

**Sixteenth Meeting of the Cross Polar Trans East Air Traffic Management Providers' Work Group
(CPWG/16)**

(Ottawa, Canada 3-6 December 2013)

**Agenda Item 8: Communications, Navigation, Surveillance (CNS) and Air Traffic Management
(ATM) issues**

UPDATE ON LOST COMMUNICATIONS DISCUSSIONS WITHIN ICAO

(Presented by NAV CANADA, ISAVIA and FAA)

SUMMARY

This paper presents an update regarding discussions within ICAO related to an initiative to develop revised radio communication failure (RCF) provisions.

1 Introduction

1.1. At its 8th meeting (December 2009), the CPWG agreed upon a proposal to amend the North American Regional Supplementary Procedures (NAM SUPPs, Doc 7030) related to radio communication failures. At the 11th meeting, the CPWG was advised the NAM SUPPs would not be amended as proposed, as further coordination had highlighted the preference of the user community that a global procedure be developed (Summary of Discussions of CPWG/11, paragraphs 6.20 through 6.25 refer).

1.2. ICAO formed the Communication Failure Coordination Group (CFCG) to discuss RCF provisions, with a view towards developing, if possible, revised procedures which could be globally applicable. The CFCG participants are listed at **Attachment A**.

2 Discussion

2.1. The CFCG has not yet reached a consensus on whether a flight, once it has recognized that it is experiencing an RCF, should conform to its last assigned level or climb in accordance with the flight plan. The lack of consensus mainly centers on enroute flights which are cruising at a level which is not the same as the flight planned level, and to step climb situations.

2.2. The FAA, ISAVIA and NAV CANADA contend that a flight should not automatically climb in accordance with the flight plan. There are several reasons for this:

- a) if the flight is in receipt of an oceanic clearance to operate within the ICAO NAT Region, that clearance has, with minor exceptions, been formulated so as to provide a conflict free flight profile through the busiest portions of the NAT Region;
- b) an enroute flight in level flight is at a level which has been coordinated with at least the next responsible air traffic control sector or unit in order to provide separation assurance for the flight;
- c) the level requested in the flight plan may no longer be operationally suitable and, as a result, the last cleared flight level may be that which was requested by the flight because it is more operationally suitable than what was flight planned;

- d) there are areas where the most likely RCF scenario would involve ATC losing the ability to communicate with numerous aircraft, rather than a single aircraft equipment failure, in which case numerous aircraft changing their flight profiles could create a hazardous situation; and
- e) depending on how and when the profile, as described in the originally filed flight plan, has been modified, the flight crew and ATC may have different understandings of what the “current flight plan” is.

2.3. Others contend that a flight should automatically climb in accordance with the flight plan. There are a number of reasons cited:

- a) the last assigned level may not provide adequate terrain and obstacle clearance for the entire route to destination; and
- b) the flight plan represents an operationally suitable profile for the flight; and
- c) the flight plan is a single point of information about the flight’s intentions.

2.4. There has been discussion within the CFCG about how to ensure that the “current flight plan” is commonly understood between the flight crew and ATC. Depending on whether CHG or DLA messages have been received or what has been coordinated between ATC and the flight, there could be different understandings as what the “flight plan” currently is.

2.5. There has also been discussion about the possible use of the term EXPECT to advise a flight when or where a clearance to a specified level can be anticipated, so the flight can manoeuvre in accordance with the expected clearance in the event of an RCF. In considering this, it is noted that there are varying understandings and applications around the globe for EXPECT.

2.6. In the NAT and High Arctic areas, the main concern about RCF stems from propagation issues. Because they are operating outside VHF range, a significant number of flights in this area maintain voice communications using HF. HF is subject to propagation issues, meaning it is possible that voice communication might be lost with numerous aircraft operating in the same area at the same time. Since such episodes cannot be foreseen and planned for, the clearances provided to these aircraft usually provide separation assurance for much longer periods of time than would be the case in more tactical environments. Aircraft abandoning these “protected” flight profiles would create a hazardous situation.

2.7. The CFCG has not yet found an unambiguous way to ensure that aircraft experiencing an RCF will manoeuvre in ways which are predictable and which do not create an unacceptable level of risk.

3 Recommendation

3.1. The Meeting is invited to note the information provided in this paper and provide comments as deemed appropriate.

ATTACHMENT A - Communication Failure Coordination Group Participants

Brazil	Mr. Jarbas De Oliveira Pinto Mr. Marcelo De Souza Freitas	ASECNA Mr. Bissa Sougue
Canada	Mr. Alain Lemery	CANSO Mr. Bernard Gonsalves Mr. Stefano Romano Mr. Leifur Hakonarson Mr. Anthony Tisdall Mr. Sandile Maphanga
China	Nan Kang Min Cui	EASA Ms. Algar Ruiz (main) Mr. Emanuil Radev (alternate)
France	Mr. Quoc Dung Nguyen	EUROCONTROL Mr. Neculai Cojocariu
Germany	Mr. Timo Koelker Mr. Michael Godhof	IATA Mr. Carlos Cirilo
Mexico	Mr. Sergio Pérez Rodriguez Mr. Rodrigo Bruce Magallon de la Teja	IFALPA Captain Stefan Fiedler Ms. Carole Couchman
Singapore	Mr. NG Him Yick	IFATCA Mr. Pierre Gaumond Dr. Ruth Stilwell
South Africa	Mr. Jeffrey Mzikayise Matshoba	ICAO Ms. Leslie Cary Captain Miguel Marin Ms. Mie Utsunomiya Mr. Vaughn Maiolla
UAE	Mr. Omar Al Abdouli	
United States	Mr. Keith Dutch Mr. Eric Saldana	

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