



Aircraft Tracking Task Force Frequently Asked Questions

The Aircraft Tracking Task Force (ATTF) is an initiative launched by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) that is aligned closely with the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO's) focus on global flight tracking. Following the loss of MH370, the ATTF was announced on 1 April by IATA DG and CEO Tony Tyler at the IATA Ops Conference in Kuala Lumpur. The first meeting took place immediately following the ICAO Special Meeting on Aircraft Flight Tracking, 12-13 May.

What is the membership of the Aircraft Tracking Task Force?

The ATTF includes representatives from IATA, ICAO, Airlines for America, Association of Asia-Pacific Airlines, the Civil Air Navigation Services Organization, Flight Safety Foundation, International Coordinating Council of Aerospace Industries Associations, International Federation of Air Line Pilots Associations, Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Airbus SAS, Bombardier Aerospace and Embraer Commercial Aviation.

What's the remit?

The ATTF is focused on identifying near-term options for global tracking of aircraft. One of the primary activities of the ATTF will be to assess the products and services that exist today to see how they will be used to implement global flight tracking.

Will it be an entirely new or separate service, or linked to current airline communications networks or air traffic services?

The role of the ATTF is to identify the best near term options and develop performance-based recommendations for global flight tracking. However, it is important to note that the ATTF is focused on tracking, not surveillance. Because the industry has committed to an extremely aggressive timeline to develop recommendations it is imperative to limit the scope of the assessment.

What is the difference between aircraft tracking and aircraft surveillance?

Aircraft surveillance is considered to be an ATC function---it's primary purpose is to ensure separation between aircraft. Aircraft tracking is the ability to know where a plane is at any point—it does not make distinctions between aircraft relative to where they are to other aircraft, objects etc. It's simply where the aircraft is at a point in time.

Since the ATTF is not looking at enhanced air traffic control, will recommendations be offered so that each airline can make its own decisions how to track its own aircraft?

The ATTF has been charged with developing a set of performance-based recommendations—meaning that there will likely be a number of options that airlines can consider. In order to ensure a global capability the ATTF will also define a minimum set of performance requirements that any system should achieve. So airlines will make their own decision about how to best track their aircraft based on their operations but will need to meet a baseline set of requirements.

Didn't the industry face the same issues after AF447 and do nothing?

The AF447 Final Report recommendations related to locator beacons, deployable flight recorders and other accident-specific location capabilities, not specifically flight tracking. The ATTF focus is on developing recommendations to create an improved global capability to track aircraft—this would also improve the ability to identify an aircraft's last reported position. The recommendations submitted to ICAO in the aftermath of AF447 are not part of the ATTF remit.

When is the ATTF going to report?

We expect the ATTF to be in a position to deliver draft options for enhanced global aircraft tracking to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in September leading to presentation to the industry before yearend.

How quickly do you envisage the recommendations of the ATTF will be taken up?

Because the recommendations will be based on performance needs—meaning that operators will utilize different options to accommodate their fleets, routes, etc., some recommendations can be taken up very quickly while others may take longer. It's also important to note that the task force will identify a minimum set of performance requirements that any option will need to meet.

What weight will be placed on cost considerations?

Cost is one of the many factors being considered as part of the criteria to assess options. Other factors include items such as data management, availability (such as whether the equipment is available on the market), performance parameters, etc. The ATTF will need to carefully consider all of these factors.

Will the recommendations be mandatory as a condition of IATA membership?

Given the compressed timeframe that the ATTF has to develop its recommendations we are not focusing on mandates. The industry is in agreement that we should never again have an aircraft go missing and to that end, a well rationalized set of performance based options will move the industry forward toward improved global flight tracking. ICAO will need to consider what needs to be done in order for States to ensure that

flight tracking capabilities are implemented globally. IATA and ICAO will continue to work together to determine what actions will need to be taken by both governments and industry.

Why was this not done before?

Following AF447 a series of recommendations were presented to ICAO to improve the ability to locate and retrieve FDRs when an aircraft is gone missing. IATA believes that these efforts are still valid. We also believe that an improved ability to track flights will augment efforts to locate an aircraft in the unfortunate event that it an unusual occurrence happens.