

# MAKING FLYING SAFE AND PEACEFUL

**O**n August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, setting in motion a drama which would continue to play itself out until today. Six days later, a more quiet drama began. ICAO established the **Gulf Contingency Team**.

Thanks to that team and the cooperation of Contracting States, civilian aircraft continued flying in the area, almost without incident, throughout the crisis. During the most violent days of "Desert Storm", the United Nations-approved response to the invasion, ICAO arranged five alternative routes which daily steered some 200 planes away from air spaces closed because of the fighting.

Spectacular as this sounds, contingency planning in the event of crises is one of the many functions of ICAO. Sometimes on a smaller scale, sometimes on a more long-term basis. For keeping the air lanes available for the orderly conduct of civil aviation has always been one of its primary objectives.

Indeed, ICAO's founding document, the Convention on International Civil Aviation, includes among the Organization's objectives the peaceful use of aircraft and meeting the needs for safe, regular, efficient and economical air transport.

Crucial to the success of ICAO and of international civil aviation has been the development and maintenance of a series of

international standards and recommended practices which form the foundation for standardization in international civil aviation. Regional air navigation plans comprise listings of the facilities and services necessary for the safety and efficiency of international flight.

The successful implementation of universal standards, for example, has meant having the proper navigation and other facilities strung along the world's air routes, together with highly trained staff to operate and maintain them.

The network of facilities, services and procedures so far approved by the ICAO Council and its Air Navigation Commission add up to more than 60,000 items.



Six years after devastation, Kuwait Airport is thriving.

Among inter-governmental bodies, the ICAO Council is unusual in the amount of real power it exercises. And one of its major duties is the adoption of the international standards and recommended practices, mentioned above.

For instance, how would two pilots react as their aircraft approached each other head on?

Would they break left or right? Should airspeed be measured in kilometres, miles or knots? Temperature in centigrade or fahrenheit?

Over the years, the ICAO Council has developed and adopted 18 technical annexes dealing with everything from meteorology to environmental protection. All ensure the "safety, regularity and efficiency" of air transportation.

As a result of these initiatives, today when two planes approach each other head on, they both veer right. Pilots relate their airspeed to air traffic controllers in knots. And they receive temperature readings from meteorologists in centigrade.

As other concerns are recognized, they too are promptly addressed. When hijacking and other forms of unlawful interference with aircraft and ground facilities began to adversely affect the safety of international civil aviation in the 1960s, ICAO and other civil aviation authorities pressed ahead with campaigns to get States to sign

international treaties making unlawful interference with civil aviation an international crime and to collaborate to defeat such interference.

Now the use of X-rays, metal detectors, explosive detection devices and luggage and cargo scanners makes it more difficult for perpetrators to ply their trade. ➔