Canada Airport Options Up North

OPSGROUP Team
13 August, 2023

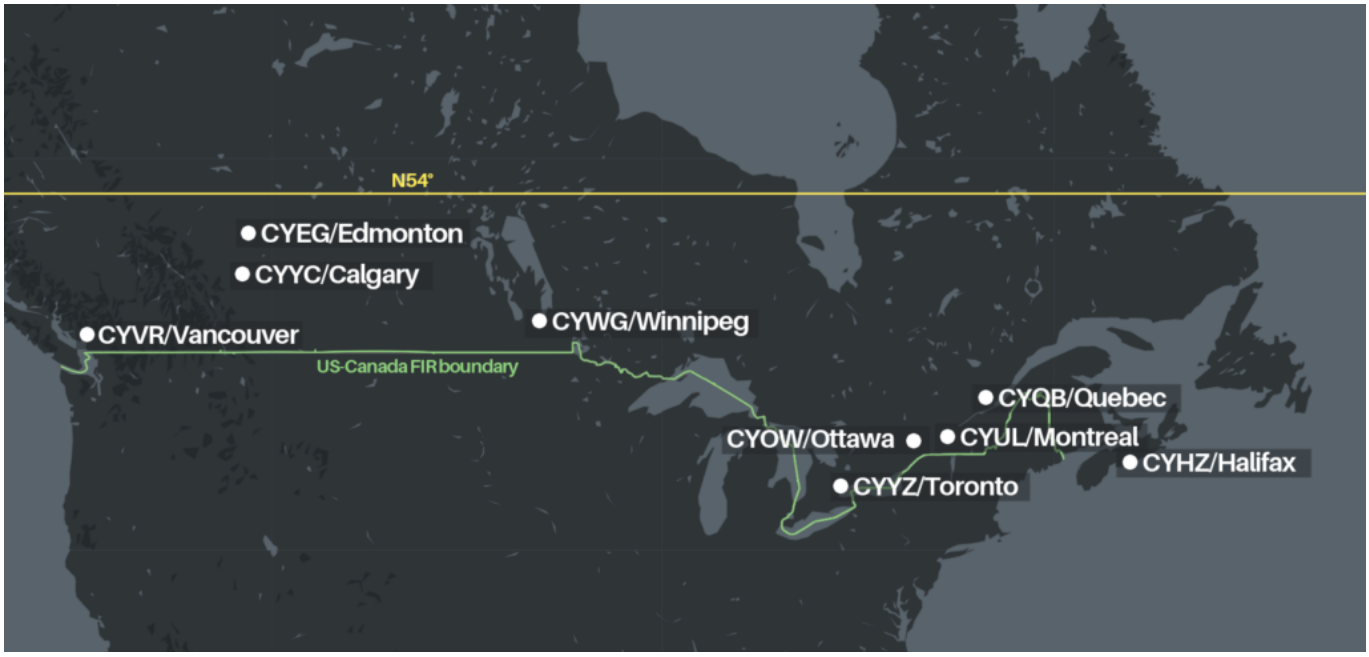
Canada, the (often) cold and (parts of it) remote northern neighbour to the US.

We thought we would take a little look at what is available out there, should you find yourself anywhere north of Highway 16 (above N54°).

Why N54°?

Well, because there is not much north of it. Or rather, there is a whole lot of country but not many options north of it. The main cities (and airports) in Canada are primarily in the southern region, close to the US/Canada border.

Here is a picture, because a picture speaks a thousand words. Or in this case, speaks **about 10 airports…**



The main Canadian airports are mainly along the southern border.

Canada is big. Very big. And the main airports (big international ones) are generally all situated below N54°. **There are others out there though.** The most northerly airport which receives scheduled passenger airlines services is CYRB/Resolute Bay sitting right up at N74°.

Unless you are actually operating into somewhere in the outer fringes of Canada then it is unlikely you will be routing over this region. Most polar routes bring you down across central eastern Canada and are unlikely to go so far west for the very reason there are very few airports available there if you need them.

The airports to consider above N54°.

CYRB/Resolute Bay

This has a 6504' runway 17/35 (that's orientated to True North, FYI). **Watch out though – it's a gravel runway, so only really useful in a dire emergency!**

There is an ILS to runway 35, an RNAV (GNSS) for runway 17, and a warning for severe turbulence during strong easterly winds. Probably something to do with the airport sitting on the edge of a craggy outcrop with lumpy, bumpy terrain to its east. Aside from the (cold) weather warnings, this airport also suffers from WAAS outages.

CYFB/Iqaluit

If you are up as high as this, and around the eastern region, you are probably better checking out CYFB/Iqaluit. This is often used as a planning airport for en-route diversions during **polar and northerly North Atlantic crossings**.

Runway 16/34 is 8605' with an ILS to 34 and an RNAV to 16. Land on 16 and you have a few nice runway exits. Land on 34 and you'll be doing a 180. It is an RFF 5.

There are a lot of **'CAUTION'** notes on the airport chart here. Caution a steady green laser light, radiosonde balloons, terrain near the airport, large animals, wind that swings all over the place, a nearby

blasting area, a random 2.5° ILS slope…

When the wind is from the north you can expect ok weather, if it is from the south the weather is less good, and this is particularly the case in Spring and Fall.

The charts suggest limited winter maintenance, but folk who have operated there say the maintenance is good.

So this is a **good airport for emergencies**, but has challenges of its own.

The main FBO is Frobisher Bay Touchdown Services who you can reach on +1 867 979 6226 / land@cyfb.ca / 123.350

CYVP/Kuujjuaq

Another eastern option. Runway 07/25 is 6000’ with an ILS to 07 and an RNAV to 25, and a VOR backup. There is a second gravel runway 13/31 which is 5001’.

The challenging environment means there are **a few gotchas here too**. Runway 07/25 has poor drainage and there is a risk of hydroplaning. It also has large animals in the airport perimeter (not sure if this means moose, bears or polar bears. Probably Caribou though), radiosonde balloons and seaplane activity on a nearby lake.

Might have been in Alaska

They say winter maintenance is limited, but this is because they do not operate 24/7. A few hours notice and they can clear the runway, and be available if needed though.

Talk to Halutik Enterprises if you are planning on planning this airport +1 819 964 2978 / cgadbois@makivik.org or try the airport direct on +1 819 964 2968 / 122.2

So CYFB/Iqaluit and CYVP/Kuujjuaq are your **only paved runway options to the east.**

CYRT/Rankin Inlet

The only paved runway in the central region, this offers a 6000’ runway 13/31. Both approaches are RNAV (GNSS) and orientated to True North.

There isn’t much info on Rankin Inlet, but given the remoteness of the region you can probably assume limited ground support and harsh winter conditions but actually the services are very good and those harsh conditions are limited to the winter! Winds are a bit of an issue here at times – expect some strong, gusty crosswinds.

Check out the picture below…

The only FBO is the airport operator who you can reach on +1 867 645 2773 / +1 867 645 8200. yrtmaintainer@gmail.com might work too.

Good luck spotting that runway when it is covered in snow

CYEV/Inuvik Mike Zubko

You have **three paved options to the west.**

First up, Mike Zubko. Mike, in case you’re wondering at the name, was a local aviator of note. Originally from Poland, he emigrated to Canada, became an Engineer with Canadian Pacific Airlines and went on to set up the Aklavik Flying Service, serving the remote region of the northwest corner of the North West Territories.

Anyway, the airport of his name has a 6001’ runway 06/25 with an ILS for 06 and an RNAV for 24. There are ‘limited graded areas’ outside the runway area here which basically means stay in the runway and you’re good.

Good ol’ Mike Z

CYZF/Yellowknife

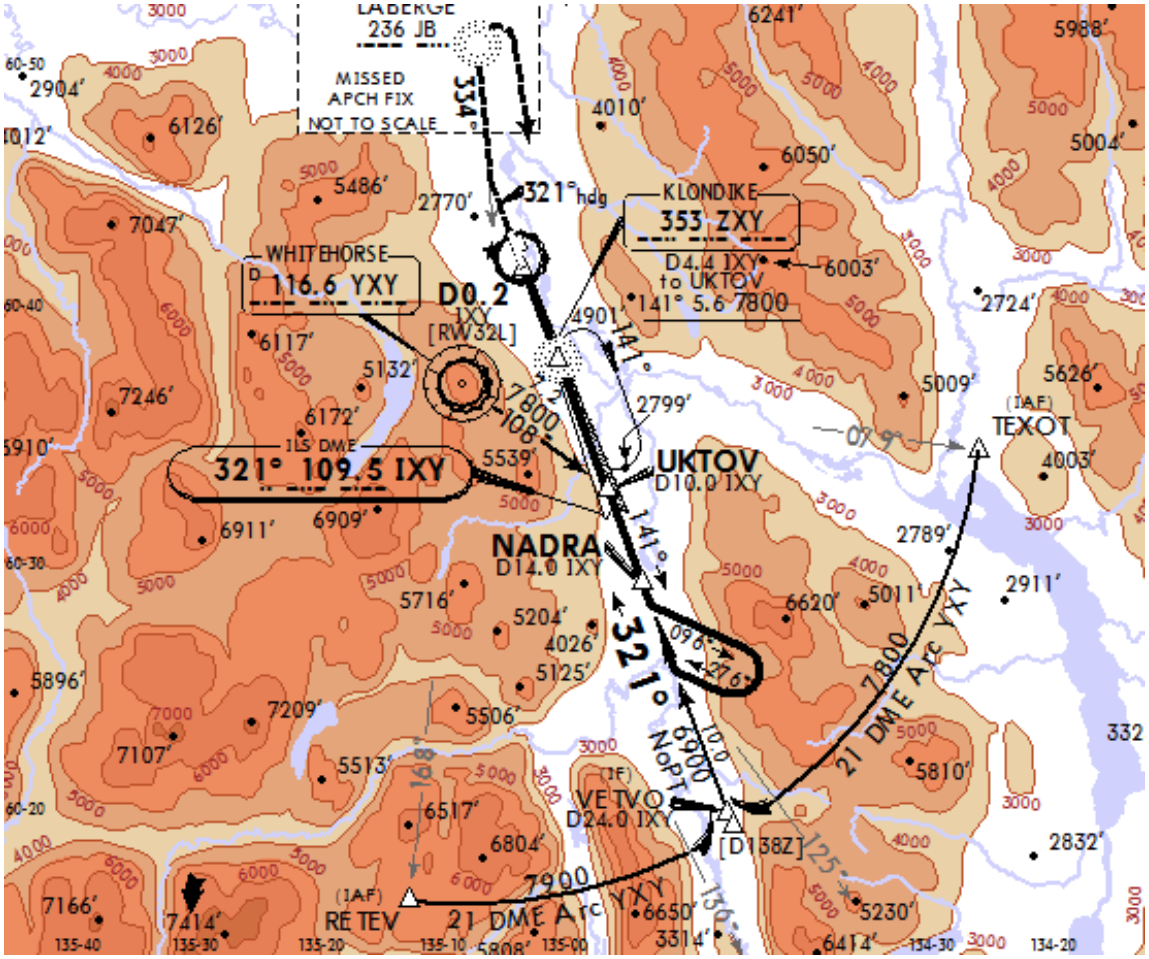
You will find **two runways here** – 10/28 5001’ with RNAV (RNP) approaches and 16/34 7503’ and offering an ILS to 34, or an RNAV (RNP). It is an RFF6 with 2 vehicles on call.

Yellowknife has limited winter maintenance (because of those operating hours again) and extensive bird activity but is a major hub in the area and will be able to provide ground support for most aircraft.

CYXY/Whitehorse

The biggest of the three, there are **three runways here** although 14R/32L at 9500’ and 14L/34R at 5317’ are the only two long enough for anything bigger than a short field Canadian Goose landing. 32L has an ILS, 14R has an RNAV. And actually there are no published approaches for 14L/32R let alone 02/20. This is an RFF5.

This airport is right in the middle of some pretty **challenging terrain**. Loads of it with an MSA rising up to 8500’ in the south. So you can expect some mean winds and a fairly challenging approach, missed approach and departure procedures.



Lots of terrain

And we’ve been told about some others…

CYYQ/Churchill in the shores of Hudson Bay. The airport is not open 24 hours, but does boast a **9195′ runway with an ILS to 33** and an RNAV to 15.

This airport might look relatively small, but it sees **high traffic numbers** as the area is famed for ecotourism (great polar bear sightings) and it is also a **primary transit hub for people and cargo** travelling between Manitoba and the more remote regions. It can accept emergency diversions from up to Boeing 777 and 747 aircraft so a good option.

CYMM/Fort McMurray is a nice central international airport in Alberta used as a destination for narrow body aircraft, but a decent alternate for wide body aircraft with its **7503′ runway and ILS approach.**

CYPR/Prince Rupert in BC has a 6000′ runway, and RNAV approach. There is limited taxiway and apron space here so a good emergency or diversion airport, but not much other support available and it has "limited winter maintenance". The airport is on an island and weather observation is not done at the field so caution using this in poor weather.

CYXJ/Fort St. John also known as North Peace Regional is another BC airport option for emergency diversions. It has an unusual crossed runway layout, with 6909′ and 6698′ lengths. Runway 30 has an ILS, otherwise you're looking at an RNAV. This airport is also slightly higher elevation, sitting at 2280′.

CYXT/Northwest Terrace Regional has Dash-8 sized aircraft operating in. It offers a **7497′ runway with an ILS and a shorter 5371′ runway with RNAV** approaches.There is high terrain here (the airport is in a valley) and it is not recommended to use unless familiar with the airport, and even then **only during daylight hours.**

That's your lot!

Unless someone knows about one we haven't heard of? **If you have, please share.** Email us at news@ops.group. Someone, somewhere, someday might be out in the great Canadian wilderness in need of an airport.

Curious happenings in the OPSGROUP village

OPSGROUP Team
13 August, 2023

Hello members!

We hope you're doing well!

It's been a few months since we wrote with a "**Member Update**" … and there are a lot of things to tell

you about. Big ones first, little ones last, but **read to the end** for the best one (Dave making waffles).

#1 The New OPSGROUP Crew Room

OPSGROUP is more fun when you do it with others, as the saying goes. We're in the midst of building out our fresh new Crew Room. Other members are here and you can speak with them, and us!

Get involved:

- Link: **ops.group/crewroom**
- Check that your **profile** is correct, and upload a pic of yourself.
- Draw a better logo for the Crew Room and send it to us!

#2 Crew Room access

We use an app called **Slack** to run the **crewroom**. Download it for your phone or desktop. Use your member email to login.

Once you get there, do this:

1. Check your profile: does it show your **full name**?
2. **Upload a picture**.
3. Now you have full access to the Crew Room!

#3 Ops Kitchen

The **#ops_kitchen** is the channel in the Crew Room where the **OPSGROUP Team** hangs out. We've made this a public channel so you can see what we're talking about, and help out if you like. *Things we talk about here*: today's ops and airspace issues, ops alert preparation, new things we're making, maps, charts, guides, and so on.

Get involved: If you want to be part of making new things for the group, or just curious what's going on today, join this channel. We look forward to seeing you there!

Link: **CrewRoom: #ops_kitchen**

#4 OPSGROUP LOCAL

LOCAL is more fun than global. With 8000+ members, we thought it would make sense to start some local "branches": even Antarctica and Timbuktu have a smattering of members.

The local branch is **for those based there, and those visiting**. You can connect with other members near you, and perhaps organize a meetup or a visit to the local ATC unit. Update the rest of the group on what's happening where you are, and help visiting crews coming your way.

We're starting with these locations:

#newzealand
#australia
#singapore
#hongkong
#italy

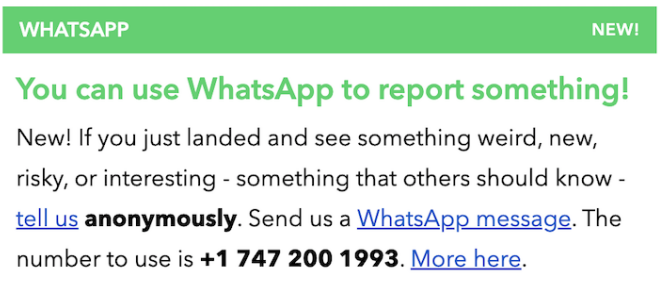
Get involved: If you are based in any of those spots, or headed there .. join the channel and **post a quick intro** to say hi!

As we add more, we'll post a note in the #crew_lounge channel. **Tell us** where you'd like the next local set up?

#5 Weird, new, risky, curious?

The only person that really knows what's happening out there is **YOU**. Logically, if you don't tell us, we won't know. So if you're downroute (or uproute) and you come across something in the wild that doesn't make sense – **tell us, please!**

Not sure what to report on? Here's the litmus test: would you mention it to another crew going to the same place? If yes, then, tell us so we can tell **all** the other crews.



The easiest way is to add our number to your phone: **+1 747 200 1993**, and send us a WhatsApp message (with photos, too!) when you spot something new.

Or, you can email us: **news@ops.group**.

Thank you for keeping the group up to date!

#6 Atlantic

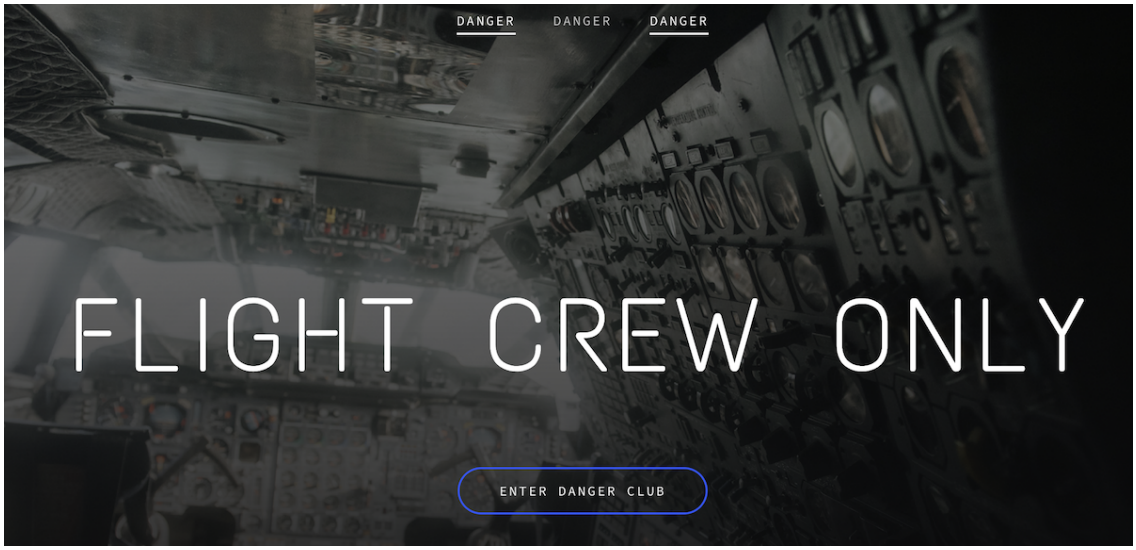
The North Atlantic is topic-of-interest-number-one for OPSGROUP members, so we've set up a LOCAL channel just for the Atlantic ocean region: probably mostly about NAT (North Atlantic) flying, but also mid/south Atlantic, EUR/SAM corridor etc. NAT topics, HLA, NAT Tracks, Clearances, Procedures, etc.

In the last few days some **good discussion** about:

* Removal of Oceanic Clearance issuance (in next NAT Doc 007)
* New Lost Comms procedure for the NAT
* New Squawk 2000 procedure (10 mins instead of 30 mins)

Get involved: Join that conversation in the **Crew Room: #atlantic**

#7 Danger Club – ideas for the next one?



Danger Club is the OPSGROUP spot for some dangerous conversations about things that happen in the cockpit. If you've joined any of the first eleven sessions, you know how it works. If you haven't, join the next one (and have a look at **dangerrr.club**).

We have a new channel in the Crew Room for Danger Club, and if this sounds like you, join the conversation: **Crew Room: #dangerclub**

Get involved: We're planning the next Danger Club (#12) and need a good incident to look at. Have you any ideas? Remember, this is all about how we are as humans in the cockpit, so we focus on incidents with some "interesting" human behaviour to give us some talking points to start.

Also, we're hoping to do a ***Danger Club Live*** at NBAA 2023 in Vegas – more on that below.

Link: Crew Room: #dangerclub

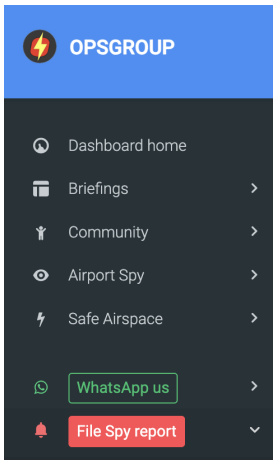
#8 We have a spy in our midst

Actually, we have dozens. Are you one of them?

Airport Spy is getting busy lately: thank you to everyone who has been busy filing reports. You can help out too: when you get back after your trip, or downroute and bored at the hotel: use Airport Spy to write a quick summary.

These are **useful for you** the next time you visit the airport, but **even more useful** for other crews that haven't visited yet. Sloppy handling, average ATC, or just an amazing experience – whatever you encountered, take 2 minutes and jot down the highlights.

Get involved: In the **Dashboard**, use the "File Spy Report" link as shown below:



#9 Vegas OPSGROUP meetup! Hands required

We're heading for Las Vegas and the focus is: **Waffles**. Chef Dave will be on hand to lead the team, but we're looking for volunteers to help run our club stand while he does the waffling.

NBAA BACE 2023 is on from **Oct 17-19**. If you're going, and have some time to help out, let us know! Join the **#vegas2023** channel in the Crew Room.

Our plans:

- The OPSGROUP Team will attend in full
- We will have a Club Stand in the North Hall of the Convention Centre
- **Get involved: Members wanted!** Help out for an hour: there will be lots to do!
- We will have some good merch (see below) – Tshirts, pins, stickers, and Tiny Cock Pit Kits.
- Member drop in: stop by and say hello (even if just for a minute)
- **OpsQuiz Live** – we'll host our famous Ops Quiz live (MC Dave)
- **Danger Club Live** – we're planning a live version for Vegas
- Actual waffles
- Actual coffee (New Zealand style Flat Whites)
- *more to come!*

Got some more Vegas ideas for us? Let us know!

Link: **Crew Room: #vegas2023**

#10 Vegas Merch

Right now we're busy desiging some flight bag stickers … and we need some member help with more ideas. We want to have a bunch ready for members at Vegas '23 – what should we make? Ideas please either in the **#vegas2023** channel in the Crew Room, or … email us.

- **T-Shirt ideas**
- **Sticker ideas**
- **Other ideas!**

#11 Everything else

That was a lot. Did you read it all? Good. If you're not still here, we'll wrap up with some snippets. These are them:

- **Coffee & Waffle** : Our old Ops Chats were good, but we paused these last year and we think we can do better. We're planning a new regular online meeting called *Coffee & Waffle*. It's nothing more than an excuse to get together as members and have some good old fashioned chats. Thoughts on this? Email us. We're thinking once a month, not recorded, no agenda, **we'll do it live**!
- **Tell us stuff!** We'll ask again because we're really keen to get your updates: scroll up for the WhatsApp number to text us new things! THANK YOU!

- **Ask us stuff!** If there's something on your mind, **just email us**. We like email, and we like replying, and we will!
- And that's the end of the end of the updates, for this time. Have a smashing weekend!

Aug 2023: Who wants to overfly Afghanistan?

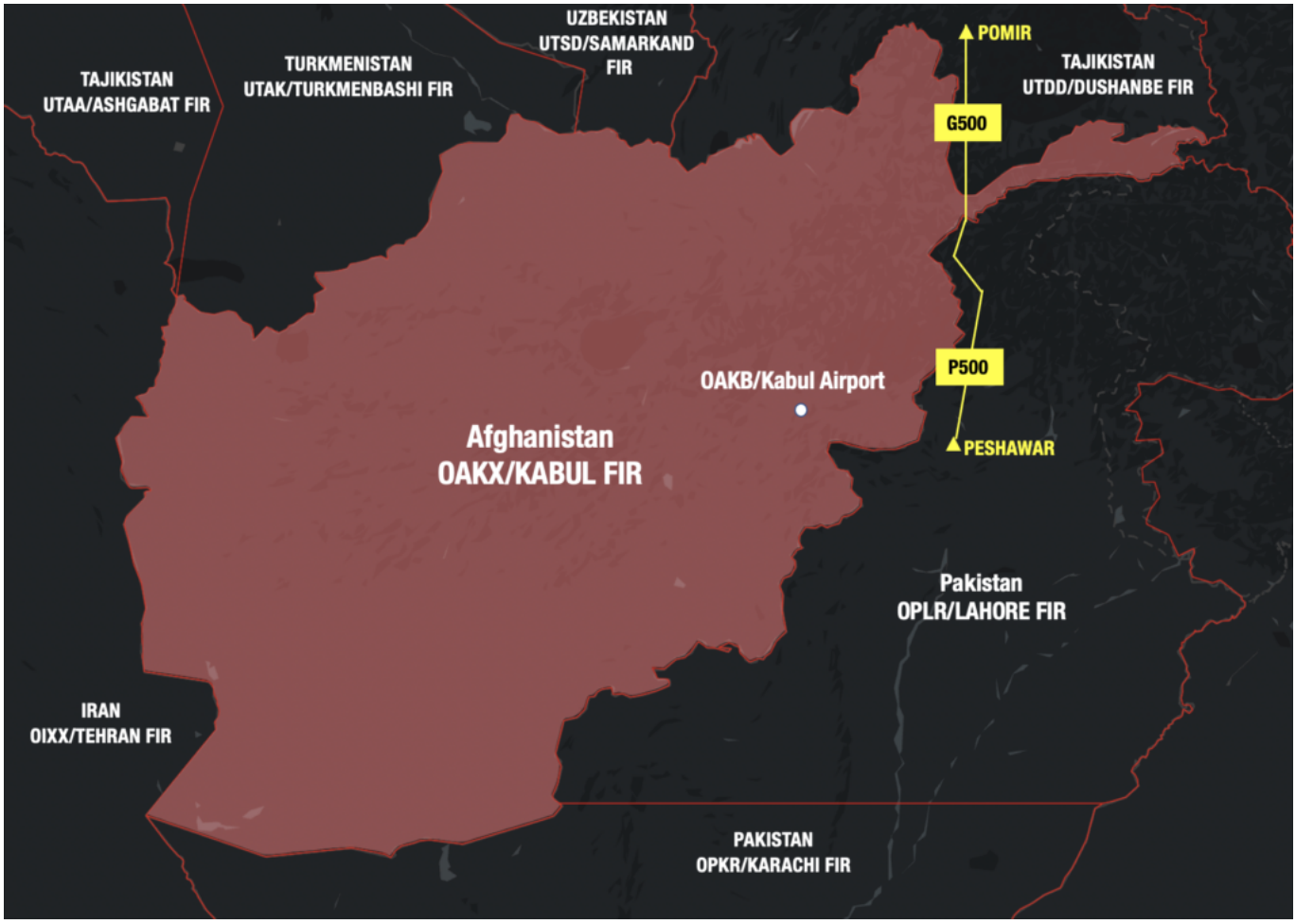
David Mumford
13 August, 2023

No one! There's **no ATC service** across the entire country, there's a seemingly endless list of surface-to-air weaponry they **might start shooting at you** if you fly too low, and **if you have to divert** then good luck with the Taliban.

US operators can now overfly Afghanistan

The US FAA has just published a new SFAR for Afghanistan which amends its airspace warning for the country. **US operators are now permitted to overfly the OAKX/Kabul FIR at FL320 and above.**

Previously, flights were only allowed on **airways P500/G500** in the east of the country. This made more sense from an airspace-risk point of view, as flights on these routes transit Afghan airspace only very briefly.



But now, if you're a US operator, you're no longer limited to those two airways – you can fly where you like across that big red blob as long as it's at FL320 or above.

The US are not the only ones who have eased their airspace warning in this way. **EASA** also recommend FL320 or above, and **Germany** say FL330 or above. All the other countries who regularly issue airspace warnings – **France, UK, Italy, and Canada** – say that overflights should only be on those P500/G500 airways.

Why the change?

To understand the rationale behind the FAA's easing of the airspace warning, the place to head is the *"Discussion of the Final Rule"* section in the SFAR.

Here's a summary:

- Essentially, the FAA think **the only risk at the higher flight levels is the lack of ATC.**
- After the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, ICAO made contact with Afghanistan's CAA. Together with neighbouring ANSPs and IATA, they published a **Contingency Plan for the resumption of overflights of the OAKX/Kabul FIR.**
- With this specific risk diminished, the FAA now allows US operators to overfly Afghanistan at FL320 and above.
- **The FAA still considers altitudes below FL320 hazardous for flights** due to ongoing security risks from Taliban and ISIS. They cite the possibility of access to various weapons by terrorist groups, including MANPADS. Cross-border attacks into Pakistan by VEOs pose additional risks below FL320.

How do the Contingency Procedures work?

You can find these on the Afghanistan CAA homepage, or by clicking below:

This Contingency Plan is activated by Notam, and applies when the **Kabul FIR is unattended – which has been the case for some time now.**

In a nutshell it relies on adjacent FIRs coordinating with one another, and with aircraft to make sure they **follow assigned routes and assigned levels** while transiting Afghan airspace to reduce collision risk.

They are effectively broken down into two sections – lower airspace (FL160 – FL290) and upper airspace (FL300 – 510).

Lower Airspace

We're not really interested in this, because we don't want to fly at these lower levels! But anyway, here's how it works:

- OAKB/Kabul, OAMS/Mazar-e-Sharif and OAHR/Herat airports will all provide surveillance services in their terminal areas.
- When outside them, you must follow a published low-level route. When descending or climbing, remain right of track unless you're below MSA on an IFR procedure. You'll also need to make TIBA broadcasts on 125.2.

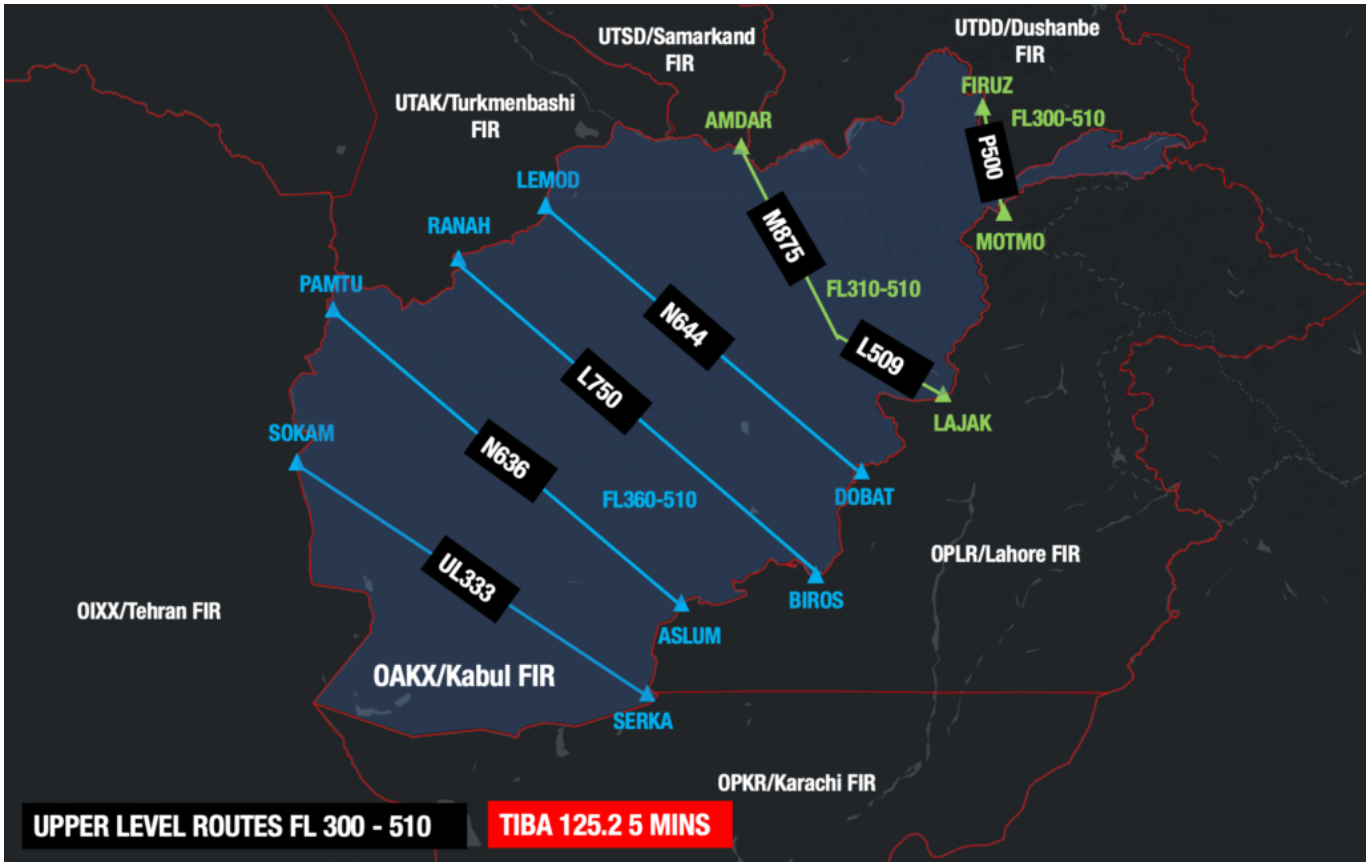
Upper Airspace

OK, the bit we're interested in!

The Contingency Plan mentions all the available routes, and the Notams make it clear what levels are available:

OAKX G0306/23 - ALL OVER FLIGHTS SHALL USE THE FOLLOWING
LATERALLY DE-CONFLICTED HIGH ROUTES (HIGH SECTOR) STARTING
AT FL360-FL510 EXCEPT ON M875/L509 ROUTES SHALL USE
FL310-FL510 AND P500 SHALL USE FL300-510
TRANSMISSION SHALL TAKE PLACE EVERY 5 MINUTES ON TIBA
FREQ 125.2MHZ FOR THE TEMPORARY PURPOSE ONLY.)
1.FIRUZ-P500-MOTMO(FL300-FL510)
2.AMDAR-M875-TAPIS-L509-LAJAK(FL310-FL510)
3.LEMOD-N644-DOBAT(FL360-FL510)
4.RANAH-L750-BIROS(FL360-FL510)
5.PAMTU-P628-ASLUM(FL360-FL510)
6.SOKAM-UL333-SERKA(FL360-FL510).
10 JUL 06:50 2023 UNTIL 05 OCT 23:59 2023 ESTIMATED.
CREATED: 10 JUL 11:34 2023

So here's what that looks like:



- **These are bi-directional routes, and only available between certain levels** (as per the map above!).
- **Try and avoid using FL300.** It is sometimes reserved for military traffic as advised by Notam.
- **On entry to the Afghan airspace:** adjacent FIRs will apply in-trail spacing of 15 mins on each route at each level. The routes provide at least 50nm lateral spacing. As per usual, westbound traffic should be at an even level, and eastbound at an odd one.
- **While inside the Class G airspace:** TIBA procedures will apply at all times on 125.2. Expect to contact the next FIR at least 10 minutes before the boundary on VHF.
- The good news is that the 'up-stream' FIR will also coordinate with the 'downstream' FIR to let them know you are coming.

Other Gotchas

- Despite being Class G, **flight plans must still follow the rules** found in Afghanistan's AIP. This includes the requirement for RNAV10 or better, and the submission of your plan to the Kabul FIR via AFTN.
- **Priority will be given to 'long haul' international flights in the higher levels.** Regional and domestic operators needs to remain in lower airspace.

What are most operators doing?

Avoiding Afghanistan! Just like they did before.

- Most major international airlines still appear to be **avoiding Afghanistan's airspace for overflights,** although some are **still using airways P500/G500** in the east of the country like they did before.
- Most traffic continues to **route south** via Pakistan/Iran, or even further south via the UAE and Arabian Sea.
- There are **risk warnings** to consider for the airspace on this southerly routing too. Several countries have warnings in place for **Iran's airspace** (the OIIX/Tehran FIR), including a total flight ban by the US. The southern part of **Saudi Arabia's airspace** (the OEJD/Jeddah FIR) carries risk as well, although there have been no reported drone strikes from Yemen in the past year.
- **To the north of Afghanistan:** the options for overflights are fairly limited – via Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, avoiding Russia – potentially useful if operating from **Europe to the Far East** (China, Hong Kong, Japan, etc.)

Should I overfly Afghanistan?

Despite there being contingency routes now in place, and despite the easing of the airspace warning by the FAA, there are still **several risks here:** lack of ATC, and serious safety and security risks at both the lower flight levels and on the ground.

If you have an **engine failure or depressurization**, will you be able to stay above FL320 all the way across the FIR? If you had to **divert to an airport in Afghanistan**, how confident would you be that you would be able to get out again in one piece?

For more info, check Safeairspace.net – our Conflict Zone & Risk Database.

NAT Changes Coming Soon!

David Mumford
13 August, 2023

It's been quiet for a while on the North Atlantic, but that's set to change soon, with the release of a new version of the NAT Doc 007.

Wait, what new version of the NAT Doc 007??

It's just a **draft** for now, due for release in **March 2024.**

It was published following the meeting of the North Atlantic Systems Planning Group (NAT SPG) back in June – the folks who meet each year to work out what needs changing in this document, amongst other things. So this draft contains the changes they discussed at that meeting.

To read the **draft NAT Doc**, click here.

If you want to read the entire report from that meeting, click here (lots of other stuff in there, but the draft NAT Doc starts on page 58!).

What is changing?

Right, the important bit!

First up, there will be **no more Oceanic Clearances** – a big change to anyone used to saying "*Cleared to Kennedy via Track Alpha, FL360, Mach 0.80*". The new NAT Doc 007 will also have a **new Comms Failure** procedure… completely rewritten.

These are the biggest changes to NAT procedures in years, and **we're looking for some volunteers** to help go through the new NAT Doc – for this, and more, **join the new #atlantic channel on Slack** – open to all members.

This is one of a bunch of **new channels** we're working on at the moment, so keep an eye out for more "**LOCAL**" channels coming ... we already have #newzealand, #singapore, #italy. These local channels are a new idea – somewhere for people based there to connect, and to help/welcome visiting crews. Opsgroup members can get involved here!

Where can I find the current NAT Doc?

Head over here. This is our article from **Jan 2023 – the last time the NAT Doc was updated.** It contains the downloadable PDF of the current NAT Doc, as well as a chapter-by-chapter summary of everything that was updated at the time.

And for a timeline of **all the big changes on the North Atlantic** stretching back to the dawn of time (actually, 2015, but basically the same thing), click here.

Header image from ATC History.

Contaminated Jet Fuel In Nigeria

Chris Shieff
13 August, 2023

Last week, a fleet of jet aircraft were grounded in Nigeria after **significant volumes of water were found in their fuel tanks.** One became airborne and suffered malfunctions in flight.

The Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) confirmed the issue was **not confined to that one airline**, describing the situation as 'dire.' Anyone uplifting fuel there right now should be seriously concerned.

The NCAA has issued an urgent All Operators Letter to refuelers and operators to follow the proper procedures – but with **sixty days** to comply. That's over two months of potentially **contaminated fuel** still being used at airports in Lagos, Abuja, and Kano – without mandatory procedures in place to check it.

What do pilots have to do?

The NCAA note requires a thorough inspection of refuelling equipment, and testing of the fuel it carries or pumps. More notably, there will also be a **mandatory requirement to take samples** from fuel tanks before and after refuelling too. **This will apply to anyone operating an aircraft in Nigeria.**

The advice is sound though – be **hyper vigilant** of anything going into your tanks there at the moment. Of course, perhaps the best mitigator right now is **not to refuel at all**, and to **tanker instead.**

Where is the water coming from?

Problems with infrastructure and how it is stored is likely to blame. Aside from particulates and fuel-loving microbes, there are **multiple opportunities** for water to accumulate. This can include water that gathers in low spots within pipelines, rain-water contamination, changes in temperature during storage or while being pumped and even the moisture content of air when tanks are unsealed to add or remove fuel.

A Little Vs A Lot

If you suspect contamination while airborne you should **land immediately.**

The impact depends on how much water is actually in your tanks. In small amounts, it can rust and corrode important components of your fuel system including fuel nozzles that can eventually fail. Water can also wear out fuel pumps that rely on fuel to stay slippery and cool.

You may also notice **unusual engine operating temperatures, surging, and technical faults** with your aircraft's fuel system.

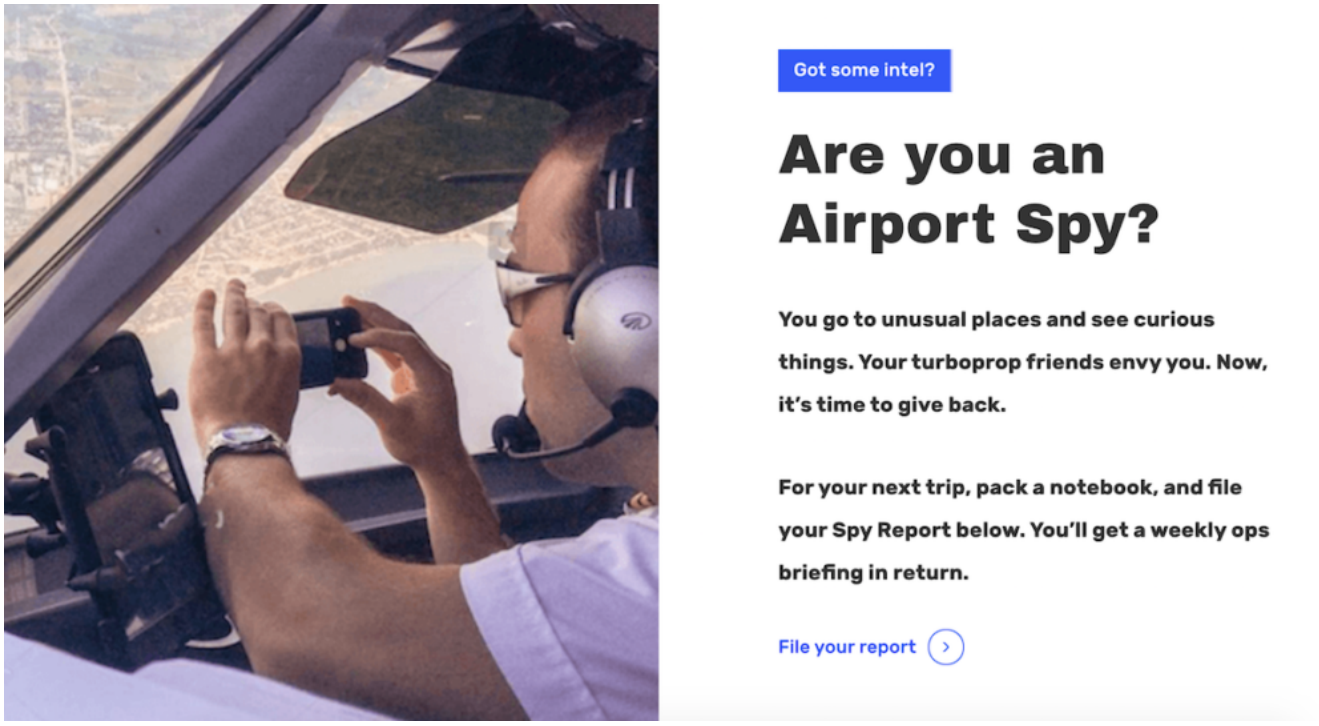
In larger quantities the issues become critical. Icing can restrict or stop the flow of fuel to your engines leading to **flame outs** (remember water freezes at just 0 degrees C, while pure Jet A1 can remain liquid in temps as low as -47 degrees C).

Also, water doesn't burn, so if it reaches your combustion chambers in any significant quantities you can say sayonara to your engines producing thrust – in other words you could have a **multiple engine failure** on your hands.

Make Sure You Report

If you do detect fuel contamination in Nigeria, it must be **reported to the NCAA.** Their contact details are found in the above letter.

And make sure you let us know too so we can help spread the word, and keep everyone safe. You can reach us on team@ops.group or by submitting an **Airport Spy** report.



New Datalink Mandate in France

David Mumford
13 August, 2023

Effective July 13, if you're flying in **France above FL195 and you have ATN CPDLC – you must use it!**

Following the recommendation of the Eurocontrol Operational Focus Group (OFG), France is the first European country to **mandate CPDLC logon** in their airspace after Karlsruhe UAC (EDUU), Maastricht UAC (EDYY), and Cyprus (LCCC). The OFG recommendation is the result of the review of several incidents by ATCOs from 22 ANSPs.

What do you mean by "France"?

Anywhere in the LFFF, LFEE, LFMM, LFBB, or LFRR FIRs.

Where have they announced this?

In AIC 10/23.

The AIC says the mandate only applies if you're "capable and eligible". What does that mean?

You're capable and eligible if **all** of the following three things apply:

- You have ATN CPDLC
- Your equipment is not broken
- The crew is trained on how to use datalink

If you don't tick all three boxes, you can still fly above FL195 in France – **they won't restrict you.** They're just saying that **you must logon if you can.**

What if I only have FANS datalink?

This new rule in France only applies to aircraft with ATN CPDLC – those with FANS 1/A (or with no datalink at all) will **continue to supported by conventional VHF.** Dual-stack aircraft should be reconfigured to

logon via ATN

Do I have to register my aircraft on the Logon List?

No. You don't have to sign up to the Logon List to use CPDLC in France. France doesn't use the Logon List yet. The only places where you need to be on this list is for flights in **Switzerland, Germany, and Maastricht-UAC controlled airspace** (i.e. the upper airspace above FL245 over Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg). **France plans to join from 2026.**

Is this new rule in France the same thing as the European Datalink Mandate?

No. The European Datalink mandate is for CPDLC **equipage** for flights **above FL285** throughout Europe. This new French mandate applies not on the carriage but on the **logon** for **flights above FL195.**

Another important distinction – **none of the European Datalink exemptions apply** for aircraft which are equipped with CPDLC, as this new French rule has nothing to do with the Datalink mandate! (i.e. the exemptions we detail here do not apply, such as aircraft with 19 seats or less and a MTOW less than 100,000 lbs).

Where else in Europe do I have to logon to CPDLC?

Provided you've got ATN CPDLC, here are the places in Europe where **logon is mandatory:**

- **Maastricht UAC** (EDYY) and **Karlsruhe UAC** (EDUU) above FL285 (source: Eurocontrol)
- **Cyprus** (LCCC FIR) above FL285 (source: AIP GEN 3.4.5)
- **France** (LFFF, LFEE, LFMM, LFBB, LFRR FIRs) above FL195 (source: AIC 10/23)

Know of anywhere else that should be in this list? Let us know.

And for everything you need to know about the **European Datalink Mandate** and how it affects your flight, check our article.

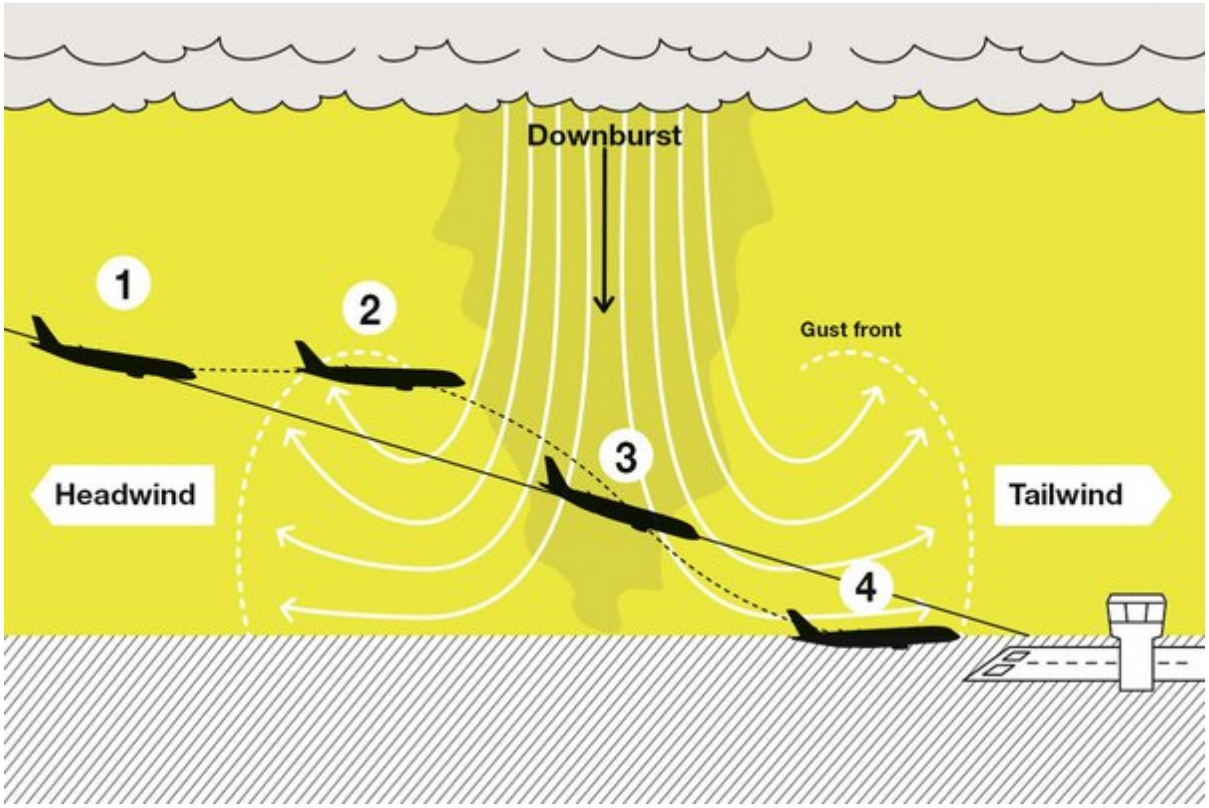
Microbursts: The clouds are gonna get ya!

Andy Spencer
13 August, 2023

Microbursts! These short-lived, intense downdrafts of air will try their best to wreck your takeoffs and landings completely. But how do they work? And how can we avoid them?

What are microbursts exactly?

Microbursts are atmospheric marvels characterised by sudden, powerful air downdrafts that spread horizontally when they reach the ground. They are often associated with severe thunderstorms, convective clouds, or other intense weather systems. These downdrafts can reach up to 130 knots, creating hazardous conditions for aircraft.



Double Danger

Microbursts pose a significant threat to aircraft. Two main reasons:

1. **The powerful downward airflow.** This can cause an aircraft to lose altitude or rapidly experience significant changes in airspeed. No matter how much power your engines produce, you won't out-climb these downdrafts!
2. **The horizontal outflow of air when the microburst reaches the ground.** This is known as the "outflow boundary" and can create strong crosswinds that affect the aircraft's handling and control. When pilots get caught in these crosswinds, they will likely struggle to maintain the desired flight path, increasing the risk of accidents. Remember, the strength of the microburst will probably mean that the aircraft cannot outperform it – even with a max rate of climb, you will be unable to get a positive performance of the plane (Aeromexico Flight 2431 is an example of what can happen if you try to fly through a microburst).

How do we avoid them?

1. **Weather checks!** Stay informed about weather conditions. Modern weather forecasting tools, including onboard radar systems (such as PWS – Predictive Windshear System) and real-time weather updates (often relying on the tower or a ground observer), provide valuable insights into severe weather systems that may produce microbursts. Review weather reports and forecasts before each flight, and pay close attention to thunderstorm activity and associated weather patterns.
2. **More training!** Pilots should receive solid training on recognising and responding to microbursts during their initial flight training and beyond. This training should include familiarising with microbursts' visual cues, such as dark and ominous cloud formations, heavy precipitation, and sudden wind shifts. But you should also be trained in specific techniques for mitigating the effects of microbursts, such as proper recovery techniques and decision-making during critical flight phases.
3. **Talk to ATC!** Maintaining open lines of communication with AT is vital in avoiding microbursts. ATC can provide pilots with up-to-date weather information and may offer alternate routes or hold patterns to prevent known or suspected microburst activity.
4. **Eyes like a hawk!** During the flight, regularly check onboard weather radar systems, which can detect the presence of microbursts. If a potential microburst is seen somewhere, avoid the area: this might involve altering the course, requesting a change in altitude, or holding until the microburst dissipates. Remember that if you see Virga, there is a good chance that a microburst may form.
5. **Just avoid them!** Obviously the best mitigation strategy! They will form quickly but dissipate quite quickly as well. Holding and waiting for a clear weather path is critical to a safe approach and landing.

A good rule of thumb to keep you safe when it comes to these beasts = **5nm for 5min.** In other words, **stay more than 5 miles away and wait at least 5 minutes from the last activity report.**

Mexico City Airport Safety Alert

Chris Shieff
13 August, 2023

There have been several recent reports of **loss of GNSS signal** in the terminal area at MMMX/Mexico City Airport. This can lead to navigational errors, and a raft of related system failures all of which have potential to ruin your day.

GNSS interference is hardly new. The issue with MMMX is that the vast majority of procedures became

RNAV based back in 2021. Add to that high altitude operations with a **healthy dose of terrain** and you begin to get the picture.

IFALPA have just published a **new safety bulletin** for MMMX/Mexico City Airport, which you can read here. But strangely, at the time of writing there has been radio silence on the issue from both Navigation Services for Mexican Airspace (SENEAM), and the Mexican Federal Civil Aviation Agency (AFAC).

Let's dig a little deeper.

The Specifics

The first problem relates to the terminal area itself. All SIDs and STARs are **RNAV 1.** This means that to ensure terrain protection your aircraft must not exceed a track error of 1nm.

One look at the Jepps and you can see why. 25nm MSA towers as high as 19,400′ to the east of the field, and 14,800′ to the west. Mount PopocatEpetl – an 18,000' volcano is just 35nm away from the field. It's easy to see why GNSS interference could become a **major safety issue.**

The second problem relates to the approaches. Only one of the two runways has ILS approaches available (05R/23L). The other runway relies entirely on RNP approaches – where the eye of the needle narrows to just 0.3nm in the final approach segment.

What could go wrong?

Aside from the obvious, a loss of GNSS can affect **other safety critical systems** too. IATA has also written about this, and it turns out losing the signal can open up a whole can of worms.

At the simpler end of the scale, a crew may receive a message that their navigational ability has been downgraded. And at worse, they may **lose GNSS navigation** completely including functions as simple as direct-to.

Depending on your aircraft type, you may find your aircraft reverting entirely to ground based and inertial navigation. Your nav display may tell you lies too, including nasty things like **map shift.**

EGPWS can also be affected – the system that has your back around terrain when you can't simply look out the window. Its predictive functions can be disabled, or spurious warnings triggered. Additionally the **position reporting function of ADS-B** can become corrupt, which is bound to upset ATC.

If your aircraft has them, **runway alerting systems** can also stop working properly. Things like **runway overrun protection** may simply now be redundant.

There's more to it than meets the eye.

So, I've lost signal at Mexico City. What should I do?

Put extra attention towards **monitoring the performance of GNSS** during operations at MMMX, because it really matters. A sterile cockpit is also important here as distractions can help mask some of the more insidious symptoms of an interrupted signal.

If GNSS signal is lost, be prepared to fly **alternative procedures.**

What are those you say?

There are no SIDs or STARs which use ground-based aids anymore at MMMX.

There are two options, radar vectors or the MEX VOR. The former is likely the easiest. **Otherwise, it is**

back to raw data – the likely outcome being a descent in a hold or a procedure turn. Either way, you'll need to let ATC know.

Without GNSS, you are effectively down to **one runway** (unless of course you are flying the visual). 23R/05L has no ground-based approach option – it is all RNP.

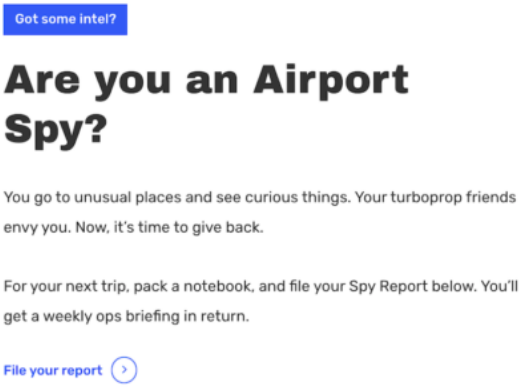
That leaves 23L/05R where the news is better. There is an ILS at each end, and even a VOR approach on 23L in a real pinch.

Whichever option you choose, if you are in cloud you need to be sure of your **terrain clearance** reference something that's **not RNAV specific** – whether it be the controller, or the MSA sectors on your chart.

Do you have info to share?

If you've been to Mexico City (or anywhere else, for that matter) and can share some info on how the trip went, please file an Airport Spy report!

OPSGROUP members can see all the Airport Spy reports filed for airports around the world on the members Dashboard here.



Portugal's new Punishment Tax (NAT Tech Stops beware!)

OPSGROUP Team
13 August, 2023

Effective July 1st, **Portugal has introduced a new tax directed at business aviation**. If you are operating an aircraft with 19 seats or less, you'll have to pay the hefty new tax – a G650 operating Lisbon-Newark will get a bill for around €2,000 (US$2,200).

It's billed as a "Carbon Tax" – ostensibly to mirror the same regulation that has applied since 2021 to airline passengers. However, an airline operating the same route with 250 passengers will only pay **€500**, despite having a fuel burn three times higher.

As such, it's better labeled as a **Punishment Tax** for business aviation.

Tech stops in the Azores are included

If you are planning a tech stop in the Azores (LPLA/Lajes or LPAZ/Santa Maria, for example) – think again. The Azores is "Portuguese Territory" and so covered by the new tax, and the exemption for "technical reasons" doesn't mean tech stops. So, if you divert in with a fire warning, no tax. If LPAZ or LPLA is your destination, however, **you can add about $2,000 USD to your invoice**.

You might want to find another NAT tech-stop.

How to calculate your bill

$$\text{Amount in Euros} = TC \times CP \times L \times (D + 1)$$

The official regulation is here (Artigo 184.º) – in Portuguese. The basics are:

1. From July 2023, a carbon tax is introduced for "consumers of air travel on aircraft with a maximum capacity of up to 19 seats" ,
2. The amount to pay is calculated as: € (**TC** x **CP** x **L** x (**D** + 1)). **TC** is the Carbon Tax (€2), **CP** is a Coefficient of Pollution (10x), **L** is the number of seats and **D** is the distance flown in kilometres **divided by 1000**.
3. The fee applies to each commercial **and** non-commercial flight departing from airports in **Portuguese territory**.
4. Exemptions: "Fully electric aircraft", PSO flights, State, Instruction, Medical emergency, SAR, and departures following landings for technical, meteorological or similar **contingency** reasons.

Examples: G650 Lisbon-Newark, G7500 Azores-Cairo

The formula can be more easily written as:
€20 x **Seats** x **Distance**

- A Gulfstream 650 with 14 seats operating **LPPT/Lisbon – KEWR/New York Newark**: The

distance is 5,447km. The charge is thus €20 x 14 x (5.4+1) will get a bill for **1,792 Euro** (**$2,000 USD**).

- A Global 7500 with 19 seats calling in to LPAZ/Santa Maria for gas on the way to Cairo: the LPAZ-HECA distance is 5,223 km. The charge here is €20 x 19 x (5.2+1) = **2,356 Euro ($2,600 USD)**
- For comparison, an Airbus 330-200 operating LPPT/Lisbon – KEWR/New York Newark will pay **500 Euro** ($550 USD). The charge is simply based on €2 per passenger (250 on board). An A330 will burn about 90,000 lbs of fuel, compared to about 30,000 lbs for a G650. This means that the G650 is being charged about **12 times more** in total.

Why is this happening?

Because of the "war" on private jets declared by Greenpeace and other groups. Their aim: **tax business jets out of existance**.

Although the new tax only came into effect a few days ago, it was signed into law in April 2023. The first few months of this year saw media across Europe pay attention to a Greenpeace "report" on business aviation, claiming massive increases in business jet use using super-flawed data (their baseline was 2020, which wasn't that busy for some reason). The EBAA countered with some actual facts, but it wasn't enough to stop the disinformation spread.

In Portugal, the PAN (People, Animals, Nature) political party convinced the government to sign this tax into law as a budget amendment.

So who has to pay, and who doesn't?

Since this has just come into effect, expect further clarifications and changes, but so far:

Pay the punishment tax:

- **Any flight** leaving Portgual using an aircraft with **19 seats or less** (aka all business jets)
- Irrelevant if commerical or private ops – all must pay

Exempt from the punishment tax:

- **Fully electric aircraft** (If you see one flying, let us know)
- **PSO flights** (A European thing where governments give you money to operate unpopular routes, so they would be charging themselves)
- **State flights** (The government exempting themselves again)
- Flights wholly operated by reticulated, northern, or southern giraffes (we threw that in, but it makes as much sense as the others)
- Medevac, training, SAR flights, and diversions for unforeseen events

More on the tax

There's plenty of uncertainty around the new rules for now, but we'll update this article as we find out more.

- EBAA – Portugal introduces new Carbon Tax
- FCC Aviation – Portugal Carbon Tax
- Original law (in Portuguese)

Do you know more about this? Help us out with any new information! Email **news@ops.group** or post below in the comments **– Obrigado!**

SSR Code Change in the NAT!

David Mumford
13 August, 2023

The NAT Region is changing the "last assigned code" SSR transponder procedures. Since the dawn of time, everywhere on the NAT, this domestic code had to be retained for 30 minutes after entering NAT airspace. But now the UK has changed it to 10 minutes for the entire EGGX/Shanwick FIR, and we expect all the other NAT FIRs will soon be updating their rules to say the same. This new 10-minute rule will then become the standard across the NAT Region, and will be published in the next version of the NAT Doc 007 due out in October 2023.

For several decades, unless directed otherwise by ATC, pilots flying in the MNPS airspace, now known as the NAT, were required to maintain the transponder in Mode A/C with continuous Code 2000 operation, except for the **last assigned code, which had to be retained for a period of 30 minutes** after entering the NAT airspace or leaving a radar surveillance service area.

The rationale for changing from the last assigned code to Code 2000 after 30 minutes was based on the recognition of the **original domestic code** by subsequent national radar services upon exit from the oceanic airspace.

It was crucial to make this change before exiting, in line with the terms of ICAO Doc 4444: *"Except for aircraft in a state of emergency, or during communication failure or unlawful interference situations, and unless otherwise agreed by regional air navigation agreement or between a transferring and an accepting ATC unit, the transferring unit shall assign Code A2000 to a controlled flight prior to transfer of communications."*

Thus, due to the limited time spent in the NAT HLA, when flying on **Tango 9, Tango 290, or Tango 213,** the change from the last assigned domestic code to Code 2000 should occur within a maximum of **10 minutes** after passing BEGAS, ADVAT, or BERUX when Northbound, and LASNO, GELPO, or TAMEL when Southbound

For the same reason, aircraft with a routing sequence **Reykjavik-Shanwick-Scottish (BIRD-EGGX-EGPX)** shall change the last assigned code to Mode A 2000 **on transfer from Reykjavik** and no later than **10 minutes** after entering Shanwick airspace.

It should also be noted that Reykjavik ACC provides radar control service in the southeastern part of its area, and therefore, transponder codes issued by Reykjavik ACC must be retained throughout the Reykjavik OCA until advised otherwise by ATC.

Furthermore, although outside the NAT HLA, it is also necessary to retain the last assigned code in **New York West ATS airspace.** Similarly, aircraft transiting **Bermuda RADAR airspace** should remain on the last assigned code until clear of that airspace, then squawk 2000.

In all other cases, Code 2000 would be displayed **30 minutes** after entry into the NAT airspace.

So what has changed?

In its AIRAC 2023-06-15 edition, the UK AIP ended the 30-minute code retention rule in order to standardize a change to Code 2000 after **10 minutes** of entering the NAT airspace.

The UK AIP now states:
"Unless otherwise directed by ATC, aircraft equipped with SSR transponders in the NAT region shall operate transponders continuously on Mode A Code 2000 regardless of the direction of flight, except that the last assigned code shall normally be retained for a maximum period of 10 minutes after entry into NAT airspace."

This change **eliminates the exceptions for Tango routes.**

Why didn't I hear about this?

The change was buried deep within the UK AIP without any publicity or modification of specific NAT documents – notably the famed NAT Doc 007.

The North Atlantic Document 007 is regularly updated through the ongoing efforts of the **North Atlantic**

Special Planning Group (NAT SPG). While it does not establish regulations (which fall under the Regional Supplementary Procedures DOC 7030 and FIR-specific AIPs), it is widely regarded as the primary resource for operational guidance in the North Atlantic. So it was surprising to learn that it had not been updated following the recent change in the Shanwick FIR, despite the ongoing work of the NAT SPG.

One could have expected that a change to a long-established practice (even if understandable for the purpose of standardizing a rule and eliminating exceptions) would have been anticipated and coordinated to avoid introducing a new exception distinguishing one FIR from the others.

But after verifying with NAT specialists at Shanwick, it appears that they have been talking about it with all the other FIRs – and **everyone has agreed to change the rule to 10 minutes.** This change will be published in the next version of the NAT Doc 007 (expected Oct 2023), and all other FIRs will be updating their AIPs in due course. It's apparently part of a push to **harmonize NAT Region procedures** where possible.

The delayed implementation of Oceanic Clearance Removal (OCR) resulted in a delay in the publication of the NAT Doc 007, as it required **significant changes to support OCR.** While the 10-minute change has been universally accepted by all Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs), the lag between documentation and ANSPs is solely due to the delayed updates of Doc 007 being published.

So tell me again, what has changed?

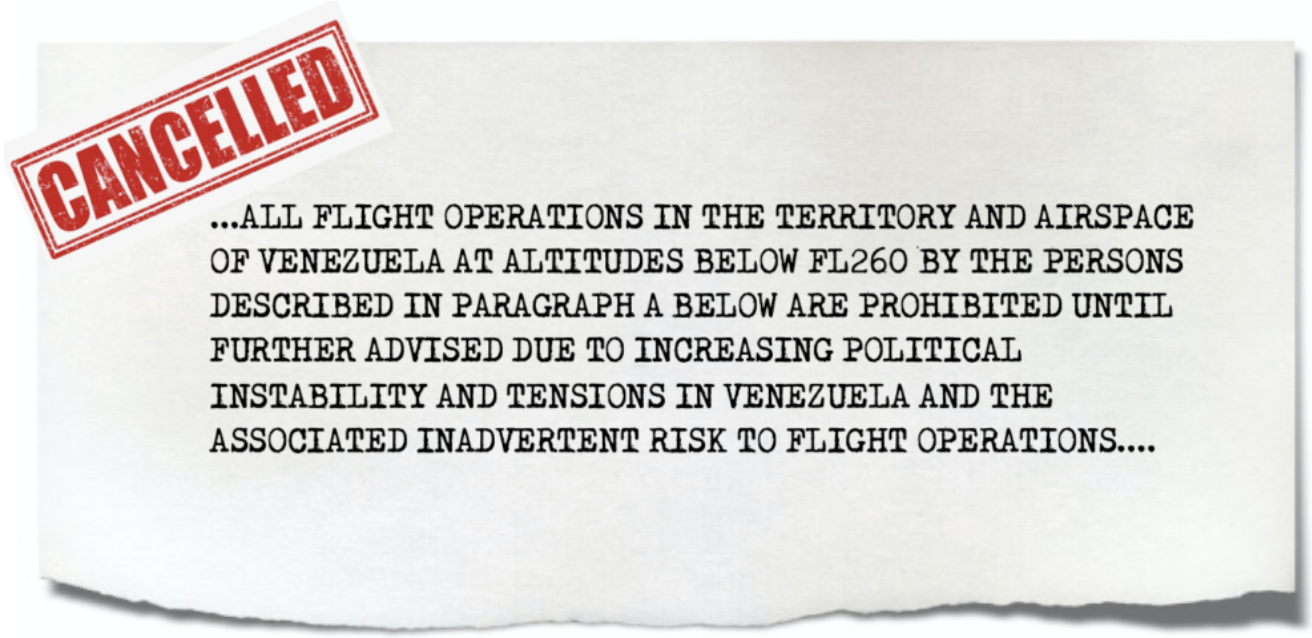
- In the **entire NAT airspace under Shanwick's jurisdiction**, unless instructed otherwise by ATC, the last assigned transponder code must be retained for **10 minutes**, followed by displaying Code 2000.
- When arriving eastbound from **BIRD/Reykjavik to EGGX/Shanwick enroute to EGPX/Scottish**, Code 2000 should be displayed **upon transfer from Reykjavik to Shanwick** and no later than **10 minutes** after entering Shanwick airspace.
- In the **other NAT FIRs** (CZQX/Gander, KZWY/New York, LPPO/Santa Maria, BIRD/Reykjavik, ENOB/Bodo), the **30-minute** rule still applies… until it changes!

Venezuela: FAA Restriction Lifted

Chris Shieff
13 August, 2023

The US FAA has **cancelled** a long standing Notam which prevented US operators from overflying Venezuelan airspace **below FL260.**

KICZ Notam A0013/19 expired in June, and hasn't been renewed. This effectively means that there are no longer any restrictions on the enroute use of the **SVZM/Maiquetia FIR.**



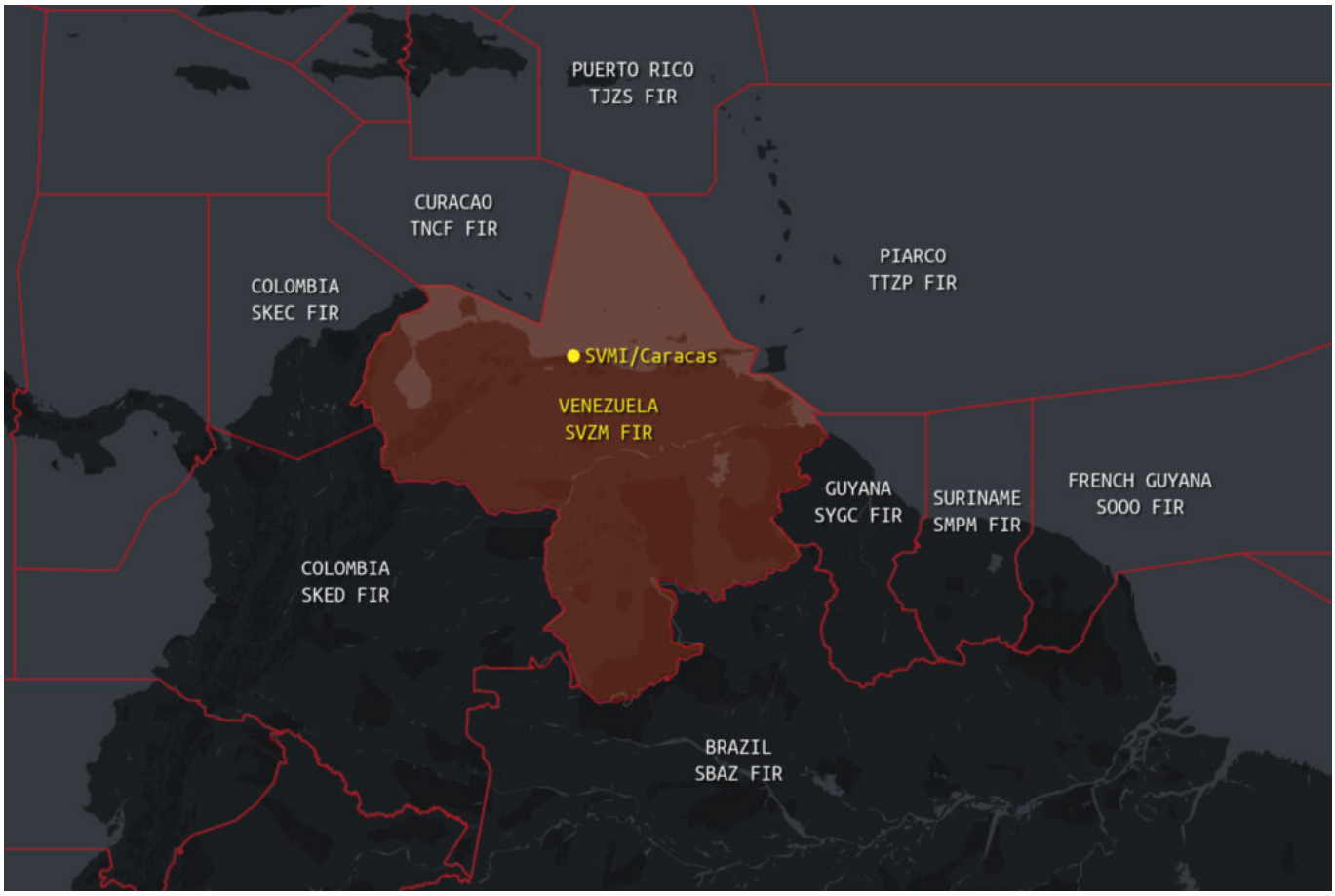
In fact, there are no active airspace warnings issued by any other states either. Here's a closer look at the airspace, why there was a restriction in the first place and what you should know now if you want to use it.

The Maiquetia FIR

Venezuela controls its own skies – the SVZM/Maiquetia FIR. It's a large chunk of Class C airspace that sits squarely on top of South America.

From a geographical perspective it provides a **handy gateway** between the US, Caribbean and destinations further south down the continent – especially Brazil.

It is also home to the country's largest airport, **SVMI/Caracas.** Here's what that all looks like on a map:



If you'd like to know more about Venezuela's airspace, here is a link to the online AIP.

Why was there a US restriction in the first place?

Back in 2019, the US FAA issued the above Notam which banned US operators from overflying Venezuelan airspace below FL260, citing **political instability.**

The (extremely) short story was that after years of steady decline, a political power struggle led to an attempted uprising. Widespread civil unrest followed while people suffered from economic collapse, inflation and shortages of food and medicine. This has continued to the current day. Here is what we had to say at the time.

The FAA had **multiple concerns** for the traffic above.

There were two major worries. The first was that the military may fracture and begin fighting against each other. Additionally, there was the known presence of mercenaries who had been employed to augment the military and police force.

It was known that the Venezuelan armed forces had large stockpiles of **advanced man portable air defence systems** (MANPADS) capable of targeting aircraft as high as FL250.

While there was no obvious intent to target civil aircraft, the FAA were worried that extremely high tensions may lead to inadvertent firing which could endanger them indirectly. They were also concerned that some of the MANPADS may find their way into the hands of non-state actors who were less predictable, and had less training.

As such US operators were banned at lower levels out of an **abundance of caution** while the situation

evolved.

If you'd like to know more, here is a copy of the Background Information note the FAA published at the time.

So, have things improved?

It would be a logical assumption given that the flight restriction has been lifted, but the short answer is that **we don't know**. And the FAA hasn't (yet) provided any explanation as to why the Notam has been cancelled.

The situation in Venezuela is at a standstill. It remains in the middle of an unprecedented social and humanitarian collapse. Although there's news lately of high-level talks to try and improve the situation, right now, it's just that – talk.

It's possible that the **immediate threat** of active fighting and the intentions behind the issue of the original Notam have subsided sufficiently that the risk to civil aircraft from anti-aircraft fire is now considered extremely remote. Although this is purely speculation.

The safest course of action until we know more would be to **remain above FL260** – although this is no longer mandated.

Beware the diversion

If you do overfly Venezuelan airspace, the most important consideration is crew and passenger safety in the event of a diversion. The **security situation** on the ground in Venezuela isn't great – in fact it is among the twenty most dangerous countries in the world, while Caracas itself has previously been ranked as the most dangerous city of all.

The **US Department of State** maintains a 'Do Not Travel' warning (its highest alert) for Venezuela citing risk of kidnapping, crime, civil unrest, terrorism and unlawful imprisonment. All to be avoided. If you're looking for the latest information, the US Embassy website is a good place to check – keep an eye out for any new **security alerts.**

Does this mean I can now fly between Venezuela and the US?

At this stage, no. The FAA restriction was purely to protect traffic transiting Venezuelan airspace below FL260. Another (more political) restriction remains in place, issued by the Department of Transport. It's a heavy read, but basically the commercial transport of passengers or cargo between airports in Venezuela and the US **remains banned.**

We're unsure at this stage whether there is an intention to drop this rule too, and have reached out to both the FAA and the DOT for more feedback. We'll keep this article updated as more info comes to hand.

The Curious Case of the Bonus French ATC Strike

David Mumford
13 August, 2023

Update 29 Jun 1130z: *The bonus French ATC strike is underway. Remember, this only affects secondary and GA airports – not the big hubs or overflights. Eurocontrol report that worst affected airports today, with high delays, are as follows: LFOB/Beauvais, LFPB/Paris Le Bourget, LFPM/Paris Villaroche, LFOP/Rouen, and LFST/Strasbourg. And poor old LFRB/Brest is essentially closed until tonight. The strike ends June 30 at 04z.*

There's an ATC strike planned in France from the **evening of June 28 to the early morning of June 30.**

But this is a strange one, because **major airports and enroute ACCs are not on strike – so overflights will not be affected.**

It's only **secondary and general aviation airports** that are striking – around 60 airports in total.

Notable ones that are popular bizav stops include:

- **LFLB/Paris Le Bourget**
- **LFLB/Chambery**
- **LFOB/Beauvais**
- **LFLY/Lyon Bron**
- **LFLP/Annecy**
- **LFKJ/Ajaccio**
- **LFKB/Bastia**

You can check LFFF Notam F1038 for a full list of airports affected.

LFOB/Beauvais north of Paris is cutting flights by 50 percent, but there are no similar restrictions at any other airports so far…

What happened to the mass ATC strike in France?

This upcoming strike isn't the same thing as the **endless French ATC** strike that's been happening these past few months. That one affected major airports and the enroute ACCs (i.e. overflights), along with various different French overseas territories.

That mass strike was part of nationwide strike action and protests over pension reforms which have been trundling on since mid-Jan. The last day of mass ATC strike action was on **June 6.** Unions met on June 13 to discuss what they might do next, but they haven't made any announcement on the outcome of those talks yet.

If and when they do schedule further action, ATC will probably get involved again and we'll see more of the mass ATC strikes like before. If that happens, you'll need to read this for guidance on what to do.

Other strikes in Europe to watch out for

Spain:

ATC strikes are set to continue at **sixteen airports through to the end of July.** These may lead to delays and other disruption, to coincide with the busy summer season, but the impact of these strikes has only been minor so far. The airports impacted are: LECO, LEAL, LECH, GCHI, GCFV, LEIB, LEJR, GCRR, GCLA, LEDA, LEMI, LELL, LEZL, LEVC, LEVX, LECU.

Italy:

There's a **nationwide 24hr ATC strike planned on July 15** (postponed from June 4). There's no Notam for this yet, and so details are slim, but we know that overflights won't be impacted, and there will likely be two time windows when flights to airports in Italy will be guaranteed: 7-10 and 18-21 local time. A few days beforehand, expect to see a Notam get published with more info.

Sweden:

Security staff are planning to strike at several major airports – on **July 3** at ESGG/Gothenburg-Landvetter and ESSB/Stockholm Bromma, and on **July 5-6** at ESSA/Stockholm Arlanda. There are various other dates potentially planned beyond these initial ones, but they're hoping to negotiate a deal to avert more strikes.

LSGG/Geneva:

There might be a **ground staff strike on June 29.** Unless an agreement is reached, workers plan to strike from 12pm that day. If it goes ahead, the union has said that all flights would be grounded – possibly a bit of an ambitious claim, but there would still likely be significant disruption.

EGLL/Heathrow:

Finally, some good news! **The upcoming strikes by security staff have been called off!** More than 2,000 staff were due to strike for 31 days this summer, affecting Terminals 3 and 5. But they've accepted a pay deal now, so the strike has been cancelled.

Come fly around China as much as you like!

David Mumford
13 August, 2023

Local agents in China have confirmed that authorities have **dropped the 6 sector limit on foreign private/bizav flights.**

Until now, aircraft were limited to 6 flights in China – international arrival, 4 internal flights, and international departure. But from June 20 all sector limits have been removed, **so you can now fly as many domestic sectors in China as you want.**

Here's a beautiful graphic we made to illustrate the change:

True to form, the authorities in China haven't officially published this change anywhere. We heard about it from an OPSGROUP member (thanks! please tell us more things!), and double-checked it with a few local agents in China who confirmed the change.

Which local agents?

Three of them, all said the same thing. You can contact them here:
Pandaviation: ops@pandaviation.com

Mainland GroundExpress: ops@mgel.aero
Universal: Chinaoperations@universalaviation.aero

Why has this changed happened?

It's all part of China's big re-opening post-Covid, and aimed at getting traffic levels back up again. **China fully reopened to tourists in March 2023, after three years of border restrictions.** For pax, quarantine was dropped in Jan, and PCR tests were replaced with rapid antigen tests at the end of April. For crew, you no longer need a Covid test at all – you just need a C type visa and to fill out the online health dec form to generate a QR code which you show on arrival.

What about cabotage?

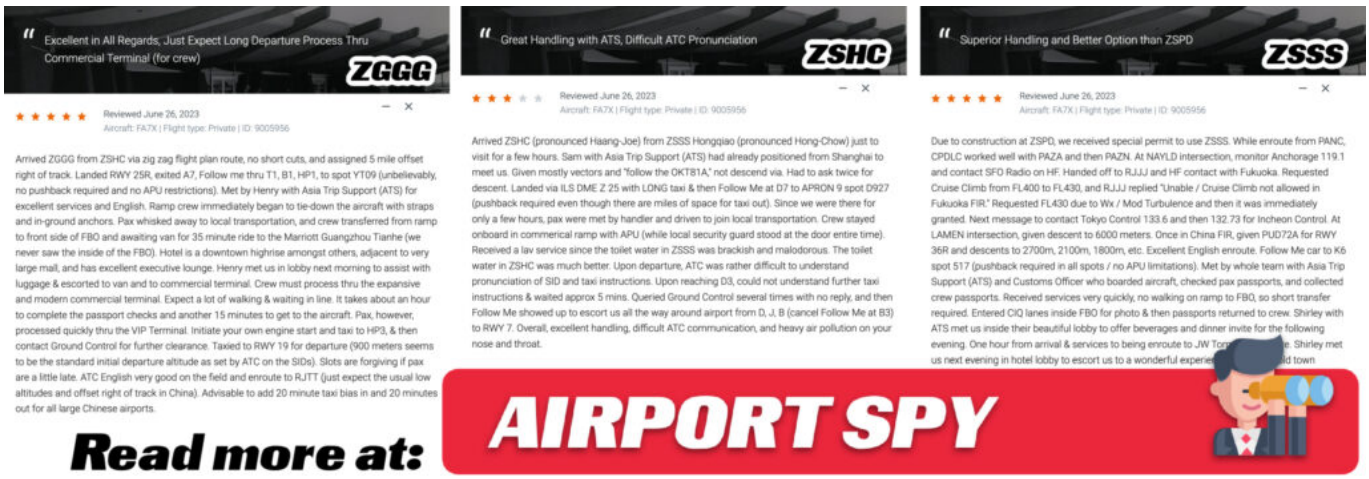
Not really an issue here – foreign reg private/bizav flights can pick up and drop off different pax on domestic flights without issue.

China treats private and charter flights as the same thing. The only difference comes when you have **more than 29 seats** onboard. In this case, the CAAC will treat you as **non-scheduled commercial flight**, which means things get more tricky – additional permit requirements including providing a charter agreement, AOC and other aircraft docs.

All interesting in theory. But what are ops to China <u>really</u> like?

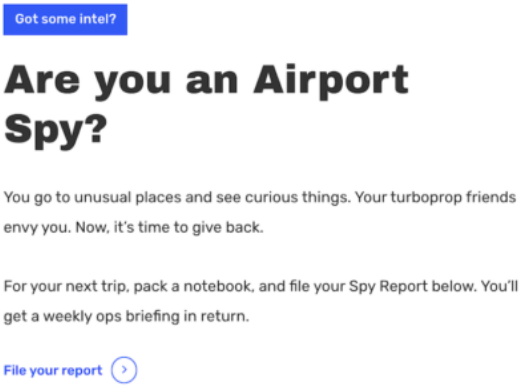
We don't know. But we know someone who does – **YOU!** – fine upstanding members of OPSGROUP!

We've had several reports recently from OPSGROUP members who have flown to China. Head over to **Airport Spy** on your dashboard to read the reports!



We want your reports!

If you've been to China (or anywhere else, for that matter) and can share some info on how the trip went, let us know. Or even better, skip the middle man and file an Airport Spy report!



More info on China ops

- For all your questions on ops to/between/over/avoiding **China and Taiwan**, check here.
- For some general **top tips on ops to China**, check here.
- Want to know what the deal is with **crew visas** in China? Check here.
- Make sure you know about the **hidden permit costs** of operating to China here.
- Read about the latest goings on in the **South China Sea** here.
- OPSGROUP members can download a **Himalayan Routing Guide** here.

EASA: New Ops Risks in Europe

Chris Shieff
13 August, 2023

In 2020, the industry fell off a cliff as the world went into hiding. Things in 2021 weren't much better. Then finally last year the wheels started to turn properly again – albeit while still pushing against outdated travel restrictions, quarantine and covid testing.

It is really only this year that the brakes have well and truly been released and the industry has been allowed to return to a full gallop. So with peak summer season coming up, EASA has issued a new Safety Information Bulletin on the **emerging new safety risks** in Europe.

Here's a look at some of the main ones…

The Speed of the Recovery

Business is booming, the world is travelling again, and operators are making up for lost time – cash flow has never been more welcome.

But herein lies the problem. The sheer speed at which things have started up again is a threat. The primary issue EASA identifies is that the industry just isn't keeping up with the **pace of change.** We're not managing things as well as we should. And they smell risk – with a delayed fuse…

Shortages of People and Things

There is currently a **lack of qualified operational staff** across the board. This isn't just limited to pilots either – cabin crew, engineers and air traffic controllers to name a few are all in hot demand. And for the ones already employed and working, **fatigue** is becoming a major concern.

For new ones, **lack of experience** is likely to emerge more often in incident and accident reports. EASA are worried about the lack of time and resources to train them all at the pace the industry is demanding of them. The problem with this is that the safety impact may not be immediately obvious but could emerge later.

But it isn't just people. It is the tools they use – there is a significant **shortage of aircraft** and the parts needed to fix them. **Supply chain problems** are leading to cancelled flights and maintenance delays. Carriers are increasingly turning to old and retired aircraft in storage to fill the void as order lists for new ones fill up.

Cyber Attacks

A busy and overloaded system is a **vulnerable** one, and this leaves aviation at risk from those who want to harm it. There have been several instances of this reported in the past months. EASA are concerned that the busy peak season may put aviation in the firing line for digital criminals who are capable of wreaking havoc on Europe's skies.

Lack of Capacity

All of those aircraft need room in the sky and the airways system will be pushed to capacity. That means delays and difficulty securing slots, further exacerbating two major safety elephants in the room – **commercial pressure,** and **fatigue.**

Disruptive Passengers

It's not just operational staff who feel the heat. Passengers dealing with delays, strikes or other inconveniences to their travel plans may act up.

In fact, it is a becoming a major problem worldwide. Just weeks ago IATA put out a new report showing that the number of cases of unruly pax had almost doubled year-on-year after the pandemic.

It’s Not Just Europe

EASA may have concerns for Europe, but the lessons in their bulletin apply broadly as the industry accelerates away from the nastiness of the past few years. In our enthusiasm to see better times, we need to be **aware of the threats** that we may be steadily introducing. And this simple document is a good place to start.

Inside it has important suggestions for what a bunch of stakeholders (including operators!) can do to start mitigating these threats now, to avoid the fallout later.

Hurricane Season Approaching: What’s in store for 2023?

Chris Shieff
13 August, 2023

Summer is coming in the Northern Hemisphere and so is the next Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from **June to November.**

But for the first time in eight years, experts in the US are saying **it’s not going to be too bad this year** – or rather, they are predicting a “near-average” hurricane season…

The 2022 season saw 14 named storms, eight hurricanes and two major hurricanes – which is actually pretty near average.

The worst of these was **Hurricane Ian**, which hit Florida at the end of September as a Category 4 major hurricane, tracking right across Florida before making a second landfall in South Carolina.

The two surprising things about the 2022 season were **the lack of any storm in August** (a time when Atlantic storm activity normally starts to increase), and the formation of **three hurricanes in November** (Lisa, Martin and Nicole) – right at the end of the hurricane season.

Here's an animation of last year's season's highlights, thanks to the NOAA:

What does 2023 have in store?

CSU Tropical Weather & Climate Research have released their prediction for this season. Here's the lowdown:

- **Good news:** "El Niño is virtually assured in the next couple of months" – meaning that increased winds from the Pacific will blast across into the Caribbean and Atlantic and help tear apart hurricanes as they try to form.
- **Bad news:** Warm waters in the tropical Atlantic are at "record levels in the eastern part of the basin" – meaning that ideal hurricane conditions are in place which will counteract some of the El Niño effect.

So although they say to expect a "near average" season, **they really don't know yet which way it will go.** Or to put in proper met speak: "Given the conflicting signals between a potentially robust El Niño and a much warmer-than normal tropical and subtropical Atlantic, the team stresses that there is more uncertainty than normal with this outlook."

Southwest hurricane season

This isn't specifically a "northern hemisphere" thing because it **affects countries both sides of the equator.** Similar to the Atlantic season, it generally runs from **June through September.**

India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam are generally the most affected, although some of the nastier storms can track pretty far south.

Tropical systems bringing nasty weather, heavy rain and often strong winds are also associated with the season. You'll find these forming in spots like the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, and northern Indian Ocean.

The main impacts?

- **Airport operations** can often become the biggest nightmare for a pilot. Weather conditions will often shift as the storm moves through, so there may be windows where the wind is aligned with the runway, but don't let the lack of crosswind fool you, as the turbulence and wind shear caused by the high winds will still present a considerable problem for your approach.
- **Airports near the storm will often become full due to diversion traffic** – so be on the lookout for Notams which often prevent their use as a planned alternative. Some regional airports might close to arrival traffic when they are filling up, so having fuel for an alternate some distance from the storm is handy.
- **Be on the lookout for Notams affecting entire airways.** In addition, there are often LSWDs (Large Scale Weather Deviations), and FIRs will modify route availability to assist their aircraft management.
- **Carry extra fuel.** This is especially true for those ultra long range flights. Weather at the time of your departure may be forecast OK. However, 12 hours is a lifetime for these storms, and the airport, which you thought would be OK, could be the storm's firing line. Fuel will give you options.

- **Be mindful of aircraft limitations and aware that ATC may not pass on info if they're busy.** Ask the approach controller how many aircraft have made successful landings in the past 30 min, just to help create a picture of how things are on the ground.
- **After storms pass, the local region can be isolated due to flooding and damage.** Power and water are often cut off, and essential services may be limited. For airports, manpower and fuel could be an issue, so FBOs/handlers may not be able to assist with your arrival for days after the storm has passed.

Understanding the forecasts

During hurricane season, some terms get thrown around that aren't always that clear.

Especially:

- The difference between a storm and a hurricane.
- What categories actually mean.
- The actual effect of these categories on the ground.

Hurricanes are measured on a 5-point scale. The bigger the number, the more destructive it will be. Here's a handy little graphic, courtesy of the National Hurricane Center:

https://ops.group/blog/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SSHWS_animaton.mp4

Getting good intel

Keep an eye on the FAA OIS website and NOAA website. When new storms form, daily telcons are activated that anyone can dial into. They provide up-to-the-minute operational updates on airports and airspace.

Prepare to help!

After a disaster, we know that knowledge is critical. Getting good information to relief workers literally saves lives – which is why OPSGROUP established Relief Air Wing. It is a team of OPSGROUP volunteers who come together in the aftermath of these storms to help share information to relief agencies so that **help can get through to where it is needed the most.**

Our community contains thousands of skilled pilots, air traffic controllers, dispatchers and other professionals and **together we can make a real difference.** Head on over to the Relief Air Wing website for more info on our mission and how **you can help.**

ADS-B Mandates in 2023

David Mumford
13 August, 2023

Certain exemptions to the ADS-B mandate in Europe ended on June 7th, 2023, which means that **most aircraft flying in Europe now need to have ADS-B.**

Essentially, you were exempt until 7th June if your CofA was from between 1995-2020, **and** you had a retrofit plan in place, **and** you never benefitted from any EU funding for the retrofit.

Now, you're only exempt if your CofA is from before 1995, **or** you're doing a maintenance or delivery flight, **or** you'll be ceasing ops within EU airspace before Oct 2025.

There's a whole bunch of EU docs out there containing these rules, but the main one to check is 1207/2011.

Other ADS-B mandates around the world

Here's a map of all the current ADS-B mandates we know about, in a lovely green tint, mostly pointing in the right direction of where the airspace they refer to are!

Other ADS-B mandates coming soon

Fiji

July 13th 2023 – ADS-B will be required for all flights in the Fiji domestic sector of the NFFF/Nadi FIR. (You already need it in the New Caledonia sector, i.e. the bit around NWWW/Noumea airport). Ref: AIC 03/23

Canada

August 10th 2023 – ADS-B will be required for all flights in Class A airspace (at or above FL180), then in Class B airspace from May 16th 2024, then everywhere else from some time in 2026. Ref: NavCanada

Any more we missed? Let us know!

Mexico General Aviation Challenges: Old and New

David Mumford
13 August, 2023

This article is from Rick Gardner of CST Flight Services. We asked if he could talk to us about some of the long-standing challenges affecting General Aviation ops to Mexico, as well as some of the more recent issues which maybe haven't been widely reported.

Mexico has been a popular destination for General Aviation pilots and aircraft owners for many years and for good reason. Mexico is a country rich in culture, a diverse geography, incredible cuisine, a fascinating history and a warm and welcoming people. The fact that it sits right on the US border makes it easy to reach by most GA aircraft.

However, there are some **long-standing issues affecting GA aircraft arrivals in Mexico** which many veteran travelers may be familiar with that continue to exist.

Customs

Under Mexican Customs law, only a pilot who can prove that they are the owner of the aircraft they are flying is allowed to bring anything into Mexico other than basic clothes and personal effects. Sporting equipment, electronic equipment other than a laptop or an ipad and anything else that you might want to have with you is **not allowed entry and can be taxed or confiscated.**

Even though the law allows the owner-pilot to have passenger privileges in this regard, **many customs agents are unaware of this allowance** and frequently deny them this privilege.

If the Mexican Customs agents do not have access to a working x-ray machine to scan bags when arriving or departing the country, then customs agents may **open all bags of crew and passengers for manual inspection.** This means that any personal contents inside your bags may become public knowledge very quickly to all those present in the customs arrival area.

Immigration

Mexican Immigration officers are usually very courteous and professional although sometimes they misapply article 14A of the Mexican Tax code which assesses an approximately **$100 USD fee on GA aircraft if they arrive outside of "normal" operating hours** or on weekends and/or holidays. The Mexican Tax code specifically states that this fee is NOT to be applied to private flights, yet immigration officers at certain airports **apply this fee to all aircraft arrivals** regardless of the type of flight or the hours of operation.

Another caveat of Mexican Immigration law is that pilots do not pay certain immigration taxes unless they remain in the country for more than 1 week. This sometimes catches pilots by surprise when immigration officers tell them that they have **overstayed their time and are charged an additional fee.** This is not a fine but simply the same charge that passengers have to pay.

Permits

When you enter Mexico in a private aircraft, you must obtain an **Entry Permit** for the aircraft. There are two types of Entry Permits: a Single Entry Permit (SEP) and a Multiple Entry Permit (MEP).

A SEP is valid for 180 days or until the aircraft departs the country, whichever comes first. A MEP is valid for the calendar year and an aircraft can enter Mexico as many times as the operator wishes during the year without paying for a new Entry Permit, provided that the aircraft does not remain in the country continuously for more than 180 days at a time.

A MEP specifies the crew that brought the aircraft into the country when the permit was issued and **use of the aircraft by a different crew can invalidate the MEP.**

Be aware that neither a Single Entry nor Multiple Entry Permit is valid unless it is accompanied by the original receipt for payment of that permit. If you have a Mexican Multiple Entry Permit (MEP) and you plan

to enter Mexico towards the end of the calendar year, or if you plan to spend New Years in Mexico, you should obtain a SEP when you enter. **The MEP expires on December 31st** and if you have an AOG incident or if you decide at the last minute to remain in Mexico for the New Year, you could face a tricky situation.

Pilot Docs

Another issue that pops up at certain airports is where AFAC officials require that **the pilot's Medical Certificate Class matches their Airman Certificate** and not the privileges being exercised.

For example, a pilot with an Airline Transport Pilot Certificate may be required to have a 1st Class Medical Certificate even though they are flying their own personal Cessna 182. Trying to explain to some AFAC officials how a 1st Class Medical Certificate can become a 2nd Class and then a 3rd Class per 14 CFR 61.23 becomes even more entertaining.

Ramp Checks

Ramp Checks have always been an issue in Mexico and that has not changed. Always be prepared to have valid aircraft and crew documents ready along with the appropriate Entry Permit.

Insurance policies of private aircraft, issued in their country of registry, are valid in Mexico if they include Mexico in the territory coverage and the liability insurance minimum is at least $ 300,000 USD.

For Charter aircraft, it is a completely different story. Operators of aircraft that are used for both private and charter use need to be extremely careful that if the aircraft is being flown privately into Mexico and an insurance policy (Non-Mexican or Mexican) is presented to the Mexican AFAC that indicates that the policy is for COMMERCIAL purposes, then **the entire operation could be considered as commercial** and the operator will have to present additional proof that the operation is actually private. Otherwise, the operator could be detained, fined, etc. for not having the appropriate permits for charter operations in Mexico.

While not required by regulation, we strongly recommend that if the aircraft is not registered in the name of the pilot or one of the passengers, that you **prepare a notarized letter** identifying the legal owner of the aircraft and that the owner is authorizing the crew to fly the aircraft and the passengers to be aboard

the aircraft on an international flight to Mexico. The letter should also clarify that the flight is a **private, non-commercial flight.** This letter can serve to defuse any misconceptions that a private flight may be a charter flight or that the aircraft may be stolen. Sometimes, this letter can help to **avoid the $100 fee mentioned above** that is erroneously charged by Mexican Immigration by proving that the flight is private. Sometimes……

SENEAM airspace and overtime

This is a topic worthy of its own article. Mexican airspace fee calculation and payment is a topic that will confuse and frustrate even the most seasoned international operator. Suffice it to say that if you flew through the Mexican FIR, even if it was due to a vector by US ATC at the border, and you neither landed nor departed from a Mexican airport on that flight, **you owe Mexico airspace fees.**

If you depart, or arrive, at the beginning, or at the end, of an airport's normal operating hours, you may incur **SENEAM overtime fees** which cannot be paid at the airport. Furthermore, if you requested an extension to the airport's normal operating hours for an early or late operation, the SENEAM overtime fees **cannot be paid along with the airport fees.**

SENEAM overtime fees, like Mexican airspace fees, are **paid through a separate process via a Mexican bank.** Contact us for instructions on how you can inquire directly with SENEAM if airspace or overtime fees are owed.

Safety

The elephant in the room. While theft of aircraft in Mexico has not been an issue for many years, personal safety has gained a lot more attention since 4 US Citizens were kidnapped in the border town of Matamoros leaving 2 of them dead.

For a crime to occur, you need a victim and the right environment. **Avoid being a victim – don't draw attention to yourself** by wearing expensive clothes, jewelry, personal effects and/or by bragging about your success and/or wealth. Don't create the environment. Avoid going "off of the beaten path", don't interact with strangers no matter how innocuous they might appear, avoid using the same taxi driver unless you really know who they are. Avoid border towns.

Another issue pertains to using **app services like Uber**. While Uber is a legally protected service in Cancun, there have been major conflicts between the taxi drivers in Cancun and Uber drivers. These conflicts have spiraled into violent encounters between taxi drivers, Uber drivers and passengers. Until the authorities get a handle on this simmering problem, be very careful with what ground transportation service you use while in Cancun.

Planning for the worse is usually the mantra of pilots. We recommend **fueling on arrival** in a foreign country and leaving enough fuel on board to at least get back to the US border or to another country known to be a safe haven.

We also recommend having **2 satellite based communications devices**, one for the crew and one for the passengers. While sat phones are ideal, they are also terribly expensive. However, devices like the Garmin InReach bring satellite connectivity to a more reasonable level using text messaging. If you are dependent on cellphone or landline technology, you are exposed to getting cut off from the rest of the world and from each other if there is a natural or manmade disaster that interrupts those services.

The US State Department has a couple of useful services for international travel:

- US State Department: Smart Traveler Enrollment Program
- US State Department: Safety and Security Messaging App

New Challenges: Changes to agencies that interact with General Aviation

There is a new political party in Mexico, led by the current president, that has swept into power at the federal, state, and municipal level across the country. This new party has been making **significant changes to laws and leadership** across those institutions that interact with GA arrivals.

The following is a summary of what those changes have been, and the **impact they are having in varying degrees to GA flights** to Mexican Airports…

Security

The Mexican Federal Police (Federales) have been disbanded and replaced with a new entity called the National Guard (Guardia Nacional) which was formed in March of 2019 and **staffed primarily by military personnel.** While still technically a civil organization, it is controlled by the military. The Guardia Nacional now provides security at international airports and at many domestic airports in Mexico, and they are usually the first government agency that an arriving aircraft will encounter. Their degree of interaction with aircraft crews and passengers **varies widely between Mexican airports.**

Civil Aviation Authority

Mexico's CAA formerly known by its acronym of the DGAC was also replaced with the Agencia Federal de Aviación Civil (AFAC) in October of 2019. During the transition process, the top leadership at the central level, as well as the airport level, were **replaced by former military personnel, primarily from the Mexican Air Force.** The AFAC is the agency that issues Entry Permits to foreign aircraft via their central office and local offices at the Mexican international airports and they are the ones who can conduct **random ramp checks** on aircraft arriving at Mexican airports.

Customs and Immigration

In July 2021, another decree replaced Mexican Customs with a new entity called Agencia Nacional de Aduanas de México (ANAM) which falls under the control of the Mexican military. The former civil servants that functioned as Customs officers were terminated and **replaced by military personnel.** Mexican Customs is present at all Mexican international airports and reviews crew and passenger luggage and cargo on arrival into the country and again when departing the country.

In the past, visitors entering Mexico had to complete a Multiple Immigration (FMM) for Immigration control.

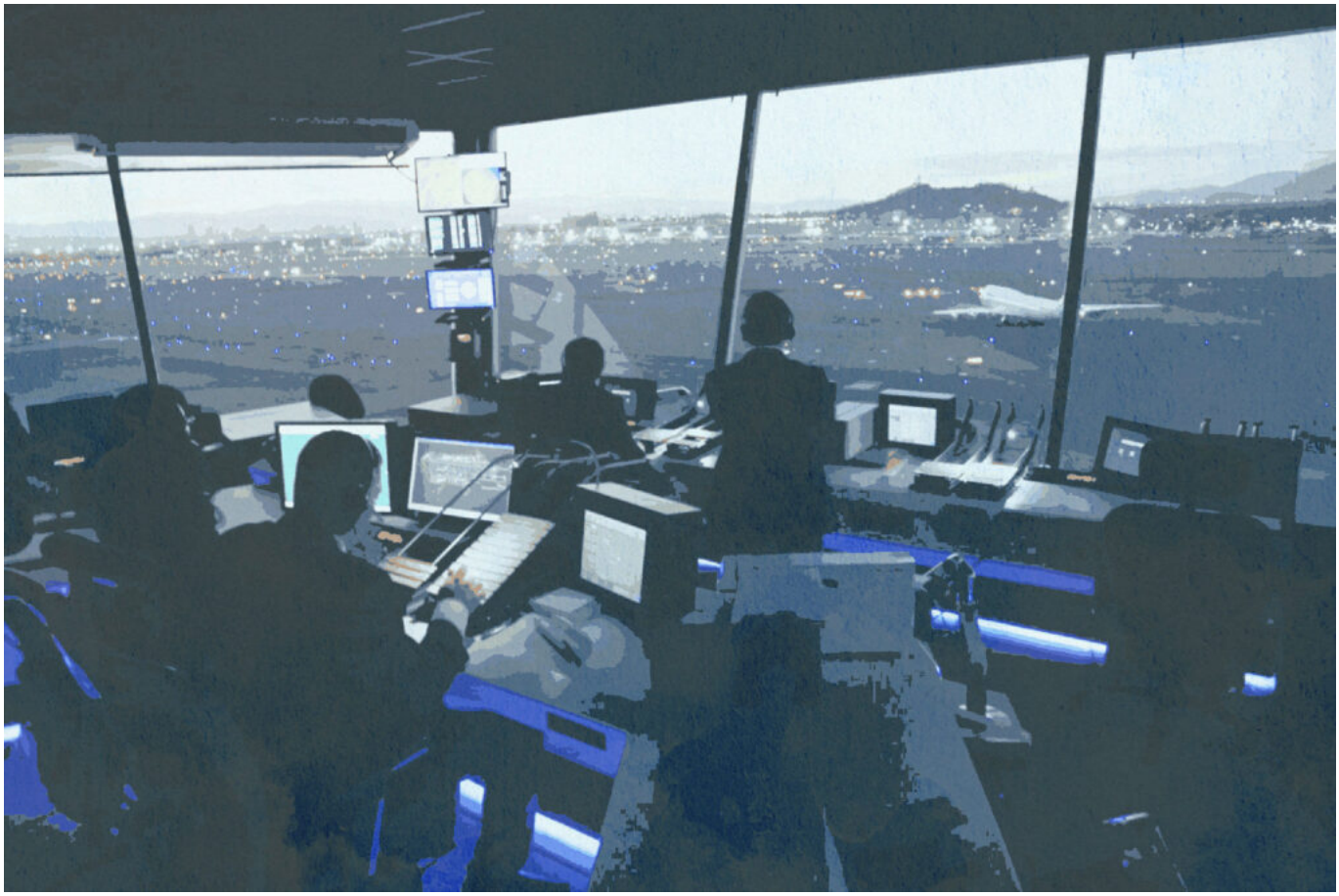
The FMM is a two part form that you fill out upon entering Mexico and the immigration officer would stamp

both parts of the form and return one part to the visitor. Upon departing Mexico, the visitor would surrender their part of this form.

However, the present government is phasing out that form and it is being **replaced with a simple Entry and Departure stamp in the visitor's passport.** Depending on the International airport that you operate from in Mexico, you may, or may not, have to complete the form. It will depend on what stage of the implementation process they are in at that airport.

ATC

In March 2023, a new law went into effect empowering the Mexican military to guarantee the security, sovereignty and independence of Mexican airspace. How this new law will affect the AFAC and SENEAM (the civil entity that provides ATC services in Mexican airspace) has yet to be seen.



How do these changes affect General Aviation?

It is difficult to imagine that these massive changes to so many different federal government agencies that interact with GA would be trouble-free during the transition.

The reality is that at the major airports that receive the highest volumes of visiting GA aircraft, like Cancun, Puerto Vallarta, the 2 Cabo airports, Toluca, Guadalajara and Monterrey, **the impact has been less significant due to the efforts of the airport operators and local FBOs to keep things operating smoothly.** Operators using ground handlers typically fare better because they have somebody on the ground who understands the proper procedures and speaks the language.

However, in all fairness to ground handlers, they cannot interfere with the actions of federal officials doing their duties. So, their abilities to minimize the inconveniences can sometimes be very limited and it is also not in their best interests to antagonize those federal officials that they must interact with every day.

At the other end of the spectrum, international airports and domestic airports that receive little GA traffic can sometimes be more onerous. What we have experienced firsthand is a **lack of coordination between the different agencies which has provoked delays in arrival and departure processing**, frustration on the part of crew and passengers as well as misplaced documents.

For example, the National Guard (Guardia Nacional) will often request that all contents of the aircraft be removed and placed on the ramp to be searched on arrival and departure. Once complete, they may tell you that you can return your items to the aircraft only to have the Customs agent come behind them and tell you to **unload everything again** and to bring it into the airport building. As these agencies rarely identify themselves, it is **sometimes hard to tell who is who.**

Another area of concern has been that these government officials are **using cellphones to take pictures of crew and passenger documents** containing Personally Identifiable Information (PII) such as Airmen Certificates, Medical Certificates and Passports. The ownership of these cellphones, the location where the images are being stored and the steps being taken to protect that data has never been explained.

Unfortunately, we have seen the **AFAC deny entry into Mexico of Experimental Aircraft or pilots using BasicMed**, even though their own published regulations specifically state that Experimental aircraft and BasicMed are allowed with no specific individual approvals.

Another issue that continues to pop up are **AFAC inspectors wanting to see Type Ratings on Airman Certificates for aircraft that do not require Type Ratings.** Fortunately, we have been able to clear up Type Ratings issues by working with the AFAC inspectors.

Bottom line

With so many new personnel entering these Mexican government agencies, some inconveniences are to be expected as they become proficient at the new tasks they are being assigned to do. In the meantime, the best strategy is to **pack an extra case of patience and a large bottle of good humor.** After all, it could be worse, you could have flown on the airlines...

About the author:
Rick Gardner of CST Flight Services, a company which provides a wide range of international trip support services for both owner-pilots and professional pilots. Rick is also the representative for the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) in Mexico, Central America, The Bahamas and the Caribbean as well as a Bahamas Flying Ambassador, member of The Bahamas Civil Aviation Council and has participated on aviation committees of other foreign countries.

For many years, several individuals and flying organizations like CST Flight Services have collaborated with the heads of the different government agencies in Mexico that interact with US General Aviation arrivals in an attempt to simplify and standardize the entry process. CST's efforts over the years have been successful on a number of fronts such as: obtaining official notification from DGAC that US Issued insurance policies are valid for private aircraft and that you do not have to buy "special" Mexican insurance from 3rd parties, obtaining deferrals for almost 10 years for the requirement of 406 MHz ELTs, obtaining official permission for Experimental Aircraft to enter Mexico in September of 2008 and again in February, 2021, and obtaining an alternate means of filing Mexican APIS for private flights by sending an Excel template via email to Mexican Immigration.

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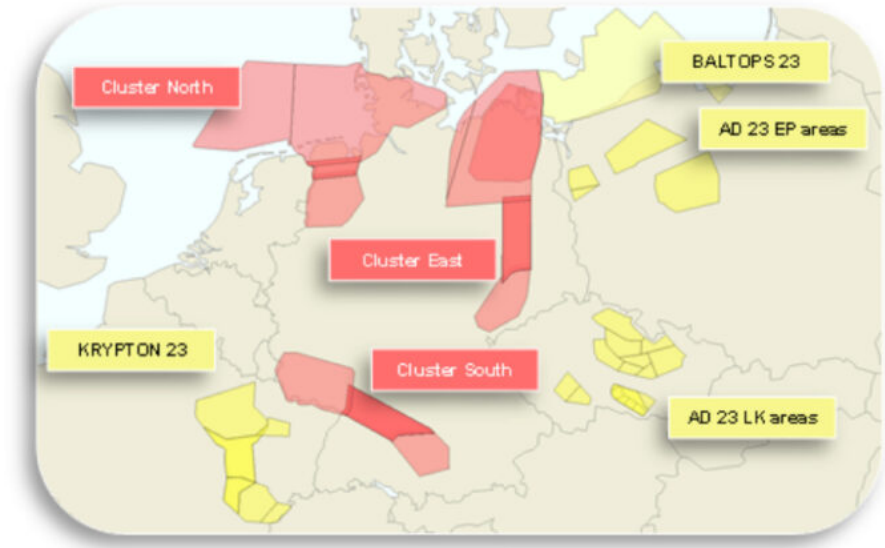
Air Defender 23: Hundreds of flights in Europe to be rerouted each day

David Mumford
13 August, 2023

There are several military exercises planned in Europe until June 22, affecting some busy airspace in Germany (including Maastricht), Czech Republic, northern Poland, and eastern France.

Air Defender in Germany is going to be the one that will cause the most delays and disruption. It's happening June 12-22 (Mon-Fri first week, Mon-Thu second week). This is going to be NATO's biggest ever air exercise, involving 250 military aircraft from 25 countries, and is all about testing their response to a simulated attack on a NATO country.



BALTOPS 23
04 -16 Jun 2023

AIR DEFENDER 23
12 -22 Jun 2023 Mon to Fri

KRYPTON 23
21 Jun 2023

TIME ALLOCATION AIR DEFENDER		
	From	To
Cluster East	08:00	12:00
Cluster South	11:00	15:00
Cluster North	14:00	18:00

Eurocontrol are going to be working hard to re-route flights – around 800 flights each day, with around **300 of these expected to have at least 60nm added to their routings.** They predicted the average delay per flight would be around only 3 minutes (but we have to say that feels extremely optimistic!)

They are also warning operators **not to plan flights that will land close to airport closure times**. Several German airports are extending their opening hours on request, although for some you'll have to prove that Air Defender is the reason you need to arrive/depart late: **EDDS/Stuttgart, EDDB/Berlin, EDDF/Frankfurt, EDDL/Dusseldorf** (there may be more!)

For more info, in order of usefulness and how painful they are to read (1 = useful, low pain, 4 = bamboozling, not very useful, high pain), check the following:

1. Eurocontrol’s summary of how bad they think it’s going to be. Click here.
2. Eurocontrol’s full 65 page briefing. Click here.
3. German AIP SUP 7/23 of predicted impact in German airspace. Click here.
4. Czech AIP SUP 2/23 of predicted impact in Czech airspace. Click here.

Is TCAS always required on the North Atlantic?

Andy Spencer
13 August, 2023

Oh, TCAS, you sly little gadget! The Traffic Collision Avoidance System is the knight in shining armour for preventing mid-air collisions. **You would think that TCAS would be an absolute must-have in the NAT airspace**, where the skies are busier than a beehive. But wait for it… surprise, surprise, the answer is a RESOUNDING (but actually slightly complicated) **NO!**

How can this be?

Although most aircraft are still required to have TCAS onboard, a little something called **MEL dispensation** comes to the rescue.

Minimum Equipment List (MEL) is like that cool aunt who lets you get away with stuff. **It allows us to operate with TCAS inoperative, within certain limits.** For some aircraft, it’s a two-day pass, while others enjoy ten whole days of TCAS-less adventures (as long as they’re departing from a place where fixing it isn’t possible).

But what about ATC? Don't they require us to have functioning TCAS?

We reached out to **Shanwick ATC** for a comment, and they had something surprising to say:

- *Shanwick supervisor guidelines state that there are no operational reasons for ATC to refuse a request to operate in Shanwick without functioning TCAS.*
- *There are some caveats: level or route restrictions may be imposed to avoid densely populated airspace, however this is unlikely within Shanwick airspace. ATC here would not automatically exclude the flight from the NAT Tracks. Operators should file and request their optimal routing and ATC will endeavour to approve as requested.*
- *Where TCAS fails during flight: Shanwick ATC will coordinate with the next unit but advise that the operator should be coordinating with other ANSPs, particularly those without a NAT boundary (for example any Eastbound flight that suffers TCAS failure in Gander FIR – Gander would coordinate with Shanwick and Shanwick would coordinate with Shannon).*

A discussion with **Gander ATC** on the other side of the pond resulted in much the same information:

- *There is no rule prohibiting an aircraft operating under TCAS MEL relief from operating anywhere in the NAT HLA or on the NAT Tracks.*

It all boils down to **airspace design and risk mitigation.** When intelligent folks design these controlled airspace areas, they put the responsibility of traffic separation on ATC. So, whether we have TCAS or not, it keeps their game plan the same. Our fancy onboard collision avoidance measures, whether TCAS or a creative SLOP manoeuvre, are like sprinkles on the icing of the airspace cake.

A word of caution

MEL isn't there to make us feel invincible. **It's not a license to fly with broken stuff just because we can.** It's more like a get-out-of-jail-free card to prevent us from being stranded without a paddle.

And also, before making grand plans for TCAS-free adventures, remember that **our departure and destination airports may have something to say about it.** The busier places like London or New York might only be keen on welcoming an aircraft with TCAS.

So, what are our options? We might need to make a detour to a quieter second or third-tier airport, which might not be as glamorous as our passengers desire. We'll have to calculate the impact on remaining time and fuel and consider getting our aircraft to a maintenance base before the MEL expires.

Gimme the bite-sized version

- En-route ATC centres don't have any operational reasons to refuse entry into the NAT. **If it breaks before the flight, you must let all of them know.** If it breaks in flight, they will help you.
- You may not get your planned level or track – **you will need more fuel** as a contingency.
- Be mindful that the **MEL doesn't intend us to fly with broken equipment simply because we can**… it's a tool for us to get aircraft to equipped maintenance centres
- **Your departure or destination airports may not accept you without TCAS.** Consider where you would go and how that would impact the remaining time of deferred defects.

US will not delay 5G aircraft retrofit deadline

David Mumford
13 August, 2023

Telecoms firms will be rolling out 5G near major US airports from July 1, 2023. **Most aircraft need to upgrade their radio altimeters** by this date to continue certain operations, and the FAA has said it will not be extending the deadline.

What do you mean by "certain operations"?

These ones:

- *Special Authorization CAT I, CAT II and above approaches.*
- *Auto-landings.*
- *Head-up display landings.*
- *Enhanced vision systems through touchdown.*

For ease of reference, we're going to call these **"fancy landings"** for the rest of this article.

What do you mean by "most aircraft"?

Aircraft that need to do this are "Transport and Commuter Category Airplanes." Just like it says in the FAA rules!

What FAA rules?

The initial set of rules (Airworthiness Directive 2021-23-12) was published in Dec 2021. But that got superseded in May 2023 (right at the death, with only 1.5 months to go until the July 1st deadline!) with Airworthiness Directive 2023-10-02. This really is the place to go to find answers to all questions.

The rules set two deadlines:

July 1, 2023: All transport and commuter category airplanes, regardless of the type of operation (Part 91, Part 135, Part 121), will be **prohibited from performing these fancy landings at any US airport unless they have upgraded their radio altimeters.** Aircraft without upgraded radio altimeters will be able to operate into any airport, but cannot fly the fancy landings.

Feb 1, 2024: US aircraft operating under **Part 121** need to have upgraded their radio altimeters to be able to operate **anywhere in the contiguous US.**

What are "transport and commuter category airplanes"?

Commuter Airplanes = multi-engine, max pax seats 19, max takeoff weight of 19,000lbs. If you have more than 19 seats, or you're heavier than 19,000lbs, that makes you a **Transport Airplane.**

So this basically means everyone.

EVERYONE everyone? Or just N-reg aircraft?

Yeah ok, not EVERYONE everyone. **The rules only apply to N-reg aircraft.**

So, technically, if you're not N-reg you can carry on flying the fancy landings in the US after July 1st even if you haven't upgraded your radio altimeter. But that's probably not a great idea, because **the 5G interference is still going to be an issue for you!**

As the FAA says in the rules (in response to no fewer than eleven foreign airlines who asked this very same question):

"Under ICAO Annex 8, Airworthiness of Aircraft, the state of registry of an airplane
is the state responsible for its airworthiness. For this reason, FAA ADs

apply only
to U.S.-registered airplanes. To the extent the FAA's bilateral partners agree with
the FAA's finding of an unsafe condition in U.S. airspace, the FAA encourages those
authorities to adopt the FAA AD or similar requirements as mandatory continuing
airworthiness instructions for airplanes registered in other countries.
The FAA also plans to publish information in the FAA's Aeronautical Information
Publication to alert international operators to the 5G C-Band situation in the U.S.,
including the agency's use of Domestic Notices. The FAA strongly urges operators of
foreign-registered airplanes to voluntarily comply with the actions required by this
AD when operating in the contiguous U.S. given the unsafe condition affects their
airplanes as much as the airplanes subject to this AD.”

What if I don’t care about these fancy landings?

If you’re N-reg but don’t have approvals to do these fancy landings, you don’t need to worry – **no radio altimeter upgrade is required.**

Before July 1st, just stick this table into your AFM, and you’re done:

Figure 4 to paragraph (i)— *AFM Revision for Non-Radio Altimeter Tolerant Airplanes*

(Required by AD 2023-10-02)

Radio Altimeter Flight Restrictions

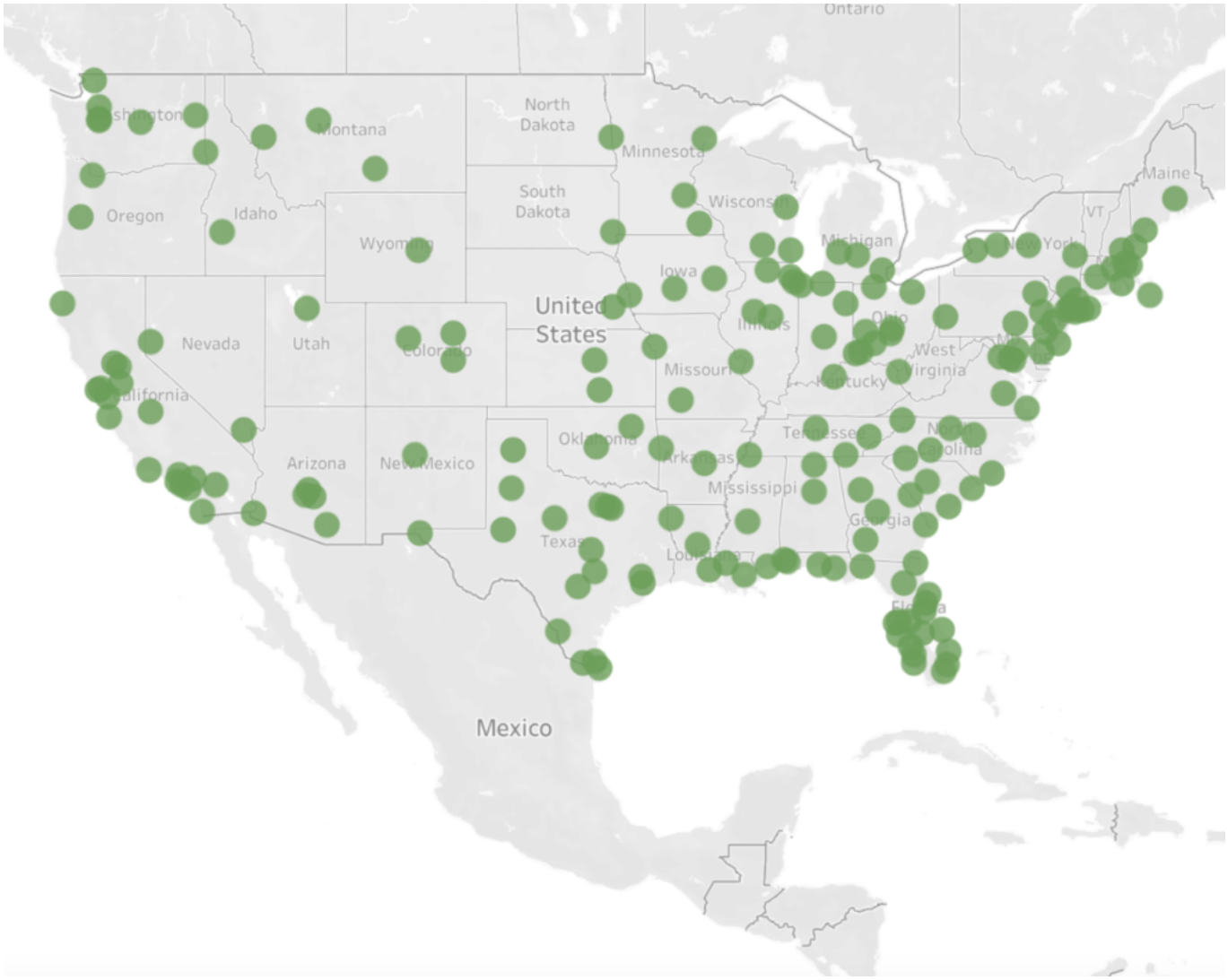
Due to the presence of 5G C-Band wireless broadband interference, when operating in the contiguous U.S. airspace, the following operations requiring radio altimeter are prohibited:

- Instrument Landing System (ILS) Instrument Approach Procedures (IAP), SA CAT I, SA CAT II, CAT II, and CAT III
- Automatic Landing operations
- Manual Flight Control Guidance System operations to landing/head-up display (HUD) to touchdown operation
- Use of Enhanced Flight Vision System (EFVS) to touchdown under 14 CFR 91.176(a).

As of February 1, 2024, this airplane must not operate under 14 CFR part 121 in the contiguous U.S.

Which airports are affected?

Right now, there are almost 200 US airports with 5G interference issues. **The FAA has an interactive map** of them all here, where you can check all the restrictions for each one.



This list of airports is probably going to increase after July 1st, as more 5G towers are installed across the country.

What's the backstory to all this? Please make it short

In Dec 2021, the FAA had concerns about 5G networks interfering with aircraft radio altimeters due to similar frequencies. They banned fancy landings at some airports, issued some guidelines, and allowed some exemptions. In the end, a deal was made to delay activation near major airports, initially until July 2022 but extended to July 2023.

Where can I find more info?

- Really, truly, head here first for the **FAA rules** on all this, to get it from the horse's mouth.
- Then if you're still keen, you can check here for the **FAA website on all things 5G.**
- And also here for a recent **webinar by AIN** on the impact of 5G, with a focus on bizav.
- Then finally here for the most recent **special airworthiness information bulletin** issued by the FAA on 24th May 2023, where they're basically asking manufacturers and operators to continue assessing the whole 5G issue and report back to them their findings.

Asia Airspace Risk: Why North Korea's Lastest Launch Matters...

Chris Shieff
13 August, 2023

****Update: June 2, 07:35z ****

South Korea, the Philippines and Japan have all issued new airspace warnings by Notam due to the risk caused by falling debris. Japan's in particular is worth noting as it also suggests an '**anti-ballistic missile' may be launched** from several potential locations within the **RJJJ/Fukuoka FIR** to shoot down the craft if it enters Japanese airspace during launch.

The Notams to be aware of are:

South Korea:

```
RKRR Z0298/23 - ROCKET LAUNCH WILL TAKE PLACE FROM NORTH KOREA.
IN THE INTEREST OF AVIATION SAFETY, WI INCHEON FIR ALL ACFT ARE
STRONGLY ADVISED TO KEEP LISTENING TO THE FREQUENCY AND FOLLOW
THE INSTRUCTION OF ATC.
EXPECT FALLING AREAS ARE AS BLW :
1. 360656N 1233307E-352431N 1232247E-352001N 1234837E-360226N 1235911E
2. 340554N 1230159E-332328N 1225153E-331632N 1232940E-335858N 1234004E
3. 145410N 1284006E-111918N 1291050E-112649N 1295408E-150142N 1292403E.
31 MAY 08:38 2023 UNTIL 10 JUN 15:00 2023. CREATED: 31 MAY 08:38 2023
```

Japan:

```
RJJJ P2445/23 - ALL ACFT INTENDING TO FLY WI FUKUOKA FIR ARE ADVISED TO PAY
SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION.
A ROCKET IS EXPECTED TO BE LAUNCHED FROM NORTH KOREA AND THE
ANTIBALLISTIC MISSILES MAY BE LAUNCHED FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE
```

ROCKET.

1.ROCKET LAUNCHED FROM NORTH KOREA
(1)LAUNCH SITE: NORTH KOREA
(2)FALLING AREAS COORDINATES:
FIRST STAGE
360656N1233307E 352431N1232247E 352001N1234837E 360226N1235911E
SECOND STAGE
340554N1230159E 332328N1225153E 331632N1232940E 335858N1234004E
THIRD STAGE
145410N1284006E 111918N1291050E 112649N1295408E 150142N1292403E

2.IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 82-3 OF JAPAN SELF DEFENSE FORCE LAW,
THE ANTIBALLISTIC MISSILES ARE DEPLOYED AT POSITIONS BLW,
(1)NAHA-SHI : 261219N1273929E
(2)MIYAKOJIMA : 244602N1251930E
(3)ISHIGAKIJIMA : 241953N1240828E
(4)YONAGUNIJIMA : 245838N1225716E. SFC - UNL
30 MAY 15:00 2023 UNTIL 10 JUN 15:00 2023. CREATED: 30 MAY 13:57 2023

Philippines:
RPHI B1867/23 - SPECIAL OPS (SATELLITE LAUNCH ACT) WILL TAKE PLACE WI:
145410N 1284006E -
111918N 1291050E -
112649N 1295408E -
150142N 1292403E -
145410N 1284006E.
SFC - UNL, 30 MAY 15:00 2023 UNTIL 10 JUN 15:00 2023. CREATED: 30 MAY 02:31 2023

****

It has been a busy week for the aspiring North Korean space program.

In an unusual turn of events, on May 29 they actually provided prior notice of an **impending launch** of a (suspected) surveillance satellite into orbit. Then on May 30 it actually lifted off, although unsuccessfully. Alarms were briefly triggered in South Korea and Japan. No sooner had the dust settled than Pyongyang announced their intention to try again – sometime before June 11.

Similar attempts in the past have turned out to be yet more **thinly veiled missile tests.** Nevertheless, the global community is taking these warnings seriously, and word is being spread by Notam.

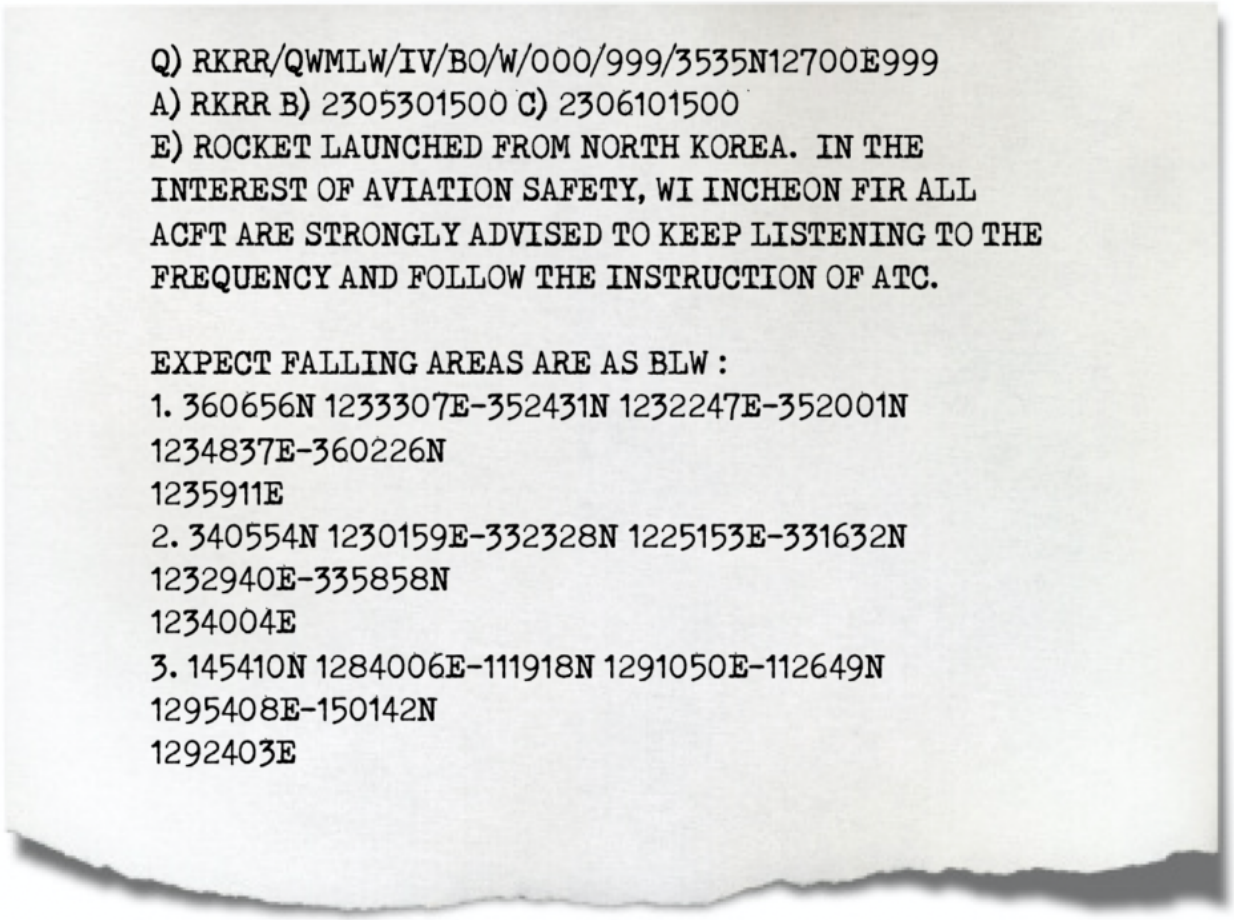
Unlike conventional missile tests which we have frequently reported, an attempt to put something into orbit not only uses UN-sanctioned technology, but creates **far broader hazard areas for civil aviation – well beyond the ZKKP/Pyongyang FIR where traditional missile tests lie.** Which is why we're collectively sitting up a little straighter.

Not all of the beans are being spilt though. Only some of them. Which is why this week's launch window was notably broad – extending for a full ten days. Subsequent launches are likely to be same.

The risk for aircraft was from falling debris from rocket staging, or even a complete failure of the craft.

The Notam…

On May 29, South Korea (the RKRR/Incheon FIR) published the following Notam (which has since been cancelled):



Q) RKRR/QWMLW/IV/BO/W/000/999/3535N12700E999
A) RKRR B) 2305301500 C) 2306101500
E) ROCKET LAUNCHED FROM NORTH KOREA. IN THE
INTEREST OF AVIATION SAFETY, WI INCHEON FIR ALL
ACFT ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO KEEP LISTENING TO THE
FREQUENCY AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTION OF ATC.

EXPECT FALLING AREAS ARE AS BLW :
1. 360656N 1233307E-352431N 1232247E-352001N
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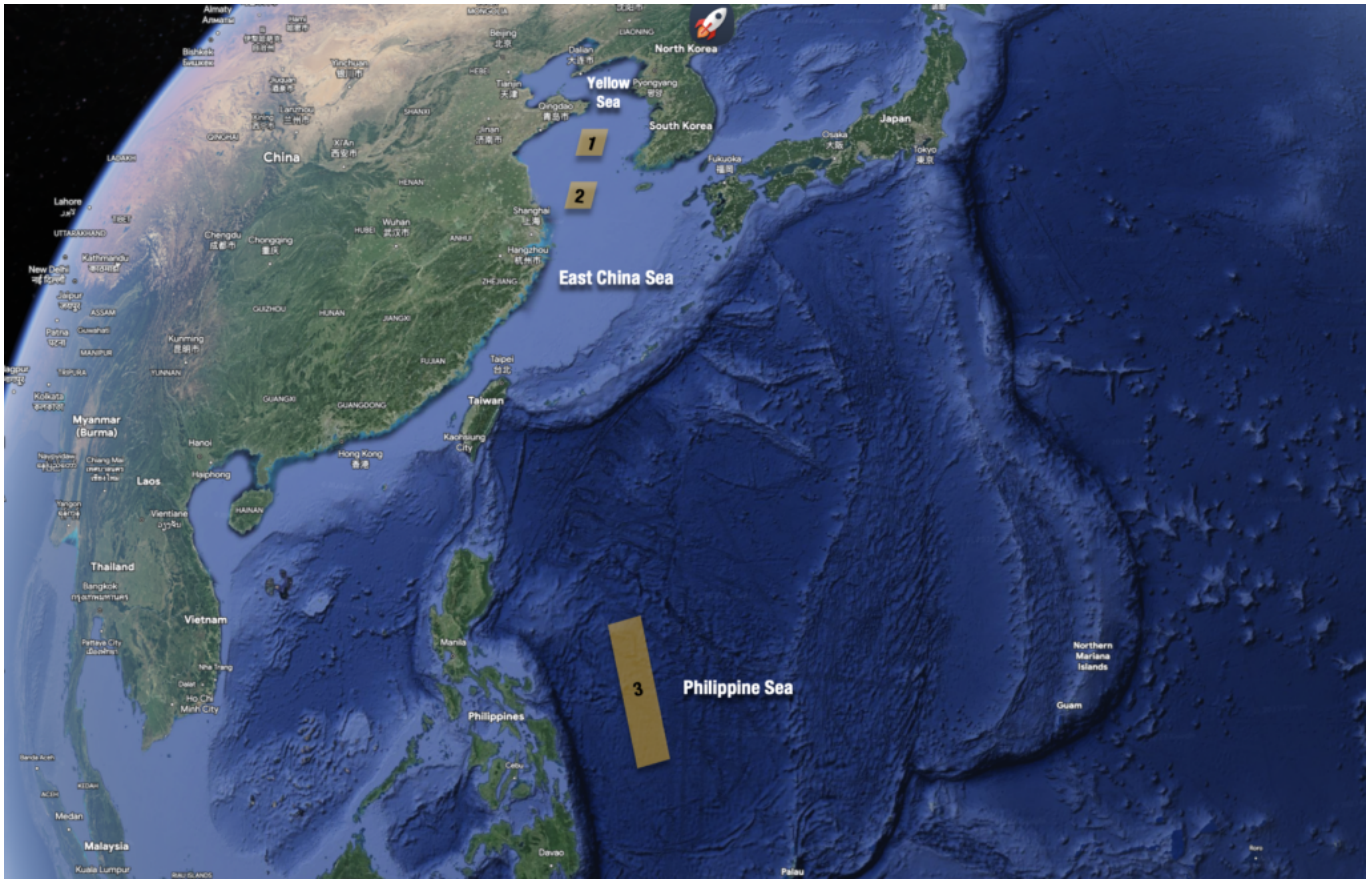
1235911E
2. 340554N 1230159E-332328N 1225153E-331632N
1232940E-335858N
1234004E
3. 145410N 1284006E-111918N 1291050E-112649N
1295408E-150142N
1292403E

There were three major hazard areas – portions of the Yellow Sea, East China Sea and the Philippine Sea.

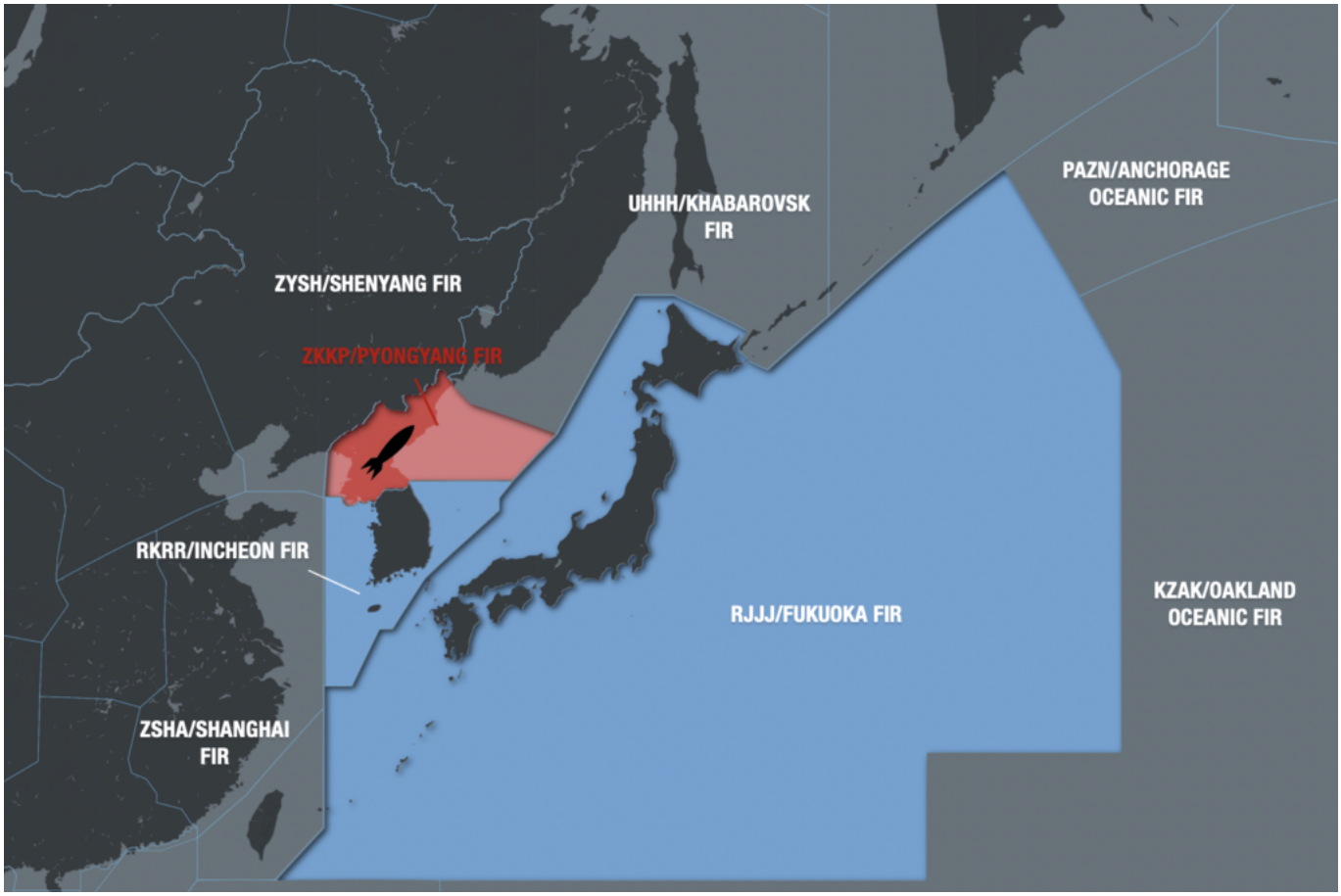
Don’t think in capitalised type-written coordinates? Neither do we. Here’s what that looked like on a map:



The official advice was avoid them completely, if practical. Otherwise, to listen out to ATC for potential updates.

The Plot Thickens…

Given the current state of affairs, any launch is **politically sensitive** and risks far greater political fallout. Japan has been especially vocal in denouncing them saying that they 'threaten the peace and safety of Japan, the region and international community…' They have vowed to shoot down any satellite or debris if it enters Japanese territory – important note: there are currently **no airspace warnings for air defence activity anywhere in the RJJJ/Fukuoka FIR.** With the best intentions, history has shown this type of activity can inadvertently put civilian aircraft at risk.



It's no wonder too – there is a well publicised record of North Korean missile launches coming uncomfortably close to Japanese territory, often landing well into the Sea of Japan.

Political Posturing

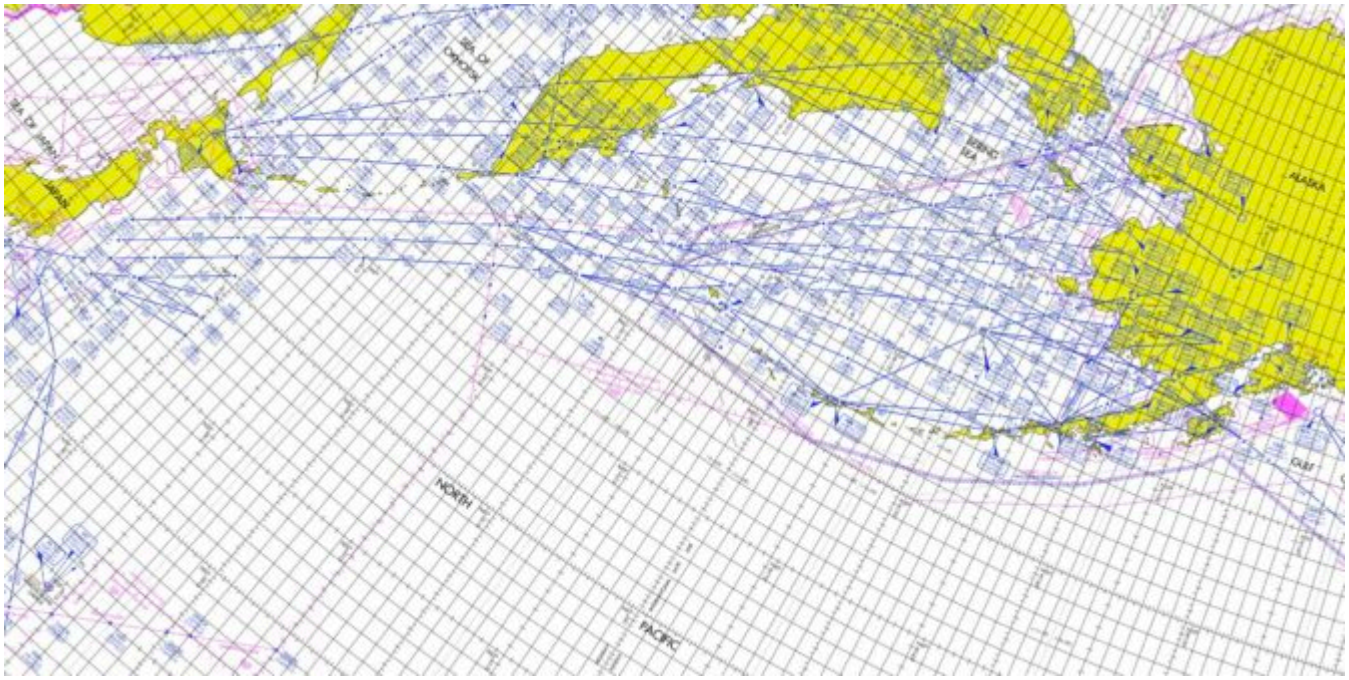
It's unclear whether these are genuine attempts to put a craft into orbit, or more simply a political statement to flex North Korea's ballistic missile capabilities. If subsequent launches were successful it would be North Korea's first foray into space ops. However, it comes at a time when there have been large scale live-firing military exercises near the North Korean border by South Korea – part of a seemingly constant cycle of diplomatic muscle flexing that seems to characterise to the region – and as such we may need to take things with a grain of salt.

From an airspace perspective though, these launches should be **treated as real hazards.** At the very least because it is better to be safe than sorry.

We'll continue to report on any changes as they emerge. Many of these risks are well publicised, and safeairspace.net is a great place to start for that info.

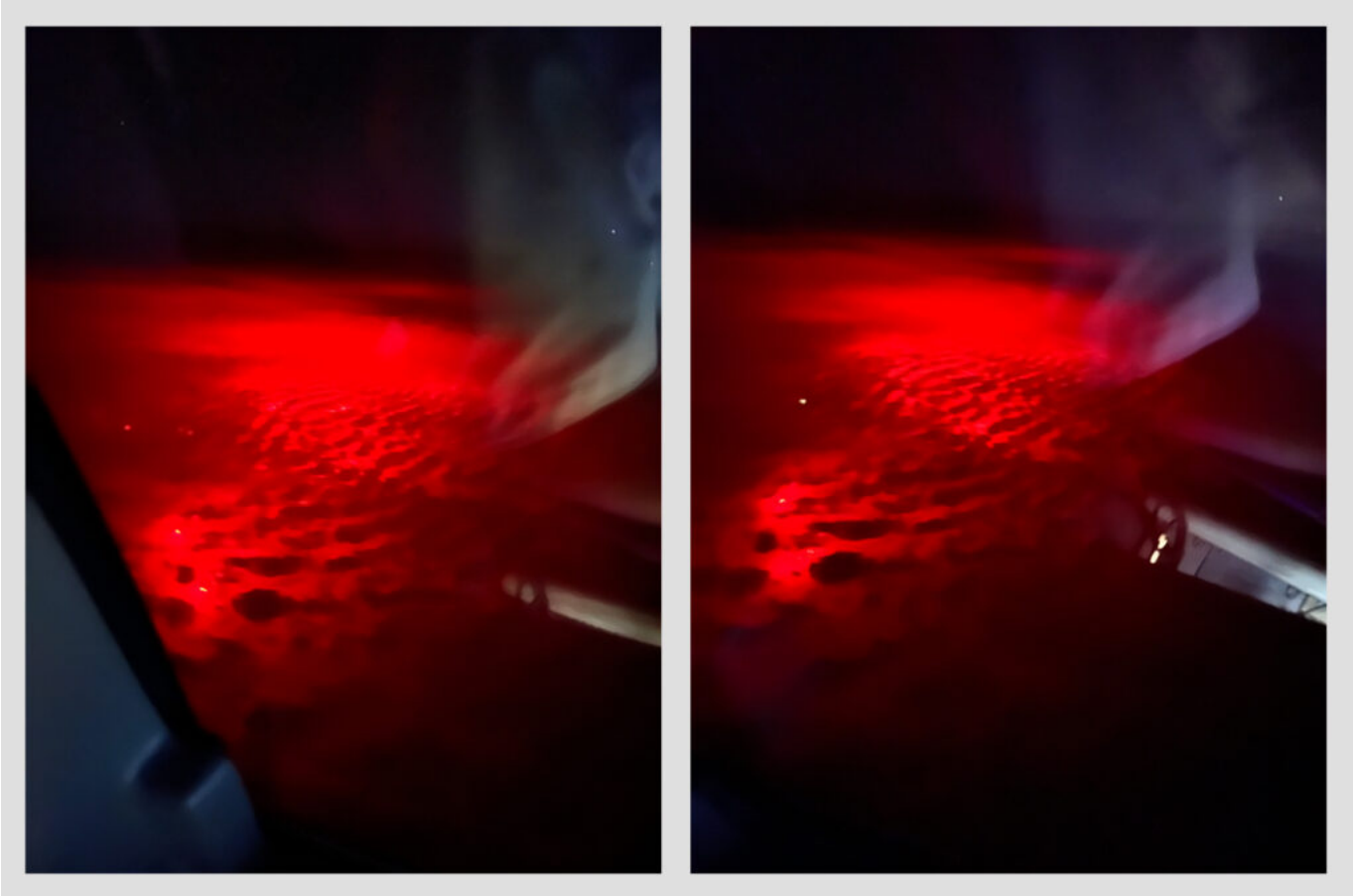
Navigating the NOPAC Redesign Project

Andy Spencer
13 August, 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.

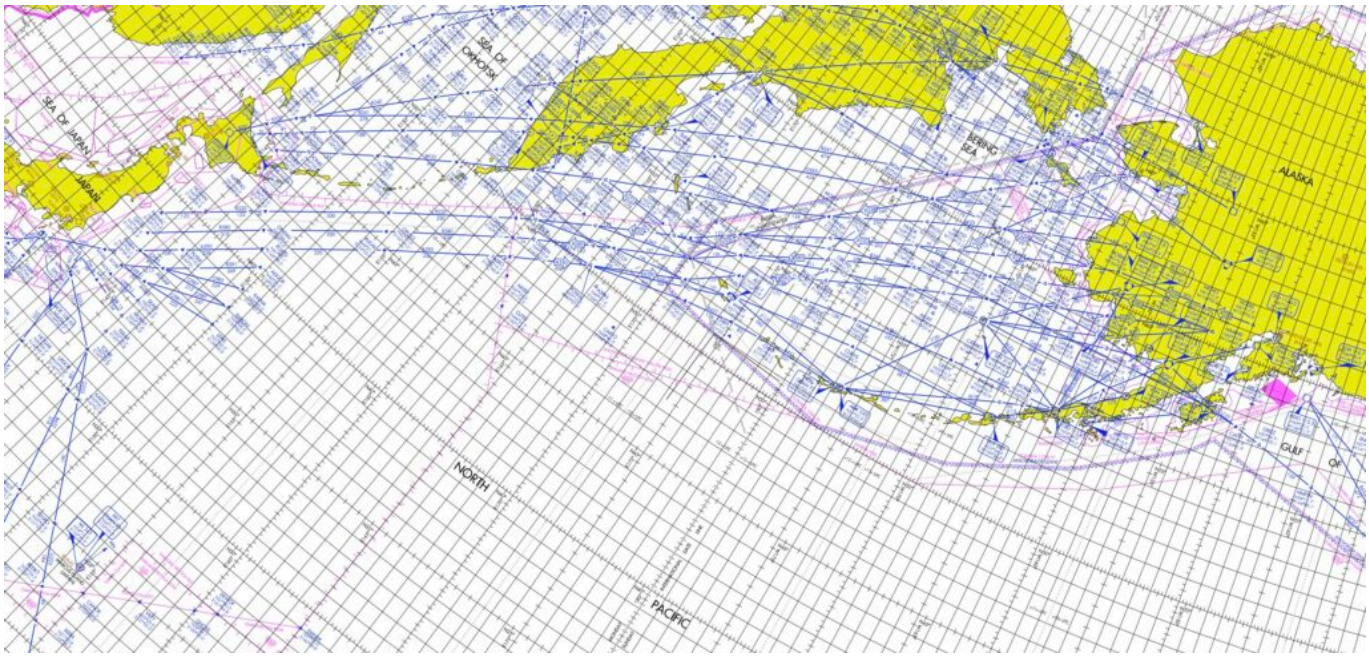
This new project aims to **compress four routes into less airspace**, leaving pilots more room for

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??

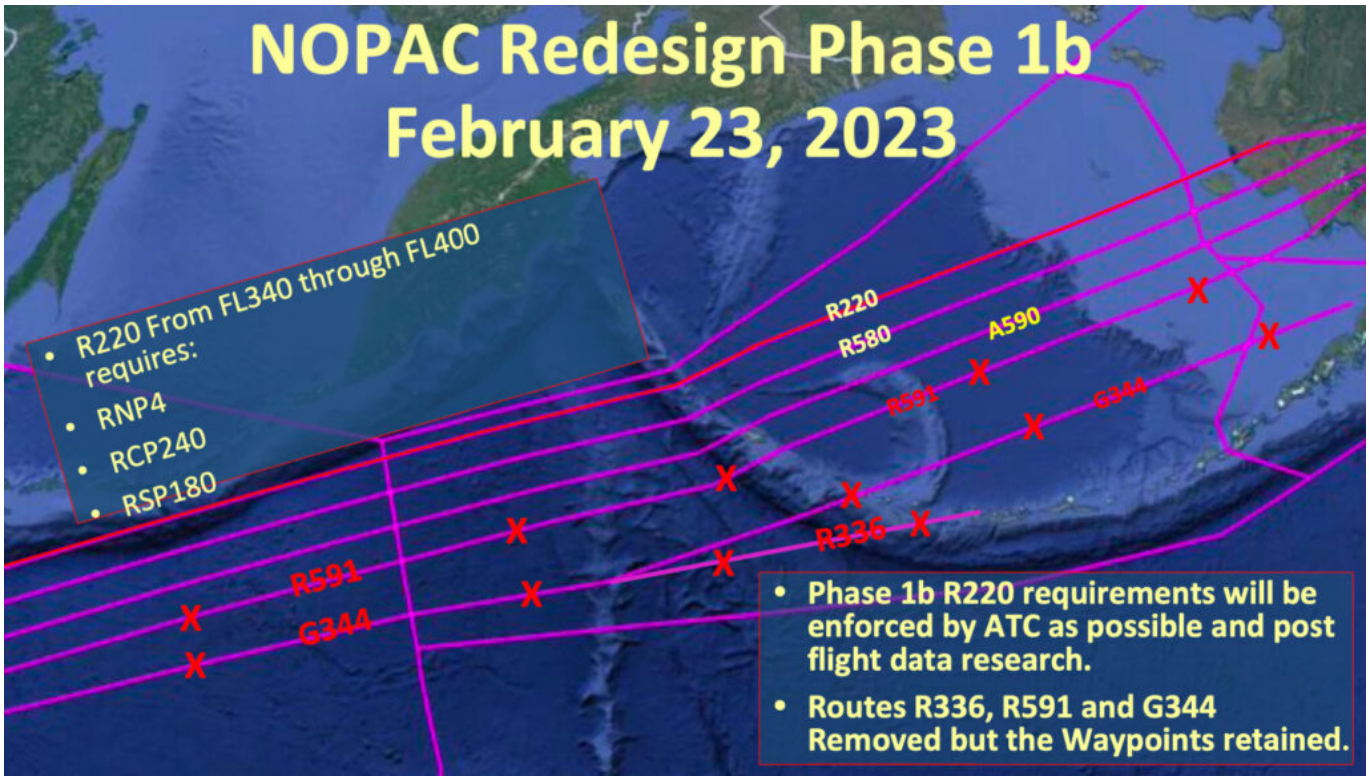
This area, from Alaska, over the North Pacific and down to Japan:



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

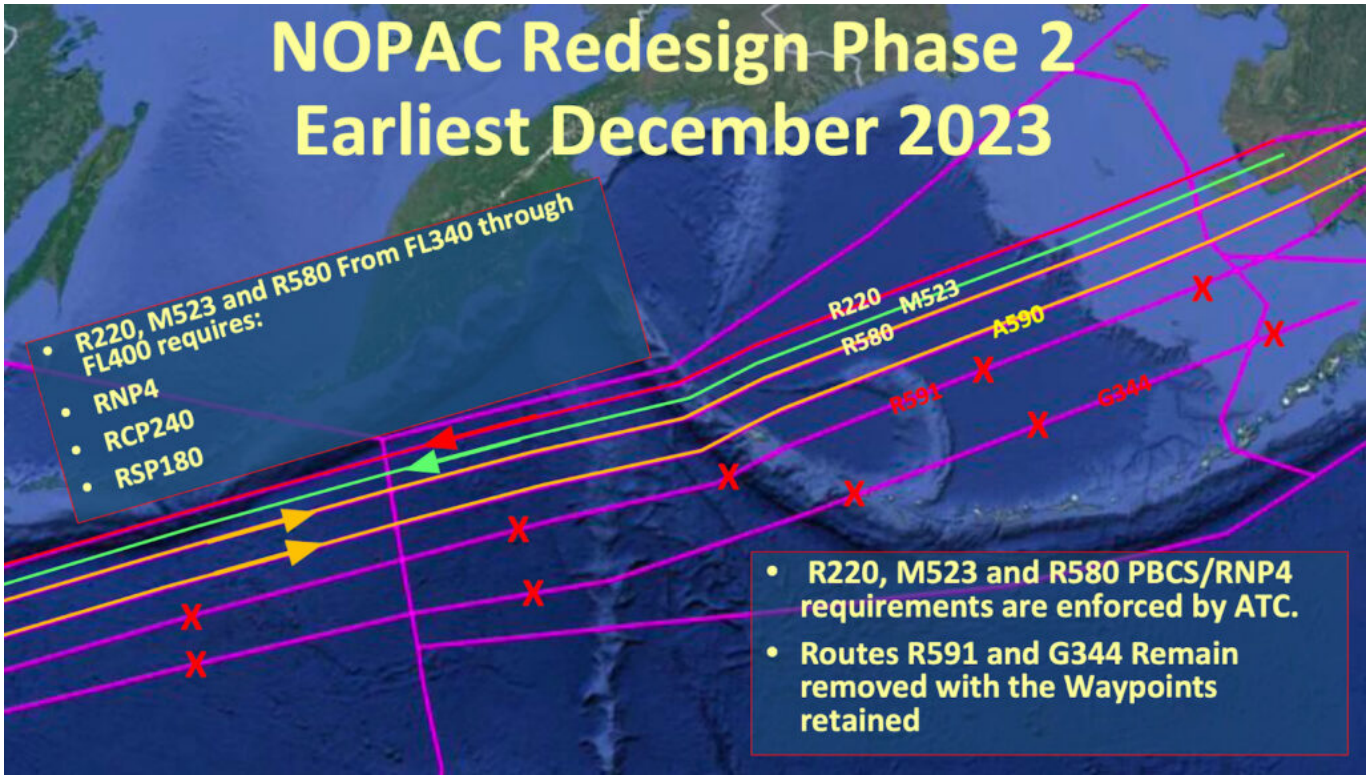
Yep, but thanks to the FAA we have some nicer maps available, showing exactly what is changing…

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

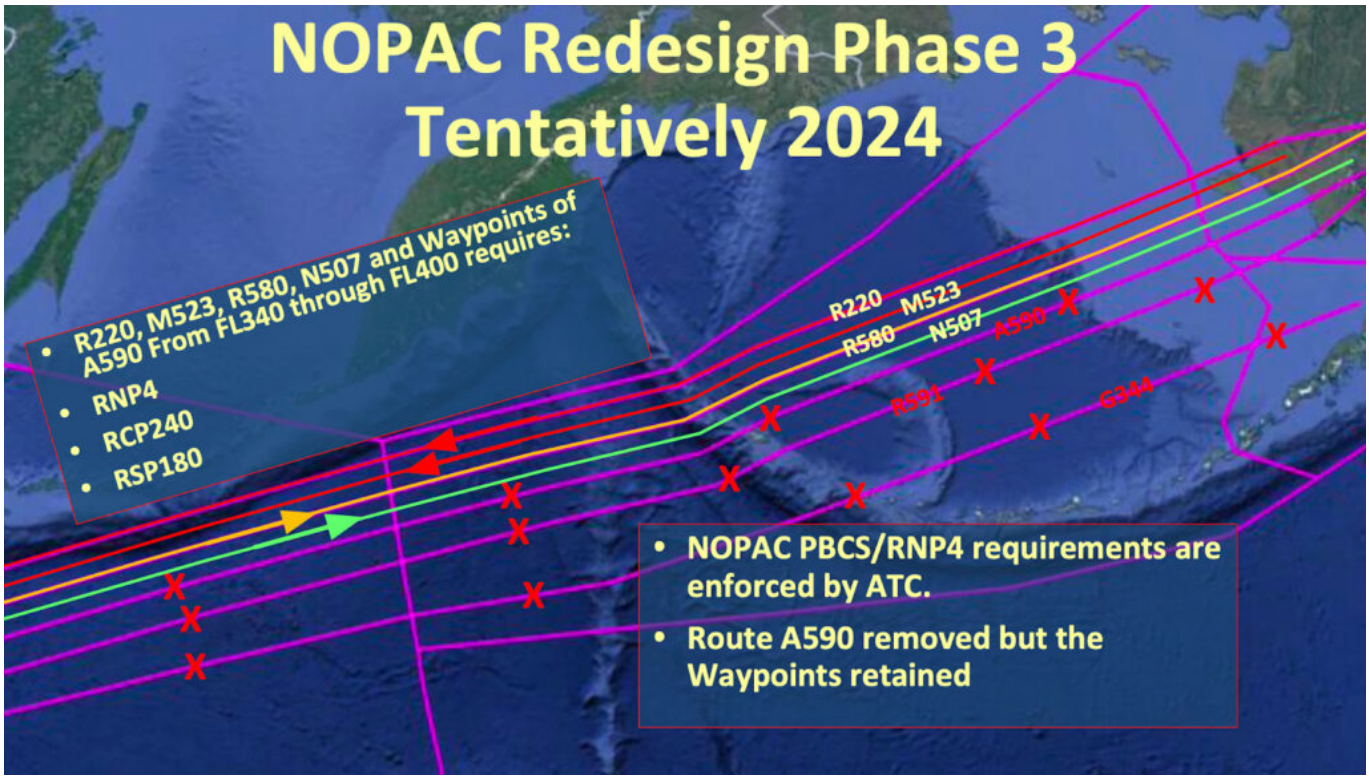


- At the end of 2023 (but most likely in Jan 2024), Phase 2 of this redesign will unfurl.
- Brace yourselves for the birth of a new westbound ATS Route named **M523**. It is ideally situated between R220 and R580. Think of it like adding a secret passage to an already perplexing labyrinth. But unlike 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.

Parking Pain in Portugal

David Mumford
13 August, 2023

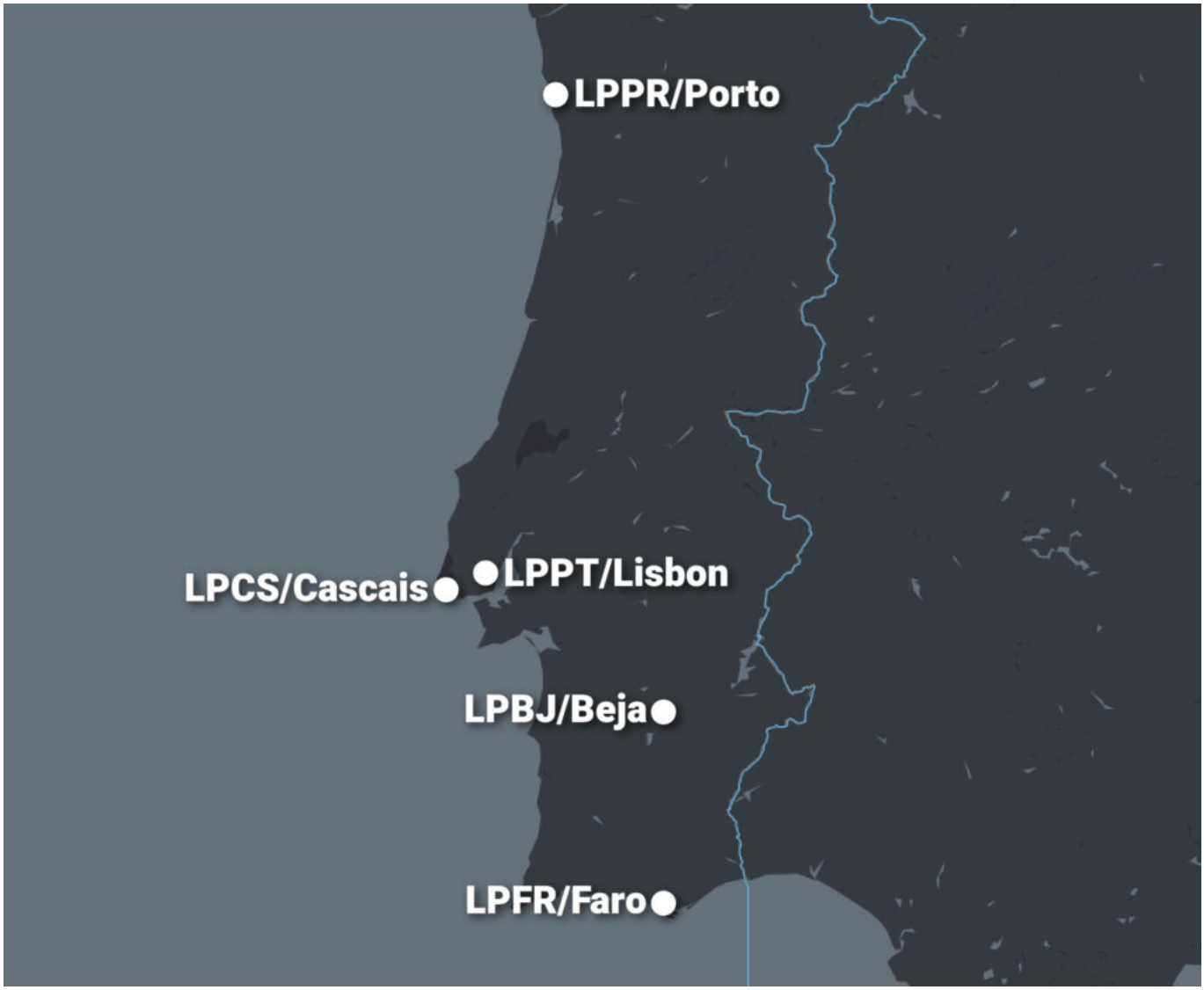
It looks like summer ops to Portugal are going to be tough. There are restrictions at the two main airports, LPPT/Lisbon and LPPR/Porto, and parking elsewhere is going to be challenging too. Here's the lowdown…

Strikes

Just before we get stuck in, it's worth knowing that there are **border control staff strikes** planned over the next month at the major airports in Portugal.

- **LPPT/Lisbon** will be impacted 05-10 local time every Sat-Mon until the end of June.
- **Strikes at other airports** are planned for all day every Friday until the end of June.

More info here.



LPPT/Lisbon

Until the end of the official IATA Summer Season (that's Oct 29, to you and me), most aircraft will be limited to **max 60mins turnaround time** (and Code A and B aircraft only get 45mins). There's no Notam on this – it's hidden away in AIP SUP 61/22. Local handlers expect limited summer slots too. Contact them at lis@omnihandling.com. So essentially, it's **drop-and-go's only from now til November!**

LPPR/Porto

Porto also expects to be busy this summer. They're saying that **parking will only be granted for 4 days max** (96 hours), and can be requested only **within 15 days** of your planned trip. They do have a hangar which could accommodate longer parking, but **the airport does not have a towbar for GA/BA aircraft** so you'll have to bring your own! Contact local handler opo@omnihandling.com for more info.

LPCS/Cascais

One to consider, especially if you're headed to Lisbon as it's jus up the road. You don't need slots here, and they say that **they normally have parking availability** over the summer. The airport is open from 7am till sunset, but will open early/late for an extra fee. Contact the local handler at cascais@omnihandling.com.

LPFR/Faro

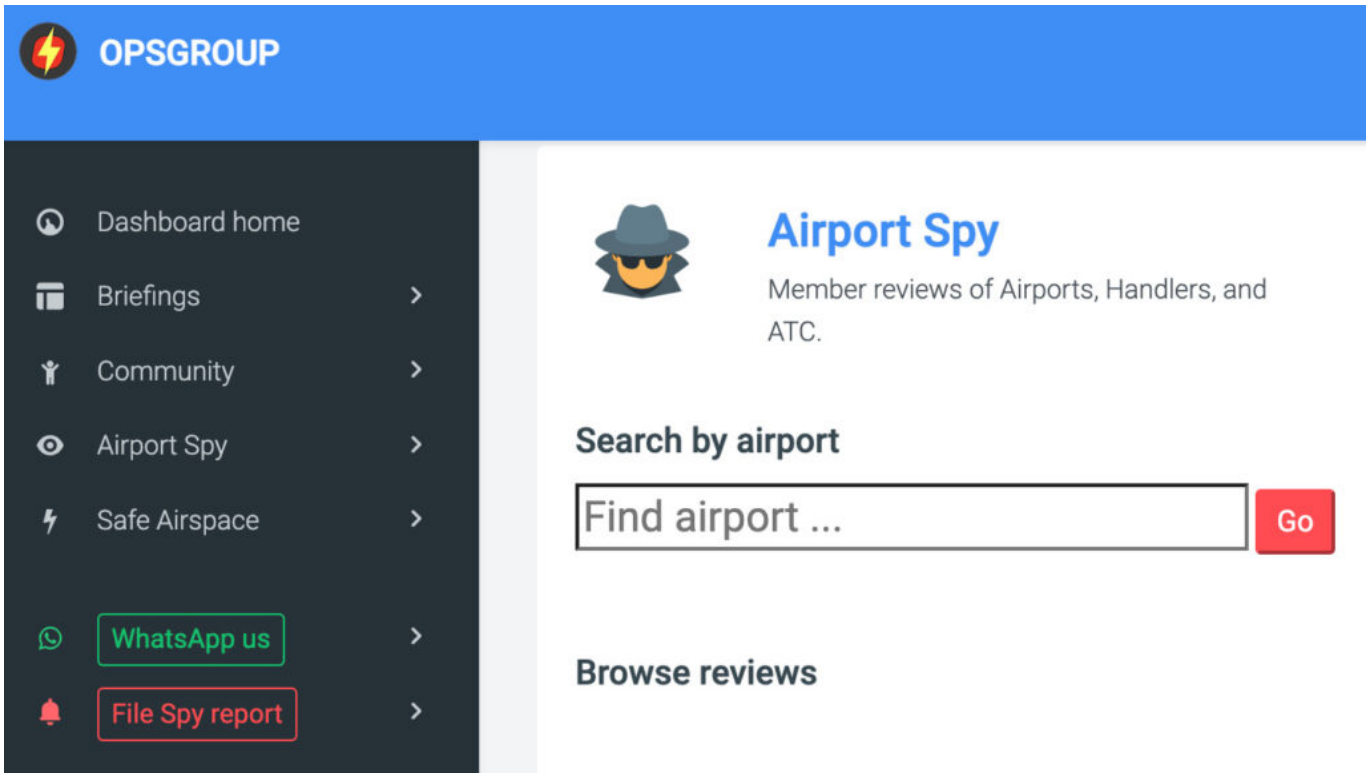
You need slots and parking approval, and **they regularly run out of both during the summer months.** Although technically open 24/7, the runway is closed every night from 23-06z due to noise restrictions. Contact the local handler at fao@omnihandling.com.

LPBJ/Beja

A cheeky extra option to consider. This is a join civil/military airport, so you just need to get clearance in advance (they say to give 48hrs for this), but **they usually have parking available.**

Your Reports!

We've had a couple of recent Airport Spy reports from OPSGROUP members who have operated trips to Portugal – there's one for LPPT/Lisbon, and one for LPCS/Cascais.



LPPT/Lisbon

- Had to wait for fueler and missed our TSAT. **Make sure you respect your numbers** in LPPT… don't mess with TSAT and EOBT otherwise you are not going anywhere.
- Slots required, +/-20 minutes. **Pax must remain onboard** unless they want to take a ride to the terminal and clear immigration, but **there's no FBO** to sit in anyways.
- We had four outbound crew members and all of the bags to support a two-week trip, plus catering. We dragged all of it up and down a few sets of stairs in the terminal, and everything had to go through a carry-on sized x-ray scanner at the security checkpoint. It took **at least 20 minutes from curbside to parking stand** and it wasn't pretty.
- We did not experience aircraft servicing delays as indicated in other reports; our late-night (2300) timing may have helped. There is a **hard midnight curfew for non-commercial ops** and some night restrictions for commercial ops outlined in the 10-1 pages, so be mindful of **potential delays sinking a late-night tech stop.**

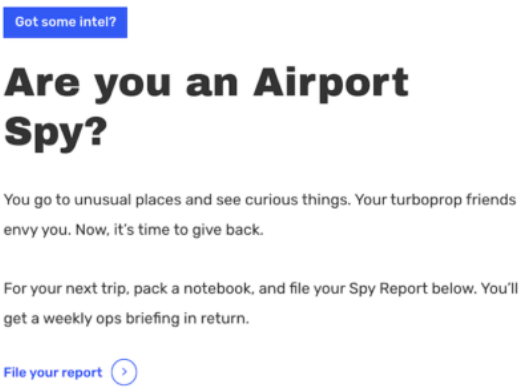
- **Almost all of the parking stands require a pushback.** The parking stand was assigned by the airport authority on an ad-hoc basis, so the handler could not reserve one of the few taxi-through parking stands ahead of time. Pushback was with a Lektro, so no towbar required. TOBT was coordinated through the handler and pushback was requested/authorized by ATC.

LPCS/Cascais

- We ended up in LPCS when, less than 12h to departure time for an 8h leg we were informed that **LPPT would be unable to accommodate parking despite booking weeks in advance.**
- LCPS has a short runway but is still very accommodating for larger aircraft. If you have the marginal performance to land (and depart) there, **this should be your top choice!** There is ample ramp space to accommodate even the largest BizJets and local terrain is of little concern for most BizJets at the weights required to get in and out of their runway.
- **Omni handling was excellent** and they clearly were very proud of their airport, they are incredibly friendly and welcoming. The handlers were a bit discombobulated on the departure, handing us the wrong flight package and then an incomplete package but they worked hard to get us everything we needed.
- Clearing customs inbound was a bit difficult unfortunately – **they have to manually inspect your baggage.** If you have a lot of luggage do plan extra time. It took at least 3-5min per luggage (including hand luggage.)

We want your reports!

If you've been to Portugal and can share some info on how the trip went, let us know! Or even better, skip the middle man and file an Airport Spy report!

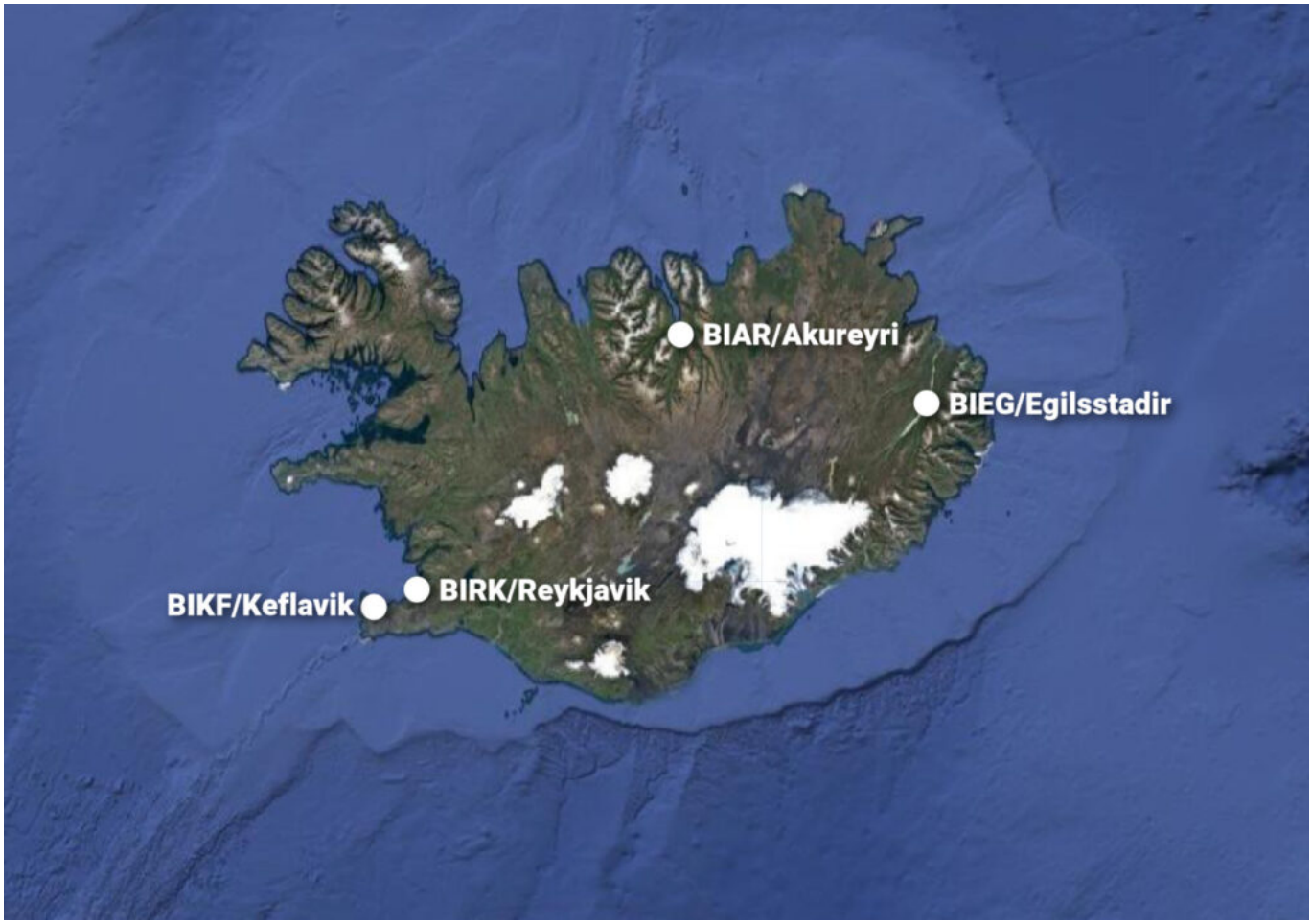


Iceland Airports Reopen to GA/BA Flights

David Mumford
13 August, 2023

Update 1000z May 18: The summit is over, and the restrictions on flights at BIKF and BIRK have now been lifted. Below is original story from May 16.

There's a big state summit happening in Reykjavik this week, which means **restrictions for GA/BA flights at Iceland's main airports BIKF/Keflavik and BIRK/Reykjavik.**



BIKF/Keflavik

This is the most common stop for GA/BA flights doing North Atlantic stops. **There's no parking allowed here from 0000z May 15 to 1000z May 18.** That's what this super vague Notam A0133/23 actually means:

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A0133/23 - EAST APRON/WEST APRON RESTRICTED FOR SPECIAL OPERATION.
STATE, DIVERTED AND AMBULANCE FLIGHTS ARE EXCLUDED.
15 MAY 00:00 2023 UNTIL 18 MAY 10:00 2023.
CREATED: 11 MAY 14:37 2023
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We checked with a local handler at the airport, who said that **quick turns are not allowed either** during this period. You can contact them for more info at ops@southair.is.

BIRK/Reykjavik

From 0700z May 16 to 1900z May 17, GA/BA flights are **not allowed to go here either!** Not unless your flight is directly related to the summit, in which case you need slots. And you can't use it as a FPL alternate.

The days before and after (May 15 and 18), BIRK will be somewhat restricted as well – it'll be busy, all areas and access to the airport will be restricted and guarded by police, and access will only be granted to operating crews, VIPs and staff that have been approved and listed by authorities. Roads and areas close to the summit in downtown Reykjavik will be closed or restricted as well, so good to keep that in mind if crews are staying at a hotels close to the summit.

The Notams for BIRK are actually pretty clear (unlike those for BIKF), and if you need more info about all this, you can contact the local handler at ops@reykjavikfbo.is, but also check out AIP SUP 6-23 below:

SUP - 1 04 MAY 2023

AIP Supplement – ÍSLAND / ICELAND **AIP SUP nr 06/2023**

Isavia ANS ehf., Reykjavíkurflugvelli, 102 Reykjavík /
Isavia ANS, Reykjavik Airport, IS-102 Reykjavik, Iceland
Sími / Telephone: + 354 424 4000
ais@isavia.is
http://www.isavia.is/

Effective from 04 MAY 2023
Published on 04 MAY 2023

ISAVIA ANS
Air Navigation Services

BIRK Reykjavík - Leiðtogafundur Evrópuráðs í Reykjavík 16. og 17. maí 2023 / BIRK Reykjavik - Council of Europe Summit 16 th and 17 th of May 2023 in Reykjavik

Efnisleg ábyrgð: Isavia / Isavia Innanlands
Content Responsibility: Isavia / Isavia Domestic

1 Inngangur

Fjórði leiðtogafundur Evrópuráðsins verður haldinn í Reykjavík dagana 16. og17. maí 2023.
Reykjavíkurflugvöllur (BIRK) mun ekki afkasta þeim fjölda loftfara sem óska eftir að lenda á vellinum ofannefnda daga.
Loftför í millilandaflugi ofannefnda daga þurfa því að óska eftir stæðisúthlutun, sem og skömmtuðum komu- og brottfaratíma.
Önnur loftför, að undanskildu, áætlunarflugi innanlands, sjúkra- og neyðarflugi munu verða fyrir takmörkunum, sem auglýstar verða með útgáfu NOTAM.

2 Stæðisúthlutun

Alþjóðlegir flugrekendur sem óska eftir að leggja á BIRK, frá kl. 07:00 þann 16. maí til kl. 19:00 þann 17. maí, þurfa að óska eftir stæðisúthlutun ekki seinna en 72 klst. fyrir áætlaða komu.

Ríkisflug munu njóta forgangs og beiðnir verða afgreiddar í þeirri röð sem þær berast.
Óska skal eftir stæðisúthlutun á vefsíðunni https://airportcoordination.com/ með eftirfarandi upplýsingum:

- Kallmerki vélar
- Skráningarstöfum vélar
- Flugvélategund
- Áætlaður komutími
- Áætlaður brottfarartími

Fjöldi stæða í boði á BIRK mun verða:

- 18 loftför með kóða staf B
- 3 loftför með kóða staf C

1 Introduction

The 4th Council of Europe Summit will take place in Reykjavik 16th and17th of May 2023.
Reykjavik Airport (BIRK) is expected to receive a number of aircraft that will exceed the airport's capacity.
Therefore, all international aircraft will be subject to landing and take-off slot allocation as well as parking stand availability.
Other flights, except scheduled domestic flights, hospital, and emergency flights, will be subject to limitations that will be published by NOTAM.

2 Parking allocation

All international aircraft operators requesting to park at BIRK, from 0700 UTC on May 16th to 1900 UTC on May 17th, will have to request parking no later than 72 hours before the estimated time of arrival.

Priority will be given to state flights and requests will be handled on a first come first served basis.
To request a parking allocation visit:
https://airportcoordination.com/ with the following information:

- Aircraft callsign
- Aircraft registration
- Aircraft type
- Estimated time of arrival
- Estimated time of departure

Parking capacity at BIRK will be as follows:

- 18 aircraft with code letter B
- 3 aircraft with code letter C

ISAVIA ANS 06/2023

Where else to go?

If you want to use Iceland as a North Atlantic night stop this week, local handlers are advising to use **BIEG/Egilsstadir** or **BIAR/Akureyri** in the north of the country.

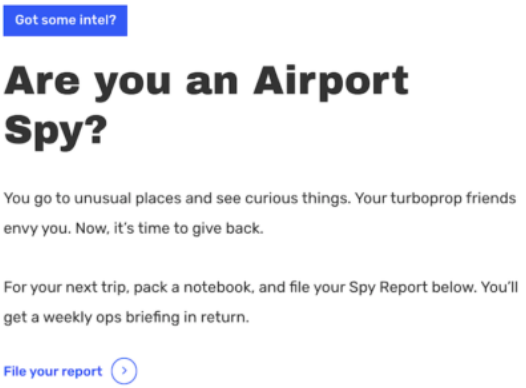
BIEG/Egilsstadir is open weekdays 0800-1745z and weekends 0915-1745z (400EUR charge outside these hours), and are able to handle almost all GA/BA flights – but they do not have a VIP lounge or FBO. There seem to be a few different handling agents able to make arrangements here. We've been speaking with jetcenter@icelandair.is – so maybe get in touch with them for more info.

BIAR/Akureyri is open 0700-2300z (and outside these hours, for an extra fee), and they do have an FBO for GA/BA flights – so this might be the airport to go to. Local agents have reported that there is still space at the airport right now, but it's busier than usual due to the summit. Contact them at jetcenter@icelandair.is.

Anything else worth knowing about ops to Iceland?

- **There's been a change in AFTN addressing for filing of flight plans** in the BIRD/Reykjavik FIR. IFR FPLs now need to be sent to BIRDZPZZ. VFR and mixed FPLs should be sent to BIRDZPZX. AIC 8-23 refers.
- **Iceland's airspace is now entirely covered with ADS-B.** Coverage extends from the North Pole to Scotland and from the Greenwich Meridian to the west of Greenland. You can see their coverage map including flight levels at this link.
- **There are some specific route requirements for flights to BIKF/Keflavik and BIRK/Reykjavik.** These can be found in AIP ENR 1.8.4.1.3.7 which explains exactly how you should file your flight plans to/from both BIKF and BIRK. But to make all this blurb easier to understand, the good folks at Isavia have published some handy graphic presentations of the requirements which you can find here.

Anything else big we missed? Let us know! Or even better, if you've operated to Iceland recently and can share some info on how it went, file an Airport Spy report!



Movie Stars and Racing Cars: Special Flight Ops in Southern France

Chris Shieff
13 August, 2023

The sun's back out in Southern France, and so are the high rollers, race car drivers and movie stars.

That's right – it's that time of year again, with two major events stacked back-to-back – the Cannes Film Festival (May 16 – 27) and Monaco Grand Prix. It's the jewel of the F1 calendar (May 25-28).

This means an influx of business jet traffic to two major airports – **LFMD/Cannes** and **LFMN/Nice,** where some of the world's wealthiest will come out to play.

It's not all caviar and roulette though – you'll still need to be able to land there first. **Three AIP SUPs** have been published to help that happen. Here's what you need to know about them.

LFMD/Cannes

AIP SUP 30/23 has the deets here.

The airport itself isn't normally co-ordinated, but you'll **need a slot** to go there between May 16 – 29. That info is found on this website. The apron is going to be chock-a-block too – a word of warning, you won't be allocated a slot unless you have confirmed parking too.

If you like to manage things yourself on the ground, you're out of luck. Handling services will be mandatory during this period, and it seems there's only port-of-call:

AEROPORT CANNES MANDELIEU / SKY VALET
https://cy.myhandlingsoftware.com
E-mail: operations-acm@cote-azur.aeroport.fr
Phone : +33 (0) 4 93 90 41 10

You may not get your requested slot, so a little flexibility may help here. When you get an **authorisation**

number, this will need to go into Item 18 of your flight plan. Without it, EUROCONTROL will likely refuse it.

Don't be tempted to fly the hop between Cannes and Nice either, in either direction. These flights will be **banned** between May 26 – 29.

LFMN/Nice

AIP SUP 27/23 is the one to check out here.

Nice is co-ordinated year-round, so there's less of a surprise. As above, you'll need to co-ordinate a slot to arrive or depart.

Once again, hiring ground handling services will be mandatory. This time there is a little more choice though. According to the AIP SUP, roll the dice and pick between:

AVIAPARTNER EXECUTIVE
https://www.aviapartnerexecutive.com/nice
E-mail: nce.executive@aviapartner.aero
Phone: + 33 (0) 4 93 21 37 37

DC AVIATION G-OPS
https://www.dca-gops.com/
E-mail : nice.ops@dca-gops.com
Phone: +33 4 93 21 58 12

Monaco

Monaco itself doesn't have an airport. In fact, it is the second smallest country in the world and is found on France's Côte d'Azur – its south-eastern coast. Inside Monaco is the district of **Monte Carlo,** where the F1 race is taking place. Most fans and participants will enter via Nice.

If you're looking for crew accommodation there, book early. Things fill up, and it becomes astronomically expensive – if it isn't already.

Restricted Airspace

Info on this is published in yet another SUP – this one: AIP SUP 076/23.

From May 16 – 28, unless you are special traffic you will **not be able to overfly the city of Cannes** at low level.

Keep an eye out for intensive helicopter traffic. For **IFR traffic departing on a SID**, it is important to follow published climb gradients and altitude requirements. If you don't think you'll make it – let ATC know with your start request. You may get hit with a delay, but it's better than the alternative..

We're expecting another AIP SUP to be published closer to the F1 Grand Prix which may be more restrictive, and so we'll keep this article updated.