

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 the IFATCA 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 2024 IFATCA Annual Conference, the ATMOPSP has conducted two in-person meetings – one in Langen during October 2024, and one in Montréal during April 2025. Meanwhile, the working groups of the ATMOPSP have continued to correspond online to progress the development of standards, recommended practices, procedures, and guidance.
- 1.3. The ATMOPSP is an important panel for IFATCA as many of the topics of interest to the Technical & Operational Committee and the Professional & Legal Committee – as well as the wider air traffic management community – are discussed, reviewed, and/or developed within this panel.

2. DISCUSSION

- 2.1. It continues to be me pleasure to be the member of the ATMOPSP nominated by IFATCA, having taken over the duties in 2021 from former IFATCA President and CEO, Mr 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 Adam Exley reviews inter-panel coordination and assists in the various day-to-day tasks of the Panel. 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 provision of the aerodrome flight information service (AFIS); d) guidance for the planning and

implementation of ATS; e) provisions related to radio communication failure; and, f) digital ATS.

- 2.3. In addition to the working groups established by the Panel to pursue these topics, the Panel also maintains an active working group concerned with radiotelephony and phraseology, as well as an active joint task force with the Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems panel (RPASP) concerned with RPAS-ATM integration. 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 April 2025 Montréal meeting continues; this working paper will summarise the work of the panel up until March 2025 and discuss expected actions in April 2025.
- 2.5. **ATFM** remains the priority topic for the ATMOPSP, and IFATCA actively participates in the work of the ATFM Working Group (ATFM WG). The ATFM-related proposals for amendment to Annex 11 — *Air Traffic Services* and the *Procedures for Navigation Services — Air Traffic Management* (PANS-ATM, Doc 4444) were first approved by the Panel in April 2023, and an ICAO Secretariat review process was then instituted. Changes arising from that review were approved by the ATMOPSP members in February 2025, and the package is now planned to progress to the ANC during mid-2025.
- 2.6. If adopted, the package will see the ATFM service as a mandatory service to be provided everywhere and all the time. 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 flow management positions. The package is 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.
- 2.7. While the proposals for amendment were under review, the ATFM WG has continued to update the guidance contained in the *Manual on Collaborative Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFM)* (Doc 9971). With a proposed applicability date for the changes of November 2028, it is planned to publish the guidance in late 2026. The guidance sets out the rationale for ATFM and provides support for States needing to establish an effective and conforming ATFM service.
- 2.8. **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. Similar to ATFM, an ICAO Secretariat review was instituted which resulted in some minor changes, and the ATMOPSP members approved those changes in February 2025. The package is planned to progress to the ANC mid-2025 to support a November 2028 applicability date.

- 2.9. The revised package retains the intent of clarifying 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.
- 2.10. The Cold Temperature Correction Working Group, led by IFATCA, is finalising a new ICAO manual containing guidance which supports the proposed changes to pilot and controller procedures. 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.
- 2.11. **Guidance for the provision of AFIS** is a Panel task which continues beyond its expected duration due to: a) difficulties associated with the relationship between the guidance and existing SARPs in Annex 11; and b) the desire of some States to retain guidance which is possibly conflicting with the SARPs. Specifically, the issue of control of vehicles and pedestrians continues to cause concern in the drafting process.
- 2.12. IFATCA is participating in what is hopefully the final round of document review, which is addressing outstanding concerns raised by the ICAO Secretariat and other ATMOPSP members. Once finalised, there is no doubt that the guidance will be a valuable resource for ATS authorities seeking to implement AFIS, including those intending to implement AFIS in combination with digital aerodrome ATS systems.
- 2.13. **Guidance for the planning and implementation of ATS** is a task which is led by IFATCA. In late 2024 the members of the ATS Planning & Implementation Working Group (ATSPI WG) delivered the final draft guidance for ATS personnel handling aircraft in a state of emergency. This guidance is intended to be published as a manual or online to facilitate the effective implementation of existing SARPs and PANS in case of aircraft emergencies. The guidance recommends to ATS authorities a structured 'ATS emergency response process' which is supported by checklists and decision-making models.
- 2.14. The ATSPI WG is now 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 provide assistance 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.
- 2.15. **Digital aerodrome ATS** is a topic which has been under the intense scrutiny of IFATCA for a number of years, and IFATCA actively participates in the DATS Working Group (DATS WG). Early work of the DATS WG sought to rectify issues which were foreseen to cause difficulties. Recent work by the DATS WG has focussed on developing guidance material for States intending to

implement digital aerodrome ATS, and the ATMOPSP is continuing to review human factors-focussed guidance on the topic. The DATS WG is also developing an online repository of guidance and information relating to digital aerodrome ATS, which is expected to support States and ATS authorities to make informed decisions when commissioning such systems.

- 2.16. **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 focussed on finalising 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).
- 2.17. Changes to the global procedure for **radio communication failure** were approved by the ATMOPSP at its seventh meeting, and similar to the proposals for amendment relating to ATFM and cold temperature altitude corrections, a review by the ICAO Secretariat resulted in an amended package which was approved by ATMOPSP members in February 2025. The proposal for amendment to Annex 2 — *Rules of the Air* and the PANS-ATM (Doc 4444), will be progressed to the ANC alongside the other proposals discussed above in mid-2025, for applicability November 2028.
- 2.18. The proposed changes to the radio communication failure procedure were developed in response to numerous factors – increasing long haul flying, improved alternative communications means, dangers to civil aircraft from conflict zones, and a slow proliferation of local variations to the global procedure. The proposed changes seek to provide pilots with increased flexibility to alter their trajectory away from the flight plan route, such as returning to the departure aerodrome or diverting to an alternate aerodrome, while maintaining some predictability for controllers to allow for maintaining separation minima.
- 2.19. The changes to radio communication failure procedures were related to the development of lost C2 Link procedures for RPAS, and IFATCA has played a leading role in the development of both. This was considered vital to ensure that controllers were not placed in a position where they were responsible for maintaining separation from a contingency aircraft following an unpredictable trajectory towards an unknown location.
- 2.20. **The RPASP-ATMOPSP Joint Task Force (RA-JTF)** is jointly led by panel members nominated by IFATCA and CANSO, and for a number of years this group has been developing ‘the ATM integration package’ for RPAS. The proposals for amendment have expanded to affect Annex 2, 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. The revised lost C2 Link procedures are simpler and more closely aligned with the radio communication failure

procedures. The revised detect and avoid procedures are defined separately from the existing airborne collision avoidance system procedures, but the language and procedures are closely aligned. The RA-JTF has also developed guidance material relating to the lost C2 Link for inclusion in the next edition of the *Manual on Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS)* (Doc 10019).

- 2.21. At the same time as the RA-JTF was revisiting its own work, some 'wrinkles' were identified within the overall RPAS package of changes. The ATM integration package's revised applicability date of November 2028 will align with other RPAS-related changes to SARPs, PANS and guidance.
- 2.22. In addition to its core tasks, the ATMOPSP has provided feedback to other expert panels, including feedback on separation, licensing, training, and instrument flight procedure design. In addition to his responsibilities for the PLC, Adam Exley has also participated in workshops regarding emergency autoland technology.
- 2.23. In closing, 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 PLC Chair, Mr Adam Exley; and also my former advisor, M Bertrand Foucher. A special mention must 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 controllers during the Panel's deliberations.

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 pursuing its work programme, and proposals for amendment to various standards, recommended practices and procedures will be presented to the ANC in mid-2025. These proposals relate to ATFM, cold temperature altitude corrections and radio communication failure, and are expected to be applicable in November 2028. ATM-related RPAS provisions are expected to be applicable on the same date.
- 3.3. The ATMOPSP has delivered guidance on the ATS response to aircraft in a state of emergency. It is currently developing guidance material related to ATFM, cold temperature altitude corrections, AFIS, digital aerodrome ATS, radiotelephony, and RPAS-ATM integration.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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