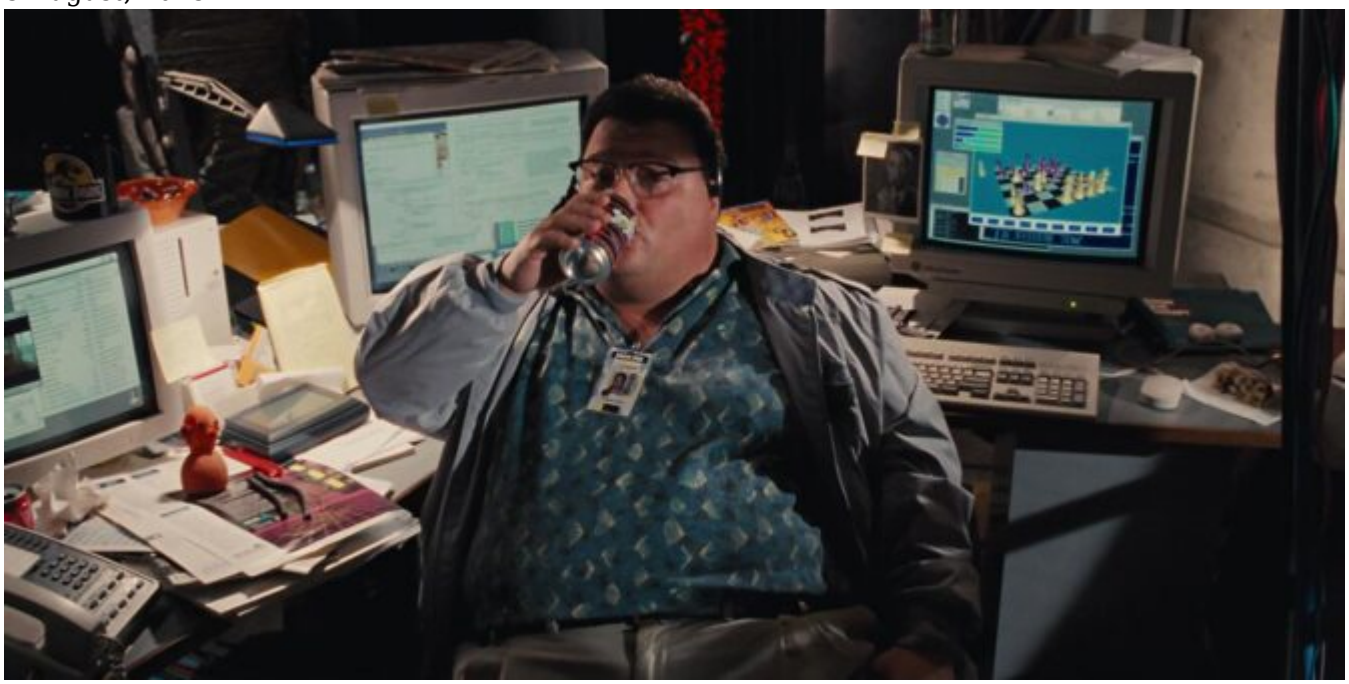
Cybersecurity in Aviation: Growing Operational Risk

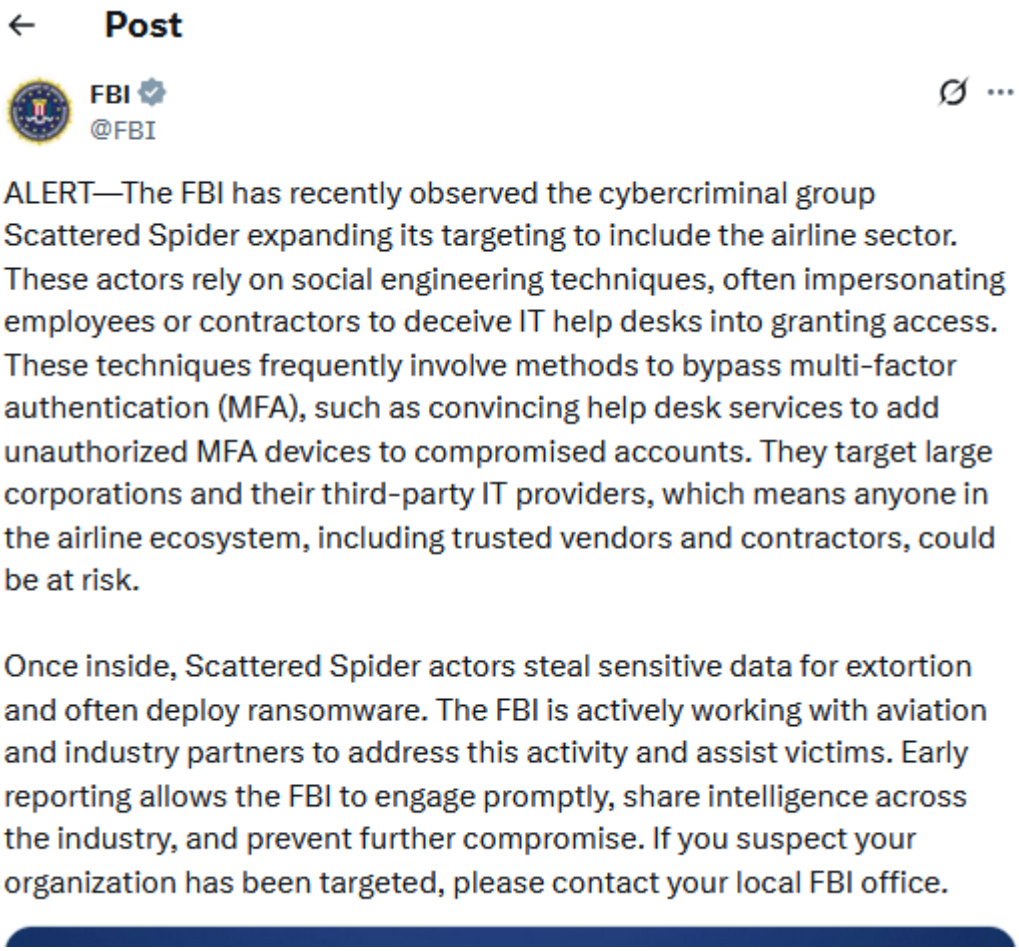
Chris Shieff
5 August, 2025



Aviation is under fire

A recent study recorded a 600% increase in attacks on the aviation sector year-on-year. 71% of these involved credential theft or unauthorised access to critical systems.

The FBI also warned on June 28 that a cybercriminal group called ‘Scattered Spider’ had turned its attention toward the aviation sector, using impersonation to compromise security.



The alert was issued on X.

Protecting ourselves from these attacks has become a **multi-million dollar** industry.

High profile attacks in recent months have impacted both Aeroflot and Qantas, the latter likely carried out by none other than Scattered Spider – the group the FBI are worried about.

The FAA is paying attention

There has been a response to this growing risk.

There is an obvious intent to **include cyber security in future regulations.** While not yet law, recent advisories and bulletins make it clear that operators are expected to begin taking proactive steps.

A good place to start is AC 119-1A which provides an overview of cyber security requirements, risk assessments and best practices. Also keep an eye out for cyber threat alerts which can be published by SAFO, Notam or other notices.

The FAA is also actively working with ICAO and other agencies to **harmonise future cyber protection practices** under Annex 17 (Security).

What about business aviation?

The examples above relate to attacks on larger airlines and IT infrastructure. A valid question remains then, what does this all mean for biz av?

While not a traditional target, many business aviation operators **lack dedicated IT departments or cyber defence teams.** We also frequently carry high-net worth individuals on sensitive operations which

may motivate nefarious cyber activity.

Recent reports from the industry show that biz av isn't immune:

In 2020, a major manufacturer of business jets confirmed a cyber-security breach that compromised personal and aircraft ownership information.

Another example from May this year involved a Europe-based private jet operator which appeared on a ransomware group's leak site. Sensitive crew info was shared, which reportedly included passport photos.

It's clear that business aviation is **not under the radar** – therefore we must remain measured but cautious in our approach to emerging cyber threats.

EFBs – A Soft Target?

Feedback from industry experts and OPSGROUP members suggest that a closer look at the electronic security of EFBs warrants a **closer analysis.**

The role of EFBs in cyber crime warrants a closer analysis.

Eye-opening research, such as the work conducted by Cyber Security Consultancy Pen Test Partners, has highlighted that EFBs could act as an additional gateway for cyber crime if not **correctly managed.**

Look out for an dedicated article on this subject soon.

An extra tip – don't forget your SMS

If your flight department operates under an SMS, it may be wise to include cyber security.

This means treating digital threats like any other hazard – **reportable, measurable and mitigable.**

It's important we take steps now to keep our operations secure.

LFPM/Villaroche: Paris Without the Pain

Kateřina Michalská
5 August, 2025

If LFPB/Paris Le Bourget is proving too noisy, too crowded, or just too regulated for your liking this summer – there's another option.

Thanks to the team at Elyxan Aviation, we've got the full scoop on LFPM/Paris Villaroche, a lesser-known but promising alternative for BizAv flights heading to Paris. Located about 45-50 minutes from the city center, this airport sits southeast of Paris and offers something refreshingly rare: **no slots, no APU restrictions, and 24/7 availability.**

Why consider LFPM?

LFPM/Paris Villaroche isn't new – it's a former flight test site that's been quietly evolving into a solid business aviation option southeast of Paris. It has a similar feel to EGLF/Farnborough, and although public ownership has slowed its full development, what's already in place is pretty impressive:

- 1972m x 45m runway with GNSS/LPV approach
- No slots, no APU restrictions, no curfews
- 24/7 ops capability, with English-speaking ATC available on request
- RFFS Cat 5 available on request
- Modern FBO with hangars for bizjets up to Global 7000/Gulfstream 700
- Direct ramp access, VIP pax facilities, and fast turnarounds
- No public access = high privacy for pax and high-profile ops

What's the catch?

LFPM is not a designated port of entry – so it only accepts flights arriving from or departing to EU/Schengen airports (Switzerland included). No customs or immigration means international flights must route in from a Schengen stop first.

Also, while the runway can easily handle larger jets, **LFPM imposes a 37-tonne (approx. 81,600 lbs) limit on actual operating weight** at the time of arrival or departure – not MTOW. For heavier aircraft, fuel loads may need to be adjusted accordingly.

Looking at other options around Paris:

- **LFPB/Le Bourget** is Paris's main BizAv airport – but it's slot-controlled, has APU restrictions, and can be congested in summer.
- **LFPG/Charles de Gaulle** and **LFPO/Orly** are international, but mainly serve scheduled airlines and are not BizAv-friendly.
- **LFOB/Beauvais** and **LFOK/Vatry** are international airports with customs, but they're significantly farther from the city.
- **LFPT/Pontoise** (NW of the city) is also Schengen-only, with a shorter runway and stricter weight limits. Currently undergoing refurbishment.

Faster into Paris?

Actually, yes – and not just on paper.

Even though LFPM looks farther from central Paris than LFPB, the real-world travel time is often the same or shorter. That's especially true if you're arriving from the south – you'll avoid the extra flight time needed to route around LFPG/Charles de Gaulle and skip the congestion-prone A1 motorway used by LFPB/Le Bourget arrivals.

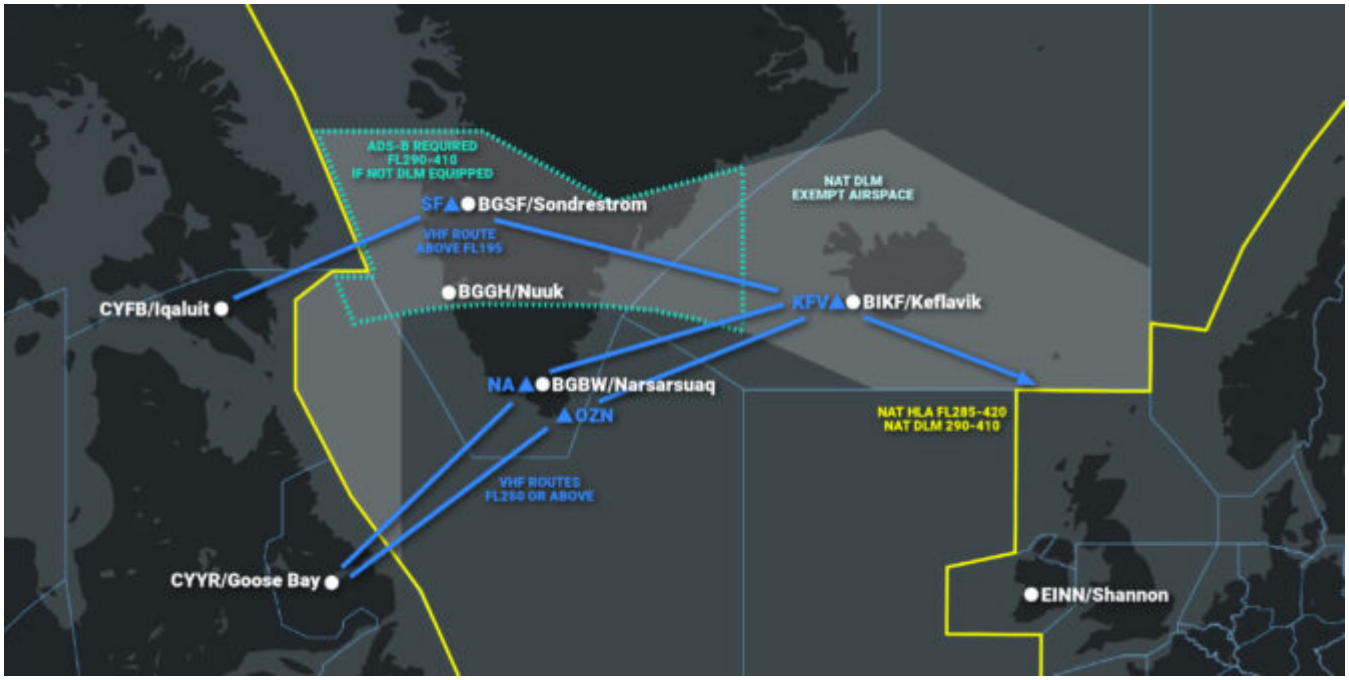
Elyxan put together a practical comparison of travel times from LFPM vs. LFPB to central Paris – factoring in flight routing, ramp access, and road traffic.

For now, it's Schengen-only – but if French authorities eventually install CIQ, Villaroche could become a serious player. In the meantime, it's a great EU option: straightforward, operator-friendly, and low on red tape.

 Contact Elyxan Aviation for more info:
ops@elyxan-aviation.fr | +33 6 58 83 66 25

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

David Mumford
5 August, 2025



The Short Story

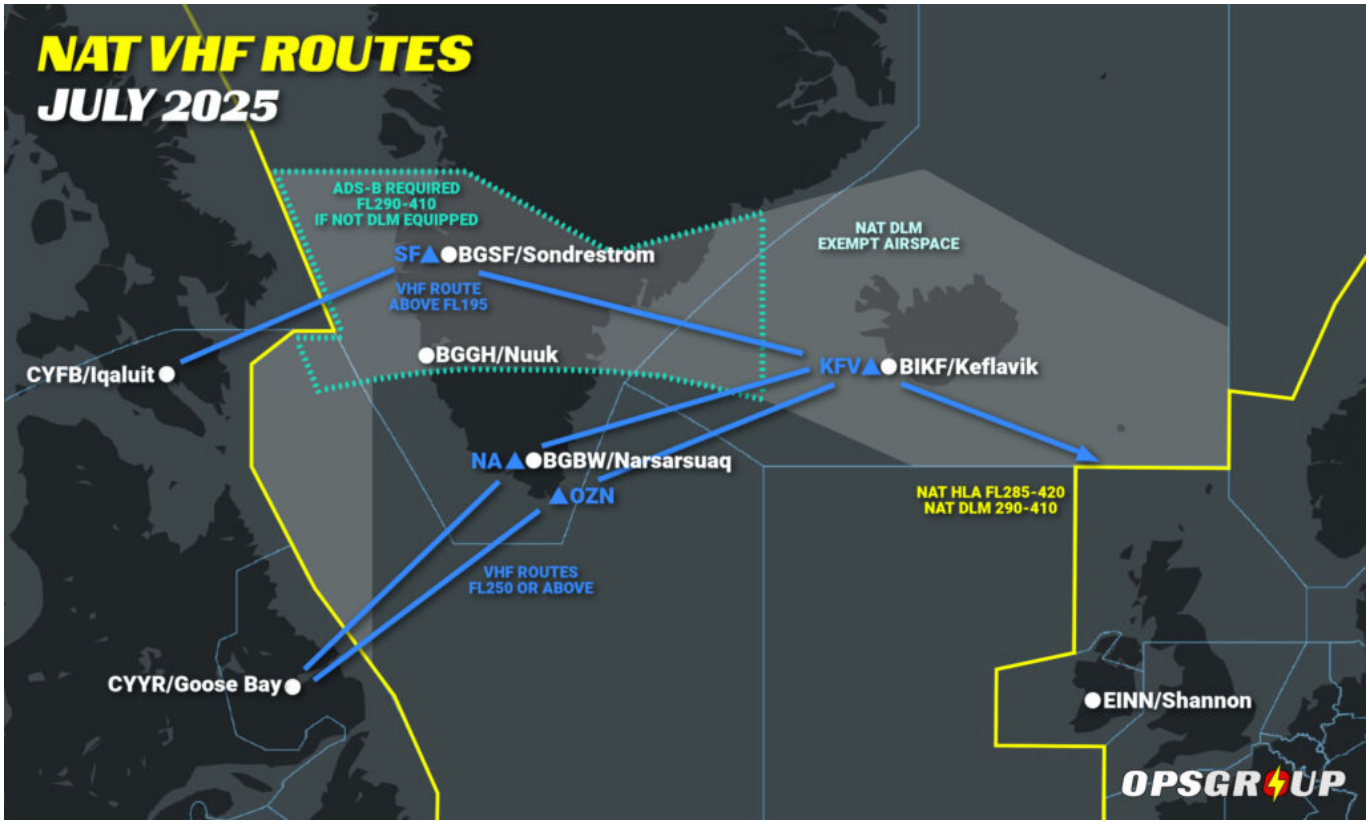
The Blue Spruce Routes are gone — but if you don't have all the equipment, there are still ways to get across the Atlantic. What you can do depends on what's on board:

Fully equipped? (2 LRNS, CPDLC RCP240, ADS-C RSP180, HF, LOAs)
➤ You can go anywhere in the NAT HLA.

No datalink?
➤ Avoid FL290–410 unless you're in the DLM Exemption Area (e.g. Iceland–Greenland Corridor) and have ADS-B.

No HF radios?
➤ You can only cross via specific VHF-only routes:
– Above FL195: YFB–SF–KFV
– FL250 and above: YYR–OZN–KFV

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



The Longer Story

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Standard Ops

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

For unrestricted access to the NAT HLA, operators need:

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

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

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

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

Old Stuff

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

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

New Stuff

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

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

Now, it gets a little more nuanced…

Broken Stuff

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

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

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

Little Stuff

And if you get a wild hair to cross the Atlantic in an aircraft with **only one LRNS, no HF radios, no Datalink, no LOAs, without the range to fly non-stop** (like me), you still have options. You'll need to stick to the Iceland–Greenland Corridor, or the specific VHF-approved routes via OZN or SF.

What's a Blue Spruce?

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

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

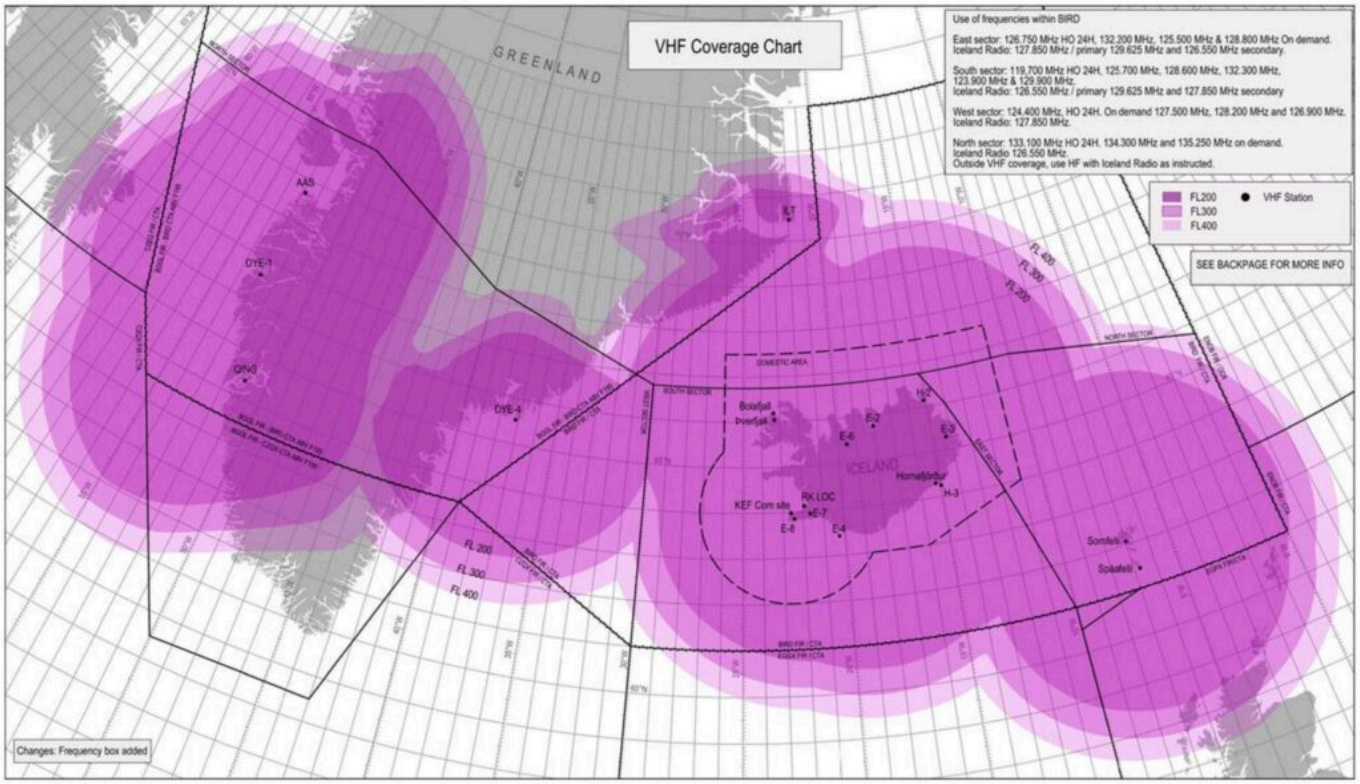
Gray Areas

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

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

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

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



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

You can see the incentive to count on relays.

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

What About Aircraft with Only One LRNS?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summing up

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

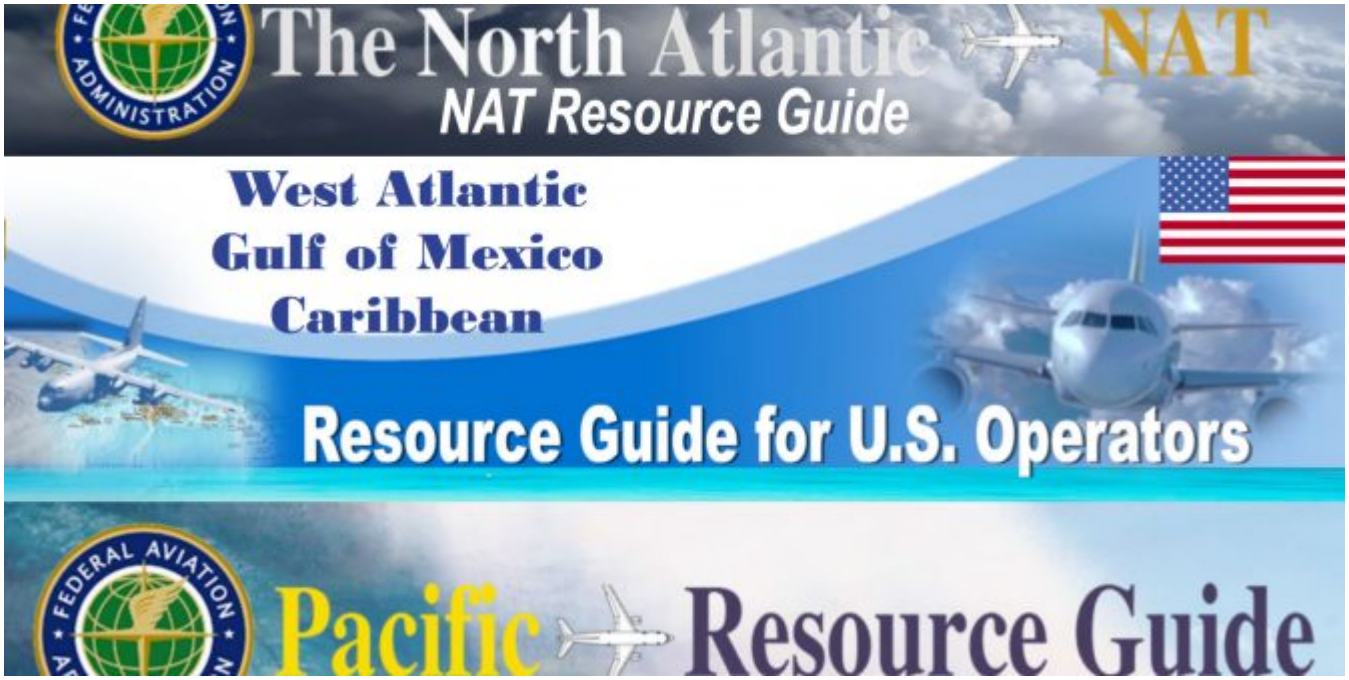
Outside of these specific altitudes and routings, aircraft operating in the NAT Region must normally carry two long-range communication systems, one of which must be HF, when operating beyond VHF coverage – unless a specific exemption has been granted by the State of the Operator or Registry (eg. for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

If you want to learn more, check out myaircraftmanagement.com for a 101-level walkthrough of a Blue Spruce operation.

Happy Crossings! ✈ □ □✈

Updated FAA Oceanic Guides

David Mumford
5 August, 2025



The FAA has updated its resource guides for the three big oceanic areas of interest: the North Atlantic, the Pacific, and WAT airspace (West Atlantic / Gulf Of Mexico / Caribbean). All three have been updated effective July 2025.

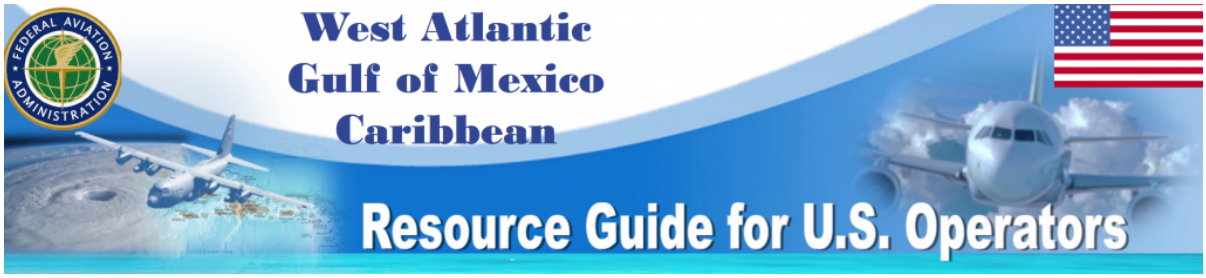
These guides are a good starting point for understanding all the essentials of operating in these regions, and include links to all kinds of useful supplemental information around the main topics for each one.

Click on the pics to check them out.

North Atlantic

Pacific

WAT

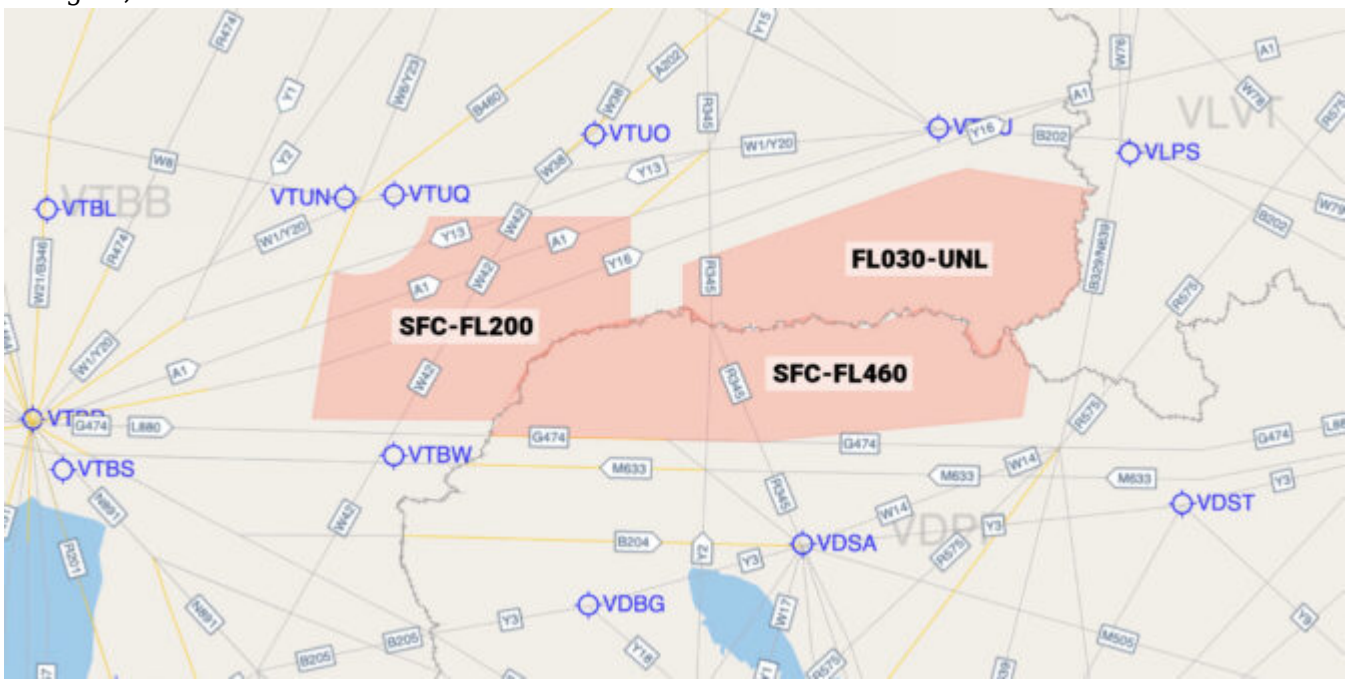


To see a timeline of the **big changes on the NAT** stretching back to 2015 click here.

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

Emerging Airspace Risk: Cambodia & Thailand

Chris Shieff
5 August, 2025



Update: July 28

Good news: **Cambodia and Thailand have agreed to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire** starting midnight local time on Monday July 28 (1700Z), following five days of intense fighting along their shared border. Both sides have committed to reopening communication lines and setting up a monitoring mechanism to maintain the truce.

While this is a major step toward de-escalation, the situation remains fragile – **caution is still advised near the border region**.

There are **no changes so far to the Phnom Penh FIR danger area (SFC–UNL)**. **VDPF Notam A0092/25** remains active.

Original Article: July 25

Key Points

- **A sudden military escalation began on July 24 along the central portion of the Cambodia–Thailand border, around 100–150 NM north of Siem Reap.**
- **Both sides accuse each other of firing first. Thailand has carried out airstrikes using F-16s.**
- **A danger area now extends along much of the border, SFC to UNL. Overflights may face elevated risk from unannounced military activity, including GPS interference.**

Background

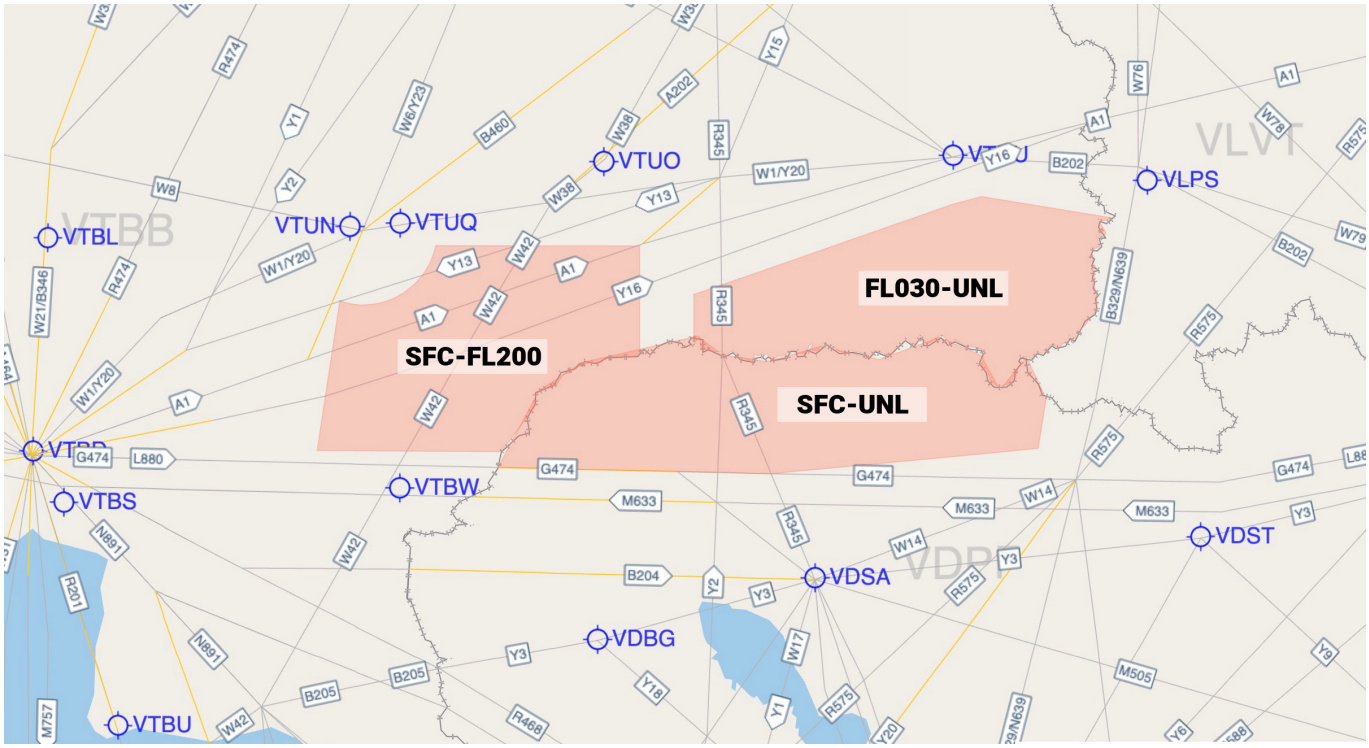
Cambodia and Thailand's long-standing border dispute has flared since May, when a Cambodian soldier was killed in a skirmish. In the weeks since, alleged landmine incidents have endangered Thai troops.

Political turmoil in Thailand has added to the crisis – its Prime Minister was suspended after a leaked call with Cambodian leaders linked to the dispute.

By July 24, the conflict had escalated into one of Southeast Asia's most serious military confrontations in over a decade, involving **airstrikes, heavy artillery, and mass civilian displacement.**

Danger Areas

Thailand and Cambodia have both issued Notams (under the VDPF/Phnom Penh FIR and VTBB/Bangkok FIR codes), activating **danger areas across a large portion of the shared border at all levels.**



What's notably absent from the Notams is any mention of the reason behind the danger area activations: **an escalating conflict on the ground.**

Cross-border fighting has involved heavy artillery and military airstrikes. Unannounced military activity poses **potential risks to civil aviation at all levels** – including from air defense systems and GPS interference.

We advise caution in the open airspace above.

High altitude airways affected include:

North/Southbound

R345 – the airway connecting VDSA/Siem Reap with northern Thailand.

Y2 – connects southern Cambodia with northern Thailand.

These routes are currently off-limits, as they pass through the main danger areas.

West/Eastbound

A1/Y16/Y13 – airways connecting the Bangkok airports with eastern Thailand and Vietnam. The danger area here only extends up to FL200, with airline traffic still transiting these routes.

At time of writing, there are no new state-issued airspace warnings concerning either Thai or Cambodian airspace.

France Summer BizAv Parking Tips

Kateřina Michalská
5 August, 2025

France is facing the same summer congestion we've seen in Spain and Greece: packed ramps, limited slot availability, and strict parking rules – both for location and duration. From the Côte d'Azur to Corsica and key inland airports, space is tight. But there are still some options if you know where to look. Here's what we've found so far.

Common Themes Across France

- **Plan ahead.** Most airports require advance notice for parking and handling – anywhere from 24 to 72 hours – usually via MyHandling.
- **Customs and Gendec:** For international arrivals, most airports expect crew and pax lists to be submitted 24 hours ahead, even for Schengen flights.
- **Slots or PPR?** It depends. Some airports like LFML/Marseille are slot- and PPR-free but limited by physical stand space. Others have strict PPR or slot rules, and some impose restrictions based on Schengen/non-Schengen status.
- **Nothing is guaranteed.** Even with advance requests, parking isn't always available – especially for longer stays. At LFMN/Nice, approval often comes just 7 days out. LFML/Marseille has only a few stands for 48h+ parking, and LFKF/Figari doesn't allow overnight stays at all.

Riviera Airports – Busy, Tight But Accessible

LFMN/Nice

Nice has been very busy since May, and according to local FBOs, things aren't getting any easier. If you're planning to stay on the ground for more than 4 hours, expect a bit of a process. The airport is fully slot-controlled, and **parking only gets confirmed once airport authorities approve your request – often just 7 days out**. Submitting a full schedule early gives you the best shot.

Slot tolerance is tight (+/–10 min arrival, –10/+15 min departure), and even small schedule changes can mean losing both slots and parking. Once confirmed, the slot ID needs to be in Field 18 of your FPL.

APU use is also limited to just 10 minutes before TSAT, and only after towing. Until then, it's ground power only. But several OPSGROUP members have reported issues with GPUs and overheating, especially in high temps. For a deeper look, check out our article on heat damage in Nice.

Fuel delays are common too. Airline traffic takes priority, and BizAv can end up waiting. Crews must be onboard during refueling, so best to show up early before ETD just in case. Multiple fuel providers operate at LFMN, and availability can vary depending on the day and time.

FBO contacts:

- Signature Aviation: nce@signatureaviation.com
- Avia VIP: lfmn@aviavip.com

LFMD/Cannes

Cannes may be scenic, but it's not built for bigger jets. The airport has strict aircraft restrictions: **no jets over 35T MTOW, and no turboprops over 22T**. Slots are mandatory from May 12 – Sep 15, when the airport is fully coordinated for the summer season. The control tower is active from 0800 LT to sunset +30 minutes. Handling services may operate on a different schedule, so check with your local FBO directly.

FBO contacts:

- ACM Handling: operations-acm@cote-azur.aeroport.fr
- Jetex: france@jetex.com

LFML/Marseille

Marseille offers a more relaxed entry point to the region, with fewer restrictions. The airport and customs are both H24. **There's no need for slots or PPR, and short-turn parking is usually available** without much hassle.

That said, longer stays are tricky – **only four stands are available for 48h+**, and they fill up quickly on a first-come, first-served basis. One or two nights might still be possible depending on traffic, but anything beyond that is unlikely in peak season.

FBO contacts:

- Jetex: fbo-mrs@jetex.com
- Avia VIP: lfml@aviavip.com

Southern Coastal Options – Mixed Rules

LFTH/Toulon-Hyeres

Toulon is getting busier in the summer, but **parking is still possible if you're organized.** The airport is open daily from 0800-2000 LT until Oct 28, with the possibility to arrange extensions. Customs hours are slightly different – available daily from 0800-1800 LT.

As a joint civil-military airport, LFTH has additional restrictions: according to the local FBO, flights before 0900 LT are currently not allowed due to military operations.

FBO contacts:

- Toulon Airport Handling: fbo@toulon-hyeres.aeroport.fr
- Jetex: france@jetex.com

LFTZ/La Mole Saint-Tropez

The airport has restricted-use status, so only operators with special approval can use it. **Pilots must meet specific training requirements** depending on the aircraft.

If you're thinking about flying into LFTZ, **be ready for a bit of admin.** The airport website and their AIP explain exactly what's needed – from how to request access to the paperwork and pilot qualifications

required.

PPR is required and operations are permitted daily 0800-1900 LT in summer, with extensions available until sunset. Non-Schengen flights are only allowed July 1 – Oct 15, 0700-1700 LT, and any schedule changes must be re-approved.

FBO contacts:

- Sky Valet: operations@sainttropez.aeroport.fr
- Jetex: france@jetex.com

Western Provence – Quieter Alternatives Inland

LFMT/Montpellier

Montpellier stands out as a dependable inland choice, even for heavier jets. While the airport can get busy at times, especially in peak summer weeks, **it's still worth considering if coastal airports are full.** All non-based BizAv must request PPR at least 72 hours in advance. Handling is charged in full if cancelled less than 3 days before arrival and not charged if cancelled earlier.

FBO contact: Avia VIP: lfmt@aviavip.com

LFTW/Nimes

Nimes is often overlooked, but can be a smart alternative if you plan ahead. The airport operates daily until 2000 LT. ATC is available until 1900 LT on weekdays and until 1600 LT on weekends. CIQ services are available daily from 0900-1800 LT.

FBO contact: Jetex: france@jetex.com

LFMP/Perpignan

Perpignan is another inland option worth considering this summer. Local FBO confirms that parking is currently not congested and that the airport can accommodate larger bizjet like the G650. Parking availability is confirmed once a full schedule is submitted.

FBO contact: G-OPS: executive@g-ops.com

LFMV/Avignon

Avignon gives operators a welcome level of flexibility during the peak season. **No PPR is required**. The airport is open Mon-Fri from 0700-2130 LT, Sat until 1900 LT, and Sun from 0800-2000 LT. CIQ services are available daily until 2300 LT.

FBO contacts:

- Airport handling: handling@avignon.aeroport.fr
- Jetex: france@jetex.com

LFMQ/Le Castellet

Castellet remains a niche but functional option for those who can work with the limitations. **Customs is**

available for Schengen traffic only – international (non-Schengen) flights are not permitted.

The airport operates daily 0900-1800 LT during summer. Extensions must be requested by 1600 LT the day before. Slots are required.

FBO contacts:

- Airport Handling: operations@aeroportducastellet.com
- Jetex: france@jetex.com

Corsica – Few Airports, Fewer Options

BizAv parking on Corsica is tricky during the summer too. **LFKF/Figari is the most restrictive option with only quick turnarounds allowed** and no long-term parking.

LFKB/Bastia may offer a bit more flexibility with some limits, but no PPR is required.

The best recommendation from local handlers goes to **LFKJ/Ajaccio**. Parking is more feasible here and while a slot and PPR are mandatory, availability is currently good.

FBO contact (covers LFKF, LFKB, and LFKJ): G-OPS: executive@g-ops.com

Looking Inland – Reliable Summer Parking

If the Riviera is full, heading inland could be a smart move. **LFLL/Lyon Saint-Exupery** usually has parking available, even during peak summer, and can handle larger jets with ease. Just be aware of night noise restrictions between 2200-0600 LT for louder aircraft.

Nearby **LFLY/Lyon Bron** is smaller but also reports good availability for BizAv during the summer.

Further south, **LFLS/Grenoble** may be the most straightforward of the three. The airport is open daily from 0900-1800 LT, and services like handling, customs, and fuel are all available during this window. Extensions are possible upon request, but need to be arranged at least 8 days in advance.

FBO contacts:

- LFLL: fbo.lfll@lyonaeroports.com + lfll@aviavip.com
- LFLY: fbo.lfly@lyonaeroports.com
- LFLS: businessaviation@grenoble-airport.com

Watch Your FPL Alternates

One final thing to note here for ops to the south of France – watch out for a common issue with flight plan alternates, as **some airports cannot be used unless specific conditions are met**, according to the AIP or Notams. We've had several reports over the years from members who have had this flagged on SAFA ramp checks.

Common ones to watch out for:

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

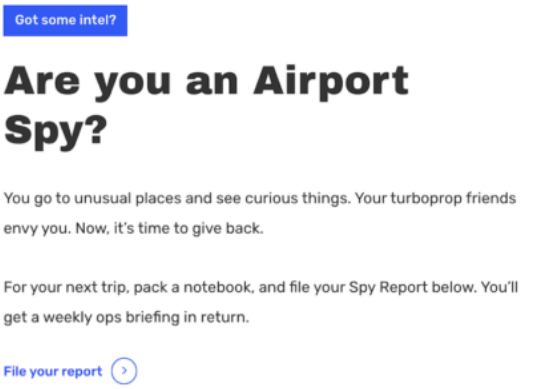
LFMD/Cannes – can't be used as alternate except for flights to LFTZ/La Mole.

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!

Help Us Keep This Info Fresh

Things can change fast at French airports in the summer – what worked last week might not work today. If you've recently operated to any of these airports, let us know! A quick Airport Spy Report helps everyone stay ahead. It's like sending a postcard with your notes, so others know what to expect next time.



Heat Damage in Nice: When APU Rules Damage Aircraft

Chris Shieff
5 August, 2025

Key Points

- **APU use is limited – only allowed 10 minutes before TSAT, and only after towing.**
- **GPU reliability is shaky – some units failed or had to be replaced during operations.**
- **Heat may be damaging systems – OPSGROUP member reports of aircraft experiencing electrical failures, suspected to be caused by overheating while waiting without APU or proper cooling.**

Recent reports from OPSGROUP members highlight growing concerns over the **strict APU restrictions at LFMN/Nice.**

Like many French airports, LFMN restricts APU use – aiming to cut noise and emissions. But as summer peaks on the Riviera, enforcement remains rigid despite the operational challenges this creates in high heat.

Beyond hot cabins, new concerns have emerged: **potential electrical damage linked to the airport's fixed ground power units (GPUs).** Reports submitted to the airport remain unanswered. Here's what we know so far.

A Little Context

Private jet flights at LFMN primarily use the 'Kilo Apron.' This is the designated parking area for BizAv close to FBO facilities.

The rules for APU usage are found under the airport briefing in the French AIP. **Specific guidelines apply to the Kilo Apron:**

- *Arriving flights* must stop on a designated line labelled 'STOP ENGINE AND APU.' From there towing to your parking spot is mandatory.

- *Departing flights must be towed to start-up stands fitted with 400Hz/28v ground power units, along with air. APU usage is limited to 10mins prior to TSAT (Target Start-up Approval Time).*

Exemptions are very limited. You either need to be operating a medivac, state or cargo flight (carrying temperature sensitive payload). Or if the plug isn't compatible with your aircraft.

Recent Member Reports

Here are three recent member reports received from OPSGROUP members there.

Report 1:

After towing to Stand 35, the crew connected to the fixed GPU. CAS messages flickered, followed by complete electrical failure and aircraft blackout. Despite heatwave conditions and an overheated crew, APU start was denied. A portable GPU was brought in – but it was dead. When permission to start the APU was finally granted, it was too late: navigation and communication systems had already failed. The aircraft departed under MEL and required expensive repairs at the next stop. The ramp agent advised us to file a report, which we did. According to them, this wasn't the first time such an event had happened.

Report 2:

Another crew experienced a similar issue. One of two FMS units failed after GPU connection. While the cause wasn't immediately clear, the symptoms matched those described in the earlier report. The unit was removed for repair.

Report 3:

The GPU caused a fault on our GVII upon disconnect. Our FA that understands French overheard ground personnel stating "it's too hot" in reference to the GPU. Surface temp at time was 24C so it was the equipment. Had to shut down aircraft to dark and restart to clear fault and get a new CTOT 40 mins later.

Potential GPU Issues

While we can't confirm the GPUs are the direct cause, it's plausible. Aircraft systems are sensitive, and power issues — including frequency drift, incorrect voltage, poor grounding, or surges — can trigger serious failures.

Heat may be a compounding factor. Ground air units often underperform in high temperatures, especially if hoses are blocked or airflow is weak. Aircraft may exceed thermal limits before crews can start APUs or get adequate air.

The GPUs themselves may also struggle in heat – output may sag or drift, or thermal protection systems may shut them down.

All of this increases operational risk – especially when APU use is restricted with no flexibility for safety.

And, despite being mandatory, GPU usage at LFMN comes with a charge.

If you're going to enforce the rules on APU usage in summer there needs to be some flexibility for the operational safety of multi-million dollar aircraft and their crews. Quiet airports are great, but it's easy to forget we are customers. In fact, Nice is the second busiest airport for business aviation in France, second only to Paris Le Bourget.

Mitigators

Following an alert issued to the group regarding these reports, another member (also a fully qualified pilot and aircraft engineer) got in touch with some practical advice to operators.

Here is what he had to say:

I thought it would be prudent to post some operational hints and tips to avoid problems like this event in the future. Not just with LFMN, but with any hot weather destination with restricted APU use (i.e. most of Europe).

Most biz jet hydraulic pumps demand very high KVA from the GPU's – avoid/delay applying hydraulic power to test systems and parking brake until APU start is approved.

Keep all the shades/sun shields drawn until packs are available.

Dim all the display units in the cockpit until air conditioning is available.

Open cargo and main door to allow air flow throughout the cabin. Small fans can run off the GFI plugs.

Open gear doors on some models as the exhaust for the avionic cooling fans use the wheel wells as the exit point.

Has this happened to you here, there, or elsewhere?

Please get in touch with us via blog@ops.group. We'd love to hear from you.

For ops at LFMN, if you identify a GPU issue (malfunction, incorrect configuration, electrical hazard, emissions), report it via your handling agent to the airport's operations or safety department, or directly to **Aéroports de la Côte d'Azur**: +33 4 08 20 42 333, or via this contact form.

Greenland NAT Alternates: July 2025 Update

Chris Shieff
5 August, 2025

July 2025 Update

Radar services at **BGSF/Sondrestrom** will be ending around Nov 1, 2025. From that point, only procedural (non-radar) separation will be available. Iceland's ADS-B offers some situational awareness over Greenland but can't be used for control.

This follows the planned downgrade from tower to AFIS at the airport between Aug-Oct, driven by reduced traffic as BGGH/Nuuk expands. All controlled airspace will become Class G, with a radio mandatory zone within 20 NM below 7000ft, and FISCOM available via Nuuk FIC after hours.

RWY 27 is typically used for departures and RWY 09 for arrivals – be especially careful of opposite direction traffic. AIC 01/25 has more info.

June 2025 Update

The extensively expanded **BGGH/Nuuk** is now open, and receiving regular jet traffic.

With an operating length of 7218′ (2200m) and ILS approaches available for both runway ends, it is now a solid choice for NAT enroute alternates (and ETOPS/EDTO if that's your thing). The Greenland AIP has been

updated, and you can find the current airport chart here. Both runway and apron PCNs are **67/F/A/W/T** .

The airport has an **AFIS** on watch Monday to Saturday, 09:00 – 18:00 LT (11:00 – 20:00z) with RFF Category 5.

For handling, contact **Greenland Airports**: nuuk@mit.gl

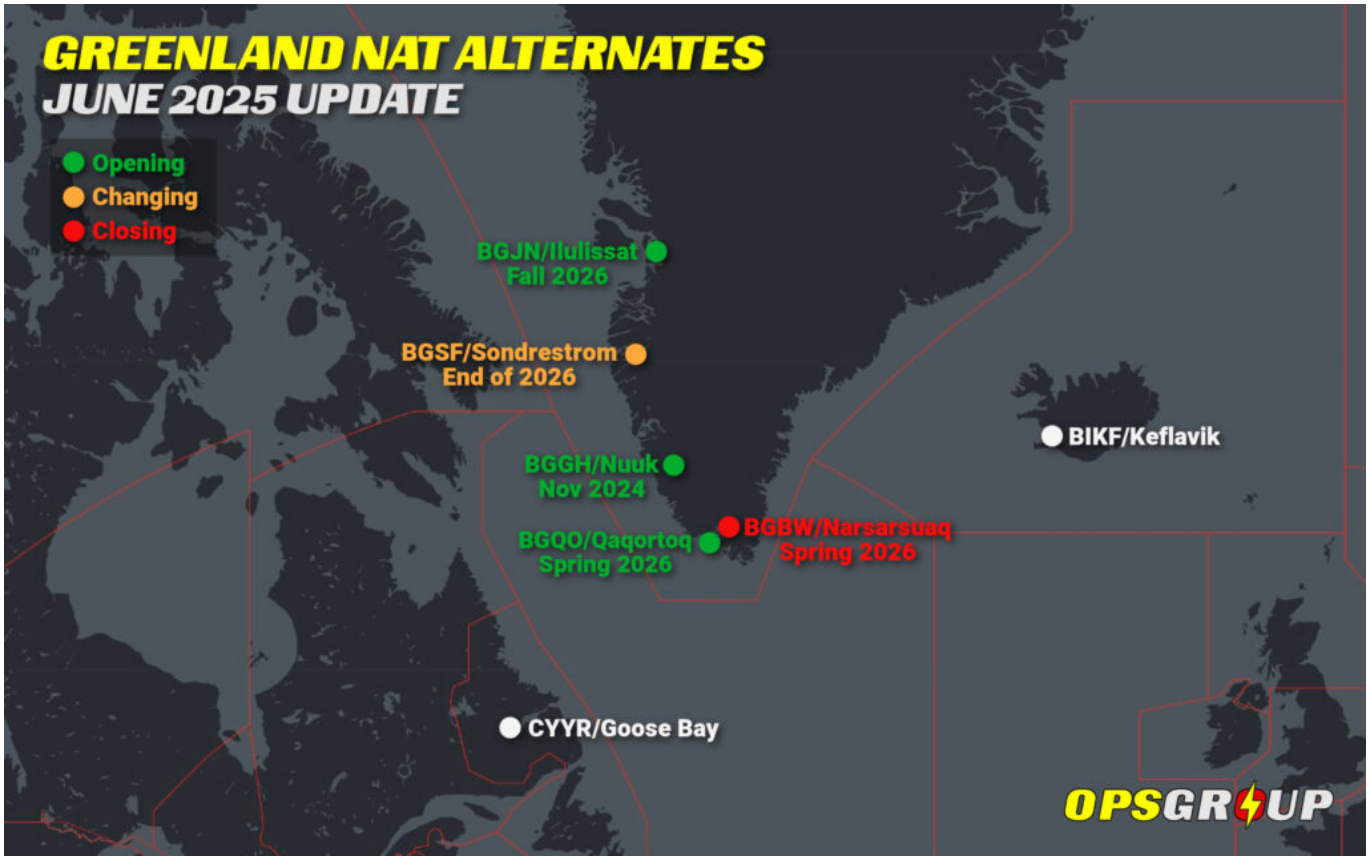
Original Article

Each day thousands of aircraft routinely cross the NAT and use airports in Greenland as enroute/ETOPS alternates – mainly **BGSF/Sondrestrom and BGBW/Narsarsuaq.**

It's big business for Greenland's major airports, but over the next few years **major changes are coming** that will directly impact on the operational use of these airports as NAT alternates.

Here's the lowdown on what's changing:

- **Opening:** BGGH/Nuuk (Nov 2024), BGQO/Qaqortoq (Spring 2026), BGJN/Ilulissat (Fall 2026).
- **Changing:** BGSF/Sondrestrom downgrading ATC to AFIS (Aug – Oct 2025).
- **Closing:** BGBW/Narsarsuaq (likely Spring 2026).



ETOPS Airports...

Before we get stuck into the finer points of what's changing at each airport, a big question many will have is: **"What airports can I use as enroute/ETOPS alternates?"**

Answering that is tricky, because it will depend on a number of factors that will be different for each operator – if the airport has a long enough runway for your particular aircraft / the necessary facilities and services / the minimum approach procedure / fire cover / weather minima etc.

But here's a quick reference table showing what's changing, and when, which *might* be helpful:

Airport	What's Happening?	When?	Rwy Length	OK for ETOPS?
BGGH/Nuuk	New runway being built	Nov 2024	2200m	Probably fine
BGSF/Sondrestrom	Possibly downgrading ATC to AFIS	End of 2025	2800m	Probably fine
BGBW/Narsarsuaq	Scheduled to close	Spring 2026	1800m	Not if it's closed!
BGQO/Qaqortoq	New runway being built	Spring 2026	1500m	Short runway, so probably not
BGJN/Ilulissat	New runway being built	Fall 2026	2200m	Probably fine

BGGH/Nuuk

Nuuk's found on the western edge of Southern Greenland, close to the NAT HLA. It's Greenland's capital city but until now, the airport has not been 'capital-sized'.

Hence why larger aircraft have not considered BGGH/Nuuk as a viable alternate due to its **short runway length (3,050'/930m) in addition to poor weather and the mountainous terrain** that surrounds it.

But things will soon get easier. A major expansion has been underway since 2019 to replace its aging runway and improve the airport infrastructure to accommodate the wide body airliners of the territory's flagship carrier who are relocating their hub there.

28 Nov 2024 has been earmarked as its full re-opening – just weeks away. **A new runway will now measure 7,200'/2200m.** Better yet, ILS approaches will be operating at both ends with much lower minimas. A new terminal building, tower and apron are already in use.

If you have any doubts as to Nuuk's viability as a well-equipped NAT alternate, it may be reassuring to hear that at least one **US legacy carrier** will also commence scheduled services to the improved airport from Newark twice a week from mid-next year.

Keep an eye out for an upcoming OPSGROUP briefing on the new and improved Nuuk soon.

BGQO/Qaqortoq

A new airport will be opening in Spring 2026, **35nm away from Narsarsuaq** on Greenland's southern tip.

Right now Qaqortoq is a heliport (operating under a different ICAO code), but will **re-open with a 4,921'/1500m runway** due to a decision by Greenland's government a few years back to convert it for fixed wing traffic.

At that length Qaqortoq will likely only be an option for **small to medium sized jets**, but there is also room for future expansion to 5,905'/1800m – so watch this space in years to come. Word on the street is that it will also be equipped with both LOC and RNP approaches.

BGJN/Ilulissat

A new international airport is under construction which will be equipped with a **7,217'/2200m runway.** It's scheduled to open in Fall 2026 and will replace the existing domestic airport. By in large, it will be equipped with the same equipment as the upgraded airport in Nuuk.

Next up, a look at what's happening at the existing airports BGSF/Sondrestrom and BGBW/Narsarsuaq…

BGSF/Sondrestrom

The much-improved airport in Nuuk will undoubtedly take a heavy toll on traffic levels at **Sondrestrom** – in the vicinity of a 90% reduction.

But all is not lost for BGSF as a solid NAT alternate – it will continue to operate, with almost **full services available** with one notable exception – **ATS will be downgraded to an AFIS sometime between Aug – Oct 2025.**

The **runway (9,186'/2800m)** is longer than Nuuk, and the weather much more predictable – it should remain a solid option to consider.

BGBW/Narsarsuaq

The airport is scheduled to **close in 2026!**

Despite its geographical convenience to NAT traffic, it remains a **difficult option**. For some, it is considered only in the case of extreme circumstances (such as fire).

The reason for this is predominantly **weather, and the non-precision approaches** that serve the airport. The runway itself is also short at only **5,905'/1800m.**

Reminder – Look out for Surprise Fees

We've written about this before, but worth a reminder.

Be careful – if you file BGBW or BGSF as an alternate after hours (overnight 20-11z or anytime on Sundays) you will be charged the better part of **$3000 USD** for the privilege of keeping standby equipment on watch, and runways clear of snow. Even if you don't actually divert there.

A little insider advice – **advance notice will reduce the cost** as it allows for cheaper planning. If you need one outside of normal operating hours, provide at least 24 hours' notice.

For regular use, operators can also apply directly for a reduction in these rates.

Know more about changes to Greenland Ops?

We'd love to hear from you. You can reach us via news@ops.group

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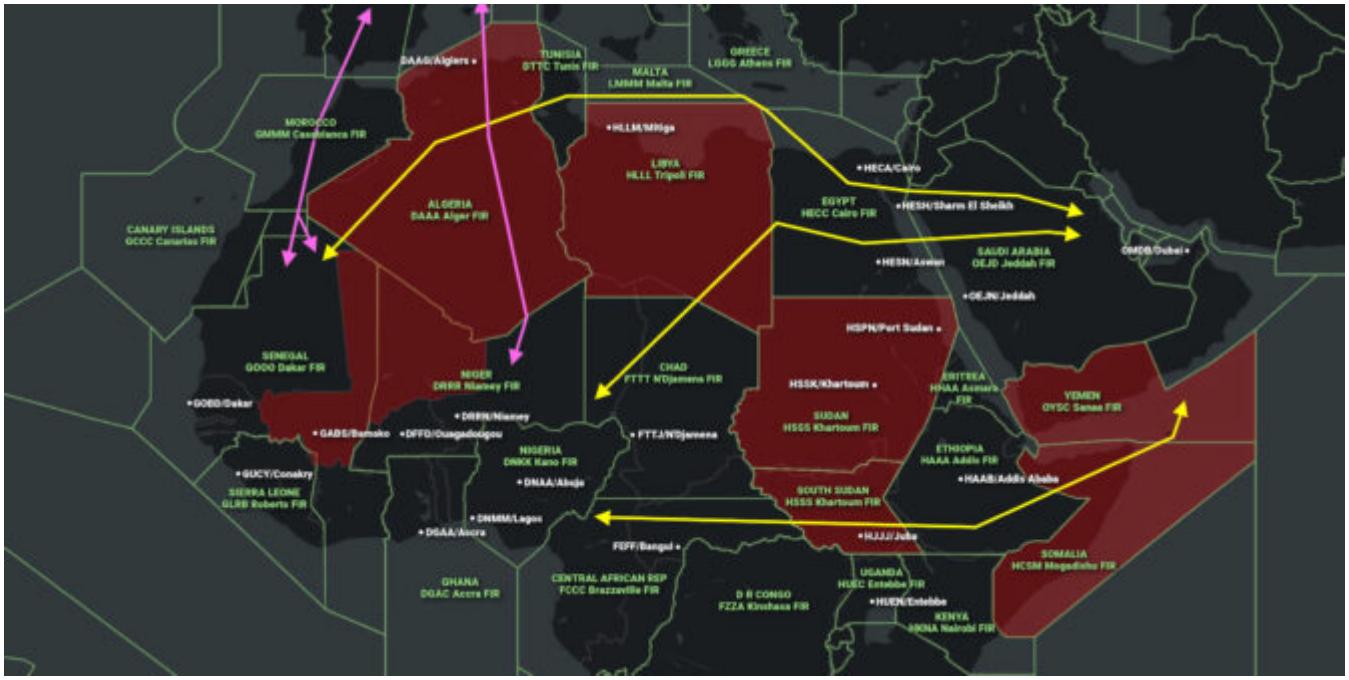
West Africa Ops: Routing Options and Restrictions

David Mumford
5 August, 2025



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

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

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

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

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

Mali/Algeria

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

Libya

- Active conflict zone since 2014.

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

Sudan/South Sudan

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

Somalia

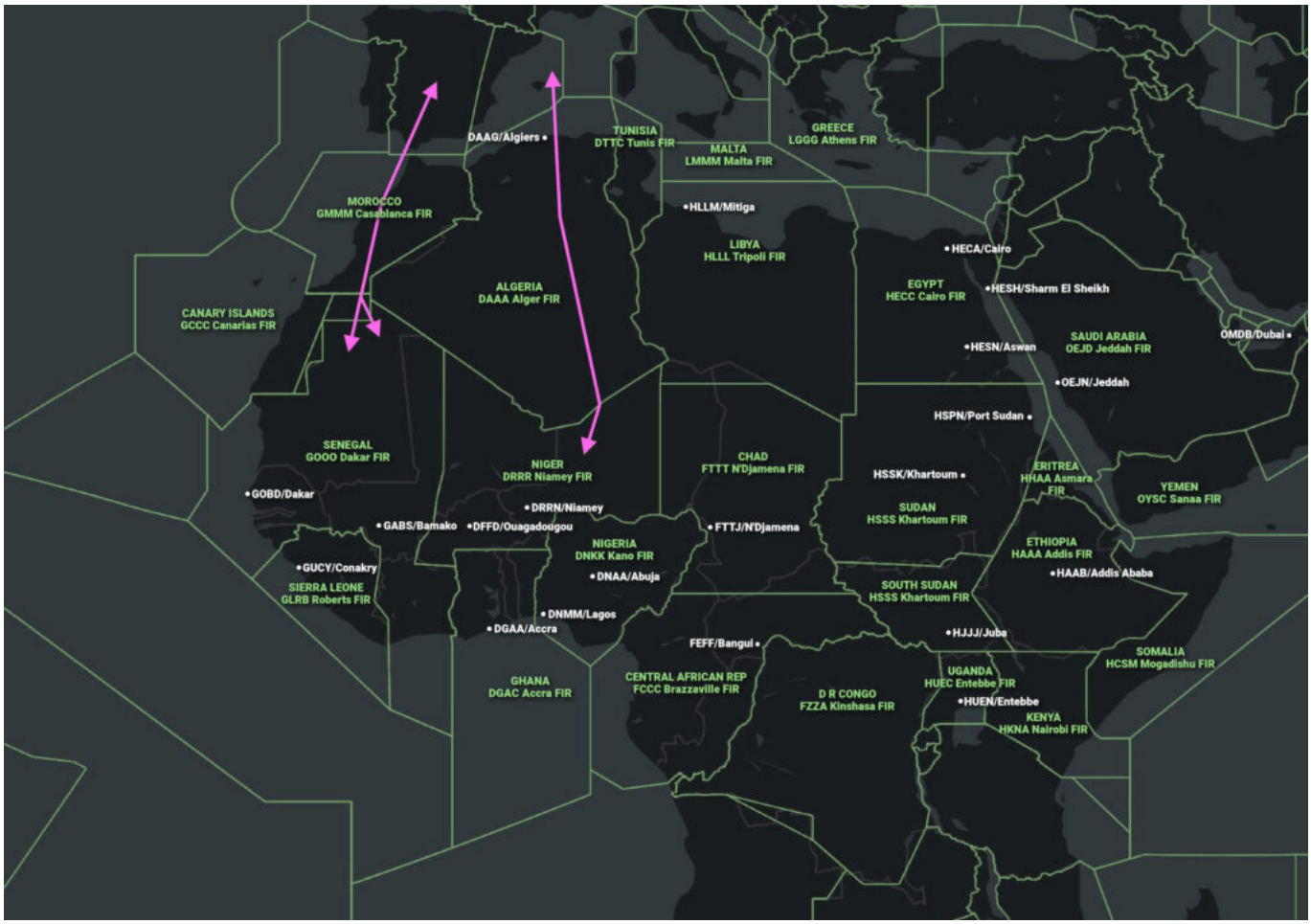
- Government control is limited; attacks by extremist militants are ongoing.
- US prohibits flights below FL260 (except overwater to/from HDAM/Djibouti).
- Risk of being targeted at lower altitudes by anti-aircraft weapons.
- Reports of unauthorized ATC units issuing contacting aircraft and issuing them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

Yemen

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

- More info here.

Routing Options: West Africa to Europe

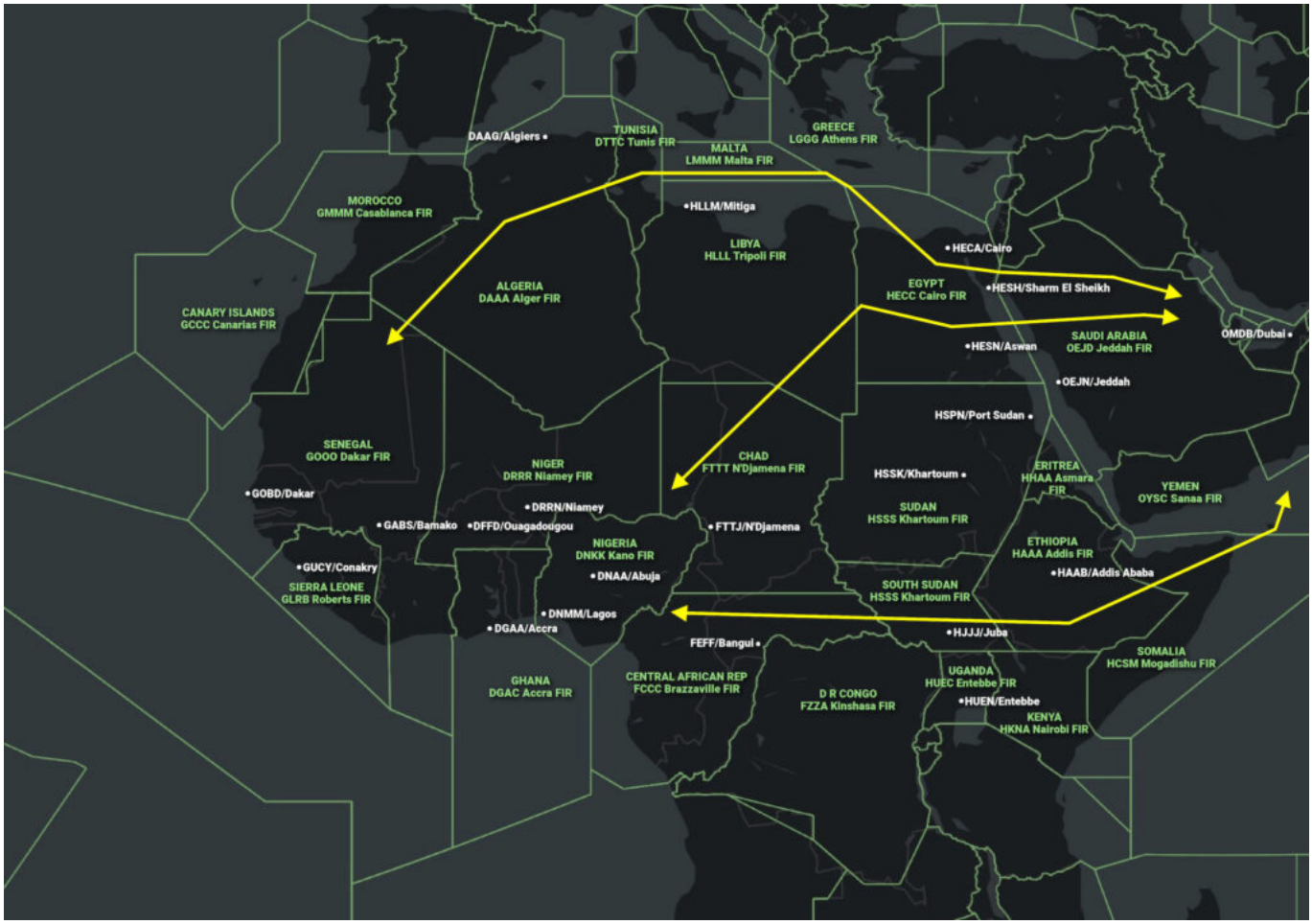


Two main options here:

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

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

Routing Options: West Africa to the Middle East



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

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

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

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

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

FAA Housekeeping: Foreign Instrument Procedures, Approach Chart Clutter

Chris Shieff
5 August, 2025

Recently, the FAA has been doing some spring cleaning. You might have missed them, but recent changes to the FAA's advisory circulars and charting notices are quite important.

This article covers two of them:

- **Effective June 2025, the FAA officially shifted the responsibility for evaluating and approving foreign instrument procedures to aircraft operators themselves.**
- **From October 2, instrument approach charts will be decluttered by removing unnecessary comms data.**

Let's take a look at each of these in more detail.

Removing approvals for specific foreign procedures

Recently, the FAA advised those operating under Part 91(K), 121, 125 and 135 of changes to **foreign instrument procedure authorizations.**

It has removed outdated references to specific foreign instrument procedures by title from operator authorizations (OpSpec C058, C358 and H107).

Others were simplified (C059, C060, and C384) to remove references to specific foreign airports and procedures.

The end result? Operators are no longer required to obtain FAA approval for specific foreign instrument procedures listed by name — but they must still hold the required FAA authorization (OpSpec, MSpec, or

LOA) to conduct the type of procedure (e.g., RNP AR, CAT II/III), regardless of where it's flown.

So, does this mean I can now fly any foreign procedure without FAA involvement?

Not quite. While you no longer need FAA approval for each individual foreign procedure, you still need FAA authorization for the procedure type and must comply with host country requirements.

For instance, if Germany requires local authorisation for an RNP (AR) approach into EDDM/Munich, you must obtain it without FAA involvement.

ICAO (Annex 6) says operators are still required to obtain approvals when the host state mandates it, and crews must comply with any local procedures or limitations.

Why the change?

Without delving too much into the specifics, there are a few reasons:

- **Less paperwork** – foreign procedural reviews are cumbersome and labor intensive, and lead to delays in approval.
- **Less workload –** inspectors no longer have to approve each foreign procedure individually.
- **Improved design –** there has been significant improvement in procedural design around the world thanks to the proliferation of ICAO PANS OPS.
- **Empowerment** – operators can perform their own risk assessments and use globally standardised instrument procedures without the extra weight of FAA approvals.

So the onus is now on the operator – what next?

That's where AC 120-105B comes into play. It provides guidance for US operators on reviewing and accepting foreign instrument procedures outside the US.

This includes a list of your areas of responsibility, recommended tools and checklists to help with your review, and advice on incorporating a review process into your company's manuals, SOPs and pilot training.

If you operate abroad, it's important you're familiar with this revised AC. We've also put together the following **checklist** based on its advice to help get you started:

De-cluttering Approach Charts

On July 3, the FAA issued a new charting notice (advance notification of significant changes to charts and publications).

The news is that from October 2, the FAA will begin removing **redundant comms data** from instrument approach charts. This includes departure ATIS, CLNC DEL and the availability of CPDLC if all of this is shown on the corresponding airport diagram.

Listing it again on instrument approach charts is unnecessary and can reduce readability during critical phases of flight while critical frequencies remain prominent (don't worry, tower and ground ain't going anywhere).

While we have you, a couple more FAA-related tidbits to brush off the table.

- **Notams**. Big changes are coming to the US system. By September, it will be **completely overhauled.** The new system will be a fast, cloud-based, and (hopefully) rock-solid stable. A renewed focus on improved safety throughout the US NAS has escalated the project, and the targets are ambitious – user testing is expected to start later this month.

- **FAA-license holders abroad**. This is our last reminder! July 7 has come and gone, which means anyone holding US licences/ratings and living outside of the US must have provided a US based address for service to the FAA via the USAS portal. If you haven't yet, your license is **effectively now invalid** until you do – whatever you do, don't operate an aircraft while un-licensed.

Have we missed a spot?

Please get in touch with us around the clock via blog@ops.group

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Spain Summer 2025: Where to Park When There's Nowhere to Park

Kateřina Michalská
5 August, 2025

Flying to Spain this summer? Be ready for one of the most challenging seasons yet. OPSGROUP members and local FBOs have confirmed that many of Spain's key airports are either full or close to capacity, with last-minute parking denials, repositioning chaos, and growing frustration.

The Big Picture

- **Balearic Islands are maxed out.** LEPA/Palma, LEIB/Ibiza, and LEMH/Menorca are denying overnight parking in most cases. Even short turnarounds now require formal approval.
- Mainland airports like **LEVC/Valencia** and **LEAL/Alicante** – once go-to repositioning options – are now also denying overnight stays, especially for ferry flights. Overflow traffic is being pushed to bigger hubs like **LEBL/Barcelona** and **LEMD/Madrid**, which can still work, but come with long taxi times, fueling delays, and strict slot restrictions. **In Barcelona, non-based BizAv aircraft are limited to a maximum 96-hour stay. In Madrid, they're allowed just one overnight, and turnarounds without passengers are not permitted.**
- **The system is overwhelmed.** We've received multiple reports from our members that due to poor infrastructure planning, increased aircraft size, and inflexible airport authority (AENA) policies, BizAv is being squeezed out of prime destinations.
- Even second-tier airports like **LEGR/Granada or LERS/Reus are turning away requests.** Some smaller fields remain usable – but only with proper planning and early coordination.

What All Airports Have in Common

- **Slot and parking coordination opens 14-15 days prior to arrival.** Earlier requests are not accepted, and even short turnarounds often require prior approval.
- **No real-time availability.** Handlers can't tell you if parking is available until you've submitted a full handling request (aircraft type, schedule, operator details). Confirmations often take days and even then, your request may still be denied. Final decisions are made by the airport authorities.The best advice? **Submit your schedule as early as the airport window allows, and always have a backup plan ready.**

A-CDM airports in Spain: Watch Your Timings

Several major Spanish airports operate under A-CDM (Airport Collaborative Decision Making) procedures – for example, **LEBL/Barcelona, LEMD/Madrid, and LEPA/Palma de Mallorca**. Always double-check with your local FBO to confirm whether A-CDM rules apply at your destination.

At these airports, **your filed EOBT (Estimated Off-Block Time) must exactly match your assigned departure slot**. If it doesn't, ATC will not clear you to start up or taxi. There's no flexibility – and your handler has no power to override the system.

What often happens is this: a crew files an updated EOBT without informing the handler, but the airport system still holds the original slot. That mismatch is caught by Eurocontrol, which then assigns a much later CTOT (Calculated Take-Off Time) – often causing a delay of 1 to 2 hours, or blocking the departure entirely.

To avoid this, **always coordinate any time change, even a small one, with your handler first**. Once they've confirmed your new slot, you can safely file your updated flight plan to match.

If you're delayed inbound and won't make your original slot, make sure to send your updated ETA asap – this gives the airport time to adjust your arrival slot accordingly.

Spain is one of the stricter countries in Europe when it comes to A-CDM enforcement. If your times don't match, you're not moving. For more on how Eurocontrol and CTOTs work behind the scenes, see our explainer article.

The Balearics: Parking Nightmare Central

The three main airports in the Balearic Islands – **LEIB/Ibiza, LEPA/Palma de Mallorca, and LEMH/Menorca** – are all experiencing major congestion this summer.

Key issues across all:

- **Parking is extremely limited**, especially on weekends. Overnight stays are frequently denied – sometimes even for light jets.
- **Repositioning to the mainland is increasingly common.** Local FBOs recommend LEBL/Barcelona and LEGE/Girona – both H24 – as the best alternates. LEVC/Valencia is also commonly used, but recent reports say it's already congested.

LEIB/Ibiza

Ibiza is proving the most difficult of the three. Members report that overnight parking is nearly impossible to obtain – 90% of overnight parking requests are flatly refused, regardless of aircraft size.

According to local FBOs (not published in the AIP), aircraft with a wingspan greater than 18 meters planning to remain on the ground for more than 3 hours require a PPR – which is rarely approved during the peak season. Even short turnarounds are becoming problematic without advance coordination.

FBO contacts:

- Sky Valet: fbo.leib@skyvalet.com, occ@skyvalet.com
- Aviapartner: leib@aviavip.com

LEPA/Palma de Mallorca

LEPA is slightly more manageable, but still highly congested.

New for 2025: From 1 June – 30 Sep, aircraft longer than 20 meters are limited to a maximum of 7 days of parking, unless specifically approved by the airport. See AIP for details.

Members report first-time outright parking refusals for light jets, and fuel delays of more than an hour due to one of the two fuel trucks being out of service.

FBO contacts:

- Sky Valet: fbo.lepa@skyvalet.com, occ@skyvalet.com
- Aviapartner: lepa@aviavip.com

LEMH/Menorca

Menorca is facing similar congestion pressures as the rest of the Balearics this summer, but local FBOs suggest it may still be the *easiest* of the three island airports to manage. While parking is certainly limited, especially on peak days (Friday through Sunday), overnight stays are not impossible – particularly if you plan ahead.

During the summer, the airport operates from 0700-0030 local time. See AIP for details.

Slot and parking requests can typically be submitted 14-15 days before arrival. Some FBOs note that approvals are sometimes possible even on shorter notice, especially if you provide a full itinerary. Drop-and-go remains the best strategy here too.

FBO contacts:

- Universal Aviation: mah@uvspain.com, universal.aviation@uvspain.com
- Aviapartner: lemh@aviavip.com

Mainland Spain: Where You Might Have a Chance

Need local FBOs contacts or AIP links? Click here for quick access.

Popular Repositioning Options – but Getting Busy

LEVC/Valencia and **LEAL/Alicante** are among the most commonly suggested mainland alternates for traffic repositioning from the islands. But this summer, both airports are struggling with overflow demand. Overnight parking is frequently denied, even for ferry flights, and local FBOs report regular rejections, especially on peak days.

Big Airports Still Working – with Significant Limits

LEBL/Barcelona is still one of the more reliable options for BizAv this summer. Parking is usually available and the airport operates H24. However, LEBL enforces a 96-hour parking limit for all non-based aircraft year-round, so longer stays are not possible. During the summer, aircraft with an MTOW under 15 tons are also not permitted to arrive between 0900–1159 local time. In addition, taxi times from the BizAv apron are long, typically around 20 minutes. The airport applies A-CDM rules strictly.

LEMD/Madrid is no longer an easy fallback. While it operates H24 and still offers reasonable parking availability, non-based BizAv operators are now subject to strict slot restrictions: only one overnight is allowed, and at least one leg (arrival or departure) must be a passenger flight. Turnarounds involving positioning flights only are not permitted. Crews should also plan for long taxi times (15–30 minutes), and fuel uplift may be delayed or denied without a confirmed same-day departure, as priority is given to commercial and outbound traffic.

Member report received July 2: We had an overnight 2 days ago and the airport is packed. Evidently there is no where to park in the islands and everyone is drop and go to LEMD as you have reported. We got to the airport 2.5 hours prior to our departure scheduled for 1320 local departure and waited almost 3 hours for fuel. Our slot had to be constantly updated by the handlers so we didn't miss it.

Another member report received July 3: We were granted a week's parking at Madrid, but on a disused taxiway arriving yesterday. The handler said it's at capacity.

UN Summit in Sevilla – Temporary Restrictions Across Andalusia

Several airports in Andalusia are currently affected by temporary restrictions due to the **UN summit in LEZL/Seville, running from June 26 – July 4**. These impact BizAv ops across the region, especially in terms of parking, ground time, and access. **However, once the summit ends, many of these airports may become more usable options for summer parking**. Here's a breakdown of what to expect:

LEZL/Seville is effectively off-limits for BizAv during the summit. The airport cannot be used as an alternate, and all BizAv flights require special government permission. Slots and PPR are mandatory. Local FBOs strongly advise avoiding LEZL during the summit unless absolutely necessary. Things should return to normal after July 4.

LEAM/Almeria is generally an easy airport to work with and remains a solid parking option compared to congested hubs like Palma or Valencia. At the moment, both slot and PPR are required, likely due to increased activity linked to the UN summit. Traffic may temporarily rise, but overall availability remains better than at most coastal airports.

LEGR/Granada is currently operating under an Apron Saturation Procedure until July 5. BizAv flights are limited to 60 minutes on stand and must receive prior approval, even though no official slot or PPR system is in place. All international arrivals are treated as non-Schengen, even if coming from Schengen countries, due to temporary internal border controls. Outside the summit, LEGR is a good parking fallback.

LEJR/Jerez normally just requires a slot (no PPR) and usually has decent parking availability. Right now though, BizAv traffic is limited – only flights with a properly authorized slot are accepted, and approvals are more selective than usual. After July 3, it should return to being one of the more reliable fallback options in the region.

LEMG/Malaga is often seen as a good BizAv parking option, and we've received positive reports from members securing parking here. Parking restrictions relating to the summit were lifted on July 2, so there's no issue on that front anymore.

Other Viable Options – Depends on Timing

LEGE/Girona and **LERS/Reus** are both decent fallback options for mainland parking and can be worth a try. While not always full, availability is limited and approvals are never guaranteed. BizAv flights to LERS require a PPR, so early coordination is essential.

Better Bets for Summer Parking

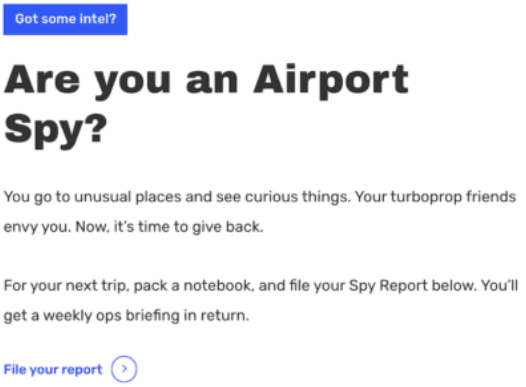
Airports in northern Spain – including **LEBB/Bilbao, LEAS/Asturias, LEST/Santiago de Compostela,**

LEVX/Vigo, and LEXJ/Santander – are not as widely used for BizAv but are currently seeing less congestion and can be good alternatives, even for bizjets. Most require slots but not PPR. Parking is generally available, though space for long stays or bigger jets may still be assessed case-by-case. These are solid options worth exploring, especially when the more popular destinations are full.

Situation Changing Fast – Help Us Keep It Updated

Airport conditions across Spain can change quickly during the summer – a slot that was easy yesterday might be impossible tomorrow. If you have recent experience at any of these airports, please share it with us by submitting an Airport Spy Report. Your intel helps the whole community stay informed.

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



Lithium Battery Fires, New Safety Alert: What Are The Rules For Part 91?

Chris Shieff
5 August, 2025

The risk of lithium-ion battery fires on aircraft is on the rise, with vapes, power banks, and laptops identified as the main culprits.

The FAA has reported a sharp rise in incidents, with some sources noting two thermal runaway events per week. EASA also raised concerns, issuing a new Safety Bulletin on May 27.

While rules are strict for Parts 121 and 135, private flights under Part 91 face fewer restrictions. Arguably, private jets are more at risk, and we're doing less to protect ourselves.

- **Business jets are smaller.** A lithium-ion battery fire can quickly fill the cabin with thick, toxic smoke – up to 10 cubic meters from a single laptop battery in just two minutes. History has shown that smoke inhalation often causes the loss of an aircraft in a fire before the fire itself.
- **Fewer crew members.**With only one or two pilots and often no cabin crew, response capability is limited.
- **The passengers we carry.** Biz jet passengers often carry multiple personal electronic devices which increases fire risk. Some passengers may disregard or not correctly follow safety rules.
- **Less safety equipment.**Compared to airliners, biz jets typically have fewer fire suppression tools and less protective gear on board.

It seems clear that for the few rules that exist for Part 91 operations, we must be aware of them, and stick to them. And it may come as a surprise to some operators that these rules are more strict when you fly **internationally** – *even privately.*

So here's a rundown of what you need to know.

A word about lithium-ion batteries

If you're already familiar with a **Wh rating,** feel free to skip to the next section. But to understand the rules properly, it helps if you're familiar with it first.

Watt on earth is a watt-hour (Wh)?

When we talk about how dangerous a lithium-ion battery could potentially be, we talk watt-hours. It is a measure of how much energy a battery can store and use. Think of it like the amount of fuel in a tank – it simply tells us how much power (watts) it produces over time (hours).

It also directly proportional to fire risk. If something goes wrong, all that energy can be released as heat and gas. The more in the tank, the bigger the fire.

The higher the Wh, the hotter the flames, the thicker the smoke, and critically – the harder it is to put out.

Righto, onto the rules for US Part 91.

Part 91

For domestic flying in the US under Part 91, the rules for lithium-ion batteries are pretty simple.

If the batteries are being carried for personal use, Part 91 operators are (almost) entirely exempt from the US D.O.T. HAZMAT regulations that apply to commercial flights. But it's not a free-for-all.

The PIC is still prohibited by law from carrying hazardous items onboard an aircraft in a way that might endanger people or things. This includes knowingly carrying defective batteries or packing them in a way that is dangerous or irresponsible.

Baseline safety guidelines still apply, including FAA Advisory Circulars (AC 91-78, AC 120-76D) -along with relevant Safety Alerts for Operators (SAFOs). Deviation from these can expose the operator/PIC to legal liability in the case that something bad happens.

Here's a summary of those:

Installed batteries (in devices):

Carry these without restriction if they're properly secured within the equipment, show no visible damage (like swelling or leakage) and are turned off.

Spare batteries:

These must be carry-on.

- *Little ones (100Wh or less):* There's no limit on the number carried, but each one should be protected from short-circuits (case, sleeve, taped terminals or original packaging).
- *Bigger ones (101 – 160Wh):* FAA guidelines say no more than two per person. These must be individually protected using the same precautions above.
- *Biggest ones (161Wh+):* Not allowed without full HAZMAT compliance and operator approval. Requires UN spec packaging, shipping papers, training etc. BE CAREFUL – some higher end power banks exceed this limit.

International operators beware!

Here's where things get a little tricky.

Once you leave the US, some authorities no longer recognize the distinction between Part 91 (private) and other commercial flights.

Foreign authorities may enforce local rules for the batteries you carry – *regardless* of your Part 91 status. These are usually based upon **IATA Dangerous Goods Regulations.** Reportedly, this includes China, Thailand, Korea, India and the UAE.

In other words, **what was acceptable in the US may not be once you're abroad.**

Foreign handlers may refuse to load spare batteries that don't comply with IATA standards, while customs and ramp safety officers may demand battery specs and proper packaging – especially for devices like power banks, drones, camera gear and e-bikes. Devices may be confiscated if they do not comply with local guidelines.

The best solution? Just comply with IATA standards from the outset.

Where do I find these regs?

If you want to get technical – they're defined in ICAO Doc 9284 (ICAO Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air), and further refined under the IATA Dangerous Goods Regulations.

These include packing instructions, required documents, limits of watt hour ratings, the quantity of batteries, labelling and distinctions between passenger and cargo aircraft.

Three million pages of DG-related dread building? Worry not. We've put together a **quick checklist** of requirements/suggestions for Part 91 operators to help them stay out of trouble when carrying batteries outside of the US:

Fire containment

You might already have fire containment bags onboard, but there are other types of containment devices worth considering.

Some of the newer **hard-sided designs** offer features like hands-free collection, blast protection for the user, and the ability to inject water to help interrupt thermal runaway. Check out this one!

These boxes aim to **reduce the risk to crew during an incident** and address some limitations of soft bags, which can be difficult to use safely without two people – a challenge on smaller aircraft operating under Part 91 or 135. With recent incidents showing how violent lithium battery fires can be, having an effective containment method onboard is increasingly important.

Don't forget to report

For Part 91 private flights, the US FAA requires operators to report any case of battery fire, smoke, overheating or thermal runaway aboard an aircraft within 72 hours. The form for this is DOT 5800.1.

ICAO may also require a report if the event qualifies as a **serious incident or accident.** You are not required to report directly to IATA – it's only voluntary.

FAA License Holders Abroad – You'll Need A US Address Soon

Chris Shieff
5 August, 2025

June 10 update – look out for imminent medical renewals!

If you're due for a **medical** soon, you might already need a US address in the USAS portal. Although the official FAA deadline to add a US agent for service is July 7, an OPSGROUP member recently discovered that MedXpress would not let him complete the pre-exam form without it. Since MedXpress and the USAS portal now talk to each other, the system checks for that US address before allowing you to proceed. Without it, you will not get the **confirmation number** needed for your medical.

Key Points

- **The FAA has published a new rule that will require certificate holders abroad to nominate a physical US address for service.**
- **This is required from April 2 for any new applications; and July 7 for anyone who already holds FAA certificates, ratings or authorizations.**
- **Anyone who ignores the new rule will be unable to exercise the privileges of their documents.**

What's Changing?

115,000 (give or take) FAA certificate holders currently **live outside of the US.**

Back in Oct 2024, the FAA issued a new rule requiring anyone with no US physical address on file to **nominate a US Agent For Service.**

This agent will be responsible for receiving all documents from the FAA on the certificate holder's behalf –

including legal and safety-critical stuff.

It's already been postponed once, but there are now **two deadlines for individuals with a foreign address and no physical US one on file:**

- **April 2** for new applications.
- **July 7** for existing certificate holders.

The FAA is having problems serving documents to the large number of FAA certificate holders living abroad.

By using US-based agents, this process will be a lot faster and easier. Especially in the case of larger overseas-based flight departments.

Who will this apply too?

Anyone with a foreign address (and no US address on file) who holds or applies for FAA certificates, ratings or authorizations under the following parts of 14 CFR – 47, 61, 63, 65, 67, 107.

Who can be a 'US Agent For Service'?

It's not as complicated as it sounds.

The new rule (CFR 14 3.302) says this can be **any entity or adult (18yo+) with a US-based postal address.**

One big gotcha though: **this must be a physical address** – PO boxes and mail drops are no-good.

It's important you nominate someone you trust. They will be responsible for promptly forwarding you any FAA documents and must fully understand the importance of this task.

You'll also need to provide the FAA with their full name, phone number and a working email address.

If there isn't already someone in the US you know and trust, it may be worth engaging a professional service to be your agent instead.

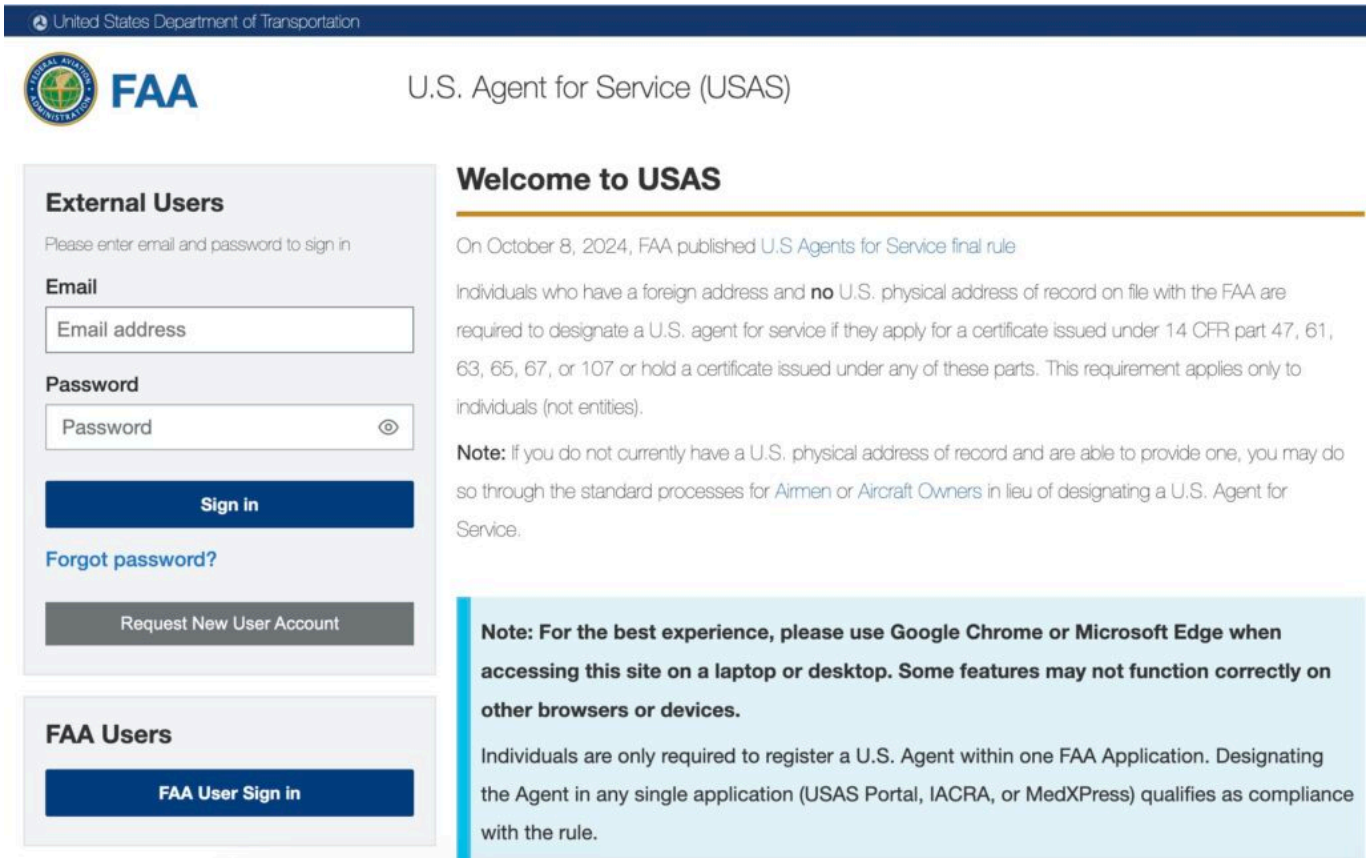
What if I just ignore this rule?

Don't! If a certificate holder fails to designate a US postal address or Agent of Service by the above dates, you will no longer be able to exercise the privileges of that document. **You will effectively become unlicensed**.

Another big scary rule – the FAA Enforcement and Compliance Order 2150.3 – says other enforcement actions can be taken including fines and jail time.

How will I designate my agent of service?

Via a new portal called the US Agent for Service System (USAS).



This will allow you to nominate your agent and provide all required contact details via the online prompts.

Don’t forget you will also need to keep the system updated with any changes.

I live in the US, does this affect me?

Long story short, no. As long as the FAA has your physical address on file you’re good to go!

Sydney BizAv Fees Set to Skyrocket

Kateřina Michalská
5 August, 2025

From July 1, YSSY/Sydney will move ahead with a major fee overhaul for BizAv. After strong pushback from the local community – led by ExecuJet and the Australian Business Aviation Association (ABAA) – some of the most extreme fee increases have been softened. Parking will no longer have a flat rate and now allows 180 minutes free, but fees remain steep for longer stays. Runway charges are rising sharply, and mandatory GPU/PCA fees and environmental charges will still apply. Operators should prepare for a noticeable jump in operating costs.

What's changing?

The proposed fee increases are eye-watering:

1. **Parking fees:**
   The good news is that **BizAv operators will now get 180 minutes of free parking** in designated BizAv areas. This replaces the originally proposed flat AUD $3,220/day rate. After the free period, fees are tiered based on aircraft weight and length of stay. For **aircraft over 40,000 kg MTOW, charges start at AUD $1,000/day** for days 1 to 3 and go up to AUD $2,500/day beyond 7 days. Smaller aircraft pay less, starting at AUD $500/day.
2. **Runway charges:**
   The runway fee will jump from AUD $60 minimum to **AUD $340 minimum**, with the per-1,000 kg MTOW fee going from AUD $6.91 to AUD $17.
3. **GPU and PCA requirements:**
   Sydney Airport now mandates the use of Ground Power Units (GPU) and Preconditioned Air (PCA) where available. **Even if you don't use them, you'll be charged** a blended rate depending on aircraft code – ranging from AUD $11.35 to $21.74.
4. **Environmental spill charges:**
   Expect a new AUD $300 charge for unreported fuel or oil spills, or AUD $150 if you self-report.

Why is this such a big deal?

These are not small adjustments – they represent a major change to how BizAv is charged at Sydney. Even with some softening of the original plan, the new structure will lead to substantially higher costs, especially for longer stays. Many see this as part of a broader shift toward prioritizing commercial operations.

Who’s pushing back?

ExecuJet (the main local FBO) and the Australian Business Aviation Association (ABAA) led the response, engaging directly with the airport. They submitted formal objections and encouraged all operators to speak up during the consultation. If you have any questions, contact ExecuJet directly at fbo.yssy@execujet.com.

What’s next?

The revised fee structure is confirmed and takes effect on July 1. Operators flying to Sydney should review the new rules closely and adjust planning and quoting accordingly. While the original plan was moderated thanks to community input, BizAv costs at YSSY are still about to get much steeper.

Summer Tips for Flight Planning in Europe

Kateřina Michalská
5 August, 2025

Summer in Europe often means one thing: **traffic – and lots of it.**

Eurocontrol keeps the system moving, but it can feel complex, especially when delays mount and regulations interfere with your plans.

The good news? A few smart moves can make a big difference. This guide breaks down what matters most: the tools, timing, and habits that help your flight operate on time.

For Dispatchers: Plan It Right

Keep Your EOBTs Accurate

Your Estimated Off-Block Time (EOBT) is what anchors your flight in the network. It tells the system when you plan to be ready for pushback, and everything from slot allocation to airspace planning builds on that. **If the EOBT is outdated, your flight might get an unrealistic Calculated Take-Off Time (CTOT) or**

even be suspended.

A CTOT is a take-off window assigned based on current traffic demand. It's valid from -5 to +10 minutes around the assigned time. **You must take off within that window.**

Some operators hesitate to update the EOBT, thinking it could make the CTOT worse. In fact, the system often improves the slot within a few minutes when fresh data is provided.

Tip: If a new CTOT looks worse, give it 10 minutes to settle. If there's still no improvement, then it's time to contact e-Helpdesk.

Don't File YO-YO Profiles

Trying to dodge flow restrictions with **unusual altitude changes (like FL360 → FL320 → FL360) only confuses the system**. These so-called "YO-YO" profiles increase workload for ATC and can cause downstream problems. Use tools like NMP Flight to build efficient, compliant flight plans without trying to game the system.

Respect Arrival Slots

If your destination airport is slot-coordinated, **always align your flight plan with the assigned airport arrival slot**. Mismatches can lead to flight plan suspension and suspended flights aren't included in ATFM. That means no slot, no priority, and big delays. Double-check that your slot confirmation matches what you file.

ATFM (Air Traffic Flow Management) is the system that manages demand and capacity across the network. If your flight is suspended, it's excluded from this process – making it much harder to recover your slot.

Use IFPS Validation Tools

Before filing your flight plan, use validation tools like NMP Flight, the NOP Portal, or CHMI. These platforms let you check for errors, confirm compliance with the RAD, and fine-tune your routing. A rejected plan means wasted time, especially when the network is busy.

NMP Flight is now the main interface for flight tracking, planning validation, slot monitoring, and more. It replaces older tools like CHMI and adds useful features like custom alerts, critical flight marking, and real-time updates. If you haven't used it yet, it's worth getting familiar.

If you're facing a long delay, slot swaps can help – but only in specific cases. **Operators can swap CTOTs between flights** under their own AOC, provided the flights are subject to the same ATFM regulation. Each flight can take part in up to three swaps, which must be submitted via NMP Flight, the NOP Portal, or B2B. Phone requests are possible but should be a last resort. Each request is reviewed by NMOC (Network Manager Operations Centre), Eurocontrol's operational hub for managing traffic flow across Europe, so swaps aren't instant or guaranteed. But when used correctly, they can help reduce the operational impact of delays.

Submit Slot Improvement Requests Wisely

Need a better slot? **Use the e-Helpdesk, but only from EOBT minus 60 minutes**. Submitting too early won't work and flooding the system with duplicate requests won't help either. One well-timed request is all you need. Track your flight in NMP Flight, and only follow up if absolutely necessary.

Understanding Critical Flights

With the introduction of NMP Flight, operators now have access to a **useful new feature: the ability to**

mark a flight as Critical. This helps Eurocontrol identify flights where delays would cause significant operational problems and gives those flights a better chance of being prioritised. This doesn't guarantee an earlier CTOT, but it does signal urgency to the Eurocontrol network team, who may coordinate with ATC or destination airports to reduce the impact of the delay.

From 60 minutes before EOBT, you can tick the "Critical flight" box and choose a reason from a predefined list:

What to keep in mind:

- You can only apply Critical status from **60 min before EOBT**. Earlier requests won't be accepted.
- Once marked, **you can't change or remove the flag** for that flight during the day, so be sure before using it.
- You can mark **up to 5 % of your regulated flights as Critical each day**, with a maximum of 20 flights.
- These flights are **not automatically rejected**, which improves the chance of receiving support from Eurocontrol.

Use this option carefully, and only for flights where delay would cause real disruption. When applied correctly, it's a simple but powerful tool to keep your operation running smoothly.

For Pilots: Keep It Predictable

Eurocontrol doesn't like surprises. The whole system runs more smoothly when flights do exactly what they said they would do. Sudden changes might seem harmless from the flight deck, but they can ripple through the network and cause chaos in sectors ahead. Here's how to keep things flowing:

- **Fly what you file.** Stick to your planned routing and levels unless ATC, weather, or safety require a change. That shortcut might save a minute, but it could cost someone else much more.
- **Stick to your slot.** Request start-up in line with your EOBT and CTOT. Off-schedule departures can break the flow and lead to slot issues.
- **Let your dispatch team talk to Eurocontrol.** The Network Manager Operations Centre (NMOC) is ready to help, but contact should come from dispatch. Unless you're both pilot and ops – let the team handle it.

Need Help? Know Where To Go

Your first stop should always be the **e-Helpdesk** in NMP Flight. It's the fastest and most efficient way to request CTOT improvements, mark Critical flights, or get slot-related support. The network team monitors it constantly and responds quicker when requests come through the system.

Calls should be a last resort, used only for urgent, time-critical situations. Phone support takes resources away from managing the wider network – so only use it when really needed.

Call only if:

- A flight is about to miss CTOT at the holding point.

- There’s a crew duty or curfew risk.
- You’re repositioning a diverted aircraft.
- You’re handling a medical or emergency flight.

Contacts:

- AOLO (Aircraft Operator Liaison Officer) general line: **+32 2 745 1992**
- Airport Function (AF) – for airport-related issues or curfew risk: **+32 2 745 1903**
- AOLO Hotline – for critical/emergency issues only: **+32 496 560 300**
- Airport coordination e-mail: **nm.airports@eurocontrol.int**

For everything else, use the e-Helpdesk – it’s how Eurocontrol can help you best.

Want to Learn More? Start Here

If you want to go beyond the basics and build a deeper understanding of how the European network works, here are three great places to start:

EUROCONTROL Learning Zone – Free online courses and tutorials to help you better understand European flight planning and ATFM.

ThinkNetwork Guide – Summer 2025 – Eurocontrol’s seasonal briefing with key planning tips, capacity updates, and network insights.

NOP Portal Real-time source for airspace status, regulations, slots, and network operations.

Three Ways To Escape From New York

Chris Shieff
5 August, 2025

Key Points

- **If you're flying out of the New York area, expect delays. ATC staffing and tech issues, along with heavy traffic, are causing slowdowns.**
- **But there are three lesser-known routing options (SERMN, Deep Water, TEC) that can get you airborne faster – if you're willing to fly lower, carry extra fuel, and meet a few added requirements.**

In the middle of last year, the FAA transferred control of Newark's airspace from **New York TRACON (N90)** to **Philadelphia TRACON's Area C** due to a shortage of staff.

And it hasn't been smooth sailing. Philly itself is understaffed, and has reported several failures recently with data sent from New York via aging copper lines affecting both radar and communication equipment.

Recent murmurings from OPSGROUP members indicate **EDCT delays** are rife – even at outlier airports. We're talking **hours** here, not minutes.

And in the short term at least, it looks like things will get worse before they get better.

The Memorial Day Weekend set records for US air travel, and the Summer peak is nearly upon us.

A couple of weeks back some clever folk from the NBAA, FAA and the Teterboro Users Group (TUG) got together to talk about the recent disruptions in the Northeast and what to do about it. You can view a replay of their excellent session here.

Some of the juiciest intel was the use of not-so-secret **ATC routes to significantly reduce departure delays** and get you clear of New York's airspace post-haste.

In fact, **three less conventional route options** were discussed to help you escape the Big Apple.

A Quick Word on Fuel

A recurring theme here is 'operational flexibility.' **None of these options will save you fuel, only time.**

To use these routes, you will need to carry more. In some cases enough to operate at low level (less than 10,000') for up to 100nm. But letting ATC know you are willing and capable of flying them may well see you jump an extremely long queue for conventional routes.

Escape Plan #1: SERMN Routes

When weather gets in the way of things, the FAA has a literal **playbook** of strategic options to help manage high volumes of traffic. You can find it here.

Within this playbook, is something called **SERMN Routes**. SERMN stands for SWAP Escape Routes – Metro New York. SWAP stands for severe weather avoidance plan. With me so far?

They comprise a **low-level game plan** to help ATC manage traffic out of the NY Metro area when the regular routes are not available due to nasty build-ups.

When this happens, ATC has three plays available (depending on the direction you're headed):

 SERMN North (BUF, ROC, SYR, YYZ etc). Example routing ex KTEB: COATE → LAAYK → STUBN →BENEE → BUF→ KROC. Jets capped at **10,000**′ until exiting NY Center's airspace.

 SERMN South (DCA, CLT, ATL etc). Example routing ex KTEB: ELVAE → COL → DIXIE → T303 → LEEAH → T315→ TAPPA→ THHMP→ CAVLR6→ KIAD Jets capped at **8,000′.**

 SERMN East – (BOS, North Eastern Corridor). Example routing ex KTEB: BREZY → V39 → CMK → V3 → WOONS → KBOS. Jets capped at **9,000.'**

Their aim is to get you under weather and away from traffic.

But here's the kicker (football pun intended). You don't necessarily need bad weather to fly em.' If hit with a departure delay, communicate with Clearance Delivery that you're **fuelled and willing** to accept a SERMN route. Or any of the other routes below (TEC and Deep Water) for that matter.

If you can get it, it may be good option to beat the crowds.

Hey, what about SERMN West?

It doesn't actually exist, for a few reasons. Predominantly because western departures from the NY Metro area are heavily managed by other established routes such as J80 and J6.

Westbound traffic is also not as typically constrained by adjacent airspace as those aircraft headed in the other directions – and in any case there are other plays in the play book available for westbound traffic, they just don't carry the title SERMN.

Escape Plan #2: Deep Water Routes

Another option to consider are **Deep Water routes** which run north and south off the coast between the Northeast and Florida.

If you have the right gear on board, don't be afraid to get your feet wet.

The FAA advises they can be useful routes out of the area by getting you out of the way of traffic and restricted airspace along the coast.

But before you dive on in, it's important you are **familiar with the requirements** of these routes to fly them.

For instance, in NY Oceanic airspace if you are not RNP 4 or 10 capable you need to let ATC know so that they can apply additional separation. If you do have RNP 4/10, you need to comply with those requirements which includes holding the appropriate Opspec/LOA and having the right equipment on board (such as two independent long range navigation systems).

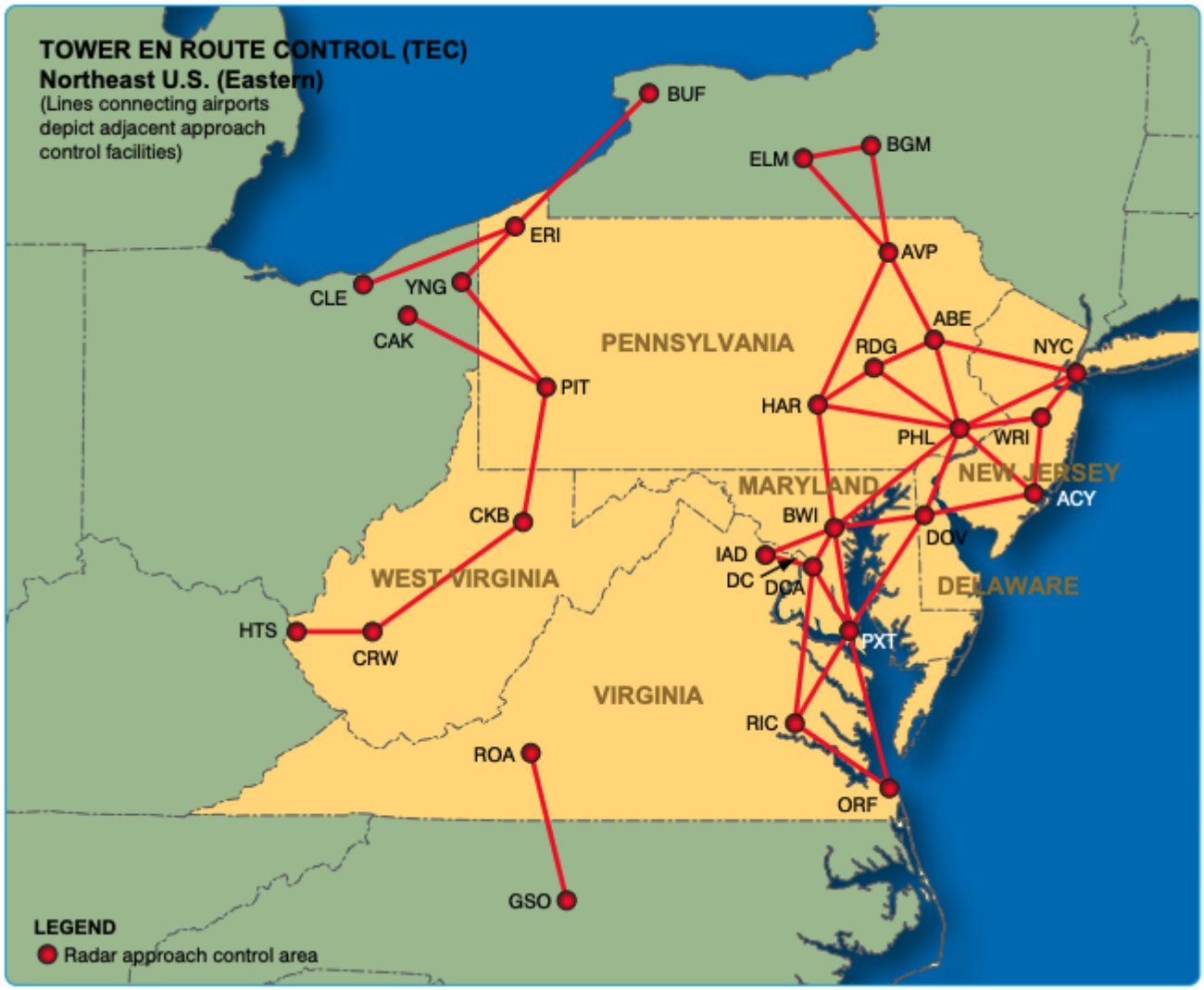
And don't forget your **survival gear** either – which can include lift vests, a raft, survival kits, an ELT and pyrotechnic signalling devices depending on what part of the law you're operating under. You can find these under FARs 91.509, 135.167 and 121.339.

It's also important you're thoroughly familiar with the contingency procedures for oceanic airspace including what to do in the event of a navigation failure (especially loss of RNP capability).

Escape Plan #3: TEC Routes

If you're not headed far from New York, consider the use of **FAA TEC Routes** (Tower Enroute Control).

These are low-altitude IFR routings (typically 5000 – 17,000') used for short-distance flights (usually less than 500nm) and often link nearby metropolitan centres.



The idea behind them is to keep aircraft within TRACON (Terminal Radar Approach Control) without the need to hand them off to enroute centers. They are by design, simple and efficient.

These routes reduce controller workload, and keep you away from busier airways. They are typically used by **turbo-prop** aircraft, so let delivery know you have the fuel to fly them as they may not be immediately considered for jets.

You can find the NE TEC routes in the **FAA Chart Supplement** here.

Finally, stay clued in.

You can avoid delays by predicting when and where they are most likely. The FAA provides a head's up via three useful sources – fly.faa.gov, nasstatus.faa.gov and X (formerly Twitter). This includes daily briefings on incoming weather, disruptions and the plans in place to mitigate against them.

Worldwide GPS Dual Failure mystery solved

OPSGROUP Team
5 August, 2025

The mystery of the dual GPS failures around the world has been solved.

Last week, a slew of Dual/Complete GPS Failures began to be reported by airlines and AOs around the world. A peak of failure reports were received around May 21. Typically, the fault was first annunciated as an “ADS-B RPTG” Fault, followed by GPS 1/2 failure. Aircraft affected were mostly B737 and A320 series, though some widebodies also caught the lurgy.

Initially, no clear cause could be established. There were theories about new spoofing and jamming areas, solar flares, sunspots, and troubling new hacker activity. But none of those lined up with the symptoms.

However, over the weekend, the culprit was traced to a single faulty satellite, GPS PRN 37. Data from the broadcast of this satellite led to the on-board failures that we saw.

Thanks to all OPSGROUP members that assisted with the “ALL CALL” that went out on Friday, there was a great response and we were able to collect a great deal of information. An Ops Alert was issued to members on Sunday, which reads:

ZZZZ/Worldwide - Hazard The mystery of worldwide dual GPS failures appears to have been solved. Over the weekend Boeing, Honeywell, and Collins collaborated to investigate the cause, and the outcome is that the faults were traced to one GPS satellite (PRN 37). A change in the data format being broadcast from it apparently led to the receiver failures. These were limited to Honeywell MMR's, predominantely on B737 and A320 series aircraft. This change has been corrected, and no further issues are expected. There was no connection to an increase in solar activity, or jamming/spoofing. The three OEM's involved consider the case closed. Thank you to all members who responded with reports and information.

A **special briefing** is in your member Dashboard, which includes crew reports of the issue.

NANU NANU

There was a warning (published as a NANU message) to GPS users published earlier in the year, that warned of unhealthy navigation messages being broadcast on GPS satellites 35, 36 and 37 throughout 2025. Let’s hope that any rogue signals from PRN 35 or 36 don’t have the same effect down the track.

NOTICE ADVISORY TO NAVSTAR USERS (NANU) 2025017 NANU TYPE: GENERAL
*** GENERAL MESSAGE TO ALL GPS USERS ***
Testing will be occurring through CY 2025 using PRNs 35, 36, 37
on residual SVs broadcasting UNHEALTHY navigation messages.
*** GENERAL MESSAGE TO ALL GPS USERS ***

POC: CIVILIAN - NAVCEN AT 703-313-5900, HTTPS://WWW.NAVCEN.USCG.GOV
MILITARY - GPS WARFIGHTER COLLABORATION CELL at
HTTPS://GWCC-WS.CCE.AF.MIL/GPSOC, DSN 560-2541, COMM 719-567-2541,
gpsoperationscenter@us.af.mil, HTTPS://GWCC-WS.CCE.AF.MIL
MILITARY ALTERNATE - JOINT SPACE OPERATIONS CENTER, DSN 276-3526.
COMM 805-606-3526. JSPOCCOMBATOPS@US.AF.MIL

Visual Approaches: When To Say No

Chris Shieff
5 August, 2025

There is a recent history in the US of serious incidents that have occurred during visual approaches – you don't have to hunt long to find them. The reality is this: *when we accept a visual approach, we accept more risk.*

That isn't to say that this risk cannot be effectively and safely managed. Visual approaches are still an important way to increase the efficiency of congested airspace. But we *do* have to give ourselves the room, the capacity, and the mitigations to fly them **safely**. And in my opinion, that's where the **true risk** lies.

The FAA seems to agree. On April 2, it issued an eye-opening Safety Alert for Operators (SAFO) regarding visual approaches. The lowdown is this: visual approaches can be **riskier** than they seem, especially in today's busy airspace. Let's take a closer look.

FAA SAFO on Visual Approaches

The FAA's SAFO is resolute in its message – the pilot-in-command has the ultimate responsibility (by law) to **say no to clearances that excessively increase workload or erode safety margins.** In other words, they **don't want us to hesitate to say 'UNABLE'.** Ultimately, it's our decision as pilots, and no one else's.

FAA Reg 14 CFR § 91.3 specifically says:

"…The pilot in command of an aircraft is directly responsible for, and is the final authority as to, the operation of that aircraft."

This includes the **full authority** to refuse or decline any clearance or instruction that they deem unsafe or beyond the operational limits of the aircraft or crew. The SAFO then continues with another important message – **ATC will support a PIC's authority to declare 'unable'** when a clearance may reduce safety margins.

This is where the SAFO falls short a little, at least on a real-world basis. What needs to be included is '*with impunity.'*

Recent Events

In a US NAS burdened by traffic volume, aging infrastructure and controller shortages we continue to hear reports of excessive delays and even confrontation when a clearance is declined.

Check out the recent diversion of a Lufthansa A350 at KSFO/San Francisco due to **non-acceptance of visual separation at night.**

Courtesy of VASAviation.

There appears to be a growing disconnect here between what the FAA wants in its SAFO, and what's actually happening in the real world.

It's seems clear that more needs to change amongst all stakeholders before we can begin to consistently practice 'safety over sequence' while accommodating all traffic.

FAA Mitigations

The FAA's recent SAFO also provides some **guidance for pilots** on how to mitigate some of the risks of accepting visual approaches. We've summarized those in the following little Opsicle.

A note about Business Aviation

In researching this article, several suggestions were also raised about the human factors involved with why pilots find it so hard to **say no** to challenging clearances. Attend any Human Factors course and you'll be familiar with the **common culprits** – saying 'unable' can feel like a form of noncompliance, the need to be perceived as competent, an innate desire to 'make it work', or the struggle of time compression.

What's more interesting to us on this occasion is the **vulnerability** (when compared to airline ops) of **business aviation crew** to accept challenging clearances despite the increased risk. In other words, are there unique factors? BizAv pilots are faced with a **unique combination** of industry culture, operational demands and perception of role.

Under Pressure:

BizAv pilots usually find no solace in the **anonymity** of a flight deck door, a staff number, or a large airline. They have direct contact with those who employ them (sometimes even in the cockpit). Whether we like it or not, this can have an insidious effect on our tolerance for risk. Saying ‘unable’ can feel like **failing to deliver.**

Professional Flexibility:

Travel by private jet can typically cost anywhere between ten to forty times more than flying commercial. Those who pay may have a certain expectation that we can land anywhere, anytime and **circumvent the constraints of conventional airline travel.**

No One’s Watching:

Unlike the airlines, there is no requirement for business jets operated under Part 91 to be equipped with Flight Data Recorders or even CVRs, or even under Part 135 (with less than ten seats). And it is hard to deny (even with the best intentions) that this doesn’t have some kind of impact in moments of unexpectedly high workload. Strict adherence to stabilized approach criteria for instance can become more flexible **without fear of reprisal.**

Safety Management Under Part 91:

The FAA SAFO also specifically mentions the use of safety management systems (SMS) to better mitigate the risks of conducting visual approaches. However a looming mandate will **only apply to Part 135 operations – not Part 91**, where they will remain voluntary. It’s therefore possible that some BizAv pilots will not be exposed sufficiently to the FAA’s advice.

Want to join the discussion?

We’d love to hear from you. You can reach us at: news@ops.group.

Watch Out For APU Fines at Le Bourget

Chris Shieff
5 August, 2025

The summer peak is nearly upon us, and so too is the busiest season for BizAv at LFPB/Le Bourget.

Several upcoming events will see an influx of traffic to the airport including the **French Open** (May 19 – June 8), the **Paris Air Show** (June 16 – 22) and **Paris Fashion Week** (June 24 – 29).

While this isn't a new change, if you're heading into LFPB it's a good time to remind yourself of the strict rules for APU usage lest you fall victim to some potentially large fines.

They're not mucking around either – two groups are involved. The Air Transport Gendarmerie is responsible for monitoring APU usage at the airport and making sure operators follow the rules. If not, a group known (in English) as the Airport Nuisance Authority (ACNUSA) will get involved and issue fines.

In a recent year, ACNUSA imposed 334 fines for non-APU compliance across French airports. Their haul? €6.9 million – that's an average of more than **€20,000 per fine**. This has been confirmed as accurate and current by a local handler. Both the operator and PIC can be held liable.

The French AIP (LFPB AD 2.21) has the full rules – but here's what you need to know…

Know the time limits

Since 2023, the rules at Le Bourget have depended on whether your parking stands have ground facilities or not:

Departing Flights – APU use limited to **10 minutes** prior to the EOBT if your stand is equipped with ground air and power, or **45 minutes** on stands without these services.

Arriving Flights – APU use limited to **5 minutes** after arrival if your stand is equipped with ground air and power, or **20 minutes** on stands without these services.

There are *limited* exemptions to the rules, these include:

- Humanitarian and medical flights.
- Military aircraft.
- Aircraft carrying live animals, perishables, medical or cosmetic goods that require active air

flow.

- The sake of flight safety (which specifically includes passenger, crew or handler health). For departing aircraft it's worth noting it can take up to 30 mins to cool the cabin of a larger jet (such as a G650, or Falcon 8X) to comfortable temp when the ambient temp outside is more than 30 deg C (86 deg F).

For BizAv flights, determining whether or not the FBO is "equipped with ground air and power" is a slightly tricky business. **One FBO reported the following:**

We have some mobile GPUs, but not for every space. That creates two interpretations:

The first one: if we have a mobile GPU available, so it is 5 minutes on arrival and 10 minutes on departure; and if we don't have it available, it is 20 minutes on arrival and 45 minutes on departure.

The second one: they consider that as we are not able to provide one GPU to each aircraft, we are in the 20 minutes on arrival and 45 minutes on departure category by default.

But as the second way is not an "official" one, it is only a tolerance, that's why you might get different replies from the different FBOs about how the rules work here.

I need an exemption

This is at the PIC's discretion, but you need to be able to **justify it** using one of the conditions above.

To do so, you'll need to provide your agent with a declaration for the Gendarmerie that you intend to break the APU rules, and most importantly **why**.

Feedback from local agents

Here's what handlers at Le Bourget had to say when we reached out to them directly.

- *"…the airport authorities are very strict with the use of APU's here. The authorities may fine you for failure to comply – we are able to provide a GPU at the request of the crew…"*
- *"…there are some unexpected and random inspections by the authorities, after which they write a report and impose a fine…"*
- *"…the use of the APUs is randomly controlled by the Gendarmerie here in LFPB. The maximum amount of the fine for APU infractions is 20,000€…"*
- *"…the Captain may only deviate from APU rules for safety reasons. Violation is heavily penalized by the ACNUSA agency, with fines generally exceeding €10,000!…"*

Why the fuss anyway?

Two things – noise and pollution.

APU's are **noisy** things – a typical one produces 113 decibels, an equivalent noise range to a power saw, jackhammer or even a rock concert. Le Bourget is **noise sensitive** and located in close proximity to residential areas.

Then there's the dinosaurs we're burning – carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides and other nasties are ejected from our APU exhaust. Reducing runtime helps **lower emissions** and improves air quality near the field. In fact, here is a **surprising statistic** – approx. 30% of an airport's carbon emissions come from aircraft

on the ground (with APU use being a significant factor).

This is all in line with global and EU climate goals (such as Fit for 55 or the Paris Agreement). Agree or not, we have to play by the rules – or find ourselves paying a hefty price.

Have a report to share?

Have you been stung or know someone who has? Please share your story with us (as always, our reports are always de-identified). There are several thousand crew out there who will owe you a beer. You can reach us around the clock on news@ops.group.

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

David Mumford
5 August, 2025

Key Points

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

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

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

How long can I park my aircraft on the islands?

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

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

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

* Limited positions for longer stay based on Apron Availability.

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

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

Don’t get caught without a slot in Greece

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

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

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

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

- *RMK/LGXXAxxxxxxxxx* for arrivals
- *RMK/LGXXDxxxxxxxxx* for departures.

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

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

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

Watch out for extra fees!

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

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

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

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

A note on LGAV/Athens

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

But those days are gone!

In March 2025, the airport started managing BizAv parking entirely through slots and PPRs. **The free parking period was cut from 12 hours to just 90 minutes.** If your ground time is 90 minutes or less,

no PPR is needed, and you can request a slot up to 7 days before the flight. For stays longer than 90 minutes, you must first obtain a PPR, but this will **only be issued within 24 hours of the flight.** Once approved, you can then confirm your slot using the PPR. It seems this rule can only be found in the Slot Authority's guidance doc – not the AIP or Notams.

Good options for parking?

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

Plus a couple more we heard about last year:

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

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

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

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

London Night Ops: What's Changing This Summer

David Mumford
5 August, 2025

Key Points

- **EGGW/Luton will allow a limited number of BizAv night slots this summer (14 Jun – 17 Sep), a rare exception linked to upcoming runway works.**
- **EGSS/Stansted now has only 10 BizAv night slots per week, shared between all FBOs, available until the end of October (unless extended).**
- **EGWU/Northolt will have restricted civilian ops hours in Jun, Jul and Aug due to control tower works impacting ATC staffing, with no weekend flying at all in Jul and Aug.**
- **EGMC/Southend is not available H24. It operates daily from 0600 to 0130 local time, with no night operations permitted – including for QC1 or quieter aircraft.**

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

All times shown below are local time!

EGLL/Heathrow & EGKK/Gatwick

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

EGGW/Luton

There's a change to night operations this summer. **The airport will allow a limited number of night slots for BizAv**. Between 14 Jun – 17 Sep, up to 100 ad-hoc night slots will be granted for flights between 2300-0659 local time, but only for quieter aircraft. Best to check with your local handler whether your aircraft qualifies. These slots are shared across all operators and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. This is a one-off exception, linked to upcoming runway works. Slots will be tightly controlled and may be withdrawn if airline delays push into night hours. A few different FBOs to choose from:

Signature: ltn@signatureflight.co.uk
Harrods: ltnops@harrodsaviation.com

EGSS/Stansted

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

Inflite Jet Centre: operations@inflite.co.uk
Universal: uk@universalaviation.aero

Harrods: stnops@harrodsaviation.com (Harrods operate two FBOs here: *The Knightsbridge* and *The Brompton*)

EGLC/London City

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

EGTK/London Oxford

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

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

EGLF/Farnborough

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

EGKB/Biggin Hill

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

Executive Handling: handling@bigginhillairport.com
Jetex: fbo-bqh@jetex.com

EGWU/Northolt

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

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

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

Universal is the FBO here: northolt@universalaviation.aero. Check here for more info.

EGMC/Southend

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

You can contact London Southend Jet Centre FBO here: ops@londonsjc.com

EGBB/Birmingham

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

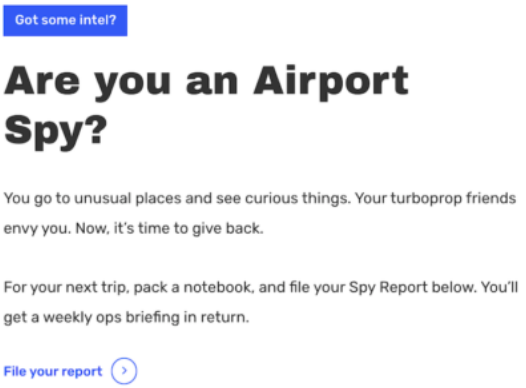
XLR Executive Jet Centre: jetcentre@xlrbirmingham.com

Signature: bhx@signatureflight.co.uk

Send us your spy reports!

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

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



EU Updates Lost Comms and Emergency Descent Rules

David Mumford
5 August, 2025

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

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

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

You can download the updated SERA guidance here, but here's a quick look at the main changes:

Radio Communication Failure Procedures

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

Squawk 7600 = Not diverting

Use 7600 if you're flying under IFR and:

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

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

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

🚨 Squawk 7601 = You ARE diverting

Use 7601 if:

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

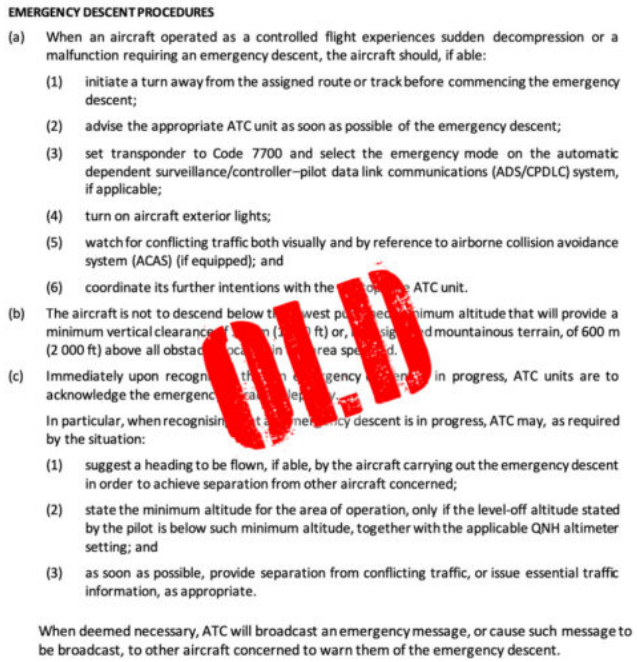
So 7601 is a brand-new code introduced to give ATC a clear picture of what you’re doing. Instead of guessing whether you’re continuing IFR or trying to land visually, ATC knows right away: you’re diverting to land, and they can adjust separation and support accordingly.

Emergency Descent Procedure

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

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

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



EMERGENCY DESCENT PROCEDURES

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

(1) initiate a turn away from the assigned route or track before commencing the emergency descent;

(2) advise the appropriate ATC unit as soon as possible of the emergency descent;

(3) set transponder to Code 7700 and select the emergency mode on the automatic dependent surveillance/controller–pilot data link communications (ADS/CPDLC) system, if applicable;

(4) turn on aircraft exterior lights;

(5) watch for conflicting traffic both visually and by reference to airborne collision avoidance system (ACAS) (if equipped); and

(6) coordinate its further intentions with the [illegible] ATC unit.

(b) The aircraft is not to descend below t[illegible]west pu[illegible]imum altitude that will provide a minimum vertical clearance [illegible] ft) or, [illegible]d mountainous terrain, of 600 m (2 000 ft) above all obstac[illegible]rea spe[illegible]d.

(c) Immediately upon recogn[illegible]gency [illegible] in progress, ATC units are to acknowledge the emergenc[illegible]

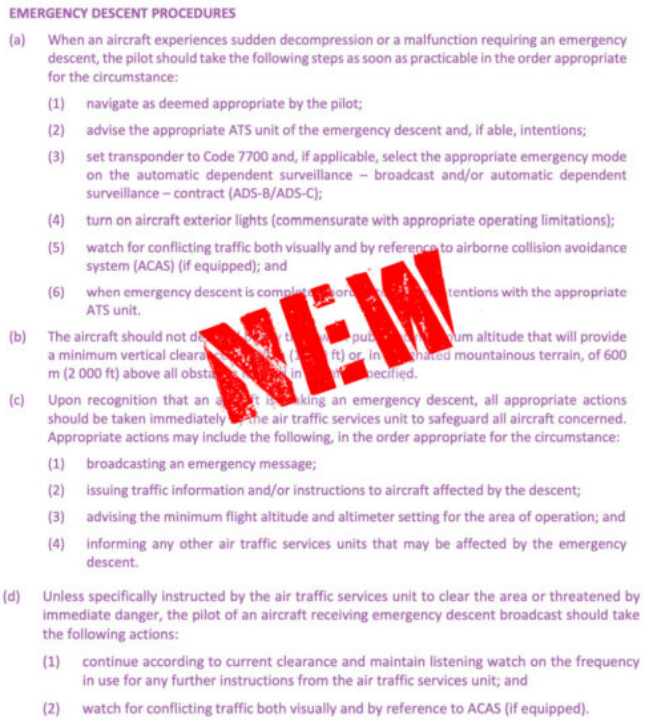
In particular, when recognisi[illegible]cy descent is in progress, ATC may, as required by the situation:

(1) suggest a heading to be flown, if able, by the aircraft carrying out the emergency descent in order to achieve separation from other aircraft concerned;

(2) state the minimum altitude for the area of operation, only if the level-off altitude stated by the pilot is below such minimum altitude, together with the applicable QNH altimeter setting; and

(3) as soon as possible, provide separation from conflicting traffic, or issue essential traffic information, as appropriate.

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



EMERGENCY DESCENT PROCEDURES

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

(1) navigate as deemed appropriate by the pilot;

(2) advise the appropriate ATS unit of the emergency descent and, if able, intentions;

(3) set transponder to Code 7700 and, if applicable, select the appropriate emergency mode on the automatic dependent surveillance – broadcast and/or automatic dependent surveillance – contract (ADS-B/ADS-C);

(4) turn on aircraft exterior lights (commensurate with appropriate operating limitations);

(5) watch for conflicting traffic both visually and by reference to airborne collision avoidance system (ACAS) (if equipped); and

(6) when emergency descent is compl[illegible]tentions with the appropriate ATS unit.

(b) The aircraft should not d[illegible]um altitude that will provide a minimum vertical cleara[illegible] ft) or, in[illegible]ated mountainous terrain, of 600 m (2 000 ft) above all obsta[illegible]pecified.

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

(1) broadcasting an emergency message;

(2) issuing traffic information and/or instructions to aircraft affected by the descent;

(3) advising the minimum flight altitude and altimeter setting for the area of operation; and

(4) informing any other air traffic services units that may be affected by the emergency descent.

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

(1) continue according to current clearance and maintain listening watch on the frequency in use for any further instructions from the air traffic services unit; and

(2) watch for conflicting traffic both visually and by reference to ACAS (if equipped).

Notams and AIP Updates

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

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

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

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

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

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

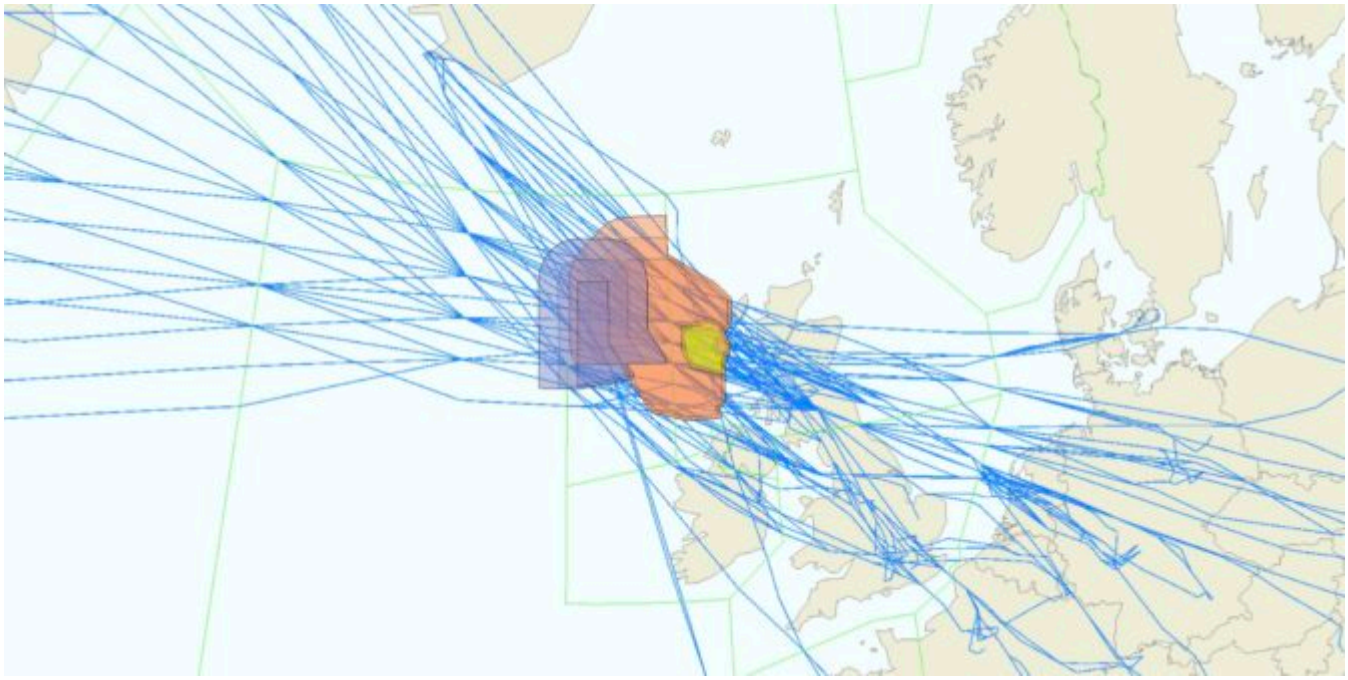
And the UK has published this doc saying that no changes are being made to the UK's RCF procedures.

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

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

NAT Airspace Closures: Formidable Shield 2025

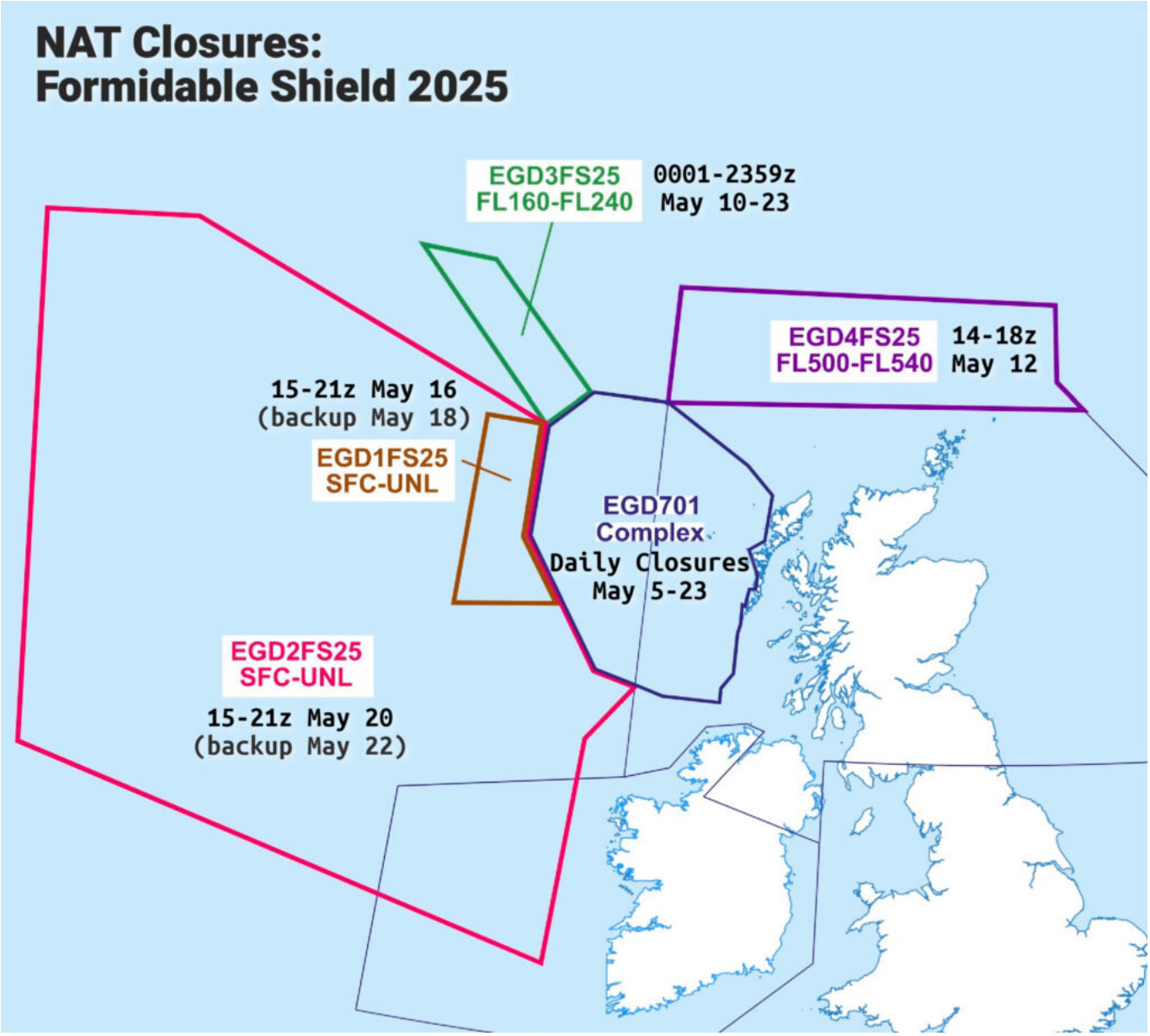
David Mumford
5 August, 2025



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

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

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



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

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

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

G0069/25 – AIRSPACE RESERVATION:
AREA: 590000N 0143000W – 590000N 0130000W – 573126N 0130000W –
564357N 0120000W – 563000N 0143000W – 590000N 0143000W
FLW SEPARATIONS WILL BE PROVIDED WITHIN OCEANIC AIRSPACE: MNPS/NAT
HIGH LEVEL AIRSPACE(HLA) 30NM, NON-MNPS/NAT HLA 60NM.EGD1FS25. SFC – UNL, 18
MAY 15:00 2025 UNTIL 18 MAY 21:00 2025. CREATED: 08 MAY 09:16 2025

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

Saudi Arabia Lifts Cabotage Ban

Kateřina Michalská
5 August, 2025

Key Points

- **Starting May 1, Saudi Arabia has removed its cabotage limits, which means foreign charter flights can now operate domestic sectors within the country – repositioning without passengers and quick drop-offs are no longer the only option.**
- **To gain approval, operators need to complete three steps: register with MISA, apply to GACA with a business plan, and comply with GACAR Part 129 requirements including safety and sustainability documentation.**

Here's what you need to do:

Step 1: Register with MISA

Before anything else, you need to register with MISA (Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Investment). They handle investment licensing, which is the starting point for getting your charter approval. If you hit any snags here, you can reach them at logistics@misa.gov.sa.

Step 2: Apply to GACA

Next, you'll submit an official letter to the President of the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) at generalaviation@gaca.gov.sa. This letter should:

- Request approval for domestic charter operations
- Include your business plan (GACA has provided a template)

- Optionally include any extra economic details you want to share

Step 3: Meet the regulatory requirements

You'll need to comply with GACAR Part 129 – basically, Saudi's rules for foreign air carriers. Part of this includes submitting a Safety and Environmental Sustainability Sector form.

What does this change mean?

For international operators, it's a big deal. You can now:

- **Pick up and drop off passengers on domestic segments**
- **Reposition flights domestically without worrying about cabotage violations**
- **Offer more flexible services to clients operating inside Saudi Arabia**

This change is part of Saudi's big push to grow its general aviation sector into a $2 billion industry by 2030, creating thousands of jobs and expanding the private aviation market. GACA says they've already received plenty of interest from international and regional operators, so expect some competition.

Where to get help

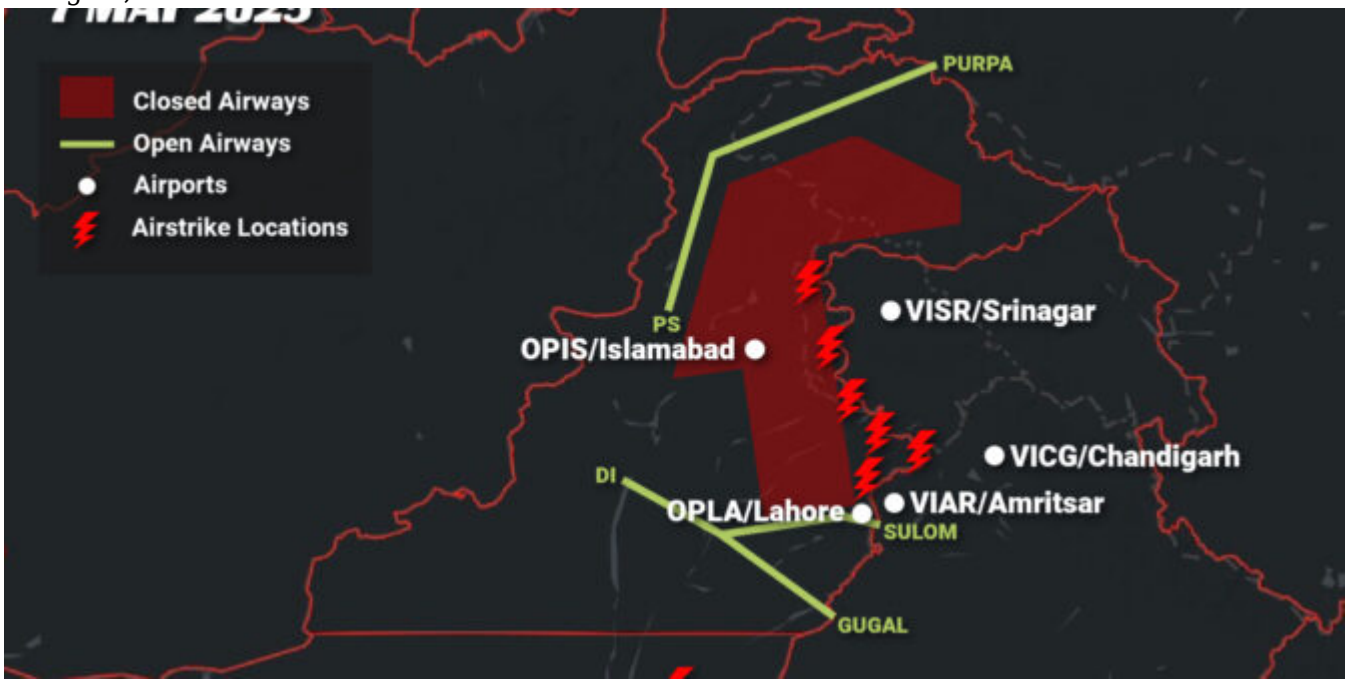
If you need help or have questions, GACA and MISA have both provided contact points:

MISA: logistics@misa.gov.sa

GACA: generalaviation@gaca.gov.sa

Pakistan/India Airspace Update

David Mumford
5 August, 2025



Update May 12

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

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

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

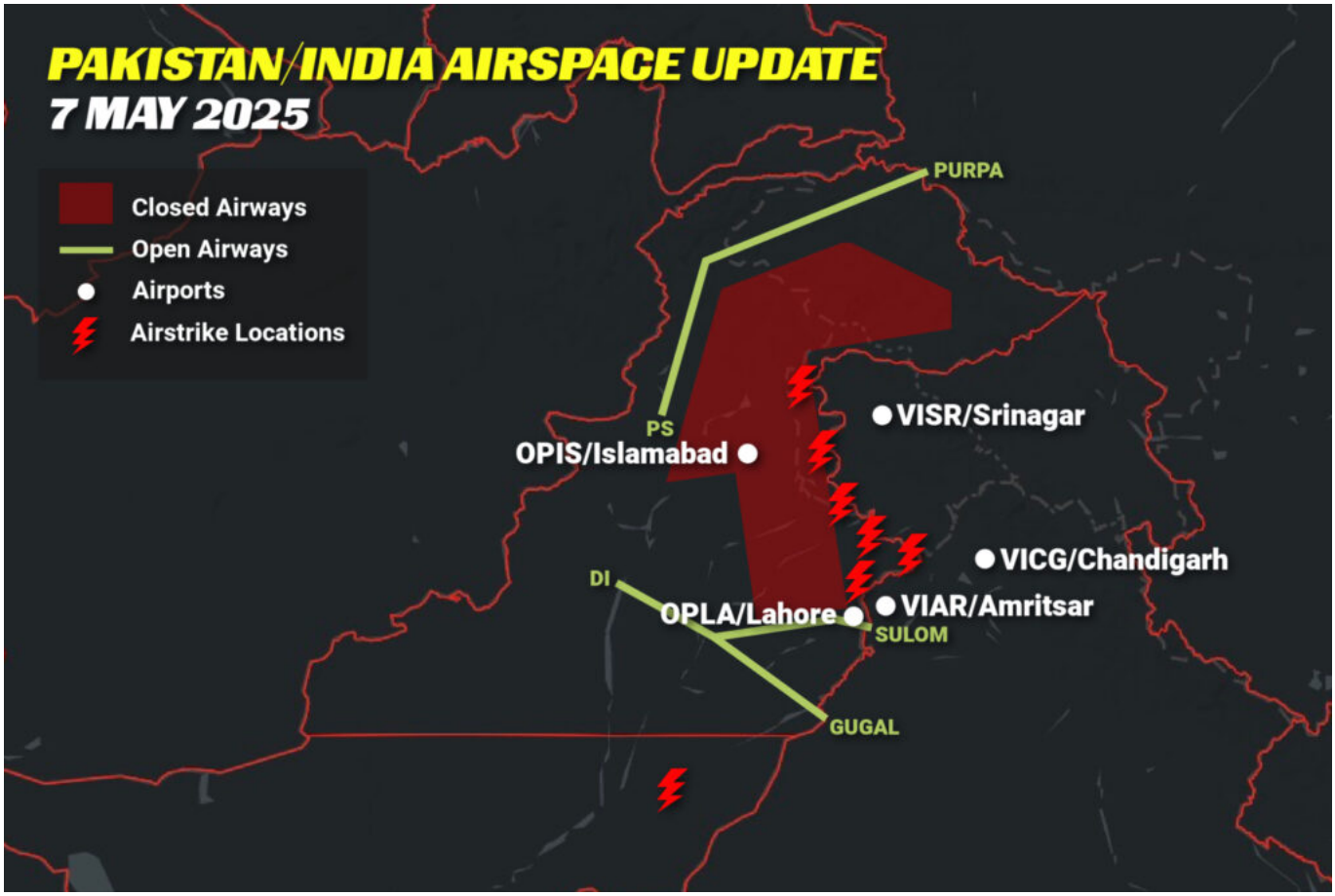
Pakistan has reopened all previously closed airways. India has reopened all previously closed airports. But both countries continue to prohibit each other's aircraft from entering their respective airspace (Notams: VIDF G0510/25 and OPLR A0220/25).

Update May 7

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

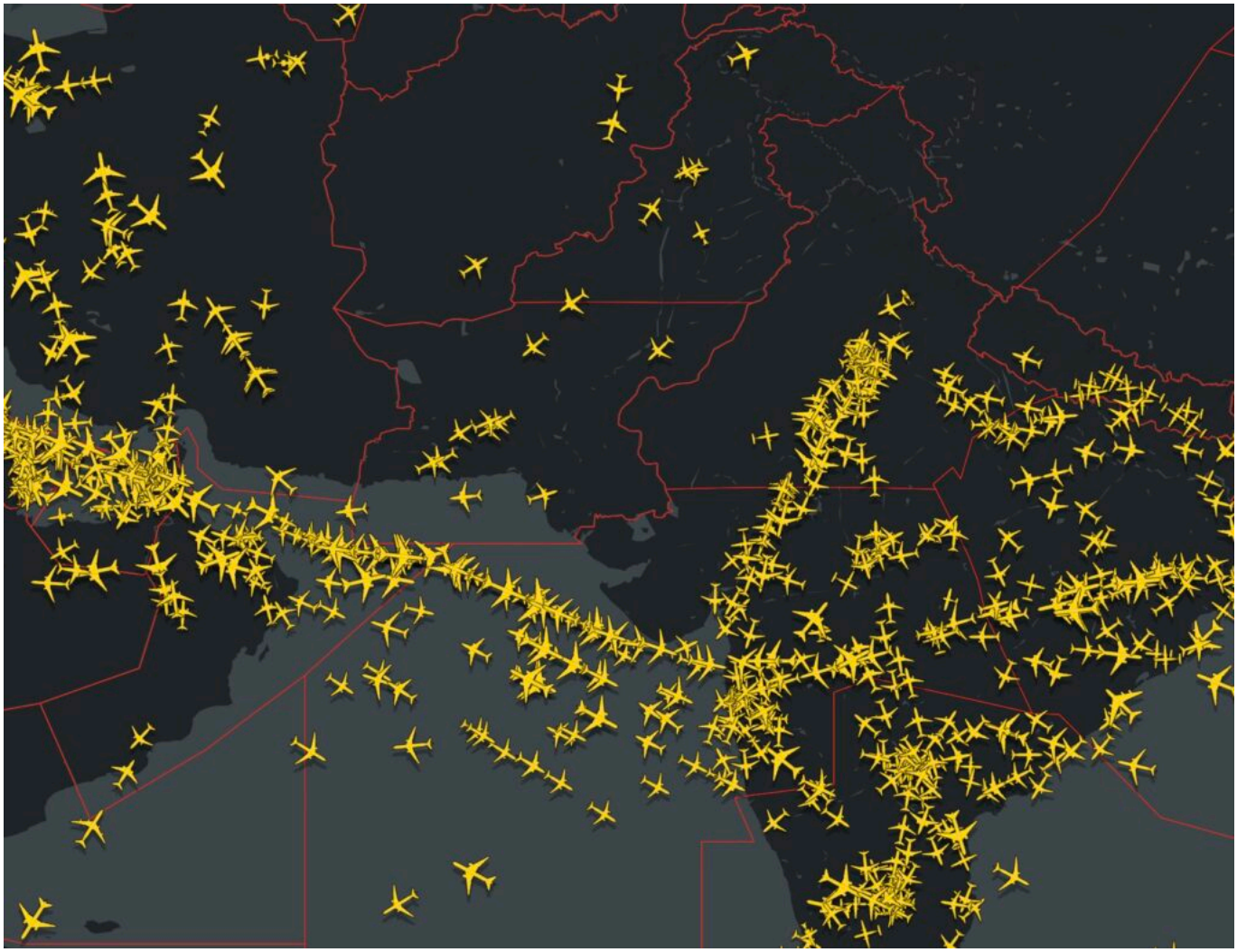
In India, **VIAR/Amritsar, VISR/Srinagar and VICG/Chandigarh airports are closed** to civil flights until May 10 as a precaution. In Pakistan, flights have now resumed at all airports that were temporarily closed on May 7, including **OPLA/Lahore and OPIS/Islamabad.**

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



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

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



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