

IBAC Technical Report Summary

Subject: Caribbean (CAR) and South America (SAM) PIRG
Meeting: 12th GREPECAS Meeting
IBAC File: PIRGs
Reported by: Adalberto Febeliano

Summary

The main objectives of the 12th GREPECAS meeting were to review the decisions taken by ICAO's ANC and Council on the 11th GREPECAS Report, the inter and intra-regional activities related to CNS/ATM and the work done at the subgroup level. Furthermore, the Group had to elect a new President and Vice-President. Among the issues discussed are of special interest the following:

- a) Confirmation of January 20th, 2005 as the effective date for transition into RVSM, and of November 30th, 2004 as the latest go-no go decision making timeframe for Sates;
- b) The willingness that all States are ready to use CPDLC systems by mid-2006, allowing RNAV routes to be implemented at the oceanic airspace;
- c) Some initial discussions on centralizing several air navigation services (including air navigation fees collection) under a multi-national entity, similar to the Eurocontrol; and
- d) The need to emphasize, to controllers and pilots, the use of the approved aeronautical phraseology, since English language shortcomings of some controllers are amplified by the use of non-standard communications.

Implications for Business Aviation

RVSM transition in the same timeframe as DVRSM in the US will provide a safer environment for all aircraft.

CPDLC is presently under trials by the airlines. If States decide to request their installation to allow for RNAV routes usage in Oceanic airspace, business aircraft could be assigned to the less favorable ones, affecting the efficiency of operations.

If States can agree on a multinational organization to provide air traffic services in the region it is likely that overall service level will improve, due to the better human resources and equipment that may be available in some less wealthy States.

Decisions Required

Recommendation 1: That the POC support the maintenance of IBAC as a GREPECAS observer and a Member of the Flight Safety Board.

Recommendation 2: That the POC, urges the studies on CNS/ATM technologies applied to business aircraft.

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Meeting: 12th GREPECAS Meeting

Place and Date: La Habana, Cuba, 7th to 11th of June, 2004

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1. Preface

The author has, as in the last 2 reports, relinquished to the ICAO idiom and its acronyms. For those in need of assistance for a better understanding of those, please contact him at the address below or, alternatively, check the existing prior reports on GREPECAS 8, 9, 10 and 11 and RAN/CAR/SAM/3, which do contain several explanations on terms used herein.

2. Introduction

GREPECAS is the PIRG for both the CAR (Caribbean) and the SAM (South America) regions. It is assisted by the 2 Regional Offices ICAO has in those regions, in Mexico City (Mexico) and in Lima (Peru). Its former President, Mr. José Pedro Sánchez Dañino, from the Mexican DGAC, has retired at the 11th Meeting, and the present one is expected to choose a new Chairperson. Its Secretary is still Mr. Raymond Ybarra, from ICAO's Mexico City Office.

GREPECAS seems to be moving from a yearly pattern of meetings to a more spaced year-and-a-half one. GREPECAS 13, for instance, is expected to convene by the end of 2005 or beginning of 2006, in Chile.

As in other PIRGs, GREPECAS has a number of technical subgroups that are constantly evaluating the status of the air navigation in the regions, based either on reports and requests made by International Organizations, especially IATA, or on requests from ICAO Headquarters, for matters of systemic nature (such as new navigation technologies or security procedures, to name a few). The subgroups meet at least once between GREPECAS meetings, and prepare reports containing suggestions of diverse nature. These reports are sent to the GREPECAS plenary, where they are reviewed by all present States and, in most of the cases, endorsed by them for enforcement by the respective ICAO Regional Office or by ICAO's Secretariat.

It is always worthwhile to mention that only the States have executive power, i.e., both GREPECAS and the Regional Offices may present suggestions and/or push for the improvement of a situation, but the implementation of its solution must be carried out by a State, or by somebody who was duly authorized by it.

3. The Meeting

The meeting was attended by 97 Delegates from 16 Member States, 7 Contracting States, 1 Observer State and 6 International Observer Organizations, a number somewhat below GREPECAS 11.

The meeting was held at Havana, and Cuba's Civil Aviation Authority has presented several Working Papers and Information Papers taking advantage of the larger group available on site. They've also taken the opportunity to show the new Area Control Center for the Havana region, equipped with brand new data processing and communications equipment.

If the restructuring of GREPECAS, with fewer technical subgroups, had already shown up effective in the previous meeting, it became much more apparent at this one that overall productivity has been greatly improved. The plenary has basically reviewed reports prepared by the subgroups, and almost all Conclusions and Decisions proposed have been approved as received.

The meeting has reviewed the recommendations made by the ICAO Council on the RVSM introduction alongside with the US domestic airspace, and acknowledged that the Air Navigation Commission (ANC) will provide guidance material on the use of the Internet for aeronautical purposes and on runaway incursions. It followed with the analysis of the results of the Eleventh Air Navigation Conference, the Task Force in Institutional Aspects, the ATM/CNS, AERMET, AGA/AOP, AIS/MAP and AVSEC/COMM subgroups, the Air Safety Board (ASB) Meeting and the Management of the GREPECAS Mechanism.

The last topics were more of administrative nature, with the revision of the Terms of Reference and Work Programmes of the Contributory Bodies, of the Outstanding Conclusions and, finally, the election of the new Chairperson.

Brig. Normando Araújo de Medeiros, former Brazilian representative within ICAO's Air Navigation Commission and presently working in the Brazilian CNS/ATM Commission, chaired the meeting as GREPECAS's First Vice-President, position he had been elected for at the previous meeting.

4. Discussions

At this opportunity there were not controversial matters, and the meeting progressed smoothly.

Discussions started with the South Atlantic ATM/CNS services. Expansion of RVSM outside the EUR/SAM corridor is not expected, due to lack of adequate technology (and resources) in most African States. Implementation of RNAV is, however, expected, allowing each operator to fly its preferred route. Such technology depends on States having access to CPDLC (Controller-Pilot Data Link Connection), what is part of the FANS1/A technology developed for the airliners.

Target date in this case is mid-2006, and it may have a large impact on business aviation operations. Presently, CPDLC is not available to business aircraft, and if they are not equipped by the time RNAV is implemented they may be assigned less favorable routes, leading to longer flights and eventually poorer weather.

This reinforces the need for the CNS/ATM technology study IBAC is planning.

States in the region have also agreed about using the FANS1/A Operating Manual developed for the Pacific Region FANS1/A. This is good news, since it assures there will be equipment interoperability for airplanes flying in both regions.

It was also reported that the South American countries will integrate CAFSAT (the African satellite aeronautical communications network) communication nodes within their communication networks. This will likely improve AFS message exchanging, a complain operators have long had about the Southern Atlantic.

When discussing Recommendation 1/16 from the 11th Air Navigation Conference, that demands Annex 6 Part II to be revised to include training of General Aviation pilots on the operation of ACAS, several States have informally asked what was IBAC's position with that respect and were informed that, as far as Business Aviation is concerned, a significant part of the fleet has already been equipped with ACAS systems, and therefore training on their operation was already accomplished. They were reminded, at the same time, that this was not the case with lighter general aviation.

Some comments on the deficiencies of ionosphere deflection corrections of GPS signals were voiced by South American states, a feature that will delay full implementation of SBAS and GBAS in the region. Brazil is leading researches in the area, in the quest for better modeling of the interferences.

The 11th ANC Report brings a request that International Organizations comply with 12 Recommendations, numbered 1/1, 1/7, 1/10, 1/13, 4/8, 5/1, 6/1, 6/2, 6/9, 6/13, 7/2 and 7/3. Among those, 1/7 requests for "... cost-effective early implementation ... of ADS-B ..."; 6/1 demands that "... airspace users take note of ... upcoming SBAS ... services ... and take ... steps towards installation and certification ... of ... avionics."; and 7/3 suggests that "... States ... continue the use of ... VHF until ... either ... saturation ... is approached ... or ... cost/benefit of safety advantages are expected from ... other ICAO Standards." Apart from those, relevance to business aviation is reduced.

The following Working Paper discussed the possibility of integrating, to a higher extent, air navigation services in the Caribbean and South American regions. If this idea is progressively accepted and adopted by the States, the region might see a Eurocontrol-like centralized air navigation fees collection which, if properly managed, may lead to a better technical infrastructure in less favorable countries.

There are, however, some restrictions to the idea, to be dealt with in the future.

RVSM implementation in the region was confirmed for 20th of January, 2005, with a go-no go final decision expected for the 30th of November this year. It is important to notice, however, that there will be several exceptions in areas with lower air space utilization, and where international traffic is sparse. This is the case for southern Argentina and some areas in the Amazon region, where controllers might approve non-RVSM flights if there is no other traffic expected.

The Chilean delegation has informed that they have a functional Internet-based Flight Information System, where users can obtain any type of information and present their flight plans remotely, with no additional software needed. Colombia told that, after July, their aviation services will also allow for that.

When discussing the results of the Air Safety Board meeting, the recurring issue of lack of adequate command of the English language by some Air Traffic Controllers was raised by operators and States.

While some countries presented their procedures for assuring adequate proficiency on the English phraseology, GREPECAS Acting Chairman, Brig. Normando, has reminded the audience that greater safety concern should also be put on the proper use of aeronautical phraseology by pilots, since there is normally a poor usage from their part. This is surely true, and some reports on difficulties of operations in Latin American countries can certainly be traced to the non-adherence to ICAO standardized phraseology.

International operators should put more emphasis on training of such capabilities.

When discussing the activities of the Aeronautical Information Subgroup, several States have mentioned that they are adopting ISO 9000 quality assurance procedures. Although none of them has reported successful completion of the process, this will certainly enhance flight safety in the area.

Chile has volunteered to organize the 13th GREPECAS in the end of 2005 or beginning of 2006.

The last activity of the meeting was the election of the new Chairman and Vice-Chairman of GREPECAS.

Brigadier Normando Araújo de Medeiros, former Brazilian representative at the Air Navigation Commission and presently head of the country's CNS/ATM Committee, GEPECAS's Vice-Chairman and acting Chairman for the meeting, was indicated by the Cuban delegation for the Chairmanship of the Group, with support from the Argentinean delegation.

The head of the Cuban delegation, Mr. Raúl Madrigal, was indicated by the US delegation for the Vice-Chairmanship of the Group, with support from the Brazilian delegation.

Both were elected unanimously.

5. Conclusions

GREPECAS continues increasing its productivity, mainly due to the better quality of the work done at subgroup level.

This fact suggest that IBAC should consider sending Experts and/or Technical Representatives to some of the subgroup meetings in the future, specially to the ATM/CNS Subgroup, where most of the activity related to CDPLC, Data Links, SBAS and GBAS (the CNS/ATM basic tools) will be conducted.

Brazil continues to look for consolidating its leadership among the participant States, and from the results of the election for Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanship it seems that it is being supported by some of the most important States.

Again IBAC's presence for the 5th time in the plenary generates important dividends, and the relationship with relevant ICAO officers and States' representatives is clearly improving.

6. Needed Actions

The POC must continue to support the position that IBAC be a Member of the CAR/SAM Flight Safety Board, and that IBAC be present in all venues of said Board. The POC must also continue to support the participation of IBAC in all GREPECAS plenary meetings.

The POC, possibly through the International Operators Committees of IBAC's Member Organizations, should emphasize the need for pilots operating in the region to adhere more strictly to ICAO's aeronautical phraseology.

The POC should also give higher priority to the CNS/ATM technological study under consideration, since States are starting to seek support from IBAC to assist in their planning activities for the implementation of the new technologies.

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