

# Formidable Shield 2023: NAT Airspace Closures

David Mumford

8 May, 2023



Formidable Shield is happening again this year, from May 9-27, which will mean **parts of North Atlantic airspace will be closed to all flights** for several hours at a time.

Back in 2021, the airspace closures were pretty big, stretching halfway across the EGGX/Shanwick FIR. Things aren't so bad this year though – it looks like the closures will just be limited to an area off the west coast of Scotland.

Deep in the bowels of the Eurocontrol website they have published this doc which tells you all about the different closures in the various little chunks of airspace.

## Formidable Shield 2023

EG D701 COMPLEX

EGGX, EGPC FIR

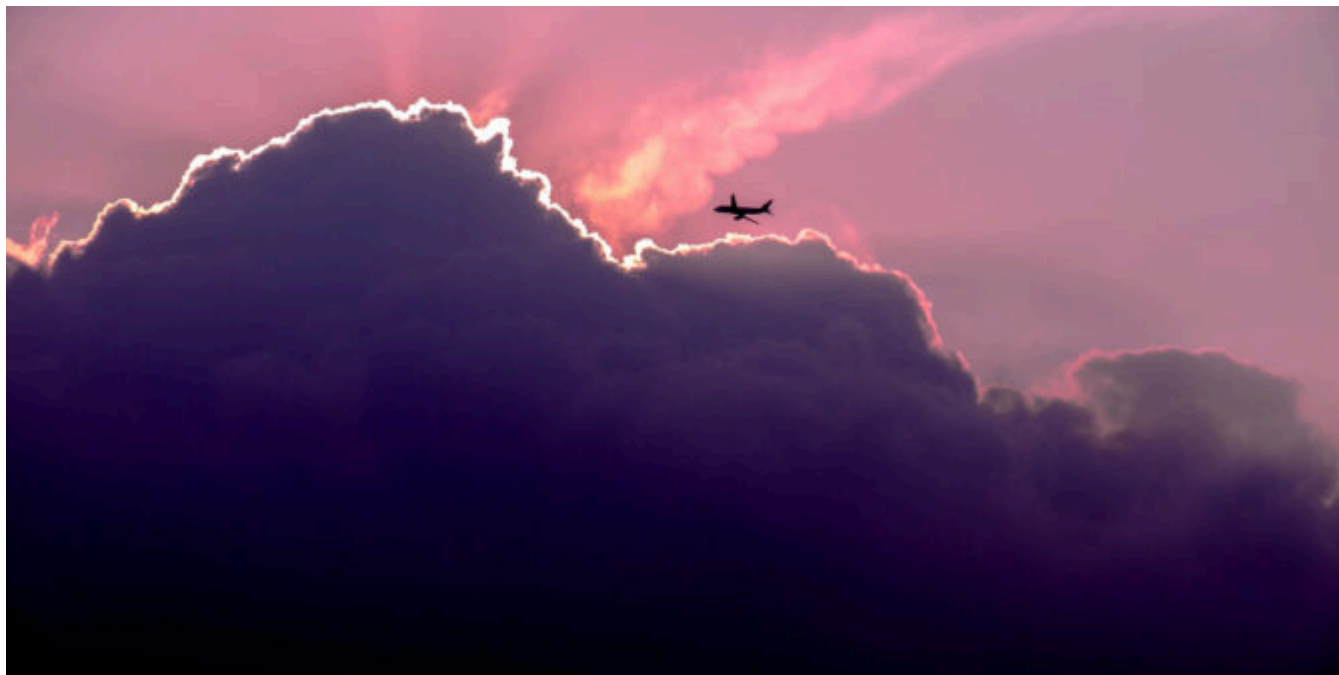
09 - 27 MAY 2023



So for planning NAT flights, watch out for the whole area from ORTAV in the north to APSOV in the south. And for any questions on Formidable Shield, you can contact the UK Airspace Management Cell at [SWK-MAMC-ManagedAirspace@mod.gov.uk](mailto:SWK-MAMC-ManagedAirspace@mod.gov.uk).

## Pilot Mental Health: What can we do right now?

David Mumford  
8 May, 2023



*This article is from Karlene Petitt – international airline pilot, author, and speaker. It occurred to us that we hadn't talked much about **pilot mental health and wellbeing** here on the OPSGROUP blog, and we wanted to change that. We know that pilots not being able to talk openly about mental health struggles for fear of being grounded is the big problem that needs fixing. But for now, we wanted to start at the individual level, with these questions: **How can we help people right now? What can pilots do if they feel they have limited control of their environment?** Over to Karlene for some answers...*

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As a pilot I have spent years navigating storms around the globe. Not a difficult task because technology enabled me to identify the strength and location of those systems—I could see what was ahead and avoid them. However, every so often we would get pounded by clear air turbulence. **In those unexpected situations, there was no time to do anything but grab the controls and deal with the issue at hand.** When the unexpected happens, pilots deal with it quite effectively because we are trained to fly the plane and then solve the problem. The stress of an emergency doesn't immobilize us – we learn from it and carry that experience forward.

**From my experience, flying airplanes is easier than navigating life.** As humans we are not issued radar equipment; few, if any, read their systems manual; there are no standard operating procedures; and most of us don't receive training as how to deal with life's unexpected surprises that pile up. How do you deal with unethical management, dysfunctional operations, irritating co-workers, fear of reporting safety concerns, extreme work environments, or even harassment? Throw in a mortgage, toddlers to teens, tuition, increasing life expenses, relationship issues, or even a neighbor's barking dog.

How often have we laid awake thinking about stuff? Perhaps your mind even wanders to someone who harmed you in the past. An attorney told me that he knew he had everything that should bring him joy, a great job, great wife, great kid; yet daily happiness eluded him until he reached to anti-depressants to make his world a better place. **At least when we have life problems, we can justify the reason for unhappiness. But what if there is no apparent reason?** What if the unhappiness is simply that you are working in an environment that opposes your values and you justify that behavior or look the other way?

I was told that people do not want to be told to drink less, read a book, and do yoga to solve their problems. While I love reading, I often do it with a bourbon in the tub, as I contemplate joining a yoga class. I get it. Instead, I recently joined a group who was inspired by a post I had written on pilot suicide.

The group's title: *How to talk to pilots*, turned out to be **verbal vomit filled with big words, theory, and discussion of all the problems within corporations, but no solutions were offered.**

I then reached for one of the first books I'd written, *Flight to Success, Be the Captain of Your Life*, and opened it to a quote, "*Happy is right here, right now, living the journey.*" A prolific statement, but how do we achieve that feeling? **Is happiness a feeling, a way of life, or how we think? My answer - yes to all.**

The question is how to get there? A good counselor can help with that journey. But when I recently said to an integrative medicine doctor, "Do you know how hard it is to find a good counselor?" He emphatically said, "Yes I do!" Even those helping others need help too. We all do.



Unfortunately, as a pilot, as in many other professions, **mental health counseling places you in the "danger category"** to the public and therefore must be reported to officials, placing your career at risk, and thus keeping many people away from getting assistance to balance their life. This archaic thought is ridiculous at best and prevents people from getting the help they need. Far too many pilots and military personnel have taken their lives after years of personal issues that snowballed. **Problems addressed early prevent them from being perceived as hopeless.**

We all know the first step is to identify the problem before you can solve it. Anyone who has the foresight to seek help for themselves before life problems become insurmountable has a strong mind, not the other way around. But that is not where we are in society today. Which is extremely frustrating because our world is in a substantially chaotic mess, a time when we could use help more than ever.

### **What To Do**

Take my words for what it's worth because I have been through hell and back multiple times in my life, and I'm still figuring it out. But along the way, I have learned a few things and today they are all coming together like a jigsaw puzzle. **I am happy. Not to be confused with moments of being pissed off.** Yes, you can be happy and get angry too. No... you are not bipolar.

I am the middle of five daughters from a broken home at the age of nine. I became an airline pilot despite my entire formative years being told that girls couldn't fly. Growing up, I babysat, mowed lawns, bagged groceries, and bussed tables. My airline career was another story. Furloughed. Bankrupt. Merged. I started over eight times. Despite women not being able to fly, I earned eight type ratings and became an instructor. I raised three daughters, and during my journey I earned a Master's in Human Services, an MBA, and subsequently a PhD. My survival skills pattern was to attend college and learn more to address life problems of the time. Not always my own, but that of our aviation industry as well. Hundreds of books have found their way into my home.

This overachieving goal-setting behavior would later haunt me when my airline paid a doctor \$74,000 to state I was bipolar after I gave them a 45-page safety report. What should have been my golden years of flying, I ended up in the middle of a seven-year nightmare of litigation. Not until November of 2022 when the airline finally threw in the towel after having lost in trial and on appeal, offering me a settlement of what the judge originally ordered, did my health finally turn for the worse. **I was done with the hard part. I won. It was over. But my physical body gave up.**

I suspected my health decline was due to my frame of reference and how I perceived that settlement. In January 2023 I lost my first class medical. Then on January 31<sup>st</sup> I retired, leaving the last 4.5 years of my

career behind. I did not medically retire. I walked away from this airline to heal my life and subsequently myself.

I'm not going to tell you to drink less, but I will share with you what I learned in the process of restoring my health. I won't ask you to read a book, but I will share principles I learned from books I've read, through my education and from experience. **Not theory, but practical application.** Below is a litany of suggestions, and I offer you to take what works for you.

## **Journaling**

Challenging my bipolar diagnosis, Dr. Trenerry at the Mayo Clinic had asked me what I had been doing during my time off, due to my composure before him. He said, "Most people would be an absolute wreck having gone through what you have." I told him I was writing novels. He asked if I was in those books, and I said, "Yes," and then explained a scene in *Flight for Truth*, where one character (me) told the other character (also me), "They might very well get away with this, but your life will not be over. It will just be different." He said with a smile, "Keep writing."

I had to convince myself that no matter what happened in my life, it would not be over – just different. Life doesn't often go as we planned, but the acceptance of doing all you can do, and then accepting the reality is the only way to move forward. As it's been said, if you want to make God laugh tell him your plans.

**Most experts say that journaling is one of the best things to do when dealing with a life issue.** Unbeknownst to me, I simply took journaling to the next level by writing novels—truth in fiction.

Writing works. Perhaps your life, too, can be a story. As Stephen King said, "Write for the garbage can." Do not edit. Do not re-read. Just put your story onto paper, and one day you'll have a book. That's what I did. Polishing will come later. But there is something freeing to place all the thoughts you have running around your head onto paper. You free yourself from thinking about them. There will be a time to revisit the situation later.

**If you cannot tell your problems to a psychiatrist, you can tell them to the computer.** If you want to have a little fun, after you've written a passage, play counselor and type these words: What do you think about that? What can you do about that? What does that mean to you? Is there a better way to look at this situation? Then answer those questions. You've just participated in a form of self-directed therapy, and you **do not have to report it to the FAA or any controlling agency.**

## **Music**

It's harder to be sad when uplifting music is playing. **When you're having a bad day, change the record.** Shift your emotion from thinking about what's happening, to listening to something enjoyable. Sing. Dance. The more emotion and physical movement you put into it, the more you will smile and shift your energy to a positive a frame of thinking.

One day I had sat down to read a legal motion that the airline's attorney had written. The more I read, the angrier I became at their false assertions. I stopped reading, plugged into some good music, and went outside and mowed my lawn. I found myself dancing while I mowed. This didn't make the legal motion go away, but it just **changed my attitude, changed my feelings, and enabled me to better address the issue.**

## **Take a Walk**

I'm not going to tell you to exercise. I am going to tell you that the process of exercising enables your body to naturally increase your happy brain chemicals called dopamine and serotonin. These are the drugs psychiatrists prescribe for depressed patients, but without the negative side-effects. **When you exercise, you simply feel better.**



**If you feel like the world is imploding, take a walk.** My current routine is to awaken, drink water with Zip Fizz on the elliptical or bike, even before I have coffee, while listening to fun music. My day is much more productive this way. I have also passed many type-rating programs studying during my morning exercise routine, while listening to music. In the middle of the day, break away and get moving... even if it's a powerwalk around the building or through the passenger cabin.

## **Stress Management**

Not all stress is bad, it simply gets blamed for everything. There is good stress that engages, provides experience, improves resilience, and enables us to grow. It's the bad stress that I speak of today. I recently learned of a Stress Management and Resiliency Training (SMART) program from the Mayo Clinic. Not unlike Marci Shimoff's, *Happy for No Reason*, Dr. Seligman's *Authentic Happiness*, or *The Rabbit Effect* by Dr. Harding, research supports that **the events in our life are not what cause us problems, it's how we perceive those events.**

Do you perceive the event in your life as a transient issue, or that your life will always be like this? Do you believe that you have control over your world, or does your world control you? Do you believe there is a way out, or do you believe your situation is hopeless?

I can state with absolute certainty that your life will not always look like this. You absolutely have control over your life, despite external events trying to exert their existence. **There is always a way out. Nothing is hopeless.** Seeing a positive future is powerful. If you cannot see it yourself, that's when you need to get help to paint that picture for you. My sister was taking a course during nursing school and the instructor asked the students to envision the life they had now, and what that will look like ten years in the future. She saw the way her life was headed, cried, and then changed it. You, too, have that power.

## **Do You Know That To Be True?**

How often do we place judgement as to the actions of another? **How often do we think the worst?** For example, you receive a note from your boss, "see me after work". Who would not spend their day catastrophizing thinking the worst case possible? We all create mental images filling in the pieces because the human psyche needs to have answers. Marci's suggestion in *Happy for No Reason*, is that when you find your brain going down that path to stop and ask yourself, "*Do you know that to be true?*" Most often we do not. So don't allow your thoughts to go there. **This question stops negative thoughts from taking hold.** "How" we think about things causes most of our life issues.

Negative thinking could be construed as a human condition because our brains tend to **default to survival mode.** Some refer to this as the reptile brain. At the beginning of time when we were faced with predators and finding food and shelter where a priority for survival, this default condition was necessary.

But we no longer need those same survival skills because we don't have the same threats in our external world. Thus, the mind defaults to survival from threats within and will create a threat that is not there. **We ruminate, worry, and catastrophize.** We think about how someone harmed us, we regret what we did, we bemoan what we should have done, and we fear what the future might look like. The trick is training your mind to not go there and convincing it to travel down a different path.

When you assume something, ask yourself, "*Do you know that to be true?*" While exercise, listening to music, and meditating will help with stress management, it is imperative to train your mind to be focused, preventing it from wandering through a minefield. **When a negative thought pops in, let it go and replace it with something you are grateful for.** Create a practice of gratitude to replace your negative thoughts.

## **Create Enjoyment**

In that we spend much of our waking hours at work, if we don't find value, enjoyment or gratitude in our

work, our health will suffer and negatively impact our life in many ways. Unless you are a manager or executive, you have no control over the external work environment. But you do have control of how you deal with that environment. **If your work feels like a miserable place and you don't have any option other than to weather the storm, find a way to improve the quality of your work environment.** Sometimes that is as simple as changing how you perceive your job, and how you see your personal value in what you bring to your work.

When Covid hit, flight crews flew long days and then were isolated with 24-hour layovers locked in a room. Socialization dropped to nothing, which for many the layover was the best part of the job. This impacted the mental health of many people. Isolation in general from Covid did that to much of society. With socializing at the end of a flight gone, I made an effort to stand at the boarding door and talk with the passengers as I gave wings to the kids before I was locked into the flight deck. **I made an effort to engage where I could.**

Layovers were tough for most. I once had a 72-hour layover locked in my room in Korea. Instead of complaining I soaked in the tub, watched movies, I ordered room service, wrote, and caught up on emails. What was perceived as torture to many crews would be a vacation to any stay-at-home mom. I opted to turn my situation into a hotel staycation. **Perspective.** Change your perspective on any negative situation and you will improve the quality of your life.

### **Money and Happiness**

Depending upon the research, the country, or the participants surveyed, you will find a variety of statistics on whether money can buy happiness. Dr. Harding asserts that once we have enough money to provide shelter, food, and proper medical care that the **additional income doesn't improve the level of happiness.** This assertion could be supported by those rich and famous who take their own lives despite apparently having it all. If your value is truly amassing a fortune for the sake of having money, then perhaps more money could bring happiness. However, if you think that more money brings happiness because of the stuff you can buy, the reality is that stuff doesn't bring you happiness. **Happiness comes from gratification.**

### **Job Loss and Gratification**

If the job is miserable and you cannot change your perspective or find value in your work, the question is not necessarily can you afford to quit... **but can you afford not to?** That will be a personal choice. But what if you are forced to leave due to a mandatory retirement age or a layoff, how do you deal with that?

Retirement should bring happiness, but far too often it does not. The stuff we buy might bring a moment of pleasure, some think it makes you happy, but the feeling is fleeting. **For true happiness we need to feel gratification.** Take a pilot who is forced to retire. This person was highly trained and used their skills daily to accomplish the goal of a flight. They spent a couple hours of preparation to depart, and then spent hours enroute either engaged in conversation with their fellow pilot, reading a book, or appreciating the beauty outside their flight deck, followed by a skilled landing... it was a journey. On the layover, they shared dinner with coworkers, had a beer and much laughter. While there was often bad weather, fatigue, and all the issues that could make the day more challenging, those issues improved gratification of a job well done.

Now, imagine this highly trained individual being told they can no longer do their job because someone said they are too old, or the company sold out and their services are no longer needed. They may have saved wisely and could buy stuff to make them feel happy, but they don't feel it. There is a hole because stuff doesn't make you happy.

Anyone who works in an extremely gratifying, highly skilled, job will have the most difficult time in leaving their employment. **The solution is to find something meaningful in your life.** The happiest retired pilots I know have either found another flying job, purchased a camper and are traveling, golfing, working

at a non-profit and giving back, or have gone back to school to begin another career.



## The Solution

If I could impart any wisdom, it would be to **change how you perceive your world**. Create habits of listening to music, exercising, journaling, adopting a different perspective, or meditating, to improve how you feel. Change your perspective on the word “mental health” and simply think of these suggestions as activities to feel the daily joy you deserve. Your physical health will follow. What that looks like, will be specific to you. For me, my morning habits simply make me feel better. I’m doing something for me, before I give my day to everyone else. There is a reason we tell passengers to put on their oxygen mask first before they help others. I also know that I love learning, creating, writing, and helping others. **Figure out what you love to do, what pulls you into a flow, and then create a life around those activities.** Habits create the tapestry of life in the fabric of existence. They will either lift you high or hold you down. The choice of which is yours.

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## Q&A

Here’s the bit where **Dave from Opsgroup** asks some questions, and **Karlene** gives some answers.

### **1. If we need help as pilots, where can we go? What are some of the resources out there available to us?**

*Trust but verify. Your AME is an excellent resource; however, like any profession, there are some AME’s that are better than others. Some will be your advocate, while others play it safe and not necessarily to your benefit. Find an AME that has your back, and someone you can be completely honest with. Then, despite all the advice you receive, visit the FAA.gov website yourself, and type your questions into the search box and educate yourself on the rules and regulations.*

*If you choose not to see a counselor or psychiatrist because of an archaic FAA reporting requirement, I suggest seeing an Integrative Medicine Doctor. These doctors are not counselors and not psychiatrists. The integrative medicine doctor I saw at the Mayo Clinic was an MD. Integrative medicine is an evidence-based approach to improve your health and wellness, through physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual impact on your health. You can list this doctor as an MD, and the reason you are seeing him/her is for your overall*



health and wellness. But they are an excellent source to help deal with life issues.

## **2. What questions can we ask each other to check how we're doing?**

*Pilots are not trained to assess each other. There is no magic pill. No specific question to ask. With respect to the most recent pilot suicide at my airline, nobody would have known he was ready to leave this earth. Sometimes you just can't tell. But what we can do is listen and listen for comments of hopelessness. If you think it's more than just a bad day, encourage them to speak to someone.*

### **Anything we missed?**

If you have questions about any of the above, or if you think there's something we missed, let us know!

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### **About the author:**

*Karlene Pettitt. PHD. MBA. MHS. Type rated on A350, A330, B777, B747-400, B747-200, B757, B767, B737, B727. International Airline Pilot / Author / Speaker. Dedicated to giving the gift of wings to anyone following their dreams. Supporting Aviation Safety through training, writing, and inspiration. Fighting for Aviation Safety and Airline Employee Advocacy. Safety Culture and SMS change agent.*

### **Are you someone with knowledge to share?**

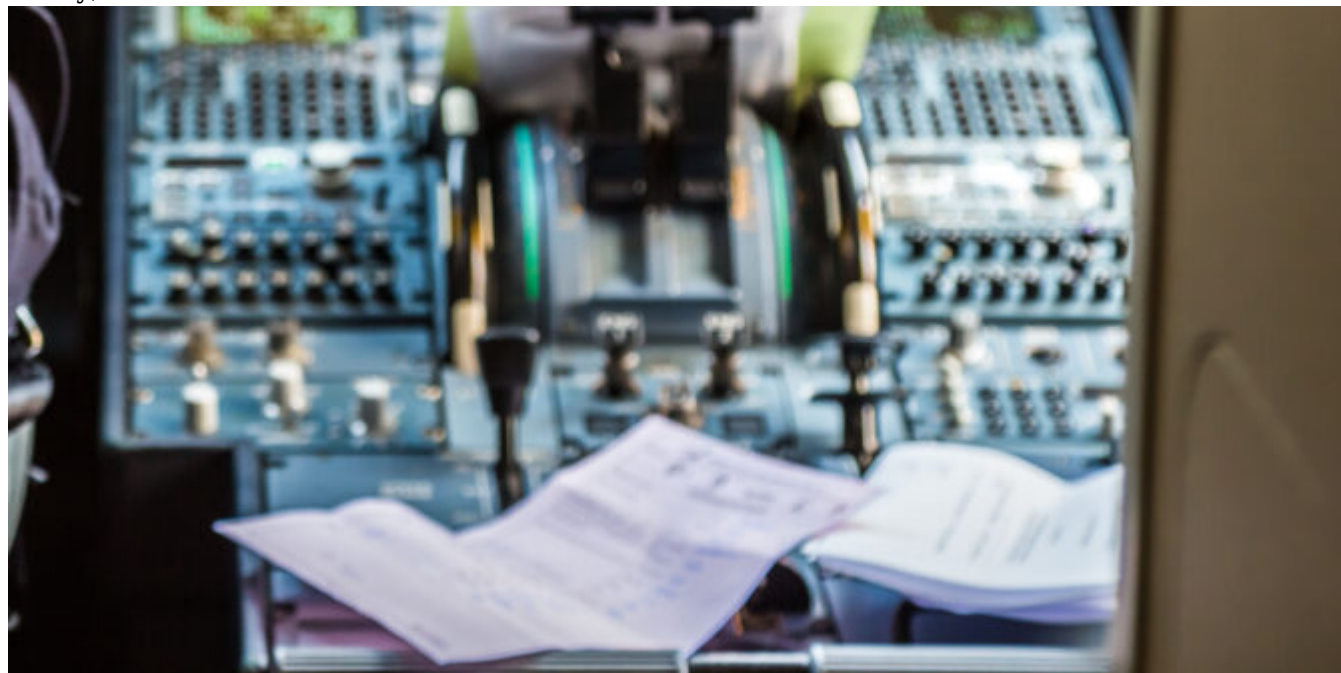
*Know something about something worth knowing? Want to write about it? Let OPSGROUP know! Maybe we can work together and write an article on it.*

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# **Flight Plan Alternates in Europe**

David Mumford

8 May, 2023



In the US, under certain conditions you can get away with not having to select an alternate – as long as both ends of one runway are suitable and available, you have two runways. In Europe, there's a similar

rule, but the key difference is that there has to be **separate runways** – not one runway which you could land at either end of.

EASA recently issued this reminder letter to Third Country Operators:

*For a flight to be conducted in accordance with the instrument flight rules, at least one destination alternate aerodrome shall be selected and specified in the operational and ATS flight plans, unless the duration of the flight from the departure aerodrome, or from the point of in-flight re-planning to the destination aerodrome is such that, taking into account all meteorological conditions and operational information relevant to the flight, at the estimated time of use, a reasonable certainty exists that:*

- 1. the approach and landing may be made under visual meteorological conditions (VMC); and*
- 2. separate runways are usable at the estimated time of use of the destination aerodrome with at least one runway having an operational instrument approach procedure.*

*In accordance with the ICAO definition, separate runways are two or more runways at the same aerodrome configured such that if one runway is closed, operations to the other runway(s) can be conducted.*

*Several ICAO contracting States have filed a difference to ICAO with regard to this standard, because their national regulation does not contain a requirement for separate runways at the destination aerodrome when opting to file a flight plan without a dedicated destination alternate aerodrome.*

*Please be informed that EASA expects TCOs to plan their flights in compliance with the ICAO standard. This means that an alternate aerodrome has to be listed in the ATS flight plan where required in accordance with standard 4.3.4.3.1 of Annex 6 Part 1 to the Chicago Convention, even though your national regulation is less restrictive in this aspect.*

*The respective destination alternate fuel shall be included in the pre-flight calculation of usable fuel in accordance with standard 4.3.6.3 of said Annex.*

*EASA will verify compliance by means of sampling flight documents during the initial authorisation and during continuous monitoring of TCO authorisation holders.*

*Furthermore, ramp inspections performed under SAFA/RAMP inspection programme will serve as an additional source of information for non-compliance.*

*Where a non-compliance is found, EASA will raise a level-2 finding in accordance with Part-ART of the TCO Regulation (EU) No 452/2014.*

*We therefore, encourage you to review your flight planning procedures and where necessary to align those to ensure full compliance with the respective above-mentioned standards.*

### **So can I plan a flight in Europe without an alternate?**

Yes, but only in certain circumstances. EASA CAT.OP.MPA.182 has the details:

**BASIC FUEL SCHEME — DESTINATION ALTERNATE AERODROME**

- (a) For each IFR flight, the operator should select and specify in the operational and ATS flight plans at least one destination alternate aerodrome.
- (b) For each IFR flight, the operator should select and specify in the operational and ATS flight plans two destination alternate aerodromes when for the selected destination aerodrome, the safety margins for meteorological conditions of [AMC5 CAT.OP.MPA.182](#), and the planning minima of [AMC6 CAT.OP.MPA.182](#) cannot be met, or when no meteorological information is available.
- (c) The operator may operate with no destination alternate aerodrome when the destination aerodrome is an isolated aerodrome or when the following two conditions are met:
  - (1) the duration of the planned flight from take-off to landing does not exceed 6 hours or, in the event of in-flight re-planning, in accordance with point [CAT.OP.MPA.181\(d\)](#), the remaining flying time to destination does not exceed 4 hours; and
  - (2) two separate runways are usable at the destination aerodrome and the appropriate weather reports and/or weather forecasts indicate that for the period from 1 hour before to 1 hour after the expected time of arrival, the ceiling is at least 2 000 ft (600 m) or the circling height 500 ft (150 m), whichever is greater, and ground visibility is at least 5 km.

Or if you want to keep it simple, **just file an alternate airport** in your flight plan.

**A Cautionary Tale**

Here's a recent report from an OPSGROUP member on this:

*We were doing flights all over the EU without an alternate, when the weather didn't require one as per our rules. Then we got SAFA ramp checked in EGSS/Stansted, and the ramp inspector took umbrage that we were coming in without an alternate on a clear day. We now carry an alternate for all single runway ops in the EU, with a realistic routing.*

**A Realistic Routing?**

This is another thing to watch out for in Europe. You have to make sure your route to alternate is **computed and included in your flight plan**, that it's **realistic**, and that it **doesn't break any rules**. Let's tackle those in order:

**Computed and included in your flight plan:**

It should look something like this:

**ALTERNATE #1 EDDM / ROUTE: AMIKI ZUE Z601 KPT Z999 ATMAX MERSI T468 BETOS BETOS1A**

CRUISE PROFILE: MACH 0.87 @ FL90

WAYPOINTS COORDINATES	AWY ALT	WIND DIR/SPD OAT/ISA	TAS GS	HDG CRS	LEG REM	REM	USED ACT	FLOW	LEG REM	ETE ATE	EPU
LSZH N4727.5/E00832.9	1400	- - -2/-14	0 0	- -	- 176	17327	-	0	- 0:38	-	
AMIKI N4734.4/E00902.2	I16 FL204	H20 051/030 -30/-9	319 302	090 094	28 148	16491	836	8148	0:06 0:32	0:06	
ZUE N4735.5/E00849.1 ZURICH EAST 110.05	DCT 16200	T21 051/030 -30/-9	402 423	277 274	9 139	16471	856	969	0:01 0:31	0:07	
BODAN N4735.2/E00927.1	Z601 9000	H24 056/031 -14/-6	317 293	084 087	26 113	16304	1023	1894	0:05 0:26	0:12	
KPT N4744.7/E01021.0 KEMPTEN 108.4	Z601 9000	H29 060/030 -8/-6	292 263	070 072	37 76	15766	1561	3757	0:09 0:17	0:21	
ATMAX N4755.8/E01045.0	Z999 9000	H30 059/030 -10/-7	291 261	052 052	20 56	15486	1841	3736	0:05 0:12	0:26	
MERSI N4758.9/E01102.6	DCT 9000	H24 061/025 -12/-9	290 266	070 071	12 44	15315	2011	3712	0:02 0:10	0:28	
BETOS N4804.1/E01121.0	T468 9000	H25 061/025 -12/-9	290 265	063 063	14 30	15128	2199	3711	0:03 0:07	0:31	
-TOD- N4808.5/E01139.3	BETOS1A 9000	H25 061/025 -12/-9	290 265	065 066	13 17	14945	2382	3709	0:03 0:04	0:34	
OTT N4810.8/E01149.0 OTTERSBERG 112.3	BETOS1A 6000	H24 062/019 -13/-12	269 244	066 066	7 10	14868	2458	2726	0:02 0:02	0:36	
EDDM N4821.2/E01147.2	BETOS1A 1487	H2 087/019 -7/-14	248 246	354 349	10 -	14751	2576	2762	0:02 -	0:38	

**Realistic:**

This means you've included a proper route to alternate like the one shown above, **not just one big DCT**. The routing doesn't have to be fully Eurocontrol compliant, it just has to be realistic. That means making sure you **have enough fuel for a missed approach, climb, and descent to alternate**. If you use a SID from your destination airport and join it up with a STAR for your alternate, that's probably a safe bet.

**Doesn't break any rules:**

The French DSAC recently partnered up with IS-BAO to take a look at hundreds of de-identified ramp check findings in order to analyse **the most frequent CAT 2 and CAT 3 findings in business aviation**. A common one was flights planned to unavailable alternates - usually those that **cannot be used as per AIP or Notam**, or those where you need **PPR**.





## RAMP CHECK FINDINGS \*Top Offenders\*



Flight Planning



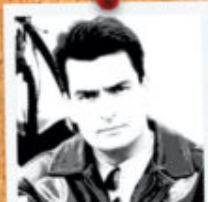
Documents



Defects



Charts



Cabin Safety

### Flight Planning

- \* Flight planned for an unavailable alternate. LFMD, LFOB, LFLX and LFBE are the usual suspects here.
- \* Had no weather briefing or PPR.
- \* Bogus flight planning to alternates. (Planning straight lines, outrageous speeds below FL100, and ridiculous fuel computations.)
- \* Had the wrong number of pax onboard, or pax sitting in the wrong places. The same errors were found for luggage.
- \* Pilot bafflement when asked about the various empty/operating/maximum masses of the aircraft.

### Documents

- \* Different versions of the same manual or checklist found onboard.
- \* No instructions for challenging airports.
- \* No procedure for in-flight fuel checks.
- \* Dangerous goods not listed properly (i.e. lithium batteries).
- \* Outdated versions of the QRH found onboard, or sometimes not found at all!
- \* Mismatch between the aircraft configuration and the QRH, or the equipment on the aircraft and the MEL.
- \* (O) or (M) procedures inadequate or missing.

### Charts

- \* Outdated navigation databases or charts (in one case by up to a decade).
- \* Missing instrument charts.
- \* Use of an unapproved EFB.
- \* No storage device installed for the EFB.

### Defects



- \* Maintenance action from the MEL hadn't been done.
- \* Inoperative equipment not mentioned in the tech log, or missing info from engineers.
- \* Flight operations conducted beyond the due dates.

### Cabin Safety

- \* Beds open during critical phases of flight and taxi, blocking emergency exits.
- \* Luggage stored in the toilets, left on the floor or seats or in front of an emergency exit.
- \* Straps or nets not used to secure stuff in the cargo hold.
- \* Household coffee machine installed in the galley.



**LFTH/Toulon** – can't be used as alternate without PPR.

**LFMD/Cannes** – can't be used as alternate except for flights to LFTZ/La Mole.

**LFMQ/Le Castellet** – this sometimes gets used as an alternate for LFMN/Nice and LFML/Marseille. But LFMQ rarely publishes TAF/METAR reports, so if you want to use this, you need to make sure you select at least one other alternate with a weather report!

Do you know of any more? Let us know!

### More info

Head here to download the latest ramp check guidance straight from the horse's mouth.

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# (Adventurous) Flight Ops Assistant WANTED!

David Mumford

8 May, 2023



Hi there!

We're hiring again: this role is for a **Flight Ops Assistant** at **OPSGROUP**. Might this be you?

There are some hidden instructions in this post. Read carefully! At the end, you're going to go on an *adventure*, so be ready!

## Let's get started!

The first question you might have is, what does a **Flight Ops Assistant** do? This role is a junior one, but you'll be a core member of the OPSGROUP Team. You'll assist with the daily work that we do for our

members, and at the same time learn more than you can imagine about the weird and wonderful world of International Flight Operations. So for the right person, it's a win-win.

## A day in the life of a Flight Ops Assistant...

When we say "Every day is different", it's actually true here. That's the beauty of international flight ops – Monday is a problem on the North Atlantic, Tuesday is an ATC strike in France (OK, that's every week right now, but ...), Wednesday is a typhoon heading for Tokyo. But an overview of the things you would do are this:

- Keep an eye on **member messages** – a request for help, or a notification of something new.
- **Fact-check**: assess reports coming in, and communicate with CAA's, FBO's, ATC, Airports to nail down the skinny on the latest risks and changes.
- **Write** crisp, clear **ops alerts** in plain human-friendly English for our members.
- **Help** compile the Daily Brief for members.
- Research larger operational risks and changes for blog articles and guidance to members, and write helpful, clear articles.
- **Coordinate** our chats, meetings, events: Danger Club, Coffee & Waffle, OPSGROUP Local.
- **Help** with some of our focus work: NOTAM reform, Safe Airspace, Pilot-Controller workshops.
- Take part in our **Team chats**, and help track new ideas for member tools, resources, useful articles, maps, and other genius things.
- Keep our flight ops databases, member information, and airport info up to date.

## Who are you?

Here's the first (*not so hidden*) instruction – when you start your adventure down below, make sure to give us a sense of **who you are**. For sure, some flight ops experience is important, but we like working with people we like. That doesn't mean "people like us", it just means that you bring great energy.

As this is a junior role for an assistant, we're not expecting you to have twenty years at the pointy end of international flight ops – but you should have a solid basis in flight operations: dispatch or flying, real world, a few years at least. We'll help take that foundation and expand your world; you'll learn, grow, and take on new challenges here.

## The deets

- **Working hours: Weekdays** (Monday-Friday), daytime hours, **full-time**. We have a target of 6 hours of good work each day, and most weeks will average out at 30-40 hours of work. You decide (mostly) when that happens – no night shifts or back of the clock grinding required!
- **Payment**: Monthly, fixed-rate. Some weeks more, some weeks less – depends what's going on.
- **Location**: Your island, cabin, apartment, garden, boat, tiny home, co-working space – wherever you have a quiet spot to yourself and some decent internet. We *might* have a preference for a US timezone in this regard (UTC-4 to UTC-8), but we're open.

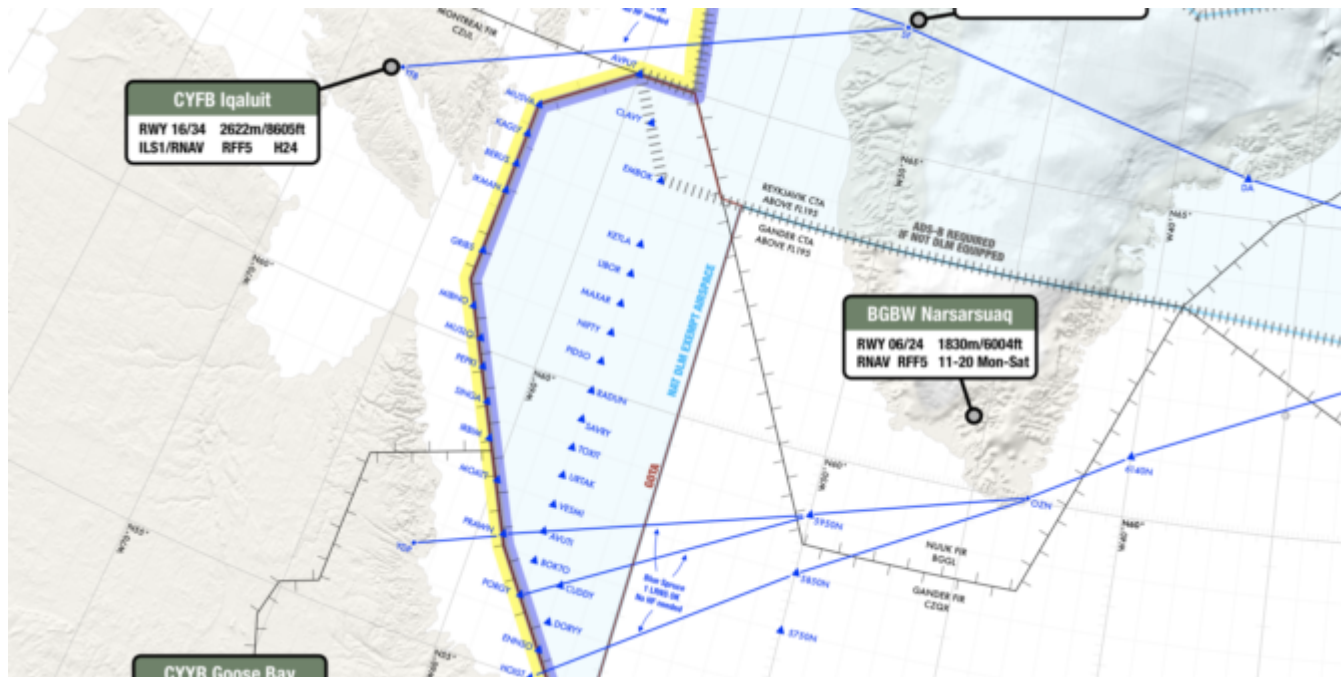
## **Ready?**

**You can do your first interview already!** It'll take about 20 minutes. We'll take you on a little adventure, ask you some things, tell you some things. All you need is your big computer (couple of practical things to do, so your phone isn't ideal) and a little time.

---

# **NAT Datalink Exempt Airspace - 2023 Update**

David Mumford  
8 May, 2023



There have been some changes to the boundaries of the datalink exempt airspace in the northern bit of the North Atlantic.

This used to extend down south to SAVRY, but now only goes as far as EMBOK.

**So now you need datalink in the NAT oceanic airspace over Greenland controlled by Gander.**

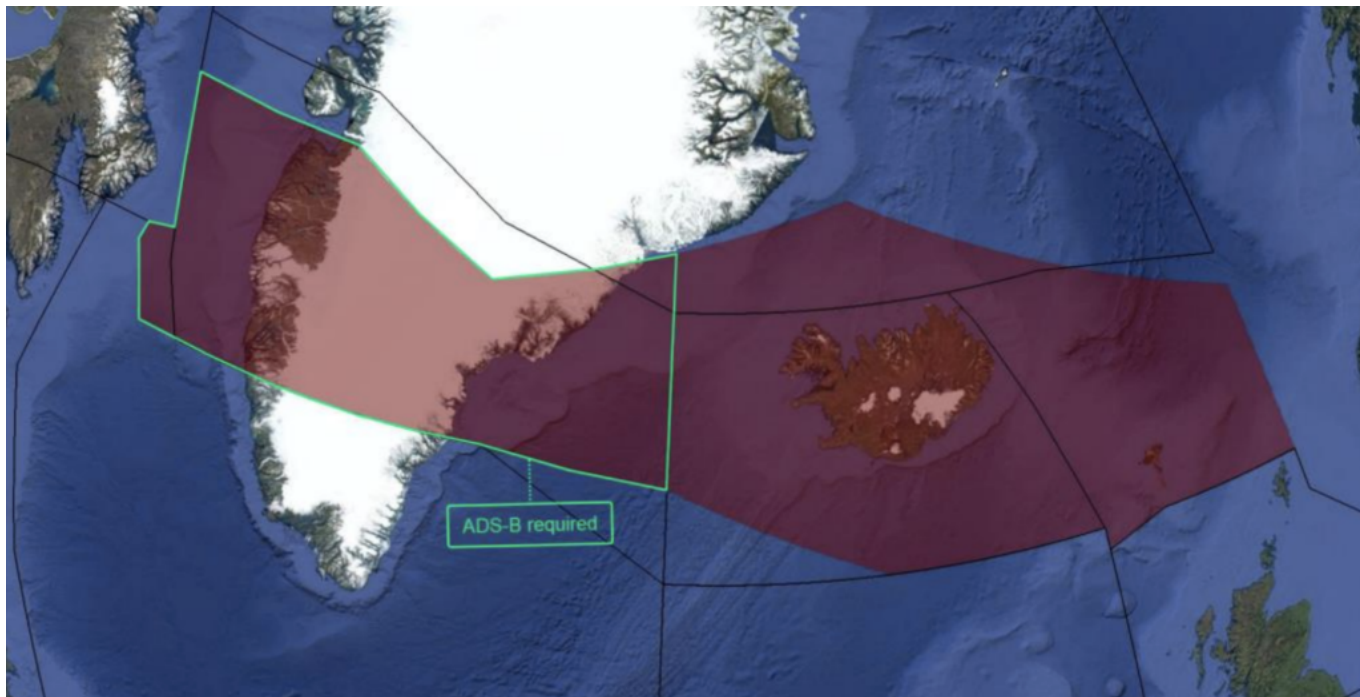
Here's a pic of what that now looks like:

**You don't need datalink in GOTA airspace.** We discovered this in Aug 2022, after some lengthy discussions with the authorities. (So that's why GOTA is shaded blue!)

**You don't need datalink over the northern half of Greenland** either, but if you don't have it, you must have ADS-B (as per the grey hatched line in the pic above).

**When did this change happen?**

It was actually published in the updated NAT Doc 007 in Jan 2023, but we only just spotted it now!



The new coordinates are as follows:

**Northern boundary:** 65N000W - 67N010W - 69N020W - 68N030W - 67N040W - 69N050W - 69N060W - BOPUT.

**Southern boundary:** GUNPA (61N000W) - 61N007W - 6040N010W - RATSU (61N010W) - 61N020W - 63N030W - 6330N040W - 6330N050W - EMBOK.

### Why has this happened?

At the end of 2022, Canada decommissioned some VHF and ground based ADS-B sites in southern Greenland, and therefore no longer have the datalink exempt area in the northern portion of Gander oceanic HLA airspace. So at that point, **all Gander oceanic airspace became DLM airspace** (although GOTA stayed datalink exempt).

The 127.9 frequency continues to be used by Gander IFSS for the Blue Spruce Routes.

### So, to recap...

- **Datalink Airspace:** Remember, NAT DLM airspace only applies from FL290-410. Below or above that, you don't need datalink in the North Atlantic.
- **If you have full datalink (CPDLC and ADS-C):** You can go where you like. But watch out here - "full datalink" means you have Inmarsat or Iridium. HF datalink alone (ACARS) does not meet the satcom part of the NAT DLM requirement. So if you want to fly in NAT DLM airspace (FL290-410 in the NAT region) "J2" in field 10a of your FPL isn't enough - you need "J5" for Inmarsat or "J7" for Iridium.
- **For GOTA airspace:** You need a transponder, automatic pressure-altitude reporting equipment and VHF. If you have ADS-B, that's helpful for ATC.
- **For oceanic airspace over Greenland controlled by Gander:** you need datalink.
- **For the Blue Spruce Routes:** You need datalink for the southerly ones, but not the northerly ones. (If you're flying on these then you're probably doing so below FL290 anyway, in which case you're below NAT DLM airspace and don't need datalink).



We've updated our dedicated NAT page with this info. This has a timeline of North Atlantic changes stretching back to the dawn of time (actually, 2015, but basically the same thing).

---

# Nicaragua's Silly New System For Overflight Permits

David Mumford

8 May, 2023



Nicaragua's CAA has recently implemented a silly new system for overflight permit requests.

They talk about the changes in AIC numbers 89-93. But even when translated into English, the docs are **bamboozling, and it's not really clear exactly what has changed.**

So we called on the help of Consorcio Aviation — a flight support company in the region, and our old pals — for help to understand all this, and how overflight permit requests now work.

## So, how does it work?

Before, the process would go as follows: you would make one request with all the flights you wanted to do in a month, and the CAA would reply with one unique permit number for the entire list that was requested.

The new system is different. **Now each flight must have its own permit number, and it is sent in the format of a QR code.**

## QR codes? Yuck.

Yep. You scan the QR code, and a webpage opens with your permit number – **the one that you add to your FPL.**

## Is that it?

No, it gets worse. To make things more confusing, the QR codes are not all sent at once, but in partial batches of five, two or sometimes even one at a time, depending on how many flights you're doing, further increasing the need for **constant follow-up**.

## What do these hideous QR codes look like?

Here's a sample. The QR code there is fake for confidentiality reasons, but if you scan a real one you get just a text with the permit number.

INSTITUTO NICARAGÜENSE DE AERONAUTICA CIVIL  
INAC

Unidad de Atención a la Aviación General Internacional  
y Vuelos Oficiales

Aprobación Solicitud de Sobrevuelo

Fecha: lunes, 01 mayo 2023

Trámite: 01234

Operador: OPERATOR NAME

Código IAC



Fecha de Vuelo: 02/05/2023

TIPO	MATRICULA	ORIGEN	DESTINO	AEROVIA	MOTIVO
B733 FLIGHT	TAIL NO.	ORIGIN	DESTINATION	UB767	TYPE OF

Esta Autorización es valida para la ida y el retorno.

Watch out for the **TRAMITE number** on this doc. This is like an internal code for the CAA - it's not the permit number. If you have inquiries and need to get to the authorities, they will ask you this TRAMITE number, not the permit number itself.



### **Is this QR code / permit system online?**

No, they don't have an online system for the requirements. **You need to request it directly from the authorities - and easier to do this through an agent.** Although some of the authorities' staff understand English, it's easier to communicate in Spanish in case they request more information or something is not very clear to them.

### **What about Nav fees? How do these get paid?**

At the end of every month they send the billings to all the operators/companies that requested permits. In our case for example we usually give the options to our clients to pay directly or we pay for them. Usually they choose the second option for the reasons stated above.

### **Who are you, Consorcio?**

Consortio Aviation is a leading Flight Support Company headquartered in Paraguay, with a global footprint. It provides full-service ground handling to the main airports in Latin America and the Caribbean, for both cargo and passenger flights. With over 40 years of experience in the aviation industry, Consortio Aviation is a suitable partner to assist ground operations with world-class standards. Email us at [fltops@consorcioaviation.com](mailto:fltops@consorcioaviation.com)

### **Sounds swish. Got any pics?**

Yep. Here we are.





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# OPSGROUP is coming to AIROPS23!

David Mumford  
8 May, 2023



**AirOps is an event for business aviation flight ops people**, put on by the European Business Aviation Association, where ground handlers, airports and FBOs meet with trip-planners and operators. And this year, we're going to be there too!

## When and where?

The Event Lounge in **Brussels, Belgium**. It's a three-day event, from **Feb 13-15**, featuring an exhibition, along with training and flight ops info sessions.

For more info on **what to expect** and **who's going to be there**, check the AirOps23 page [here](#). (And to see some snaps of the last event in 2020, [click here](#)).



## Come see us!

We'll be running our world famous **Ops Quiz** at the end of Day 2. Test your ops knowledge with questions like these ↓, pit your wits against other teams, and ease into the evening with a fun, interactive session. (And yes, there will be prizes for the winning teams!)



# OPSQUIZ!

How up-to-date is your Ops knowledge?!

What tripled in the Netherlands?  
The birth rate or Air Passenger Tax?

Is EES only for creatures from Mars  
or also for EU nationals?

What is the most common ramp check  
finding in Business Aviation in  
France? Lack of wine on board or  
Flight Preparation?



If you're able to make it, we'd love to see you! Come meet OPSGROUP's Rebecca and Dave in person, share your knowledge, swap stories, and discover some recent ops updates you might have missed.

**OPSGROUP members can take advantage of discounted rates** – just enter the code **AIROPS2023\_OPS\_GROUP** in the 'coupon' section when registering. See you there!

**AIROPS**  
2023

13-15 FEBRUARY 2023, BRUSSELS  
**BUSINESS AVIATION  
FROM THE GROUND UP**

MEET THE OPSGROUP TEAM AT AIROPS DURING THE OPS QUIZ!  
SPECIAL OPSGROUP DISCOUNT CODE: **AIROPS2023\_OPS\_GROUP**

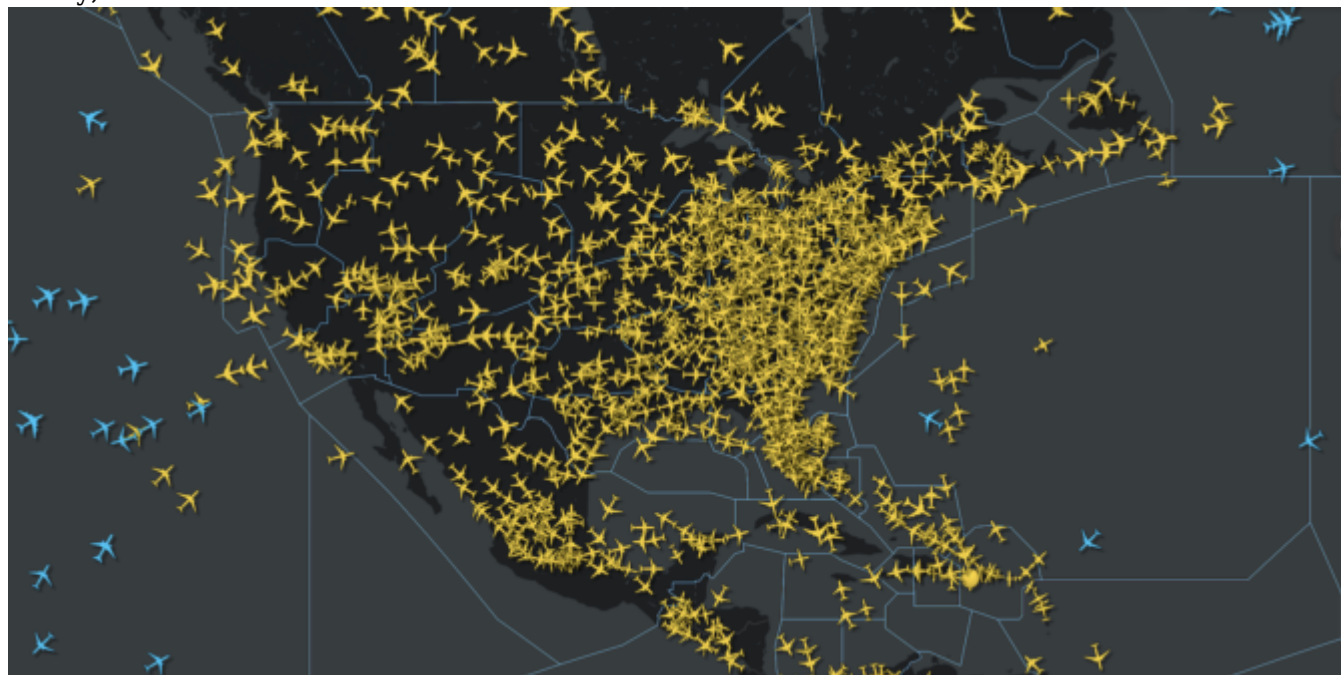
WWW.EBAA.ORG

## US Grounds All Flights After NOTAM System

# Failure

David Mumford

8 May, 2023



## Update 12Jan 1100z:

*The Misery Map of flight delays in the US isn't looking too bad today, following yesterday's Notam system meltdown that resulted in a nationwide ground stop and the cancellation of more than 10,000 flights according to FlightAware. The FAA has said the Notam system "continues to remain operational and stable" today. For ops to/within the US today, keep an eye on the latest FAA Advisories [here](#).*

The US grounded all flights on the morning of Jan 11, due to a glitch with the Notam system.

Here's the ATCSCC advisory giving the order:

ATCSCC Advisory	
ATCSCC ADVZY 028 DCC 01/11/2023 NATIONWIDE GROUND STOP	
MESSAGE:	EVENT TIME: 11/1220 - 1430 GROUND STOP ALL FLIGHTS / ALL DESTINATIONS EXCLUDES MILITARY AC AND MEDEVAC FLIGHTS DESTINATION AIRPORT; ALL FACILITIES INCLUDED: ALL GROUND STOP PERIOD: UNTIL 1430Z REASON: EQUIPMENT OUTAGE REMARKS: US NOTAMS SYSTEM DOWN
EFFECTIVE TIME:	111221 - 111500
SIGNATURE:	23/01/11 12:21

The Notam system failed at 2028 UTC on Jan 10, after which time no new Notams or amendments were

processed.

**The FAA lifted the ground stop shortly before 9am EST on Jan 11**, saying that “normal air traffic operations are resuming gradually”. Later that night, they announced that the outage was **likely due to a software issue**.

Update 6: We are continuing a thorough review to determine the root cause of the Notice to Air Missions (NOTAM) system outage. Our preliminary work has traced the outage to a damaged database file. At this time, there is no evidence of a cyber attack. (1/2)

— The FAA ✈️ (@FAANews) January 11, 2023

## Springer's Final Thought

### **We all hate Notams.**

Let's qualify that. *A significant number of pilots and dispatchers have told us that they are concerned about Notams, and would like to see an improved system.*

The FAA has said last week's meltdown was due to a damaged database file. Our focus has never really been on the software on the back-end of the Notam system, but on the impact of Notams on pilots and operators.

We've been campaigning for changes to the current Notam system for a long time – **not because the system might crash, but because of the daily impact to pilots who are forced to use an archaic briefing system from the 1920's that causes critical flight information to be missed.**

If you've read the news today about this mysterious “Notam system” causing widespread travel misery, and you want to learn more about this ongoing issue, you can start your adventure here.

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# 2022 Flight Ops Changes: The Big Ones

David Mumford  
8 May, 2023





## Dear Santa...

We do hope we've been good little boys and girls this year. Last Christmas we received no presents from you at all, which was disappointing.

**We did get one from ICAO** that got lost in the post and then turned up in January – an update to the NAT Doc 007. *Truth be told, Santa, we didn't actually like that very much.*

## It's been another busy year of international flight ops changes, Santa!

We thought you probably missed most of it, hunkered down in your Arctic grotto, beavering away on all the presents you must be making for us this year. **So we've written you a little list** – just the big stuff that's happened this year.

If you don't want to read it all, that's okay, we know you're busy! You can get nearly all the same info by playing our **Snakes On A Plane & Ladders game** that we made! ☐ ☐

We designed it in bright **RED** and **YELLOW** colours to make it easier for you to play in the dim pre-dawn light as you're zipping around the skies on Christmas Eve! ☐

You can **download a PDF of the game** here, or just click on the picture!

In fact, before we get to the long-version list of stuff that's happened...

## Our Christmas Wishlist

- *No more hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, floods, domestic conflicts, international invasions, drone and missile attacks, or global pandemics please.* We've put this one at the top, because this is the one we **really want the most.**
- **An EU-LISA teddy bear.** The one where you press its tummy and it tells you a nice clear definition of what a "carrier" is.
- **A set of walkie-talkies.** We'll keep one and give the other to North Korea, so they can use it to tell us when they're launching test missiles.

- **A big pair of scissors.** So when we're doing flights over Greece or Turkey we can snip out all the pages of whingey, irrelevant Notams they publish about each other.
- **Some earplugs.** We'll use them in January when the postman knocks on the door with ICAO's annual NAT Doc 007 present, late again.

Ok, Santa, on to the good stuff – *here's* the long-version list of stuff that's happened...

## January

- The US went into a **ground stop** at their west coast airports after North Korea launched a missile. [Read](#)
- The US delayed their **5G roll out** because of concerns at airports. [Read](#)
- Honduras got **new airport** – MHPR/Palmerola. [Read](#)
- UAAA/Almaty airport, **Kazakhstan closed** (and later reopened) due to violent protests and unrest across the country. [Read](#)
- The Yemen conflict reached the UAE when several **ballistic missiles** targeted Abu Dhabi. [Read](#)
- NTF/Fua'amotu airport in Tonga closed after the **eruption of Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai**, and the ash also disrupted some overflights in the South Pacific. [Read](#)

## February

- Airlines started to avoid Ukrainian airspace after Russia's invasion, and **insurance companies started cancelling cover** for flights in Ukraine. [Read](#)
- Singapore mandated **RNP4 and RNP10** on some of its main oceanic airway from FL290 and above. [Read](#)
- **NAT Tracks were abolished** from FL330 and below. [Read](#)

## March

- As the Russia-Ukraine conflict escalated, Russia brought in **"tit for tat" flight bans**, including bans on all US operators, and operators had to start finding new routes avoiding Ukraine and Russia. [Read](#)
- **Spillover into Europe** from the conflict and "traffic jams" in other airspace started occurring. [Read](#)
- We first heard mention of EASA's new dreaded **EU-LISA (EES/ETIAS) system**. [Read](#)
- Iran kicked off against Iraq again, sending **missiles towards ORER/Erbil** region. [Read](#)
- In the US, the military ran tests on **GPS interference** and it jammed civilian aircraft. [Read](#)
- **Fuel shortages in Nigeria** and bandits at the airport raised concerns. [Read](#)
- Ethiopia announced a **ceasefire** between fighting factions in the Tigray region. [Read](#)



## April

- **EASA's new fuel policy** was announced and it was really hard to read. [Read](#)
- A new airport opened in **Mexico City** (MMSM/Santa Lucia) and everyone said don't use it. [Read](#)
- **Fuel prices started rising** due sanctions particularly on US east coast; and in other countries they started to announce shortages, particularly across Africa. [Read](#)
- FAA announced **new flight planning codes** for advanced capabilities. [Read](#)
- Iceland became completely **covered with ADS-B**. [Read](#)
- The **mass ATC walkout in Poland** was narrowly avoided. [Read](#)

## May

- Reports of **flights being tracked** for nefarious reasons started to concern BizAv folk. [Read](#)
- We talked about **EMAS** because no-one seemed to know what it was. [Read](#)
- **ATC returned to Somalia** with Class A reinstated above FL245 during the day. [Read](#)
- We took a look at some common **NAT Conundrums!** [Read](#)
- US eased rules for **flights to Cuba**. [Read](#)

## June

- Everyone was still **confused by EU-LISA**, who still couldn't make it clear which operators need to register to use the new system (i.e. who counted as a "carrier"). [Read](#)
- The **South China Sea dispute** got worse with China building islands and putting weapons on them and running lots of military drills. [Read](#)
- Sri Lanka completely **ran out of fuel** [Read](#)
- Bahamas delayed their **Click2Clear** because no-one understood it. [Read](#)
- Antigua brought in **new Nav/ATC fees** that they want in advance if you're overflying up to FL245. [Read](#)
- Saudi Arabia risk level was reduced as **Houthi attacks drop off**. [Read](#)
- We published a book on **European Slot Rules**. [Read](#)
- **Kathmandu got RNP** (and you should use it). [Read](#)
- The **5G rollout was delayed** in US. [Read](#)

## July

- We decided **Safety used to be far more sexy** and tried to bring it back again. [Read](#)
- Flights to/from Israel got easier as **Israel got friendlier** with their neighbours. [Read](#)

- EASA published **new All Weather Operations** stuff and we were all confused by it. [Read](#)
- **EU-LISA is postponed** (thank goodness!). [Read](#)
- **VHHH/Hong Kong's new runway** finally opened. [Read](#)
- ICAO **expanded SELCAL** to include new codes. [Read](#)
- The FAA postponed the final phase of **Northeast Corridor Atlantic routes** project until April 2023. [Read](#)
- We made a picture book to help people understand the new **EASA fuel rules**. [Read](#)

## August

- Qatar finally got the go-ahead from ICAO to set up their **own airspace**. [Read](#)
- China got angry with Taiwan and held massive drills that **shut Taiwan** because they effectively surrounded it with prohibited areas. [Read](#)
- Canada delayed their **ADS-B mandate** until Aug 2023 to give folk time to install equipment. [Read](#)
- **NAT 006** is updated, and we're proud of our James Bond pun which no-one else got. [Read](#)
- **EIDW/Dublin** opened a new runway. [Read](#)
- We put together on the **London Airport options**, made with help from the London Underground tube map publishers, circa 1962. [Read](#)
- EASA updated their RIM and we posted a reminder of all the things people keep getting into trouble with during **ramp checks!** [Read](#)

## September

- The **hurricane season** was in full force with Earl closing Bermuda, Kay closing La Paz in Mexico and then the massive Fiona reaching Canada, and Ian devastating parts of Florida.
- A big military exercise threatened to close a chunk of **EGGX/Shanwick** impacting the NAT, but then it didn't. [Read](#)
- EASA delayed their **ELT mandate** by 2 years. [Read](#)
- **Azerbaijan and Armenia** kicked off again and the border airspace closed, then quickly reopened. [Read](#)
- CYYZ/Toronto **capped slots for GA/BA** flights. [Read](#)
- African ATC went on a **mega strike!** They brought in fake ATC and we put out a big safety alert over it. [Read](#)
- The **FAA extended** their Iran and Iraq warnings for another 2 years. [Read](#)

## October

- North Korea sent a **missile directly over Japan** causing them to issue a public warning. [Read](#)

- **Major airways** in Iraq are in close proximity to areas of airspace with high risk from drones and missiles. [Read](#)
- Florida airports reopened after **Hurricane Ian** raged through. [Read](#)
- We discovered more info on the **CPDLC trial** in the US and how BizAv are (or aren't) involved. [Read](#)
- The FAA published new **winter holdover times**. [Read](#)
- Everyone started planning for the **Qatar world cup** because Doha is small and no-one was sure where to park. [Read](#)

## November

- A **cyber attack** brought down a fair few Jeppesen planning products. [Read](#)
- **ADS-B privacy issues** reared its head again with more groups questioning the privacy and security. [Read](#)
- Shannon published info on **level busts** and US BizAv are to blame for a lot of them! [Read](#)
- **KTEB/Teterboro** added new waypoints to help with the challenging circle for RWY 01. [Read](#)
- Canada published a **safety watchlist** that applies to everyone, everywhere really. [Read](#)
- The Russia-Ukraine spillover impacted more countries, with **a wayward missile** hitting Poland and concerns about UAS. [Read](#)
- Saudi Arabia got **CPDLC from FL150 up**. [Read](#)
- We started to **worry about Turkey** - they are fighting with Syria and Iraq and their southern region is higher risk. [Read](#)
- Germany issued a warning against low level **flights in Myanmar**. [Read](#)
- An Emirates aircraft might have been **hijacked**. [Read](#)

## December

- Possibly because of power outage issues, but **South Africa lost CPDLC** and FAOR/Johannesburg Oceanic airspace turned into one big IFBP area for a day or so. [Read](#)
- **Ski season started** in Europe with parking restrictions and PPR requirements aplenty. A lot of folks also head off to the **Caribbean** this time of year. We made our own pirate map. [Read](#)
- **Auckland** got bad fuel. Not ideal for long haul flights (so any flight trying to get to Auckland). [Read](#)
- Someone asked us about weird **Mexican timezone changes** and we realised that in April 2023 most of Mexico will stop using DST but some places along the border won't. Highly bamboozling. [Read](#)
- **France banned domestic airline flights** under 2.5 hours. [Read](#)
- **KPHL/Philadelphia** decided they didn't want international GA flights heading in there anymore. [More](#)

Fare-thee-well, 2022

And that brings us bang up to date, Santa, if you're still reading.

If not, we hope this whirlwind of flight ops bulletpoints has been of interest to someone out there. **Maybe a few of you weary aviation folk** who have stuck with us throughout the year ☐

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## ATC radio outage in Johannesburg Oceanic

David Mumford

8 May, 2023

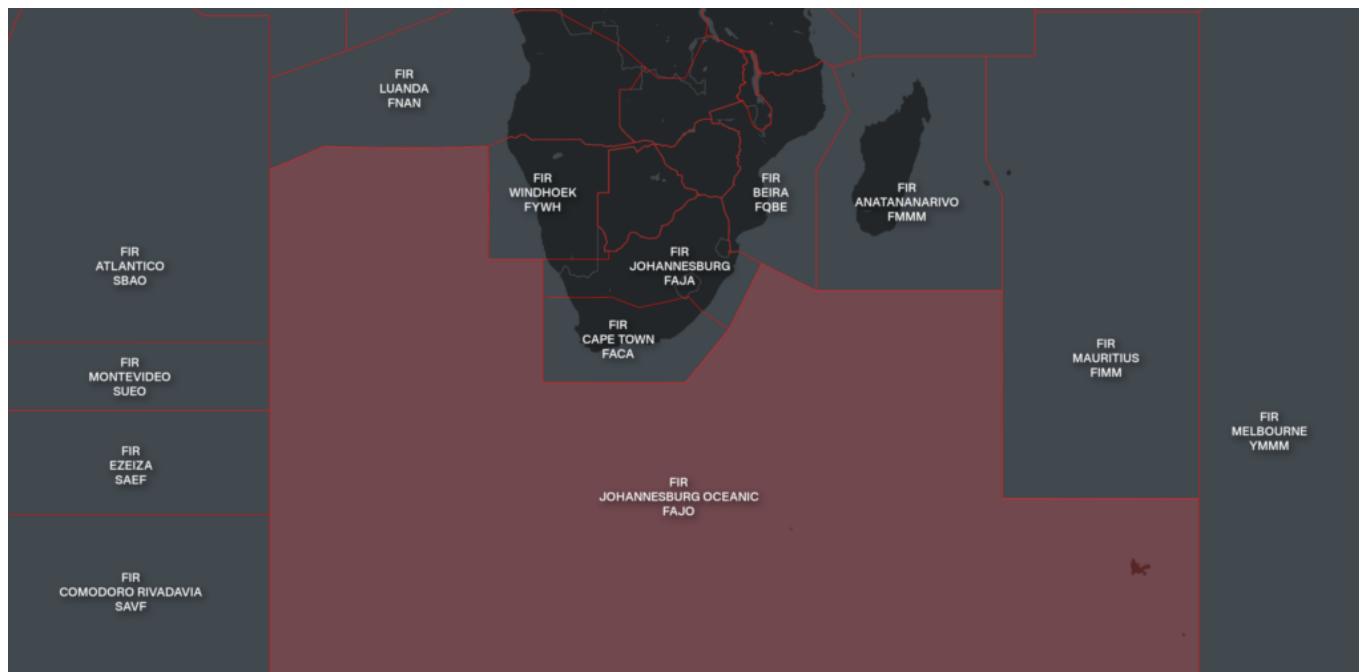


**CPDLC has been fixed in the FAJO/Johannesburg Oceanic FIR following yesterday's outage.**

That's the only thing ATC have currently got to communicate with aircraft, as their radios have been out of action since November.

The FAJO/Johannesburg Oceanic FIR covers a pretty big chunk of airspace:





Aircraft not equipped with CPDLC will have to broadcast on the emergency **In-Flight Broadcast Procedure** (IFBP) VHF frequency 126.9, and maintain a continuous listening watch on 123.45. Here's the Notam for that:

**A3931/22** - TRANS AND REC U/S. PRI COM IS CPDLC. ACFT NOT CPDLC/ADS-C EQUIPPED MUST BCST AND MNT IFBP (IATA IN-FLIGHT BROADCAST PROCEDURE) ON 126.9 MHZ. 11 NOV 17:57 2022 UNTIL 31 DEC 23:59 2022 ESTIMATED. CREATED: 11 NOV 18:06 2022

You can check IATA's doc for a quick summary of IFBP here:



Operations Notice Number: 001/2019

#### IATA In-flight Broadcast Procedure (IFBP) AFI Region

Applicable to:	Operations in AFI region
Effective Date:	15 August 2019
Revision Date:	2 March 2022
Expiry:	31 August 2022
Authorized by:	Senior Vice President Operations, Safety and Security (OSS) IATA
Contact e-mail:	<a href="mailto:safety@iata.org">safety@iata.org</a>

#### IATA In-flight Broadcast Procedure (IFBP) AFI Region

This Operations Notice replaces ON 001/2014 in total.

#### Background:

In many FIRs in the AFI Region, both fixed and mobile aviation communication systems have either not been implemented or operate well below the required reliability. This has an impact on the proper provision of Air Traffic Services, especially with regard to Flight Information Service (FIS). Consequently, an AFI Regional Technical Conference had determined that the IATA In-Flight Broadcast Procedure (IFBP) should be used within AFI designated FIRs as an interim measure, until such time as communications facilities affecting the FIRs in question have been improved.

#### Designated frequency in AFI

In the AFI Region the designated frequency for the IFBP is 126.9 MHz

#### Area of Application

It is recommended that the IFBP be applied in the following FIRs and airspaces:

Asmara	Lusaka
Brazzaville *	Mogadishu
Kano	Niamey *
Khartoum	N'Djamena *
Kinshasa	Tripoli **
Luanda	Dakar

\* Asmara, Niamey and N'Djamena FIR provide CPDLC service, however these FIRs are maintained in IFBP area of applicability to accommodate users' requirement for linear boundaries to the extent possible.

\*\* Tripoli FIR mandated IFBP within their entire FIR, hence IFBP region extended from North of latitude 30 N to cover entire Tripoli FIR

This Notice should be used for information only and is based on data available at the time of issuance. It is not intended to replace an operator's own assessment and evaluation, nor replace the opinions and expert advice that the operator may receive from third parties. Operators shall remain responsible at all times for their operations and any decisions related to this notice.

Operational Notice #: Error! Reference source not found.ON001\_19\_In-flight\_Broadcast\_Procedure\_in\_AFI\_RegionPage 1 of 5

As far as we can tell, South Africa hasn't published its own Contingency Plan to help us work out what to

expect when we're flying through their oceanic airspace and we can't reach ATC.

But ICAO harmonized the contingency procedures for all oceanic airspace worldwide back in 2020. The basic rule is this: **turn from the route by at least 30°, offset by 5 NM, stay at your current level or descend below FL290, then apply a cheeky little vertical offset.**

## Power Outages

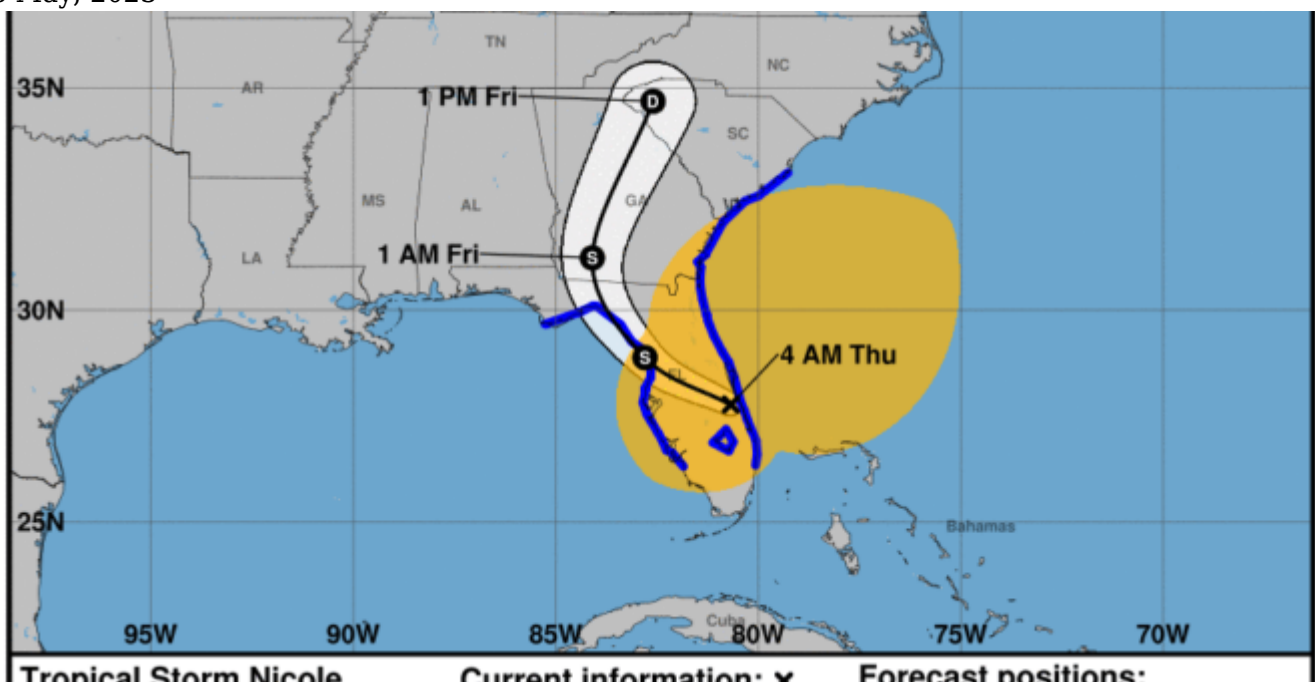
Power outages are an ongoing issue in South Africa. **Airports remain unaffected, directly.** However, yesterday's CPDLC outage coincided with a breakdown of several ESKOM powerplants. We aren't sure whether this was a coincidence or not.

The continued power outage crisis may lead to delays with certain services which have a knock on effect on your operation. The likelihood of civil unrest is also growing so caution on the ground in the country is recommended at this time.

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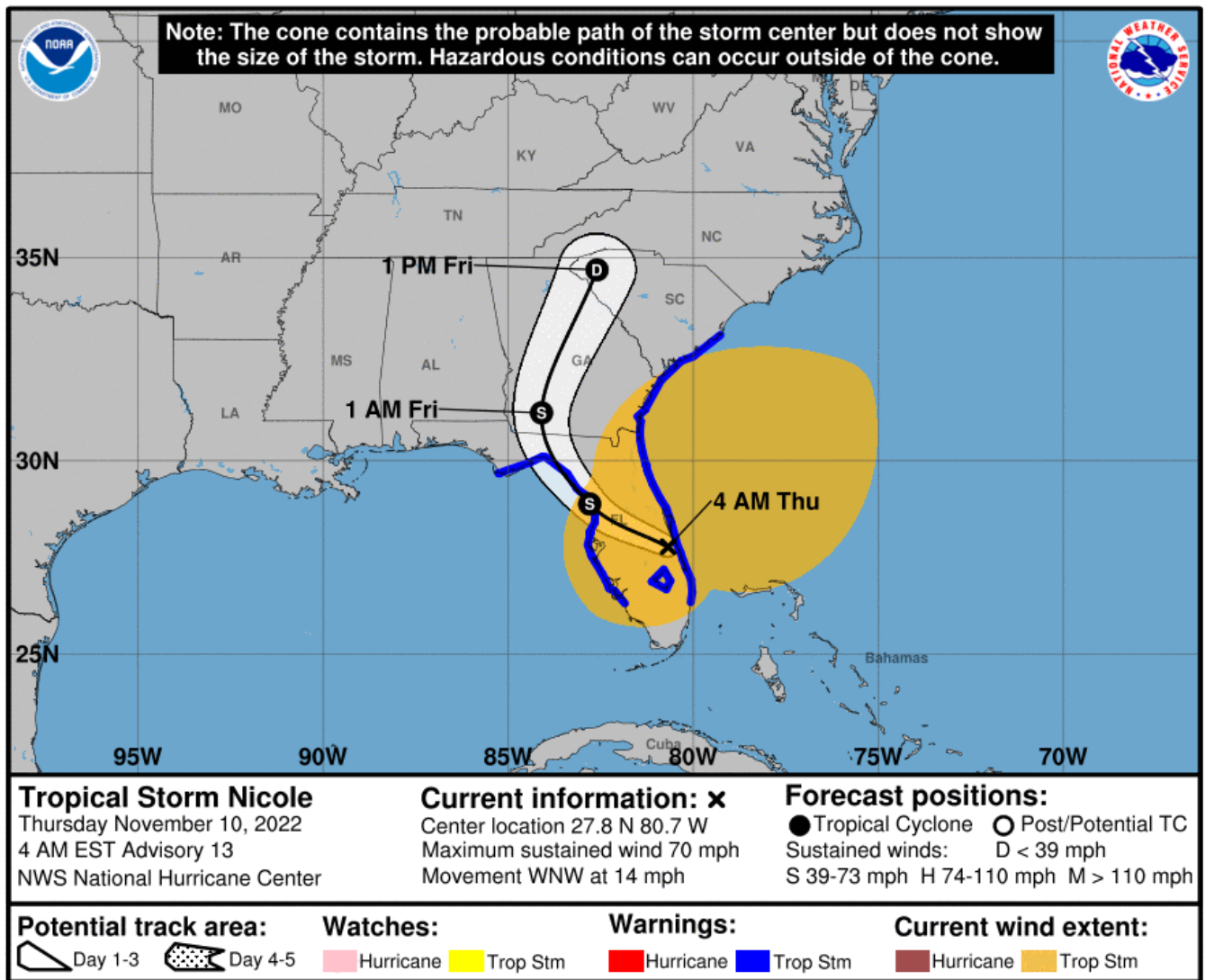
# Hurricane Nicole: Florida Airport Closures - Nov 10 1000z

David Mumford  
8 May, 2023



Hurricane Nicole made landfall this morning over east-central Florida as a large tropical storm, with winds of around 60kts. Nicole is forecast to move across Florida this morning towards the Gulf Coast, and then move north up along the Florida Panhandle and Georgia tonight and Friday.

**National Hurricane Center's Advisory, issued 4am EST Nov 10:**



At 400 AM EST (0900 UTC), the center of Tropical Storm Nicole was located inland over east-central Florida near latitude 27.8 North, longitude 80.7 West. Nicole is moving toward the west-northwest near 14 mph (22 km/h). A turn toward the northwest and north-northwest is expected later today and tonight, followed by an acceleration toward the north and north-northeast on Friday. On the forecast track, the center of Nicole will move across central Florida this morning, possibly emerge over the far northeastern Gulf of Mexico this afternoon, and then moving across the Florida Panhandle and Georgia tonight and on Friday.

Maximum sustained winds have decreased to near 70 mph (110 km/h) with higher gusts. Additional weakening is forecast while Nicole moves over land during the next day or two, and the storm is likely to become a tropical depression over Georgia tonight or early Friday. Nicole is expected to merge with a frontal boundary over the Mid-Atlantic United States by Friday night.

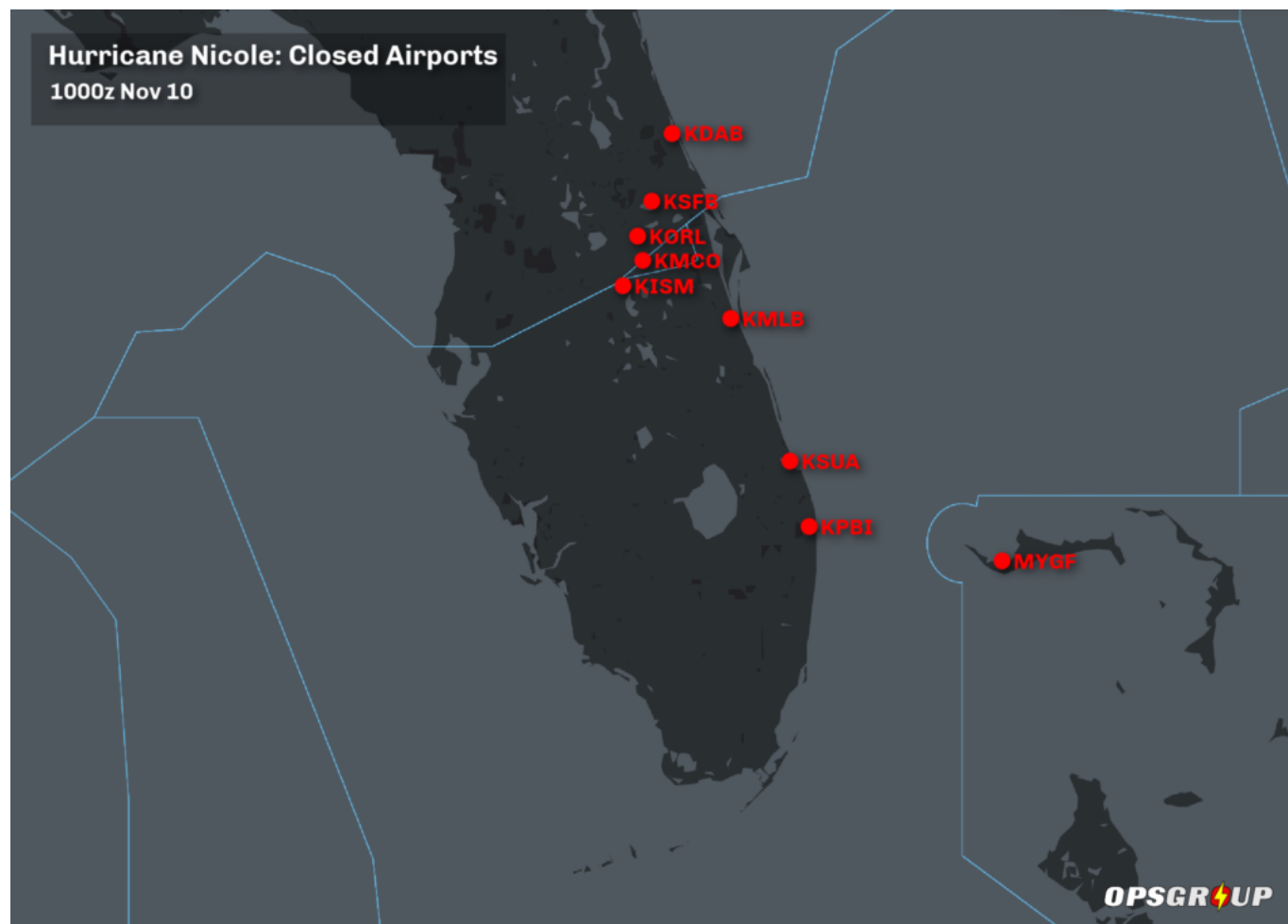
Nicole remains a large tropical storm. Tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 450 miles (720 km) from the center, especially to the north. A sustained wind of 47 mph (76 km/h) and a

gust to 62 mph (100 km/h) were recently reported at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida. Winds are increasing near the west coast of Florida. A sustained wind of 38 mph (61 km/h) and a gust to 45 mph (72 km/h) were recently reported at Clearwater Beach.

The estimated minimum central pressure based on surface observations is 981 mb (28.97 inches).

### Airport Closures

Several airports across the region are now closed for the passage of the storm. Here are the ones we know about as of 1000z on Nov 10:



And here are the Notams that carry the announcements of the closures:

#### **MYGF/Grand Bahama**

A0604/22 - AD CLSD. 08 NOV 22:30 2022 UNTIL 14 NOV 11:30 2022. CREATED: 08 NOV 15:07 2022

#### **KPBI/Palm Beach**

A2072/22 - AD AP CLSD EXC MIL, EMERG ACFT 1HR PPR 561-471-7440. 09 NOV 14:00 2022 UNTIL 10 NOV 13:00 2022. CREATED: 09 NOV 11:02 2022

#### **KSUA/Witham Field**

11/130 - AD AP CLSD EXC MIL OPS AND EMERG ACFT. 09 NOV 19:00 2022 UNTIL 10 NOV 17:00 2022. CREATED: 09 NOV 13:53 2022

#### **KMLB/Melbourne**



A0565/22 – AD AP CLSD EXC MIL OPS AND EMERG ACFT 1HR PPR 321-508-1319. 09 NOV 19:00 2022 UNTIL 10 NOV 21:00 2022. CREATED: 08 NOV 19:51 2022

**KISM/Kissimmee**

A0400/22 – AD AP CLSD. 09 NOV 17:00 2022 UNTIL 11 NOV 11:59 2022. CREATED: 08 NOV 23:29 2022

**KMCO/Orlando**

A3251/22 – AD AP CLSD EXC EMERG ACFT AND MIL OPS AND CARGO. 09 NOV 22:00 2022 UNTIL 11 NOV 17:00 2022. CREATED: 09 NOV 21:30 2022

**KORL/Orlando Executive**

A3204/22 – ORL AD AP CLSD TO FIXED WING EXC HEL AND EMERG HEL AND MIL HEL OPS. 09 NOV 21:00 2022 UNTIL 11 NOV 17:00 2022. CREATED: 08 NOV 21:48 2022

**KSFB/Orlando Sanford**

A1063/22 – AD AP CLSD EXC EMERG ACFT AND SAR 1HR PPR 407-247-1212. 09 NOV 21:00 2022 UNTIL 11 NOV 14:00 2022. CREATED: 09 NOV 14:27 2022

**KDAB/Daytona Beach**

A1969/22 – AD AP CLSD EXC MIL, EMERG ACFT 1HR PPR 386-547-0298. 09 NOV 19:09 2022 UNTIL 11 NOV 11:00 2022. CREATED: 09 NOV 19:09 2022

**More info**

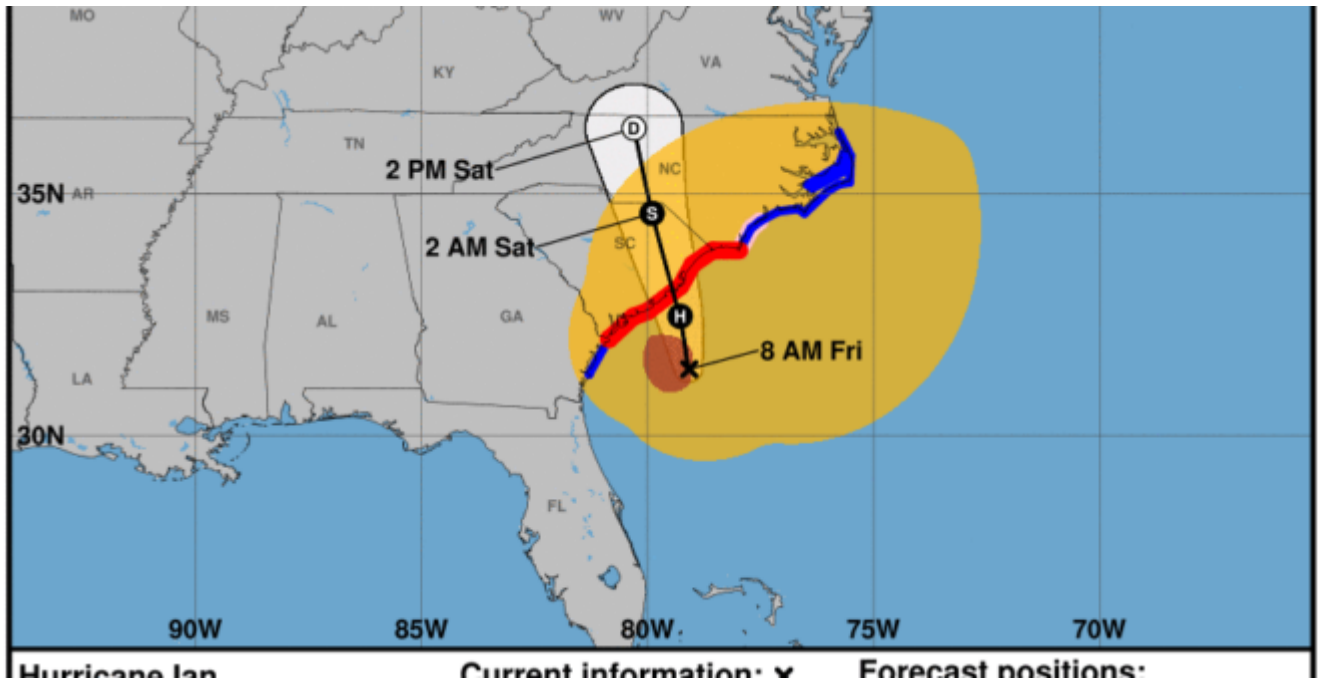
- **Cyclocane** have a tracker page for Nicole here, which includes tracking map and source info from the National Hurricane Center.
- **The FAA** have a page on airport closures here.
- **The NBAA** have a page on Nicole here, which includes airport closures, equipment shutdowns, and route info.

If you have any additional info to add, please email us at [news@ops.group](mailto:news@ops.group)

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## Hurricane Ian: Florida Airport Closures - Sep 30 1200z

David Mumford  
8 May, 2023

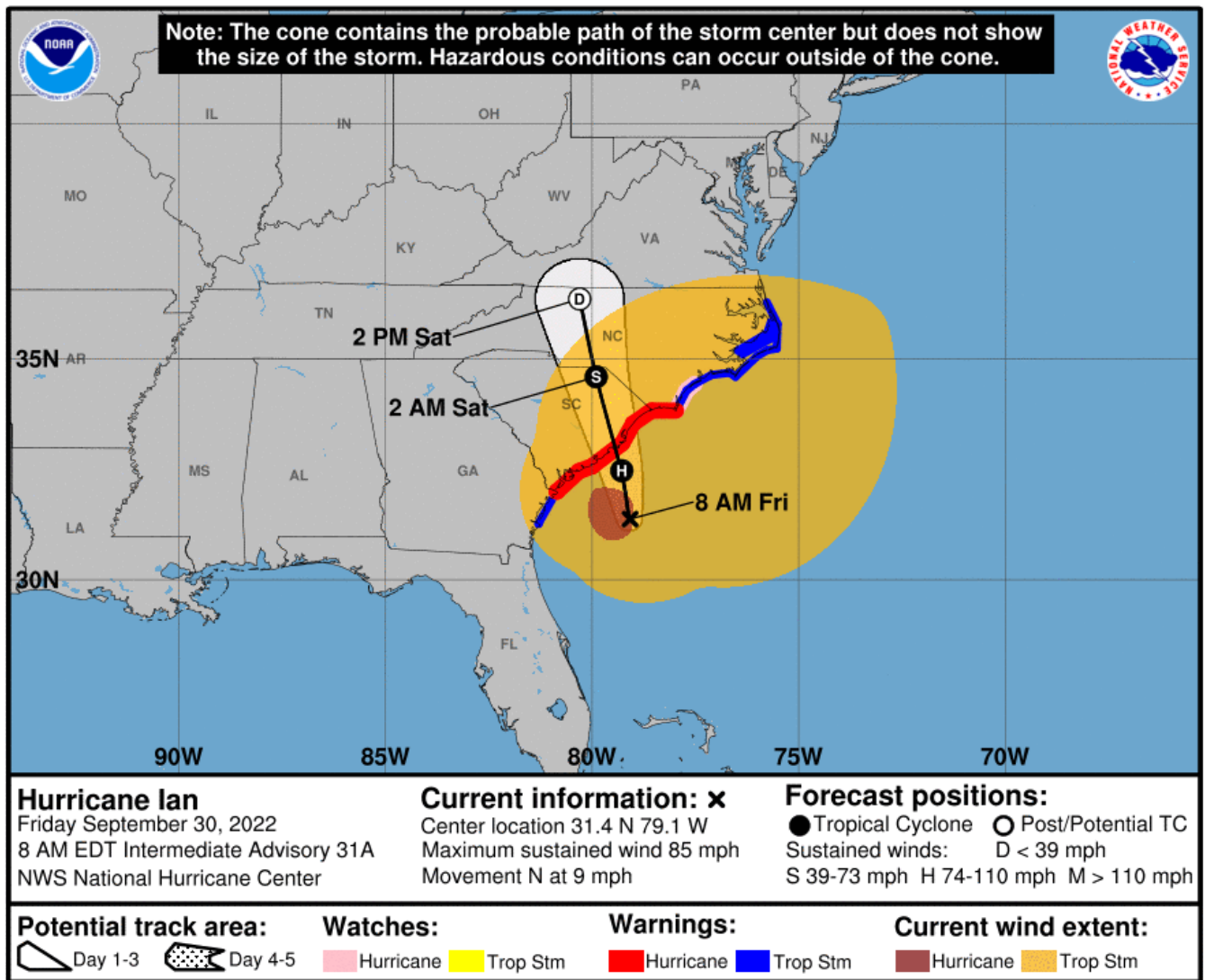


Tropical Storm Ian, which impacted Florida as a hurricane on Wednesday, is gaining new strength as it approaches South Carolina today. Forecasts say landfall could take place this afternoon.

The entire coast of South Carolina is under a hurricane warning. Once it makes landfall, Ian is expected to weaken back to a tropical storm as it makes its way across the southeastern US.

Meanwhile, Florida is still assessing the mass of damage from Ian, mostly from flooding.

**National Hurricane Center's Advisory, issued 1200z Sep 30:**



At 800 AM EDT (1200 UTC), the center of Hurricane Ian was located near latitude 31.4 North, longitude 79.1 West. Ian is moving toward the north near 9 mph (15 km/h). This general motion with an increase in forward speed is expected this morning, followed by a turn toward the north-northwest by tonight. On the forecast track, the center of Ian will approach and reach the coast of South Carolina today, and then move farther inland across eastern South Carolina and central North Carolina tonight and Saturday.

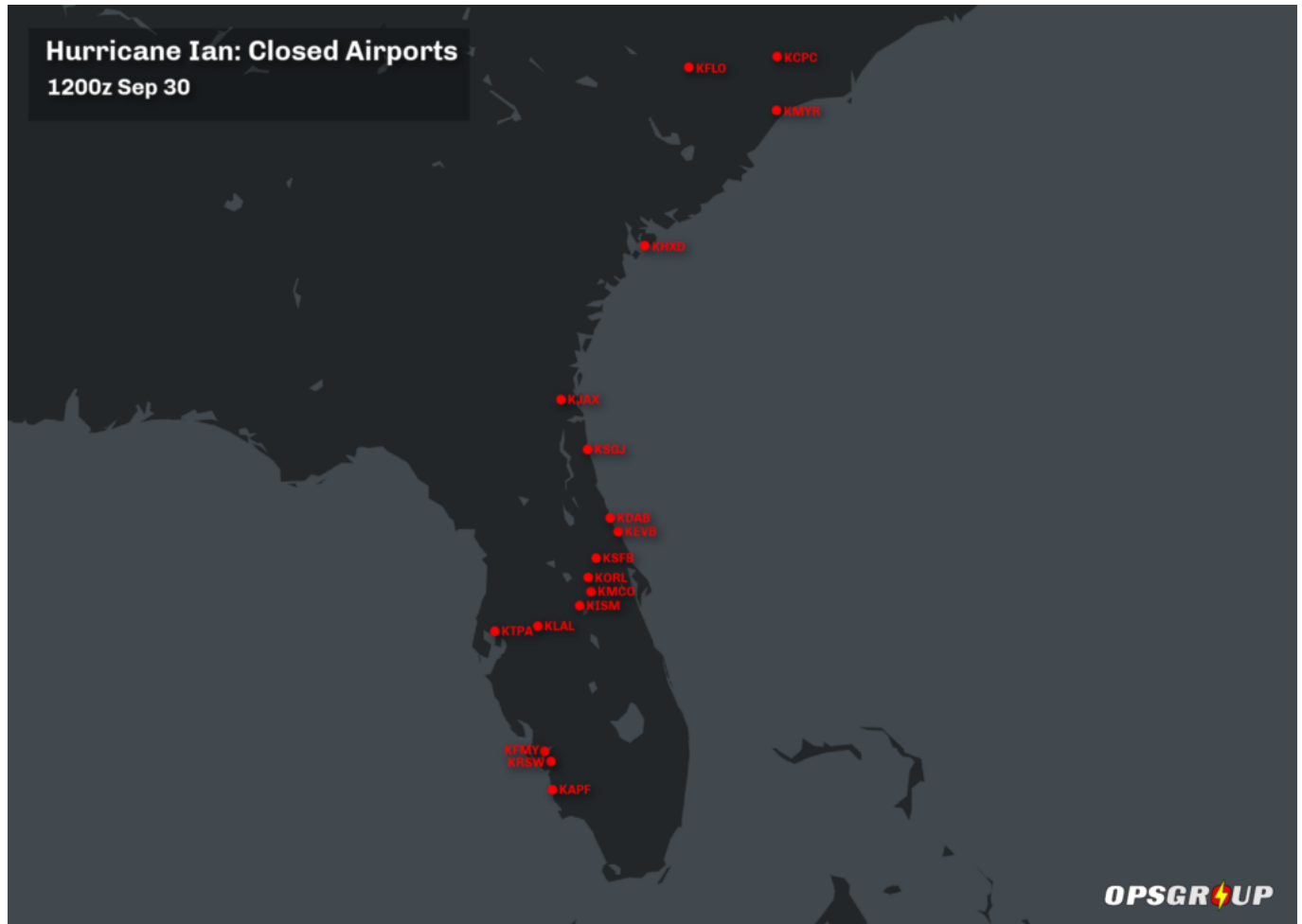
Maximum sustained winds remain near 85 mph (140 km/h) with higher gusts. Little change in strength is expected before Ian reaches the coast later today. Rapid weakening is expected after landfall, and Ian is forecast to become an extratropical low over North Carolina tonight or on Saturday. The low is then expected to dissipate by Saturday night.

Hurricane-force winds extend outward up to 70 miles (110 km) from the center and tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 485 miles (780 km). A sustained wind of 40 mph (65 km/h) and a gust to 58 mph (93 km/h) were recently reported at a WeatherFlow station on Fort Sumter Range Front Light in South Carolina.

The estimated minimum central pressure is 984 mb (29.06 inches).

## Airport Closures

Several airports across the region have closed for the passage of the storm. Here are the ones we know about as of 1200z on Sep 30:



And here are the Notams that carry the announcements of the closures:

### KAPF

09/097 - AD AP CLSD EXC 2HR PPR 239-564-1692. 30 SEP 12:00 2022 UNTIL 03 OCT 23:00 2022.

CREATED: 29 SEP 22:04 2022

09/096 - AD AP CLSD DLY SS-SR. 30 SEP 23:00 2022 UNTIL 04 OCT 12:00 2022. CREATED: 29 SEP 21:56 2022

### KRSW

09/112 (A0845/22) - AD AP CLSD EXC HUM 30MIN PPR 239-590-4460. 29 SEP 13:18 2022 UNTIL 07 OCT 16:00 2022. CREATED: 29 SEP 13:19 2022

### KFMY

09/075 (A0470/22) - SVC TWR CLSD MNT CTAF 119.0. 29 SEP 17:08 2022 UNTIL 01 OCT 11:00 2022.

CREATED: 29 SEP 17:08 2022

09/073 (A0466/22) - RWY 05/23 CLSD EXC HUM. 29 SEP 14:23 2022 UNTIL 01 OCT 16:00 2022. CREATED: 29 SEP 14:23 2022

### KTPA

09/275 (A3155/22) - AD AP CLSD EXC EMERG ACFT AND CARGO. 29 SEP 23:01 2022 UNTIL 30 SEP 14:00 2022. CREATED: 29 SEP 16:19 2022



Plans on reopening at 10am on Sep 30: <https://twitter.com/FlyTPA>

**KLAL**

09/063 - APRON TERMINAL RAMP CLSD EXC EMERG ACFT AND SAR. 29 SEP 18:15 2022 UNTIL 07 OCT 21:00 2022. CREATED: 29 SEP 18:15 2022

**KISM**

09/041 (A0346/22) - AD AP CLSD EXC PPR 407-518-2537. 29 SEP 17:52 2022 UNTIL 01 OCT 10:59 2022. CREATED: 29 SEP 17:52 2022

More info: <https://twitter.com/flyKissimmee>

**KMCO**

09/200 (A2653/22) - AD AP CLSD EXC EMERG ACFT AND MIL OPS 2HR PPR 407-825-2036. 30 SEP 00:12 2022 UNTIL 30 SEP 14:00 2022. CREATED: 30 SEP 00:12 2022

**KORL**

09/040 (A2617/22) - ORL AD AP CLSD EXC EMERG ACFT AND MIL OPS 2HR PPR 407-825-1681. 28 SEP 14:30 2022 UNTIL 30 SEP 16:00 2022. CREATED: 27 SEP 19:43 2022

Although they say they will be reopening at 12pm on Sep 30: <https://twitter.com/mco>

**KSFB**

09/044 (A0904/22) - AD AP CLSD EXC SAR 1HR PPR 407-247-1212. 28 SEP 05:00 2022 UNTIL 30 SEP 21:00 2022. CREATED: 27 SEP 19:54 2022

More info: [https://twitter.com/sfb\\_airport](https://twitter.com/sfb_airport)

**KEVB**

09/014 - AD AP NOT ATTENDED. 28 SEP 14:21 2022 UNTIL 01 OCT 16:00 2022. CREATED: 28 SEP 14:21 2022

09/013 - AD AP SFC COND NOT REP. 28 SEP 14:20 2022 UNTIL 01 OCT 16:00 2022. CREATED: 28 SEP 14:20 2022

09/012 - SVC TWR CLSD MNT CTAF 119.675. 28 SEP 14:00 2022 UNTIL 01 OCT 11:00 2022. CREATED: 28 SEP 13:39 2022

**KDAB**

09/166 (A1752/22) - AD AP CLSD EXC FOR MIL AND EMERG ACFT 1HR PPR 386-547-0298. 28 SEP 16:35 2022 UNTIL 05 OCT 22:00 2022. CREATED: 28 SEP 15:22 2022

**KSGJ**

09/019 - AD AP CLSD EXC EMERG ACFT. 28 SEP 21:30 2022 UNTIL 01 OCT 16:00 2022. CREATED: 28 SEP 21:30 2022

**KJAX**

09/058 (A0987/22) - SVC TWR CLSD TWR 118.3 NOW CTAF CLASS C VFR OPS NOT PERMITTED EXC MEDEVAC AND LAW ENFORCEMENT CTC JACKSONVILLE ARTCC FOR CLASS C ARR COM ON 124.67, FOR CLR DELIVERY AT 904.845.1592. 29 SEP 00:42 2022 UNTIL 01 OCT 00:42 2022. CREATED: 29 SEP 00:42 2022

Although they say they will be reopening at 12pm on Sep 30: <https://twitter.com/JAXairport>

**KHXD**

09/032 (A0615/22) - AD AP CLSD. 29 SEP 19:08 2022 UNTIL 01 OCT 14:00 2022. CREATED: 29 SEP 19:08 2022

**KMYR**

09/033 (A0448/22) - SVC TWR CLSD CLASS C SER NOT AVBL CTC JACKSONVILLE ATCSCC ON 134.37. 29 SEP 23:15 2022 UNTIL 01 OCT 12:30 2022. CREATED: 29 SEP 22:05 2022

## KFLO

09/023 - SVC TWR CLSD TWR 125.1 NOW CTAF. 30 SEP 02:00 2022 UNTIL 01 OCT 10:30 2022. CREATED: 29 SEP 23:51 2022

## KCPC

09/003 - AD AP CLSD. 30 SEP 05:00 2022 UNTIL 01 OCT 12:00 2022. CREATED: 30 SEP 00:35 2022

## More info

- **Cyclocane** have a tracker page for the Hurricane here, which includes tracking map and source info from the National Hurricane Center.
- **The FAA** have a page on airport closures here.
- **The NBAA** have a page on the Hurricane here, which includes airport closures, equipment shutdowns, and route info.

If you have any additional info to add, please email us at [news@ops.group](mailto:news@ops.group)

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# Iraq Airspace Risk For Overflights

David Mumford

8 May, 2023



International operators overflying Iraq should take note of recent events impacting airspace risk in the region.

Iran have closed a section of airspace in the north of the country along the border with Iraq, and are potentially using the area to launch **missile and drone attacks at targets near ORER/Erbil airport, in close proximity to heavily flown international air routes.**

## Iranian attacks

Iran are warning their own operators against flying in Iraqi airspace, and especially at Erbil airport, which came under direct fire from Iranian surface-to-surface ballistic missiles in Feb 2021 and again in March 2022. Iran launched further attacks this week on an area 35 miles east of Erbil, reportedly targeting a Kurdish opposition group in the region – an armed opposition force that is banned in Iran.

Here is the warning issued by Iran:

**OIIIX A2959/22** - AIRSPACE SAFETY AND SECURITY WARNING ISSUED BY IRAN CAA IN RESPONSE TO THE HAZARDOUS SITUATION WITHIN THE TERRITORY AND AIRSPACE OF BAGHDAD FIR (ORBB),  
IRANIAN REGISTERED AIR OPERATORS ARE ADVISED TO TAKE ALL POTENTIAL RISKS INTO ACCOUNT IN RISK ASSESSMENT AND FLT PLANNING DECISIONS WHEN OPERATING AT AIRPORTS WHICH ARE LOCATED WITHIN BAGHDAD FIR (ORBB) ESPECIALLY ERBIL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (ORER), DUE TO THE RISK POSED BY MILITANT ACTIVITY AND LIMITED RISK MITIGATION CAPABILITIES IN IRAQ. 28 SEP 17:35  
2022 UNTIL 05 OCT 18:30 2022 ESTIMATED. CREATED: 28 SEP 17:43 2022

## Iraq airspace risk

Several countries warn against overflights of both Iran and Iraq. The US FAA bans N-reg aircraft from the OIIX/Tehran FIR, and says that overflights of the ORBB/Baghdad FIR must be at FL320 or above – and just last week they extended these rules to 2024.

**But the Iranian attacks in northern Iraq raise questions and concerns about overflights of Iraq.** Airways UM688 (southbound) and UM860 (northbound) through Iraq are popular routes for international flights between Europe and the Middle East. **Is it really safe to fly these routes now, even above FL320?**

It's worth digging into the US FAA guidance on Iraq a bit deeper to get a clearer picture of exactly what the risk is here. SFAR 77 has the info, and this is (some of) what it says:

- *Iranian-aligned militia groups (IAMGs) have access to UAS and anti-aircraft capable weapons systems which present inadvertent risks to the safety of U.S. civil aviation operations in the ORBB/Baghdad FIR at altitudes below FL320 and at potentially targeted airports.*
- *IAMGs likely lack the ability to conduct effective target identification and airspace de-confliction, increasing the risk of an accidental shoot down of a civil aircraft due to misidentification or misperception.*
- *In addition, the FAA remains concerned about cross-border military activity. Both Iran and Turkey have previously conducted various no-notice, cross-border operations striking targets in northern Iraq using a variety of weapons, including short-range ballistic missiles, rockets, and weaponized UAS. In a recent example, on March 12, 2022, up to twelve Fateh-110 surface-to-surface ballistic missiles launched from western Iran and impacted near the construction site of the new U.S. consulate in Erbil, Iraq, and Erbil International airport (ORER). While this attack did not pose a direct threat to the airport, the missile trajectories possibly presented an inadvertent risk to aircraft in flight that might have been operating at low altitude in the vicinity of Erbil International airport (ORER) during the time of the attack.*
- *In general, unannounced third-party cross-border operations in the Baghdad FIR (ORBB)*

*present a low altitude safety-of-flight risk for aircraft flying in the vicinity of the targeted location(s) and for aircraft on the ground at airports co-located with, or in close proximity to, the intended targets. These activities also pose an airspace de-confliction challenge.*

## Should I avoid overflying Iraq?

For most Europe-Middle East flights, **the route through Saudi-Egypt is a safer option than Iraq.**

Even routing through Iran is probably a safer bet at the moment (although we don't advise that either!). We received a report from an OPSGROUP member this week who routed through Iran:

*"I would estimate our flights through Iran vs Iraq are taking (approximately) 10-15 mins longer, but at significantly less risk. We only consider airports that are served by either Emirates or FlyDubai as suitable for diversion, but only as a last resort, such as OIIE, OISS and OIFM. The company we use for support and handling if such diversions are required is Hadid. They are excellent for sorting any problems/permits in the Middle East."*

## Here's the Iraq risk, as we see it:

- Potential of **intentional targeting** by terrorist organisations who possess portable anti-aircraft weaponry.
- Civil aircraft may be **misidentified** by the air defence systems of both local and foreign military who are active in the country.
- Iraq is politically unstable, and **security and safety on the ground** is unpredictable and likely to be high risk.
- The US have pulled their troops out and so there is **little protection at the major airports.**
- ORBI/Baghdad and ORER/Erbil airports are **common target for rocket attacks.** Militia and terrorist groups are active in these areas.

## Want a full briefing?

Just click [here](#). Safeairspace.net is our conflict zone and risk database run by OPSGROUP. We continually assess the risk to operators the world over. It presents that information in a way that will always be simple, clear, and free. You can also add your email to our new fortnightly airspace risk briefing that contains only what you need to know, delivered every second Monday.

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# Ops to Taiwan? You'll have to avoid China

David Mumford  
8 May, 2023





- Can I fly between China and Taiwan?
- If I make a stop in Hong Kong, is that ok?
- What about overflights?
- Can I overfly China to get to Taiwan?

There's a **boring answer** to these questions, and there's a **fun answer**.

### The Fun Answer

OPSGROUP members have all the fun – you guys get to play the game. We tested it out and managed to find the 'cheat mode', so we left the screen open for you. You can download this (along with all the other Opsicles we've made) via your Dashboard here.

### The Boring Answer

You can't fly between China and Taiwan in a foreign-registered aircraft.

The Chinese authorities are reluctant to provide any kind of official document stating any of this – we haven't been able to find any precise wording anywhere in their AIP which states these restrictions.

To test the theory, we applied to the Chinese authorities for a landing permit for a direct flight from Taiwan to China. After we applied, we received an immediate call from CAAC emphasising that they **will not deal with such applications** for foreign registered aircraft. They advised they will not process this application and **verbally rejected it**.

The Chinese authorities circulate an official document to Chinese handling agents about this issue, which sets out the rules quite clearly. For some reason, they don't like these to be distributed outside of China... so naturally, we got our hands on a translated copy:

Take off from	Tech stop at	Overfly	Tech stop at	Destination	Allowed?
Taiwan		Mainland China		Third countries	No
Taiwan	Third countries	Mainland China		Third countries	Yes
Taiwan		Sanya FIR		Third countries	Yes
Taiwan	Third countries	Sanya FIR		Third countries	Yes
Taiwan				Mainland China	No
Mainland China				Taiwan	No
Mainland China		Taiwan		Third countries	No
Third countries		Mainland China		Taiwan	No
Third countries		Mainland China	Third countries	Taiwan	Yes
Third countries		Sanya FIR		Taiwan	Yes

So, to summarize:

- **Foreign-registered aircraft are prohibited from operating direct between China and Taiwan.**
- **You've got to make a tech stop somewhere between the two countries - most choose to do so in either VHHH/Hong Kong or VMMC/Macau.**
- **Importantly, the same rules apply for China overflights - if you're flying to Taiwan from any third country, you can't overfly China. China allow some airline flights to Taiwan to overfly China, then the Hong Kong FIR. But they don't allow non-sched and private flights to do this.**
- **Only Chinese and Taiwanese registered aircraft are able to operate direct between China and Taiwan.**

There's one more scenario that is apparently also not allowed:

**You can't overfly both China and Taiwan and then land in a third country.** For example: you're departing from RPLL/Manilla in the Philippines, then overflying Taiwan (RCAA FIR), then overflying China (ZSHA FIR), and then landing in a third country like RKSI/Seoul in South Korea - according to the Chinese authorities, **this is not allowed**, and they won't issue an overflight permit!

#### Further reading:

- For some general **top tips on ops to China**, check [here](#).
- Make sure you know about the **hidden permit costs** of operating to China [here](#).
- Read about the latest goings on in the **South China Sea** [here](#).
- OPSGROUP members can download a **Himalayan Routing Guide** [here](#).

## NAT Conundrums Volume III: To GOTA and beyond!

David Mumford  
8 May, 2023



Ah, NAT conundrums! We love them so much, we're into our third Volume already!

**Volume I covered the following three conundrums:**

1. To SLOP, or not to SLOP?
2. What's the difference between the NAT Region and the NAT HLA?
3. Can I fly across the North Atlantic without Datalink?

**Volume II covered these additional three:**

4. Do you need to plot on Blue Spruce Routes?
5. Do we still fly Weather Contingency Procedures on Blue Spruce routes?
6. When can we disregard an ATC clearance and follow the contingency procedure instead?

**And this post, Volume III, looks at GOTA airspace.** It's such a juicy topic, it gets an entire Volume all of its own.

So here goes...

**Where is GOTA airspace?**

This section of airspace is found off the coast of North-eastern Canada, FL290 to FL600 inclusive.

Here it is, outlined in red:

**Why are we talking about it?**

Because lots of aircraft transit this area when flying across the North Atlantic. Also because the requirements here were very tricky for us to track down on "paper" (i.e. the Canada AIP, NAT Doc 007, etc), and were only really made clear after speaking with a real human being at Transport Canada. *We like human beings!*

So here's what we discovered...

## You don't need datalink in GOTA airspace

No, you don't. We thought you did, but we were wrong.

When we sat down to update our North Atlantic Plotting chart last year, we wanted to draw nice clear lines on the map to show where datalink was required. But we were bamboozled by GOTA.

The ICAO NAT Doc 007 says that you don't need datalink in:

*"Airspace where an ATS surveillance service is provided by means of radar, multilateration and/or ADS-B, coupled with VHF voice communications as depicted in State Aeronautical Information Publications (AIP), provided the aircraft is suitably equipped (transponder/ADSB extended squitter transmitter)."*

It then says to check in State AIPs to see if any of their airspace fulfils this criteria.

So that's what we did. But checking in Canada's AIP brought up this for GOTA:

### 7.2.1 Gander Oceanic Transition Area (GOTA)

The implementation of additional surveillance and communication sites along the north-east coast of Canada allowed for the provision of enhanced services and led to the creation of the Gander oceanic transition area (GOTA).

The lower limit of the GOTA is FL 290; the upper limit is FL 600. The GOTA is Class A controlled airspace.

The GOTA consists of airspace FL 290 and above, from 6530N 060W, east to the Reykjavik area control centre (ACC) boundary, south to 6330N 055W, south along 055W to the Gander domestic boundary, north along the Gander/Montreal domestic boundaries, north to the Edmonton boundary, and then back to the point of origin (see Figure 7.2.1 for reference).

Surveillance services are provided by Gander ACC. The automatic dependence surveillance - contract/controller-pilot data link communications (ADS-C/CPDLC) log on address for aircraft in GOTA airspace is CDQX.

And this for Data Link Mandate (DLM) Airspace:



## 7.2.4 Data Link Mandate (DLM) Airspace

### 7.2.4.1 General Information

The objectives of the NAT Data Link Mandate are to enhance communication, surveillance, and air traffic control (ATC) intervention capabilities in the NAT region. ADS-C provides conformance monitoring of aircraft adherence to cleared route and flight level significantly enhancing safety. ADS-C also facilitates search and rescue operations including the capability to locate the site of an accident in oceanic airspace. CPDLC substantially improves air/ground communications capability and therefore controller intervention capability.

### 7.2.4.2 DLM Flight levels

DLM airspace encompasses FL290 to FL410 inclusive throughout the NAT region.

### 7.2.4.3 Flights Permitted to Operate within NAT DLM airspace

The following flights may flight plan to operate in NAT DLM airspace:

1. Flights equipped with and prepared to operate FANS 1/A (or equivalent) CPDLC and ADS-C data link systems (see ICAO Doc 7030 3.3.2 and 5.4.2).
  - (a) The appropriate equipage to be indicated in Item 10 of the ICAO flight plan is:
    - D1; and
    - One of J2, J5 or J7
2. Non -equipped flights that file STS/FFR, HOSP, HUM, MEDEVAC, SAR or STATE in item 18 of the flight plan.

**Note:** Such flights may not receive an ATC clearance that matches flight planned requests depending on tactical situations.

So none of that really answered our question of **whether or not you need datalink in GOTA airspace**. The trail went cold...

via GIPHY

## Our chat with Transport Canada in 2021:

Deep in the doldrums of lockdown, we sent Transport Canada (TC) some emails asking them the question directly. Here's a massively paraphrased transcript of that email exchange:

**Us:** We have been trying to determine if the GOTA requires datalink? It appears to meet the definition of ATS Surveillance Airspace but we can't identify anywhere in the Canadian AIP which specifically states this.

**TC:** The GOTA is in fact DLM airspace.

**Us:** Really? So operators without datalink must cap their flight below FL290 through the GOTA airspace until they reach that datalink exempt airspace over Greenland, at which point they can climb to the higher levels?

**TC:** Yes. Well... flights equipped with ADS-B may operate at DLM levels within the GOTA.

**Us:** Oh. Now we're confused. Oh well, it's Christmas now. Chat next year!

**TC:** Merry Christmas.

## Our chat with Transport Canada in 2022:

**Us:** We have been trying to determine if the GOTA requires datalink? It appears to meet the definition of ATS Surveillance Airspace but we can't identify anywhere in the Canadian AIP which specifically states this.

**TC:** Didn't you ask this exact same question last year?

**Us:** Yep. But then... you know... Christmas...

**TC:** Ah yeah. Ok. As long as you are HLA Certified (MNPS & RVSM) and you have ADS-B, transponder and VHF you wouldn't require all the DLM equipage. GOTA is technically Gander Oceanic airspace (NAT HLA airspace), but as they have Ground based Radar sources, space-based ADS-B and VHF coverage in the area it has been delegated to Gander Domestic. Due to this, the airspace is considered Class A surveillance airspace and follows the similar regulations as you would in other Canadian domestic Class A airspace.

**Us:** What about that ADS-B requirement?

**TC:** Well, technically ADS-B isn't required as it is considered class A surveillance airspace. So lack of ADS-B wouldn't prevent you from entering the GOTA area. That said, ADS-B equipage is preferred by many of the controllers. This is because the ground based radar isn't always guaranteed to the outer limits of the GOTA airspace. This makes identification and separation easier for the domestic controllers when the aircraft have ADS-B.

**Us:** So tell us again, what do you need in GOTA airspace?

**TC:** Required equipment for GOTA airspace is transponder, automatic pressure-altitude reporting equipment and VHF. As soon as you leave that airspace you would need other equipment depending on what airspace you enter.

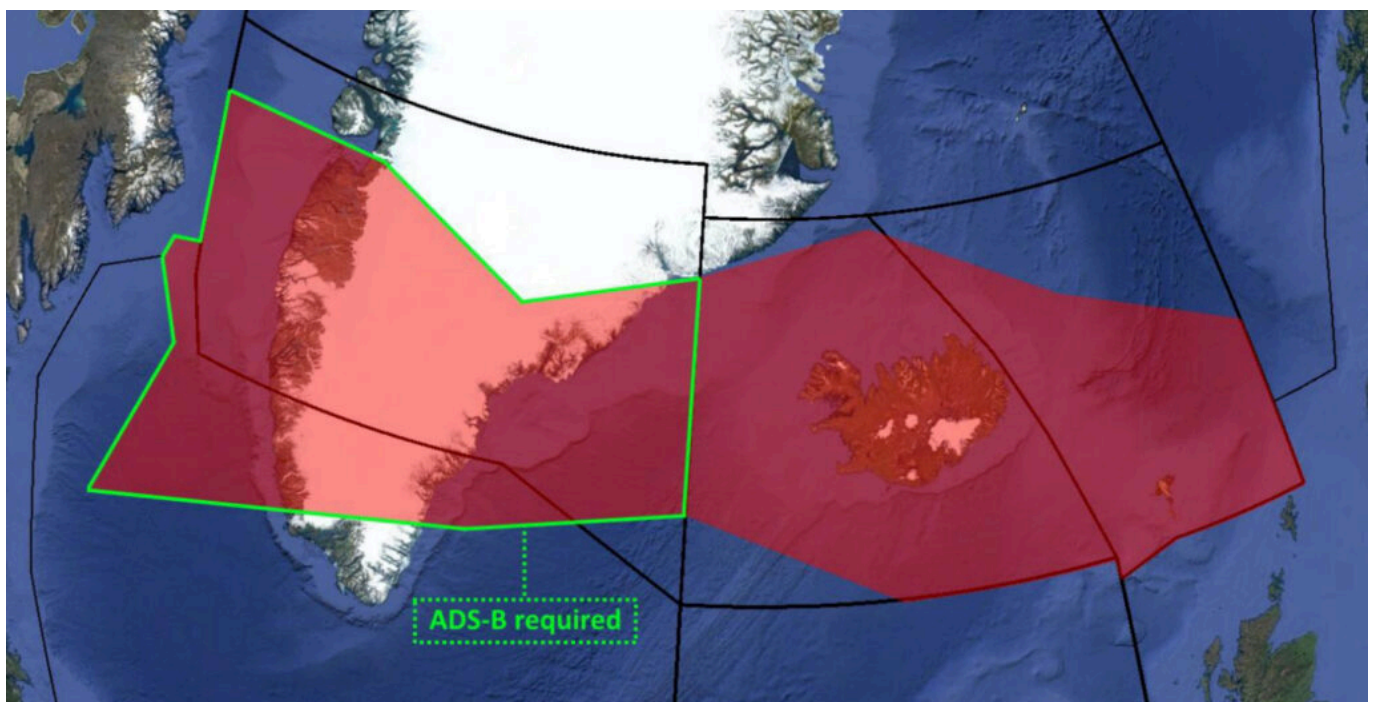
**"As soon as you leave that airspace..."**

Yes indeed, a good point, worthy of further investigation! Because no-one just zips around solely in GOTA airspace, do they?

So here's a look at the airspace adjacent to GOTA, and what you need where...

### **Datalink Exempt airspace over Greenland, Iceland, and a bit of Gander Oceanic**

There's an interesting picture in the NAT Doc 007 doc that looks like this:



This the datalink exempt ATS Surveillance airspace over Greenland, Iceland, and a bit of Gander Oceanic where you can still fly if you don't have datalink.

### **This area is bounded by the following:**

Northern boundary: 65N000W – 67N010W – 69N020W – 68N030W – 67N040W – 69N050W – 69N060W – BOPUT.

Southern boundary: GUNPA – 61N007W – 6040N010W – RATSU – 61N020W – 63N030W – 62N040W – 61N050W – SAVRY

So, putting that on our nice NAT Plotting Chart, it looks like this (outlined in green):

**Us:** What are the requirements for this airspace?

**TC:** HLA Certification (MNPS & RVSM), ADS-B & VHF.

**Us:** Nice.

### **HLA airspace**

So now we're talking about the bit to the south of the datalink exempt airspace, outlined here in fruity pink:

**Us:** What are the requirements for this airspace?

**TC:** HLA Certification and full DLM certification, FANS 1/a (ADS-C(D1) & CPDLC(J2, J5 or J7)). Depending on the route of flight and the tracks that day there may be other requirements as well (ie. PBCS Certification for PBCS tracks).

### **The Blue Spruce Routes**

So here's what we said in a previous post on these...

***The Southerly ones:*** These go over Greenland linking Canada with Iceland via waypoint OZN, and are not fully contained in the exempted airspace. So if you're flying these southerly Blue Spruce routes you will have to meet the NAT DLM requirements or fly outside of the vertical parameters of DLM airspace (i.e. below FL290 or above FL410). In other words: you need datalink to fly on the southerly Blue Spruce routes between FL290-410.

***The Northerly ones:*** These are the ones going overhead BGSF/Sondrestrom airport. These do fall within the exempted area of airspace – so datalink is not mandatory if you're flying here.

**Us:** All that stuff we told people in our previous post... did we get that right?

**TC:** Yeah, pretty much. The primary purpose of Blue Spruce routes is for aircraft with only one long range navigation system. This would normally exclude them from the exemption area anyway, as they are usually kept below HLA airspace (FL280 or below) as they would normally need state HLA approval to fly a blue spruce route with one long range navigation system at FL290 and above.

### **Gander's datalink exempt airspace won't be datalink exempt for much longer!**

**You:** Hold on... which bit of airspace are we talking about now??

**Us:** This bit, outlined in black. It's the bit of airspace in the datalink exempt area which is controlled by Gander Oceanic.

So, this is where the plot thickens!

**Us:** Can you tell us why the plot has thickened, exactly?

**TC:** Yes, we can. Do you guys actually know anything, or do just come to us for all your answers?

**Us:** We only know how to massively paraphrase email exchanges.

**TC:** Okay. So here's the deal. As we are decommissioning the VHF and ground based ADS-B sites in southern Greenland we will no longer have the datalink exempt area in the northern portion of Gander oceanic HLA airspace. At that point, all Gander oceanic airspace will become DLM airspace. Although GOTA will stay datalink exempt.

**Us:** Decommissioning VHF and ground based thingies, you say?

**TC:** That's right. Nav Canada put out a circular last year and updated it again this year advising that the ADS-B and VHF sites in that area will be decommissioned. The current circular is AIC 15/22. The tricky part is, it discusses just the ADS-B and VHF sites, but many people don't make the connection from that to the exemption area. When the VHF sites are decommissioned we won't have the equipment to qualify for DLM exemption in that area. Nav Canada is keeping one frequency until December 29, 2022 to enable users to continue to use the area for this year, but that final one will be decommissioned at that time. The 127.9 frequency will continue to be used by Gander IFSS for the Blue Spruce Routes. When it gets closer to that date, there should be an ICAO NAT Ops Bulletin out and NAT Doc 007 will be amended. So just to clarify, barring any major unexpected changes, that airspace will become strictly DLM airspace on December 29, 2022. At that point it will follow the same regulations as the rest of the NAT DLM airspace.

**Us:** Bonza.

**So, to recap...**

- **Datalink Airspace:** Remember, NAT DLM airspace only applies from FL290-410. Below or above that, you don't need datalink in the North Atlantic.
- **If you have full datalink (CPDLC and ADS-C):** You can go where you like, and you didn't really need to read this post.
- **For GOTA airspace:** You need a transponder, automatic pressure-altitude reporting equipment and VHF. If you have ADS-B, that's helpful for ATC.
- **For the Blue Spruce Routes:** You need datalink for the southerly ones, but not the northerly ones. (If you're flying on these then you're probably doing so below FL290 anyway, in which case you're below NAT DLM airspace and don't need datalink).
- **For the datalink exempt airspace over Greenland, Iceland, and a bit of Gander Oceanic:** You don't need datalink, but from 29 Dec 2022 you will do in the bit controlled by Gander.

## Questions

Just send us an email at [news@ops.group](mailto:news@ops.group) and we'll try to find out the answer.

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# Saudi-Yemen Airspace Update

David Mumford

8 May, 2023



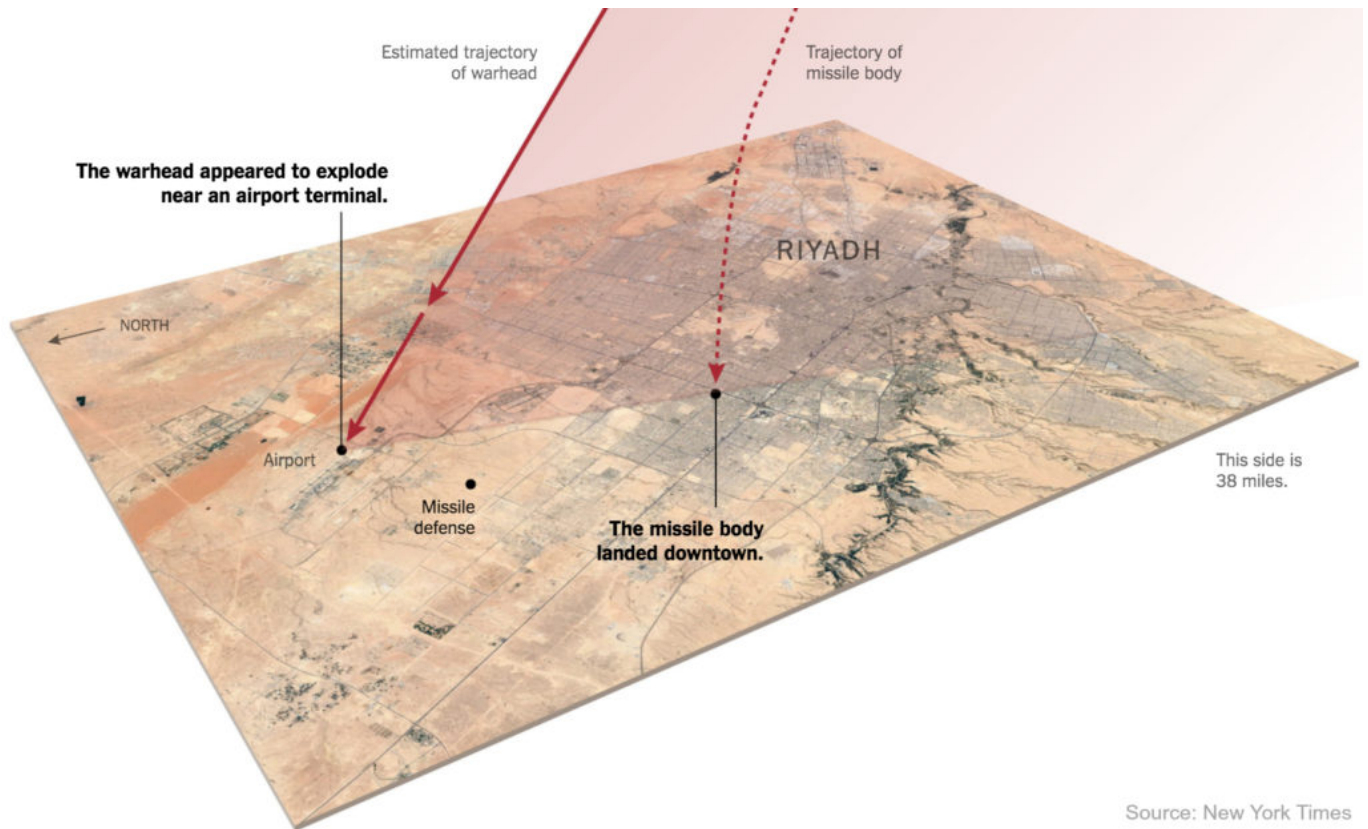
There's an **improving airspace risk picture** in Saudi Arabia since a ceasefire was agreed in April – which has now been extended to Aug 2. All groups have agreed to **halt the conflict** inside and outside Yemeni borders. The first month of the ceasefire saw **no reported drone strikes in Saudi Arabia**.

However, long-standing airspace warnings remain in place. If the conflict resumes, Houthi drone and missile attacks on targets in Saudi Arabia pose a potential threat to ops at Saudi airports, and for overflights of the OEJD/Jeddah FIR. The most significant risk is in the south of the country along the border with Yemen, but OERK/Riyadh and OEJN/Jeddah airports have also been targeted in the past.

Back in March 2021, **OEJN/Jeddah Airport** closed temporarily following multiple attempted drone attacks. Saudi media reported dozens of drones were intercepted in their airspace, and the US Embassy also issued a statement. **OERK/Riyadh Airport** was targeted in June 2020 and again in October.

Much of the information comes from state media and cannot always be independently verified. In 2017, a New York Times investigation suggested that at least one of the most high-profile attacks from that year may not have been “shot-down” or intercepted by Saudi defense systems at all.





## Saudi Arabia Airspace Risk

With the ceasefire now in place, we're waiting to see if any of the countries who have issued airspace warnings for Saudi Arabia will amend their guidance.

**Germany** and **Canada** warn of a risk to landing anywhere in the country, but particularly along the border with Yemen in the southwest part of the OEJD/Jeddah FIR. **France** has issued similar advice, with the specific warning not to operate to OEAB/Abha, OEGN/Jazan, OENG/Nejran, OESH/Sharurah, OEWD/Wadi Al Dawasir and OEBH/Bisha airports:

## A note on Yemen

The first month of the ceasefire saw notably reduced hostilities in Yemen, and commercial flights resumed at OYSN/Sanaa Airport for the first in six years.

However, Yemen remains an active conflict zone, and the vast majority of Yemeni airspace (OYSC/Sanaa FIR) should be avoided. Several countries have **prohibited flights** here due to the ongoing conflict on the ground. The oceanic portion of the OYSC/Sanaa FIR is excluded from most warnings, by nature of being offshore. The guidance issued by the US FAA currently looks like this:

Essentially, US operators are banned from flying north of a line KAPET-NODMA-ORBAT-PAKER-PARIM-RIBOK. The US FAA specifically mentions UT702 and M999 as being ok to use.

## Watch out for ESCAT

You might know this as SCATANA. ESCAT is the new name, but the process is the same – if you're overflying the OEJD/Jeddah FIR and hear **"ESCAT RULES ARE NOW ACTIVE"** (or something to that effect) you need to be aware that these apply to you!

You will likely be given a **change of route directly out of the airspace**, or will be **directed to land at the nearest suitable aerodrome**. The purpose is to clear the affected airspace of all civilian aircraft at which point they close down all nav aids and airports until the threat has been dealt with.

ESCAT procedures are published in GEN 1.6 of Saudi Arabia's AIP. If you don't have a login, you can see the relevant section here. There are some special routes that you have to fly in the southern part of the OEJN/Jeddah FIR, as advised by Notam, and you can find these in AIP SUP 02/21.

SafeAirspace.net continues to provide up-to-date information for both Saudi and Yemen airspace.



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## Traffic Jam in Europe: Airspace Bottlenecks & ATC Disruption

David Mumford  
8 May, 2023



Since the Ukraine conflict began at the end of Feb, **options to overfly Europe have become increasingly complicated** – especially for aircraft transiting between Western Europe and the Middle East and Asia.

We've talked about this a couple of times already. Here's our article with considerations for operators now looking to **route around closed airspace**. And here's a follow-up report on the **spillover risks near the conflict zone in Ukraine**, including undetected military drone incursions and GPS interference.

But there's another aspect we haven't discussed yet – the impact of **increased congestion in Europe and the potential for ATC disruption**.

With the winter weather fading, and Covid restrictions easing up, we're seeing a major upturn in traffic throughout Europe. But the ongoing closure of Ukrainian airspace is shifting traffic flows across the region – especially in those FIRs to the southeast of Ukraine where traffic levels have significantly increased:

On March 25, Eurocontrol hosted a webinar looking at the impact to European aviation following the airspace closures in Ukraine and surrounding regions. This webinar covered a bunch of topics – the spiralling cost of jet fuel, the increase in flight times between Europe and Asia, and the traffic forecast for the upcoming summer season:

One thing also discussed was **the impact of reroutes** to Polish airspace – how increased military use is causing more reroutes for civilian traffic, plus increased workload on Polish ATC as a result.

### **The Poland situation**

Polish controllers at Warsaw ACC are currently facing a revised contract (pay cuts and changes to working conditions), which has prompted some resignations already.

The Air Traffic Controllers European Unions Coordination (ATCEUC) have reported that if an agreement is not reached soon, **hundreds of flights will have to re-routed** out of Polish airspace and into neighbouring states – mostly into Germany, which may not be able to handle all the extra flights.

### **The Germany situation**

With Germany potentially receiving the lion's share of traffic affected by ATC staff shortages in Poland, the

problem simply becomes capacity. It is already extremely busy airspace. German ATC has reportedly announced that it could only handle no more than two hundred extra flights per day – **just a portion of aircraft** potentially re-routed from Poland.

### The France situation

Major changes to ATC systems in the **LFEE/Reims FIR** are being rolled out on April 5.

For the first two weeks, **capacity is likely to reduce by at least 50%** leading to significant delays and other disruptions. This will be followed by a steady decrease in capacity reductions which will offer additional capacity at the rate of about 10% every four weeks or so, ending in 'normal' capacity resumption hopefully by the end of July.

The **LFMM/Marseille FIR** follows later this year, and then **LFFF/Paris** (Winter 2023/24) and **LFBB/Bordeaux & LFRR/Brest** (2024/25).

On March 31 at 1230z, Eurocontrol is holding a telcon to brief the impacts of this new ATC system. To dial in, call +44 2030 095710 and use the conference ID 5998424. We'll hopefully get some more clarity during the telcon, but the current prognosis for the overall reduction in capacity and service doesn't look good.

### The perfect storm?

With all of these factors taken into account, we are likely to see unprecedented bottlenecks in the coming weeks in European airspace. All eyes are on Eurocontrol to provide operational updates and guidance via their Network Portal, which you can access here – it's the best place to stay up to date.

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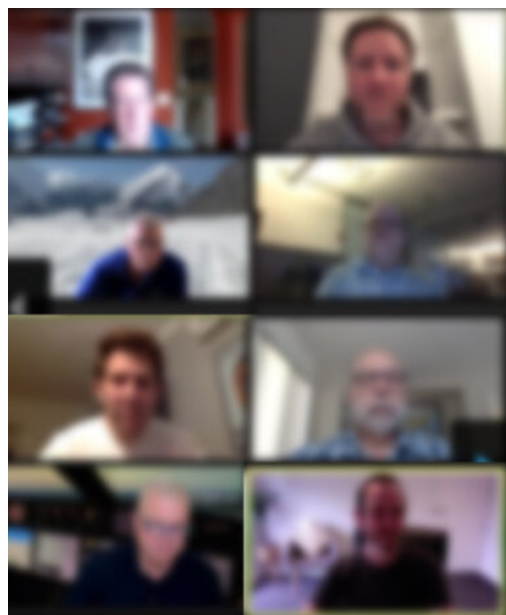
## OPSCHAT Summary 22 MAR

David Mumford

8 May, 2023

The graphic is a promotional slide for an OPSCHAT meeting. On the left, there is a 4x2 grid of eight small video call windows showing participants. On the right, the background is a solid yellow-orange color. The text 'OPSCHAT' is written in large, white, bold, italicized capital letters. Below it, 'TUESDAY 22 MAR 2000Z' is written in blue, bold, capital letters. At the bottom, four topics are listed in black, bold, capital letters: 'UKRAINE SPILL-OVER RISK', 'US AIRSPACE IMPROVEMENT', 'SAUDI ARABIA AIRSPACE RISK', and 'DANGER CLUB RETURNS'.





# **OPSCHAT**

## **TUESDAY 22 MAR 2000Z**

**UKRAINE SPILL-OVER RISK  
US AIRSPACE IMPROVEMENT  
SAUDI ARABIA AIRSPACE RISK  
DANGER CLUB RETURNS**

**Hello members,**

We had another busy OPSCHAT call this week!

You can catch the full reply on your Member's Dashboard.

Here's a rundown of what we talked about:

- **Airspace Risk in Europe** – We looked at EASA and IFALPA's new safety bulletins. Brief discussion about GPS jamming. Feedback from member operating out of Cyprus who encountered it recently – ATC were advised but seems to be ops normal for them there. We also asked whether there are any other risks or impacts that operators are encountering as a result of the conflict in Ukraine that are not being publicised or reported?
- **Russia latest** – The US has still not been officially banned from Russian airspace via the UUUU notams. Although there are reports of people having difficulties obtaining overflight permits anyway. Brief discussion about Bloc permits, and then Chinese permits (taking 4-5 days, expect short notice changes to be refused, carry additional fuel for unexpected routes/levels).
- **Saudi Arabia airspace risk** – The US FAA has now issued an advisory on Houthi drone incursions. A few key questions put to group:
  - Why has it taken the FAA so long to issue this?
  - What is the actual risk to overflights?

Feedback from group is that ESCAT is likely the biggest impact. Ops into Southern Airports are unusual for western operators.

- **Canada** – Briefly touched on the end of the pre-travel testing mandate from April 1 – only applies to fully vaccinated pax (no booster required). Non-vaccinated pax must still follow existing rules. No impact to crew who are exempt anyway.
- **USA** – Airspace improvement project on East Coast finishing with changes in Nov 3. 55 new Q and Y routes and ultra high sector routes (>FL400). New routes will be published in Sept but unavailable for use until Nov 3. More info here.
- **North Korea** – Several missile launches over the weekend landed in the Yellow Sea. Total of



eleven this year – all without airspace warnings. Likely to be more. Brief discussion on the ZKKP/Pyongyang FIR – seems operators are staying well clear. Discussed the FAA SFAR which does a good job of communicating the risks. More info [here](#).

- **Unsolved mystery:** Reports in media of bizav aircraft being used for relief missions, particularly to Poland. Looking for updates on conditions at airports, traffic congestion and fuel availability. Let us know at [news@ops.group](mailto:news@ops.group)
- **Danger Club:** Happening March 24 at 1800z! Read more and register [here](#).

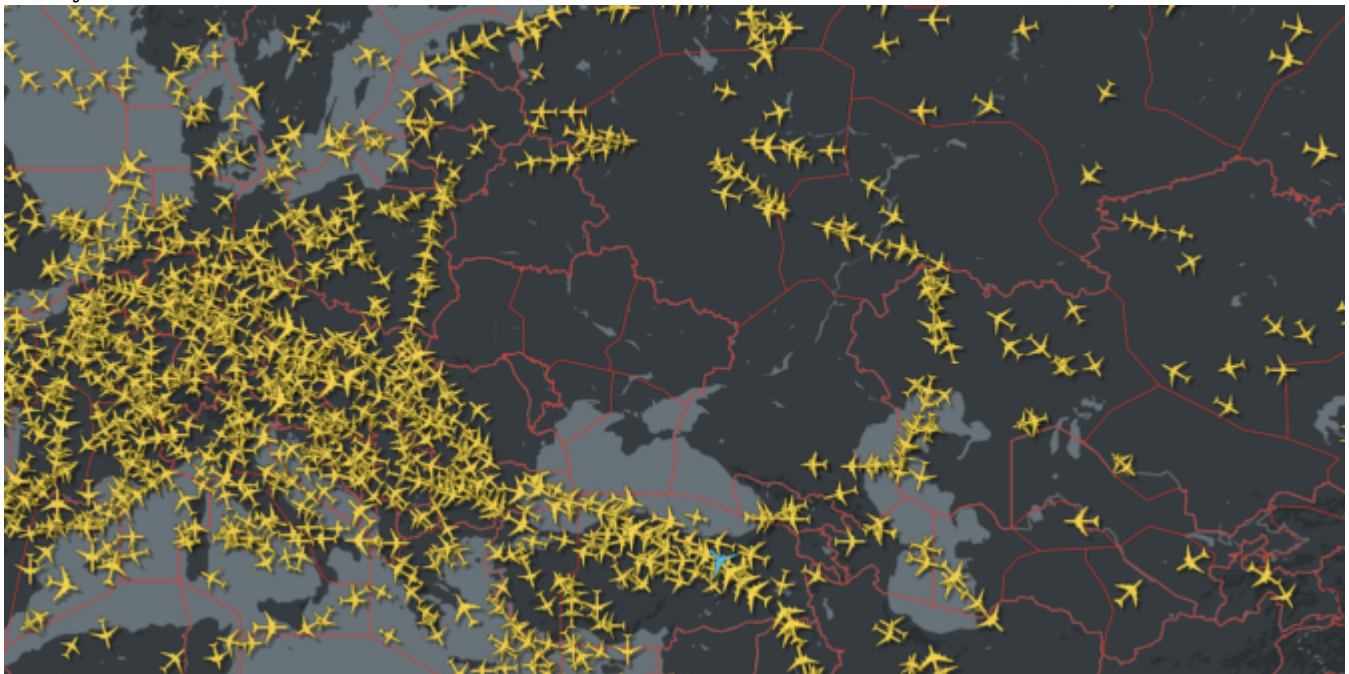
As always, the team is here to help with any operational support, info or questions. You can reach us on [news@ops.group](mailto:news@ops.group), or via the slack channels **#flightops** and **#questions**.

To watch the replay of the OPS CHAT in full, head over to the [dashboard](#).

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## Ukraine/Russia Update: Airspace closures, Flight bans, Sanctions, Routing considerations

David Mumford  
8 May, 2023



Here's everything we know right now about the Ukraine/Russia situation with regards to **the impact to international flight ops**. We'll edit and add to this post as more information becomes available.

### The main topics:

1. Ukraine, Moldova, Russia and Belarus **airspace closures**.

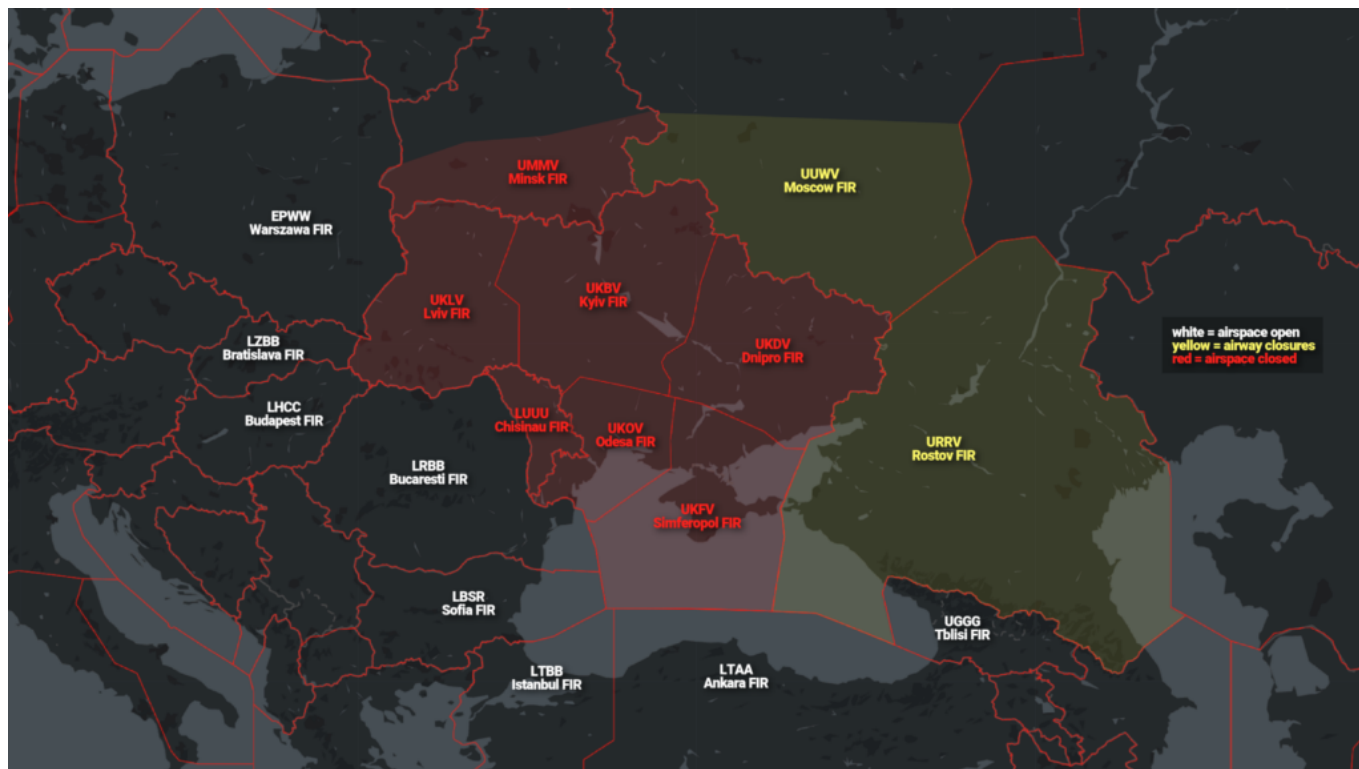
2. Which countries have banned Russian aircraft and operators, and **which countries has Russia banned** in response?
3. The differences between the **sanctions imposed on Russia** by the US, the UK, and the EU, and the nuances of how these sanctions may impact your flight.
4. Considerations for operators now looking to **route around Russian airspace**.
5. Information on **Humanitarian relief missions**.

## Airspace closures

These are pretty well known by most of us at this stage, but just to reiterate:

- The entire airspace of **Ukraine** remains closed to all civil flights.
- The airspace of **Moldova** is also closed, but they have been accepting flights to LUKK/Chisinau Airport on a case by case basis (we've seen several cargo flights go in there in the past week). But you have to apply to the Ministry of Defence and sign a declaration accepting "the risks that may arise as a result of operating in conflict areas". So that's a pretty stark warning of the risk of operating in here at the moment.
- **Belarus** has closed the southern half of its airspace along the FIR boundary with Ukraine.
- **Russia** has closed most airways in the URRV/Rostov FIR and in the southern part of the UUWV/Moscow FIR.

Here's what all that looks like:



## Reciprocal bans on aircraft/operators

Several countries have now **banned Russian aircraft and operators** from their airspace – The European Union along with some non-EU countries, the US, Canada, the UK, along with some Caribbean states – Anguilla, Aruba, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos.

In response, **Russia has banned aircraft and operators from most of these countries** from Russian airspace, announcing the bans via Notams under the UUUU code. The notable exception, so far, is the US.

However, several local agents in Russia have reported that they are not able to provide Russian landing and overflight permits to US registered aircraft and operators, and we've had similar reports from some locally based OPSGROUP members. With all US airlines **avoiding Russian airspace**, that is sensible action to follow given the uncertainty.

To keep updated on which countries have issued bans for Russian aircraft/operators, and which countries Russia has banned in response, Makgas are keeping an updated list [here](#).

## UK/US/EU sanctions

The EU, the UK and the US have each taken different approaches with their sanctions in terms of how they impact jet travel.

**The US** – For aircraft not registered in Russia – there's now a list online, published by the International Trade Administration, and if your aircraft is "owned, chartered, leased, operated or controlled by, for, or for the benefit" of someone on that list, you can't operate "to, from, within, or through" US territorial airspace. For more info on this, check our dedicated article [here](#).

**The UK** bans aircraft owned, operated or chartered by anyone connected with Russia or designated individuals or entities – but unlike the US they haven't published a list of who those individuals or entities might be. You can see the most recent UK announcement on this [here](#).

**The EU** rules are the least specific – essentially the ban in Europe applies to Russian passport holders, even dual citizens. So Russian citizens can still travel as passengers, but they can't charter the plane (and

EU companies/people can't charter it on their behalf either). You can read the EU's official announcement [here](#).

There have been a couple of incidents over the past couple of weeks where certain operators have fallen foul of the rules pertaining to sanctions.

- **Canada:** a Falcon 900 registered in the Cayman Islands was **detained at CYZF/Yellowknife airport**, along with its crew and passengers, after landing from Geneva. The aircraft was released and flew back to Europe later that week, but the Russian charter customer was fined \$3,000, as was the jet's pilot. And the aircraft's owner was fined \$15,000.
- **The UK:** a Global 6500 registered in Luxembourg was **detained at EGLF/Farnborough airport** because the authorities suspected it was linked to a Russian oil tycoon. The aircraft will only be allowed to leave Farnborough if the inquiry they've set up shows it is not a Russian-owned or controlled jet.

The bottom line – **don't charter a sanctioned aircraft**, and make sure that you **don't charter your aircraft** to a banned individual or entity. The potential impact to getting this wrong could range from having your payments frozen, to fines, to potentially having your aircraft impounded somewhere.

### **Routing around Russian airspace**

*"Is it safe to overfly?"* and *"Is it safe to land?"* are in many ways **the same question** – because if you've elected to fly over a certain bit of airspace, and something goes wrong, the chances are you're going to be landing there. Most operators are now avoiding Russian airspace, either because they're banned from it, or because they've decided **the risks of having to divert to Russia are too high**.

### **Europe focus:**

European carriers are generally having to change more routes than the US airlines... but higher fuel costs of having to route around Russia are offset against the fact that they're now saving thousands on **not having to pay Russia overflight nav fees**.

Options to overfly Europe have become increasingly complicated – especially for aircraft transiting between Western Europe and the Middle East and Asia. Major carriers in the region now appear to be following **two major air corridors** – one that extends from the Persian Gulf to Romania, the other from China to the Black Sea. Here's what that looks like.



These routes take aircraft in close proximity to **several danger spots**, including Iraq, Iran, and Syria. For more info on this, check out the article we wrote [here](#).

### US focus:

A lot of US airline flights won't be too badly impacted from their current levels – flights to the likes of China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea – just because they weren't doing that many flights here anyway because of Covid restrictions.

From a routing point of view, there's not a lot of impact to flights from the US to Europe, even the US to the Middle East – heading East is not an issue because there's really only Russia's Kaliningrad FIR to watch out for.

**But for US flights heading West, avoiding Russian airspace does have an impact** – routing via the NOPAC routes, down to Japan and China. There's a 1700nm stretch of airspace here between PADK/Adak in the Aleutian Islands and RJCC/Sapporo in Japan where your options are extremely limited except for airports in Russia (mainly UHPP/Petropavlovsk, but also UHSS/Sakalin Island just before you get to Japan).





The considerations for general/business aviation are different to the airlines here – it's more a question of **do you have the aircraft range to safely operate this section of airspace over water?** And do you have decent divert alternates available in case you need them, to ensure that you don't find yourself 3 hours away from a non-Russian airport in a 1LE scenario?

## Ukraine Relief Missions

Humanitarian flights for Ukraine are taking place into Poland, Romania and other neighbouring countries. We have compiled a list of handy contacts, general ops information, and other bits which we hope might help – you can read the article [here](#).

The two agencies we'd encourage people to go check out are Airlink and DirectRelief – these two have already flown in shipments of aid and have more scheduled this month. So those are good places to go find out exactly what's needed, and how to help.

IFALPA and the European Cockpit Association have also put out a letter for members of the aviation community wanting to **help support the pilot community in Ukraine**. They suggest you reach out to local organizations to help, or donate to larger ones such as Red Cross who are on the ground there. You can read the letter [here](#).

If you need assistance with anything to help prepare for humanitarian flights, please get in touch. Similarly, if you have already operated similar missions, please get in touch to share your contacts, feedback and experience so we can support others in their operations as well.

## CofA's revoked!

A final word on this. We put it right down here at the bottom because although it's fairly big news and worth knowing about, it probably won't impact *your* operation very much.

Aviation authorities in **Bermuda** and **Ireland** have now revoked airworthiness certificates for leased aircraft detained in Russia – mainly because they're no longer able to check these aircraft to see if they are still airworthy. They've done this ahead of the March 28th deadline set by the EU to terminate leases and recover planes from Russian airlines.

From most reports, it seems there are around 500 aircraft owned by foreign leasing companies which are rented to Russian operators.

The response from Russia has been to create a new law which basically **allows Russian carriers to re-register these aircraft**, and continue operating them domestically – despite the termination of the leases. And reports suggest something like 200 of these aircraft have already been re-registered in the past week.

Added to that, all the major manufacturers are now **no longer supplying spare parts to Russia**. Airlines and operators using these aircraft in Russia will therefore almost immediately have the issue how to keep them functioning and airworthy, but the point worth noting for all the rest of us is this – do you want to risk potentially having to divert somewhere where your aircraft might get stuck on the ground with a tech issue that can't be fixed?

Ultimately, we're now approaching a situation in Russia very similar to the Soviet Union days. **Russia is essentially now in the same basket as Iran and North Korea** in terms of being shut off from the rest of the aviation world, and operators need to plan accordingly.

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## Canada to reopen more airports to international flights

David Mumford  
8 May, 2023



On Feb 28, Canada will reopen more airports to international passenger flights. Currently these flights can only arrive at one of 18 airports, but the government has confirmed this restriction will end on Feb 28.

**CYQX/Gander** is one of those airports not currently on the list – although they have been able to handle tech-stops all through the pandemic, international pax have not been able to disembark here for over a year.

So until Feb 28, here are the airports allowed to receive international passenger flights:

- CYUL/Montreal
- CYQB/Quebec
- CYYC/Calgary
- CYEG/Edmonton
- CYXE/Saskatoon
- CYQR/Regina
- CYWG/Winnipeg
- CYYZ/Toronto Pearson
- CYTZ/Toronto Billy Bishop
- CYHM/Hamilton
- CYKF/Waterloo
- CYOW/Ottawa
- CYVR/Vancouver
- CYYJ/Victoria
- CYLW/Kelowna
- CYXX/Abbotsford

- CYHZ/Halifax
- CYYT/St Johns

And here's the Notam in question, which will expire on Feb 28:

**H3740/21 (Issued for CZUL CZQX CZQM) COVID-19: FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS**  
 UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE, WITH THE INTENT TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF  
 COVID-19 THROUGHOUT CANADA, ALL COMMERCIAL AIR SVC, PRIVATE OPR  
 (CAR SUBPART 604) AND FOREIGN BUSINESS AVIATION, THAT ARE  
 TRANSPORTING PASSENGERS TO CANADA MUST COMPLY WITH THE PROVISIONS  
 OF THE INTERIM ORDER RESPECTING CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS FOR CIVIL  
 AVIATION DUE TO COVID-19, ISSUED BY THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND  
 CURRENTLY IN FORCE. THIS INCLUDES A REQUIREMENT PASSENGERS TO  
 WEAR FACE MASKS AND PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF A NEGATIVE RESULT FOR A  
 COVID-19 MOLECULAR TEST PRIOR TO BOARDING.

IN ADDITION TO ABV, AND PURSUANT TO SECTION 5.1 OF THE  
 AERONAUTICS ACT, ALL COMMERCIAL AIR SVC, PRIVATE OPR  
 (CAR SUBPART 604) AND FOREIGN BUSINESS AVIATION, THAT ARE  
 TRANSPORTING PASSENGERS TO CANADA MUST, FOR THE PURPOSE OF  
 DISEMBARKING PASSENGERS, LAND AT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING AP:

- AEROPORT INTL DE MONTREAL-TRUDEAU (CYUL)
- AEROPORT DE QUEBEC-JEAN LESAGE (CYQB)
- CALGARY INTL AIRPORT (CYYC)
- SASKATOON INTL AIRPORT (CYXE)
- REGINA INTL AIRPORT (CYQR)
- WINNIPEG INTL AIRPORT- JAMES ARMSTRONG (CYWG)
- TORONTO-PEARSON INTL AIRPORT (CYYZ)
- TORONTO-BILLY BISHOP TORONTO CITY (CYTZ)
- HAMILTON INTL AIRPORT (CYHM)
- WATERLOO INTL AIRPORT (CYKF)
- OTTAWA INTL AIRPORT (CYOW)
- VANCOUVER INTL AIRPORT (CYVR)
- VICTORIA INTL AIRPORT (CYYJ)
- KELOWNA INTL AIRPORT (CYLW)
- ABBOTSFORD INTL AIRPORT (CYXX)
- HALIFAX INTL AIRPORT-STANDFIELD (CYHZ)
- ST. JOHN'S INTL AIRPORT (CYYT)

□THIS RESTRICTION DOES NOT APPLY TO ACFT OPERATED IN THE FLW  
 CIRCUMSTANCES:

- DIRECT FLT FM SAINT-PIERRE-ET-MIQUELON
- MEDEVAC FLT
- FERRY AND CREW REPATRIATION FLT
- CARGO FLIGHTS CARRYING ONLY AIRCREW OR AIRLINE EMPLOYEES
- TECHNICAL STOPS WHERE PASSENGERS DO NOT DISEMBARK
- AT ALTERNATE AP IDENTIFIED IN A FLT PLAN TO ADDRESS WX
- ACFT SAFETY SITUATIONS, OR
- IN THE CASE WHERE SPECIAL

AUTH HAS BEEN GRANTED BY TRANSPORT CANADA: 1-888-857-4003.

SFC - UNL, 30 NOV 05:01 2021 UNTIL 28 FEB 21:00 2022.

CREATED: 23 NOV 14:27 2021

Also effective Feb 28, testing rules will be eased for vaccinated passengers. Essentially, the change here is that **travellers will now have the option of using a rapid antigen test** (taken the day prior to their flight) instead of a PCR test (taken no more than 72 hours before their flight) if they wish. However, the rapid antigen test still needs to be administered in a health care facility, so although it might be slightly cheaper than getting a PCR test, it's not really any less onerous.

There's no impact on crew, who are exempt from testing. However, since 15 Jan 2022, **all foreign crew need to be vaccinated to enter Canada**. The same rule applies to all passengers aged 12 and older. Crew who are Canadian citizens/residents do not need to be vaccinated, along with several other exempted categories which you can read more about [here](#).

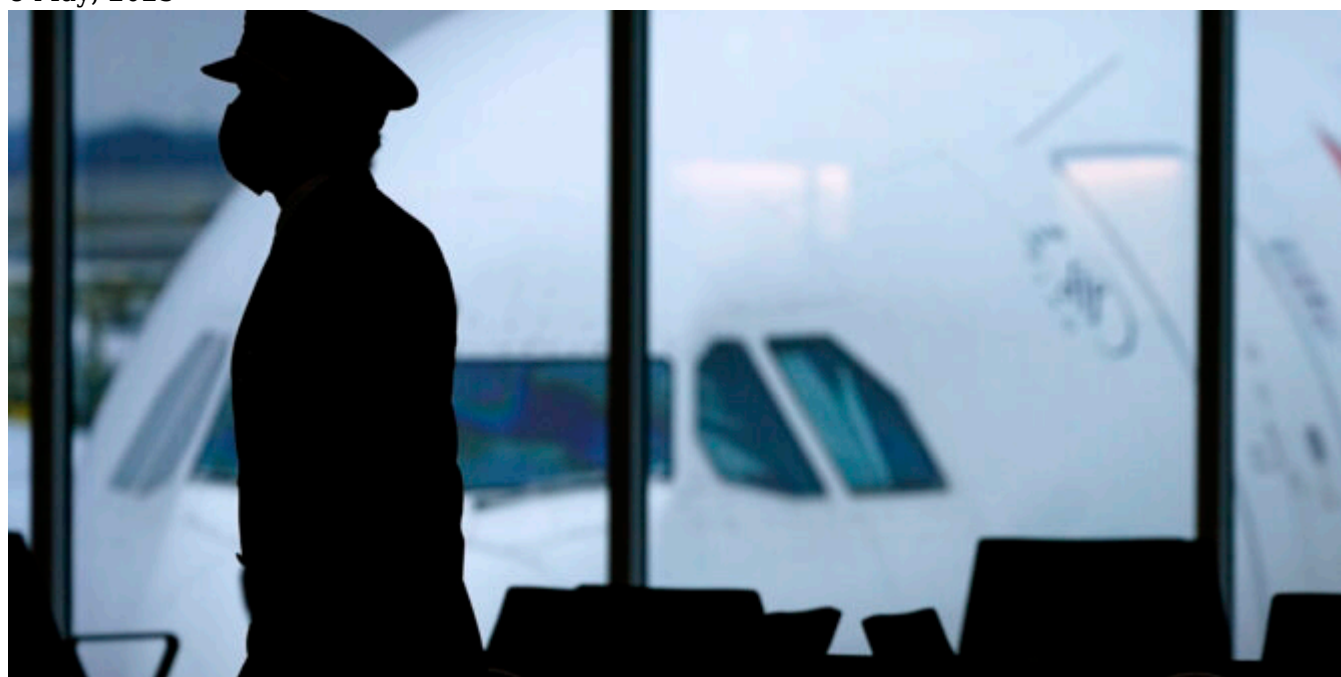
Ultimately, if you're unsure about Canada's entry rules, the best thing to do is use their official online tool to quickly work these out depending on your circumstances.

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## Countries with crew vaccine mandates

David Mumford

8 May, 2023



Here's a simple thing: **a list of countries which require crew to be vaccinated to be able to enter.**

We will keep adding to the list if/when more countries adopt this requirement.

*Note that the info for each country is just a quick heads-up summary, not an extensive explanation of the rules in detail. For that, click on the links provided, or contact local agents for more info.*

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**Update Jan 27**



## **Antigua**

There are no special exemptions for crew in Antigua! So that makes the rules pretty straightforward here – everyone aged 18 or older needs to be vaccinated, have a pre-arrival test, and have a booking to stay at “certified accommodation”. There’s no quarantine on arrival as long as you tick all these boxes. Full guidance [here](#). Contact local agent [anu@signatureflight.com](mailto:anu@signatureflight.com) for more info.

## **Chile**

Crew vaccination is not absolutely required, but local agents say it’s highly recommended in order to avoid potentially having to quarantine in their hotel room until departure. Note that you need to validate your vaccination and obtain a “mobility pass” on this website and this process might take up 30 days. Essentially, crew should follow the same procedure as passengers – get the mobility pass, take pre-arrival test, take another test on arrival and remain in quarantine until they receive a negative test result.

The best site we’ve found for easy-to-read and clear guidance is the UK FCO page for Chile. Contact local agent [fbo@aerocardal.com](mailto:fbo@aerocardal.com) for more info.

## **Hong Kong**

Hong Kong don’t absolutely require crew to be vaccinated, but things get tricky if they’re not. The Hong Kong crew rules are excruciatingly complex, but essentially, crew who have been to “High Risk Places” (i.e. pretty much everywhere) within the past 21 days will have to self-isolate on arrival. Here’s where the vaccination status becomes important – vaccinated crew only have to self-isolate in an airport hotel until departure, but unvaccinated crew must stay at a designated quarantine hotel for a full 21 days.

Full guidance [here](#). And for an up-to-date list of what countries are in the “High Risk Places” list, click [here](#). Local agent Asia Flight Services have summarised all this pretty clearly in a crib-sheet which you can download [here](#).

## **Qatar**

Crew are allowed to enter as long as they are vaccinated and have a pre-arrival test. How long they must quarantine for depends on which country they are flying in from. The US, Canada, and most European countries are currently on Qatar’s “Red List”, which means a 2 day hotel quarantine on arrival with a Covid test conducted at the end of the second day.

Full guidance [here](#). Contact local agent [handling@qatarexec.com.qa](mailto:handling@qatarexec.com.qa) for more info.

## **Thailand**

Crew need to be vaccinated and have a pre-arrival test, and must self-isolate in their hotel room until departure (yep, the room).

However, vaccinated crew are free to apply for the “Test&Go” or “Sandbox” options instead, if they prefer. These are the two schemes Thailand has in place for travellers to avoid lengthy quarantine. The requirements for each scheme are bit complex (read about Test&Go requirements [here](#), and Sandbox requirements [here](#)), but they are probably worth considering if crew are planning on staying in Thailand for longer than just a night or two.

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**Update Jan 25**

## **Anguilla**

Crew need proof of vaccination, a pre-arrival test (various different types accepted, within varying timeframes), and will get tested again on arrival. They then have to stay in their hotel until the results come back – usually within 24 hours. Crew staying for more than 8 days may be tested again on day 4. Full guidance [here](#).

## **Argentina**

Crew must be vaccinated to enter. They don't need a pre-arrival test, but must take a test between the 3rd and 5th day after arrival. Contact local agent [info@transair-fbo.com](mailto:info@transair-fbo.com) for more info.

## **Canada**

Effective Jan 15, all foreign crew must be vaccinated to enter Canada. There are several exemptions for Canadian citizens and residents, one of which is for crew. You can use Canada's online tool to quickly work out what the entry rules are for you, depending on your circumstances.

## **Cambodia**

All foreign crew must be vaccinated. They must take a pre-arrival test if travelling to VDPP/Phnom Penh or VDSV/Sihanoukville, but this is not required for flights to VDSR/Siem Reap. At all airports, crew will be tested on arrival – results take up to 20 minutes. Contact local agent [occ@asiaflight.aero](mailto:occ@asiaflight.aero) for more info. Full guidance [here](#).

## **France**

Crew operating domestic flights need either a pre-arrival test, proof of vaccination, or a certificate of recovery. These rules do not apply to crew operating international flights as they are still exempted from all requirements. Full guidance [here](#).

## **French Polynesia**

Crew need to be vaccinated to enter, unless they have a "compelling motive" and obtain permission from the High Commissioner's Office in advance – in which case they must quarantine on arrival. A pre-arrival test is also required. Contact local agent [nuutea@tascfbo.com](mailto:nuutea@tascfbo.com) for more info.

## **Galapagos Islands (Ecuador)**

Crew traveling to the Galapagos Islands need proof of vaccination plus a pre-arrival test. Also note that SEGS/Galapagos airport is not an airport of entry – you must do customs and immigrations through SEQM/Quito or SEGU/Guayaquil on Ecuador's mainland first. Contact local agent [info@pike-aviation.com](mailto:info@pike-aviation.com) for more info.

## **Singapore**

Crew and pax entering Singapore via the Vaccinated Travel Lane scheme need to jump through a lot of hoops: proof of vaccination, a pre-departure test, another test on arrival plus self-isolation until they get an SMS with a negative test result (this is likely to arrive within 24 hours, but for scheduled arrivals at Changi airport it is taking 6 hours or less). Full guidance [here](#).

But from Jan 24, if they can prove they had Covid and recovered from it (between 7-90 days before the date of departure for Singapore) they are exempt from all these requirements. Full guidance [here](#).

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If you know of somewhere not on the list, but which should be, send us an email at [news@ops.group](mailto:news@ops.group)

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## Italy ATC Strike on Dec 16

David Mumford

8 May, 2023



**A general strike** is planned in Italy all day on Dec 16, which **could include ATC personnel**.

The impact of the strike is hard to assess until the day itself, but if it does go ahead, the usual rules would apply:

- No impact to overflights, inbound intercontinental flights (i.e. those from outside Europe), and other essential traffic
- Expect delays for all other flights to/from Italian airports.

LIBB/LIMM/LIRR Notam A9236/21 has the current information, and keep an eye on the Eurocontrol NOP for further announcements on what services will be impacted.

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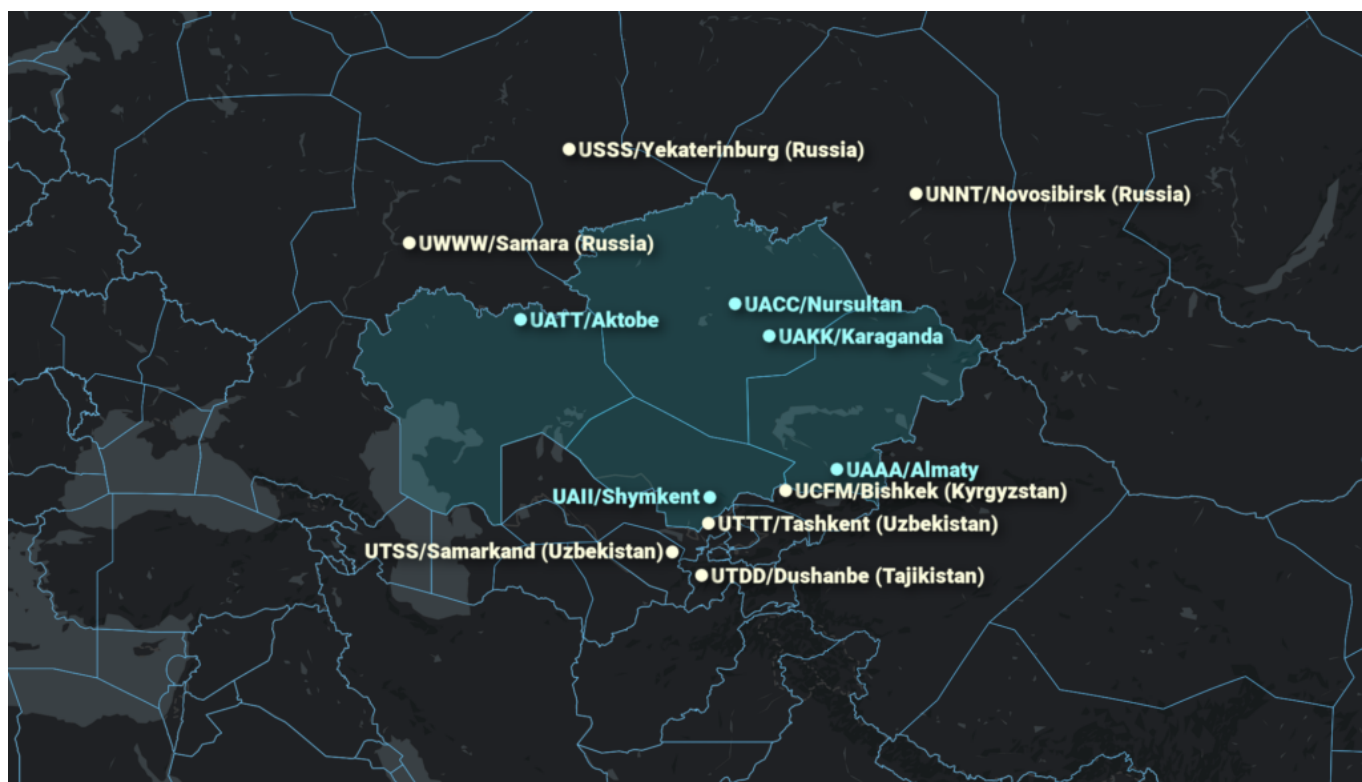
## Limited fuel in Kazakhstan for bizav flights

David Mumford

8 May, 2023



There's currently a big fuel shortage in Kazakhstan. Local agents have said that **fuel is currently only available to foreign registered bizav flights on a case-by-case basis** at airports across the country, including the main international airports UAAA/Almaty, UACC/Nursultan and UAKK/Karaganda.



Fuel is still being provided to **commercial flights** and **some charters on KZ registered aircraft**, but foreign registered non-scheduled flights should tanker fuel inbound.

None of the airports have published Notams warning of fuel supply issues, but local press have reported that UACC/Nursultan has suspended refuelling of cargo aircraft, and UAAA/Almaty has confirmed interruptions in their fuel supply and has warned of possible restrictions.

Kazakhstan airports are often used as **fuel stops for flights between Europe and Asia**. So until the fuel shortage ends, consider using alternative airports to the south in neighbouring **Kyrgyzstan** and **Uzbekistan**, or potentially those airports to the north in **Russia** if headed to destinations in northern

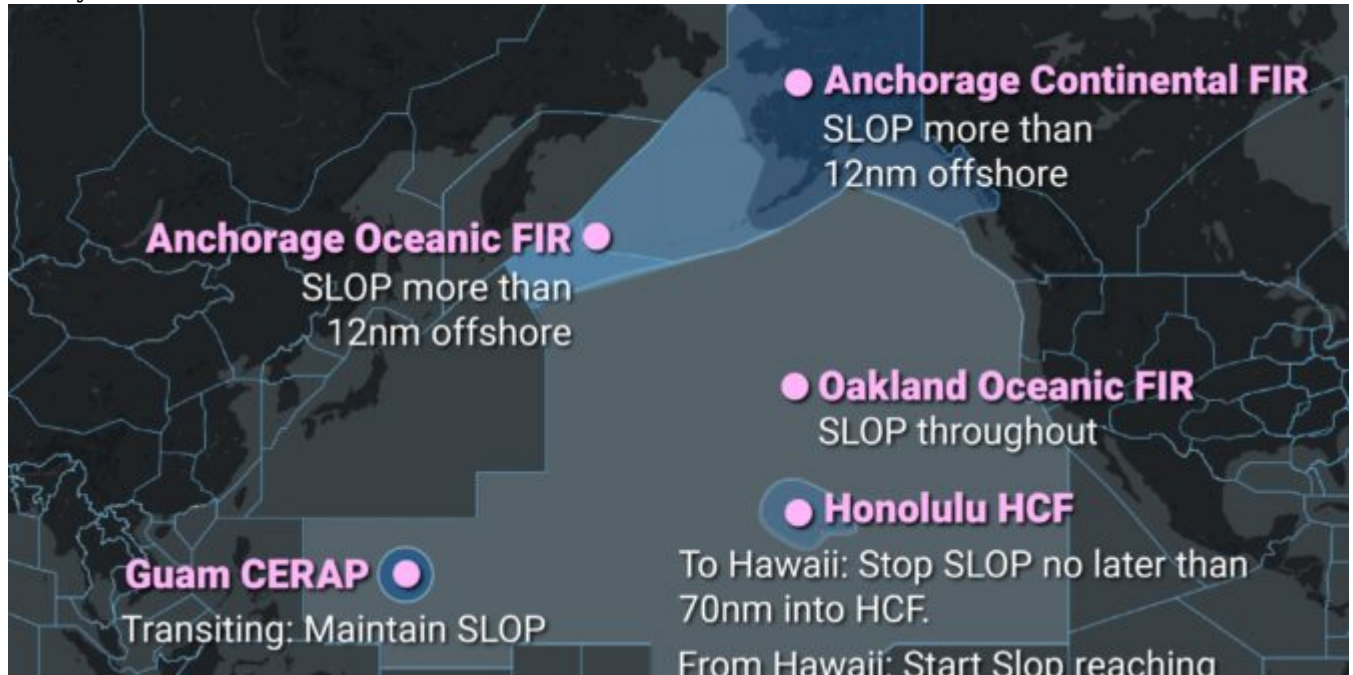
China or Japan.

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# FAA Airspace SLOP Mini Guide

David Mumford

8 May, 2023



Strategic Lateral Offset Procedures (SLOP) in FAA-Controlled Oceanic Airspace and the Anchorage FIR are based off the **ICAO Doc 4444** SLOP rules, and can be found in the FAA AIP ENR section 7.1.

## I don't want to read the FAA AIP ENR section 7.1

No, neither do we. Here's what that experience looks like:



AIP by Topic

▶ GENERAL

▶ EN ROUTE

▶ AERODROMES

Appendix 1. ATS ROUTES

Pilot/Controller Glossary

EN ROUTE / OCEANIC OPERATIONS / General Procedures

ENR 7. Oceanic Operations

ENR 7.1 General Procedures

1. IFR/VFR Operations

1.1 Flights in oceanic airspace must be conducted under Instrument Flight Rule (IFR) procedures when operating:

1.1.1 Between sunset and sunrise.

1.1.2 At or above Flight Level (FL) 055 when operating within the New York, Oakland, and Anchorage Oceanic Flight Information Regions (FIRs).

1.1.3 Above FL180 when operating within the Miami and Houston FIRs and in the San Juan Control Area. Flights between the east coast of the U.S., and Bermuda or Caribbean terminals, and traversing the New York FIR at or above 5,500 feet MSL should be especially aware of this requirement.

1.1.4 At or above FL230 when operating within the Anchorage Arctic FIR.

1.2 San Juan CTA/FIR VFR Traffic.

1.2.1 All VFR aircraft entering and departing the San Juan FIR/CTA will provide San Juan Radio with an ICAO flight plan. All aircraft must establish two-way communications with San Juan Radio on 126.7, 122.2, 123.65, or 255.4.

1.2.2 Communication can also be established by transmitting on 122.1 and receive using the appropriate VOR frequency for Borinquen (BQN), Mayaguez (MAZ), Ponce (PSE), and St. Croix (COY). For St. Thomas (STT), transmit on 123.6 and receive on the VOR frequency. If unable to contact San Juan Radio, the pilot is responsible for notifying


Handy info, but fairly brutal on the eyes and soul.

## Is there another way to get this info?

Indeed there is!

We took all the excellent info provided by the FAA with regards to SLOP rules in FAA airspace, and turned it into a quick guide – complete with a simple map of the rules for the different regions.

## FAA SLOP Mini Guide



Strategic Lateral Offset Procedures (SLOP) in FAA-Controlled Oceanic Airspace and the Anchorage FIR are based off the ICAO Doc 4444 SLOP rules.

So here's a mini SLOP brief for you, pulled from the [FAA AIP ENR 7.1](#).

**What?**

- If you're conducting an oceanic flight then it's good to fly a lateral offset.
- A lateral offset is only allowed to the RIGHT and up to 2nm from the centreline in 0.1nm increments.
- If you're doing it in an approved spot then you don't need an ATC clearance. If you do want to coordinate, for something like wake, then try on VHF 123.45.16

**Why?**

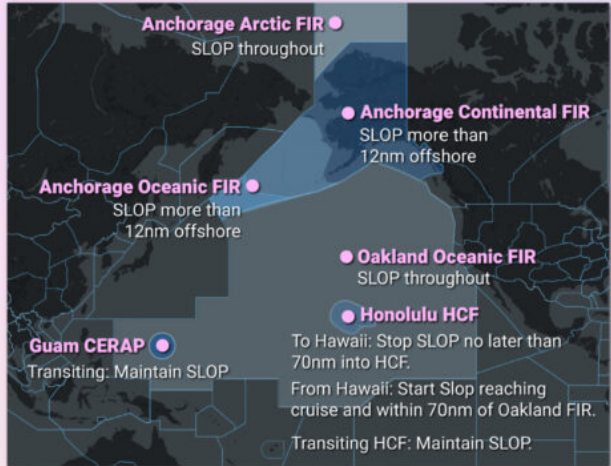
It helps keep you safer from other traffic, reduces wake turbulence encounters and is generally recommended because it can mitigate against traffic incursions.

**Where?**

- In any FAA controlled Oceanic airspace.
- In the Anchorage FIR.
- In airspace around Bermuda.
- In the airspace controlled by the Honolulu Control Facility (HCF).
- In airspace controlled by the Guam CERAP.

**When?**

From reaching your cruising flight level until top of descent, unless ATC say otherwise.



**Transiting Airspace**

If you are transiting Bermuda, HCF or Guam CERAP airspace you can remain on your offset.

**Anchorage FIR**

- Anchorage ARCTIC allow full SLOP all the way through.
- If you are in Anchorage domestic and Anchorage Oceanic then you can SLOP in any portion which is more than 12 miles offshore.
- You can slop over land areas of the Alaska Peninsula west of 160 degrees longitude.

**Hawaii**

- If you are departing Hawaii, you should apply SLOP when you reach your initial cruise flight level and are within 70nm of entering Oakland Oceanic control area.
- If you're flying to Hawaii, then you need to stop SLOping no later than 70nm after entering HCF airspace, or when you receive radar vectors from HCF.
- If you are a Hawaiian inter-island flight don't ever use SLOP (well, you can ask ATC if there is some important reason for needing it).

Q. WHICH AIRCRAFT CANNOT SLOP?

A. ANY THAT CANNOT AUTOMATICALLY MAINTAIN OFFSET.

**OPSGROUP members** can download a copy for free here.

If you're not an OPSGROUP member, but you'd like to be, you can join here. (Or you could just screenshot the image above instead – if you'd like a grainy, pixelated JPEG instead of the full, juicy PDF).

We're going to be publishing more of these little docs over the next few months. **We're calling them "Opsicles" – refreshing bits of ops info, just for members.** So keep an eye out for the next installment!

## US to lift travel ban for vaccinated travellers

David Mumford  
8 May, 2023



From Nov 8, the US will lift its Covid travel restrictions to allow fully vaccinated passengers to enter from those countries currently on the banned list:

- The UK
- Ireland
- The 26 Schengen countries in Europe without border controls (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland).
- China
- Iran
- Brazil
- South Africa
- India

### **The rules right now**

The travel ban has been in force since March 2020, when the pandemic first began gathering pace. Under the current policy, **only certain people can travel into the US if they have been in a banned country within the previous 14 days:**

- US citizens and their immediate families.
- Green card holders.
- Flight crew if traveling to the US on C, D or C1/D visas.
- Those with national interest exemptions (NIE). (Amongst other things, these also allow foreign crew to enter to pick up aircraft and do delivery/maintenance flights etc despite their travel history.)

For more details on the **current restrictions and exemptions**, check the US CDC webpage [here](#).

### **The rules from Nov 8**

There are no guidelines yet on the new requirements due to take effect in November – these are expected to be announced in the coming days. The few crumbs of info we know so far:

- **Before departure** - Travellers to the US will need to show proof of vaccination in addition to a negative Covid test taken within three days of the flight. There will be some exemptions to the vaccine policy, including for children not yet eligible to be vaccinated.
- **On arrival** - Travellers will not need to quarantine upon arrival in the US, but airlines will be asked to collect their contact info for contact tracing purposes.
- **Which vaccines will be accepted?** All FDA and WHO approved vaccines will be accepted.
- **Any changes for US travellers?** - Yes. US travellers will also be subject to stricter requirements and will need to take a Covid test a day before they leave the US, and another one when they return.

We will update this page as new info is announced.