

FLIGHT SAFETY IN UN PEACE KEEPING OPERATIONS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Peacekeeping aviation operations, by their very nature, are complex and hazardous activities. To provide its field missions with mobility the United Nations (UN) employs a wide range of fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft, each with its own particular operating capabilities and limitations. Depending on security considerations, these aircraft may be either military or civilian, or a combination of both, and may have been drawn from different countries of registration. More often than not, flight operations are carried out under very challenging environmental conditions and in venues that have little or no aviation infrastructure. As a result, the peacekeeping flight activities that the UN asks its military and civilian aircrews to perform are some of the most difficult and dangerous missions to be found in the aviation profession. Given these complexities, formulating, managing and implementing effective flight safety measures is a challenge. Safety defences are safeguards put in place to protect a system from both human and technical failure. The breakdown of one or more defences can be determined in the aftermath of an accident. Several examples show how important it is for an organization to regularly identify what defences are currently in place to contain potential safety hazards. Proactive aviation safety programmes have long been recognized as the most effective instrument for preventing accidents.

Military services and commercial aviation companies worldwide have had formal prevention programmes for long time with excellent accident prevention results. The benefits of safety-conscious air operations are obvious. They protect the United Nations property, save money and time but most importantly, save lives and reduce individual suffering. Additionally, they boost morale through the recognition of individuals and groups achievements in the promotion of specified safety goals. Everyone in the organization ends up paying for an accident; therefore a vigorous aviation safety programme is in the best interest of all.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

2. This dissertation seeks to study and analyse the flight safety organisation and measures in place for the aviation element of UN missions for effectiveness in creating a safe flying environment, to bring out any lacunae and suggest possible solutions.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

3. Accidents are wasteful in human, material, finance and transport resources. They are a serious handicap to the political and operational effectiveness of Peacekeeping Operations. The cause of accidents originates in a variety of ways, ranging from an incorrect statement of the operational requirement, through design, production and development, to the operation and maintenance of aircraft. They also originate in the attitude of the Operator, training of personnel and the operational risks that are inherent in every Peacekeeping mission. To keep accident rates low, it is

necessary to establish a formal Aviation Safety Policy and an adequate safety organization. Safety management is not a means of achieving operational efficiency and is not an end in itself. Aviation Safety Policy seeks the prevention of accidents through the implementation of set Standards and Recommended Practices.

4. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in UN is responsible for establishing specific Aviation Standards and Aviation Safety Programmes, which includes explicit practices, procedures and structures, with the objective of minimizing the risks inherent in peacekeeping aviation operations and preventing aviation accidents¹. Complacency or a false sense of security should not be allowed to develop as a result of long periods without an accident or serious incident. An Organization with a good safety record is not necessarily a safe organization. Good fortune rather than good management may be responsible for what appears to be a safe operation. Safety defences are barriers or safeguards put in place to protect a system from both human and technical failure. The breakdown of one or more defences can be determined in the aftermath of an accident. Several examples show how important it is for an organization to regularly identify what defences are currently in place to contain potential safety hazards. **While the Aviation safety organisation and the guide lines exist and there is no doubting the fact that guide lines and plans cannot cater for every possible scenario however, an in depth study of the system and organisational plans may result in some lacunae being addressed and result in a better and safer flying environment.**

¹ UN Aviation Safety Manual Revision 6 – 1 February 2003

SCOPE

5. The scope of this study is limited to outline and analyse the existing organisation and measures in place for flight safety in UN missions in Africa.

METHODOLOGY

6. All data and information has been collected from secondary sources like :-
 - (a) the UN publications for flight safety
 - (b) UN bulletins in context of flight safety
 - (c) DPKO manuals
 - (d) Open source articles on the subject from the internet.

The relevant extracts are placed as a shadow file on the CD and a bibliography of the source is provided at the end.

ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION (CHAPTERISATION)

7. The subject has been studied in the following manner :-
- (a) Chapter I Introduction - deals with Statement of Problem, Justification of Study, Scope, Methodology, and Chapterisation.
 - (b) Chapter II Aviation Safety Culture - deals with the flight safety organisation, measures and objectives in place for UNPKO.
 - (c) Chapter III Aviation Safety Programme - Deals with the aviation safety programme established for implementation in UNPKO,
 - (d) Chapter IV Risk Assessment and Management – Deals with studying the risk management system in place.
 - (e) Chapter V Case Study - UNPKO Aviation Safety Record in Africa – Deals with Analysis of available accident data and investigation reports.
 - (e) Chapter VI Recommendations and Conclusion – Deals with peculiarities of roles, Emerging Issues identified after analysis of data in chapter V, examining the existing Aviation Safety Measures for adequacy, possible inclusions and changes that would result in a better and safer flying environment in UNPKO in Africa.