

in the San Juan FIR and in the airspace corridor between Florida and the San Juan FIR. Third, we propose to remove the proposal that would have allowed part 91 turbo-propeller aircraft to operate in RVSM airspace with a single RVSM compliant altimeter. The part 91 proposal received opposition from pilot organizations and civil aviation authorities of other countries, including countries with airspace adjoining the U.S.

Proposal To List Atlantic High and Gulf of Mexico High Offshore Airspace

Listing these airspaces would better define the offshore and oceanic airspaces off the eastern and southern coasts of the U.S. where we propose to implement RVSM. Certain airspace beyond 12 miles of the eastern and southern coasts of the U.S. is designated in FAA Order 7400.9 (Airspace Designations and Reporting Points) as Atlantic High and Gulf of Mexico High Offshore Airspace. This area includes airspace between Florida and the San Juan FIR. FAA Order 7400.9 contains a complete description of the horizontal boundaries of this airspace. We have published a chart showing the boundaries of Offshore and Oceanic airspace off the eastern and southern coasts of the U.S. in the docket at <http://dms.dot.gov>, docket number FAA-2002-12261.

Listing Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico High Offshore Airspace in part 91, Appendix G, with oceanic airspace completes the list of airspace off the eastern and southern coasts of the U.S. where we may implement RVSM.

Proposal To Add the Airspace Between Florida and Puerto Rico and the San Juan FIR to the Implementation Plan

The NPRM that we published on May 10, 2002, proposed to implement RVSM in Miami Oceanic FIR airspace over the Gulf of Mexico. In comments on the NPRM, the Air Transport Association (ATA) suggested including “* * * the San Juan and Miami FIR’s in their entirety * * *” in the list of airspace where RVSM is proposed to be implemented. We believe that this proposal has merit and can be accomplished by listing Atlantic High Offshore Airspace and the San Juan FIR in part 91, Appendix G, section 8 (Airspace Designation). As noted previously, Atlantic High Offshore Airspace includes a corridor of airspace between Florida and the San Juan FIR. This corridor is bounded in the north by RVSM airspace in the New York Oceanic FIR and in the south by the Havana, Santa Domingo and Port-au-Prince FIR’s.

A primary objective of this action is to implement RVSM in the airspaces discussed above at the same time that we implemented it in the domestic U.S. We believe that this will have the following benefits:

(1) It harmonizes RVSM operations between RVSM airspace implemented in 2001 in the New York Oceanic FIR and RVSM airspace proposed over the State of Florida as part of the domestic U.S. RVSM proposal.

(2) It harmonizes RVSM operations for traffic operating north and south between the San Juan and New York Oceanic FIR.

(3) It reduces the complexity of operations and improves safety by providing a common vertical separation standard and flight level orientation scheme for the New York Oceanic FIR, Atlantic High Offshore Airspace, the San Juan FIR and the domestic U.S.

(4) It improves the flow of traffic between Florida and the San Juan FIR by making six more flight levels available.

(5) It provides the potential for harmonizing RVSM operations with the Air Traffic Service Providers in the Caribbean when RVSM is implemented in that area.

(6) It makes all the benefits of RVSM cited in the NPRM available in these airspaces. This benefit includes increased controller flexibility, reduction of controller workload, and enhanced flexibility to enable aircraft to cross intersecting routes.

Effect on Operators

We do not believe that this proposal would require a significant number of operators that had not already obtained or planned to obtain RVSM authority to do so. We have examined the aircraft types and operators that fly in the San Juan FIR and in the airspace between Puerto Rico and Miami. We have found that all of the flights operating between FL 290–410 in the airspace are flown to or from destinations in the U.S., Canada and Europe.

To operate on the routes to or from airports in the U.S. northeast, mid-Atlantic and Canada, operators have already been required to obtain RVSM approval to fly through RVSM airspace in the New York Oceanic FIR. To operate to or from airports in Europe, operators have already been required to obtain RVSM approval to operate in RVSM airspace in the North Atlantic and Europe. In addition, the NPRM proposed to implement RVSM in domestic U.S. airspace. Aircraft operating to or from destinations in the domestic U.S. would be required by that

proposal to comply with RVSM standards.

We believe this proposal has a minimal financial impact on U.S. operators, as it would not affect any beyond those identified in the NPRM. We request your comments regarding financial impact on any operators not identified in the NPRM.

Withdrawal of the Proposal To Permit a Single RVSM-Compliant Altimeter

The RVSM standards for aircraft approval are published in 14 CFR part 91, Appendix G, section 2. Section 2 calls for the aircraft to be equipped with two independent altitude measurement systems. In the NPRM, we proposed that turbo-propeller aircraft operated under part 91 that were equipped with a single RVSM-compliant altitude measurement system and all other RVSM required aircraft systems could be considered eligible to conduct RVSM operations within the U.S. airspace and the airspace of foreign countries that authorize such a provision.

In making the proposal, we recognized that the precedence in the first five years of RVSM operations was for RVSM-compliant aircraft to be equipped with two altimetry systems. Both FAA regulations and other civil aviation authorities worldwide followed this precedence. We noted, however, that the 1992 Edition 1 of the International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO) Manual on RVSM (ICAO Document 9574) contained provision for small aircraft to be equipped with a single RVSM-compliant altimetry system and elected to make the NPRM proposal.

We propose to withdraw the proposal to allow turbo-propeller aircraft operated under part 91 and equipped with a single RVSM-compliant altimeter to conduct RVSM operations within the U.S. and foreign countries adopting that provision. We now conclude that the benefit is not significant enough to warrant changing the RVSM aircraft equipage standard that the FAA and other world authorities have applied for the past five years. We considered the following factors:

First, turbo-propeller aircraft represent a very low percentage of the traffic that operates at FLs where RVSM would be applied, that is, between FLs 290 and 410. Turbo-propeller aircraft operated under part 91 represent an even less significant percentage of traffic at those flight levels. Turbo-propeller aircraft were found to conduct only 0.4 percent of operations between FLs 290 and 410. Turbo-propeller aircraft operated under part 91 are estimated to conduct only 0.3 percent of operations