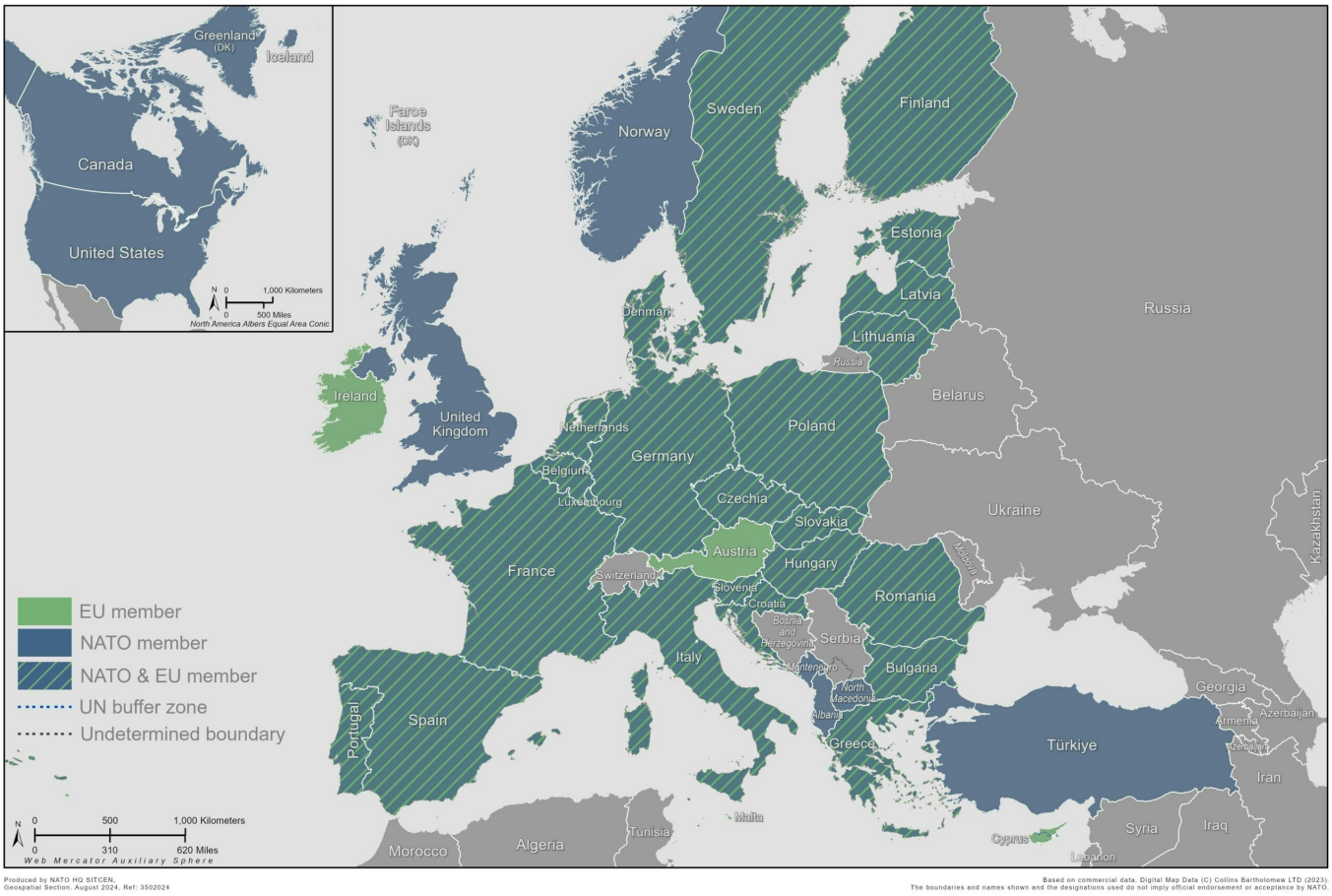
Airspace Violations: Spillover Concerns in Eastern Europe

Chris Shieff
24 September, 2025

Key Points

- **The last two weeks has seen a significant increase in Russian military activity near NATO borders, including several confirmed airspace violations involving both drones and aircraft.**
- **This has been reported in Poland, Romania and Estonia. While these kinds of airspace incidents are not new, the recent spike in frequency and intensity is cause for concern.**
- **NATO has responded in the region by scrambling jets, enhancing surveillance, and deploying additional defensive resources along its eastern borders.**
- **These events may have increased risks for civil aviation, including collision hazards, potential for escalation, activation of air defence systems and GPS interference.**



Airspace violations have been reported by NATO members close to the border with Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

Major Incidents

September 9-10: Poland (EPWW/Warsaw FIR)

During a Russian missile and drone attack on Ukraine, multiple Russian drones violated Polish airspace.

They were detected across **eastern, central and northern Poland** with some reportedly entering via Belarus.

Polish and NATO fighters were scrambled, and **several drones were shot down.**

Poland described the event as a major provocation. It invoked Article 4 of the NATO treaty – a move that triggers emergency consultations with other member states.

This was an important political response. While Article 4 does not commit NATO to collective defence, it does require formal discussions when a member state feels its security is under direct threat.

Image courtesy of the Insititute For The Study of War and Critical Threats.

September 13: Romania (LRBB/Bucharest FIR)

A single Russian drone breached Romanian airspace near the Danube River during strikes on nearby

Ukrainian targets.

It reportedly loitered for around 50 minutes before exiting back towards Ukraine.

Romanian and NATO fighters responded, but **no weapons were fired due to concerns about collateral damage** in populated areas below.

September 19: Estonia (EETT/Tallinn FIR)

Three Russian MiG-31s allegedly entered Estonian airspace for about 12 minutes without authorization near Vaindloo Island in the Gulf of Finland, **close to the boundary with Russian-controlled airspace.**

The jets flew without flight plans, transponders or ATC contact for approx 12 minutes. NATO jets were dispatched to intercept them, before the Russian jets exited the area.

Estonia invoked Article 4 following the incursion.

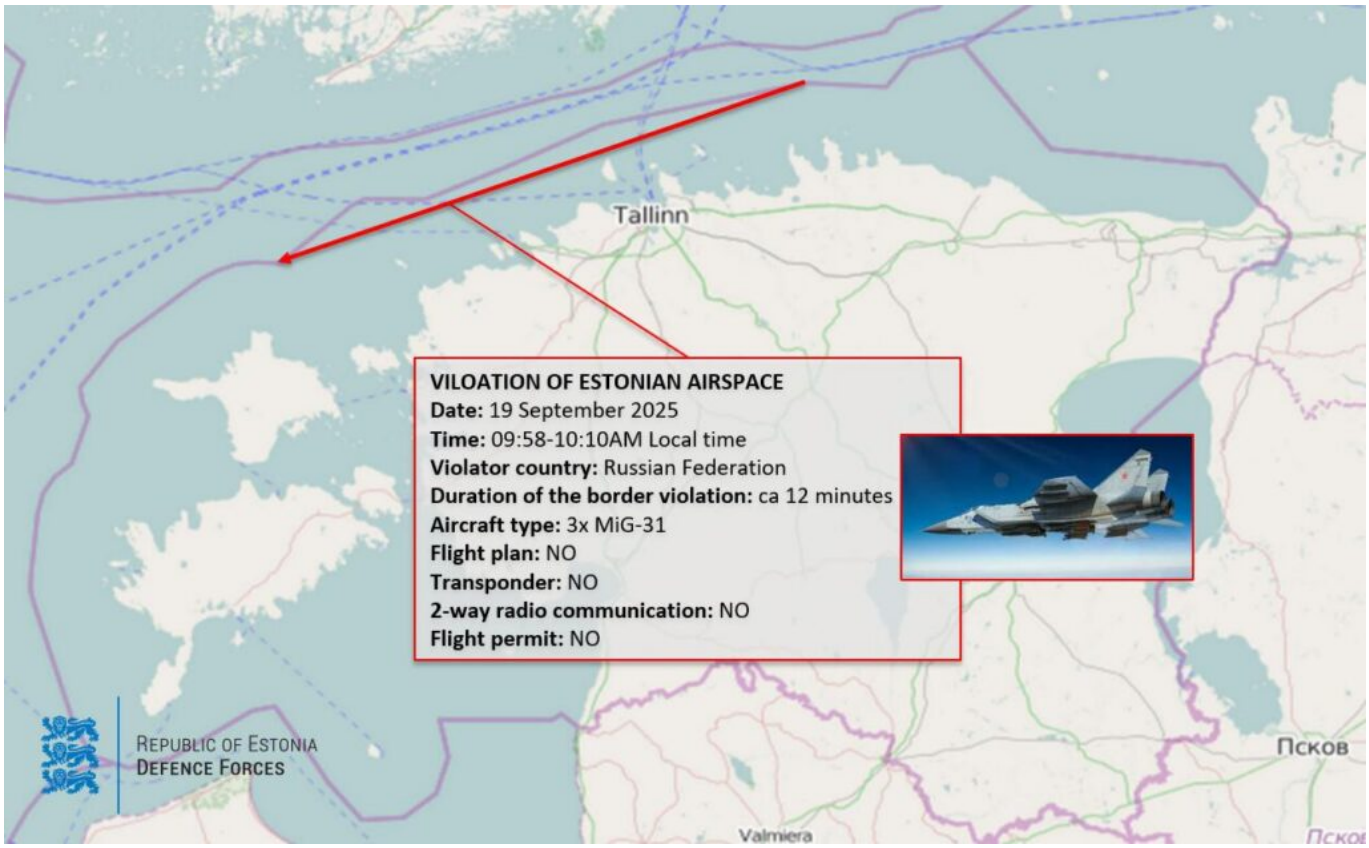


Image Courtesy of the Republic of Estonia Defence Forces

NATO Response – Operation Eastern Sentry

On Sep 12, NATO launched Operation Eastern Sentry to bolster its posture along the eastern flank.

This mission involves ongoing **fighter patrols, improved radar surveillance, and reinforced air defence systems along NATO's eastern border.**

The specifics of this deployment aren't available, but the operation's purpose is to detect and respond rapidly to any further violations.

NATO’s Operation Eastern Sentry has been underway since Sep 12.

Why Russia might be doing this

Analysts suggest there may be several possible motives:

- **Testing NATO’s response** – violations can be used to gather intel on detection and reaction times, radar coverage and interception procedures.
- **Posturing** – signalling strength and willingness to challenge NATO in a show of force.
- **Distraction** – Diverting NATO resources away from other interests (such as the conflict in Ukraine).
- **Deniability** – Maintaining ambiguity by blaming navigation errors, or claiming operations only occurred in neutral airspace.

What’s the bigger picture?

Tensions have risen along NATO’s eastern boundaries in recent weeks, raising **safety and operational concerns** for civil aviation. Even if an outright conflict is still unlikely, these violations complicate de-escalation and increase the frequency of spill-over risks.

Flight operations in this region need to **monitor the situation closely for changes** – history has shown that just because airspace is open, doesn’t mean it is safe.

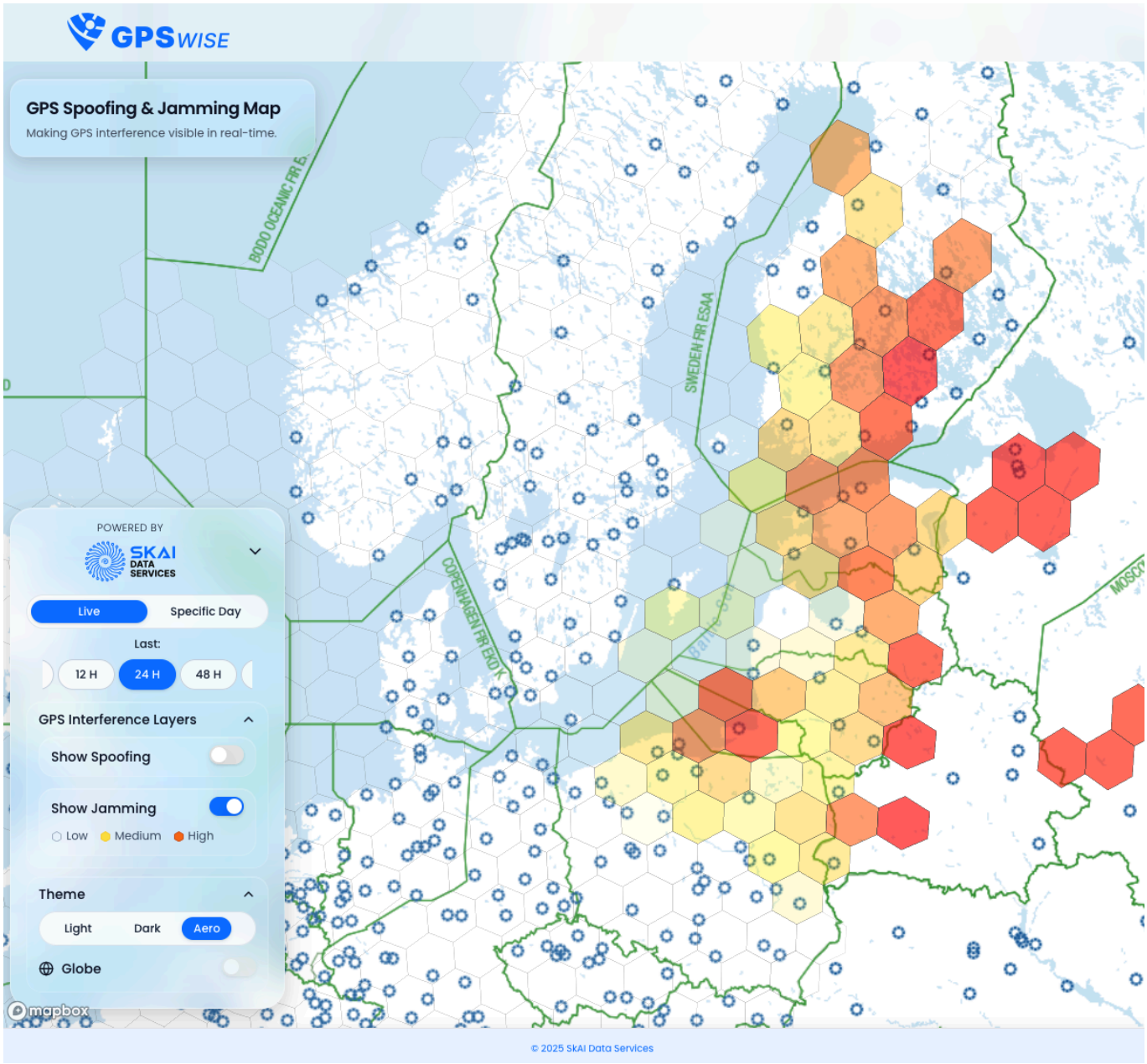
Key risks for operators

Collision hazards – Military aircraft operating without transponders in high-density airspace can create serious risks for civil flights – especially in Baltic states and Poland where major routes between Western Europe and Scandinavia exist.

Airspace disruption – When interceptions occur, ATC may need to rapidly clear surrounding airspace causing re-routes and unexpected fuel burn to enroute aircraft.

Sudden Escalation – A full confrontation between NATO and Russia is unlikely in the near term. However, recent lessons in the Middle East have shown us that sudden closures of FIRs can be a realistic consequence of a deteriorating political situation. This can occur in hours, not days.

GPS Interference – Russian-origin jamming is frequently reported in the region, often traced to areas like Kaliningrad and St Petersburg. The team at SKAI Data Services kindly provided us with the following data map of recent jamming and spoofing recorded in the area -a special thanks to their team.



Courtesy of SKAI Data Services.

Stay Informed

We continually monitor global airspace for changes to risk and security at safeairspace.net. There, you can find up-to-date state-issued warnings for areas bordering Russian and Ukrainian FIRs. You can also reach the team directly via blog@ops.group.

New APIS Rules for Mexico

David Mumford
24 September, 2025

Update: 24 Sep

We've heard from OPSGROUP member reports that some operators and handlers in Mexico are seeing lots of different interpretations of this new rule, and the way it's applied can vary from one airport to another (sometimes even between officials at the same airport!). This article is simply based on the official rules as published by the authorities.

Our advice is this: always comply with the published requirements (as outlined below). APIS manifests go to Immigration HQ in Mexico City, so stick to the official standard. If an airport asks for less, that's fine — but still meet the full rules.

Original Story: 17 Sep

Watch out for revised APIS requirements in Mexico starting from 17 Sep 2025. A new two-step submission process will apply to all private and charter flights:

1. **First submission** – within two hours before departure, for both inbound and outbound flights.
2. **Second submission** – a confirmation of pax on board, sent after doors close and before takeoff.

There’s been some word on the street that the second submission only applies to commercial flights, not private ones. However, the published rule in the federal register makes no such distinction — it clearly applies to **all international flights, both commercial and private.**

That said, in practice, some airports may be handling private flights a bit differently, which could explain why operators are hearing mixed messages. But while enforcement may vary locally, the official requirement remains **two submissions for everyone.**

For more info on this new rule, including the details on fines for getting it wrong, check here.

Submitting Mexican APIS

There are three ways to do it:

- **Option 1 – ARINC:** According to Mexican Immigration APIS regulations, ARINC is the only authorized vendor for submitting manifests. You can set up an account directly and submit through their portal.
- **Option 2 – Email:** You can email a completed Excel spreadsheet to apisinm@inami.gob.mx. The most recent official guidance we’ve located on how to complete the Excel file can be found here.
- **Option 3 – Third Party:** Some service providers can handle the process for you. Depending on the provider, they may submit directly via their ARINC account or by emailing the Excel file on your behalf.

Beware the Email Option!

Whether you send the email yourself, or a third party does it for you — watch out.

This email option is limited to **four trips to/from Mexico per year.** Beyond that, you’ll need to use ARINC (either directly or a through a third-party service). Some operators have reported receiving emails from Mexican Immigration confirming this four-trip cap.

Another important difference: **when you submit through a dedicated ARINC portal, you get an immediate response** — either confirming that your Excel file was successfully uploaded or flagging errors that need to be corrected and re-submitted.

With the public email address, your message simply gets forwarded to ARINC’s system, but no response is sent back. This means you won’t know if your submission was accepted, rejected, or never received — **essentially, you’re transmitting blind, which increases the risk of things going wrong!**

A Brief History of Mexican APIS Headaches

Nov 2012: Mexico introduced the APIS requirement, and for years a simple Excel file emailed to Immigration was enough for compliance. This worked smoothly until a new government ended that option, requiring all operators to use the ARINC template and portal instead. Since then, enforcement has tightened and compliance has been more strictly monitored.

Oct 2023: Mexican Immigration began sending circulars to international airports, reminding officers about APIS rules and instructing them to warn private operators to comply or face penalties. More circulars followed through May 2024, with increasing emphasis on enforcement. Immigration also confirmed they can monitor APIS submissions on the ARINC server to check for accuracy and timeliness.

Feb 2024: By February, fines were being issued to private operators. Some were due to manifests

submitted through third-party apps that never showed up on the ARINC server, while others involved manifests sent via the central email address but not received in the system. This created confusion, and at some airports, officers started asking operators to email copies of their Excel spreadsheets directly — raising concerns about sensitive passenger data being shared through insecure channels. *Mexican Immigration headquarters later clarified that this extra step isn't necessary if you've submitted correctly using ARINC, direct email, or a third-party service.*

Mexico Ops: Other Recent Updates

Check below for more info on Mexico ops:

- **June 2024:** New guidelines for landing permits are causing confusion for both private and commercial flights.
- **Jan 2024:** Recent changes to the permit procedures in Mexico are causing stress and delays.
- **June 2023:** A look at some of the long-standing challenges affecting General Aviation ops to Mexico.

Thanks to Rick Gardner of CST Flight Services for this article. CST Flight Services provides a wide range of international trip support services in Mexico and beyond. You can contact them for more info at: customersvc@cstflightservices.com

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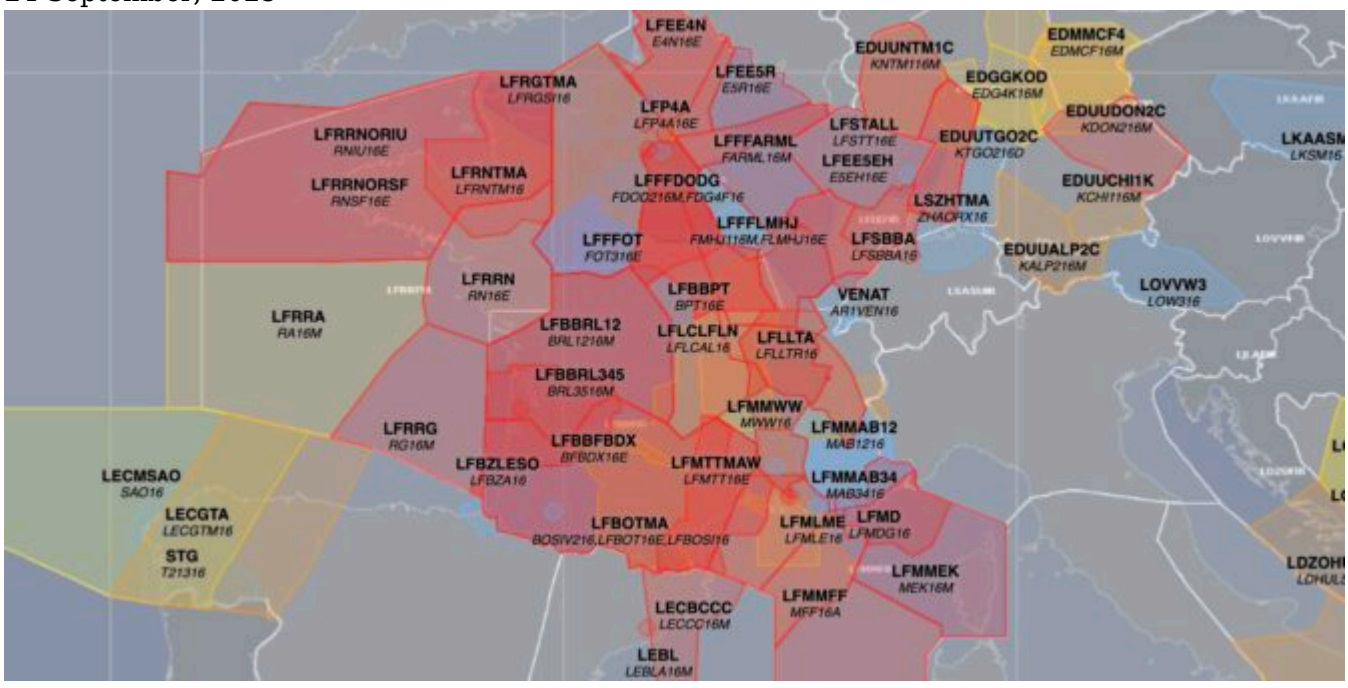
French ATC Strike: Sep 18

David Mumford
24 September, 2025



Update 17 Sep 2025

- France's main ATC union SNCTA has called off its Sep 18 strike, but other unions are still

striking.

- The strike will run 0400z Sep 18 to 0600z Sep 19 (per LFFF Notam F1302/25).
- Morning will be worst affected, especially LFMM/Marseille ACC east sectors, with delays expected to improve later in the day. LFFF/Paris ACC will see some regulations, but no major network-wide disruption expected there.
- LFSB/Basel will have very limited capacity. LFBL/Limoges will be closed all day. LFBE/Bergerac and LFTW/Nimes may partially close depending on staffing levels.
- Eurocontrol has disabled certain route restrictions and opened additional routings to help manage traffic flow, including via Italy for LFMN/Nice departures and arrivals, and special routings over DTTC/Tunis and DAAA/Algeria FIRs. Check Eurocontrol's Mitigation Plan for more info.
- The next planned French ATC strike is Oct 7-10, expected to cause major disruption.

How to survive a French ATC strike

Each French ATC strike is different, but there are some things that are pretty much the same every time. **Here is what you need to know, in order to survive!**

What happens?

There's a normal pattern to French ATC strikes – controllers who are unhappy about a range of issues (mainly salaries and labour reforms) announce they plan to go on strike, Eurocontrol puts a plan in place to mitigate the disruption as best as possible, and airlines start cancelling flights – sometimes voluntarily, other times under the instruction to reduce their schedules.

So let's break that down a bit…

How do strikes get announced?

Often on the Notams, to start with. And the Notams that get published prior to these strikes are often fairly similar, and tend to be a bit vague. That's because they never know exactly how many staff will go on strike until the day itself, when they look around the control room and count the number of empty seats.

Then what happens?

Eurocontrol tell us about the Notams – in the "Network Headline News" section at the top of the NOP website.

Then they start figuring out **what they think the impact will be.** They normally host a teleconference or two, where a bunch of their ATC personnel jump on a call with airlines and other interested parties to discuss what they think will happen.

Then they publish a **"Mitigation Plan".** This tells you:

- Their best guess of how bad the strike is going to be
- What to expect for flights to France
- How best to avoid French airspace.

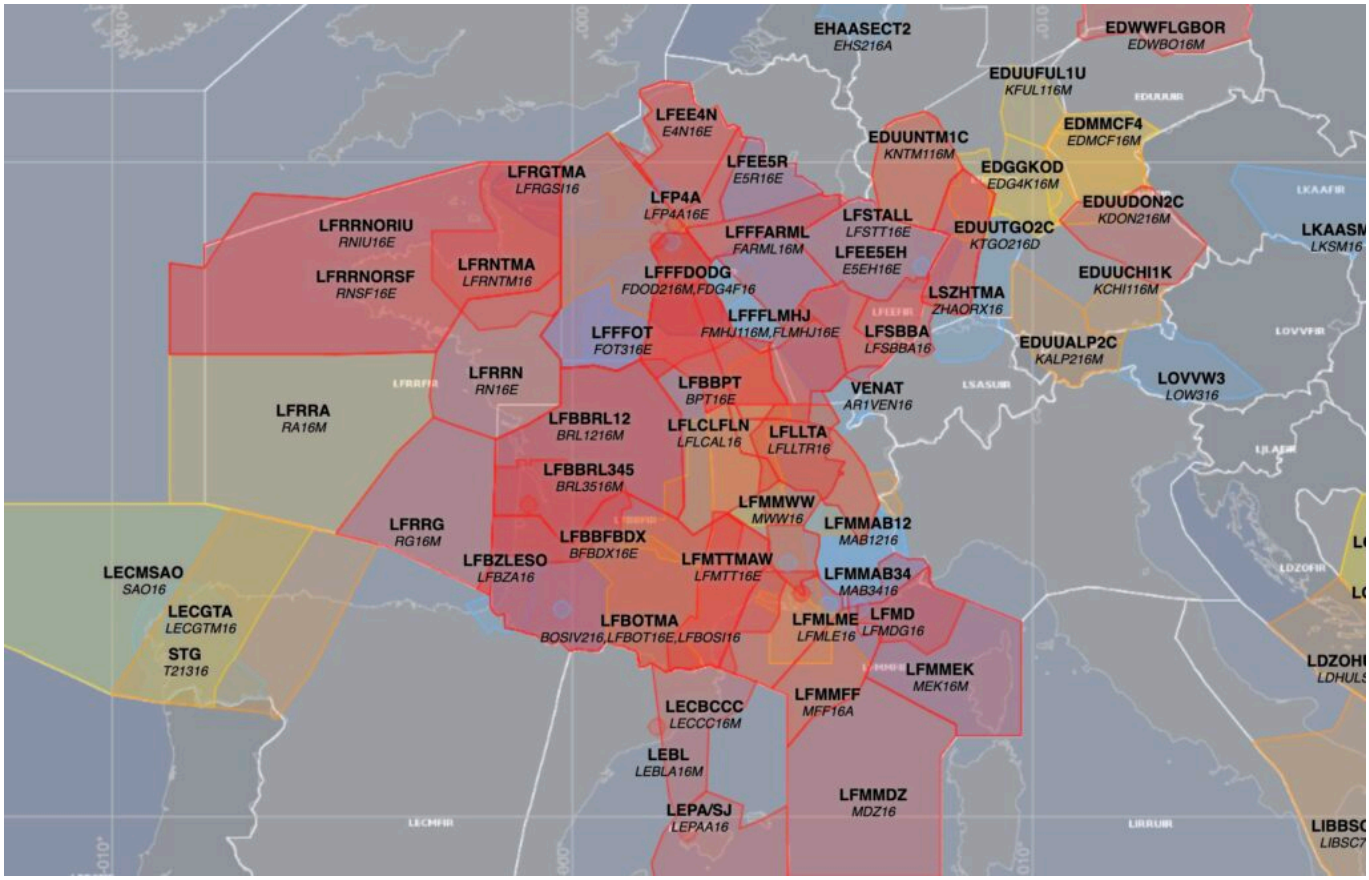
The big day arrives… it's strike time!

Smaller airports – These tend to have the harshest restrictions applied, often with periods where no ATS services are provided at all.

Bigger airports – During the really big strikes, the larger airports can get hit pretty hard too, and when Notams start getting published saying "MINIMUM SERVICE", that's when you know that things are getting serious – as that basically means that only 50% of FPLs are being accepted (the absolute minimum allowed under French law, regardless of whether or not a strike is taking place).

Impact – The airlines will often be told to cut their schedules at the big airports. For the rest of us, **expect delays if flying to airports in France as well as for French overflights** – because unlike most other countries in Europe, when French ATC goes on strike, there's no special exemption for overflights!

French ATC strikes may also impact French overseas territories – so keen an eye on the Notams at the likes of NTAA/Tahiti, SOCA/Cayenne, TFFF/Martinique, TFFR/Pointe a Pitre, FMEE/La Réunion, and FMCZ/Mayotte airports as well as those in France.



Where to look for live updates?

For real-time updates of any airspace issues once the strike has started, keep an eye on the **"Tactical Update" section** of the NOP, as well as this **French ATC webpage:** https://cdm.dsna.fr/

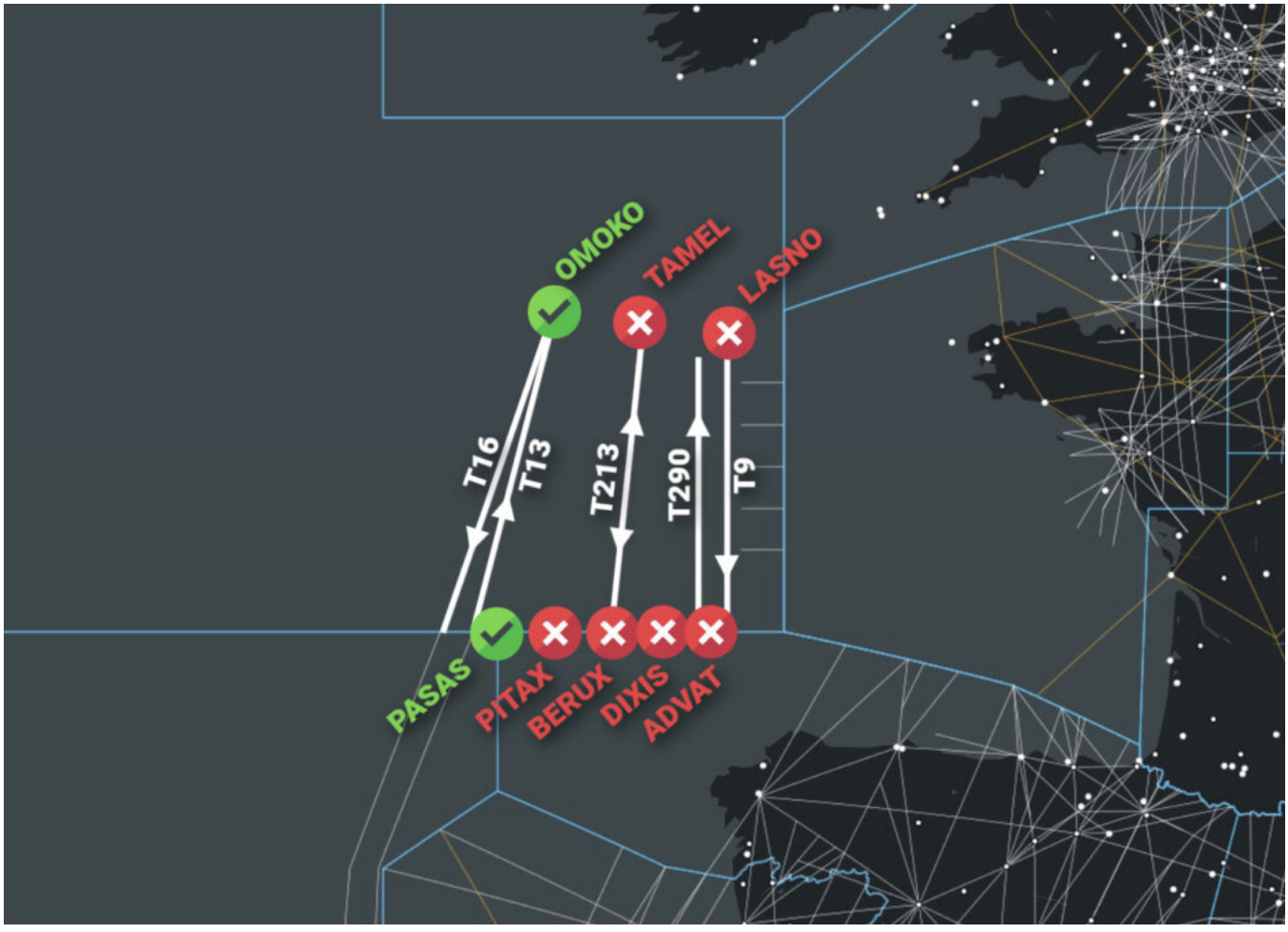
For smaller airports, best **check the Notams directly**, as they might get forgotten about in the deluge of information that gets published and endlessly updated for the other larger airports.

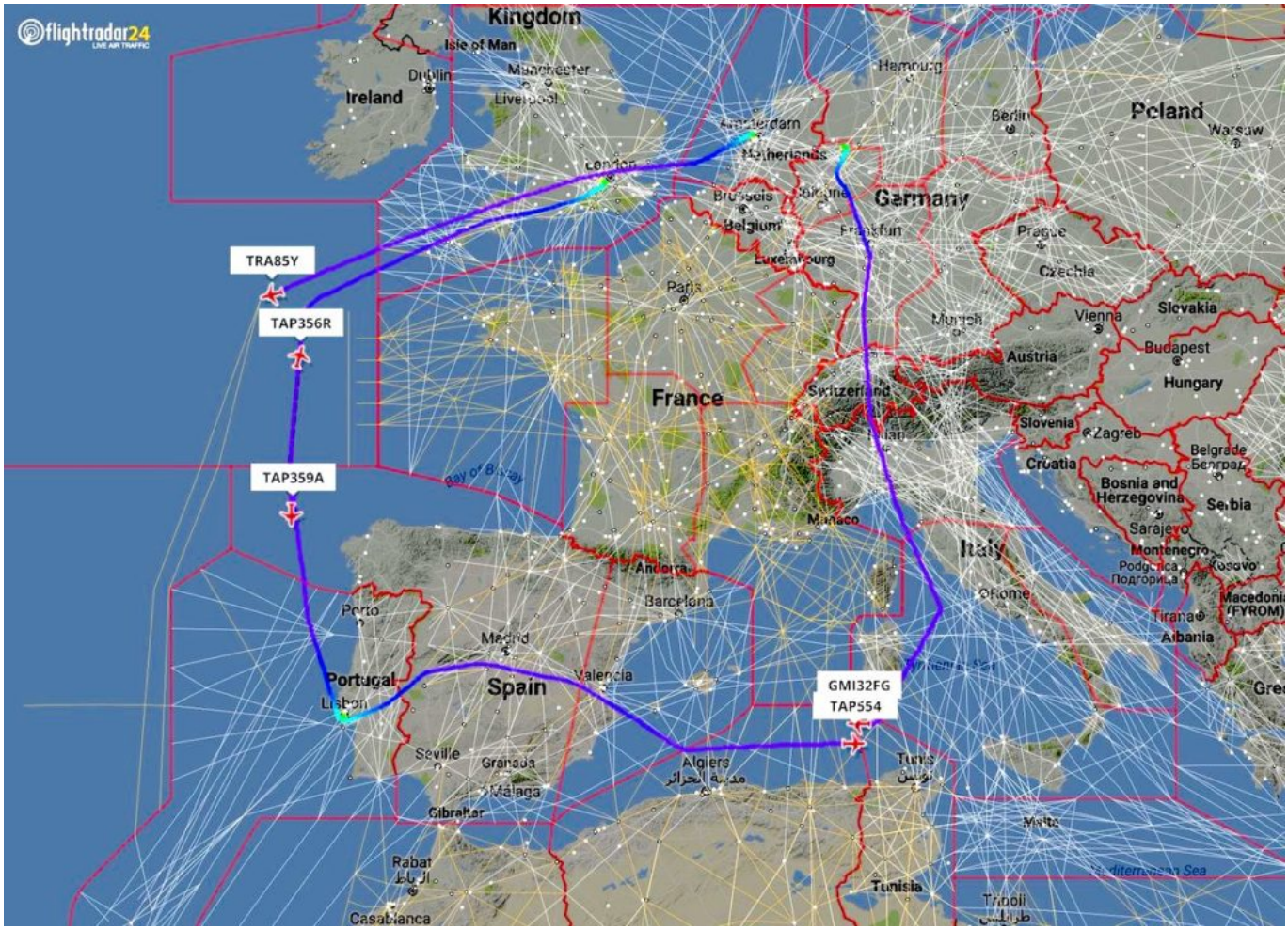
Routing around French airspace

The Mitigation Plan should be your first port of call here. Make sure you're checking the latest version. It will tell you what to do!

Here’s what it normally says, every time:

- **Tango Routes** are subject to higher than normal demand when strikes are on. Flights intending to route to/from Canaries, Madeira and mainland Portuguese and Spanish destinations via the Shanwick Oceanic Control Area (OCA) are usually requested to flight plan via published routes T9, T213 or T16. During the strike period, ATC normally won’t let you cross from one Tango Route to another.
- **Tunisia** allow overflights without the need for an overflight permit.
- **Algeria** allow scheduled commercial flights to overfly its airspace without a permit, but all other flights must have one.
- For routes through Tunisia/Algeria, check the Mitigation Plan for the permitted routings. And make sure to add the right AFTN codes on flight plans! That means as well as filing your FPL to the normal Eurocontrol addresses, you must also include those for Algeria (DAAAZQZX) and Tunisia (DTTCZQZX and DTTCZRZX) – and make sure these are included for any subsequent DLA messages as well.
- **Shanwick** always publish something on the NOP telling us what entry points to use for NAT crossings. For westbound NAT crossings heading over the central Atlantic (rather than the NAT Tracks up north), they normally want us to file via OMOKO (or west of) or PASAS in order to best avoid all the extra traffic on the Tango routes. If you’re entering the Shanwick OCA, you must have HF radio. And for oceanic clearance during the strike, you need to make sure you request your oceanic clearance 40 minutes before entry to the ocean.





Dishing the Dirt on Aircraft Trash

Chris Shieff
24 September, 2025

We've had a few reports from OPSGROUP members lately about issues with how international aircraft trash is handled when arriving in the US.

In one case at **KMIA/Miami**, a handler said that **CBP asked them to track the tail numbers** of any aircraft that disposed of trash after leaving the customs ramp. If this happens, CBP may issue fines—and if handlers don't report it, *they* could be held responsible instead.

While there's no sign of any new rules, it's a good reminder of how strict the existing requirements are and how expensive it can get if you don't comply.

So, what exactly counts as regulated garbage, and how should it be handled?

What Counts as "Regulated Garbage"

Certain waste can carry animal diseases or pests into the US. The **USDA** and **APHIS** require this type of trash to be handled under strict rules (CFR Title 7 330.400 – 402, and CFR Title 9 94.5.).

Regulated garbage includes:

- Any food waste, fruits, vegetables, meats, or other plant/animal products.
- Anything that has touched those items—like packaging, napkins, or utensils.

Time limits matter:

- From *any foreign country* in the past **2 years**.
- From *Hawaii or US territories* in the past **12 months**.

You'll need to pass this trash to a USDA-approved service so they can dispose of it.

What Isn't Regulated

- Trash from **Canada-only** flights.

- **Clean items** like magazines or unused paper towels.
- **Sealed, unopened US-origin food** that hasn't been contaminated.
- Empty cans or bottles for recycling **only if they've never touched food waste**.

Important: If clean trash gets mixed with food waste, it becomes regulated. So bag international food waste separately and don't let it mix with clean trash!

Common Questions

Q: I'm arriving from Hawaii or a US territory. Does this apply?
Yes. USDA/APHIS rules apply to trash arriving from outside the Continental US – be careful if arriving from Hawaii or other US territories abroad (Guam, Virgin Islands etc). You may have taken off from American soil, but the rules still apply.

Q: What about Alaska?
Alaska is considered part of the continental US for this purpose, and so trash from Alaska flights isn't regulated.

Q: My catering came from a pre-clearance airport like EINN/Shannon. Am I exempt?
No. Pre-clearance doesn't simply let you bypass the disposal rules. Some exceptions do exist but these require certificates/inspector actions and strict conditions. In practice, pre-clearance alone will not free you from regulated garbage rules. Apparently diseases and pests care not for our paperwork!

Enforcement: Why Miami Came Up

While USDA and APHIS make the rules, **CBP enforces them** at ports of entry.

Enforcement can vary by location, and some airports take a "treat all trash as regulated" approach to keep things simple.

If you want to keep unregulated trash separate, you'll need:

- Clear, documented segregation.
- Advance notification to the customs inspector.
- Records of who you coordinated with (including badge numbers).

Otherwise, CBP can assume non-compliance and issue fines.

Safest bet: Treat all international trash as regulated and dispose of it at the customs ramp.

More Questions?

Get in touch with us on blog@ops.group. For USDA/APHIS garbage and quarantine inquiries, email ppq.fsis.mail@usda.gov or AskUSDA@usda.gov. You can also find contact details for CBP at your intended arrival airport here.

New Rule for Qatar Overflights

David Mumford
24 September, 2025

Update – Sep 10:

Not directly related to this article, but thought we'd mention it here for the next few days just FYI!

Ops Alert – Sep 10: *So far the Israeli airstrike in Qatar on Sep 9 has not triggered major disruptions in adjacent FIRs. There are no new airspace restrictions to report, and OTHH/Doha is operating normally. Flight tracking indicates that major airlines are still overflying Qatari airspace. Despite this, continue to monitor the situation closely. The diplomatic response to this event is still unfolding – sudden airspace closures are possible if the situation escalates.*

Original story – Sep 9:

The Doha FIR might be small geographically, but it's strategically important. A huge chunk of regional traffic passes through here, especially flights heading between the UAE and Europe that want to avoid Iranian airspace.

And now there's a new rule: if you're flying in the northern portion of the OTDF/Doha FIR, you need to submit a flight notification if you plan to use certain offshore routes.

3.6 APPLICATION FOR OVERFLYING TRAFFIC

3.6.1 If an operator intends to perform a non-scheduled flight for the purpose of transit across (overfly) territory of the State of Qatar, it is necessary to obtain prior overflying permission from the QCAA at least forty-eight (48) hours before the intended flight takes place.

3.6.2 Such applications or requests shall be submitted through the online web portal available at the official website: https://caa.gov.qa/en/non-scheduled-flights-service. All applications/requests must include the following information:

a. Name of the operator
b. Flight number/callsign
c. Purpose of flight
d. Nature of cargo
e. ATS route with entry/exit points of Doha FIR, flight level and timings in UTC
f. Billing details including the contact address and the relevant email address.

3.6.3 Operator shall follow the requirements of flight plan as prescribed in ENR 1.10 and ENR 1.11. Operator shall ensure that operator name is included under "OPR/" in item 18 of ATC Flight Plan.

← 3.6.4 If an operator intends to conduct a non-scheduled flight for the purpose of transiting (overflying) the Doha FIR (outside
← the territory of the State of Qatar), the operator must submit the flight details to the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA)
← prior to flight operations. This should be done through the online web portal using the "Flight Notification" service available on the official website: https://caa.gov.qa/en/non-scheduled-flights-service . Upon submission, the QCAA will acknowledge
← receipt of the flight details.
←
← 3.6.5 Such operator shall follow the flight plan requirement as mentioned at GEN 1.2 subsection 3.6.3.

These routes don't require permission to fly – that hasn't changed – but you do now **need to tell Qatar CAA in advance that you're going to be there.** The notification is submitted through the QCAA's online portal, the same place you'd normally go for overflight permits.

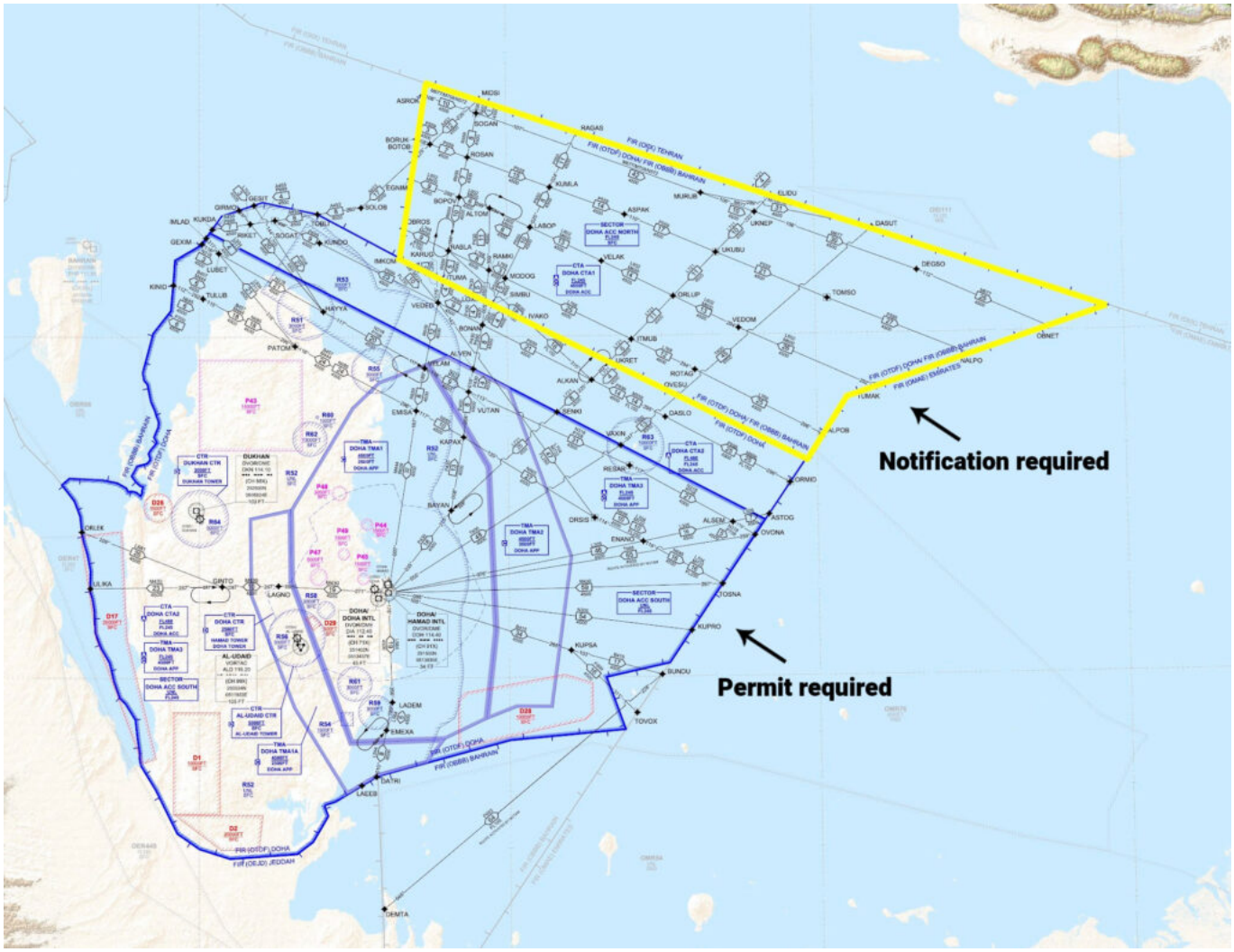
The new rule came in on 4 Sep 2025, and applies to all "non-scheduled" operators (includes charter flights, private operators, ad-hoc flights – basically everything other than airline flights).

The affected routes

The rule applies specifically to these routes:

- **M677/M708** (ASROK/OBNET)
- **P559/L704** (BORUK/NALPO)
- **L602/T557/M600** (TUMAK/EGNIM)
- **L768/M556** (ALPOB/OBROS)

These are the offshore routes running north of Qatar, in international waters.



Why the new rule?

First, a quick refresher on who controls what inside the Doha FIR:

- **The southern part of the OTDF/Doha FIR:** Qatar controls everything, from SFC-UNL.
- **The northern part of the OTDF/Doha FIR:** This part covers international waters, not Qatari territory. Operationally, ATC responsibility here still switches at FL245 — Qatar handles traffic below this level, and Bahrain handles traffic above it.

The rule is simple

- **Flying in the southern part of the OTDF/Doha FIR:** Standard overflight permit required — no changes.
- **Flying in the northern part of the OTDF/Doha FIR:** Submit a flight notification via the QCAA portal.

This flight notification isn't a permit and doesn't need approval, it simply lets Qatar know who's flying there in case you dip into their controlled airspace unexpectedly.

Notifications are submitted through the same QCAA portal used for permits. Bahrain continues to provide ATC in the northern area, and you don't need a Bahrain permit unless you're a weird non-ICAO, military, or

state flight.

GAR Procedure for UK Flights

David Mumford
24 September, 2025

Since April 2024, there have been major changes to the UK's General Aviation Report (GAR) submission for international flights. These rules remain in force in 2025, so here's a reminder of what you need to know.

- **The GAR form is now required for departures (not just arrivals).**
- **You have to submit it via an online portal, or through a third-party app (no longer directly to UK Border Force via email).**
- **If you get it wrong, you can now get fined up to £10,000 (there were no fines before). These apply to both the operator AND the captain.**

These rules apply to all international flights arriving/departing the UK (including within the Common Travel Area: Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands). Details on how the rules work within the CTA are explained below.

You can read the rules in full on the UK Government website, but here's a summary of the main points:

How to submit the GAR

You need to submit info online about the flight and crew/pax, no earlier than 48 hours and no later than 2 hours prior to the expected time of departure. There are 3 ways to do this:

1. The government's free-to-use online portal.
Alternatively, you can download this GAR template (Excel doc), complete it electronically and upload it to

the portal.

2. Approved third-party applications: Rocket Route, OnlineGAR

3. Direct connections: FB01, Streamlane, Mobile-Edge, PnrGo

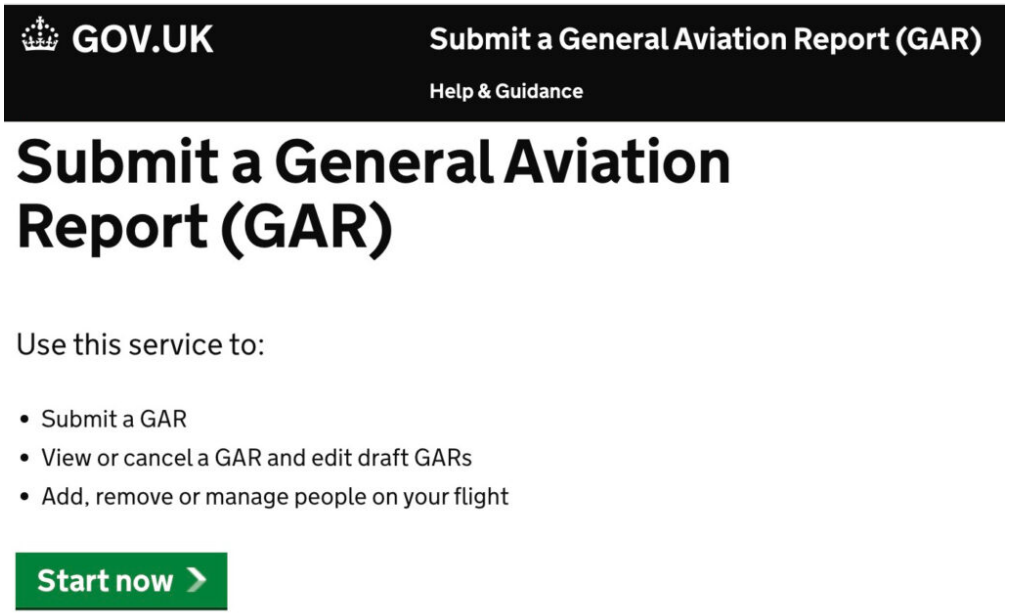
More info on the UK government site here.

After you submit the GAR, **you should get a response telling you whether that crew/pax is allowed to travel.** It will be one of the following (thanks to our friends at FlyingInIreland for this table):

Response Message	Action
Valid permission to travel	The Home Office can find a valid permission to travel for the person. Pilots, operators and agents are not required to check visas, but Passport or Travel Document checks still apply. They must check that the passport or travel document presented is genuine and valid, and that the person is the rightful holder. For more information on checking passports and travel documents click here Guidance on examining identity documents (publishing.service.gov.uk)
Authority to carry granted	Pilots, operators and agents are required to check visas for Visa Nationals. Passport or Travel Document checks apply for all passengers. They must check that the passport or travel document presented is genuine and valid and that the person is the rightful holder. For more information on checking passports and travel documents click here Guidance on examining identity documents (publishing.service.gov.uk) Follow this link to check visa requirements Check if you need a UK visa – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Authority to carry refused. DO NOT BOARD.	This response message will not be displayed on the screen. Pilots, operators and agents will be instructed not to board an individual (NO BOARD) via a call and email when Authority to Carry (ATC) has been refused.

Because fines apply if the GAR is submitted incorrectly, many handling agents may no longer be willing to do it on your behalf.

If you're not already using a third-party application, the safest option is to set up an online account and handle the submission yourself.



Common Travel Area flights (Ireland, Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Northern Ireland)

Flying within the CTA is where GAR rules can catch people out. On top of the standard UK GAR, there are two extra layers to watch.

First, some destinations have their own local GAR forms. The **Channel Islands (EGJJ/Jersey, EGJBGuernsey) require local GARs inbound and outbound, and the Isle of Man/EGNS has its own form too**. Requirements can vary, so best practice is to confirm with your local handler. ***Opsgroup member report:*** *At EGJJ/Jersey, Border Force has at times required full residential addresses for crew and pax, and commercial operators also need local permits separate from UK CAA permits.*

Second, the 12-hour police rule. If you are flying to or from the CTA and using a UK aerodrome that is not police-designated, extra steps apply. **For private flights, you need to notify the local police at least 12 hours in advance**. For commercial flights, it's stricter: you must obtain prior police approval before operating from a non-designated aerodrome. ***Opsgroup member report:*** *A flight originally planned from EGKB/Biggin Hill to EGJJ/Jersey made a last-minute stop in EGTK/Oxford. Because Oxford is not police-designated, the 12-hour rule kicked in. The crew had filed a GAR only a few hours before departure, so Border Police enforced the rule and the jet was stuck in Oxford overnight.*

For Northern Ireland, the designated ports are **EGAC/Belfast City**, **EGAA/Belfast Intl**, and **EGAE/City of Derry**. If you use any other airport, you must notify the local police at least 12 hrs in advance (GAR@psni.pnn.police.uk).

You can find the full list of police-designated aerodromes in Annex A of the official UK GAR guidance.

Getting it wrong

Again, check the official guidance on this, but here's what "getting it wrong" basically means:

- Failing to provide correct info about the flight and people on board.
- Not submitting it within the required timeframe (no earlier than 48 hours and no later than 2 hours prior to the expected time of departure).
- Not doing it in the fight format (i.e. through the web portal or via an approved third party).

The big things to know / watch out for:

- **Fines:** Getting it wrong could mean a fine for the *"owner or agent and captain"*. So that means the operator AND captain are subject to enforcement action and fines. These start at £5,000 for first-time offenders (ouch!), subsequent breaches start at £7500, followed by the maximum of £10,000.
- **Errors on the GAR submission:** Watch out for incorrect spelling of names, omitting middle names, not using the full names exactly as shown on passports, and incorrect crew assignment (which pilot is the PIC). Anything like this is likely to get you a "warning" from UK Customs on arrival, and potentially a fine if it happens again. ***Opsgroup member report:*** *At EGPH/Edinburgh, Border Force issued a non-compliance report because a crew member's middle name was missing from the GAR, even though it appeared on the GenDec. All given names (including middle names) must be included in GAR submissions. When using the GAR portal, enter the middle name(s) in the "Given name(s)" field along with the first name.*
- **Last minute changes:** Bad news. If you get an extra passenger last minute, or someone shows up with a different passport than the one you sent on the GAR submission, you have to

file a new GAR and then wait 2 hours until you depart. Same applies if you change your arrival airport in the UK. One exception here: if a passenger was provided on the GAR and they do not travel, a new GAR is not required to be submitted.

- **Diverts:** If you have to divert due to weather, that's fine. If this happens, UK Border Force want you to call them if you can, on +44 300 123 2012. Make sure you're diverting to the alternate listed on your flight plan (should also be an international airport with Customs). If you're diverting somewhere other than what's listed on your flight plan (i.e. it's an emergency), call UK Border Force after you land to explain.
- **Late departures:** If the flight will operate on the same day, albeit later, no new GAR submission is required. If a flight is delayed to the next calendar day, a new GAR must be submitted.
- **Early departures:** If you depart early headed to the UK, don't update the GAR! ***Opsgroup member report:*** *We had a flight to UK that departed 45 mins early, so we thought it wise to update the GAR to correct ETA. This resulted in a UK Customs warning for 'submitting' a GAR once flight airborne (8hr leg). We've been told that we should not have updated the ETA and it is UK Customs' responsibility to keep up to date with the ETA.*

More info

Check out this page from PnrGo. It has a bunch more info for pilots and operators, including a recent webinar recording plus an extensive Q&A on this topic.

Pilot vs Crew: ID Confusion in Nice

Chris Shieff
24 September, 2025

We've had a few reports from crews facing problems at LFMN/Nice because their ID cards said **"PILOT"**

instead of **“CREW.”** In one case, a delay caused a missed slot. Other incidents have been reported elsewhere, such as LSGG/Geneva. The issue isn’t just a matter of wording—it’s about how rules are being applied differently to EU and non-EU operators.

Why the Confusion?

At the heart of this is EU security law:

- **EU-based crews:** Under EU Reg. 2015/1998, airport authorities are right to insist on IDs that show **“CREW.”** Section 1.2.4.1 requires this wording in English, along with a validity date and other criteria. IDs showing “PILOT” do not meet the EU requirement.
- **Non-EU crews:** These rules don’t apply to you. Instead, you must meet your own national crew ID requirements. ICAO provides guidance in Annex 17 and Doc 8973, but leaves specifics to each country. This means ID formats can vary widely, which sometimes leads to problems at European airports.

Reality at LFMN/Nice

Despite the legal distinctions, local security often applies a simpler standard—they just want to see **“CREW”** on the badge. If your ID lacks it, you could face delays, requests for extra docs (licence, passport), and additional paperwork from your handler (Signature advise that in the case of flight attendants, they will need to be listed as PAX on the Gen Dec if their IDs are not accepted).

Some members report that using IDs from services like IBAC or CrewID has avoided problems entirely.

What Should You Do?

- **EU crews:** Ensure your ID meets EU requirements—“CREW” must appear.
- **Non-EU crews:** Even though it’s not legally required, consider carrying an ID with **“CREW”** clearly displayed. It can save you time and hassle. And just brief your handler in advance if you think your ID might raise questions.

Have Something to Report?

We rely on member reports to discover these kinds of issues. If you have some extra info, chances are it will be a huge help to other operators.

Please get in touch with us on blog@ops.group around the clock.

Cuba Ops Guide: Why Most Private Jets Can’t Go

David Mumford
24 September, 2025

Key Points

- **Private flights:** Technically banned. US BIS requires a license for any US-built aircraft (or aircraft with more than 10% US parts), regardless of where it's registered or where it's flying from — and those applications for private flights are almost always denied.
- **Commercial flights:** If there's any US link to the flight (a US person, company, someone physically in the US, or a USD payment), then OFAC rules apply — meaning the trip must fit into one of 12 allowed categories. You'll also need to use the BIS AVS license exception (max stay in Cuba 7 days), apply to DOT for route/frequency approval (if you're a US operator). If you're heading from Cuba to the US you'll need to land at a CBP-designated southern airport of entry.
- **Overflights:** Fine, but pay NAV fees or risk being blocked. US operators must use a third-party vendor to arrange both the overflight permit and payment of fees.
- **Landings:** Relatively straightforward on the Cuba side of things: Cuban permit (3 days), local handler/sponsor, e-visa on arrival.
- **Insurance:** Many policies exclude Cuba. US underwriters may not honour claims unless you've confirmed the trip in advance.

Thinking of flying to Cuba?

Here's the part most operators miss — and honestly, we missed it too until we dug into the rules. Almost every modern bizjet in the world is either US-built or contains enough US technology (>10%) to fall under US export law. And under those rules, private flights to Cuba are technically banned. It doesn't matter where the aircraft is registered, who owns it, or where it's flying from — if it's US-origin, the US government decides whether it can go. And for private flights, the answer is almost always "no."

This guide explains why, who the US "gatekeepers" are, and what you need to clear if you want to operate to Cuba. We've split it into two parts – Legal Stuff and Operational Stuff – so you can see both the law and the logistics.

Legal Stuff

Are you even legally allowed to fly to Cuba? For most operators, the answer isn't obvious — because three US agencies can have a say. Two of them are the real gatekeepers:

BIS (Bureau of Industry and Security): Decides whether your aircraft can go, under US export control law.

OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control): Regulates the people and the money — who's onboard, who's paying, and whether the trip fits into one of 12 legal travel categories.

The third one only matters if you're a US airline or charter operator:

DOT (Department of Transportation): Controls which routes and how many flights US carriers can operate to Cuba. Foreign operators can ignore this.

So let's take a look at these in a bit more detail…

Gatekeeper #1: BIS (US Bureau of Industry and Security)

BIS is why almost no private bizjets can legally fly to Cuba.

Under US export law, any aircraft that's **US-built** or contains **more than 10% US parts** is treated as a US-origin item. Flying such an aircraft to Cuba — from anywhere in the world — counts as an export or reexport under the EAR rules.

It doesn't matter where the aircraft is registered, who owns it, or who's onboard — BIS only cares about the aircraft's **origin and content**.

Here's what that means in practice:

- **Private flights:** Need a BIS license, and BIS applies a policy of denial. In other words, your application will almost never be approved.
- **Commercial flights (airline or charter):** Can operate under the AVS license exception. You don't apply for a license each time, but you must self-certify that the flight meets the AVS conditions:
    - The aircraft remains under your control (can't be handed to a Cuban entity).
    - Stay capped at 7 days.
    - Records must be kept to prove compliance.

What BIS told us: Even we weren't sure at first — so we asked them directly: what about a US-built, foreign-registered jet flying privately to Cuba from outside the US? Their answer: it's still treated as an export/reexport. Unless AVS (commercial) applies, a license is required — and private-flight licenses are almost never approved.

Gatekeeper #2: OFAC (US Office of Foreign Assets Control)

If BIS decides whether the *aircraft* can go, OFAC decides whether the *people and money* are allowed. And like BIS, OFAC's reach is global — if there's a US link, it doesn't matter where the flight starts or where the aircraft is registered.

What triggers OFAC: Any one of these is enough to put the entire flight under OFAC rules:

- A US person (citizen, resident, company, or anyone physically in the US) is involved, or
- The transaction touches the US financial system (eg. a USD payment).

Example: A French-registered Falcon flying Paris–Havana still needs OFAC compliance if a single US passenger is onboard or the payment is in USD.

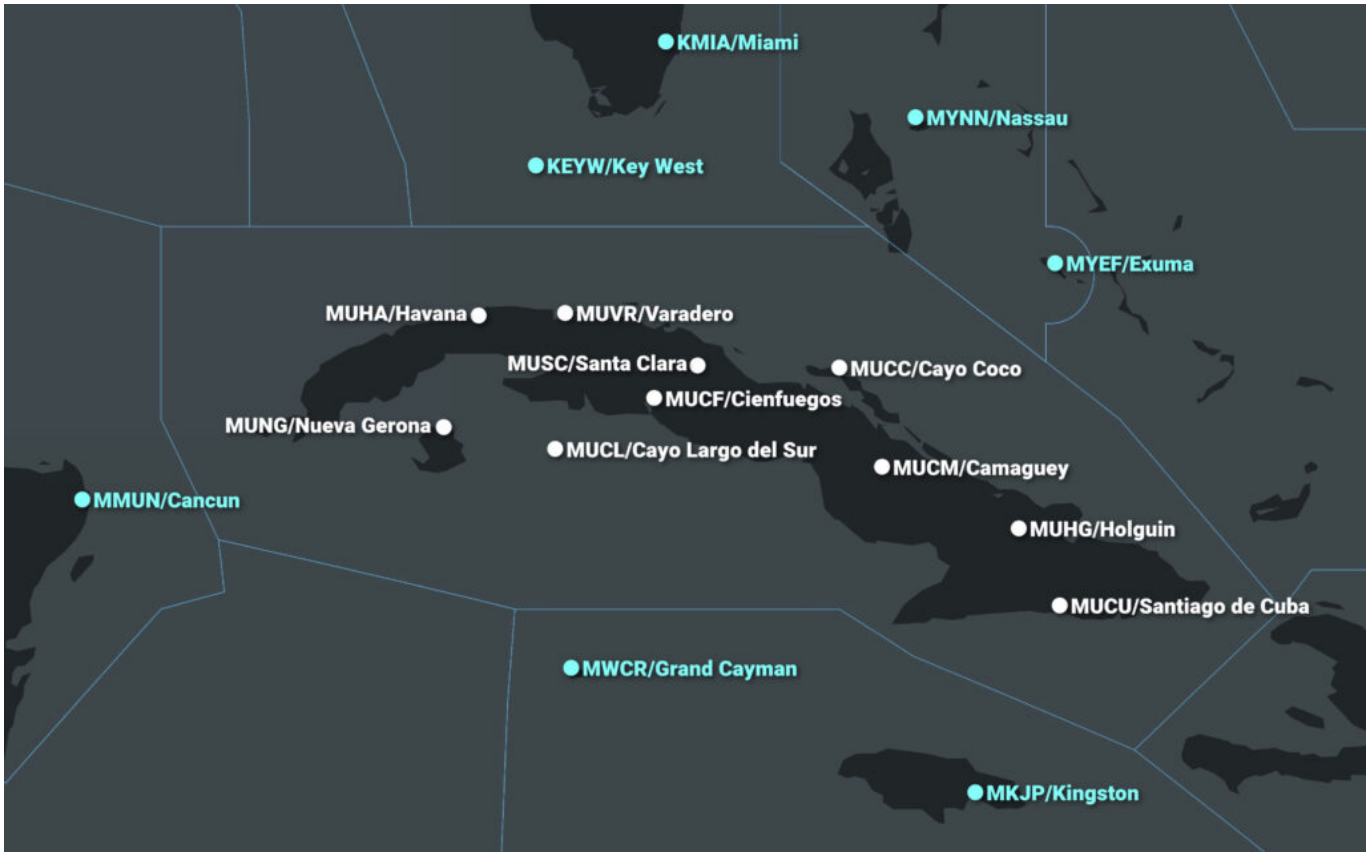
What's allowed: Tourism is banned. Instead, OFAC only permits travel under 12 specific categories (family visits, journalism, education, humanitarian work, etc).

How you comply: If your purpose clearly fits one of the 12 categories, you don't apply in advance. You operate under a *general license* — but you must keep records proving the trip qualified. If the trip doesn't fit a general license, you need a *specific license*. These are rarely granted outside humanitarian or official cases and can take months to obtain.

In short: Any US link brings OFAC into play, anywhere in the world — and if your purpose isn't one of the 12 categories, you're not going.

Gatekeeper #3: DOT (US Department of Transportation)

DOT controls which *routes* US airlines and charter operators are allowed to fly — and *how many flights* can operate.



In 2020 they banned all US charter flights to Cuba except MUHA/Havana, but that ban was lifted in 2022. Today, US airlines and charter operators can apply for service to multiple Cuban airports, but only within the limits set by DOT. They decide both the destinations and the number of flights allowed.

DOT rules **do not apply to foreign operators.**

~~Gatekeeper #4:~~ FAA (US Federal Aviation Administration)

Maybe surprisingly, for Cuba ops, the FAA isn't in the gatekeeper role! The FAA's focus is *safety and air navigation*, not sanctions or export rules.

If BIS and OFAC say a flight is ok, the FAA won't block it just because the destination is Cuba.

The FAA issues airspace warnings for some countries, but not for Cuba — there are **no FAA restrictions on flights** heading here.

Operational Stuff

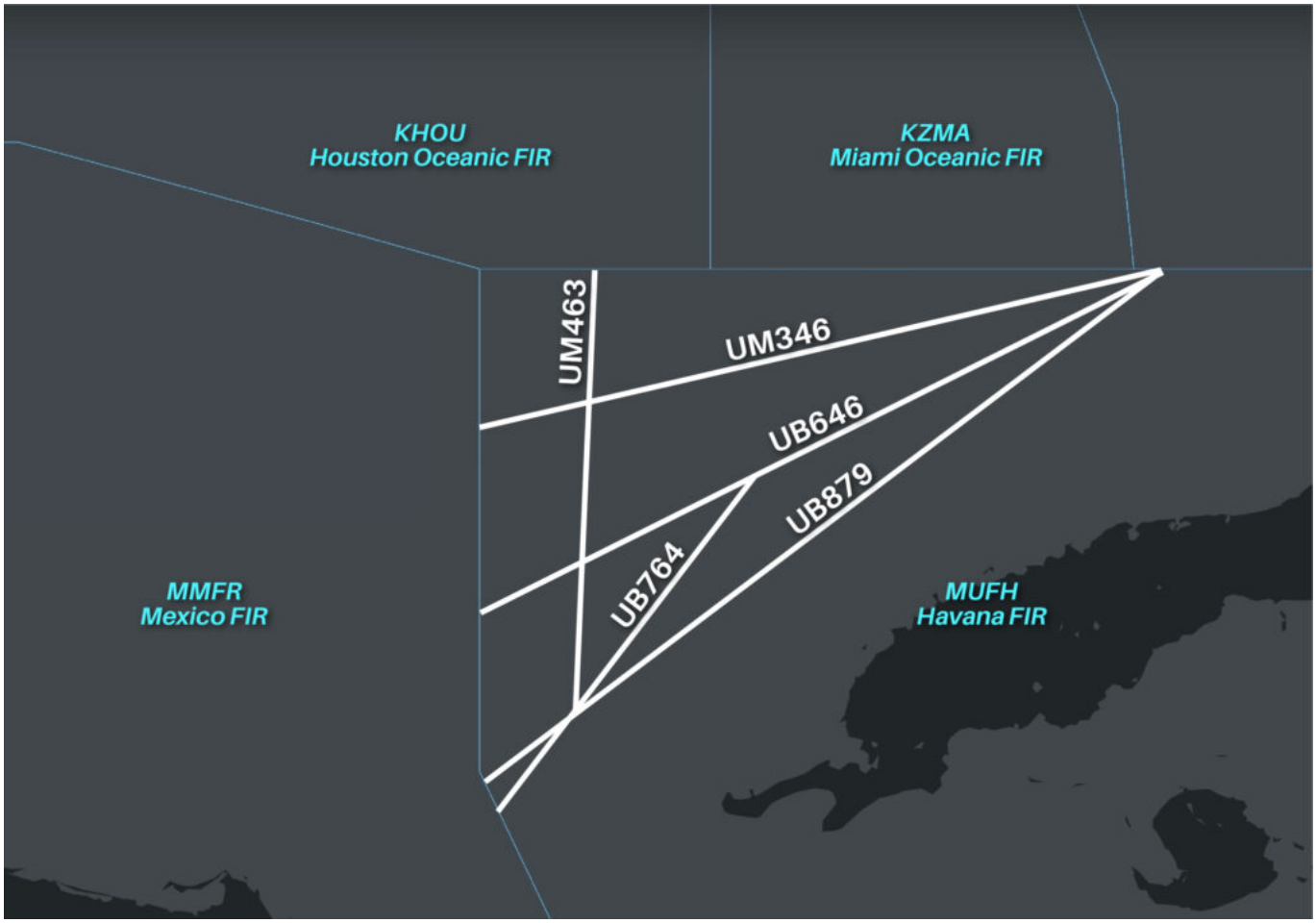
Goodness, wasn't that tedious! Now for the slightly more interesting operational stuff to watch out for.

Cuba Overflights

If your route passes through the MUFH/Havana FIR and enters Cuba's inner ADIZ or overflies the island itself, you will need to **get an overflight permit and pay the associated fees.**

For non-US operators, the process is straightforward – set up a customer number with the Cuban authorities and apply directly, often with same-day turnaround if submitted during business hours. US operators will generally need to use an approved permit vendor.

There are several overwater routes in the northwest corner of Cuban airspace where a **permit is not required:**



However, these still incur **NAV fees**, and if you don't pay them it can result in your aircraft tail number being blocked from Cuban airspace in the future. NAV fees must be paid to ECNA in Euros, and unpaid fees can build up quietly until you are **denied entry on a later flight.**

For more info on Cuba overflights and how to sort all this out, check our briefing here.

Cuba Landings

Getting approval on the Cuba side of things is usually very straightforward – secure the landing permit, arrange handling, and off you go.

US BIS 7-day limit: Remember, under the US BIS rules, US-built aircraft operating under the AVS exception are only allowed to stay in Cuba for a max of 7 consecutive days.

Landing permit: All flights to Cuba need a landing permit, regardless of the aircraft's registry or departure point. The Cuban CAA requires at least 3 working days' notice to process the request.

Handling: You must have a local ground handler in Cuba. The CAA won't issue a permit without proof of handling support. In the past we've worked with the handling agent **C2C Travel** in Cuba, who were extremely helpful with arranging all services. Contact fabrice@c2ctravel.com.

Local receiving party ("sponsor"): Permits are only granted if you list a local contact or business sponsor in Cuba. If you don't have one, your handler may be able to provide this.

Visas: Pax and crew get an e-visa on arrival with the help of a handling agent. Everyone has to fill a form online before arrival at this site.

Insurance: Watch out here, as many aviation policies exclude Cuba entirely, leaving flights there

uninsured. Even if covered, US underwriting or reinsurance can block payouts due to sanctions. Confirm Cuba is included and sanctions-proof — and get written confirmation from your broker.

Cuba-US Flights

Commercial operators can **depart for Cuba from any US customs-designated airport.**

But on the return leg from Cuba, US CBP requires you to **land at the first designated US airport of entry** that is nearest to your point of crossing the US border or coastline *(in some cases, there's some flexibility here where you don't actually have to land at the "first" airport — check our briefing for more info.)*

If you want to land at a different airport instead, you will need a Border Overflight Exemption in advance.

The current list of approved southern airports of entry is published by CBP and includes key gateways in Florida, Texas, and other southern states:

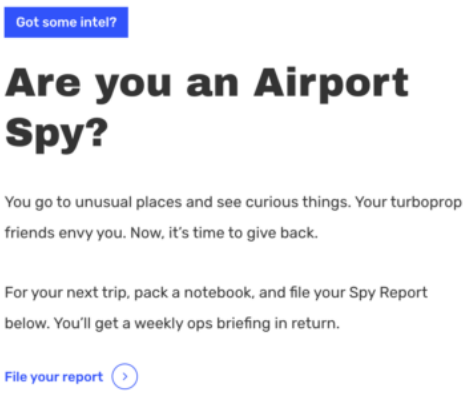
Location	Name
Beaumont, Tex	Jefferson County Airport.
Brownsville, Tex ..	Brownsville International Airport.
Calexico, Calif	Calexico International Airport.
Corpus Christi, Tex.	Corpus Christi International Airport.
Del Rio, Tex	Del Rio International Airport.
Douglas, Ariz	Bisbee-Douglas International Airport.
Douglas, Ariz	Douglas Municipal Airport.
Eagle Pass, Tex ..	Eagle Pass Municipal Airport.
El Paso, Tex	El Paso International Airport.
Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport.
Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport.
Fort Pierce, Fla	St. Lucie County Airport.
Houston, Tex	William P. Hobby Airport.
Key West, Fla	Key West International Airport.
Laredo, Tex	Laredo International Airport.
McAllen, Tex	Miller International Airport.
Miami, Fla	Miami International Airport.
Miami, Fla	Opa-Locka Airport.
Miami, Fla	Tamiami Airport.
Midland, TX	Midland International Airport.
New Orleans, La ..	New Orleans International Airport (Moissant Field).
New Orleans, La ..	New Orleans Lakefront Airport.
Nogales, Ariz	Nogales International Airport.
Presidio, Tex	Presidio-Lely International Airport.
San Antonio Tex ..	San Antonio International Airport.
San Diego, Calif ..	Brown Field.
Santa Teresa, N. Mex.	Santa Teresa Airport.
Tampa, Fla	Tampa International Airport.
Tucson, Ariz	Tucson International Airport.
West Palm Beach, Fla.	Palm Beach International Airport.
Wilmington, NC	New Hanover County Airport
Yuma, Ariz	Yuma International Airport.

This rule applies to **both US and foreign-registered aircraft** arriving from Cuba, and CBP will enforce it strictly, so plan your routing and arrival airport accordingly.

Been to Cuba?

Please let us know! You can also reach us directly on news@ops.group, or file an Airport Spy report.

OPSGROUP members can access the **full Airport Spy database** via the members dashboard here.



US Border Overflight Exemptions: A How-to Guide

David Mumford
24 September, 2025

Update Aug 2025: BOEs Move to eAPIS (No More Email Applications)

Until now, getting a Border Overflight Exemption (BOE) was an email game. You'd draft up a message to

CBP with your operator details, compliance statement, and a few other bits depending on whether it was a new application, renewal, or name change.

That's now changed. **CBP has shifted BOE applications and renewals into the eAPIS web portal.** Instead of emailing back and forth, you log in with your usual eAPIS credentials and hit the new "Border Overflight Exemption" link under the manifest options.

CBP says they'll process these within 30 days or less (same as before). Commercial operators still need to add carrier bond info and confirm customs fees are current, but otherwise it's a much smoother process. If you use a handler or third-party provider, they'll continue doing it for you behind the scenes.

New to BOEs? *If you're arriving from the south, CBP normally requires your first landing to be at the nearest southern airport of entry. A Border Overflight Exemption lets you bypass that rule and fly straight to the airport you actually want to reach. More info here.*

Original Story Sep 2024: BOE Guide

Back in the days when you had to email your BOE requests to CBP and everything was way more painful, we lovingly prepared a 1-page quick-ref cribsheet showing what to do.

But with the Aug 2025 switch to doing all your BOEing via the eAPIS website, **that guide is now defunct!** We hereby forever consign it to the great FOD bin of history!

Ops to Europe: How to Get a Third Country Operator (TCO) Approval

OPSGROUP Team
24 September, 2025

If you want to operate commercially into the EU (or certain associated states), you'll need a Third Country Operator (TCO) Authorisation from EASA. The process is free and straightforward if you meet ICAO standards – just a bit time-consuming to get all the paperwork together.

What is it, and who needs one?

A Third Country Operator is **any non-European aircraft operator conducting commercial air transport flights into the EU**. That includes BizAv charter flights intending to operate commercially. **Private flights are exempt**.

There's also a provision for "one-off" or short-notice non-scheduled commercial flights without a TCO authorisation. These are strictly limited to urgent public interest missions – such as humanitarian, disaster relief, or air ambulance flights – and can be approved for operations of up to 12 weeks.

What's being assessed?

The regulation requires TCOs to hold an authorisation issued by EASA to confirm they meet international operational and safety standards in line with ICAO requirements.

Common Gotchas

- Do you have a **Safety Management System** (SMS)? Even if SMS is not required by your local regulator, EASA expects these applicable international standards to be complied with when operating to the EU.
- You need a **Flight Data Analysis Programme** (FDAP) if your aircraft's MTOW is greater than 27,000 kg (59,500 lbs).
- Do you comply with the reinforced **cockpit door regulations**?
- Are you compliant with **Mode S Elementary, ADS-B Out, and Mode S Enhanced Surveillance**? Or do you have a plan in place to retrofit?

If you're a Part 121-style operator from a well-regulated state, you'll likely already meet these standards. **Part 135 operators may need to address a few gaps**.

You can check who already has a TCO here: EASA TCO Holder List.

How closely will EASA check?

EASA applies a **risk-based approach** when reviewing applications. This takes into account:

- Your own safety performance and history
- The safety record of your State of Operator and State of Registry
- Your level of exposure to European citizens

Operators from well-regulated states with a clean record and modern fleet – for example, an Australian operator with no incidents – will generally face less scrutiny than those from higher-risk environments.

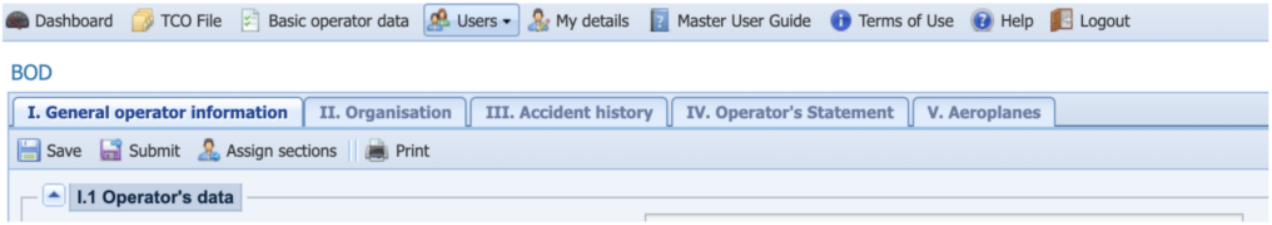
Note: **You do not need IS-BAO certification to obtain a TCO**. If you have it, great, but EASA assesses each application individually and may request extra info if needed.

How to get a TCO?

The good news? It's still **free to apply**, and the process is straightforward if you have your paperwork ready. Here's how it works in 2025:

It's actually pretty simple to apply:

1. **Submit your application** – Download the latest application form from the EASA website, complete it, and email it to **tco.applications@easa.europa.eu** (cc **tco@easa.europa.eu**) – electronic submissions only. Attach the mandatory documents: Certificate of Incorporation, Air Operator Certificate (AOC) or Air Carrier Certificate (ACC), and Operations Specifications (Ops Specs).
2. **Complete the Basic Operator Data** – Once you receive login credentials for the TCO web-interface, log in immediately and **complete the Basic Operator Data within 7 days**. It takes a few hours, so gather AOCs, insurance certificates, and aircraft documents in advance. The portal is still clunky, so hit "save" often. Keep your fleet and contact details up to date.



3. **Submit and respond to follow-ups – EASA's technical evaluation can take up to 30 days**. They may ask follow-up technical questions; you'll need to reference your manuals and reply via the portal.
4. **Get your approval** – Once satisfied, EASA will issue your TCO authorisation. **It has no expiry date, but continuous monitoring applies**, so be ready to respond to periodic information requests.

For most operators, getting and keeping a TCO is free. **EASA only charges fees if your risk profile warrants it** – for example, if they need to hold a technical meeting (from €10,000) or conduct an on-site audit (from €19,000 plus travel costs).

What's next after approval?

Maintain compliance – EASA monitors operators through ramp checks and document reviews, so be prepared at all times. Keep your TCO portal information up to date, and respond promptly to any EASA communication.

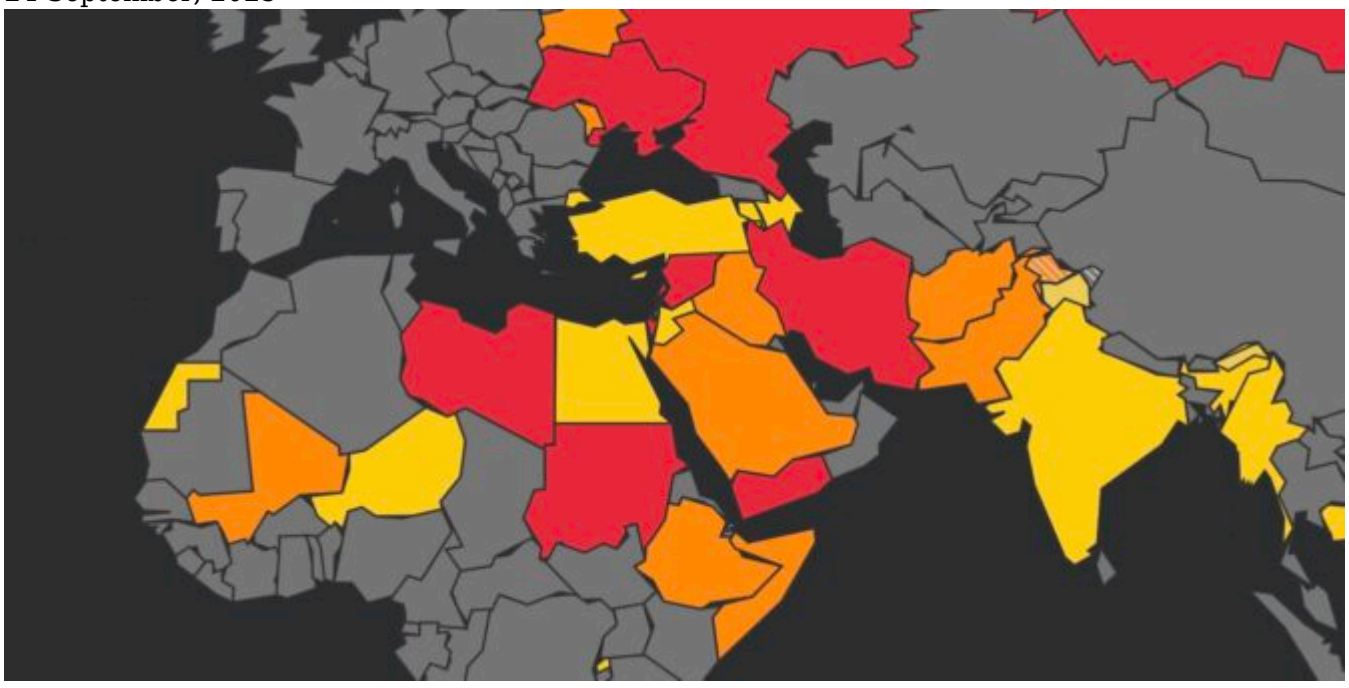
Remember, your **TCO authorisation is simply EASA's safety thumbs-up**. **You may still need to arrange the usual overflight/landing permits from each EU Member State**, depending on the nature of your flight and the national rules in place. In other words, TCO gets you through the safety gate, but you still have to knock on the door of each country you plan to operate to.

Extra Reading:

- EASA TCO Website
- EASA TCO FAQs

EASA Removes CZIBs: Middle East Risk Gets Harder to Read

David Mumford
24 September, 2025

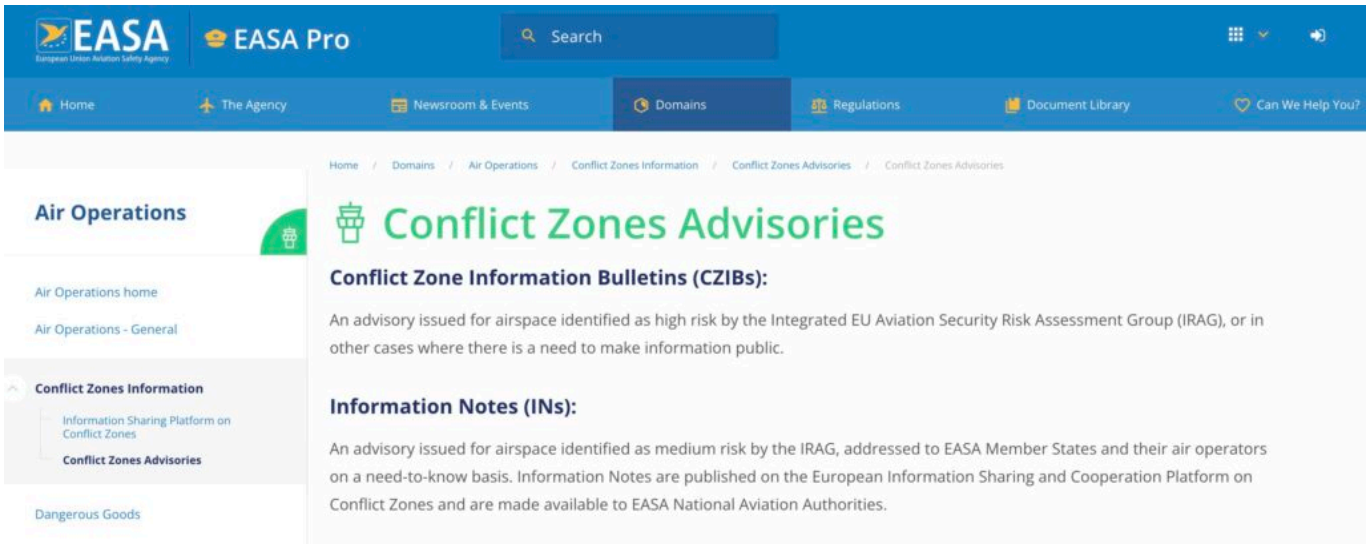


Earlier this year, **EASA withdrew its CZIBs** (Conflict Zone Information Bulletins) for Israel and Iran, citing de-escalation. At the time, we wrote that the move seemed premature.

Then in June, the region saw one of its worst escalations in decades, with Israel and Iran trading missile strikes, the US and Gulf states scrambling to protect airbases, and most of the Middle East airspace system grinding to a halt.

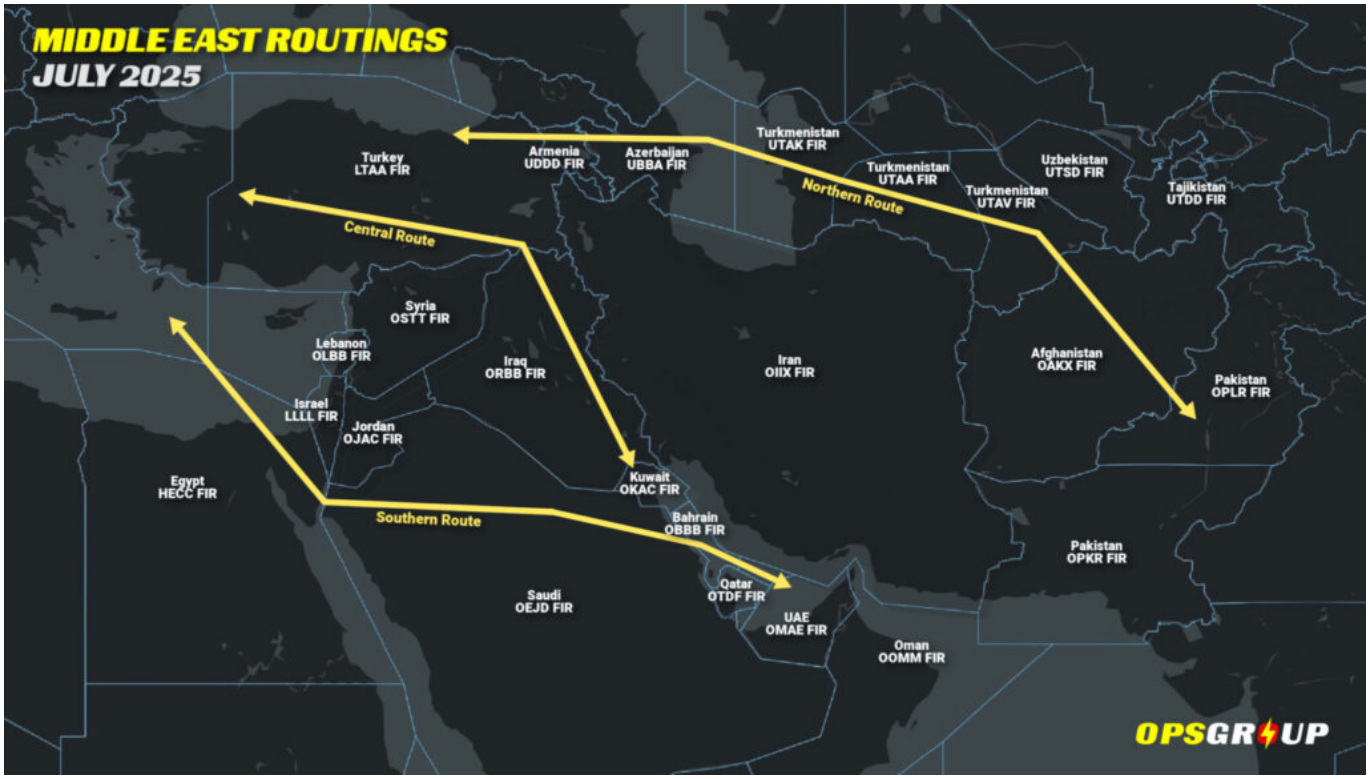
EASA responded by **reissuing updated CZIBs** advising operators to stay well clear of Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon. They also flagged the risk of spillover into parts of Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Now, just weeks after that guidance, those CZIBs have been **withdrawn again.** And once again, they've been **replaced by vague and inaccessible "Information Notes"** — only available to EU-based commercial operators, civil aviation authorities, and EU agencies. Everyone else (mainly biz jets and non-EU carriers) is locked out.



What's changed?

To recap: Following a ceasefire in early July, most FIRs across the region reopened. Iran reopened its OIIX/Tehran FIR in stages — first the east, then limited use of the west, and finally full ops. Israel began accepting traffic to LLBG/Tel Aviv on specific routings. Iraq reopened its airspace. Syria and Lebanon reopened too, albeit amid some brief re-closures. OPSGROUP members can access a full briefing here.



But the risks haven't vanished. Most carriers are still avoiding direct routings over Iran. GPS spoofing remains widespread. FIRs across the region are fragile — especially the corridor between Israel and Iran, which could close again at short notice if the conflict resumes.

The CZIBs are gone, again.

EASA's logic for removing them now appears to mirror their reasoning back in January — improving conditions, a reduction in active hostilities, and a belief that risk has subsided enough to no longer warrant a public advisory.

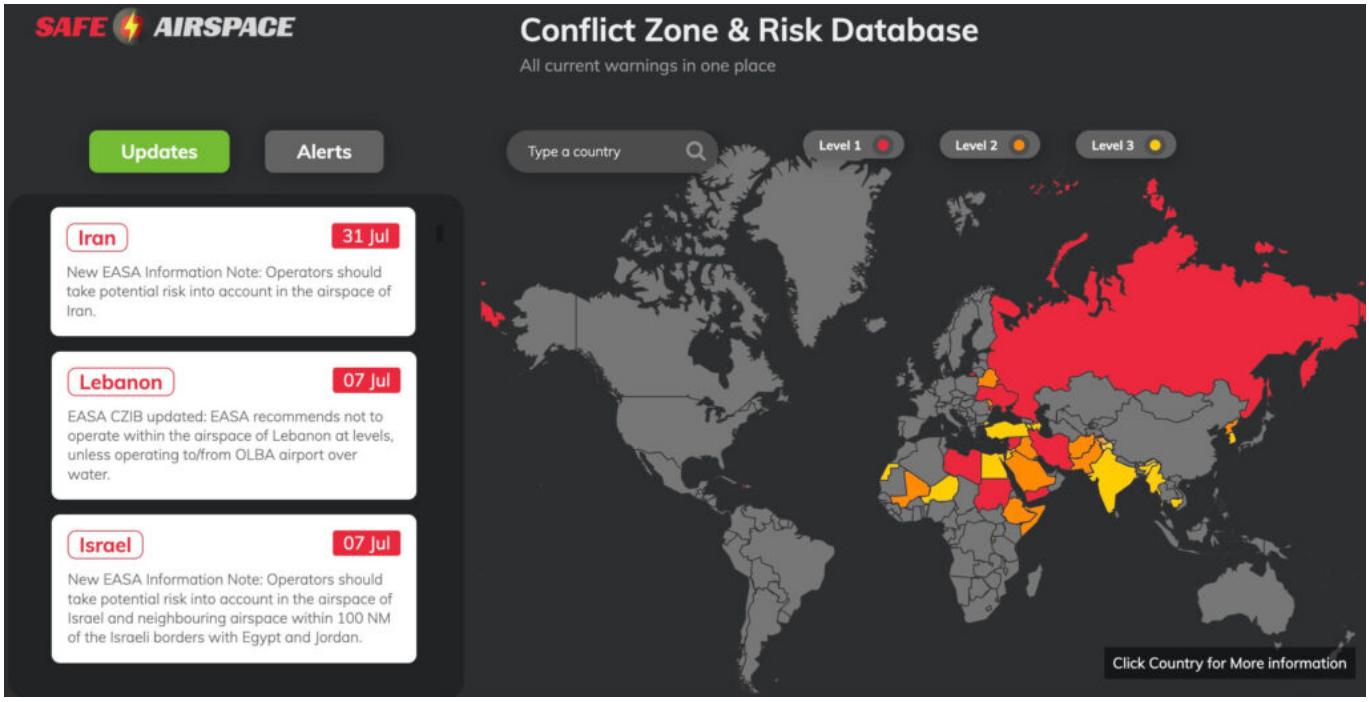
But here's the key problem: the new "Information Notes" replacing CZIBs are not public. Unless you're part of the inner circle of EU-based airlines or national regulators, you don't get to see them. And the publicly accessible version doesn't contain any detailed analysis, routing recommendations, or clarity on thresholds for escalation.

CZIBs were never binding, but they were visible — offering a common European position on conflict zone risk. The shift to restricted-access notes marks a change in how EASA communicates that risk.

A continuing need for caution

The removal of CZIBs shouldn't be interpreted as an all-clear. The ceasefire between Israel and Iran remains fragile. Regional tensions persist. GPS interference continues to impact operations across the eastern Mediterranean and Persian Gulf. Routes through Athens and Nicosia FIRs remain congested as many operators still choose to avoid overflights of Iran and Israel altogether.

EASA's risk assessments will of course evolve as the situation does — but for operators outside the EU system, the reduced visibility makes it **more important than ever to consult a variety of sources:** state-level airspace warnings, Notams, real-time airspace activity, and third-party guidance.



We maintain a full database of state issued airspace warnings at SafeAirspace.net, freely accessible to everyone.

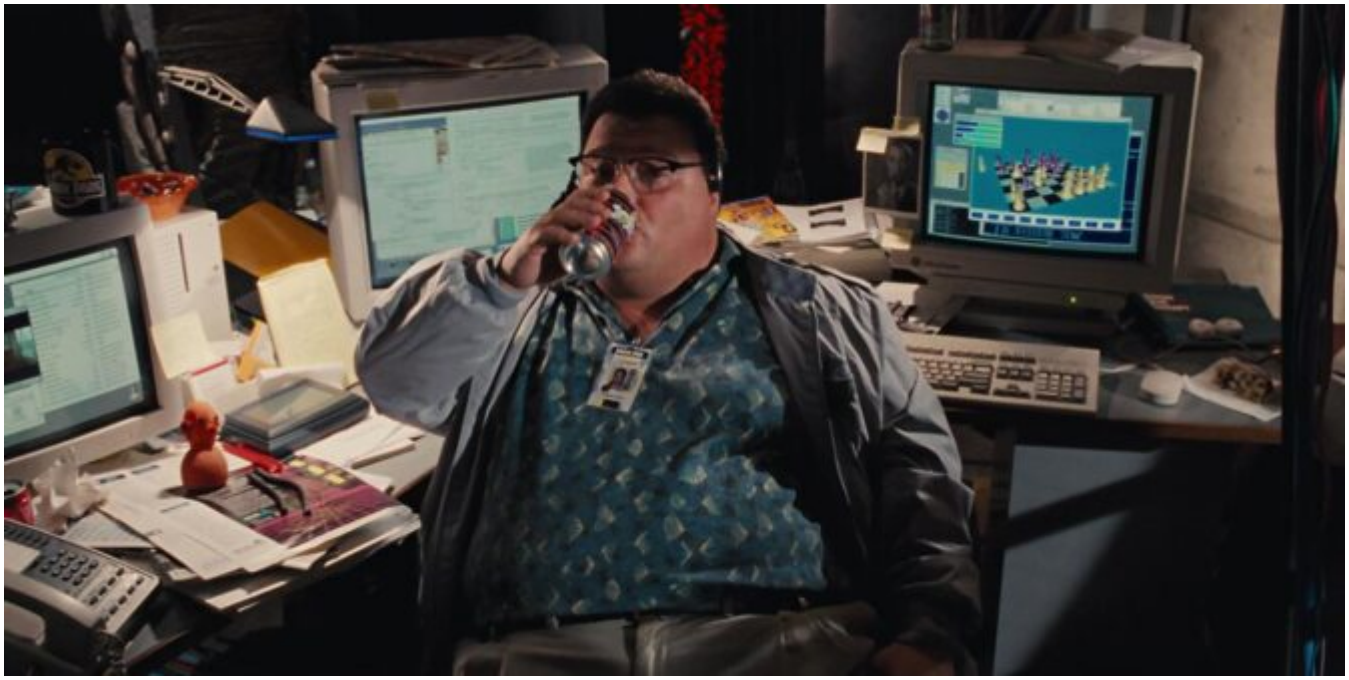
The bottom line

While EASA's decision to withdraw its CZIBs reflects improved conditions in parts of the region, the underlying risks remain dynamic. Operators should continue to treat Middle East operations with care — especially in and around Iran and Israel — and stay alert to changes that could result in rapid airspace restrictions or closures.

In short: just because EASA has stopped talking about it doesn't mean the threat has gone away.

Cybersecurity in Aviation: Growing Operational Risk

Chris Shieff
24 September, 2025



Aviation is under fire

A recent study recorded a 600% increase in attacks on the aviation sector year-on-year. 71% of these involved credential theft or unauthorised access to critical systems.

The FBI also warned on June 28 that a cybercriminal group called ‘Scattered Spider’ had turned its attention toward the aviation sector, using impersonation to compromise security.

Protecting ourselves from these attacks has become a **multi-million dollar** industry.

High profile attacks in recent months have impacted both Aeroflot and Qantas, the latter likely carried out by none other than Scattered Spider – the group the FBI are worried about.

The FAA is paying attention

There has been a response to this growing risk.

There is an obvious intent to **include cyber security in future regulations.** While not yet law, recent advisories and bulletins make it clear that operators are expected to begin taking proactive steps.

A good place to start is AC 119-1A which provides an overview of cyber security requirements, risk assessments and best practices. Also keep an eye out for cyber threat alerts which can be published by SAFO, Notam or other notices.

The FAA is also actively working with ICAO and other agencies to **harmonise future cyber protection practices** under Annex 17 (Security).

What about business aviation?

The examples above relate to attacks on larger airlines and IT infrastructure. A valid question remains then, what does this all mean for biz av?

While not a traditional target, many business aviation operators **lack dedicated IT departments or cyber defence teams.** We also frequently carry high-net worth individuals on sensitive operations which may motivate nefarious cyber activity.

Recent reports from the industry show that biz av isn't immune:

In 2020, a major manufacturer of business jets confirmed a cyber-security breach that compromised personal and aircraft ownership information.

Another example from May this year involved a Europe-based private jet operator which appeared on a ransomware group's leak site. Sensitive crew info was shared, which reportedly included passport photos.

It's clear that business aviation is **not under the radar** – therefore we must remain measured but cautious in our approach to emerging cyber threats.

EFBs – A Soft Target?

Feedback from industry experts and OPSGROUP members suggest that a closer look at the electronic security of EFBs warrants a **closer analysis.**

Eye-opening research, such as the work conducted by Cyber Security Consultancy Pen Test Partners, has highlighted that EFBs could act as an additional gateway for cyber crime if not **correctly managed.**

Look out for an dedicated article on this subject soon.

An extra tip – don't forget your SMS

If your flight department operates under an SMS, it may be wise to include cyber security.

This means treating digital threats like any other hazard – **reportable, measurable and mitigable.**

It's important we take steps now to keep our operations secure.

LFPM/Villaroche: Paris Without the Pain

Kateřina Michalská
24 September, 2025

If LFPB/Paris Le Bourget is proving too noisy, too crowded, or just too regulated for your liking this summer – there's another option.

Thanks to the team at Elyxan Aviation, we've got the full scoop on LFPM/Paris Villaroche, a lesser-known but promising alternative for BizAv flights heading to Paris. Located about 45-50 minutes from the city center, this airport sits southeast of Paris and offers something refreshingly rare: **no slots, no APU restrictions, and 24/7 availability.**

Why consider LFPM?

LFPM/Paris Villaroche isn't new – it's a former flight test site that's been quietly evolving into a solid business aviation option southeast of Paris. It has a similar feel to EGLF/Farnborough, and although public ownership has slowed its full development, what's already in place is pretty impressive:

- 1972m x 45m runway with GNSS/LPV approach
- No slots, no APU restrictions, no curfews
- 24/7 ops capability, with English-speaking ATC available on request
- RFFS Cat 5 available on request
- Modern FBO with hangars for bizjets up to Global 7000/Gulfstream 700
- Direct ramp access, VIP pax facilities, and fast turnarounds
- No public access = high privacy for pax and high-profile ops

What's the catch?

LFPM is not a designated port of entry – so it only accepts flights arriving from or departing to EU/Schengen airports (Switzerland included). No customs or immigration means international flights must route in from a Schengen stop first.

Also, while the runway can easily handle larger jets, **LFPM imposes a 37-tonne (approx. 81,600 lbs) limit on actual operating weight** at the time of arrival or departure – not MTOW. For heavier aircraft, fuel loads may need to be adjusted accordingly.

Looking at other options around Paris:

- **LFPB/Le Bourget** is Paris's main BizAv airport – but it's slot-controlled, has APU restrictions, and can be congested in summer.
- **LFPG/Charles de Gaulle** and **LFPO/Orly** are international, but mainly serve scheduled airlines and are not BizAv-friendly.
- **LFOB/Beauvais** and **LFOK/Vatry** are international airports with customs, but they're significantly farther from the city.
- **LFPT/Pontoise** (NW of the city) is also Schengen-only, with a shorter runway and stricter weight limits. Currently undergoing refurbishment.

Faster into Paris?

Actually, yes – and not just on paper.

Even though LFPM looks farther from central Paris than LFPB, the real-world travel time is often the same or shorter. That's especially true if you're arriving from the south – you'll avoid the extra flight time needed to route around LFPG/Charles de Gaulle and skip the congestion-prone A1 motorway used by LFPB/Le Bourget arrivals.

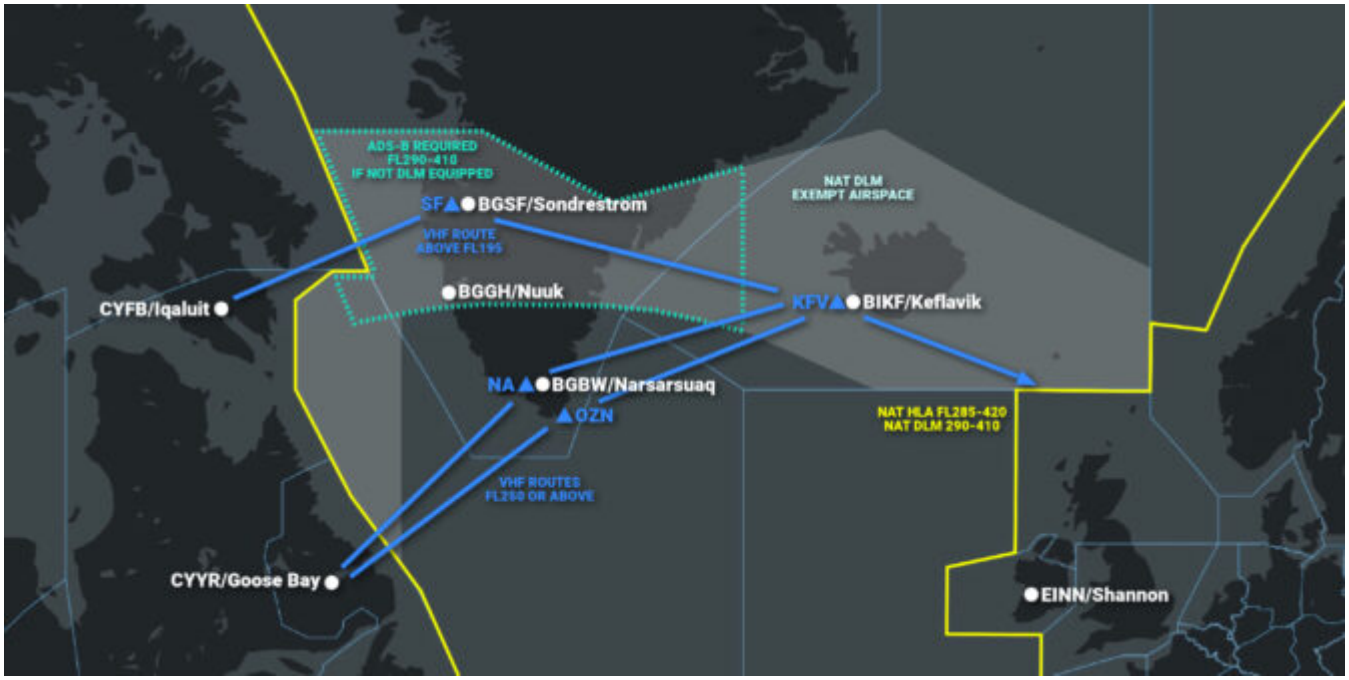
Elyxan put together a practical comparison of travel times from LFPM vs. LFPB to central Paris – factoring in flight routing, ramp access, and road traffic.

For now, it's Schengen-only – but if French authorities eventually install CIQ, Villaroche could become a serious player. In the meantime, it's a great EU option: straightforward, operator-friendly, and low on red tape.

 Contact Elyxan Aviation for more info:
ops@elyxan-aviation.fr | +33 6 58 83 66 25

Blue Spruce Routes Are Gone (But You Can Still Fly Them)

David Mumford
24 September, 2025



The Short Story

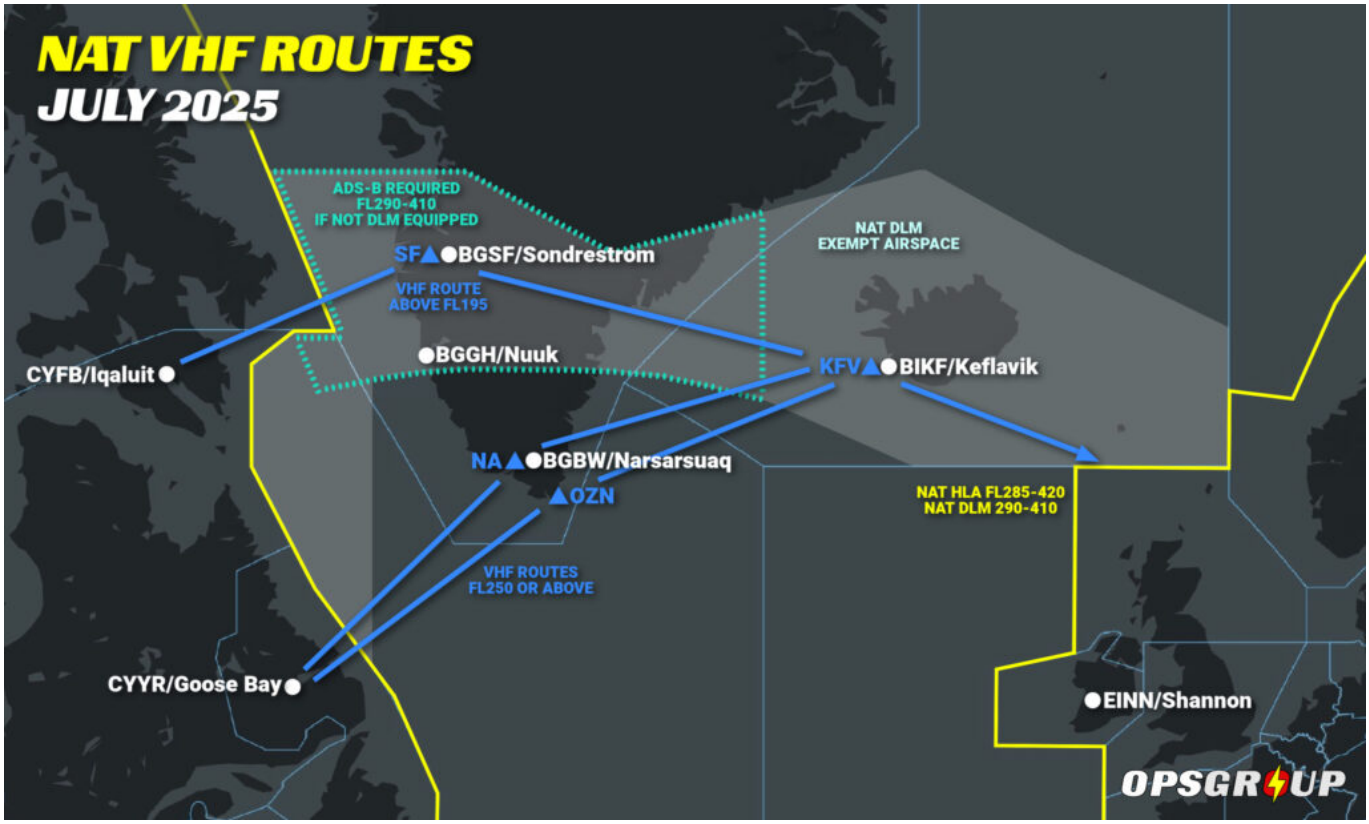
The Blue Spruce Routes are gone — but if you don't have all the equipment, there are still ways to get across the Atlantic. What you can do depends on what's on board:

Fully equipped? (2 LRNS, CPDLC RCP240, ADS-C RSP180, HF, LOAs)
➤ You can go anywhere in the NAT HLA.

No datalink?
➤ Avoid FL290–410 unless you're in the DLM Exemption Area (e.g. Iceland–Greenland Corridor) and have ADS-B.

No HF radios?
➤ You can only cross via specific VHF-only routes:
– Above FL195: YFB–SF–KFV
– FL250 and above: YYR–OZN–KFV

Only one LRNS?
➤ Stay below FL285 to avoid HLA nav and datalink rules – but unless you're on a Gander-approved VHF route (e.g. via OZN or SF), you'll still need two long-range comms systems.
➤ Want to climb into HLA airspace? You'll need VHF coverage, ATS surveillance, State approval, and a compliant routing like the Iceland-Greenland corridor.



The Longer Story

As of March 20, 2025, the Blue Spruce Routes have been officially removed from the North Atlantic. These routes—once the lifeline for aircraft with limited navigation or communication capability—are now a thing of the past. The change is part of the latest update to **NAT Doc 007**, which you can read more about here.

Technically established in 1976, the Blue Spruce Routes allowed aircraft with only one **Long Range Navigation System (LRNS)** to transit the **NAT High Level Airspace (HLA)** under special routing and coverage provisions. Over time, however, the need for them faded. The reasons:

- Almost no aircraft that have the mandated CPDLC equipment have only one LRNS. Or put another way, if you have CPDLC, you have dual LRNSs unless broken. With the addition of CPDLC requirement, relief for a single LRNS became outdated.
- Ground-based nav aids along the routes have largely disappeared.
- Datalink Mandated Airspace now covers most of NAT HLA.
- The Iceland–Greenland Corridor, with reliable VHF and ATS surveillance, provides a more flexible and better-supported fallback option.

While the Blue Spruce name may still pop up informally (especially among ferry operators), it no longer refers to any officially recognized ICAO routes. But crucially, **some of the old routings remain usable**—just under new conditions.

For example, Canada now allows aircraft operating with only VHF to cross via specific routes:

- **Above FL195 via YFB–SF–KFV** *(this one currently says "below" FL195 in the Canada AIP, but that's been confirmed as a typo, and will be getting updated shortly!)*

- **FL250 or above via YYR–OZN (or NA)–KFV**

These are the only routes where **VHF coverage is considered sufficient** for oceanic ops without HF radios. Everywhere else, HF is still required outside VHF range.

So while the Blue Spruce Routes are gone in name and publication, **practical exemptions remain**—especially for aircraft with partial equipage. What's changed is how you plan and justify the crossing.

Let's walk through what you can still do today, based on what your aircraft has (or doesn't).

Standard Ops

Most traffic crossing the North Atlantic Airspace (NAT) occurs from **FL290-410 through the North Atlantic High Level Airspace (NAT HLA).** Over the years, advances in navigation, communication, and surveillance equipment have led to additional requirements for operators so ATC can safely reduce aircraft spacing and pack more aircraft through the airspace.

For unrestricted access to the NAT HLA, operators need:

- 2 Long Range Navigation Systems (LRNSs)
- Outside VHF areas 2 LRCS are required – either 2x HF, or HF & Satcom/or CPDLC, for the other.
- FANS 1/A equipment for the NAT Datalink Mandated airspace
- Super-duper datalink for the coveted PBCS Tracks (i.e. CPDLC capable of RCP240 + ADS-C capable of RSP180)

And for US operators, that equipment list is a prerequisite for several required LOAs:

- A056 CPDLC Enroute, and Oceanic and Remote (PBCS)
- B036 Oceanic and Remote Continental Navigation Using Multiple Long-Range Navigation Systems (M-LRNS), Aka. RNP 4 (and RNP 10)
- B039 NAT HLA
- B046 RVSM
- D195 MEL (not technically required for a crossing, but might as well throw this one in)

The above is the ideal setup. But what if I fly old stuff, or new stuff, or broken stuff, or little stuff?

Old Stuff

To the formerly early adopters without the benefit of factory standard state-of-the-art equipment: let's say your aircraft has LRNSs that are only capable of RNP 10, or your FANS equipment is RCP400 and RSP400. All else being equal, the only limitation would be **no PBCS tracks.** And **no T9/T290** either. All other tracks or random routes through the HLA are approved.

Is your equipment so old it doesn't even have the above equipment? **Consider yourself the same as broken**, and keep reading…

New Stuff

You just closed on a shiny, new, well-equipped jet and have to ferry it across the pond, but you have no LOAs. In this case, you are altitude and route are limited. No RVSM or NAT HLA LOAs means the airspace from FL290-410 is off limits for you. If traffic permits, ATC may let you climb through the HLA above FL410, but you might want to plan fuel and route at FL280. Route-wise, without B036, **you're flying the Iceland-Greenland Corridor.**

If you only have some of the above-listed LOAs, **also consider yourself broken.**

Now, it gets a little more nuanced…

Broken Stuff

You've been spoofed, but only one GPS came back? When down to one LRNS (or you don't have B036), fly the Iceland-Greenland Corridor. With only one LRNS, you could fly through the NAT HLA along the corridor with approval if you stay within surveillance and VHF coverage and have the equipment to fly the assigned route. Otherwise, fly above or below the NAT HLA.

You're down to one HF or lost both? You can still cross via the Iceland–Greenland Corridor or the old southern Blue Spruce routing via OZN – but only between FL250-280, where VHF coverage is sufficient and you're still below DLM airspace. Just make sure to stay clear of Shanwick OCA, which still requires HF.

HFs are back, but your Datalink konks out (CPDLC or ADS-C), or you don't have A056. There are two options: stay within the Data Link Mandate (DLM) exemption area (the corridor) and fly any altitude. The DLM exemption area exists because you don't need CPDLC in that area if you have ADS-B. Radio reception is pretty good throughout there! The second option is to fly above or below the NAT HLA.

Little Stuff

And if you get a wild hair to cross the Atlantic in an aircraft with **only one LRNS, no HF radios, no Datalink, no LOAs, without the range to fly non-stop** (like me), you still have options. You'll need to stick to the Iceland–Greenland Corridor, or the specific VHF-approved routes via OZN or SF.

What's a Blue Spruce?

It's a Christmas tree native to the Rocky Mountains that you won't see across the Atlantic on any of your stops. However, the Blue Spruce Routes are routes in and around the Atlantic connecting Canada, Greenland, Iceland, and the UK.

Why were they called the Blue Spruce Routes? Back when military aircraft had wooden propellers (sometimes made of spruce), they painted the tips blue. These aircraft had to make the trans-Atlantic journey along the now-known Blue Spruce Routes.

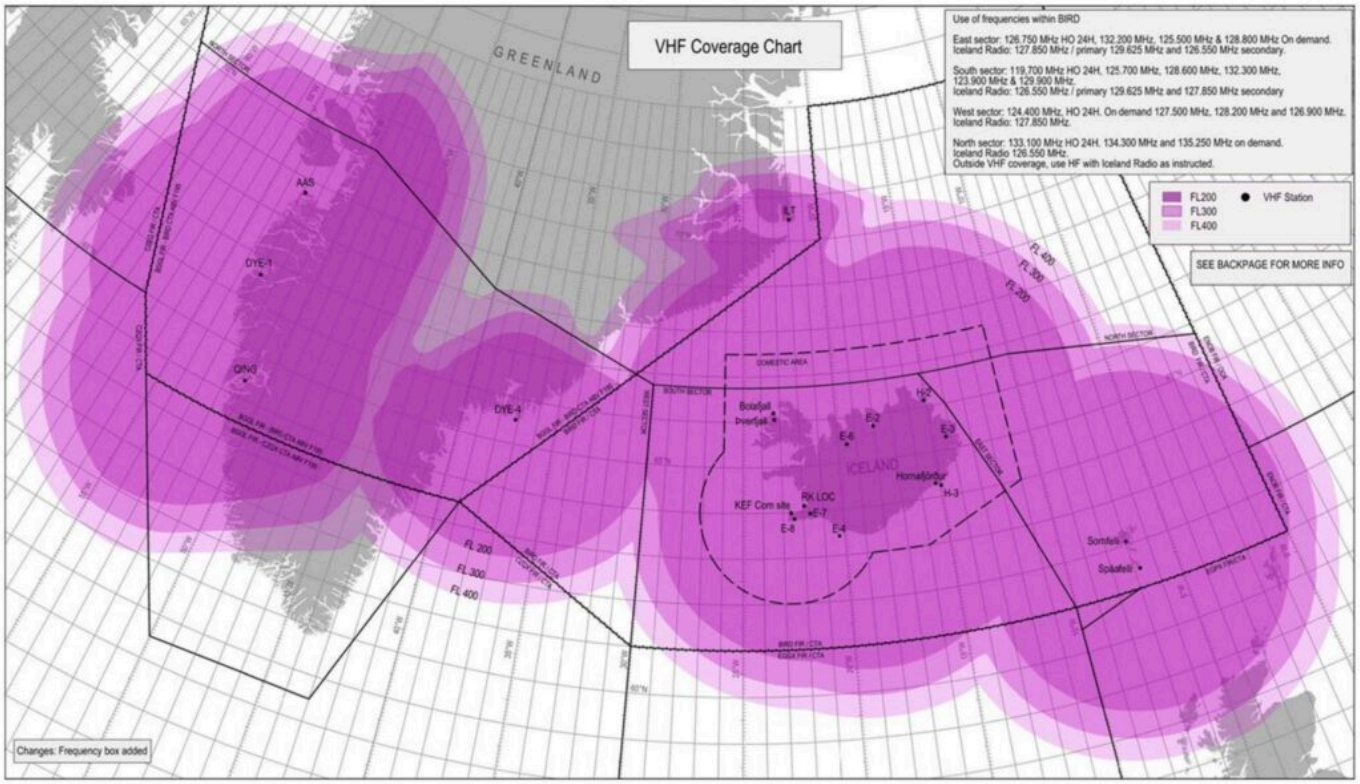
Gray Areas

The Iceland-Greenland Corridor provides exemptions from equipment and operational requirements because land-based radio transmitters along the route provide decent coverage, and route legs are short enough to complete a crossing without necessitating equipment redundancy.

Now, there are exemptions from the rules, and then there are gray areas. Despite all the relief these routes provide, one regulation remains: you must maintain two-way radio communication with ATC.

So far, much of the discussion is how high you can go, **but what about how low?**

VHF communications have improved significantly in the Atlantic in the last ten years. Both the northern and southern routes have VHF reception at appropriate altitudes. The longest stretch of water is between Canada and Greenland. On the southern route over this stretch of water, I have experienced adequate communication at FL250 and up. The northern route is good down to FL200. Iceland is fantastic – it's almost like you're in domestic airspace.



The gray area is when you plan to operate **below these altitudes and are counting on using another aircraft to relay position reports.** By the letter, this is a no-no. The up-and-up solutions would be to rent a portable HF unit or containerize and ship the aircraft to Europe, both of which can be about $20k.

You can see the incentive to count on relays.

Are ferry pilots bending the rules? Let us descend, inception-style, one further layer down the list of the exceptions: ATC can waive the HF requirement for ferry, delivery, and special event flights. Ferry pilots have all the fun.

What About Aircraft with Only One LRNS?

Back in the day, the Blue Spruce Routes were the go-to option for aircraft with only one **Long Range Navigation System (LRNS)** crossing the Atlantic. Now that those routes are gone, what are your options?

If you're staying below the NAT HLA (below FL285), you're in the clear:

- You don't need two LRNSs to operate below FL285.
- You're also free from NAT HLA requirements like RNP 10 and Datalink etc.
- Just make sure your one LRNS (typically GPS-based) is suitable for the route you're flying.
- You still need two long-range communication systems (HF + HF or HF + Satcom), unless you're on one of the VHF-only routes approved by Gander that we talked about above (ie. via OZN or SF)

If you want to enter the NAT HLA (FL285–420), it gets more tricky:

You'll need to qualify under the NAT Doc 007 1.4.1 exception, which says aircraft can operate in the NAT HLA with fewer than the standard requirements only if:

- You stay within ATS surveillance,
- You remain within VHF communication coverage,
- Your navigation system is suitable for the planned route,
- And you have specific State approval to operate with reduced navigation capability.

In practical terms, this means you might be able to fly the Iceland–Greenland Corridor at HLA altitudes, but only if your authority signs off – and probably not straight across via the likes of OZN.

Summing up

You can operate with one LRNS, no HF radios, no CPDLC, and no LOAs using the **Iceland–Greenland Corridor or the designated VHF routes published by Canada.**

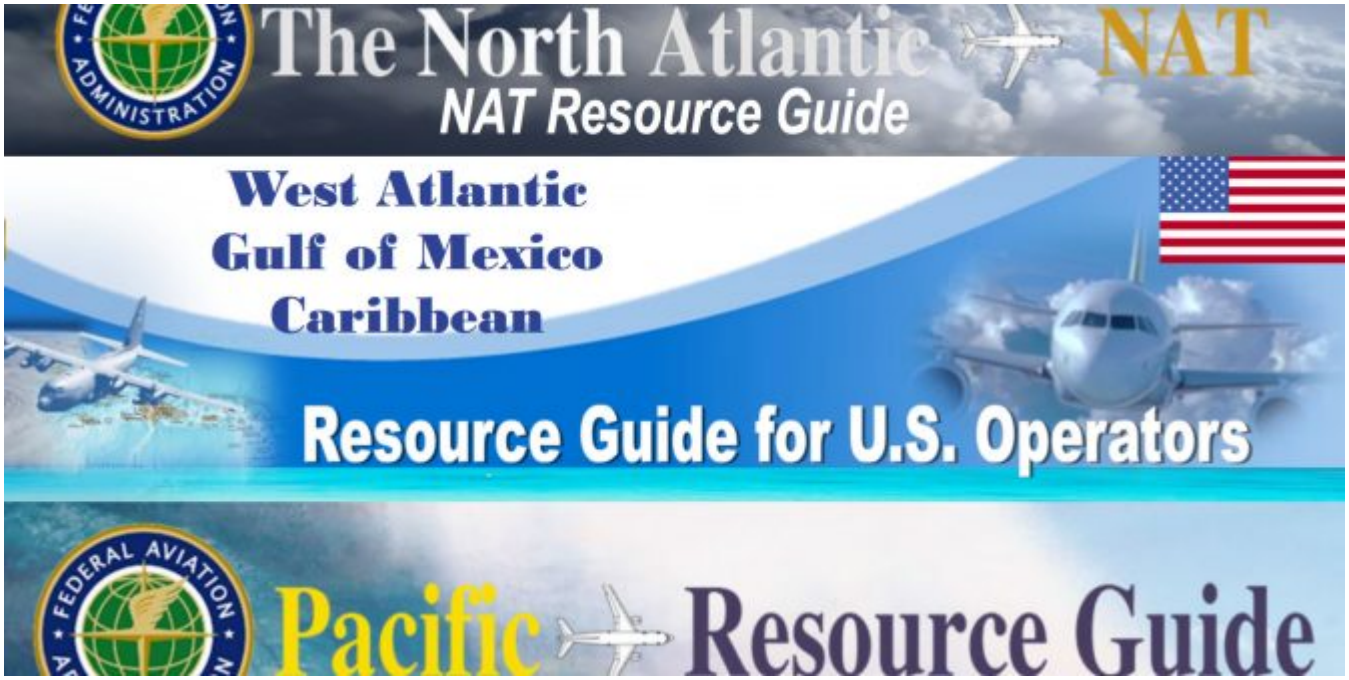
Outside of these specific altitudes and routings, aircraft operating in the NAT Region must normally carry two long-range communication systems, one of which must be HF, when operating beyond VHF coverage – unless a specific exemption has been granted by the State of the Operator or Registry (eg. for ferry or delivery flights).

If you want to learn more, check out myaircraftmanagement.com for a 101-level walkthrough of a Blue Spruce operation.

Happy Crossings! ✈ □ □✈

Updated FAA Oceanic Guides

David Mumford
24 September, 2025



The FAA has updated its resource guides for the three big oceanic areas of interest: the North Atlantic, the Pacific, and WAT airspace (West Atlantic / Gulf Of Mexico / Caribbean). All three have been updated effective July 2025.

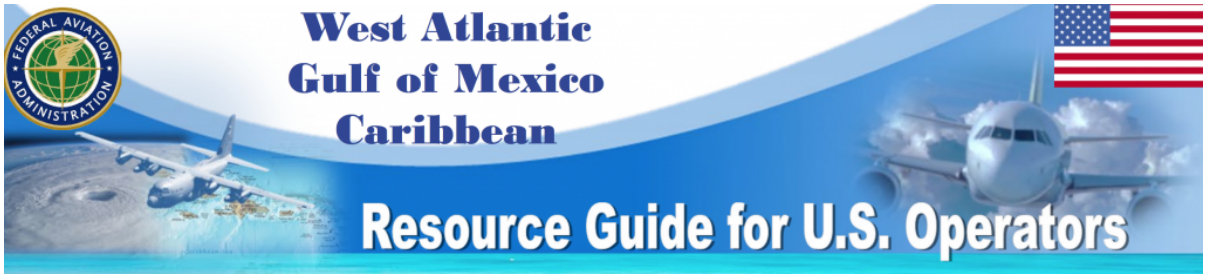
These guides are a good starting point for understanding all the essentials of operating in these regions, and include links to all kinds of useful supplemental information around the main topics for each one.

Click on the pics to check them out.

North Atlantic

Pacific

WAT

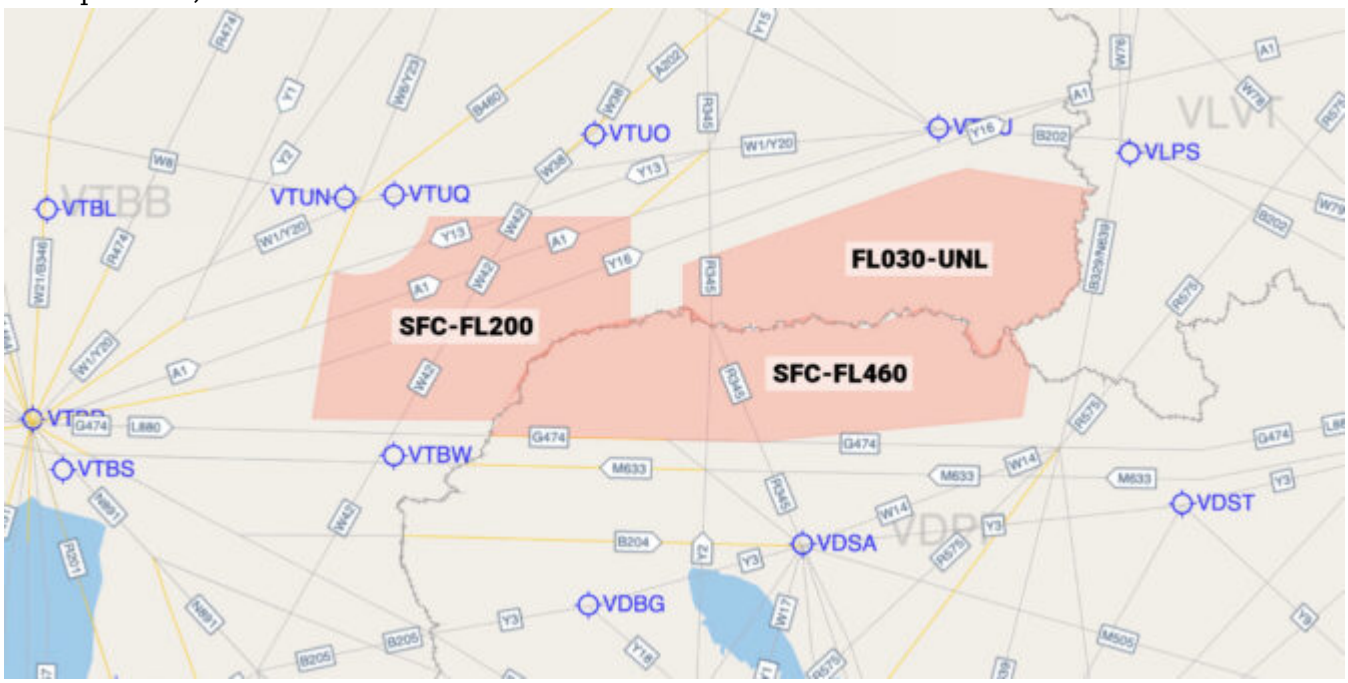


To see a timeline of the **big changes on the NAT** stretching back to 2015 click here.

Opsgroup members can download several **NAT guides** and a **NAT Plotting & Planning Chart** via the Members Dashboard here.

Emerging Airspace Risk: Cambodia & Thailand

Chris Shieff
24 September, 2025



Update: July 28

Good news: **Cambodia and Thailand have agreed to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire** starting midnight local time on Monday July 28 (1700Z), following five days of intense fighting along their shared border. Both sides have committed to reopening communication lines and setting up a monitoring mechanism to maintain the truce.

While this is a major step toward de-escalation, the situation remains fragile – **caution is still advised near the border region**.

There are **no changes so far to the Phnom Penh FIR danger area (SFC–UNL)**. **VDPF Notam A0092/25** remains active.

Original Article: July 25

Key Points

- **A sudden military escalation began on July 24 along the central portion of the Cambodia–Thailand border, around 100–150 NM north of Siem Reap.**
- **Both sides accuse each other of firing first. Thailand has carried out airstrikes using F-16s.**
- **A danger area now extends along much of the border, SFC to UNL. Overflights may face elevated risk from unannounced military activity, including GPS interference.**

Background

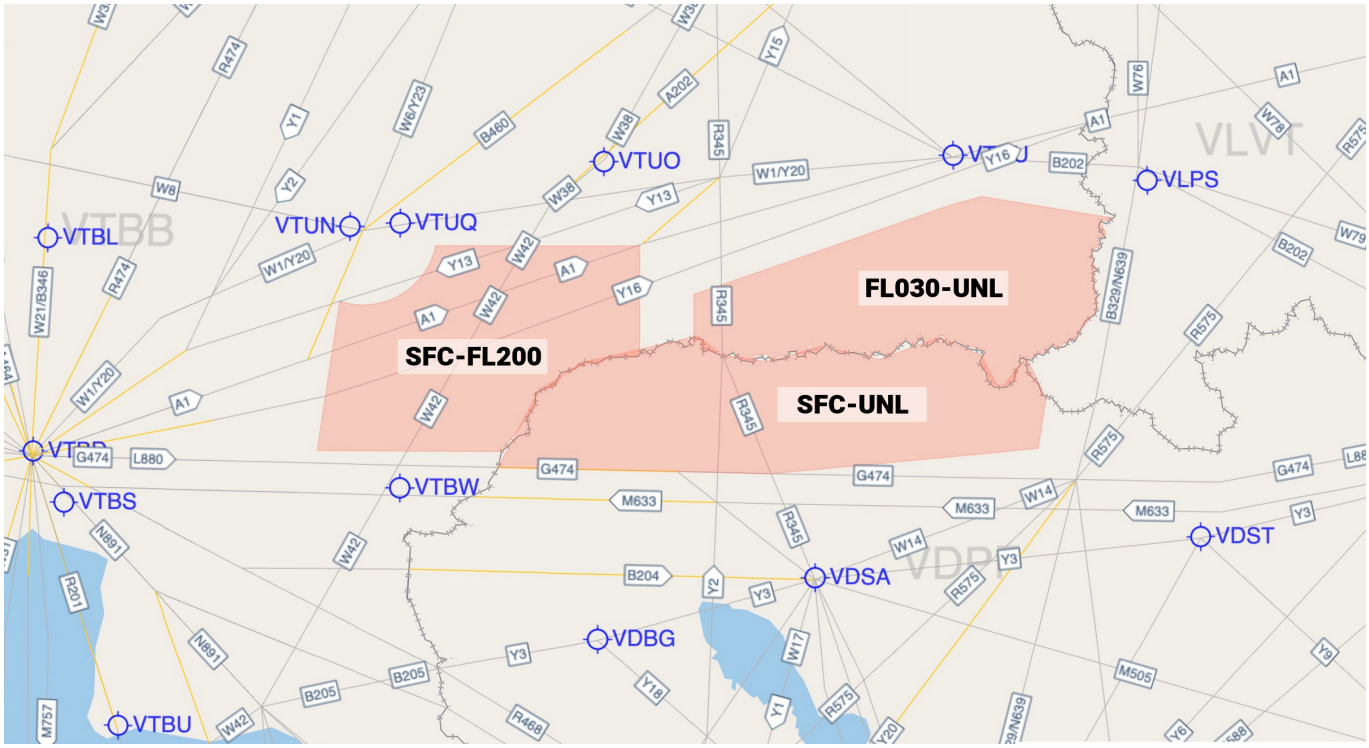
Cambodia and Thailand's long-standing border dispute has flared since May, when a Cambodian soldier was killed in a skirmish. In the weeks since, alleged landmine incidents have endangered Thai troops.

Political turmoil in Thailand has added to the crisis – its Prime Minister was suspended after a leaked call with Cambodian leaders linked to the dispute.

By July 24, the conflict had escalated into one of Southeast Asia's most serious military confrontations in over a decade, involving **airstrikes, heavy artillery, and mass civilian displacement.**

Danger Areas

Thailand and Cambodia have both issued Notams (under the VDPF/Phnom Penh FIR and VTBB/Bangkok FIR codes), activating **danger areas across a large portion of the shared border at all levels.**



What's notably absent from the Notams is any mention of the reason behind the danger area activations: **an escalating conflict on the ground.**

Cross-border fighting has involved heavy artillery and military airstrikes. Unannounced military activity poses **potential risks to civil aviation at all levels** – including from air defense systems and GPS interference.

We advise caution in the open airspace above.

High altitude airways affected include:

North/Southbound

R345 – the airway connecting VDSA/Siem Reap with northern Thailand.

Y2 – connects southern Cambodia with northern Thailand.

These routes are currently off-limits, as they pass through the main danger areas.

West/Eastbound

A1/Y16/Y13 – airways connecting the Bangkok airports with eastern Thailand and Vietnam. The danger area here only extends up to FL200, with airline traffic still transiting these routes.

At time of writing, there are no new state-issued airspace warnings concerning either Thai or Cambodian airspace.

France Summer BizAv Parking Tips

Kateřina Michalská
24 September, 2025

France is facing the same summer congestion we've seen in Spain and Greece: packed ramps, limited slot availability, and strict parking rules – both for location and duration. From the Côte d'Azur to Corsica and key inland airports, space is tight. But there are still some options if you know where to look. Here's what we've found so far.

Common Themes Across France

- **Plan ahead.** Most airports require advance notice for parking and handling – anywhere from 24 to 72 hours – usually via MyHandling.
- **Customs and Gendec:** For international arrivals, most airports expect crew and pax lists to be submitted 24 hours ahead, even for Schengen flights.
- **Slots or PPR?** It depends. Some airports like LFML/Marseille are slot- and PPR-free but limited by physical stand space. Others have strict PPR or slot rules, and some impose restrictions based on Schengen/non-Schengen status.
- **Nothing is guaranteed.** Even with advance requests, parking isn't always available – especially for longer stays. At LFMN/Nice, approval often comes just 7 days out. LFML/Marseille has only a few stands for 48h+ parking, and LFKF/Figari doesn't allow overnight stays at all.

Riviera Airports – Busy, Tight But Accessible

LFMN/Nice

Nice has been very busy since May, and according to local FBOs, things aren't getting any easier. If you're planning to stay on the ground for more than 4 hours, expect a bit of a process. The airport is fully slot-controlled, and **parking only gets confirmed once airport authorities approve your request – often just 7 days out**. Submitting a full schedule early gives you the best shot.

Slot tolerance is tight (+/–10 min arrival, –10/+15 min departure), and even small schedule changes can mean losing both slots and parking. Once confirmed, the slot ID needs to be in Field 18 of your FPL.

APU use is also limited to just 10 minutes before TSAT, and only after towing. Until then, it's ground power only. But several OPSGROUP members have reported issues with GPUs and overheating, especially in high temps. For a deeper look, check out our article on heat damage in Nice.

Fuel delays are common too. Airline traffic takes priority, and BizAv can end up waiting. Crews must be onboard during refueling, so best to show up early before ETD just in case. Multiple fuel providers operate at LFMN, and availability can vary depending on the day and time.

FBO contacts:

- Signature Aviation: nce@signatureaviation.com
- Avia VIP: lfmn@aviavip.com

LFMD/Cannes

Cannes may be scenic, but it's not built for bigger jets. The airport has strict aircraft restrictions: **no jets over 35T MTOW, and no turboprops over 22T**. Slots are mandatory from May 12 – Sep 15, when the airport is fully coordinated for the summer season. The control tower is active from 0800 LT to sunset +30 minutes. Handling services may operate on a different schedule, so check with your local FBO directly.

FBO contacts:

- ACM Handling: operations-acm@cote-azur.aeroport.fr
- Jetex: france@jetex.com

LFML/Marseille

Marseille offers a more relaxed entry point to the region, with fewer restrictions. The airport and customs are both H24. **There's no need for slots or PPR, and short-turn parking is usually available** without much hassle.

That said, longer stays are tricky – **only four stands are available for 48h+**, and they fill up quickly on a first-come, first-served basis. One or two nights might still be possible depending on traffic, but anything beyond that is unlikely in peak season.

FBO contacts:

- Jetex: fbo-mrs@jetex.com
- Avia VIP: lfml@aviavip.com

Southern Coastal Options – Mixed Rules

LFTH/Toulon-Hyeres

Toulon is getting busier in the summer, but **parking is still possible if you're organized.** The airport is open daily from 0800-2000 LT until Oct 28, with the possibility to arrange extensions. Customs hours are slightly different – available daily from 0800-1800 LT.

As a joint civil-military airport, LFTH has additional restrictions: according to the local FBO, flights before 0900 LT are currently not allowed due to military operations.

FBO contacts:

- Toulon Airport Handling: fbo@toulon-hyeres.aeroport.fr
- Jetex: france@jetex.com

LFTZ/La Mole Saint-Tropez

The airport has restricted-use status, so only operators with special approval can use it. **Pilots must meet specific training requirements** depending on the aircraft.

If you're thinking about flying into LFTZ, **be ready for a bit of admin.** The airport website and their AIP explain exactly what's needed – from how to request access to the paperwork and pilot qualifications

required.

PPR is required and operations are permitted daily 0800-1900 LT in summer, with extensions available until sunset. Non-Schengen flights are only allowed July 1 – Oct 15, 0700-1700 LT, and any schedule changes must be re-approved.

FBO contacts:

- Sky Valet: operations@sainttropez.aeroport.fr
- Jetex: france@jetex.com

Western Provence – Quieter Alternatives Inland

LFMT/Montpellier

Montpellier stands out as a dependable inland choice, even for heavier jets. While the airport can get busy at times, especially in peak summer weeks, **it's still worth considering if coastal airports are full.** All non-based BizAv must request PPR at least 72 hours in advance. Handling is charged in full if cancelled less than 3 days before arrival and not charged if cancelled earlier.

FBO contact: Avia VIP: lfmt@aviavip.com

LFTW/Nimes

Nimes is often overlooked, but can be a smart alternative if you plan ahead. The airport operates daily until 2000 LT. ATC is available until 1900 LT on weekdays and until 1600 LT on weekends. CIQ services are available daily from 0900-1800 LT.

FBO contact: Jetex: france@jetex.com

LFMP/Perpignan

Perpignan is another inland option worth considering this summer. Local FBO confirms that parking is currently not congested and that the airport can accommodate larger bizjet like the G650. Parking availability is confirmed once a full schedule is submitted.

FBO contact: G-OPS: executive@g-ops.com

LFMV/Avignon

Avignon gives operators a welcome level of flexibility during the peak season. **No PPR is required**. The airport is open Mon-Fri from 0700-2130 LT, Sat until 1900 LT, and Sun from 0800-2000 LT. CIQ services are available daily until 2300 LT.

FBO contacts:

- Airport handling: handling@avignon.aeroport.fr
- Jetex: france@jetex.com

LFMQ/Le Castellet

Castellet remains a niche but functional option for those who can work with the limitations. **Customs is**

available for Schengen traffic only – international (non-Schengen) flights are not permitted.

The airport operates daily 0900-1800 LT during summer. Extensions must be requested by 1600 LT the day before. Slots are required.

FBO contacts:

- Airport Handling: operations@aeroportducastellet.com
- Jetex: france@jetex.com

Corsica – Few Airports, Fewer Options

BizAv parking on Corsica is tricky during the summer too. **LFKF/Figari is the most restrictive option with only quick turnarounds allowed** and no long-term parking.

LFKB/Bastia may offer a bit more flexibility with some limits, but no PPR is required.

The best recommendation from local handlers goes to **LFKJ/Ajaccio**. Parking is more feasible here and while a slot and PPR are mandatory, availability is currently good.

FBO contact (covers LFKF, LFKB, and LFKJ): G-OPS: executive@g-ops.com

Looking Inland – Reliable Summer Parking

If the Riviera is full, heading inland could be a smart move. **LFLL/Lyon Saint-Exupery** usually has parking available, even during peak summer, and can handle larger jets with ease. Just be aware of night noise restrictions between 2200-0600 LT for louder aircraft.

Nearby **LFLY/Lyon Bron** is smaller but also reports good availability for BizAv during the summer.

Further south, **LFLS/Grenoble** may be the most straightforward of the three. The airport is open daily from 0900-1800 LT, and services like handling, customs, and fuel are all available during this window. Extensions are possible upon request, but need to be arranged at least 8 days in advance.

FBO contacts:

- LFLL: fbo.lfll@lyonaeroports.com + lfll@aviavip.com
- LFLY: fbo.lfly@lyonaeroports.com
- LFLS: businessaviation@grenoble-airport.com

Watch Your FPL Alternates

One final thing to note here for ops to the south of France – watch out for a common issue with flight plan alternates, as **some airports cannot be used unless specific conditions are met**, according to the AIP or Notams. We've had several reports over the years from members who have had this flagged on SAFA ramp checks.

Common ones to watch out for:

LFTH/Toulon – can't be used as alternate without PPR.

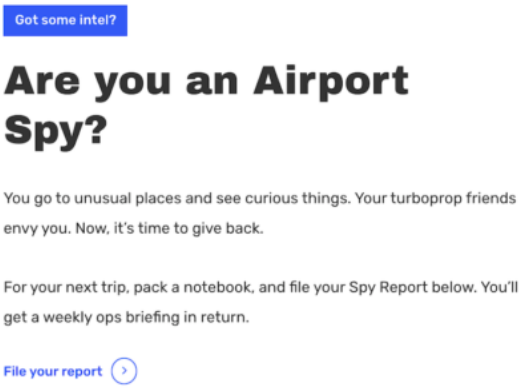
LFMD/Cannes – can't be used as alternate except for flights to LFTZ/La Mole.

LFMQ/Le Castellet – this sometimes gets used as an alternate for LFMN/Nice and LFML/Marseille. But LFMQ rarely publishes TAF/METAR reports, so if you want to use this, you need to make sure you select at least one other alternate with a weather report!

Do you know of any more? Let us know!

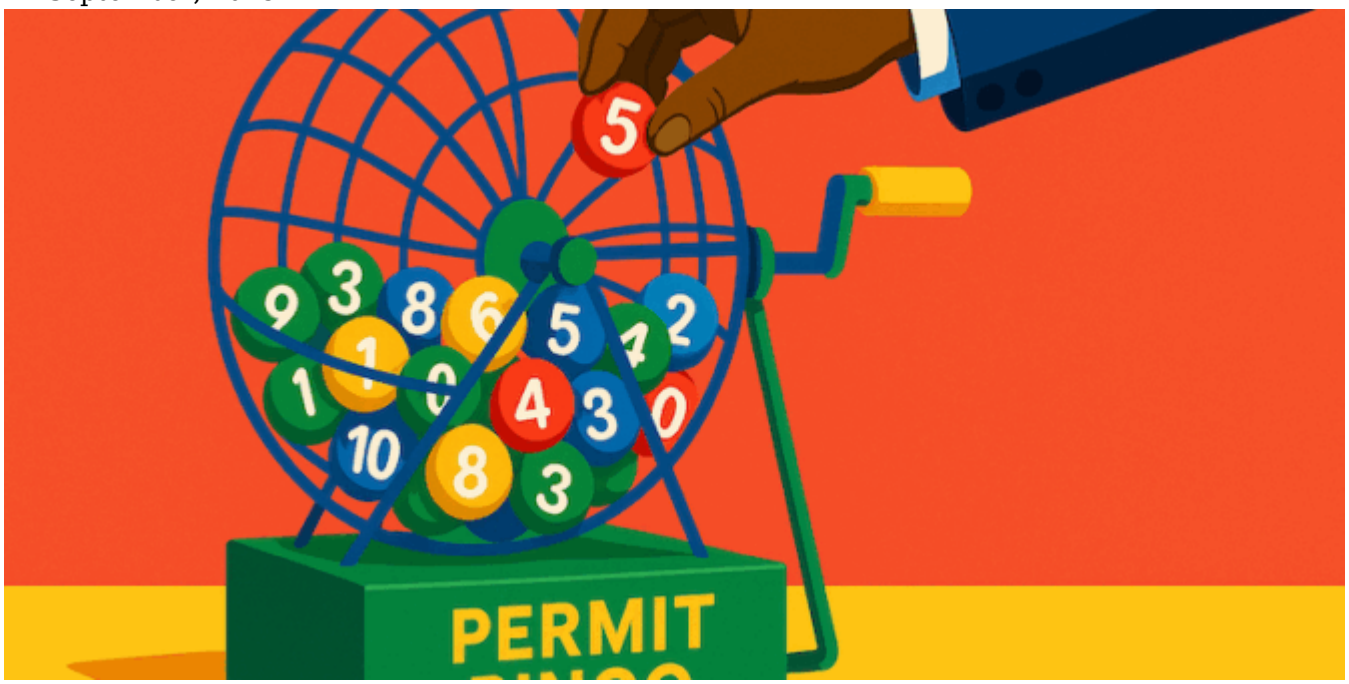
Help Us Keep This Info Fresh

Things can change fast at French airports in the summer – what worked last week might not work today. If you've recently operated to any of these airports, let us know! A quick Airport Spy Report helps everyone stay ahead. It's like sending a postcard with your notes, so others know what to expect next time.



South Africa Permits: Still a Mess

Kateřina Michalská
24 September, 2025



New Issue: July 2025

A new issue has emerged with South Africa's already miserably bad permit approval process (see original story below).

New issue: if there are **any changes** to your flight schedule (timing, routing, pax or crew details) you must have your original landing permit revalidated by the Department of Transport before departure. This even applies to crew-only, ferry, or maintenance flights. This must be handled by your local handler, who will also need a signed power of attorney document from you, and can take several days. Critically, the Department **only operates weekdays, with no weekend support** – so any changes late in the week can leave your aircraft stuck on the ground until Monday, racking up parking charges. Some operators have reported being **unable to depart** without unofficial after-hours help.

Original Story: June 2025

We've had quite a few updates recently about the **ongoing chaos around landing permits and FOPs (Foreign Operator Permits) for South Africa**. While there was hope things were improving back in May, the latest reports show that the process is still painful.

What's the issue?

Let's quickly recap the two main permits you might need when flying into South Africa:

Landing Permit: Issued by the Department of Transport (DOT). This is required for all foreign-registered aircraft, even private ones. It usually takes 3 working days to process.

Foreign Operator Permit (FOP): Issued by the South African CAA. This is meant for commercial operations, typically with more than 8 passengers or cargo over 1000 kg. It takes much longer to obtain (up to a month), and the paperwork can be extensive.

The issue: Even for flights where an FOP shouldn't be required under the official rules – for example, a private flight with fewer than 8 passengers – sometimes operators are still being asked to submit one. Sometimes this comes from local agents who've handled the same flights for years.

This mismatch is at the heart of the problem. The South African AIP says one thing (like "no permit needed for private flights"), the law technically says another, and what's being demanded in practice by officials is sometimes something else entirely.

One operator told us they submitted a full FOP package for a charter with just 6 pax, only to be told a week later it wasn't required.

What changed?

A new Minister of Transport took office, and a new Air Services Licensing Council (ASLC) was appointed. That might sound like progress – but according to folks on the ground, the new team found evidence of corruption, started clearing it out, and in the process created a massive vacuum. Staff were removed, new rules came in, but no one was properly trained. The result: total inconsistency.

One local agent told us: "It's bureaucracy for the sake of bureaucracy… Officials now interpret the rules however they want, and nobody has been trained properly."

Permit processing times?

Here's the reality as it stands:

- **Landing permits**: Officially 3 working days, but expect 7-10 days minimum, and if anything is missing or unclear, the clock resets.
- **FOPs**: Can take a month or more, especially if your application gets bounced back for clarification (which it often does).
- All permit applications go through permits@dot.gov.za – but your best bet is to use a local clearance company. Trying to deal with the DOT directly is not recommended.

Corruption?

There were credible reports of permits being deliberately delayed in hopes of bribes. The Department of Transport has acknowledged this and says reforms are underway – but in the meantime, honest operators are left paying the price in delays and uncertainty.

What do you need?

For most private ops under 8 pax, you *shouldn't* need a FOP – just a landing permit. But the advice from multiple members is clear: don't take anything for granted.

Suggested checklist:

- **Private flights (under 8 pax)**: Landing permit only (in theory).
- **Charter flights or more than 8 pax**: Landing permit + FOP.
- **FOP applications** require 20+ notarised and certified documents – use a local agent or FBO to manage the process.
- Include a **detailed flight purpose** – vague terms like "business" aren't accepted anymore.

Local agents like ExecuJet, Onyx, and others are actively supporting operators with this, but even they admit it's a bit of a lottery.

We'll keep tracking this, but for now: expect delays, get your paperwork in early, and triple-check everything before submitting. And above all – don't trust the published timelines.

Heat Damage in Nice: When APU Rules Damage Aircraft

Chris Shieff
24 September, 2025

Key Points

- **APU use is limited – only allowed 10 minutes before TSAT, and only after towing.**
- **GPU reliability is shaky – some units failed or had to be replaced during operations.**
- **Heat may be damaging systems – OPSGROUP member reports of aircraft experiencing electrical failures, suspected to be caused by overheating while waiting without APU or proper cooling.**

Recent reports from OPSGROUP members highlight growing concerns over the **strict APU restrictions at LFMN/Nice.**

Like many French airports, LFMN restricts APU use – aiming to cut noise and emissions. But as summer peaks on the Riviera, enforcement remains rigid despite the operational challenges this creates in high heat.

Beyond hot cabins, new concerns have emerged: **potential electrical damage linked to the airport's fixed ground power units (GPUs).** Reports submitted to the airport remain unanswered. Here's what we know so far.

A Little Context

Private jet flights at LFMN primarily use the 'Kilo Apron.' This is the designated parking area for BizAv close to FBO facilities.

The rules for APU usage are found under the airport briefing in the French AIP. **Specific guidelines apply to the Kilo Apron:**

- *Arriving flights* must stop on a designated line labelled 'STOP ENGINE AND APU.' From there towing to your parking spot is mandatory.

- *Departing flights must be towed to start-up stands fitted with 400Hz/28v ground power units, along with air. APU usage is limited to 10mins prior to TSAT (Target Start-up Approval Time).*

Exemptions are very limited. You either need to be operating a medivac, state or cargo flight (carrying temperature sensitive payload). Or if the plug isn't compatible with your aircraft.

Recent Member Reports

Here are three recent member reports received from OPSGROUP members there.

Report 1:

After towing to Stand 35, the crew connected to the fixed GPU. CAS messages flickered, followed by complete electrical failure and aircraft blackout. Despite heatwave conditions and an overheated crew, APU start was denied. A portable GPU was brought in – but it was dead. When permission to start the APU was finally granted, it was too late: navigation and communication systems had already failed. The aircraft departed under MEL and required expensive repairs at the next stop. The ramp agent advised us to file a report, which we did. According to them, this wasn't the first time such an event had happened.

Report 2:

Another crew experienced a similar issue. One of two FMS units failed after GPU connection. While the cause wasn't immediately clear, the symptoms matched those described in the earlier report. The unit was removed for repair.

Report 3:

The GPU caused a fault on our GVII upon disconnect. Our FA that understands French overheard ground personnel stating "it's too hot" in reference to the GPU. Surface temp at time was 24C so it was the equipment. Had to shut down aircraft to dark and restart to clear fault and get a new CTOT 40 mins later.

Potential GPU Issues

While we can't confirm the GPUs are the direct cause, it's plausible. Aircraft systems are sensitive, and power issues — including frequency drift, incorrect voltage, poor grounding, or surges — can trigger serious failures.

Heat may be a compounding factor. Ground air units often underperform in high temperatures, especially if hoses are blocked or airflow is weak. Aircraft may exceed thermal limits before crews can start APUs or get adequate air.

The GPUs themselves may also struggle in heat – output may sag or drift, or thermal protection systems may shut them down.

All of this increases operational risk – especially when APU use is restricted with no flexibility for safety.

And, despite being mandatory, GPU usage at LFMN comes with a charge.

If you're going to enforce the rules on APU usage in summer there needs to be some flexibility for the operational safety of multi-million dollar aircraft and their crews. Quiet airports are great, but it's easy to forget we are customers. In fact, Nice is the second busiest airport for business aviation in France, second only to Paris Le Bourget.

Mitigators

Following an alert issued to the group regarding these reports, another member (also a fully qualified pilot and aircraft engineer) got in touch with some practical advice to operators.

Here is what he had to say:

I thought it would be prudent to post some operational hints and tips to avoid problems like this event in the future. Not just with LFMN, but with any hot weather destination with restricted APU use (i.e. most of Europe).

Most biz jet hydraulic pumps demand very high KVA from the GPU's – avoid/delay applying hydraulic power to test systems and parking brake until APU start is approved.

Keep all the shades/sun shields drawn until packs are available.

Dim all the display units in the cockpit until air conditioning is available.

Open cargo and main door to allow air flow throughout the cabin. Small fans can run off the GFI plugs.

Open gear doors on some models as the exhaust for the avionic cooling fans use the wheel wells as the exit point.

Has this happened to you here, there, or elsewhere?

Please get in touch with us via blog@ops.group. We'd love to hear from you.

For ops at LFMN, if you identify a GPU issue (malfunction, incorrect configuration, electrical hazard, emissions), report it via your handling agent to the airport's operations or safety department, or directly to **Aéroports de la Côte d'Azur**: +33 4 08 20 42 333, or via this contact form.

Milan targets business jets with 650% rate increase

David Mumford
24 September, 2025

Key Points

- **Milan's LIML/Linate and LIMC/Malpensa airports have hiked Business Aviation parking rates by up to 650%, effective 1 July 2025.**
- **The changes apply to both private and commercial flights, and were published without prior notice.**
- **A large business jet crew reports pays nearly €29,000 for three weeks on the ground – previously around €6,800.**

Without warning, Milan's airport authorities have slapped a massive increase on General Aviation parking fees at LIML/Linate and LIMC/Malpensa – a change that's already catching operators off guard and racking up huge costs.

One OPSGROUP member told us their aircraft, parked at Linate for a three-week stay, saw the bill shoot up from a previously quoted **€6,800** to nearly **€29,000**, following the new rate introduction on July 1.

Local handlers confirm the price hike. One local FBO outlined the new pricing structure, which now uses a tiered pricing model based on duration, with rates charged per ton per hour:

Linate (LIML):

- 0–24h: €0.57 / ton / hr
- 24–72h: €0.80 / ton / hr
- Over 72h: €1.09 / ton / hr
  (Old rate: €0.15)

Malpensa (LIMC):

- 0–24h: €0.44 / ton / hr
- 24–72h: €0.52 / ton / hr
- Over 72h: €0.77 / ton / hr
  (Old rate: €0.13)

The first two hours are still free, but that's about the only mercy left in this new setup.

This means parking a 50-ton aircraft at **Linate** for more than 72 hours now costs **€1300 per day** – a whopping **650% increase** from the old rate. At Malpensa, the impact is slightly less brutal but still substantial, with costs up **nearly 500%** in some cases.

The airport authority has offered absolutely nothing in the way of explanation, but handlers suspect the move is part of a strategy to **discourage long-term "empty leg" parking and reserve space for active operations.** No consultation, no warning – just a new tariff sheet published in July and backdated to take effect immediately. (You can see the old tariffs from 2024 here).

Some large operators are already lodging complaints. Whether those efforts will gain traction remains to be seen. In the meantime, if you're flying into Milan for anything longer than a fuel stop, you might want to seriously reconsider!

Also watch out for landing fees

Both LIML/Linate and LIMC/Malpensa charge **higher landing fees for non-AOC flights.**

Commercial flights (Part 135) get the standard rate, while private flights (Part 91) **pay about 1.5–2× more** for the same landing and take-off. The gap grows with aircraft size – large jets can see several thousand euros extra per stop. You can check the rates here.

Be clear about your flight type when booking handling and have your AOC ready if you have one!

Other airports to consider in the region

LIMP/Parma

Parma is a bizjet-friendly airport with a 2,100m (6,900ft) runway, a dedicated GA apron, no slot restrictions, and full handling support – so this can be a pretty decent alternative to Milan's airports if they have the space.

You can check the parking costs at Parma here. Parking is charged at €0.60 per hour per ton of MTOW, starting from the third hour, with the first two hours free. So a **50-ton aircraft parked for 24 hours would pay €660**, which is similar to the cost at Linate, but the key difference here is that the rate stays flat for longer stays!

LIPO/Brescia

Brescia is another decent option, with a 2,990m (9,800ft) runway, dedicated GA facilities, and no slot restrictions.

Charges are published here. Parking is charged at €0.07 per hour per ton of MTOW, starting from the third hour, with the first two hours free. If our calculations are correct, that means **a 50-ton aircraft parked for 24 hours would pay just €77** – making it one of the most affordable options in the region.

LIME/Bergamo

Bergamo has a 2,990m (9,800ft) runway, full GA handling, no slot restrictions, and is the closest of the three alternatives to Milan—just about an hour's drive from the city centre—so you might even be able to drop your passengers here directly, rather than using LIML/LIMC and repositioning elsewhere for parking.

Charges are published here. Parking is charged at €0.17 per hour per ton of MTOW, with the first two hours free. So that means **a 50-ton aircraft parked for 24 hours would pay €187** – still significantly cheaper than Milan's new rates.

Greenland NAT Alternates: July 2025 Update

Chris Shieff
24 September, 2025

July 2025 Update

Radar services at **BGSF/Sondrestrom** will be ending around Nov 1, 2025. From that point, only procedural (non-radar) separation will be available. Iceland's ADS-B offers some situational awareness over Greenland but can't be used for control.

This follows the planned downgrade from tower to AFIS at the airport between Aug-Oct, driven by reduced traffic as BGGH/Nuuk expands. All controlled airspace will become Class G, with a radio mandatory zone within 20 NM below 7000ft, and FISCOM available via Nuuk FIC after hours.

RWY 27 is typically used for departures and RWY 09 for arrivals – be especially careful of opposite direction traffic. AIC 01/25 has more info.

June 2025 Update

The extensively expanded **BGGH/Nuuk** is now open, and receiving regular jet traffic.

With an operating length of 7218′ (2200m) and ILS approaches available for both runway ends, it is now a solid choice for NAT enroute alternates (and ETOPS/EDTO if that's your thing). The Greenland AIP has been updated, and you can find the current airport chart here. Both runway and apron PCNs are **67/F/A/W/T** .

The airport has an **AFIS** on watch Monday to Saturday, 09:00 – 18:00 LT (11:00 – 20:00z) with RFF Category 5.

For handling, contact **Greenland Airports**: nuuk@mit.gl

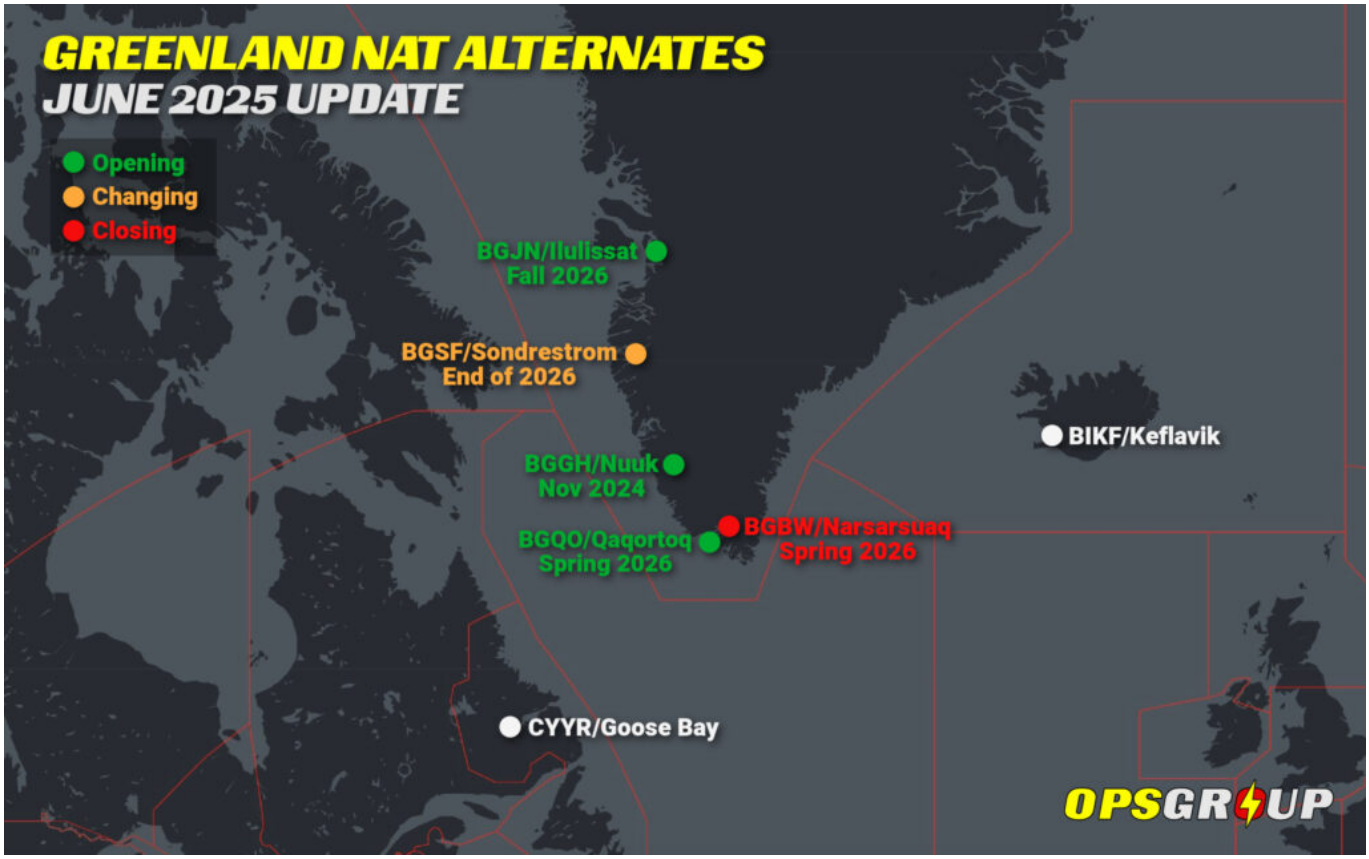
Original Article

Each day thousands of aircraft routinely cross the NAT and use airports in Greenland as enroute/ETOPS alternates – mainly **BGSF/Sondrestrom and BGBW/Narsarsuaq.**

It's big business for Greenland's major airports, but over the next few years **major changes are coming** that will directly impact on the operational use of these airports as NAT alternates.

Here's the lowdown on what's changing:

- **Opening:** BGGH/Nuuk (Nov 2024), BGQO/Qaqortoq (Spring 2026), BGJN/Ilulissat (Fall 2026).
- **Changing:** BGSF/Sondrestrom downgrading ATC to AFIS (Aug – Oct 2025).
- **Closing:** BGBW/Narsarsuaq (likely Spring 2026).



ETOPS Airports...

Before we get stuck into the finer points of what's changing at each airport, a big question many will have is: **"What airports can I use as enroute/ETOPS alternates?"**

Answering that is tricky, because it will depend on a number of factors that will be different for each

operator – if the airport has a long enough runway for your particular aircraft / the necessary facilities and services / the minimum approach procedure / fire cover / weather minima etc.

But here's a quick reference table showing what's changing, and when, which *might* be helpful:

Airport	What's Happening?	When?	Rwy Length	OK for ETOPS?
BGGH/Nuuk	New runway being built	Nov 2024	2200m	Probably fine
BGSF/Sondrestrom	Possibly downgrading ATC to AFIS	End of 2025	2800m	Probably fine
BGBW/Narsarsuaq	Scheduled to close	Spring 2026	1800m	Not if it's closed!
BGQO/Qaqortoq	New runway being built	Spring 2026	1500m	Short runway, so probably not
BGJN/Ilulissat	New runway being built	Fall 2026	2200m	Probably fine

BGGH/Nuuk

Nuuk's found on the western edge of Southern Greenland, close to the NAT HLA. It's Greenland's capital city but until now, the airport has not been 'capital-sized'.

Hence why larger aircraft have not considered BGGH/Nuuk as a viable alternate due to its **short runway length (3,050'/930m) in addition to poor weather and the mountainous terrain** that surrounds it.

But things will soon get easier. A major expansion has been underway since 2019 to replace its aging runway and improve the airport infrastructure to accommodate the wide body airliners of the territory's flagship carrier who are relocating their hub there.

28 Nov 2024 has been earmarked as its full re-opening – just weeks away. **A new runway will now measure 7,200'/2200m.** Better yet, ILS approaches will be operating at both ends with much lower minimas. A new terminal building, tower and apron are already in use.

If you have any doubts as to Nuuk's viability as a well-equipped NAT alternate, it may be reassuring to hear that at least one **US legacy carrier** will also commence scheduled services to the improved airport from Newark twice a week from mid-next year.

Keep an eye out for an upcoming OPSGROUP briefing on the new and improved Nuuk soon.

BGQO/Qaqortoq

A new airport will be opening in Spring 2026, **35nm away from Narsarsuaq** on Greenland's southern tip.

Right now Qaqortoq is a heliport (operating under a different ICAO code), but will **re-open with a 4,921'/1500m runway** due to a decision by Greenland's government a few years back to convert it for fixed wing traffic.

At that length Qaqortoq will likely only be an option for **small to medium sized jets**, but there is also room for future expansion to 5,905'/1800m – so watch this space in years to come. Word on the street is that it will also be equipped with both LOC and RNP approaches.

BGJN/Ilulissat

A new international airport is under construction which will be equipped with a **7,217'/2200m runway.** It's scheduled to open in Fall 2026 and will replace the existing domestic airport. By in large, it will be equipped with the same equipment as the upgraded airport in Nuuk.

Next up, a look at what's happening at the existing airports BGSF/Sondrestrom and BGBW/Narsarsuaq...

BGSF/Sondrestrom

The much-improved airport in Nuuk will undoubtedly take a heavy toll on traffic levels at **Sondrestrom** – in the vicinity of a 90% reduction.

But all is not lost for BGSF as a solid NAT alternate – it will continue to operate, with almost **full services available** with one notable exception – **ATS will be downgraded to an AFIS sometime between Aug – Oct 2025.**

The **runway (9,186'/2800m)** is longer than Nuuk, and the weather much more predictable – it should remain a solid option to consider.

BGBW/Narsarsuaq

The airport is scheduled to **close in 2026!**

Despite its geographical convenience to NAT traffic, it remains a **difficult option**. For some, it is considered only in the case of extreme circumstances (such as fire).

The reason for this is predominantly **weather, and the non-precision approaches** that serve the airport. The runway itself is also short at only **5,905'/1800m.**

Reminder – Look out for Surprise Fees

We've written about this before, but worth a reminder.

Be careful – if you file BGBW or BGSF as an alternate after hours (overnight 20-11z or anytime on Sundays) you will be charged the better part of **$3000 USD** for the privilege of keeping standby equipment on watch, and runways clear of snow. Even if you don't actually divert there.

A little insider advice – **advance notice will reduce the cost** as it allows for cheaper planning. If you need one outside of normal operating hours, provide at least 24 hours' notice.

For regular use, operators can also apply directly for a reduction in these rates.

Know more about changes to Greenland Ops?

We'd love to hear from you. You can reach us via news@ops.group

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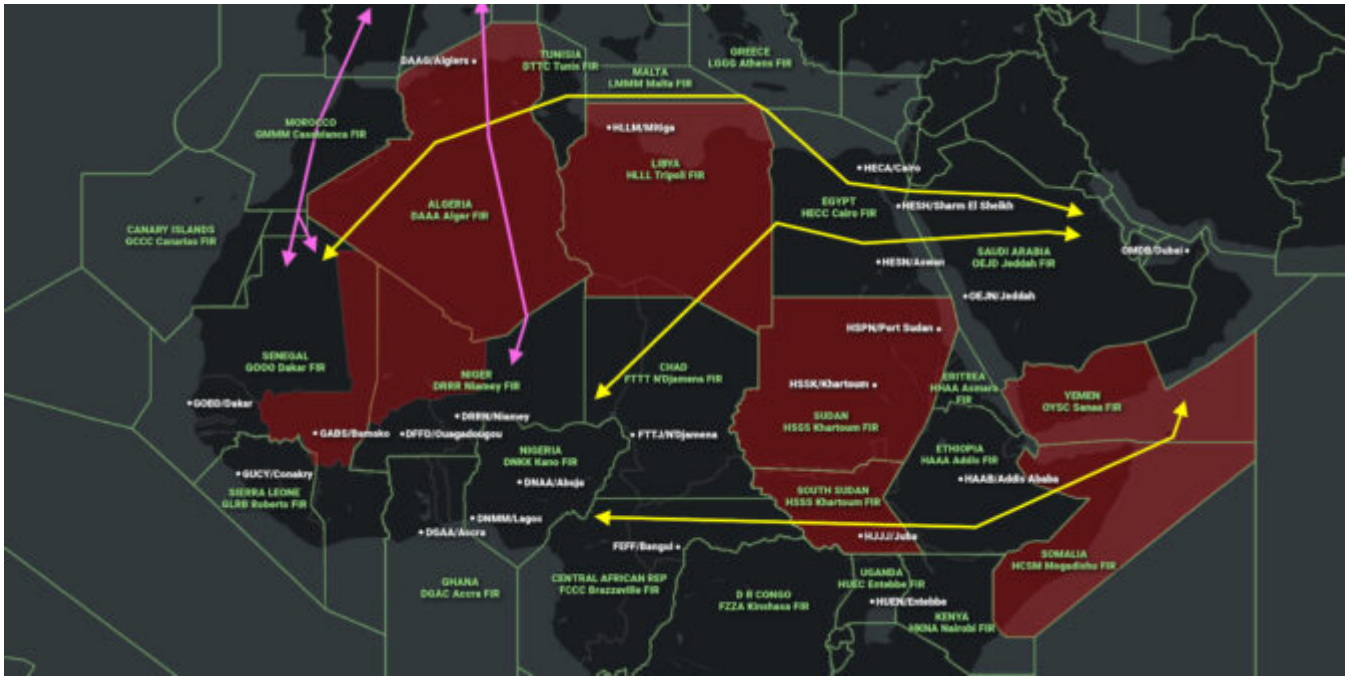
West Africa Ops: Routing Options and Restrictions

David Mumford
24 September, 2025



Flying into or out of West Africa is becoming increasingly tricky, with operators having to navigate a patchwork of airspace bans, conflict zones, and overflight restrictions. Two directions present the most complexity: north to Europe, and east to the Middle East.

OPSGROUP members can download this map to see exactly how these restrictions affect routing.

There's a cluster of major airports in West Africa — from Lagos to Accra to Dakar — that handle the bulk of international traffic in the region.

But getting to these hubs from Europe or the Middle East is complicated by airspace risks and closures in five key areas: **Mali/Algeria, Libya, Sudan/South Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen.**

Here's a more detailed look at each of these.

Mali/Algeria

- Northern Mali remains a war zone — ongoing since 2012.
- MANPADS, rockets, and mortars pose a threat to low-flying aircraft.
- US advises caution at all flight levels; several states restrict ops below FL250/260.
- Overflights above FL320 permitted, per long-standing Notams from GOOO/Dakar and DRRR/Niamey FIRs.
- Airports GATB, GAGO, GAKL should be avoided.
- A reciprocal airspace ban with Algeria (since April 2025) prohibits all flights between the two countries — even overflights.
- Routing via Mauritania remains open. Algerian ATC may reroute flights via Niger.
- More info here.

Libya

- Active conflict zone since 2014.

- HLLL/Tripoli FIR is high-risk. Total ban for US and UK operators.
- Threats include misidentification by air defense systems, militia threats near Tripoli, and unreliable ATC.
- Frequent radar and comms outages; some flights rely on Malta ATC for guidance.
- Strongly advised to avoid all Libyan airspace, regardless of altitude. However, some airline flights between West Africa and the Middle East operate over the south-eastern corner of the HLLL/Tripoli FIR between Egypt and Chad rather than routing around Libya to the north or via South Sudan to the south.
- More info here.

Sudan/South Sudan

- Airspace fully closed since the April 2023 coup.
- HSSK/Khartoum Airport is shut; no Notams are being issued.
- There are some contingency routes available for flights to HSPN/Port Sudan, but security remains volatile.
- Several states prohibit overflights due to military activity and anti-aircraft threats.
- In South Sudan, there's no ATC above FL245, but two east-west contingency routes are available for overflights.
- South Sudan is open for flights to HJJJ/Juba.
- More info here.

Somalia

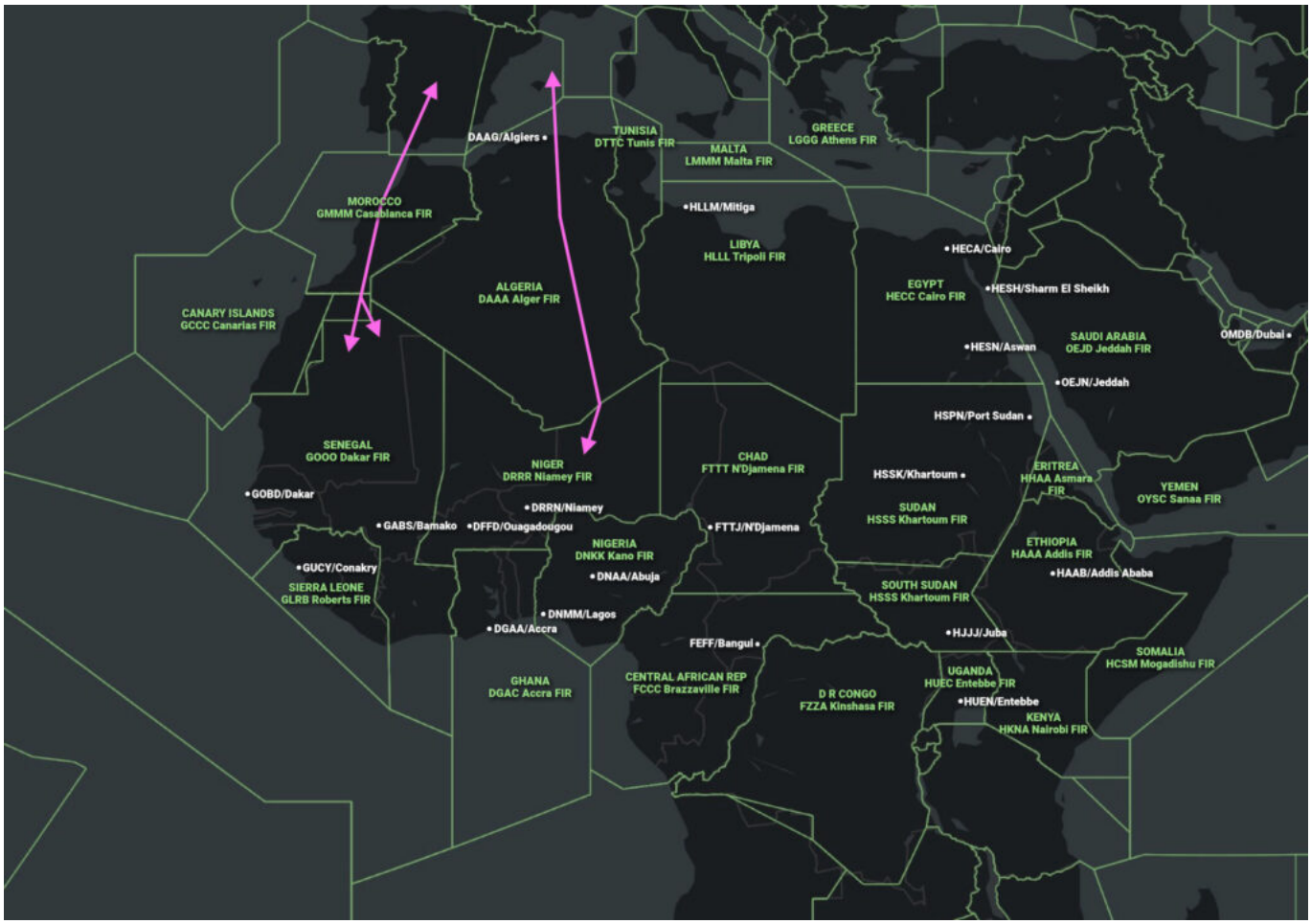
- Government control is limited; attacks by extremist militants are ongoing.
- US prohibits flights below FL260 (except overwater to/from HDAM/Djibouti).
- Risk of being targeted at lower altitudes by anti-aircraft weapons.
- Reports of unauthorized ATC units issuing contacting aircraft and issuing them instructions in the northern part of the HCSM/Mogadishu FIR – genuine ATC here will only issue level changes by
  CPDLC or SATCOM.
- More info here.

Yemen

- Active warzone — avoid all land portions of the Sanaa FIR (OYSC).
- US operators permitted to use offshore routes UT702 and M999.
- Other states allow overwater-only routing, avoiding the landmass.
- Threats include drones, missiles, and intentional targeting by militants.
- Military strikes by Saudi Arabia and Israel have been ongoing for a few years.

- More info here.

Routing Options: West Africa to Europe

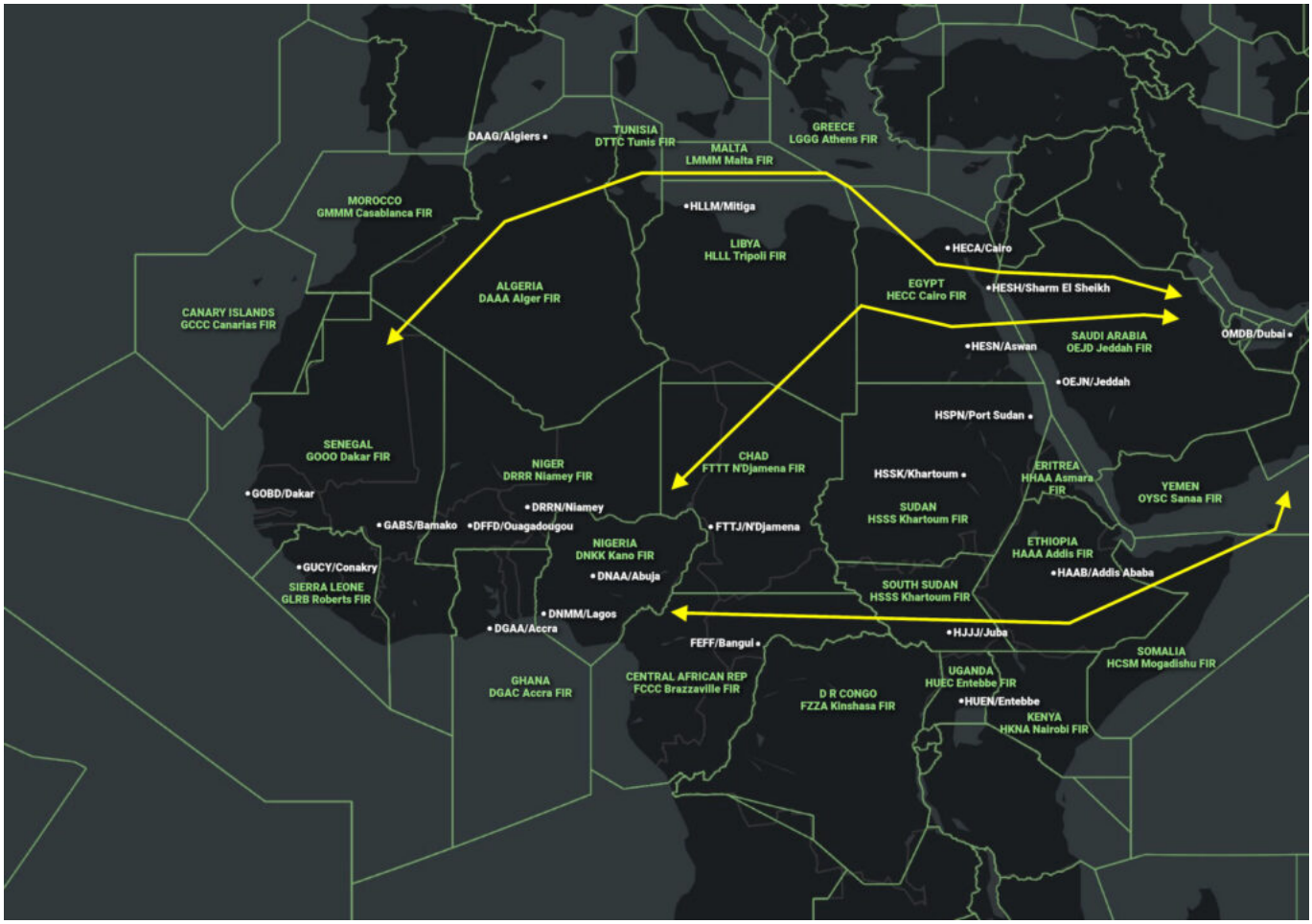


Two main options here:

Central route via Niger/Algeria: Due to the Mali-Algeria airspace ban, overflights between these two countries is not possible. Add to that the security risks at the lower levels in northern Mali, many operators choose to avoid Mali entirely by routing east into Niger, and then turning north into Algerian airspace from there.

Western route via the Atlantic: Flights route westward over the Atlantic, before turning northeast via the Canary Islands or Morocco and into Europe. This route bypasses the entire Sahel region and avoids any involvement with Mali or Algeria. Common for flights heading to Western Europe (eg. Spain, France, Portugal).

Routing Options: West Africa to the Middle East



With Libya risky, Sudan closed, and Somalia/Yemen partially restricted, operators have three main options:

Central route via Libya: The shortest option routes east from Chad into the southeastern corner of Libya, then across Egypt into the Middle East. This path clips Libyan airspace, and while still considered high-risk, some airlines are using it. ATC reliability is poor, but the routing avoids longer detours.

Southern route via South Sudan: This uses one of two east-west contingency routes above FL245, then crosses Ethiopia and exits via the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Yemen and on towards the Middle East. This avoids Libya and Sudan entirely, but adds an extra 500NM or so when compared with the central route. If South Sudan isn't viable, flights may reroute even further south via Uganda or Kenya.

Northern route avoiding Libya: This takes a northern dogleg through Niger and Algeria, then across Tunisia and Malta and into Egypt. This route avoids all high-risk airspace but is the longest of the three. It's commonly used by operators with stricter risk thresholds or where insurance policies exclude Libyan or South Sudanese airspace.

If you're flying any of these routings (or know of any clever alternatives we haven't covered here), we'd love to hear from you. Email us at blog@ops.group — we'll update this briefing and help keep other pilots and operators in the know!

FAA Housekeeping: Foreign Instrument Procedures, Approach Chart Clutter

Chris Shieff
24 September, 2025

Recently, the FAA has been doing some spring cleaning. You might have missed them, but recent changes to the FAA's advisory circulars and charting notices are quite important.

This article covers two of them:

- **Effective June 2025, the FAA officially shifted the responsibility for evaluating and approving foreign instrument procedures to aircraft operators themselves.**
- **From October 2, instrument approach charts will be decluttered by removing unnecessary comms data.**

Let's take a look at each of these in more detail.

Removing approvals for specific foreign procedures

Recently, the FAA advised those operating under Part 91(K), 121, 125 and 135 of changes to **foreign instrument procedure authorizations.**

It has removed outdated references to specific foreign instrument procedures by title from operator authorizations (OpSpec C058, C358 and H107).

Others were simplified (C059, C060, and C384) to remove references to specific foreign airports and procedures.

The end result? Operators are no longer required to obtain FAA approval for specific foreign instrument procedures listed by name — but they must still hold the required FAA authorization (OpSpec, MSpec, or

LOA) to conduct the type of procedure (e.g., RNP AR, CAT II/III), regardless of where it's flown.

So, does this mean I can now fly any foreign procedure without FAA involvement?

Not quite. While you no longer need FAA approval for each individual foreign procedure, you still need FAA authorization for the procedure type and must comply with host country requirements.

For instance, if Germany requires local authorisation for an RNP (AR) approach into EDDM/Munich, you must obtain it without FAA involvement.

ICAO (Annex 6) says operators are still required to obtain approvals when the host state mandates it, and crews must comply with any local procedures or limitations.

Why the change?

Without delving too much into the specifics, there are a few reasons:

- **Less paperwork** – foreign procedural reviews are cumbersome and labor intensive, and lead to delays in approval.
- **Less workload –** inspectors no longer have to approve each foreign procedure individually.
- **Improved design –** there has been significant improvement in procedural design around the world thanks to the proliferation of ICAO PANS OPS.
- **Empowerment** – operators can perform their own risk assessments and use globally standardised instrument procedures without the extra weight of FAA approvals.

So the onus is now on the operator – what next?

That's where AC 120-105B comes into play. It provides guidance for US operators on reviewing and accepting foreign instrument procedures outside the US.

This includes a list of your areas of responsibility, recommended tools and checklists to help with your review, and advice on incorporating a review process into your company's manuals, SOPs and pilot training.

If you operate abroad, it's important you're familiar with this revised AC. We've also put together the following **checklist** based on its advice to help get you started:

De-cluttering Approach Charts

On July 3, the FAA issued a new charting notice (advance notification of significant changes to charts and publications).

The news is that from October 2, the FAA will begin removing **redundant comms data** from instrument approach charts. This includes departure ATIS, CLNC DEL and the availability of CPDLC if all of this is shown on the corresponding airport diagram.

Listing it again on instrument approach charts is unnecessary and can reduce readability during critical phases of flight while critical frequencies remain prominent (don't worry, tower and ground ain't going anywhere).

While we have you, a couple more FAA-related tidbits to brush off the table.

- **Notams**. Big changes are coming to the US system. By September, it will be **completely overhauled.** The new system will be a fast, cloud-based, and (hopefully) rock-solid stable. A renewed focus on improved safety throughout the US NAS has escalated the project, and the targets are ambitious – user testing is expected to start later this month.

- **FAA-license holders abroad**. This is our last reminder! July 7 has come and gone, which means anyone holding US licences/ratings and living outside of the US must have provided a US based address for service to the FAA via the USAS portal. If you haven't yet, your license is **effectively now invalid** until you do – whatever you do, don't operate an aircraft while un-licensed.

Have we missed a spot?

Please get in touch with us around the clock via blog@ops.group

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Spain Summer 2025: Where to Park When There's Nowhere to Park

Kateřina Michalská
24 September, 2025

Flying to Spain this summer? Be ready for one of the most challenging seasons yet. OPSGROUP members and local FBOs have confirmed that many of Spain's key airports are either full or close to capacity, with last-minute parking denials, repositioning chaos, and growing frustration.

The Big Picture

- **Balearic Islands are maxed out.** LEPA/Palma, LEIB/Ibiza, and LEMH/Menorca are denying overnight parking in most cases. Even short turnarounds now require formal approval.
- Mainland airports like **LEVC/Valencia** and **LEAL/Alicante** – once go-to repositioning options – are now also denying overnight stays, especially for ferry flights. Overflow traffic is being pushed to bigger hubs like **LEBL/Barcelona** and **LEMD/Madrid**, which can still work, but come with long taxi times, fueling delays, and strict slot restrictions. **In Barcelona, non-based BizAv aircraft are limited to a maximum 96-hour stay. In Madrid, they're allowed just one overnight, and turnarounds without passengers are not permitted.**
- **The system is overwhelmed.** We've received multiple reports from our members that due to poor infrastructure planning, increased aircraft size, and inflexible airport authority (AENA) policies, BizAv is being squeezed out of prime destinations.
- Even second-tier airports like **LEGR/Granada or LERS/Reus are turning away requests.** Some smaller fields remain usable – but only with proper planning and early coordination.

What All Airports Have in Common

- **Slot and parking coordination opens 14-15 days prior to arrival.** Earlier requests are not accepted, and even short turnarounds often require prior approval.
- **No real-time availability.** Handlers can't tell you if parking is available until you've submitted a full handling request (aircraft type, schedule, operator details). Confirmations often take days and even then, your request may still be denied. Final decisions are made by the airport authorities.The best advice? **Submit your schedule as early as the airport window allows, and always have a backup plan ready.**

A-CDM airports in Spain: Watch Your Timings

Several major Spanish airports operate under A-CDM (Airport Collaborative Decision Making) procedures – for example, **LEBL/Barcelona, LEMD/Madrid, and LEPA/Palma de Mallorca**. Always double-check with your local FBO to confirm whether A-CDM rules apply at your destination.

At these airports, **your filed EOBT (Estimated Off-Block Time) must exactly match your assigned departure slot**. If it doesn't, ATC will not clear you to start up or taxi. There's no flexibility – and your handler has no power to override the system.

What often happens is this: a crew files an updated EOBT without informing the handler, but the airport system still holds the original slot. That mismatch is caught by Eurocontrol, which then assigns a much later CTOT (Calculated Take-Off Time) – often causing a delay of 1 to 2 hours, or blocking the departure entirely.

To avoid this, **always coordinate any time change, even a small one, with your handler first**. Once they've confirmed your new slot, you can safely file your updated flight plan to match.

If you're delayed inbound and won't make your original slot, make sure to send your updated ETA asap – this gives the airport time to adjust your arrival slot accordingly.

Spain is one of the stricter countries in Europe when it comes to A-CDM enforcement. If your times don't match, you're not moving. For more on how Eurocontrol and CTOTs work behind the scenes, see our explainer article.

The Balearics: Parking Nightmare Central

The three main airports in the Balearic Islands – **LEIB/Ibiza, LEPA/Palma de Mallorca, and LEMH/Menorca** – are all experiencing major congestion this summer.

Key issues across all:

- **Parking is extremely limited**, especially on weekends. Overnight stays are frequently denied – sometimes even for light jets.
- **Repositioning to the mainland is increasingly common.** Local FBOs recommend LEBL/Barcelona and LEGE/Girona – both H24 – as the best alternates. LEVC/Valencia is also commonly used, but recent reports say it's already congested.

LEIB/Ibiza

Ibiza is proving the most difficult of the three. Members report that overnight parking is nearly impossible to obtain – 90% of overnight parking requests are flatly refused, regardless of aircraft size.

According to local FBOs (not published in the AIP), aircraft with a wingspan greater than 18 meters planning to remain on the ground for more than 3 hours require a PPR – which is rarely approved during the peak season. Even short turnarounds are becoming problematic without advance coordination.

FBO contacts:

- Sky Valet: fbo.leib@skyvalet.com, occ@skyvalet.com
- Aviapartner: leib@aviavip.com

LEPA/Palma de Mallorca

LEPA is slightly more manageable, but still highly congested.

New for 2025: From 1 June – 30 Sep, aircraft longer than 20 meters are limited to a maximum of 7 days of parking, unless specifically approved by the airport. See AIP for details.

Members report first-time outright parking refusals for light jets, and fuel delays of more than an hour due to one of the two fuel trucks being out of service.

FBO contacts:

- Sky Valet: fbo.lepa@skyvalet.com, occ@skyvalet.com
- Aviapartner: lepa@aviavip.com

LEMH/Menorca

Menorca is facing similar congestion pressures as the rest of the Balearics this summer, but local FBOs suggest it may still be the *easiest* of the three island airports to manage. While parking is certainly limited, especially on peak days (Friday through Sunday), overnight stays are not impossible – particularly if you plan ahead.

During the summer, the airport operates from 0700-0030 local time. See AIP for details.

Slot and parking requests can typically be submitted 14-15 days before arrival. Some FBOs note that approvals are sometimes possible even on shorter notice, especially if you provide a full itinerary. Drop-and-go remains the best strategy here too.

FBO contacts:

- Universal Aviation: mah@uvspain.com, universal.aviation@uvspain.com
- Aviapartner: lemh@aviavip.com

Mainland Spain: Where You Might Have a Chance

Need local FBOs contacts or AIP links? Click here for quick access.

Popular Repositioning Options – but Getting Busy

LEVC/Valencia and **LEAL/Alicante** are among the most commonly suggested mainland alternates for traffic repositioning from the islands. But this summer, both airports are struggling with overflow demand. Overnight parking is frequently denied, even for ferry flights, and local FBOs report regular rejections, especially on peak days.

Big Airports Still Working – with Significant Limits

LEBL/Barcelona is still one of the more reliable options for BizAv this summer. Parking is usually available and the airport operates H24. However, LEBL enforces a 96-hour parking limit for all non-based aircraft year-round, so longer stays are not possible. During the summer, aircraft with an MTOW under 15 tons are also not permitted to arrive between 0900–1159 local time. In addition, taxi times from the BizAv apron are long, typically around 20 minutes. The airport applies A-CDM rules strictly.

LEMD/Madrid is no longer an easy fallback. While it operates H24 and still offers reasonable parking availability, non-based BizAv operators are now subject to strict slot restrictions: only one overnight is allowed, and at least one leg (arrival or departure) must be a passenger flight. Turnarounds involving positioning flights only are not permitted. Crews should also plan for long taxi times (15–30 minutes), and fuel uplift may be delayed or denied without a confirmed same-day departure, as priority is given to commercial and outbound traffic.

Member report received July 2: We had an overnight 2 days ago and the airport is packed. Evidently there is no where to park in the islands and everyone is drop and go to LEMD as you have reported. We got to the airport 2.5 hours prior to our departure scheduled for 1320 local departure and waited almost 3 hours for fuel. Our slot had to be constantly updated by the handlers so we didn't miss it.

Another member report received July 3: We were granted a week's parking at Madrid, but on a disused taxiway arriving yesterday. The handler said it's at capacity.

UN Summit in Sevilla – Temporary Restrictions Across Andalusia

Several airports in Andalusia are currently affected by temporary restrictions due to the **UN summit in LEZL/Seville, running from June 26 – July 4**. These impact BizAv ops across the region, especially in terms of parking, ground time, and access. **However, once the summit ends, many of these airports may become more usable options for summer parking**. Here's a breakdown of what to expect:

LEZL/Seville is effectively off-limits for BizAv during the summit. The airport cannot be used as an alternate, and all BizAv flights require special government permission. Slots and PPR are mandatory. Local FBOs strongly advise avoiding LEZL during the summit unless absolutely necessary. Things should return to normal after July 4.

LEAM/Almeria is generally an easy airport to work with and remains a solid parking option compared to congested hubs like Palma or Valencia. At the moment, both slot and PPR are required, likely due to increased activity linked to the UN summit. Traffic may temporarily rise, but overall availability remains better than at most coastal airports.

LEGR/Granada is currently operating under an Apron Saturation Procedure until July 5. BizAv flights are limited to 60 minutes on stand and must receive prior approval, even though no official slot or PPR system is in place. All international arrivals are treated as non-Schengen, even if coming from Schengen countries, due to temporary internal border controls. Outside the summit, LEGR is a good parking fallback.

LEJR/Jerez normally just requires a slot (no PPR) and usually has decent parking availability. Right now though, BizAv traffic is limited – only flights with a properly authorized slot are accepted, and approvals are more selective than usual. After July 3, it should return to being one of the more reliable fallback options in the region.

LEMG/Malaga is often seen as a good BizAv parking option, and we've received positive reports from members securing parking here. Parking restrictions relating to the summit were lifted on July 2, so there's no issue on that front anymore.

Other Viable Options – Depends on Timing

LEGE/Girona and **LERS/Reus** are both decent fallback options for mainland parking and can be worth a try. While not always full, availability is limited and approvals are never guaranteed. BizAv flights to LERS require a PPR, so early coordination is essential.

Better Bets for Summer Parking

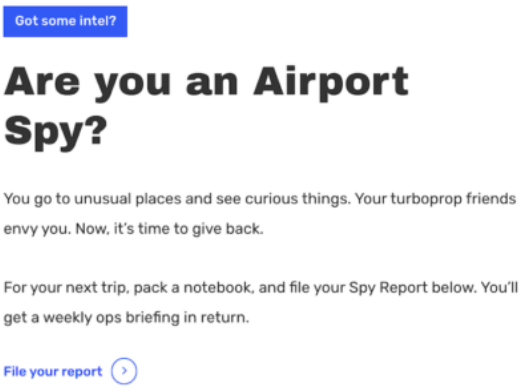
Airports in northern Spain – including **LEBB/Bilbao, LEAS/Asturias, LEST/Santiago de Compostela,**

LEVX/Vigo, and LEXJ/Santander – are not as widely used for BizAv but are currently seeing less congestion and can be good alternatives, even for bizjets. Most require slots but not PPR. Parking is generally available, though space for long stays or bigger jets may still be assessed case-by-case. These are solid options worth exploring, especially when the more popular destinations are full.

Situation Changing Fast – Help Us Keep It Updated

Airport conditions across Spain can change quickly during the summer – a slot that was easy yesterday might be impossible tomorrow. If you have recent experience at any of these airports, please share it with us by submitting an Airport Spy Report. Your intel helps the whole community stay informed.

What's Airport Spy? Well, you write a quick little postcard with "what happened" when you went to some airport somewhere. Then you, and others can refer to your notes for future flights to the same place.



Lithium Battery Fires, New Safety Alert: What Are The Rules For Part 91?

Chris Shieff
24 September, 2025

The risk of lithium-ion battery fires on aircraft is on the rise, with vapes, power banks, and laptops identified as the main culprits.

The FAA has reported a sharp rise in incidents, with some sources noting two thermal runaway events per week. EASA also raised concerns, issuing a new Safety Bulletin on May 27.

While rules are strict for Parts 121 and 135, private flights under Part 91 face fewer restrictions. Arguably, private jets are more at risk, and we're doing less to protect ourselves.

- **Business jets are smaller.** A lithium-ion battery fire can quickly fill the cabin with thick, toxic smoke – up to 10 cubic meters from a single laptop battery in just two minutes. History has shown that smoke inhalation often causes the loss of an aircraft in a fire before the fire itself.
- **Fewer crew members.**With only one or two pilots and often no cabin crew, response capability is limited.
- **The passengers we carry.** Biz jet passengers often carry multiple personal electronic devices which increases fire risk. Some passengers may disregard or not correctly follow safety rules.
- **Less safety equipment.**Compared to airliners, biz jets typically have fewer fire suppression tools and less protective gear on board.

It seems clear that for the few rules that exist for Part 91 operations, we must be aware of them, and stick to them. And it may come as a surprise to some operators that these rules are more strict when you fly **internationally** – *even privately.*

So here's a rundown of what you need to know.

A word about lithium-ion batteries

If you're already familiar with a **Wh rating,** feel free to skip to the next section. But to understand the rules properly, it helps if you're familiar with it first.

Watt on earth is a watt-hour (Wh)?

When we talk about how dangerous a lithium-ion battery could potentially be, we talk watt-hours. It is a measure of how much energy a battery can store and use. Think of it like the amount of fuel in a tank – it simply tells us how much power (watts) it produces over time (hours).

It also directly proportional to fire risk. If something goes wrong, all that energy can be released as heat and gas. The more in the tank, the bigger the fire.

The higher the Wh, the hotter the flames, the thicker the smoke, and critically – the harder it is to put out.

Righto, onto the rules for US Part 91.

Part 91

For domestic flying in the US under Part 91, the rules for lithium-ion batteries are pretty simple.

If the batteries are being carried for personal use, Part 91 operators are (almost) entirely exempt from the US D.O.T. HAZMAT regulations that apply to commercial flights. But it's not a free-for-all.

The PIC is still prohibited by law from carrying hazardous items onboard an aircraft in a way that might endanger people or things. This includes knowingly carrying defective batteries or packing them in a way that is dangerous or irresponsible.

Baseline safety guidelines still apply, including FAA Advisory Circulars (AC 91-78, AC 120-76D) -along with relevant Safety Alerts for Operators (SAFOs). Deviation from these can expose the operator/PIC to legal liability in the case that something bad happens.

Here's a summary of those:

Installed batteries (in devices):

Carry these without restriction if they're properly secured within the equipment, show no visible damage (like swelling or leakage) and are turned off.

Spare batteries:

These must be carry-on.

- *Little ones (100Wh or less):* There's no limit on the number carried, but each one should be protected from short-circuits (case, sleeve, taped terminals or original packaging).
- *Bigger ones (101 – 160Wh):* FAA guidelines say no more than two per person. These must be individually protected using the same precautions above.
- *Biggest ones (161Wh+):* Not allowed without full HAZMAT compliance and operator approval. Requires UN spec packaging, shipping papers, training etc. BE CAREFUL – some higher end power banks exceed this limit.

International operators beware!

Here's where things get a little tricky.

Once you leave the US, some authorities no longer recognize the distinction between Part 91 (private) and other commercial flights.

Foreign authorities may enforce local rules for the batteries you carry – *regardless* of your Part 91 status. These are usually based upon **IATA Dangerous Goods Regulations.** Reportedly, this includes China, Thailand, Korea, India and the UAE.

In other words, **what was acceptable in the US may not be once you're abroad.**

Foreign handlers may refuse to load spare batteries that don't comply with IATA standards, while customs and ramp safety officers may demand battery specs and proper packaging – especially for devices like power banks, drones, camera gear and e-bikes. Devices may be confiscated if they do not comply with local guidelines.

The best solution? Just comply with IATA standards from the outset.

Where do I find these regs?

If you want to get technical – they're defined in ICAO Doc 9284 (ICAO Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air), and further refined under the IATA Dangerous Goods Regulations.

These include packing instructions, required documents, limits of watt hour ratings, the quantity of batteries, labelling and distinctions between passenger and cargo aircraft.

Three million pages of DG-related dread building? Worry not. We've put together a **quick checklist** of requirements/suggestions for Part 91 operators to help them stay out of trouble when carrying batteries outside of the US:

Fire containment

You might already have fire containment bags onboard, but there are other types of containment devices worth considering.

Some of the newer **hard-sided designs** offer features like hands-free collection, blast protection for the user, and the ability to inject water to help interrupt thermal runaway. Check out this one!

These boxes aim to **reduce the risk to crew during an incident** and address some limitations of soft bags, which can be difficult to use safely without two people – a challenge on smaller aircraft operating under Part 91 or 135. With recent incidents showing how violent lithium battery fires can be, having an effective containment method onboard is increasingly important.

Don't forget to report

For Part 91 private flights, the US FAA requires operators to report any case of battery fire, smoke, overheating or thermal runaway aboard an aircraft within 72 hours. The form for this is DOT 5800.1.

ICAO may also require a report if the event qualifies as a **serious incident or accident.** You are not required to report directly to IATA – it's only voluntary.