

Comments on “UK Defence Spectrum Management –Consultation on: An Implementation Plan for Reform”

International Air Transport Association (IATA)
4 September 2008

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Consultation: “UK Defence Spectrum Management – A Consultation on: An Implementation Plan for Reform”.

IATA represents 230 of the world’s airlines carrying 94% of international scheduled traffic and 40% of manufactured goods. Some 130 of our members fly through UK airspace and 6 of our members are UK based.

IATA supports the efficient use of public sector spectrum but we do not believe market mechanisms such as trading are the way to achieve this.

The MoD consultation does not specifically consider aeronautical bands for release or trading *at this time*; but the general implications and precedent for the future are of serious concern to IATA.

Our broad position on trading and specific comments on MoD’s suggestion that the band 2700--3400 MHz that includes primary radar may be considered in the future follow.

IATA’s Position on Trading of Bands Aviation Uses or Shares

IATA’s position is that the release of or trading of spectrum in aeronautical bands would not be possible due to safety considerations, international obligations, and the potential detriment to ongoing European initiatives to increase efficiency such as the Single European Sky.

1. Safety is always the first priority.

Aviation is a public safety of life service. The spectrum aviation uses must absolutely be protected from harmful interference to ensure the high integrity of the systems used. Trading of such spectrum – even spectrum shared with defence users - could severely prejudice this integrity.

2. Introduction of trading for aviation would be incompatible with International obligations and responsibility.

Aeronautical spectrum is allocated globally through the ITU (International Telecommunications Union) radio regulations and such allocations have treaty status through the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC). Aviation’s

use of these allocations must conform with the UN International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) developed standards. These requirements are non-negotiable and cannot be impacted by national decisions.

International allocations ensure a harmonized operational system that is essential for the safety and interoperability of a global industry. Any State that proposes unilateral national procedures that differ from international obligations, must also assume the responsibility for any interference to safety within its airspace as well as its international implications. This pertains as well to shared spectrum such as 2700-3400 MHz part of which is used for aviation, maritime and defence primary radar.

3 The UK should do nothing that could impact on the benefits of the EC Single European Sky (SES). - a programme the UK strongly supports.

Any UK unilateral action must be considered in the context of the SES/SESAR programme to improve air traffic management in Europe and ensure a competitive European air transport industry for the future. New systems and procedures that will support the Single European Sky (SES) will need appropriate radio spectrum to operate. Individual national trading of public sector spectrum removes this assurance and could seriously impact the ability of SES to achieve its goals.

Trading in the Primary Radar Band

The MoD consultation refers to the 2700-3400 MHz band that includes primary radar. Despite the statement that this band is not proposed to “be released or further shared at this time”; the consultation does not clarify if it might be considered in future; if so when and on what criteria such a decision might be based.

It should be emphasised first that this band is heavily used and planned for future use.

Primary radar for aviation, maritime and defence use part of this band. Should the band be traded to another user for another system, there could be serious safety or interference issues.

Internationally, part of this band was sought for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT) use at the last WRC in 2007. IATA and other aviation interests were opposed to this and the end result was a WRC allocation to IMT that did not allow sharing within the band 2700-3400 MHz.

Thus, what the MoD consultation may be considering nationally, although “not at this time”, could contradict the outcome of WRC 07

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

IATA's conclusion with respect to "An Implementation Plan for Reform "

- Safety is a non-negotiable requirement and an international obligation for aviation.
- the spectrum used by aviation must be developed through the existing international due process and comply with international standards
- trading of aviation spectrum would prejudice its integrity and safety
- trading of aviation spectrum could also be in breach of international obligations and have significant adverse impact on air traffic management initiatives within the EC Single European Sky
- Any MoD decision to trade spectrum should specifically exclude that used by aviation.