Indonesia is intercepting aircraft – outside their airspace

David Mumford
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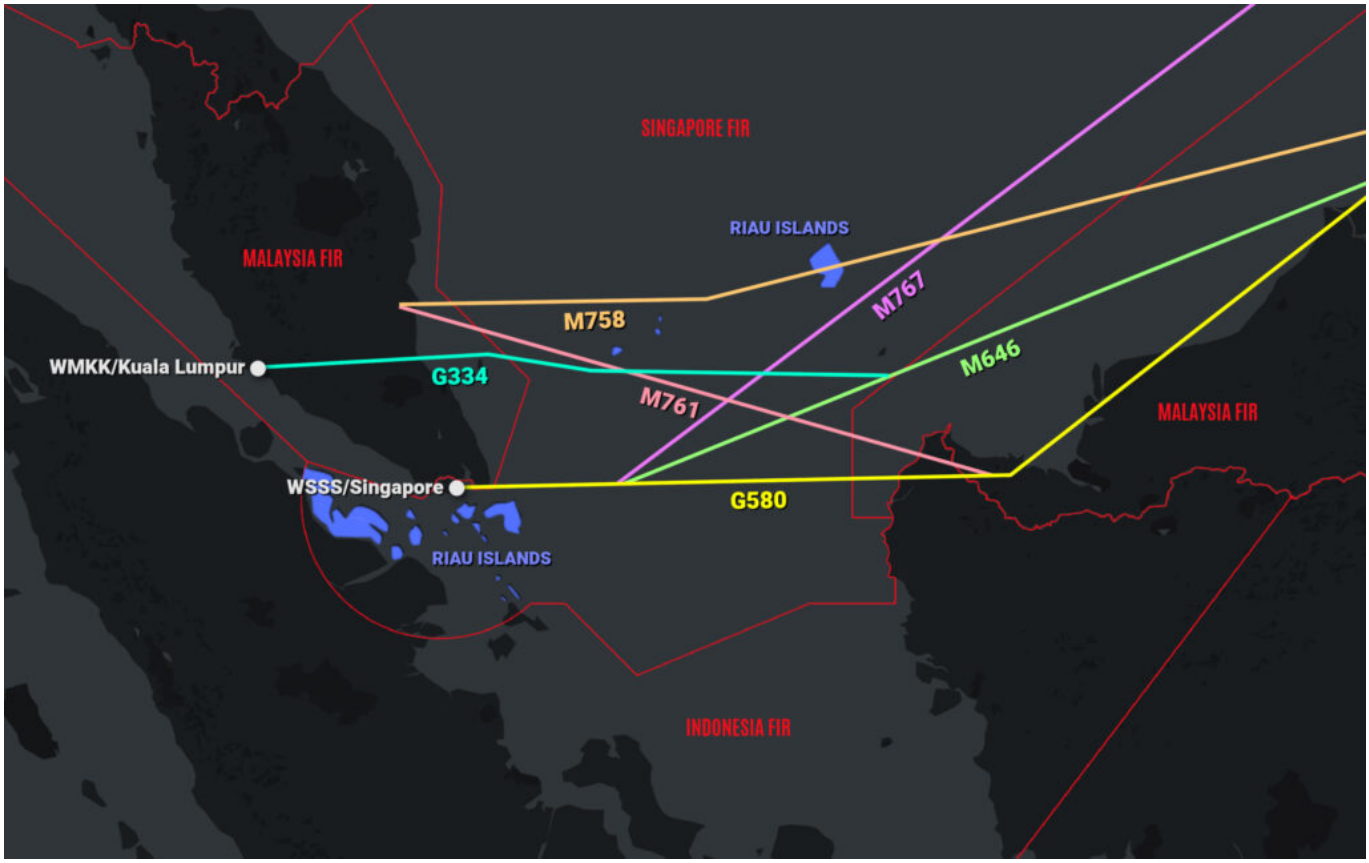
If you are operating in the Singapore FIR, consider this carefully: **you may be overflying Indonesia** without knowing it. Indonesia will know though, and they want you to have an overflight permit.

You will find out in one of three ways:

1. You'll be intercepted by two Indonesian Air Force fighter jets and brought to Indonesia
2. You'll receive a nastygram via your National Authority
3. You'll get a fine

2. and 3. are not cool, but 1. is something to avoid at all costs. The inside of military/police cells at outlying Indonesian Airports is not pretty.

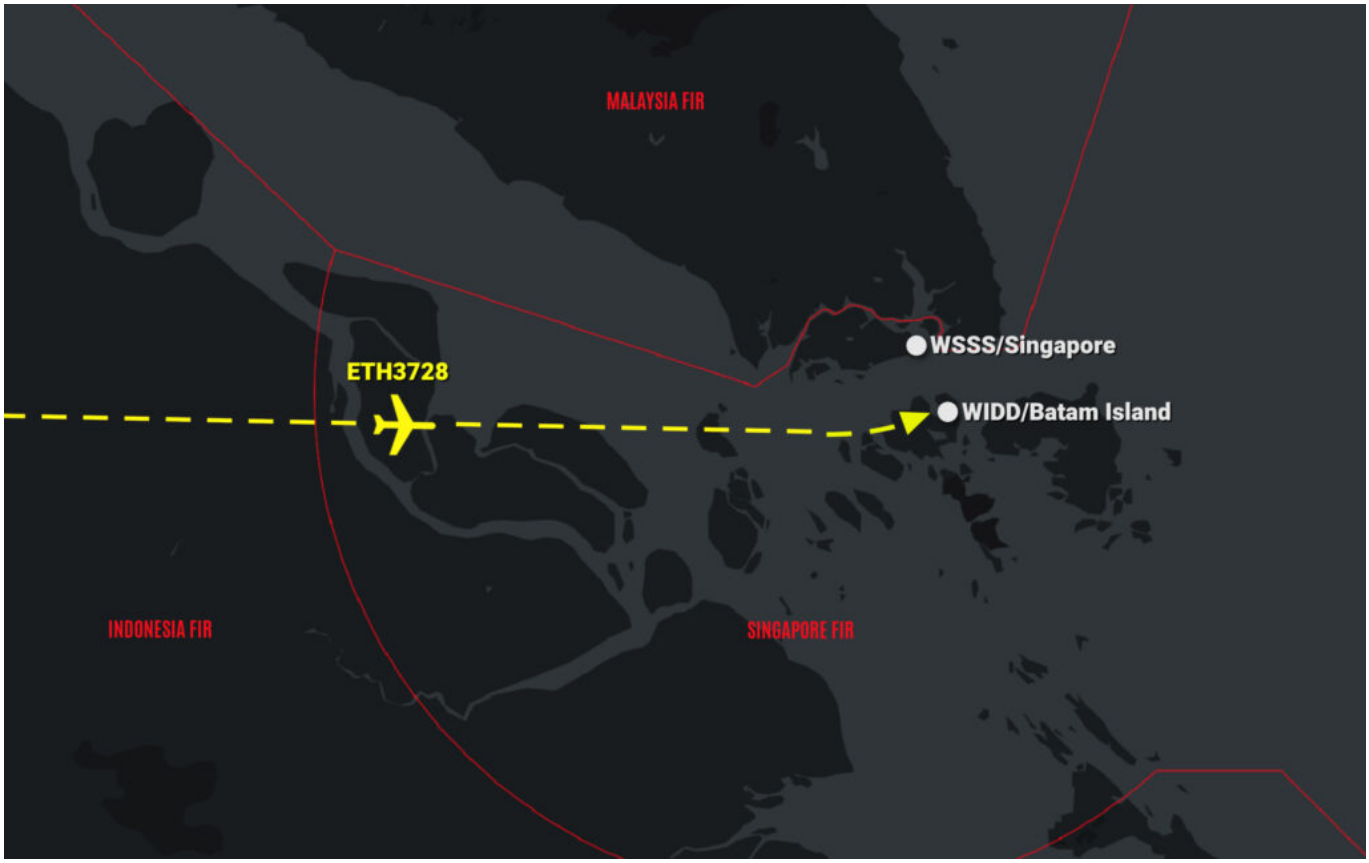
Watch out for the following airways – **M758, M646, M767, G334, M761, G580**. These all pass over Indonesian territory, even though the area is actually part of the Singapore and Malaysia FIRs.



Indonesia has a reputation for excessively strict enforcement of permit rules.

On 14 Jan 2019, two Indonesian F-16s intercepted an Ethiopian Airlines cargo flight ETH3728 for flying across Indonesian airspace without permission. The aircraft was initially supposed to operate from HAAB/Addis Ababa to VHHH/Hong Kong, but was modified at the last minute to route via WSSS/Singapore instead, to make a delivery of Rolls-Royce Trent 1000 engines.

The Ethiopian Airlines aircraft was intercepted forced to land at WIDD/Batam Island – which lies right in the middle of the chunk of airspace controlled by Singapore.



Another incident happened back in 2014, where a King Air plane en-route from WBGG/Kuching to WSSS/Singapore was intercepted by Indonesian fighter jets in the same airspace managed by Singapore, and forced to land at WIOO/Pontianak Airport in Indonesia.

The reason? Because they were overflying some Indonesian islands out in the ocean, the Indonesian Air Force claimed they were overflying Indonesia's sovereign skies – without a permit.

Indonesia still hasn’t updated its AIP, but the rules they enforce are clear: if you’re overflying any Indonesian territory, you must get an overflight permit, regardless of the flight level.

Here’s a nastygram to an OPSGROUP member, received in February 2017:

EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
SINGAPORE

[redacted]

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia presents its compliments to the British High Commission in Singapore and has the honour to transmit a message from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia as follows:

- On [redacted] a [redacted] registered aircraft, call sign [redacted] enroute Kinabalu – Seletar has flown over Indonesia's territory. The said aircraft was detected over the Indonesian archipelagic waters and territorial sea in the vicinity of Riau Islands and Natuna Islands. The flight was conducted without valid flight clearance from the Government of the Republic of Indonesia.

- The aforementioned intrusion is a clear violation of Indonesian sovereignty and Indonesian law as well as international law. In accordance with Article 1 of the Chicago Convention 1944, Indonesia has the complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above its territory. Furthermore, the Ministry would like to reiterate that foreign aircraft overflying Indonesia's territory must have a valid flight clearance issued by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia.

- In this connection, the provision of air traffic services by the Singapore Authority, in accordance with the rules of ICAO, cannot be interpreted that Singapore has the authority to issue the clearance to foreign aircrafts entering Indonesia's airspace.

- The Ministry would like to bring this issue to the attention of the relevant authorities of the Cayman Islands with a view to ensuring that similar occurrences of such territorial breach will not be repeated in the future.

With regards to the above, the Embassy has the honour of seeking the kind assistance of the British High Commission in Singapore to convey the Government of the Republic of Indonesia's concern to the relevant authorities of [redacted]

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the British High Commission in Singapore the assurances of its highest consideration.

[redacted] February 2017

British High Commission
Singapore

KEDUTAAN BESAR REPUBLIK INDONESIA
02
SINGAPURA

Bottom line: check your airways carefully, and make sure there are no Indonesian Island underneath. **If there are, get a permit**.