



FABEC Project West: real-time simulation looks at new routes in one of the busiest areas in Europe

In an effort to cope with the anticipated future traffic upturn and improve air traffic management performance in one of the busiest areas in Europe, the civil air navigation service providers Belgocontrol, the French DSNA, EUROCONTROL's Maastricht UAC and NATS (UK), together with their military colleagues from the Belgian and French Air Forces, validated an improved airspace structure during a two-week large-scale real-time simulation held at EUROCONTROL's premises in Brétigny, France.

The airspace between the FABEC (Functional Airspace Block Europe Central) area and the south east of the UK (Dover area) is one of the most congested air traffic areas in Europe. Today this area has to accommodate major European air traffic flows crossing from the UK to the east and from France to the north. In addition, military training activity in a cross-border area located at the boundary between France and Belgium (the so-called CBA1) further reduces the already scarce capacity available for civil traffic in the area. All these factors generate delays and inefficiencies.

The first results of the simulation indicate that the airspace structure can be improved to accommodate additional traffic while taking into account military requirements by increasing the number of eastbound routes, reshaping sectors managed by Belgocontrol, MUAC and NATS and by redesigning the military training area CBA1.

Implementation of the improved airspace design is scheduled for 2013.

FABEC is currently managing several airspace design projects intended to improve overall performance in the core area of Europe. The FABEC West Project is one of these airspace design projects.



FABEC brings together the six states of Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland, both at transport and defense ministerial levels, their civil and military air navigation service providers and EUROCONTROL's four-state air traffic control centre in Maastricht. The civil FABEC ANSPs employ a total of 17,700 people. 5,400 are air traffic controllers. 55% of all European traffic movements are in the FABEC area.

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Belgocontrol is an autonomous public company created on October 2, 1998. Its mission is to guarantee the safety of air navigation in the airspace for which Belgium is responsible. Its zone of activities extends from ground level (at Brussels airport and the airports of Antwerp, Charleroi, Liege and Ostend) to 24,500 feet for Belgium and from 14,500/16,500 to 24,500 feet for the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

COMOPSAIR is the military ATM and Air Defence service provider, mainly providing services to Operational Air Traffic in the Belgian FIR/UIR and associated cross-border areas from ground to unlimited, and on the military aerodromes of Kleine Brogel, Beauvechain, Florennes and Koksijde.



DSNA, Direction des Services de la Navigation Aérienne, is part of the Direction Générale de l'Aviation Civile, within the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Housing. It has 7,900 employees. It provides air traffic services for flights above mainland France and in airspace over the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, designated by ICAO. The DSNA operates 5 en-route control centres and 85 control towers. It controlled 2,700,000 flights in 2010.

DSAE/DIRCAM is the air traffic management pillar of the French State Aviation Authority. The military Air Traffic Management Directorate DSAE/DIRCAM is the regulator for Operational Air Traffic domains such as flying rules, provision of air traffic services, air information services as well as airspace design in cooperation with civilian authorities. The Director of DSAE/DIRCAM is also the National Supervisory Authority for Defence providers, on behalf the civilian National Supervisory Authority for the provision of air traffic services to General Air Traffic.

NATS handled 2.1 million flights in the 2010 calendar year, covering the UK and eastern North Atlantic, and carried more than 200 million passengers safely through some of the busiest and most complex airspace in the world. NATS provides air traffic control from its centres at Swanwick, Hampshire and Prestwick, Ayrshire. NATS also provides air traffic control services at 15 of the nation's major airports including Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow, together with air traffic services at Gibraltar Airport.

The Maastricht Upper Area Control Centre (MUAC), operated by **EUROCONTROL** on behalf of four states, provides control for the upper airspace (above 24,500 feet) of Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and north-west Germany. The lower airspace is managed by the national providers, Belgocontrol, Luchtverkeersleiding Nederland (LVNL) and Deutsche Flugsicherung (DFS) respectively. The international area of responsibility covered by MUAC is a perfect example of the simplification and harmonisation of airspace in the spirit of the Single European Sky.

EUROCONTROL, the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation, has as its primary objective to develop a seamless, pan-European air traffic management (ATM) system that fully copes with the growth in air traffic, while maintaining a high level of safety, reducing costs and respecting the environment. At its **Research Centre in Brétigny**, EUROCONTROL carries out large-scale simulations on behalf of its Member States.