Title 14—AERONAUTICS AND SPACE

Chapter I—Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Transportation

[Docket No. 8600; Amdt. 77-6]

PART 77—OBJECTS AFFECTING NAVIGABLE AIRSPACE

Objects Interfering With Air Navigation Facilities

The purpose of this amendment to Part 77 of the Federal Aviation Regulations is to permit the Administrator to consider the effect a proposed construction or alteration would have upon the operation of an air navigation facility.

The substance of this amendment was published as a notice of proposed rule making in the FEDERAL REGISTER on December 21, 1967 (32 F.R. 20658), as NPRM 67-54. Many comments were received in response to the notice. Generally, the comments were favorable and recommended adoption of the amendment as proposed.

Part 77 of the Federal Aviation Regulations establishes standards for determining obstructions in navigable airspace, sets forth the notice requirements of certain proposed construction or alteration, provides for aeronautical studies of obstructions to determine their effect on the safe and efficient use of airspace and provides for public hearings on the hazardous effect of proposed construction or alteration. In accordance with previous interpretations and practice, this part applies to the physical effect of an obstruction on the flight of aircraft through the navigable airspace.

The Federal Aviation Administration is encountering with increasing frequency, situations where construction or alteration has a deleterious effect on the operation of air navigation facilities without being a physical hazard in the flight path of aircraft. These situations have ranged from construction which partially blocked the view from an airport air traffic control tower of runways, taxi, and parking areas, to obstructions which blocked or reflected electromagnetic radiation in the vicinity of navigational aids like radio or radar installations. In some instances, the navigational aid could be moved to an interference-free location. In other situations, however, no interference-free locations were available, or the cost of razing and relocating facilities, because of their size or number, was exorbitant.

It appears desirable that when an aeronautical study is made, the Administrator should include in that study the effect that construction or alteration may have on the operation of air navigation facilities. It would be an unreasonable burden on the public to require a proponent to consider this effect because the public may not be aware of the existence or operational characteristics of an air navigation facility, and any effect thereon may not easily be ascertained by the proponent. Accordingly, the Administrator should have the authority of including in an aeronautical study the physical or electromagnetic effect of proposed construction on air navigation facilities. The study may enable the Administrator to recommend changes in the design, location, or construction material that would eliminate or reduce interference with the operation of the air navigation facility. A reduction or elimination of interference may permit the retention of existing approach minimums, use of existing runways or facility structures or avoid costly relocation expenses to the airport or the FAA.

All of the parties that submitted comments concurred in or endorsed the proposed amendment, except the Airport Operators Council International, the Department of Aviation, City of Atlanta, Ga., and the Air Transport Association of America.

The Airport Operators Council International stated that it strongly opposed the proposed amendment primarily for the following reasons:

(1) The FAA already has sufficient authority to minimize critical encroachment upon airport control tower sight lines through its ability to NOTAM and therefore needs no additional authority.

(2) It is undesirable to use the proposed amendment to protect off-airport navaids from the deleterious effect on their operation by construction proposals over which the airport operation has no control.

Regarding the first comment, the FAA's present authority allows it to issue a Notice to Airmen to advise them concerning areas on an airport in which ground control of traffic cannot be maintained due to blocking of line-of-sight from the airport control tower. When such a condition exists, the derogation of air traffic control has already taken place and a NOTAM merely advises of that condition. The purpose of this rule is to prevent the condition from arising in the first place.

As far as the second comment is concerned, this amendment intends to include consideration of the physical or electromagnetic effect on the operation of air navigation facilities of any construction proposal for which a notice is required under § 77.13(a), and would exceed any standard of Subpart C, regardless of whether the facilities are located on or off an airport.

The Department of Aviation, City of Atlanta, Georgia, opposed the proposed amendment primarily on the ground that it felt that this amendment would allow the location and functioning of an FAA air navigation facility to control all other airport development prospects. The Department also stated that it felt that the present Federal Aviation Regulations were adequate to handle obstructions to airport control towers and air navigation facilities.

The aeronautical study may enable the FAA to recommend changes in the design, location, or construction material that may eliminate or reduce interference with the operation of the air navigation facility. These recommendations would be made to the construction sponsor and not to the airport operator unless the construction proposal was one over which the airport operator exercised control. Proposed construction or alteration subject to an aeronautical study under the proposed amendment would be limited to those proposals for which notice to the Administrator is now required under § 77.13(a) of Part 77, FAR, and the proposal would exceed any standard of Subpart C. Proposed construction or alteration off airports that would not require notice under § 77.13(a) would not come within the scope of the proposed amendment even though there may be a possibility that the proposed construction or alteration might adversely affect the operation of a nearby air navigation facility.

It is not the purpose of the proposed amendment to institute control over any aspect of airport development but (1) to consider the physical and electromagnetic effects of any proposed construction or alteration on air navigation facilities, during an aeronautical study; (2) to inform the construction sponsor, if necessary, of possible interference and how to avoid it; and (3) where the construction proposal would have a substantial adverse effect upon the operation of any air navigation facility to issue a determination of hazard. Current Federal Aviation Regulations do not provide the FAA with

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authority to study proposed construction or alteration for the purpose of determining their physical and electromagnetic effect on the operation of air navigation facilities.

The Air Transport Association (ATA) did not oppose the proposed amendment, but made several suggestions. Among them ATA commented that FAA has published few guidelines for constructing facilities on or near airports and such guidelines should be published by FAA prior to amending Part 77 as proposed.

In addition, ATA felt it should be made clear that airport control towers are not air navigation facilities in the sense of the proposed rule. ATA comments are under careful consideration and the FAA at the present time is engaged in a project to develop new criteria to determine whether proposed construction would affect the operation of air navigation facilities. The intent of the amendment to Part 77, however, is not to revise or develop criteria but to provide the authority to consider possible interference with the operation of air navigation facilities during the aeronautical study of construction proposals. At such time as new criteria have been developed a determination will be made as to their adequacy and whether they should be incorporated in the regulation.

In consideration of the foregoing, Part 77 of the Federal Aviation Regulations is amended as follows, effective August 31, 1968:

1. In § 77.31, paragraph (a) is revised to read:

§ 77.31 Scope.

(a) This subpart applies to the conduct of aeronautical studies of the effect of proposed construction or alteration on the use of air navigation facilities or navigable airspace by aircraft. In the aeronautical studies, present and future IFR and VFR aeronautical operations and procedures are reviewed and any possible changes in those operations and procedures and in the construction proposal that would eliminate or alleviate the conflicting demands are ascertained.

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2. In § 77.35, paragraph (a) is revised to read:

§ 77.35 Aeronautical studies.

(a) The Regional Director of the region in which the proposed construction or alteration would be located, or his designee, conducts the aeronautical study of the effect of the proposal upon the operation of air navigation facilities and the safe and efficient utilization of the navigable airspace. This study may include the physical and electromagnetic radiation effect the proposal may have on the operation of an air navigation facility.

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(Secs. 307, 313, 1101, Federal Aviation Act of 1958; 49 U.S.C. 1348, 1354, 1501)

Issued in Washington, D.C., on July 25, 1968.

WILLIAM F. MCKEE,
Administrator.

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