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United Nations  
Department of Peacekeeping Operations  
Department of Field Support



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## Policy

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## Aviation Safety

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Approved by: Mr. Herve Ladsous, USG DPKO  
Mr. Atul Khare, USG DFS

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## DPKO and DFS Policy on Aviation Safety

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### A. PURPOSE

1. This document is a revised version of the Policy on Aviation Safety (2009.2) approved and promulgated in 2009. The Policy establishes aviation safety as one of the Organization's top priority, as United Nations places the highest emphasis on the safety and security of its personnel and assets when utilizing civilian and military aircraft in the United Nations Peacekeeping and Special Political Missions supported by DFS (henceforth – DFS supported missions).
  2. The purpose of this revision is to align Policy requirements with the most recent International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPS), the United Nations Aviation Standards for Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Air Transport Operations (UN AVSTADS), and other United Nations policies (as referenced in Section F of this Policy) and best practices.
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### B. SCOPE

3. This Policy applies to the following categories of personnel:
  - a. All civilian, military and police DPKO and DFS staff at United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ) and in the DFS supported missions;
  - b. Aviation related commercial contractors providing services to DPKO and DFS;
  - c. *Military aviation units operating under the Letter of Assist (LOA);*
  - d. All agencies and funds that utilize air assets contracted by DPKO and DFS.

4. Compliance with this Policy is mandatory for all staff mentioned in this document.
  5. Detailed guidance on the implementation of this Policy as well as the entire scope of aviation safety related activities at UNHQ and in the DFS supported missions shall be elaborated in the DFS Aviation Safety Manual (forthcoming) and other guiding documents.
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### **C. RATIONALE**

6. DFS, as part of its logistical support to the missions, utilizes various types of aircraft (piloted and remotely piloted) operated by civilian contractors and military aviation units, often in challenging environments, which frequently lack the infrastructure required by international standards for the safe conduct of aviation operations.
7. ICAO SARPS require Contracting States of ICAO to develop and implement State Safety Programmes (SSP), and Service Providers to prepare their respective Safety Management Systems (SMS). Although UNHQ or DFS supported missions do not fall under the "State" or "Service Provider" categories, this Policy is aligned with the relevant provisions on the safety management.
8. The 2011 Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on United Nations Air Operations (A/65/738) provides the framework for aviation standards applicable in the United Nations context. In particular, the report states:

"The applicable aviation standards for commercial operators are the ICAO SARPS and the UN AVSTADS. The applicable standards for military aircraft under letters of assist are defined by the respective troop-contributing countries' national military regulations. Both military and commercial operators must however conform to the applicable regulations of the host country, and further must operate in a wholly integrated manner in the peacekeeping operational environment and thus, must conform to policy, guidance and requirements of the DPKO Aviation Manual, mission standard operating procedures and the DPKO-DFS Aviation Safety Manual".

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### **D. POLICY**

#### **D.1. DPKO and DFS Aviation Safety Regulatory Framework**

9. Management of aviation safety at UNHQ and in DFS supported missions shall be based on the ICAO SARPS, UN AVSTADS, the ICAO Safety Management Manual, United Nations policies, guidelines and procedures (as referenced in Section F of this Policy). Proactive and predictive approaches will be systematically applied in order to identify potential hazards and initiate mitigating actions. Lessons from accidents and serious incidents will be analysed to determine active and latent hazards that contributed to their occurrence, in order to prevent such events from happening in the future.
10. The rules and regulations of the following States shall be respected.
  - a. State of the Operator/ Troops Contributing Country (TCC);
  - b. State of Registry;
  - c. State of Design;
  - d. State of Manufacture;
  - e. State where United Nations aviation operations are conducted.

## **D.2. Aviation Safety Organization, Appointment of Key Safety Personnel**

11. The United Nations has established the following formal aviation safety structures at the Secretariat and in the field, accountable to the DPKO and DFS, and appointed designated staff members to manage, monitor, and coordinate required safety management activities:
  - a. The Aviation Safety Section at UNHQ – a component part of the Office of the Director of the Logistics Support Division in the DFS (LSD/DFS);
  - b. Regional Aviation Safety Offices (RASOs) and mission Aviation Safety Units (ASUs), which administratively report to the respective Director or Chief of Mission Support (D/CMS) and coordinate their activities with the Aviation Safety Section, LSD/DFS through established reporting lines;
  - c. The organigrams and staffing of the aviation safety structures shall be elaborated in the DFS Aviation Safety Manual (forthcoming) and other guiding documents.

## **D.3. Responsibilities and Accountabilities**

12. All personnel involved in aviation related activities at UNHQ and in the DFS supported missions have an individual safety responsibility for their own actions, and shall strictly adhere to the established safety standards, policies, guidelines and procedures.
13. Management of safety, as one of the key managerial functions, to large extent is about mitigation of risks and establishing the designed balance between production (aviation related activities) and protection (safety related activities). Managers identified in this Policy shall be responsible and held accountable for both – operational and safety performances in their respective areas of responsibility, ensuring that an acceptable level of safety is achieved. The aviation safety staff, while performing their duties, shall be able to deliver to the senior managers expert advice on all aviation safety related matters.
14. UNHQ leadership and management, with regard to aviation safety, shall bear the following responsibilities:
  - a. The primary responsibility for safety management at UNHQ rests with the USG DFS, who, as the Accountable Officer<sup>1</sup>, approves and promulgates policy and guidance documents related to the aviation safety management;
  - b. The Assistant Secretary General (ASG) DFS shall be responsible for addressing the cross-cutting issues related to aviation safety management.
  - c. Director LSD/DFS shall be responsible and accountable to the USG DFS for ensuring that aviation safety related policies, guidance documents and procedures are developed, implemented, and strictly adhered to by the DFS supported missions with aviation assets.
  - d. The Chief, Aviation Safety Section LSD/DFS shall be responsible for providing expert advice and recommendations, through Director LSD/DFS, on all aviation safety related matters at UNHQ, as well as for designing and establishing the DFS Aviation Safety Programme (ASP, forthcoming), and providing guidance to DFS supported missions in the development, and management of the Mission ASPs, and oversight of their implementation. In the event of a serious safety concern, s/he has the right to report it to the USG DFS through the Director LSD/DFS.

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<sup>1</sup> The Officer of the United Nations who is overall responsible for air transport operations and aviation safety and who exercises authority on behalf of the UN Organization for the management of air transport and aviation safety (UN AVSTADS: Section 2, para 2.2.)

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- e. The Chief, Air Transport Section LSD/DFS shall be responsible for ensuring that safety management requirements are integrated in the respective policies, guidance and procedures in air transport operations.
  - f. The Chief, Movement Control Section LSD/DFS shall be responsible for ensuring that requirements of this document are integrated in the respective policies, guidance and procedures in movement control operations.
15. The Mission leadership and management, with regard to aviation safety, shall bear the following responsibilities:
- a. The Head of Mission (HoM) is accountable to USG DPKO or USG DPA, and to USG DFS, and shall be responsible for the implementation of aviation safety related policies in the Mission. The HoM is ultimately responsible for decisions made in the risk management process associated with utilization of mission aviation resources at the high/extremely high risk levels.
  - b. The Force Commander (Head of Mission Military Component) shall be responsible for ensuring that DPKO and DFS aviation safety related policies are adhered to and that the safety management aspects related to the use of military aviation assets under his/her operational tasking authority are integrated into the relevant mission decision-making processes and procedures.
  - c. The D/CMS shall be responsible for ensuring that day-to-day aviation safety activities are carried out in accordance with the respective DPKO and DFS policies, guidelines and procedures. On behalf of the Mission's senior management, they shall formulate and sign off the Aviation Safety Statement as part of the Mission Aviation Safety Programme.
  - d. The Chief, Regional and Mission Aviation Safety Officers shall be responsible to the respective D/CMS for the development and management of the Mission ASP. In an event of a serious safety concern, s/he, after consultation with the Chief, Aviation Safety Section LSD/DFS, has the right to report it to the HoM through the D/CMS.
  - e. The Chief Aviation Officer (CAVO) and the Chief Movement Control Officer (CMCO) in DFS supported missions shall ensure that safety management requirements are embedded in the respective Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), as stipulated in the aviation safety related policies, guidelines and procedures.
16. The pilot-in-command of an aircraft shall have final authority as to the safe disposition of the aircraft while in command.

**D.4. Aviation Accident and Incident Investigation**

17. Respective States will conduct investigations of accidents and serious incidents involving DFS contracted aircraft in accordance with the ICAO Annex 13 and other relevant documents.
18. In parallel, DFS will conduct a United Nations internal Aviation Safety Investigation (ASI) focused on the identification of possible non-compliance with the mission operational and administrative procedures, in addition to the technical aspects. DFS will designate a UNHQ, Regional or Mission Aviation Safety Officer to conduct the ASI. The ASI Report will serve as the source of information for the United Nations Board of Inquiry (BOI) until the State investigation report (preliminary or final) is published. The sole objective of such investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and not to apportion blame or liability.
19. RASOs and ASUs shall conduct investigations of occurrences other than those mentioned above with the DFS contracted aircraft.

#### **D.5. Mission Aviation Emergency Preparedness**

20. Each mission utilizing DFS contracted aircraft shall develop and implement key documents that define actions to be taken by the mission in case of the accident or incident involving DFS contracted aircraft. This includes an Aviation Emergency Response Plan (AERP) and a Search and Rescue (SAR) SOP.
21. DFS supported missions normally rely on SAR coverage provided by the State(s) where United Nations aviation operations are conducted, or the regional air navigation agreements. If SAR capacity is limited or non-existent in the State, the mission should take necessary steps to ensure SAR coverage is provided by other available means.
22. The mission AERP and SAR SOP should be cross-referenced and coordinated with the relevant National Authorities.

#### **D.6. Aviation Risk Management**

23. DPKO and DFS have adopted the Aviation Risk Management (ARM) Policy (2014.02), which sets the minimum standards for aviation related activities in DFS supported missions. The Policy obliges respective decision makers to ensure that risks associated with aviation related activities are mitigated and/or controlled at the acceptable levels, or flights/tasks are cancelled if the risk becomes unacceptable.
24. Offices at UNHQ directly or indirectly involved in aviation related activities shall apply the ARM Policy requirements in their processes and procedures.
25. ARM Policy requires DFS supported missions to develop and implement their mission-specific ARM SOPs and consider respective risk management policies and procedures of the air operators and/or military aviation units operating in the missions.

#### **D.7. Safety Assurance**

26. DPKO and DFS Guidance on Safety Assurance (SA), which defines processes and procedures applicable to UNHQ and DFS supported missions, shall be developed and implemented. SA activities should be focused on the evaluation of the continued effectiveness of implemented mitigation actions and strategies identified during the ARM process, particularly ensuring continuous oversight of the field mission operations. The SA guidance should include the following elements:
  - a. Safety performance monitoring and measurement at UNHQ and in DFS supported missions. Key safety performance indicators shall be established as a means to monitor and appraise processes and procedures.
  - b. The management of change – reducing or eliminating safety risks resulting from the changes in the organization itself, or in aviation related activities, as indication of the organization's proactiveness while introducing new elements.
  - c. Continuous improvement of safety performance through regular reviews and amendments of the aviation related manuals and SOPs at the UNHQ and in DFS supported missions.
27. Synergies within the SA and Quality Assurance activities should be identified and considered in order to avoid the overlapping of effort.

#### **D.8. Safety Promotion**

28. Safety promotion involves the establishment of internal and external processes to provide or facilitate safety management related training of staff involved in aviation related activities, communication and dissemination of safety information.
29. Management at UNHQ and in DFS supported missions shall support aviation safety related training activities. Standardized training requirements shall be developed by the Aviation Safety Section LSD/DFS and be periodically reviewed in order to ensure that

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staff members involved in aviation safety activities are able to effectively perform their functions, provide professional advice and support the implementation of new policies, guidelines and procedures.

30. DPKO and DFS promote culture of reporting matters that affect safety standards. All involved in aviation operations must be confident that the United Nations will not use information on committed errors or mistakes against them, but will also not tolerate actions such as the deliberate violation of established procedures, rules and regulations or willful misconduct compromising the safety of aviation operations. Received safety information shall be protected from inappropriate use in accordance with the provisions of ICAO Annex 13 and 19.
31. LSD/DFS will continue sharing with relevant stakeholders the DFS Aviation Safety monthly reviews and quarterly analyses of the collected safety data.

### **D.9. DFS and Mission Aviation Safety Programmes**

32. The Aviation Safety Section LSD/DFS, Regional Aviation Safety Offices and mission Aviation Safety Units shall formulate and implement their respective Aviation Safety Programmes and implementation plans.
33. The DFS and Mission Aviation Safety Programmes shall be revised as required, aiming at continuous improvement of safety management.

## **E. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

34. Terminology used in this Policy is based on the ICAO SARPS, UN AVSTADS, other UNHQ policies, and/or derived from the documents of the internationally recognized aviation organizations.
  - a. **Accident:**<sup>2</sup> An occurrence associated with the operation of an aircraft, which, in the case of a manned aircraft, takes place between the time any person boards the aircraft with the intention of flight until such time as all such persons have disembarked, or in the case of an unmanned aircraft, takes place between the time the aircraft is ready to move with the purpose of flight until such time as it comes to rest at the end of the flight and the primary propulsion system is shut down, in which:
    - i. A person is fatally or seriously injured;
    - ii. The aircraft sustains damage or structural failure;
    - iii. The aircraft is missing or is completely inaccessible.
  - b. **Aviation Risk Management:** A logical and systematic method of establishing the context, identifying, analyzing, evaluating, treating, monitoring and communicating risk associated to aviation related activities in a way that will enable organizations to minimize losses to an acceptable level and maximize opportunities.
  - c. **Aviation Safety Programme:** An integrated set of activities aimed at improving safety of aviation operations.
  - d. **Incident:** An occurrence, other than an accident, associated with the operation of an aircraft which affects or could affect the safety of operation.
  - e. **Safety:** The state, in which risks associated with aviation activities, related to, or in direct support of the operation of aircraft, are reduced and controlled to an acceptable level.
  - f. **Safety assurance:** Planned and systematic actions necessary to afford adequate confidence that aviation related activities achieve acceptable or tolerable level of

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<sup>2</sup> It is a simplified definition; complete definition of an accident can be found in the ICAO SARPS.

- safety. Core safety assurance activities include safety performance monitoring and measurement, management of change and continuous improvement of safety management.
- g. **Safety management:** An organizational function, which ensures that all safety risks have been identified, assessed and satisfactorily mitigated.
  - h. **Safety management system:** A systematic approach to managing safety, including the necessary organizational structures, accountabilities, policies and procedures.
  - i. **Safety oversight:** For the purpose of this policy – a function of the organization by means of which it ensures that the aviation related activities at UNHQ and in the DFS supported missions are conducted at a safety level equal to, or better than, that defined by the ICAO SARPS, UN AVSTADS and safety-related UN policies, guidelines and procedures.
  - j. **Safety performance:** A State or a service provider's safety achievement as defined by its safety performance targets and safety performance indicators.
  - k. **Safety performance indicator:** A data-based parameter used for monitoring and assessing safety performance.
  - l. **Serious incident:** An incident involving circumstances indicating that there was a high probability of an accident and associated with the operation of an aircraft. The difference between an accident and a serious incident lies only in the result.
  - m. **State of Design:** The State having jurisdiction over the organization responsible for the type design.
  - n. **State of Manufacture:** The State having jurisdiction over the organization responsible for the final assembly of the aircraft.
  - o. **State of Occurrence:** The State in the territory of which an accident or incident occurs.
  - p. **State of the Operator:** The State in which the operator's principal place of business is located or, if there is no such place of business, the operator's permanent residence.
  - q. **State of Registry:** The State on whose register the aircraft is entered.
  - r. **State safety programme:** An integrated set of regulations and activities aimed at improving safety.
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## F. REFERENCES

- i. ICAO SARPS.
- ii. ICAO Safety Management Manual, Doc. 9859.
- iii. United Nations Aviation Standards for Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Air Transport Operations (2012).
- iv. "United Nations Air Operations" – SG report to the General Assembly A/65/738.
- v. "Administrative and safety arrangements relating to the management of military utility helicopters in peacekeeping operations" – SG report to the General Assembly A/64/768.
- vi. Rules and regulations of the relevant States.
- vii. Military standards, rules and regulations of the TCCs.
- viii. DPKO and DFS Policy on Aviation Risk Management (2014.02).
- ix. DPKO and DFS Policy on Boards of Inquiry (Forthcoming).

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- x. DFS Aviation Safety Management Manual (Forthcoming).
  - xi. UN Peacekeeping Missions Military Aviation Unit Manual (2015 edition).
  - xii. DPKO Aviation Manual (Forthcoming).
  - xiii. DPKO and DFS Movement Control Manual (2014.21).
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**G. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE**

- 35. Director, LSD/DFS shall monitor the implementation of this Policy.
  - 36. Missions' compliance with this Policy shall be assessed by the Aviation Safety Section LSD/DFS as part of its safety oversight activities.
  - 37. Overall compliance with this Policy can be assessed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) or Board of Auditors (BoA).
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**H. CONTACT**

- 38. Chief, Aviation Safety Section, LSD/DFS is the contact person for this Policy ([aviationsafety@un.org](mailto:aviationsafety@un.org)).
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**I. HISTORY**

- 39. This Policy supersedes the Aviation Safety Policy (2009.02) approved by USG DFS in 2009.
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Approval Signature:

Mr. Herve Ladsous, USG DPKO

Date of Approval: MAY 05 2016

Approval Signature: 

Mr. Atul Khare, USG DFS

Date of Approval: 4 May 2016