

Iran and Iraq airspace restrictions

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Please note: This article refers to the airspace warnings for Iran and Iraq following the shutdown of UIA flight 752 in Tehran in Jan 2020. We are keeping the article here for reference purposes only. For updated airspace warnings, check safeairspace.net

Following the events of Jan 8, when an Iranian missile strike on US military bases in Iraq was quickly followed by the shooting down of Ukraine Int Airlines flight 752 in Tehran by the Iranian Armed Forces, multiple western countries issued warnings to **avoid the airspace of Iraq and Iran completely**.

But in the weeks that followed, some of these countries issued updated advice, **allowing overflights to resume at the higher flight levels**.

Here's a summary of what the main countries/agencies who regularly publish airspace warnings have said with regards to Iraq and Iran:

The US

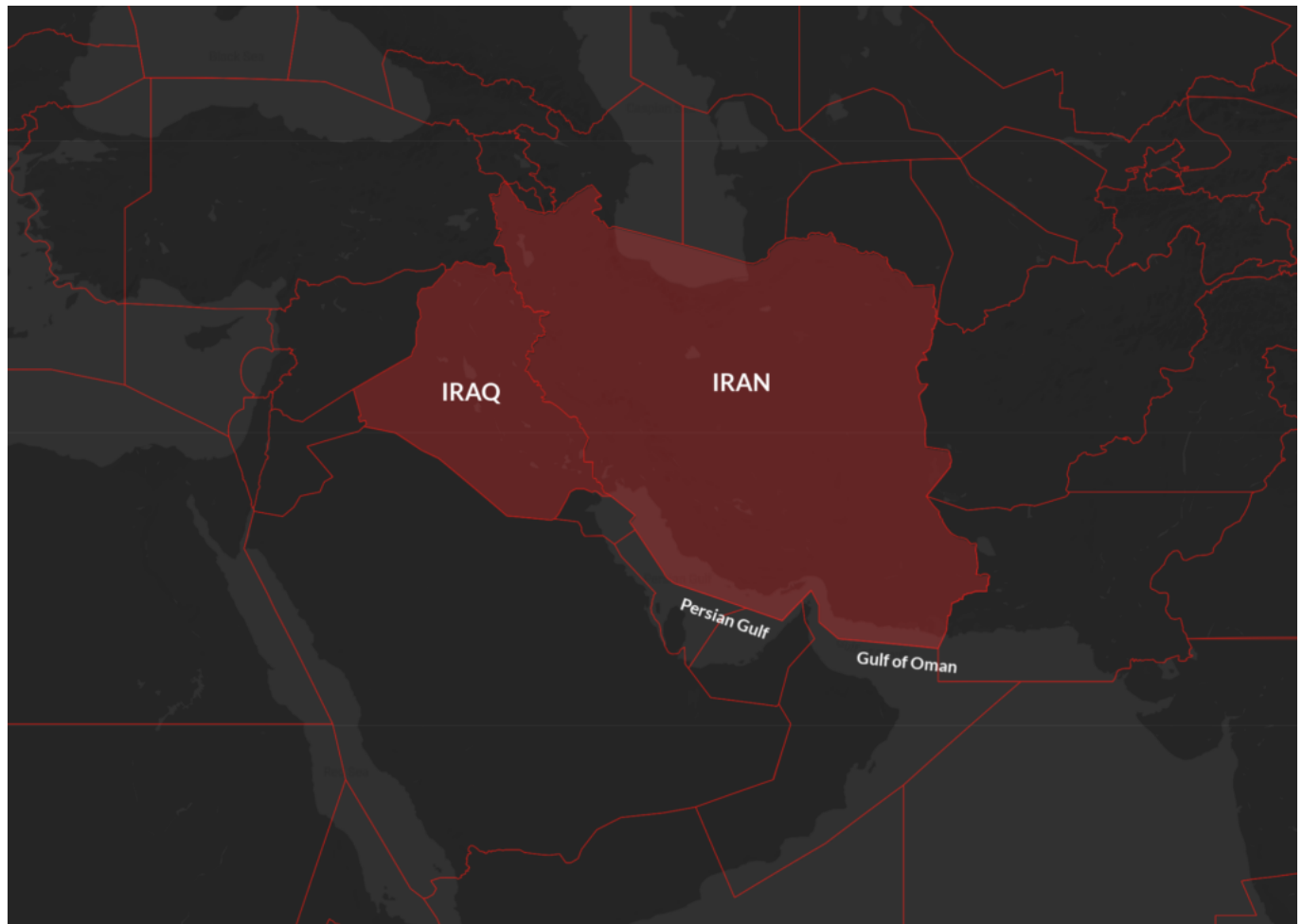
As of Mar 12, the US prohibit all flights in the airspace of Iraq and Iran, but allow flights in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman. Here are the details for each:

On Feb 27, the US loosened its restrictions on Iraq, issuing an updated Notam and Background Notice document which advised that US operators were now permitted to overfly Iraq at FL320 or above. They said there has been a de-escalation in military activity and diminishing political tensions in the region, but there was still a risk at the lower flight levels from armed militias who are likely responsible for multiple recent attacks on US armed forces in Iraq, as well as rocket attacks targeting the US Embassy and ORBI/Baghdad International Airport.

Then on Mar 12, the US issued an emergency order that once again banned US operators from overflying Iraq with immediate effect. This came after US warplanes hit militia weapons storage facilities in southern Iraq in a strike designed to destroy rockets like those fired at US troops earlier this week.

The US downgraded its airspace warning for the overwater airspace in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman on Feb 17 – 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. 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.

The US ban on the airspace of Iran is still in place – US operators are prohibited from entering the OIIX/Tehran FIR.



Germany

Germany just advises caution for both Iraq and Iran overflights – at no point since the events of Jan 8 have they issued outright bans on the airspace of these two countries.

France

France initially issued a Notam on Jan 9 advising operators to avoid the airspace of Iraq and Iran. Then on Feb 14, they changed their advice for Iran, saying that the only chunk of airspace which should be avoided is the western half of the country (everywhere west of 54 Degrees East longitude); they recommended that overflights of the eastern half should be at or above FL320. This guidance was then incorporated into AIC 14/20. The French Notam for Iraq lapsed on Feb 12, and was not renewed – therefore the French advice for Iraq has reverted back to that contained in AIC 14/20 which says that overflights should be at or above FL320, and only on certain airways.

The UK

The UK published Notams on Jan 9 prohibiting operators from entering the airspace of both Iraq and Iran. Then on Jan 17, they issued a new Notam for Iran, and cancelled the one for Iraq, advising operators to revert back to the guidance contained in the AIP ENR 1.1 (1.4.5). Bottom line, the UK advice for both countries is now this: do not overfly below 25,000ft AGL.

EASA

EASA published a notice on Jan 11 specifically warning operators against overflying Iraq and Iran. They said this should be taken as a precautionary measure, following the events of Jan 8. EASA don't normally issue blanket warnings/recommendations like this. Then on Jan 29, they withdrew that advice, and reaffirmed the position previously stated in their Conflict Zone Information Bulletins (CZIB) – Iraq overflights should be avoided except on two specific airways (UM688 and UM860), and Iran overflights should be avoided below FL250.

Further discussion

- The **#FlightOps** channel on Slack is open for Iran/Iraq discussion
- Email team@ops.group with any intel or analysis you can share