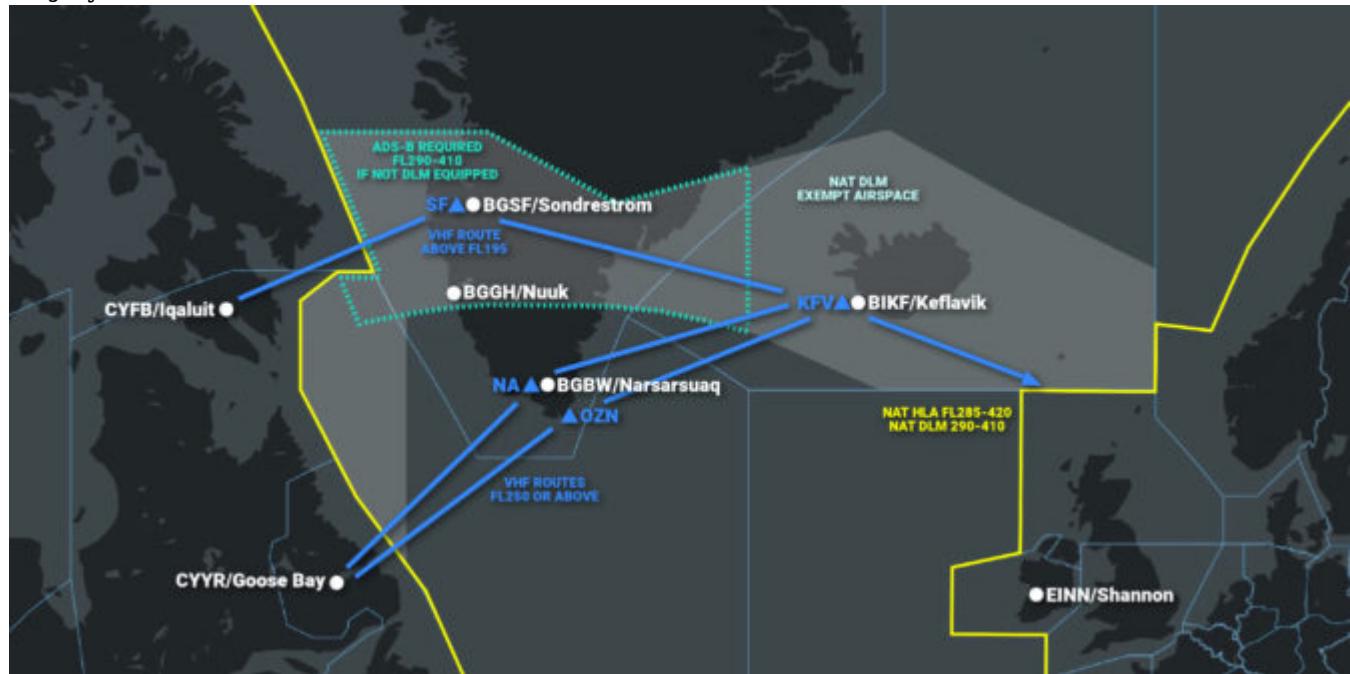


# Blue Spruce Routes Are Gone (But You Can Still Fly Them)

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



## The Short Story

The Blue Spruce Routes are gone — but if you don't have all the equipment, there are still ways to get across the Atlantic. What you can do depends on what's on board:

### **Fully equipped? (2 LRNS, CPDLC RCP240, ADS-C RSP180, HF, LOAs)**

- You can go anywhere in the NAT HLA.

### **No datalink?**

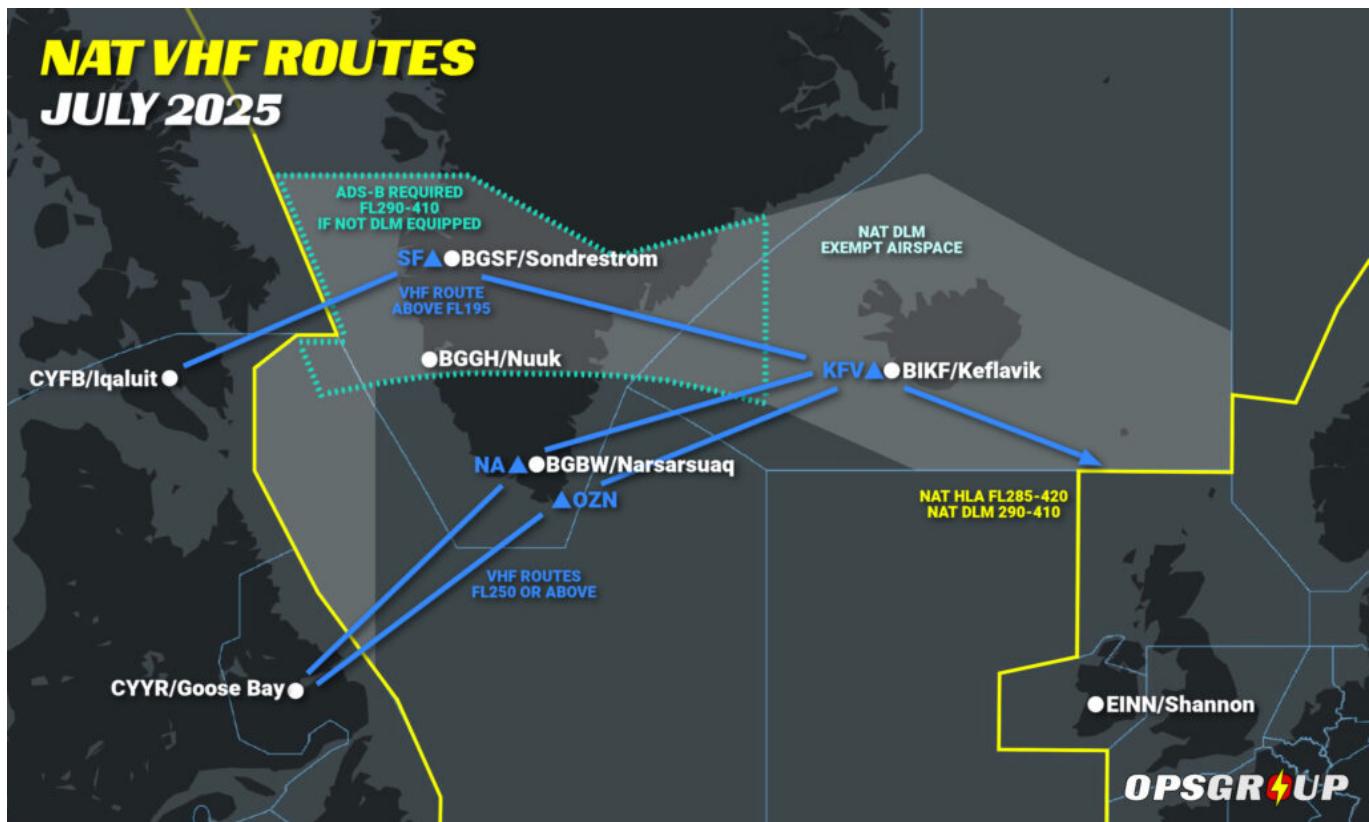
- Avoid FL290-410 unless you're in the DLM Exemption Area (e.g. Iceland-Greenland Corridor) and have ADS-B.

### **No HF radios?**

- You can only cross via specific VHF-only routes:
  - Above FL195: YFB-SF-KFV
  - FL250 and above: YYR-OZN-KFV

### **Only one LRNS?**

- Stay below FL285 to avoid HLA nav and datalink rules — but unless you're on a Gander-approved VHF route (e.g. via OZN or SF), you'll still need two long-range comms systems.
- Want to climb into HLA airspace? You'll need VHF coverage, ATS surveillance, State approval, and a compliant routing like the Iceland-Greenland corridor.



### The Longer Story

As of March 20, 2025, the Blue Spruce Routes have been officially removed from the North Atlantic. These routes—once the lifeline for aircraft with limited navigation or communication capability—are now a thing of the past. The change is part of the latest update to **NAT Doc 007**, which you can read more about [here](#).

Technically established in 1976, the Blue Spruce Routes allowed aircraft with only one **Long Range Navigation System (LRNS)** to transit the **NAT High Level Airspace (HLA)** under special routing and coverage provisions. Over time, however, the need for them faded. The reasons:

- Almost no aircraft that have the mandated CPDLC equipment have only one LRNS. Or put another way, if you have CPDLC, you have dual LRNSs unless broken. With the addition of CPDLC requirement, relief for a single LRNS became outdated.
- Ground-based nav aids along the routes have largely disappeared.
- Datalink Mandated Airspace now covers most of NAT HLA.
- The Iceland-Greenland Corridor, with reliable VHF and ATS surveillance, provides a more flexible and better-supported fallback option.

While the Blue Spruce name may still pop up informally (especially among ferry operators), it no longer refers to any officially recognized ICAO routes. But crucially, **some of the old routings remain usable**—just under new conditions.

For example, Canada now allows aircraft operating with only VHF to cross via specific routes:

- **Above FL195 via YFB-SF-KFV** (*this one currently says “below” FL195 in the Canada AIP, but that’s been confirmed as a typo, and will be getting updated shortly!*)

- **FL250 or above via YYR-OZN (or NA)-KVF**

These are the only routes where **VHF coverage is considered sufficient** for oceanic ops without HF radios. Everywhere else, HF is still required outside VHF range.

So while the Blue Spruce Routes are gone in name and publication, **practical exemptions remain**—especially for aircraft with partial equipage. What's changed is how you plan and justify the crossing.

Let's walk through what you can still do today, based on what your aircraft has (or doesn't).

## Standard Ops

Most traffic crossing the North Atlantic Airspace (NAT) occurs from **FL290-410 through the North Atlantic High Level Airspace (NAT HLA)**. Over the years, advances in navigation, communication, and surveillance equipment have led to additional requirements for operators so ATC can safely reduce aircraft spacing and pack more aircraft through the airspace.

### For unrestricted access to the NAT HLA, operators need:

- 2 Long Range Navigation Systems (LRNSs)
- Outside VHF areas 2 LRCS are required – either 2x HF, or HF & Satcom/or CPDLC, for the other.
- FANS 1/A equipment for the NAT Datalink Mandated airspace
- Super-duper datalink for the coveted PBCS Tracks (i.e. CPDLC capable of RCP240 + ADS-C capable of RSP180)

### And for US operators, that equipment list is a prerequisite for several required LOAs:

- A056 CPDLC Enroute, and Oceanic and Remote (PBCS)
- B036 Oceanic and Remote Continental Navigation Using Multiple Long-Range Navigation Systems (M-LRNS), Aka. RNP 4 (and RNP 10)
- B039 NAT HLA
- B046 RVSM
- D195 MEL (not technically required for a crossing, but might as well throw this one in)

**The above is the ideal setup. But what if I fly old stuff, or new stuff, or broken stuff, or little stuff?**

## Old Stuff

To the formerly early adopters without the benefit of factory standard state-of-the-art equipment: let's say your aircraft has LRNSs that are only capable of RNP 10, or your FANS equipment is RCP400 and RSP400. All else being equal, the only limitation would be **no PBCS tracks**. And **no T9/T290** either. All other tracks or random routes through the HLA are approved.

Is your equipment so old it doesn't even have the above equipment? **Consider yourself the same as broken**, and keep reading...

## New Stuff

You just closed on a shiny, new, well-equipped jet and have to ferry it across the pond, but you have no LOAs. In this case, you are altitude and route are limited. No RVSM or NAT HLA LOAs means the airspace from FL290-410 is off limits for you. If traffic permits, ATC may let you climb through the HLA above FL410, but you might want to plan fuel and route at FL280. Route-wise, without B036, **you're flying the Iceland-Greenland Corridor.**

If you only have some of the above-listed LOAs, **also consider yourself broken.**

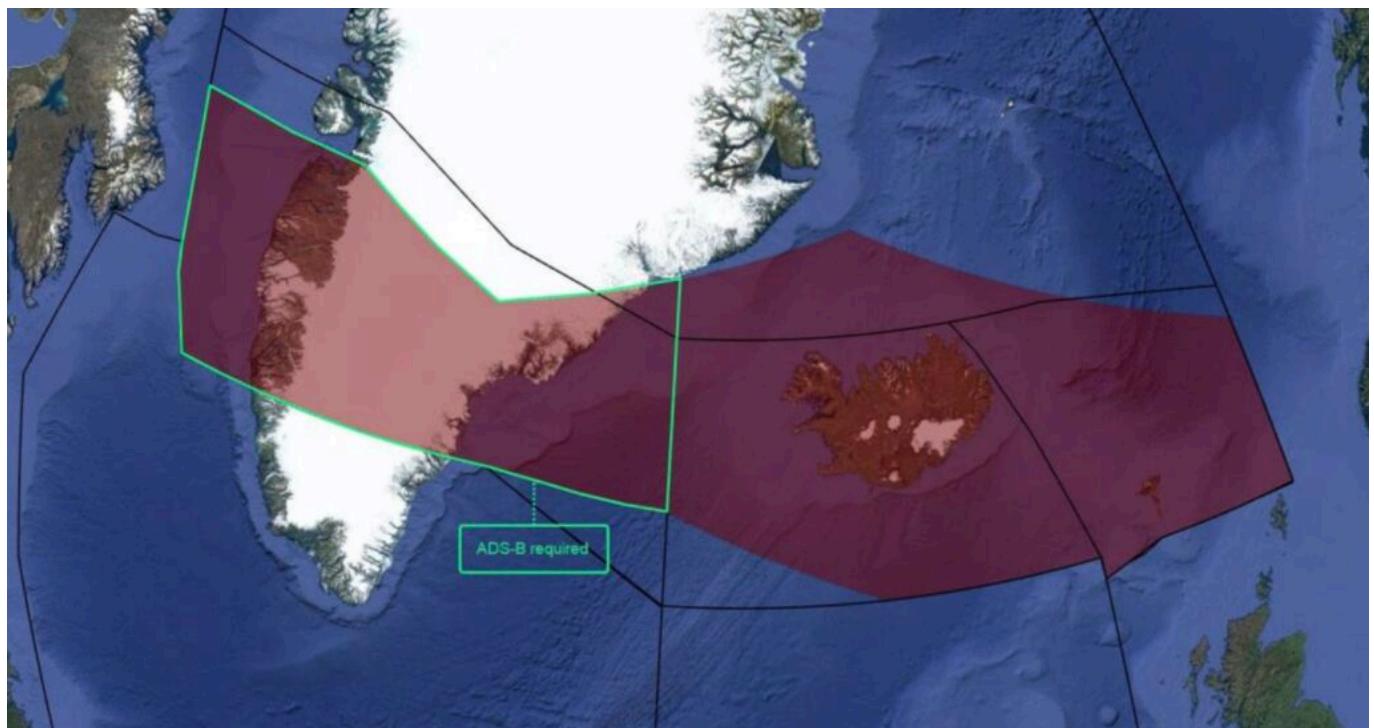
Now, it gets a little more nuanced...

## Broken Stuff

**You've been spoofed, but only one GPS came back?** When down to one LRNS (or you don't have B036), fly the Iceland-Greenland Corridor. With only one LRNS, you could fly through the NAT HLA along the corridor with approval if you stay within surveillance and VHF coverage and have the equipment to fly the assigned route. Otherwise, fly above or below the NAT HLA.

**You're down to one HF or lost both?** You can still cross via the Iceland-Greenland Corridor or the old southern Blue Spruce routing via OZN – but only between FL250-280, where VHF coverage is sufficient and you're still below DLM airspace. Just make sure to stay clear of Shanwick OCA, which still requires HF.

**HFs are back, but your Datalink konks out (CPDLC or ADS-C), or you don't have A056.** There are two options: stay within the Data Link Mandate (DLM) exemption area (the corridor) and fly any altitude. The DLM exemption area exists because you don't need CPDLC in that area if you have ADS-B. Radio reception is pretty good throughout there! The second option is to fly above or below the NAT HLA.



DLM Exemption Area (ie. Iceland-Greenland Corridor)

## Little Stuff

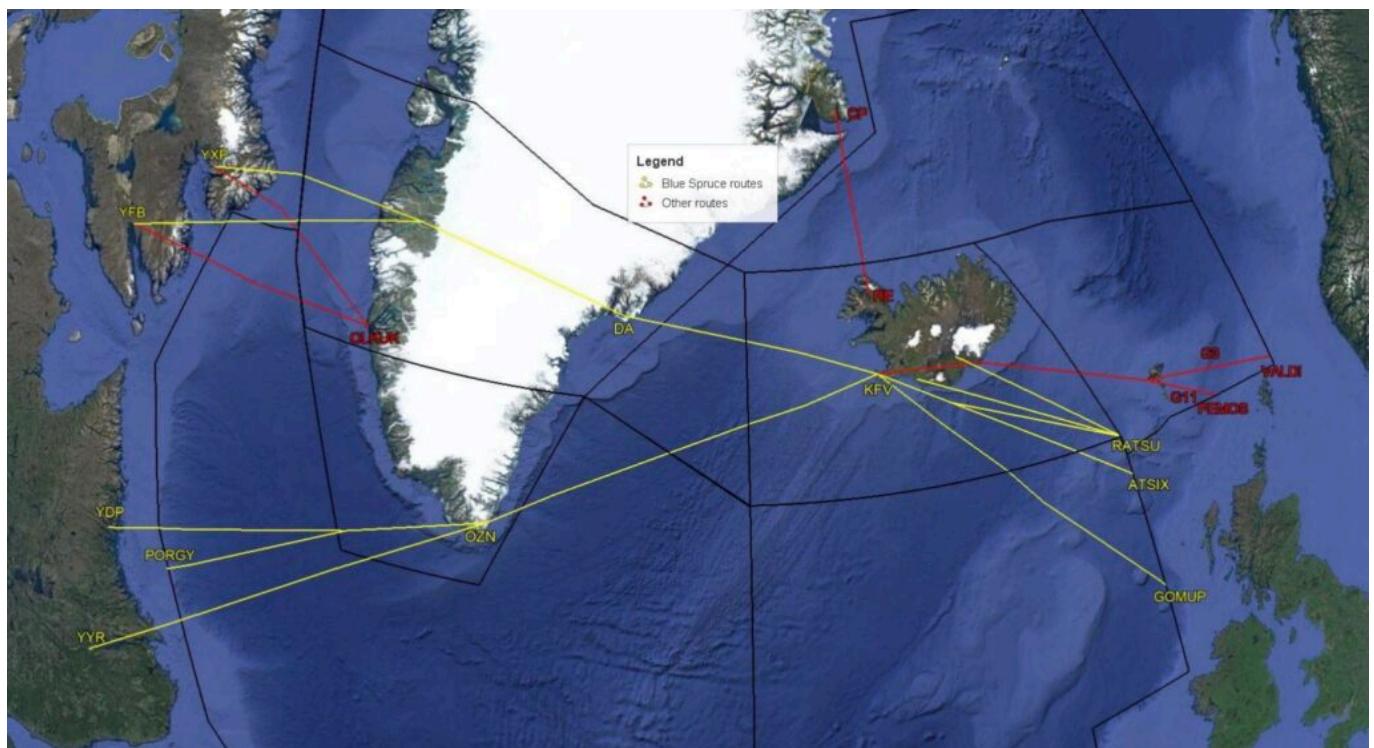
And if you get a wild hair to cross the Atlantic in an aircraft with **only one LRNS, no HF radios, no**

**Datalink, no LOAs, without the range to fly non-stop** (like me), you still have options. You'll need to stick to the Iceland-Greenland Corridor, or the specific VHF-approved routes via OZN or SF.

## What's a Blue Spruce?

It's a Christmas tree native to the Rocky Mountains that you won't see across the Atlantic on any of your stops. However, the Blue Spruce Routes are routes in and around the Atlantic connecting Canada, Greenland, Iceland, and the UK.

**Why were they called the Blue Spruce Routes?** Back when military aircraft had wooden propellers (sometimes made of spruce), they painted the tips blue. These aircraft had to make the trans-Atlantic journey along the now-known Blue Spruce Routes.



Nostalgia Map.

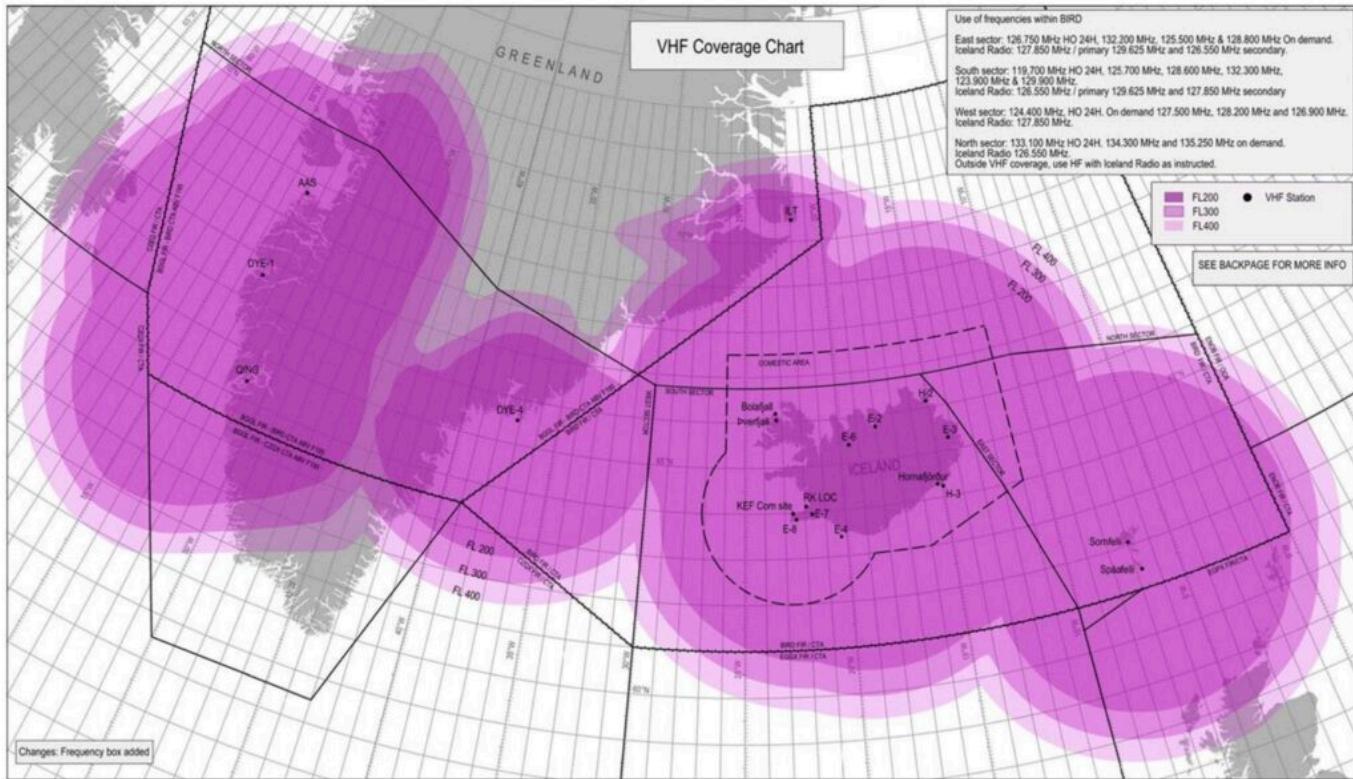
## Gray Areas

The Iceland-Greenland Corridor provides exemptions from equipment and operational requirements because land-based radio transmitters along the route provide decent coverage, and route legs are short enough to complete a crossing without necessitating equipment redundancy.

**Now, there are exemptions from the rules, and then there are gray areas.** Despite all the relief these routes provide, one regulation remains: you must maintain two-way radio communication with ATC.

So far, much of the discussion is how high you can go, **but what about how low?**

VHF communications have improved significantly in the Atlantic in the last ten years. Both the northern and southern routes have VHF reception at appropriate altitudes. The longest stretch of water is between Canada and Greenland. On the southern route over this stretch of water, I have experienced adequate communication at FL250 and up. The northern route is good down to FL200. Iceland is fantastic – it's almost like you're in domestic airspace.



The gray area is when you plan to operate **below these altitudes and are counting on using another aircraft to relay position reports**. By the letter, this is a no-no. The up-and-up solutions would be to rent a portable HF unit or containerize and ship the aircraft to Europe, both of which can be about \$20k.

You can see the incentive to count on relays.

**Are ferry pilots bending the rules?** Let us descend, inception-style, one further layer down the list of the exceptions: ATC can waive the HF requirement for ferry, delivery, and special event flights. Ferry pilots have all the fun. ☺

### What About Aircraft with Only One LRNS?

Back in the day, the Blue Spruce Routes were the go-to option for aircraft with only one **Long Range Navigation System (LRNS)** crossing the Atlantic. Now that those routes are gone, what are your options?

**If you're staying below the NAT HLA (below FL285), you're in the clear:**

- You don't need two LRNSs to operate below FL285.
- You're also free from NAT HLA requirements like RNP 10 and Datalink etc.
- Just make sure your one LRNS (typically GPS-based) is suitable for the route you're flying.
- You still need two long-range communication systems (HF + HF or HF + Satcom), unless you're on one of the VHF-only routes approved by Gander that we talked about above (ie. via OZN or SF)

**If you want to enter the NAT HLA (FL285-420), it gets more tricky:**

You'll need to qualify under the NAT Doc 007 1.4.1 exception, which says aircraft can operate in the NAT HLA with fewer than the standard requirements only if:

- You stay within ATS surveillance,
- You remain within VHF communication coverage,
- Your navigation system is suitable for the planned route,
- And you have specific State approval to operate with reduced navigation capability.

In practical terms, this means you might be able to fly the Iceland-Greenland Corridor at HLA altitudes, but only if your authority signs off – and probably not straight across via the likes of OZN.

### Summing up

You can operate with one LRNS, no HF radios, no CPDLC, and no LOAs using the **Iceland-Greenland Corridor or the designated VHF routes published by Canada.**

Outside of these specific altitudes and routings, aircraft operating in the NAT Region must normally carry two long-range communication systems, one of which must be HF, when operating beyond VHF coverage – unless a specific exemption has been granted by the State of the Operator or Registry (eg. for ferry or delivery flights).

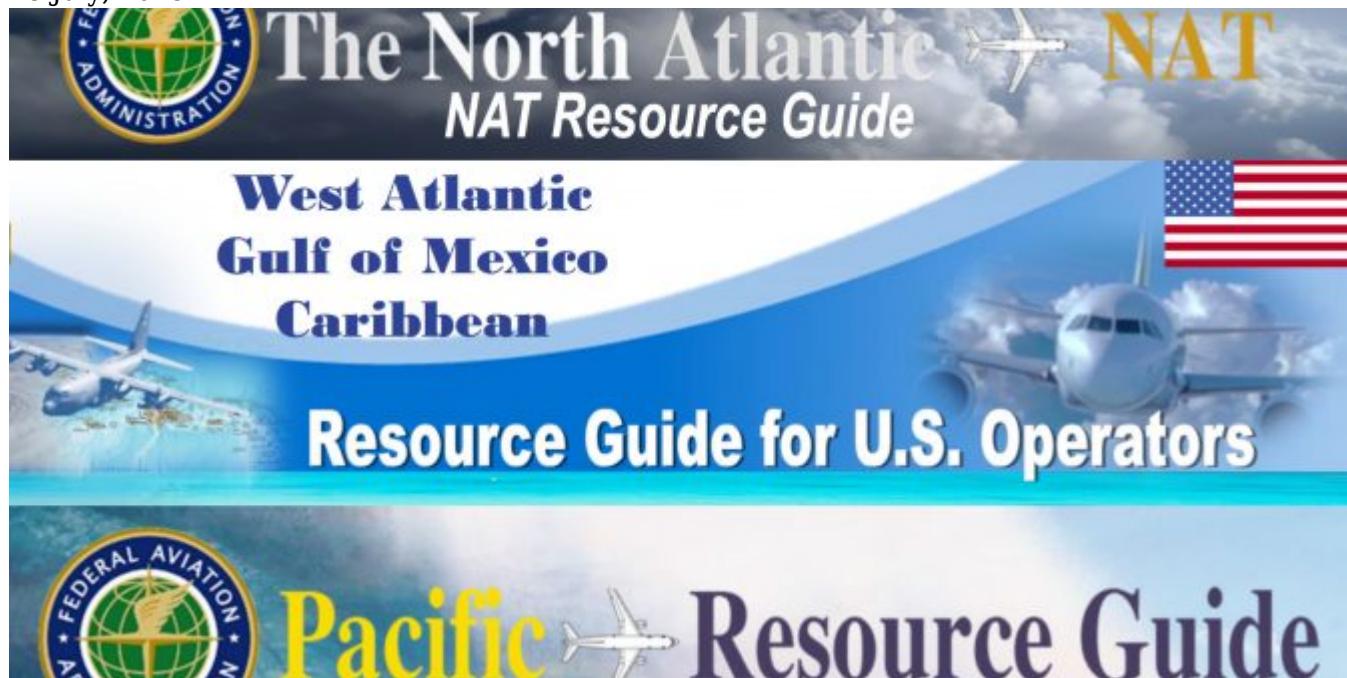
If you want to learn more, check out [myaircraftmanagement.com](http://myaircraftmanagement.com) for a 101-level walkthrough of a Blue Spruce operation.

Happy Crossings! ↗ ⓘ ↘

## Updated FAA Oceanic Guides

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team

28 July, 2025



The FAA has updated its resource guides for the three big oceanic areas of interest: the North

**Atlantic, the Pacific, and WAT airspace (West Atlantic / Gulf Of Mexico / Caribbean). All three have been updated effective July 2025.**

These guides are a good starting point for understanding all the essentials of operating in these regions, and include links to all kinds of useful supplemental information around the main topics for each one.

Click on the pics to check them out.

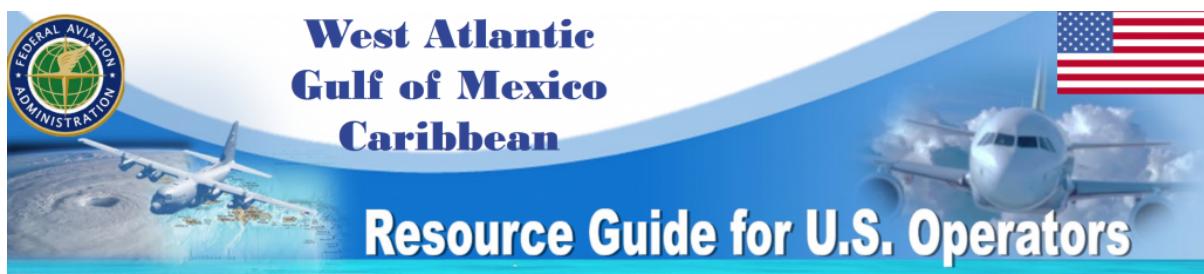
#### **North Atlantic**



#### **Pacific**



#### **WAT**



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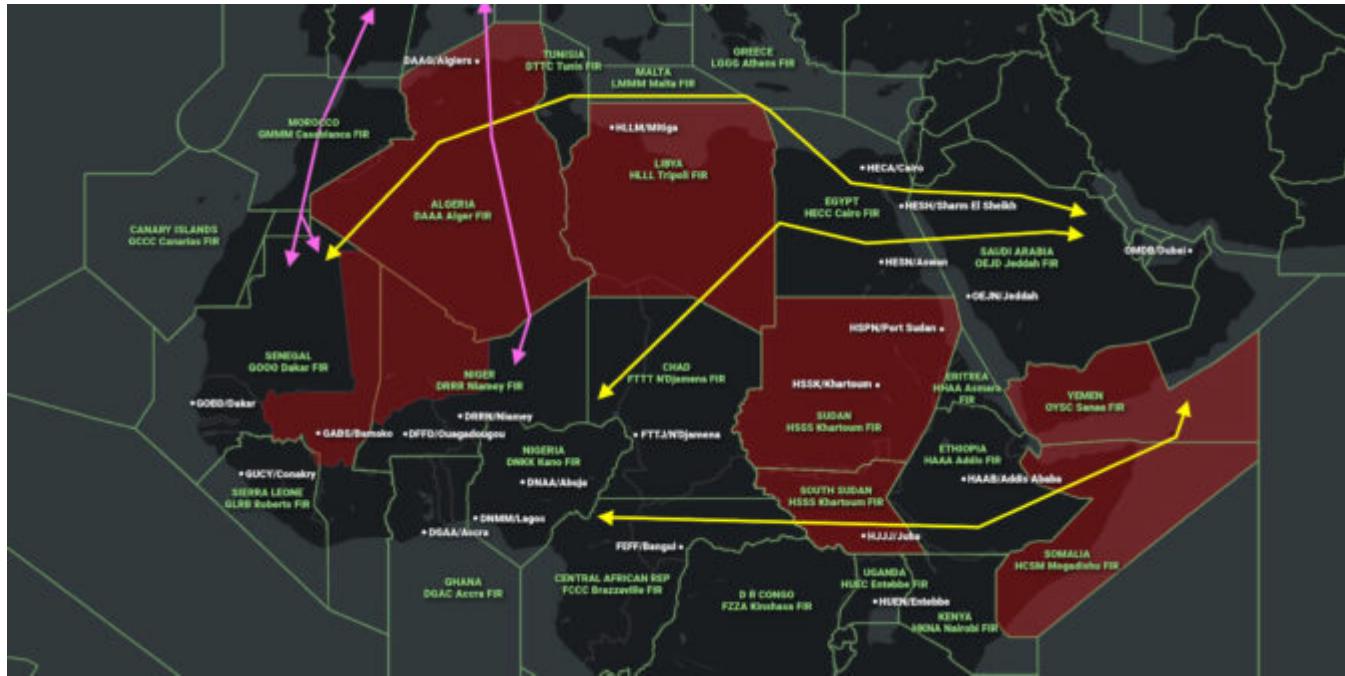
To see a timeline of the **big changes on the NAT** stretching back to 2015 click [here](#).

Opsgroup members can download several **NAT guides** and a **NAT Plotting & Planning Chart** via the Members Dashboard [here](#).

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## **West Africa Ops: Routing Options and Restrictions**

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



**Flying into or out of West Africa is becoming increasingly tricky, with operators having to navigate a patchwork of airspace bans, conflict zones, and overflight restrictions. Two directions present the most complexity: north to Europe, and east to the Middle East.**

OPSGROUP members can download this map to see exactly how these restrictions affect routing.

There's a cluster of major airports in West Africa — from Lagos to Accra to Dakar — that handle the bulk of international traffic in the region.

But getting to these hubs from Europe or the Middle East is complicated by airspace risks and closures in five key areas: **Mali/Algeria, Libya, Sudan/South Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen.**

Here's a more detailed look at each of these.

## Mali/Algeria

- Northern Mali remains a war zone — ongoing since 2012.
- MANPADS, rockets, and mortars pose a threat to low-flying aircraft.
- US advises caution at all flight levels; several states restrict ops below FL250/260.
- Overflights above FL320 permitted, per long-standing Notams from GOOO/Dakar and DRRR/Niamey FIRs.
- Airports GATB, GAGO, GAKL should be avoided.
- A reciprocal airspace ban with Algeria (since April 2025) prohibits all flights between the two countries — even overflights.
- Routing via Mauritania remains open. Algerian ATC may reroute flights via Niger.
- More info here.

## Libya

- Active conflict zone since 2014.

- HLLL/Tripoli FIR is high-risk. Total ban for US and UK operators.
- Threats include misidentification by air defense systems, militia threats near Tripoli, and unreliable ATC.
- Frequent radar and comms outages; some flights rely on Malta ATC for guidance.
- Strongly advised to avoid all Libyan airspace, regardless of altitude. However, some airline flights between West Africa and the Middle East operate over the south-eastern corner of the HLLL/Tripoli FIR between Egypt and Chad rather than routing around Libya to the north or via South Sudan to the south.
- More info here.

## **Sudan/South Sudan**

- Airspace fully closed since the April 2023 coup.
- HSSK/Khartoum Airport is shut; no Notams are being issued.
- There are some contingency routes available for flights to HSPN/Port Sudan, but security remains volatile.
- Several states prohibit overflights due to military activity and anti-aircraft threats.
- In South Sudan, there's no ATC above FL245, but two east-west contingency routes are available for overflights.
- South Sudan is open for flights to HJJJ/Juba.
- More info here.

## **Somalia**

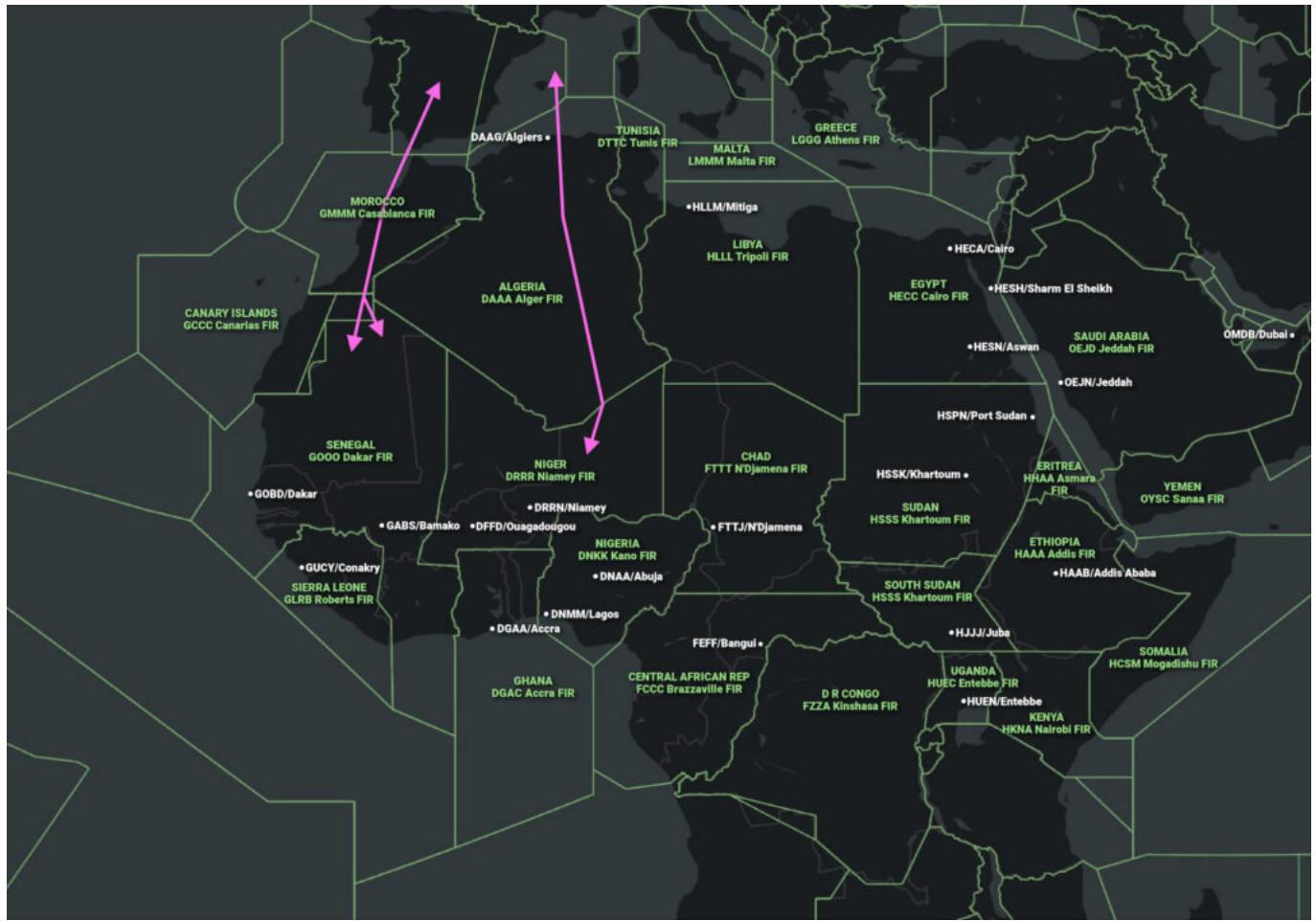
- Government control is limited; attacks by extremist militants are ongoing.
- US prohibits flights below FL260 (except overwater to/from HDAM/Djibouti).
- Risk of being targeted at lower altitudes by anti-aircraft weapons.
- Reports of unauthorized ATC units issuing contacting aircraft and issuing them instructions in the northern part of the HCSM/Mogadishu FIR - genuine ATC here will only issue level changes by CPDLC or SATCOM.
- More info here.

## **Yemen**

- Active warzone — avoid all land portions of the Sanaa FIR (OYSC).
- US operators permitted to use offshore routes UT702 and M999.
- Other states allow overwater-only routing, avoiding the landmass.
- Threats include drones, missiles, and intentional targeting by militants.
- Military strikes by Saudi Arabia and Israel have been ongoing for a few years.

- More info here.

### Routing Options: West Africa to Europe

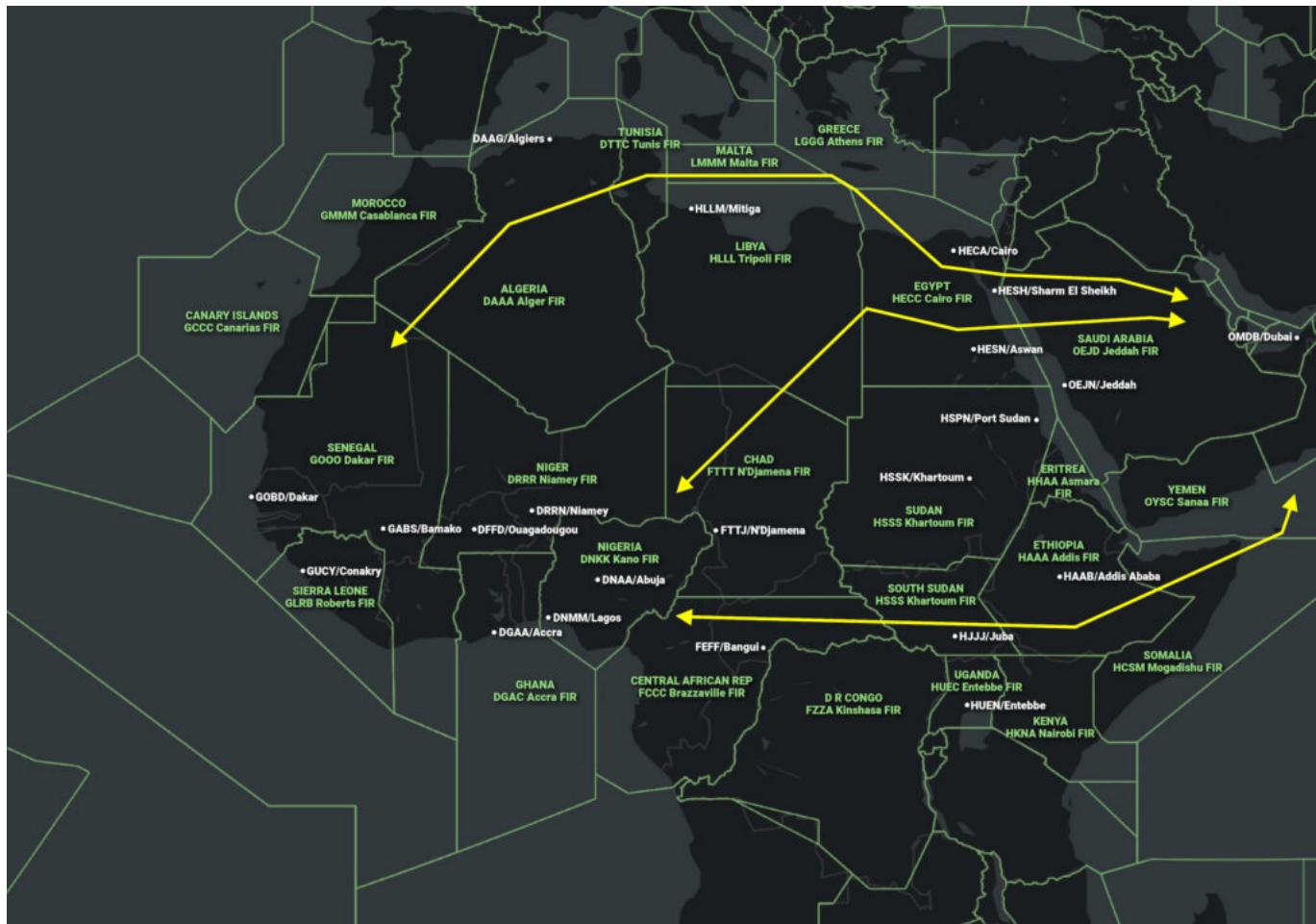


Two main options here:

**Central route via Niger/Algeria:** Due to the Mali-Algeria airspace ban, overflights between these two countries is not possible. Add to that the security risks at the lower levels in northern Mali, many operators choose to avoid Mali entirely by routing east into Niger, and then turning north into Algerian airspace from there.

**Western route via the Atlantic:** Flights route westward over the Atlantic, before turning northeast via the Canary Islands or Morocco and into Europe. This route bypasses the entire Sahel region and avoids any involvement with Mali or Algeria. Common for flights heading to Western Europe (eg. Spain, France, Portugal).

### Routing Options: West Africa to the Middle East



With Libya risky, Sudan closed, and Somalia/Yemen partially restricted, operators have three main options:

**Central route via Libya:** The shortest option routes east from Chad into the southeastern corner of Libya, then across Egypt into the Middle East. This path clips Libyan airspace, and while still considered high-risk, some airlines are using it. ATC reliability is poor, but the routing avoids longer detours.

**Southern route via South Sudan:** This uses one of two east-west contingency routes above FL245, then crosses Ethiopia and exits via the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Yemen and on towards the Middle East. This avoids Libya and Sudan entirely, but adds an extra 500NM or so when compared with the central route. If South Sudan isn't viable, flights may reroute even further south via Uganda or Kenya.

**Northern route avoiding Libya:** This takes a northern dogleg through Niger and Algeria, then across Tunisia and Malta and into Egypt. This route avoids all high-risk airspace but is the longest of the three. It's commonly used by operators with stricter risk thresholds or where insurance policies exclude Libyan or South Sudanese airspace.

If you're flying any of these routings (or know of any clever alternatives we haven't covered here), we'd love to hear from you. Email us at [blog@ops.group](mailto:blog@ops.group) — we'll update this briefing and help keep other pilots and operators in the know!

# Greece Summer Lowdown: Parking Pain, Slot Stress, and Hidden Fees

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team

28 July, 2025



## Key Points

- All Greek islands will be extremely busy again this summer. Athens too.
- Very few slots are made available to BizAv flights, overnight parking is scarce, even quick turn arounds are extremely difficult in some cases.
- At Level 3 airports, your filed flight plan must match the confirmed slot time within ±15 minutes, otherwise it will be suspended.
- Watch out for extra fees at LGMK/Mykonos, LGKR/Corfu and LGKO/Kos.
- Consider drop-and-go's, with parking at airports on the Greek mainland, Cyprus, or Turkey.

There are loads of island airports in Greece, but there's a special collection which are managed by a company called Fraport.

"Special" just because operating to these particular airports has become **increasingly challenging** since their privatisation in 2017. Fraport initially struggled to deal with providing parking to non-scheduled and business aviation, and new slot procedures were introduced to try to better manage the volume of requests being made.

## How long can I park my aircraft on the islands?

**Not long.** There are two places to check how long you can stay on the ground at these airports - and you need to check both.

The first is the PPR Handbook Fraport have published which includes this info in handy chart form, plus a bunch of extra info about how to actually go about applying for PPR. The chart below shows the info for the 2025 summer season:

Airport	Maximum Ground Time (days)
<b>SKG</b> <i>LGTS/Thessaloniki</i>	30MAR – 15JUN: 7*
<b>CFU</b> <i>LGKR/Corfu</i>	16JUN – 15SEP: 5
<b>ZTH</b> <i>LGZA/Zakynthos</i>	16SEP – 25OCT: 7*
<b>EFL</b>	5 for fixed-wing Aircraft CAT C
<b>LGKF/Kefalonia</b>	3 for fixed-wing Aircraft CAT B
	Helicopters maximum 60 min ground time from 0500z to 1600z
<b>PVK</b> <i>LGPZ/Aktion</i>	1 (departure by 0500 UTC)
<b>KVA</b>	From 01/06/2025 until 30/09/2025 and from 08:00 UTC to 16:55 UTC, the maximum
<b>CHQ</b>	ground time for flights allocated to the declared apron positions is 90 minutes.
<b>RHO</b>	There are limited no-declared positions for longer stay based on Apron Availability.
<b>KGS</b>	Helicopters and fixed-wing Aircraft: maximum 60 min ground time
<b>JTR</b>	1 overnight for fixed-wing Aircraft (arrival: 1 hour prior airport closure and departure
<b>JMK</b>	the latest 30min after airport opening according to airport operating hours). Towbar
<b>MJT</b>	availability is mandatory for overnights
<b>SMI</b>	Based on Apron availability
<b>JSI</b>	Based on Apron availability
<b>JSI</b> <i>LGSK/Skiathos</i>	7
<b>KGS</b> <i>LGKO/Kos</i>	Based on Apron availability for fixed-wing Aircraft only.
<b>JTR</b> <i>LGSR/Santorini</i>	Helicopters maximum 120 min ground time.
<b>JMK</b> <i>LGMK/Mykonos</i>	From 01/06/2025 until 15/09/2025 and from 05:00 UTC until 18:00 UTC, the
<b>MJT</b> <i>LGMT/Lesbos</i>	maximum ground time for GA/BA flights is 40 minutes.
<b>SMI</b> <i>LGSM/Samos</i>	From 01/06/2025 until 15/09/2025 and from 04:00 UTC until 19:30 UTC, the
<b>JSI</b>	maximum ground time for GA/BA flights is 40 minutes.

\* Limited positions for longer stay based on Apron Availability.

For airports that there is no limitation of maximum ground time as per above table and overnight request exceeds the 15 days, a prior communication with ANOC is required, via e-mail to [xxxppr@fraport-greece.com](mailto:xxxppr@fraport-greece.com), (where "xxx" is the 3-letter IATA airport code).

The second place to check is the Notams, and this applies to ALL Greek airports. With peak summer season coming in July/August, expect to see even more restrictive max-time-on-ground Notams get published.

### Don't get caught without a slot in Greece

Greece has brought back the Flight Plan Suspension (FLS) system for summer 2025. It applies to Level 3 coordinated airports – which includes most of the busy island destinations – you can which are Level 3 here.

**If your flight plan is more than 15 minutes off your confirmed slot time, it will be automatically**

## **suspended.**

Make sure you have a confirmed slot from HSCA - your handler will usually take care of this - and that your flight plan matches the slot time.

### **The slot ID must be included in Field 18 of your flight plan:**

- *RMK/LGXXAxxxxxxxx for arrivals*
- *RMK/LGXXDxxxxxxxx for departures.*

Even if you're flying VFR, a slot is still required if any part of the flight is under IFR.

If you can't reach HSCA, you can contact Greek ATS at: +30 210 997 2656 (office) or +30 210 997 22654 (24/7)

This change is published in LGGG Notam A1535/25, effective from May 30 - July 9. We'll see if it gets extended...

## **Watch out for extra fees!**

There are some extra costs at three airports in the summer: **LGMK/Mykonos, LGKR/Corfu and LGKO/Kos.**

The short story is this: all BizAv flights have to use the dedicated GA Terminal at these airports in the summer months, where you will get charged an **extra 2000 Euros per passenger-carrying sector flight** (so if a flight has pax inbound and outbound, 4000 Euros will be charged). VAT is charged on top of this to non-EU operators.

It doesn't matter which handler you use - they all quote the same costs for this.

There's no mention of these charges in Fraport's Airport Charges documents published on their site.

## **A note on LGAV/Athens**

Once a haven for weary BizAv operators, Athens used to guarantee a quiet remote stand where you could leave the jet for a few nights after dropping pax on the islands.

But those days are gone!

In March 2025, the airport started managing BizAv parking entirely through slots and PPRs. **The free parking period was cut from 12 hours to just 90 minutes.** If your ground time is 90 minutes or less, no PPR is needed, and you can request a slot up to 7 days before the flight. For stays longer than 90 minutes, you must first obtain a PPR, but this will **only be issued within 24 hours of the flight.** Once approved, you can then confirm your slot using the PPR. It seems this rule can only be found in the Slot Authority's guidance doc - not the AIP or Notams.

## **Good options for parking?**

In Greece, we've heard reports from OPSGROUP members on these ones: **LGTS/Thessaloniki, LGIO/Ioannina, and LGKV/Kavala.** In Cyprus, there's **LCPH/Paphos.** And then there's always the option of Turkish coastal airports, the likes of **LTBJ/Izmir and LTFE/Bodrum.**

Plus a couple more we heard about last year:

**LGBL/Volos** - A joint use air base 90nm north of Athens. We just relocated our aircraft there on our trip to Athens for around 9 days. Super easy in and out. Stayed at Volos town about 15 miles away. Limited operating days and hours so check notams. They have limited airline service also. Rental cars are available. All in all a great experience for storing our aircraft until the boss was ready to return to the US.

**LGIR/Heraklion** - We operated into LGIR a few days ago. Everything very easy and Skyserv did a really great job of taking care of our pax and us. Lots of nice hotels in the area around the city, some nice sights if you have some days off. Departure was also very smooth, catering, fuelling, gpu everything worked exactly as it should. The fees were also very moderate. LGIR is also a good candidate for parking if you can't get it anywhere else.

And a couple of other airports which used to be okay options, but maybe aren't so great anymore:

**LGRX/Araxos and LGSM/Samos.** As reported by Universal handling: *LGRX is very restrictive and not with so much space, I wouldn't consider it as one of the first options, but desperate times call for desperate measures. LGSM was not so easy to approve last summer, they have also their morning peak a couple of days of the week but it is indeed a solution.*

**Know of any other good options?** Let us know: news@ops.group

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## London Night Ops: What's Changing This Summer

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025

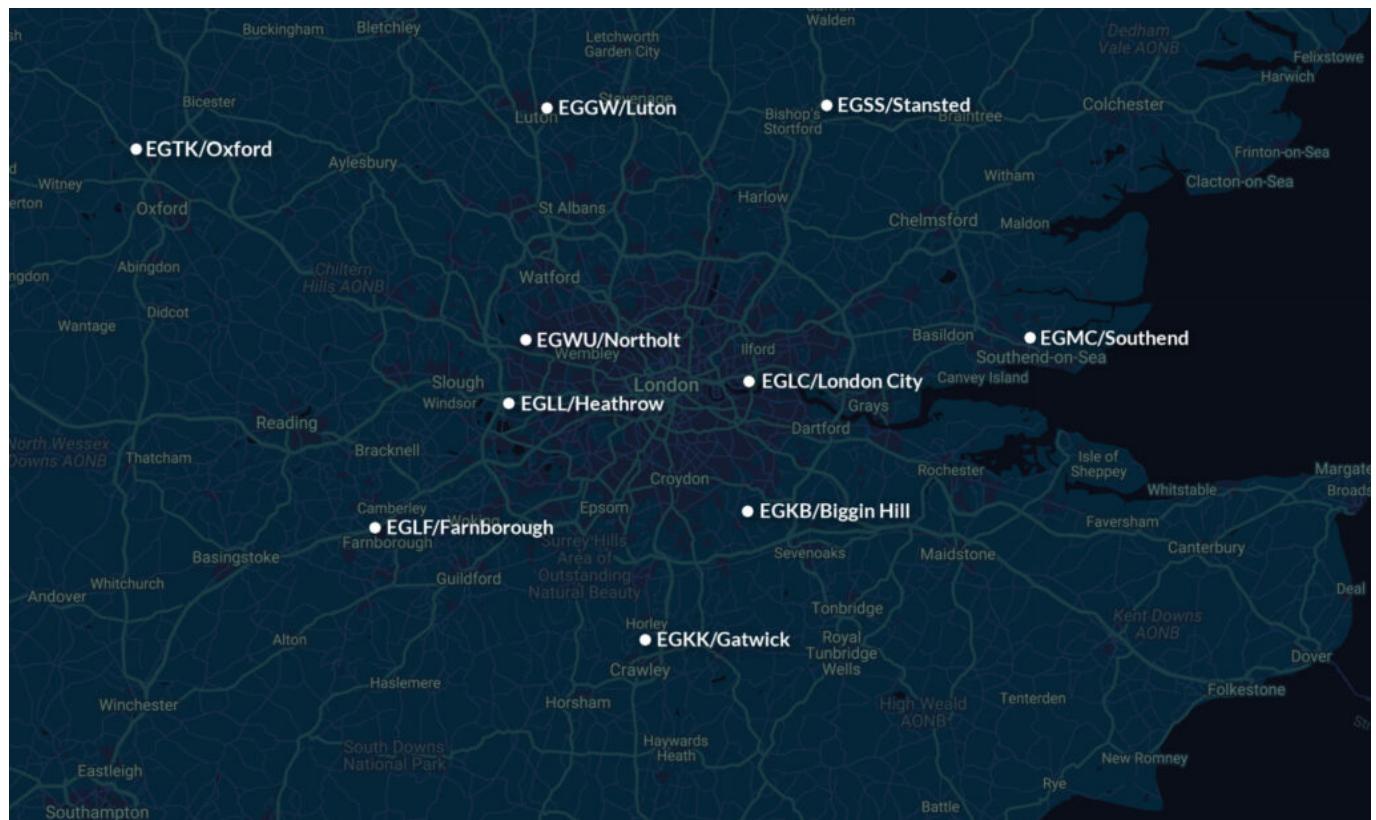


### Key Points

- EGGW/Luton will allow a limited number of BizAv night slots this summer (14 Jun - 17 Sep), a rare exception linked to upcoming runway works.

- EGSS/Stansted now has only 10 BizAv night slots per week, shared between all FBOs, available until the end of October (unless extended).
- EGWU/Northolt will have restricted civilian ops hours in Jun, Jul and Aug due to control tower works impacting ATC staffing, with no weekend flying at all in Jul and Aug.
- EGMC/Southend is not available H24. It operates daily from 0600 to 0130 local time, with no night operations permitted - including for QC1 or quieter aircraft.

Unlike previous summers, EGGW/Luton is making a one-off exception this year by allowing a small number of BizAv night slots, to help manage capacity during upcoming runway works. However, availability is extremely limited, slots are tightly controlled, and subject to withdrawal if airline delays eat into the night hours. EGMC/Southend is no longer a viable late-night option. It now operates strictly between 0600 and 0130 local time, with no movements allowed outside those hours - regardless of aircraft noise level.



All times shown below are local time!

### EGLL/Heathrow & EGKK/Gatwick

Slots for bizav flights are almost never issued at night, as there is a noise quota system in place between 2300-0700. There might be a few daytime slots available - best bet is to contact a local handler and they will try to sort you out. There's only one FBO at these airports, both Signature: lhr@signatureflight.co.uk and lgw@signatureflight.co.uk

### EGGW/Luton

There's a change to night operations this summer. **The airport will allow a limited number of night slots for BizAv.** Between 14 Jun - 17 Sep, up to 100 ad-hoc night slots will be granted for flights between 2300-0659 local time, but only for quieter aircraft. Best to check with your local handler whether your aircraft qualifies. These slots are shared across all operators and will be allocated on a first-come, first-

served basis. This is a one-off exception, linked to upcoming runway works. Slots will be tightly controlled and may be withdrawn if airline delays push into night hours. A few different FBOs to choose from:

Signature: [ltn@signatureflight.co.uk](mailto:ltn@signatureflight.co.uk)  
Harrods: [ltnops@harrodsaviation.com](mailto:ltnops@harrodsaviation.com)

### **EGSS/Stansted**

After a full ban on BizAv night slots between 2300-0600 local time from June 1 to Sep 30, limited availability has now returned. Local FBOs confirm that just 10 night slots per week in total are being allocated, shared between all handlers at Stansted. This arrangement is in place until the end of October, though it may be extended through April 2026 before further summer restrictions are reintroduced. A few different FBOs to choose from:

Inflight Jet Centre: [operations@inflight.co.uk](mailto:operations@inflight.co.uk)  
Universal: [uk@universalaviation.aero](mailto:uk@universalaviation.aero)  
Harrods: [stnops@harrodsaviation.com](mailto:stnops@harrodsaviation.com) (Harrods operate two FBOs here: *The Knightsbridge* and *The Brompton*)

### **EGLC/London City**

Open: 0630-2130 weekdays, 0630-1230 Sat and 1230-2130 Sun. There are slots available between these times. [jetcentre@londoncityairport.com](mailto:jetcentre@londoncityairport.com) are who you need to speak to for handling and slot assistance there.

### **EGTK/London Oxford**

Open: 0630-2230 and up to 2359 on request, seven days a week.

The thing you probably want to know about Oxford is while it takes just over an hour to drive to London, making it the furthest away of all the “London” airports, it also charges much less in handling fees. You can contact the FBO at [ops@londonoxfordairport.com](mailto:ops@londonoxfordairport.com)

### **EGLF/Farnborough**

Open: 0700-2200 weekdays, 0800-2000 weekends - but no extensions possible. Farnborough is a dedicated business aviation airport and can be contacted at [ops@farnboroughairport.com](mailto:ops@farnboroughairport.com)

### **EGKB/Biggin Hill**

Open: 0630-2300 weekdays, 0800-2200 weekends. On UK bank holidays, weekend hours apply. Biggin Hill is one to consider for smaller corporate and charter operations. A dedicated bizav airport, only 12 miles outside of central London, and no slots required. A couple of FBOs to choose from:

Executive Handling: [handling@bigginhillairport.com](mailto:handling@bigginhillairport.com)  
Jetex: [fbo-bqh@jetex.com](mailto:fbo-bqh@jetex.com)

### **EGWU/Northolt**

Normally open: Monday to Friday 0800-2000, Sat 0800-1500 and Sun 1200-1900. So not great for night flights, but pretty handy otherwise as Northolt is one of the closest GA-accessible airports to central London, as well as the closest airport to EGLL/Heathrow (8 miles away). **But this summer (Jun through Aug), opening hours for civilian ops are being restricted due to infrastructure works at the control tower impacting ATC staffing.**

In Jun, ops are limited to Monday to Friday 0800-1800 and Sunday 1000-1700 local time, with Saturday fully closed. In Jul and Aug, weekday hours return to 0800-2000, but there will be no weekend flying at all, as the airport will be open for military traffic only. Any bookings outside these hours will need to be moved or cancelled.

Bear in mind it's a dual use military/civil airport, so you'll need PPR, but they're normally quite quick to approve this.

Universal is the FBO here: [northolt@universalaviation.aero](mailto:northolt@universalaviation.aero). Check here for more info.

## **EGMC/Southend**

**Open daily from 0600 to 0130 local time.** No operations including for QC1 or quieter aircraft are permitted outside of these hours. Extensions are not possible and night operations are not allowed under any circumstances.

You can contact London Southend Jet Centre FBO here: [ops@londonsjc.com](mailto:ops@londonsjc.com)

## **EGBB/Birmingham**

*Correct, not a London airport!* Just a bonus one for you, because outside of all those listed above, this is probably the next closest airport to London that is open at night. Two FBO options here, both open H24 – but night time operations are available on request and subject to additional out-of-hours fees:

XLR Executive Jet Centre: [jetcentre@xlr-birmingham.com](mailto:jetcentre@xlr-birmingham.com)

Signature: [bxh@signatureflight.co.uk](mailto:bhx@signatureflight.co.uk)

## **Send us your spy reports!**

Send us your Airport Spy reports for all these airports so we can share the gotchas, the things to know, contacts to contact and anything else useful.

**What's Airport Spy?** Well, you write a quick little postcard with "what happened" when you went to some airport somewhere. Then you, and others (that's the magic), can refer to your notes for future flights to the same place.



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For your next trip, pack a notebook, and file your Spy Report below. You'll get a weekly ops briefing in return.

[File your report >](#)

# EU Updates Lost Comms and Emergency Descent Rules

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



On May 1, the Standardised European Rules of the Air (SERA) were updated – bringing **new procedures for lost comms, emergency descents, and even a brand-new transponder code**.

SERA is essentially the rulebook that ensures consistent flight procedures across EU airspace. It's developed by EASA and is legally binding for all EU member states.

Each country still publishes its own AIP, but when SERA is updated, it overrules anything outdated in those local documents. **So even if a country's AIP hasn't caught up yet, you're still expected to follow the new SERA rules!**

You can download the updated SERA guidance [here](#), but here's a quick look at the main changes:

## Radio Communication Failure Procedures

Lost comms? The new SERA rules introduce a **second transponder code**, and defines which one to use – depending on **whether or not you're diverting**.

### □ Squawk 7600 = Not diverting

Use 7600 if you're flying under IFR and:

- You've lost radio communication, and
- You're continuing with your IFR flight – even if you're in VMC.

This means you're sticking to the standard lost comms procedures: continue based on your last clearance, possibly to your destination or alternate, and let ATC protect that airspace.

**One important change to be aware of when using the 7600 code:** the old 7-minute rule in lost comms situations has been replaced. Under the updated rules, if you're continuing under IFR after losing communications, you must now maintain your last assigned level and speed for **20 minutes (instead of 7)** before taking further action under lost comms procedures. This extended buffer gives ATC more time to identify your position and protect your track.

## □ **Squawk 7601 = You ARE diverting**

Use 7601 if:

- You're flying under IFR
- You've lost comms
- You're in VMC, and
- You decide to land at the nearest suitable airport instead of continuing the flight.

### **So 7601 is a brand-new code introduced to give ATC a clear picture of what you're doing.**

Instead of guessing whether you're continuing IFR or trying to land visually, ATC knows right away: you're diverting to land, and they can adjust separation and support accordingly.

#### **Emergency Descent Procedure**

This has been updated with clearer priorities! The procedure now starts with "**Navigate as deemed appropriate by the pilot**" – replacing the older instruction to always turn off route before beginning the descent. So the new rule gives the pilot full discretion to navigate as needed – possibly turning, possibly descending straight ahead.

**There are also some changes to what ATC should do:** broadcasting an emergency message now comes first (not just "if necessary"), and there's clearer guidance to inform other ATS units (this wasn't explicitly stated before).

**Plus some guidance on what other aircraft should do if they hear the emergency descent broadcast:** keep flying their current clearance, maintain listening watch, and watch for conflicting traffic visually and with ACAS. Pretty standard stuff, but this wasn't explicitly mentioned in the previous guidance.

#### EMERGENCY DESCENT PROCEDURES

(a) When an aircraft operated as a controlled flight experiences sudden decompression or a malfunction requiring an emergency descent, the aircraft should, if able:

- (1) initiate a turn away from the assigned route or track before commencing the emergency descent;
- (2) advise the appropriate ATC unit as soon as possible of the emergency descent;
- (3) set transponder to Code 7700 and select the emergency mode on the automatic dependent surveillance/controller–pilot data link communications (ADS/CPDLC) system, if applicable;
- (4) turn on aircraft exterior lights;
- (5) watch for conflicting traffic both visually and by reference to airborne collision avoidance system (ACAS) (if equipped); and
- (6) coordinate its further intentions with the appropriate ATC unit.

(b) The aircraft is not to descend below the lowest published minimum altitude that will provide a minimum vertical clearance of 600 m (2 000 ft) or, in signalled mountainous terrain, of 600 m (2 000 ft) above all obstacles located in the area specified.

(c) Immediately upon recognising that an emergency descent is in progress, ATC units are to acknowledge the emergency descent.

In particular, when recognising that an emergency descent is in progress, ATC may, as required by the situation:

- (1) suggest a heading to be flown, if able, by the aircraft carrying out the emergency descent in order to achieve separation from other aircraft concerned;
- (2) state the minimum altitude for the area of operation, only if the level-off altitude stated by the pilot is below such minimum altitude, together with the applicable QNH altimeter setting; and
- (3) as soon as possible, provide separation from conflicting traffic, or issue essential traffic information, as appropriate.

When deemed necessary, ATC will broadcast an emergency message, or cause such message to be broadcast, to other aircraft concerned to warn them of the emergency descent.

#### EMERGENCY DESCENT PROCEDURES

(a) When an aircraft experiences sudden decompression or a malfunction requiring an emergency descent, the pilot should take the following steps as soon as practicable in the order appropriate for the circumstance:

- (1) navigate as deemed appropriate by the pilot;
- (2) advise the appropriate ATS unit of the emergency descent and, if able, intentions;
- (3) set transponder to Code 7700 and, if applicable, select the appropriate emergency mode on the automatic dependent surveillance – broadcast and/or automatic dependent surveillance – contract (ADS-B/ADS-C);
- (4) turn on aircraft exterior lights (commensurate with appropriate operating limitations);
- (5) watch for conflicting traffic both visually and by reference to airborne collision avoidance system (ACAS) (if equipped); and
- (6) when emergency descent is completed, coordinate further intentions with the appropriate ATC unit.

(b) The aircraft should not descend below the lowest published minimum altitude that will provide a minimum vertical clearance of 600 m (2 000 ft) or, in signalled mountainous terrain, of 600 m (2 000 ft) above all obstacles located in the area specified.

(c) Upon recognition that an aircraft is making an emergency descent, all appropriate actions should be taken immediately by the air traffic services unit to safeguard all aircraft concerned. Appropriate actions may include the following, in the order appropriate for the circumstance:

- (1) broadcasting an emergency message;
- (2) issuing traffic information and/or instructions to aircraft affected by the descent;
- (3) advising the minimum flight altitude and altimeter setting for the area of operation; and
- (4) informing any other air traffic services units that may be affected by the emergency descent.

(d) Unless specifically instructed by the air traffic services unit to clear the area or threatened by immediate danger, the pilot of an aircraft receiving emergency descent broadcast should take the following actions:

- (1) continue according to current clearance and maintain listening watch on the frequency in use for any further instructions from the air traffic services unit; and
- (2) watch for conflicting traffic both visually and by reference to ACAS (if equipped).

#### Notams and AIP Updates

One issue to be aware of here – most countries won't update their AIPs until May 15 with the next AIRAC cycle. But these new SERA rules are legally binding from May 1 and take precedence over any outdated AIP content, so you must follow the updated SERA guidance!

So far, **France** appears to be the only country that has issued a Notam acknowledging/warning us about the changes:

**LFFF F0627/25** (Issued for LFBB LFEE LFFF LFMM LFRR) -  
APPLICATION OF THE NEW EUROPEAN REGULATION IR SERA 2024/404  
IN FORCE ON MAY 1ST, 2025 WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF POINT SERA.14083  
RELATING TO PROCEDURES IN CASE OF RADIO COMMUNICATION FAILURE.  
MODIFICATION OF RADIO FAILURE PROCEDURE : INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW  
EMERGENCY CODE 7601 AND MODIFICATION OF THE 7-MINUTE RULE TO 20 MINUTES.  
REF AIP ENR1.1. 01 MAY 00:00 2025 UNTIL PERM. CREATED: 30 APR 10:03 2025

And another issue to be aware of – **some non-EU countries in Europe are not updating their rules!**

**Switzerland** have decided to confuse everyone by saying they won't be implementing the 7601 code anytime soon:

**LSAS A0252/25** - IFR FLT SHALL USE SSR CODE 7600 IN CASE OF RCF EVEN WHEN  
CONTINUING IN VMC TO THE NEAREST SUITABLE AD. SSR CODE 7601 AS DEFINED  
BY SERA.14083 NOT YET IMPLEMENTED. 15 MAY 00:00 2025 UNTIL 31 JAN 23:59 2026.  
CREATED: 02 MAY 10:01 2025

**And the UK** has published this doc saying that no changes are being made to the UK's RCF procedures.

As the UK and Switzerland are not EU countries, they can do what they like. EU countries don't have this option – they're all legally required to apply new SERA rules on the effective date.

**Bottom line:** keep an eye out for more AIRAC/AIP updates and Notams from other European countries in the coming days as they clarify how they're implementing the new SERA procedures!

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# NAT Airspace Closures: Formidable Shield 2025

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team

28 July, 2025

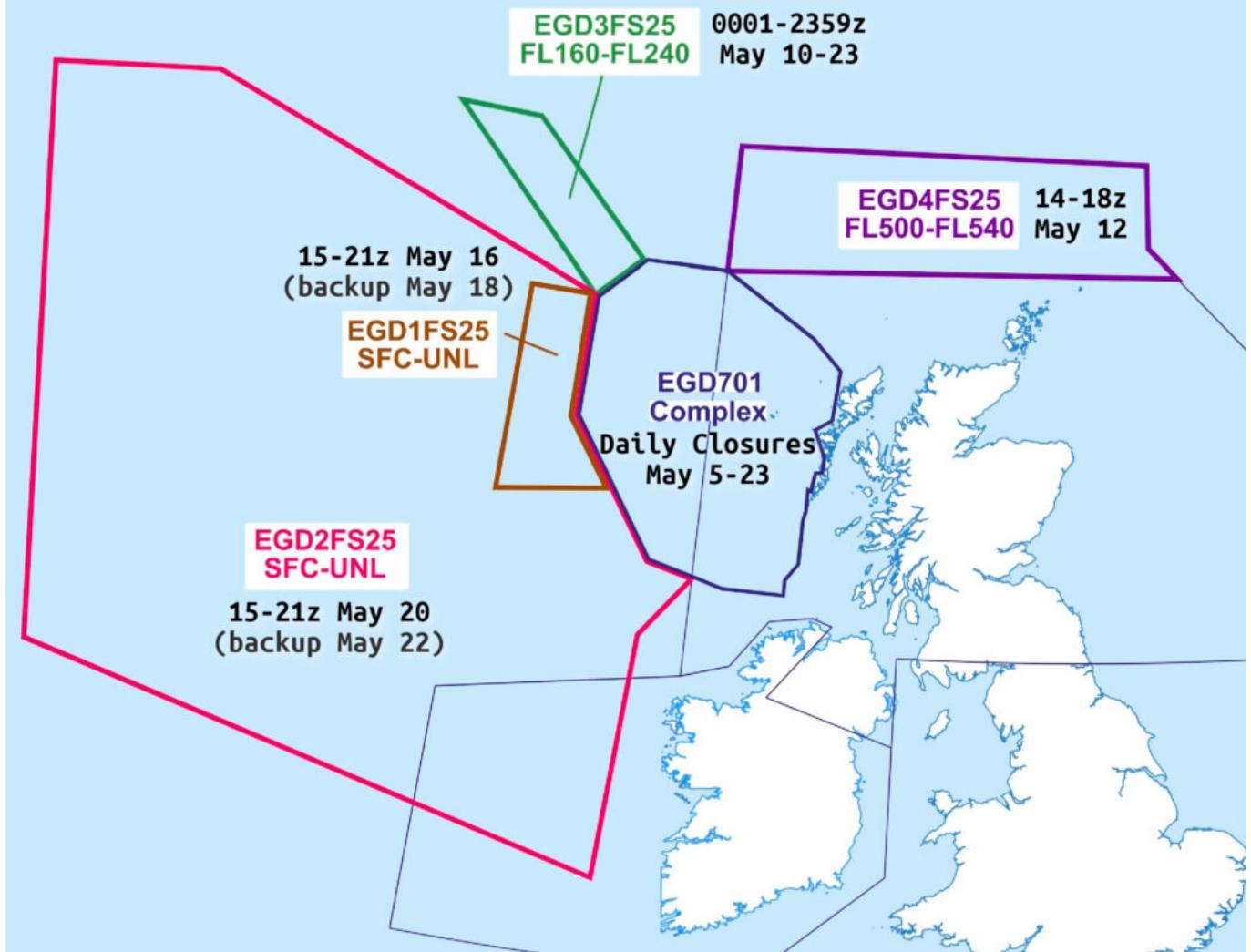


Remember that big NAT military exercise a couple of years ago? Formidable Shield is happening again now, which will mean **parts of North Atlantic airspace will be closed to flights** for several hours at a time.

There are daily closures in the EGD701 area off the coast of Scotland until May 23, but the big one to watch out for is a **large closure of airspace across the northern half of the EGGX/Shanwick FIR on May 20 between 15-21z** (with May 22 as the backup day).

The map below shows everything we know about this so far, taken from this UK SUP.

# NAT Closures: Formidable Shield 2025



For the big closure on May 20, **ATC might start rerouting flights before the airspace closure starts (15z)** with the use of Flight Plan Buffer Zones extending 30 NM or 60 NM beyond the closed airspace.

There's no timings yet for when these might be activated, and ATC have said they won't make any decision on this until nearer the time when they know where the jet stream is going to be and what the tracks might look like, but best advice would be **plan a flight that clears the area at least 1 hour before the airspace closure (so 14z)**.

Keep an eye on the **EGGX/Shanwick Notams** – they will publish one for the big closure at least 24 hours prior, which will look a bit like this (except it will say **EGD2FS25** instead of EGD1FS25).

## **G0069/25 – AIRSPACE RESERVATION:**

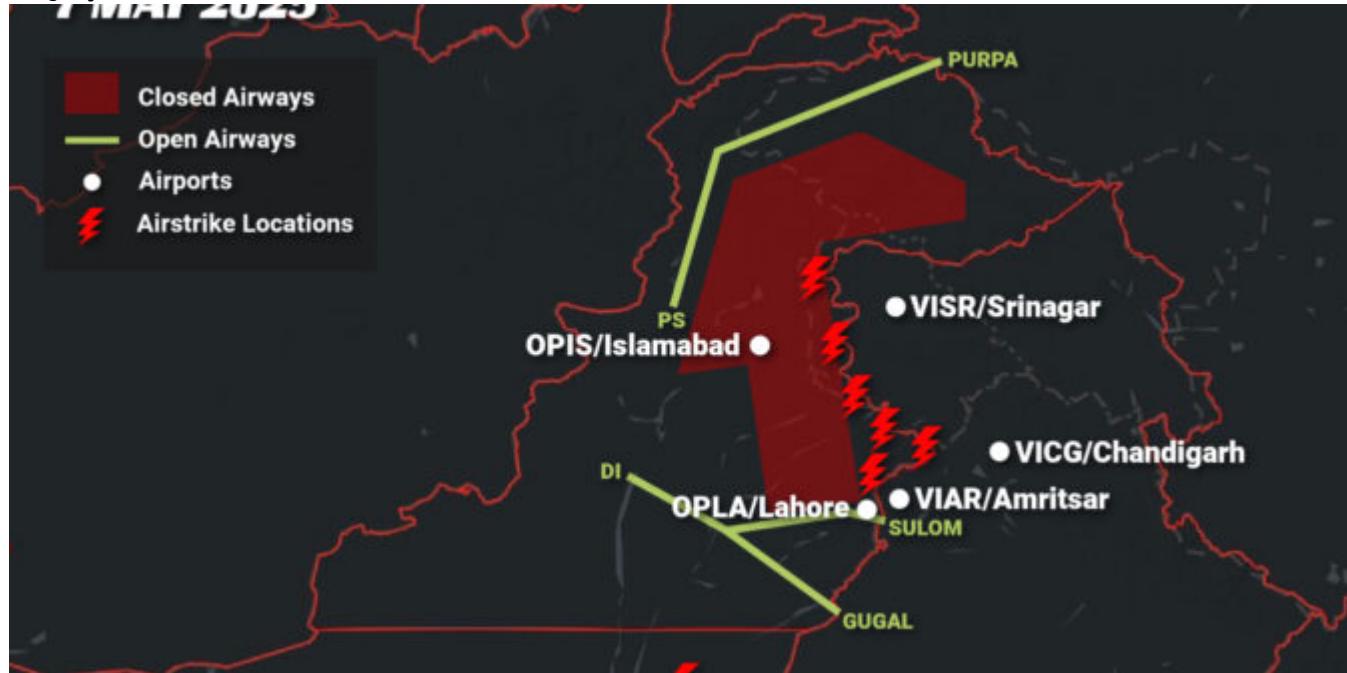
AREA: 590000N 0143000W – 590000N 0130000W – 573126N 0130000W –  
564357N 0120000W – 563000N 0143000W – 590000N 0143000W  
FLW SEPARATIONS WILL BE PROVIDED WITHIN OCEANIC AIRSPACE: MNPS/NAT  
HIGH LEVEL AIRSPACE(HLA) 30NM, NON-MNPS/NAT HLA 60NM. **EGD1FS25.** SFC – UNL, 18  
MAY 15:00 2025 UNTIL 18 MAY 21:00 2025. CREATED: 08 MAY 09:16 2025

And for any questions on Formidable Shield, you can contact the UK Airspace Management Cell at SWK-MAMC-ManagedAirspace@mod.gov.uk.

# Pakistan/India Airspace Update

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team

28 July, 2025



## Update May 12

A ceasefire between India and Pakistan, announced on May 10, **appears to be holding** despite mutual accusations of violations.

**We continue to advise caution**, particularly over the Kashmir region and along the shared border where air defense activity could resume with little warning if hostilities were to restart.

Flight tracking indicates that **nearly all operators are still avoiding the area**, opting instead to reroute south via the Gulf of Oman and the UAE.

Pakistan has reopened all previously closed airways. India has reopened all previously closed airports. But both countries continue to prohibit each other's aircraft from entering their respective airspace (Notams: VIDF G0510/25 and OPLR A0220/25).

## Update May 7

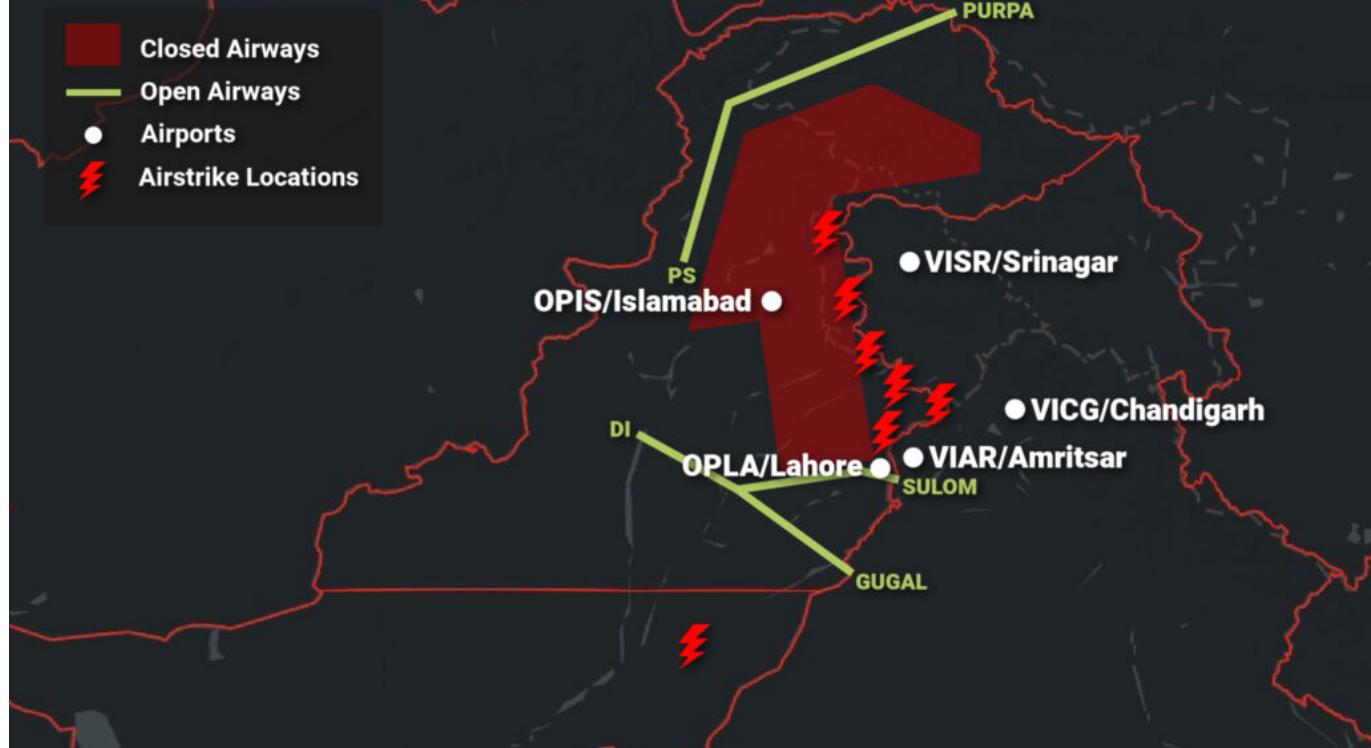
India launched **airstrikes on multiple locations in northern Pakistan** early on May 7, leading to a broader exchange of fire and escalating tensions along the border. There were **drone attacks on both sides** the following night.

In India, **VIAR/Amritsar, VISR/Srinagar and VICG/Chandigarh airports are closed** to civil flights until May 10 as a precaution. In Pakistan, flights have now resumed at all airports that were temporarily closed on May 7, including **OPLA/Lahore and OPIS/Islamabad**.

Despite some media claims, **Pakistan has not closed its entire airspace**. Instead, several airways in the northern OPLR/Lahore FIR remain unavailable until May 10, although alternate routings are still possible.

# PAKISTAN/INDIA AIRSPACE UPDATE

## 7 MAY 2025



These restrictions are listed on the Pakistan CAA Notams website, many of which are not mirrored on the FAA's site, so it's best to **check the source directly for the latest updates**.

However, most major airlines are now **avoiding Pakistan's airspace altogether**, with east-west traffic diverting south via the Gulf of Oman and UAE. Given the uncertainty and potential for rapid escalation, this seems a sensible choice.



If the conflict continues, there is a chance that **Pakistan could impose a full airspace closure**, as they did from Feb to Aug 2019 under similar circumstances. Check SafeAirspace.net for any major updates to airspace risk.

**SAFE AIRSPACE**

**Conflict Zone & Risk Database**  
All current warnings in one place

[Updates](#) [Alerts](#)  [Level 1](#) [Level 2](#) [Level 3](#)

**Pakistan** 07 May

Risk summary updated: Pakistan closed several airways in the north of the country following airstrikes from India. Most major airlines are now avoiding Pakistan's airspace altogether, with east-west traffic diverting south via the Gulf of Oman and UAE.

**Yemen** 06 May

Risk summary updated: OYSN/Sanaa Airport closed due to damage from Israeli airstrikes in Dec 2024 and May 2025.

**Lebanon** 02 May

Germany Notam extended, no change to warning: Caution advised to German operators in the OLBB/Beirut FIR due to potential risk from anti-aviation weaponry and military ops.

Click Country for More information

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# Back to the Radio: Gander Goes Voice-Only Pre-Oceanic

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



- Since the removal of Oceanic Clearances in December 2024, Gander had been issuing pre-Oceanic route amendments via CPDLC. But crew confusion over these messages has led to increased VHF workload for controllers.
- To help fix this, from 5 May to 31 December 2025, Gander will issue all route amendments before the Oceanic Entry Point by VHF voice only, even if the aircraft is logged on to CPDLC. All other OCR procedures remain unchanged.

More info can be found in Canada AIP SUP 46/25. The same update has been announced via Notam too:

**CZQX H1579/25** - EASTBOUND FLT IN GANDER DOMESTIC, ENROUTE TO GANDER OCEANIC, WILL BE ISSUED OCEANIC ROUTE AMENDMENTS VIA VHF VOICE IN LIEU OF CPDLC LOADABLE ROUTE CLEARANCES. ALL OTHER OCEANIC CLEARANCE REMOVAL (OCR) PROC REMAIN UNCHANGED.  
REFER TO AIP CANADA SUP 046/2025.  
05 MAY 00:00 2025 UNTIL 04 AUG 16:00 2025. CREATED: 01 MAY 12:36 2025

We've written before about **crew confusion and errors on the NAT following the introduction of the new "No Oceanic Clearance" procedure.**

Since 4 Dec 2024, Oceanic Clearances are no longer being issued by Gander for eastbound flights, and a new procedure is in place using the same ACARS 623 RCL message process enabling you to send your desired time, level and speed at the Oceanic Entry Point (OEP) so ATC can develop an optimal Oceanic

profile for your flight.

**But there have been plenty of cases of flight crew getting it wrong, the top 5 being:**

1. Sending the RCL at the wrong time
2. Asking for an Oceanic Clearance
3. "DIY" level changes
4. Wrong handling of RCL Rejected messages
5. Repeated voice requests for "route confirmation" blocking active ATC frequencies due to CPDLC UM79 route clearance confusion.

We previously published this **Crew Brief and Checklist**, which you can download below:

### CREW BRIEF & CHECKLIST : GANDER EASTBOUND ⚡

**90-60 MINS BEFORE DEP/ENTRY**  
RCL (Pos, Time, Level, Speed) \_\_\_\_\_ SENT  
ACK ("RCL Received by Gander") \_\_\_\_\_ RECEIVED  
(IF RCL SENT ON TIME, NO FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED)

**WITH GANDER DOMESTIC**  
OCEANIC CLEARANCE \_\_\_\_\_ NONE (REMOVED)  
IF "RCL REJECTED" \_\_\_\_\_ READ RCL TO ATC  
LEVEL CHANGE \_\_\_\_\_ AWAIT FROM ATC  
(NEVER GO TO YOUR RCL LEVEL WITHOUT CLEARANCE)

**AT OCEANIC ENTRY POINT**  
FLIGHT LEVEL \_\_\_\_\_ AS CLEARED  
SPEED \_\_\_\_\_ SET (RCL or ASSIGNED MACH)  
ROUTE \_\_\_\_\_ AS PER FPL OR RE-CLEARANCE  
ATC SYSTEMS ARE CONTINUALLY MONITORING YOUR ROUTE, SPEED, AND LEVEL, AND WILL ADVISE OF ANY DISCREPANCY

**TOP 5 PILOT ERRORS**  
AS REPORTED BY GANDER OCEANIC, DECEMBER 2024

- 1 **WRONG RCL TIME.** Send it when you are 90-60 mins from your entry point, not before, not after. The 1 hour cut-off is strict.
- 2 **ASKING FOR AN OCEANIC CLEARANCE.** They are gone, finished, done. (for NAT eastbound) ATC can't give you one, so don't ask!
- 3 **CLIMBING WITHOUT APPROVAL** (or descending). Too many are getting this wrong. ATC will ensure you are at the right level at the DEP. Don't "do it yourself".
- 4 **WRONG HANDLING OF "RCL REJECTED".** You get this if you send your RCL early or late. If late, just tell ATC on the correct frequency what your RCL says, then you're done. You won't be handled any differently. No "Oceanic Clearance".
- 5 **ASKING FOR ROUTE CONFIRMATION.** Don't do it. It blocks the frequency and increases ATC workload. ATC auto-queries your FMS to ensure it's correct.

**DON'T DO THIS!**

**CZDX/GANDER DOMESTIC**  
RNNY (1) → TUDEP (2) → 52N 50W (3) → 52N 40W (4) → 52N 30W  
DEP/ENTRY POINT  
- Maintain current level. **Don't climb!** (or descend) to RCL level unless Domestic ATC clears you.  
- Speed: Per RCL or as assigned  
- Route: As per FPL or as re-cleared

**OCEANIC SECTOR**  
- "Resume Normal Speed" or "Continue to Fly Cost Index/RCL speed"  
- If you did not get your optimum level or route, ATC will issue a RCL. If you're in the oceanic sector, ATC will advise when it is available.

**NAT EASTBOUND: STEP BY STEP**  
CQZX/GANDER OCEANIC → KZWY/NEW YORK OCEANIC → LPPG/SANTA MARIA OCEANIC

**1** The RCL is a **one-and-done** message with your **desired** level and speed. You **won't** get a clearance, so don't ask for one! Send your RCL at **the right time**. The 1 hour cut-off is firm. If you do have to use **voice** (e.g. late, or no ACARS) - just read out the RCL with current ATC, and you're done.

**2** Domestic ATC (the radar sector before the ocean) is **responsible** for getting you to the level Oceanic ATC has assigned you. **IF** your RCL level is available, they will clear you. **Don't** just climb yourself. Nil comms means no change, stay where you are.

**3** At the Oceanic Entry Point, **maintain** whatever level Domestic ATC has assigned - this is your ocean level. Set speed to Econ/Cost Index, or a Fixed Mach if so assigned. Your **route** is automatically queried with a "Confirm Assigned Route" message - no need to confirm via voice.

**4** Once in the ocean and traffic permits, you can expect an advisory that your RCL level is available if you didn't get it earlier. If you have an Assigned Mach, when able, ATC will issue "Resume Normal Speed". This means fly RCL speed (Cost Index), and notify of +/- 0.02 changes to this speed.

**Download the Gander RCL Crew Brief and Checklist (PDF, 1Mb)**

↑ All the info in the Checklist is still accurate, except for this new change from May 5: **Gander will issue all route amendments before the Oceanic Entry Point by VHF voice only, even if the aircraft is logged on to CPDLC.** Note that Moncton and Montreal will continue to issue CPDLC UM79 route amendments.

## Getting it wrong

Since Canada removed Oceanic Clearances in Dec 2024, things haven't exactly gone smoothly. Crews are confused. Controllers are overloaded. Frequencies are clogged.

The ICAO North Atlantic Implementation Management Group published this report in April 2025, which gives a bit more info about what's been going wrong. Here's a summary:

1. **Misinterpretation of "RCL RECEIVED".** Crews wrongly believe this means their requested level and speed are approved.
2. **Expectation of Verbal Clearance.** Crews continue to ask for Oceanic Clearance or confirmation, despite RCL automation.
3. **Confusion Over Clearance Level.** Crews question why the cleared level differs from what was requested in the RCL.
4. **Timing Errors.** RCLs sent too early or too late are rejected, leading to further confusion.
5. **Old Habits Die Hard.** Habits from the previous Oceanic Clearance system persist among crews.
6. **Interpretation Problems with UM79.** Some crews are reading the UM79 and thinking "direct to the Clearance limit," which is wrong.
7. **Incomplete Route Displays.** Missing route chunks - Depending on the avionics, not all of the routing shows up properly, or crews miss them.
8. **FMS Issues and Fuel Warnings.** The FMS throws up alerts. Crews wonder if something's off with the routing.
9. **Reluctance to Load Routes.** Crews hesitate to load the Clearance into the FMS without voice confirmation - they'd rather check with ATC first, just to be sure.
10. **General Avionics Variability.** Every aircraft is different - and so is how it shows the message. It's not standard, which means more chances to mess it up.
11. **Incorrect or Partial Route Loading.** Frequent errors like skipping waypoints or only partially loading Clearances - or just loading it wrong altogether!
12. **BizAv-Specific Confusion.** Not sure how true this is, but the doc says that BizAv crews in particular are struggling with strange LL coordinate formatting.
13. **Increased Voice Frequency Use.** Radio overload - all these doubts mean more calls to ATC. VHF is getting slammed.
14. **High ATC Workload.** ATC are super busy with constantly jumping in to prevent route deviations due to misinterpretations.
15. **Prevented Deviations.** A high number of potential lateral or vertical deviations are being caught just in time by ATC.

Phew! Who knew this whole *Removal of Oceanic Clearances* thing was going to be so much work!

## Getting it right

In our previous post, we did attempt to draw out some straightforward guidance for crews heading eastbound on the NAT through Gander on how to get it right. But for those of us who prefer cold hard text

rather than little pictures and maps, here's some step-by-step guidance:

1. **File your flight plan.** Do this as usual, including your planned route, speed, and flight level(s).
2. **Log on to CPDLC.** The Gander Domestic logon code is CDQX. Gander Oceanic logon is CZQX. No need to add anything else as the transfer of connections should be automatic.
3. **Submit your RCL.** Do this via the ACARS 623 process between 90-60 mins prior to the OEP for Gander. Remember, this RCL is a message you send to ATC telling them your desired route, level, and speed across the NAT. It's not asking for a Clearance - it gives ATC the details needed to build your optimal profile.  
***Submit the RCL by voice instead of the ACARS 623 process if any of the following apply:***
  - You don't have datalink capability or it's not working.
  - You're departing from an airport less than 45 minutes' flying time from the OEP (send the RCL 10 minutes prior to start-up).
  - You receive an "RCL REJECTED" message for any reason.
  - You don't receive an "RCL RECEIVED" response within 15 minutes.
4.  **Expect any Oceanic route amendments from Gander Domestic via VHF voice, not CPDLC.** Between 5 May and 31 December 2025, Gander Domestic controllers will issue any route amendments via VHF voice only, even if you're logged on to CPDLC. This is a temporary change to reduce confusion, controller workload, frequency congestion and hopefully identify mitigations for the UM79 errors. Any route changes after you progress by the OEP will still be issued via CPDLC or HF by Gander Oceanic.
5. **Don't request a clearance!** There is no eastbound Oceanic Clearance anymore, so don't ask ATC to confirm your route!
6. **Don't climb!** Maintain your domestic cleared level. Domestic ATC (the radar sector before the ocean) is responsible for getting you to the level Oceanic ATC has assigned you. If your RCL level is available, they will clear you. Do not climb without a clearance! Nil comms means no change, stay where you are. At the OEP, set speed to Econ/Cost Index, or a Fixed Mach if so assigned. Your FMS routing is automatically checked with a "CONFIRM ASSIGNED ROUTE" message - no need to confirm via voice. If there's a problem, ATC will contact you.
7. **Once in Oceanic airspace...** Any further route or level changes will be issued via CPDLC or HF, as before. Once in the ocean and traffic permits, you can expect an advisory that your RCL level is available if you didn't get it earlier. Continue normal NAT procedures, including position reporting (as required), speed change notifications, and monitoring of appropriate frequencies.

#### **Back to the Radio**

For crews, these temporary changes will feel like **stepping back in time to the old school pre-CPDLC era**. After years of progress toward datalink-driven automation, we're now back to copying Oceanic route amendments over VHF - just like the old days. Until the system catches up, have your pens ready and your radios tuned - because Gander is going retro, at least for now.



**What about flights heading the other way across the NAT?**

Westbound flights are still fully doing things the old-fashioned way, as **Shanwick have still not removed Oceanic Clearances yet!**

They initially planned to drop these in Dec 2024, but identified some system issues at the last minute which would have created major problems in providing a full ATC service.

The latest news from them is that they don't expect to do this before Summer 2025 - and NATS will give at least 2 months' notice before making any changes.

For more on that, Opsgroup members can check this briefing.

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## 2025 Update: BizAv Ops to Israel

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



## Key Points

- **May 2025:** Turkish airports have stopped supplying fuel to aircraft heading to Israel due to a trade embargo. BizAv flights will need to plan fuel stops enroute at one of Israel's "approved airports."
- **Jan 2025:** Israel's new Electronic Travel Authorization system (ETA-IL) is now mandatory for pax from all visa-exempt countries. Plus we have a new list of approved airports from which international flights are allowed to enter or overfly the LLLL/Tel Aviv FIR.
- **May 2024:** Israel has tightened the rules for GA flights from the US, due to security concerns. Most flights will now need to either hire an approved security company to do screening in the US, or else make a stop en-route at an approved European airport.
- Check below for a summary of **how to get an Israel landing or overflight permit**, and what to expect on how that process works.

### May 2025: No fuel for Israel-bound flights in Turkey

We've had confirmation from a local handler that Turkish airports will no longer supply fuel to aircraft heading to Israel. This is part of a trade embargo Turkey imposed on Israel following the Gaza war, but it seems like only recently they've started applying the rule specifically to jet fuel for BizAv flights.

So if you're flying to Israel and were planning to tech-stop in Turkey for fuel – that's no longer an option. You'll need to plan a fuel stop at another airport enroute, and make sure it's on Israel's list of "approved airports" for international departures (see list below).

### Jan 2025: New ETA Rules

Effective 1 Jan 2025, Israel's new Electronic Travel Authorization system (ETA-IL) is now **mandatory for pax from all visa-exempt countries**. The ETA will be valid for up to 2 years, and lets people stay for up to 90 days. Visitors from non-eligible countries still need to get a visa, just like before. **Operating crew are exempt** (official word here).



For a list of visa-exempt countries, check here. Visitors from non-eligible countries still need to get a visa, just like before.

#### **Jan 2025: New list of approved airports for flights to Israel**

Israel has published a revised list of approved airports from which international flights are allowed to enter or overfly the LLLL/Tel Aviv FIR. Download it [here](#).

**Several airports have been removed from the list:** EBCI/Charleroi, GMMN/Casablanca, LEPA/Palma, LEMG/Malaga, and KIAD/Washington Dulles.

Russian airports UUBW/Zhukovsky and UUWW/Vnukovo have been added.

You can still apply to operate from airports that don't appear on the list - but allow extra time for processing.

#### **May 2024: GA flights from US to Israel - 3 Options**

Effective May 2024, there are some new rules for GA flights from the US. These have come from ASOC (Aviation Security Operations Center), the authority responsible for the security procedures for the arrival of aircraft into and through Israeli airspace.

You can read the ASOC announcement [on this page](#). If you want to fly from the US to Israel, you now have three options...

##### **1. Hire an ASOC-approved security company in the US to do pre-departure security screening and fly direct.**

- You basically pay one of two companies to send their staff to whichever US airport you want to depart from, and they will do your pre-departure security screening for you.
- The two companies approved by ASOC are: **Premier Corporate Security** or **Crisis 24**. Contact details for both can be found [here](#).

##### **2. Private flights can sign up to the Preferred Carrier/Aircraft Program and fly direct without any pre-departure screening.**

- Charter flights (Part 135) are not eligible for this - only Private flights (Part 91).
- It's quite a process - you have to pay for ASOC to come visit you, conduct interviews, train your crew, and the whole thing can take months. So this option is really only applicable to operators who do frequent flights to Israel or who have close ties to the country.
- You can apply by emailing [asoc-dvir@int.gov.il](mailto:asoc-dvir@int.gov.il)

### **3. Land at an approved European airport en-route for a security check before continuing to Israel.**

- Check this list of approved airports (published in Jan 2025). These are where you're allowed to fly direct to Israel from. Ignore the US ones (KEWR and KJFK) as these no longer apply to GA flights.
- For flights coming from the US, there are plenty of viable options to consider in northern Europe. (BIKF/Keflavik isn't an option though - that got removed from the list back in 2023).

#### **What do I need to do to fly to Israel?**

So now we're talking about **permits** *i.e. the standard stuff that's been around for a while.*

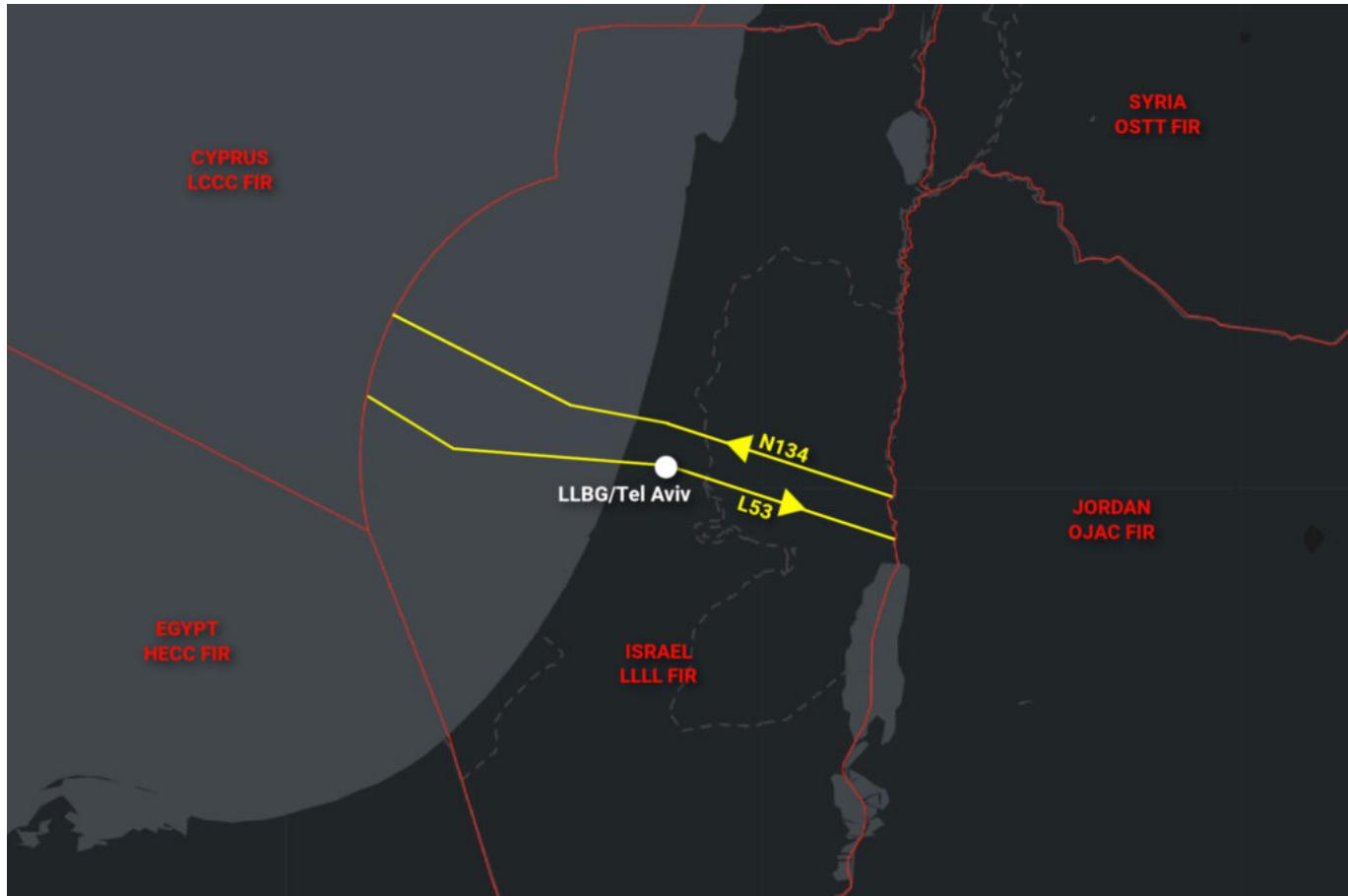
It's the same process for landings and overflights, except for the thing about a 'local sponsor' - you only need this for landing permits.

1. **You must be departing from one of the approved airports** in the approved list. (For overflights, your destination airport doesn't matter.)
2. **For landing permits:** You need a 'local sponsor' - a contact person in Israel who can vouch for you. This person must be Israeli, and personally acquainted with all passengers - not just a travel agent or hotel representative. They will be contacted by the security services before any approval is given.
3. **For overflight permits:** You don't need a local sponsor.
4. **Your crew/pax/plane need to be from Israel-friendly countries:** You must provide passport copies of the crew and passengers, who must be nationals of countries that have diplomatic relations with Israel. The same rule applies to the country your aircraft is registered in.
5. Fill in the permit application form, and send it back to ASOC at [asoc@int.gov.il](mailto:asoc@int.gov.il).

*The next step is where it can get a bit confusing. Get ready for some jargon. Check out the full guidance on ASOC's website, but here's the lowdown on how it works and what to do:*

1. ASOC will check your permit request, and if approved, will reply to you with a **Pending Permission Notification**.
2. The Captain must then call or log in to the ASOC website to submit an **Entry Code**. The Pending Permission Notification then becomes a **Final Security Arrival Permit**.
3. You're good to go! On entering Israeli airspace, you've then got to follow the **Arrival Identification Procedure**. This bit is easier than it sounds - ATC will basically just ask for your Entry Code to approve you for entry. ASOC have published an example of how you can expect that conversation to go.

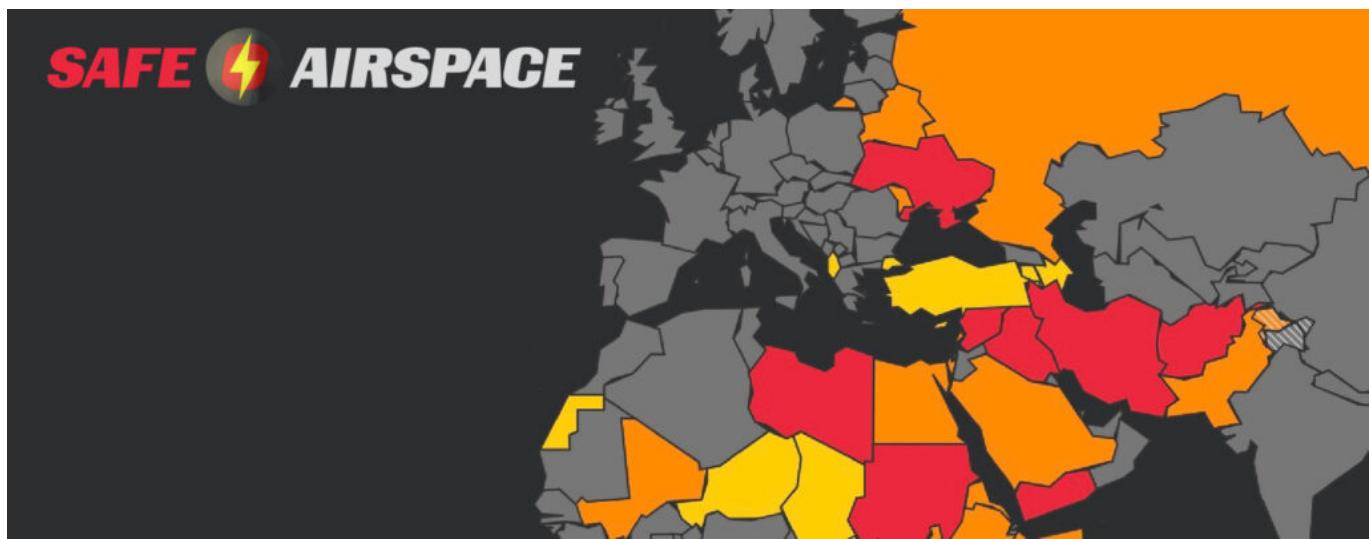
For overflights, there's basically two options - **N134** for westbound flights, and **L53** for eastbound. Although check the Notams for the latest here, as they often only permit overflights at specific flight levels and times.



#### Security & Airspace Safety

Ongoing **GPS spoofing**, sporadic attacks in the north from **Lebanon**, and the **Gaza conflict** create a hostile and non-routine environment. There remains **significant risk within the Tel Aviv FIR** from the ongoing conflict, and a day-to-day review of the current situation is essential prior to operating.

For more info, check [safeairspace.net](http://safeairspace.net), which also includes a report about the **recent Iranian drone/missile attacks on Israel** that resulted in airspace closures across the region.



Most airlines stopped flying to Israel at the start of the conflict in Oct 2023, and many have been slow to return. To read **OPSGROUP member reports** on flights they have recently operated to LLBG/Tel Aviv, check Airport Spy.

For **overflights** in the region, almost none are going over Israel. Most operators are going **via Egypt and**

**Saudi Arabia** – many are choosing to transit west of Cairo, fly south, avoid Sinai, and then continue eastbound over Saudi Arabia. The northern route via Turkey and Iraq is also an option, though warnings for Iraq remain below FL320.

**Send us your reports!**

If you've been to Israel recently (or anywhere else, for that matter) and can **share some info on how it went**, please file a quick Airport Spy report and we can update this article and share the info with everyone!



Got some intel?

## Are you an Airport Spy?

You go to unusual places and see curious things. Your turboprop friends envy you. Now, it's time to give back.

For your next trip, pack a notebook, and file your Spy Report below. You'll get a weekly ops briefing in return.

[File your report >](#)

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## New APIS system coming to Hong Kong

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



- Hong Kong has implemented a new APIS system. BizAv flights need to do this from 29 April 2025 onwards (although non-compliance will not be enforced until Sep 2025). APIS info will be required for all crew and pax (including transit) for all flights - both

private and commercial.

- The local FBO (HKBAC) will not do this for you. The operator must complete APIS themselves, or get a third party trip support provider to do it for them.
- The process for actually submitting APIS sounds a bit messy. Full guidance below ↓

So, first things first, there's this letter that says BizAv flights need to do APIS from 29 April 2025 onwards, with full compliance mandatory from 1 Sep 2025.

In terms of how to go about doing it, there is now a website up and running where you can register an account to file APIS online:

Screen ID: LOGIN-01

## Advance Passenger Information System

### Immigration Department

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
of the People's Republic of China

User Name \* Please input User Name  
Please input User Name

Password \* Please input Password

Verification Code \* Please input Code a52y  
Fields marked with \* are mandatory

Refresh

Login

Reset Password

Account Registration

Useful Information

Click on 'Useful Information' and you can then download the 'Submission Guide' which tells you what to do, but the main things to know are as follows:

#### 1. "No Board" = No entry, even for crew

If the APIS system returns a "No Board" message for any traveller, including crew members, they are not permitted to board the flight! You then have to contact the Command Centre if you think that decision is wrong for any reason. Phone: +852 2121 0008. Email: [apisoperation@immd.gov.hk](mailto:apisoperation@immd.gov.hk)

#### 2. Different submission deadlines for pax and crew

This is a weird one. Passenger API data must be submitted no later than 40 minutes before departure, but crew data must be submitted at least 60 minutes before departure. No idea why, but it's in the rules! Best thing to do is just submit both crew and pax data at least 1hr prior, and forget about the whole '40 mins for pax' thing (and certainly don't tell them about it!)

#### 3. Crew data must be submitted twice

This is ever weirder still! Operators are required to submit crew API data twice for every inbound flight. The first submission must occur before departure, and the second (the Flight Close-out Message) must be submitted after the flight has departed. Even if there are no changes to the crew, the second submission is mandatory and must reflect the actual crew on board.

#### **4. Transit crew and pax must be included**

API data must be submitted for all travellers on board the aircraft, including those in transit who are not disembarking in Hong Kong.

#### **5. The local FBO can't do it for you**

This one doesn't actually appear in the guidance, but was reported to us by the local FBO (HKBAC). They said they cannot file APIS for operators – they can help you to set up the account on the APIS website, but you will have to file yourself! (or get your third party trip support provider to do it for you)

#### **6. Eventually there will be fines for getting it wrong**

As seems to be standard with all things like this, they say they'll fine you if you get it wrong. Failure to submit required data, submission of inaccurate or misleading information – stuff like that. Although they do also say that they won't start fining anyone in the 'transitional period' which ends on 1 Sep 2025.

### **Ops to Hong Kong**

This has long been a tricky old game for GA/BA flights – even before this latest thing with the new APIS requirements.

To operate to VHHH/Hong Kong, you need all of the following to be confirmed in advance (and we recommend applying in this order): **landing permit, parking, ground handling, slots... and now APIS too.**

All of these need to be applied for individually. Here's how to do it...

#### **Landing Permit**

This can be done whenever, but should probably be done first.

**Apply here:** [www.cad.gov.hk/english/efiling\\_home.html](http://www.cad.gov.hk/english/efiling_home.html)

**Contact:** Civil Aviation Department (CAD)

Email: asd@cad.gov.hk, gcmtse@cad.gov.hk

Phone: +852 2910-6648, -6629

#### **Parking**

Parking is confirmed on a first-come-first-served basis, and can be applied for up to 30 days in advance. Ultimately, the earlier you apply the better. However, parking requests for 5 days or more can sometimes be rejected, and overnight parking is often denied during busy periods. If this happens, unfortunately the best strategy is still to just keep making new applications until you get accepted! Once your parking is approved, you'll receive a confirmation, and this must be given to your ground handler.

**Apply here:** <https://extranet.hongkongairport.com/baps/>

**Contact:** Hong Kong Airport Authority (HKAA)

Email: [bjetslot@hkairport.com](mailto:bjetslot@hkairport.com)

## Ground Handling

There are plenty of agents and handlers at VHHH, but only one dedicated FBO for BA/GA flights – HKBAC. Send them an email to confirm your ground handling in advance.

**Contact:** Hong Kong Business Aviation Centre (HKBAC) <https://www.hkbac.com>

Email: [hkbac@hkbac.com](mailto:hkbac@hkbac.com)

Phone: +852 2949 9000

## Slots

Applications will only be considered 14 days prior to flight (unless you're applying for a last-minute cancelled or unused slot). Authorities monitor the slot system for intentional misuse – which could lead to operators being banned from using the system altogether. Other violations include any cancellations of outbound flights less than 72 hours before departure, and delays on the day by more than 2 hours – although any off-slot operations outside a tolerance of +/-20 minutes can still flag up for potential slot misuse.

**Apply here:** [http://www.hkgslot.gov.hk/Online\\_Coordination.html](http://www.hkgslot.gov.hk/Online_Coordination.html)

**Contact:** Hong Kong Schedule Coordination Office (HKSCO)

Email: [hkgslot@cad.gov.hk](mailto:hkgslot@cad.gov.hk)

Phone: +852 2910 6898

## Our Pilot Report - here's what we did...

If you're headed to VHHH/Hong Kong for the first time (or the *first time in a long time*) and want to know what to expect, here's an **OPSGROUP Team report from a recent flight**:

*Hong Kong is a busy commercial hub in Asia. However, they manage BizAv aircraft there. There are a few gotchas to keep an eye out for when arriving and departing.*

### **Handling:**

- *All your operations will centre around the HKBAC (Business Aviation Centre). They are helpful, and I'd suggest you contact them for help arranging your parking and slots.*
- *It can get busy, so the earlier you contact them, the better your chances will be.*
- *It is an expensive place to fly into. However, Hong Kong is expensive in general.*

### **Arrival:**

- *If you are coming to Hong Kong, note that the airport is beside a large mountain, so you get significant mechanical turbulence and wind shear.*
- *All arrivals are RNAV; vectors are not expected for many shortcuts beyond TD for Runway 25R. There is a lot of terrain.*
- *I suggest you take the RNAV 25R over the ILS. The ILS is very complicated as it is a two-part RNAV transition. It is also very high-load, and you must NOT select approach mode (i.e., switch to LOC/GS) before you hit TOPAN. Honestly, stick to the RNAV Z unless the cloud base is really an issue (which it rarely is).*
- *Even with calm winds on the ground, expect the approach to be quite bumpy.*

- Generally, ATC won't assign you the close runway for landing, so expect a long taxi. You can expect to cross 07R/25L at K6 before making a right turn onto K and then into the BAC.
- Once you open the door, they will offload the pax and cargo (customs screens everything, so take note), and they will often reposition you quite quickly to a staging bay while you clean up.
- If you have a short lay over the Sheraton at Tung Chung is nice, otherwise it is a good 45-minute uber ride into Town.

### **Departure:**

- The ramp is small, so expect to be at a remote staging area while you get the aircraft prepped. You can run the APU, etc., without issue, and then somewhere ETD-30, you can expect them to tug the plane into your departure position. These guys know what they are doing, but give them a heads-up if you wish your passengers would be late.
- PDC is available, as is Digital ATIS. Don't forget you need a start clearance (this isn't the USA).
- You can expect to depart from the closeby runway (07R/25L) unless it is closed for some reason (there is a nightly alternating closure for maintenance). So there is a short taxi; just be mindful that if you are slow with cabin prep, etc., you will be blocking the cargo aircraft that also taxi from the same side of the airport. ATC is friendly and competent but expects us to be efficient also.
- Departure clearance will be on your SID to 5000. Be mindful of flying noise abatement procedures; they expect you to accelerate to SID speed restrictions knots as soon as practicable. It is all on the charts; remember, we operate amongst a sea of heavies.
- One thing to note is that HK Departures only wants you to make the first call reporting your altitude passing and non-climb. There is no need to report your SID.
- Expect to level off at 9000' until you are about 20-30nm from the airport; this is due to the arrival traffic above.

If you have been to VHHH/Hong Kong (or anywhere else) and have a story to share - please do! Reports like these are super useful for everyone in the group. **File an Airport Spy report anonymously here.**



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[File your report](#) 

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# Boston Parking Restrictions Are Back

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team

28 July, 2025



## Key Points

- The BizAv PPR requirement at KBOS/Boston will be in effect from April 15 through the end of October.
- PPR is required for all non-scheduled flights (private and charter, Part 91 and 135), and will be issued on a first-come-first-served basis via Signature Aviation.
- This time, it's not just about congestion - construction work is underway on the ramp.
- If approved, aircraft are limited to a maximum of 2 days on the ground.

Boston is getting busy again, and with construction now happening on the ramp, the airport is bringing back PPR requirements for all BizAv flights.

The PPR requirement will start on **April 15** and is expected to remain in place **until the end of October**. Operators will need to stick closely to approved schedules, especially during the construction period.

Signature Aviation remains the only FBO at Boston. They have said that if you get PPR, the **max length of stay is 2 days**, and they cannot accept requests more than **30 days** prior to the planned flight.

Here's the updated table of scary costs for getting things wrong:

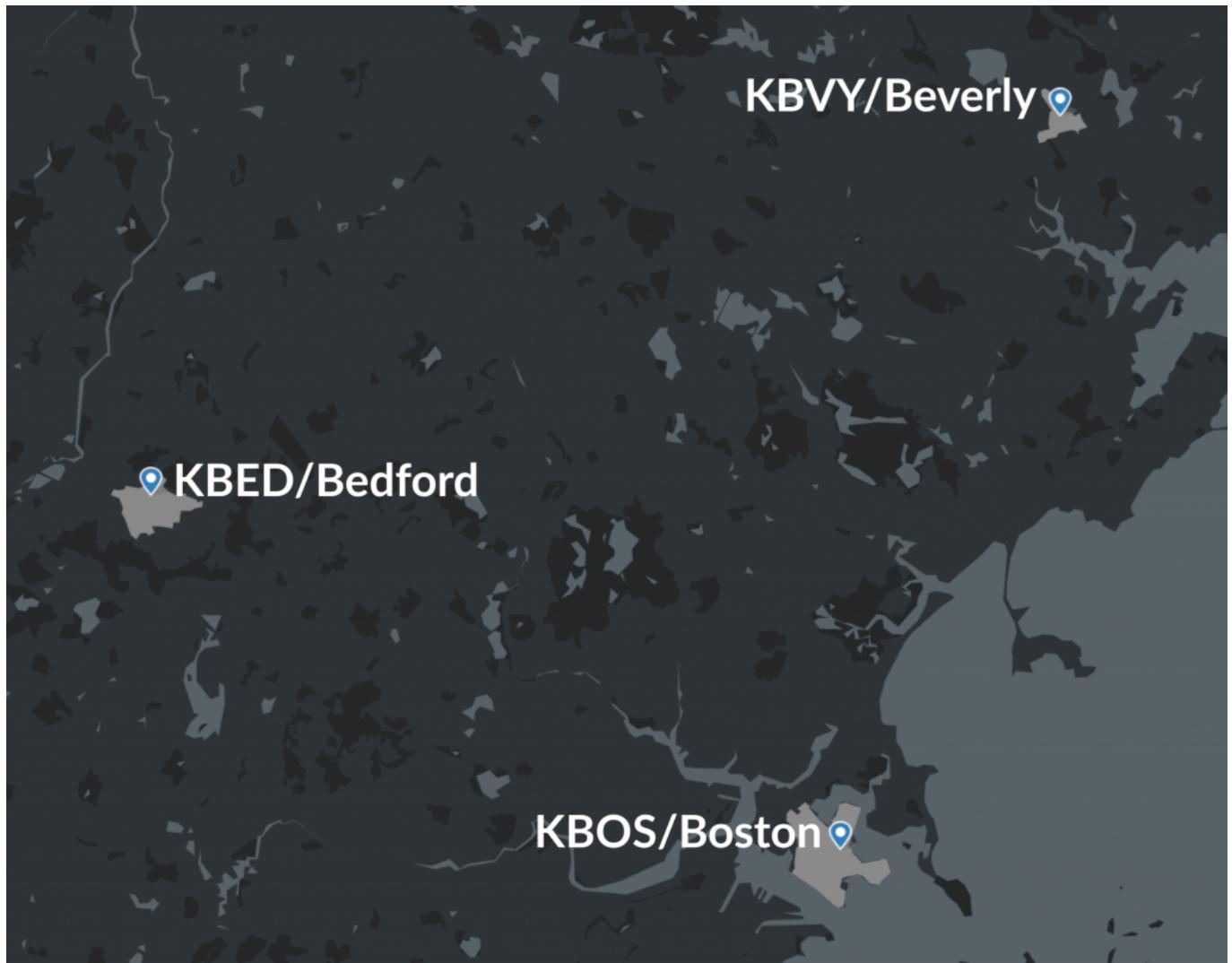
Fee Type:	Description:
<b>Cancellation / No-Show Fee</b>	Cancellation within 24 Hours of PPR reservation arrival time or a no-show for PPR reservation arrival time
<b>Violation Fee</b>	Show up without PPR reservation; FBO will determine length of stay and overstay charges will apply if applicable
<b>Overstay Fee (Hourly)</b>	Hourly rate for late departure based on PPR reservation; Max 4 hours at which point daily fee applies
<b>Overstay Fee (Daily)</b>	Daily rate applicable during PPR for every 24 hour period after 4 hours of PPR Overstay Fee have been assessed

Group	Type	PPR Cancellation Fee	PPR Violation Fee	PPR Overstay Fee	
		One-time charge	One-time Charge	Hourly Rate	Daily Rate
BA	Transport	\$2,750	\$8,800	\$1,375	\$5,500
	BBI/ACJ	\$2,750	\$7,700	\$1,375	\$5,500
Jet	Super Heavy Jet	\$2,750	\$6,600	\$1,375	\$5,500
	Heavy Jet	\$2,750	\$5,500	\$1,375	\$5,500
	Medium Jet	\$1,650	\$3,300	\$825	\$3,300
	Light Jet	\$1,100	\$2,200	\$550	\$2,200
	Very Light Jet	\$880	\$1,760	\$440	\$1,760
Prop	Heavy Prop	\$1,650	\$3,300	\$825	\$3,300
	Medium Prop	\$660	\$1,320	\$330	\$1,320
	Light Prop	\$550	\$1,100	\$275	\$1,100
	Single Engine Prop	\$440	\$880	\$220	\$880
Helicopter	Heavy Helicopter	\$220	\$440	\$110	\$440
	Medium Helicopter	\$220	\$440	\$110	\$440
	Light Helicopter	\$110	\$220	\$55	\$220
Piston	Heavy Twin	\$220	\$440	\$110	\$440
	Light Twin	\$220	\$440	\$110	\$440
	Single Engine Twin	\$110	\$220	\$55	\$220

## Where else to go?

For drop-and-go's, you could reposition to **KBED/Bedford** airport for parking. KBED looks like it could be a good option, as they are open H24 (tower is open from 07-23 local time), have a 7000ft runway, and the airport is only 20 miles from Boston - they do also handle international flights too, so you could always just fly there directly instead. The Signature page for KBED is [here](#).

One other option is **KBVY/Beverly** airport. **Flight Level Aviation** is the sole FBO there, and fees can be lower than KBED. The airport only has a 5000ft runway, and does not have 24/7 Customs coverage, but you can contact the CBP office at KBED to make arrangements. Drive time from KBVY into downtown Boston is roughly equivalent as from KBED. The North Atlantic Air page for KBVY is [here](#).



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# NAT Changes 2025: No More Blue Spruce Routes

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



**Key Points: Updated 19 March 2025**

- **A new NAT Doc 007 takes effect from 20 March 2025.**
- **Blue Spruce Routes are being removed. Aircraft with only 1 x LRNS will have to go via GOTA and the Iceland-Greenland corridor instead.**
- **There are new super fun chapters on Space Weather Contingencies and GNSS Interference Events.**
- **Other NAT news: Shanwick does not expect to implement the removal of Oceanic Clearances before summer 2025.**
- **Other NAT news: There's a big military exercise coming in May which will close large parts of the Shanwick FIR.**
- **Other NAT news: Greenland airport BGGH/Nuuk now more viable NAT alternate with a brand new runway (7200'/2200m) opened in Nov 2024.**

Once (or sometimes twice) every year, ICAO update their **NAT Doc 007 - the main guidance doc for ops over the North Atlantic**. All the specifics about how to operate your aircraft safely through the complex airspace of the region are here.

There's a **new one that takes effect from 20 March 2025**, which contains a few important changes to know about if you're planning a flight across the NAT.

You can download the new NAT Doc 007 in full, but here's a summary of the main changes...

#### **Deletion of Blue Spruce Routes**

If you're new to the NAT, the Blue Spruce Routes have been around since forever. These are special routes that go via Greenland and Iceland, designed to help aircraft with limited navigation capabilities.

**The Blue Spruce Routes will be officially deleted in March 2025.** The team behind this (the Blue Spruce Routes Project Team) has decided the following:

- There aren't enough ground-based navigation aids anymore to reliably support these routes.
- Hardly anyone uses them, as very few aircraft with single LRNS rely on them.
- The Iceland-Greenland surveillance corridor is a good enough alternative for aircraft with navigation issues.
- The difference in flight distance between Blue Spruce Routes and alternative corridors is so small it's not worth keeping them.

So from March 20, the **Iceland-Greenland corridor** will replace Blue Spruce Routes as the backup option. A review is also underway to decide whether to keep or remove remaining ground-based navigation aids.

#### **Updated NAT Doc 007**

Here's some of the other stuff in the newly updated version of this, effective 20 March 2025:

#### **Deleted sections, New sections, and Chapter Switcheroos**

##### **Deleted sections:**

- **Chapter 12** on *Guarding Against Common Errors*
- **Chapter 13** on *The Prevention Of Lateral Deviations From Track*

##### **New sections:**

- **Chapter 10** on *Special Procedures For In-Flight Contingencies* now includes a section to help crews handle **space weather contingencies** (explains how to manage impacts on communications, navigation, and surveillance systems caused by solar activity) and **GNSS interference events** (guidance on what to do in case of GPS jamming or spoofing, based on lessons from recent incidents).

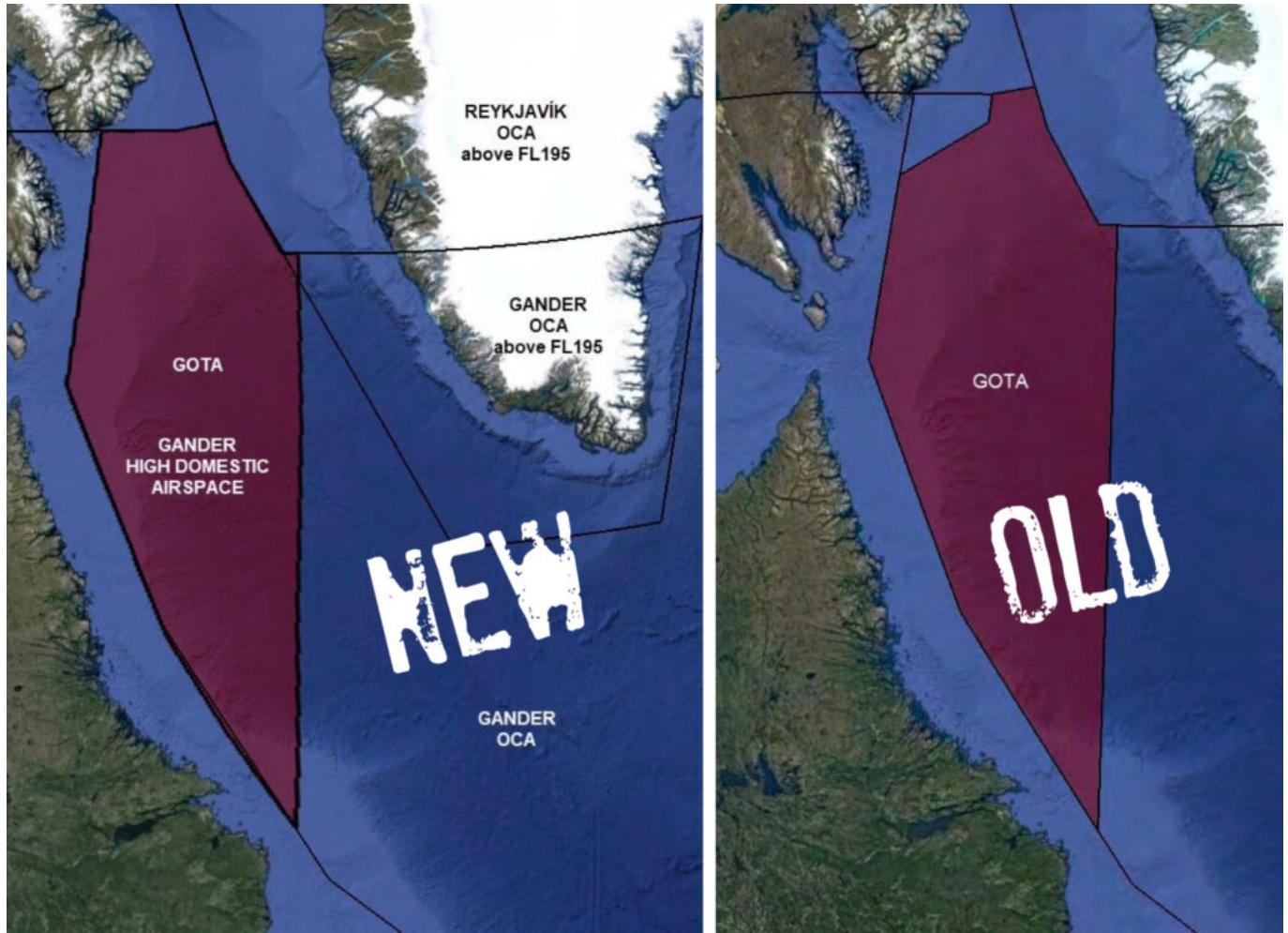
##### **Chapter Switcheroos:**

Not that interesting. Same content just in different places now. *Over to ChatGPT for a summary of this one:*

- Monitoring of Aircraft Systems & Flight Crew Performance moved to the end of the document and renumbered as Chapter 13.
- Navigation System Failure Procedures is now Chapter 9 (was Chapter 10).
- In-Flight Contingencies Procedures is now Chapter 10 (was Chapter 11) and includes the new space weather and GNSS interference guidance.
- Dispatchers' Guidance is now Chapter 11 (was Chapter 14).
- Flight Operations Below NAT HLA is now Chapter 12 (was Chapter 15).

#### **GOTA**

The picture of the airspace boundaries for GOTA has been corrected slightly from the previous NAT Doc. (The GOTA boundaries haven't changed, they just had the wrong pic in before!)



## RCL timings & Squawking 2000

A couple of minor updates here:

- In the Reykjavik OCA, you must now send your RCL **no earlier than 15 minutes** prior to the OEP (it used to be 20 minutes).
- They've also updated the bit about squawking 2000 10 minutes after passing the OEP - you should do this everywhere except the Reykjavik CTA **and when transitioning through Bermuda radar** (it didn't mention Bermuda before). Squawking 2000 is not required in these areas as they have you on radar!

## **Prior to oceanic entry**

### Send RCL message

6.2.26 An RCL is a voice or data link message via ACARS used to provide ETA at OEP, requested flight level, and speed. There is a requirement to send an RCL message prior to the OEP as follows:

- Gander OCA 90-60 minutes;
- Shanwick OCA 90-30 minutes;
- Santa Maria OCA at least 40 minutes;
- Bodo OCA at least 20 minutes;
- Reykjavik OCA **no earlier** than 15 minutes;
- New York OCA East no requirement for RCL.

Gander: Flights departing airports less than 45 minutes flying time from the OEP should send RCL 10 minutes prior to start-up.

Reykjavik: Due to coverage limitations, aircraft equipped with Inmarsat data link won't be able to send an RCL message via ACARS data link when north of 82°N. Aircraft equipped with Iridium and/or HF ACARS data link should be able to send an RCL message via ACARS data link regardless of location.

### **Continued confusion about the Removal of Oceanic Clearances**

The new version of the NAT Doc 007 tries to consolidate all the changes made after the March 2024 roll-out of OCR procedures. The only problem is that it now says that "**No oceanic clearance is required**" without pointing out that **this doesn't yet apply to Shanwick!**

## OCEANIC CLEARANCE REMOVAL FEB 2025 UPDATE

ENO/Bodo  
OCR: Changed Dec 2024

BIRD/Reykjavik  
OCR: Changed Mar 2024

CZQX/Gander  
OCR: Changed Dec 2024

EGGX/Shanwick  
OCR: Postponed UFN

KZWY/New York  
OCR: No change

LPPO/Santa Maria  
OCR: Changed Mar 2024

**OPSGROUP**

Everything about the Removal of Oceanic Clearances so far has been **quite confusing for crews**. What is happening, when it's happening, what is changing, the constant implementation date changes, plus the fact that there has been a bunch of confusing documentation out there with incorrect dates and procedures that are not yet in place.

### So here's the lowdown!

- **Reykjavik and Santa Maria** = removed Oceanic Clearances in March 2024
- **Gander and Bodo** = removed Oceanic Clearances in Dec 2024.
- **Shanwick** = still has Oceanic Clearances!

So, Shanwick is the only NAT ANSP still to make the change - and the main news at the moment is that **Shanwick does not expect to implement the removal of Oceanic Clearances before summer 2025.**

Until then, westbound flights entering Shanwick from domestic airspace will continue to be the only flights on the NAT that will still require an Oceanic Clearance. For more info on all this, OPSGROUP members should check this post in their Dashboard.

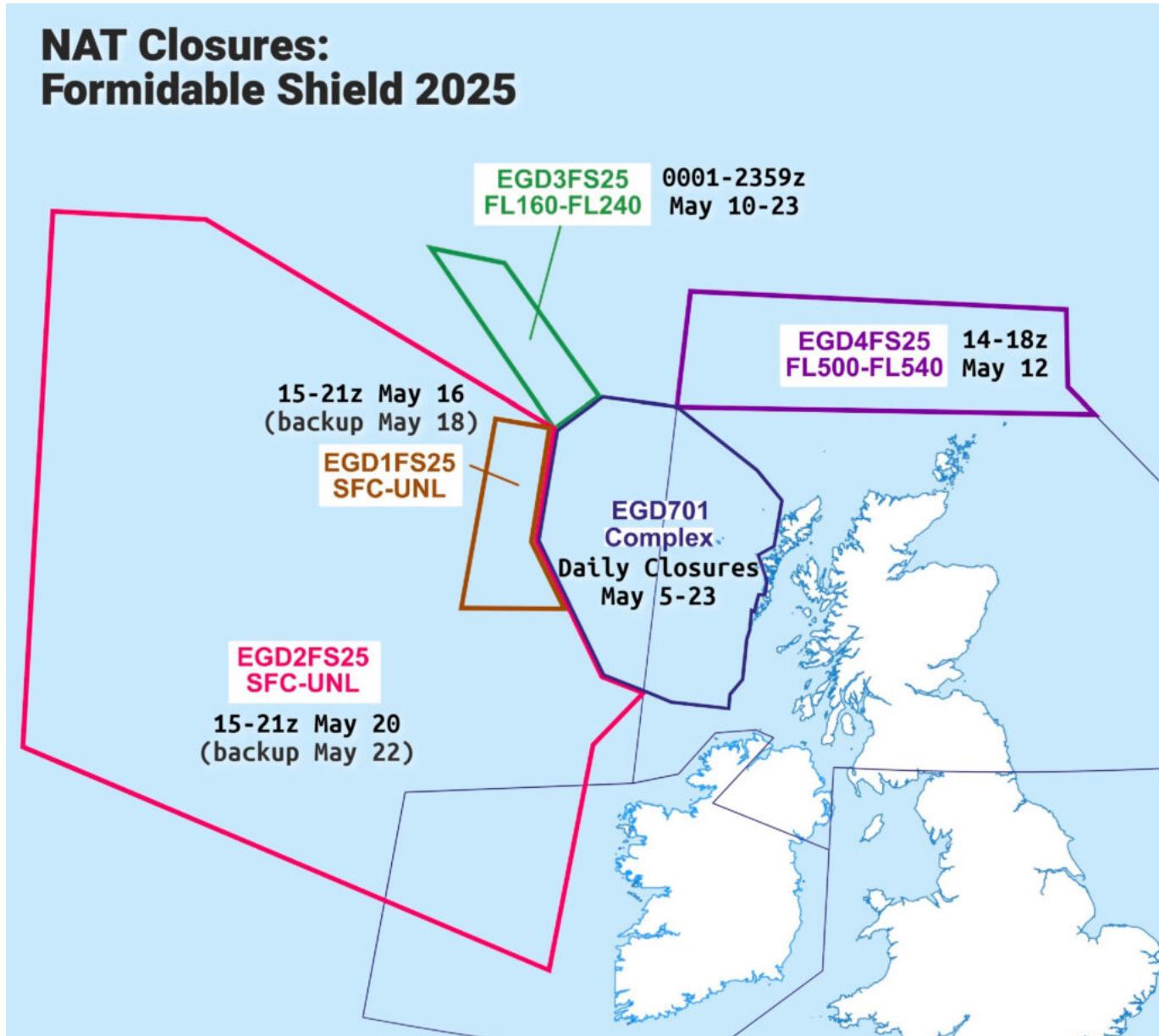
Other important NAT stuff to look forward to

## Formidable Shield military exercise expected in May 2025

Remember that big NAT military exercise a couple of years ago? Formidable Shield is happening again soon, and **this year will be a fairly bad vintage.**

There will be daily closures in the D701 area off the coast of Scotland from May 5-23, but the big one to watch out for is a **large closure of airspace across the northern half of the EGGX/Shanwick FIR** on May 20 between 15-21z (with May 22 as the backup day).

The map below shows everything we know about this. For more info, check this UK SUP.



## Changes to Greenland NAT alternates

**BGGH/Nuuk** airport's brand new runway (7200'/2200m) opened in Nov 2024, with ILS at both ends, which on the face of it makes Nuuk a more viable diversion option for NAT traffic.

But since it opened, we've had reports of **a few things to watch out for at BGGH/Nuuk:**

- ATC may **delay your arrival and put you into a hold** as only one ILS approach can be handled at a time, and 15 min separation is being applied between international arrivals. So carry up to half an hour of extra fuel if possible.
- In practical terms the airport is **effectively closed overnight**. Because it's a brand new airport, night opening is unrealistic at the moment – especially in winter. In the summer months, when there's no snow and it's daylight almost all day every day, there won't be the same need for runway sweeping and using the airport as a diversion alternate might be more possible.
- Aircraft larger than A330 should **consider continuing using BGSF/Sondrestrom as an alternate instead** – it may make more sense to divert here with the longer runway and less traffic compared to the marginal runway in BGGH/Nuuk.

Also watch out for changes potentially coming at **BGSF/Sondrestrom**, where they're considering downgrading ATC to AFIS at the end of 2025. More info [here](#).

### Did we miss anything?

If you spotted anything important in the new NAT Doc 007 which we missed in this summary, please let us know! Email us at [news@ops.group](mailto:news@ops.group)

#### More help with North Atlantic ops

- Download the OPSGROUP NAT Guide ("My First North Atlantic Flight is Tomorrow")
- Download the OPSGROUP NAT Plotting & Planning Chart
- Explanation of what you need to know about the NAT Datalink Mandate
- An overview of NAT Emergency Divert Airports

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## France Hates Planes - it's official

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



#### Key Points - updated 5 March 2025

- France have massively hiked their passenger air tax rates, effective 1st March 2025, which also now extend to commercial BizAv flights - private flights are exempt.
- These new rates will mean operators must pay anywhere from €420 to €2100 per passenger, depending on where you're flying!
- The tax applies to flights departing from both mainland France and most French overseas territories - but with some exceptions.

France has just passed its annual budget, which includes some **eye-watering adjustments to the Air Passenger Transport Tax** (Taxe de Solidarité sur les Billets d'Avion, or TSBA), which now extends to commercial BizAv flights (aircraft with 19 seats or less).

The new rates are due to take effect from 1 March 2025, and vary depending on destination. For BizAv departing from French airports, the new rates per passenger will be:

- **€420 for European destinations**
- **€1015 for intermediate destinations (everywhere else up to 5500km)**
- **€2100 for long-distance destinations (beyond 5500km).**

And yes, those rates are **per passenger!** Domestic flights within France will have to pay an extra 10% VAT on top of these rates.

**The airlines are getting hit too.** The budget includes a rise from €2.63 to €7.40 for an economy ticket heading anywhere within Europe, and more if you're going somewhere farther away or are traveling in business class.

DESTINATION FINALE	CATÉGORIE DE SERVICE	Tarif (€)
European or similar destination	Normal	7,4
	With additional services	30
	Business aircraft with turboprop	210
	Business aircraft with turbojet	420
Intermediate destination	Normal	15
	With additional services	80
	Business aircraft with turboprop	675
	Business aircraft with turbojet	1015
Distant destination	Normal	40
	With additional services	120
	Business aircraft with turboprop	1025
	Business aircraft with turbojet	2100

There's a weird way they calculate the distance flown here. The new law specifies that the **distance used to determine the tax will be calculated from LFPG/Paris Charles de Gaulle airport** (what they call the the "national reference aerodrome of the metropolitan territory"), rather than the actual distance between departure and destination airports.

For example, if you're flying from LFMN/Nice to KTEB/Teterboro, the tax calculation will actually use the distance from LFPG/Paris to KTEB/Teterboro instead. The idea with this weird method is that it helps give a consistent and simplified way of calculating the distance for tax purposes.

### Do private flights have to pay this too?

We're almost 100% sure they don't.

The new tax rules list a few exemptions, including: **"flights undertaken by a physical or legal person for the purposes of leisure aviation or on their own behalf."**

That sounds very much like private flights.

Also, the French tax authority has an entire website where they try to answer questions like this. The best answer comes in the March 1st FAQ which clarifies three points:

#### **"Own-account" (ie. private) flights are not subject to the tax:**

*"In the case of own-account flights (i.e. private flights) involving employees or managers of the operator, or employees/managers of a company that owns 100% of the operator, these are not subject to the TS."*

#### **Non-commercial flights are not taxable:**

*"Article L. 422-5 of the CIBS specifies at national level the definition of commercial flight established at European level. Under these conditions, an aircraft flight that does not fall within the definition of a commercial flight is not taxable... The economic activity criteria is not met if the activity is not carried out for valuable consideration."*

#### **Fractional/shared ownership flights are generally considered private and not subject to the tax:**

*"With regard to the criteria of carrying out transport on behalf of third parties: shared/fractional ownership models are part of own-account transport..."*

The doc also says that even if a flight is filed as "General Aviation" (G) in the flight plan, this does not automatically mean it is tax-exempt. It sounds like the authorities pretty much ignore how the flight plan is filed - they're more interested in determining whether the flight truly meets the definition of **non-commercial private transport** or **commercial transport** under tax law.

## What about flights from French overseas territories?

This is where it gets even more complicated! The tax applies to flights departing from both mainland France and **most French overseas territories** – but with some exceptions.

### **Flights departing from these places are exempt:**

- *TFFJ/Saint Barthelemy and TFFG/Saint-Martin*
- *New Caledonia and French Polynesia*
- *LFSB/Basel-Mulhouse Airport (flights operated under Swiss traffic rights from here are exempt).*

### **The tax applies to flights departing from:**

- *Guadeloupe*
- *Reunion*
- *Martinique*
- *Mayotte*
- *French Guyana*

For flights from these places, here's how they calculate what rate of tax you should pay:

#### **“European or similar destination” (€420):**

- Flights within the same French overseas territory.
- Flights to mainland France and Corsica.
- Flights to EU, EEA, Switzerland, or within 1000 km of the departure airport.

*So for example, a TFFR/Guadeloupe to LEMD/Madrid flight would qualify for this (because it's going to an airport in the EU).*

#### **“Intermediate destination” (€1015):**

- Flights to any airport 1000-5500km away, not covered by the above criteria.

*For example, a TFFR/Guadeloupe to KTEB/Teterboro flight (approx 2000km).*

#### **“Distant Destination” (€2100):**

- Flights to any airport more than 5500km away, not covered by the above criteria.

*For example, a TFFR/Guadeloupe to KSFO/San Francisco flight (approx 5530km).*

## How should operators pay these taxes?

The new tax rules say that operators have to work out how much they owe, and declare it using an online portal: <https://taxes-aeronautiques.sigp.aviation-civile.gouv.fr/>

**Until 31 Dec 2025:** Operators must submit declarations by the last day of the month following the reporting period (monthly or quarterly).

**From 1 Jan 2026:** The deadline changes to the 20th of the following month.

There's also some text saying that if an operator fails to declare or underreports passengers, the DGAC may use aircraft seating capacity to estimate tax liability!

We have had some local reports saying that some FBOs/Handlers have been collecting these taxes from operators, and paying on their behalf. But some others have reported that they're not doing this as it's technically illegal. So we're not sure we would recommend this option at the moment!

## Why is France doing this?

The French government have projected these new tax rates to generate **€800-€850 million in additional revenue**. The country's new Minister for Public Accounts has given a  to the tax increase -

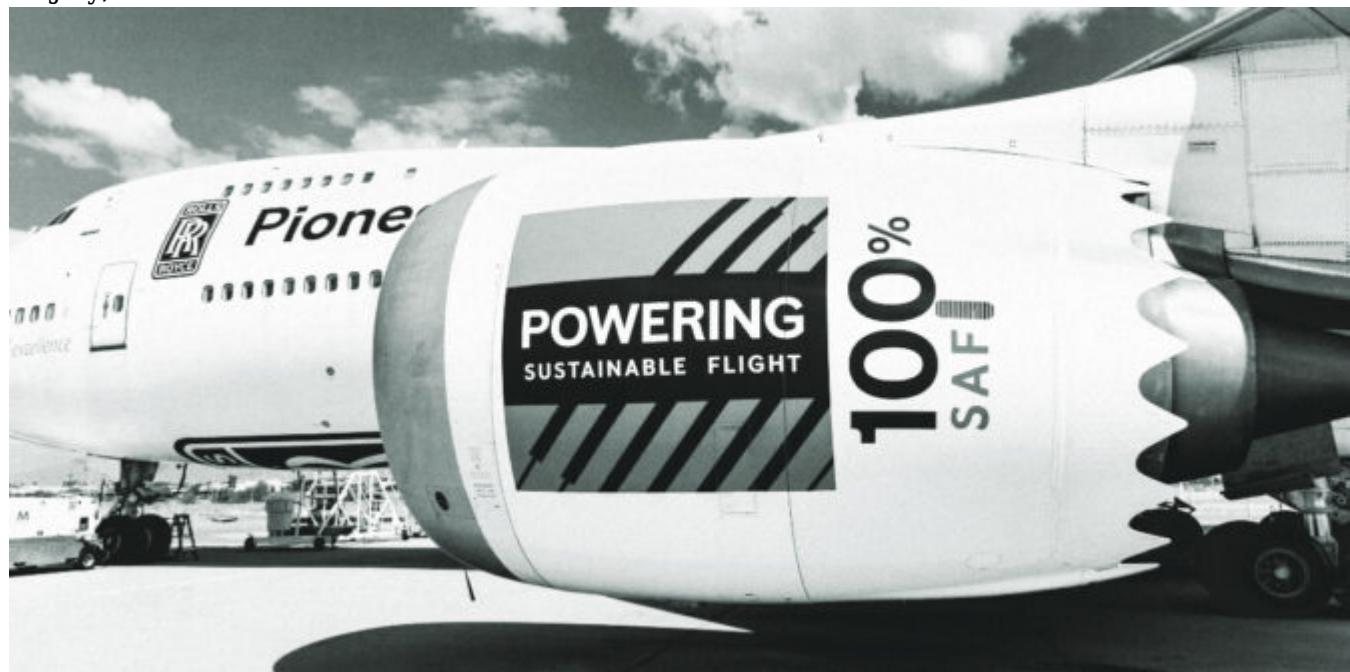
"I am in favour. It is a measure of fiscal and ecological justice," she told Le Parisien on Jan 5. "The 20% of the population with the highest incomes are responsible for more than half the expenditure on air travel."

So there you have it, friends. **France hates planes - it's official.**

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## EASA Safety Bulletin on SAF risks

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



EASA has published a new Safety Information Bulletin for risks associated with the use of sustainable fuels (SAF) that do not comply with the proper quality criteria.

This is due to growing demand along with **potential for fraudulent business practices** trying to take advantage of higher prices.

**Any uplift of 'out-of-spec' fuel could cause serious safety concerns.** EASA's advice to operators is to make sure your suppliers comply with the correct standards listed in their bulletin, and to be especially wary of new entrants to the market.

**Download the PDF** of the EASA Safety Information Bulletin here.

EASA SIB No.: 2025-01

**EASA**  
European Union Aviation Safety Agency

**Safety Information Bulletin**  
Airworthiness – Operations – Aerodromes

SIB No.: 2025-01  
Issued: 18 February 2025

**Subject:** Risks Related to Out of Specification Aviation Turbine Fuels

**Ref. Publications:**

- Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 dated 04 July 2018.
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 1321/2014 dated 26 November 2014.
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 965/2012 dated 05 October 2012.
- Regulation (EU) 2023/2405 dated 18 October 2023.
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 139/2014 dated 12 February 2014.
- EASA Executive Director Decision 2014/012/R dated 27 February 2014.
- EASA Certification Memorandum CM-PPIS-009 Issue 01 dated 28 February 2013.
- ICAO Manual on Civil Aviation Jet Fuel Supply (Doc 9977) 1st Edition, 2012.
- ASTM International ASTM D7566-24B dated 27 August 2024.
- ASTM International ASTM D1655-24D dated 04 December 2024
- United Kingdom Ministry of Defence Defence Standard 91-091 Issue 18 dated 28 December 2024.
- Energy Institute / Joint Inspection Group (JIG) EI/JIG 1530 Standard dated May 2019.
- Energy Institute EI 1533 2nd Edition dated February 2025.
- Joint Inspection Group JIG 1 dated September 2021.
- Joint Inspection Group JIG 2 dated September 2021.
- Joint Inspection Group JIG 4 dated September 2021.

**Applicability:**  
Aviation fuel suppliers and producers, aviation fuel blending facilities, organisations involved in storing and dispensing of fuel, National Competent Authorities (NCAs), aircraft operators, aerodrome operators, design approval holders.

**Definitions:**  
**Design approval holder:** An entity that holds the approval for the design of an aeronautical product, part, or appliance, ensuring it meets regulatory compliance standards.

**Synthetic blending components (SBC):** Fuel blending components derived from non-conventional sources, as defined in ASTM D7566, DefStan 91-091, and EI standards. Under RefuelEU Aviation, SBC is referred to as Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).

**Synthetic aviation turbine fuel (SATF):** A blend of synthetic blending components (SBC) with fossil-based jet fuel conforming to ASTM D7566. In DefStan 91-091 and JIG standards (JIG 1, JIG 2, JIG 4), SATF is referred to as semi-synthetic jet fuel (SSJF).

This is information only. Recommendations are not mandatory.

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An agency of the European Union

# Clarifying Cuba Overflight Permits and NAV Fees

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



## Key Points

- There are several overwater airways in the north-west corner of Cuban airspace where an overflight permit is not required.
- If using these airways, you still need to pay NAV fees, otherwise you risk being denied entry to the airspace at some point.

For the longest time, we've been confused about the rules around Cuba overflight permits and NAV fees. Once upon a long ago, the requirements for these were contained in the MUFH/Havana FIR Notams, but alas, no more. We couldn't find all the info we really wanted on them in the Cuban AIP either.

But thanks to CST Flight Services, we now have some answers in the report below. *CST Flight Services provides a wide range of international trip support services in Mexico, Central and South America, The Bahamas and the Caribbean. You can contact them for more info at: [customersvc@cstflightservices.com](mailto:customersvc@cstflightservices.com)*

## Overflight Permits

For airways that go through Cuba's MUFH/Havana FIR and penetrate Cuba's inner Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) or overfly the island, a Cuba overflight permit is required and a permit fee, plus NAV fees, will need to be paid to Cuba.

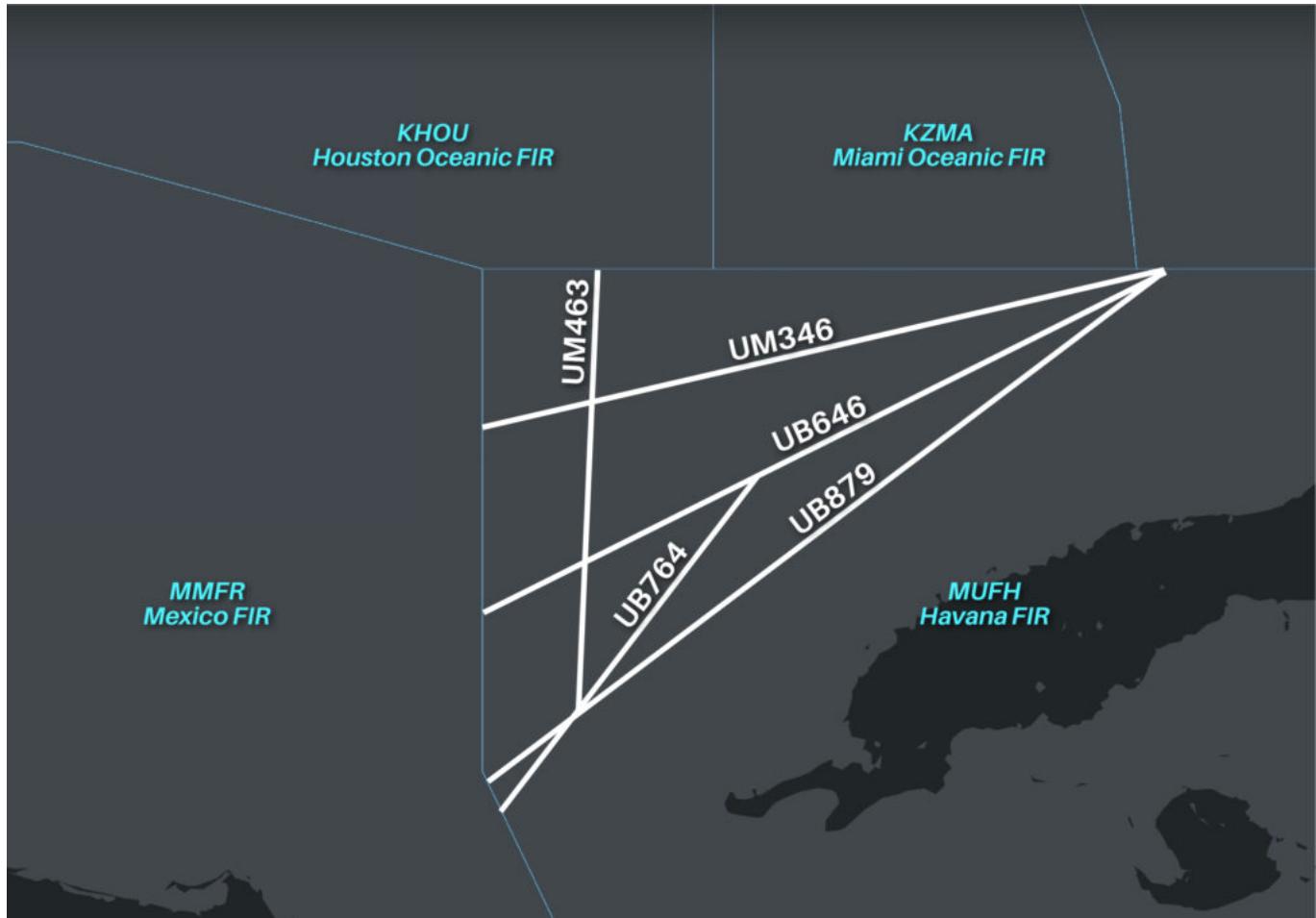
**If you're not a US operator, you can apply directly to Cuba for your overflight permit if you like.** First you'll need to set up a customer number. After you have this number, you can apply directly to the Cuban authorities for your permits. Most get returned pretty quickly – same day or next if you apply during business hours. OPSGROUP members can use the online Permit Helper tool in the members Dashboard to help with this, which includes email contacts.

**But if you're a US operator, you'll want to find an approved vendor for Cuba permits.** CST have a service where you can apply for Cuba overflight permits online. The system determines whether you will need one, and calculates what the fee will be based on Cuba's fee structure. You pay for it online, and CST get your permit for you.

MTOW RANGE (lb)	ONE WAY		ROUND TRIP	
	MEMBER	NON MEMBER	MEMBER	NON MEMBER
0 - 33000	\$204	\$277	\$290	\$362
33001 - 66000	\$260	\$333	\$398	\$471
66001 - 154000	\$299	\$372	\$475	\$548
154001 - 220000	\$352	\$425	\$578	\$651

However, there are several overwater airways in the north-west corner of Cuban airspace where an **overflight permit is not required**. These are:

- **B646/UB646**
- **B764/UB764**
- **B879/UB879**
- **M346/UM346**
- **UM463**



But if you're flying these airways and not paying any NAV fees, watch out! ...

## NAV Fees

Cuba overflight permits are issued by Cuba's Civil Aviation Department IACC, while airspace fees are assessed by Cuba's ECNA – a different agency of the Cuban government.

When an aircraft flies on an oceanic airway, an airspace fee is still assessed but as no permit was issued ECNA doesn't know who to bill and the **unpaid fees accumulate against that tail number**.

Over time, and with enough flights, that **tail number will be blocked** and that information given to the IACC and to Cuba's ATC which can result in that aircraft being **denied entry into Cuban airspace**.

Therefore, if you have been using these oceanic airways, and have not been paying Cuba NAV fees for those flights, you may be denied entry on your next attempt to fly through the airspace.

**NAV fees need to be paid to ECNA in Cuba in Euros** – which becomes a bit of a challenge for many operators! Again, CST can help with this. Contact them at [customersvc@cstflightservices.com](mailto:customersvc@cstflightservices.com) for more info.

## Flights TO Cuba

Now we're getting into murky legal and political waters. **If you want to actually fly TO Cuba, rather than overfly it, the short story is this:**

**US Part 91 (Private) flights:** these have been **completely banned** since June 2019. Applies to all N-reg aircraft flying directly or indirectly to Cuba (i.e. from the US or another country). This was a policy introduced by the US Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), which meant that U.S. operators could no

longer operate an N-reg aircraft privately to Cuba for any reason – it doesn't matter if your passengers meet OFAC's "permitted categories of travel" or not, **it's a no-go**.

**US Part 135 (Charter) and Part 121 (Airline) flights:** these are **allowed to operate** to Cuba. However, it's a tricky business to do these flights and stay within the rules. Policies introduced by the Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) in 2017 mean that there are only a handful of **categories of permitted travel** between the US and Cuba.

**Non-US operators:** If you're heading to Cuba from anywhere other than US territory, it should be fairly straightforward. Get a landing permit, arrange your ground handling, file your flight plan, and off you go. Just double-check your insurance policy – if it's provided or underwritten by a US company, you might not be covered for ops to Cuba. Check out our article for more info.

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## Watch out for Cape Verde Runway Closures

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team

28 July, 2025



Two issues in Cape Verde

1. **There are ongoing runway closures at Cape Verde airports that pilots and operators would only know about if they checked the AIP.**
2. **There are Notams published for these airports which do not show up in the FAA Notam search. Again, you would likely only know about them if you checked the Notams tab on the AIP website.**

### What are the closures?

As of Jan 2025, the runway at GVAC/Sal continues to be closed on weekday mornings (slightly different times each day) until April 2025. The runway at GVSV/Sao Pedro is also closed for an hour every morning

Mon-Sat. There were similar closures at GNVP/Praia throughout 2024, but the work here is now complete and the runway is open again.

## CAPE VERDE

### GVAC, Amilcar Cabral

**Sal**, Rwy 01/19 closed due to work in progress: Mon 0220-1235, Tue & Wed 0220-1230, Thu 0220-1100, Fri 0220-1000 Est 15 Apr 25.

### GVSV, Cesaria Evora Intl

**Sao Pedro**, RWY 06/24 will be clsd due to work in progress Tue-Sat 0700-0800 until Est 31 Jan 25.

If you have a Jepp subscription, you might have seem these closures pop up in the NavData Change Notices, but if not, **the only place you'll find them is in the AIP SUPs**.

## Where is Cape Verde?

Here:



GVAC/Sal and GVNP/Praia are the two Cape Verde airports most popular for use as **mid-Atlantic enroute alternates**. GVSV/Sao Pedro and GVBA/Boa Vista are the other international airports. But **GVAC/Sal** is the one you'd most likely be considering for an enroute alternate, or maybe even a fuel stop, as this is the airport best set up to handle bizav and airline flights – they have a 9843ft runway, are open H24, and have an FBO run by Safeport (other ground handlers are also available: Aviation Services Cabo Verde, Cabo Verde Express, and CV Handling).

## Why are we not seeing these closures on the Notams?

It's because these are long-term runway closures. They are no longer publishing them by Notam because **they exceed the 3-month time limit** allowed by ICAO for publication, as per their Notam Improvement Campaign. So once the closures go on for longer than 3 months, they no longer get published as Notams but as AIP SUPs instead.

Whilst that's great, in theory, for de-cluttering the Notam system of old Notams, it does leave **pilots and**

**operators having to scratch around to find the information.** And in this case, we don't even have a Notam warning us to check the AIP SUPs as the place to find it.

Worse than that, **we don't seem to be getting any Notams at all** out of Cape Verde! They publish them on their own website, but for some reason none of them seem to show up on the FAA Notam search - the one that most of us use to check Notams.

### **Bottom line**

For any ops involving GVAC or GVNP, **watch out for morning weekday runway closures** for the next little while, and know that **you'll likely be missing a bunch of Notams** - make sure you check the Cape Verde official page for updates on both!

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## **FIRE on the NAT! Where to go in an emergency?**

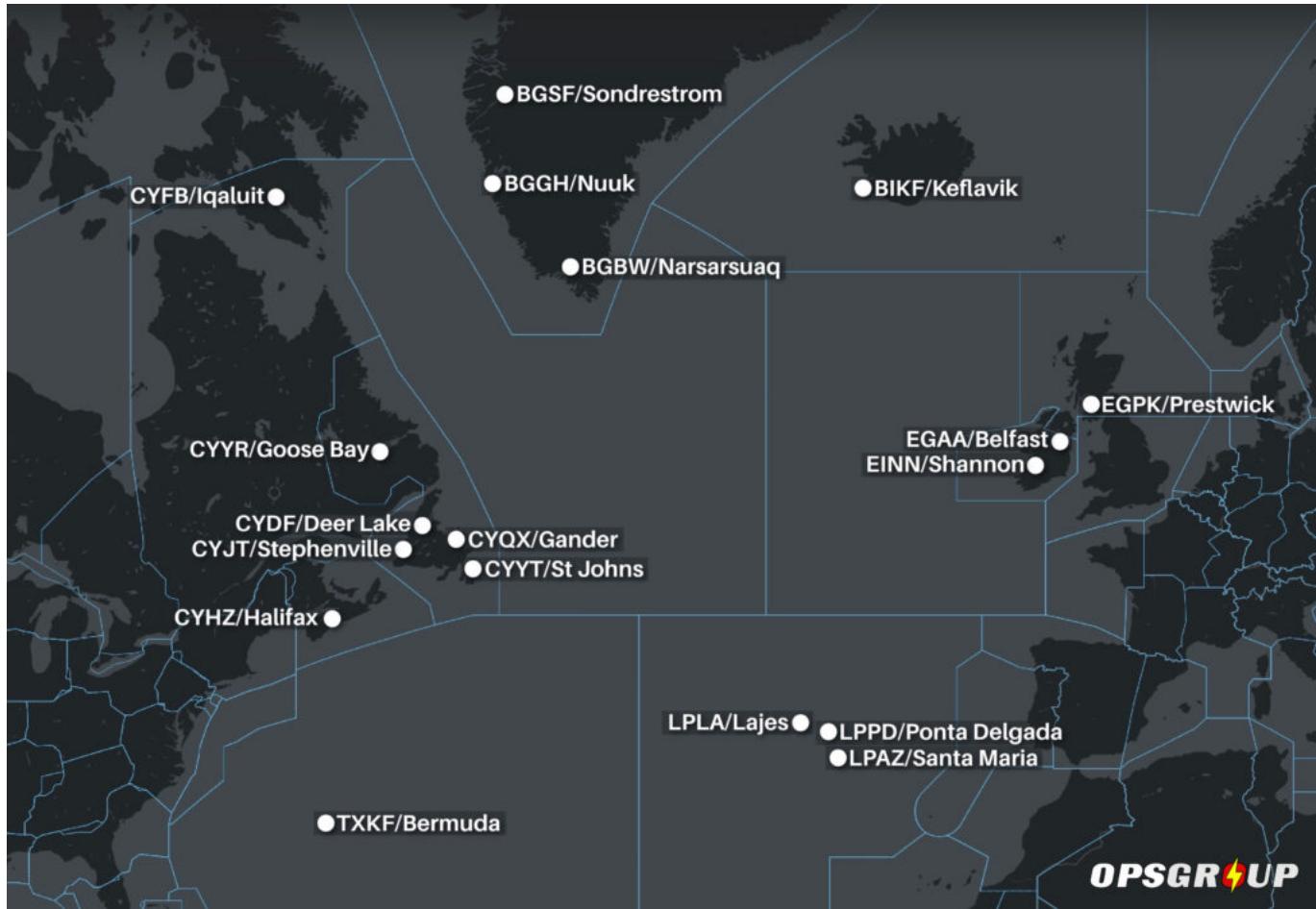
Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team

28 July, 2025



**In OPSGROUP, we talk a lot about the North Atlantic.** Whether it's a Plotting Chart you need, or an explanation of the Datalink Mandate, or a summary of big changes stretching back to the dawn of time - we've got you covered. We love the NAT so much we even enjoy asking ourselves annoying questions about it over and over again to see if we can answer them (we can).

But here's something we haven't fully looked into before - **if you're in big trouble on the NAT (like an engine on fire, for example), where can you go?**



Turns out there's quite a bit of complexity to this. **Some airports don't have amazing levels of fire cover, some are closed at night, and some have weird setups where you have to pay them in advance to make sure they stay open in case you need them.**

We'll start with these **odd ones**. And we're going to do everything in **local time** to keep things easy. Also, for the uninitiated, **RFFS** means Rescue and Fire Fighting Services (i.e. what level of fire cover an airport has), and if you're confused about what number means what, you can read all about it [here](#).

#### Odd Ones

##### **CYFB/Iqaluit**

- **Airport open:** Mon-Fri 08-17, other times 12hrs notice required
- **RFFS:** 5
- **Why odd?** So it's basically closed at night unless you make a special request for them to stay open in case you need them. If extended hours are needed, additional costs will apply to keep staff on standby. Requests to extend operating hours at the airport must be submitted using a specific document for either RFF5 or RFF7. CYFB provides extra RFF coverage at night on average 40 to 50 times a month. The cost for them to stay open with RFF5 is \$1714 which gives you a 4 hour block of time. For RFF7 it's \$3427.

##### **BGGH/Nuuk**

- **Airport open:** 06-21 every day

- **RFFS:** 5 (or RFFS 8 with 4 hours notice)
- **Why odd?** Technically it's open at night, but as it's a brand new airport, night opening is unrealistic at the moment - especially in winter. In the summer months, when there's no snow and it's daylight almost all day every day, there won't be the same need for runway sweeping and using the airport as a diversion alternate might be more possible because they will only require standby personnel on short notice.

## **BGBW/Narsarsuaq**

- **Airport open:** Mon-Sat 08-17 (yep, closed on Sundays!)
- **RFFS:** 7
- **Why odd?** Can be requested to stay open at night most of the time. But watch out! As we reported before, Greenland airports will charge you the better part of \$3k if you list either of them on your flight plan as diversion alternates when they're closed.

## **BGSF/Sondrestrom**

- **Airport open:** Mon-Fri 08-16 (yep, recent change here is that they're closed on weekends!)
- **RFFS:** 5 (or RFFS 8 with 4 hours notice)
- **Why odd?** Same as BGBW, can be requested to stay open at nights or on weekends, but same costs will apply.

## **EGPK/Prestwick**

- **Airport open:** H24
- **RFFS:** 7
- **Why odd?** Often at night they close the terminals building (they always Notam it) so there are no facilities for diversions at these times.

## **LPPD/Ponta Delgada**

- **Airport open:** 0615-0000
- **RFFS:** 7 (can be increased to RFFS 9 with 24hrs notice at a cost of 70 Euros per hour, although they say this can usually be increased for emergencies too).
- **Why odd?** At night (0000-0615), the airport has told us that they are closed and will only guarantee reopening for urgent medical evacuation flights, or humanitarian flights at the request of the Portuguese Air Force. LPLA/Lajes is the only airport in the Azores that is open all night for diverts.

## **LPAZ/Santa Maria**

- **Airport open:** It's complicated.

- **RFFS:** It's complicated.
- **Why odd?** Ok, here we go. So from **0635-2130** they are fully open with RFFS 6 (RFFS 8 available for a surcharge if you arrange in advance). Then from **2130-0000** the airport is closed but you can request they stay open for around 900 Euros (plus a fee to the handling agent). Then from **0000-0645** the airport is completely closed and cannot accept emergency diverts at all. Bottom line, just go to LPLA/Lajes instead.

## **TXKF/Bermuda**

- **Airport open:** 07-23 every day
- **RFFS:** 9
- **Why odd?** To get them to open at night (ATC and RFFS) for emergencies, you need to give them 30 mins notice - so not ideal if your needs are super urgent. Also, they do sometimes publish Notams saying that ATC will not be available for certain periods at night, even for emergencies.

## **Not Odd Ones**

Ok great! Here are all the straightforward airports that are open H24 with decent fire cover:

### **CYYR/Goose Bay**

Open H24

RFF 5 (RFF 8 on request)

### **CYQX/Gander**

Open H24

RFF 5 (RFF 6/7/8 with 2hrs notice)

### **CYDF/Deer Lake**

Open H24

RFF 6 (RFF 7 with 30 mins notice)

### **CYJT/Stephenville**

Open H24

RFF 5 (RFF 6 with 30 mins notice)

In winter months, they often have a Notam saying that they might need 2hrs notice at night to clear the runway of snow.

### **CYYT/St Johns**

Open H24

RFF 7

### **CYHZ/Halifax**

Open H24

RFF 7

### **BIKF/Keflavik**

Open H24

RFF 8 daytime 05-19 (RFF 7 overnight 19-05)

### **EGAA/Belfast**

Open H24  
RFF 7 (RFF 8/9 with 24hrs notice)

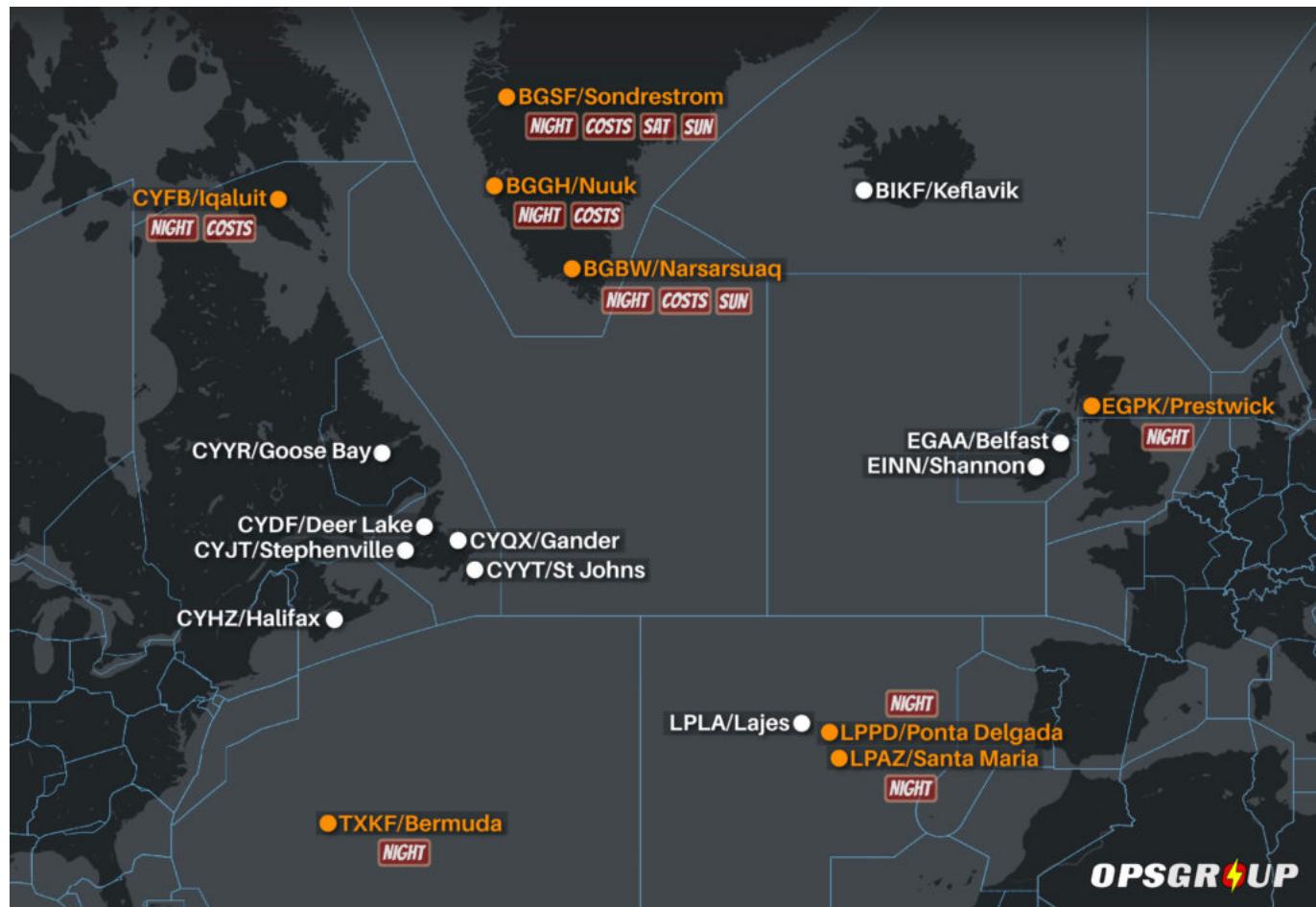
### **EINN/Shannon**

Open H24  
RFF 9 (may on occasion be reduced to RFF 7 depending on staffing)

### **LPLA/Lajes**

Airport open 07-21 (but H24 for emergencies)  
RFF 8 at all times

So let's give that map another try, this time with a tasteful splash of orange colour...



So there you have it, friend! While we're on the subject of **Emergency Diverts**, you might also be interested to read about NAT Contingency Procedures (what to do when you need to deviate from your ATC clearance due to an emergency). For more info about recent changes to **Greenland Airports**, click [here](#). And to download the latest **OPSGROUP NAT/North Atlantic Plotting and Planning Chart 2025**, head over [here](#).

As usual, any questions, let us know at [team@ops.group](mailto:team@ops.group).

# UK Electronic Travel Authorization - The BizAv Guide

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



## Key Points

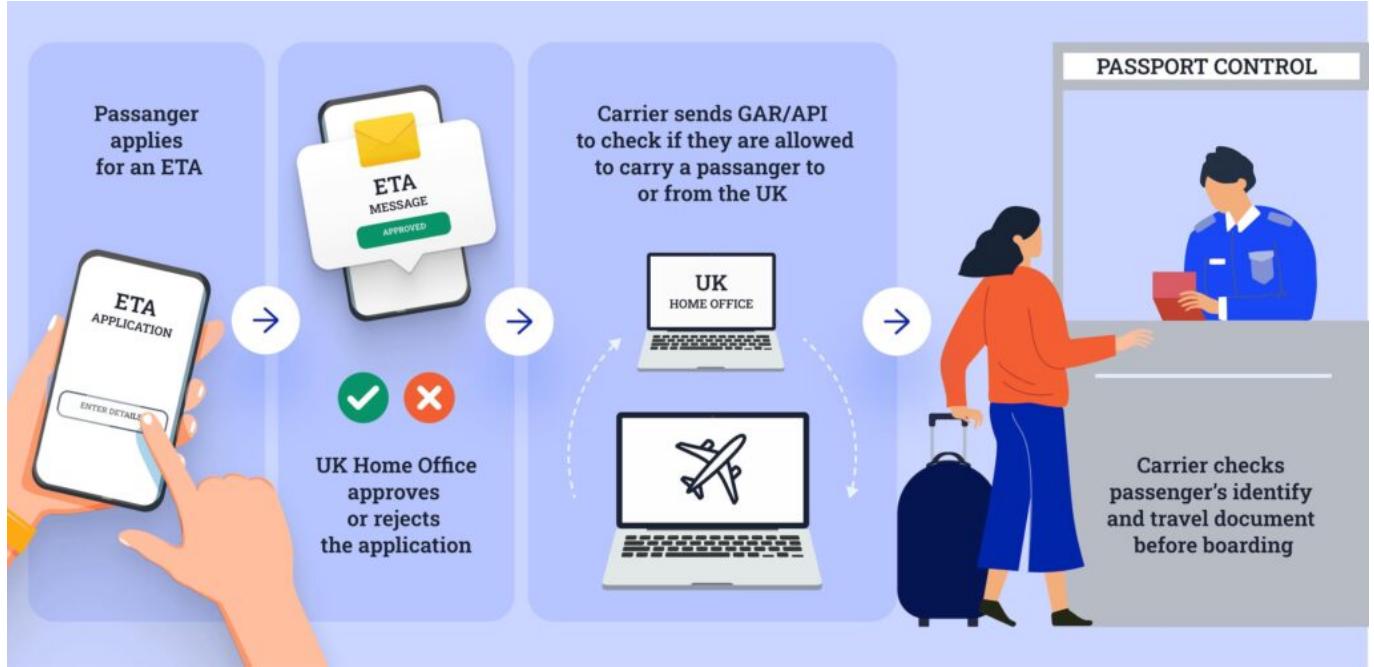
- **The UK is bringing in an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme for passengers, much like the US ESTA.**
- **It started in Nov 2023 for travellers from Qatar. It then applied to travellers from more Gulf states from Feb 2024. Nationals from a long list of countries (includes the US) will be able to use this from 8 Jan 2025. Then there's another list (pretty much everywhere in Europe) who can use this from 2 April 2025 (can apply from March 5).**

The UK will be implementing its Universal Permission to Travel (UPT) scheme in 2025. Under a new Carrier Liability Scheme, operators will be obliged to check immigration permissions for non-visa nationals (in addition to visa nationals). This will affect both GAR and API submissions.

With ESTA in the States, eTA in Canada, and ETIAS coming soon in the European Union, the introduction of Electronic Travel Authorisation in the United Kingdom comes as no surprise. What does ETA mean and how can operators prepare for the upcoming changes?

## Part of the bigger picture: Universal Permission to Travel

ETA is a digital record linked to a person's passport (valid for 2 years, or less if the passport expires). It is being introduced as part of a broader scheme called Universal Permission to Travel. The general aim of UPT is to strengthen the UK border security by ensuring that **all travellers have a valid travel permission in advance**. The plan is for the majority of these permissions to become **digital-only** in the future (e.g. e-visas). This way, operators will be able to check and confirm a passenger's permission prior to travel. This will reduce the number of people denied entry at the border, and the associated detention and removal costs (which operators need to bear).



## Who and when: The scope of the UK ETA

In general, the UK ETA applies to **visa-exempt passengers and those who do not have a UK immigration status**. There will be some limited exceptions for those who cannot be required to hold a permission, e.g. diplomats.

### ETA will not be required for people with either:

- a British or Irish passport;
- permission to live, work, or study in the UK;
- a visa to enter the UK.

People living in Ireland who are not Irish citizens will only be exempt if: they are legally resident in Ireland, do not need a visa to enter the UK, AND they are entering the UK via the Common Travel Area. All three conditions must be met.

It's worth noting that **ETA is also required for passengers transiting through the UK**.

The launch of ETA will happen in phases:

1. **From 15 Nov 2023:** the nationals of Qatar.
2. **From 22 Feb 2024:** the nationals of Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.
3. **8 Jan 2025:** loads more nationalities – basically all of the world except Europe.
4. **2 April 2025 (can apply from March 5):** pretty much all of Europe.

You can see the full lists of nationalities [here](#).

Travellers can apply for the ETA [here](#). Expect a confirmation within 3 working days, often quicker. The cost is £10. The ETA is valid for two years, and can be used for multiple visits, but if you get a new passport within that time then you'll need to apply for a new ETA.

**There are some nationalities who won't be able to apply for the ETA.** The ETA scheme is broadly for visitors who do not need a visa for short stays to the UK. Travellers who currently need a visa will most likely continue to need one when the scheme goes live.

## New ETA: What does it mean for operators?

The introduction of ETA has affected the Authority to Carry regulations, which constitute the UK's "no fly" scheme. **Travellers who are refused an ETA, as well as those whose ETA gets cancelled, are now included on the list of people whom operators cannot carry to or from the UK.**

An operators may get fined (up to a max of £50,000!) when:

- they do not check if they can carry a person;
- they carry a person who has no valid permission to travel.

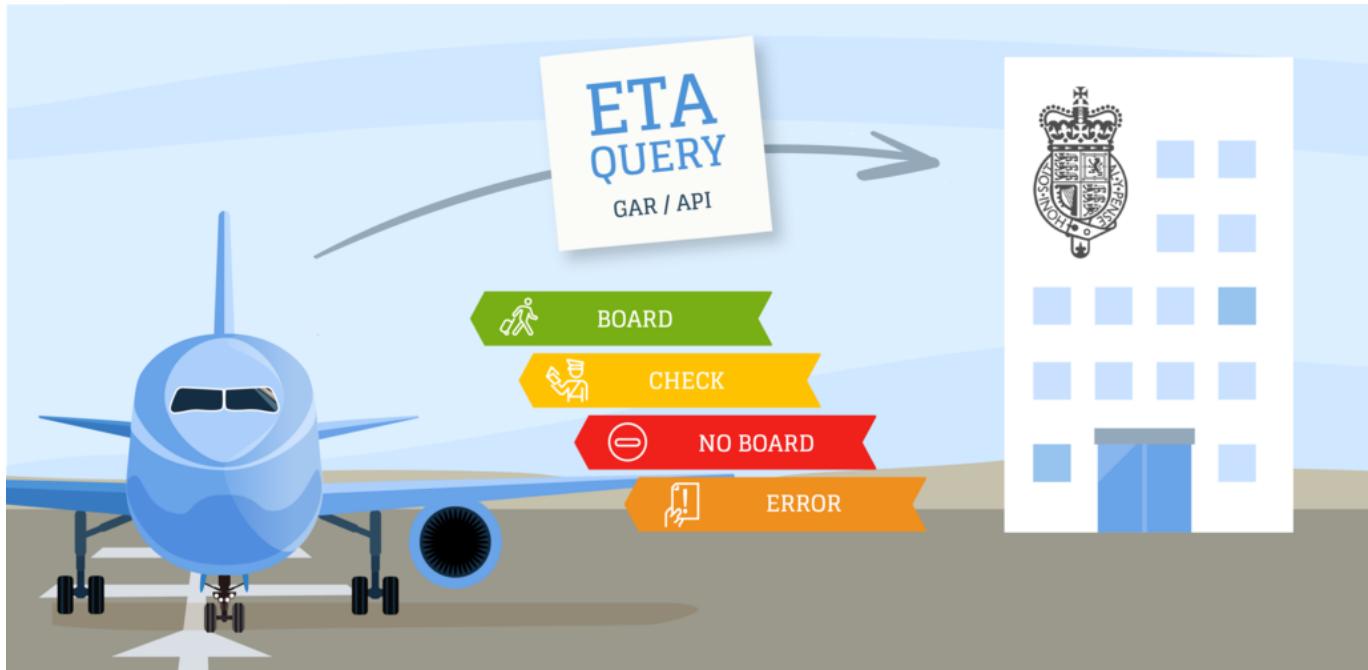
This means that operators will need to send their API data in an 'interactive' way in order to check the ETA status (the submissions will trigger a response from the Home Office). There are different ways to meet this requirement (depending on the type of operation and terminal type):

- submitting GAR data manually via the sGAR web-portal;
- submitting API data from DCS via the UK iAPI system;
- requesting a third-party (e.g. your Ground Handler / FBO / Data Provider) to submit the data on your behalf.

## ETA status check: Four possible outcomes

Regardless of the submission method, there will be four basic results (board / check / no board / error), with additional codes or descriptions for operators to know what needs to be done:

- **BOARD:** A valid permission to travel has been found. Once the identity and passport / travel document check is completed, the passenger can board the plane.
- **CHECK:** There is no record of a valid permission to travel. The operator has to conduct a manual check of immigration or exemption documents as well as identity checks. If the check is satisfactory, the passenger may board.
- **NO BOARD:** The permission to carry is refused. The person must not board the plane. Carrying such a passenger entails a risk of a civil penalty.
- **ERROR:** The permission to travel cannot be confirmed due to some missing data. The operator should correct the data, resend it, and wait for the check result.



## What are operators expected to do now?

Passenger scenario	Action for the operator
Passenger has a Visa or Biometric Resident's Permit	Verify the visa or check the validity of the Biometric Resident's Permit (a valid visa or Biometric Resident's Permit is still recognized as a travel permission, just like ETA)
Passenger has an ETA	OK to board
Passenger is still waiting for their ETA application to be approved	OK to board
Passenger did not apply for an ETA	Ask them to apply before boarding
Passenger/UK confirms that the ETA has been rejected or cancelled	Do NOT board

It is also important to know that operators **must continue to check the passenger's identity and travel document** (ETA changes do not affect these checks in any way).

## Does this all apply to Private Flights too?

Yes. The scheme applies to all operators – including General Aviation.

## Do flight crew need an ETA?

No, not for most flights. We asked the UK authorities this question, and they said:

- Crew who arrive and depart by aircraft as operational crew within seven days of arrival will not require an ETA.
- Crew who are arriving in the UK as deadheading or positioning crew do not qualify for this exemption – they will need an ETA. However, the UK does operate a concession for deadhead and positioning visa national crew leaving by 23:59 the day after their arrival.

Another thing to watch out for if flying to the UK with ground crew or engineers on board who are intending

to work airside. These staff are **not allowed to enter as crew on a gendec** - you must get a work permit for them 48hrs in advance. The only alternative is to apply to the UK Border Force to make an exception, in which case you need to fill out this form and email it to them.

## What about the UK GAR rules?

Effective 6 April 2024, there were some big changes to the UK's General Aviation Report (GAR) submission for international GA flights:

- The GAR form is now **required for departures** (not just arrivals).
- If you get it wrong, **you can now get fined** up to £10,000 (there were no fines before).
- You have to submit it via an **online portal**, or through your handler, (no longer directly to UK Border Force via email).
- And after you submit it, you will get a response telling you whether that crew/pax is allowed to travel (you will still need to check their passport/visa/travel docs etc).

More info on these new GAR rules can be found [here](#).

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**Thanks to PnrGO for help with this article!** If you're flying to the UK and are impacted by these changes, you can contact PnrGO if you'd like to save yourself some UPT/ETA/GAR/API related misery - they have some tech that lets you do all of this automatically. [Click here](#) for more info.

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# 2024 Flight Ops Changes: The Big Ones

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



It's been another **busy year of change** in the world of international flight ops! Here are some of the big ones from 2024...

## January

- **Secret Overflight Requirements in Antigua:** If you enter the Antigua TMA/TCA (the airspace around Antigua up to FL245), you'll need to apply for a "cross-border permit". Without it, they won't let you enter! [Read](#)
- **Mexico Permit Chaos: New Rules Explained:** Some recent changes to the permit procedures in Mexico caused stress and delays. Here's how the new process works. [Read](#)
- **NAT Conundrums Volume IV: Contingency Procedures:** We love North Atlantic conundrums so much, we're into our fourth Volume! This one looks at Contingency Procedures in depth, for those times when you need to deviate from your ATC clearance. [Read](#)

## February

- **Expanded Free Route Airspace in Africa:** Free Route Airspace (i.e. you can fly direct between waypoints) is now available across all ASECNA airspace in Africa, FL250 and above. [Read](#)
- **Libya Airspace Risk: An Idiot's Guide:** Why have EASA eased their warning on flights to Libya? Here's a look, all wrapped up in a 7-Step Idiot's Guide to Libya Airspace Risk, with some maps, pictures, analysis, and advice for operators. [Read](#)
- **New Risk Warning: Somalia ATC Conflict:** Ongoing issue in Somalia of aircraft being contacted and given conflicting instructions by fake ATC. Bottom line, if you're overflying in the northern half of the country (i.e. where all these issues have been happening) and get a call on the radio, ignore it. [Read](#)
- **US FAA: Who wants to land on the runway?** Flying to an airport in the US? Want to land on the actual runway, rather than some taxiway or dirt road which looks a bit like the runway? Not afraid of some basic pics showing you how not to mess it up? Well then today's your lucky day! [Read](#)

## March

- **Singapore Airspace Changes:** Singapore and Indonesia realigned their FIRs in March 2024. There's one thing this will hopefully fix for good - no more intercepts of civil aircraft by Indonesian fighter jets! [Read](#)
- **Haiti Crisis: Airport Attacked, Aircraft Shot:** MTPP/Port-au-Prince was closed from March-May 2024 due to sustained gang violence across Haiti. Aviation came under direct threat during the worst of the violence, with several reports of several armed attacks at the airport. Then in November, two aircraft were hit by gunfire on approach, and the airport was closed again. Since then, several countries have issued new airspace warnings for Haiti. [Read](#)
- **NAT Changes March 2024: No More Oceanic Clearances:** Three big changes announced for the North Atlantic: NAT Comms Failure Procedures have been simplified, squawking 2000 ten minutes after OEP are now standard everywhere in the NAT, and there will be no more Oceanic Clearances. *(unfortunately this last one turned into a bit of a mess - check the entries for November/December below for more info!)*

## April

- **The MEL vs MMEL issue:** US aircraft have often had ramp check findings in Europe because EASA decided that the D095 LOA wasn't good enough (they wanted to see a D195 LOA instead). In April, the FAA announced that operators could get these D195 LOAs much more quickly. [Read](#)
- **TIBA in Australia: What's Going On?** TIBA still seems to be an issue in Australia – shortage of ATC resulting in big bits of restricted Class G airspace, often at short notice. [Read](#)
- **Outsmarting the GPS Spoofers:** We came across a new tool designed to alert you if you are being spoofed. We liked it – it works, so here are the details. [Read](#)
- **Saudi Arabia Overflights - Free Route Gotcha:** There is some new Free Route Airspace in the OEJD/Jeddah FIR, specifically in the south-east portion. If you don't file the right way, you'll be descended to FL300. This is especially relevant now, with so much EU-Asia traffic operating via Egypt-Saudi. [Read](#)
- **New GAR Procedure for UK Flights:** There were some BIG changes to the UK's General Aviation Report (GAR) submission for international GA flights. [Read](#)

## May

- **Italy New Disinsection Procedures:** For flights to Italy, if your aircraft has been in an affected country (including the US) in the past 28 days, you'll need to get it sprayed and provide a certificate. [Read](#)
- **Argentina Overflight Permits Now Required:** All foreign aircraft now need an overflight permit for Argentina. Here's how you get one. [Read](#)
- **US Domestic Enroute CPDLC Update:** Domestic en-route CPDLC in the US is now available to everyone. To get it, you've got to have the right avionics and submit a form – the FAA has published a list of aircraft types, which you will need to check to see if you comply. [Read](#)
- **Israel tightened rules for GA Flights from the US:** Most operators will now need to either hire an approved security company to do screening in the US, or else make a stop en-route at an approved European airport. [Read](#)
- **Canada ADS-B Mandates:** Where you need ADS-B in Canada, what equipment you need, how to apply for an exemption, plus all manner of other questions answered! [Read](#)

## June

- **Mexico Permit and APIS Issues:** New guidelines for landing permits caused yet more confusion for both private and commercial flights to Mexico. There are also now different options for submitting APIS, and these have been causing issues too! [Read](#)
- **Edinburgh security rules create delays:** EGPH/Edinburgh airport has a rule that means all aircraft have to go through outbound security screening, regardless of weight or type of flight. Airport Spy reports suggest this can easily take an extra hour to complete, so plan for departure delays! (or go to Glasgow instead, as many members suggest). [Read](#)
- **SAFA Ramp Checks: The Top 5 Offenders (+Alcohol test):** We had several reports indicating a ramp up of ramp checks in sunny Europe (especially Germany). High on the list of

findings are: fuel checks not done, bogus flight planning to alternates, and for business jets - beds not folded up for landing/departure. Also increasingly popular is a breath test to get things rolling! Read

- **Don't Climb! A Big NAT No-No:** One of the most popular pilots mistakes on the NAT is to start climbing or descending when you get your Oceanic Clearance (or send your RCL). Prior to the entry point, you are still with Domestic ATC - you have to ask them for any level change. Don't ruin your day! Read

## July

- **NAT Crossing after GPS Spoofing Guide:** An increasing problem on the NAT is aircraft crossing the ocean following a GPS Spoofing encounter. This reduces your capability from RNP4 to RNP10, and in busy westbound flows causes problems for Shanwick. It has also led to descents to FL280 and diversions to Iceland. Here's the full guidance on what to do. Read
- **German Ops Gotchas:** OPSGROUP members reported several strange things happening at airports in Germany - new rules about baggage holds, reports of sneaky security checks of bizav aircraft, and a snageroo for commercial flights when paying for fuel. Read
- **Afghanistan Overflight Update:** An update on the risks of Afghanistan overflights, following an easing of the rules for N-reg aircraft. Plus a full crew report from a recent flight over the country - to give you an idea of what it's really like. Read

## August

- **UK Electronic Travel Authorization Guide:** Travellers from a long list of countries (includes the US) will be able to use this from Jan 2025. Then there's another list (pretty much everywhere in Europe) who can use this from April 2025. Get the full lowdown here. Read

## September

- **GPS Spoofing: Final Report published by WorkGroup:** We published the Final Report of the GPS Spoofing WorkGroup. Over a six-week period between July 17-August 31, the WorkGroup tackled the complex issue of GPS Spoofing affecting civil aviation. The result is a comprehensive study of the GPS Spoofing problem, including detailed analysis of the technical background, impacts to aircraft handling and operation, best practices for flight crew, and a series of safety concerns and recommendations for industry attention. Read
- **Hong Kong's new APIS system:** Hong Kong brought in a new APIS system in Sep 2024. GA/BA flights will have to start doing it from April 2025. Here's how it will work, plus the lowdown on ops to VHHH/Hong Kong if you're headed there for the first time - or the first time in a long time. Read
- **Watch out for Cape Verde Runway Closures:** Popular mid-Atlantic tech stop airports GVAC/Sal in Cape Verde has some long term runway closures going on - but you won't find out about these from the Notams. Read
- **TSA Waiver Guide:** If you're heading to the US and are trying to work out whether you need a TSA Waiver for your flight, we have a guide to help with that. Read
- **US Border Overflight Exemptions Guide:** Want to fly from Mexico to the US and land

wherever you like? You'll need a thing called a US Border Overflight Exemption. The CBP has just increased the validity period of these to three years (previously two). Here's how to get one. Read

## October

- **Middle East / Israel Update - October 2024:** Israel carried out airstrikes on Tehran on Oct 26, in response to Iranian strikes on Israel on Oct 1. The en-route traffic situation has since largely returned to normal. Most operators continue to avoid Iran and Israel. Iran in particular has a heightened risk of misidentification or interception for overflights at the moment. Middle East transits should consider going south via Egypt/Saudi instead. Read
- **EU-LISA Update:** A more in-depth look at the requirements for operators when the first phase of Europe's Entry/Exit System starts in November 2024. Read
- **Blue Spruce Routes Guide:** Most flights on the North Atlantic have all the necessary bells and whistles to merrily zip along between FL290-410 right through the centre of NAT HLA. But if you fly old planes, broken planes, little planes, or planes straight outta the factory - you will most likely be flying the Blue Spruce Routes. Here's how they work, and what to expect when flying them. Read
- **Greenland Airports Guide:** Each day thousands of aircraft routinely cross the North Atlantic and use airports in Greenland as enroute/ETOPS alternates. But some major changes are coming that will directly impact on the operational use of these airports as NAT alternates. Read
- **US LOA Guide:** Applying for Letters of Authorization (LOAs) from the FAA can be a tricky old process. Here's an updated guide which tells you what LOAs are, when you need them, and how straightforward the application process can be. Read
- **US Ops: CBP Gotchas and Recent Penalty Cases:** There has been a surge in CBP penalty cases recently. The top 3 reasons: failing to get Permission to Land, failing to obtain Departure Clearance, and errors in APIS data. Here's how to avoid making the same mistakes. Read

## November

- **NAT Guide 2025 - My First NAT Flight is Tomorrow:** The OPSGROUP NAT Guide 2025 (aka My First North Atlantic Flight is Tomorrow) is now available to all members, as well as an updated Circle of Entry. Read
- **2025 North Atlantic Plotting & Planning Chart:** We also updated the OPSGROUP North Atlantic Plotting and Planning Chart! This is our chart showing North Atlantic Oceanic and adjoining domestic airspace, with easy to read NAT Tips, Airspace Requirements, Emergency Procedures, and much more! Read
- **US Pre-Clearance Guide:** Everything you ever wanted to know about US Pre-Clearance! Where you can do it, where you can fly to in the US once you've done it, and how the process works on the ground. Read
- **Dodging Danger: The Three Routes Through the Middle East:** Middle Eastern transits have become more challenging of late, with no "zero risk" options available anymore. Most flights are heading via three distinct routes: South via Saudi Arabia and Egypt, Central via Iraq and Turkey, or North via the Stans and the Caspian Sea. Here's a detailed look at each.

Read

- **Shanwick postpones Oceanic Clearance Removal:** Shanwick has delayed its Oceanic Clearance Removal (OCR) until further notice. Bodo and Gander went ahead with their transition on Dec 4, and Reykjavik and Santa Maria did theirs back in March. Review the full briefing, with FAQ, new procedure, and full details [here](#). Read
- **Red Sea Conflict Zone - Airspace Risk:** The Red Sea is an active Conflict Zone. A missile intercept incident near Jeddah on Nov 3 (observed at close proximity by transiting air crew) has highlighted the risk to civil aviation, and has made it clear that this area is an extension of the Israeli conflict. Many Europe-Asia Middle East routes fly over this area. Read

## December

- **CENAMER Flight Planning Requirements:** A couple of new things to know if you're operating in the MHCC/Central American FIR - two countries there have ADS-B mandates coming soon, and there's a new website where you can pay for your nav fees. If you've never flown here before, check out this guide. Read
- **South Atlantic Bulletin: CPDLC Warning:** Some operators have been incorrectly logging onto GOOO/Dakar rather than DIII/Abidjan when transiting the South Atlantic. ATC are concerned, and so a new SAT Ops Bulletin has been published. Here's a closer look at what it contains, and how to not mess it up on your next crossing. Read
- **High levels of Pilot Error with NAT RCL - New Briefing and Checklist:** Since the Dec 4 "No Oceanic Clearance" procedure, high levels of pilot errors are creating traffic restrictions in Gander Oceanic airspace. As a result, we issued a new Crew Brief and Checklist: download it and avoid making some of the common mistakes! Read

As the year draws to a close, we want to say **a big thank you to everyone in OPSGROUP** for showing up, sharing stories, experiences, and information, and in turn keeping us all safe and up to date.

We'll be taking some time off from the Daily Brief and Weekly Bulletin emails over the holiday period. Last day in the office will be Monday 23rd Dec, and we'll be back again on Thursday 2nd Jan. Happy Holidays everyone, and see you in 2025! ❤️✈️🌐✈️



# CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY OPENING HOURS

TUESDAY DEC 24 - WEDNESDAY JAN 1: CLOSED  
(NO DAILY BRIEF OR WEEKLY BULLETIN)

happy holidays from  
**UPSGROUP**

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## CENAMER Flight Planning Requirements

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



CENAMER is a combination of CENtral AMERICAN countries that work together as one for ATC Service. The controlling Authority is COCESNA. It's real name is the MHCC/Central American FIR – but most people just call it Cenamer. The actual controllers are in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, but control the airspace of **Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua**.



## Recent Updates

- **Dec 2024: ADS-B Mandates.** Two of the six countries in the MHCC/Cenamer FIR are mandating ADS-B at the end of 2024. Guatemala will require it from Dec 31 (AIC 44/24), and El Salvador from Jan 1 (AIC 46/24). None of the other countries (Belize, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua) have published any ADS-B mandates yet. You can download the AICs here. *Note that the airspace above FL195 for all these countries is controlled by MHCC/Cenamer ATC based in Honduras.*
- **Dec 2021: New Honduras airport.** All scheduled international flights were transferred from MHTG/Toncontin to MHPR/Palmerola – the new international airport in Honduras which commenced commercial operations in Dec 2021. MHTG/Toncontin will now be used for domestic flights, but is still available for international bizav flights. Check our article for more info.
- **Oct 2020: New AFTN code when filing flight plans.** For flights through the MHCC/Cenamer FIR above FL195 you must include the AFTN address MHFPZYX. This is the address of a new automated system they've got, which will check if you've written your flight plan properly (i.e. according to ICAO standards). If you have, you'll get an ACKNOWLEDGE (ACK) or ACCEPTANCE message, and the system will then fire it off to all of the individual countries within the MHCC/Cenamer FIR that you'll be overflying/flying to. If you've got it wrong, you'll get a REJECTED (REJ) or ERROR message, with the reason why, and you'll have to file it again.

## The fabled “Cenamer Notification”

For flights intending to operate within the MHCC/Cenamer FIR **require notification**. Every FIR worldwide requires the same thing, but because of the grouping of countries, the process is a little different here. A pre-formatted AFTN message must be sent containing the flight details and planned schedule, to both the AIS office, and to the various billing departments.

The latter is most important, because it give them the opportunity to warn in advance if airspace entry will be denied because of **unpaid Navigation Fees**. The Cenamer Notification confirmation is normally in the format MPTOXXXX192330, being the originating AFTN address and a date/time stamp.

### Notification Requirements

**Notification:** All flights entering the MHCC/Cenamer FIR must send notification 48 hours prior to entry.

**Documents Required:** None.

**Lead Time:** Official requirement is 48 hours before flight. Notification can be made up to 1 hour prior to airspace entry, but there is a risk that not all departments will have had time to process the message. Assuming there are no billing issues, denial of entry into the airspace is unlikely.

**Validity:** Once notification is made, there is no need to revise it for a new schedule. The Notification can be considered valid for 72 hours.

**Permit Format:** Confirmation is normally in the format MPTOXXXX192330, being the originating AFTN address and a datetime stamp. FPL Field 18 entry is not mandatory, but you can include it as PERMIT/CENAMER NOTIFICATION MPTOXXXX192330.

### Do I need AFTN access to make this happen?

They do have this website where you can **check whether an aircraft reg has any outstanding payments:** <https://apps.cocesna.org/fycbilling/pages/fyc/fycbilling.jsp>

It also allows you to calculate the approximate cost of a flight depending on the point of entry and exit into the airspace. Then you can calculate the total cost (any outstanding fees + the fees for your upcoming flight) and pay online.

You can also **contact COCESNA direct** (facturacionycobros@cocesna.org, invoices@cocesna.org), in good time prior to the flight, requesting details of any outstanding navigation charges and a copy of the invoice. But their office is only open from 8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday, so you might not receive a reply right away to say that everything is paid. In this case, you'll need AFTN to file the Notification and to follow-up with any countries which reply to say you owe them nav fees.

Also – if you **don't** receive an email reply and there **are** outstanding charges, you'll only know about it when you come to file your flight plan, at which point you'll receive a reply on AFTN from the specific country (or countries!) you owe money to. At this point, you're at their mercy as to whether they **accept or reject your flight plan** – and you may not have time to pay for any outstanding charges. These individual countries won't email you, they'll send you a message via AFTN (to the same address you use to file the Notification).

Bottom line, whoever files your Notification (and then, later, your actual flight plan) **will need access to the AFTN system** so that they are able to reply to these messages as they come through – and to check to make sure that your flight plan is accepted! This is where using a third party agent for overflights in this region can come in handy, as they should manage this whole process for you and communicate with all the relevant countries via AFTN.

## **Which AFTN addresses do I send messages to, and what should I say?**

Your message should read something like this:

CENAMER NOTIFICATION OF FLIGHT REF XXXX  
PLEASE ADVISE IF ANY OBJECTION TO OPERATE

AIRCRAFT: XXXXX  
CALLSIGN: XXXXX  
TYPE: XXXXX  
OPERATOR NAME: XXXXX  
DATE OF FLIGHT: 20DEC2020

PLEASE CONFIRM RECEIPT OF THIS NOTIFICATION  
PLEASE CONFIRM OK TO OPERATE BY AFTN TO (INSERT YOUR AFTN HERE)

SCHEDULE:  
20DEC ETD KDEN1300 ETA SBGR2230

NAVIGATION FEES SETTLED BY: XXXXX  
OPERATOR: XXXXX  
EMAIL: XXXXX

COPY TO ALL CONCERNED:

MHCCYSYX/CENAMER CONTROL  
MHCCZQZX/CENAMER CONTROL FPL  
MHTGYAYX/HONDURAS CAA  
MHTGYOYX/HONDURAS AIS  
MHLMYGYX/HONURAS RCO  
MROCYAYX/COSTA RICA CAA  
MROCYOYX/COSTA RICA AIS  
MROCYGYX/COSTA RICA RCO  
MNMGYAYX/NICARAGUA CAA  
MNMGYOYX/NICARAGUA AIS  
MNMGYGYX/NICARAGUA RCO  
MSLPYGYX/EL SALVADOR RCO  
MSSSYAYX/EL SALVADOR CAA  
MSSSYOYX/EL SALVADOR AIS  
MGGTYAYX/GUATEMALA CAA  
MGGTYOYX/GUATEMALA AIS  
MGGTYGYX/GUATEMALA RCO  
MZBZYAYX/BELIZE CAA  
MZBZYGYX/BELIZE RCO

And here's the list of AFTN addresses to send it to:

MHCCYSYX  
MHCCZQZX  
MHTGYAYX

MHTGYOYX  
MHLMYGYX  
MROCYAYX  
MROCYOYX  
MROCYGYX  
MNMGYAYX  
MNMGYOYX  
MNMGYGYX  
MSLPYGYX  
MSSSYAYX  
MSSSYOYX  
MGGTYAYX  
MGGTYOYX  
MGGTYGYX  
MZBZYAYX  
MZBZYGYX

## **Is the Cenamer Notification the same as an Overflight Permit?**

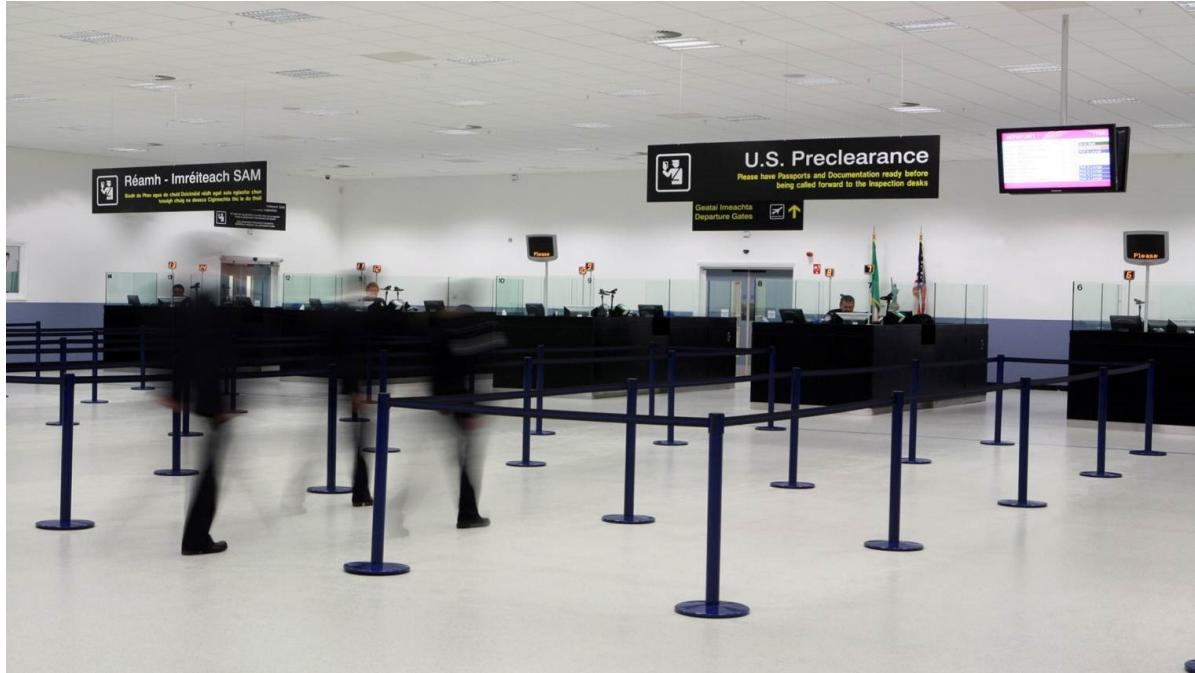
**No.** It's important to note that this is **not a permit**, this is just to ensure the Cenamer countries receive notification of your planned flight, and can check for any unpaid Navigation Fees. Each individual country in this region requires an **overflight permit** as well (except for El Salvador and Costa Rica, if you're operating a private flight).

For more information on permit requirements, OPSGROUP members can use the dedicated Permits App in your Dashboard. If you're not a member, you can get a copy of the same information in our Permit Book, or alternatively, join OPSGROUP [here!](#)

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## **US Pre-Clearance: How does it work?**

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



## What is US Customs and Border Protection Pre-Clearance?

This service basically allows aircraft flying from certain approved airports direct to the US to complete their entry procedures at their departure airport – instead of on arrival in the US.

### Where can I do it?

If you're a bizav flight (i.e. private or charter), you can only do it at **EINN/Shannon** and **TNCA/Aruba**.

*Scheduled airline flights can do it at these airports too:*

- **The United Arab Emirates** – OMAA/Abu Dhabi
- **The Bahamas** – MYGF/Freeport or MYNN/Nassau
- **Bermuda** – TXKF/Bermuda
- **Canada** – CYYC/Calgary, CYEG/Edmonton, CYHZ/Halifax, CYUL/Montreal, CYOW/Ottawa, CYYZ/Toronto, CYVR/Vancouver, or CYWG/Winnipeg
- **Ireland** – EIDW/Dublin

### Where can I fly to in the US once I've Pre-Cleared?

Turns out it's not that easy to find a list of US airports approved for the arrival of Pre-Cleared aircraft. But thanks to Signature FBO at EINN/Shannon, here is a copy:

Finding a list of US International Airports of Entry is pretty easy, just go to the CBP website and use their interactive map. But it's worth noting that **not all US International Airports of Entry are on the list of those approved to accept Pre-Cleared flights**, due to lack of agriculture agreements, and/or local CBP agreements there.

### How does Pre-Clearance work in reality?

US CBP has published this guide on exactly **how the Pre-Clearance service works**, but here's the lowdown:

1. **Request the service with CBP** - Get in touch with CBP telling them that you want to do it! Pass them a bunch of information - details about the flight, passengers and crew. You can do this step through your ground handler (recommended).
2. **Submit APIS** - Slightly tricky here, because for Pre-Clearance you have to submit this no less than one hour before the scheduled Pre-Clearance processing time itself, rather than the departure time from the Pre-Clearance airport. For example, you want to fly from EINN-KALB at 2pm, and you've got your Pre-Clearance set up for 1pm, so that means you need to file your APIS no later than 12pm!
3. **Pre-Clearance approval** - US CBP will email notice of approval, including the appointment confirmation number.
4. **The Pre-Clearance procedure** - When you arrive at the Pre-Clearance airport, CBP will conduct the same procedures as if you were at an airport in the US. Travelers and luggage are screened and the aircraft is inspected.
5. **Departure** - Crew, passengers and luggage board the aircraft, and off you go. (And remember - no opening of any aircraft doors from this point before departure!) The kindly CBP chaps you've just dealt with will zap your info across to their counterparts at whichever US airport you're flying to, so everything should be nice and smooth on arrival.
6. **Arrival** - Upon arrival in the US, bag up your garbage for CBP to collect. Note that if you have to land somewhere other than where you said you'd be landing in your APIS, Pre-Clearance approval will be voided and you'll have to go through the normal entry process.

Remember, if you're a bizav flight, you can only do Pre-Clearance at EINN/Shannon Airport or TNCA/Aruba. So here's some info specific to both of these airports...

### Pre-Clearance at EINN/Shannon

One of the FBOs there is **Signature Aviation**, and they have provided a summary of what you can expect when you Pre-Clear, with a few more details than the basic summary above. You can download the PDF here, but key points are: you must give 24hrs notice, and the CBP office opening hours are 0900-1700 local each day with out of hours available between 0700-0900 and 1700-2100 local. You can contact them at [snn@signatureflight.ie](mailto:snn@signatureflight.ie).

### Pre-Clearance at TNCA/Aruba

**Jet TNCA** is the only FBO at Aruba, and they can provide Pre-Clearance to bizav flights. They need 24hrs notice, it costs \$315, and CBP there are open from 0930-1100 and 1530-1700 local time each day (not available on afternoons at weekends). You can find more info [here](#), and contact them at [ops@jet-tnca.com](mailto:ops@jet-tnca.com).

### A note on the US Virgin Islands

Technically, airports in the Virgin Islands "offer" this service too, but it's not really Pre-Clearance in the same sense as at EINN and TNCA - here it's actually more of a requirement than an optional extra. The US CBP say the following:

*For flights leaving the USVI enroute to other United States locations, GA aircraft operators are required to contact CBP in the USVI prior to departure. Aircraft cannot be moved from the U.S. Virgin Islands to other U.S. locations until CBP Agriculture Specialists (CBPAS) have:*

- *had the opportunity to inspect the aircraft;*

- crew, and passengers; and
- the CBPAS has provided clearance for departure from the USVI.

**Standard Aviation FBO at TIST/St Thomas** say that Customs requires a minimum notice of 2hrs in advance of the appointment time. Appointments are available 7 days a week from 0800-1630 local, and it costs \$250. Contact them at [ops@sa-stt.com](mailto:ops@sa-stt.com).

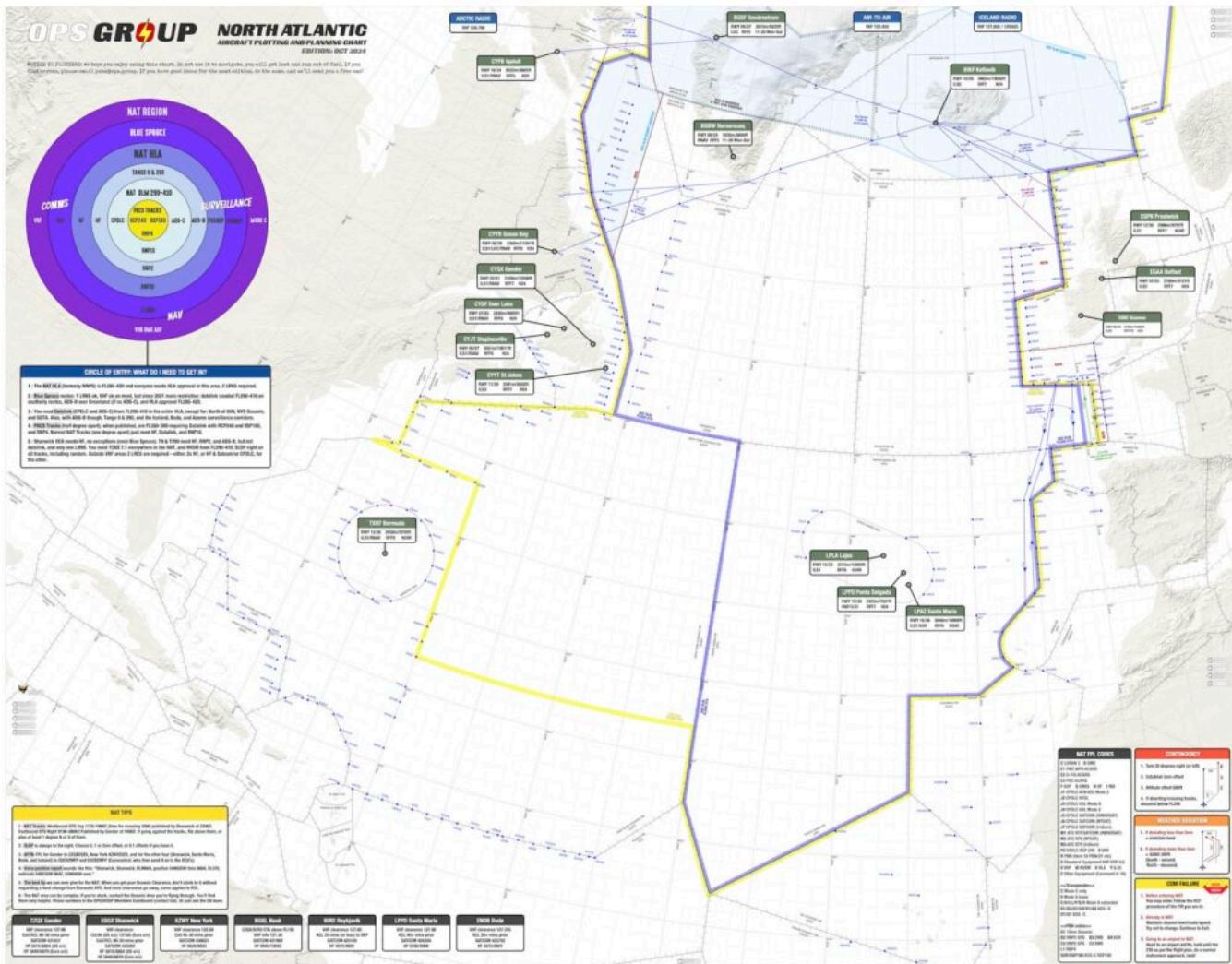
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# 2025 North Atlantic Plotting & Planning Chart

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



**The new OPSGROUP NAT/North Atlantic Plotting and Planning Chart 2025 is released today!**  
This is our chart showing North Atlantic Oceanic Airspace and adjoining domestic airspace, with easy to read NAT Tips, Airspace Requirements, Emergency Procedures, and much more!



OPSGROUP members - you can grab a copy in your Dashboard. View it on your iPad or Laptop etc. as a PDF, or print it out! If you're not a member, read on for how to get a copy...

## Changes in this NEW edition (Oct 2024):

- **FULLY UPDATED** for 2025!
- **UPDATED!** NAT Tips - using NAT Tracks, SLOP, filing an Oceanic Flight Plan, and helpful tips.
- **UPDATED!** Quick reference for contingency, weather, and comms failure with easy graphics.
- **UPDATED!**: NAT Airspace Circle of Entry 2025 - easily check what you need for Nav, Comms and ATC Surveillance depending on which bit of the NAT you will be flying through.
- **Additional** diversion airports, now 16 total primary NAT alternates with runway, approach, length, RFF, and hours.
- **Easy view** of boundaries for HLA and DLM/Datalink mandated airspace.
- **Updated** NAT FPL codes, clearance frequencies, Satcom, and HF.
- **Fully updated** “South East Corner” with new Tango routes.
- and ... Treasure Boxes!

## Other chart features:

- Requirements for NAT tracks, PBCS tracks, datalink mandate.
- Common NAT Diversion Airports.
- Runway Orientation, Length, best IFR Approach.
- RFF Category and Opening hours.
- NAT FPL Codes and sample FPL.
- Blue Spruce routes and equipment requirements.
- All NAT Entry/Exit points with associated required landfall fixes.

**There are two options to download a copy of the NAT Chart:**

### OPSGROUP Members

You can get it in your Dashboard, under **Briefings and Guides**.

### Get it from the OPSGROUP Store

Not a member? Get a copy from the **OPSGROUP Store**.

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# Member Meetup - NAT Special: Nov 6, 1500 UTC

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team  
28 July, 2025



## Member Meetup November 2024

- November 6, 1500 UTC
- North Atlantic Special
- Release of 2025 NAT Guide and NAT Plotting/Planning Chart
- **Non-members welcome** to attend this one (see below)



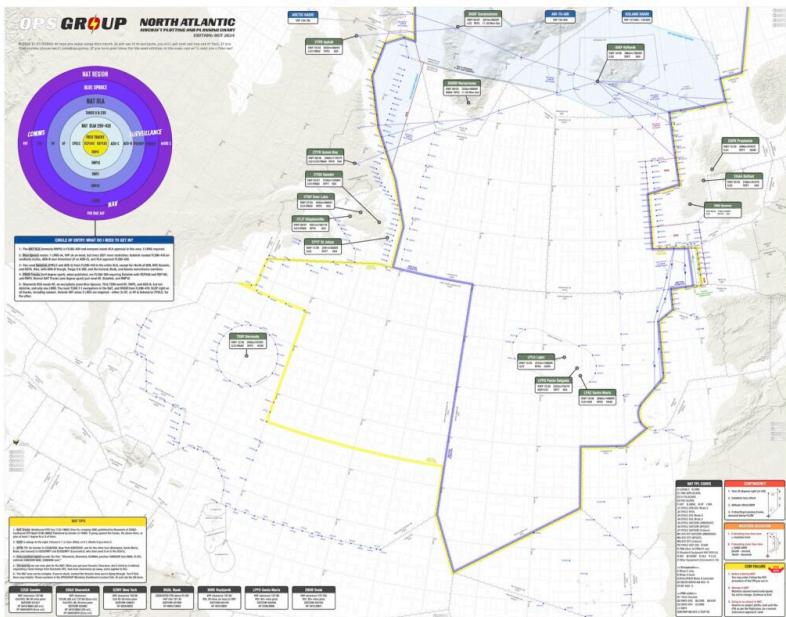
## Member Meetup November 2024

Hi everyone! This months OPSGROUP Member Meetup has a special focus: the North Atlantic (NAT), and upcoming changes. This will be the final monthly meetup for 2024. (🕒)

**Here is the running order of topics - yes, a long list!**

- Blue Spruce Routes removal.
- Oceanic Clearance Removal (Shanwick/Gander) coming up on Dec 4th.
- PBCS Half-Track usage.
- Use of RNP4 on the NAT, more than advertised.
- Current "Hot Errors" to avoid.
- FL280 operations.
- New NAT Doc 007 scheduled for March 2025.

- New OPSGROUP NAT Chart 2025 released today! (download your copy [here](#))



## We'll also look at:

- New ICAO Doc 4444 coming later this month.
- FF-ICE.
- Greenland big changes for ETOPS/Alternate availability.
- OPSGROUP NAT Guide 2025 walk-through.

Join fellow members to say hello, meet some new people, discuss the latest in international ops, and get the latest from the OPSGROUP Team.

## OPSGROUP Members

### Save your spot: [Register here!](#)

**OPSGROUP Member Meetup: November 6th 1500 UTC** (on Zoom)

*In local times: 10am, New York / 3pm, London / 4pm, Amsterdam / 7pm, Dubai*

## Non-Members

For this particular NAT Special, we are inviting non-members to participate. The North Atlantic update portion is open to everyone.

**OPSGROUP NAT Special: November 6th 1500 UTC** (on Zoom)

*In local times: 10am, New York / 3pm, London / 4pm, Amsterdam / 7pm, Dubai*

Use **this link** to register for the call.

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# LOA Guide for US Operators

Robbie Moon & OPSGROUP Team

28 July, 2025



Applying for Letters of Authorization (LOA) from the FAA can be a tricky old process. Because there are so many different things you need permission for, you might need various LOAs.

An LOA is a formal “you’re allowed to do that” certificate given to an operator, permitting them to conduct a **specific flight operation**, fly in **certain airspace**, or use a **particular bit of equipment**, or **document**.

The folks at Nimbl (the new name for AviationManuals) have issued an updated guide which tells you what LOAs are, when you need them, and how straightforward the application process can be.

You can [download a copy of the guide here](#).

## The guide includes:

- Who needs what and where, for Part 91 and Part 135 operators.
- List of key terms, and explanations of the most common LOAs and why you would need them.
- Separate elements of an LOA application – some discussion on the process.
- Turnaround timeframes for different LOAs.

## Who issues me my LOA?

The FAA, but more specifically, your local FAA Flight Standards District Office (FSDO). You can find a location of those [here](#).

So, a Principle Operations Inspector, known as a **POI** is the person at the **FAA FSDO** who will issue your

**LOA.** Don't you just love aviation acronyms ☺

## How to apply

1. First things first, check the guide, and **work out what LOAs you need.**
2. Then decide **who the actual operator is.** The FAA say this is “the person or entity who has operational control of the aircraft.” But they don’t mean the pilot flying it – they mean the person who has **legal control, not operational control.**
3. Decide who is the **responsible person**, what your primary address is, and then work out which FSDO is going to be the closest. *Sometimes operators get confused about this point and think they are able to choose which FSDO they can submit to, not realizing that the address on the documents matters a lot to where they can submit.*
4. **Contact your local FSDO**, work out what they need you to send them, and send it.
5. **Now the FAA will review your application.** Turnaround times vary according to which LOA you’ve applied for – it can take anywhere from three weeks to six months, so you’ll want to get it right the first time! If it gets rejected, they will send you a detailed list of why to help you when you re-apply.

## Anything else?

If you have any questions about the process, or if you need help with any of the above, visit [www.gonimbl.com](http://www.gonimbl.com) or send them an email at [info@gonimbl.com](mailto:info@gonimbl.com). They have a dedicated team of LOA experts who provide support to operators in preparing all the paperwork, plus ongoing support as you go through the FAA submission process. (Also, we’ve known them for a long time, and can confirm they’re nice people!)