

**Security Council**

Distr.: General
11 October 2001

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 13 (b) of Security Council resolution 1343 (2001) concerning Liberia**I. Introduction**

1. In paragraph 13 (b) of its resolution 1343 (2001) of 7 March 2001, the Security Council requested me to submit to it, six months from the date of the adoption of the resolution, a report on the steps taken by the Government of Liberia to improve its capacity in air traffic control and surveillance in accordance with the recommendations of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1306 (2000) and any advice that might be provided by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

2. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request. It is based on information provided to the United Nations Office in Liberia on the measures taken by the Government of Liberia regarding air traffic control and surveillance as well as the steps it has taken to obtain the advice and assistance of ICAO in that regard.

II. Steps taken by Liberia in January to improve its air traffic control and surveillance capacity

3. In paragraph 4 (b) of my previous report (S/2001/424), I indicated that the Government of Liberia had, according to information provided to the United Nations Office in Liberia, grounded all aircraft registered under the Liberian flag until their owners produced documentary evidence of their airworthiness under Liberia's civil aviation laws and on the basis of

the standards established by ICAO. That measure, adopted on 22 January 2001, followed the publication of the report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1306 (2000) (S/2000/1195).

4. In paragraphs 12 and 13 of my report, I also detailed other measures implemented by the Government of Liberia following the grounding of aircraft registered under its flag, as well as the assistance and cooperation that the Government of Liberia had sought from ICAO.

III. Measures implemented by the Government of Liberia since January

5. Since the implementation of the above-mentioned measures in January, the Government of Liberia has, according to information provided to the United Nations Office in Liberia, taken the following additional steps:

(a) In order to alleviate the shortcomings and deficiencies in its airspace system, the Government of Liberia has reportedly purchased from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland a turnkey system to replace its outdated air traffic control tower system. The new equipment is due to be installed and commissioned by the contractor, System Interface Limited of Essex, by December 2001. The new system is said to include a three-position control desk, a crash alarm, an air traffic control clock system, a signal



lamp, very-high frequency transmitters and receivers, a voice recorder, tower accessories and a back-up power distribution system to ensure continuous operation;

(b) According to the Government, the installation of a new air traffic control system, in addition to enhancing the country's capacity in air traffic control, would help to overcome the limitations of conventional systems and allow its air traffic management system to develop in line with the communication, navigation, surveillance/air traffic management concept. In the Government's view, its decision to acquire the system represents a step-by-step approach towards a communication, navigation, surveillance/air traffic management concept;

(c) According to the Government, that concept coincides with the ICAO recommendation requiring States to implement area control as soon as possible, with a view to increasing air traffic safety. The Government has also reported that the new operational concept would be essential to providing increased efficiency. The Government has further observed that effective air traffic management was essential to ensuring the safety, regularity and efficiency of international civil aviation and that the implementation of emerging technologies should fulfil the requirements for a regional air traffic management system. In its view, the new approach is designed to lead initially to improved harmonization of air traffic services, which, ultimately, would help to achieve a globally integrated air traffic management system;

(d) The Government of Liberia also reported that efforts were being made to establish links between the Roberts International Airport Air Traffic Control Centre in Monrovia and the domestic airports of the hinterland as they became operational and that, meanwhile, the Civil Aviation Authority and the Liberian Domestic Airport Agency were making plans to take an inventory of and to inspect domestic airports;

(e) In order to enhance its supervisory and monitoring capacity, the Government of Liberia has indicated its intention to install a microwave link between the Office of the Director of Civil Aviation in Monrovia and the Roberts International Airport Air Traffic Control Centre.

Liberia's initiative in air traffic management within the Roberts flight information region

6. In keeping with the global trend towards regional groupings and combined airspace, Liberia, according to the Government, continues to be a member of the Roberts flight information region and adheres, therefore, to the African-Indian Ocean air navigation plan and other navigational and air traffic operational requirements and protocols. The Government has stressed, however, that as a result of continuous cross-border incursions by dissident forces and due to increased national security concerns associated with those incidents, it has decided to temporarily assume independent management of Liberian airspace, pending an improvement in relations among the Mano River Union countries.

7. According to the Government, the above contingency plan requires the installation of appropriate equipment at the Roberts International Airport Air Traffic Control Centre and the reactivation of the aeronautical fixed telecommunication network equipment already established at the Centre. It also requires that the Roberts flight information region be reactivated and operated by a team of exclusively Liberian technicians working under the direct supervision of the Liberian Civil Aviation Authority.

8. The Government has asserted that with the provisional technical innovations set out above, the Liberian Civil Aviation Authority has assumed a more active role in airspace management which, hitherto, had more or less been delegated to Roberts International Airport and the Roberts flight information region. In this connection, the Government draws attention to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention) as it applies to international standards and recommended practices, and underlines the principle that every State has complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above its territory.

IV. Contact between the Government of Liberia and the International Civil Aviation Organization

9. Following the decision of the Government of Liberia to temporarily manage, by itself, its territorial airspace, the Secretary-General of the Roberts flight

information region requested an informal coordination meeting on air traffic management within the region. The meeting, according to the Government, was held under the auspices of the ICAO Regional Office for West and Central Africa, based in Dakar, on 26 and 27 March 2001. According to the Government, several items were discussed, including:

(a) A preliminary exchange of views on ICAO procedures in the African-Indian Ocean air navigation plan;

(b) A review of Liberia's unilateral decision relative to the control and management of its airspace and its implications for safety and the flow of air traffic in accordance with the African-Indian Ocean air navigation plan and regulations;

(c) A review of the implications for the air traffic services route network within the Roberts flight information region in relation to units providing air traffic services in accordance with the African-Indian Ocean air navigation plan and regulations;

(d) A review of the implications for communication and coordination problems in relation to the African-Indian Ocean air navigation plan;

(e) A review of the implications for operational letters on air traffic management; search and rescue; communication, navigation and surveillance and aeronautical information service agreements between the Roberts Air Traffic Control Centre and the Conakry, Freetown and Roberts approach control centres within the Roberts flight information region and adjacent centres;

(f) The development and harmonization of territorial airspace contingency plans related to air traffic management; search and rescue; communication, navigation and surveillance and aeronautical information services within the Roberts flight information region.

10. At that meeting, the Government of Liberia maintained that some flight information regions in the African-Indian Ocean region were closely aligned with national boundaries and that this was understandable from the point of view that States had complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above their territory and had, as a result, a regulatory monopoly. The Government noted, however, that it strongly believed in and adhered to the ICAO policy that member States might achieve further efficiency and

economy through consolidation of facilities and services.

11. The Liberian Government further reported that the following "points of principle", had been agreed upon at the Dakar meeting:

(a) That the integrity of the Roberts flight information region would be maintained in accordance with the ICAO/African-Indian Ocean air navigation plan;

(b) That the safety of international air navigation would remain paramount and in compliance with ICAO procedures and provisions;

(c) That Liberia would control its territorial airspace while remaining a member of the Roberts flight information region and working in harmony with its neighbours;

(d) That there was need to seek operational solutions within the flight information region for the points raised by Liberia;

(e) That cooperation and coordination among all concerned States should be established;

(f) That technical solutions should be explored to preserve both the integrity of the Roberts flight information region and the sovereignty of each State party.

12. A draft memorandum of understanding on the above-mentioned issues, agreed upon by all parties concerned within the Roberts flight information region, had been forwarded with the comments of the Government of Liberia, to be signed by the Roberts approach control centre and the Roberts flight information region, according to the Government's report.

13. The parties attending the meeting, according to the Government, had also agreed on the need to find a technical and operational solution acceptable to all parties without degrading the integrity of the Roberts flight information region. A small working group comprising the three parties, namely, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as the Roberts flight information region secretariat with assistance from the ICAO secretariat, had been established, and had proposed that the Roberts Air Traffic Control Centre:

(a) Provide clearance for and coordinate traffic to Roberts Approach Control entering Liberian airspace at Matru, Tekto, Ponka and Ritam;

(b) Reactivate the aeronautical fixed telecommunication network at Roberts International Airport;

(c) Assess and train, as needed, Liberian communications personnel to operate and maintain equipment;

(d) Assign only Liberians to the Roberts Approach Control Centre.

14. With regard to military flights, the Liberian Government has referred to article 4 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation by which States agreed not to use civil aviation for any purpose inconsistent with the aims of the Convention. In this connection, the Government of Liberia has stated that it would continue to remain committed to the improvement and safety of its air navigation and air traffic management initiatives.

15. The Government has also reported that during meetings it held in July 2001 with members of the United Nations Panel of Experts, the Government's attention had been drawn to the fact that certain aircraft had been flying under the Liberian "EL" registration mark despite the Government's claim that it had effectively de-registered and closed the Liberian air registry. In addition to closing the air registry, the Liberian Civil Aviation Authority had reportedly also begun to formulate and establish a new system of civil aviation registration based on the Gates system, which is designed to ensure strict conformity with the Convention on International Civil Aviation. The draft of the proposed registry had, according to the Government, been completed and would be reviewed by ICAO technicians in the near future.

16. In a letter dated 30 July 2001 addressed to the Secretary-General of ICAO, the Liberian Minister for Transport requested that, on the basis of the recommendation of the Panel of Experts, the previous Liberian "EL" aircraft registration mark should be changed to either "RL", "LI", "LB" or "ML" to ensure that unscrupulous persons do not continue to avail themselves of the "EL" mark.

V. Observations

17. From the report submitted by the Liberian Government to the United Nations Office in Liberia, it would appear that its Civil Aviation Authority has remained in contact with the ICAO since the publication in December 2000 of the report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1306 (2000).

18. The Government had dispatched its Minister for Transport and the Director of Civil Aviation to ICAO headquarters to seek its cooperation and assistance in reforming its civil aviation administration soon after the publication of the report of the Panel of Experts.

19. As reported in paragraph 9 of the present report, an informal coordination meeting on air traffic management within the Roberts flight information region was held under the auspices of the ICAO regional office in Dakar on 26 and 27 March. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Liberia's decision to manage temporarily its territorial airspace.

20. According to the Government, the new system of civil aviation registration established by the Liberian civil aviation authorities on the basis of the Gates system would be reviewed by a team of ICAO technicians who are due to visit Liberia shortly. In addition, the Directorate of Civil Aviation of the Liberian Ministry of Transport on 30 July sought the approval of ICAO to change its "EL" aircraft registration so as to put an end to its illegal use by unscrupulous aircraft operators.

21. As indicated above, the present report has been prepared on the basis of information provided to the United Nations Office in Liberia by the Government of Liberia. The Office does not itself have the capacity to independently confirm the claims of the Government of Liberia on any of the pertinent issues.

22. It can be observed from the report provided by the Government of Liberia that efforts are being made by the Liberian authorities to reform their civil aviation administration and that the assistance of ICAO has been sought in that regard. I hope that ICAO will continue to extend the necessary cooperation and assistance to the Liberian authorities with a view to meeting the objectives sought under paragraph 13 (b) of Security Council resolution 1343 (2001).