

Report of the IFALPA Air Traffic Services (ATS) Committee

Presented by Kimmo Koivula

SUMMARY

The report covers the activities of the IFALPA ATS Committee over the past year. The ATS Committee handles wide variety of global, regional and local topics. This report focuses on matters most relevant to Air Traffic Controllers and on co-operation between the Committee and IFATCA.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) represents over 100000 pilots in nearly 100 countries. It has 11 standing committees specializing in different fields of aviation.
- 1.2. The Air Traffic Services (ATS) Committee works with topics related to Air Traffic Management, Communications, Navigation, Surveillance, Meteorology and Search and Rescue.
- 1.3. Experts of the Committee participate in various local, regional and international forums. Main focus is on the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).
- 1.4. The Committee is chaired by Paul Vissers (Easyjet A320 Captain). He has kept close ties with IFATCA and continuously welcome contribution from the Controllers perspective in the Committee work.
- 1.5. The Technical Officer, who is organizing all the Committee logistics has changed quite a few times since Carole Couchman retired. IFALPA is currently hiring a new person for the position.
- 1.6. Around 25 Airline Pilots actively participates in the meetings and committee work. They represent their IFALPA member associations across the World.
- 1.7. Two meetings were organized during the past year.
 - 13th – 15th November 2023 in Washington DC, hosted by US ALPA
 - 27th – 29th March 2024 in Luxembourg, hosted by LAPL.
- 1.8. IFALPA is having their Annual Conference in 9th -12th May 2024 in Mexico City.
- 1.9. The next meeting of the ATS Committee is going to be the 4th combined meeting with the IFATCA Technical and Operations Committee (TOC). After years of planning, this will take place in September 2024 in Madrid, kindly facilitated by USCA, SEPLA and INDRA.

2. DISCUSSION**2.1. Commercial Space**

An increasing number of space launches, re-entries and high-altitude operations has been noted by the Committee, since they could cause significant impact to regular civil aviation operations. Besides states doing space operations, number of private operators have emerged with a need to transit through airspace used by regular aviation. Some of the new space ports are even located in the close vicinity of a major airport. The Committee has voiced concern about the distribution and correctness of the information about exact times and areas (ie. over

high seas) where launches and re-entries are taking place. Also, these operations could block excessive amounts of airspace – as an example of a restricted area size of 5 NM x 100 NM SFC-UNL. In Europe SESAR continues its research for Space and High Airspace Operations under ECHO 2 project, which was presented in the last meeting by Mr. Duncan Auld.

2.2. Environmental issues

IFALPA has a dedicated Climate Working Group. It regularly coordinates activities and works with the ATS Committee, since ATM improvements are widely considered as one of the main pillars to reduce climate impact of aviation.

During the past year ICAO manual on Continuous Descent Operations (Doc 9931) has been under a review.

Non-CO² related environmental issues has been discussed. Namely the ongoing studies on the impact of contrails (day/night), and how to forecast and plan to avoid areas/altitudes of contrail formation. ICAO has a Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP) with task forces to study specific environmental issues. In September 2023 IFALPA organized a climate workshop for various stakeholders like CANSO and EASA.

2.3. Remote Towers

The Committee has worked to update IFALPA's policy on Remote Towers. The previous policy defined many detailed technical and regulatory requirements. This policy was replaced by more general policy requiring appropriate safety assessments, cyber security to be addressed, compliance to ICAO SARPS and appropriate contingency procedures if aerodromes controlled by the same DATS facility are used as an alternative diversion airport. Furthermore, the new policy states concern about ATCO controlling more than one aerodrome simultaneously due to new challenges to pilots and ATCO's which have not yet been addressed. IFALPA does not support the implementation of the multiple mode of operation.

The policy continues that one ATCO may provide services to more than one aerodrome on a sequential basis as long as it is done one aerodrome at a time. The Committee is aware of IFATCA's policies and latest studies on the subject and IFALPA's main expert, Tomas Gustafsson is regularly coordinating with IFATCA's Remote Tower Task Force.

2.4. CDTI assisted spacing and separation

ADS-B In Retrofit Spacing Evaluation Project in the USA has continued trials of CAVS, CAS-A, I-IM applications in real life operations. The Committee has emphasized that they do not support any change of responsibility of separation from the ATC to pilots, as implied in CAS applications.

2.5. TCAS TA only

US ALPA has been concerned for the safety of switching TCAS to TA only mode during closely spaced parallel approaches at certain locations. The FAA's Flight Procedure Standards Branch has been tasked to collect data and analyze risks of using RA mode with such approaches. It was noted in the Committee that some airports with parallel approaches and high elevation are getting more nuisance RA's, due to TCAS's larger alert parameters at higher levels.

2.6. Transfer of Communications

Eurocontrol Maastricht UAC is controlling upper airspace in part of Europe which is extremely busy and the frequency congestion has become a capacity limiting issue. With small size of sectors, portion of transfers of communication is significant. Thus, Maastricht UAC has been developing means to transfer communications by CPDLC completely silently. There pilots would not make the required initial call by voice to the next sector but be called by ATCO when there is sufficient silence on frequency.

The Committee has been concerned about potential incorrect dial of the voice frequency and the consequences it could cause in busy environment. Downlinking the dialled frequency would mitigate the issue, but it is not technically possible currently or even foreseen in future.

The Committee discussed extensively about the "MONITOR" and "STAND-BY FOR" instructions as they identified similar concerns how these are used by voice currently at certain locations.

IFATCA's study on "Reducing Initial Call frequency congestion" (Las Vegas, 2016) was provided to the Committee and its recommendation for global "Callsign only" procedure got acceptance from the members.

Eventually the Committee drafted a policy where they consider that only instruction “CONTACT” can be used to transfer and establish two-way communication.

2.7. Cleared to VIA

CPDLC message UM79 “CLEARED TO (position) VIA (route clearance)” has caused confusion with “PROCEED DIRECT TO”. Some cockpit displays might even “hide” the route part to other page, creating potential for pilots to fly direct to final waypoint of the route. IFALPA and IATA have reviewed the issue and discussed some possible mitigations.

2.8. Misuse of 121.5

The Committee updated the IFALPA Safety Bulletin on the misuse of aeronautical emergency frequency 121.5 and loss of communications. The new version includes understandable and practical scenarios, good practices and mitigations for pilot audiences. IFATCA strongly supported the efforts by the Committee to keep 121.5 available for real emergencies. Some good practices for ATC were identified as well.

2.9. GNSS issues

Already for number of years the Committee has voiced concern about the vulnerability and over reliance on GNSS. Recent events of “spoofing”, which could cause more serious consequences than “jamming”, has woken the industry to the problem. The issue was also handled by IFALPA’s Aircraft Design and Operation Committee (ADO) and the Security Committee (SEC), where IFATCA was represented by Philippe Domogala. This co-operation resulted in joint Position Paper by IFALPA and IFATCA on “Disruption of Satellite Based Signals”, which was published in December 2023. Both Federations are urging industry and states to recognize the concerns and urgently to ensure resiliency of GNSS based operations. The Position Paper suggests many detailed actions to achieve this. It can be accessed in the public web pages of both Federations.

Additionally, IFALPA published a Briefing Leaflet “Manipulated GNSS Signals” for pilots to be aware of possible scenarios, risks and possible mitigations.

By invitation, Philippe Domogala gave an excellent, well received presentation on GNSS vulnerabilities to the Committee in the last meeting.

Also, IFALPA suggested to write a joint working paper with IFATCA to upcoming ICAO Air Navigation Conference (Aug-Sep 2024) on these issues.

GNSS issues remain in the agenda of the Committee as jamming has become unfortunate new normal especially near conflict zones, but also by the potential of disruptions caused by space weather events.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1. Topics in the agenda of the ATS Committee parallels closely with the work IFATCA is doing especially by members of TOC and representatives in ICAO. The continuous and close co-operation of experts and representatives benefits both Federations. IFALPA representative to TOC, Kolja Bollhorst (Captain, Lufthansa A320) has contributed greatly to the working papers of IFATCA. Also, many local and regional matters warrant contacts to IFATCA member associations and regional representatives.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1. This working paper is accepted as an information paper.