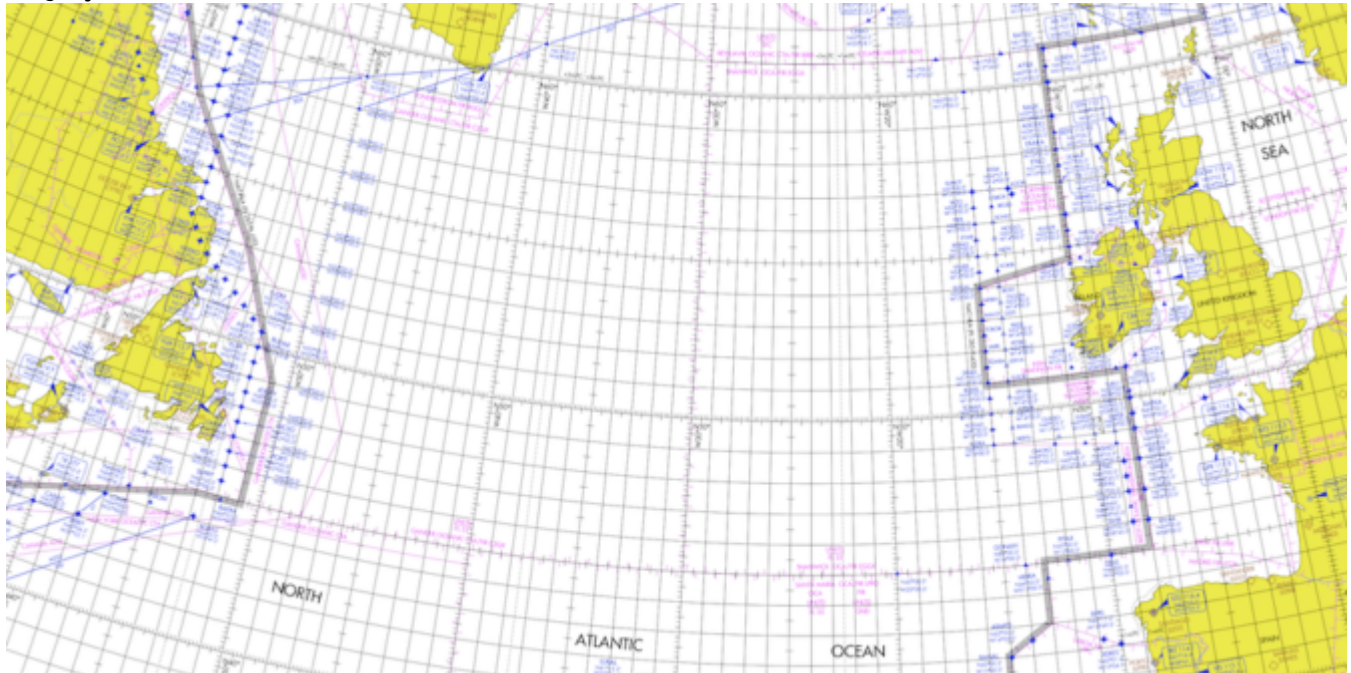


# July 2020 North Atlantic Ops Update

David Mumford  
13 July, 2020



**July 2020:** There's a bunch of new things to tell you about the North Atlantic this month! Here's a summary:

- Two new ICAO NAT Ops Bulletins
- An updated NAT Doc 007 from ICAO (aka the North Atlantic "Ops Bible")
- A guide for pilots from the FAA about what to do if ATC suddenly has to suspend services
- Some juicy Notams from all the NAT FIRs extending the relaxation of the North Atlantic datalink mandate rules until the end of September.

## ICAO NAT Ops Bulletins

Two new ICAO NAT Ops Bulletins have been published this week, but it looks like there's no need to panic.

First up, there's **2019\_003 Rev 2: Data Link Performance Improvement Options**, which is just an updated list of common datalink errors and what to do about them.

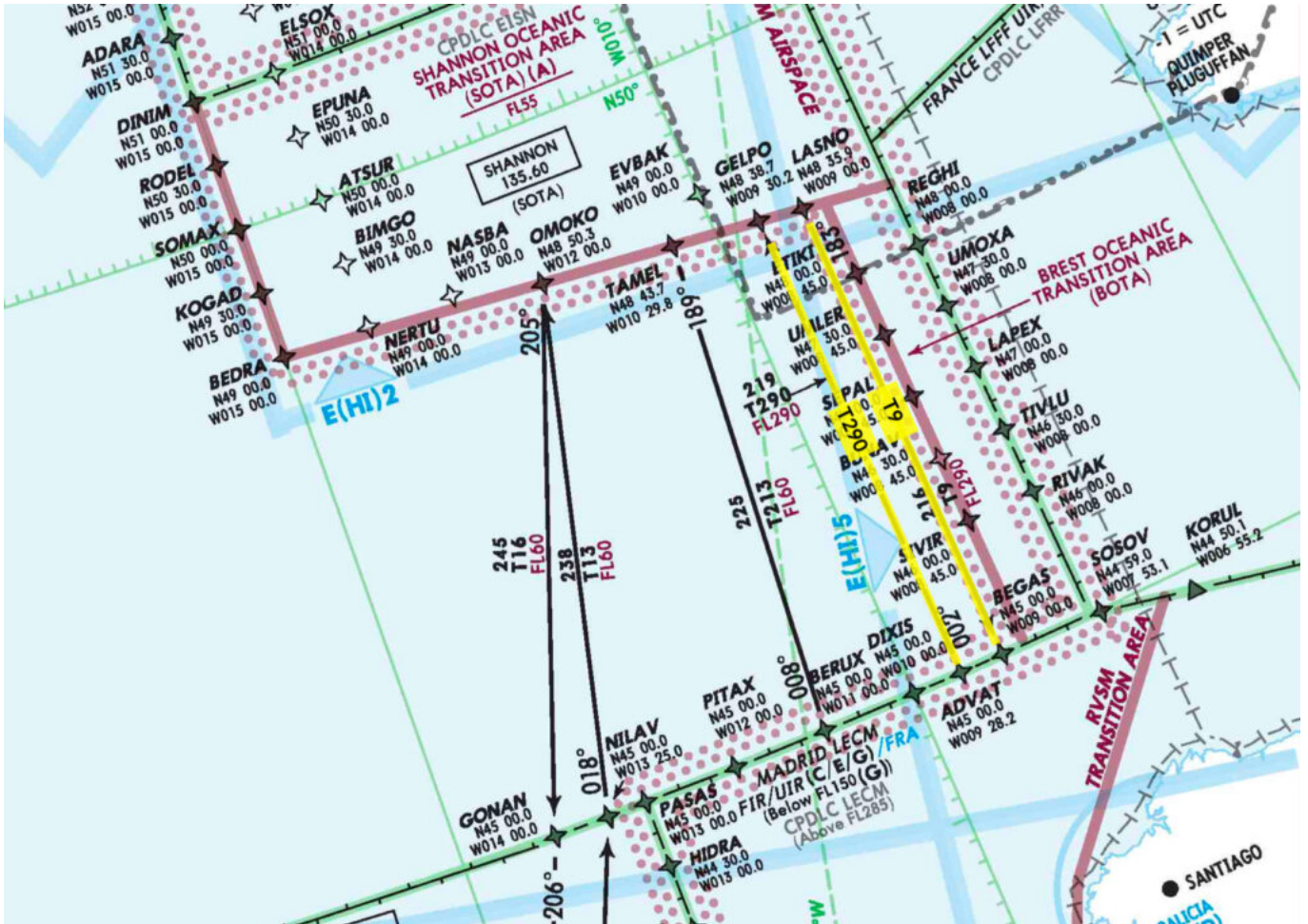
Second, there's a new Bulletin called **2020\_002: Surveillance Service in the NAT Region / Flight Crew Operating Procedures**. This is a strange one. The message seems to be this: back in the old days, you used to get a call from ATC saying "radar service is terminated" or "surveillance service is terminated" when heading out into the NAT, or when crossing from one oceanic control centre to the next. But nowadays, with improved SSR equipment and ADS-B more widely implemented, you might not get this message anymore.

## ICAO NAT Doc 007 (2020, Version 2)

ICAO has published an updated version of the NAT Doc 007, applicable from July 2020. There are only some minor changes from the previous version, concerning the **Tango Routes**:

- There's now a specific note saying that **state approval** is required to operate on these.
- There's also a change to the **transponder procedures** when using **T9** or **T290**: normally you


change transponder code to 2000 30mins after NAT entry, but because of the limited time spent in the NAT HLA when flying on T9 and T290 you should instead make this change 10mins after joining either of those routes.



**T9** is southbound only, even levels between FL300-400. **T290** is northbound only, odd levels from FL290-410. For more info on the Tango Routes, check out our article here.

## What to do during “ATC Zero” events

You’re halfway across the Atlantic when ATC declares that they are suspending all services. TIBA procedures are now in effect. **Would you know what to do next?** As Covid infections impact ATC facilities, short notice closures are currently a constant risk.



**SAFO**  
Safety Alert for Operators

SAFO 20011  
DATE: 7/1/20  
Flight Standards Service  
Washington, DC

U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Aviation Administration

[http://www.faa.gov/other\\_visit/aviation\\_industry/airline\\_operators/airline\\_safety/safo](http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/safo)

A SAFO contains important safety information and may include recommended action. Besides the specific action recommended in a SAFO, an alternative action may be effective in addressing the safety issue named in the SAFO. The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

**Subject:** Operations in Oceanic Airspace during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

**Purpose:** This SAFO serves to advise flightcrews of the potential loss of Air Traffic Control (ATC) services in the event of an oceanic ATC facility shutdown and recommends the mitigating procedures contained herein.

**Background:** Suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 among ATC facility staff and technicians that provide service to such facilities have led and will likely continue to lead to intermittent, total, or partial closures of ATC facilities, which may occur with little or no warning. Accordingly, the Flight Standards Service is providing recommended actions for flightcrews and operators, in anticipation of potential disruptions in ATC services due to an oceanic ATC facility shutdown.

**Recommended Action:** Flightcrews are encouraged to review relevant guidance in the Aeronautical Information Publications (AIP) for the countries where they operate; regional operational air traffic management contingency plans, such as the Air Traffic Management Operational Contingency Plan for the North Atlantic Region (NAT Doc 006; and Regional Supplements Doc 7030). Operators should ensure that flightcrews and dispatchers, if applicable, are familiar with the guidance contained in their contingency plans for unexpected closure of an oceanic ATC facility. See references and considerations in the Appendix to this SAFO.

**Contact:** Questions or comments regarding this SAFO should be directed to the Flight Technologies and Procedures Division at 202-267-8790 or the Air Transportation Division at 202-267-8166.

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The FAA has published a safety alert for international flight crew with contingency procedures in the event of loss of ATC services in **Oceanic airspace**. It's a good one to have in your flight bag. Dispatchers and flight crew are reminded to be thoroughly familiar with AIP specific procedures and traffic management contingency plans for the regions they are operating in. You can read the FAA's alert [here](#).

They have also published another one for ATC Zero events in **Terminal airspace**, which you can read [here](#). There have been multiple 'ATC Zero' events at major air traffic control centres due to Covid prevention and the subsequent cleaning required. The alert contains important information regarding instrument approach selection, TCAS use, alternate minima, aerodrome lighting and other CTAF procedures at unattended airports. There are also important considerations applicable to Part 121 operations discussed.

## **NAT Datalink Mandate**

EGGX/Shanwick, BIRD/Reykjavik, CZQX/Gander, KZWY/New York Oceanic West and LPPO/Santa Maria have all published Notams extending the relaxation of the North Atlantic datalink mandate rules until the end of September. This is due to the fact that there's still significantly less traffic because of all the Covid restrictions. **Non-datalink mandate compliant aircraft may therefore continue to flight plan and operate across the North Atlantic between FL290-410 until Sept 30.** For more info on the NAT Datalink Mandate, check out our article [here](#).

In addition, ICAO are saying that due to the decrease in traffic, there is a significantly higher chance of flights being cleared as requested, and are encouraging operators to file and request their optimal profiles at all stages of the flight. Read ICAO's guidance [here](#).

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For a brief history of the most significant North Atlantic-related ops changes, check out our dedicated article [here](#).