Summer Tips for Flight Planning in Europe

Kateřina Michalská
3 June, 2025

Summer in Europe often means one thing: **traffic – and lots of it.**

Eurocontrol keeps the system moving, but it can feel complex, especially when delays mount and regulations interfere with your plans.

The good news? A few smart moves can make a big difference. This guide breaks down what matters most: the tools, timing, and habits that help your flight operate on time.

For Dispatchers: Plan It Right

Keep Your EOBTs Accurate

Your Estimated Off-Block Time (EOBT) is what anchors your flight in the network. It tells the system when you plan to be ready for pushback, and everything from slot allocation to airspace planning builds on that. **If the EOBT is outdated, your flight might get an unrealistic Calculated Take-Off Time (CTOT) or even be suspended.**

A CTOT is a take-off window assigned based on current traffic demand. It's valid from -5 to +10 minutes around the assigned time. **You must take off within that window.**

Some operators hesitate to update the EOBT, thinking it could make the CTOT worse. In fact, the system often improves the slot within a few minutes when fresh data is provided.

Tip: If a new CTOT looks worse, give it 10 minutes to settle. If there's still no improvement, then it's time to contact e-Helpdesk.

Don't File YO-YO Profiles

Trying to dodge flow restrictions with **unusual altitude changes (like FL360 → FL320 → FL360) only confuses the system**. These so-called "YO-YO" profiles increase workload for ATC and can cause downstream problems. Use tools like NMP Flight to build efficient, compliant flight plans without trying to

game the system.

Respect Arrival Slots

If your destination airport is slot-coordinated, **always align your flight plan with the assigned airport arrival slot**. Mismatches can lead to flight plan suspension and suspended flights aren't included in ATFM. That means no slot, no priority, and big delays. Double-check that your slot confirmation matches what you file.

ATFM (Air Traffic Flow Management) is the system that manages demand and capacity across the network. If your flight is suspended, it's excluded from this process – making it much harder to recover your slot.

Use IFPS Validation Tools

Before filing your flight plan, use validation tools like NMP Flight, the NOP Portal, or CHMI. These platforms let you check for errors, confirm compliance with the RAD, and fine-tune your routing. A rejected plan means wasted time, especially when the network is busy.

NMP Flight is now the main interface for flight tracking, planning validation, slot monitoring, and more. It replaces older tools like CHMI and adds useful features like custom alerts, critical flight marking, and real-time updates. If you haven't used it yet, it's worth getting familiar.

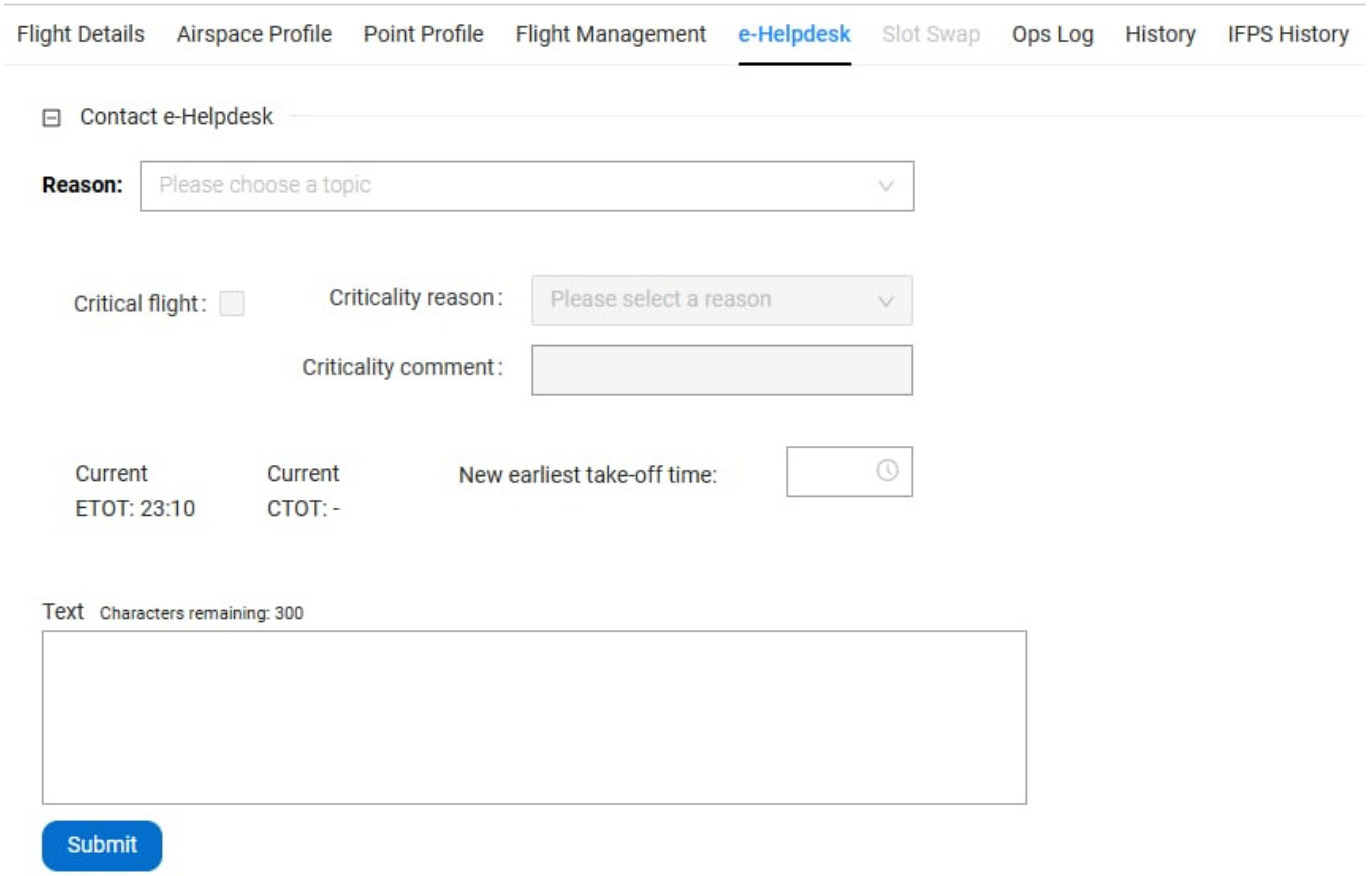
If you're facing a long delay, slot swaps can help – but only in specific cases. **Operators can swap CTOTs between flights** under their own AOC, provided the flights are subject to the same ATFM regulation. Each flight can take part in up to three swaps, which must be submitted via NMP Flight, the NOP Portal, or B2B. Phone requests are possible but should be a last resort. Each request is reviewed by NMOC (Network Manager Operations Centre), Eurocontrol's operational hub for managing traffic flow across Europe, so swaps aren't instant or guaranteed. But when used correctly, they can help reduce the operational impact of delays.

Submit Slot Improvement Requests Wisely

Need a better slot? **Use the e-Helpdesk, but only from EOBT minus 60 minutes**. Submitting too early won't work and flooding the system with duplicate requests won't help either. One well-timed request is all you need. Track your flight in NMP Flight, and only follow up if absolutely necessary.

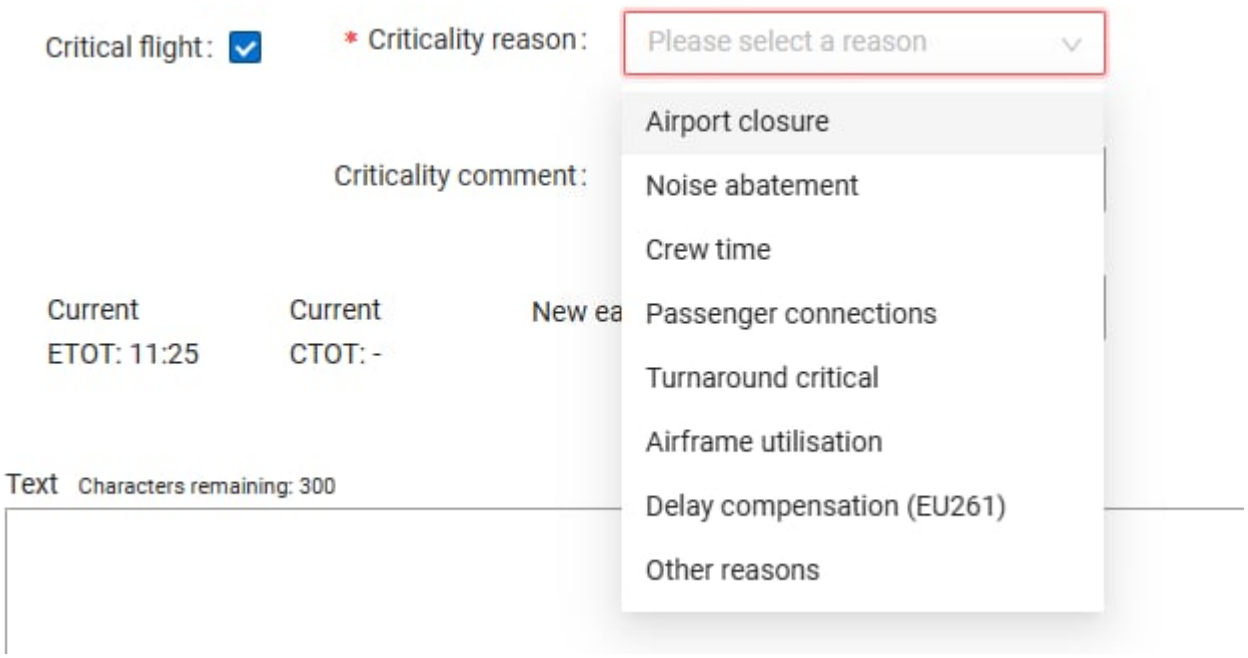
Understanding Critical Flights

With the introduction of NMP Flight, operators now have access to a **useful new feature: the ability to mark a flight as Critical**. This helps Eurocontrol identify flights where delays would cause significant operational problems and gives those flights a better chance of being prioritised. This doesn't guarantee an earlier CTOT, but it does signal urgency to the Eurocontrol network team, who may coordinate with ATC or destination airports to reduce the impact of the delay.



You'll find the option in the e-Helpdesk tab in NMP Flight.

From 60 minutes before EOBT, you can tick the "Critical flight" box and choose a reason from a predefined list:



You can also add a brief comment (up to 300 characters) to explain the situation.

What to keep in mind:

- You can only apply Critical status from **60 min before EOBT**. Earlier requests won't be accepted.
- Once marked, **you can't change or remove the flag** for that flight during the day, so be sure before using it.
- You can mark **up to 5 % of your regulated flights as Critical each day**, with a maximum of 20 flights.
- These flights are **not automatically rejected**, which improves the chance of receiving support from Eurocontrol.

Use this option carefully, and only for flights where delay would cause real disruption. When applied correctly, it's a simple but powerful tool to keep your operation running smoothly.

For Pilots: Keep It Predictable

Eurocontrol doesn't like surprises. The whole system runs more smoothly when flights do exactly what they said they would do. Sudden changes might seem harmless from the flight deck, but they can ripple through the network and cause chaos in sectors ahead. Here's how to keep things flowing:

- **Fly what you file.** Stick to your planned routing and levels unless ATC, weather, or safety require a change. That shortcut might save a minute, but it could cost someone else much more.
- **Stick to your slot.** Request start-up in line with your EOBT and CTOT. Off-schedule departures can break the flow and lead to slot issues.
- **Let your dispatch team talk to Eurocontrol.** The Network Manager Operations Centre (NMOC) is ready to help, but contact should come from dispatch. Unless you're both pilot and ops – let the team handle it.

Need Help? Know Where To Go

Your first stop should always be the **e-Helpdesk** in NMP Flight. It's the fastest and most efficient way to request CTOT improvements, mark Critical flights, or get slot-related support. The network team monitors it constantly and responds quicker when requests come through the system.

Calls should be a last resort, used only for urgent, time-critical situations. Phone support takes resources away from managing the wider network – so only use it when really needed.

Call only if:

- A flight is about to miss CTOT at the holding point.
- There's a crew duty or curfew risk.
- You're repositioning a diverted aircraft.
- You're handling a medical or emergency flight.

Contacts:

- AOLO (Aircraft Operator Liaison Officer) general line: **+32 2 745 1992**
- Airport Function (AF) – for airport-related issues or curfew risk: **+32 2 745 1903**
- AOLO Hotline – for critical/emergency issues only: **+32 496 560 300**
- Airport coordination e-mail: **nm.airports@eurocontrol.int**

For everything else, use the e-Helpdesk – it’s how Eurocontrol can help you best.

Want to Learn More? Start Here

If you want to go beyond the basics and build a deeper understanding of how the European network works, here are three great places to start:

EUROCONTROL Learning Zone – Free online courses and tutorials to help you better understand European flight planning and ATFM.

ThinkNetwork Guide – Summer 2025 – Eurocontrol’s seasonal briefing with key planning tips, capacity updates, and network insights.

NOP Portal Real-time source for airspace status, regulations, slots, and network operations.

Three Ways To Escape From New York

Chris Shieff
3 June, 2025

Key Points

- **If you’re flying out of the New York area, expect delays. ATC staffing and tech issues, along with heavy traffic, are causing slowdowns.**

- **But there are three lesser-known routing options (SERMN, Deep Water, TEC) that can get you airborne faster – if you're willing to fly lower, carry extra fuel, and meet a few added requirements.**

In the middle of last year, the FAA transferred control of Newark's airspace from **New York TRACON (N90)** to **Philadelphia TRACON's Area C** due to a shortage of staff.

And it hasn't been smooth sailing. Philly itself is understaffed, and has reported several failures recently with data sent from New York via aging copper lines affecting both radar and communication equipment.

Recent murmurings from OPSGROUP members indicate **EDCT delays** are rife – even at outlier airports. We're talking **hours** here, not minutes.

And in the short term at least, it looks like things will get worse before they get better.

The Memorial Day Weekend set records for US air travel, and the Summer peak is nearly upon us.

A couple of weeks back some clever folk from the NBAA, FAA and the Teterboro Users Group (TUG) got together to talk about the recent disruptions in the Northeast and what to do about it. You can view a replay of their excellent session here.

Some of the juiciest intel was the use of not-so-secret **ATC routes to significantly reduce departure delays** and get you clear of New York's airspace post-haste.

In fact, **three less conventional route options** were discussed to help you escape the Big Apple.

A Quick Word on Fuel

A recurring theme here is 'operational flexibility.' **None of these options will save you fuel, only time.**

To use these routes, you will need to carry more. In some cases enough to operate at low level (less than 10,000') for up to 100nm. But letting ATC know you are willing and capable of flying them may well see you jump an extremely long queue for conventional routes.

Escape Plan #1: SERMN Routes

When weather gets in the way of things, the FAA has a literal **playbook** of strategic options to help manage high volumes of traffic. You can find it here.

Within this playbook, is something called **SERMN Routes**. SERMN stands for SWAP Escape Routes – Metro New York. SWAP stands for severe weather avoidance plan. With me so far?

They comprise a **low-level game plan** to help ATC manage traffic out of the NY Metro area when the regular routes are not available due to nasty build-ups.

When this happens, ATC has three plays available (depending on the direction you're headed):

SERMN North (BUF, ROC, SYR, YYZ etc). Example routing ex KTEB: COATE →

LAAYK → STUBN →BENEE → BUF→ KROC. Jets capped at **10,000**′ until exiting NY Center's airspace.

 SERMN South (DCA, CLT, ATL etc). Example routing ex KTEB: ELVAE → COL → DIXIE → T303 → LEEAH → T315→ TAPPA→ THHMP→ CAVLR6→ KIAD Jets capped at **8,000′.**

 SERMN East – (BOS, North Eastern Corridor). Example routing ex KTEB: BREZY → V39 → CMK → V3 → WOONS → KBOS. Jets capped at **9,000.'**

Their aim is to get you under weather and away from traffic.

But here's the kicker (football pun intended). You don't necessarily need bad weather to fly em.' If hit with a departure delay, communicate with Clearance Delivery that you're **fuelled and willing** to accept a SERMN route. Or any of the other routes below (TEC and Deep Water) for that matter.

If you can get it, it may be good option to beat the crowds.

Hey, what about SERMN West?

It doesn't actually exist, for a few reasons. Predominantly because western departures from the NY Metro area are heavily managed by other established routes such as J80 and J6.

Westbound traffic is also not as typically constrained by adjacent airspace as those aircraft headed in the other directions – and in any case there are other plays in the play book available for westbound traffic, they just don't carry the title SERMN.

Escape Plan #2: Deep Water Routes

Another option to consider are **Deep Water routes** which run north and south off the coast between the Northeast and Florida.

If you have the right gear on board, don't be afraid to get your feet wet.

The FAA advises they can be useful routes out of the area by getting you out of the way of traffic and restricted airspace along the coast.

But before you dive on in, it's important you are **familiar with the requirements** of these routes to fly them.

For instance, in NY Oceanic airspace if you are not RNP 4 or 10 capable you need to let ATC know so that they can apply additional separation. If you do have RNP 4/10, you need to comply with those requirements which includes holding the appropriate Opspec/LOA and having the right equipment on board (such as two independent long range navigation systems).

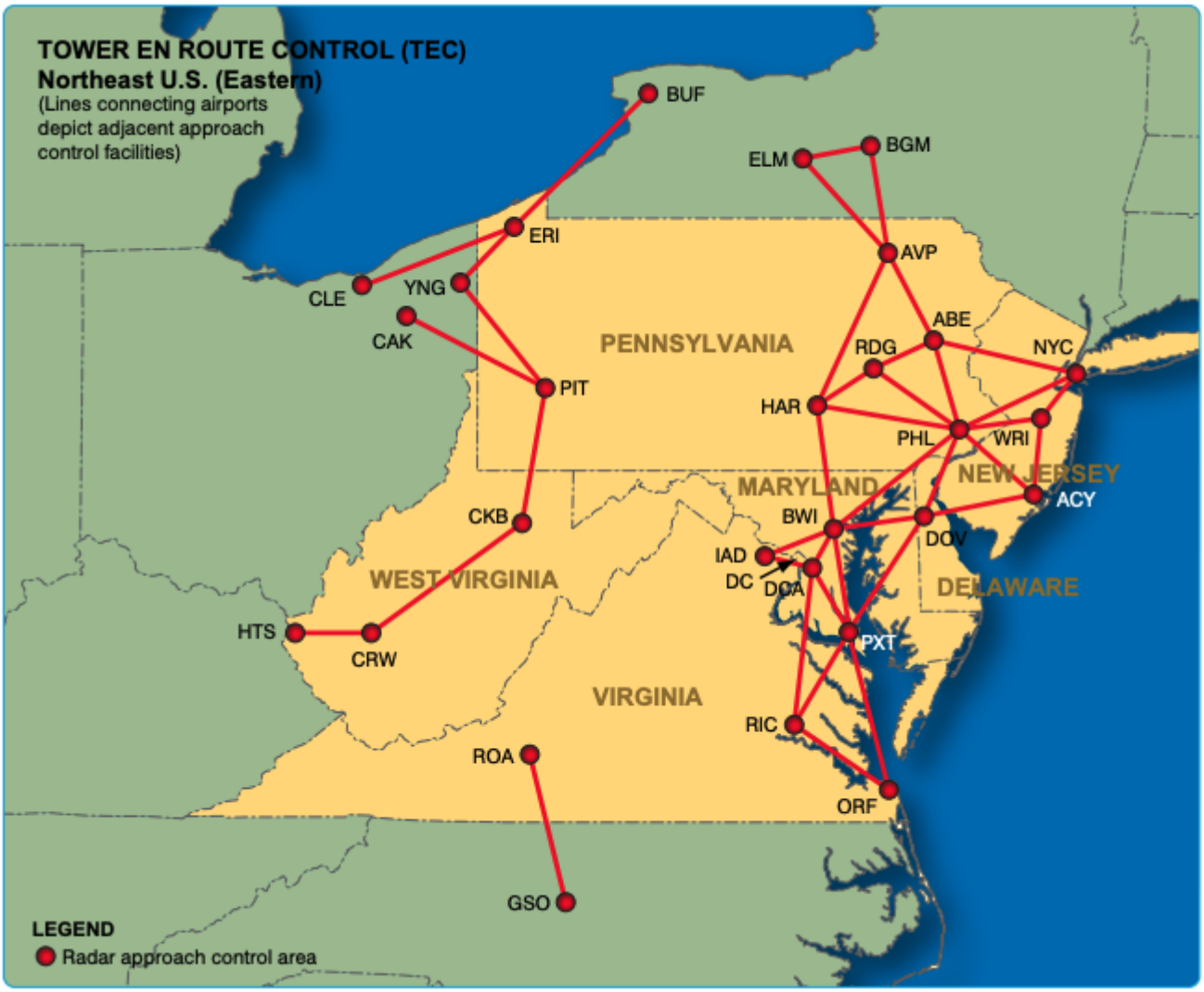
And don't forget your **survival gear** either – which can include lift vests, a raft, survival kits, an ELT and pyrotechnic signalling devices depending on what part of the law you're operating under. You can find these under FARs 91.509, 135.167 and 121.339.

It's also important you're thoroughly familiar with the contingency procedures for oceanic airspace including what to do in the event of a navigation failure (especially loss of RNP capability).

Escape Plan #3: TEC Routes

If you're not headed far from New York, consider the use of **FAA TEC Routes** (Tower Enroute Control).

These are low-altitude IFR routings (typically 5000 – 17,000') used for short-distance flights (usually less than 500nm) and often link nearby metropolitan centres.



The idea behind them is to keep aircraft within TRACON (Terminal Radar Approach Control) without the need to hand them off to enroute centers. They are by design, simple and efficient.

These routes reduce controller workload, and keep you away from busier airways. They are typically used by **turbo-prop** aircraft, so let delivery know you have the fuel to fly them as they may not be immediately considered for jets.

You can find the NE TEC routes in the **FAA Chart Supplement** here.

Finally, stay clued in.

You can avoid delays by predicting when and where they are most likely. The FAA provides a head's up via three useful sources – fly.faa.gov, nasstatus.faa.gov and X (formerly Twitter). This includes daily briefings on incoming weather, disruptions and the plans in place to mitigate against them.

Worldwide GPS Dual Failure mystery solved

OPSGROUP Team
3 June, 2025

The mystery of the dual GPS failures around the world has been solved.

Last week, a slew of Dual/Complete GPS Failures began to be reported by airlines and AOs around the world. A peak of failure reports were received around May 21. Typically, the fault was first annunciated as an “ADS-B RPTG” Fault, followed by GPS 1/2 failure. Aircraft affected were mostly B737 and A320 series, though some widebodies also caught the lurgy.

Initially, no clear cause could be established. There were theories about new spoofing and jamming areas, solar flares, sunspots, and troubling new hacker activity. But none of those lined up with the symptoms.

However, over the weekend, the culprit was traced to a single faulty satellite, GPS PRN 37. Data from the broadcast of this satellite led to the on-board failures that we saw.

Thanks to all OPSGROUP members that assisted with the “ALL CALL” that went out on Friday, there was a great response and we were able to collect a great deal of information. An Ops Alert was issued to members on Sunday, which reads:

ZZZZ/Worldwide - Hazard The mystery of worldwide dual GPS failures appears to have been solved. Over the weekend Boeing, Honeywell, and Collins collaborated to investigate the cause, and the outcome is that the faults were traced to one GPS satellite (PRN 37). A change in the data format being broadcast from it apparently led to the receiver failures. These were limited to Honeywell MMR's, predominantely on B737 and A320 series aircraft. This change has been corrected, and no further issues are expected. There was no connection to an increase in solar activity, or jamming/spoofing. The three OEM's involved consider the case closed. Thank you to all members who responded with reports and information.

A **special briefing** is in your member Dashboard, which includes crew reports of the issue.

NANU NANU

There was a warning (published as a NANU message) to GPS users published earlier in the year, that warned of unhealthy navigation messages being broadcast on GPS satellites 35, 36 and 37 throughout 2025. Let’s hope that any rogue signals from PRN 35 or 36 don’t have the same effect down the track.

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NOTICE ADVISORY TO NAVSTAR USERS (NANU) 2025017 NANU TYPE: GENERAL
*** GENERAL MESSAGE TO ALL GPS USERS ***
Testing will be occurring through CY 2025 using PRNs 35, 36, 37
on residual SVs broadcasting UNHEALTHY navigation messages.
*** GENERAL MESSAGE TO ALL GPS USERS ***

POC: CIVILIAN - NAVCEN AT 703-313-5900, HTTPS://WWW.NAVCEN.USCG.GOV
MILITARY - GPS WARFIGHTER COLLABORATION CELL at
HTTPS://GWCC-WS.CCE.AF.MIL/GPSOC, DSN 560-2541, COMM 719-567-2541,
gpsoperationscenter@us.af.mil, HTTPS://GWCC-WS.CCE.AF.MIL
MILITARY ALTERNATE - JOINT SPACE OPERATIONS CENTER, DSN 276-3526.
COMM 805-606-3526. JSPOCCOMBATOPS@US.AF.MIL
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Visual Approaches: When To Say No

Chris Shieff
3 June, 2025

There is a recent history in the US of serious incidents that have occurred during visual approaches – you don't have to hunt long to find them. The reality is this: *when we accept a visual approach, we accept more risk.*

That isn't to say that this risk cannot be effectively and safely managed. Visual approaches are still an important way to increase the efficiency of congested airspace. But we *do* have to give ourselves the room, the capacity, and the mitigations to fly them **safely**. And in my opinion, that's where the **true risk** lies.

The FAA seems to agree. On April 2, it issued an eye-opening Safety Alert for Operators (SAFO) regarding visual approaches. The lowdown is this: visual approaches can be **riskier** than they seem, especially in today's busy airspace. Let's take a closer look.

FAA SAFO on Visual Approaches

The FAA's SAFO is resolute in its message – the pilot-in-command has the ultimate responsibility (by law) to **say no to clearances that excessively increase workload or erode safety margins.** In other words, they **don't want us to hesitate to say 'UNABLE'.** Ultimately, it's our decision as pilots, and no one else's.

FAA Reg 14 CFR § 91.3 specifically says:

"…The pilot in command of an aircraft is directly responsible for, and is the final authority as to, the operation of that aircraft."

This includes the **full authority** to refuse or decline any clearance or instruction that they deem unsafe or beyond the operational limits of the aircraft or crew. The SAFO then continues with another important message – **ATC will support a PIC's authority to declare 'unable'** when a clearance may reduce safety margins.

This is where the SAFO falls short a little, at least on a real-world basis. What needs to be included is '*with impunity.'*

Recent Events

In a US NAS burdened by traffic volume, aging infrastructure and controller shortages we continue to hear reports of excessive delays and even confrontation when a clearance is declined.

Check out the recent diversion of a Lufthansa A350 at KSFO/San Francisco due to **non-acceptance of visual separation at night.**

Courtesy of VASAviation.

There appears to be a growing disconnect here between what the FAA wants in its SAFO, and what's actually happening in the real world.

It's seems clear that more needs to change amongst all stakeholders before we can begin to consistently practice 'safety over sequence' while accommodating all traffic.

FAA Mitigations

The FAA's recent SAFO also provides some **guidance for pilots** on how to mitigate some of the risks of accepting visual approaches. We've summarized those in the following little Opsicle.

A note about Business Aviation

In researching this article, several suggestions were also raised about the human factors involved with why pilots find it so hard to **say no** to challenging clearances. Attend any Human Factors course and you'll be familiar with the **common culprits** – saying 'unable' can feel like a form of noncompliance, the need to be perceived as competent, an innate desire to 'make it work', or the struggle of time compression.

What's more interesting to us on this occasion is the **vulnerability** (when compared to airline ops) of **business aviation crew** to accept challenging clearances despite the increased risk. In other words, are there unique factors? BizAv pilots are faced with a **unique combination** of industry culture, operational demands and perception of role.

Under Pressure:

BizAv pilots usually find no solace in the **anonymity** of a flight deck door, a staff number, or a large airline. They have direct contact with those who employ them (sometimes even in the cockpit). Whether we like it or not, this can have an insidious effect on our tolerance for risk. Saying ‘unable’ can feel like **failing to deliver.**

Professional Flexibility:

Travel by private jet can typically cost anywhere between ten to forty times more than flying commercial. Those who pay may have a certain expectation that we can land anywhere, anytime and **circumvent the constraints of conventional airline travel.**

No One’s Watching:

Unlike the airlines, there is no requirement for business jets operated under Part 91 to be equipped with Flight Data Recorders or even CVRs, or even under Part 135 (with less than ten seats). And it is hard to deny (even with the best intentions) that this doesn’t have some kind of impact in moments of unexpectedly high workload. Strict adherence to stabilized approach criteria for instance can become more flexible **without fear of reprisal.**

Safety Management Under Part 91:

The FAA SAFO also specifically mentions the use of safety management systems (SMS) to better mitigate the risks of conducting visual approaches. However a looming mandate will **only apply to Part 135 operations – not Part 91**, where they will remain voluntary. It’s therefore possible that some BizAv pilots will not be exposed sufficiently to the FAA’s advice.

Want to join the discussion?

We’d love to hear from you. You can reach us at: news@ops.group.

Watch Out For APU Fines at Le Bourget

Chris Shieff
3 June, 2025

The summer peak is nearly upon us, and so too is the busiest season for BizAv at LFPB/Le Bourget.

Several upcoming events will see an influx of traffic to the airport including the **French Open** (May 19 – June 8), the **Paris Air Show** (June 16 – 22) and **Paris Fashion Week** (June 24 – 29).

While this isn't a new change, if you're heading into LFPB it's a good time to remind yourself of the strict rules for APU usage lest you fall victim to some potentially large fines.

They're not mucking around either – two groups are involved. The Air Transport Gendarmerie is responsible for monitoring APU usage at the airport and making sure operators follow the rules. If not, a group known (in English) as the Airport Nuisance Authority (ACNUSA) will get involved and issue fines.

In a recent year, ACNUSA imposed 334 fines for non-APU compliance across French airports. Their haul? €6.9 million – that's an average of more than **€20,000 per fine**. This has been confirmed as accurate and current by a local handler. Both the operator and PIC can be held liable.

The French AIP (LFPB AD 2.21) has the full rules – but here's what you need to know…

Know the time limits

Since 2023, the rules at Le Bourget have depended on whether your parking stands have ground facilities or not:

Departing Flights – APU use limited to **10 minutes** prior to the EOBT if your stand is equipped with ground air and power, or **45 minutes** on stands without these services.

Arriving Flights – APU use limited to **5 minutes** after arrival if your stand is equipped with ground air and power, or **20 minutes** on stands without these services.

There are *limited* exemptions to the rules, these include:

- Humanitarian and medical flights.
- Military aircraft.
- Aircraft carrying live animals, perishables, medical or cosmetic goods that require active air

flow.

- The sake of flight safety (which specifically includes passenger, crew or handler health). For departing aircraft it's worth noting it can take up to 30 mins to cool the cabin of a larger jet (such as a G650, or Falcon 8X) to comfortable temp when the ambient temp outside is more than 30 deg C (86 deg F).

For BizAv flights, determining whether or not the FBO is "equipped with ground air and power" is a slightly tricky business. **One FBO reported the following:**

We have some mobile GPUs, but not for every space. That creates two interpretations:

The first one: if we have a mobile GPU available, so it is 5 minutes on arrival and 10 minutes on departure; and if we don't have it available, it is 20 minutes on arrival and 45 minutes on departure.

The second one: they consider that as we are not able to provide one GPU to each aircraft, we are in the 20 minutes on arrival and 45 minutes on departure category by default.

But as the second way is not an "official" one, it is only a tolerance, that's why you might get different replies from the different FBOs about how the rules work here.

I need an exemption

This is at the PIC's discretion, but you need to be able to **justify it** using one of the conditions above.

To do so, you'll need to provide your agent with a declaration for the Gendarmerie that you intend to break the APU rules, and most importantly **why**.

Feedback from local agents

Here's what handlers at Le Bourget had to say when we reached out to them directly.

- *"…the airport authorities are very strict with the use of APU's here. The authorities may fine you for failure to comply – we are able to provide a GPU at the request of the crew…"*
- *"…there are some unexpected and random inspections by the authorities, after which they write a report and impose a fine…"*
- *"…the use of the APUs is randomly controlled by the Gendarmerie here in LFPB. The maximum amount of the fine for APU infractions is 20,000€…"*
- *"…the Captain may only deviate from APU rules for safety reasons. Violation is heavily penalized by the ACNUSA agency, with fines generally exceeding €10,000!…"*

Why the fuss anyway?

Two things – noise and pollution.

APU's are **noisy** things – a typical one produces 113 decibels, an equivalent noise range to a power saw, jackhammer or even a rock concert. Le Bourget is **noise sensitive** and located in close proximity to residential areas.

Then there's the dinosaurs we're burning – carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides and other nasties are ejected from our APU exhaust. Reducing runtime helps **lower emissions** and improves air quality near the field. In fact, here is a **surprising statistic** – approx. 30% of an airport's carbon emissions come from aircraft

on the ground (with APU use being a significant factor).

This is all in line with global and EU climate goals (such as Fit for 55 or the Paris Agreement). Agree or not, we have to play by the rules – or find ourselves paying a hefty price.

Have a report to share?

Have you been stung or know someone who has? Please share your story with us (as always, our reports are always de-identified). There are several thousand crew out there who will owe you a beer. You can reach us around the clock on news@ops.group.

Greece Summer Lowdown: Parking Pain, Slot Stress, and Hidden Fees

David Mumford
3 June, 2025

Key Points

- **All Greek islands will be extremely busy again this summer. Athens too.**
- **Very few slots are made available to BizAv flights, overnight parking is scarce, even quick turn arounds are extremely difficult in some cases.**
- **At Level 3 airports, your filed flight plan must match the confirmed slot time within ±15 minutes, otherwise it will be suspended.**
- **Watch out for extra fees at LGMK/Mykonos, LGKR/Corfu and LGKO/Kos.**
- **Consider drop-and-go's, with parking at airports on the Greek mainland, Cyprus, or Turkey.**

There are loads of island airports in Greece, but there's a special collection which are managed by a company called Fraport.

"Special" just because operating to these particular airports has become **increasingly challenging** since their privatisation in 2017. Fraport initially struggled to deal with providing parking to non-scheduled and business aviation, and new slot procedures were introduced to try to better manage the volume of requests being made.

How long can I park my aircraft on the islands?

Not long. There are two places to check how long you can stay on the ground at these airports – and you need to check both.

The first is the PPR Handbook Fraport have published which includes this info in handy chart form, plus a bunch of extra info about how to actually go about applying for PPR. The chart below shows the info for the 2025 summer season:

Airport	Maximum Ground Time (days)
SKG *LGTS/Thessaloniki*	30MAR – 15JUN: 7* 16JUN – 15SEP: 5 16SEP – 25OCT: 7*
CFU *LGKR/Corfu*	5 for fixed-wing Aircraft CAT C 3 for fixed-wing Aircraft CAT B Helicopters maximum 60 min ground time from 0500z to 1600z
ZTH *LGZA/Zakynthos*	1 (departure by 0500 UTC)
EFL *LGKF/Kefalonia*	From 01/06/2025 until 30/09/2025 and from 08:00 UTC to 16:55 UTC, the maximum ground time for flights allocated to the declared apron positions is 90 minutes. There are limited no-declared positions for longer stay based on Apron Availability.
PVK *LGPZ/Aktion*	Helicopters and fixed-wing Aircraft: maximum 60 min ground time 1 overnight for fixed-wing Aircraft (arrival: 1 hour prior airport closure and departure the latest 30min after airport opening according to airport operating hours). Towbar availability is mandatory for overnights
KVA *LGKV/Kavala*	Based on Apron availability
CHQ *LGSA/Crete*	Based on Apron availability
RHO *LGRP/Rhodes*	7
KGS *LGKO/Kos*	Based on Apron availability for fixed-wing Aircraft only. Helicopters maximum 120 min ground time.
JTR *LGSR/Santorini*	From 01/06/2025 until 15/09/2025 and from 05:00 UTC until 18:00 UTC, the maximum ground time for GA/BA flights is 40 minutes.
JMK *LGMK/Mykonos*	From 01/06/2025 until 15/09/2025 and from 04:00 UTC until 19:30 UTC, the maximum ground time for GA/BA flights is 40 minutes.
MJT *LGMT/Lesbos*	Based on Apron availability
SMI *LGSM/Samos*	Based on Apron availability for fixed-wing Aircraft only. Helicopters maximum 120 min ground time.
JSI *LGSK/Skiathos*	7*

* Limited positions for longer stay based on Apron Availability.

For airports that there is no limitation of maximum ground time as per above table and overnight request exceeds the 15 days, a prior communication with ANOC is required, via e-mail to xxxppr@fraport-greece.com, (where "xxx" is the 3-letter IATA airport code).

The second place to check is the Notams, and this applies to ALL Greek airports. With peak summer season coming in July/August, expect to see even more restrictive max-time-on-ground Notams get published.

Don’t get caught without a slot in Greece

Greece has brought back the Flight Plan Suspension (FLS) system for summer 2025. It applies to Level 3 coordinated airports – which includes most of the busy island destinations – you can which are Level 3 here.

If your flight plan is more than 15 minutes off your confirmed slot time, it will be automatically suspended.

Make sure you have a confirmed slot from HSCA – your handler will usually take care of this – and that your flight plan matches the slot time.

The slot ID must be included in Field 18 of your flight plan:

- *RMK/LGXXAxxxxxxxxx* for arrivals
- *RMK/LGXXDxxxxxxxxx* for departures.

Even if you’re flying VFR, a slot is still required if any part of the flight is under IFR.

If you can’t reach HSCA, you can contact Greek ATS at: +30 210 997 2656 (office) or +30 210 997 22654 (24/7)

This change is published in LGGG Notam A1535/25, effective from May 30 – July 9. We’ll see if it gets extended…

Watch out for extra fees!

There are some extra costs at three airports in the summer: **LGMK/Mykonos, LGKR/Corfu and LGKO/Kos.**

The short story is this: all BizAv flights have to use the dedicated GA Terminal at these airports in the summer months, where you will get charged an **extra 2000 Euros per passenger-carrying sector flight** (so if a flight has pax inbound and outbound, 4000 Euros will be charged). VAT is charged on top of this to non-EU operators.

It doesn’t matter which handler you use – they all quote the same costs for this.

There’s no mention of these charges in Fraport’s Airport Charges documents published on their site.

A note on LGAV/Athens

Once a haven for weary BizAv operators, Athens used to guarantee a quiet remote stand where you could leave the jet for a few nights after dropping pax on the islands.

But those days are gone!

In March 2025, the airport started managing BizAv parking entirely through slots and PPRs. **The free parking period was cut from 12 hours to just 90 minutes.** If your ground time is 90 minutes or less,

no PPR is needed, and you can request a slot up to 7 days before the flight. For stays longer than 90 minutes, you must first obtain a PPR, but this will **only be issued within 24 hours of the flight.** Once approved, you can then confirm your slot using the PPR. It seems this rule can only be found in the Slot Authority's guidance doc – not the AIP or Notams.

Good options for parking?

In Greece, we've heard reports from OPSGROUP members on these ones: **LGTS/Thessaloniki, LGIO/Ioannina, and LGKV/Kavala.** In Cyprus, there's **LCPH/Paphos.** And then there's always the option of Turkish coastal airports, the likes of **LTBJ/Izmir and LTFE/Bodrum.**

Plus a couple more we heard about last year:

LGBL/Volos *– A joint use air base 90nm north of Athens. We just relocated our aircraft there on our trip to Athens for around 9 days. Super easy in and out. Stayed at Volos town about 15 miles away. Limited operating days and hours so check notams. They have limited airline service also. Rental cars are available. All in all a great experience for storing our aircraft until the boss was ready to return to the US.*

LGIR/Heraklion *– We operated into LGIR a few days ago. Everything very easy and Skyserv did a really great job of taking care of our pax and us. Lots of nice hotels in the area around the city, some nice sights if you have some days off. Departure was also very smooth, catering, fuelling, gpu everything worked exactly as it should. The fees were also very moderate. LGIR is also a good candidate for parking if you can't get it anywhere else.*

And a couple of other airports which used to be okay options, but maybe aren't so great anymore: **LGRX/Araxos and LGSM/Samos.** As reported by Universal handling: *LGRX is very restrictive and not with so much space, I wouldn't consider it as one of the first options, but desperate times call for desperate measures. LGSM was not so easy to approve last summer, they have also their morning peak a couple of days of the week but it is indeed a solution.*

Know of any other good options? Let us know: news@ops.group

London Night Ops: What's Changing This Summer

David Mumford
3 June, 2025

Key Points

- **EGGW/Luton will allow a limited number of BizAv night slots this summer (14 Jun – 17 Sep), a rare exception linked to upcoming runway works.**
- **EGSS/Stansted now has only 10 BizAv night slots per week, shared between all FBOs, available until the end of October (unless extended).**
- **EGWU/Northolt will have restricted civilian ops hours in Jun, Jul and Aug due to control tower works impacting ATC staffing, with no weekend flying at all in Jul and Aug.**
- **EGMC/Southend is not available H24. It operates daily from 0600 to 0130 local time, with no night operations permitted – including for QC1 or quieter aircraft.**

Unlike previous summers, EGGW/Luton is making a one-off exception this year by allowing a small number of BizAv night slots, to help manage capacity during upcoming runway works. However, availability is extremely limited, slots are tightly controlled, and subject to withdrawal if airline delays eat into the night hours. EGMC/Southend is no longer a viable late-night option. It now operates strictly between 0600 and 0130 local time, with no movements allowed outside those hours – regardless of aircraft noise level.

All times shown below are local time!

EGLL/Heathrow & EGKK/Gatwick

Slots for bizav flights are almost never issued at night, as there is a noise quota system in place between 2300-0700. There might be a few daytime slots available – best bet is to contact a local handler and they will try to sort you out. There's only one FBO at these airports, both Signature: lhr@signatureflight.co.uk and lgw@signatureflight.co.uk

EGGW/Luton

There's a change to night operations this summer. **The airport will allow a limited number of night slots for BizAv**. Between 14 Jun – 17 Sep, up to 100 ad-hoc night slots will be granted for flights between 2300-0659 local time, but only for quieter aircraft. Best to check with your local handler whether your aircraft qualifies. These slots are shared across all operators and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. This is a one-off exception, linked to upcoming runway works. Slots will be tightly controlled and may be withdrawn if airline delays push into night hours. A few different FBOs to choose from:

Signature: ltn@signatureflight.co.uk
Harrods: ltnops@harrodsaviation.com

EGSS/Stansted

After a full ban on BizAv night slots between 2300-0600 local time from June 1 to Sep 30, limited availability has now returned. Local FBOs confirm that just 10 night slots per week in total are being allocated, shared between all handlers at Stansted. This arrangement is in place until the end of October, though it may be extended through April 2026 before further summer restrictions are reintroduced. A few different FBOs to choose from:

Inflite Jet Centre: operations@inflite.co.uk
Universal: uk@universalaviation.aero

Harrods: stnops@harrodsaviation.com (Harrods operate two FBOs here: *The Knightsbridge* and *The Brompton*)

EGLC/London City

Open: 0630-2130 weekdays, 0630-1230 Sat and 1230-2130 Sun. There are slots available between these times. jetcentre@londoncityairport.com are who you need to speak to for handling and slot assistance there.

EGTK/London Oxford

Open: 0630-2230 and up to 2359 on request, seven days a week.

The thing you probably want to know about Oxford is while it takes just over an hour to drive to London, making it the furthest away of all the "London" airports, it also charges much less in handling fees. You can contact the FBO at ops@londonoxfordairport.com

EGLF/Farnborough

Open: 0700-2200 weekdays, 0800-2000 weekends – but no extensions possible. Farnborough is a dedicated business aviation airport and can be contacted at ops@farnboroughairport.com

EGKB/Biggin Hill

Open: 0630-2300 weekdays, 0800-2200 weekends. On UK bank holidays, weekend hours apply. Biggin Hill is one to consider for smaller corporate and charter operations. A dedicated bizav airport, only 12 miles outside of central London, and no slots required. A couple of FBOs to choose from:

Executive Handling: handling@bigginhillairport.com
Jetex: fbo-bqh@jetex.com

EGWU/Northolt

Normally open: Monday to Friday 0800-2000, Sat 0800-1500 and Sun 1200-1900. So not great for night flights, but pretty handy otherwise as Northolt is one of the closest GA-accessible airports to central London, as well as the closest airport to EGLL/Heathrow (8 miles away). **But this summer (Jun through Aug), opening hours for civilian ops are being restricted due to infrastructure works at the control tower impacting ATC staffing.**

In Jun, ops are limited to Monday to Friday 0800-1800 and Sunday 1000-1700 local time, with Saturday fully closed. In Jul and Aug, weekday hours return to 0800-2000, but there will be no weekend flying at all, as the airport will be open for military traffic only. Any bookings outside these hours will need to be moved or cancelled.

Bear in mind it's a dual use military/civil airport, so you'll need PPR, but they're normally quite quick to approve this.

Universal is the FBO here: northolt@universalaviation.aero. Check here for more info.

EGMC/Southend

Open daily from 0600 to 0130 local time. No operations including for QC1 or quieter aircraft are permitted outside of these hours. Extensions are not possible and night operations are not allowed under any circumstances.

You can contact London Southend Jet Centre FBO here: ops@londonsjc.com

EGBB/Birmingham

Correct, not a London airport! Just a bonus one for you, because outside of all those listed above, this is probably the next closest airport to London that is open at night. Two FBO options here, both open H24 – but night time operations are available on request and subject to additional out-of-hours fees:

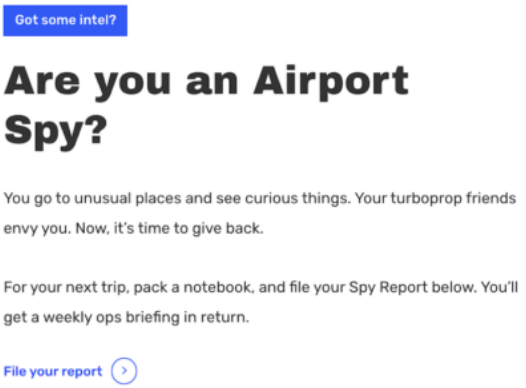
XLR Executive Jet Centre: jetcentre@xlrbirmingham.com

Signature: bhx@signatureflight.co.uk

Send us your spy reports!

Send us your Airport Spy reports for all these airports so we can share the gotchas, the things to know, contacts to contact and anything else useful.

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



EU Updates Lost Comms and Emergency Descent Rules

David Mumford
3 June, 2025

On May 1, the Standardised European Rules of the Air (SERA) were updated – bringing **new procedures for lost comms, emergency descents, and even a brand-new transponder code.**

SERA is essentially the rulebook that ensures consistent flight procedures across EU airspace. It's developed by EASA and is legally binding for all EU member states.

Each country still publishes its own AIP, but when SERA is updated, it overrules anything outdated in those local documents. **So even if a country's AIP hasn't caught up yet, you're still expected to follow the new SERA rules!**

You can download the updated SERA guidance here, but here's a quick look at the main changes:

Radio Communication Failure Procedures

Lost comms? The new SERA rules introduce a **second transponder code**, and defines which one to use – depending on **whether or not you're diverting.**

Squawk 7600 = Not diverting

Use 7600 if you're flying under IFR and:

- You've lost radio communication, and
- You're continuing with your IFR flight – even if you're in VMC.

This means you're sticking to the standard lost comms procedures: continue based on your last clearance, possibly to your destination or alternate, and let ATC protect that airspace.

One important change to be aware of when using the 7600 code: the old 7-minute rule in lost comms situations has been replaced. Under the updated rules, if you're continuing under IFR after losing communications, you must now maintain your last assigned level and speed for **20 minutes (instead of 7)** before taking further action under lost comms procedures. This extended buffer gives ATC more time to identify your position and protect your track.

Squawk 7601 = You ARE diverting

Use 7601 if:

- You’re flying under IFR
- You’ve lost comms
- You’re in VMC, and
- You decide to land at the nearest suitable airport instead of continuing the flight.

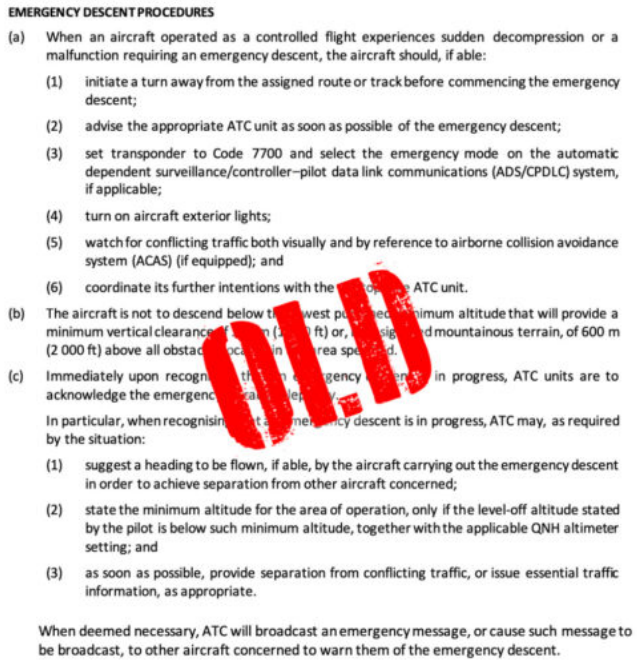
So 7601 is a brand-new code introduced to give ATC a clear picture of what you’re doing. Instead of guessing whether you’re continuing IFR or trying to land visually, ATC knows right away: you’re diverting to land, and they can adjust separation and support accordingly.

Emergency Descent Procedure

This has been updated with clearer priorities! The procedure now starts with **“Navigate as deemed appropriate by the pilot”** – replacing the older instruction to always turn off route before beginning the descent. So the new rule gives the pilot full discretion to navigate as needed – possibly turning, possibly descending straight ahead.

There are also some changes to what ATC should do: broadcasting an emergency message now comes first (not just “if necessary”), and there’s clearer guidance to inform other ATS units (this wasn’t explicitly stated before).

Plus some guidance on what other aircraft should do if they hear the emergency descent broadcast: keep flying their current clearance, maintain listening watch, and watch for conflicting traffic visually and with ACAS. Pretty standard stuff, but this wasn’t explicitly mentioned in the previous guidance.



EMERGENCY DESCENT PROCEDURES

(a) When an aircraft operated as a controlled flight experiences sudden decompression or a malfunction requiring an emergency descent, the aircraft should, if able:

(1) initiate a turn away from the assigned route or track before commencing the emergency descent;

(2) advise the appropriate ATC unit as soon as possible of the emergency descent;

(3) set transponder to Code 7700 and select the emergency mode on the automatic dependent surveillance/controller–pilot data link communications (ADS/CPDLC) system, if applicable;

(4) turn on aircraft exterior lights;

(5) watch for conflicting traffic both visually and by reference to airborne collision avoidance system (ACAS) (if equipped); and

(6) coordinate its further intentions with the ATC unit.

(b) The aircraft is not to descend below t… west p… …imum altitude that will provide a minimum vertical clearance … ft) or, … …d mountainous terrain, of 600 m (2 000 ft) above all obstac… …rea spe…d.

(c) Immediately upon recogn… …gency … in progress, ATC units are to acknowledge the emergenc… …y.

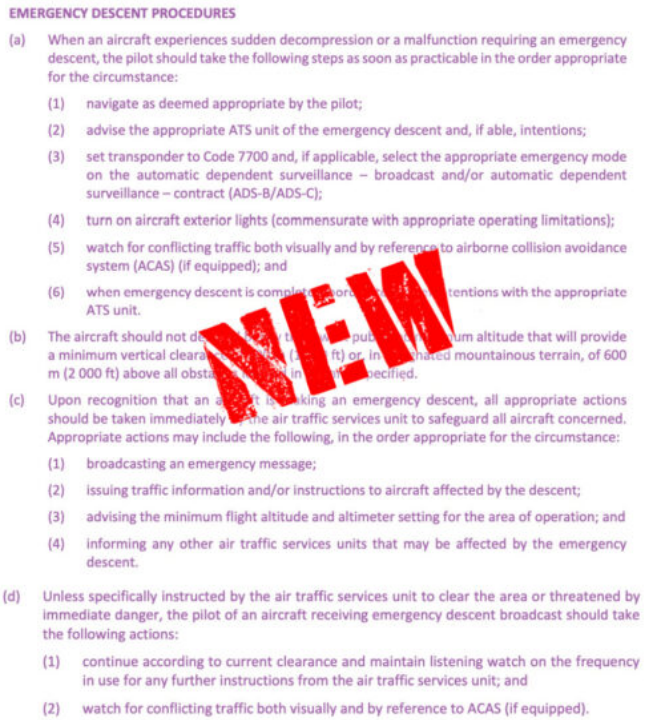
In particular, when recognisin… …ncy descent is in progress, ATC may, as required by the situation:

(1) suggest a heading to be flown, if able, by the aircraft carrying out the emergency descent in order to achieve separation from other aircraft concerned;

(2) state the minimum altitude for the area of operation, only if the level-off altitude stated by the pilot is below such minimum altitude, together with the applicable QNH altimeter setting; and

(3) as soon as possible, provide separation from conflicting traffic, or issue essential traffic information, as appropriate.

When deemed necessary, ATC will broadcast an emergency message, or cause such message to be broadcast, to other aircraft concerned to warn them of the emergency descent.



EMERGENCY DESCENT PROCEDURES

(a) When an aircraft experiences sudden decompression or a malfunction requiring an emergency descent, the pilot should take the following steps as soon as practicable in the order appropriate for the circumstance:

(1) navigate as deemed appropriate by the pilot;

(2) advise the appropriate ATS unit of the emergency descent and, if able, intentions;

(3) set transponder to Code 7700 and, if applicable, select the appropriate emergency mode on the automatic dependent surveillance – broadcast and/or automatic dependent surveillance – contract (ADS-B/ADS-C);

(4) turn on aircraft exterior lights (commensurate with appropriate operating limitations);

(5) watch for conflicting traffic both visually and by reference to airborne collision avoidance system (ACAS) (if equipped); and

(6) when emergency descent is compl… …tentions with the appropriate ATS unit.

(b) The aircraft should not d… …um altitude that will provide a minimum vertical clearan… ft) or, in … …ated mountainous terrain, of 600 m (2 000 ft) above all obsta… …ecified.

(c) Upon recognition that an … …king an emergency descent, all appropriate actions should be taken immediately … the air traffic services unit to safeguard all aircraft concerned. Appropriate actions may include the following, in the order appropriate for the circumstance:

(1) broadcasting an emergency message;

(2) issuing traffic information and/or instructions to aircraft affected by the descent;

(3) advising the minimum flight altitude and altimeter setting for the area of operation; and

(4) informing any other air traffic services units that may be affected by the emergency descent.

(d) Unless specifically instructed by the air traffic services unit to clear the area or threatened by immediate danger, the pilot of an aircraft receiving emergency descent broadcast should take the following actions:

(1) continue according to current clearance and maintain listening watch on the frequency in use for any further instructions from the air traffic services unit; and

(2) watch for conflicting traffic both visually and by reference to ACAS (if equipped).

Notams and AIP Updates

One issue to be aware of here – most countries won't update their AIPs until May 15 with the next AIRAC cycle. But these new SERA rules are legally binding from May 1 and take precedence over any outdated AIP content, so you must follow the updated SERA guidance!

So far, **France** appears to be the only country that has issued a Notam acknowledging/warning us about the changes:

LFFF F0627/25 (Issued for LFBB LFEE LFFF LFMM LFRR) -
APPLICATION OF THE NEW EUROPEAN REGULATION IR SERA 2024/404
IN FORCE ON MAY 1ST, 2025 WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF POINT SERA.14083
RELATING TO PROCEDURES IN CASE OF RADIO COMMUNICATION FAILURE.
MODIFICATION OF RADIO FAILURE PROCEDURE : INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW
EMERGENCY CODE 7601 AND MODIFICATION OF THE 7-MINUTE RULE TO 20 MINUTES.
REF AIP ENR1.1. 01 MAY 00:00 2025 UNTIL PERM. CREATED: 30 APR 10:03 2025

And another issue to be aware of – **some non-EU countries in Europe are not updating their rules!**

Switzerland have decided to confuse everyone by saying they won't be implementing the 7601 code anytime soon:

LSAS A0252/25 - IFR FLT SHALL USE SSR CODE 7600 IN CASE OF RCF EVEN WHEN
CONTINUING IN VMC TO THE NEAREST SUITABLE AD. SSR CODE 7601 AS DEFINED
BY SERA.14083 NOT YET IMPLEMENTED. 15 MAY 00:00 2025 UNTIL 31 JAN 23:59 2026.
CREATED: 02 MAY 10:01 2025

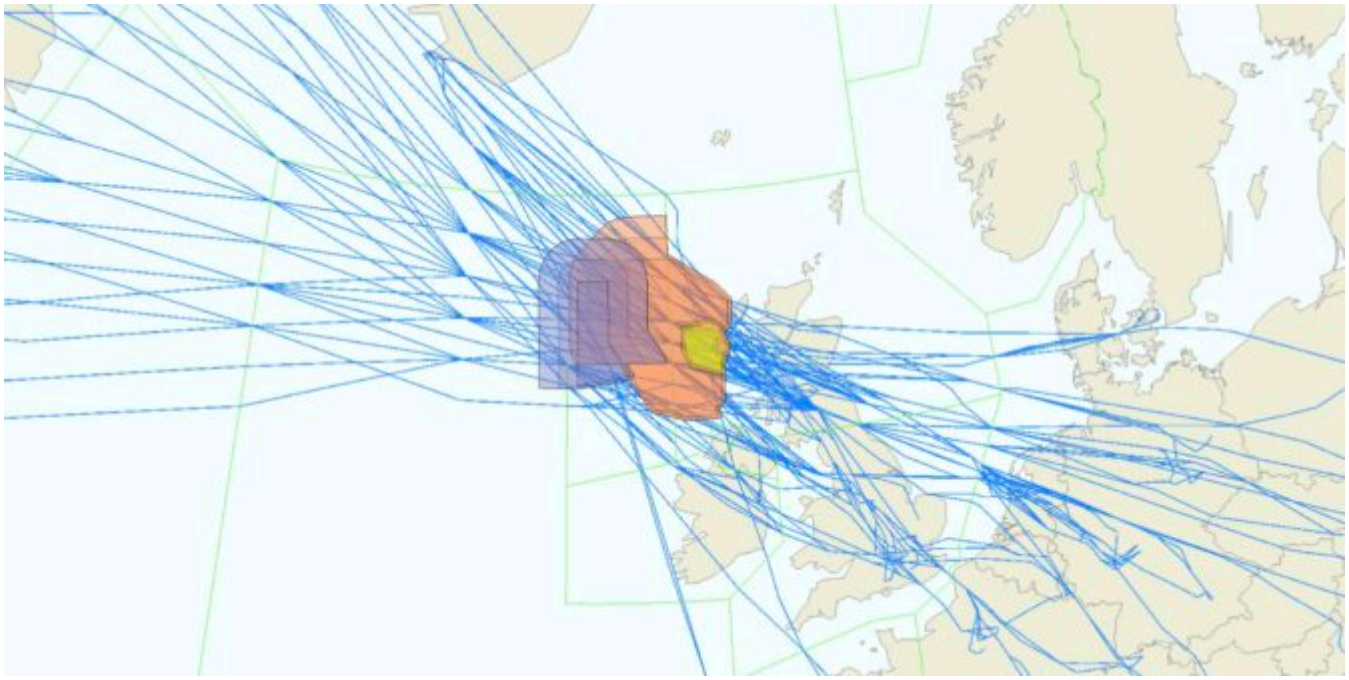
And the UK has published this doc saying that no changes are being made to the UK's RCF procedures.

As the UK and Switzerland are not EU countries, they can do what they like. EU countries don't have this option – they're all legally required to apply new SERA rules on the effective date.

Bottom line: keep an eye out for more AIRAC/AIP updates and Notams from other European countries in the coming days as they clarify how they're implementing the new SERA procedures!

NAT Airspace Closures: Formidable Shield 2025

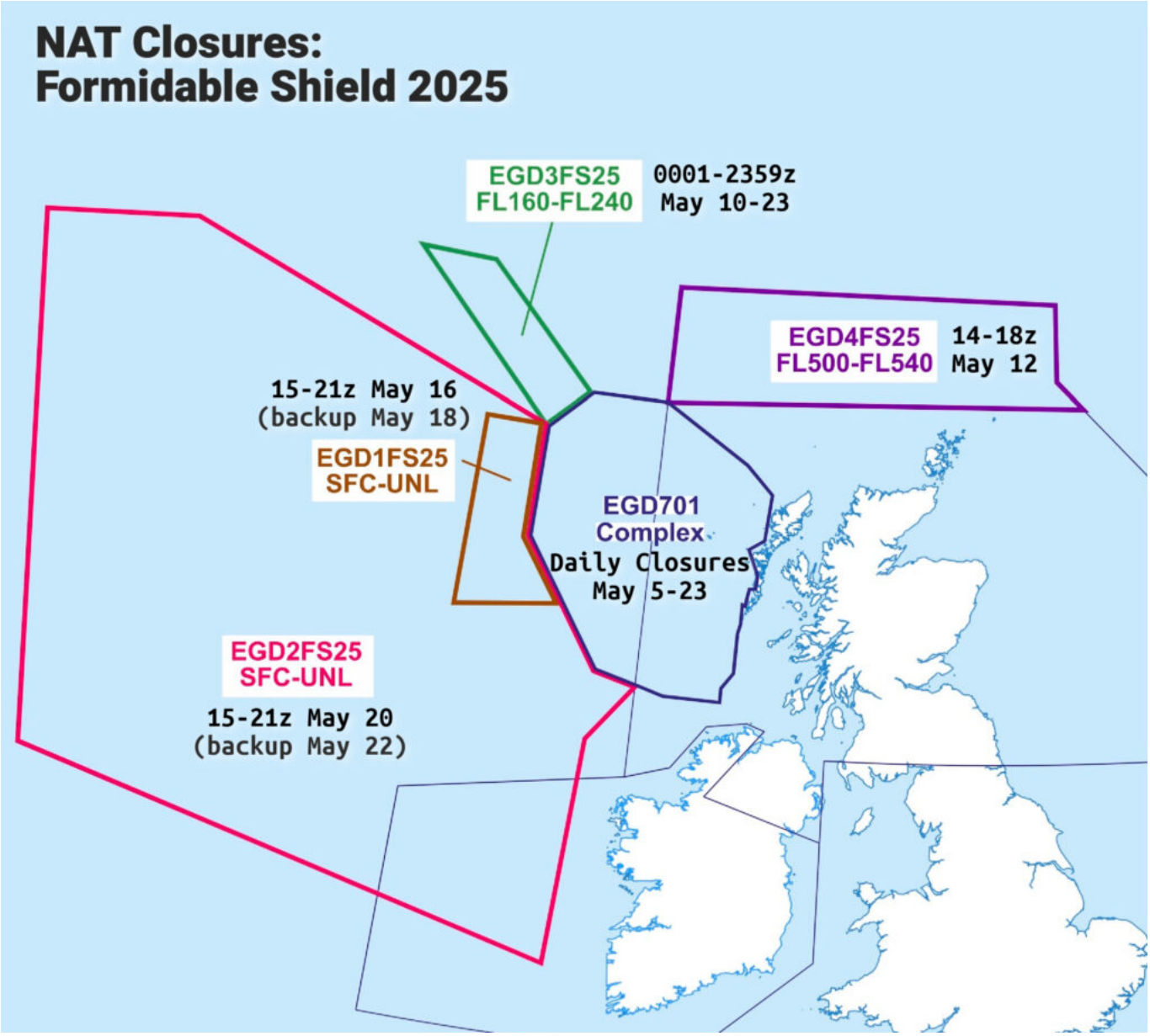
David Mumford
3 June, 2025



Remember that big NAT military exercise a couple of years ago? Formidable Shield is happening again now, which will mean **parts of North Atlantic airspace will be closed to flights** for several hours at a time.

There are daily closures in the EGD701 area off the coast of Scotland until May 23, but the big one to watch out for is a **large closure of airspace across the northern half of the EGGX/Shanwick FIR on May 20 between 15-21z** (with May 22 as the backup day).

The map below shows everything we know about this so far, taken from this UK SUP.



For the big closure on May 20, **ATC might start rerouting flights before the airspace closure starts (15z)** with the use of Flight Plan Buffer Zones extending 30 NM or 60 NM beyond the closed airspace.

There's no timings yet for when these might be activated, and ATC have said they won't make any decision on this until nearer the time when they know where the jet stream is going to be and what the tracks might look like, but best advice would be **plan a flight that clears the area at least 1 hour before the airspace closure (so 14z).**

Keep an eye on the **EGGX/Shanwick Notams** – they will publish one for the big closure at least 24 hours prior, which will look a bit like this (except it will say **EGD2FS25** instead of EGD1FS25).

G0069/25 – AIRSPACE RESERVATION:
AREA: 590000N 0143000W – 590000N 0130000W – 573126N 0130000W –
564357N 0120000W – 563000N 0143000W – 590000N 0143000W
FLW SEPARATIONS WILL BE PROVIDED WITHIN OCEANIC AIRSPACE: MNPS/NAT
HIGH LEVEL AIRSPACE(HLA) 30NM, NON-MNPS/NAT HLA 60NM.EGD1FS25. SFC – UNL, 18
MAY 15:00 2025 UNTIL 18 MAY 21:00 2025. CREATED: 08 MAY 09:16 2025

And for any questions on Formidable Shield, you can contact the UK Airspace Management Cell at SWK-MAMC-ManagedAirspace@mod.gov.uk.

Saudi Arabia Lifts Cabotage Ban

Kateřina Michalská
3 June, 2025

Key Points

- **Starting May 1, Saudi Arabia has removed its cabotage limits, which means foreign charter flights can now operate domestic sectors within the country – repositioning without passengers and quick drop-offs are no longer the only option.**
- **To gain approval, operators need to complete three steps: register with MISA, apply to GACA with a business plan, and comply with GACAR Part 129 requirements including safety and sustainability documentation.**

Here's what you need to do:

Step 1: Register with MISA

Before anything else, you need to register with MISA (Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Investment). They handle investment licensing, which is the starting point for getting your charter approval. If you hit any snags here, you can reach them at logistics@misa.gov.sa.

Step 2: Apply to GACA

Next, you'll submit an official letter to the President of the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) at generalaviation@gaca.gov.sa. This letter should:

- Request approval for domestic charter operations
- Include your business plan (GACA has provided a template)

- Optionally include any extra economic details you want to share

Step 3: Meet the regulatory requirements

You'll need to comply with GACAR Part 129 – basically, Saudi's rules for foreign air carriers. Part of this includes submitting a Safety and Environmental Sustainability Sector form.

What does this change mean?

For international operators, it's a big deal. You can now:

- **Pick up and drop off passengers on domestic segments**
- **Reposition flights domestically without worrying about cabotage violations**
- **Offer more flexible services to clients operating inside Saudi Arabia**

This change is part of Saudi's big push to grow its general aviation sector into a $2 billion industry by 2030, creating thousands of jobs and expanding the private aviation market. GACA says they've already received plenty of interest from international and regional operators, so expect some competition.

Where to get help

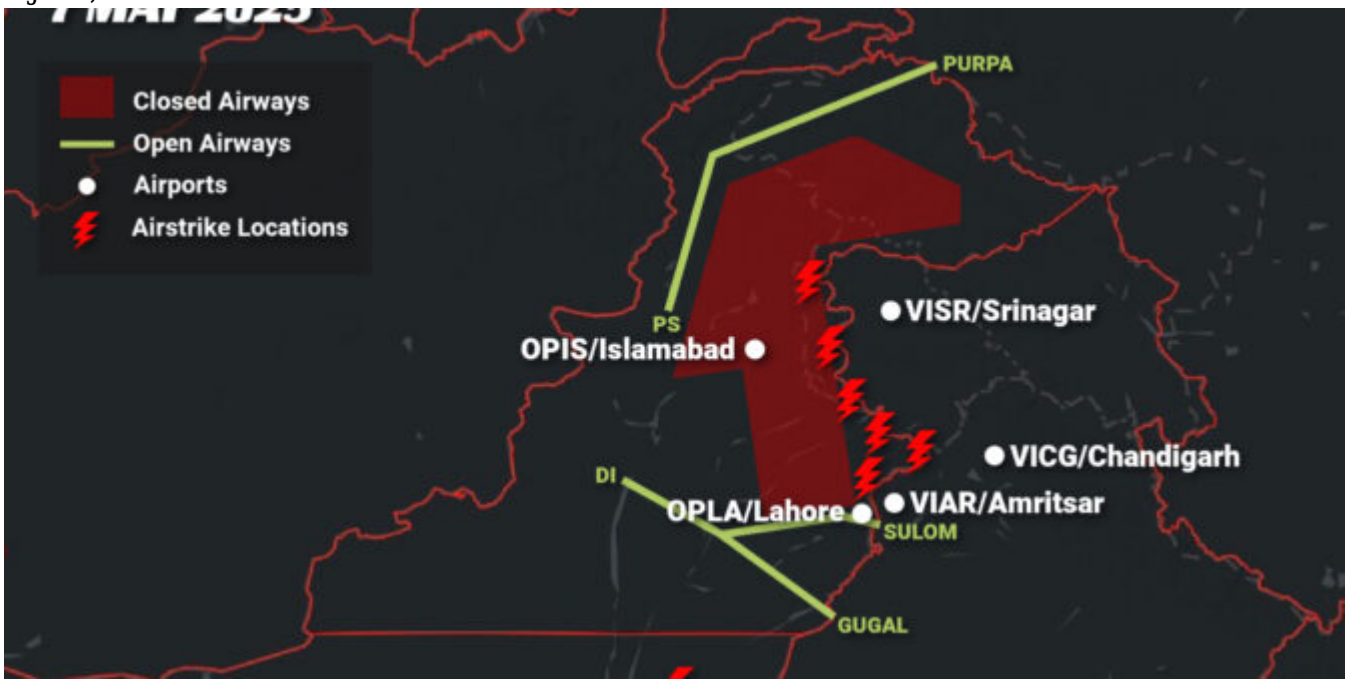
If you need help or have questions, GACA and MISA have both provided contact points:

MISA: logistics@misa.gov.sa

GACA: generalaviation@gaca.gov.sa

Pakistan/India Airspace Update

David Mumford
3 June, 2025



Update May 12

A ceasefire between India and Pakistan, announced on May 10, **appears to be holding** despite mutual accusations of violations.

We continue to advise caution, particularly over the Kashmir region and along the shared border where air defense activity could resume with little warning if hostilities were to restart.

Flight tracking indicates that **nearly all operators are still avoiding the area**, opting instead to reroute south via the Gulf of Oman and the UAE.

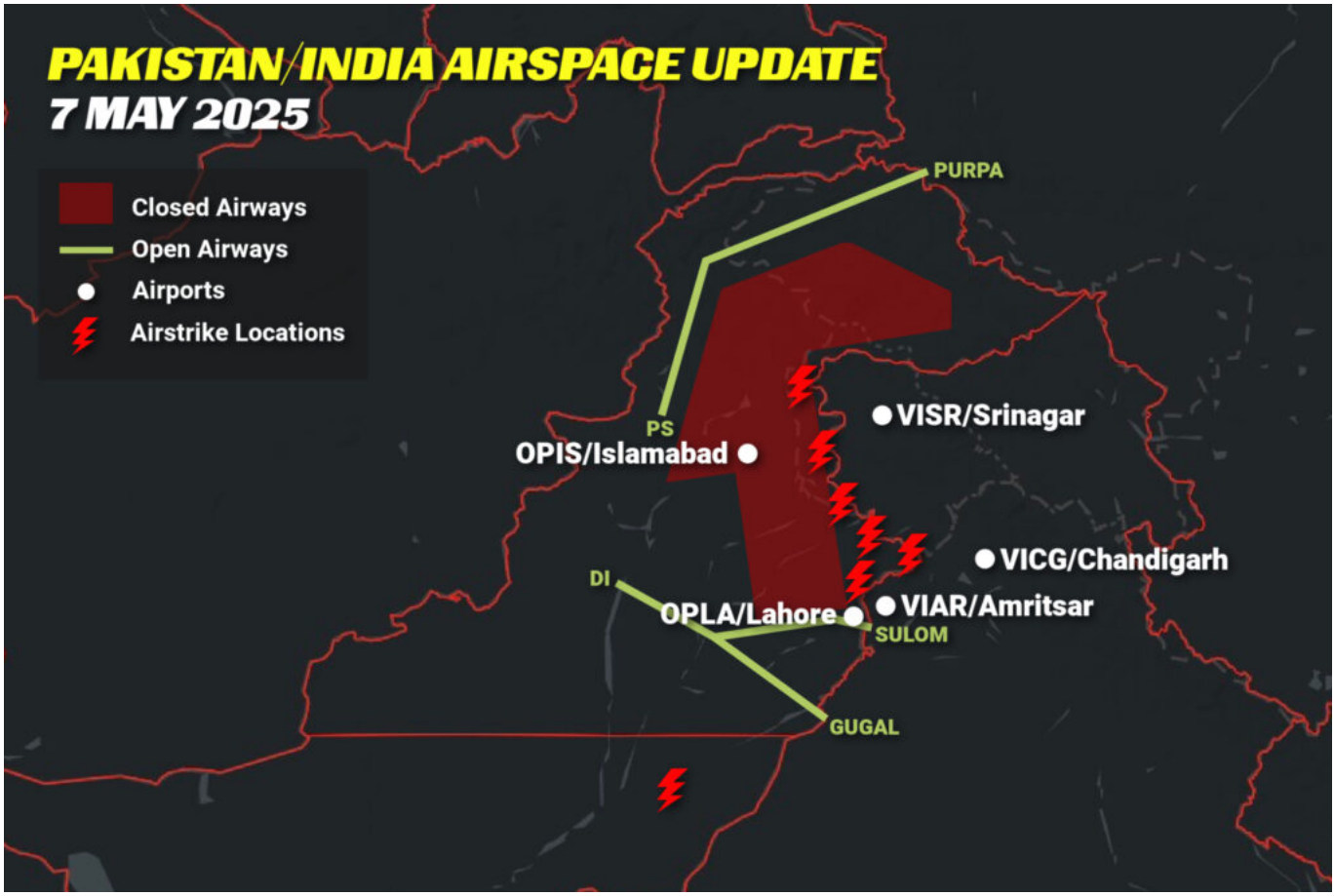
Pakistan has reopened all previously closed airways. India has reopened all previously closed airports. But both countries continue to prohibit each other's aircraft from entering their respective airspace (Notams: VIDF G0510/25 and OPLR A0220/25).

Update May 7

India launched **airstrikes on multiple locations in northern Pakistan** early on May 7, leading to a broader exchange of fire and escalating tensions along the border. There were **drone attacks on both sides** the following night.

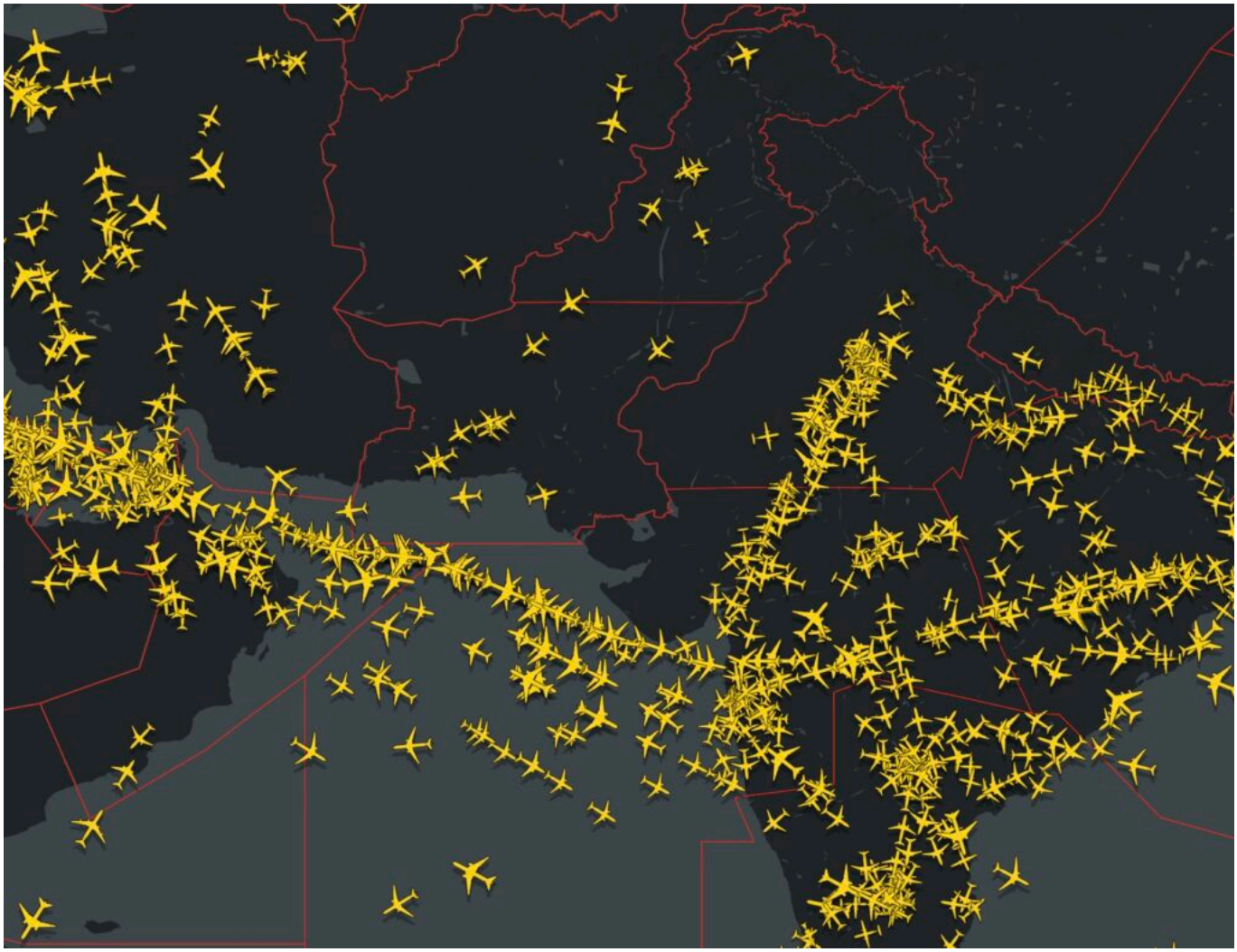
In India, **VIAR/Amritsar, VISR/Srinagar and VICG/Chandigarh airports are closed** to civil flights until May 10 as a precaution. In Pakistan, flights have now resumed at all airports that were temporarily closed on May 7, including **OPLA/Lahore and OPIS/Islamabad.**

Despite some media claims, **Pakistan has not closed its entire airspace.** Instead, several airways in the northern OPLR/Lahore FIR remain unavailable until May 10, although alternate routings are still possible.



These restrictions are listed on the Pakistan CAA Notams website, many of which are not mirrored on the FAA's site, so it's best to **check the source directly for the latest updates.**

However, most major airlines are now **avoiding Pakistan's airspace altogether**, with east-west traffic diverting south via the Gulf of Oman and UAE. Given the uncertainty and potential for rapid escalation, this seems a sensible choice.



If the conflict continues, there is a chance that **Pakistan could impose a full airspace closure**, as they did from Feb to Aug 2019 under similar circumstances. Check SafeAirspace.net for any major updates to airspace risk.

Back to the Radio: Gander Goes Voice-Only Pre-Oceanic

David Mumford
3 June, 2025

- **Since the removal of Oceanic Clearances in December 2024, Gander had been issuing pre-Oceanic route amendments via CPDLC. But crew confusion over these messages has led to increased VHF workload for controllers.**
- **To help fix this, from 5 May to 31 December 2025, Gander will issue all route amendments before the Oceanic Entry Point by VHF voice only, even if the aircraft is logged on to CPDLC. All other OCR procedures remain unchanged.**

More info can be found in Canada AIP SUP 46/25. The same update has been announced via Notam too:

CZQX H1579/25 - EASTBOUND FLT IN GANDER DOMESTIC, ENROUTE TO GANDER OCEANIC, WILL BE ISSUED OCEANIC ROUTE AMENDMENTS VIA VHF VOICE IN LIEU OF CPDLC LOADABLE
ROUTE CLEARANCES. ALL OTHER OCEANIC CLEARANCE REMOVAL (OCR) PROC REMAIN UNCHANGED.
REFER TO AIP CANADA SUP 046/2025.
05 MAY 00:00 2025 UNTIL 04 AUG 16:00 2025. CREATED: 01 MAY 12:36 2025

We've written before about **crew confusion and errors on the NAT following the introduction of the new "No Oceanic Clearance" procedure.**

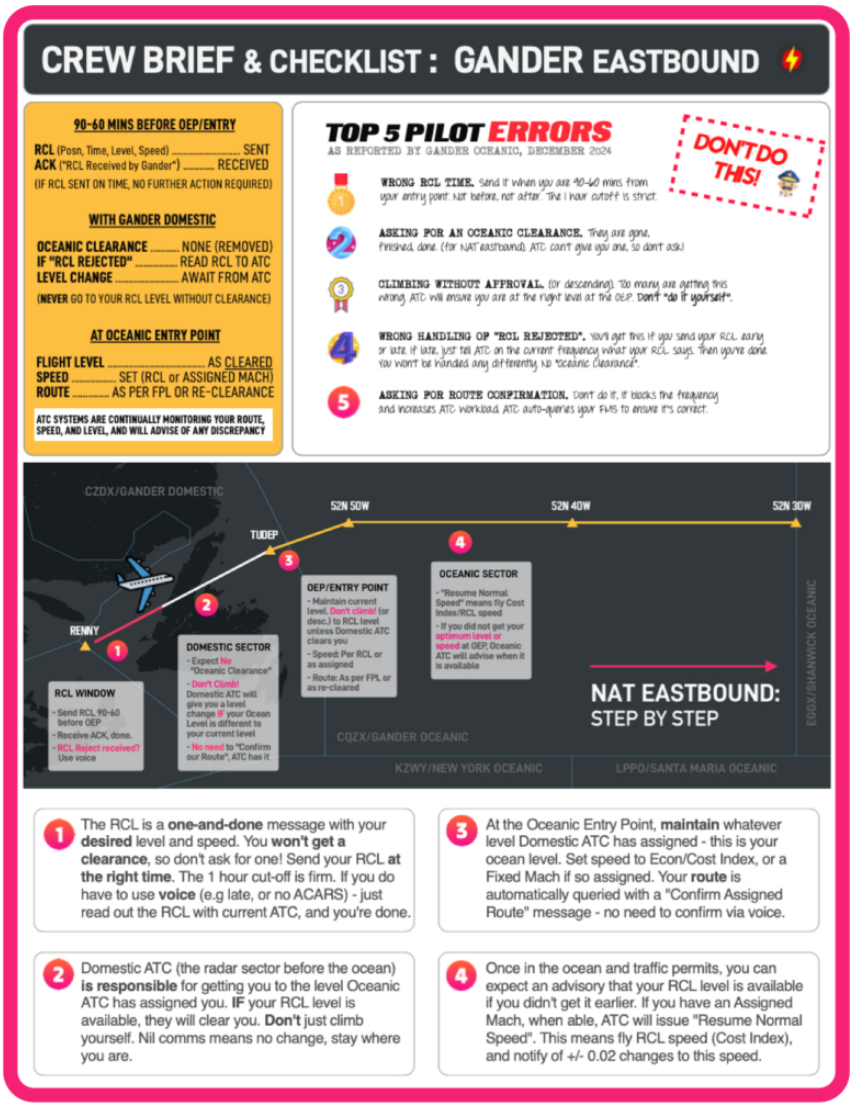
Since 4 Dec 2024, Oceanic Clearances are no longer being issued by Gander for eastbound flights, and a new procedure is in place using the same ACARS 623 RCL message process enabling you to send your desired time, level and speed at the Oceanic Entry Point (OEP) so ATC can develop an optimal Oceanic

profile for your flight.

But there have been plenty of cases of flight crew getting it wrong, the top 5 being:

1. Sending the RCL at the wrong time
2. Asking for an Oceanic Clearance
3. “DIY” level changes
4. Wrong handling of RCL Rejected messages
5. Repeated voice requests for “route confirmation” blocking active ATC frequencies due to CPDLC UM79 route clearance confusion.

We previously published this **Crew Brief and Checklist**, which you can download below:



Download the **Gander RCL Crew Brief and Checklist** (PDF, 1Mb)

⬆ All the info in the Checklist is still accurate, except for this new change from May 5: **Gander will issue all route amendments before the Oceanic Entry Point by VHF voice only, even if the aircraft is logged on to CPDLC.** Note that Moncton and Montreal will continue to issue CPDLC UM79 route amendments.

Getting it wrong

Since Canada removed Oceanic Clearances in Dec 2024, things haven't exactly gone smoothly. Crews are confused. Controllers are overloaded. Frequencies are clogged.

The ICAO North Atlantic Implementation Management Group published this report in April 2025, which gives a bit more info about what's been going wrong. Here's a summary:

1. **Misinterpretation of "RCL RECEIVED".** Crews wrongly believe this means their requested level and speed are approved.
2. **Expectation of Verbal Clearance.** Crews continue to ask for Oceanic Clearance or confirmation, despite RCL automation.
3. **Confusion Over Clearance Level.** Crews question why the cleared level differs from what was requested in the RCL.
4. **Timing Errors.** RCLs sent too early or too late are rejected, leading to further confusion.
5. **Old Habits Die Hard.** Habits from the previous Oceanic Clearance system persist among crews.
6. **Interpretation Problems with UM79.** Some crews are reading the UM79 and thinking "direct to the Clearance limit," which is wrong.
7. **Incomplete Route Displays.** Missing route chunks – Depending on the avionics, not all of the routing shows up properly, or crews miss them.
8. **FMS Issues and Fuel Warnings.** The FMS throws up alerts. Crews wonder if something's off with the routing.
9. **Reluctance to Load Routes.** Crews hesitate to load the Clearance into the FMS without voice confirmation – they'd rather check with ATC first, just to be sure.
10. **General Avionics Variability.** Every aircraft is different – and so is how it shows the message. It's not standard, which means more chances to mess it up.
11. **Incorrect or Partial Route Loading.** Frequent errors like skipping waypoints or only partially loading Clearances – or just loading it wrong altogether!
12. **BizAv-Specific Confusion.** Not sure how true this is, but the doc says that BizAv crews in particular are struggling with strange LL coordinate formatting.
13. **Increased Voice Frequency Use.** Radio overload – all these doubts mean more calls to ATC. VHF is getting slammed.
14. **High ATC Workload.** ATC are super busy with constantly jumping in to prevent route deviations due to misinterpretations.
15. **Prevented Deviations.** A high number of potential lateral or vertical deviations are being caught just in time by ATC.

Phew! Who knew this whole *Removal of Oceanic Clearances* thing was going to be so much work!

Getting it right

In our previous post, we did attempt to draw out some straightforward guidance for crews heading eastbound on the NAT through Gander on how to get it right. But for those of us who prefer cold hard text

rather than little pictures and maps, here's some step-by-step guidance:

1. **File your flight plan.** Do this as usual, including your planned route, speed, and flight level(s).
2. **Log on to CPDLC.** The Gander Domestic logon code is CDQX. Gander Oceanic logon is CZQX. No need to add anything else as the transfer of connections should be automatic.
3. **Submit your RCL.** Do this via the ACARS 623 process between 90-60 mins prior to the OEP for Gander. Remember, this RCL is a message you send to ATC telling them your desired route, level, and speed across the NAT. It's not asking for a Clearance – it gives ATC the details needed to build your optimal profile.
   Submit the RCL by voice instead of the ACARS 623 process if any of the following apply:
   – You don't have datalink capability or it's not working.
   – You're departing from an airport less than 45 minutes' flying time from the OEP (send the RCL 10 minutes prior to start-up).
   – You receive an "RCL REJECTED" message for any reason.
   – You don't receive an "RCL RECEIVED" response within 15 minutes.
4. **Expect any Oceanic route amendments from Gander Domestic via VHF voice, not CPDLC.** Between 5 May and 31 December 2025, Gander Domestic controllers will issue any route amendments via VHF voice only, even if you're logged on to CPDLC. This is a temporary change to reduce confusion, controller workload, frequency congestion and hopefully identify mitigations for the UM79 errors. Any route changes after you progress by the OEP will still be issued via CPDLC or HF by Gander Oceanic.
5. **Don't request a clearance!** There is no eastbound Oceanic Clearance anymore, so don't ask ATC to confirm your route!
6. **Don't climb!** Maintain your domestic cleared level. Domestic ATC (the radar sector before the ocean) is responsible for getting you to the level Oceanic ATC has assigned you. If your RCL level is available, they will clear you. Do not climb without a clearance! Nil comms means no change, stay where you are. At the OEP, set speed to Econ/Cost Index, or a Fixed Mach if so assigned. Your FMS routing is automatically checked with a "CONFIRM ASSIGNED ROUTE" message – no need to confirm via voice. If there's a problem, ATC will contact you.
7. **Once in Oceanic airspace…** Any further route or level changes will be issued via CPDLC or HF, as before. Once in the ocean and traffic permits, you can expect an advisory that your RCL level is available if you didn't get it earlier. Continue normal NAT procedures, including position reporting (as required), speed change notifications, and monitoring of appropriate frequencies.

Back to the Radio

For crews, these temporary changes will feel like **stepping back in time to the old school pre-CPDLC era.** After years of progress toward datalink-driven automation, we're now back to copying Oceanic route amendments over VHF – just like the old days. Until the system catches up, have your pens ready and your radios tuned – because Gander is going retro, at least for now.

What about flights heading the other way across the NAT?

Westbound flights are still fully doing things the old-fashioned way, as **Shanwick have still not removed Oceanic Clearances yet!**

They initially planned to drop these in Dec 2024, but identified some system issues at the last minute which would have created major problems in providing a full ATC service.

The latest news from them is that they don't expect to do this before Summer 2025 – and NATS will give at least 2 months' notice before making any changes.

For more on that, Opsgroup members can check this briefing.

The Dangers of Mixed Traffic: FAA Targets Risks at Key Airports

Chris Shieff
3 June, 2025

Key Points

- **Hotspot focus: The FAA is targeting KDCA, KLAS, LA area, and Gulf Coast airports due to helicopter/fixed-wing traffic risks.**
- **Immediate changes: KDCA closed one heli route; KLAS saw 30% drop in proximity events after ATC changes.**
- **More to come: The FAA is using AI and forming new rules; safety report due by Sept 2025.**

April 22 was an important day for the safety of aircraft operating at major airports across the US.

The FAA held a Safety Roundtable to discuss how to best manage risks associated with intensive helicopter operations near fixed wing traffic in busy, controlled airspace.

This follows the tragic mid-air collision of a Black Hawk helicopter and CRJ700 airliner at **KDCA/Washington** on January 29.

The Table featured a collective of FAA leadership, ATC representatives, helicopter operators and industry safety experts.

Their purpose was to identify the specific hazards of mixed helicopter and fixed-wing operations – **especially in congested airspace** – and how to better protect us from them.

While the FAA has yet to release a comprehensive public report, they have been providing updates and preliminary findings via their online newsroom.

Here’s what’s being discussed.

The Targets

The Round Table's approach to the dangers of mixed traffic identified three core issues:

- **Airspace –** better strategies to segregate helicopter and fixed wing traffic are sorely needed, especially at congested and controlled airports.
- **Communication** – communication protocols between pilots and ATC needs to be improved.
- **AI –** using AI technology to learn from existing data (such as incident and accident reports) and identify patterns of risk. It then becomes easier to effectively mitigate these dangers quickly, and with limited resources.

Hot Spots

The Group went on to identify the US airports of primary concern…

Washington

The swiftest action took place at KDCA/Washington itself in the aftermath of the Potomac disaster. The airport is situated in close proximity to the locally known *helicopter alley* – an area of dense rotorcraft traffic used by essential services such as the military, law enforcement and medevac.

In response to the accident, the FAA closed the low-level helicopter route in use at the time and has **restricted non-essential helicopter ops.** Only those engaged in 'special missions' will be allowed. ADS-B Out has also been mandated for all but the most secure of flights.

Las Vegas

The Safety Round Table identified **KLAS/Las Vegas** next as perhaps the airport of highest safety concern for mixed traffic, where air tours are frequent.

Concern was raised by the group that helicopter routes used in agreements with local operators lacked effective guidance on vertical and lateral boundaries. And in many cases, tower controllers were **not issuing traffic advisories** to arriving and departing fixed wing traffic.

In what seems to be a case of procedural 'slip', normalization of deviance or even perhaps complacency the FAA has reported **routine lack of compliance with Class B separation rules.**

Either way, it is a potentially dangerous mix.

Immediate changes have been put in place – essentially more proactive separation by ATC and better traffic info for pilots. We're pleased to report that according to the FAA, these efforts reduced 'proximity events' by 30% in just three weeks – circumstances that FAA believe might elevate collision risk (even if legal separation has been applied).

Other changes are coming in Las Vegas, but these have yet to be announced.

Los Angeles

LA's airports are another area of concern – **KBUR/Burbank** and **KVNY/Van Nuys** were specifically mentioned. Here airspace is complex, and hosts substantial helicopter ops including news, medical and air tours close to commercial flight paths.

The FAA is actively looking at operations near these airports but as yet, there are no major changes to

report.

The Gulf Coast

The FAA has begun looking at busy airports along the US Gulf Coast which include **offshore helicopter operations.**

It is not going to be an easy fix, but they advise that AI technology mentioned above will be put to good use to figure out where the greatest risks lie and what can be done about them in the near future.

Better Rules

In response to these dangers among others, the FAA has also launched another safety initiative – they've formed a rule making committee to improve the safety of commercial helicopter tours.

Some elements of this group's focus will have an important impact on the safety of mixed traffic operations – including potential changes to regulations.

There will also be a renewed focus flight data to ensure helicopters do not stray from established operating areas and other measures to **better separate them from fixed wing traffic in busy airspace** (including further ADS mandates).

A report of their safety recommendations is due by 22 September 2025.

Have Something to Add?

Please get in touch with us! You can reach the team via news@ops.group

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2025 Update: BizAv Ops to Israel

David Mumford
3 June, 2025

Key Points

- **May 2025:** Turkish airports have stopped supplying fuel to aircraft heading to Israel due to a trade embargo. BizAv flights will need to plan fuel stops enroute at one of Israel's "approved airports."
- **Jan 2025:** Israel's new Electronic Travel Authorization system (ETA-IL) is now mandatory for pax from all visa-exempt countries. Plus we have a new list of approved airports from which international flights are allowed to enter or overfly the LLLL/Tel Aviv FIR.
- **May 2024:** Israel has tightened the rules for GA flights from the US, due to security concerns. Most flights will now need to either hire an approved security company to do screening in the US, or else make a stop en-route at an approved European airport.
- Check below for a summary of **how to get an Israel landing or overflight permit**, and what to expect on how that process works.

May 2025: No fuel for Israel-bound flights in Turkey

We've had confirmation from a local handler that Turkish airports will no longer supply fuel to aircraft heading to Israel. This is part of a trade embargo Turkey imposed on Israel following the Gaza war, but it seems like only recently they've started applying the rule specifically to jet fuel for BizAv flights.

So if you're flying to Israel and were planning to tech-stop in Turkey for fuel – that's no longer an option. You'll need to plan a fuel stop at another airport enroute, and make sure it's on Israel's list of "approved airports" for international departures (see list below).

Jan 2025: New ETA Rules

Effective 1 Jan 2025, Israel's new Electronic Travel Authorization system (ETA-IL) is now **mandatory for pax from all visa-exempt countries.** The ETA will be valid for up to 2 years, and lets people stay for up to 90 days. Visitors from non-eligible countries still need to get a visa, just like before. **Operating crew are exempt** (official word here).

For a list of visa-exempt countries, check here. Visitors from non-eligible countries still need to get a visa, just like before.

Jan 2025: New list of approved airports for flights to Israel

Israel has published a revised list of approved airports from which international flights are allowed to enter or overfly the LLLL/Tel Aviv FIR. Download it here.

Several airports have been removed from the list: EBCI/Charleroi, GMMN/Casablanca, LEPA/Palma, LEMG/Malaga, and KIAD/Washington Dulles.

Russian airports UUBW/Zhukovsky and UUWW/Vnukovo have been added.

You can still apply to operate from airports that don't appear on the list – but allow extra time for processing.

May 2024: GA flights from US to Israel – 3 Options

Effective May 2024, there are some new rules for GA flights from the US. These have come from ASOC (Aviation Security Operations Center), the authority responsible for the security procedures for the arrival of aircraft into and through Israeli airspace.

You can read the ASOC announcement on this here. If you want to fly from the US to Israel, you now have three options…

1. Hire an ASOC-approved security company in the US to do pre-departure security screening and fly direct.

- You basically pay one of two companies to send their staff to whichever US airport you want to depart from, and they will do your pre-departure security screening for you.
- The two companies approved by ASOC are: **Premier Corporate Security** or **Crisis 24.** Contact deets for both can be found here.

2. Private flights can sign up to the Preferred Carrier/Aircraft Program and fly direct without any pre-departure screening.

- Charter flights (Part 135) are not eligible for this – only Private flights (Part 91).
- It's quite a process – you have to pay for ASOC to come visit you, conduct interviews, train your crew, and the whole thing can take months. So this option is really only applicable to operators who do frequent flights to Israel or who have close ties to the country.
- You can apply by emailing asoc-dvir@int.gov.il

3. Land at an approved European airport en-route for a security check before continuing to Israel.

- Check this list of approved airports (published in Jan 2025). These are where you're allowed to fly direct to Israel from. Ignore the US ones (KEWR and KJFK) as these no longer apply to GA flights.
- For flights coming from the US, there are plenty of viable options to consider in northern Europe. (BIKF/Keflavik isn't an option though – that got removed from the list back in 2023).

What do I need to do to fly to Israel?

So now we're talking about **permits** *i.e. the standard stuff that's been around for a while.*

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. (For overflights, your destination airport doesn't matter.)
2. **For landing permits:** You need a 'local sponsor' – a contact person in Israel who can vouch

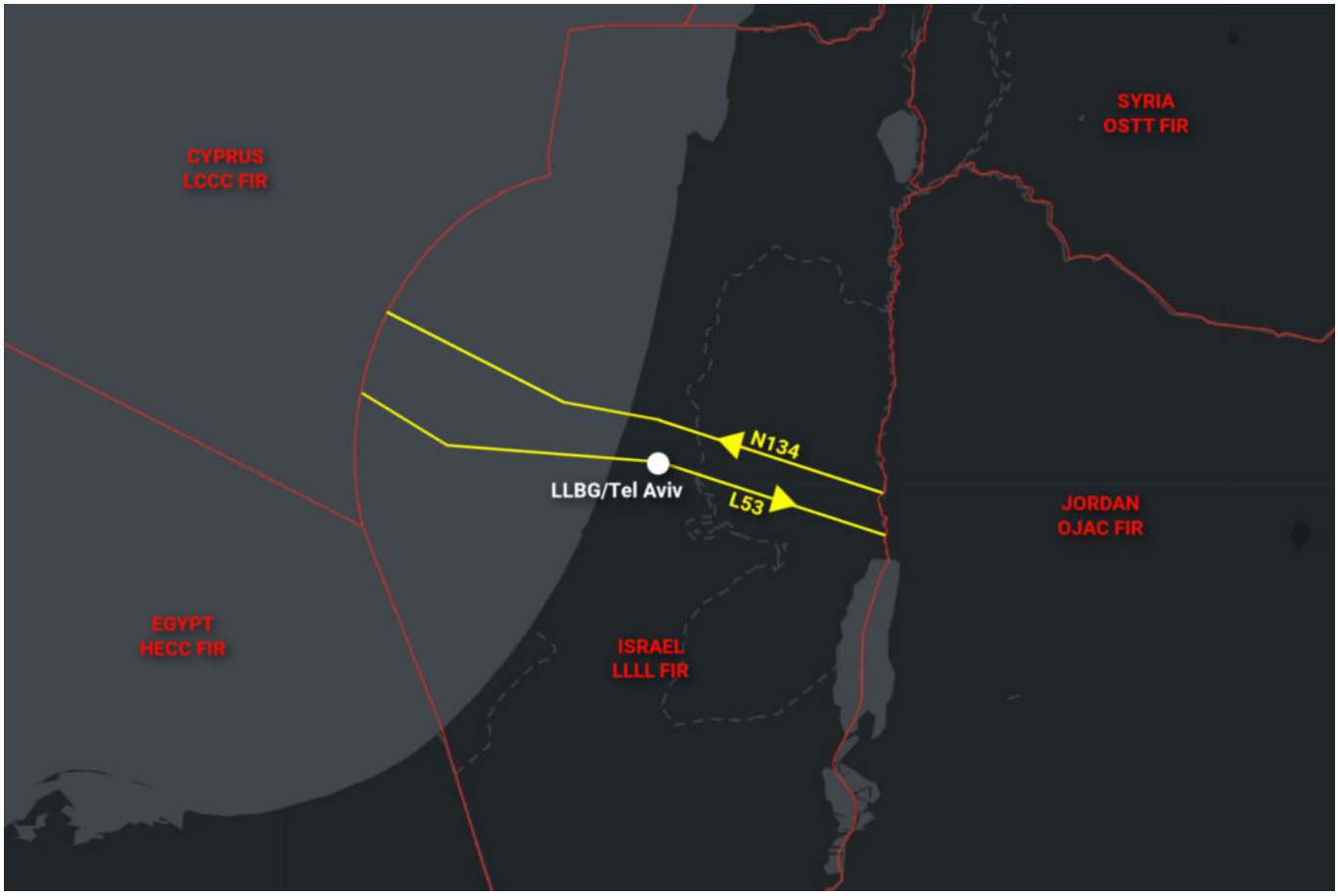
for you. This person must be Israeli, and personally acquainted with all passengers – not just a travel agent or hotel representative. They will be contacted by the security services before any approval is given.

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.

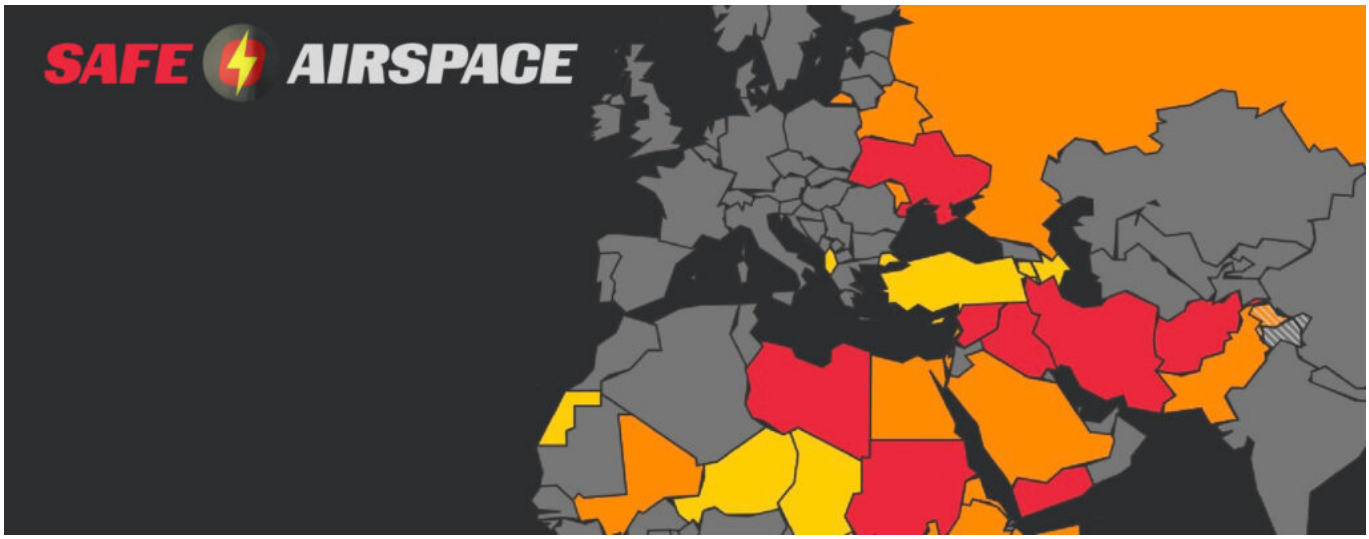
For overflights, there's basically two options – **N134** for westbound flights, and **L53** for eastbound. Although check the Notams for the latest here, as they often only permit overflights at specific flight levels and times.



Security & Airspace Safety

Ongoing **GPS spoofing**, sporadic attacks in the north from **Lebanon**, and the **Gaza conflict** create a hostile and non-routine environment. There remains **significant risk within the Tel Aviv FIR** from the ongoing conflict, and a day-to-day review of the current situation is essential prior to operating.

For more info, check safeairspace.net, which also includes a report about the **recent Iranian drone/missile attacks on Israel** that resulted in airspace closures across the region.



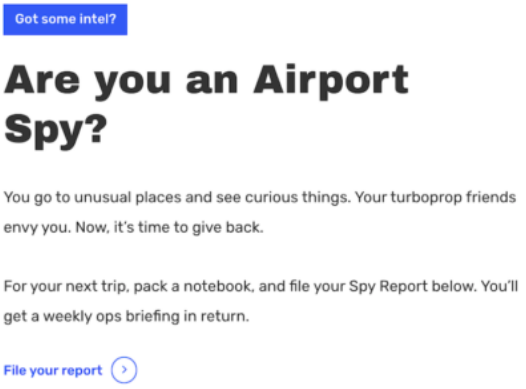
Most airlines stopped flying to Israel at the start of the conflict in Oct 2023, and many have been slow to return. To read **OPSGROUP member reports** on flights they have recently operated to LLBG/Tel Aviv, check Airport Spy.

For **overflights** in the region, almost none are going over Israel. Most operators are going **via Egypt and**

Saudi Arabia – many are choosing to transit west of Cairo, fly south, avoid Sinai, and then continue eastbound over Saudi Arabia. The northern route via Turkey and Iraq is also an option, though warnings for Iraq remain below FL320.

Send us your reports!

If you've been to Israel recently (or anywhere else, for that matter) and can **share some info on how it went**, please file a quick Airport Spy report and we can update this article and share the info with everyone!



New APIS system coming to Hong Kong

David Mumford
3 June, 2025

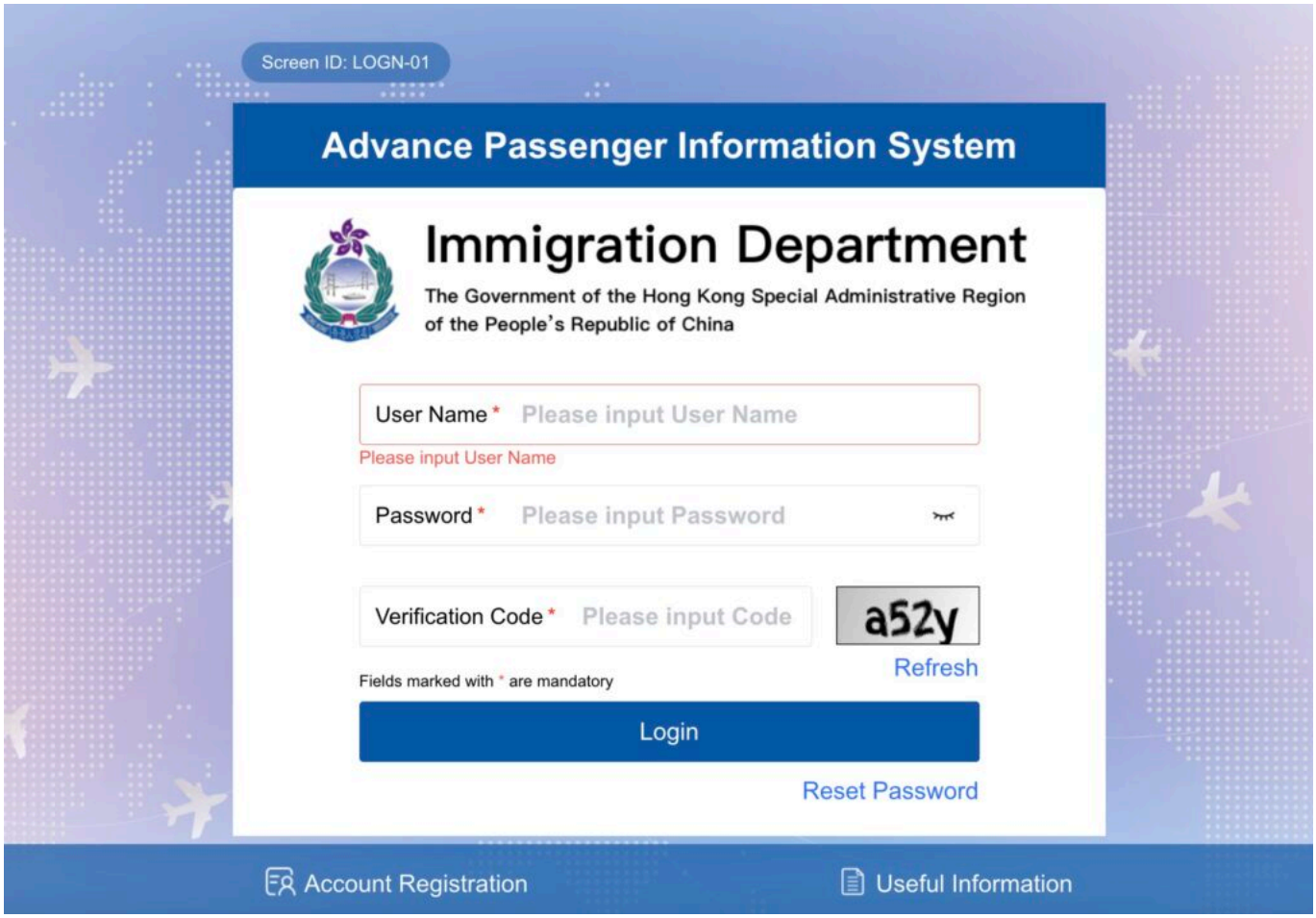
- **Hong Kong has implemented a new APIS system. BizAv flights need to do this from 29 April 2025 onwards (although non-compliance will not be enforced until Sep 2025). APIS info will be required for all crew and pax (including transit) for all flights – both**

private and commercial.

- **The local FBO (HKBAC) will not do this for you. The operator must complete APIS themselves, or get a third party trip support provider to do it for them.**
- **The process for actually submitting APIS sounds a bit messy. Full guidance below ⬇**

So, first things first, there's this letter that says BizAv flights need to do APIS from 29 April 2025 onwards, with full compliance mandatory from 1 Sep 2025.

In terms of how to go about doing it, there is now a website up and running where you can register an account to file APIS online:



Click on 'Useful Information' and you can then download the 'Submission Guide' which tells you what to do, but the main things to know are as follows:

1. "No Board" = No entry, even for crew
If the APIS system returns a "No Board" message for any traveller, including crew members, they are not permitted to board the flight! You then have to contact the Command Centre if you think that decision is wrong for any reason. Phone: +852 2121 0008. Email: apisoperation@immd.gov.hk

2. Different submission deadlines for pax and crew
This is a weird one. Passenger API data must be submitted no later than 40 minutes before departure, but crew data must be submitted at least 60 minutes before departure. No idea why, but it's in the rules! Best thing to do is just submit both crew and pax data at least 1hr prior, and forget about the whole '40 mins for pax' thing (and certainly don't tell them about it!)

3. Crew data must be submitted twice

This is ever weirder still! Operators are required to submit crew API data twice for every inbound flight. The first submission must occur before departure, and the second (the Flight Close-out Message) must be submitted after the flight has departed. Even if there are no changes to the crew, the second submission is mandatory and must reflect the actual crew on board.

4. Transit crew and pax must be included
API data must be submitted for all travellers on board the aircraft, including those in transit who are not disembarking in Hong Kong.

5. The local FBO can't do it for you
This one doesn't actually appear in the guidance, but was reported to us by the local FBO (HKBAC). They said they cannot file APIS for operators – they can help you to set up the account on the APIS website, but you will have to file yourself! (or get your third party trip support provider to do it for you)

6. Eventually there will be fines for getting it wrong
As seems to be standard with all things like this, they say they'll fine you if you get it wrong. Failure to submit required data, submission of inaccurate or misleading information – stuff like that. Although they do also say that they won't start fining anyone in the 'transitional period' which ends on 1 Sep 2025.

Ops to Hong Kong

This has long been a tricky old game for GA/BA flights – even before this latest thing with the new APIS requirements.

To operate to VHHH/Hong Kong, you need all of the following to be confirmed in advance (and we recommend applying in this order): **landing permit, parking, ground handling, slots… and now APIS too.**

All of these need to be applied for individually. Here's how to do it…

Landing Permit

This can be done whenever, but should probably be done first.

Apply here: www.cad.gov.hk/english/efiling_home.html

Contact: Civil Aviation Department (CAD)
Email: asd@cad.gov.hk, gcmtse@cad.gov.hk
Phone: +852 2910-6648, -6629

Parking

Parking is confirmed on a first-come-first-served basis, and can be applied for up to 30 days in advance. Ultimately, the earlier you apply the better. However, parking requests for 5 days or more can sometimes be rejected, and overnight parking is often denied during busy periods. If this happens, unfortunately the best strategy is still to just keep making new applications until you get accepted! Once your parking is approved, you'll receive a confirmation, and this must be given to your ground handler.

Apply here: https://extranet.hongkongairport.com/baps/

Contact: Hong Kong Airport Authority (HKAA)
Email: bjetslot@hkairport.com

Ground Handling

There are plenty of agents and handlers at VHHH, but only one dedicated FBO for BA/GA flights – HKBAC. Send them an email to confirm your ground handling in advance.

Contact: Hong Kong Business Aviation Centre (HKBAC) https://www.hkbac.com
Email: hkbac@hkbac.com
Phone: +852 2949 9000

Slots

Applications will only be considered 14 days prior to flight (unless you're applying for a last-minute cancelled or unused slot). Authorities monitor the slot system for intentional misuse – which could lead to operators being banned from using the system altogether. Other violations include any cancellations of outbound flights less than 72 hours before departure, and delays on the day by more than 2 hours – although any off-slot operations outside a tolerance of +/-20 minutes can still flag up for potential slot misuse.

Apply here: http://www.hkgslot.gov.hk/Online_Coordination.html

Contact: Hong Kong Schedule Coordination Office (HKSCO)
Email: hkgslot@cad.gov.hk
Phone: +852 2910 6898

Our Pilot Report – here's what we did…

If you're headed to VHHH/Hong Kong for the first time (or the *first time in a long time)* and want to know what to expect, here's an **OPSGROUP Team report from a recent flight:**

Hong Kong is a busy commercial hub in Asia. However, they manage BizAv aircraft there. There are a few gotchas to keep an eye out for when arriving and departing.

Handling:

- *All your operations will centre around the HKBAC (Business Aviation Centre). They are helpful, and I'd suggest you contact them for help arranging your parking and slots.*
- *It can get busy, so the earlier you contact them, the better your chances will be.*
- *It is an expensive place to fly into. However, Hong Kong is expensive in general.*

Arrival:

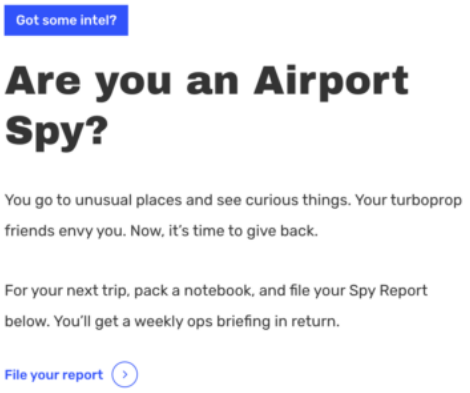
- *If you are coming to Hong Kong, note that the airport is beside a large mountain, so you get significant mechanical turbulence and wind shear.*
- *All arrivals are RNAV; vectors are not expected for many shortcuts beyond TD for Runway 25R. There is a lot of terrain.*
- *I suggest you take the RNAV 25R over the ILS. The ILS is very complicated as it is a two-part RNAV transition. It is also very high-load, and you must NOT select approach mode (i.e., switch to LOC/GS) before you hit TOPAN. Honestly, stick to the RNAV Z unless the cloud base is really an issue (which it rarely is).*
- *Even with calm winds on the ground, expect the approach to be quite bumpy.*

- *Generally, ATC won't assign you the close runway for landing, so expect a long taxi. You can expect to cross 07R/25L at K6 before making a right turn onto K and then into the BAC.*
- *Once you open the door, they will offload the pax and cargo (customs screens everything, so take note), and they will often reposition you quite quickly to a staging bay while you clean up.*
- *If you have a short lay over the Sheraton at Tung Chung is nice, otherwise it is a good 45-minute uber ride into Town.*

Departure:

- *The ramp is small, so expect to be at a remote staging area while you get the aircraft prepped. You can run the APU, etc., without issue, and then somewhere ETD-30, you can expect them to tug the plane into your departure position. These guys know what they are doing, but give them a heads-up if you wish your passengers would be late.*
- *PDC is available, as is Digital ATIS. Don't forget you need a start clearance (this isn't the USA).*
- *You can expect to depart from the closeby runway (07R/25L) unless it is closed for some reason (there is a nightly alternating closure for maintenance). So there is a short taxi; just be mindful that if you are slow with cabin prep, etc., you will be blocking the cargo aircraft that also taxi from the same side of the airport. ATC is friendly and competent but expects us to be efficient also.*
- *Departure clearance will be on your SID to 5000. Be mindful of flying noise abatement procedures; they expect you to accelerate to SID speed restrictions knots as soon as practicable. It is all on the charts; remember, we operate amongst a sea of heavies.*
- *One thing to note is that HK Departures only wants you to make the first call reporting your altitude passing and non-climb. There is no need to report your SID.*
- *Expect to level off at 9000′ until you are about 20-30nm from the airport; this is due to the arrival traffic above.*

If you have been to VHHH/Hong Kong (or anywhere else) and have a story to share – please do! Reports like these are super useful for everyone in the group. **File an Airport Spy report anonymously here.**



Olá Brazil: New Entry Rules for US, Canadian and Australian Citizens

Chris Shieff
3 June, 2025

Key Points

- Effective April 10, all US, Canadian and Australian citizens entering Brazil now need a **valid visa.**
- The visa waiver which has been in place since 2019 is no more.
- April's news may come as a surprise to passengers who might not be aware of the new requirement – and **there is no option to obtain one on arrival.**
- **Operating crew** are exempt (with some gotchas).

Why the change?

Back in 2019, visa requirements were dropped for the US, Canada and Australia. The previous President did so to boost tourism and trade.

However, it was a one-way move as Brazilian citizens still needed a visa to enter those countries.

Brazil has long since had a diplomatic policy of **reciprocity**. The new visa rules signify a return to this principle.

For operators, it's simply a new rule we need to navigate.

How to get a visa.

Citizens of the US, Canada and Australia now need to apply for an electronic visa to enter Brazil.

It's strongly recommended to do this at least **15 days' prior** as it can take some time to process.

Once issued, it will be valid for **multiple entries** for the next ten years.

Make sure your pax carry at least two printed copies for authorities.

Be careful, because **they can't get one on arrival.**

What about crew?

Great question. We reached out to several local agents for a clarification on the rules for crew.

While some advice was conflicting, the general consensus was that operating **crew are exempt** from the visa requirement and usually granted entry for up to ten days (regardless of nationality).

Universal Aviation Brazil has confirmed that to qualify, they must meet the following conditions:

- **Are on active duty;**
- **Are listed as operating crew on the GENDEC;**
- **Are in uniform on arrival;**
- **Present a pilots' license;**
- **And (obviously) have a valid passport.**

Some trouble has been reported for **flight engineers and flight attendants** who are not explicitly covered by this exemption policy (even if they are listed on the GENDEC).

In some cases, they have been allowed entry but this is **not** guaranteed.

To avoid trouble, we recommend that a visa is obtained for these staff beforehand to avoid the problem entirely – cost is approx. $80USD per person.

Another chestnut to look out for is crew who are **positioning** to Brazil either with you, or on an airline service. They will need a visa to enter.

Have you just been to Brazil?

If things were different than we've described, **we'd love to hear from you**. You can reach us around the clock on news@ops.group.

Special thanks to the team at Universal Brazil for their help clarifying the new rules!

Unapproachable Approaches: South Africa's IFR Crisis

Chris Shieff
3 June, 2025

April 10 marks an important date for operations in South Africa — it was the original deadline for the expiry of extensions granted to a large number of instrument procedures in urgent need of re-validation.

Then just yesterday, news broke that the South African Aviation Authority (SACAA) has re-approved procedures at major airports **FACT/Cape Town, FAOR/Johannesburg, FALE/Durban and FAPE/Port Elizabeth.**

Others weren't so lucky – IFR procedures at **FABL/Bloemfontein, FARB/Richards Bay and FAUP/Upington** will remain restricted until further notice.

The issue appears to be both a safety concern and a politically sensitive matter — the country currently faces what is being described as a looming **'air navigation crisis.'**

The Transport Minister is under growing pressure to provide answers, a process that has already led to the suspension of the CEO of Air Traffic and Navigation Services (ATNS). It's clear that all is not well within the ranks.

So what exactly is going on there, and why do these procedures need revalidation anyway?

Unapproachable Approaches

Three months ago an investigation was launched into why the revalidation of over three hundred instrument procedures had lapsed leading to delays, and unnecessary headaches for pilots and flight planners.

The primary cause was identified as a **critical staffing shortage.**

IFR procedures aren't just set-and-forget. Dig into the **ICAO SARPs** (more specifically Docs 9906 and

8168) and you'll see that instrument flight procedures should be periodically **revalidated** (usually every 3 – 5 years) to make sure they remain safe and operationally relevant.

They must remain adequately clear of obstacles for instance, especially when terrain or construction has changed since a procedure was designed.

They must also comply with updated ICAO PANS-OPS or local regulations and keep up with changes to navigational standards (such as PBN). Not to mention, the charts themselves must remain correct and accurate.

It is a skill in demand, and there are comparatively few aircraft and crew in South Africa certified for this work – so much so that accusations have emerged of **'poaching'** of staff between competing service providers.

In the case of South Africa, procedures due for revalidation are being pushed back months, especially at smaller lower priority fields. The result is a major backlog of **unvalidated procedures.**

It just isn't a simple process.

Revalidations are a complicated business requiring both desk-based assessments and flight validation by specially calibrated check aircraft.

Aside from shooting an approach for instance, **a full procedural design check** is required by qualified designers which includes an analysis of updated obstacle and terrain data along with a cross check against changes in airspace structure and traffic flows.

'Accelerated' efforts are now underway to urgently recruit and train a bunch more of them, but this takes time.

Who is liable to pay for it?

While costs are circumstantial to the complexity of each procedure, it is not unreasonable to see bills for revalidations (including design, consultation and flight testing) to exceed $40,000 USD each.

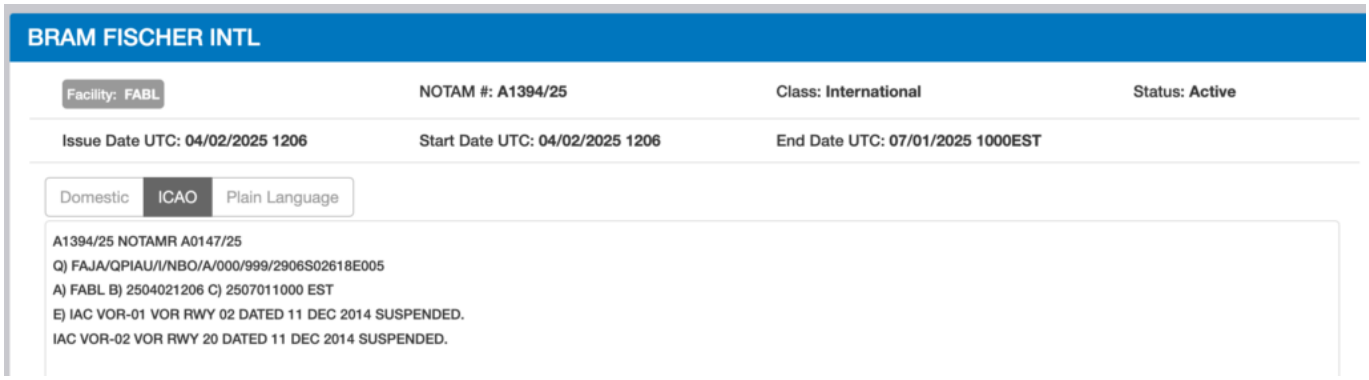
In the case of smaller or regional airports this can fall on airport authorities or operators. At larger airports it is hard to know which entity is responsible for footing the bill.

A lack of consensus leads to delays, and the withdrawal of procedures.

What is the operational impact?

In a nutshell, pilots can show up expecting IFR access only to find that procedures are 'not available until further notice.'

ATC can't (and won't) clear you for an IFR procedure that **isn't validated** – even if it's charted and in your nav database.



BRAM FISCHER INTL

Facility: FABL | NOTAM #: A1394/25 | Class: International | Status: Active

Issue Date UTC: 04/02/2025 1206 | Start Date UTC: 04/02/2025 1206 | End Date UTC: 07/01/2025 1000EST

Domestic | ICAO | Plain Language

A1394/25 NOTAMR A0147/25
Q) FAJA/QPIAU/I/NBO/A/000/999/2906S02618E005
A) FABL B) 2504021206 C) 2507011000 EST
E) IAC VOR-01 VOR RWY 02 DATED 11 DEC 2014 SUSPENDED.
IAC VOR-02 VOR RWY 20 DATED 11 DEC 2014 SUSPENDED.

Ultimately, the onus will continue to fall upon operators to search for IFR alternates to keep their flight plan legal.

And if you're unfamiliar with flight planning in South Africa, this can be a challenge. South Africa's Daily Airspace Plan can provide some guidance on airports where procedures have been suspended – but it is important to consider the Notams carefully.

Central Airspace Management Unit | DAILY AIRSPACE PLAN 08 APRIL 2025

Telephone Number: 011 928 6433
Email: camuhelpdesk@atns.co.za

Last Update: Tuesday, 8 April 2025 07:11 South African local time
Next Telcon: Week days at 0630UTC excl. Public Holidays

Issues expected to impact service delivery

Location	Details
FAJO FACA FAJA	SEE NOTAMS FOR SUSPENDED PROCEDURES. PPV, LWV U/S. DVOR HMV 113.40 MHZ OFFLINE.

Look out at smaller airports.

It seems clear that there is no immediate fix to South Africa's Air Navigation crisis.

News this week is consistent with plans to prioritise procedures at larger airports first – which will continue to be to the detriment of smaller ones. **Therefore operators to South Africa's regional airports will likely be grappling with this issue for some time yet.**

Work continues between ATNS, SACAA and the Department of Transport on how best to future-proof the currency of South Africa's IFR infrastructure. But at time of writing, a conclusive answer has yet to emerge.

Boston Parking Restrictions Are Back

David Mumford
3 June, 2025

Key Points

- **The BizAv PPR requirement at KBOS/Boston will be in effect from April 15 through the end of October.**
- **PPR is required for all non-scheduled flights (private and charter, Part 91 and 135), and will be issued on a first-come-first-served basis via Signature Aviation.**
- **This time, it's not just about congestion – construction work is underway on the ramp.**
- **If approved, aircraft are limited to a maximum of 2 days on the ground.**

Boston is getting busy again, and with construction now happening on the ramp, the airport is bringing back PPR requirements for all BizAv flights.

The PPR requirement will start on **April 15** and is expected to remain in place **until the end of October**. Operators will need to stick closely to approved schedules, especially during the construction period.

Signature Aviation remains the only FBO at Boston. They have said that if you get PPR, the **max length of stay is 2 days,** and they cannot accept requests more than **30 days** prior to the planned flight.

Here's the updated table of scary costs for getting things wrong:

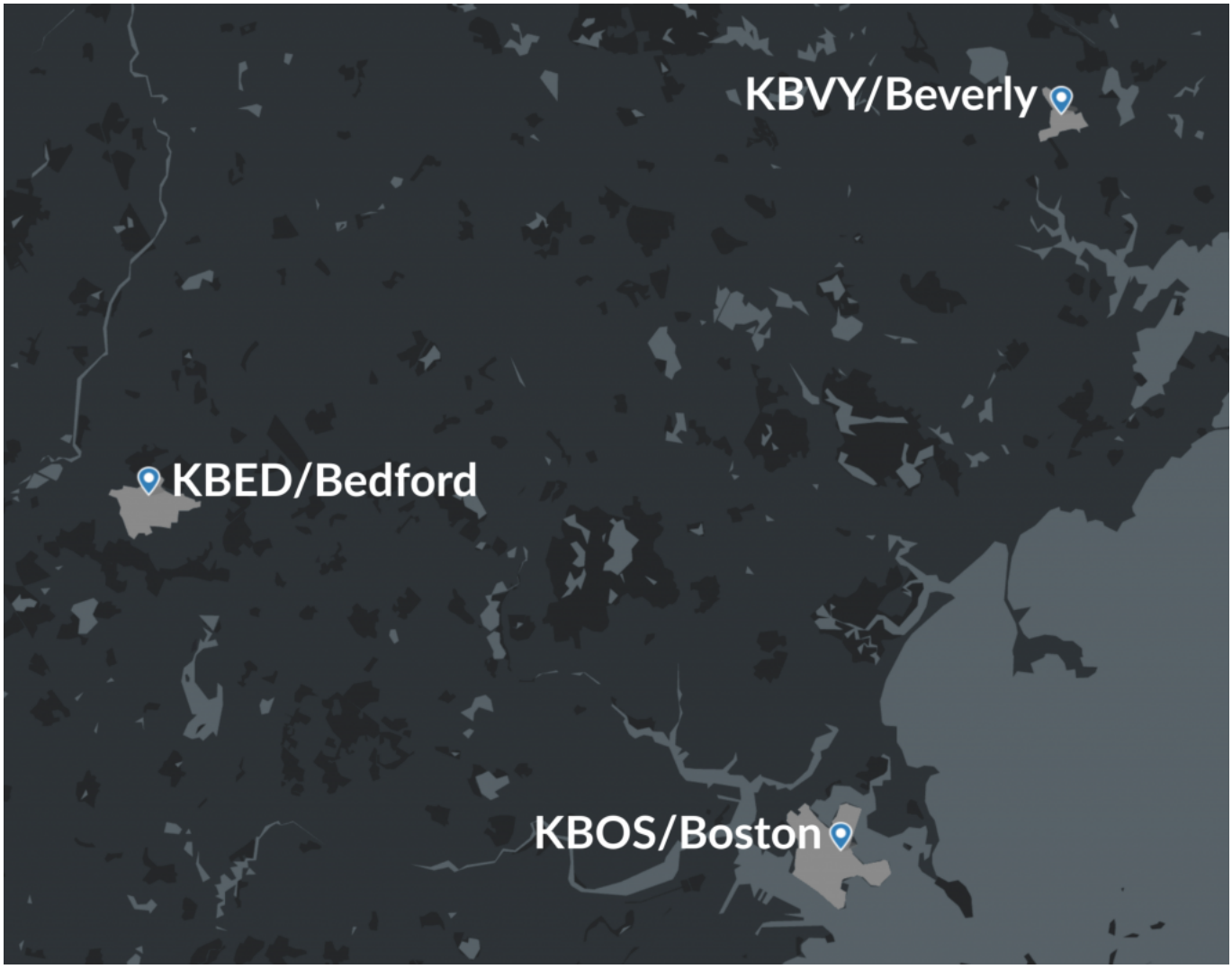
Fee Type:	Description:
Cancellation / No-Show Fee	Cancellation within 24 Hours of PPR reservation arrival time or a no-show for PPR reservation arrival time
Violation Fee	Show up without PPR reservation; FBO will determine length of stay and overstay charges will apply if applicable
Overstay Fee (Hourly)	Hourly rate for late departure based on PPR reservation; Max 4 hours at which point daily fee applies
Overstay Fee (Daily)	Daily rate applicable during PPR for every 24 hour period after 4 hours of PPR Overstay Fee have been assessed

Group	Type	PPR Cancellation Fee	PPR Violation Fee	PPR Overstay Fee	
		One-time charge	One-time Charge	Hourly Rate	Daily Rate
BA	Transport	$2,750	$8,800	$1,375	$5,500
	BBJ/ACJ	$2,750	$7,700	$1,375	$5,500
Jet	Super Heavy Jet	$2,750	$6,600	$1,375	$5,500
	Heavy Jet	$2,750	$5,500	$1,375	$5,500
	Medium Jet	$1,650	$3,300	$825	$3,300
	Light Jet	$1,100	$2,200	$550	$2,200
	Very Light Jet	$880	$1,760	$440	$1,760
Prop	Heavy Prop	$1,650	$3,300	$825	$3,300
	Medium Prop	$660	$1,320	$330	$1,320
	Light Prop	$550	$1,100	$275	$1,100
	Single Engine Prop	$440	$880	$220	$880
Helicopter	Heavy Helicopter	$220	$440	$110	$440
	Medium Helicopter	$220	$440	$110	$440
	Light Helicopter	$110	$220	$55	$220
Piston	Heavy Twin	$220	$440	$110	$440
	Light Twin	$220	$440	$110	$440
	Single Engine Twin	$110	$220	$55	$220

Where else to go?

For drop-and-go's, you could reposition to **KBED/Bedford** airport for parking. KBED looks like it could be a good option, as they are open H24 (tower is open from 07-23 local time), have a 7000ft runway, and the airport is only 20 miles from Boston – they do also handle international flights too, so you could always just fly there directly instead. The Signature page for KBED is here.

One other option is **KBVY/Beverly** airport. **Flight Level Aviation** is the sole FBO there, and fees can be lower than KBED. The airport only has a 5000ft runway, and does not have 24/7 Customs coverage, but you can contact the CBP office at KBED to make arrangements. Drive time from KBVY into downtown Boston is roughly equivalent as from KBED. The North Atlantic Air page for KBVY is here.



US Ops Update: Privacy, IDs & Safety

Chris Shieff
3 June, 2025

Key Points

- **FAA Enhances Aircraft Privacy:** The FAA now allows private aircraft owners to request the removal of personal details from public FAA websites, enhancing privacy.
- **US Address Required Abroad:** FAA certificate holders abroad must nominate a physical US address by April 2 (for new applicants) or July 7 (for existing holders) to retain their privileges, with professional services available for those without a US address.
- **REAL ID Deadline Looms:** From May 7, all adult passengers on US commercial flights (including Part 135 charters) must present a REAL ID-compliant ID or other accepted identification, with private Part 91 flights exempt.
- **Notam System Fails Again:** The US Notam system suffered another outage on March 22, raising concerns about its reliability.
- **FAA Tightens KDCA Helicopter Rules:** After the Jan 29 mid-air collision, the FAA has closed a KDCA helicopter route, restricted non-essential ops, mandated ADS-B Out, and launched a broader safety review.
- **KDCA Drone Tests Trigger Alerts:** On March 1, military counter-drone testing near KDCA triggered erroneous TCAS alerts, raising concerns over improper testing and its impact on civil aviation.

In Cognito

On March 28, the FAA began accepting requests from private aircraft owners to **withhold personal details** (such as name and address) from public access across all FAA websites.

It’s good news for business aviation, as it potentially makes it more difficult for members of the public to track the movement of **privately owned aircraft** for nefarious purposes.

Aircraft owners can now submit their request via the Civil Aviation Registry (CARES) here.

Address for Service

Attention all **FAA License holders abroad** – this one's for you!

The FAA has written a new rule that will require certificate holders abroad to nominate a physical **US address for service**. We've written about it in detail here, but there are essentially two looming deadlines to be aware of:

April 2 for new applications, and **July 7** for anyone who already holds FAA certificates, ratings or authorizations. You'll need to submit this via the USAS website that is about to go live.

Whatever you do – don't ignore this. If you don't nominate a US based address by the applicable date, you won't be able to exercise the privileges of your document. i.e. say sayonara to your license until you submit the right info.

If you don't have an address to nominate in the US, don't despair. You can use a professional service like FAA Mail Agent. These guys can take care of all it for less than 50 bucks a year. Use the code 'Opsgroup' and get a discount.

Passenger ID Requirements

From May 7, all adult passengers (18+) using commercial air transport within the US (including Part 135 charters) **must show an ID** that complies with the new Real ID Act.

The big change is that anyone who wants to use a state-issued ID or drivers licence to meet this requirement must make sure that it is REAL ID compliant – look for one of the following symbols:

Examples of REAL IDs:

There is also a list of other IDs (such as US and Foreign Passports) that continue to be acceptable.

Operators need to take note because if they allow a passenger to board an aircraft without the appropriate

ID they are effectively breaching TSA requirements and become liable for hefty penalties

Important note – private flights operated under **Part 91 are exempt.**

The Notam system went kaput (again).

The US Notam system was down (again) for several hours on March 22 due to a hardware failure. It was the second time since early February.

Once again we **collectively flinched** – a system crash in January 2023 lead to the first US ground stop since 2001, disrupting over 10,000 flights.

Questions are being asked about the reliability of the system, and its lack of redundancy.

The FAA previously announced plans to discontinue the legacy US Notam system by mid-2025, with further changes slated for the next five years.

There appears now renewed public and political concern for a **faster resolution.**

Mixed Traffic and The Potomac Tragedy

The FAA has responded to several recommendations made by the NTSB in its preliminary report from the mid-air collision over the Potomac River on January 29.

The immediate changes will be felt at **KDCA/Washington itself.** The FAA has permanently closed the low level helicopter route involved in the accident. Non-essential helicopter ops will also be banned, with increased ATC separation applied to those on 'urgent missions.'

ADS-B out is now mandated for all helicopters, with only very limited exemptions for presidential missions.

Further afield, the FAA is also looking closely into ops at airports in other major cities with high volumes of **mixed traffic** (including NY, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Houston and LA) with corrective actions looming for any risks identified.

TCAS wasn't spoofed in Washington.

On March 1, several aircraft on approach to **KDCA/Washington** responded to **erroneous TCAS alerts**, including RAs. While recent research has indicated malicious interference of TCAS is a credible security concern, a Senate hearing last week revealed this was not the case.

The culprit was counter-drone testing by the military nearby which was operating on a similar spectrum to TCAS – a separate concern previously raised by the FAA.

Nevertheless, there are concerns that these tests were **conducted improperly** and caused unnecessary alarm to civil aircraft nearby. At the very least it was an unfortunate coincidence given recent events at the airport.

Other things you might have missed.

- *TFR Busts* – The FAA has reported several instances of civil aircraft busting TFRs in recent weeks. The hot spot appears to be **Palm Beach, FL** where the President has a residence at Mar-a-Lago nearby. A reminder that special procedures apply, including TSA Gateway screening when active for anyone headed in or out of **KPBI/Palm Beach.** More on that in our recent article, here.

- *Laser Strikes* – New guidance was published by the FAA on March 26. Turns out the number of laser strikes on aircraft continue to be **dangerously high.** There's an online tool to see where the worst spots are here. Remember to report em!
- *Drones* – DJI, the main recreational drone producer in the US, has removed its built-in geo-fencing feature that physically protects airports from incursions. Instead, an FAA database will simply warn the user when close to a no-fly zone. The issue is that this can now be **maliciously ignored.** DJI has said that its geo-fencing is about education, not enforcement. We're not convinced – continue to report any illegal sightings to the FAA.

Anything we missed?

Let us know via news@ops.group, and we'll add it to this article. As always the team is also available to help answer any questions, or put you in touch with the person who can.

ADC Numbers in South Asia: What You Need to Know

Kateřina Michalská
3 June, 2025

The ADC number is a security clearance required for flights operating through the Air Defence Identification Zones (ADIZ) of several countries in South Asia: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal. Without one, flights could face delays, or potentially being denied entry into the airspace.

The process for obtaining an ADC is roughly the same in each country. So we'll start with that, then we'll move on to some slight variations to know about for each country.

The Process!

File the Flight Plan

- File the flight plan as usual, including the overflight/landing permit number.
- The ADC number is normally not included in the flight plan.

Obtain the ADC number:

- **For departures** from the country where the ADC is required, the local handling agent should obtain the ADC number from ATC and then inform the crew. In some countries, ATC might provide the ADC number directly to the crew along with the start-up clearance.
- **For overflights** of the country where the ADC is required, ATC will typically confirm the ADC number to the crew when the aircraft approaches the country's ADIZ. However, it's useful if your agent (whoever got your permit number) has also given the crew the ADC number in advance.

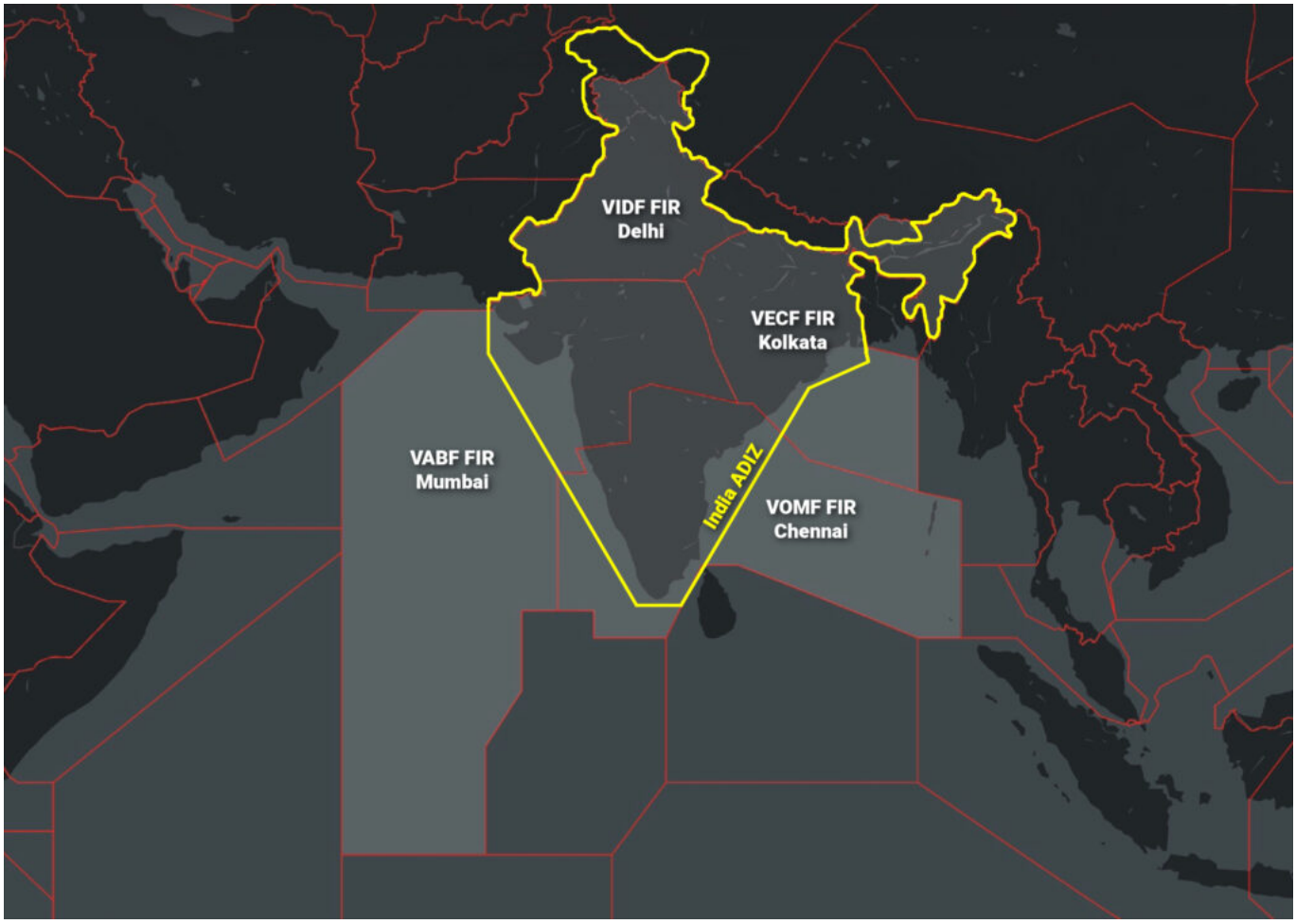
Main gotchas to watch out for:

- **Departures:** When departing from a country where ADC is required, make sure you get the number from ATC before departure! This helps avoid any last-minute issues with routing, fees, or documentation that could delay the flight. A common best practice is for the crew to contact ATC as soon as the APU is running to allow enough time to address any issues.
- **Delays:** If a flight is delayed beyond the allowed window (eg. 30 minutes up to 2 hours, depending on the country), a new ADC number must be obtained.
- **Routing:** Some countries, like Bangladesh, do not require an ADC number for specific routes (more on that below). However, if you have to deviate from those routes, you may be required to obtain an ADC number.

So that's generally how it works.

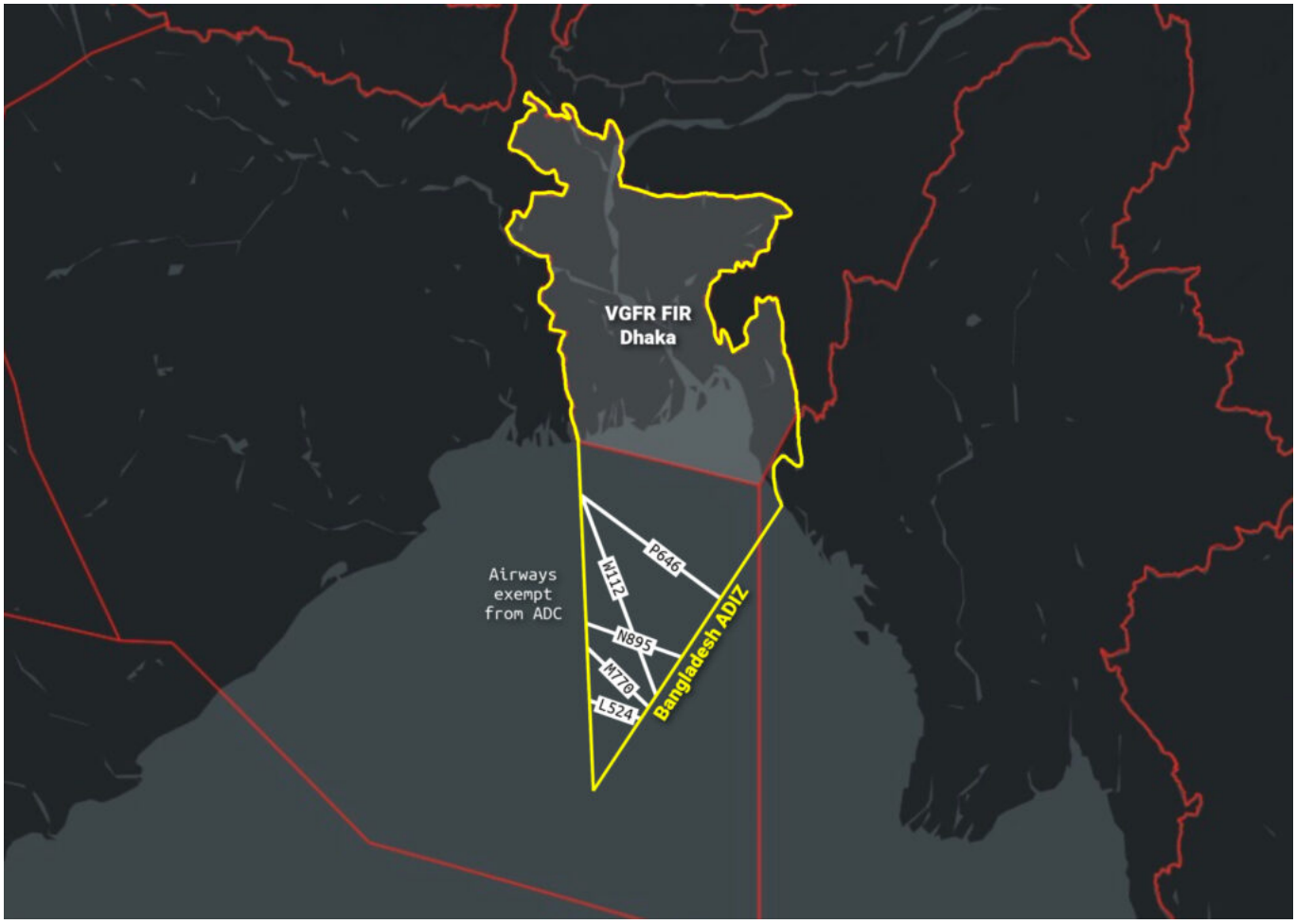
Now for some **country-specific info, links to AIPs, and badly-drawn maps!**

India



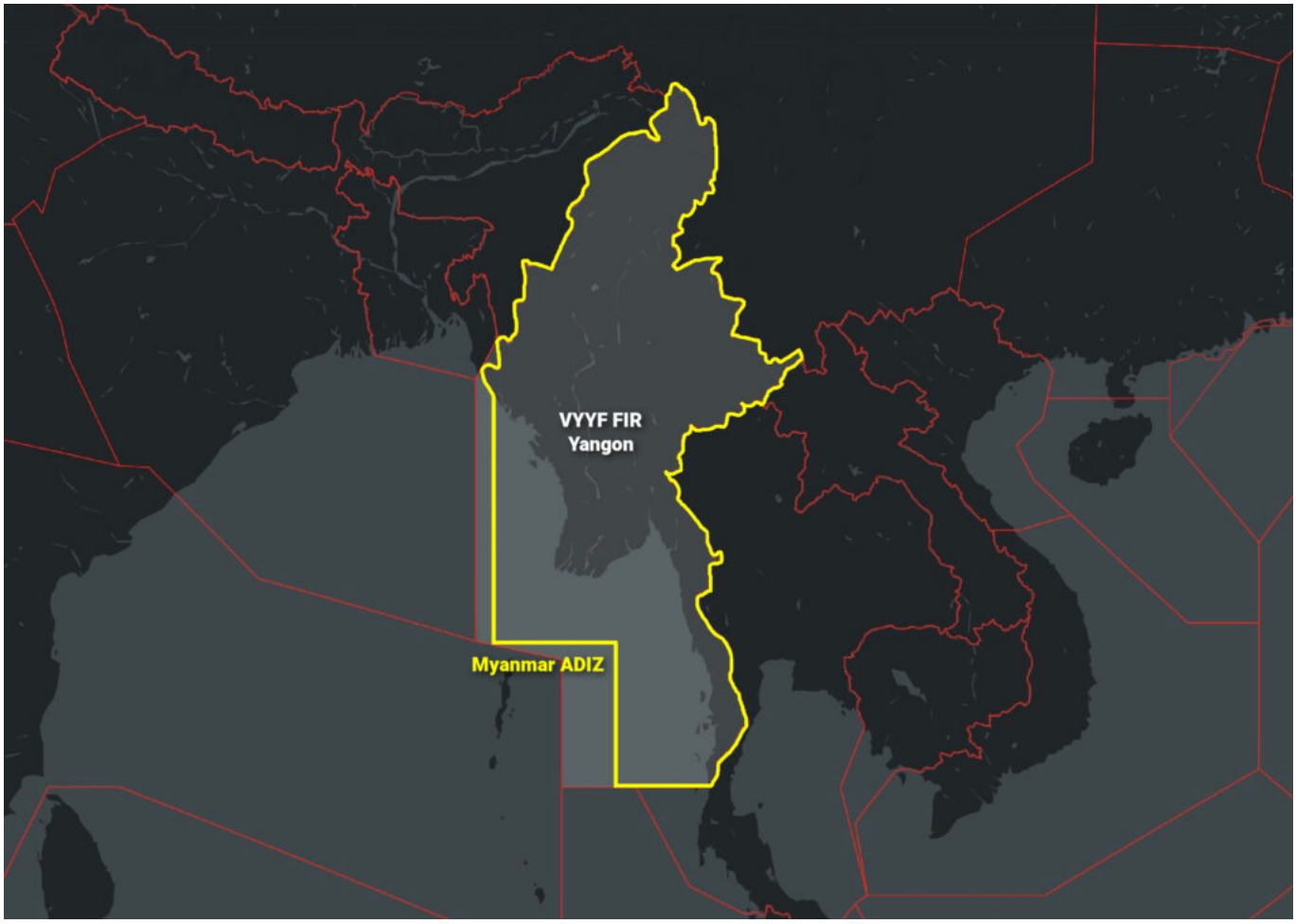
- **The process for getting an ADC number is kinda interesting here.** You basically have to file your flight plan with your overflight/landing permit (YA number) on it, then ATC review it and issue you a FIC number (Flight Information Clearance), then the Indian Air Force reviews it plan and issues an ADC number!
- **The overflight/landing permit is valid for 48 hours.** If the aircraft is returning to the same airport or operating another leg within that window, a new permit may not be needed, but this depends on how the routing and timings are filed.
- Indian authorities will send the **invoice for nav fees directly to the operato**r for payment.
- **Delays:** If the flight is delayed by more than **1 hour**, a new ADC number must be requested.
- **More info:** India AIP ENR section 1.12.

Bangladesh



- **The handling agent is responsible for paying the nav fees** (not the operator).
- The Bangladesh ADIZ actually stretches down beyond Bangladesh airspace into the adjacent Indian VECF/Kolkata FIR. But **overflights through this part of it (airways P646, N895, M770, L524, and W112) do NOT require an ADC number** unless the aircraft deviates toward the landmass of Bangladesh.
- After filing the flight plan, the ADC number is issued via AFTN or you can request it from the Bangladesh Air Force at adnc@baf.mil.bd.
- Domestic flights, state aircraft, and general aviation flights within Bangladesh are now exempt from ADC requirements – a key change reflected in the latest AIP amendment.
- Also, the option to use the same ADC number for a return flight on the same day? Gone. You'll need to request a fresh ADC for that.
- **Delays:** If the flight is delayed by more than **2 hours**, a new ADC number must be requested.
- **More info:** Bangladesh AIP ENR section 5.2.

Myanmar

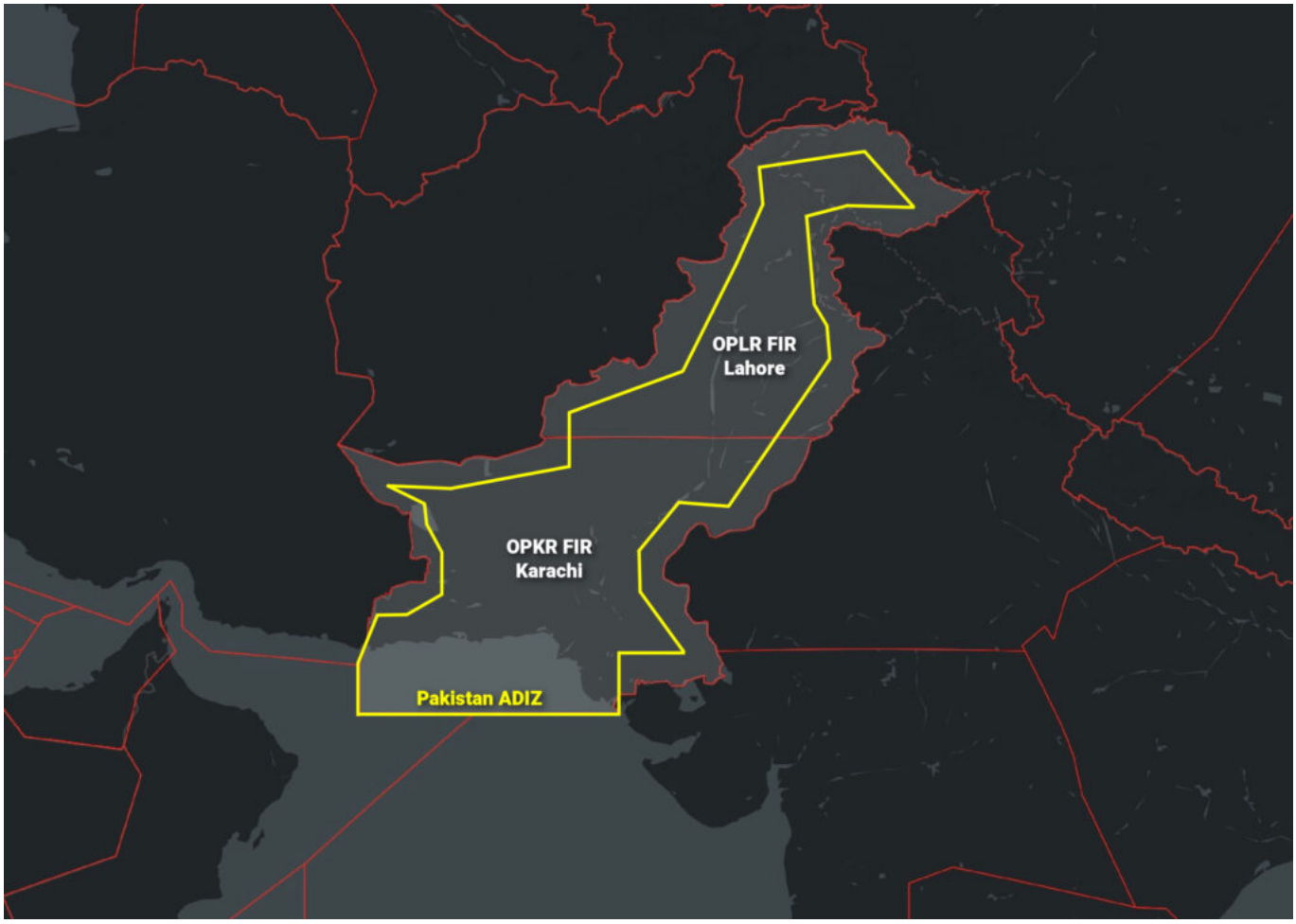


- Some crews report being asked for the **ADC number at the departure airport if entering Myanmar airspace within 30 mins of takeoff.** So if you're heading to/over Myanmar from somewhere nearby (i.e. VGHS/Dhaka, Bangladesh), try to get the ADC Number before you depart, to avoid delays.
- **Delays:** If the flight is delayed by more than **30 minutes**, a new ADC number must be requested.
- **More info:** Myanmar AIP ENR section 1.1.

Sri Lanka

- Unlike the other countries on this list, **the ADIZ only covers the territory of Sri Lanka** including its territorial waters up to 12 NM from the coastline, rather than the entire FIR. So that's kinda nice.
- **Delays:** If the flight is delayed by more than **1 hour**, a new ADC number must be requested.
- **More info:** Sri Lanka AIP ENR 5.2.

Pakistan



- **Delays:** If the flight is delayed by more than **1 hour**, a new ADC number must be requested.
- **More info:** Pakistan AIP ENR section 2.2.

Nepal

- Although Nepal's AIP doesn't mention ADC, local handling agents confirm that an ADC Number is required! **We currently don't have any specifics on the process or any possible exemptions.** If anyone has more information, please reach out to help complete this section! Email us at team@ops.group

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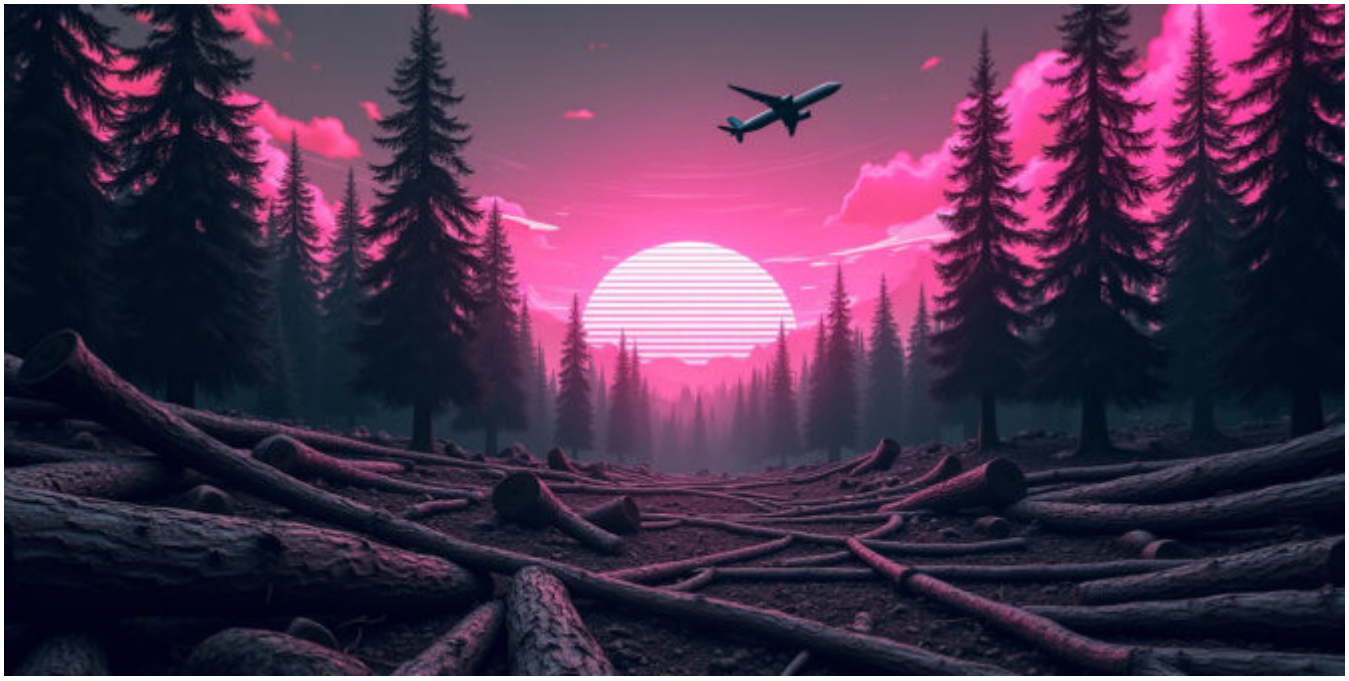
NAT Changes 2025: No More Blue Spruce Routes

David Mumford
3 June, 2025



Key Points: Updated 19 March 2025

- **A new NAT Doc 007 takes effect from 20 March 2025.**
- **Blue Spruce Routes are being removed. Aircraft with only 1 x LRNS will have to go via GOTA and the Iceland-Greenland corridor instead.**
- **There are new super fun chapters on Space Weather Contingencies and GNSS Interference Events.**
- **Other NAT news: Shanwick does not expect to implement the removal of Oceanic Clearances before summer 2025.**
- **Other NAT news: There's a big military exercise coming in May which will close large parts of the Shanwick FIR.**
- **Other NAT news: Greenland airport BGGH/Nuuk now more viable NAT alternate with a brand new runway (7200'/2200m) opened in Nov 2024.**

Once (or sometimes twice) every year, ICAO update their **NAT Doc 007 – the main guidance doc for ops over the North Atlantic.** All the specifics about how to operate your aircraft safely through the complex airspace of the region are here.

There's a **new one that takes effect from 20 March 2025**, which contains a few important changes to know about if you're planning a flight across the NAT.

You can download the new NAT Doc 007 in full, but here's a summary of the main changes…

Deletion of Blue Spruce Routes

If you're new to the NAT, the Blue Spruce Routes have been around since forever. These are special routes that go via Greenland and Iceland, designed to help aircraft with limited navigation capabilities.

The Blue Spruce Routes will be officially deleted in March 2025. The team behind this (the Blue Spruce Routes Project Team) has decided the following:

- There aren’t enough ground-based navigation aids anymore to reliably support these routes.
- Hardly anyone uses them, as very few aircraft with single LRNS rely on them.
- The Iceland-Greenland surveillance corridor is a good enough alternative for aircraft with navigation issues.
- The difference in flight distance between Blue Spruce Routes and alternative corridors is so small it’s not worth keeping them.

So from March 20, the **Iceland-Greenland corridor** will replace Blue Spruce Routes as the backup option. A review is also underway to decide whether to keep or remove remaining ground-based navigation aids.

Updated NAT Doc 007

Here’s some of the other stuff in the newly updated version of this, effective 20 March 2025:

Deleted sections, New sections, and Chapter Switcheroos

Deleted sections:

- **Chapter 12** on *Guarding Against Common Errors*
- **Chapter 13** on *The Prevention Of Lateral Deviations From Track*

New sections:

- **Chapter 10** on *Special Procedures For In-Flight Contingencies* now includes a section to help crews handle **space weather contingencies** (explains how to manage impacts on communications, navigation, and surveillance systems caused by solar activity) and **GNSS interference events** (guidance on what to do in case of GPS jamming or spoofing, based on lessons from recent incidents).

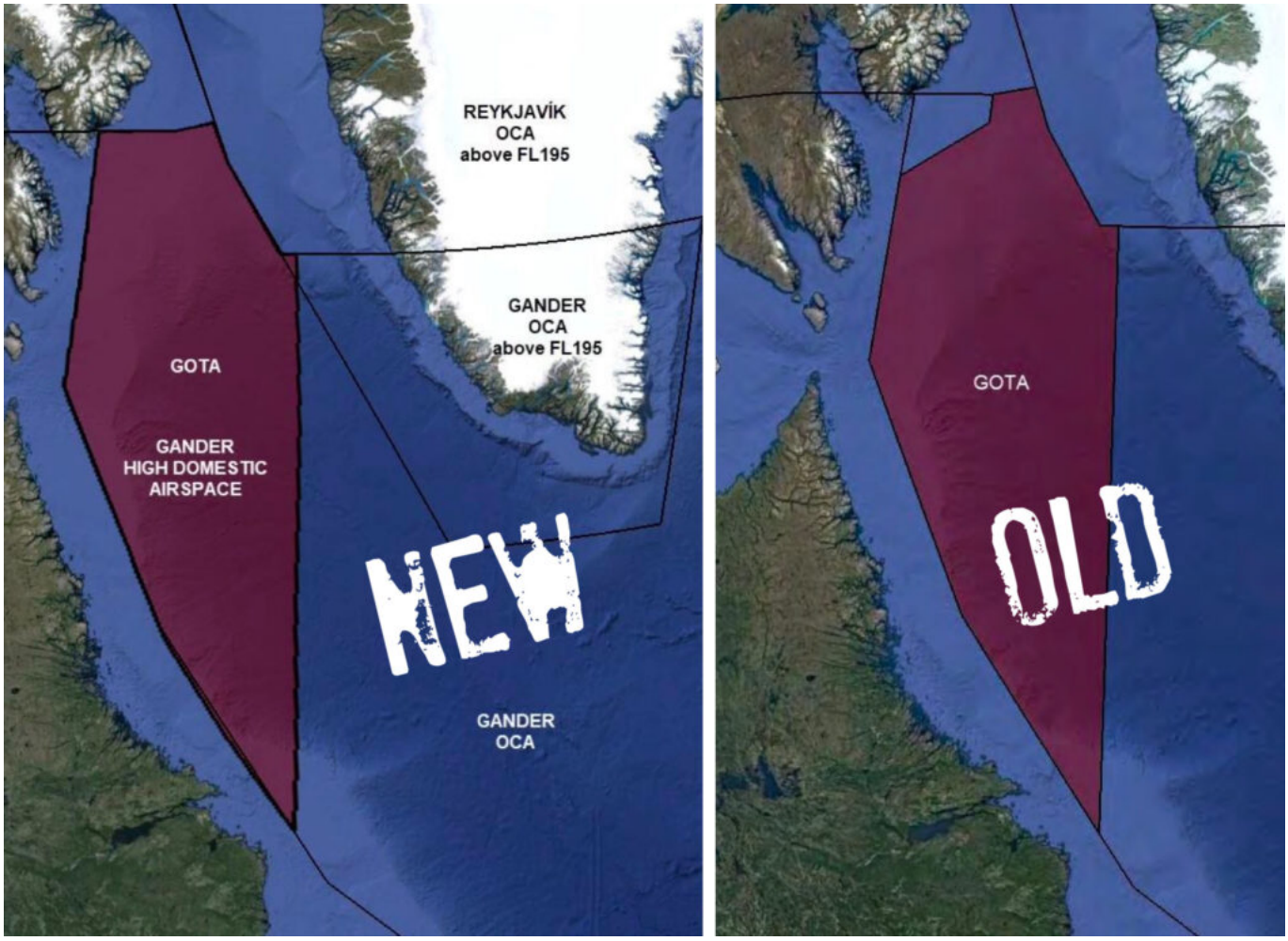
Chapter Switcheroos:

Not that interesting. Same content just in different places now. *Over to ChatGPT for a summary of this one:*

- Monitoring of Aircraft Systems & Flight Crew Performance moved to the end of the document and renumbered as Chapter 13.
- Navigation System Failure Procedures is now Chapter 9 (was Chapter 10).
- In-Flight Contingencies Procedures is now Chapter 10 (was Chapter 11) and includes the new space weather and GNSS interference guidance.
- Dispatchers’ Guidance is now Chapter 11 (was Chapter 14).
- Flight Operations Below NAT HLA is now Chapter 12 (was Chapter 15).

GOTA

The picture of the airspace boundaries for GOTA has been corrected slightly from the previous NAT Doc. (The GOTA boundaries haven’t changed, they just had the wrong pic in before!)



RCL timings & Squawking 2000

A couple of minor updates here:

- In the Reykjavik OCA, you must now send your RCL **no earlier than 15 minutes** prior to the OEP (it used to be 20 minutes).
- They've also updated the bit about squawking 2000 10 minutes after passing the OEP – you should do this everywhere except the Reykjavik CTA **and when transitioning through Bermuda radar** (it didn't mention Bermuda before). Squawking 2000 is not required in these areas as they have you on radar!

Prior to oceanic entry

Send RCL message

6.2.26 An RCL is a voice or data link message via ACARS used to provide ETA at OEP, requested flight level, and speed. There is a requirement to send an RCL message prior to the OEP as follows:

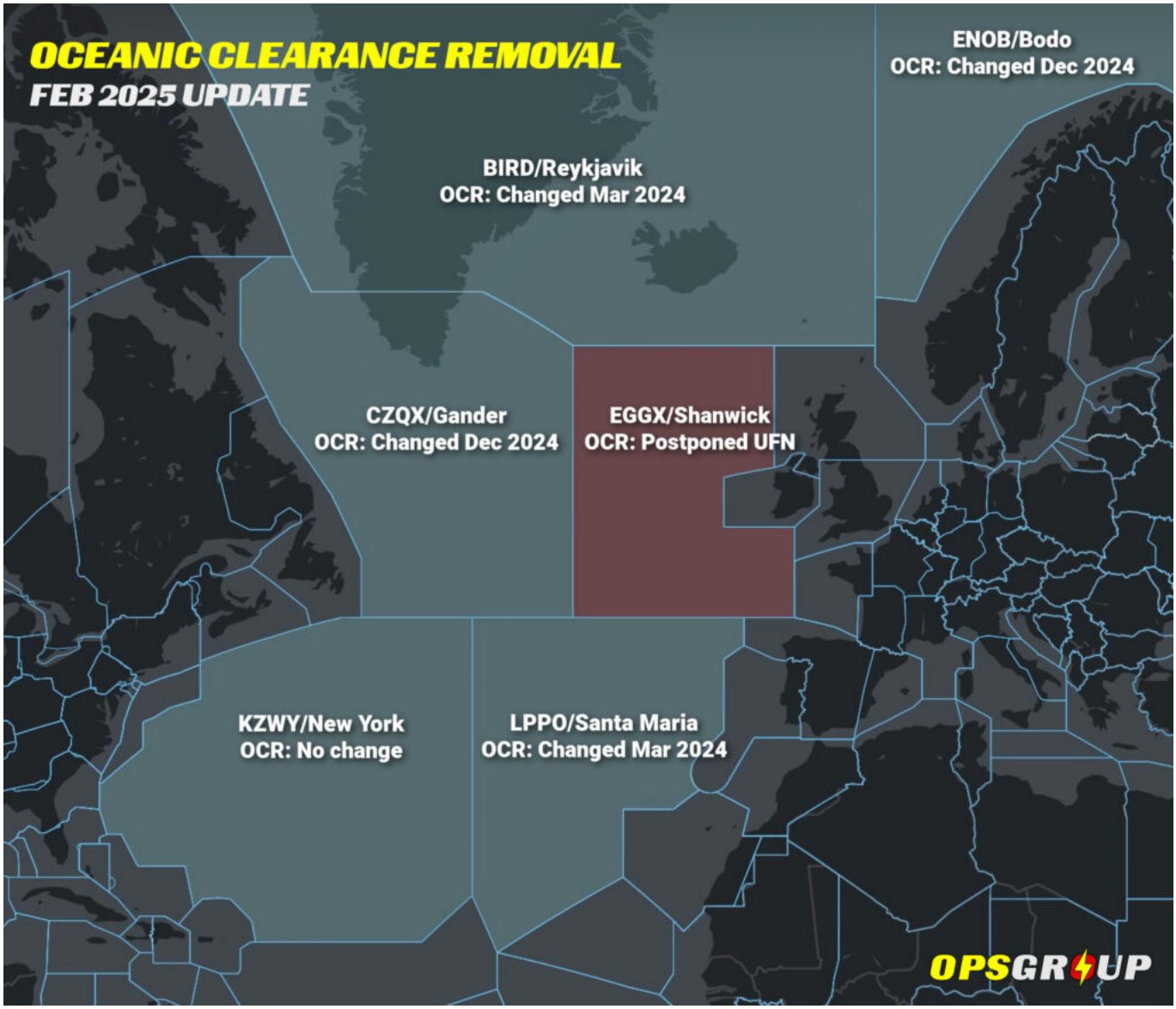
- Gander OCA 90-60 minutes;
- Shanwick OCA 90-30 minutes;
- Santa Maria OCA at least 40 minutes;
- Bodo OCA at least 20 minutes;
- Reykjavik OCA **no earlier** than 15 minutes;
- New York OCA East no requirement for RCL.

Gander: Flights departing airports less than 45 minutes flying time from the OEP should send RCL 10 minutes prior to start-up.

Reykjavik: Due to coverage limitations, aircraft equipped with Inmarsat data link won't be able to send an RCL message via ACARS data link when north of 82°N. Aircraft equipped with Iridium and/or HF ACARS data link should be able to send an RCL message via ACARS data link regardless of location.

Continued confusion about the Removal of Oceanic Clearances

The new version of the NAT Doc 007 tries to consolidate all the changes made after the March 2024 roll-out of OCR procedures. The only problem is that it now says that **"No oceanic clearance is required"** without pointing out that **this doesn't yet apply to Shanwick!**



Everything about the Removal of Oceanic Clearances so far has been **quite confusing for crews.** What is happening, when it's happening, what is changing, the constant implementation date changes, plus the fact that there has been a bunch of confusing documentation out there with incorrect dates and procedures that are not yet in place.

So here's the lowdown!

- **Reykjavik** and **Santa Maria** = removed Oceanic Clearances in March 2024
- **Gander** and **Bodo** = removed Oceanic Clearances in Dec 2024.
- **Shanwick** = still has Oceanic Clearances!

So, Shanwick is the only NAT ANSP still to make the change – and the main news at the moment is that **Shanwick does not expect to implement the removal of Oceanic Clearances before summer 2025.**

Until then, westbound flights entering Shanwick from domestic airspace will continue to be the only flights on the NAT that will still require an Oceanic Clearance. For more info on all this, OPSGROUP members should check this post in their Dashboard.

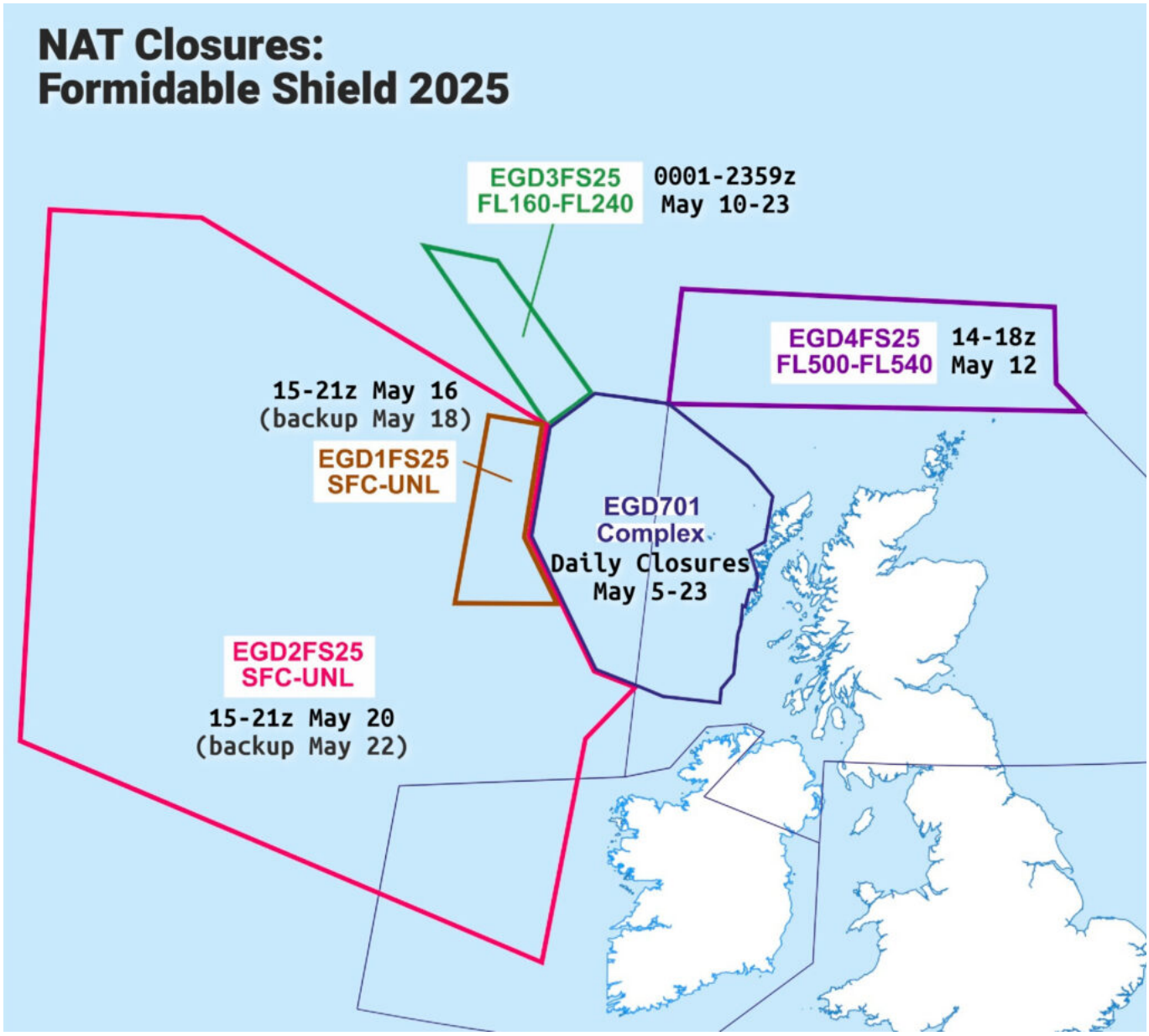
Other important NAT stuff to look forward to

Formidable Shield military exercise expected in May 2025

Remember that big NAT military exercise a couple of years ago? Formidable Shield is happening again soon, and **this year will be a fairly bad vintage.**

There will be daily closures in the D701 area off the coast of Scotland from May 5-23, but the big one to watch out for is a **large closure of airspace across the northern half of the EGGX/Shanwick FIR** on May 20 between 15-21z (with May 22 as the backup day).

The map below shows everything we know about this. For more info, check this UK SUP.



Changes to Greenland NAT alternates

BGGH/Nuuk airport's brand new runway (7200'/2200m) opened in Nov 2024, with ILS at both ends, which on the face of it makes Nuuk a more viable diversion option for NAT traffic.

But since it opened, we've had reports of **a few things to watch out for at BGGH/Nuuk:**

- ATC may **delay your arrival and put you into a hold** as only one ILS approach can be handled at a time, and 15 min separation is being applied between international arrivals. So carry up to half an hour of extra fuel if possible.
- In practical terms the airport is **effectively closed overnight.** Because it's a brand new airport, night opening is unrealistic at the moment – especially in winter. In the summer months, when there's no snow and it's daylight almost all day every day, there won't be the same need for runway sweeping and using the airport as a diversion alternate might be more possible.
- Aircraft larger than A330 should **consider continuing using BGSF/Sondrestrom as an alternate instead** – it may make more sense to divert here with the longer runway and less traffic compared to the marginal runway in BGGH/Nuuk.

Also watch out for changes potentially coming at **BGSF/Sondrestrom**, where they're considering downgrading ATC to AFIS at the end of 2025. More info here.

Did we miss anything?

If you spotted anything important in the new NAT Doc 007 which we missed in this summary, please let us know! Email us at news@ops.group

More help with North Atlantic ops

- Download the OPSGROUP NAT Guide ("My First North Atlantic Flight is Tomorrow")
- Download the OPSGROUP NAT Plotting & Planning Chart
- Explanation of what you need to know about the NAT Datalink Mandate
- An overview of NAT Emergency Divert Airports

DC False Alerts: Could TCAS Be Vulnerable to Cyber Attack?

Chris Shieff
3 June, 2025

On March 1, several aircraft reported erroneous TCAS TA and RA alerts while on approach to Runway 19 at **KDCA/Washington.** All aircraft correctly followed avoidance procedures, and **no loss of separation** occurred. Six of the incidents occurred within eleven minutes of each other.

⬆ *shared with permission, courtesy of* ***VASAviation.***

What has followed is speculation – who, or what, was responsible? It is an answer the FAA is actively seeking.

TCAS interference is rare but can occur. There are several plausible explanations including ground clutter and reflections, software issues and unintentional radio interference.

However, it would be hard to deny that these alerts came at a **sensitive time** both for operations at the airport following the mid-air collision over the Potomac River, and across a broader tapestry of concern for aviation safety across the US NAS given recent events.

Which begs an important question – **can TCAS actually be tampered with?** Is it possible these events were an act of criminal mischief or other mis-intent? While remote, a little-known alert issued just weeks ago by **CISA** (the part of Homeland Security responsible for US cyber and infrastructure security) suggests it is *indeed* possible.

Published on January 21, CISA discussed **two flaws in TCAS design** that leave the system vulnerable to **malicious cyber-attacks** – one of which they deem a high, almost critical vulnerability.

In event that such an attack occurs, criminal interference could generate fake targets on an aircraft's TCAS display and even disable resolution advisories.

The problem is that bulletin is quite technical. So here is a break-down of what it says in plain, simple language.

The Bulletin

There were essentially two risks identified for TCAS II Versions 7.1 or older.

1. Fake Position Signals

It is theoretically possible to broadcast a spoofed aircraft location to another target.

This could be achieved using specialised radio equipment where potential attackers could send fake signals to aircraft, causing the appearance of **non-existent targets** on TCAS displays, along with the associated warnings.

In other words, crews would effectively be chasing shadows.

As TCAS II systems rely on transponders that may not be able to adequately validate the data received, they remain vulnerable to unauthorised signals. The bulletin describes this risk as a reliance on '*untrusted inputs'.*

Read the report and you'll see something called a '**CVSS score.'**

CVSS stands for **Common Vulnerability Scoring System**, and it is basically a danger rating for flaws in computer security. It is a measure of how serious a vulnerability is. Factors include the method of attack, the access required and the potential impact.

It is represented on a scale of 0 (non-existent) to 10 (critical).

The issue of fake position signals has been given a CVSS score of 6.1.

Perhaps more concerning is that the report advises there is no way to actively mitigate this threat with existing TCAS technology. The equipment required is accessible to the public. Therefore this threat is the most likely suspect of any erroneous TCAS interference occurring today.

2. No TCAS RA

This affects some older TCAS II systems using transponders with outdated technical standards.

It is theoretically possible for an attacker to impersonate a ground station and send a special request that lowers a system's sensitivity settings. A TCAS sensitivity level command does exist, envisaged to reduce nuisance alerts at some airports.

This could be used to maliciously adjust sensitivities to the lowest setting and even **disable a resolution advisory** completely.

The threat has a concerning CVSS score of 8.1 – highly vulnerable to exploitation, but would require a high level of expertise and technology to carry out.

Fortunately, in this case there is a way to mitigate the problem – by switching to ACAS X, or upgrading your associated transponder to more recent technical standards.

There is **no indication** that this has vulnerability has ever been exploited.

So, could the aircraft at KDCA have been hacked?

It's unlikely, but CISA's report indicates it's possible. And a new expert analysis of events at KDCA by **Aireon** seems to agree. In their published report they found that *'it is possible the intruder was airborne or related to a ground-based transmitter used for testing or spoofing.'*

Why does this matter?

The industry must remain responsive to security threats that are becoming increasingly sophisticated and

designed to exploit vulnerabilities in safety critical systems.

The recent industry-wide interest in GPS interference spanning from the inconvenient, to major degradations including the loss of EGPWS protection, ADS-B tracking and navigational accuracy is a startling testament to this fact. This is all possible because of **existing system design.**

Since the events of September 11, passenger screening and security protocols have undergone a revolution, and it's now much harder for bad actors to carry out conventional attacks. But there are still risks associated with malicious attacks that could potentially be achieved **remotely** – and cyber-interference seems an obvious choice.

France Hates Planes – it's official

David Mumford
3 June, 2025

Key Points – updated 5 March 2025

- **France have massively hiked their passenger air tax rates, effective 1st March 2025, which also now extend to commercial BizAv flights – private flights are exempt.**
- **These new rates will mean operators must pay anywhere from €420 to €2100 per passenger, depending on where you're flying!**
- **The tax applies to flights departing from both mainland France and most French overseas territories – but with some exceptions.**

France has just passed its annual budget, which includes some **eye-watering adjustments to the Air Passenger Transport Tax** (Taxe de Solidarité sur les Billets d'Avion, or TSBA), which now extends to commercial BizAv flights (aircraft with 19 seats or less).

The new rates are due to take effect from 1 March 2025, and vary depending on destination. For BizAv departing from French airports, the new rates per passenger will be:

- **€420 for European destinations**
- **€1015 for intermediate destinations (everywhere else up to 5500km)**
- **€2100 for long-distance destinations (beyond 5500km).**

And yes, those rates are **per passenger!** Domestic flights within France will have to pay an extra 10% VAT on top of these rates.

The airlines are getting hit too. The budget includes a rise from €2.63 to €7.40 for an economy ticket heading anywhere within Europe, and more if you're going somewhere farther away or are traveling in business class.

DESTINATION FINALE	CATÉGORIE DE SERVICE	Tarif (€)
European or similar destination	Normal	7,4
	With additional services	30
	Business aircraft with turboprop	210
	Business aircraft with turbojet	420
Intermediate destination	Normal	15
	With additional services	80
	Business aircraft with turboprop	675
	Business aircraft with turbojet	1015
Distant destination	Normal	40
	With additional services	120
	Business aircraft with turboprop	1025
	Business aircraft with turbojet	2100

There's a weird way they calculate the distance flown here. The new law specifies that the **distance used to determine the tax will be calculated from LFPG/Paris Charles de Gaulle airport** (what they call the the "national reference aerodrome of the metropolitan territory"), rather than the actual distance between departure and destination airports.

For example, if you're flying from LFMN/Nice to KTEB/Teterboro, the tax calculation will actually use the distance from LFPG/Paris to KTEB/Teterboro instead. The idea with this weird method is that it helps give a consistent and simplified way of calculating the distance for tax purposes.

Do private flights have to pay this too?

We're almost 100% sure they don't.

The new tax rules list a few exemptions, including: **"flights undertaken by a physical or legal person for the purposes of leisure aviation or on their own behalf."**

That sounds very much like private flights.

Also, the French tax authority has an entire website where they try to answer questions like this. The best answer comes in the March 1st FAQ which clarifies three points:

"Own-account" (ie. private) flights are not subject to the tax:

"In the case of own-account flights (i.e. private flights) involving employees or managers of the operator, or employees/managers of a company that owns 100% of the operator, these are not subject to the TS."

Non-commercial flights are not taxable:

"Article L. 422-5 of the CIBS specifies at national level the definition of commercial flight established at European level. Under these conditions, an aircraft flight that does not fall within the definition of a commercial flight is not taxable... The economic activity criteria is not met if the activity is not carried out for valuable consideration."

Fractional/shared ownership flights are generally considered private and not subject to the tax:

"With regard to the criteria of carrying out transport on behalf of third parties: shared/fractional ownership models are part of own-account transport..."

The doc also says that even if a flight is filed as "General Aviation" (G) in the flight plan, this does not automatically mean it is tax-exempt. It sounds like the authorities pretty much ignore how the flight plan is filed – they're more interested in determining whether the flight truly meets the definition of **non-commercial private transport** or **commercial transport** under tax law.

What about flights from French overseas territories?

This is where it gets even more complicated! The tax applies to flights departing from both mainland France and **most French overseas territories** – but with some exceptions.

Flights departing from these places are exempt:

- *TFFJ/Saint Barthelemy and TFFG/Saint-Martin*
- *New Caledonia and French Polynesia*
- *LFSB/Basel-Mulhouse Airport (flights operated under Swiss traffic rights from here are exempt).*

The tax applies to flights departing from:

- *Guadeloupe*
- *Reunion*
- *Martinique*
- *Mayotte*
- *French Guyana*

For flights from these places, here's how they calculate what rate of tax you should pay:

"European or similar destination" (€420):

- Flights within the same French overseas territory.
- Flights to mainland France and Corsica.
- Flights to EU, EEA, Switzerland, or within 1000 km of the departure airport.

So for example, a TFFR/Guadeloupe to LEMD/Madrid flight would qualify for this (because it's going to an

airport in the EU).

“Intermediate destination” (€1015):

- Flights to any airport 1000-5500km away, not covered by the above criteria.

For example, a TFFR/Guadeloupe to KTEB/Teterboro flight (approx 2000km).

“Distant Destination” (€2100):

- Flights to any airport more than 5500km away, not covered by the above criteria.

For example, a TFFR/Guadeloupe to KSFO/San Francisco flight (approx 5530km).

How should operators pay these taxes?

The new tax rules say that operators have to work out how much they owe, and declare it using an online portal: https://taxes-aeronautiques.sigp.aviation-civile.gouv.fr/

Until 31 Dec 2025: Operators must submit declarations by the last day of the month following the reporting period (monthly or quarterly).

From 1 Jan 2026: The deadline changes to the 20th of the following month.

There’s also some text saying that if an operator fails to declare or underreports passengers, the DGAC may use aircraft seating capacity to estimate tax liability!

We have had some local reports saying that some FBOs/Handlers have been collecting these taxes from operators, and paying on their behalf. But some others have reported that they’re not doing this as it’s technically illegal. So we’re not sure we would recommend this option at the moment!

Why is France doing this?

The French government have projected these new tax rates to generate **€800-€850 million in additional revenue.** The country’s new Minister for Public Accounts has given a to the tax increase –

“I am in favour. It is a measure of fiscal and ecological justice,” she told Le Parisien on Jan 5. “The 20% of the population with the highest incomes are responsible for more than half the expenditure on air travel.”

So there you have it, friends. **France hates planes – it’s official.**

New York Southbound: FAA Suggested Routes to Spring Break

Chris Shieff
3 June, 2025

Spring is upon us, and so is **Spring Break.** Traffic volumes into **Florida** and the **Caribbean** typically surge in the coming weeks.

Up in New York, this is causing a traffic jam over the **WHITE departure fix** for southbound GA traffic departing KTEB/Teterboro and KHPN/Westchester .

The FAA has issued a request to operators to consider filing via alternative **'offload' routes** instead during peak times – specifically, Thursday to Saturday.

This will help expedite departures from FBO ramps and reduce mile-in-trail delays over WHITE.

Here's a quick look at those alternative options.

Departing for West Coast Florida:

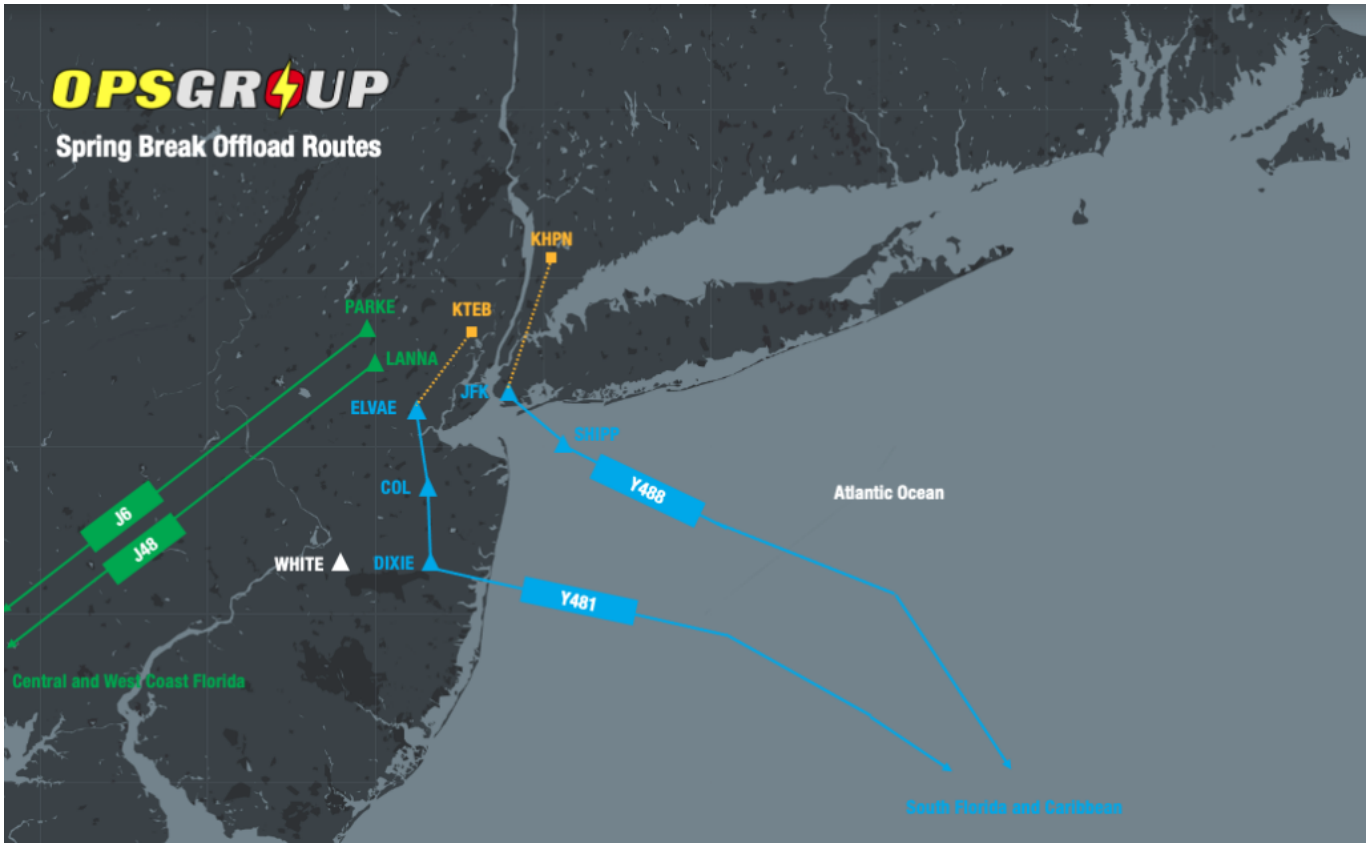
File via: PARKE.J6.HVQ or LANNA.J48

*Departing for South Florida and the Caribbean (*must be deep water capable):*

KTEB/Teterboro – File via: ELVAE.COL.DIXIE.Y481

KHPN/Westchester – File via: JFK.SHIPP.Y488

And here's what that looks like on a map:



One other route to consider.

If departing **KHPN/Westchester** between 1000 and 2000z for any Florida destination, the FAA also suggests considering filing via HPN.JFK.WAVEY.EMJAY.Q167.ZJAAY.KALDA. We asked the FAA about the timings, and they were advised this is due to peak flow in and out of KJFK/New York.

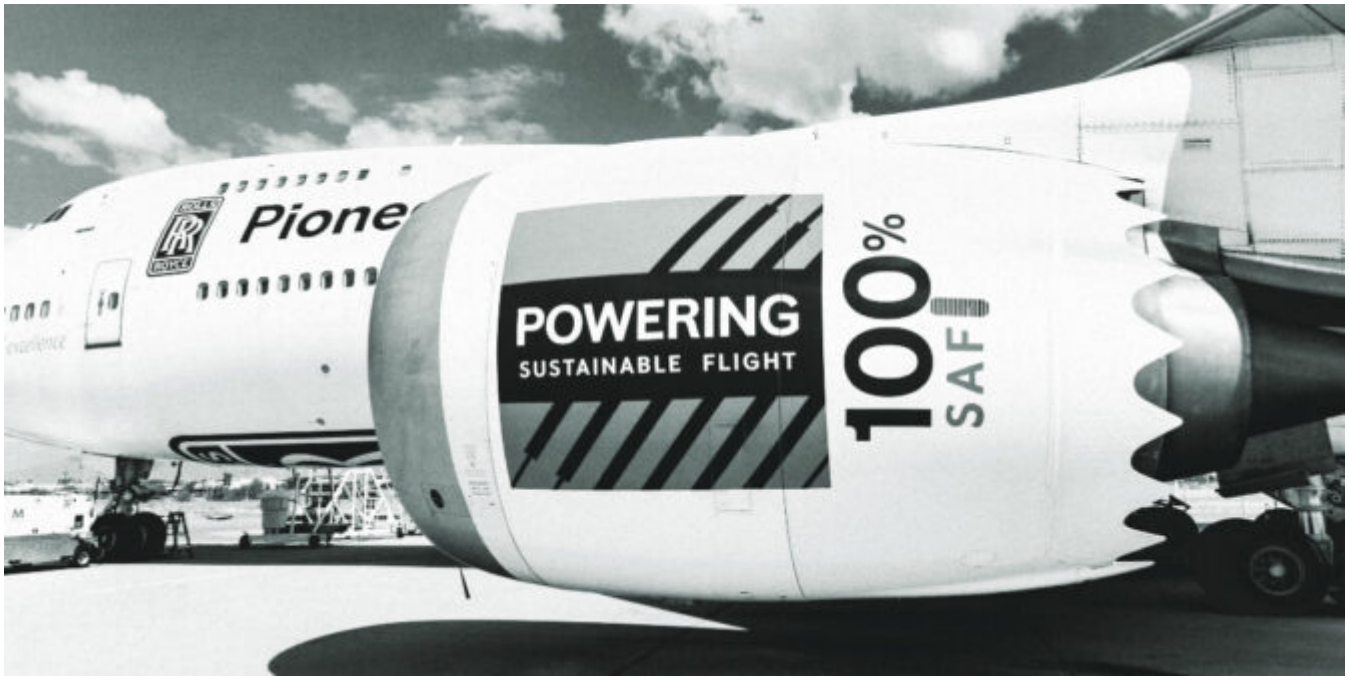
It's just an ask.

You can still plan via WHITE if you'd like too, but expect extra delays.

The best place to keep an eye on operational disruptions (including any ground delays) is the **FAA NAS Status website**, which you can find here.

EASA Safety Bulletin on SAF risks

David Mumford
3 June, 2025

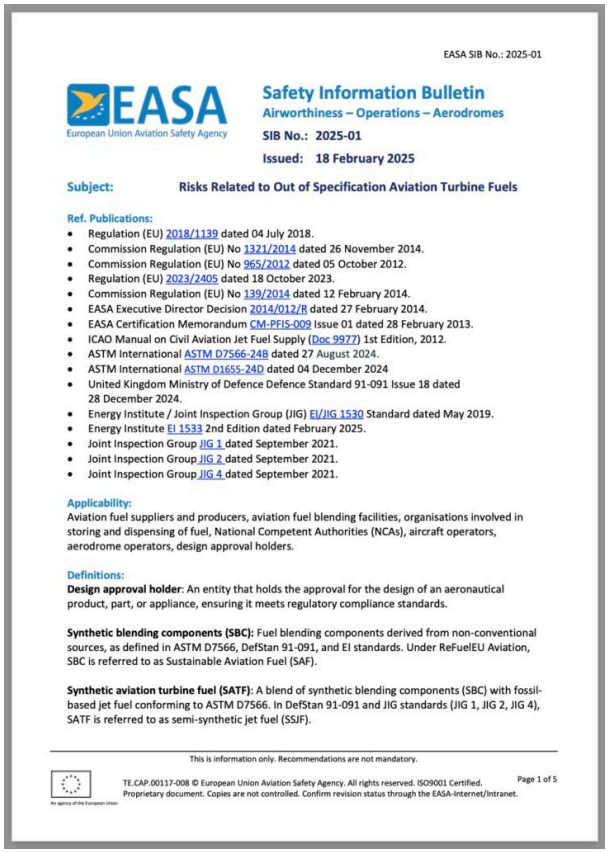


EASA has published a new Safety Information Bulletin for risks associated with the use of sustainable fuels (SAF) that do not comply with the proper quality criteria.

This is due to growing demand along with **potential for fraudulent business practices** trying to take advantage of higher prices.

Any uplift of 'out-of -spec' fuel could cause serious safety concerns. EASA's advice to operators is to make sure your suppliers comply with the correct standards listed in their bulletin, and to be especially wary of new entrants to the market.

Download the PDF of the EASA Safety Information Bulletin here.



EASA SIB No.: 2025-01

EASA
European Union Aviation Safety Agency

Safety Information Bulletin
Airworthiness – Operations – Aerodromes
SIB No.: 2025-01
Issued: 18 February 2025

Subject: **Risks Related to Out of Specification Aviation Turbine Fuels**

Ref. Publications:
- Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 dated 04 July 2018.
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 1321/2014 dated 26 November 2014.
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 965/2012 dated 05 October 2012.
- Regulation (EU) 2023/2405 dated 18 October 2023.
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 139/2014 dated 12 February 2014.
- EASA Executive Director Decision 2014/012/R dated 27 February 2014.
- EASA Certification Memorandum CM-PFIS-009 Issue 01 dated 28 February 2013.
- ICAO Manual on Civil Aviation Jet Fuel Supply (Doc 9977) 1st Edition, 2012.
- ASTM International ASTM D7566-24B dated 27 August 2024.
- ASTM International ASTM D1655-24D dated 04 December 2024
- United Kingdom Ministry of Defence Defence Standard 91-091 Issue 18 dated 28 December 2024.
- Energy Institute / Joint Inspection Group (JIG) EI/JIG 1530 Standard dated May 2019.
- Energy Institute EI 1533 2nd Edition dated February 2025.
- Joint Inspection Group JIG 1 dated September 2021.
- Joint Inspection Group JIG 2 dated September 2021.
- Joint Inspection Group JIG 4 dated September 2021.

Applicability:
Aviation fuel suppliers and producers, aviation fuel blending facilities, organisations involved in storing and dispensing of fuel, National Competent Authorities (NCAs), aircraft operators, aerodrome operators, design approval holders.

Definitions:
Design approval holder: An entity that holds the approval for the design of an aeronautical product, part, or appliance, ensuring it meets regulatory compliance standards.

Synthetic blending components (SBC): Fuel blending components derived from non-conventional sources, as defined in ASTM D7566, DefStan 91-091, and EI standards. Under ReFuelEU Aviation, SBC is referred to as Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).

Synthetic aviation turbine fuel (SATF): A blend of synthetic blending components (SBC) with fossil-based jet fuel conforming to ASTM D7566. In DefStan 91-091 and JIG standards (JIG 1, JIG 2, JIG 4), SATF is referred to as semi-synthetic jet fuel (SSJF).

This is information only. Recommendations are not mandatory.