



International Civil Aviation Organization

Twenty Second Meeting on the improvement of Air Traffic Services over the South Atlantic

(SAT 22)

(Paris, France, 7 to 9 June 2017)

Agenda item 2: Air traffic management (ATM) (by the ATM working group)
Large Height Deviation and unknown traffic in the South Atlantic
(Presented by Argentina)

SUMMARY

This working paper requests the meeting to address Unknown Traffic and the number of Large Height Deviation in the South Atlantic airspace. Even though Argentina, together with other States of the region, has carried out continuous mitigation measures, there is still a lack of coordination and information of flights to or from the Malvinas Islands (Falkland)*. This circumstance has a negative impact on safety of air traffic in South Atlantic airspace, since it produces a gap in the coordination chain, which is necessary among the FIRs involved in the provision of air traffic services to aircrafts using that airspace.

References:

- Joint Statement of the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of 25th September 1991.
- Letter of Operational Agreement between the Comodoro Rivadavia Area Control Centre and the Air Traffic Services Unit of Monte Agradable Airport, Islas Malvinas (Falkland Islands)*.
- ATM/CNS Trilateral Meeting Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, (SAM ATM/CNS South).
- Ninth Meeting of the GREPECAS Scrutiny Working Group.
- Tenth Meeting of the GREPECAS Scrutiny Working Group.
- Twelfth Meeting of the GREPECAS Scrutiny Working Group.
- Thirteenth Meeting of the GREPECAS Scrutiny Working Group
- Fifteenth Meeting of the GREPECAS Scrutiny Working Group (GTE/15)
- SAT/19 Meeting – Conclusions and Decisions
- SAT/20 Meeting – Conclusions and Decisions
- SAT/21 Meeting – Conclusions and Decisions

Objetivos estratégicos de la OACI:

A – Safety

B – Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency

1. Introduction

* Text in accordance to the ICAO Regional Office Manual (ROM).

A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands (Falkland Islands).

1.1 A reliable air traffic service provided by ATS units decisively contributes to the safety of operations in any airspace, mainly in oceanic ones, like the South Atlantic airspace. ATS units involved must have all the available information, timely and in accordance with the appropriate rules and procedures.

1.2 The Caribbean and South American Regional Planning and Implementation Group (GREPECAS) has delegated to the Caribbean and South American Monitoring Agency (CARSAMMA) the safety monitoring function in support of the implementation and use of RVSM airspace in the Caribbean and South American Regions. One of the main responsibilities of the CARSAMMA is to verify the risk associated to the RVSM operations and to recommend the best practices, with a view to guaranteeing a suitable coordination between ATS Facilities.

1.3 CARSAMMA continues to observe a number of Large Height Deviation in the South Atlantic, which results in a risk associated with operations in South Atlantic RVSM Airspace. Those numbers of LHD in the South Atlantic have been provided in the past to South Atlantic Monitoring Agency (SATMA) for its consideration.

1.4 Consequently, Large Height Deviation continue to affect the region due to a lack of coordination between Monte Agradable ATS Unit and Comodoro Rivadavia ACC via AFTN (FPL, DEP, etc) or oral communication. Therefore, some aircraft take off from the Malvinas Islands (Falkland)* without prior coordination with the responsible ACC of the FIR. As a result of this situation, Argentina has informed that Monte Agradable ATS Unit does not contact the Comodoro Rivadavia ACC to transfer the responsibility of the aircraft, before they leave Monte Agradable CTR.

1.5 In some cases, aircrafts establish contact with Comodoro Rivadavia ACC and/or Ezeiza ACC, allowing one of them to coordinate with Montevideo ACC, which afterwards is able to do so with Atlántico ACC. However, there are still several cases in which aircrafts do not make any contact with Comodoro Rivadavia ACC.

1.6 Some aircrafts (few) make contact with Comodoro Rivadavia ACC or Ezeiza ACC via HF equipment or Satellite Telephone, without being a previous contact of Monte Agradable Unit with Comodoro ACC to request clearance or to transfer responsibilities. This situation appears to reduce the lack of communication and tends to reduce the risk analysis calculated by the CARSAMMA, taking into account the Collision Risk Model Methodology applied.

1.7 Nevertheless, this situation continues to be a risk because air traffic from and to the Malvinas Islands (Falkland)* should be carried out in accordance to what has been agreed in the Joint Statement of the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of September 25, 1991 and in the Letter of Operational Agreement Between the Comodoro Rivadavia Area Control Centre and the Air Traffic Services Unit at Monte Agradable Airport, Malvinas Islands (Falkland)*. Both instruments were agreed and signed under the formula on sovereignty recorded in paragraph 2 of the Joint Statement issued in Madrid on 19 October 1989.

1.8 In such cases, aircrafts normally make contact with some ACC, flying a long way without any contact with an ATC unit and, thus, constituting a risk to operational safety.

1.9 As we stated above, CNS and ATM from and to the Malvinas Islands (Falkland)* are regulated by the Letter of Operational Agreement between the Comodoro Rivadavia Area Control Centre and the Air Traffic Services Unit at Monte Agradable Airport, in the Malvinas Islands (Falkland)*. This agreement established ATS procedures to the Terminal Control Zone (CTR) and the air traffic routing procedures, because Monte Agradable Airport is within the Comodoro Rivadavia Flight Information Region. Such Operational Agreement entered into force on October 9, 1991, and it was presented to ICAO jointly by Argentina and the United Kingdom, under the above-mentioned sovereignty formula.

1.10 Several meetings of the GREPECAS Scrutiny Working Group have dealt with Large Height Deviation in the South Atlantic. The ATM/CNS Trilateral Meeting which includes Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, (SAM ATM/CNS South) also took into consideration the LHD in the region and developed several actions to be taken in order to solve the information/coordination issues.

1.11 Numerous SAT meetings have discussed the issue regarding the lack of coordination between Monte Agradable ATS Facility and Comodoro Rivadavia ACC and its consequences to the neighboring ACCs (Montevideo and Atlántico). In that regard, during SAT/19 the Secretary of ICAO SAM region presented a Working Paper (WP/16), from which the meeting reached “Conclusion SAT19/10: Large Height Deviation and unknown traffic in the South Atlantic”

That:

- The SAT Group expresses its concern about the unknown traffic and the increasing number of Large Height Deviation in the South Atlantic airspace, due to the lack of coordination and information of the flights coming from and going to Falkland Islands (Malvinas)*.

- The SAT Group recalls the need that all ATS Units involved in the South Atlantic airspace provide information to their respective ACCs in accordance with the international arrangements in force (among them, the Letters of Operational Agreements) and with the applicable ICAO rules and procedures, in order to enhance the coordination among the FIRs involved."

** A dispute exists between the government of Argentina and the government of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).*

1.12 During SAT/20 not only was Conclusion 19/10 adjudged to be still valid, but the meeting also “noted the reduction in the number of incidents of LHD due to mitigation actions taken by Argentina and urged international organizations including ICAO, IATA, IFALPA, and IFATCA to create awareness of the negative impact on safety due to the lack of coordination among the ATC units”. Afterwards, SAT/21 also adjudged Conclusion 19/10 to be still valid, and urged to continue engagement with international organizations including ICAO, IATA, IFALPA, and IFATCA to create awareness of this situation.

1.13 Argentina has been implementing this action in several ICAO related fora and in 2017 submitted formal Notes to ICAO, IATA, IFALPA, and IFATCA aimed at creating awareness of the negative impact on safety due to the lack of coordination among ATC units and to inform those organizations that the Argentine Republic keeps on working in order to mitigate the negative impact on safety produced by this situation.

1.14 The significant raise on the risk in 2013 was mainly associated with the higher number of LHD in the South Atlantic. This can be seen in the 110 LHD that occurred in 2013 and in the 33 LHD that occurred in 2014. It can also be observed in the 3,5 times higher annual total vertical collision risk comparing 2012 and 2013. This significant raise of the risk in 2013 is mainly associated with the higher number of LHD in the South Atlantic.

1.15 According to Argentine Air Navigation Authorities, Monte Agradable ATS Unit has been constantly failing to provide information about aircraft flying from and to the Malvinas Islands (Falkland)*, which is a breach of item III(2) of the Joint Statement between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of September 25, 1991, and items IV - 4.1 (Scope) VI - 6.6 (coordination - in paragraphs 6.6.1 and 6.6.5) of the Letter of Operational Agreement. This situation should be considered as a safety risk for aviation over the South Atlantic and it may be considered as lack of compliance from an ICAO member State.

1.16 Argentina has presented a formal protest to the United Kingdom about such breach and notified this situation to the ICAO General Secretary (Note ARG066-13 from Argentina's Permanent Mission to ICAO).

1.17 Argentina has provided information regarding a higher degree of compliance in the presentation of Filed Flight Plans (FPL) and Departure Messages (DEP) by Monte Agradable ATS Unit. Nonetheless, there is still need of a better compliance of the terms agreed regarding the request for traffic information and coordination of flights taking off from Monte Agradable Airport (Current Flight Plan - CPL).

1.18 In some cases, aircraft crews that fly from the Malvinas Islands (Falkland)* to the mainland communicate with Comodoro Rivadavia ACC for the purpose of requesting traffic clearance and informing their estimated entry into the FIR. This procedure makes it possible to partially mitigate the risk posed by the lack of compliance with the Letter of Operational Agreement.

1.19 As it has been mentioned in working paper 16 during SAT/19, in the case of flights to Ascension Island or Antarctica, Argentina has informed that Monte Agradable ATS Unit did not communicate neither FPL nor DEP messages. As a result, details of the flight route are received, provided that the aircraft communicates with the respective ATS units.

2. Suggested action

2.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- Take note of the information provided in this working paper.
- Recall the need that all ATS Units involved in the South Atlantic airspace provide information to their respective ACCs in accordance with the international arrangements in force and with the applicable ICAO rules and procedures, by adjudging Conclusion SAT 19/10 as still valid.