The Instrument Landing System (ILS) - A Review

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Abstract: - The primary objective of this paper is to emphasise and elucidate on basic information about the Instrument Landing System (ILS); which happens to be a high precision & accuracy-based radio navigation equipment. It is primarily a ground-based system which utilises an amalgamation of radio signals wherever they are received by airports and airlines around the world; providing both lateral and longitudinal guidance of an approaching aircraft, landing on a runway in atmospheric meteorological conditions. The purpose of this paper is to delineate the architecture of the ILS, its composition, installation, components etc.

Key Words: —*Instrument Landing System, Localizer, Glideslope, Marking Beacons, Aircrafts, Aeronautics, Distance Measuring Equipment.*

I. Introduction

The ILS is a ground-based radio navigation system giving pilots the azimuthal and vertical guidance towards the runway as they are in approach in Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IMC). The principle of operation of the same is fundamentally based on Distance Measuring Equipment (DME), VHF Omni Range, and Instrument Settlement System for proximity and seating. A standard operating system for radio stationing utilised globally was adopted by (ICAO) in 1946 as ILS. International aircraft landed in all climates [1], and the first use of ILS occurred in 1964 [2], whilst there had been an excruciating surge in the air traffic. Currently, at many major airports, there have been reports of the existence of multitude of difficulties in handling ongoing levels of traffic safely, especially during residential or unpredictably unprecedented weather conditions. To overcome these predicaments and the consequential challenges faced, a plethora of solutions and remedial measures had been proposed, e.g., the Microwave Landing System (MLS) which is an omni-weather, ground-based navigation guidance system. ICAO has adopted Microwave Landing System (MLS) for global and widespread utilisation [3], but it demands expensive and immense installation on aircraft and consistent monitoring which perhaps not many airports accept to implement.

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Ever since the launch of GPS, most existing MLS systems have henceforth been turned off in North America, FAA prefers GPS over MLS [4]. But the GPS is not very meticulously concise when it comes to the consistent maintenance of precision and accuracy and henceforth, its numerous cons make this proposal rather ineffective and inadequate. The reception of a plane when approaching and arriving at an airport is an immensely methodical & systematic task and demands indispensable inerrancy and accuracy. Although improvements have been made to find better and efficient measures for this system through differential fixation messages (DGPS), there is still is the reception of an estimated error rating of 3 to 5 metres. This erroneous anomaly may accidentally result in the aircraft to deviate from the runway and catastrophically crash due to lack of high accuracy, amongst GPS limitations, i.e., low precision satellite accuracy time transmission signal longer than signal sent down location, low GPS recovery rate, Signal decline, ionosphere effects etc. While GPS availability is not readily guaranteed, the world can't absolutely just rely on this device for navigation assistance. Hence, this direly pressing need was what ultimately led to the advent and invention of the ILS. [9] It is considered one of the best and most prominent and well-established devises in the history of aviation henceforth, the advanced ILS instrumentation will be for interest in the nomadic community. [10] The fundamental purpose of this paper is to accentuate an elaborate review of the instrument landing system (ILS) as a system actually used on a wider scale any other aircraft landing system; which might not have yet been successfully invested and implemented due to their shortcomings, insatiable studies of development or those that are more expensive than their economic viability &

sustainability. The prime focus is on the implications of the ILS system, so this paper provides ample emphasis on the features and the respective bottlenecks of the same. The sections have emphasized the idea behind ILS machines, Sub-station units, Cover Signal and Monitoring, Flight Unlocked board materials and structures, ILS Centre Operations Categories, and other ILS requirements such as Accuracy / Integrity / Availability, to understand how ILS directs a flight downhill the flight path safely.[13].

II. Analysis and Discussion

2.1 Configuring an ILS into an Aircraft

The aircraft has to be fitted with an adequate ILS receiver to display and convert the picked-up signals on the cockpit instruments to fly an ILS. Additionally, the necessary ILS approach data chart with indispensable information like the ILS frequency, the respective identifier code, the glide-slope angle & final approach point, the ILS inbound course, the given minimum descent altitude/height & ILS categories and finally, the ILS go-around or missed approach procedure are also needed. [17].

2.2 Structure of an ILS

The aircraft is provided with an advocated route to maintain its lateral position in the centre of the runway. Hence, the ILS consists of two independent sub-systems. The first, which provides a side-by-side guide, which limits flight to the runway to deviate from the recommended runway, is called a localiser. [11]

The second, which provides longitudinal direction, and henceforth limits the vertical deviation of the suggested descent path, is called the glide slope or slide. Guidance is provided by transmitting amplitude modulation from two different transmitters by location. This modulated signal is accepted by ILS recipients on the flight and is further processed & interpreted for directional information. The depths of fluctuations of the erratically changing signals are compared continuously between a particular pair separately. [15]

The two signals are geographically dichotomised in such a way that the precise cancellation and nullification of the variable signal occurs only in the recommended flight path. When a plane deviates from its suggested direction, either of the components exceeds the other and a non-minimal amount of the signal distinction effect appears.[19]

Fig.1. The Localiser Antenna Subsection

Localiser: - The azimuth direction provided by the localiser is attained using a 90-Hz left antenna pattern and a 150-Hz module right hand pattern as viewed on an aircraft approaching. The rightward deviation is caused by the 90-Hz signal received by the flight recipient (CDI). The 150-Hz signal will drive a straight CDI needle to the leftward of the plane. If the plane is in the middle, the direct CDI needle will be in the centre. [12] The ILS system consists of 2 main antennae sending out signals at one tuneable frequency. Several pairs of directional antennae constitute and locate the localiser antenna. Radio signals are sent along the azimuthal axis of the runway.

Consider Fig.2. the localiser antenna continuously emits two lobes which are frequency modulated 90 Hz on the left-hand side of the runway centreline and 150 Hz towards the right.

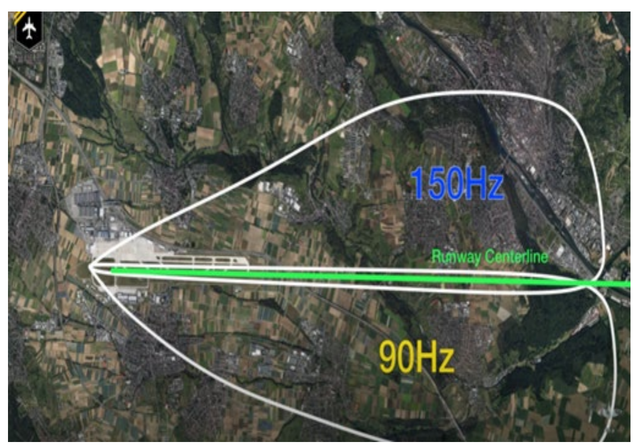

Fig.2. Constituents of the Instrument Landing System

To obtain a better insight into the working of the localiser antennae, imagine each lobe as a massive light beam. Now the 90 Hz FM modulated lobe would be a yellow light and the 150 Hz side would be a blue light. [8] It one is slightly to the right of the centreline, the light that one would be seeing would be primarily blue; meaning one would have to fly more towards the left where the lobes overlap creating a green signal to be on the precise runway centreline. Based on this concept, one obtains an understanding of how to interpret the converted ILS signal on the ADI. [7] Now, instead of these colours, a diamond indicating the aircraft's position relative to the runway is present on the ILS display screen. If the diamond is placed more towards the right of the runway centreline, the aircraft is present more to the left of it and the pilot needs to correct his heading to join the localiser and vice versa. [1]

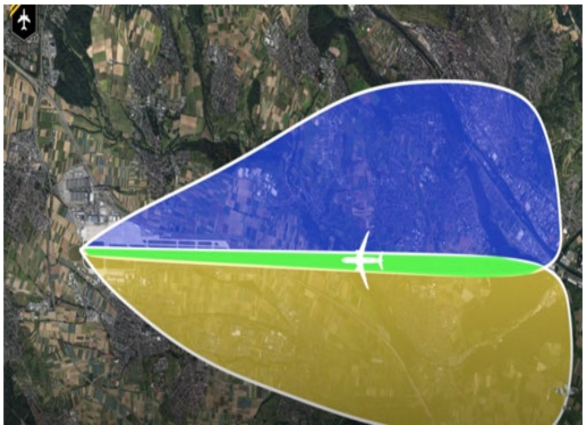

Fig.3. Localizer Beamforming

The ILS facility identification code is simultaneously transmitted by the localiser. It's important as the frequency range for the ILS is relatively very small and one can always end up picking the wrong ILS signals of a nearby airport. Therefore, each ILS sends out its own Morse code for its unique identification. For example, the ILS identification code for John F Kennedy Airport 04 Right is India Juliet Foxtrot Kilo (IJFK) and this will be displayed on the pilot's ILS display screen. [19]

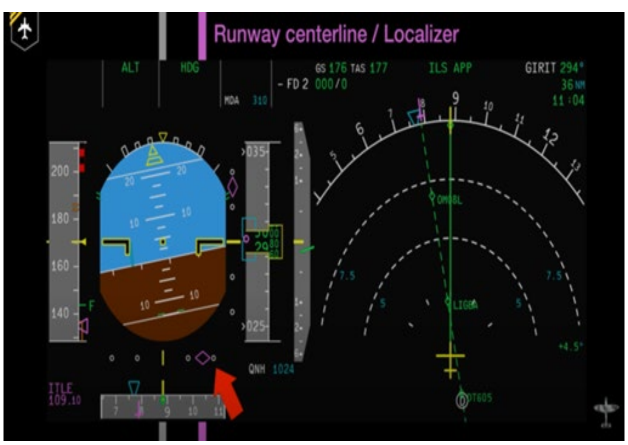

Fig.4. Localizer Display insider the Aircraft

Glide-Slope: – The glide-slope antenna is similar to the localiser antenna, except it sends out signals to the vertical axis of the runway and is perpendicular to the touchdown zone. [10] The glide-slope location which is usually found along the end of the runway is given direct deviation. A total of 40 channels are assigned to the band 328.6-335.4 MHz. The network company emits antenna radiation below the slope amplitude adjusted with a 150-Hz signal. The pattern above the slope of the slope produces a signal with a 90-Hz amplitude module. If the approaching plane is on a slope, a horizontal CDI needle (glide slope) will be in the centre. Imagine the same light-beam analogy that was mentioned before, it works the same except it works at a 90-degree angle to the localiser beam. [11] More often than not, the glide-slope angle towards the runway is approximately tilted 3 degrees, which is an angle presenting an adequate vertical descent rate in coherence with the approach speed and it's shallow enough to constantly reduce the aircraft speed by extending slats, flaps and the landing gear.

Fig.5. Glidescope Antenna Subsystem

There's another marker presented on the ILS display portraying the position of the aircraft relative to the glide path. If the diamond is above the centre; that gives one the indication that the aircraft is below the glide-slope and the pilot would have to reduce his vertical speed to recapture the glide-slope. If below, it indicates that the aircraft is too high above the glide-slope; and the vertical speed has to be rectified in order to rejoin. This sounds easy, but in actuality it's quite the opposite due to the presence of Magnus effect and Dynamic lift.[3]

Marking Beacons: - Marking beacons indicate how far off the approaching aircraft is from the runway. This is absolutely important for the speed management and hence all the ILS instruments have 3 main marking beacons – the outer marker, the middle marker and the inner marker. [6]

Outer marker (OM) - Situated 3 1/2 to 6 NM from the threshold within 250 ft of the extended runway centre-line, enables the pilot to make a positive position fix.
Middle Marker (MM) - Situated approximately 0.5 to 0.8 NM from the threshold on the extended runway centreline and intersects the glide path at an estimation of 200 to 250 ft above the runway elevation.
Inner Marker (IM) - Situated on the front course between the landing threshold and middle marker.

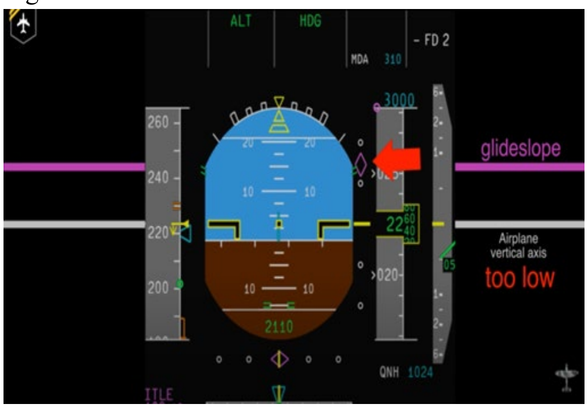

Fig.6. Glidescope Display inside the Aircraft

Course-related marking tools provide vertical fan signals to mark important productions along the way. The inner marker is usually on the runway; the subsequent centre mark is 3500 meters from the threshold; and the outer mark is about 5 miles from the runway. [9] DME in one of the 20 paired channels and local channels may be used to show location in the middle of the path. So, when flying over the outer marker, a little blue light will start flashing on the screen and the corresponding beeping mode can be heard. [6] Likewise, the middle marker and the inner marker correspond to crimson and white light respectively. The beeping frequency keeps increasing as we enter externally towards the runway from consecutive marking zones starting from the outer marking beacon.[7]
Distance Measuring Equipment (DME): In the latest ILS equipment's, there is a 3rd antenna called the DME or the Distance measuring equipment which provides an adequate slant range towards the runway making it a lot easier to monitor distance but the aircraft has to be fit in with the appropriate DME receiver and an instrument to synchronise with the corresponding frequency. [5] On an estimate, the localiser shall be receivable with accuracy of at least 25 nautical miles from the runway threshold at +/- 10 degrees at either side; at +/- 17 nautical miles and 35 degrees and if necessary, at 180 degrees within 10 NM radius. The glide- slope has its best accuracy at +/- 8 degrees to either side of 10 NM Radius.

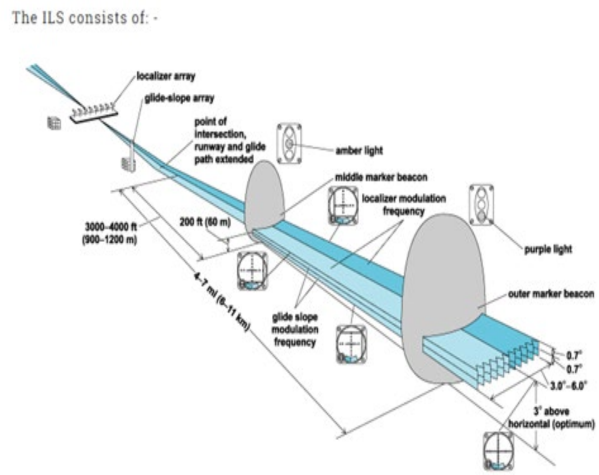

Fig.7. Marking Beacons

2.3 How to fly an ILS

In order to fly an ILS, align the aircraft in coherence with the runway via the lateral assistance offered by the localiser. This is generically provided by the radar vectors from ATC. Subsequently, approach the runway and intercept the glide-slope from underneath, to prevent a pseudo glide path interception, henceforth ensuring accuracy. Start a gradual descent toward the runway after this has been attained.[9]
Multitude of ways can be incorporated in order to represent the localiser & glide slope on the internal aircraft communication systems; but more often times than not, green triangle or a line signifies the localiser; a green diamond or triangle signifies the glide-slope.
After intercepting the glide-slope and commencing gradual descent towards the runway, the localiser/glide-slope indications move if one gets off the centreline, indicating the necessary measures to attain accordance with the centreline & provide the respective increase/decrease descent rate. [10] On nearing the runway, the localiser and glide-slope signals become exceedingly sensitive as the course width of both recede the closer one gets to the runway. Utilising minute rectifications and high precision, it is essential to fly an ILS all the way to minimum.

2.4 Various categories of the ILS & different Approach Lighting Systems: –

Runway Visual Range (RVR): - To ensure a safe and sound landing, the pilot must be able to vividly perceive the appropriate visual aids not later than the arrival at the Decision Height (DH) or the missed approach point (MAP).

The Approach Lighting Systems: - A plethora of runway lighting systems serve as crucial parts of the ILS system to assist the pilot in landing, a few examples being approach light system (ALS), sequenced flashing light (SFL), touchdown zone lights (TDZ) and centreline lights etc. [9]

The runway visual range (RVR) sets a bare minimum threshold above which a hazard free, unambiguous landing is ensured. The pilot adheres to the ILS guidance until the apt decision height (DH) is attained during the approach. At the DH, the touchdown approach may only be adopted if the specified visual reference is available; otherwise, a go-around is made.

Table.1. Classification of ILS

Category I	Supports a minimal height of resolution at 200 ft. The visibility of the runway is at estimation of 1800 ft. In addition to IFR rules in concordance with the ILS system and a marker beacon receiver; the plane has to be well equipped.
Category II	Supports a minimal decision height of 100 ft. The visibility of the runway is at an estimation of 1200 ft. A radio altimeter, inner beacon receiver, autopilot link, raindrop remover, automatic draught control system of engine etc need to be incorporated into the plane.
Category III A	Supports minimal decision height lower than 100 ft. The visibility of the runway is at an estimation of 700 ft. An autopilot, passive malfunction monitor, head up display etc have to be inculcated into the aircraft.
Category III B	Supports minimal decision height lower than 50 ft. The visibility of the runway is at an estimation of 150 ft. Alternation of a rolling speed needs to be consistently monitored and maintained.
Category IIIC	Zero visibility

2.5 ILS & ICAO Requirement

Accuracy: - As the subject lines are primarily determined by Localiser and Glide Path antenna patterns they can be represented by structures, space and leaves. It often results in undesired advances in deviation of the subject away from the straight line. This anomaly is called a "structure". ICAO respectively segregates the remarkably high levels of this particular deviation accordingly.[20]

Integrity: **-** The receiver in the air must consistently monitor the amount of fluctuations and vacillations and if this level goes below the set threshold, the warning indicator on the driver indicator should work. The sub-station includes monitors that must see without tolerance conditions.

Availability: **-** Extensive acquisition is obtained using two transmitters. If the operating transmitter fails or disconnects tolerance, the second shifts to the system. The transition time is a phase function with high stages that require short periods of replacement.

III. Conclusion

The ILS system is considered the most accurate and precise method to ensure safe aircraft landing under a variety of meteorological conditions; as per a plethora of previous research and studies, it is evident that the system needed to meticulously work well to meet safety requirements as well as the standards set by the ICAO. [4] Despite the dynamic advances and progression in technology, the ILS system as a whole needs persistent evaluation and continuous monitoring due to the sensitivity of its signals influenced by a number of surrounding factors and stray interferences. There is immense scope in additional addendums and further advancements in the ILS to make it a much more robust and proficient.

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