INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION

THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE AFI TACTICAL ACTION GROUP
(TAG/13)
(VIRTUALLY, 26 OCTOBER 2021)

Agenda Item 7:   **Review of TAG and Terms of Reference**

REVIEW OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR), WORK PROGRAMME AND STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES OF THE TACTICAL ACTION GROUP

(Presented by Secretariat)

SUMMARY
This WP paper provides a review of the activities and Terms of Reference, Work Programme and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) of Tactical Action Group, and invites proposals to make the activities of the TAG more effective in meeting its objectives.
Action by the meeting is at paragraph 3.
REFERENCES Report of Special AFI RAN Meeting Revised TAG Terms of Reference (2019)
This Working Paper is related to Strategic Objective: **A - Safety**

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   The TAG was established based upon Recommendation 6/6 of the Special AFI Regional Air Navigation Meeting AFI RAN.

1.2   The key functions of the Group include performance of Safety Assessments and reduced vertical separation minimum (RVSM) and scrutinize incidents and ATM occurrences that has the potential to reduce the Target Level of Safety necessary for continued RVSM operations across the region.

2.   DISCUSSION

2.1   When examining the safety implications of RVSM and the requirements to ensure that safety levels were maintained, the Special AFI RAN recalled that subsequent to the implementation of RVSM in other regions, yearly follow-up safety assessments showed that the overall collision risk was exceeding the target level of safety (TLS) of 5x10-9 fatal accidents per aircraft flight hour.

2.2   In light of this, it was agreed that except for technical altimetry performance, a different, more robust and realistic approach should be followed by the AFI Region for the monitoring of RVSM operations, which should utilize best practices of other regions as well as safety management principles.

2.3   In this respect, the meeting noted that in the AFI Region, RVSM implementation planning had been conducted under the framework of a comprehensive plan known as the RVSM pre-implementation safety case (PISC) with the active participation of the AFI Regional Monitoring Agency (ARMA), supported by Air Traffic Navigation Services (ATNS) of South Africa, which managed the PISC and maintains the RVSM database as well as carry out other monitoring activities.

2.4   The meeting was informed that the PMT had also been working on these matters through weekly teleconferences organized by the ATM Section at ICAO Headquarters in Montreal. This weekly focus on deficiencies, errors and deviations had resulted in a decline in reported incidents and communications deficiencies. The meeting agreed that the PMT should be renamed as the Tactical Action Group (TAG), with terms of reference and a work programme. It was agreed that the group, through its by-weekly teleconferences, **should tactically address any deficiencies or operational errors identified**. The meeting therefore agreed to the following recommendation:

Recommendation 6/7 — Establishment of a Tactical Action Group (TAG)

That:
   a) ***a Tactical Action Group (TAG) be created in the AFI Region with the Terms of Reference and Work Programme outlined in Appendix C to the Report on Agenda Item 6; and***

   b) ***States as a matter of priority make all efforts to assist and comply with requests from the TAG group.***

2.5   In the post-RVSM implementation period, it was noted that data would continue to be collected and analyzed in order to maintain the highest safety levels. This data would be provided to ARMA by operators, States, other regional monitoring agencies and stakeholders. ARMA, on a yearly basis would report on the safety level of RVSM operations. In this context, the meeting recalled the importance of providing data to the ARMA for analyses and reporting and stressed the need for all States to meet their obligations in this respect.

2.6   The meeting was advised that operational errors leading to large height deviations were critical contributors to the erosion of safety levels. For this reason, the meeting agreed with a proposal by ARMA to establish an RVSM scrutiny group early in 2009 to assist with the management of operational errors.

2.7   The meeting was informed of the scope of activities carried out by ARMA in support of RVSM implementation and proposed follow-up activities as follows:

   a) maintain a database of State RVSM operational approvals (operators/aircraft);

   b) monitor aircraft height-keeping performance and the occurrence of large height deviations reporting results appropriately;

   c) conduct safety assessments and report results appropriately;

   d) monitor operator compliance with State approval requirements; and

   e) initiate necessary remedial actions if RVSM requirements are not met.

2.8   On the basis of the above, the meeting agreed that in order for the AFI Region to meet its obligations toward continuous monitoring and regular assessment of the safety level in RVSM airspace, a structured approach should be implemented and agreed to the following recommendation:

Recommendation 6/8 — Reduced vertical separation minimum (RVSM) monitoring and follow-up activities:

That AFI States support:

    a)   *the long-term submission of State RVSM operationally approved aircraft to the AFI Regional Monitoring Agency (ARMA);*

    b)   *provision of long-term support to the AFI height monitoring programme;*

    c)   *long-term collection of safety assessment data;*

    d)   *the availability of personnel to fulfil the role of RVSM National Programme Managers;*

    e)   *the establishment of the ARMA scrutiny group in 2009; and*

    f)   *measures to reduce the large number of horizontal incidents in the AFI Region.*

2.9   The meeting noted that as required by the AFI RVSM safety policy, a Post Operational Safety Case (POSC) would be completed to ensure that all the PISC aspects had been met and that RVSM was meeting safety expectations.

2.10   The TAG reviewed and adopted new Terms of Reference, Work Programme and Standard Operating Procedures during its eight meeting in 2015 as attached in **Appendix A** to this working paper.

2.11   The implementation of all the proposals that were envisioned in the new TOR, work programme and SOP has not been fully realized. It would therefore be prudent for the Group to review the status of implementation, update and/or align them to effectively address current and emerging challenges, and take appropriate measure to ensure that is objectives are fully achieved.

3.   **Action proposed**

3.1   The meeting is invited to:

    a)   review the Terms of Reference, Work Programme and Standard Operating Procedures attached in **Appendix A** to this working paper; and

    b)   propose specific actions to make TAG effective in meeting its objectives.

APPENDIX

**REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND WORK PROGRAMME OF THE
TACTICAL ACTION GROUP (TAG)**
(Last reviewed by TAG/11 in 2019)

1.   Terms of reference

a)   To carry out an ongoing safety assessment of operations in the AFI Region on a bi-weekly basis. The assessment will include all aspects related to the operational environment in the AFI airspace above FL290 including but not limited to ATC loop errors, communications problems, navigation and surveillance issues and any other items affecting the safety of operations.

b)   Take due consideration of ATS related incidents below 290

c)   Meet at least once a year to coordinate activities and plan future goals.

2.   Work Programme

Operational level of safety:

a)   review, on a monthly basis, all error and deviation reports received from the AFI Region;

b)   investigate and, if necessary, propose corrective action to identified deficiencies;

c)   coordinate activities with and maintain a two-way communication bridge with the ARMA; and

d)   provide yearly feedback to APIRG about TAG activities.

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3. DESCRIPTION OF THE TACTICAL ACTION GROUP AND STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES OF THE GROUP

3.1   The TAG is a multidisciplinary group made up of aviation technical experts from various aviation operational, technical, statistical and other fields as needed. The purpose of the TAG is to improve operational safety in African skies by addressing identified problems in the air navigation system on a tactical, short term basis (immediacy). TAG work will concentrate on the airspace block FL 290 to FL 410 while considering any other trends identified through the AIAG and other processes. TAG responsible team members in each AFI State will ensure that TAG queries and requests are fulfilled in the short term.

3.2   The work of the TAG is divided into two distinct parts that are designed to run concurrently. One part consists of the collection, compilation, discussion, classification, and directed action in relation to identified Unsatisfactory Condition Reports (UCR) that are received. The principal means of carrying out this phase is through the monthly telcons that members of the TAG hold to consider the specific occurrences and trends identified through analysis of the UCRs.

3.3   The parallel phase of activity will take place between the TAG technical officer (coordinator) and the TAG representative (POC/NPM) of the State concerned.

3.4   The second phase of the TAG is the interaction between the TAG coordinator and States or Service Provider addressing action plan for correction of identified deficiencies within specific time frame.

3.5   ICAO will communicate with the relevant State to advice of the pending TAG intervention in that State concerning airspace safety matters.

3.6   A conceptual working flow diagram of the TAG is shown below:
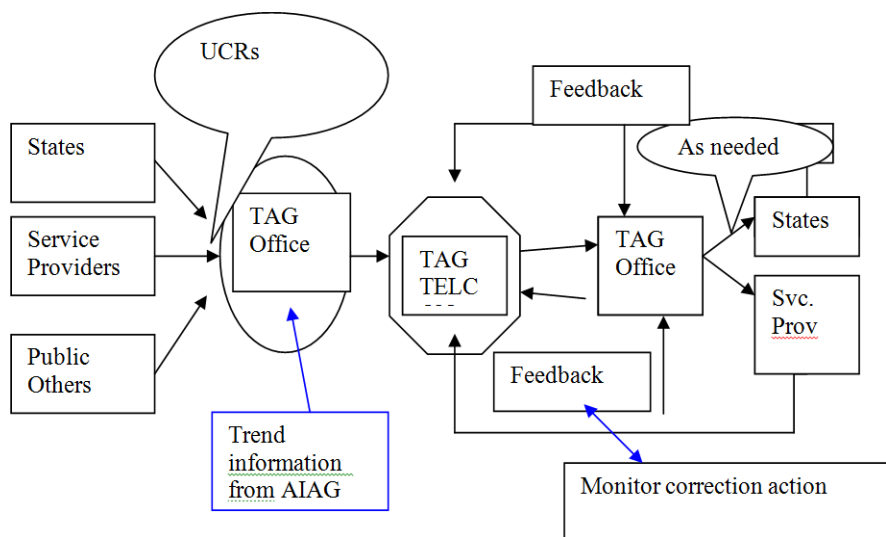
3.7   Under this concept, any UCR that is originated in AFI Region airspace gets reported to the TAG office or secretary. These UCRs may originate from system users, air navigation system service providers, pilots, air traffic controllers and/or the aviation stakeholders. UCRs may be related to unsatisfactory conditions in the areas of communication, navigation and surveillance as well as in the provision of air traffic control services.

3.8   The information contained in the UCRs are entered into a database system. The trends indicated by this information is presented at the TAG telcons every month.

3.9   The data presented to the TAG telcons will be as follows.

1. New UCRs received over the intervening month since the last telcon, and
2. Follow-up data received as feedback from States and/or service providers about previous UCRs
3. Updated trends information per FIR since inception of TAG
4. Follow up on actions or action plans implemented by States

4. THE TAG WILL CARRY OUT ITS FUNCTION UNDER THE FOLLOWING STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP).

TAG SOP

4.1 PURPOSE: These procedures set forth the operating conditions under which the Tactical Action Group (TAG) will conduct its operations. The purpose of the TAG is to achieve a continuous improvement of operational safety in AFI Region airspace block FL290 to FL410 while considering any other trends identified through the AIAG and other processes.

4.2 AUTHORITY: The TAG is established under the authority of the Special AFI RAN of 2008. The TAG operates under the reporting authority of APIRG.

4.3 MEMBERSHIP: The TAG Core Group will be made up of representatives from ATNS, ARMA, Kenya, ASECNA, IATA, IFALPA, IFATCA, representatives from the ICAO Regional and Headquarters offices, and can be extended by invitation. The TAG team membership will include, in addition to the core members, the TAG points of contact in each AFI State

4.4 RESPONSIBILITY: The TAG Core Members are responsible for all the activities related to the identification, discussion, investigation, follow-up and conclusion of all issues identified to the group. The TAG shall:

a)   Develop, maintain and support a group of TAG contacts, with a minimum of one per each AFI State, familiarizing them with the policies and practice of the TAG activities;

b)   Function as the focal point of contact for TAG members in each State;

c)   Maintain a tracking system data base of all operational errors, violations, deviations and any other identified operational deficiency or shortcoming brought to its attention. For the purpose of the TAG, these reports will be generically known as Unsatisfactory Condition Report (UCR);

d)   Identify trends and determine actions taken by TAG (monthly);

e)   Engage with States to develop action plan;

f)   Monitor the trends and implementation of action plan (monthly);

g)   Acknowledge and monitor the problem trends until corrective action has been effected;

e)   When necessary, arrange for special support missions to States that are deemed by TAG of needing special emphasis and/or support;

f)   Report on the status of all its activities on a regular basis to each APIRG meeting;

h) Unusual or emergency UCRs may require a telcon under short notice. Those events will be scheduled by the administrative assistant/technical officer in coordination with the TAG team membership; and

i) Schedule and hold a yearly meeting to review the status of all open and closed issues from the past year.

4.5 TAG points of contact in each State shall:

a) Respond within 24 hours' calls made by TAG technical officer or designated contact person;

b) Provide update every two weeks until UCR is closed; and

c) Participate in TAG telcons when required

4.6 ADMINISTRATIVE:

ICAO is responsible for managing the TAG monthly conference.

The TAG technical officer or designated member will be responsible for all administrative support related to TAG activities. The TAG technical officer or designated member will be responsible for receiving, and posting to the tracking program all the UCRs received.

The trends and status of UCRs will be compiled on a monthly basis for presentation to the to the TAG telcon.

The administrator or designated member will take all follow-up actions required by the TAG with States representatives, users, or service providers as needed.

The administrator or designated member will keep the TAG member list as well as the TAG contact list in each State up to date and available to the TAG core members

END