

IBAC Technical Report Summary

Subject: Caribbean (CAR) and South America (SAM) PIRG

Meeting: 9th GREPECAS Meeting

IBAC File: PIRGs

Reported by: Adalberto Febeliano

Summary

The main objectives of the 9th GREPECAS meeting were to review the decisions taken at the 3rd RAN/CAR/SAM meeting, held last year in Buenos Aires, and to evaluate the studies prepared by a work group on the restructuring of GREPECAS. Among the issues discussed are of special interest to Business Aviation the following:

- a) Introduction of RVSM procedures in part of the corridor linking South America and Europe (specifically in the Recife to Lisbon route);
- b) Installation, for trials, of satellite-based GPS augmentation systems (SBAS) in Brazil and Chile;
- c) Development of a new civil route between Trinidad and Tobago and Johannesburg, flying over Ascension Island; and
- d) Creation of a Flight Safety Board within GREPECAS to help States in the region to solve the several urgent shortcomings and deficiencies that, so far, despite having been identified by GREPECAS, were not tackled.

Implications for Business Aviation

Although Brazil in particular wants to keep for several years parallel routes for non-RVSM compliant aircraft, it is likely that at least when entering the European airspace those aircraft will face heavy restrictions, thus forcing all operators who plan to fly regularly on that corridor to equip their aircraft properly.

The SBAS tests, on the other hand, will make operations much more regular, since after 2004 it will allow Cat I type IFR operations in almost all airports, in a region where ILS facilities are scarce, to say the least.

Composition of the Flight Safety Board included only IATA, IFALPA and IFATCA as observers, but after the meeting that status has been granted also to IBAC, allowing for a stronger voice for Business Aviation within GREPECAS.

Decisions Required

Recommendation: That the POC support the position that IBAC be a Member of the CAR/SAM Flight Safety Board.

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Meeting: 9th GREPECAS Meeting

Place and Date: Rio de Janeiro, 7th to 12th of August, 2000

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1. Preface

For the sake of brevity the author has at last relinquished to the ICAO idiom, full of acronyms and strange expressions. For those unhappy with the result, please contact him at the address below and a "translation" to plain English will be provided or, alternatively, check the existing prior reports on GREPECAS 8 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 President is Mr. Pedro Dañino, from the Mexican DGAC, and its Secretary is Mr. Paulo Hegedus, from ICAO's Lima Office (albeit Mr. Hegedus is expected to retire by February next year, and to be replaced by Mr. Raymond Ybarra, head of ICAO Office in Mexico).

As in other PIRGs, GREPECAS has several technical subgroups that are constantly evaluating the status of the air navigation in the regions, based mainly in reports and requests made by IATA representatives. The subgroups meet at least once between GREPECAS meetings, and prepare reports containing shortcomings, deficiencies and proposed solutions for them. 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.

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

75 Delegates from 17 Member States, 15 Delegates from 4 Observer States and 20 Delegates from 7 Observer Organizations have attended to the meeting, which main objective was to work in the restructuring of GREPECAS.

In the last 2 meetings it was felt that the group needed a more streamlined organization, with fewer subgroups and better organizational tools. In the 8th Meeting, held in 1998, a work group was appointed to propose a new structure and new Terms of Reference, which have been presented only now because there was no meeting in 1999, due to the larger RAN/CAR/SAM event that took place last year in BuenosAires.

The meeting approved a new structure for GREPECAS, with only 5 subgroups, 1 administrative coordination group, 1 Flight Safety Board and a permanent assistance from Technical Cooperation Projects. The new Terms of Reference, on the other hand, call for the subgroups to

use Project Management Tools that will define responsibilities for activities in less ambiguous terms, and will assign timelines for each activity.

Apart from those changes, the meeting is always a good opportunity for the States to present their own progresses towards development of air navigation in their territories. Among the most interesting (and to some extent surprising) achievements presented was the Brazilian project to install, in cooperation with the FAA, 5 reference stations for testing a SBAS in the region.

Other issues of relative importance were transference of responsibility of area weather forecasts from States in the region to Washington (as part of an ICAO program) and the development of a structure to monitor volcanic ash in the southern part of the continent.

Of less direct importance to users, but fundamental for the States, was the development of basic cost data tables for operating costs of airplanes and for investments and maintenance costs of ground based navigation aids. These data will be used to support cost-benefit analysis that will allow States do assess the right timing for replacing the conventional systems by those based in the new CNS/ATM technologies.

4. Discussions

By far the most important issue of the meeting was the restructuring of GREPECAS. The States were concerned that, despite being very good in spotting shortcomings and deficiencies, and proposing solutions, the group was not successful in translating these findings to the real world, implementing airports, nav aids and/or administrative structures that would satisfy the needs of the aircraft operators.

This difficulty is mainly due to the lack of adequate prioritization from governments to the necessary investments, what is understandable in a region with many less developed countries with constrained Government budgets.

In order to overcome this problem, GREPECAS has decided to move in two directions: firstly, its own internal work shall be streamlined, with fewer subgroups that are better integrated and which may better fulfill the specific needs of the States (please refer to the new org chart in Figure 1 at the end of this report).

This is the idea that led to the creation of two new subgroups: the AGA/AOP Subgroup, for Aerodrome Ground Aids and Aerodrome Operational Planning (which has replaced the late AOP Committee that used to be part of the ATS subgroup) and the Human Resources subgroup. These subgroups, specially the latter, are expected to answer the difficulties the States of the region face routinely, being adequate training of human resources one of the most acute - and which can be easily settled, since several of the countries of the concerned regions (like, for instance, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico) have training structures that can easily be put at the service of the others.

Secondly, GREPECAS has decided that its own activities should be more "controllable", with responsibilities being clearly assigned and timelines agreed upon by the people involved, so there are not internal delays that may justify the postponement of actions by the States. To accomplish this, the group has ordered the subgroups to use "project management tools", which are not very different from the ones we are all used to - time schedules, Gantt charts and the alike.

Another measures they have agreed upon were the creation of an Administrative Coordination Group, composed basically by the secretaries of the subgroups, which shall convene prior to the plenary meeting to prepare as much of the secretarial work as possible in advance, so the meeting can be shorter and more productive, and the creation of a Flight Safety Board.

This particular structure has a large potential to become sort of a steering committee, since its Terms of Reference (ICAO terminology for Objectives) are to concentrate in the shortcomings and deficiencies classified as URGENT (what means they have a direct impact on flight safety) and propose effective solutions for them, what may involve advocacy at the highest echelons of Governments of States, or looking for possible donors/sponsors of equipment/personnel/training.

By doing so, the Flight Safety Board will almost certainly dictate the priorities of GREPECAS - hence the interest for IBAC to be part of this Board.

Among the other issues, the Brazilian announcement of the technical agreement with the FAA to install 5 reference stations for GPS correction, 2 master stations for measurements correlation and 1 uplink station to send the signals to the INMARSAT satellite was a surprise to almost everybody.

Brazil had a long established policy of sponsoring an ICAO-managed GNSS, refusing as much as they could to accept the GPS as a suitable GNSS for civil aviation use outside the US.

For reasons beyond public knowledge, Brazil has changed their mind and have signed a comprehensive agreement with the FAA for technology transfer, whereby Brazil will buy and install those stations.

In addition to the obvious political significance of the announcement, there is an important technical feature behind the agreement. The region located between the Equator and the Tropics is perceived as one of the most difficult for the proper correction and broadcast of GPS signals, mainly for atmospheric conditions. The system to be installed in Brazil will, therefore, help the FAA as well in evaluating the performance of an SBAS in that region, which presents few other suitable areas with significant air traffic.

The implementation of the RVSM corridor between Recife and Europe was no longer discussed, apart from reports stating that the SAT (South Atlantic) Group is in charge of making up the details of its operation.

There has been some discussion on the establishment of RNAV routes in the Santiago-Lima-Mexico-Los Angeles and the Rio-São Paulo-Miami traffic flows, which could also use the concepts of RVSM and RNP, but those studies are yet in the beginning.

It is worthwhile to mention, nevertheless, that the Uruguayan officer in charge of presenting a paper in the next ATM/CNS subgroup meeting on the suitability of adoption of RVSM routes in the CAR and SAM regions has contacted IBAC to show that his work was asking for States to take International General Aviation flights into account when planning for such routes.

The responsibility for area weather forecasts, apparently pertaining to an ICAO agreement, was transferred from a couple of states in South America to the Washington WAFC. The States have agreed, on the other hand, to improve the OPMET communications network, still not fully deployed in the region.

The meeting noted that the structure to monitor volcanic ash in the region is already working, but sometimes with SIGMET produced only in the Spanish language, which should be improved to generate messages only with standardized language and in English.

5. Conclusions

GREPECAS has defined a new working structure that will likely turn it into a more productive PIRG - at least as far as IMPLEMENTATION is concerned.

As the CNS/ATM technology penetrates more and more the day-to-day operations in all countries, even some reluctant ones may change their minds, as have done Brazil. The country is planning also the installation of dozens of GBAS, which are expected to allow even Cat II type approaches in airports that, today, rely solely on non-precision NDB or VOR approaches, what would greatly help Business Aviation, since Brazil have more than 2,000 aerodromes, with less than 200 receiving regular commercial flights.

IBAC's presence for the 3rd consecutive meeting is definitely generating dividends, both in political momentum and in practical results.

IBAC's request to be part of the Flight Safety Board was viewed positively, and when officers from the technical subgroups start asking for IBAC's referral to their papers it means IBAC is making its inroads in the group.

Most of the GREPECAS work is done at subgroup level. There are, nevertheless, too many subgroup meetings, and it is not likely that IBAC could ever participate in all of them. Being present regularly in all group meetings, and now participating also in the Flight Safety Board meetings, is probably the best substitute IBAC can use.

6. Needed Actions

The POC must 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.

IBAC must also strive to present at least an information paper in the next GREPECAS meeting, possibly to be held in Spain in September 2001 (the possibility of having the meeting outside the CAR and SAM regions was not fully approved by all GREPECAS Members, and its place may change).

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