

FAA eases Gulf airspace restriction

written by David Mumford
18 February, 2020



The FAA has downgraded its airspace warning for the overwater airspace in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman.

They previously said that US operators should **avoid this airspace** except when flying to/from the main airports in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia.

The new guidance now just **advises caution** in this region, and recommends to avoid the airways nearest to the OIIX/Tehran FIR whenever possible, to reduce the risk of miscalculation or misidentification by air defence systems (remember, the US ban on Iran overflights is still in place).

The crucial change with this new warning is that **overflights in this region are now permitted**. So for US operators wanting to transit the OKAC/Kuwait, OBBB/Bahrain, OMAE/Emirates and OOMM/Muscat FIRs – you can now do so.



This new Notam represents a further loosening of the total airspace ban on the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman initially applied by the FAA shortly after the Iranian missile strike on US military bases in Iraq on Jan 8, which was quickly followed by the **shooting down of Ukraine Int Airlines flight 752 in Tehran** by the Iranian Armed Forces, having mistaken the aircraft radar return for an inbound missile.

The FAA cited **Iranian military de-escalation** as the reason for the change. "The FAA assesses there is sufficiently reduced risk of Iranian military miscalculation or misidentification that could affect U.S. civil aviation operations in the overwater airspace above the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman," the agency said in their Background Information statement, issued on 18th Feb 2020.

Here's the Background Information statement in full:

Iran has de-escalated its military posture in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman as of early February 2020. Given this de-escalation, the FAA assesses there is sufficiently reduced risk of Iranian military miscalculation or misidentification that could affect U.S. civil aviation operations in the overwater airspace above the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman in the Kuwait Flight Information Region (FIR) (OKAC), Jeddah FIR (OEJD), Bahrain FIR (OB BB), Emirates FIR (OMAE), and Muscat FIR (OOMM) to permit U.S. civil flight operations to resume.

While the risk to U.S. civil aviation operations in the above-named area has decreased, military posturing and political tensions in the region remain elevated, and there remains some inadvertent risk to U.S. civil aviation operations due to the potential for miscalculation or misidentification. As a result, on 14 Feb 2020, the FAA issued Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) KICZ A0014/20 (reissued on 17 Feb as A0016/20) permitting U.S. civil flight operations to resume in the above-named area while advising operators to exercise caution and to avoid operating on air routes nearest to the Tehran FIR (OIIX) boundary whenever possible. The situation in the region remains fluid and could quickly escalate if circumstances change.

The 8 January 2020 accidental shoot down of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 shortly after takeoff from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport (OIIE) tragically highlights the airspace deconfliction

concerns, which pose an inadvertent risk to civil aviation from air defense engagements during periods of heightened tensions and associated military activity. Following the accidental shoot down, the region has seen a lowering of tensions, despite Iran's continued air defense coverage along its southern coast. In June 2019, there were two incidents of surface-to-air missile fire from the southern coast of Iran targeting U.S. unmanned aircraft systems operating in the Gulf of Oman.

Iran possesses a wide variety of anti-aircraft-capable weapons, including surface-to-air missile systems (SAMs), man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) and fighter aircraft capable of conducting aircraft interception operations. Some of the anti-aircraft-capable weapons have ranges that encompass key international air routes over the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. Although Iran likely has no intention to target civil aircraft, the presence of multiple long-range, advanced anti-aircraft-capable weapons in a tense environment poses a risk of miscalculation or misidentification, especially during periods of heightened political tension and military activity.

There is also the potential for Iran to use Global Positioning System (GPS) jammers and other communications jamming capabilities, which may inadvertently affect their command and control capabilities and potentially pose a risk to U.S. civil aviation operating in the above-named area.

The FAA will continue to monitor the risk environment for U.S. civil aviation operating in the region and make adjustments, as appropriate, to safeguard U.S. civil aviation.

Here's the new Notam in full:

A0016/20 (Issued for KICZ)

SECURITY..UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ADVISORY FOR OVERWATER AIRSPACE ABOVE THE PERSIAN GULF AND THE GULF OF OMAN.

THOSE PERSONS DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH A BELOW SHOULD EXERCISE CAUTION WHEN OPERATING IN OVERWATER AIRSPACE ABOVE THE PERSIAN GULF AND THE GULF OF OMAN IN THE KUWAIT FLIGHT INFORMATION REGION (FIR) (OKAC), JEDDAH FIR (OEJD) , BAHRAIN FIR (OB BB), EMIRATES FIR (OMAE), AND MUSCAT FIR (OOMM) DUE TO CONTINUED ELEVATED MILITARY POSTURING AND POLITICAL TENSIONS IN THE REGION.

NOTAM KICZ A0002/20, WHICH PROHIBITS U.S. CIVIL AVIATION OPERATIONS IN THE TEHRAN FIR (OIIX), REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

A. APPLICABILITY. THIS NOTAM APPLIES TO: ALL U.S. AIR CARRIERS AND COMMERCIAL OPERATORS; ALL PERSONS EXERCISING THE PRIVILEGES OF AN AIRMAN CERTIFICATE ISSUED BY THE FAA, EXCEPT SUCH PERSONS OPERATING U.S. REGISTERED AIRCRAFT FOR A FOREIGN AIR CARRIER; AND ALL OPERATORS OF AIRCRAFT REGISTERED IN THE UNITED STATES, EXCEPT WHERE THE OPERATOR OF SUCH AIRCRAFT IS A FOREIGN AIR CARRIER.

B. PLANNING. THOSE PERSONS DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH A PLANNING TO OPERATE IN THE ABOVE-NAMED AREA MUST REVIEW CURRENT SECURITY/THREAT INFORMATION AND NOTAMS AND COMPLY WITH ALL APPLICABLE FAA REGULATIONS, OPERATIONS SPECIFICATIONS, MANAGEMENT SPECIFICATIONS, AND LETTERS OF AUTHORIZATION, INCLUDING UPDATING B450.

C. OPERATIONS. AVOID AIR ROUTES NEAREST TO THE TEHRAN FIR (OIIX) BOUNDARY, WHENEVER POSSIBLE, TO REDUCE THE RISK OF MISCALCULATION OR MISIDENTIFICATION BY AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS. ADDITIONALLY, AIRCRAFT OPERATING IN THE ABOVE-NAMED AREA MAY ENCOUNTER INADVERTENT GPS INTERFERENCE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS JAMMING, WHICH COULD OCCUR WITH LITTLE OR NO WARNING.

THOSE PERSONS DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH A MUST REPORT SAFETY AND/OR SECURITY INCIDENTS TO THE FAA AT +1 202-267-3333. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS PROVIDED AT:

[HTTPS://WWW.FAA.GOV/AIR_TRAFFIC/PUBLICATIONS/US_RESTRICTIONS/](https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/us_restrictions/).

SFC - UNL, 17 FEB 19:54 2020 UNTIL PERM. CREATED: 17 FEB 20:00 2020

For more on these, and for a full list of current warnings about Iran and Iraq from other states, see SafeAirspace.net