Navigating the NOPAC Redesign Project

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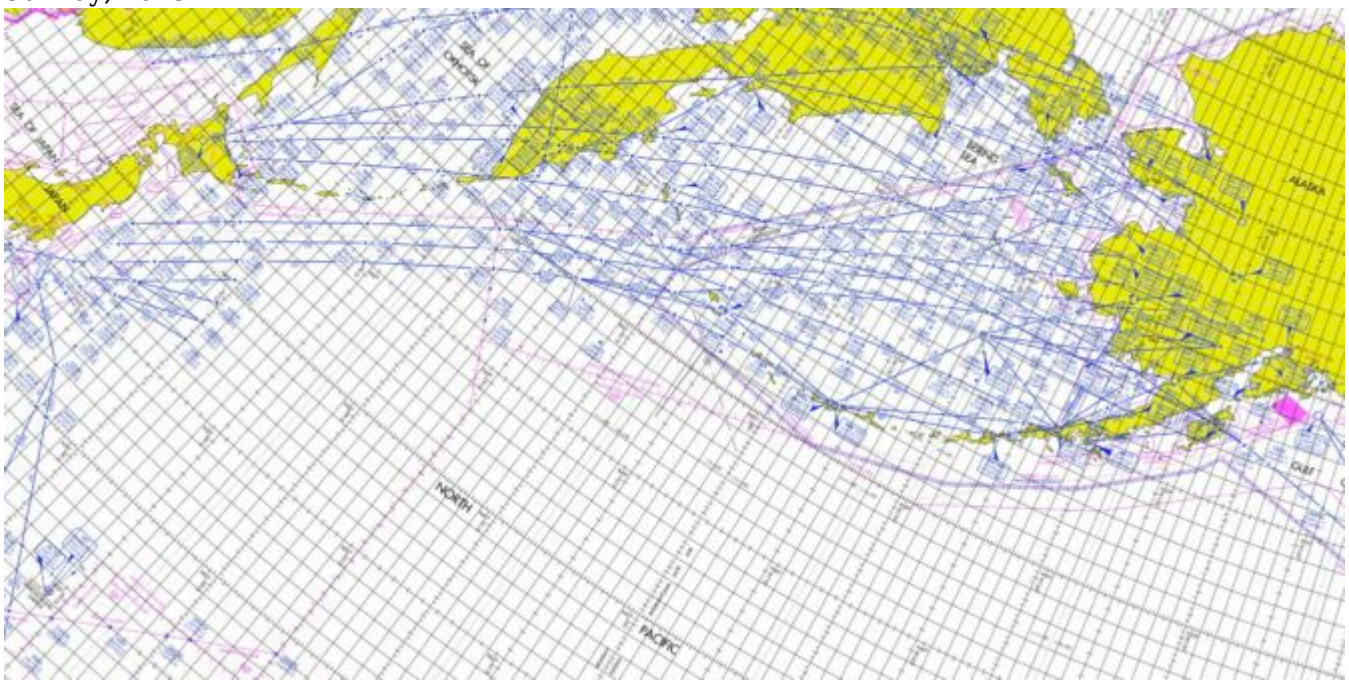
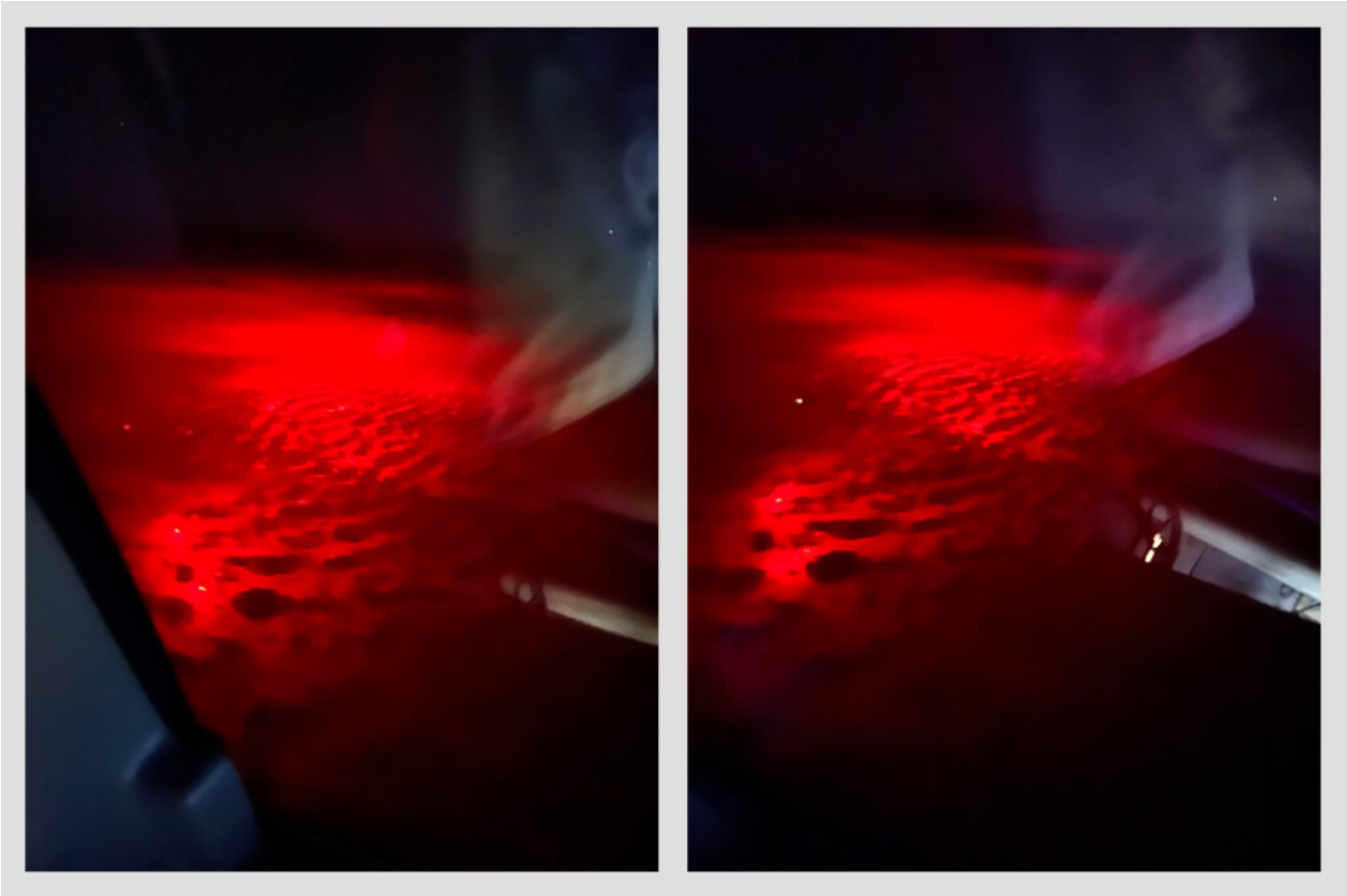
30 May, 2023



To revolutionise the efficiency of the North Pacific Route System, the FAA and Japanese CAA have embarked on a journey called the **“NOPAC Redesign Project”.**

In 1974, when NOPAC was initially born, five parallel routes were drawn for pilots to spend many nights staring into nothingness between Japan and Alaska. If lucky, you would see the aurora borealis or maybe even a mysterious red UFO floating near the ocean



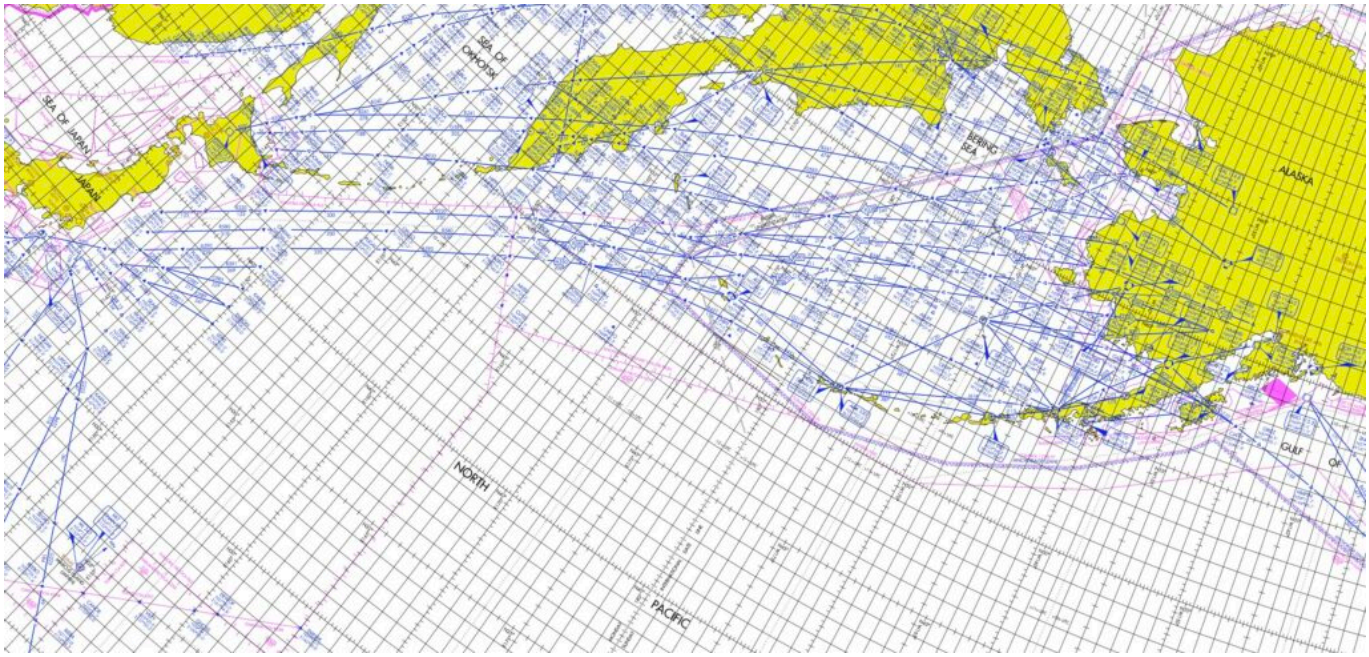
However, it was a dark and quiet journey across the North Pacific for most.

This new project aims to **compress four routes into less airspace**, leaving pilots more room for creativity and manoeuvrability.

So, fasten your seatbelts and join us on this adventure through the whimsical world of airspace redesign…

Wait! Where are we talking about??

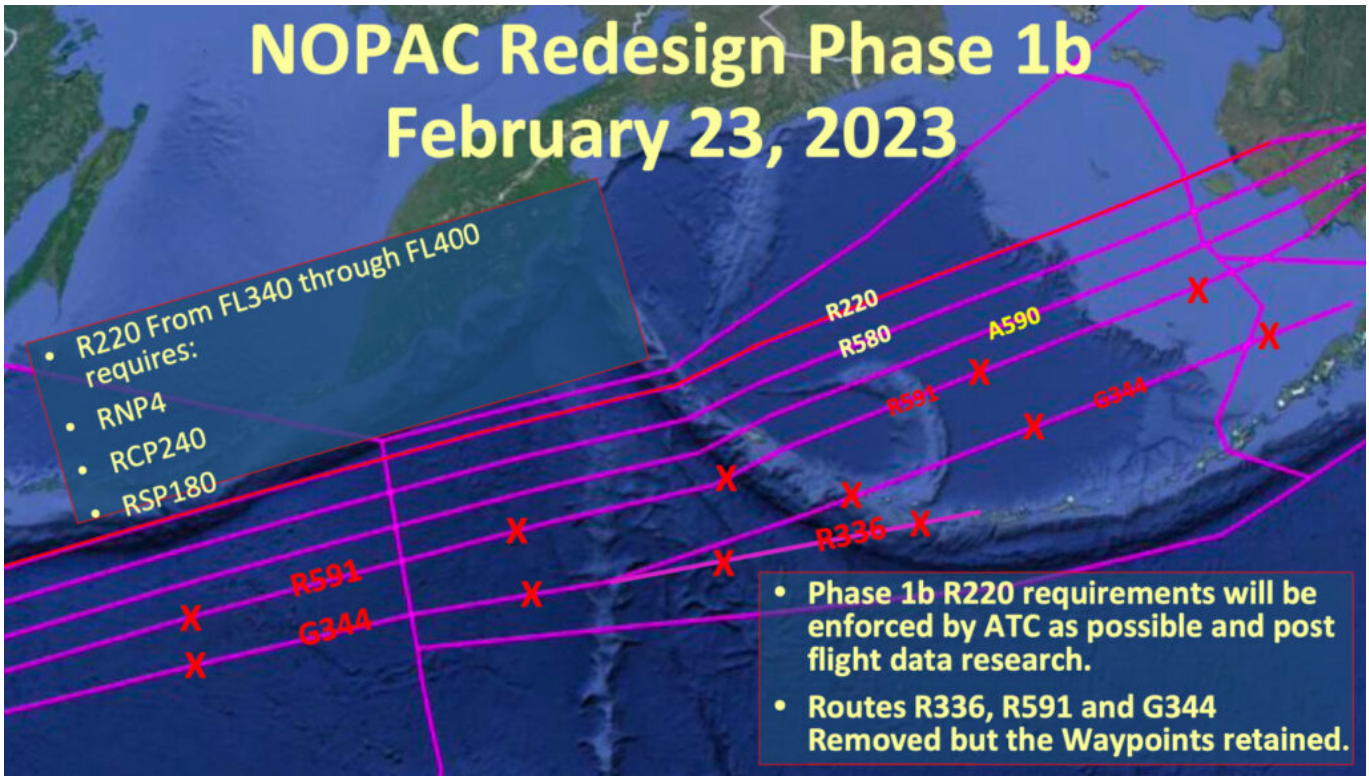
This area, from Alaska, over the North Pacific and down to Japan:



That's just a big mess of yellow land and indiscernible blue lines

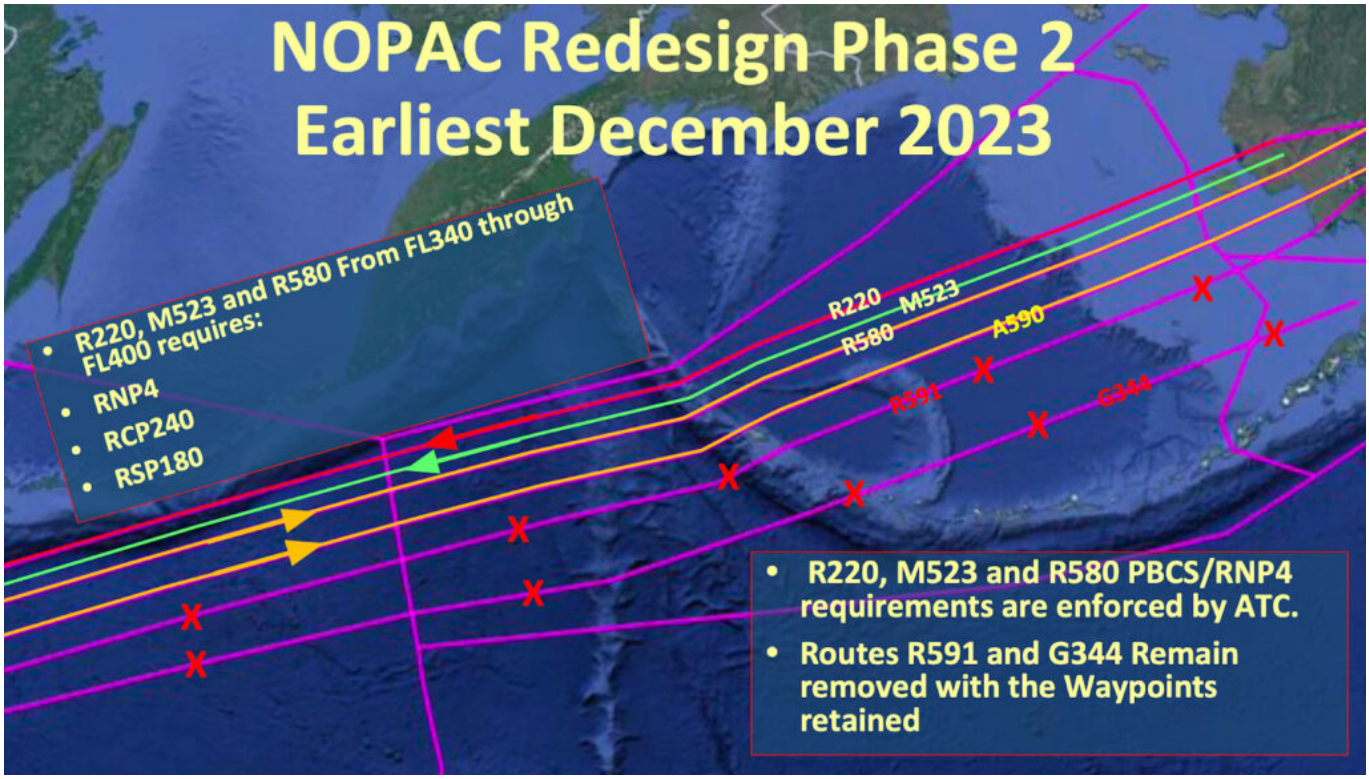
Yep, but thanks to the FAA we have some nicer maps available, showing exactly what is changing…

Phase 1B: The Story Begins



- The two southernmost routes, **G344** and **R591**, were zapped out of existence on Feb 23, 2023.
- But for the hoarders, fear not, as the waypoints defining these routes were preserved. Think of them now as magical breadcrumbs to help pilots file their flight plans. This unlocked the airspace south of **A590**, providing opportunities for User Preferred Routes (UPRs). Free to do as we please, making for a more efficient trip.
- The remaining three routes are: **R220, R580, and A590.**
- Aircraft flying on **R220** west of waypoint NULUK must have **PBCS** (RCP 240, RSP 180 and RNP4 approvals) to operate from **FL340-FL400.**

Phase 2: Westbound on Route M523

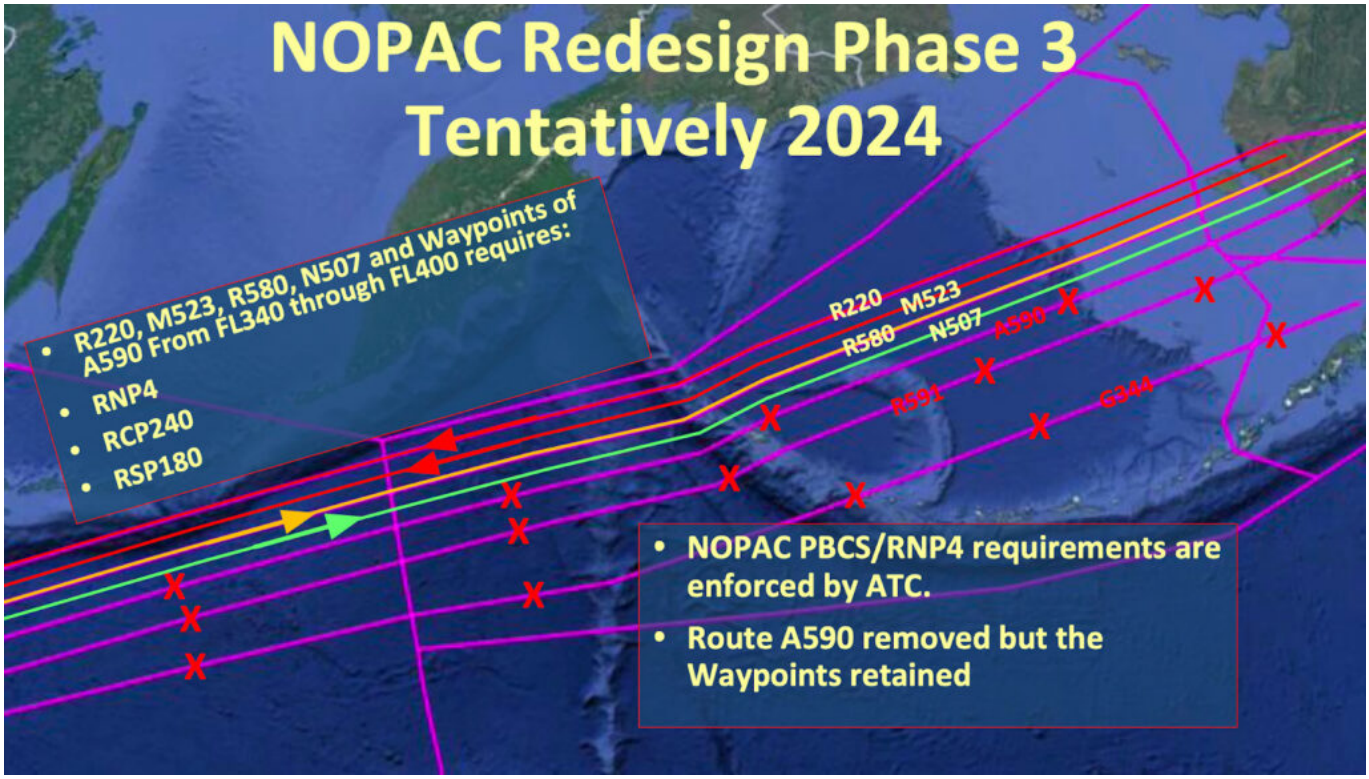


- At the end of 2023 (but most likely in Jan 2024), Phase 2 of this redesign will unfurl.
- Brace yourselves for the birth of a new westbound ATS Route named **M523**. It is ideally situated between R220 and R580. Think of it like adding a secret passage to an already perplexing labyrinth. But unlike the old routes, M523 will only be open to westbound aircraft operating from FL340-FL400.
- At this point, **R220, M523 and R580** will all require PBCS from FL340-FL400, to ensure lateral separation between aircraft (which is now down to 23nm).
- **Don't have PBCS?** If you are flying a plane lacking these approvals, you can merrily explore **R220 and R580** either at or below FL330 or at or above FL410. Do you want something more optimum? Then you can plan eastbound on A590, or a westbound route at least 50nm south of A590.

My head hurts

We're almost there now, only one more phase to go…

Phase 3: Eastbound on Route N507



- Cast your mind forward to mid-2024, when Phase 3 reveals itself. Behold the birth of the **new eastbound route N507**, positioned 25nm south of R580. Emerging from the charts, this route gives pilots more options to zigzag through the airspace. To maintain order amidst the chaos, aircraft operating on R220, M523, R580, N507, and the soon-to-be-deleted A590 waypoints will have to have PBCS.
- **Don't have PBCS?** You can operate on R220 and R580 at or below FL330, at or above FL410. Or you could operate at least 75nm south of N507. PBCS requirements do not apply in this southern airspace extravaganza.

Words words numbers numbers… just tell me what I need to know

A brave new world is appearing in the North Pacific, and to help us navigate the upcoming requirements, aviators should **consider obtaining PBCS approvals** in advance. Think of them like collecting golden tickets for new airspace adventures. So, dear pilots and planners, prepare yourselves for the challenges and delights that await in the world of NOPAC!

And to read all this information again in its pure, unbridled form, click here for the briefing from the FAA Anchorage ATC team.