Aviation industry unites on frequency protection issue

Emma Kelly/London

The aviation industry has developed a unanimous position on the protection of its radio frequencies, says John White, director of the Infrastructure Support Group at the International Air Transport Association (IATA). The decision precedes May's International Telecommunication Union World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC). IATA and the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) have been leading efforts to protect radio frequencies. IATA, ICAO, the Airports Council International, Air Transport Action Group and the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation were among the industry bodies that met in London this month to form a coalition and finalise its position.

Aviation's radio frequencies, vital for aeronautical communications and particularly for the continued development of satellite navigation, will come under threat from mobile satellite service (MSS) operators which are keen to expand their own services at the WRC on 8 May-2 June in Istanbul, Turkey. White declines to detail the action plan as "we have given away a lot to the mobile community already". The industry continues to lobby national telecommunications ministries, which have voting rights at WRC, to allocate frequencies, to support aviation interests. "Generally, we are seeing sympathy for the aviation position, but we don't know into what action that will translate," says White.

Aviation is opposing seven main areas on the WRC agenda. Top of its concerns is the threat to future satellite navigation developments, with the industry calling for no allocation to be made to MSS in the 1559-1567MHz band, with sharing in this band not feasible. "Unimpeded evolution of global navigation satellite systems is key to the continued safe growth of global air transport and the national economies that aviation serves," says IATA.

In addition, aeronautical users oppose threats from MSS to the 2700-2900MHz band, which is used for primary radar surveillance systems, the 1151-1215MHz band, which supports distance measuring equipment, and the 5000-5150MHz band, which is reserved for the microwave landing system. Any threat from MSS to these bands could result in "a very significant financial impact" on aeronautical users.

The coalition has initiated a long-term action plan designed to safeguard aviation interests, with aviation expected to require 10.8MHz of the spectrum up to 2010 and 18MHz up to 2018.

Iluyshin draws up PS-90 re-engining programme for II-76 freighter

The Iluyshin II-76 would be more environmentally friendly with four PS-90As

Aaron, with de Palacio saying the year. A senior US Federal Aviation Administration official

The 50t (110,000lbf)-payload freighter's four 26,500lbf-thrust (118kN) Aviadvigatel D-30Ks would be replaced by the quieter, more efficient 39,650lbf-thrust PS-90A. There are believed to be 900 II-76s in service worldwide, the oldest over 25 years old. The re-engining candidates have 10-12 years of airframe life left.

The engine offered is a higher-thrust PS-90 being developed for the II-96-300 freighter and proposed for the II-96M/T (Flight International, 29 February-6 March).

The powerplant will boost range and enable the aircraft to comply with International Civil Aviation Organisation noise and emission requirements. The re-engining programme is supported by Russia's Aerospace Agency.

USA calls in ICAO to referee European hushkit dispute

Ramon Lopez/Washington DC

The Clinton Administration has asked the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) to arbitrate in its row with the European Union (EU) over plans to limit the number of hushkitted aircraft operating in Europe after the 2002 introduction of a ban on non-Stage III compliant aircraft.

Europe has already moved to May's cut-off date for determining which hushkitted aircraft can continue to fly, but the USA is pushing Brussels to drop the new deadline. The European Parliament is expected to drop all proposed compromises and vote on 30 March in favour of the cut-off.

The EU has about 90 days to respond following the 14 March filing under the little-used ICAO arbitration procedure Article 84. A decision in Washington's favour would put pressure on Brussels to drop its ban or face losing ICAO voting rights, although it will be able to appeal to the International Court of Justice.

EU Transport Commissioner Loyola de Palacio claims the US Commerce Department has buckled in the face of US industry pressure in filing its complaint. Hopes for a compromise dissolved at a Brussels meeting with US commerce under-secretary David Aaron, with de Palacio saying the USA had turned down an EU offer to suspend its ruling in return for a US commitment to early negotiations.

An ICAO arbitration verdict could be issued before the end of the year. A senior US Federal Aviation Administration official says he hopes ICAO negotiators will find a solution, but warns: "We stand ready to suspend or create a hiatus in the ICAO process."

Europe says it has moved as far as it can in offering to compromise. Member of the European Parliament David Bowe, a spokesman on environmental issues, predicts a clear vote on 30 March in favour of applying the full hushkit ban.