



International Civil Aviation Organization

MIDANPIRG STEERING GROUP

Fourth Meeting (MSG/4)
(Cairo, Egypt, 24 – 26 November 2014)

Agenda Item 5: Air Navigation Safety matters and Coordination with RASG-MID

CALL SIGN CONFUSION

(Presented by the Secretariat)

<p style="text-align: center;">SUMMARY</p> <p>This paper addresses the call sign confusion issue in the MID Region taking into consideration the outcome of RASG-MID and the MIDANPIRG ATM and CNS SG meetings.</p> <p>Action by the meeting is at paragraph 3.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">REFERENCES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- ATM SG/1 Report- CNS SG/6 Report- RASG-MID/3 Report

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The use of similar call signs by aircraft is referred to as “call sign similarity”. The danger of an aircraft taking and acting on a clearance intended for another due to call sign confusion is a common occurrence. This was identified as safety issue in the MID Region through studies provided by users.

1.2 The Third Meeting of the Regional Aviation Safety Group – Middle East (RASG-MID/3) was successfully held in Kuwait, from 27 to 29 January 2014

1.3 The First Meeting of the MIDANPIRG Air Traffic Management Sub-Group (ATM SG/1) was successfully held at the ICAO Middle East Regional Office in Cairo, Egypt, from 9 to 12 June 2014.

1.4 The Sixth Meeting of the MIDANPIRG communication Navigation and Surveillance Sub Group (CNS SG/6) was successfully held in Tehran, Iran 9-11 September 2014.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The RASG-MID/2 meeting noted that the use of similar call signs by aircraft operating in the same area often gives rise to potential and actual flight safety incidents. It was highlighted that reports have been raised by airline operators and Air Navigation Service Providers of common incidents related to call-sign conflict in the Middle East.

2.2 The meeting tasked the MID-ASRT to conduct a study of call sign confusion to improve safety levels as part of the safety support activities. The objectives are to collect reliable data over a specified period of time, to ascertain the magnitude of the problem, and confirm the categories of contributing factors causing call sign confusion.

2.3 The analysis and results of the study on call sign Confusion are included in the second edition of the Middle East Annual Safety Report (MID ASR), which was endorsed by the RASG-MID/3 meeting.

2.4 The meeting may wish to recall that the ICAO PANS-ATM Doc 4444 stipulates that aircraft identification in Item 7 of the FPL should not exceed 7 alphanumeric characters, without hyphens or symbols. Furthermore, Annex 10 Vol II para 5.2.1.7 allows the use of alphanumeric (call sign ending with LETTERS).

2.5 In connection with the above, the meeting may wish to note that the ATM SG/1 meeting highlighted that the AFTN Systems (INFPL) limited the call sign to seven (7) alpha-numeric characters only, which does not support the use of extended call sign.

2.6 It was highlighted during the CNS SG/6 meeting that, in order to reduce the level of operational call sign confusion events, and therefore improve levels of safety, several Airline operators have changed their philosophy of only using a numeric (commercial) call sign (e.g. UAE503) to that of applying an 'alpha-numeric' call sign (e.g. UAE59CG). This is now common practice in the European Region.

2.7 The meeting noted that UAE has worked on various activities to address the call sign confusion issue, in particular the implementation of software designed to automatically assign alternative call sign to track label in case of identification of call sign similarity. The CNS SG/6 meeting appreciated UAE offer to share the experience on their solution with other States.

2.8 The meeting recognized that many mitigation measures could be investigated to eliminate the risks associated with the call sign confusions and accordingly agreed to the following Draft Conclusion:

Why	Need to agree on the preferred option for the mitigation of the risks associated with the call sign confusion
What	Survey and State Letter
Who	ICAO/States
When	31 January 2015

DRAFT CONCLUSION 6/5: CALL SIGN CONFUSION

That,

- a) a survey related to the acceptance/processing of the alphanumeric call signs (as filed in the flight plans) be conducted;*
- b) States that have not yet done so be invited to take necessary measures to comply with ICAO Annex 10 and Doc 4444 provisions related to the acceptance of the alphanumeric call signs (as filed in the flight plans); and*
- c) States be invited to inform the ICAO MID Regional Office of the preferred option for the mitigation of the risks associated with the call sign confusion before 31 January 2015.*

2.9 Based on the above, the Secretariat in coordination with IATA developed the survey as at **Appendix A**.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) review, and update, as deemed necessary, the questionnaire at **Appendix A**; and
- b) endorse the Draft Conclusion at para. 2.8.

APPENDIX A

Survey on Call Signs Confusion

State:

Contact Name:

Contact email:

- 1) In accordance with ICAO provisions, does your State Regulations allow the use of alphanumeric call sign ending with a LETTER for civil aircraft e.g. ABC123A, ETD012B, UAE231C?
- 2) Does your ATM system accept the following call sign format in the FPL:
 - alphanumeric: e.g. ETD020
 - alphanumeric ending with a LETTER: e.g. ETD020A
- 3) Is the use of alphanumeric call sign ending with a LETTER already implemented?
- 4) Do you have any restriction (technical, regulatory, procedure, etc.) on the use of alpha numeric call sign ending with a LETTER?
 - a- Yes
 - b- NO

Please provide more details and reference to related documents

- 5) Please advise what are your plans and/or implemented measures to mitigate the risk associated with call sign confusion
- 6) Is your ATM system capable to manage the call sign similarity ?
- 7) Additional comments, if any

Please return the completed survey to icaomid@icao.int before 31 January 2015

- END -