Haiti Crisis: Airport Attacked, Aircraft Shot

Chris Shieff
6 March, 2024

Key Points

- **Worsening gang violence in Haiti. A state of emergency is now in place, and the US Embassy has issued a new warning for its citizens to leave immediately.**

- **Aviation has also come under direct threat, with reports of several armed attacks at MTPP/Port-au-Prince in recent days. All flights have been cancelled until further notice and the airport is now effectively closed.**

- **There are no official airspace warning for Haiti. However, conditions on the ground have been likened to an active war zone. For flights, normal services are unlikely to be available, and crew security cannot be guaranteed.**

Airport Attacks

On March 4, several dozen heavily armed gang members attempted to **take control of MTPP/Port-au-Prince airport.**

They breached the airport perimeter and exchanged machine gun fire with police but ultimately failed. Airport staff were forced into hiding. Soldiers have since been stationed there for protection.

Since then, **all flights have been cancelled.**

This followed a separate attack last week where an A321 was damaged by a bullet after landing. Sustained gun fire was reported along the access road to the airport during this time.

A landing A321 at Port-au-Prince was apparently damaged by gunfire after landing on Feb 29.

Don't look to the MTPP Notams for help – you won't find anything. However, the media has reported several closures of the airport in recent days in light of these events.

Gangs are fighting fiercely for resources and revenue. This includes control over key transport routes hindering freedom of movement and further empowering the gangs – which is **why the airport is being actively targeted.** Gangs may also have the additional political motivation to interfere with ops at the airport in an attempt to stop the existing president from being able to re-enter the country.

State of Emergency

The Haitian Government declared a state of emergency on March 3, which will apply until further notice. On the same day, the US Embassy issued its own warning **asking citizens to leave.**

The Embassy itself is periodically closing, and its staff are highly unlikely to be able to help anyone who finds themselves in trouble.

Machine gun fire has been reported near the US Embassy in Port-au-Prince

Impact on Overflights

The FAA does not currently have any active airspace warnings in place for Haiti.

The country operates its own small chunk of airspace – the **MTEG/Port-au-Prince FIR**. Adjacent sectors include Cuban, Dominican Republic and US airspace. Its Notams are also conspicuously quiet.

No restrictions on overflights have been published, with flight tracking still showing sporadic airline traffic overflying– although the bulk appear to be transiting further east over the Dominican Republic.

The Dominican Republic has banned all passenger and cargo flights to and from airports in Haiti (MDCS Notam A0111/24 refers), but this does not restrict overflights.

The gangs however have shown an active intent to target **government infrastructure** – its not clear yet what effect this may have on controllers' ability to perform their duties at short notice.

At the very least, a solid contingency should be in place right now for a **short notice reversion to Class G.**

Special care also needs to be taken for the possibility of **unplanned landings or diversions** – especially to Port-au-Prince. Normal services are unlikely to be available, and **crew security cannot be guaranteed.**

As the situation evolves, keep an eye out for updated information from aviation authorities such as the FAA who may publish background information or additional flight restrictions.

We will report any we see on our conflict zone and risk database, safeairspace.net.

If you have any other information you'd like to share with us, don't hesitate to get in touch via news@ops.group.

TCAS Saves the Day in Somalia

David Mumford
6 March, 2024
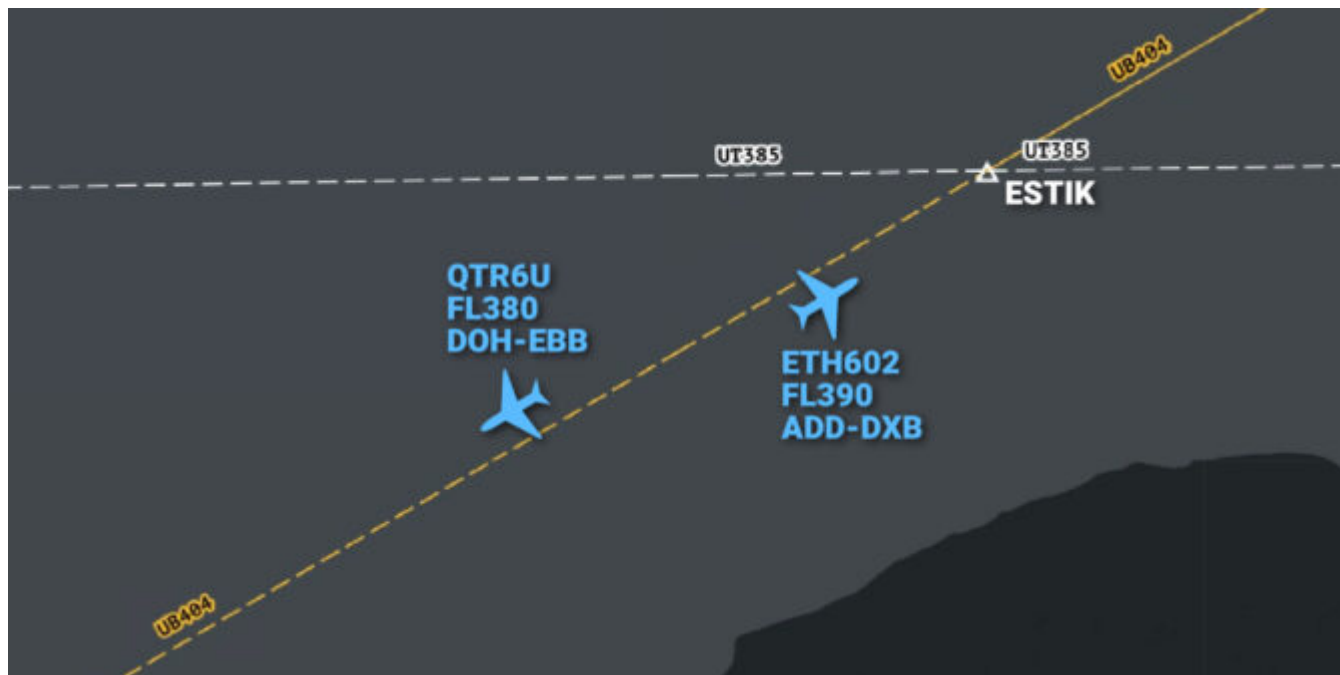
Last week we told you about a new risk emerging over Somalia, where **several enroute aircraft reported being contacted by unauthorized ATC units.** These "fake" controllers have been issuing climb/descent instructions that conflict with the official ones issued by Mogadishu Control.

This week, the very same thing happened to crews of a Qatar Airways 787 and an Ethiopian Airlines A350 **headed towards each other off Somalia's northern coastline.**

The 787 was instructed to climb from FL380 to FL400 whilst the A350 was cruising at FL390 in the opposite direction on the same UB404 airway – near position ESTIK. **A TCAS alert was triggered, and the 787 descended back to FL380 to resolve the conflict.**
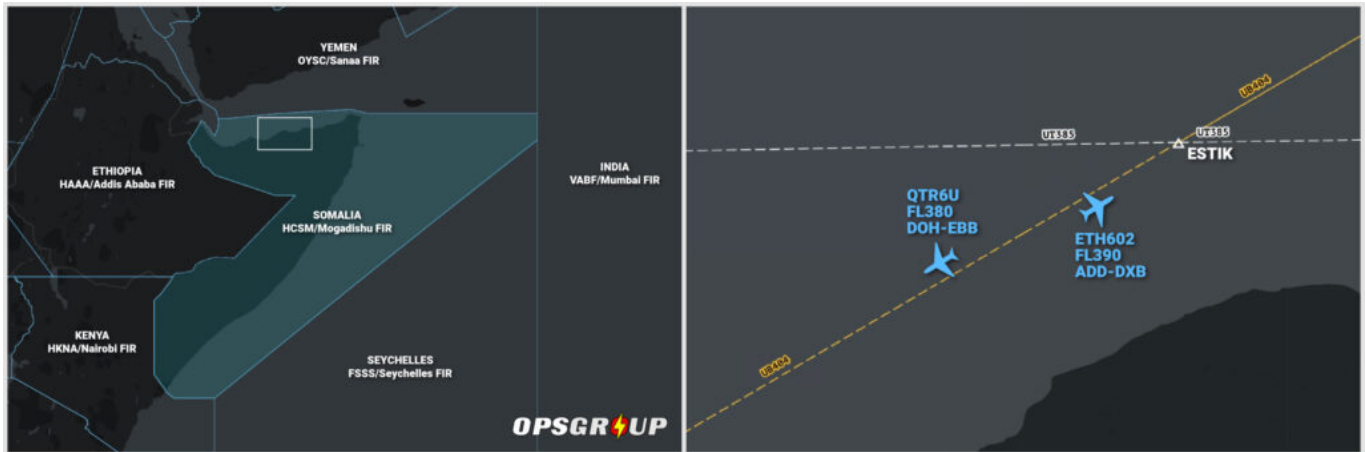
From some reports it looks like the two aircraft were **separated by as little as 2.5 nm** when the incident happened, though the situation was helped by the fact that both aircraft were laterally offset from the airway (yay for SLOP!).

Who should I be talking to?

The two competing ATC centres here are Hargeisa (Somaliland) and Mogadishu (Somalia).

For aircraft transiting the HCSM/Mogadishu FIR, it's Mogadishu ATC that you should be talking to – not Hargeisa.

Mogadishu Control holds authority over the entire Mogadishu FIR, responsible for coordinating and providing ATS services in the Upper FIR. **Hargeisa in Somaliland issues secondary transmissions, posing a potential threat to enroute traffic.**
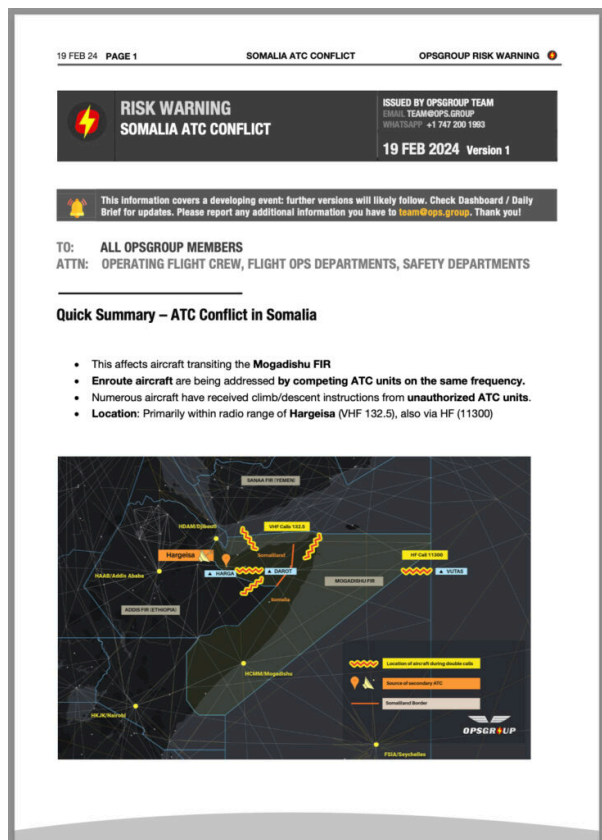
Notably, these transmissions from Hargeisa seem to mimic Mogadishu rather than clearly identifying as "Hargeisa Control" or "Somaliland Control." Reports suggest that **control instructions from Hargeisa aim to create confusion rather than ensure traffic de-confliction**, possibly as a strategy to draw political attention to their recent dispute with Somalia.

Advice to operators

Check our previous post for a **full Risk Warning**, including Crew Reports, Maps, Analysis, and Guidance. *And if you can't access, just email the team and we'll send you a copy.*

The main advice is this:

1. If possible, avoid the Mogadishu FIR.
2. If entering the airspace, expect secondary ATC transmissions from Hargeisa.
3. Limit any contact with Mogadishu to CPDLC only. Only controllers in Mogadishu have access to CPDLC.
4. Do not accept any level changes without ensuring they are genuinely from Mogadishu Control.
5. Avoid requesting any level changes while within the Mogadishu FIR.
6. Listen out on 126.9 (IFBP) and follow the IFBP procedure.
7. Note that related NOTAMs issued by Somalia may not present the full picture, or be updated regularly.

RISK WARNING
SOMALIA ATC CONFLICT

ISSUED BY OPSGROUP TEAM
EMAIL TEAM@OPS.GROUP
WHATSAPP +1 747 200 1993

19 FEB 2024   Version 1

This information covers a developing event: further versions will likely follow. Check Dashboard / Daily Brief for updates. Please report any additional information you have to team@ops.group. Thank you!

TO: ALL OPSGROUP MEMBERS
ATTN: OPERATING FLIGHT CREW, FLIGHT OPS DEPARTMENTS, SAFETY DEPARTMENTS

Quick Summary – ATC Conflict in Somalia

- This affects aircraft transiting the **Mogadishu FIR**
- **Enroute aircraft** are being addressed **by competing ATC units on the same frequency.**
- Numerous aircraft have received climb/descent instructions from **unauthorized ATC units.**
- **Location:** Primarily within radio range of **Hargeisa** (VHF 132.5), also via HF (11300)

Download the Risk Warning (PDF, 9 pages, 2Mb)

Delays and Diversions in Dubai

Chris Shieff
6 March, 2024

An OPSGROUP member reported that on Feb 21, several long-haul carriers were **forced to divert** due to

extended airborne delays.

The problem stemmed from the following unassuming needle-in-a-haystack Notam…


```
A0625/24 NOTAMN
Q)OMAE/QMRXX/IV/NBO/A/000/999/2515N05522E005
A)OMDB
B)2402200800 C)2404060800
E)RWY 30L ARR ACFT MAY EXP HLDG DLA DUE TO
INCREASED SPACING ON FINAL APCH.
REF WIP AS PER AIP SUP 35/2023 AREA C08.
```

It was later re-issued (after-the-fact), somewhat sheepishly with an actual holding advisory …


```
A0798/24 NOTAMR
Q) OMAE/QMRXX/IV/NBO/A/000/999/2515N05522E005
A) OMDB B) 2402230854 C) 2403090800 E) RWY 30L ARR ACFT
MAY EXP UPTO 40 MIN HLDG DLA DRG PEAKS 0001-0300 UTC,
0700-0930 UTC, 1330-2130 UTC DUE INCREASED SPACING ON FINAL
APCH. CREW ARE EXP TO KEEP THEIR SPEED UP IF INSTRUCTED TO
VACATE AT TWY K6 TO REDUCE RWY OCCUPANCY. REF WIP AS PER
AIP SUP 35/2023 AREA C08.
```

The good news is that you can easily access the referenced AIP SUP online – provided you provide scans of your passport, your contact details, favourite colour, hobbies and the name of your first-born.

OR

You can just read the following summary of what's been going on.

The Trouble SUP

You can read it in full here (but it's heavy).

Basically, what you need to know is that there are **ongoing taxiway works** happening at the airport.

These are divided into areas, and the one causing issues is 'C08'.

For Runway 30L, this is causing a bottle neck for aircraft exiting on the rapids bound for terminals 2 and 3.

The preferred exit (K8) is partially blocked by the works, along with the next non-rapid exit (K7) which is completely closed.

The next option is K6, which is further up the runway. The extra time needed to allow aircraft to vacate

means **increased spacing for arrivals.** Word on the street is that frequent A380 ops are also compounding the problem.

Here's what that looks like on a chart.
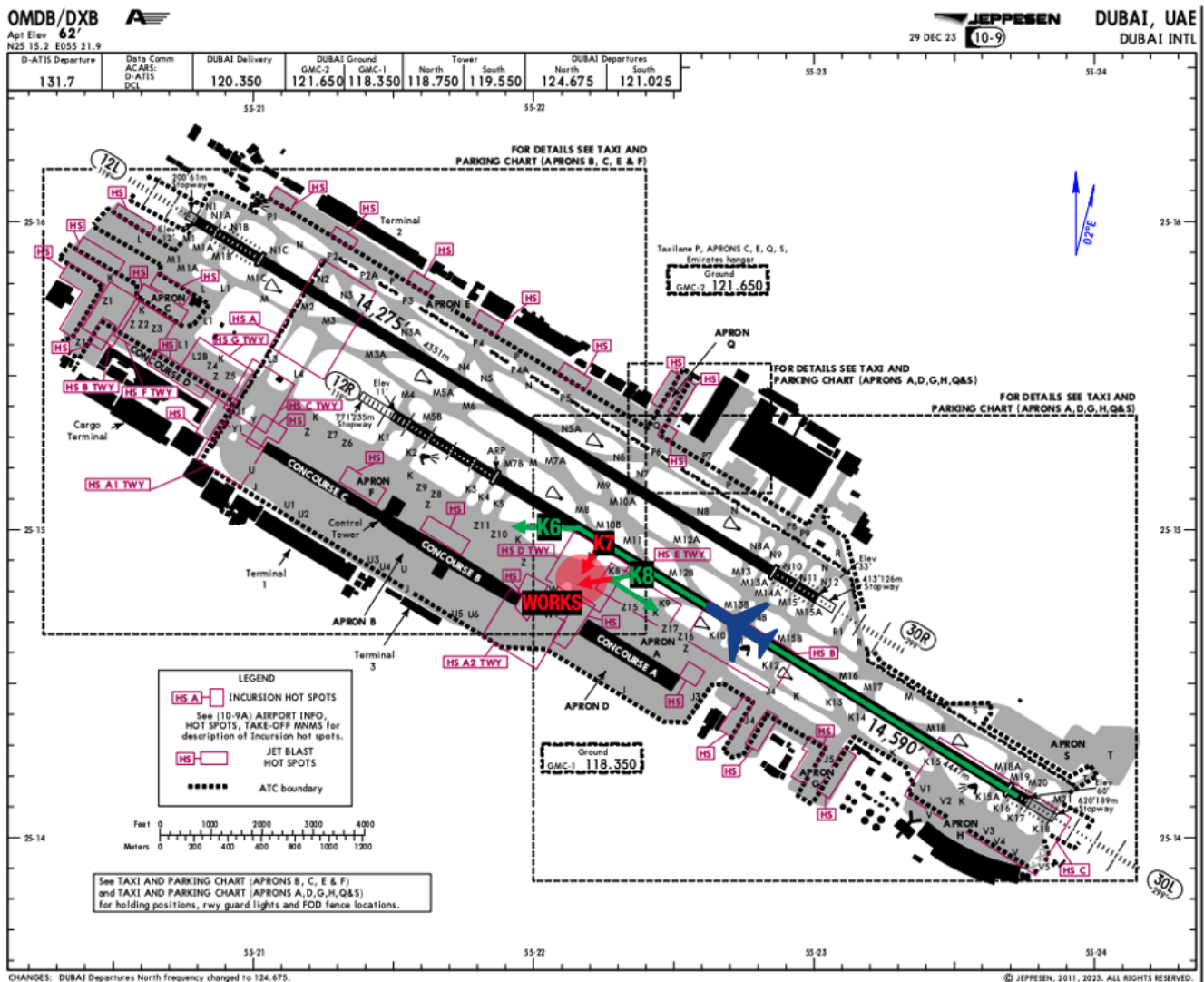
During peak times, arrivals are stacking up.

Those times are daily between:

- **00:00 – 03:00z (04:00 – 07:00 LT)**
- **07:00 – 09:30z (11:00 – 13:30 LT)**
- **13:30 – 21:30z (17:30 - 01:30 LT)**

If Runway 30L is in use, and you are arriving during one of these periods – carry at least an **extra 40 minutes** of holding fuel.

How long will this last?

The current Notam says until March 9, but may get extended. The SUP doesn't provide an end date, and strangely the original Notam applied until April 6. In other words, your guess is as good as ours...

But wait, there's more.

There are some other Notams hidden in the pile that include **closures of the other runway** (12L/30R) that infringe these times. That's an average of seventy-five arrivals and departures per hour using the one problem runway – **40 minutes may still not be enough.**

Please report back.

If you experience delays in Dubai related to works (or otherwise) we'd love to hear from you so we can share that info with the group. You can reach us on news@ops.group around the clock.

US FAA: Who wants to land on the runway?

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

1. **Flying to an airport in the US?**

2. **Want to land on the actual runway, rather than some taxiway or dirt road which looks a bit like the runway?**

3. **Not afraid of some basic pics showing you how NOT to mess it up?**

Well then today's your lucky day, friend!

Step right this way!

Arrival Alert Notices

The US FAA has published things called Arrival Alert Notices at several airports with a history of "misalignment risk" – i.e. where aircraft line up to or land on the **wrong runway, taxiway, or even sometimes the wrong airport**.

The best thing about these Notices is that they are dead simple. No superfluous symbology, no weird language, just a **nice big picture of the runway with a clear instruction on what to do.**

CENTENNIAL AIRPORT (APA) ARRIVAL ALERT

**Landing South
RWY 17R and RWY 17L**

17R

17L

Pilots confuse RWY 17L for RWY 17R.

Not for Navigational Purposes
For Situational Awareness Only

IDAHO FALLS RGNL (IDA) ARRIVAL ALERT

**Landing Southwest
RWY 17 and RWY 21**

21

17

Pilots confuse RWY 17 for RWY 21.

Not for Navigational Purposes
For Situational Awareness Only

**SALT LAKE CITY INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT (SLC) ARRIVAL ALERT**

**Landing North
RWY 34R and RWY 35 and TWY K**

TWY K

34R

35

Landing North RWY 34R and RWY 35,
pilots confuse TWY K and RWY 35.

Not for Navigational Purposes
For Situational Awareness Only

Soothing 1950's greyscale. Quietly reassuring Futura typeface.

The FAA published the first batch of these in May 2022, and then a whole bunch more in Jan 2024. So they now have them for **41 airports in total,** all of which have a history of misalignment risk or "wrong surface events" – i.e. times where folks landed on something other than the *actual runway.*

They say that many of these wrong surface events occur "during the daytime and in visual meteorological conditions, and the majority of the time, the pilot has read back the correct landing clearance." In other words, folks have got it wrong even at the best of times, so it's probably worth a quick glance at these docs.

Which Airports?

This map on the FAA AAN site shows the airports that have Arrival Alert Notices.

Airports with Arrival Alert Notices

This map below shows the airports that have Arrival Alert Notices.

What else is the FAA doing to improve safety?

A whole bunch of things. You can read all about it on their Runway Safety site, but here's a summary. *And as a cheap marketing trick by way of parting, I will say that the last one on this list is probably the best – so make sure you read to the end!*

1. **Runway Status Lights (RWSL):** In operation at 20 airports, signals potential hazards through illuminated red lights on runways and taxiway/runway crossings. More info.

2. **Airport Surface Detection Equipment, Model X (ASDE-X):** In operation at 35 airports, integrates various data sources to provide ATC with better aircraft positions, and pings up alerts for potential traffic conflicts. More info.

3. **Airport Surface Surveillance Capability (ASSC):** Similar to ASDE-X, ASSC operates at 9 airports, works in all kinds of weather, and lets ATC see aircraft on approach and departure within a few miles of the airport. More info.

4. **ASDE-X and ASSC Taxiway Arrival Prediction (ATAP):** ATAP is an enhancement to the previous two, and alerts ATC when an aircraft is aligned with a taxiway instead of the runway. In operation at these airports.

5. **Engineered Material Arresting System (EMAS):** We like these things so much, we wrote an article on them. Installed at 70 airports, EMAS are those crushable bits of tarmac at the ends of runways which you can plough into to stop overruns. Very cool. More info.

6. **Electronic Flight Bag (EFB) with Moving Map Displays:** Everyone loves their EFBs and moving maps. So do the FAA – they encourage pilots to use them!

7. **Runway Safety Areas (RSA):** Because many runways were built before the 1000-foot RSA standard was adopted, the FAA implemented the Runway Safety Area Program which made improvements to over 1000 runways at 500 airports.

8. **Runway Incursion Mitigation (RIM):** A national initiative identifying and mitigating specific risks at 80 airports that might lead to a runway incursion. Things like: unclear taxiway markings, airport signage, runway or taxiway layout.

9. **Hot Spot Standardization:** The FAA now has standardized hot spot symbology on their airport charts. We wrote about this here.

10. **Arrival Alert Notices:** i.e. this article!

11. **Automated Closure Notice Diagrams:** They now have a site where you can get a big airport chart showing all the runway or taxiway closures on it. It looks like AI might be involved behind the scenes on this one, so it's a bit clunky for some airports, but it's still pretty cool. Check it out here.

12. **"From the Flight Deck":** This might just be the best of the bunch! This FAA website basically has videos showing how to land at specific airports (real footage), plus a bunch of other useful info: hotspots, things local ATC want pilots to know, airport comms, airspace details and other preflight planning resources. Take a look here!
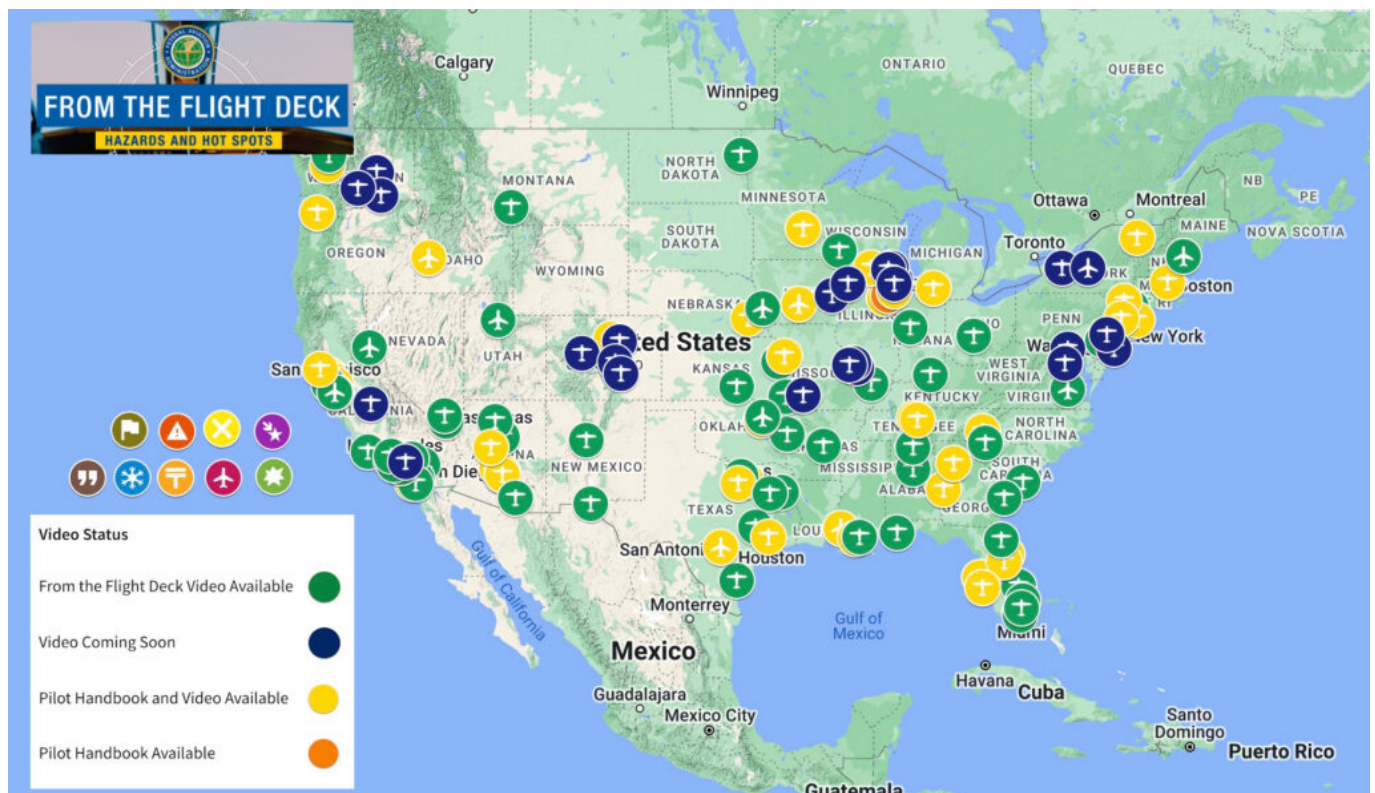
Green dots = pretty good. Yellow dots = LOADS of useful info available!

New RISK WARNING: Somalia ATC Conflict

OPSGROUP Team
6 March, 2024
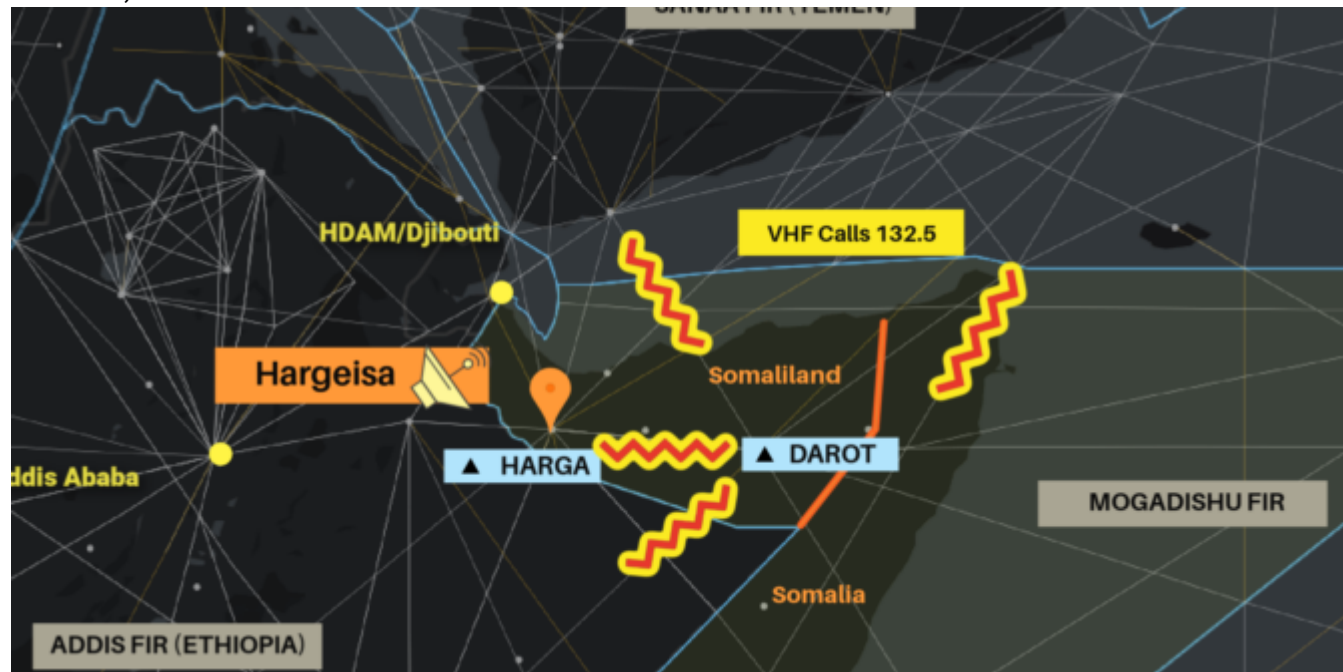
Key information for Flight Crew

Over the weekend, OPSGROUP has received at least **10 reports** of aircraft within the Mogadishu FIR being contacted by a **'fake controller'** on the same frequency, issuing **conflicting instructions**.

Crews have been issued climb and descent clearances that are not from the sector controller. Incidents have been reported mostly in the northern part of Mogadishu airspace.

The situation emanates from a political **dispute between Somaliland and Somalia**, two different countries, though the former does not have international recognition. Both countries now claim authority over the Mogadishu FIR.

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OPSGROUP Members

In your Dashboard you'll find the full Risk Warning, including Crew Reports, Maps, Analysis, and Guidance. If you can't access, just email the team and we'll send you a copy.

RISK WARNING
SOMALIA ATC CONFLICT

ISSUED BY OPSGROUP TEAM
EMAIL TEAM@OPS.GROUP
WHATSAPP +1 747 200 1993

19 FEB 2024 Version 1

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Analysis

(Excerpt from the **Risk Warning** in your dashboard)

The background to the situation is an escalating political dispute between Somaliland and Somalia. Somaliland has been an independent country since 1991, but without international recognition. Somaliland has to date maintained control over its airports, but Somalia controls the upper airspace from Mogadishu.
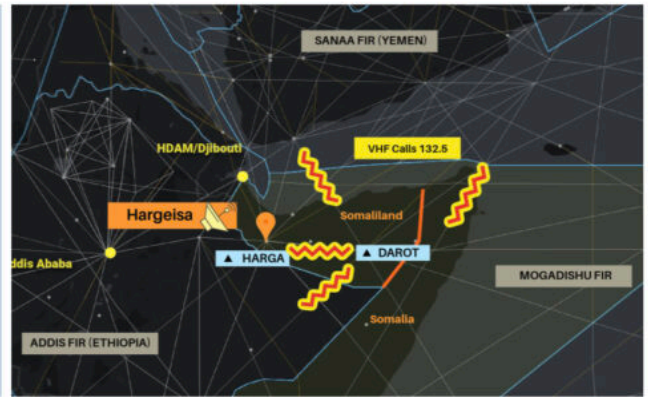
In January 2024, Ethiopia signed an agreement with Somaliland, essentially exchanging port rights on the Red Sea for recognition of their country. This was met with condemnation by Somalia. Somalia, in response, began restricting movements into Somaliland by way of denying airspace entry to the Mogadishu FIR in some instances. This has led to Somaliland declaring its right to exercise control over their airspace.

The net result is an airspace dispute between the two territories. Both Somalia and Somaliland now claim the right to control traffic. This is why crews have been contacted by other "controllers" on 132.5 (VHF) and 11300 (HF). Although it is likely that these other "controllers" are genuine Air Traffic Controllers, they are operating outside their area of jurisdiction as things stand.

Currently, the authority over the entire Mogadishu FIR is Mogadishu Control. They remain the sole authority to control, coordinate, and provide ATS services in the Upper FIR. The secondary transmissions are coming from Hargeisa in Somaliland. Although the motive for these transmissions can be understood, they present clear danger to enroute traffic. The transmissions appear to attempt to mimic Mogadishu rather than present as "Hargeisa Control", "Somaliland Control", or any clear differentiator from Mogadishu.

It would also appear from the reports that we have received, that the control instructions are not being issued to de-conflict traffic, but rather to create confusion. This may be an effort to draw attention to the airspace issue, but could have tragic consequences. For flight crews, we follow with some guidance to mitigate the situation.

The situation is volatile and may escalate. On Sunday, February 18, an AIS Officer from Somaliland, working in Mogadishu, was found dead at his home. His death appears related to this situation.

Avoidance of Mogadishu airspace would provide ultimate safety, and if the situation continues, would be wise.

[Excerpt, see full **Risk Warning** for crew reports received, maps, guidance]

Approved Airports for Flights to Israel

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

Key Points

- **Israel has published a revised list of approved airports from which international flights are allowed to land in Israel or overfly the LLLL/Tel Aviv FIR.**
- **Check below for a summary of how to get an Israel landing or overflight permit, and what to expect on how that process works.**

What's changed?

You can find the new list here. *(Published as AIC 3/23 on 11 Dec 2023, and appears under Israel's AIP AIRAC update for 22 Feb 2024).*

Looks like there's only two changes this time:

1. **LFPB/Paris Le Bourget** has been added to the list (for GA flights only).
2. Bangalore's international airport of **VOBL/Kempegowda** has replaced the city's more random and joint-military airport of VOBG/Hal.

You can still apply to operate from airports not on the list, but you'll need special permission which can take some time!

Previous updates to this list

Back in 2023, several airports were added, and several removed – **notable removals included BIKF/Keflavik and BIRK/Reykjavik.**

Airports that were removed:

- TRS (Trieste)
- KEF (Keflavik)

- RKV (Reykjavik)
- TIA (Tirana)
- MSQ (Minsk)
- BRE (Bremen)
- STR (Stuttgart)
- OHD (Ohrid)
- KSC (Kosice)
- RZE (Rzeszow)
- OSR (Ostrava)
- DBV (Dubrovnik)
- SPU (Split)
- CND (Mihail Kogălniceanu)
- CRA (Craiova)

Airports that were added:

- SSH (Sharm el Sheikh)
- SEZ (Mahe)
- BLR (Bangalore)
- BOM (Mumbai)
- ORD (Chicago)
- BOS (Boston)
- TSF (Treviso)
- CRL (Brussels South Charleroi)
- LEJ (Leipzig)
- LYS (Lyon)
- MRS (Marseille)
- BVA (Beauvais Tille)
- FMM (Memmingen)
- NAP (Naples)
- BRI (Bari)
- VCE (Venice)
- KGL (Kigali)

What do I need to do to fly to Israel?

It's the same process for landings and overflights, except for the thing about a 'local sponsor' – you only need this for landing permits.

1. **You must be departing from one of the approved airports** in the approved list. Your destination airport doesn't matter.

2. **For landing permits:** You need a 'local sponsor' – a contact person in Israel who can vouch for you. This person must be Israeli, and personally acquainted with all passengers – not just a travel agent or hotel representative. They will be contacted by the security services before any approval is given.

3. **For overflight permits:** You don't need a local sponsor.

4. **Your crew/pax/plane need to be from Israel-friendly countries:** You must provide passport copies of the crew and passengers, who must be nationals of countries that have diplomatic relations with Israel. The same rule applies to the country your aircraft is registered in.

5. Fill in the permit application form, and send it back to ASOC at asoc@int.gov.il.

The next step is where it can get a bit confusing. Get ready for some jargon. Check out the full guidance on ASOC's website, but here's the lowdown on how it works and what to do:

1. ASOC will check your permit request, and if approved, will reply to you with a **Pending Permission Notification**.

2. The Captain must then call or log in to the ASOC website to submit an **Entry Code**. The Pending Permission Notification then becomes a **Final Security Arrival Permit**.

3. You're good to go! On entering Israeli airspace, you've then got to follow the **Arrival Identification Procedure**. This bit is easier than it sounds – ATC will basically just ask for your Entry Code to approve you for entry. ASOC have published an example of how you can expect that conversation to go.

For overflights, there's basically two options – **N134** for westbound flights, and **L53** for eastbound:
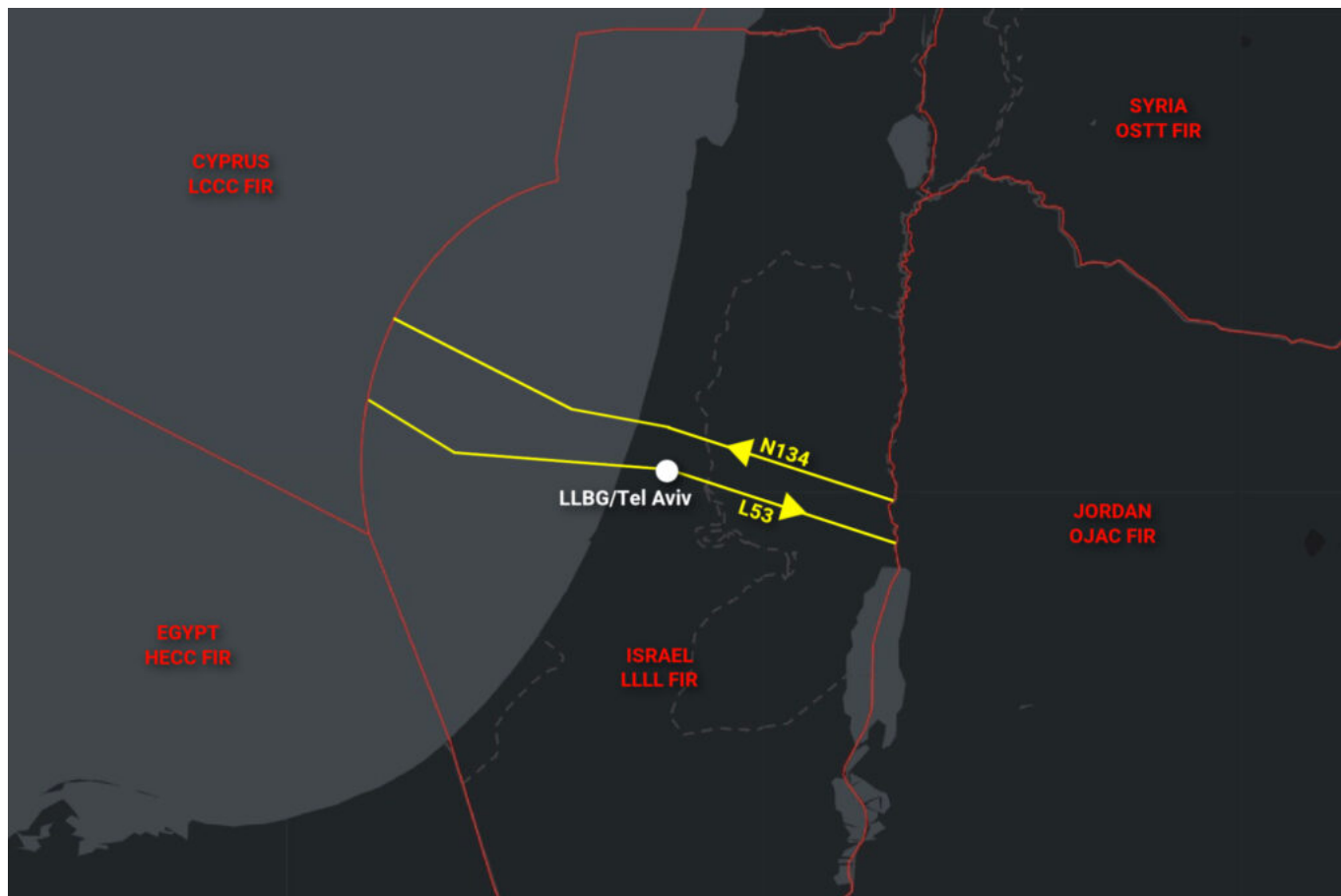
If you've been to Israel recently (or anywhere else, for that matter) and can share some info on how the trip went, please file an Airport Spy report and we can update this article and share the info with everyone!

Got some intel?

Are you an Airport Spy?

You go to unusual places and see curious things. Your turboprop friends envy you. Now, it's time to give back.

For your next trip, pack a notebook, and file your Spy Report below. You'll get a weekly ops briefing in return.

File your report ⊙

There's a Spy In Our Midst.....

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

Imagine if there was a TripAdvisor for pilots, with thousands of reports from their fellow aviators on handlers, ATC, and airports around the world?

Well, there is such a place!

PPRuNe?

No! 🙂

Airport Spy?

Correct!

Airport Spy is getting busy lately – thank you to everyone who has been busy filing reports.

Some recent reports!

OPSGROUP members can see all reports in Airport Spy via the members Dashboard here.

Spy Reports by Pilots and Operators

You can help out too! when you get back after your trip, or downroute and bored at the hotel – use Airport Spy to write a quick summary.

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

What makes a good pilot/operator Airport Spy report? Well, what would you find useful if heading someplace for the first time? What would you tell a colleague in the airbridge? Consider some topics like ATC quality, terrain, unusual procedures, local peculiarities, handling quality, contacts.

Pilots and Operators can file a report here!

Spy Reports by FBOs and Handlers

And now, for the first time ~~ever~~ since lockdown ended, we're bringing back the option for **FBOs and Handlers to file Airport Spy reports too!**

Before we pilots jet off to your airport, we'd like to know what's happening. You open? Ops normal? Any unusual rules or restrictions pilots should know about?

What makes a good FBO/Handler Airport Spy report? Well, just imagine a crew is thinking of heading your way. They'll have some basic data, but a report with the latest situation is really useful. Areas like Airport/ATC hours, new rules and restrictions, entry requirements, anything that might have changed since they were last there, or, if they're going for the first time – any local peculiarities, gotchas, or tips. All 8000 OPSGROUP members will get it once you file.

FBOs and Handlers can file a report here!

Why bother?

It's many years since we wrote this piece: "What is OPSGROUP All About". It still holds true. We're still about all the same things – **keeping each other safe, being real, being human, helping each other out, speaking plainly, and sharing radically.**

If we share, we keep each other safe. That means that if you come across a new risk, a new danger, a new procedure, something weird, something unusual – **tell us, and we'll tell everyone in the group**.

So, please tell us what you know!

US FAA: Swift Move to Improve Flight Tracking Privacy

Chris Shieff
6 March, 2024

Key Points

- **The FAA's Privacy ICAO Address (PIA) program has been expanded to include some new oceanic and Gulf of Mexico routes.**

- **If you're not familiar with this program, it prevents users' aircraft registration from being tracked by third parties using ADS-B output during US domestic flights.**
- **Check below for exactly which routes this program now applies to, and our Opsicle with steps on how to register.**

Aviation privacy is making headline news again this week.

The private jet currently believed to be carrying a certain superstar around the world on a record-breaking world tour is being tracked by her fans – and her legal team aren't happy.

In fact, they're threatening to sue a college student running a website that tracks the jet movements of her and other celebrities, politicians, and high-fliers (no pun intended).

The same student has also been famously banned by Elon Musk from X (formally Twitter) after he allegedly shared Elon's '*assassination co-ordinates*' – Elon's words, not ours.

Elon wasn't happy his jet was being tracked.

Whether or not we feel this is an overreaction is beyond the scope of this article. What does matter is that the private aviation industry often carries clients who for one reason or another would like their identity (and location) to be hidden – and it's big news at the moment.

And with these headlines may come the **expectation** from some high-profile passengers that their charter operators now **provide privacy** to the best of their ability.

Another reason why this issue may soon race back into the public eye is the looming **US presidential**

campaign, where the rules for charter flights carrying participants and their staff have already been eased. There is going to be a lot of **VIP traffic** buzzing around the US NAS in the coming months.

Enter the FAA

It may be a coincidence, but just last week news broke that they have upgraded the availability of their **Privacy ICAO Address (PIA) Program to include new oceanic and Gulf of Mexico routes.**

If you're currently asking '*what the heck is a PIA program?*' now would be a good time to hit pause, and check out the article we wrote a couple of years back. It will break down for you how it all works.

If you're feeling brave, buckle up – because here it is in two sentences:

==All Mode S equipped aircraft are assigned a unique ICAO 24-bit address – this is uniquely identifiable to your aircraft's registration. The FAA's PIA program assigns you another one to use that renders you secret-squirrel.==

Staying Incognito

Before we go on, the FAA's news last week will make more sense if you get your head around a few of its conditions.

To participate, you must tick all three of these boxes:

1. Operating an **US-registered aircraft which is ADS-B equipped**
2. Using a **third-party call sign**
3. Flying in **US territorial airspace** (the mainland, Alaska, Hawaii, and other US territories). Additionally, the PIA has been expanded to include US oceanic FIRs too – those more than 12nm from shore.

After news broke the program had been improved, we struggled to find a summary of the changes and got in touch with the FAA directly.

They advised while there is no 'master list' of the newly included routes, they have updated their website to include some valid examples including:

- **NYC to LA**
- **Miami to Houston (via the Gulf of Mexico)**
- **LA to Hawaii**
- **Boston to Miami (with offshore routes more than 12nm from shore).**

If you have an enquiry about a specific route, you can reach them on adsbprivacyicao@faa.gov. Chances are, as long as you stay **within US jurisdiction**, your route will be valid.

How to apply?

So, you want in? We've put together this little Opsicle with steps on how to register.

HOW TO ENROL IN THE FAA PRIVACY PROGRAM

Before you begin - Is your aircraft ADS-B equipped, US-registered and using a third-party call sign?

Apply in five steps:

1. Obtain an initial ADS-B report (aka PAPR) here.

2. Apply for the PIA program here (expect 10 day wait).

3. Email adsbprivacyicao@faa.gov with proof of your third-party fight ID provider.

4. Install your new PIA into your ADS-B transmitter.

5. Within 30 days, do another ADS-B report (using your new PIA). Verify it here.

Whatever you do, <u>don't</u>:

Use an unassigned PIA or one assigned to another aircraft.

Use your PIA outside of US-managed airspace.

Change your PIA during your flight.

Click to open PDF.

More questions?

The FAA has quite a good FAQ section on the PIA which you can access here.

Libya Airspace Risk: An Idiot's Guide

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

Key Points

- EASA has amended its Conflict Zone Information Bulletin (CZIB) for Libya. **They no longer recommend against flights to "airports located on the coast"** – as long as you *approach from the sea, talk to ATC, and do a risk assessment.*

- This new advice is curious, because it's **not clear there has actually been any reduction in airspace risk here.** None of the Libya airspace warnings issued by other countries (US, Canada, Germany, France, UK, etc), have changed recently. Everyone says the same thing – there remains a high risk to civil aircraft in Libyan airspace (HLLL/Tripoli FIR), and it should be avoided.

- Read on for a 7-Step Idiot's Guide to Libya – a look at airspace risk, with some maps, pictures, analysis, and advice for operators.

An Idiot's Guide to Libya

I'm Dave, and I'm an idiot. It's been 12 days since I last did something stupid.

Hi Dave.

I know almost nothing about Libya.

Back in the day, I worked for a cargo airline that did flights there. We picked up some cheap fuel in Tripoli before jetting off down to Entebbe to pick up fresh fish to take back to Europe.

God knows why. **Fly to Uganda to get some fish to take back to the UK?** A country literally surrounded by sea needs to send a plane to Africa to get some fish? Makes no sense, does it. But it never occurred to me – **because I'm an idiot.**

Just leave those pallets of fish out there in the sun, they'll be fine.

I bashed out a few flight plans – Ostende to Tripoli to Entebbe and back again – and hoped for the best. **And most times, things went just fine.**

We stopped operating in 2010. No more Libya, no more Uganda, no more fish.

Good thing too, because four years later, Libya descended into chaos with the outbreak of a **civil war that saw HLLT/Tripoli airport closed after clashes between rival militias destroyed most of the airport's facilities.** The airport remains closed to this day; most flights operate out of the city's other airport – HLLM/Mitiga.

The Battle of Tripoli Airport, 2014.

All the standard **"Do Not Travel"** warnings followed soon after, and people stopped flying to Libya.

So here we are, ten years later, and **EASA are now saying it's probably OK to start flying to airports on Libya's coastline** again – as long as you approach from the sea, talk to ATC, and do a risk assessment...

Hmm, sounds weird, doesn't it? Why on earth would we want to do that? Well, let's have a look...

Step 1: Find Out Where It Is

Remember, this is an "Idiot's Guide" where I know almost nothing about Libya. So this is where we start.
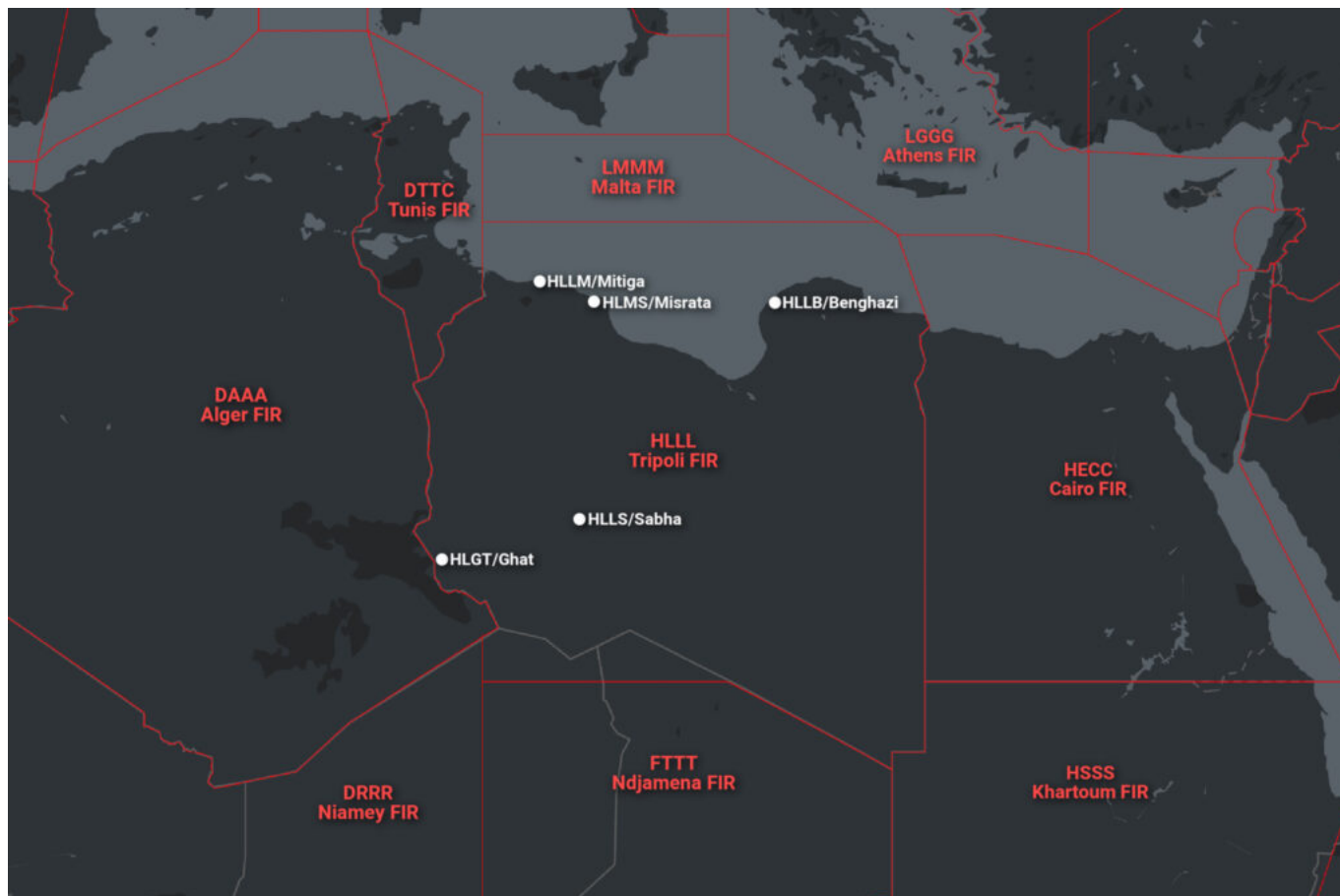
White dots = airports. Red stuff = airspace boundaries.

Step 1 complete!

Step 2: Find Out How Scary It Is

Not a great start.

Yeah but that's travel advice for passengers. **We're pilots, so we want to know about airspace and missiles and stuff...**

All the airspace warnings in one digestible, non-stop GIF.

Oh dear. None of that looks great either, does it?

Step 3: Actually Read The Warnings In The GIF

Just like the classic 80's tv advert said: **GIFs are for Christmas, Airspace Warnings are for life.**

Or was it dogs? GIFs are for dogs, not just for Christmas? Christmas is for GIFs, not just for dogs?

Something like that. What I mean is – GIFs are hardly a solid basis for a risk decision of this magnitude. It's worth taking some time to check out what the **official airspace warnings** actually say...

SAFE⚡AIRSPACE

Conflict Zone & Risk Database
All current warnings in one place

Libya

Risk Level: One - Do Not Fly

[about risk levels]

A civil war has been ongoing since 2014. Some progress made in Oct 2020 with the formation of a new government, but Libya remains an active conflict with armed clashes between various rival militia groups across the country. There is a high risk to civil aircraft. Libyan airspace (HLLL/Tripoli FIR) should be avoided entirely. Essentially a total flight ban for US and UK operators, and several other countries have warnings in place.

The **primary risk** is a misident by Libyan air defense systems, or by militia who have threatened to shoot down aircraft operating in western Libya, including HLLM/Tripoli Mitiga airport. Military activity reported over the high-seas which is either operating as OAT or not in control with ATC. Risk remains high across Libya at all flight levels, and avoidance of all airspace and airports is strongly recommended.

The **secondary risk** is that reliable ATC services cannot be guaranteed. The past few years have seen regular ATS and radar outages across the HLLL FIR airspace, and severe limitations in VHF capability, with operators having to communicate with Malta ATC for guidance.

Notifications

SUBS

to receive Conflict Zone

We will alert
changes, c
they are

Step into our office…

Safeairspace.net is our **Conflict Zone & Risk Database.** It will tell you what you need to know about airspace warnings.

==**The short story for Libya is this:** Several countries have airspace warnings for Libya, and all say pretty much the same thing – operators should avoid Libya's HLLL/Tripoli FIR entirely, due to the potential risk from anti-aviation weaponry and military operations. Libya remains an active conflict zone with armed clashes between various rival militia groups across the country, and there is a high risk to civil aircraft.==

Starting to get the feeling like we've been here before? That's because we have. We asked all these exact same questions back in 2022, and again in 2023, and decided that **no, Libya probably wasn't safe to fly to.**

But anyway, that was then and this is now. On with the guide…

Step 4: Check The News

August 2023: Major evacuation of aircraft from Tripoli due to violent clashes and gunfire at Mitiga airport. More info.

Aug 2022: Militia air defense forces claimed to have shot down a US drone operating in the vicinity of Benghazi during a period of increased tensions and threats of renewed violence between competing militias vying for control of Tripoli.

June 2022: Failed attempt by militia to enter Tripoli to seize control of government offices, resulting in armed clashes and suspension of flights at HLLM/Mitiga airport.

Jan 2020: Multiple airstrikes targeting HLLM/Mitiga airport. Videos on social media showing planes landing at the airport as shells are falling in the background.

Nov 2019: Militia advancing on the capital, Tripoli, declared a no-fly-zone around the city, threatening to shoot-down civil aircraft attempting to fly to HLLM/Mitiga airport.

And that's just the big-ticket aviation related stuff. For a full history of the endless horrors suffered by the poor people of Libya stretching back to 2011, check here.

Step 5: Ask Someone Who's Gone There

If in doubt, **just look at what other people are doing.**

Here's a report we recently received from an operator who went to Libya:

POST CARD

We recently went to Libya as an advance party for our airline, to work out if we should start flying there.

So we land in Libya, all set to explore the potential of Mitiga, Misrata, and Benina Airports. Excitement in the air, but so are concerns about safety and security.

The report card for the airports isn't exactly stellar. Potholes, cracks, and overgrown vegetation are the norm on the runways, making us feel like we're navigating a makeshift obstacle course.

Air traffic control? Well, it's basically visual flight rules only — radar and instrument landing systems seem to be on a permanent vacation.

Firefighting capabilities? Let's just say, it's a bit like bringing a water gun to a blaze.

The Libyan Civil Aviation Authority agrees with our findings and promises improvements, like installing radar and upgrading firefighting capabilities. But the security situation is a whole other story. Misrata seems like the safest bet, but Mitiga is a downright nightmare. Patchy security — a local militia called Rada runs everything, and they seem more interested in local politics than airport safety.

In the end, we decided to hit the pause button on starting operations. Mitiga's security situation is a hard pass, and we're not willing to compromise. So, until they let us bring our own security detail to the party, Libya will have to wait for our flights. Safety first, always!

Sent via postcard on layover in Siracusa, Sicily.

Step 6: Ask Someone Who Has To Deal With It ALL THE TIME

The ultimate shortcut to solving complex stuff you don't know much about? **Ask someone who knows a whole bunch about it.**

Here's a report from ATC in a neighbouring ACC to Libya:

TRANSCRIPT OF CODED MESSAGE RECEIVED:

1. WE HAVE INITIATED COMMUNICATION WITH LIBYAN ATM, BUT PROGRESS IS SLOW.

2. INCREASED ACTIVITY AT LIBYAN DOMESTIC AIRPORTS SIGNALS IMPROVED STABILITY, WITH SOME CARGO OPERATIONS RESUMING.

3. CHALLENGES PERSIST IN ESTABLISHING SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITIES AND RESOLVING COMMUNICATION ISSUES ACROSS THE FIR.

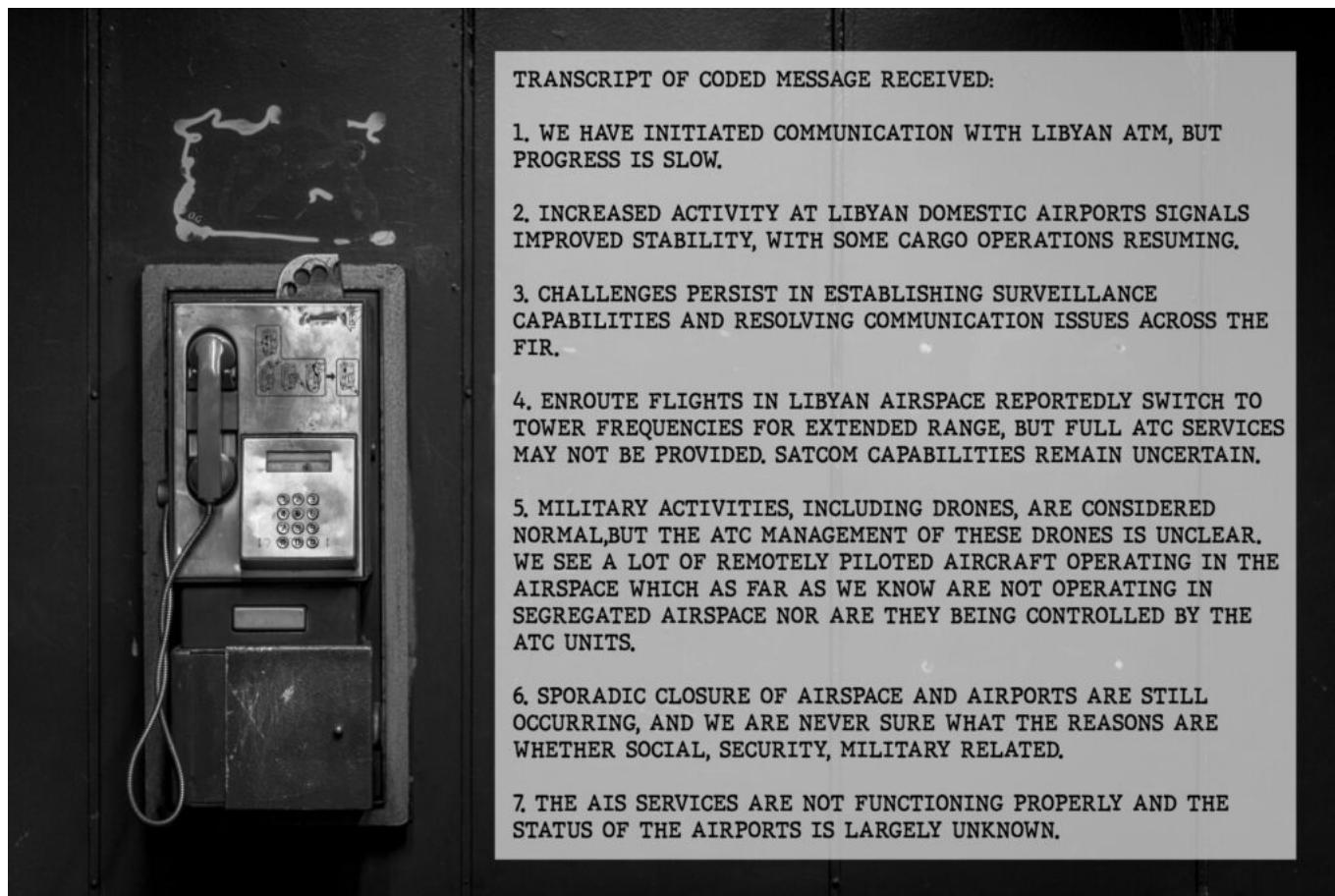4. ENROUTE FLIGHTS IN LIBYAN AIRSPACE REPORTEDLY SWITCH TO TOWER FREQUENCIES FOR EXTENDED RANGE, BUT FULL ATC SERVICES MAY NOT BE PROVIDED. SATCOM CAPABILITIES REMAIN UNCERTAIN.

5. MILITARY ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING DRONES, ARE CONSIDERED NORMAL, BUT THE ATC MANAGEMENT OF THESE DRONES IS UNCLEAR. WE SEE A LOT OF REMOTELY PILOTED AIRCRAFT OPERATING IN THE AIRSPACE WHICH AS FAR AS WE KNOW ARE NOT OPERATING IN SEGREGATED AIRSPACE NOR ARE THEY BEING CONTROLLED BY THE ATC UNITS.

6. SPORADIC CLOSURE OF AIRSPACE AND AIRPORTS ARE STILL OCCURRING, AND WE ARE NEVER SURE WHAT THE REASONS ARE WHETHER SOCIAL, SECURITY, MILITARY RELATED.

7. THE AIS SERVICES ARE NOT FUNCTIONING PROPERLY AND THE STATUS OF THE AIRPORTS IS LARGELY UNKNOWN.

OPSGROUP Listening Station, back alley of Lucky Star Chicken Restaurant, Berlin.

Step 7: Conclusion

The conclusion to this Idiot's Guide to Libya? **NO. Do Not Fly. Avoid.**

If you need reminding, you can print out this helpful Opsicle, and take it with you in your flight bag.

Libya Airspace: An Idiot's Guide

NO

Not an idiot? Want some actual info? Click here.

⬆ You can click the image above to download the PDF.

Postscript: The Curious Case of the EASA CZIB

We mentioned this at the start. And in the middle. Now again here at the end.

In their amended CZIB, EASA are now saying it's probably OK to start flying to airports on Libya's coastline again – as long as you approach from the sea, talk to ATC, and do a risk assessment.

If you're a European airline keen to resume flights to Libya, **you might like this piece of news.** Everyone's risk appetite is different, after all.

Some history here: In July 2023, Italy cancelled its 10-year ban on flights to/from Libya, the idea being to resume airline flights between the two countries at some point. So aircraft are technically no longer banned from Italian airports and airspace if they want to fly from Libya (apart from Libyan operators, who are still banned from EU airspace). You still need to get special permission from the Malta CAA if you want to do this, as per the LMMM Notams.

Why is the amended EASA CZIB "curious"? Because there's no evidence that there has actually been any reduction in airspace risk here. None of the state airspace warnings have changed, and EASA have not provided any of the reasoning behind the decision to ease their warning.

So for now, our advice remains the same: Libyan airspace (the HLLL/Tripoli FIR) should be avoided

entirely.

See you again next year for another look at why you might want to avoid Libya!

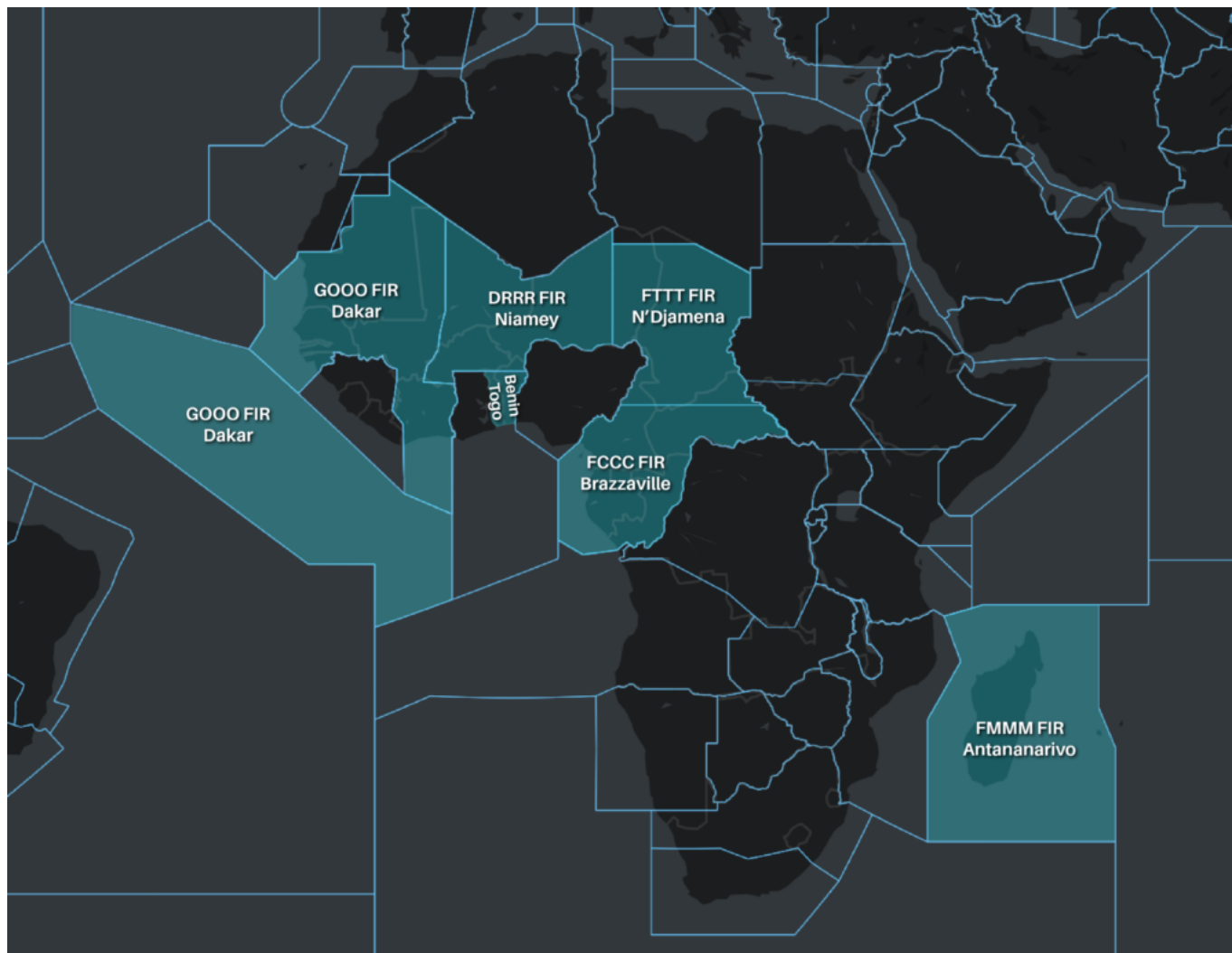# Free Route Airspace in Africa

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

Key Points

- **Free Route Airspace (i.e. you can fly direct between waypoints) is now available across most parts of ASECNA airspace in Africa, FL250 and above, as of 25 Jan 2024.**

- **There are a few other places in Africa where FRA is available too.**

- **There doesn't seem to be a map of where <u>all the FRA regions in Africa</u> are, so we made one (check the map right at the bottom of this article!)**

Where is ASECNA airspace?

Here:

Which parts have Free Route Airspace here?

These UTAs: Nouakchott, Bamako, Ouagadougou, Abidjan, Lome, Niamey, Douala, Libreville, and Brazzaville.

These FIRs: GOOO/Dakar, FTTT/Ndjamena, and FMMM/Antananarivo.

Flights can plan direct between the **reporting points of the boundary of the respective UTA or FIR.**

Unfortunately, there **doesn't seem to be one nice big map** showing exactly where these all are.

We grabbed the waypoints from the ASECNA AIP ENR Section 3. We tried plotting all these on one map, but it quickly became very messy. So here's a turgid list of waypoints for you (sorry!) just in case you want them:

Ouagadougou UTA: OPUGO TAREN DEKAS OXIDU UMOVO NAVON TUMUT NANGA BIGOM TUXID ANIXA EBSUD EDGIB ONUSI TAVOT NUSUR.

Douala UTA: OBUDU TAKUM PONDO KEMOX ARKEV DESAM TAPEK VOLMU ARASI BTA IPOVO GEBRO ARDEX RALIN ILBAS IKROP.

Brazzaville UTA: PONDO GADUV INIGO ASSAM TJN NAMOR NARTU UMOSA EDGUM RULDO NASED MISRU ONUDA KITEK ASKON AMPER BOSKI POGBA MERON OPDAK GOPUR MPK PIPLO AGTOM EMSAT BAMAV AMSIK BZ PIRMI LIKAD ARAKI TIMAK NERUP SEMUL ARKOS GARLA ONLEN EDOTO PILVI TAPIL MOVOD NEBEX MISTI ONKAR TAPEK DESAM ARKEV KEMOX.

Abidjan UTA: BIGOM AMSAT TUSEK ONESI SESIG EGADU ARABA GANKA INAKA RASAD EMTAL URAPI ATANI ARLEM IPEKA DEVLI MEGOT UBUTU AMPAS ERMIT GUREL TUXID.

Libreville UTA: BIPIV GEBRO IPOVO BTA ARASI VOLMU ONKAR MISTI NEBEX MOVOD TAPIL PILVI EDOTO ONLEN VORET ILDAN NURIP AGSIM AGRUB GULEP BOVGA.

Bamako UTA: GUREL VOLNA MOPAL UBATI NEGLO GATAX IPUGA MESER KIMGA ILDES EREMO ONTOL ONIMI ONUSI EDGIB EBSUD ANIXA INPOS.

Nouakchott UTA: NEVDI DEMIL POVIN MOKOD TIPAD ILDES EREMO ONTOL ONIMI POTOL ODATA SBITA BRENA BULIS ECHED MIYEC.

Niamey UTA: TERAS ZAWAT INAMA EREBO ERKEL TOBUK IKTAV RAKOM NAMIS INISA IPANO SABSI RIPOL KORUT RISUB DETAR MOLIT USNAV POMPA NANOS UBEVA DOGON GULEN BOVDA LITAK SIRTO TATAT BATIA GAPAG ENOXO BULSA TAREN OPUGO GALIV NUSUR TAVOT MTI ONIMI ODATA POTOL USRUT IPOBA MOKAT.

Lome UTA: GAPAG BATIA TATAT SIRTO LITAK NASTO GANDA TENTU SEVAX OPALA TEMSA POLTO KIPSA EPITI GASLO KETAT NEPRO USTIX PAMPA BUDNO IPORI ARLEX TAMIL ENOXO.

FTTT/Ndjamena FIR: IPONO LIGAT TONBA GARIN DEKTU RAKOM NAMIS INISA IPANO SABSI RIPOL ENBUT RAVOT ONTOP SIGAL KELAK MOMIG ONSEV EBIMU ETRIS GATAG INIGO ASSAM TJN NAMOR NARTU UMOSA EDGUM RULDO NASED MISRU ONUDA KAFIA MONAN KISAL KURAM ILBIB GENEI.

**GOOO/Dakar FIR:** SEPOM LUMPO MOGSA AKDAK BADIA IPUGA NEVDI BIKIS.

FMMM/Antananarivo FIR: ETGUN TETRO SUNIR EROPA EGMAD NERUL IXEMA IMKIB ETLEG GADNO ETLOP ENDEL SOLAL KINAN TABNO BERIL ATOLA NESAM DENLI ANKOR MIROV RUPIG AMBOD IBMAT APKOT APLEM UVENA DOBUT EGLIP UNKIK GERAG GETIR.

We did make a little map of the **FMMM/Antananarivo (Madagascar)** ones, cos they're kinda funky:
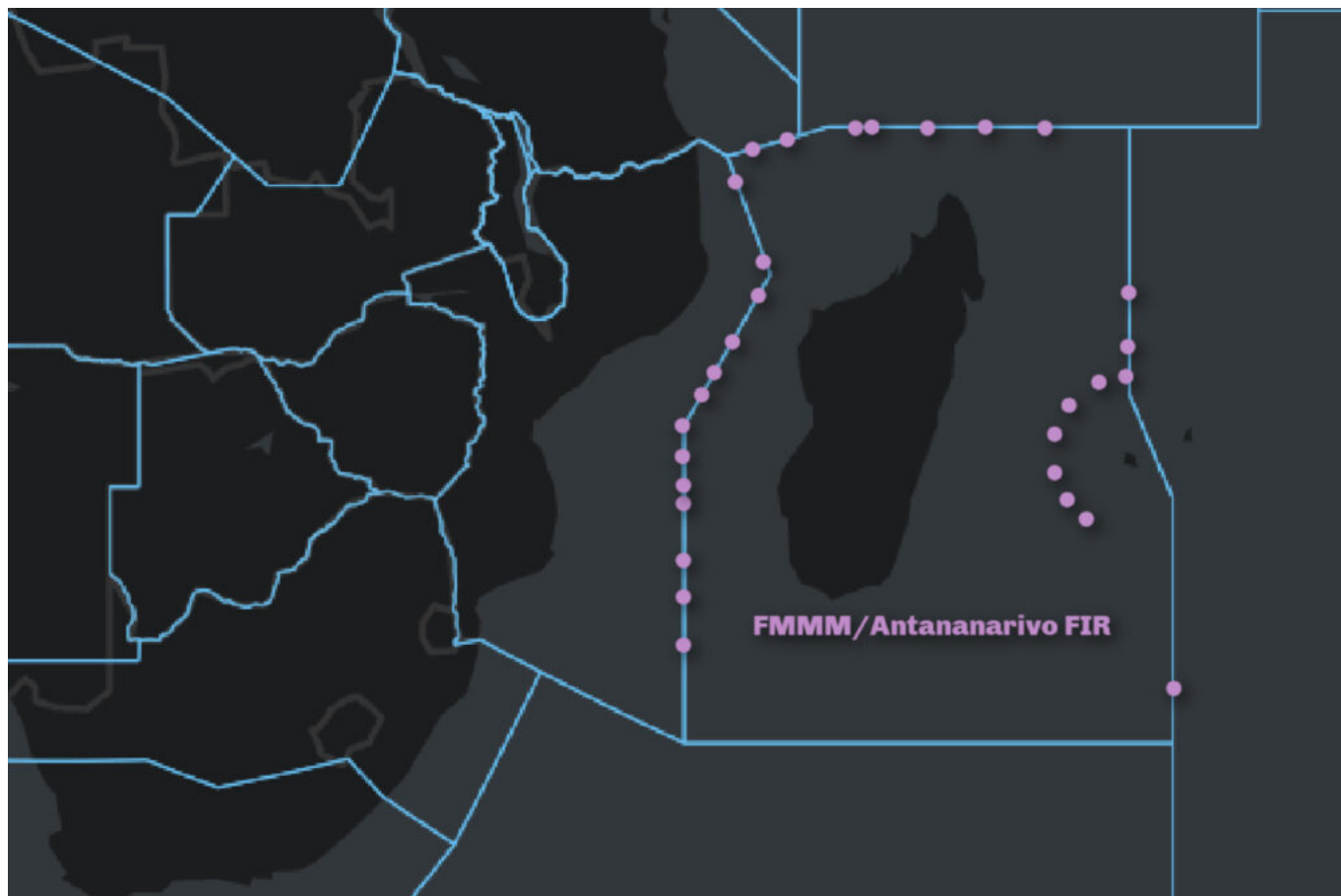
That weird little curve is the CTA boundary for FMEE/Reunion airport – no FRAing allowed there!

And we made this little map of the **GOOO/Dakar (Senegal)** ones too, just because the airspace covers a massive area (and there's also the Dakar Oceanic FIR too) but **you can only plan direct within a very small area:**
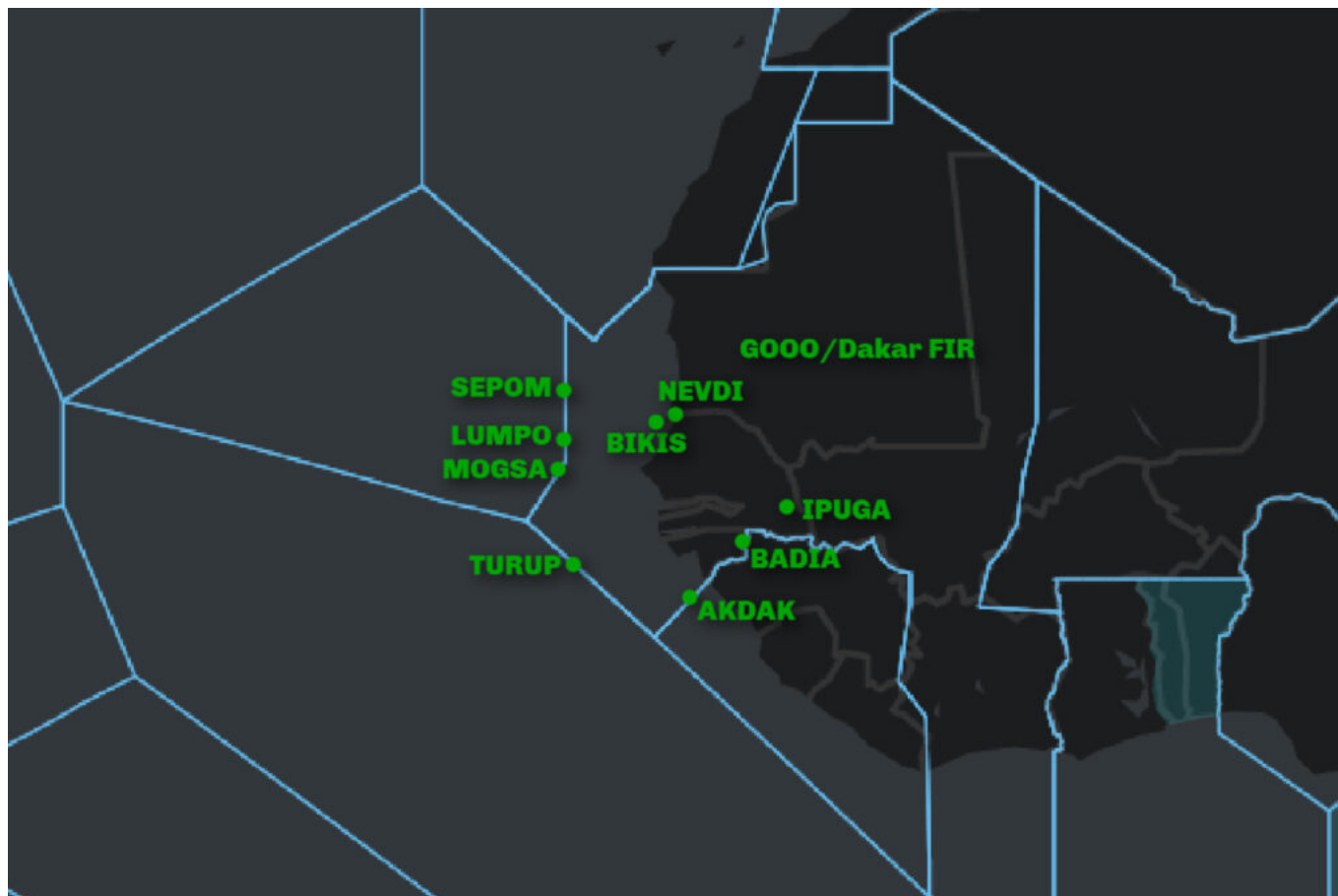
In the GOOO/Dakar FIR, you can only fly direct via these green points.

For more info, check the full details in the ASECNA AIP ENR 3.5 sections.
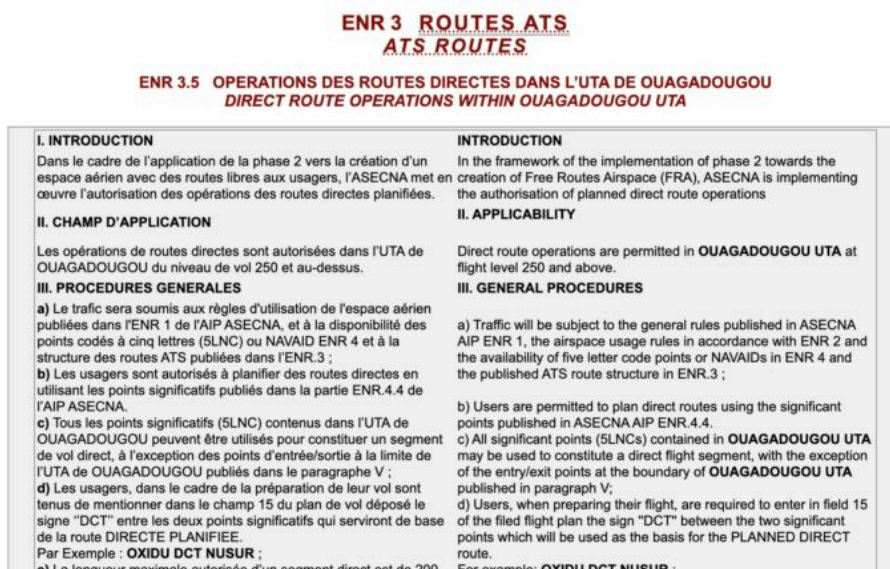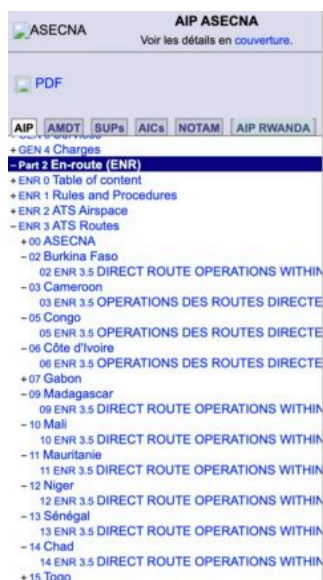
Where else in Africa has Free Route Airspace?

Good question! We think it's just these places:

**Morocco:** FL195-FL460 in the Agadir CTA (currently only available between 2200-0600z)

Ghana: FL290-FL460 in the DGAC/Accra FIR between latitudes 2N and 11N.

Nigeria: FL245 and above in the DNKK/Kano FIR.

Mauritius: FL245-FL460 in the southern part of the FIMM/Mauritius FIR South of 25S.

So, putting that all together on one map (which is the thing we really wanted in the first place)...

Here are all the places in Africa which now have Free Route Airspace!
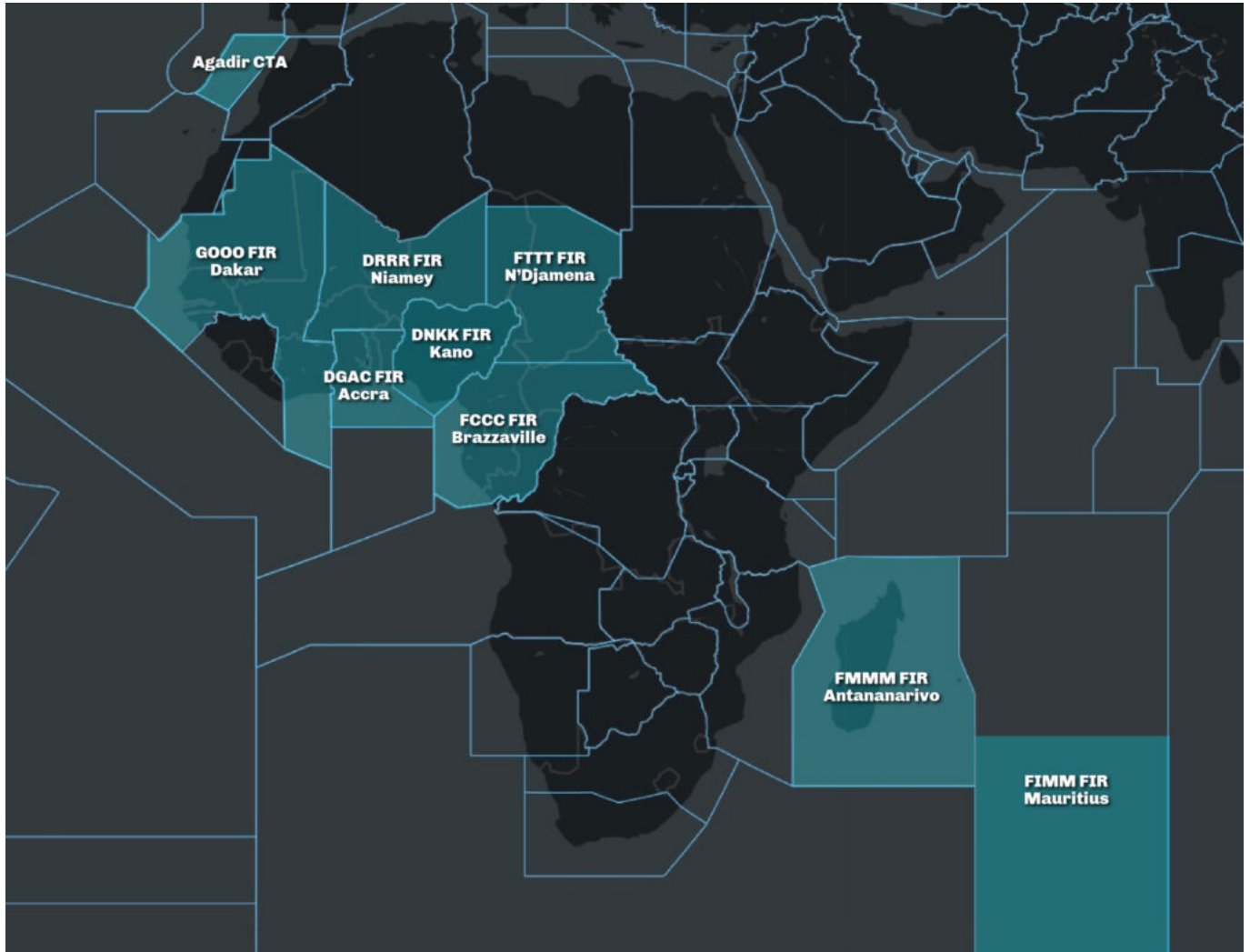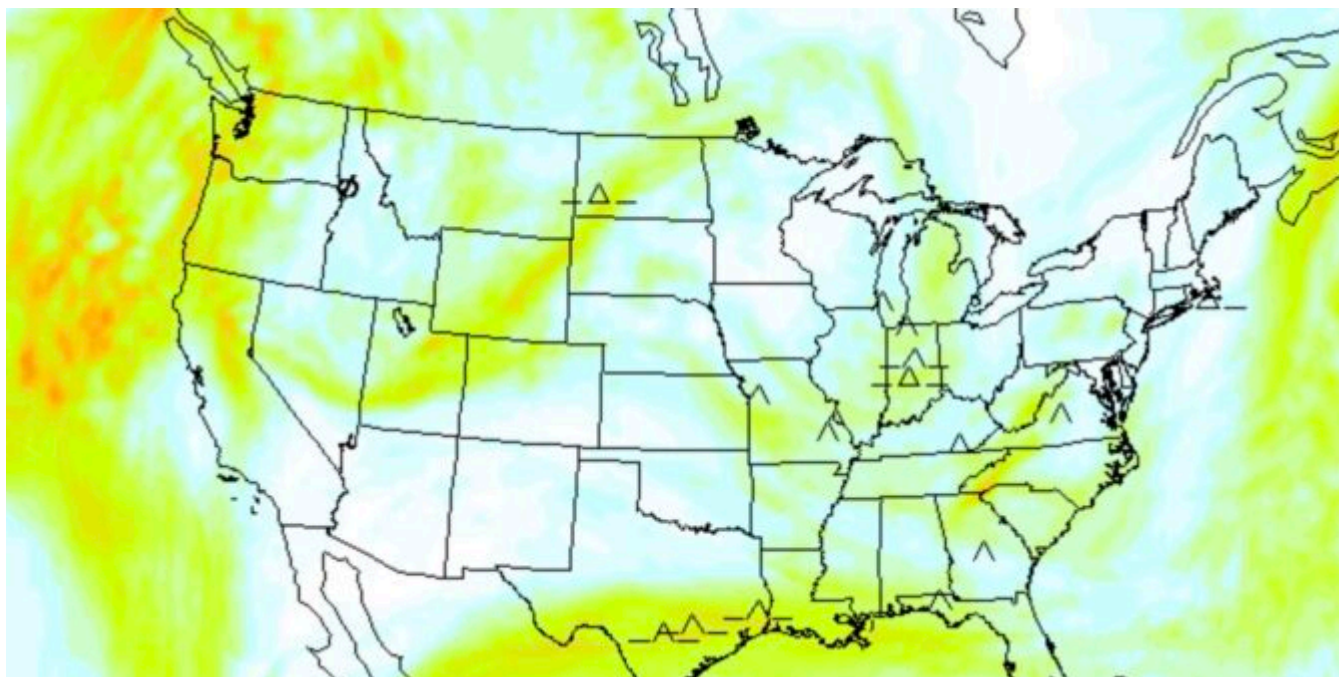

Phew, we made it there in the end.

If you know of any more places which should be added to this map (FIRs, UTAs, CTAs, etc), let us know: news@ops.group

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Who is Eddie? And what does he have to do with turbulence?

Chris Shieff
6 March, 2024

The other day, before another oceanic crossing, I settled in to brief myself on that afternoon's flight plan.

As I scalded my mouth with a hastily purchased airport coffee and began to peruse the carefully collated collection of fuel burns and leg times, my eyes fell upon the dispatcher's remarks. As I stared, the following note stared right back at me...

"Sorry guys, unavoidable EDR 60 at TOC..."

Apology accepted. **But what on earth is EDR 60?**

With the weight of the braid on my shoulder, multiplied by a factor of my stupidity as a proficient but highly 'human' aviator, I realised I needed to call in the big guns – this was a job for Google.

A powerful blankness ensued as I surveyed the answer... **Eddy Dissipation Rate.** The official metric of ICAO and World Met Organization turbulence reporting since I was in high school. Had I been living in a cave?

This thing mattered, and so I needed to dig deeper.

Here's what I found out:

...it's an aircraft-independent meteorological field expressed in meters squared per second cubed...

Not helpful. I read on...

...the cube root of the dissipation rate of turbulent kinetic energy...

I took another sip of coffee. I didn't have time for this.

Sign-on was approaching, along with hundreds of passengers expecting me to protect them from this 'EDR 60′ with my big fancy license. **All I knew was that it meant bumps.** Clearly, I needed to get a better grasp on this.

If you already know what EDR is, and could explain it to me on a napkin, there's no need to read on. If you're 'asking for a friend,' here is a crash course, written in human.

The Simplest Answer

You don't need to cube anything. Except maybe the confidence you lost (like me) in not knowing what an EDR is. It's pretty simple (ignoring the arithmetic of measuring it).

The higher the number, the more intense clear air turbulence may be…if you encounter it. Anything over 50 may result in moderate to severe CAT.

But that interpretation also depends on the type of aircraft you are flying.

So, there may be some nasty stuff around. But if you want to get your head around it, you'll need to dig a little deeper.

So, let's dig…

When we talk about turbulence, we refer to **light, moderate, severe, and extreme.** We attempt to categorise these with useful definitions like 'loss of control.'

The problem is that it is quite challenging to quantify the severity of CAT concerning different aircraft types – **what's bad in a 152, may not be as bad in a Gulfstream.** It varies from aeroplane to aeroplane, and forecasters don't know what equipment you operate.

This is where EDR comes into it – **it doesn't cares about what aircraft you fly.** It is just a measure of something.

An eddy is simply the swirling of fluid. And air behaves like a fluid. A turbulent atmosphere will make these eddies disappear quicker. A calmer one will allow them to persist.

So, if we know what is happening to these eddies, it can give us an indication of how 'churny' the atmosphere is, along with a healthy dose of mathematics, of course.

Eddies dissipate quickly = a turbulent atmosphere.

An EDR is measured with a value of between 0 and 1. But seeing a value of 0.4 for instance, doesn't exactly leap off the page of your flight plan.

So, we multiply it by a factor of 100 to make it easier to use.

Cool, we're almost there…
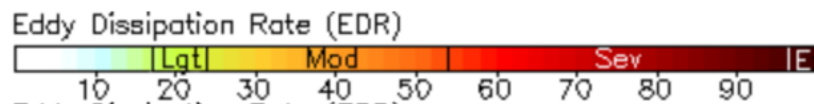
One size doesn't fit all

Once we have an EDR, we must know what to do with it.

As mentioned, every aircraft is different and will respond differently to turbulence. **This is where weight begins to matter.**
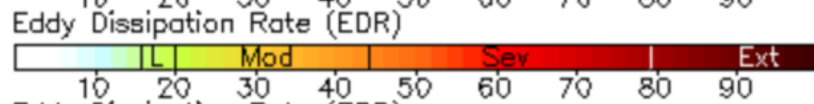
An EDR of 20 might produce moderate turbulence for a King Air, but gently shake the champagne glasses of an A380 and nothing more.

The clever folk at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, therefore did a study and came up with three weight classes to help you understand an EDR:

Heavy Aircraft:

Eddy Dissipation Rate (EDR)

| | | Lgt | Mod | | | Sev | | | | |E |
| 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 |

Medium Aircraft:

Eddy Dissipation Rate (EDR)

| | | L | | Mod | | | Sev | | | | Ext |
| 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 |

Light Aircraft:

Eddy Dissipation Rate (EDR)

| | | L | | Mod | | | Sev | | | | Ext |
| 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 |

Where do I find this EDR?

Many non-airline folk don't have the luxury of a friendly dispatcher like I had.

But you can quickly look it up. Better yet, it is as simple as paint by numbers (if you know what to do with the answer).

It would help if you had GTG (graphical turbulence guidance) like the one below. And the colours change depending on how heavy your aeroplane is.
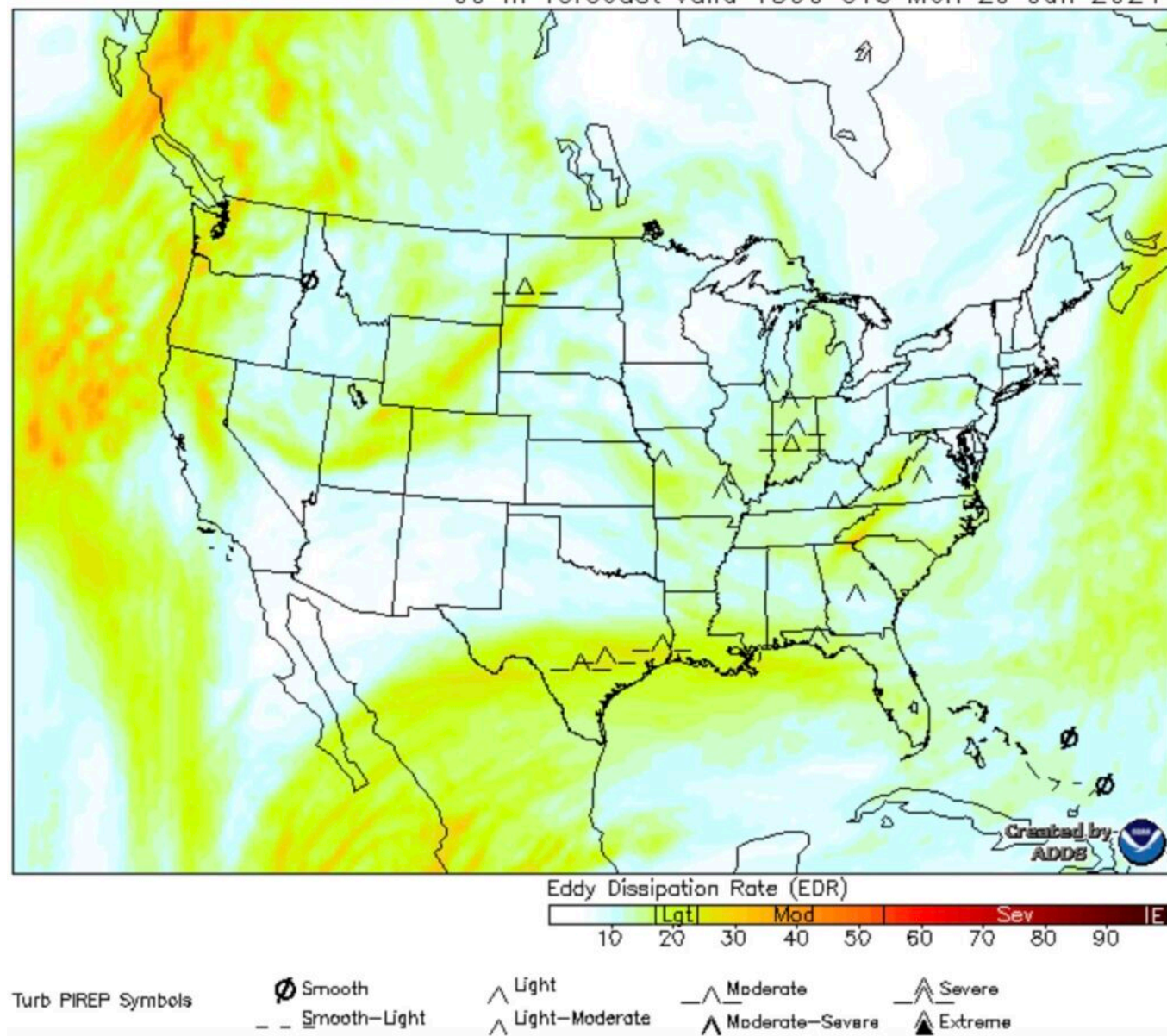
The NOAA's example of a GTG chart (graphical turbulence guidance).

Better yet, the way EDRs are presented can be changed. For instance, cross-sections of a route can also give pilots a good indication of the smoothest levels.

Check out the NOAA website **here**.

March 2024 Singapore Airspace Changes

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

Singapore and Indonesia will **realign their FIRs** from 21 Mar 2024.

They agreed to do this so that the new FIR boundary (between the WSJC/Singapore and WIIF/Jakarta FIRs) will be generally more aligned with Indonesia's territorial boundaries.

It looks like not much will change in terms of flight ops, as **Singapore will continue to control the airspace. For full details of the upcoming change, check SUP 18/2024.**

But there is one important issue this FIR realignment will hopefully fix for good – it will now be more clear that **overflights of Indonesia's Riau Islands require an Indonesia overflight permit!**
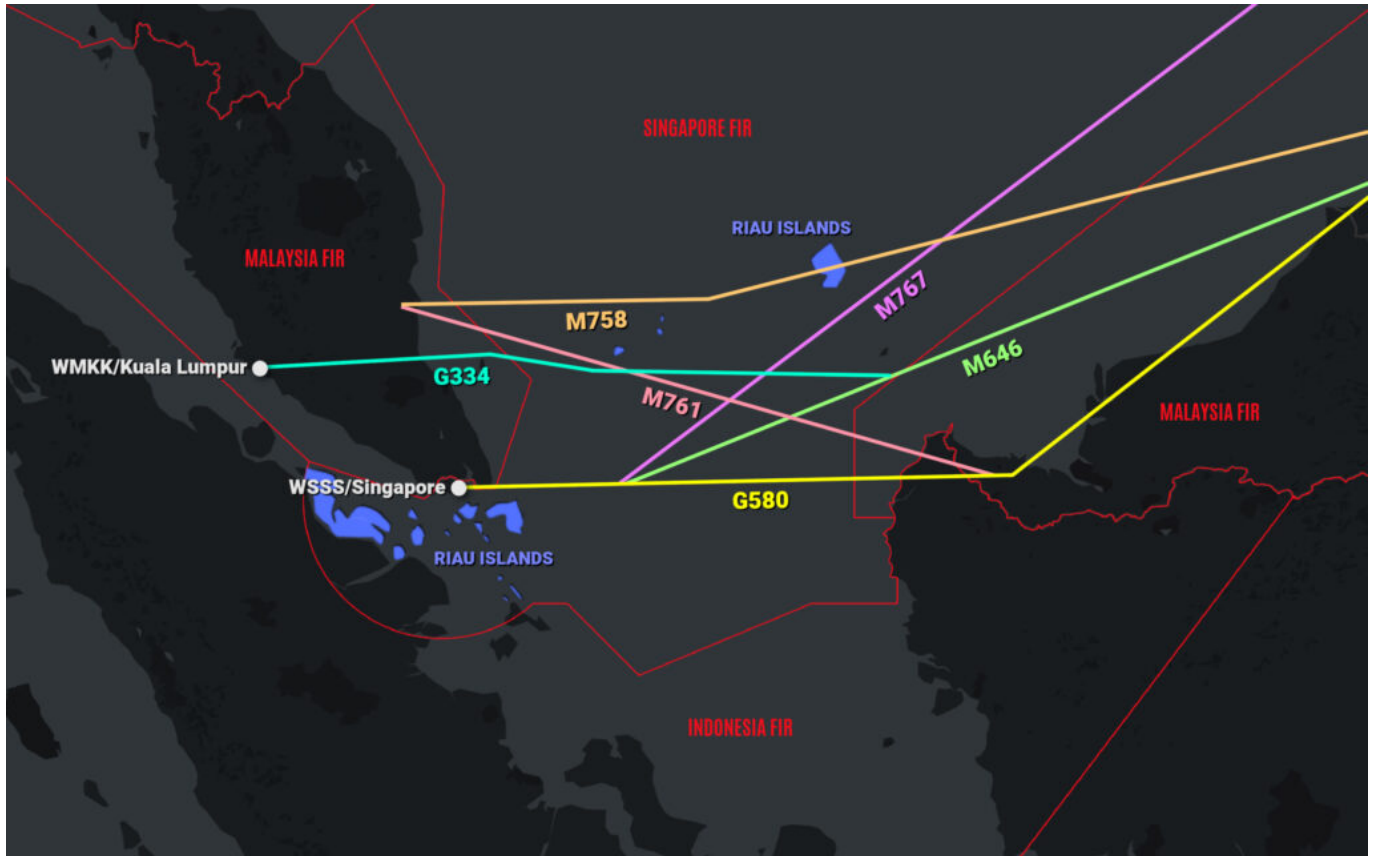
How the airspace currently looks, with Indonesia's Riau Islands inside Singapore airspace.

This has been an issue in the past, with some flights not realizing they needed an Indonesia overflight permit to overfly these islands – as they sat under the WSJC/Singapore FIR.

In 2019, two Indonesian F-16s intercepted an Ethiopian Airlines cargo flight for flying across Indonesian airspace without permission. The aircraft was initially supposed to operate from HAAB/Addis Ababa to VHHH/Hong Kong, but was modified at the last minute to route via WSSS/Singapore instead. **The aircraft was intercepted forced to land at WIDD/Batam Island.**
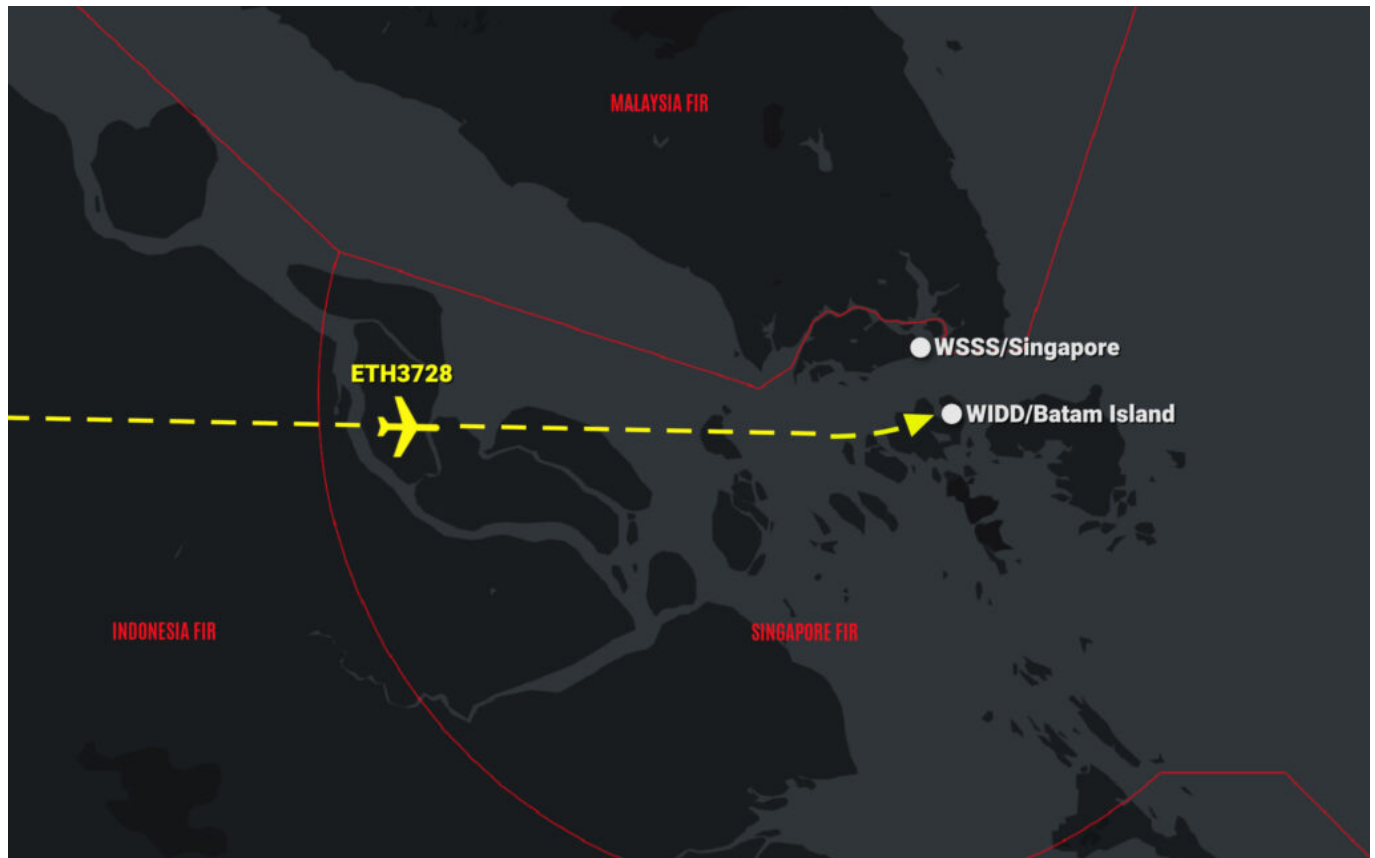
There have been several other incidents both before and since then, including some where Indonesia blamed US and Indian military planes of violating their airspace without permission.

But when the FIRs realign on 21 Mar 2024, there should hopefully be **no more confusion about permit requirements** for this chunk of airspace! You can find all the details in **SUP 18/2024**, but here's how it's going to look:
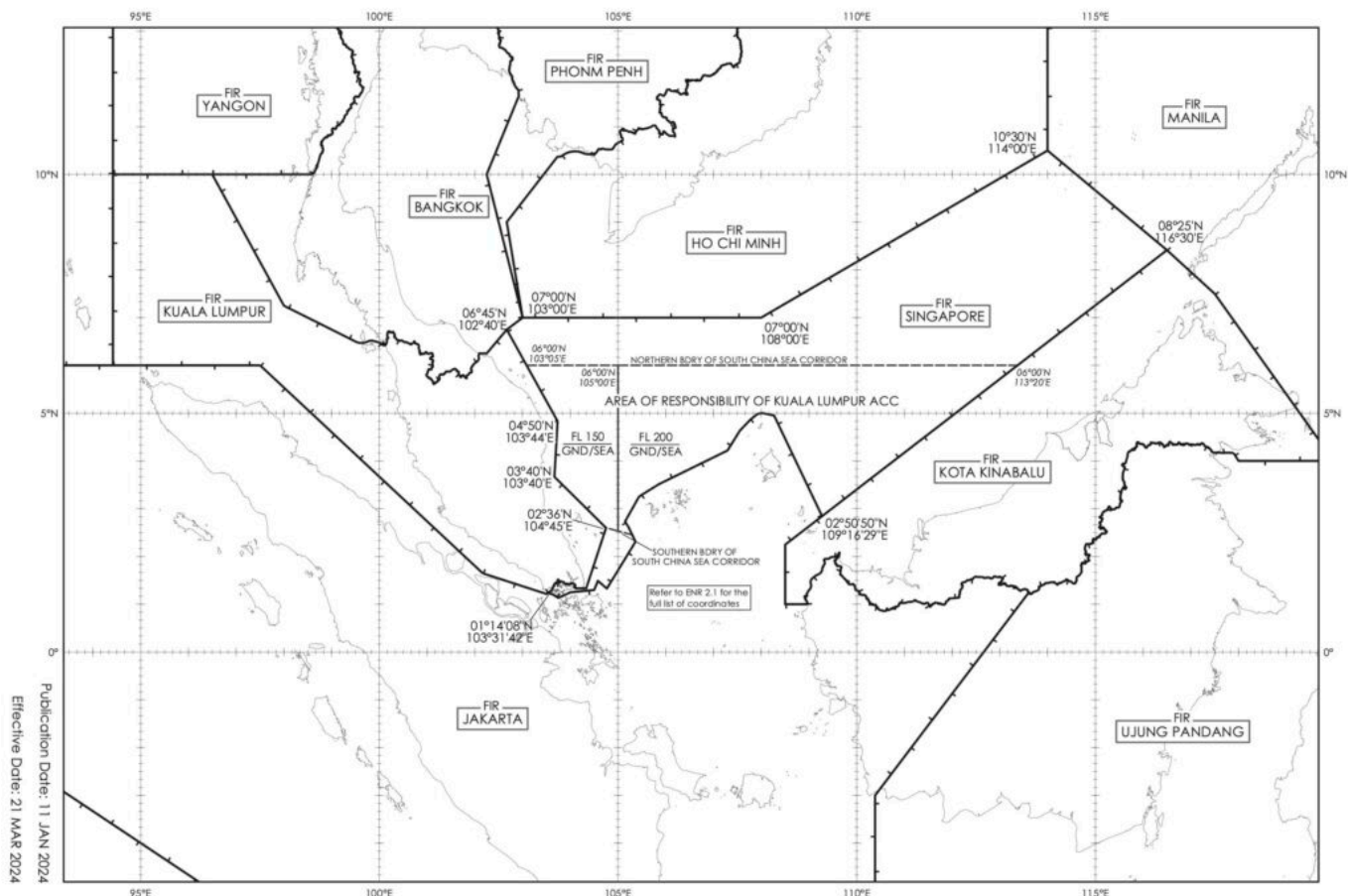
And this one is maybe useful too – this shows the **airspace which will continue to be controlled by Singapore ATC:**
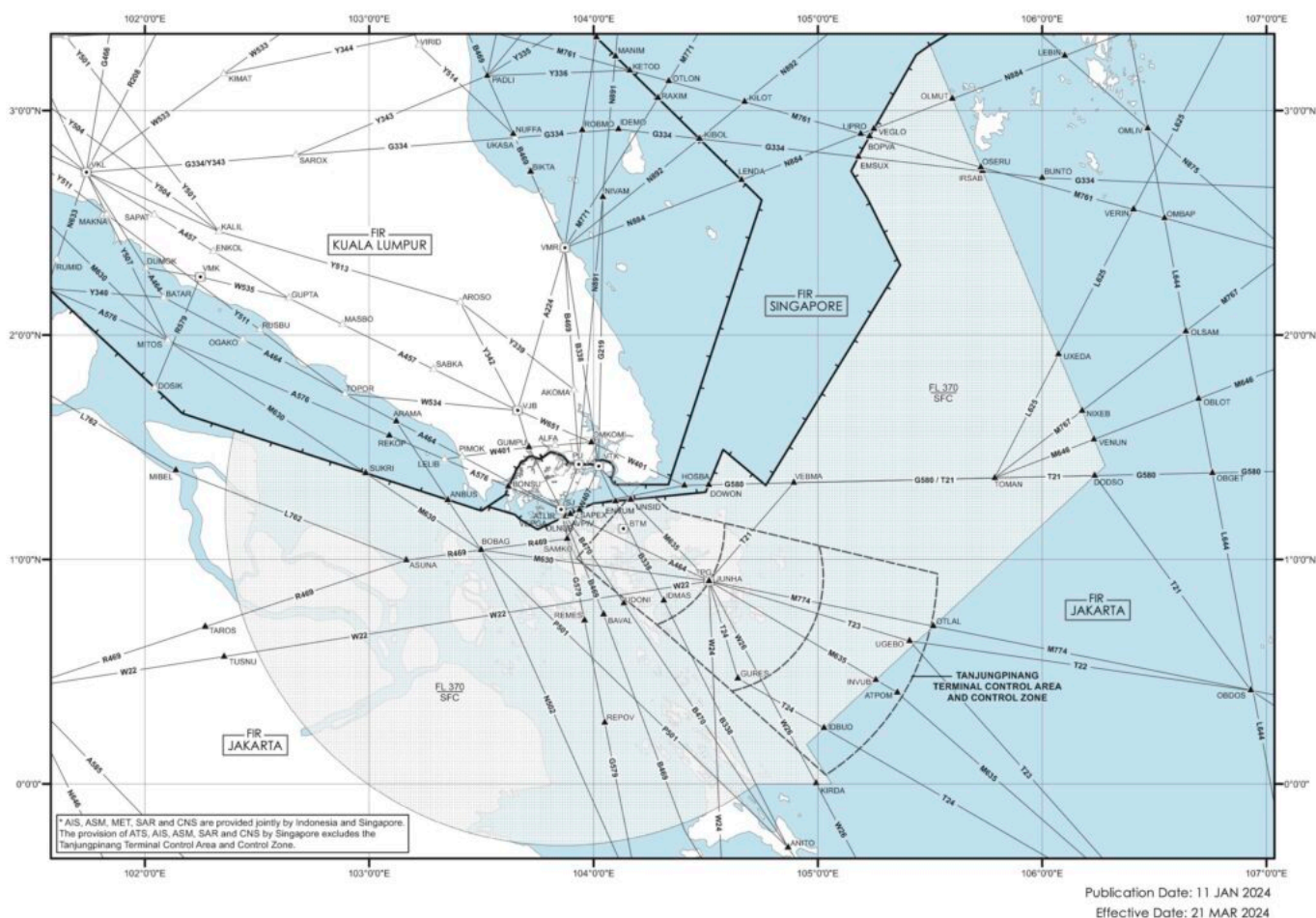
Japan Boosts ATC Procedures and Lessons from Haneda

Chris Shieff
6 March, 2024

Japan has announced changes (in Japanese) to **ATC protocols** at airports throughout the country. This follows the tragic collision of an Airbus A350 and Dash 8 on an active runway at **RJTT/Haneda** on Jan 2.

While we wait for more answers, authorities have been quick to implement new procedures. Here's what you need to know (translated), if you're headed to Japan tomorrow.

Visually Clear

Authorities are urging operators to mandate a check by aircrew that the runway is **visually clear** before landing or entering. In other words – don't rely on a clearance alone.

You may need to take this one with a grain of salt. For a myriad of reasons, it may not be practical or possible for pilots to make an accurate assessment that a runway is vacant. Take the example below – how would you fare?

Cleared for immediate take-off, with one landing behind. Is the runway clear, or is that a vehicle ahead?

But from an airmanship perspective, the intention is that our eyeballs may become the last line of defense.

Forget your place in the queue

Early indications from the accident transcript indicate that the crew of the Dash 8 may have misinterpreted the use of the phrase **'number 1'** when cleared to the runway's holding point.

To a **fluent English speaker**, the implication may appear quite simple – you are number one in the queue to depart.

But to the crew of the Dash, it may have meant you are *number one for the runway*.

So, from now on ATC will no longer advise aircraft of their place in the sequence for departure.

Their official note says there are now only four phrases that will be used to imply an aircraft can enter a runway. These are:

- **Cleared for take-off.**
- **Line up and wait.**
- **Cross runway.**
- **Taxi via runway.**

If you hear anything else, it is non-standard. **Stop and make sure you clarify the clearance.**

Behind the Scenes

There are changes happening in the tower too. While they have no operational impact for pilots, it may be reassuring to know about them.

Essentially the bulletin reinforces there will be more staff on hand to constantly monitor ground radar for **early detection of potential runway incursions.**

And work is underway to improve the visibility of paint and signage at runway holding points, especially where no stop-bars are installed or working.

As a collective, the industry needs to do more

Can I address an elephant in the room?

Having read the above bulletin, I find myself flipping the page over to see what's on the other side. I can't help but ask myself... *is that it?*

Japan's bulletin is, for all intents and purposes **a reminder of what should be happening anyway.**

In my opinion, it seems to offer little more than a gesture of reassurance that authorities have been seen to act in the face of another tragedy.

The reality is that this wasn't just a Japan problem. All the warning signs were there *before* Haneda, around the world.

Have you seen this report? Back in November it was assembled by a team of specialists who cast doubt over the future safety of the US NAS.

In a six-week period, there had been no less than **five near-miss incidents involving runway incursions and passenger jets at major US airports**. Five, in six weeks – the highest rate in over half a decade.

In the report they identified **risk factors** (such as staff shortages, aging infrastructure and inconsistent funding) as issues endemic to these near-misses. No amount of bulletin-writing can fix these problems.

With the news that traffic levels will soon surpass those seen before the pandemic, I feel unsettled that the bullish outlook for global aviation is quickly outgrowing the safety infrastructure that protects us.

Perhaps it's time for us to collectively tap the brakes and **put safety ahead of profit**, lest Haneda be the first of a number of lessons.

As a parting shot, it's important to note that **technologies already exist to solidly improve runway safety** far beyond bulletins like the one above. Take for instance, the final approach runway occupancy signal (FAROS).

This independent and fully automatic safety addition to runway status lights **warn pilots on final approach in real time that a runway is occupied.** Consider the impact this may have had that evening in the darkness of Haneda's Runway 34R.

What's needed is the time, money and willingness of industry stakeholders to implement them. **We need to do more to prevent accidents like Haneda, rather than react to them.** At the very least, Haneda is a wake-up call that the time to act on truly preventing runway incursions at busy airports is now, and not next time.

NAT Conundrums Volume IV: Contingency Procedures

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

Welcome to our 4th Volume of North Atlantic Conundrums!

Volume I covered the following three conundrums:

1. To SLOP, or not to SLOP?
2. What's the difference between the NAT Region and the NAT HLA?
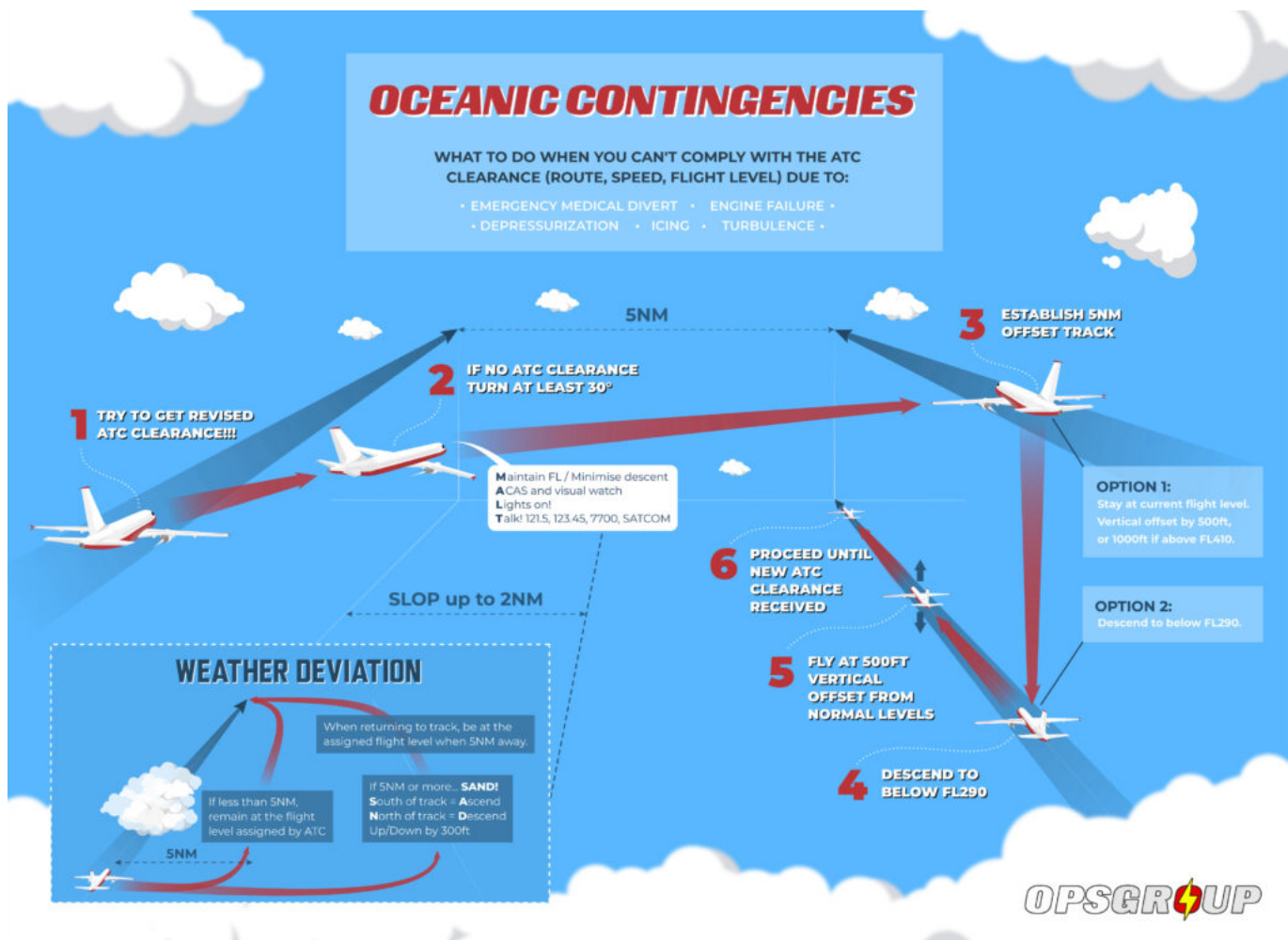3. Can I fly across the North Atlantic without Datalink?

Volume II covered these additional three:

4. Do you need to plot on Blue Spruce Routes?
5. Do we still fly Weather Contingency Procedures on Blue Spruce routes?
6. When can we disregard an ATC clearance and follow the contingency procedure instead?

Volume III looked at:

7. GOTA airspace.

And this post, Volume IV, looks at NAT Contingency Procedures – not those related to weather issues (which are well-known and described in the regs without the risk of misinterpretation), but those related to times when you need to deviate from your ATC clearance (due to comms issues, turbulence, depressurization, engine failure, immediate diversion, and other emergency situations).

OCEANIC CONTINGENCIES

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU CAN'T COMPLY WITH THE ATC CLEARANCE (ROUTE, SPEED, FLIGHT LEVEL) DUE TO:

• EMERGENCY MEDICAL DIVERT • ENGINE FAILURE •
• DEPRESSURIZATION • ICING • TURBULENCE •

1 TRY TO GET REVISED ATC CLEARANCE!!!

2 IF NO ATC CLEARANCE TURN AT LEAST 30°

5NM

Maintain FL / Minimise descent
ACAS and visual watch
Lights on!
Talk! 121.5, 123.45, 7700, SATCOM

3 ESTABLISH 5NM OFFSET TRACK

OPTION 1:
Stay at current flight level. Vertical offset by 500ft, or 1000ft if above FL410.

OPTION 2:
Descend to below FL290.

6 PROCEED UNTIL NEW ATC CLEARANCE RECEIVED

5 FLY AT 500FT VERTICAL OFFSET FROM NORMAL LEVELS

4 DESCEND TO BELOW FL290

SLOP up to 2NM

WEATHER DEVIATION

When returning to track, be at the assigned flight level when 5NM away.

If less than 5NM, remain at the flight level assigned by ATC

If 5NM or more... **SAND!**
South of track = **A**scend
North of track = **D**escend
Up/Down by 300ft

5NM

OPSGROUP

What are in-flight contingency procedures on the NAT, and which regulation governs them?

These are established to address situations where aircraft may encounter difficulties or emergencies while operating in the NAT airspace. They are primarily governed by the ICAO Document 4444, which outlines regulations for air traffic management practices and procedures. In this article, **we will focus specifically on non-weather related contingency procedures.**

I've heard of the NAT Doc 007. Is it the main reference for NAT contingency procedures?

Yes and no. While the NAT Doc 007 is a valuable resource for operators in the North Atlantic region, it's important to note that it explicitly states, "*this document is for guidance only.*" The primary regulatory framework for contingency procedures in the NAT remains **ICAO DOC 4444.**

Do I need a clearance to continue my flight?

Yes, you typically need a clearance to continue your flight. If an aircraft is unable to continue the flight in accordance with its ATC clearance, a revised clearance shall be obtained, whenever possible, prior to initiating any action.

Are there situations where I may not have a clearance?

There may be exceptional circumstances (such as emergencies or comms difficulties) where obtaining a clearance becomes challenging. In such cases, pilots should prioritize safety and follow established contingency procedures to ensure safe flight operations while seeking to obtain a revised clearance as soon as possible.

If I have already reported a contingency situation and subsequently receive a clearance, should I always follow the new clearance?

Yes, if you have been issued a clearance, you should adhere to it as long as it is safe to do so. If the new clearance is not safe, request an alternative clearance from ATC. Safety should always be the top priority.

If I have not yet been able to obtain a clearance, what should I do?

The procedure changed on the NAT in 2019, and then became the global standard in 2020 – so there is now **one standard set of Contingency Procedures for all oceanic airspace worldwide** (well, almost all airspace – there are still a few places which have slight differences, although these will eventually get aligned):

Leave your cleared track or ATS route by initiating a turn of at least 30 degrees to the right or left, in order to establish and maintain a parallel, same-direction track or ATS route offset of 5 NM.

Once established on a parallel, same-direction track or ATS route offset by 5.0 NM, you have two options:

1. Establish a 500 ft vertical offset (or 1000 ft if above FL 410) from the usual flight levels, and proceed as required by the operational situation, or if an ATC clearance has been obtained, in accordance with the clearance.
2. Descend below FL 290, and establish a 500 ft vertical offset from those flight levels normally used, and proceed as required by the operational situation or if an ATC clearance has been obtained, in accordance with the clearance.

The first rule is straightforward, involving manoeuvring to navigate between significant traffic operating in the North Atlantic High-Level Airspace (NAT HLA) by adjusting altitude with a 500 or 1000 feet offset before making a turn. **However, the second rule, when maintaining altitude is not feasible, can sometimes be misinterpreted.**

Why is the rule of descending below FL290 sometimes misunderstood?

The current wording of **ICAO Doc 4444** can sometimes lead to confusion, as it may imply that aircraft must first descend to establish a 500 ft vertical offset before making any lateral deviation. **This is not the intended interpretation.**

This misinterpretation was perpetuated by the **2023 version of the NAT Doc 007** (version 2023-1), which said: *"descend below FL 290, and establish a 150 m (500 ft) vertical offset from those flight levels normally used, **then proceed**…"*. This wording inadvertently supported the misconception by introducing the word "then" implying a strict sequence in the procedure.

The new 2024 version of the NAT Doc 007 (version 2024-1), which becomes applicable in March 2024, has been corrected, replacing the word "then" with "and", in line with ICAO Doc 4444.

How should it be understood?

The purpose of updating the contingency procedures in Doc 4444 was notably to provide a clear and effective way for aircraft to safely navigate and disengage from OTS (Organized Track System) with adjacent and nearby PBCS tracks without the risk of collisions. This is achieved by offering two primary options:

1. Using vertical offsets; or

2. In cases where maintaining altitude becomes impractical and to mitigate the risk of conflicts with the majority of traffic, which is located within the NAT HLA, descending below FL 290 before diverging.

As a result, depending on the situation, **lateral divergence can be initiated as soon as FL 290 is crossed during descent**, without the prior obligation to establish first at a potentially low FL offset before proceeding with the divergence.

In cases of **depressurization** requiring a descent to lower levels, or an **engine failure** necessitating a descent to lower levels depending on ETOPS speed, it may be preferable to initiate the turn as soon as the aircraft passes FL 290 when the alternate airport is located behind. **This helps save valuable time**, approximately 10 minutes, in returning to the same point as when crossing FL 290, especially in emergency situations.

In other circumstances (like when the alternate airport is located ahead), **a pilot may elect to establish the vertical offset first.**

The Doc 4444 regulations **allow for both of these courses of action.** Moreover, it's worth noting that the fuel planning for critical ETOPS scenarios typically does not account for continuing for a long time in the wrong direction before initiating divergence.

How do I know that this is the correct interpretation?

Because we asked ICAO.

They told us that after reviewing all the working papers, it's clear that **the intent is focused on getting below FL290 before doing anything (if possible).**

We also received confirmation that the SASP secretary, the ATM ops panel secretary, and the Flight Ops panel secretary had all discussed the issue and had agreed that the interpretation provided was correct. This does not reflect a specific panel viewpoint but rather a consolidated ICAO Secretariat view of the interpretation.

While it is preferable, given favorable conditions, to be at the offset level before initiating a turn (as this minimizes the potential for conflicts with other aircraft operating on adjacent tracks, providing some vertical 'separation' before turning across parallel tracks), **the primary emphasis remains on descending below FL290.** This priority is clarified in Doc 4444 Note 2 to 15.2.3.2(a) :

"Note 2.— Descent below FL 290 is considered particularly applicable to operations where there is a predominant traffic flow (e.g. east-west) or parallel track system where the aircraft's diversion path will likely cross adjacent tracks or ATS routes. A descent below FL 290 can decrease the likelihood of conflict with other aircraft, ACAS RA events and delays in obtaining a revised ATC clearance."

Ultimately, in emergency situations where it becomes absolutely necessary to deviate from the rules, it's down to the pilot-in-command to assess the validity of an immediate diversion in consideration of the risk of conflict with nearby aircraft in the high-level oceanic airspace. As ICAO Annex 2 says:

"The pilot-in-command of an aircraft shall have final authority as to the disposition of the aircraft while in command... the pilot-in-command may depart from these rules in circumstances that render such departure absolutely necessary in the interests of safety."

Key takeaways

In non-weather contingency scenarios, once you're established on a parallel, same direction track or ATS route, offset by 5 NM, there are two cases to consider:

- If you can maintain altitude, adjust your altitude by 500 or 1000 feet and then make a lateral turn to insert yourself between the traffic in the NAT-HLA.

- If maintaining altitude is not possible, descend below FL290 while continuing your descent toward a 500 feet offset, allowing you to diverge beneath the traffic in the NAT HLA.

In cases where maintaining altitude is not feasible, there is **no obligation to first establish an offset level before initiating divergence once FL 290 has been crossed during descent.**

With any luck, future versions of Doc 4444 will make all of this more explicit, in order to avoid various misinterpretations!

Mexico Permit Chaos: New Rules Explained

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

Key Points

- **From 1 Jan 2024, Single Entry Permits and Multiple Entry Permits for private flights have been replaced by the Single Entry Authorization (AIU).**

- **This AIU is valid for 180 days. With it, you can fly to Mexico as much as you like during this timeframe, and can do as many internal domestic flights as you want.**

- **You should apply for the AIU at least 2 days prior to the flight.**

- **Before the AIU can be issued, they Mexican airport you're flying to must obtain the authorization number from AFAC Headquarters in Mexico City. Timeframe for this is varying between 5 minutes to 2 days.**
- **These changes only impact private flights. Rules for charter flights work the same as before (i.e. you get a blanket charter permit).**

All these recent changes to permit procedures have been causing **stress and delays for ops to Mexico.** Before we get stuck into all the painful details, let's begin with a story...

A Cautionary Tale

*I just completed my first trip to **MMSL/Cabo San Lucas** since the new procedures came into effect, and thus needed the new permit. I use the local FBO for all of my permit applications, etc. **All paperwork was submitted and accepted days in advance.** This FBO is unquestionably one of the best that I ever use.*

*When I landed, they said **"we now wait for Mexico City to issue your Special Use Permit which they will only do after landing".** I suggested that my passengers (family and friends) go on to the hotel in case it took a little while. Good decision.*

*While sitting in the FBO waiting, I started to chat with other waiting crews. **One crew had been waiting for 3 hours already**, another crew was down for 2 hours.*

*The FBO manager indicated that **the new Mexican permit process has been total chaos** since it went into effect with huge delays. In the end, I waited 3 hours, and then was told to come back the next day.*

*As I left, one crew was still waiting. They had done a part 135 drop-off and had planned to head back to the US. They had been **delayed so long that customs at their US destination airport was closed**, and they couldn't reliably file a return eAPIS into the US because they didn't know their departure time (and you have to give the US at least one hours notification).*

*Hopefully, the new permit process settles down in the weeks ahead, but in the meantime, crews should be ready for a **many-hour or overnight delay.** Another pilot who flies regularly into Mexico told me that his delay (at a different airport) was less than 30 minutes. So, your mileage may vary, but in the meantime we all have to anticipate some delays.*

The Full Story

Thanks to Rick Gardner of CST Flight Services for the report that follows. CST Flight Services provides a wide range of international trip support services in Mexico and beyond, for both owner-pilots and professional pilots. You can contact them for more info at: customersvc@cstflightservices.com

Ancient History

To understand the impact that the recent change to Mexico's entry procedures has had on private aircraft arrivals, one has to understand the history of how foreign private aircraft have been allowed to enter Mexico in the past.

For well over 20 years, Article 29 of Mexico's Civil Aviation law decreed that foreign (non-Mexican) aircraft could enter Mexico by landing at an official international Airport Of Entry (AOE) in Mexico and obtaining a **Single Entry Authorization** (subsequently called the single entry permit) or a **Multiple Entry Authorization** (subsequently called the multiple entry permit).

In 2014, a Mandatory Circular (CO SA 02/14 R1) was generated that updated the procedures and

documents required for authorizing the issuance of a single, or multiple, Entry Authorization. This circular was a heavy-handed intent to address **illegal charters and illegal cabotage in Mexico** which caused great confusion because it inserted confusing procedures for recording, and updating, the list of passengers authorized to fly on board a private aircraft and it eliminated an essential federal document that was relied upon by not only Mexican Civil Aviation officials but also by Mexican Immigration and by Mexican Customs.

The fallout of this new procedure resulted in **several Mexican AOE's being unable to receive international flights for many month**s while the issues were resolved but eventually work-arounds were found and things settled down despite the confusing procedure.

Although tweaked periodically, Article 29 of Mexico's Civil Aviation Law remained unchanged until May 05, 2023 when the entire Civil Aviation Law received a major update in many areas. Amongst the many changes made in the new version of the Law, **the concept of "single entry" and "multiple entry" authorizations were eliminated** and the ambiguous phrase "corresponding authorization" was inserted.

December 2023 changes

On December 27, 2023, 4 days before the end of the year, an internal AFAC document (Oficio 4.1.2.4197) was published to all of the Civil Aviation offices at Mexico's AOEs informing them that a **new procedure was being issued for the authorization of private aircraft entering Mexico.** This internal document specified the following:

- This internal document had a validity of 180 days.

- The changes to how entry authorizations were to be handled would go into effect January 1, 2024.

- It clarified that the reference to a Single Entry Permit and a Multiple Entry Permit were not correct and contrary to law and that the concept of a "Single Entry Authorization" (Autorización de Internación Única – AIU) was being adopted.

- That the AIU would be valid for 180 days from the date of issuance.

- That during the 180 day period, aircraft could freely travel in Mexican territory in a manner similar to the prior Multiple Entry Permit.

- That to issue an AIU the foreign operator needed to present their request for an AIU at least 2 days before their planned arrival in Mexico.

- That the Civil Aviation officials at the AOE could no longer unilaterally process an entry authorization but rather needed to request an AIU authorization number from Civil Aviation headquarters in Mexico City before the AIU could be issued. The request for the AIU number must be sent via email to a central email address and accompanied by:
  - Make of aircraft
  - Model of aircraft
  - Registration (Tail) number
  - Number of crew
  - Number of passengers
  - Name of Civil Aviation Inspector in charge of the AIU request
  - Name of Civil Aviation Comandante (or acting representative) who approved the AIU

request

- The request needed to be emailed to a central email address in Mexico City

- As a measure of added security and due to different legal "issues", a Layout Of Passenger Accommodations (LOPA) needed to be presented.

- That for additional guidance on how the authorizations should be issued, AFAC officials needed to refer to the confusing 2014 Mandatory Circular (which was created for Entry Permits, which are now prohibited) until a new Circular could be published.

Confused? You are not alone.

January 2024 onwards

Almost immediately, there was an outcry about what was indicated, and not indicated, in the new procedure such as:

- Had the AFAC headquarters in Mexico City calculated how many aircraft arrive in Mexico per day and ensured that they had the email systems and staffing required to receive and process requests and issue the AIU authorization number for all AOE's in Mexico?

- How long would it take to get the authorization number?

- Many aircraft don't have the luxury to provide the 2-day required notification. (This was unofficially quickly watered down to a 2-day recommendation.)

- The Authorization is NOT VALID without the authorization number provided by the central AFAC headquarters.

    - What if an aircraft needed to make a quick turn and depart Mexico before the AIU was issued?

    - What if an aircraft needed to continue on to another airport in Mexico before the AIU was issued?

Almost immediately, we saw a **divergence in how each of these scenarios was being addressed** and how the new procedures were being implemented across the many Mexican AOE's across the country. Amongst the most notable issues we have seen are:

- It has been clarified that aircraft that were already in Mexico under the old Single Entry Permit that was issued in 2023 could remain in Mexico but needed to depart before those permits expired.

- The time to obtain an AIU authorization number was taking from **several minutes to multiple days** with no evident criteria for what made one request take longer than another.

- If the AIU authorization number is not received, some airports were **allowing the aircraft to depart but without a valid AIU.** This means that if they make a subsequent international flight to another Mexican airport, they will be treated as a new arrival and be obligated to **process yet another AIU** and pay the fee again because the AIU they had requested on their previous trip was never received.

- At some airports, flights wanting to fly on to another Mexican airport were approved on a discretionary basis by the local AFAC comandante with the requirement that they return to the

original AOE where they entered the country.

- Aircraft that had been issued an AIU and reentered Mexico with **different crew and/or passengers** are being required to process a new AIU.

- Some airports are requiring a **picture of the inside of aircraft, in addition to a LOPA**, in order to approve an AIU. Without it, approvals are delayed.

- Some airports require a **picture of the exterior of the aircraft** in order to approve an AIU.

- Some pilots who had completed the forms to request an AIU left Mexico **believing they had received an AIU** when all they had was the request form (they are all in Spanish).

One always has to look for a bright side to things, and the one bright side of this new procedure is that it resolves an issue that had plagued the old Multiple Entry Permit which expired on December 31, 2023.

Aircraft operators who entered Mexico with a Multiple Entry Permit who had an AOG at the end of December or who wanted to spend New Years in Mexico could face severe fines if they did not remove their aircraft from Mexico before their permit expired. **With the new AIU, you always have a 180 day window for its use with multiple entries during that time.**

What now?

At the present, there is a lot of **confusion, frustration and miscommunication** at all levels within the AFAC as well as at airports and FBO's in Mexico. The implementation of the AIU approval procedures will remain in flux while AFAC headquarters, regional comandantes and airport comandantes address the issues and come up with a better way to handle this.

In the meantime, **expect some turbulence ahead** – have pictures and LOPA's, expect to have to pay multiple times for AIUs if you travel to different airports in Mexico and expect possible delays. **The good news** is that the beaches are still nice, the food is still delicious, the people are still friendly and the beer is still cold.

Santa Maria HF – Unauthorised Transmissions

Chris Shieff
6 March, 2024

An OPSGROUP member recently reported they experienced **extended interference** on Santa Maria Radio (HF frequency 11309). They were unable to use it for nearly ten minutes due to a continuous broadcast in a foreign language.

This was reported directly to Nav Portugal, and the member was kind enough to share their response with the group. Here is what they had to say.

Unknown Broadcasts

The Radio Supervisor did report **significant voice interference** on the same day for a period of nearly twenty minutes. It didn't coincide with the time the member's aircraft was inside the Santa Maria FIR, but they were quick to point out this may mean it hadn't been reported yet.

In other words, this is likely not an isolated issue.

Nav Portugal advised that in the past twenty-four months, they've observed **increasing levels of interference** on the HF frequencies assigned by Santa Maria. These are often caused by voice transmissions, but have also included radar signals – essentially 'pinging.'

These have been confirmed to originate from Eastern Europe, and the Middle East.

There is no evidence the broadcasts are malicious

While they seem to emanate from regions of high political tension, there are no indications the broadcasts are an attempt to impede the communication of air traffic.

They are simply an inconvenience. Nevertheless, they are occurring in one of the largest FIRs on the planet serving hundreds of flights per day, a number of NAT tracks, and traffic in and out of the Azores.

So, it is important to know what to do if you encounter this on your next crossing.

I don't care, I have CPDLC

It's true that CPDLC services are available to all FANS 1/A equipped aircraft in the Santa Maria FIR (logon LPPO).

But look out for this chestnut, from Santa Maria themselves…

…attention is called to flight crew that the use of data link services do not exempt the requirement of establishing voice communications with Santa Maria Radio at or before the FIR Boundary, whether on HF or VHF, even if a CPDLC connection is established…

So HF interference begins to matter for everyone, when outside of VHF coverage.

Try the other line

Your next option is the ol' sat phone.

Santa Maria's contact information is listed in NAT Doc 003, but to save you some time, their Inmarsat short code is **426305**, and the direct dial for the supervisor is **+351 296 820 401**.

There are also alternative HF frequencies listed in the attached document. As a general rule, **lower frequencies work better at night, and higher during the day.**

Appendix B-5 - SANTA MARIA Radio Station Information

Station Name:	Santa Maria Radio

Country: Portugal	State: Santa Maria - Azores
City: Vila do Porto	Geographic Location: 36°58′21N025°09′54W
Transmitter site(s) location(s): Cabrestantes (36°59′44N025°10′14W)	Receiver site(s) location(s): Faneca (36°59′44N025°07′48W)

Frequencies

Family	Frequency bands								
	3 MHz	3.5 MHz	4.7 MHz	5.6 MHz	6.6 MHz	9 MHz	11.3 MHz	13.3 MHz	18 MHz
A	3016			5598		8906		13306	17946
E	2962				6628	8825	11309	13354	
H		3491			6667				

Contacts

AFTN Address: LPAZYSYX	Aircraft in Flight Address: LPAZZZZX
SATCOM short code number: 426305	

| Station Manager
Post Address:
Name:
NAV PORTUGAL
APARTADO 47
AEROPORTO SANTA MARIA
9580-909 VILA DO PORTO

Phone: + 351 296 820 509
Fax:
Email:　AFTN/SITA　Address:
LPAZYFYA | On Duty Supervisor
Post Address:
NAV PORTUGAL
APARTADO 47
AEROPORTO SANTA MARIA
9580-909 VILA DO PORTO

Phone: + 351 296 820 401
Fax:　+ 351 296 886 045
Email: smaradio@nav.pt
AFTN/SITA Address: LPAZYSYX |

Remarks:
Santa Maria radio is collocated and is a department within Santa Maria OACC.
Backup receiver site is also located in the vicinity of Santa Maria OACC.

If ionospheric propagation floats your boat, we're not here to judge. You can read more about it here.

Phone a Friend

If you're not satvoice equipped, and you can't reach Santa Maria Radio directly – what then?

In the first instance, attempt to **raise a nearby aircraft on 121.5 or 123.45** who can relay your position report for you.

Or you can try and contact adjacent ATC oceanic sectors – namely Shanwick, Gander, New York Oceanic or Piarco. Nearby radar units may also be able to assist too – Lisboa, Canarias, Sal or Madrid Controls.

Failing that, you're into the **lost comms procedure.** You can find that here.

Here's a quick sheet the team previously put together…

EVERYTHING IS LOST — UH OH	HF IS LOST — NO NO	DATALINK ISSUES — HI OR LO	HF BLACKOUT — SPACE GLOW	ATC ISSUES — HELLO?
INSIDE, WITH CLEARANCE	**INSIDE, WITH CLEARANCE**	**INSIDE, WITH CLEARANCE**	**INSIDE**	**UNFORESEEN AND SUDDEN**
Stick to **clearance**, transmit blind, **squawk** 7600, follow **lost comm procedures** for country you enter (as you leave NAT HLA). Follow **contingency** for weather or emergencies. Keep trying all **other systems.**	Stick to clearance, try **CPDLC** and **VHF**. Try other HF frequencies. **Ask for relays.** Check there is no space weather causing **blackouts.**	Let ATC know. There isn't much you can do about it now.	**Everyone has lost it.** ATC and aircraft. Continue with clearance (domestic if that is the last received) and **don't divert** - there is no-one to coordinate.	Stick to your clearance, or until you reach the point where a **published contingency procedure** applies. Try the next sector until contact made.
NOT ENTERED, WITH CLEARANCE	**NOT ENTERED, WITH CLEARANCE**	**NOT ENTERED**	**NOT ENTERED**	**NOT ENTERED**
Continue (do the above). Or divert and land.	**HF is now a requirement**) as one of your two LRNS) so tell ATC. **Shanwick** (even Blue Spruce routes) mandates it.	There is a **Datalink Mandate** for a lot of the NAT HLA. ATC might still let you in if you ask nicely. You don't need it if north of **80N**, in **NYC Oceanic,** on a **Tango 9** or **920** route, in the surveillance airspace over **Greenland/Iceland** or **below FL290/ above FL410.** **SATCOM** is usually needed for datalink, as is CPDLC and ADS-C.	Chances are you won't know, you're probably **still on VHF.** ATC might let you know though.	You are unlikely to get a clearance to enter an ATC zero region. Plan to **route around** the area.
NOT ENTERED, NO CLEARANCE	**IT BROKE EARLIER**			
Consider diverting. If entering through Shanwick follow their published procedures and **divert to EINN/Shannon.**	You can get **pre-approval** to enter without HF if its for a maintenance flight (going to fix it.)			

COMM ISSUES IN THE NAT HLA

OPSGROUP members: click to download PDF.

Keep Reporting

If you encounter HF frequency interference, it is important that you **report it.** The more detail the better – including the UTC time, position, altitude, duration and any other identifying details. It's likely you're not the only one who will encounter the problem.

We'd also love to hear from you too – you can reach us on team@ops.group

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Secret Overflight Requirements in Antigua

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

There's a secret Antigua overflight requirement that's been going on for a while but is still catching some people out.

If you enter the Antigua TMA/TCA (the airspace around Antigua up to FL245), you'll need to apply for a "cross-border permit". Without it, they won't let you enter the airspace!
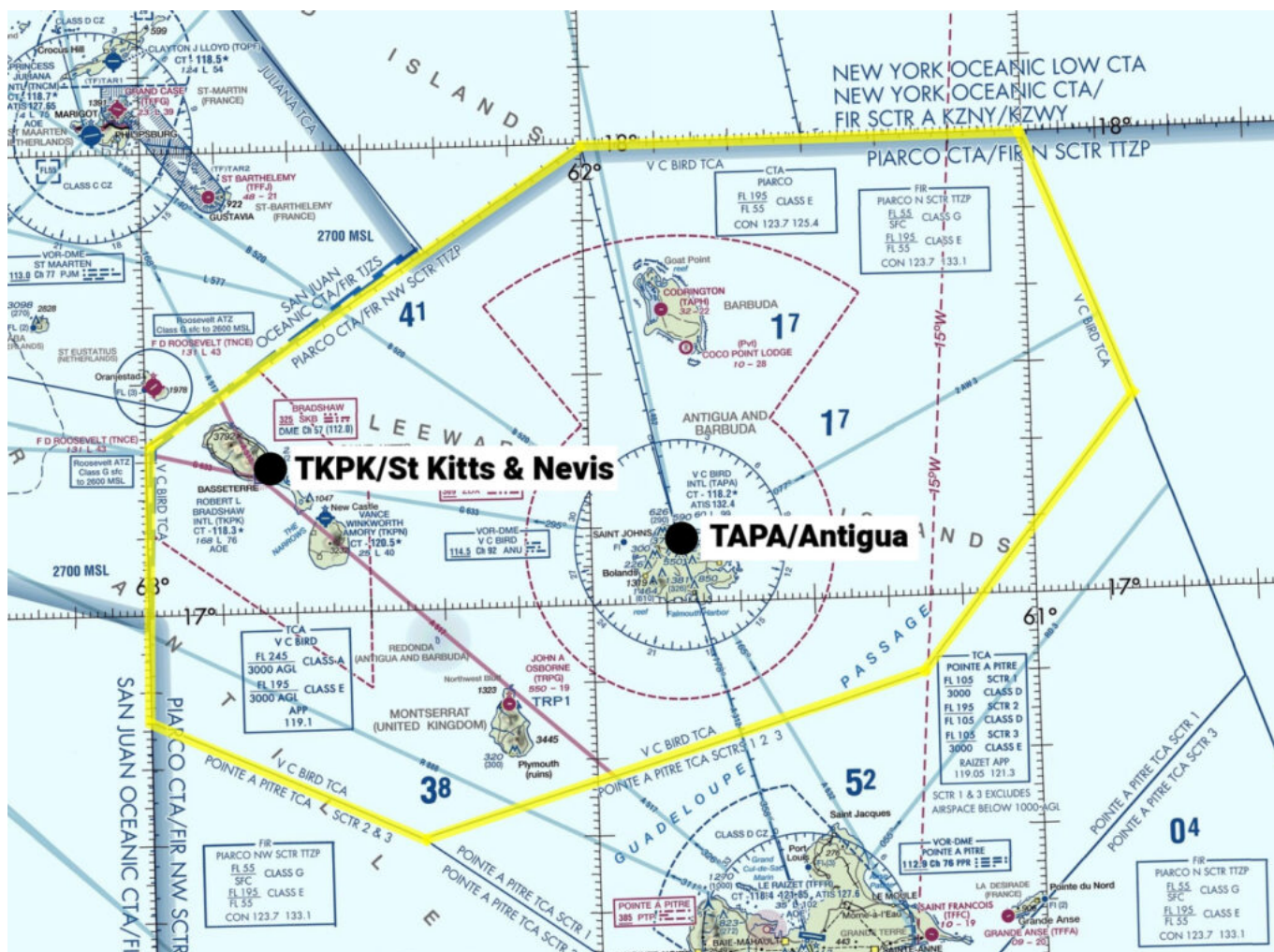
Area in yellow is the Antigua TMA/TCA.

If you're headed to TAPA/Antigua airport itself, you don't have to do this – you just get billed when you land. **You only need it for any flight through this airspace below FL245.**

So this is going to **mainly affect flights to TKPK/St Kitts & Nevis airport, as well as low-level flights between islands in the region** – the likes of St Maarten and the Virgin Islands in the northwest, down through Guadeloupe, Dominica, Martinique, and St Lucia in the southeast.
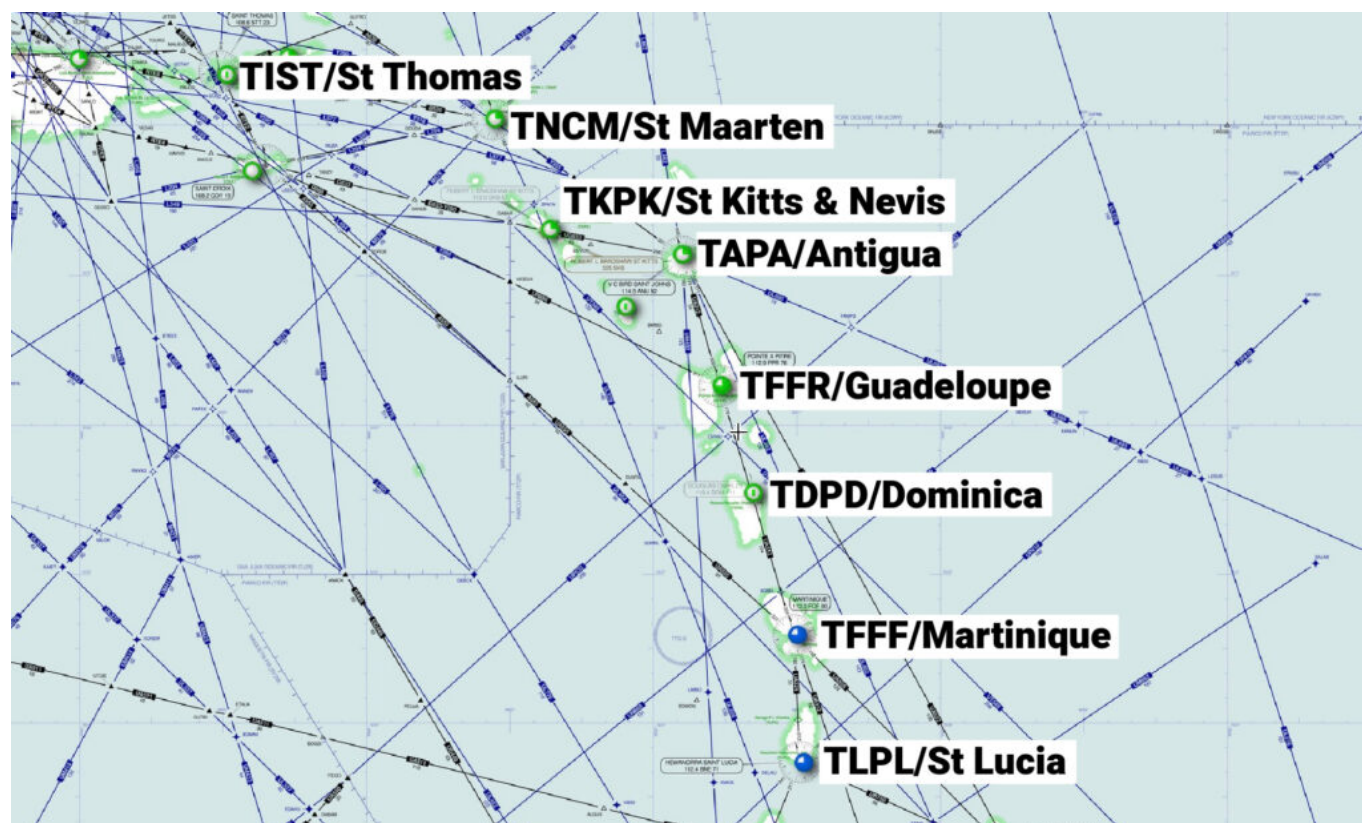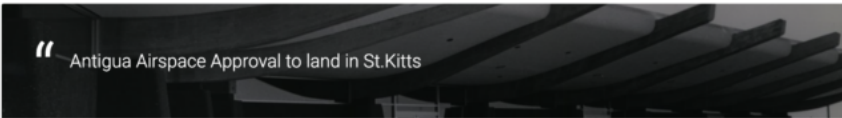
As one OPSGROUP member reported – *"Inbound to TKPK we were asked for the Antigua airspace permit. Apparently this is new so we did not have it and got a reroute of about a 100NM, it almost caused low fuel situation. Be aware!"*

You have to apply online at www.vcbirdats.com **at least 6 hours prior to the flight.**

Fees depend on aircraft MTOW, as a long-since deleted TAPA Notam explains:

```
Up to 5,000 pounds - 25 USD
5,001 to 10,000 pounds - 35 USD
10,001 to 15,000 pounds - 45 USD
15,001 to 25,000 pounds -55 USD
25,001 to 50,000 pounds - 65 USD
50,001 to 100,000 pounds - 80 USD
100,001 to 200,000 pounds - 95 USD
200,001 to 300,000 pounds - 110 USD
300,001 and over - 125 USD
```

On the www.vcbirdats.com site, click 'PERMITS' up the top and register an account. If you're not an airline, you won't have an IATA code, so just use "00" as the code making the account. You will then you'll be presented with a screen that looks like this:

One intrepid Opsgroup member who tried this out said that after they submitted all the info for the cross-border permit it was **issued instantly via email.** Just make sure that on the permit it says the callsign or tail number so ATC joins the two when approaching the airspace.

It's worth noting that this cross-border permit is **not actually an overflight permit** – it's basically just the fees you have to pay in advance for Nav and ATC. In this neck of the woods, *real* overflight permits are not required. For landings, only scheduled and charter flights require landing permits. For these, contact paula.fredrick-hunteab.gov.ag for Antigua, and foreigna@sisterisles.kn for St Kitts & Nevis. (Unless you know some better email addresses than these – in which case, let us know!)

And if you've been to the region recently, **please file an Airport Spy report** so we can share the info with everyone else in the group!

Are you an Airport Spy?

You go to unusual places and see curious things. Your turboprop friends envy you. Now, it's time to give back.

For your next trip, pack a notebook, and file your Spy Report below. You'll get a weekly ops briefing in return.

File your report ⊙

Airspace Risk Update – Important Changes You May Have Missed

Chris Shieff
6 March, 2024

While operational news has been quiet for the start of 2024, some important changes to airspace risk have been gracing the OPSGROUP news feed in recent days. Here's a brief summary of what you may have missed...

Syria

The FAA has **extended its ban** on US operators entering Syrian airspace (the **OSTT/Damascus FIR)** by a full five years. The new SFAR expires in 2028.

And with good reason – it is an **active conflict zone.** There are multiple risks to civil aviation there at all levels, including the very real threat of coming under fire from Syrian air defenses.

In addition to the US flight ban, several other states maintain active airspace warnings for the region. Almost no traffic overflies Syria – give it a wide berth. The updated SFAR 114 provides some updated background info on the airspace. Safeairspace.net also has a useful briefing.

Egypt

EASA has **withdrawn** its Conflict Zone Information Bulletin (CZIB) for Egypt – and we're not really sure why. These CZIBs are largely based on what airspace warnings other countries have issued, and the UK and Germany still have active airspace warnings for Egypt – both countries **advise against overflights below FL260** in the northern part of the Sinai region.
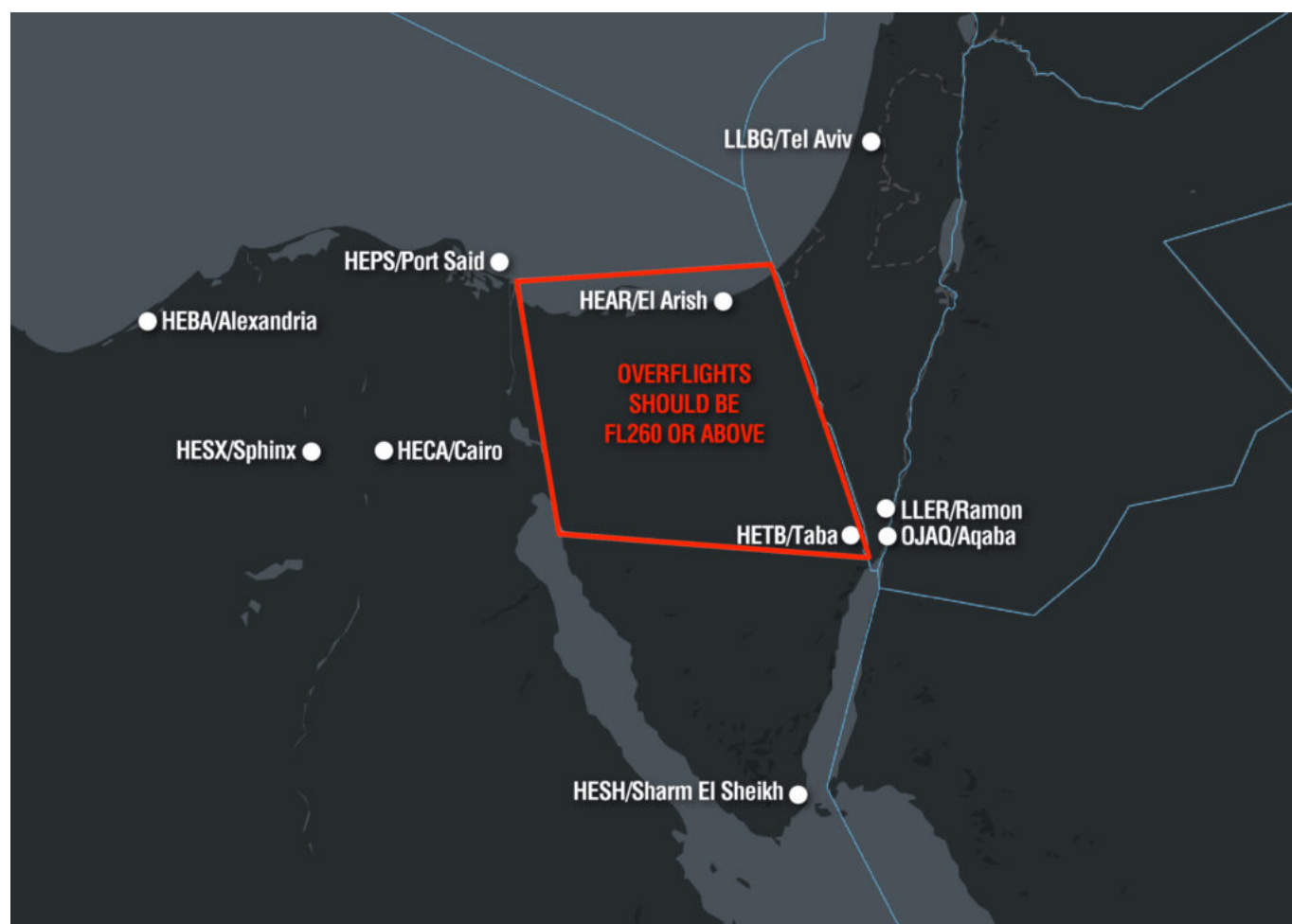
HEAR/Al Arish airport in particular near the Egypt/Gaza border has been identified as a **potential terrorist target** due to its use in humanitarian efforts. And since November 2023, the UK has been warning of risks to aircraft operating over the Red Sea due to military activity (more on that below).

Bottom line, we're not seeing a reduction in risk. **If anything, the threat to aircraft has likely escalated**.

The Red Sea

Sporadic drones and missiles continue to be intercepted in the **Southern Red Sea** by foreign militaries. On January 9, the largest single attack yet happened with over twenty-four shot down by US forces in the area. This represents a **significant increase in risk** for civil aviation. The culprits are Houthi rebels in Yemen who are typically targeting western vessels, or Israel itself.

The situation in the Red Sea continues to escalate with military air defence systems seeing frequent use in open airspace.

Back in November, the UK issued a new airspace warning due to these types of events. The threat is typically low level (below FL160) but the frequency of these occurrences is a major concern. Some OPSGROUP members have already reported **flying longer, alternative routes to avoid the area.**
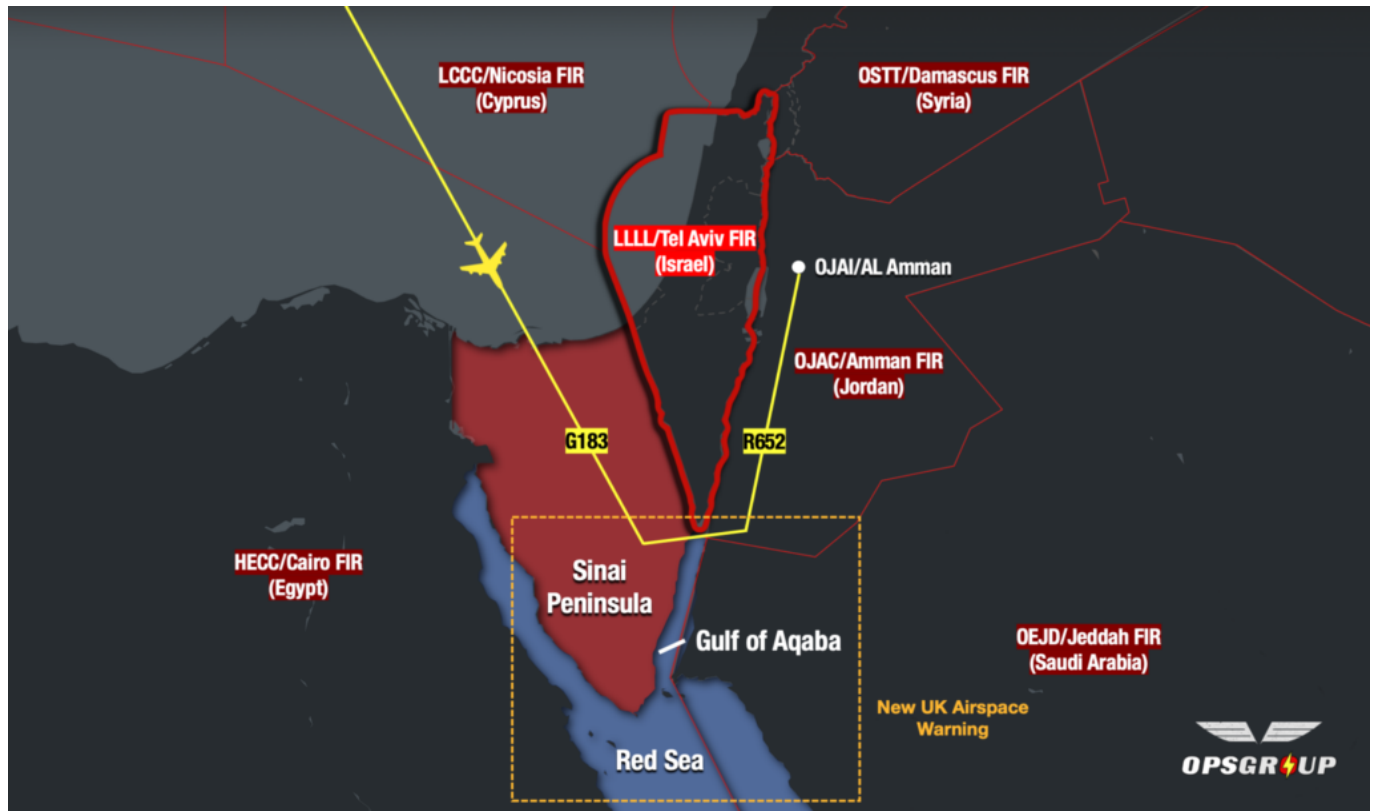
The primary risks to overflights are from misidentification or mis-targeting. The military air defence equipment present is advanced, and capable of reaching all levels.

AIRSPACE SECURITY WARNING ISSUED BY THE UK DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT. CIVIL AIR OPERATORS ARE ADVISED TO TAKE POTENTIAL RISK INTO ACCOUNT WHEN OPERATING OVER THE WATERS OF THE RED SEA AND THE GULF OF AQABA DUE TO POTENTIAL RISK FROM HEIGHTENED MILITARY ACTIVITY. FOR MORE INFO UK DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT 0207 082 6639 OR 0207 944 3111 OUT OF HOURS. AR 2023-38309/AU4. SFC - UNL, 01 NOV 15:00 2023 UNTIL 30 JAN 23:59 2024 ESTIMATED

New UK airspace warning issued November 1 for the Red Sea (and Gulf of Aqaba).

The Middle East

Iran has published a whole bunch of Notams under the **OIIX/Tehran FIR** code warning of 'gun firing and military exercises' between Jan 8-12 in the Strait of Hormuz. This is the sea **just north of Dubai**.

The areas where this will be happening are very close to overwater airways in the adjoining **OMAE/Emirates FIR** which get heavily used by **flights heading from Europe to Dubai airports.**
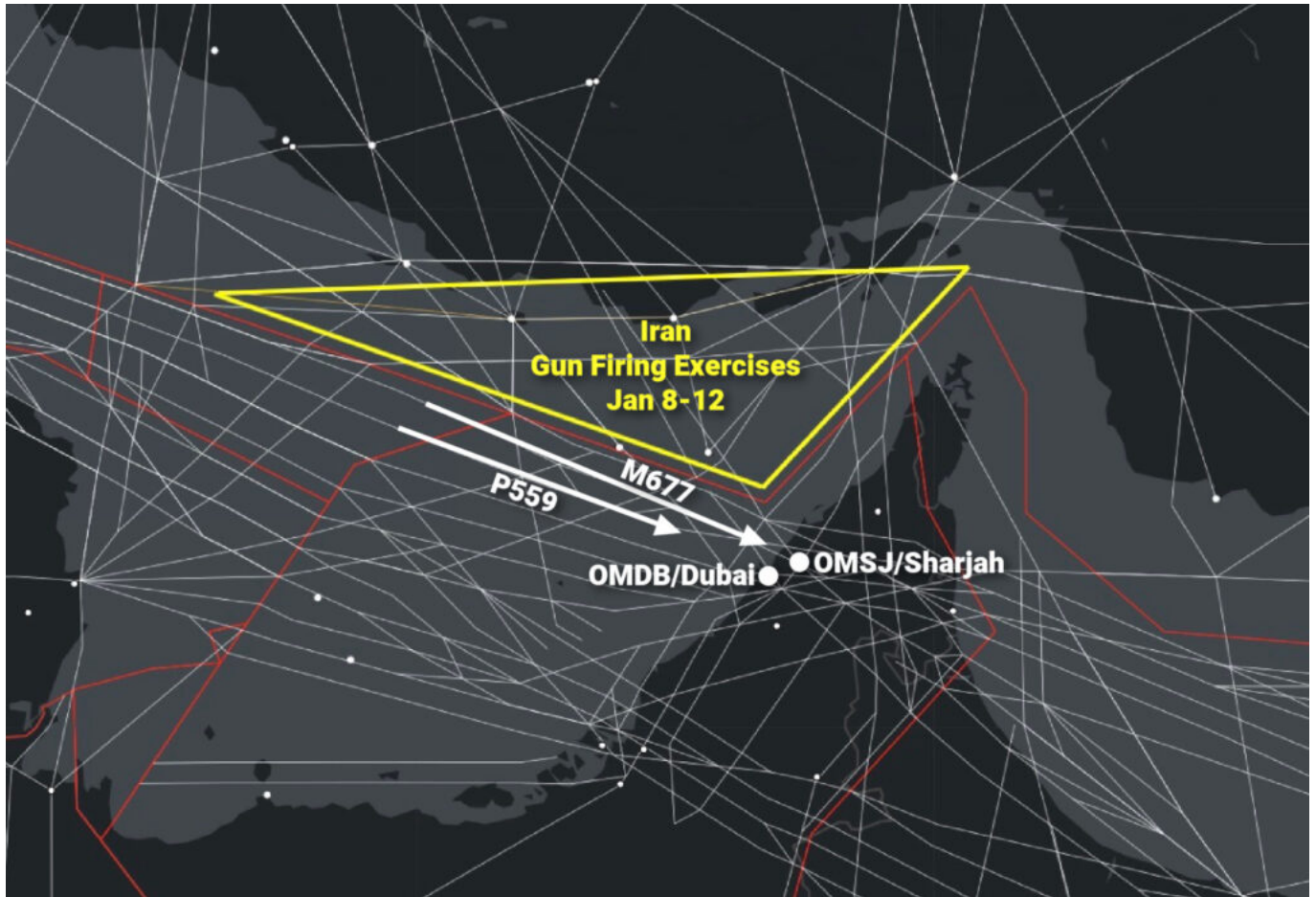
The yellow area isn't *exactly* right – there are several different gun firing exercises within this area from Jan 8-12.

The US has a longstanding warning to **avoid these airways nearest to the OIIX/Tehran FIR whenever possible**, to reduce the risk of miscalculation or misidentification by air defence systems – good advice, especially for this period of time.

Taiwan

There was some panic on January 9 when a presidential **missile warning** was issued by authorities for Taiwanese airspace. It was the first time this has happened.

On Jan 9, this alarming missile warning was issued across Taiwan.

It was later clarified that this was due to the launch of a Chinese satellite (not a missile) and posed a minor debris risk. Taiwan is on the eve of a **major presidential election** – and tensions with China are high.

There appears to be a renewed level of military posturing from both sides which can increase the risk of mistaken identity – especially in the Taiwanese air defence identification zone (ADIZ) if proper procedures are not followed.

These are known risks but are worth reviewing. Some sources are suggesting an **escalation is possible this year**, which carries the risk of a new and dangerous conflict. In this case, regional overflights would be heavily affected. We'll continue to monitor the situation closely.

GPS Spoofing in the Black Sea

We're continuing to receive frequent pilot reports of significant GPS spoofing events in the busy southwestern corner of the Black Sea.

In some cases, this has carried the threat of an **unintentional deviation into Russian or Turkish airspace without a clearance.**

Reports have been received from various aircraft types on different airways, and have included a **complete loss of all navigation capability**, transponder functions or nuisance EGPWS warnings.

So far manufacturers and aviation authorities have been slow to react to this emerging threat. Although some type-specific guidance has been issued, the universal mitigator remains **disabling GPS before entering an area of known spoofing.**

An important reminder – IRS systems are not immune to GPS interference. **By the time you identify spoofing, it may be too late to rely on them alone.** We've written about this topic extensively – read all about it here.

Updates

We continue to monitor for signs of changing airspace risk. We report these changes on safeairspace.net and via alerts issued to OPSGROUP members.

If you know or hear something, please share it with us. You can reach us at team@ops.group. We'd love to hear from you.

Datalink in Europe: What Are The Rules?

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

- **There is a mandate for Datalink <u>equipage</u> for flights above FL285 throughout Europe. There are various different exemptions for this.**

- **This mandate only applies to aircraft with ATN Datalink. If your aircraft only has FANS 1/A, you don't need to comply – but you also won't be able to get CPDLC across most of Europe.**

- **There are also some places where Datalink <u>logon</u> is mandatory.**

Datalink in Europe can be bamboozling – multiple chunks of airspace, all in close proximity to each other, all with varying levels of operating capability when it comes to CPDLC. Plus there's a Logon List to consider. And a Datalink Mandate. And different considerations depending on what kind of Datalink you've got onboard…

So here's a simple guide on how it all works, and what the rules are.

Is there a Datalink mandate in Europe?

Yes. The European Datalink mandate is for **Datalink <u>equipage</u> for flights above FL285** throughout Europe. *(<u>Equipage</u> – not necessarily for <u>logon</u>! More on that later…)*

Is my aircraft exempt?

Quite possibly – many aircraft are exempt from the equipage mandate, the main ones being:

1. Aircraft with a certificate of airworthiness first issued before 1 Jan 2018 and fitted prior to this date with FANS 1/A.

2. Aircraft with 19 seats or less and a MTOW of 45359 kg (100000 lbs) or less, with a first individual certificate of airworthiness issued before 5 Feb 2020.

3. Aircraft in this list (Annex I)

4. Aircraft in this list (Annex II) with a CofA issued before 5 Feb 2020

You can find these rules and exemptions in this EU doc (updated in Sep 2023).

The Logon List

This is what you need to get registered on to get CPDLC service when flying in:

- **Switzerland**

- **Germany**

- **Maastricht UAC** (i.e. the upper airspace above FL245 over Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg – one of Europe's busiest and most complex airspace areas.)

- **Poland** from some time around November 2024.

If you get your aircraft added to the Logon List, that means you'll be able to use CPDLC in these areas and will probably get better directs and faster climbs. However, if your avionics are **not eligible to be on the Logon List, ATC will not restrict you** to the flight levels below FL285.

The Logon List is basically to ensure that aircraft with buggy avionics don't ruin the network for everyone else – including ATC.

For more info, including details of **how to get your aircraft registered on the Logon List**, check Eurocontrol's dedicated page here.

Important to note: **the Logon List only applies to ATN aircraft – not FANS 1/A.** So essentially, if your aircraft only has FANS 1/A, you don't need to register – but you also won't be able to get CPDLC across most of Europe *(more on that below...)*

Where can I get CPDLC in Europe?

As of Jan 2024, these places:
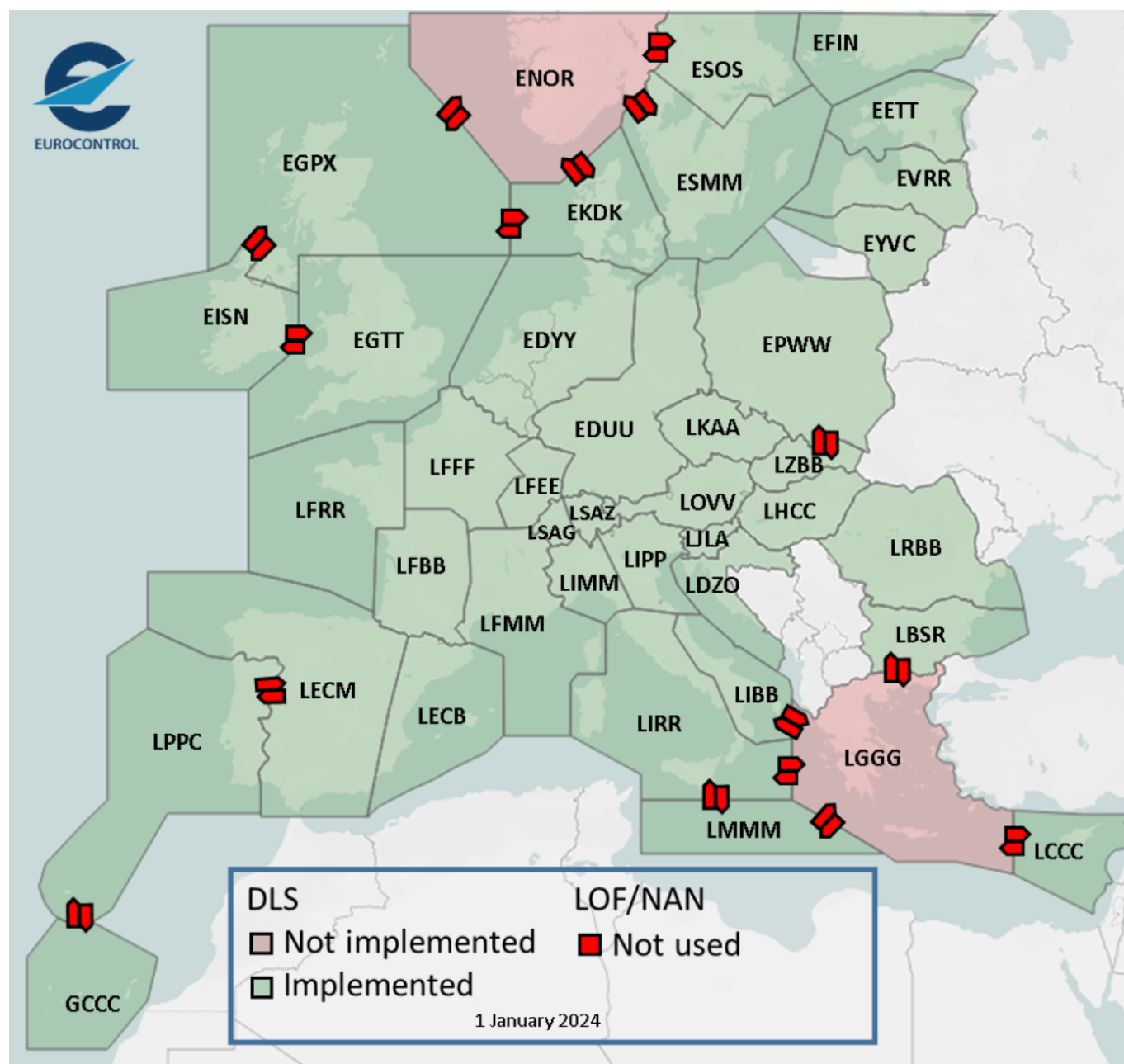
For more info about which FIRs provide Datalink, and at what flight levels, check here.

Is CPDLC logon mandatory?

The European Datalink mandate is for CPDLC equipage, not for logon.

- **Maastricht UAC** [EDUU] and **Karlsruhe UAC** [EDYY] above FL285 (source: Eurocontrol). *And from 1 Jan 2024, Maastricht UAC will start reporting aircraft which are not compliant with the mandatory logon to the relevant NSAs. We heard this issue is especially true for bizjets – around half of which are capable but don't log on!*

- **Cyprus** [LCCC] above FL285 (source: AIP GEN 3.4)

- **Hungary** [LHCC] above FL285 (source: AIP GEN 3.4)

- **Finland** [EFIN] above FL095 (source: AIP GEN 3.4)

- **Sweden** [ESMM Malmo, ESOS Stockholm] above FL285 (source: AIP GEN 3.4)

- **Romania** [LRBB] above FL285 (source: AIP GEN 3.4)

- **Serbia and Montenegro** [LYBA] above FL205 (source: AIP GEN 3.4)

- **Czech Republic** [LKAA] above FL195 (source: AIP GEN 3.4)

- **France** [LFFF Paris, LFEE Reims, LFMM Marseille, LFBB Bordeaux, LFRR Brest] above FL195 (source: AIC 10/23 and AIP GEN 3.4)

- **Switzerland** [LSAG Geneva, LSAZ Zurich] above FL145 (source: AIP GEN 3.4)

And some others coming soon:

- 18 April 2024: **Slovakia** [LZBB Bratislava] above FL285 (source: AIP GEN 3.4)

- May 2024: **Bulgaria**

- Mid 2024: **Croatia**

- Mid 2024: **Slovenia**

- Mid 2024: **Spain**

- Late 2024: **Poland**

For the countries listed above where we don't quite know the exact dates yet – these will be in the AIRACs which haven't been published yet. *Know of anywhere else that should be in this list? Let us know.*

As of Feb 2024 *(after some issues with the new LYBA logon code for Serbia and Montenegro which you can read about here)* Eurocontrol are asking operators to **make sure their aircraft avionics ATN addressing database is up to date**, to include all the right codes as per the latest version of ICAO EUR Doc 028.

My plane only has FANS 1/A. Can I get CPDLC in Europe?

The only bits of airspace in Europe where you can still get CPDLC using FANS 1/A are:

- **EGTT/London, EGPX/Scottish, EISN/Shannon FIRs.**

- **GCCC/Canarias FIR.**

- **LRBB/Bucaresti FIR.**

Everywhere else in Europe is only capable of working with ATN.

As of Aug 2021, **Maastricht Upper Airspace (MUAC)** no longer supports FANS 1/A. Dual stack aircraft in MUAC airspace must be reconfigured to logon via ATN, and aircraft with only FANS 1/A will continue to supported by conventional VHF.

What should I put in my FPL?

Got ATN Datalink? Put **J1** in field 10 of the flight plan.

Exempt from the mandate? Put **Z** in field 10 and **DAT/CPDLCX** in field 18 of the flight plan. If you don't, ATC won't know you're exempt, and you may struggle to fly above FL285!

One other thing – you should either file J1 or DAT/CPDLCX, not the two together. Flight plans with this wrong filing will be rejected.

Any more questions?

This EASA Q&A site is a good place to try.

Failing that, send us an email at news@ops.group, and we'll do our best to get it answered for you!

US Airport Fact Sheets (CBP)

David Mumford
6 March, 2024
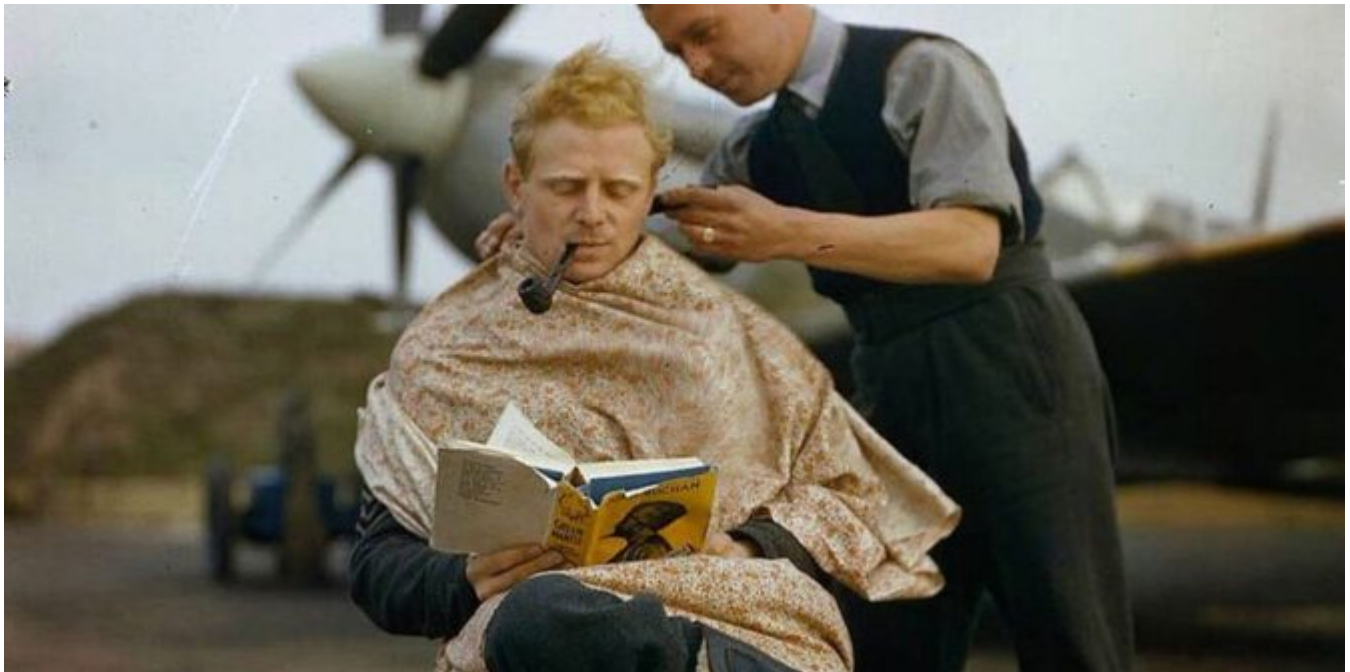
Did you know there are such things as **US Customs & Border Protection Airport General Aviation Fact Sheets?**

These are 1-page documents written by US CBP about select airports in the US, and they tell pilots pretty much all the important stuff they'd need to know about customs procedures at each one:

- **Opening Hours**

- **Contact Info**

- **Permission To Land Procedures**

- **Some blurb on what to expect for the Inspection Process**

What do they look like?

This:

Got any more I can download?

As of Jan 2024, the NBAA is now hosting **more than 300 of these Factsheets** in a centralized database.

Adirondack Regional Airport	KSLK	New York	12/20/2022
Akron-Canton Airport	KCAK	Ohio	4/19/2022
Albany International Airport	KALB	New York	6/30/2021
Albuquerque International Sunport	KABQ	New Mexico	6/30/2021
Anacortes Airport	K74S	Washington	5/22/2023
Antonio B. Won Pat International Airport	PGUM	Guam	11/9/2023
Appleton International Airport	KATW	Wisconsin	9/12/2021
Atlantic City International Airport	KACY	New Jersey	12/15/2022
Austin Bergstrom International Airport	KAUS	Texas	9/5/2023

NBAA members can download them here.

If you're not an NBAA member, we still have a few knocking about from 2023 which you can download for free here:

KBFI/Boeing Field, WA
KBGR/Bangor, ME
KDAL/Dallas Love Field, TX
KELP/El Paso, TX
KFLL/Fort Lauderdale, FL
KFXE/Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport, FL
KHOU/Houston, TX
KHPN/White Plains, NY
KIAD/Washington Dulles, VA
KLAX/Los Angeles, CA
KMIA/Miami, FL
KOPF/Opa-locka Executive, FL
KPBI/Palm Beach, FL
KTEB/Teterboro, NJ
KTMB/Miami Executive, FL
KTUS/Tucson, AZ
TJIG/Fernando Luis Ribas Dominicci, San Juan
TJSJ/Luis Munoz Marin, San Juan
KRIC/Richmond, VA
KPDX/Portland, OR
KCLT/Charlotte, NC
KMEM/Memphis, TN
KSUS/St Louis, MO
KPTK/Oakland County, MI
KFAR/Fargo, ND
KAFW/Fort Worth, TX
KABQ/Albuquerque, NM
KMCO/Orlando, FL
KAUS/Austin, TX
KSJC/San Jose, CA

KMSY/New Orleans, LA

CBP update these Fact Sheets fairly regularly, so if you're heading somewhere and want the most up-to-date version, contact CBP at that specific airport and ask for the latest copy. **It's also nice to speak to them in person!** Tell them about your planned flight, and they'll tell you what you need to know.

You can email CBP at the address shown in the Fact Sheet, or else contact them at GASupport@cbp.dhs.gov

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Slots required at all Paris airports until mid-Feb

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

France is slowly rolling out a new ATC system called 4-Flight, and from **Jan 9 to Feb 14** there's a live trial happening which is going to cause **delays at all four airports in the Paris area:** LFPB/Le Bourget, LFPG/De Gaulle, LFPO/Orly and LFOB/Beauvais.
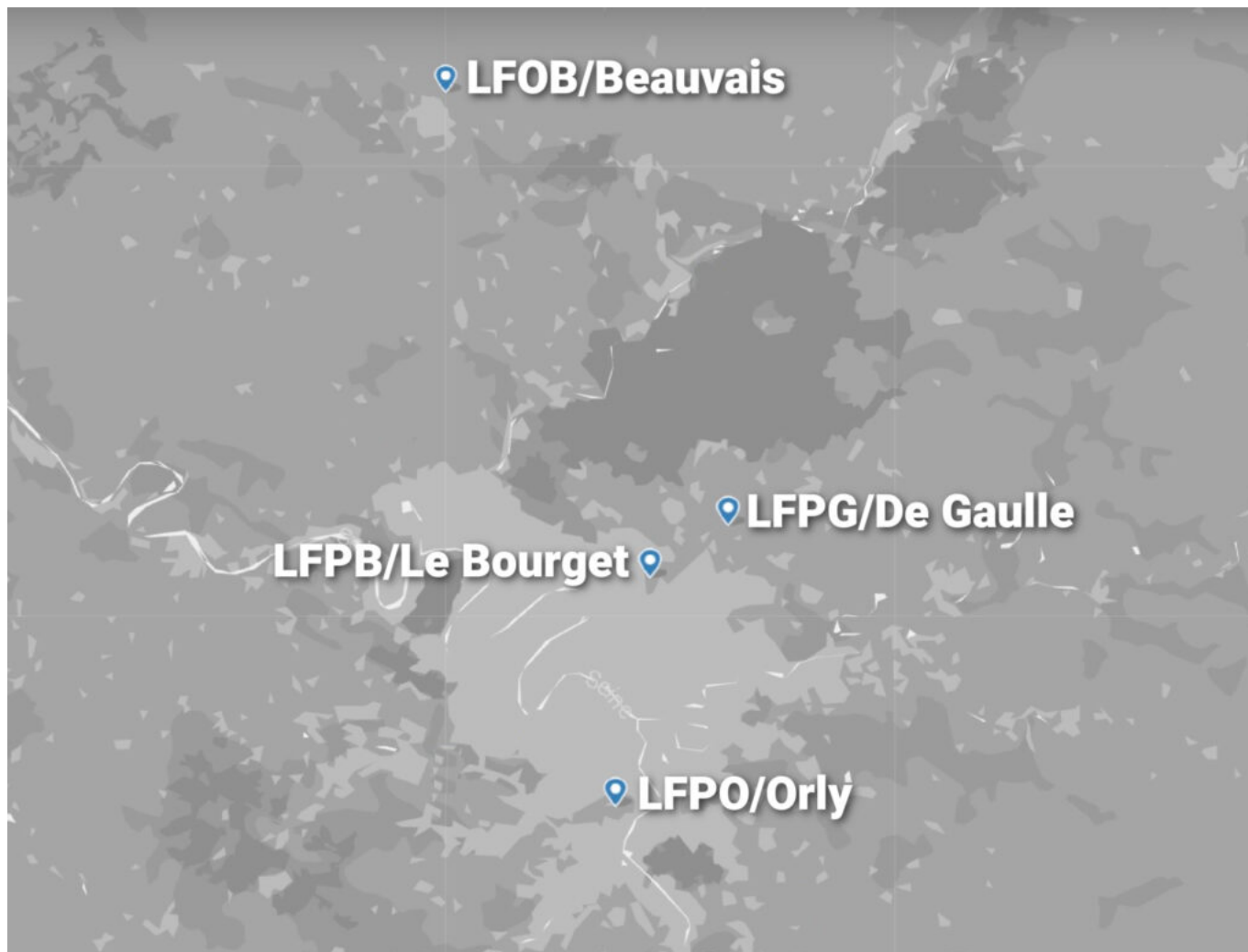
Ops to Paris = a grey and joyless experience for the next few weeks.

During this period, the operational capacity for the entire airspace will be reduced by 30%. The real-world result of all this is that LFPG and LFPO will have fewer slots available, and **LFPB and LFOB will require slots** (normally they don't).

For GA/BA flights headed to any of these airports, you should request slots via your handling agent, and you need to make sure you add the slot ID number to your flight plan, in a very specific format:

```
RMK/ASL directly followed by the 14-character authorization number,
the first 4 of which are the ICAO code for the aerodrome for which
the slot has been issued :
RMK/ASL (14 CHARACTER AIRPORT SLOT ID).
```

```
Example :
```
RMK/ASLLFPBA123456789 (arrival) or **RMK/ASLLFPBD123456789** (departure)
for Paris-Le Bourget.

There may also be **some impact to overflights** through the Paris ACC – especially at weekends when it's busy with ski flights heading south to the Alps.

Check AIC 19/23 for more info.

SUBJECT : LIVE TRIAL OF THE NEW ATM SYSTEM 4-FLIGHT : TEMPORARY CAPACITY REDUCTIONS FOR PARIS ACC AND AERODROME COORDINATION FOR PARIS-CHARLES DE GAULLE (LFPG), PARIS-ORLY (LFPO), PARIS-LE BOURGET (LFPB) AND BEAUVAIS-TILLÉ (LFOB) FROM 9TH JANUARY TO 14TH FEBRUARY 2024

1   CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVE

4-FLIGHT is the major DSNA modernization project for the operational systems deployed in the en-route centres. In the context of 4-FLIGHT commissioning in Paris ACC (LFFF), live trials are organised to :

- detect, as early as possible potential systems issues that could arise during implementation ;
- support the operational staff in gaining expertise in using the new system ;
- confirm and enhance finetuning adjustments ;
- consolidate working methods.

An extended phase of live trial for Paris ACC will be held from January 9th to February 14th , 2024, paving the way for final implementation, scheduled for November 5th, 2024.
This extended phase follows a sequence of short live trials with targeted objectives that were held in 2023.

2   RISK MITIGATION MEASURES

Operational capacities of the ACC must be adjusted to maintain flight safety and minimize disruption to operations. During the extended live trial period, the declared operational capacity for the entire airspace will be reduced by 30 %. That reduction will be supported by an ATFCM (Air Traffic Flow and Capacity Management) plan and a flight program reduction plan.

The ATFCM plan is composed of specific network RAD measures enforced during the duration of the live trial.

The flight program reduction plan is based on a temporary reduction of published airport coordination slots for LFPG and LFPO, and on the enforcement of airport coordination slots for LFOB and LFPB pursuant to Council Regulation (EEC) NR 95/93 of 18 January 1993 on common rules for the allocation of slots at Community airports, as last amended.

3   IMPACTS ON TRAFFIC REGULARITY

Most of the traffic managed by Paris ACC lands in any one of the Paris area region aerodromes. Any capacity restrictions on arrival flows in will therefore impact the operations of airlines operating and aerodrome stakeholders from those aerodromes, namely LFPG, LFPO, LFPB, and LFOB.

Despite the flow management measures, traffic delays are expected that could impact punctuality and, in general, operations of any airline flying through Paris ACC, even those not landing in Paris. Special attention shall be given to the weekend ski season flows.

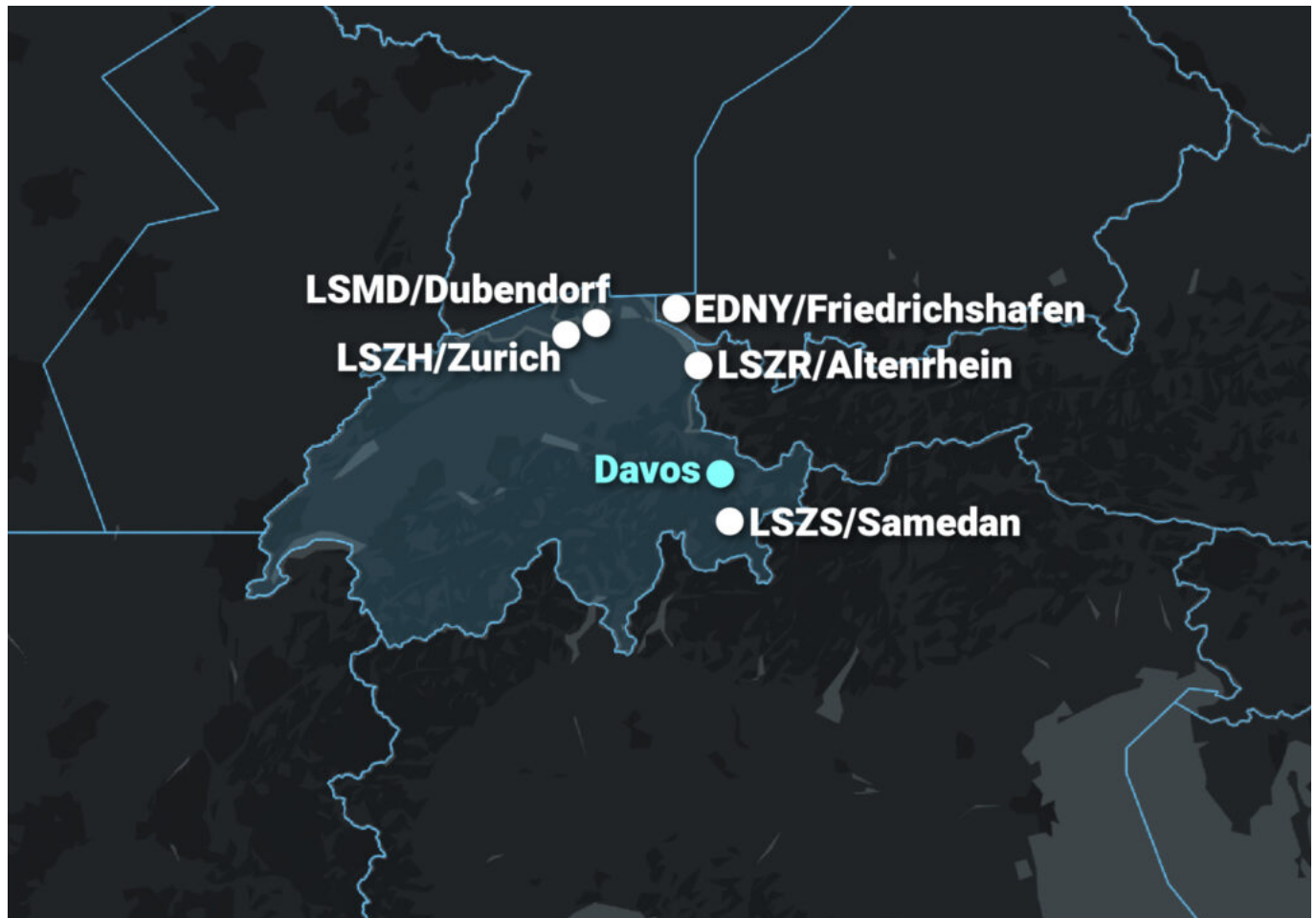# 2024 Davos World Economic Forum: Airport Restrictions

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

The World Economic Forum will take place in Davos from 15-19 Jan 2024. Parking at airports in the region will be limited – make sure you reserve your spot asap!

We contacted the local handlers at all the nearby airports to check what the lowdown is this year. Here's what they said...

LSZH/Zurich

- **Maximum 2 hour ground time** for GA/BA without parking permission (so drop-and-go's are fine, as long as they stay within that 2 hour window).

- Local handlers have reported that there is now **no more parking available at the airport** for the WEF period – it's all been taken already! Hangar parking might be available, but it'll be super expensive.

- You will **not be able to use LSZH as an alternate** from Jan 11-20.

- Airport operates from 0600-2200 local time daily, and overtime is not available – **make sure you land before closing time** or you'll get diverted to another airport.

- Customs clearance is available at the FBO for **up to 24 pax.** Any more than that and they will need to clear through the main pax terminal instead.

- Repositioning from **LSZH to LSMD will not be allowed**; aircraft would have to land and depart directly from LSMD.

- For handling, email Jet Aviation FBO at vip.zrh@jetaviation.ch, or CAT Air Service at info@cat-airservice.com

LSMD/Dubendorf

- Located in downtown Zurich. Normally a military airfield, but opens to civilian traffic each year for the Forum. **GA/BA flights can only operate here during this period if pax are heading to the WEF.**

- From Jan 13-20, they are open from 0700-1230 and 1400-2100 local time weekdays, and 0900-1230 and 1400-2000 on weekends. **No overtime available.**

- They still have **few parking slots available** – they're busy this year. The mornings of Jan 15, 18 and 19 are fully booked already.

- Slots not required, but **PPR is required.**

- Customs clearance is provided in the military terminal building.

- The airport publishes an **Air Crew Guide** for World Economic Forum every year, with everything you could possibly want to know. Download this year's version here.

- For handling, email the airport on: aircraft.handling@topmotion.ch

LSZR/Altenrhein

- Could be a good option – if you're small enough to cope with their **4774ft runway!**

- Opening hours: 0630-1200 and 1330-2100 local time Mon-Fri, 0730-1200 and 1330-2000 Sat, 1000-1200 and 1330-2000 Sun.

- The standard **fire cover is Cat 2**, but they can provide up to Cat 6 for an extra fee.

- **No slots or PPR** are required.

- **Parking is available**, hangar might be available on request (up to G650/GLEX etc).

- For handling, contact the FBO at groundservices@peoples.ch

- For more ops info check out this page.

LSZS/Samedan

- First things first, this is a **VFR airport** with some IFR traffic. Pilots heading here need to take this test first. If you haven't flown in here before, now might not be the best time to give it a try, because...

- For the WEF, the **airspace around Davos (which includes LSZS airport) will be restricted:** there are special procedures for arrivals and departures, and all flights need **PPR.** The airport has published this doc which includes everything you need to know.

- For handling, contact the airport at handling@engadin-airport.ch

EDNY/Friedrichshafen

- Open 0600-2200 local time weekdays, and 0900-2200 on weekends, with overtime available.

- **No slots PPR required** (although in previous years they introduced PPR for stays of more than 90 minutes, so that might happen again).

- Parking available, but expect to be repositioned for longer parking and servicing.

- For handling, email the local agent at fdhops@aviation-services.net

Permits

Landing permits are not required for private GA/BA flights to Switzerland or Germany. You'll only need a landing permit if you're operating a charter flight on an aircraft not registered in the EU.

For Switzerland charter flight permits, read this guidance and email the authorities direct at trafficrights@bazl.admin.ch. And for Germany, read this guidance and email einflug@lba.de.

More info

There's a good guide published here which has a bunch more info on things like fuel, catering and hotel considerations. Happy WEFing!

Ops to Mexico? Prepare to get ramp checked!

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

Authorities have announced a **ramp check program** will be in place from now until mid-Jan 2024.

They had a similar surge in ramp checks last year during the same period – the official line then was that this was instituted to **ward off cabotage.**

Make sure you have **all the required docs on board** – big fines apply for anyone missing anything important. Local agents advise these checks are taking **up to 40 mins to complete.**

Ramp Check Reports

We've had a few recent reports from OPSGROUP members who have been ramp checked at airports in Mexico:

MMZO/Manzanillo (Jan 2024)

Part 91 trip, Falcon. The Mexican ramp check/arrival was a bit more detailed than we've previously experienced. We frequent this airport and the customs/immigration officers opened every available panel, bag onboard, AND wanted us to open the avionics nose cone which was odd. We explained screwdrivers and a ladder were required – and they didn't make us open it. An important note: we were repositioning empty into the airport and leaving with Pax that the handler is quite familiar with (in a good way).

Airport Permit /paperwork was issued without problems, but every potential crew member will need to be listed on the aircraft's paperwork. Handler suggested operators should submit all possible names to prevent delays to their future ops. We requested the permit 48 hrs prior to landing and it came through just a few hours before we headed down there. Short notice trips will be unlikely. Permit good for 6 months, at this airport only.

MMTP/Tapachula (Oct 2023)

Part 91 customs stop, the whole process took exactly one hour from Block in to Block out. G600 with 15 pax and three crew.

– Upon arrival, the military and drug sniffing dogs were plane-side waiting for all the bags to come off(including crew bags).
– They were snapping photos nonstop.
– They did not want us to take our trash bags out. We just double bagged and left them in the lav.
– Myself, our FA, along with our pax and handler walked about 100 yards to the customs building, in a light drizzle.
– Bags got x-rayed and we waited while there was some back and forth between the customs agents. They

stamped docs and permits which took a good 30-40 minutes.
– Walked back out to the jet and departed with no issues.

MMTO/Toluca (Aug 2023)

Part 91 operator came in from the Caribbean on our way to Toluca. The ramp and customs personnel were there waiting for us and marshalled us to an area of the GA ramp. 30 yards or so from a covered entrance to the terminal. We were able to Leave the APU running with a crew member onboard. Passengers and crew were escorted into the terminal to clear. They did an exterior sweep and came on board the aircraft. I do believe all bags came off and went through security in a private area. I don't recall any specific questions but the whole process took probably 25-30 minutes.

Been to Mexico recently? How did it go? Please file a quick report here!

What docs to carry onboard?

Here's the list of everything you should carry on board for trips to Mexico in case you get ramp checked:

1) *Airworthiness Certificate*
2) *Registration Certificate*
3) *Worldwide and/or Mexican Insurance stating Private use when flying Far Part 91 and Charter use when flying Far Part 135. When flying Far Part 135, it is mandatory to have both insurances: worldwide and Mexican.*
4) *Pilot's licenses: both sides and stating aircraft type rating.*
5) *Pilot's medical certificates: valid document according to crew role (Pilot in Command or Second in Command), type of flight and according to pilot's age.*
6) *If holding Multiple Entry Authorization (MEA), this document and its corresponding payment receipt, must be on board.*
7) *For Charter operations, the following additional documents are required:*
a. Valid Air Operator Certificate (AOC): Copies are accepted considering this document might include many tail numbers (fleet). Payment receipt should also be included.
b. FAA OST 4507 FORM copies are accepted considering this document might include many tail numbers. Alternatively, the appropriate exemption document, Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity is also accepted.
c. If holding a Mexican Indefinite Blanket Permit (IBP), this should be accompanied by the Mexican AOC, and the Yearly Verification (including payment receipt) for it to be considered valid. Copies are accepted considering this document might have many tail numbers.
8) *The logbook (maintenance logbook) stating the most recent information about maintenance performed on the aircraft.*

9) *The authorization to operate as a mobile radio aeronautic station; (Aircraft radio station license/authorization).*
10) *The Flight Manual.*
11) *Noise Certificate.*
12) *The Minimum Equipment List (MEL) when the type certificate indicates it.*
13) *Mexican AIP (for Private flights, a Jeppesen Airway Manual has been sufficient in the past for this. Charter operators, however, are required to carry a copy of the Mexican AIP – you will need to subscribe to the AIP through AFAC and carry electronic copies onboard).*
14) *The preflight checklist.*
15) *If full or partial (inbound/outbound Mexico) route involves overflying the ocean, then a life raft and/or life jackets are required to be on board, according to the type of aircraft. Please note this is also a usual requirement, but Mexican CAA will also be double checking for this.*
16) *Weight and Balance Manifest.*
17) *First Aid Kit.*
18) *Jeppesen Manuals, (at least electronic format).*
19) *If operating Far Part 91 – Private flights, it is required to present a document stating the purpose of the flight, to include the name of the lead passenger and to declare its connection with the aircraft (owner, employees, etc). If accompanied, letter must declare the relationship of the passengers with the lead passenger (family, friends, employees, etc). This will prove there is no commercial purpose under any circumstance. To present this letter, having it notarized is not necessary.*

Private flights watch out!

Private flights to Mexico on aircraft that are used for both private and charter flights should watch out – the authorities in Mexico will likely require further proof that you are, in fact, a private flight. So if the aircraft is not registered in the name of the pilot or one of the pax, the best thing to do is prepare a notarized letter identifying the legal owner of the aircraft and that the owner is authorizing the crew and pax to be on board. **The letter should also clarify that the flight is a private, non-commercial flight.**

Further Reading

For a look at some of the **long-standing challenges affecting General Aviation ops to Mexico**, as well as some of the more recent issues which maybe haven't been widely reported yet, check out our article.

2023 Flight Ops Changes: The Big Ones

Chris Shieff
6 March, 2024

"The only constant in life is change" – once said a Greek philosopher... or maybe Russel Crowe in Gladiator.

Either way, it's been another busy year of change in the world of international flight ops! Here are some of the big'uns from 2023...

January

- **Beirut Gunfire Damage:** At OLBA/Beirut, two jets (and almost a person) were hit by falling bullets. Celebratory gun fire is common in Lebanon – including on New Years. Read

- **FAA Equipment Codes:** Addition of new equipment codes for Field 18 in international flight plans. Read

- **US Flight Grounding:** FAA grounded all flights due to a Notam system glitch. Read

- **Somalia Airspace:** US reg aircraft remain banned but now allowed to transit for flights to HDAM/Djibouti. Read

- **ICAO Doc 007:** New ICAO Doc 007 for the North Atlantic with significant changes. Read

February

- **More ICAO Doc Updates:** ICAO updated more of their North Atlantic Docs, not just 007! Both NAT Doc 006 (the one about Contingency Situations) and NAT Doc 008 (the one about Separation Minima) too. Read.

- **Africa Airspace Risk:** Alert regarding border airspace between Rwanda and Congo DRC, after a military jet was shot at near FZNA/Goma. Read

- **US Arrivals:** The US FAA introduced continuous descent arrivals into eleven airports in Florida, Kansas City, Omaha and Reno. Read

- **Big Fuss Over Big Balloons:** And then other unidentified objects in the upper levels of North American airspace. Read

- **Ops Differences:** Comparison between ops in Europe and the US. Read
- **Haneda Airport Update:** Publication of a runway incursion hazard map for RJTT/Tokyo Haneda airport. Read

March

- **Mali Warning:** Expanded airspace warning for Mali by the US FAA. Read
- **Oman's Open Skies:** Oman allows flights to overfly its territory, easing routes between Israel and Asia. Read
- **Private Flights to US:** Deeper insights for private operators to the US. Read
- **Aviation Safety in Indonesia:** Deteriorating security in Indonesia's Papua region and incidents targeting aircraft. Read
- **Global Reporting Format:** Insights on the Global Reporting Format for runway surface conditions. Read
- **China Reopens:** China reopened its doors to tourists after three years of border restrictions.
- **MAYDAYs:** Danger Club looked at why pilots are getting MAYDAYs wrong. Between us all, we did some figuring out. Read

April

- **NAT Datalink Exempt Airspace:** North Atlantic datalink exempt airspace boundaries changed – airspace over Greenland now requires it. Read
- **US Aviation Rules:** New rules for foreign operators doing P135 charter flights to the US. Read
- **Updated Risks on the South China Sea:** Recent incidents involving civil aircraft and military warships. Read
- **European Flight Planning:** Insights on planning flights in Europe without alternate routes. Read
- **Sudan Airspace Closure:** Sudan's airspace was closed following a military coup. Read

May

- **Circling Approaches:** We wrote about the dangers of circling approaches, and the difference between PANS OPS and TERPS. Read
- **Formidable Shield 2023:** North Atlantic airspace closures for Formidable Shield exercises. Read
- **FAA's Northeast Improvements:** The FAA finally finished its big North-East Corridor Improvement Project. Operators need to file preferred routes to avoid delays. Read
- **NOTAMs Fixed:** We hosted the Great Notam Sprint. Three hundred volunteers found an AI-based solution that fixes the Notam problem – a working model that ingests all NOTAMs for a flight, and outputs a simple, colourful, ranked and pilot-friendly briefing the way we want it.

Read

- **US Airport CBP Fact Sheets:** With help from the NBAA, we built a collection of handy CBP cheat sheets. Read

- **NOPAC Routes Redesign:** Redesign of the North Pacific NOPAC routes by the FAA. Read

- **North Korea's Satellite Launch:** Potential risks to aircraft due to North Korea's recent satellite launch. Read

June

- **TCAS in North Atlantic:** We talked to Shanwick and Gander about whether TCAS was essential to cross the NAT. Read

- **5G Retrofit Deadline:** FAA's decision not to delay the 5G aircraft retrofit deadline. Read

- **Mexico Challenges:** Overview of challenges affecting bizav ops to Mexico. Read

- **ADS-B Mandates:** Changes and mandates for ADS-B globally. Read

- **China's Limits Lifted:** China's removal of domestic sector limits for foreign bizav flights. Read

- **ATC Short Codes:** Inmarsat published an updated list of Short Codes for getting hold of various ATC & ACC centres worldwide. Read

July

- **NAT Region Changes SSR Transponder Procedures:** EGGX/Shanwick FIR updated, with other NAT FIRs to follow. Read

- **US Operators Can Overfly Venezuelan Airspace Below FL260:** Long-standing Notam cancelled, allowing overflight. Read

- **INMARSAT Device Registration for China:** You might need to register your INMARSAT device if headed to China.

- **Tightened Passport Control in Iceland:** Increased scrutiny during tech-stops. Expect to have to get off the plane for passport checks, even in grotty weather. Read

- **Air Traffic Controller Shortage in Australia**: Uncontrolled airspace due to staff shortage. Read

- **Portugal's New Punishment Tax:** New tax in Portugal, targeting business aviation and small aircraft. Similar costs can be expected for an Azores (LPAZ, LPLA for example) tech stop. Read

- **Mexico City Airport Safety Alert:** Several reports of loss of GNSS signal in the terminal area. Read

- **New Datalink Mandate in France:** If you're flying in France above FL195 and you have ATN CPDLC – you must use it! Read

August

- **US Operators Can Overfly Afghanistan at FL320:** Contingency routes in place, but risks

persist. Read

- **Niger Airspace Closure Due to Coup:** Significant impact on Central Africa traffic. Read

- **ZSSS/Shanghai Off-Limits:** Bizjets had to re-route to ZSPD/Pudong for a few months. Read

- **Libya: Aircraft Evacuation Due to Clashes:** Reminder of ongoing risks here. Avoid! Read

- **Navigating NO FIR Airspace in Eastern Pacific** – Procedures for uncontrolled oceanic airspace. Read

- **Approved Airports for Flights to Israel:** Our guide on all things "ops to Israel" related. Read

- **CPDLC Gotcha – Clearance Busts:** In 2022, the FAA recorded 20 aircraft deviations due to issues with CPDLC and partial reroute messages. Here's what not to do! Read

September

- **Canada Mandates ADS-B Above FL180:** Flight plan requirements, exemptions, and application process. Read

- **Niger Airspace Reopens After Coup:** Major airlines resume traffic, but security concerns persist. Read

- **EU Temporary Admission of Aircraft:** OPMAS debunks myths about EU aircraft admission. Read

- **Armenia-Azerbaijan Airspace Risk:** Brief flare-up in the conflict, closure of cross-border waypoints, most East-West flights started avoiding the region and routed via Georgia's UGGG/Tbilisi FIR instead. Read

- **WATRS Renamed:** The US FAA officially renamed WATRS airspace to WAT. Existing B050 authorizations will be re-issued within 24 months. Read

- **GPS Spoofing in Iraq:** We several reports of enroute aircraft being targeted with fake GPS signals, leading to complete nav failures. Read

October

- **OPSGROUP Goes To Vegas:** We had the pleasure of meeting up with OPSGROUP members at NBAA-BACE 23 in Las Vegas! Read

- **New Rules for Outbound US Private Flights:** APIS updates for passenger changes and ETD. Read

- **EU-LISA Screening System Postponed:** The EES bit will be delayed to some time towards the end of 2024, and the ETIAS bit will start no earlier than 2025. Read

- **Tel Aviv Airspace Risk:** Israel is now an active war zone. The Safe Airspace assessment is at Level 1 – Do Not Fly. Operators should especially avoid LLBG/Tel Aviv, despite assurances from the authorities that the airspace is "safe". It isn't! Read

- **Bizav Clampdown at Amsterdam Airport:** Reduction in slots with potential future ban for bizav. Read

- **NAT Changes 2024 Announced:** No more Oceanic Clearances, simplified procedures,

squawking changes. Read

- **US Border Overflight Exemptions:** We made a super simple How-to Guide. Read
- **More GPS Spoofing:** Watch out if you're in the Cairo, Nicosia, or Amman FIRs – at some point, your GPS sensor inputs may try to tell you you're overhead LLBG/Tel Aviv airport. Read

November

- **Bizav Roadblock: Turkey and Armenia:** Turkey blocks bizav overflights to/from Armenia. Read
- **GPS Spoofing Update and Types Identified:** GPS spoofing incidents detailed, including the Beirut scenario. Read
- **The Annual Shanghai Airports Meltdown:** Restrictions in November for bizav flights. Read
- **UK Airspace Warning for Red Sea and Gulf of Aqaba:** Caution urged due to increased military activity. Read
- **North Atlantic Volcanic Threat:** Iceland impending eruption may impact NAT traffic. Read
- **US Visual Approaches:** Ooh, people got angry about this one! A cautionary tale involving a crew of an a A350 inbound to KSFO who found themselves in a seemingly unnecessary last-minute diversion to Oakland after a long-haul flight. The incident highlighted issues with visual approaches in the US, particularly during late-night arrivals. Read
- **New GPS Spoofing Scenario – The Black Sea:** Several reports from members of GPS spoofing over the Black Sea in Turkish airspace. Read
- **Datalink Rules in Europe:** All your European Datalink questions answered! Plus there are now some additional places where Datalink logon will soon be mandatory. Read

December

- **UK Implements ETA for Passengers:** Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme for passengers. Read
- **US Domestic Enroute CPDLC Update:** CPDLC available with specific avionics. Read
- **New Approaches at KDEN/Denver:** RNAV/RNP Approaches introduced to mitigate TCAS RA events. Read
- **Niger Overflights:** Several reports of aircraft being denied entry into Niger airspace at short notice, even though a valid overflight permit was in place.
- **Anti-Aviation Protests:** Some anti-aviation protestors targeted a couple of airports in Belgium. Here's a look at some of the most notable incidents over the past few years. Read

As the year draws to a close, we wanted to say **a big "thank you" to everyone in OPSGROUP** for showing up, sharing stories, experiences, and information, and in turn keeping us all safe and up to date.
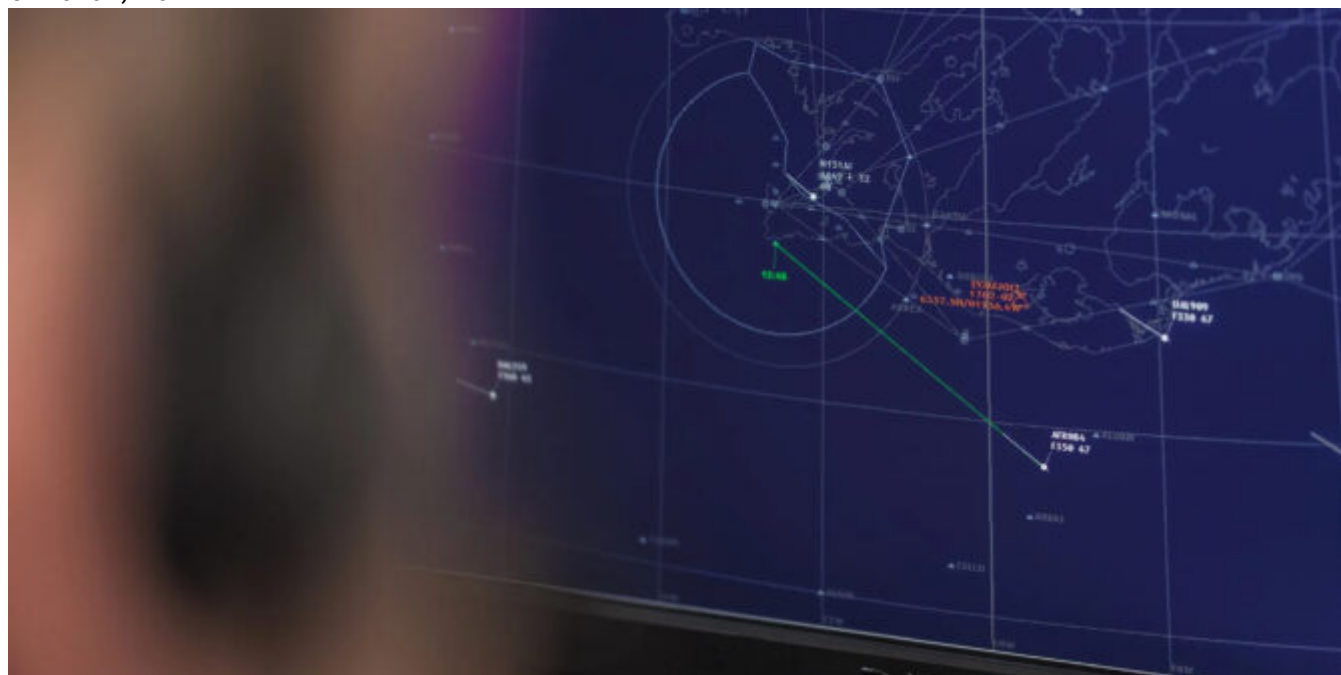
We'll be taking some time off from the Daily Brief and Bulletin emails over the holiday period. It's all fairly straightforward this year dates-wise, we'll basically be **closed from Mon 25 to Fri 29 Dec** – as this tasteful, festive postcard points out.

Happy Holidays everyone, and see you in 2024! ❤⚡✈🎄✈

Iceland ATC strikes at Keflavik

David Mumford
6 March, 2024

Update 19 Dec 1230z – The ATC strike at BIKF/Keflavik on Dec 20 has been cancelled due to a volcanic eruption on the Reykjanes Peninsula.

An Icelandic ATC strike took place on Dec 12, 14, and 18, with another planned for Dec 20 (now cancelled).

The Dec 12/14 strikes affected both BIKF/Keflavik and BIRK/Reykjavik. But the Dec 18/20 strikes were only planned at BIKF/Keflavik – no flights were allowed to operate in or out from 04-10z/

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BIKF A0802/23 - DUE TO INDUSTRIAL ACTION KEFLAVIK CTR IS CLOSED.
BIKF TWR SERVICES IS LIMITED TO AMBULANCE FLIGHTS, EMERGENCY FLIGHTS
AND FLIGHTS ON BEHALF OF THE ICELANDIC COAST GUARD.
18 DEC 04:00 2023 UNTIL 18 DEC 10:00 2023.
CREATED: 15 DEC 13:40 2023
```

The Notams said that emergency flights were exempt. We confirmed with Isavia that **all diversions were accepted**, including emergency, and that carrying **BIKF as an alternate (including ETOPS) was OK.**
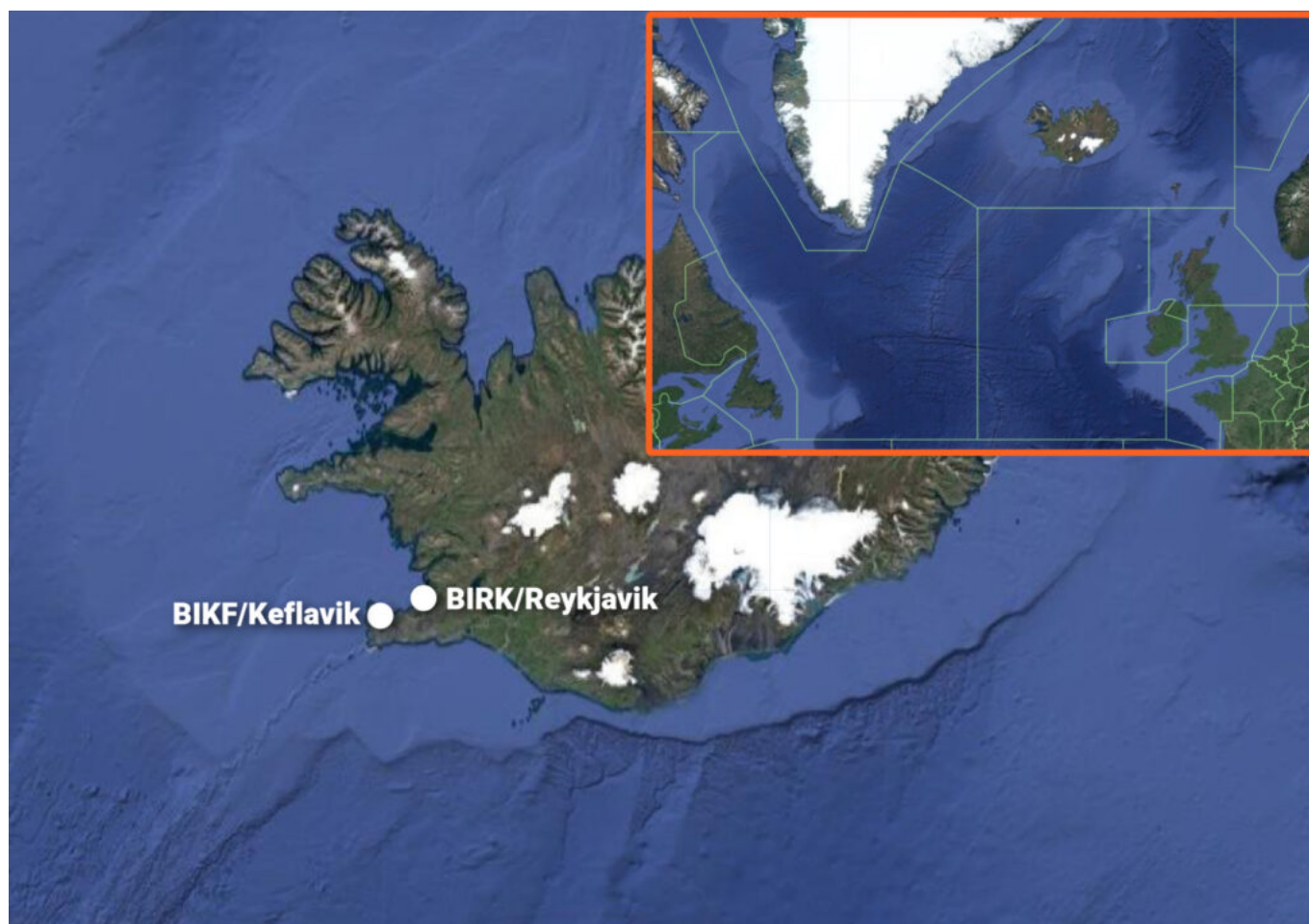
The strikes have gone quite smoothly so far, with minimal disruption to flights. Negotiations between controllers and employers are ongoing…