

Clarifying Cuba Overflight Permits and NAV Fees

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Key Points

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

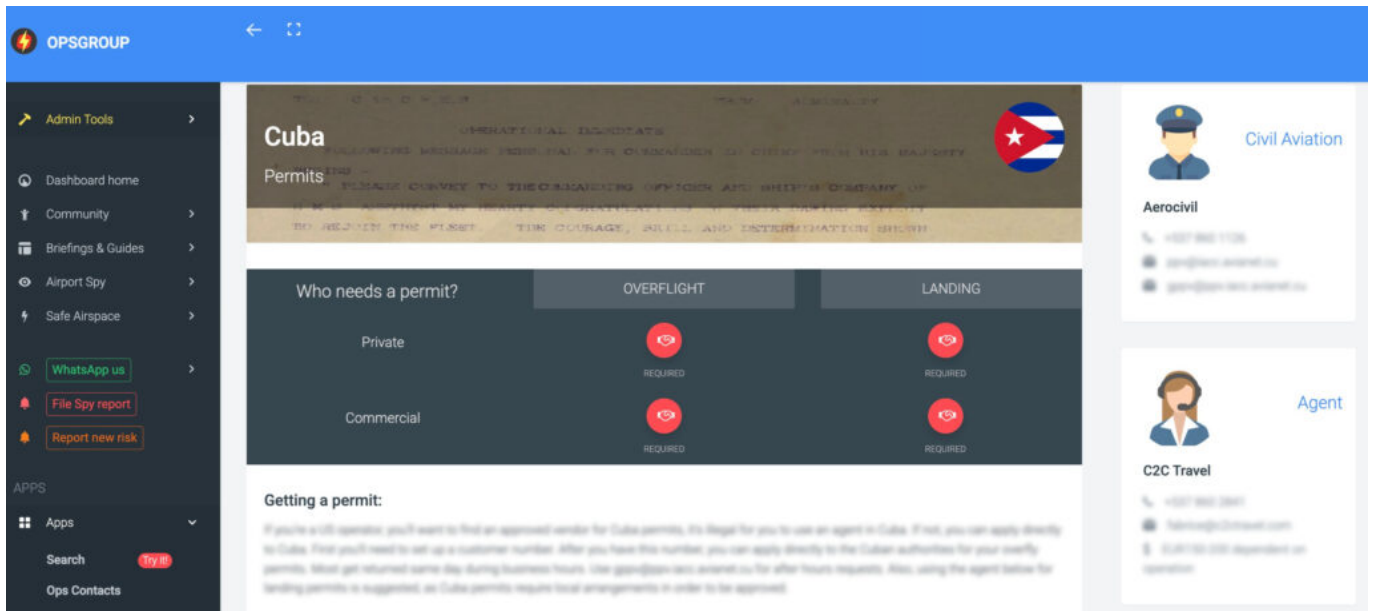
For the longest time, we've been confused about the rules around Cuba overflight permits and NAV fees. Once upon a long ago, the requirements for these were contained in the MUFH/Havana FIR Notams, but alas, no more. We couldn't find all the info we really wanted on them in the Cuban AIP either.

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

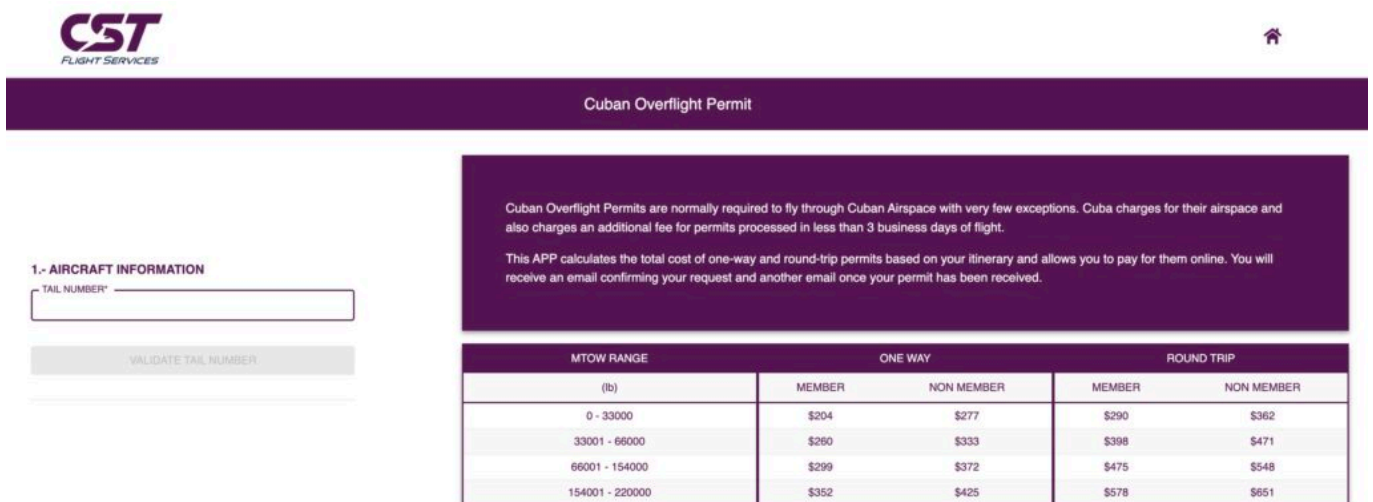
Overflight Permits

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

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

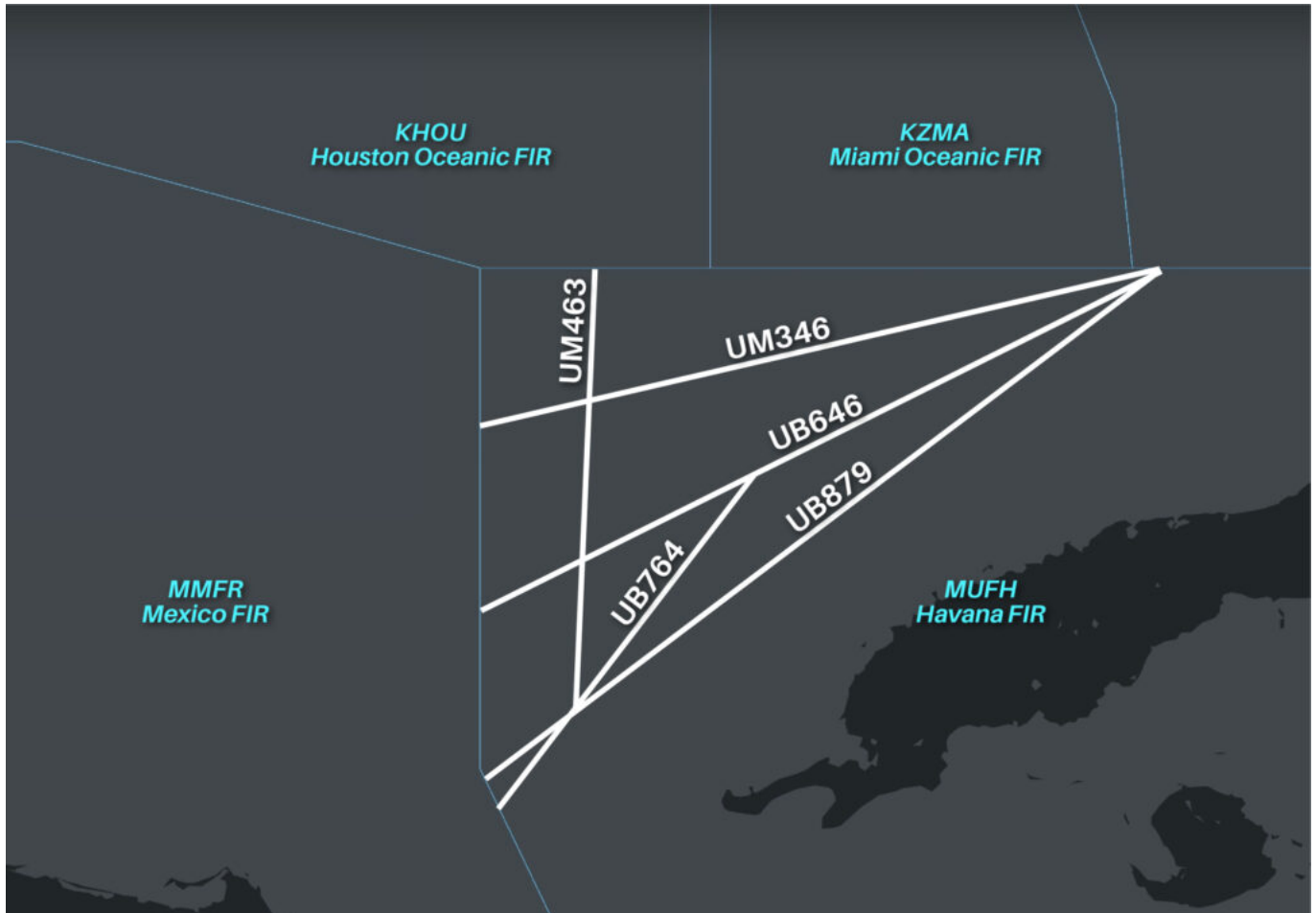


But if you're a US operator, you'll want to find an approved vendor for Cuba permits. CST have a service where you can apply for Cuba overflight permits online. The system determines whether you will need one, and calculates what the fee will be based on Cuba's fee structure. You pay for it online, and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



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

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



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

NAV Fees

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

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

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

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

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

Flights TO Cuba

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

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

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

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

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