



INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION

Western and Central African Office

Workshop on the mitigation of loss of Operational messages (Flight Plans, NOTAMs & OPMETs)

(Dakar, 12 – 14 May 2014)

Agenda Item 3: Investigation and mitigation actions on the loss of operational messages

Loss of AFTN messages (FLPs, NOTAMs, OPMETS) in the AFI Region

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

This working paper presents a brief introduction to the loss of AFTN messages in the AFI Region, recalls the regional arrangements for the resolution of missing flight plans and calls for the identification and mitigation of the main causes of these deficiencies.

Action by the meeting is at paragraph 3.

Annex 10- Aeronautical Telecommunications (Volumes 1, 2 and 3)

Annex 11- Air Traffic Services

Doc 8259 - Manual on the Planning and Engineering of the Aeronautical Fixed
Telecommunication Network

Doc 9702 - Report of the Seventh Africa-Indian-Ocean Regional Air Navigation
AFI / RAN /7 Meeting

Report on the AFI Sp AFI / RAN /8 Meeting

APIRG - Meeting Reports

Note: References can be downloaded from www.icao.int/wacaf.

Related **ICAO Strategic Objectives**: **A: Safety; B: Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency**

Related **ICAO ASBU Performance Improvement Areas and Block0 Modules**: **PIA1 (B0-FICE); PIA2 (B0-DATM, B0-AMET) PIA3 (B0-FRTO, B0-NOPS, B0-ASEP, B0-OPFL, B0-SNET);**

1. Introduction

1.1 The availability of operational messages (FLPs, NOTAMS and OPMETS) relies on the performance of AFTN circuits.

1.2 The AFI Region is encountering recurrent loss of operational messages (FLPs, NOTAMS and OPMETS) which can adversely contribute to the decrease of Air Navigation safety and efficiency in the Region.

2 Discussion

2.1 The issue related to loss of Flight Plans has been regularly discussed during this last decade without tangible definitive solutions. The phenomenon is characterized by flights reaching aerodromes of destination with no Flight Plan transmitted.

2.2 In the other hand unavailability of NOTAMs with crucial safety advisory information often encountered for some centres affects adversely the planning and operations of flights as well as they can have a negative impact on the insurance of safety in the concerned centers.

2.3 Moreover, airlines are experiencing from time to time lack of aeronautical meteorological information such as METAR, TAF, SPECI, AIREPs, SIGMETs, resulting in lack of weather awareness for aircraft and non-optimized trajectories.

2.3 The common denominator of these types of information derives from the performance of AFTN network in the AFI Region. This performance can be assessed to be resulting from:

- **The performance of the facilities (COM Centers, Telecommunication media...);**
- **The compliance to the procedures for AFTN operations including addressing and routing procedures;**
- **The compliance to messages (FLPs, NOTAMs, OPMETS)formats;**
- **Other factors.**

The particular issue of loss of Flights plans has been a concern which was brought to the attention of regional meetings and conclusions/decisions were formulated.

2.4 Under **Decision 16/17**, APIRG 16 held in Rubavu, Rwanda, 18-23 November 2017 considered missing flight plans in the AFI Region as a safety-related issue and recommended that regional surveys be conducted on missing flight plan with investigation on AFTN aspects to determine their possible impact of AFTN performance on flight plan unavailability within the Region. Decision 16/17 reads as follow:

DECISION 16/17: SURVEYS ON MISSING FLIGHT PLANS

That the ICAO Regional Offices in Dakar and Nairobi carry out the necessary coordination to ensure that due account is taken of AFTN technical and operational aspects in the conduct of surveys relating to missing flight plans in the AFI Region.

2.4 APIRG 17 Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso 2-6-August 2010 considered the problem of missing flight plans and noted for example that, in a sample period of 27 days in the Johannesburg Air Traffic Control Centre (ACC), there was an average of six (6) missing flight plans per day which could be extrapolated to **2190** missing flight plans a year. The meeting acknowledged that this was a critical and perennial safety issue. It was recalled that several actions had been taken within APIRG and its subsidiary bodies over the years, however, effective solutions were yet to be established and implemented. Detailed information on the causes had also not been established. The meeting noted with concern that if the current rate of missing flight plans was not effectively addressed, the situation could be expected to result in more serious implications when the new ICAO model flight plan was to be implemented in November 2012. The meeting Formulated conclusion 17/42 which reads as follow:

Conclusion 17/42: Resolution of Missing Flight Plans Problem

That, in order to effectively address the problem of missing flight plans between AFI ACCS, AFI states:

- (a) **Take immediate measures to ensure that standard requirements for flight plan processing are adhered to;**
- (b) **Ensure that all FIRs collect/record information on missing flight plans and exchange such information/data with other FIRs;**
- (c) **Ensure that ACCs/FICs respond to queries from other ACCs/FICs regarding missing flight plans on a timely basis, providing details that might assist not just the affected firs but others in resolving the causes for missing flight plans; and**
- (d) **Bring the trend information/data on missing flight plans to the attention of the TAG for further action.**

2.5 APIRG 18, Kampala, Uganda 27-30 March 2012 recognized that if the problem of missing flight plans was not addressed in a timely manner, the situation will jeopardize States' efforts in implementing Amendment 1 to PANS-ATM (Doc 4444) introducing the new format of the ICAO Flight Plan.

APIRG also noted that part of the challenges that could be contributing to missing flight plans was the lack of training of staff employed or engaged by air operators to file or submit flight plans (filers) to the air navigation service providers (ANSPs). Accordingly, the Group agreed to the following Conclusions:

CONCLUSION 18/17: ADDRESSING MISSING FLIGHT PLANS

That AFI States should:

- a) **address the loss of ATS messages using AFTN, including missing flight plans, as a matter of urgency;**
- b) **continuously monitor missing flight plans through:**
 - i) **the AFI Tactical Action Group (TAG); and**
 - ii) **conduct regular surveys on missing flight plans for a longer period (e.g. 30 days), or at regular intervals, under the coordination of the ICAO Regional Offices; and**
- c) **ensure that their ATC systems' clocks are synchronized with the GPS time in order to meet Annexes 2 and 11 relevant provisions.**

(Note: This Conclusion supersedes APIRG Conclusion 17/42)

CONCLUSION 18/18: TRAINING OF AIR OPERATORS PERSONNEL ON AIRSPACE ORGANIZATION

That, in order to reduce risks of missing flight plans, enhance safety and efficiency, States and concerned international organizations including IATA take necessary measures to ensure that flight planning personnel are adequately trained on the tasks for which they are engaged in the processing of flight plans.

2.6 APIRG 19, Dakar, Senegal, 28-31 October 2013 noted that while the rate of missing flight plans was slightly reduced towards and during the launch of the NEW ICAO flight plan, the rate of missing flight plans started to increase again shortly after 15 November 2012, with various impacts on safety and efficiency. The Group agreed that one of the solutions for the reduction of missing flight plans is for States to effectively implement Annex 2 standards on flight plans that also the active involvement of users was paramount. The Group noted the concern of users regarding actions that might be instituted by ANSPs in discouraging acceptance of flights without flight plans, which might impact negatively on safety. States were urged to continually ensure safety in the provision of services. The following conclusion was formulated:

CONCLUSION 19/23: RESOLUTION OF THE ISSUE OF MISSING FLIGHT PLANS

That, in order to support the effective implementation of international standards relating to flight plan:

- (a) **operators and ANSPs should, take necessary measures to ensure that, prior to departure, flight plans are correctly filed and accepted;**
- (b) **AFI States and Air Navigation Service Providers be urged to ensure that international flights are not released for departure without correctly filed flight plans;**
- (c) **in the event of routine or repetitive non-receipt of standard flight plans, the appropriate ATS authority assess the risk and as necessary, arrange for the non-acceptance of subsequent, related operations over the territory of the State concerned. The operator(s) and adjacent ATS units will be informed in advance of this action being taken; and**
- (d) **AFI States regulatory bodies take necessary action to ensure effective implementation.**

2.7 As mentioned above various ways have been explored for the resolution of the issue of missing Flight Plans. Some actions have been taken by ANSPs (ASECNA, ATNS) with encouraging results. These initiatives need to be shared between stakeholders (States, ANSPs, Airlines...)

3. Action by the meeting

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) Take note of the information provided in this working paper;
- b) Discuss on mitigation solution adopted for the resolution of missing FLPs, NOTAMs and OPMETs
- c) Encourage states and organization to implement the agreed procedures which may come out of this workshop

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