

Report of the Air Traffic Management Operations Panel (ATMOPSP)

Presented by Rick Taylor

SUMMARY

This paper describes the recent and planned activities of the ATMOPSP, including the contributions of the IFATCA member and their advisors.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The ATMOPSP is an expert panel of the ICAO Air Navigation Commission (ANC). The objectives of the ATMOPSP are to:
 - a) develop strategy and coordinated solutions for ATM, airspace management and air traffic flow management (ATFM) stemming from the aviation system block upgrades and other requirements, consistent with the need to ensure a harmonised global ATM operational environment; and,
 - b) develop and maintain standards, procedures and guidance material for air traffic services (ATS), ATFM, procedures and phraseology for air traffic control (ATC), airspace management, and civil military control.
- 1.2. Since the 2025 IFATCA Annual Conference, the ATMOPSP has conducted one in-person meeting in Montréal during October 2025, and another is scheduled for the week following this IFATCA Annual Conference. Meanwhile, the working groups of the ATMOPSP have continued to correspond online to progress the development of standards, recommended practices, procedures, and guidance, while some work of the panel has progressed to State Letter.
- 1.3. The ATMOPSP is an important panel for IFATCA as many of the topics of interest to the Technical & Operational Committee, the Professional & Legal Committee, and the wider air traffic management community are discussed, reviewed, and/or developed within this panel.

2. DISCUSSION

- 2.1. It continues to be a privilege to be the member of the ATMOPSP nominated by IFATCA, having taken over the duties in 2021 from former IFATCA President and CEO, Duncan Auld. As the member of the ATMOPSP I receive invaluable support from my IFATCA advisors – Katariina Syväys and Adam Rhodes contribute to the digital aerodrome ATS work, while my new advisor Fred Cosgrove is assisting me on matters of new flight planning systems. As an advisor to the member nominated by EUROCONTROL, Duncan Auld continues to support the Federation’s interests on the panel.
- 2.2. The current ATMOPSP job cards relate to the following areas:
 - a) ATFM;
 - b) cold temperature altitude corrections;
 - c) guidance for the planning and implementation of ATS;
 - d) digital ATS; and,
 - e) provisions related to radio communication failure.
- 2.3. In addition to the working groups established by the Panel to pursue the topics listed above, the Panel also maintains an active working group concerned with radiotelephony and phraseology, as well as active joint task forces with the Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems panel (RPASP) concerned with RPAS-ATM integration, and with the Air Traffic Management Requirements and Performance Panel (ATMRPP) concerned with integrating future flight planning and ATFM. The ATMOPSP members and advisors also contribute to the work of other panels by providing feedback on proposals for amendment to standards, recommended practices, procedures, and guidance.
- 2.4. At the time of writing, preparation for the eighth meeting of the panel (ATMOPSP/8) in Montréal meeting is underway; this working paper will summarise the work of the panel up until March 2026 and discuss expected actions in April 2026. As a full panel meeting, the ATMOPSP/8 meeting in April 2026 will mark an important milestone for the progress of the panel’s work.
- 2.5. **ATFM** remains the priority topic of the ATMOPSP. The panel’s proposal for amendment (PfA) to Annex 11 — *Air Traffic Services* and the *Procedures for Air Navigation Services — Air Traffic Management* (PANS-ATM, Doc 4444) were first approved by the Panel in April 2023, and an ANC review occurred in mid-2025. State Letter 2025/85 was transmitted to States and International Organisations in September 2025 and the commenting period ended in early 2026. IFATCA submitted a response fully coordinated by our Liaison Officer.
- 2.6. As emphasised in my previous reports, the ATFM PfA proposes re-imagining the ATFM service as a mandatory service capability provided everywhere and always. To support this, a knowledge of the capacity of controlled airspace and most controlled aerodromes will be necessary, as well as some form of ATFM unit supported by the necessary flow management positions. The changes are expected to lead to a collaborative, cross-border capability to balance air traffic

demand and air traffic control capacity through capacity enhancement and ATFM measures, and it is expected that this will improve the working conditions of ATCOs by eliminating excessive traffic peaks. It has been vital to ensure that the voice of ATCOs has been present throughout the development and review of this PfA, so that the delineation between the ATFM service and the ATC service is established. Work by the PLC and TOC establishing principles for the ATFM service and its personnel has been indispensable during the drafting process, and their ongoing support for the next year is appreciated.

- 2.7. Because of the complexity of the changes regarding ATFM, an applicability date is proposed of November 2030, and an updated *Manual on Collaborative Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFM)* (Doc 9971), to which IFATCA is greatly contributing, is planned for 2028 to allow States and ATS authorities time to adjust their services and comply with the global changes.
- 1.1. **Cold temperature altitude corrections** are a longstanding topic of interest to IFATCA, and proposals for amendment to the PANS-ATM (Doc 4444) and the *Procedures for Navigation Services — Aircraft Operations* (PANS-OPS, Doc 8168), Volume III — *Aircraft Operating Procedures* were agreed in April 2023. Like ATFM, an ANC review occurred in mid-2025, which resulted in some minor changes and led to the transmission of the PfA via State Letter 2025/85 to States and International Organisations. IFATCA's reply to that State Letter was once again fully coordinated by our Liaison Officer.
- 1.2. The PfA clarifies the enduring pilot responsibility for terrain and obstacle clearance, and the controller responsibility to support the pilot by assigning levels which are equal to or higher than the minimum flight altitude. Responsibilities during vectoring and direct routing as well as correction methods are also clarified. The changes to terrain and obstacle clearance proposed in the PfA are a direct reflection of IFATCA policy on the subject.
- 2.8. The Cold Temperature Correction Working Group of the panel is led by IFATCA and is currently finalising a new manual containing guidance supporting the proposed changes to pilot and controller procedures. The new manual is planned for publication in 2027 to support the applicability of the PfA in November 2028. It is the hope of the ATMOPSP that the changes to the PANS-ATM and the PANS-OPS Volume III supported by clear guidance will finally resolve the difficulties and confusion associated with cold temperature altitude corrections, as well as terrain and obstacle clearance.
- 2.9. **Guidance for the planning and implementation of ATS** is a task which is led by IFATCA. The ATS Planning and Implementation Working Group is developing guidance for States and ATS authorities regarding the planning and implementation of ATS, replacing the *Air Traffic Services Planning Manual* (Doc 9426). This guidance is expected to aid on topics which are not otherwise well-described in existing ICAO documents, e.g., requirements for establishing and running ATC units, establishing transition levels, incident investigation, and staff management. IFATCA is well placed to ensure that this guidance material

supports States, ATS authorities and controllers. Currently, the Working Group is finalising guidance on implementing free route airspace (including cross-border arrangements) in accordance with a resolution from the recent Air Navigation Conference.

- 2.10. Work on **digital aerodrome ATS** continues by the Digital ATS Working Group, which has focussed on developing guidance material for States intending to implement digital aerodrome ATS, and the ATMOPSP is continuing to review the draft guidance on the topic. It is hoped that an online repository of guidance and information relating to digital aerodrome ATS as implemented by some States will support other States and ATS authorities to make informed decisions when making their own arrangements.
- 2.11. Changes to the global procedures for **radio communication failure** were approved by the ATMOPSP in 2023 like ATFM and cold temperature altitude corrections; however, the mid-2025 review by the ANC resulted in the PfA returning to the ATMOPSP for re-work. The IFATCA policy on radio communication failure, which was updated at the previous annual conference, is an excellent reference for the re-work in which IFATCA is playing a key role. Currently, the Radio Communication Failure Working Group is focussing on ensuring that all types of flights are captured by the revised procedures, and recent changes in Europe are being analysed to determine if they are suitable for global adoption. At all times, the issues of greatest concern are that:
- a) controllers are not placed in a position where they are responsible for maintaining separation from a contingency aircraft following an unpredictable trajectory towards an unknown destination or diversion aerodrome; and
 - b) the procedures are readily implementable by all types of flights in all airspace.
- 2.12. **Radiotelephony** is an ongoing focus of the ATMOPSP, and IFATCA actively participates in the deliberations of the Phraseology Working Group (P WG). The P WG has recently finalised updates to the content and format of the *Manual of Radiotelephony* (Doc 9432) to provide supporting guidance to existing phraseology contained in the PANS-ATM (Doc 4444), and the P WG is now revisiting the phraseology associated with SID/STAR procedures. While some very small changes to global provisions are possible, the intention is to continue to support global implementation of the existing provisions through clarified phraseology.
- 2.13. **The RPASP-ATMOPSP Joint Task Force (RA-JTF)** is jointly led by panel members nominated by IFATCA and CANSO, and for several years this group has been developing 'the ATM integration package' for RPAS. The proposals for amendment have expanded to affect Annex 2 — *Rules of the Air*, Annex 6 — *Operation of Aircraft*, Part IV — *International Operations — Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems*, Annex 10 — *Aeronautical Telecommunications*, Volume II — *Communication Procedures including those with PANS status*, Annex 12 — *Search and Rescue*, the PANS-ATM (Doc 4444), the PANS-OPS (Doc 8168)

Volumes I–III, and the *Procedures for Air Navigation Services — Aeronautical Information Management* (PANS-AIM, Doc 10066). Since the original package was returned by the ANC in 2023, the RA-JTF has revisited its work and responded to feedback from various groups including the ANC, the RPASP and the ATMOPSP. The revised lost C2 Link procedures and detect and avoid procedures, as well as other procedures intended to facilitate the integration of RPAS into ATM, will be submitted to the RPASP/24 meeting in March 2026. The intention is that these procedures will receive final RPASP agreement and proceed to the ANC to support a November 2030 applicability date.

- 2.14. **The ATMOPSP-ATMRPP Joint Task Force** is commencing work on integrating the ATFM service with FF-ICE future flight planning systems. IFATCA is represented on this working group directly and also through the work of Daniel Walker, an advisor nominated by Canada who is also active for IFATCA in the True North Advisory Group. The work is in its early stages, but the group is carefully evaluating the issue to ensure that no matter the desire for predictability with ATFM and FF-ICE, there remains the ability of ATCOs to issue the clearances and instructions they need to satisfy the objectives of the ATC service, i.e., prevent collisions between aircraft.
- 2.15. In addition to its core tasks and joint task forces, the ATMOPSP has provided feedback to other expert panels, including feedback on separation, licensing, training, instrument flight procedure design, meteorology, and advanced air mobility.
- 2.16. IFATCA maintains an excellent reputation within the ATMOPSP, and the ATMOPSP has directly benefited from the PLC's and TOC's recent work on issues like ATFM personnel training, separation between the ATFM service and the ATC service, and considerations arising from autonomous aircraft functions. The willingness of IFATCA to dedicate resources to improving global ATM and its record of following through on its promises are well-regarded.
- 2.17. As always, it is important to acknowledge the many members of the IFATCA community who continue to provide vital support to our activities on the ATMOPSP, particularly IFATCA Deputy President, M Jean-François Le Page; IFATCA Vice President Technical, Mr Benjamin van der Sanden; IFATCA Liaison Officer to the ANC, Mr David Perks; my advisors Ms Katariina Syväys, Mr Adam Rhodes and Mr Fred Cosgrove; and PLC and TOC Chairs Ms Donna Field and Ms Jaymi Steinberg. A special mention should also be made for former IFATCA President and CEO, Mr Duncan Auld, who retains a keen interest in the ATC profession and provides clear and consistent advocacy for us. Duncan's colleagues at EUROCONTROL are equally 'friends of the Federation' and we maintain a productive working relationship.
- 2.18. Finally, I would like to thank my Member Association – the Civil Air Operations Officers' Association of Australia – and all my very dear friends and colleagues from around the world for volunteering their friendship, knowledge and experience to support me and my work on the ATMOPSP.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1. IFATCA maintains its active participation on ATMOPSP via its panel member and the member's multiple expert advisors.
- 3.2. The ATMOPSP is actively pursuing its work programme. Proposals for amendment to various standards, recommended practices and procedures regarding ATFM and cold temperature correction are currently undergoing the State Letter process for applicability November 2028 and November 2030. Joint work with the RPAS Panel integrating RPAS into ATM is planned for progression to the ANC in 2026 for applicability November 2030.
- 3.3. The ATMOPSP is engaged in developing updated guidance for ATFM, as well as new guidance for cold temperature corrections, digital aerodrome ATS, and free route airspace. The panel is now re-working the proposal for amendment regarding radio communication failure and is referring to recently revised IFATCA policy on the matter.
- 3.4. IFATCA maintains an excellent reputation on the ATMOPSP through its successful contribution to the panel's work programme, which is made possible by the work of many IFATCA officers and executive board members.

4. DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1. It is recommended that this paper is accepted as information.

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