



# ICAO

International Civil Aviation Organization  
North American, Central American and Caribbean Office  
WORKING PAPER

NACC/WG/RAP/03 — WP/15  
04/03/25

**Third Meeting of Rapporteurs of the North American, Central American and  
Caribbean Working Group (NACC/WG/RAP/03)**  
(ICAO NACC Regional Office, from 24 to 27 March 2025)

**Agenda Item 3: Update NAM/CAR regional needs and NACC/WG objectives, its structure and  
the review and reporting mechanisms (Dashboard)**

**Priorities for the Provision of Search and Rescue Services in the NAM/CAR Regions**

(Presented by SAR Task Force Rapporteur)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
This Working Paper summarizes the main priorities for the provision of search and rescue services in the NAM/CAR Regions and requests support for common initiatives.	
<b>Action:</b>	Suggested actions are included in Section 6
<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safety</li><li>• Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency</li></ul>
<i>References:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Final Report of the Fifth North American, Central American and Caribbean Working Group (NACC/WG) Search and Rescue (SAR) Implementation Task Force Meeting (NACC/WG/SAR/TF/5) Mexico City, Mexico, 25 to 27 September 2024</li></ul>

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Civil aviation is the safest mode of transportation in the world, thanks to the integration of multiple controls and systems that ensure that each flight complies with the most rigorous safety standards. However, there is still a small possibility of undesirable situations that may affect the safety of operations and the lives of passengers.

1.2 The Convention on International Civil Aviation establishes that each Contracting State undertakes to provide such means of assistance as it considers feasible to aircraft in distress in its territory and to permit, subject to the control of its own authorities, the owners of the aircraft or the authorities of the State in which they are registered to provide such means of assistance as the circumstances may require. Each Contracting State, when undertaking the search for missing aircraft, shall collaborate in such coordinated measures as may be recommended from time to time in application of this Convention.

## **2. Priorities for the provision of search and rescue services in the NAM/CAR Regions**

2.1 The most objective mechanism available to identify the priorities that must be addressed regarding the provision of SAR services in the NAM/CAR Regions are the results of the safety oversight audits carried out by the ICAO USOAP programme.

2.2 The USOAP programme has 16 protocol questions (PQs) that evaluate both the provision and oversight of SAR services, within the area of air navigation services. This result shows the main regional deficiencies of the SAR system, which is why the main areas where support is required are derived from this.

### *2.3 Difficulties in establishing SAR services*

2.3.1 10 States have not made arrangements for the establishment of SAR services, in accordance with the requirements of Annex 12, in the area in which they have accepted responsibility for the provision of these services.

2.3.2 9 States have not established rescue coordination centres (RCCs) or rescue coordination sub-centres (RSCs), as appropriate, for each Search and Rescue Region (SRR). Among these, 3 have responsibilities for establishing RCCs. The lack of establishment of RCCs affects the lack of adequate organization of SAR services throughout the SRR on which one or more States depend.

2.3.3 12 States do not ensure that their RCC/RSC has prepared detailed operational plans for the conduct of their SAR operations.

### *2.4 Lack of SAR Coordination Agreements*

2.4.1 14 States in the NAM/CAR Regions do not ensure that their SAR organization coordinates its operations with the SAR organizations of neighbouring States. This coordination is purely operational and critical to the proper conduct of search and rescue activities.

2.4.2 12 States in the NAM/CAR Regions have not established agreements to allow, in accordance with the conditions prescribed by their own authorities, the entry into their territory of SAR units from other States to search for crashed aircraft and/or possible survivors.

2.4.3 8 States have not established mechanisms to ensure that their RCCs provide assistance to other RCCs.

### *2.5 Limitations on sufficient and trained personnel for SAR operations*

2.5.1 10 States do not ensure that each RCC and/or RSC employs sufficient qualified personnel to carry out the SAR coordination and operational functions.

2.5.2 12 States do not ensure that their SAR personnel are regularly trained and that SAR exercises are organized.

2.5.3 The CAR Region has limitations in providing specialized training for SAR coordination, particularly in the English language.

### 3. Evaluation of the Basic Building Blocks (BBBs)

3.1 Under the mandate of the NACC/WG, the SAR Task Force (SAR/TF) considered the task of assessing the status of BBBs in the CAR Region.

3.2 The SAR/TF decided that further support was needed from the Secretariat to gather information on possible mechanisms that could be used to accomplish this task. Likewise, the SAR/TF Rapporteur informed the NACC/WG meeting of the challenges identified in fulfilling this assignment and suggested the development of a regional project to conduct this evidence-based assessment, including on-site visits to States' SAR facilities.

### 4. Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System (GADSS)

4.1 GADSS was established to mitigate the challenges of the global air navigation system with respect to the timely identification and location of aircraft in distress. GADSS provides an effective and globally consistent approach to improving alerting procedures for search and rescue services by addressing a number of key areas for improvement.

4.2 GADSS has three main functions:

1. Aircraft Tracking - Aircraft operator requirement since 2018.
2. Autonomous Distress Tracking (ADT) - Equipped on new aircraft.
3. Post-Flight Location (ADT equipment is not required to operate following an accident and potential location issue with 121.5 Mhz)

4.2 The SAR/TF approved guidance material to support search and rescue services on the implementation of ADT for aircraft in flight. Training of air traffic control personnel on these new procedures should be a regional priority.

### 5. Conclusions

5.1 Our region continues to prioritize the establishment of SAR services, in accordance with the standards and recommended practices of Annex 12 and the guidelines of the IAMSAR Manual. The NACC/WG must continue to focus on supporting the implementation of SAR services, prioritizing those States with responsibilities for the establishment of RCCs.

5.2 The lack of a SAR agreement negatively impacts the development of SAR activities. In the absence of duly signed agreements, activities are carried out without adequate planning, which puts the effectiveness of the response at risk. The support of the NACC/WG for the signing of SAR operational agreements, of the same type as those signed between air traffic services units, would improve regional SAR response capabilities.

5.3 The lack of SAR personnel, with the required competencies and in sufficient numbers, is a challenge that affects most States, especially smaller States that do not have autonomous sources for the training of their personnel. International cooperation and support from States with more advanced SAR systems is the only possible alternative to meet the requirements of more complex training. It is

suggested that training centres in the Region be encouraged to define career plans for aeronautical personnel, including SAR personnel. Likewise, the holding of SAR exercises (SAREX) is considered a priority as a mechanism for evaluating existing procedures.

5.4 The evaluation of SAR BBBs is a task that will provide very valuable information for the development of specific support plans regarding the provision of these services. The definition by the NACC/WG of an objective criteria for carrying out this evaluation would support the definition of realistic and well-founded work programmes.

5.5 We consider it important to achieve compliance with ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices, highlighting the need for States to have budgets in line with their needs for strengthening SAR services.

5.6 Civil-military collaboration is an important part of the SAR response, and the involvement of military authorities significantly contributes to this integration.

5.7 States are urged to extend their efforts to the common benefit of the different regions in this area, since a good SAR system, adequately trained, financially supported, technically equipped and with the appropriate equipment, can achieve an immediate response to address emergency relief and save many lives.

## **6. Suggested actions**

6.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) Take note of this Working Paper.
- b) Support conclusions in Section 5.
- c) Suggest any other action deemed necessary.

— — — — —

— END —