International Civil Aviation Organization

Middle East Air Navigation Planning and Implementation Regional Group

Sixteenth Meeting (MIDANPIRG/16)
(Kuwait, 13 – 16 February 2017)

Agenda Item 4.1:   Update from and Coordination with the RASG-MID

CALL SIGN SIMILARITY MITIGATION AS A NATIONAL TASK

(Presented by the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES)

SUMMARY

Air Traffic Control (ATC) and Airlines have become increasingly concerned about being confronted with the use of similar/identical call-signs, potentially creating safety incidents. Because of the involvement of and dependency on various stakeholders, the U.A.E. GCAA has established a permanent Working Group "Call Sign Similarity" whose focus it is to provide an effective platform to discuss and propose solutions for the topic of "Call Sign Similarity/Confusion" involving all aviation stakeholders.

Action by the meeting is at paragraph 3.

1.   **INTRODUCTION**

1.1   Air Traffic Control (ATC) and Airlines have become increasingly concerned about being faced with the use of similar/identical call-signs – this can refer to the same Airline Operator and also to different Airline Operators, operating at the same time in the same airspace or at an airport.

1.2   The use of similar call signs by aircraft operating in the same ATC environment has the potential to create safety incidents.

1.3   Reports in this regards have been raised by Airline Operators and Air Navigation Service Providers on a global level.

1.4   Call sign confusion can be either:

- aural (frequency)
- visual (radar displays, flight progress strip)
- both

1.5   The use of similar call signs by aircraft operating in the same airspace and on the same radio frequency has the potential to cause flight safety incidents, also known as "call-sign conflicts" or "call-sign confusion". The danger of an aircraft accepting and proceeding on a clearance intended for another due to call sign confusion is a common occurrence.

2.   DISCUSSION

Establishing a National 'Call Sign Similarity' Task Force

2.1   Acknowledging that Call Sign Similarity has the potential of being a safety concern, the U.A.E. GCAA has established its National UAE National Airspace Advisory Committee (NASAC) Working Group "Call Sign Similarity" in 2014 to manage and mitigate this challenge.

2.2   The U.A.E. GCAA Working Group "Call Sign Similarity" shall assist to determine and recommend the best course of action in order to minimize the risk of Call sign confusion and to propose procedures for reporting and managing occurrences when call sign similarity leads to actual call sign confusion.

2.3   Members of this Working Group are delegates from the GCAA (CAAs), Air Traffic Control, the Department of Transport, the Intl. Airports and the Airlines of the U.A.E., who deal daily with aspects of Air Traffic Management, Flight Operations or Aerodrome Operations, Human Factors in Aviation and who shall have direct access to decision makers within their organizations.

2.4   The prime purpose of the U.A.E. Call Sign Similarity Working Group is to provide an effective platform to discuss and propose solutions for the topic of "Call Sign Similarity/ Confusion" involving all aviation stakeholders. This Working Group provides a forum for industry-wide representation so as to develop a common position for the problem of call sign similarity as the basis for strategic advice to the GCAA.

2.5   One of the outcomes of this Working Group was the issuance of the U.AE. AIC 1/2015 'Call Sign Similarity' that provides specific guidelines and best courses of action to minimize the risk of call sign confusion specifically to Airline Operators, Flight Crew, the Air Traffic Service Provider and Airport Operators. It mandates procedures for reporting and managing occurrences, when call sign similarity leads to actual call sign confusion.

2.6   An additional outcome of this permanent Working Group is the overall increased awareness of Call Sign Similarity in the U.A.E. highlighted by an increase of reporting by both crew and air traffic controllers as reflected in **Appendix A**. Also the use of tactical alternative call-sign and projects such as the implementation/integration of alpha-numeric call signs or awareness campaigns and surveys related to this topic have been initiated in this group.

2.7   The objective of the Call Sign Similarity Working Group of the U.A.E. is to reduce the risk to the safety of aircraft operations posed by call sign similarity/confusion. Moreover the Working Group acknowledges, that call sign similarity and its mitigation is a task for the wider aviation community, and not limited to ATC and the Airlines only. The goal is to minimize the occurrence a call sign similarity but also how to deal with the occurrence, if a call sign similarity has been identified.

3.   ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1   The meeting is invited to:

   a) note the information contained in this paper; and

   b) consider the valuable initiative of the U.A.E. GCAA to also establish a Call Sign Similarity Task Force within its national environment.
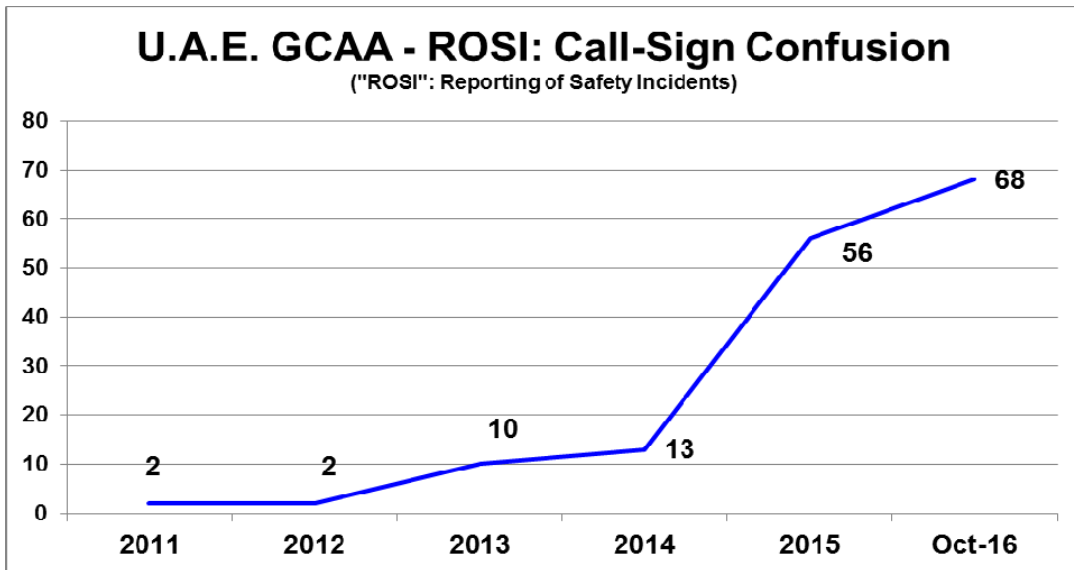

APPENDIX A

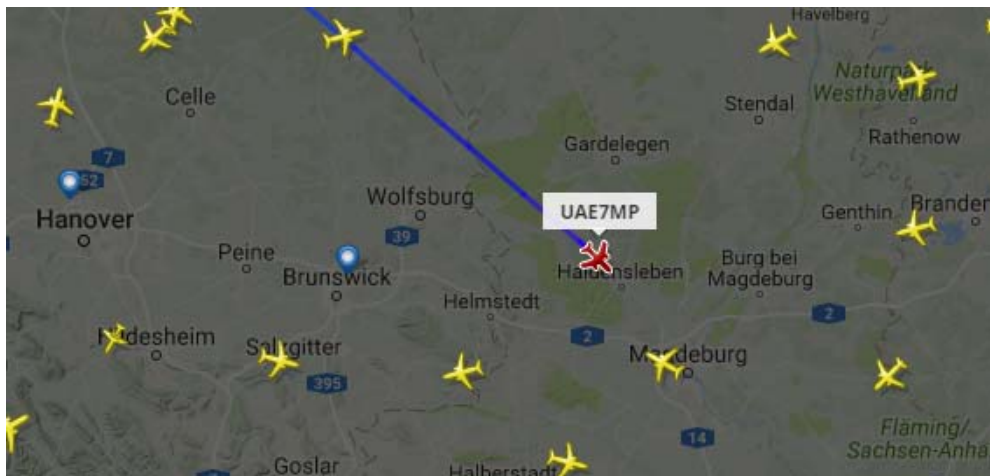Figure 1: U.A.E. GCAA – ROSI: Number of reported Call Sign Confusion events

Figure 2: Live example of alpha-numeric Call Sign used

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