Greece Winter Runway Closures

David Mumford
24 February, 2025

Key Points

- **Several airports in Greece have closures planned through to the end of March 2025 for runway construction works.**
- **These include: LGZA/Zakynthos, LGKV/Kavala, LGKF/Kefalonia, LGKR/Corfu, LGMK/Mykonos, LGSR/Santorini, LGSM/Samos, LGRP/Rhodes, LGSK/Skiathos, and LGMT/Mytilene.**
- **Some have daily closures to watch out for, but nearly all have reduced runway lengths – in some cases down to 1400-1500 metres which will make them unusable for certain aircraft types.**

Greek Airports with winter closures.

You can find all the details on the Notams, but here's a quick rundown of the planned closures and reductions in runway lengths:

LGZA/Zakynthos
Shortened Runway: RWY 16 reduced to 1400m, RWY 34 reduced to 1595m – until March 5.
Full Runway Closure: Feb 10 until Feb 29.

LGKV/Kavala
Shortened Runway: RWY 05 reduced to 1400m, RWY 23 reduced to 1400m – until March 9.
Full Runway Closure: Feb 25 from 07:00 to 10:00.

LGKF/Kefalonia
Full Runway Closure: RWY 14/32 closed at various times on different days – until March 1.

LGKR/Corfu
Shortened Runway: RWY 16 reduced to 1856m, RWY 34 reduced to 1856m (LDA 1798m) – until March 30.

LGMK/Mykonos
Shortened Runway: RWY 16 reduced to 1400m, RWY 34 reduced to 1400m – until March 30.
Full Runway Closure: RWY 16/34 closed daily from 1000-1500z (Wed & Fri from 0930-1500z) – until March 3.

LGSR/Santorini
Shortened Runway: RWY 15 reduced to 1802m, RWY 33 reduced to 1874m – until March 30.

LGSM/Samos
Shortened Runway: RWY 09 reduced to 1500m, RWY 27 reduced to 1500m – until March 30.

Full Runway Closure: RWY 09/27 closed at various times on different days – until March 1.

LGRP/Rhodes
Shortened Runway: RWY 06 reduced to 1900m, RWY 24 reduced to 1900m – until March 13.

LGSK/Skiathos
Shortened Runway: RWY 01 reduced to 1400m, RWY 19 reduced to 1400m – until April 1.

Further closures may be announced beyond the end March – check on Fraport's homepage for updates.

After that, we'll be into the summer period, when things get really spicy in Greece if you're a bizav operator! Like previous years, all Greek islands will be extremely busy this summer – Athens too. Very few slots are made available, overnight parking is scarce, even quick turn arounds are extremely difficult in some cases. Check here for our guide on this.

Santorini Shaking: State of Emergency In Effect

Chris Shieff
24 February, 2025

Key Points

- **Santorini and neighboring islands are currently experiencing what is described as a 'seismic swarm' of earthquakes.**
- **Nearly thirteen thousand have been recorded in the past twelve days.**
- **A state of emergency has been in effect since the largest tremor of 5.1 struck the**

island on Feb 6. Large numbers of people have evacuated.

- **Experts suggest this may be a precursor a larger event, including a possible volcanic eruption.**
- **The US Embassy has issued a new warning advising extreme caution before travelling there.**
- **At time of writing, local agents report no damage to the airport.**

An Active Earthquake Zone

Greece is one of the most **seismically active** regions of Europe.

It occupies part of something known as the 'Hellenic Subduction Zone.' Not dissimilar to the Pacific's notorious 'Ring of Fire,' here shifting tectonic plates create numerous weaknesses in the earth's crust.

The source of the current trouble is found near Anydros – just 16nm northeast of **Santorini**. The earthquakes began on Jan 31 and have progressively worsened which may be cause for concern.

State of Emergency

Following the events of Feb 6, a state of emergency was declared and will remain in effect until at least March 3. This includes an instruction to **immediately evacuate coastal areas** in the event of stronger earthquakes due to a tsunami risk.

On Feb 7 the US Embassy issued a new warning for Santorini and the surrounding islands. They advise **extreme caution** if travelling there.

Airports

The seismic events are occurring in a relatively constrained area of the Aegean Sea between Santorini itself, and the island of Amorgos.

As such, **LGSR/Santorin**i is the primary airport to be impacted. At time of writing, several local agents have advised the airport is open and operating normally.

However, the situation is inherently unpredictable. If a larger quake occurs, a **sudden closure of the airport is possible.**

This may be preventative due to the evacuation of staff (including ATC), or more severe in the case of damaged infrastructure including instrument approach equipment, movement areas and the runway itself.

For inbound aircraft a solid contingency plan right now would be to carry **healthy alternates** such as LGMK/Mykonos, LGIR/Heraklion, LGSA/Chania or even LGAV/Athens.

If you must go to Santorini, we recommend stop and goes only to **minimize time on the ground.**

Should the airport close, damage assessments can take hours or days to complete. Any aircraft on the ground may be stuck there for an extended period of time. Crew recovery options may also be limited during rescue efforts.

What will happen next?

Experts are undecided. A typical seismic pattern usually consists of larger earthquakes (mainshocks) followed by smaller ones (aftershocks).

The pattern in Santorini is different. Some seismic events don't consist of one single major event. Instead, a region can experience a wave of smaller quakes over a period of weeks or months. This is phenomenon is known as 'swarms.'

On the other hand, other scientists believe recent events may be a precursor to something larger – the figure being widely thrown around is a 'six', defined on the Richter Scale as a strong quake with potential to damage well-built structures with strong to violent shaking near the epicenter.

We will continue to monitor the situation in Santorini and report any changes to aircraft operations as they become apparent.

Why EASA has Withdrawn Airspace Warnings for Iran and Israel

Chris Shieff
24 February, 2025

On January 31, EASA withdrew its CZIBs for both **Israel** and **Iran**.

But the question remains – what does that actually *mean* for the safety of civil aviation there?

A word on EASA CZIBs.

A little context here helps.

- CZIB stands for 'Conflict Zone Information Bulletin' which EASA puts out when required using a combination of **publications issued by worldwide states, and risk assessments performed by their own team** called the *Integrated EU Aviation Security Group.*
- EASA shares information on conflict zones to help operators and member states make an

informed decision **whether to enter risky airspace or not.**

- Unlike some state-issued airspace warnings, **CZIBs are not legally binding.** They are just recommendations. You can find a list of them here.
- On January 31, EASA made some changes to this list – namely, they **cancelled the CZIBs for both Israel and Iran.**

Why the change?

EASA has published a brief explanation here, but it doesn't give much away.

Ultimately, they cite an **improving risk environment due to ceasefire agreements** between Israel, Hamas and Hezbollah along with a reduction in short-term regional tensions.

The CZIBs were originally published in November 2024 in response to unprecedented regional hostilities. It now seems EASA believes the situation has sufficiently come back off the boil.

Those in the know

While quick to re-affirm that some risks to aviation in the region are still present, **the CZIBs have been replaced by Information Notes** distributed to those on a **'need-to-know'** basis – their words, not ours.

Existing State Warnings

EASA CZIBs (and their removal) have **no direct effect on existing state-issued airspace warnings.** This falls into the hands of policy makers who may wish to follow their advice.

With that in mind, you can find a full list of current state-issued airspace warnings still in effect for **Iran** here, and **Israel** here.

We still think Iran is potentially risky

Five years have passed since PS752 was misidentified and **shot down by an air defense system near OIIE/Tehran airport.** The country still possesses the same arsenal of advanced anti-aircraft weaponry today.

The sudden closure of the entire OIIX/Tehran FIR last year is proof of how quickly the risk picture can change for overflights.

While there may not be an intent to target civil aviation itself, agencies such as the US FAA continue to warn of the danger posed by unannounced military activity and mistaken identity – so much so that its existing **airspace prohibition** (by SFAR) has been extended all the way to 2027.

Operate to Israel with caution

In line with EASA's advice, we have seen improving airspace safety in the **LLLL/Tel Aviv FIR.** Just recently we reduced our SafeAirspace.net risk rating for Israel from 'Do Not Fly' to 'Danger Exists.'

This was in response to the same ceasefire agreements and a proven track record of maintaining airspace safety in close proximity to active conflict zones. This also reflected the decision of several major carriers to resume scheduled flights there.

However, the long-term outcome of these agreements remains unpredictable – along with **potential for rapid escalation in risk** to previous levels should the agreements fail. Recent events have proven they

remain fragile.

For that reason, we advise operators to heed existing warnings and prepare for short notice airspace closures or reroutes in Israeli airspace.

What about Lebanon?

There was another change to EASA's list of CZIBs that was easily overlooked.

Rather than withdraw it, EASA has **extended its existing guidance for the OLBB/Beirut FIR** until end of March 2025.

EASA explains that the country has **not sufficiently proven capability to address existing risks** – including the potential for renewed escalation between Hezbollah and Israel.

Without appropriate mitigating procedures to fall back on, the airspace should still be considered dangerous. Interestingly, EASA expressed similar concerns in its recent airspace warning for **Western Russia** following the downing of Azerbaijan Airlines 8243 on approach in Grozny.

As such, EASA continues to advise aircraft **not to enter Lebanese airspace at all levels**. Over at SafeAirspace.net, we also maintain a 'Do Not Fly' warning for the same skies.

Need more info?

We maintain a full database of state issued airspace warnings at SafeAirspace.net, where a full global briefing is available with a single click. You can also reach us on team@ops.group around the clock.

Palm Beach TFRs: The President's Back In Town

Chris Shieff
24 February, 2025

Key Points

- **During President Trump's second term, TFRs will periodically be activated over KPBI/Palm Beach.**
- **Two rings will apply – a 10nm inner ring, and a 10-30nm outer ring.**
- **Aircraft wishing to operate inside the inner ring (all KPBI departures and arrivals) will require TSA pre-screening. Inbound aircraft must depart one of five gateway airports.**
- **The 10 – 30nm ring will only be available to aircraft operating in and out of local airports but will not require pre-screening.**
- **These restrictions will only apply when activated by NOTAM.**

- **A local TFR request form is only required for utility aircraft required to 'loiter' in the TFR such as aerial survey, banner and ag-aircraft.**

Home-sweet-home

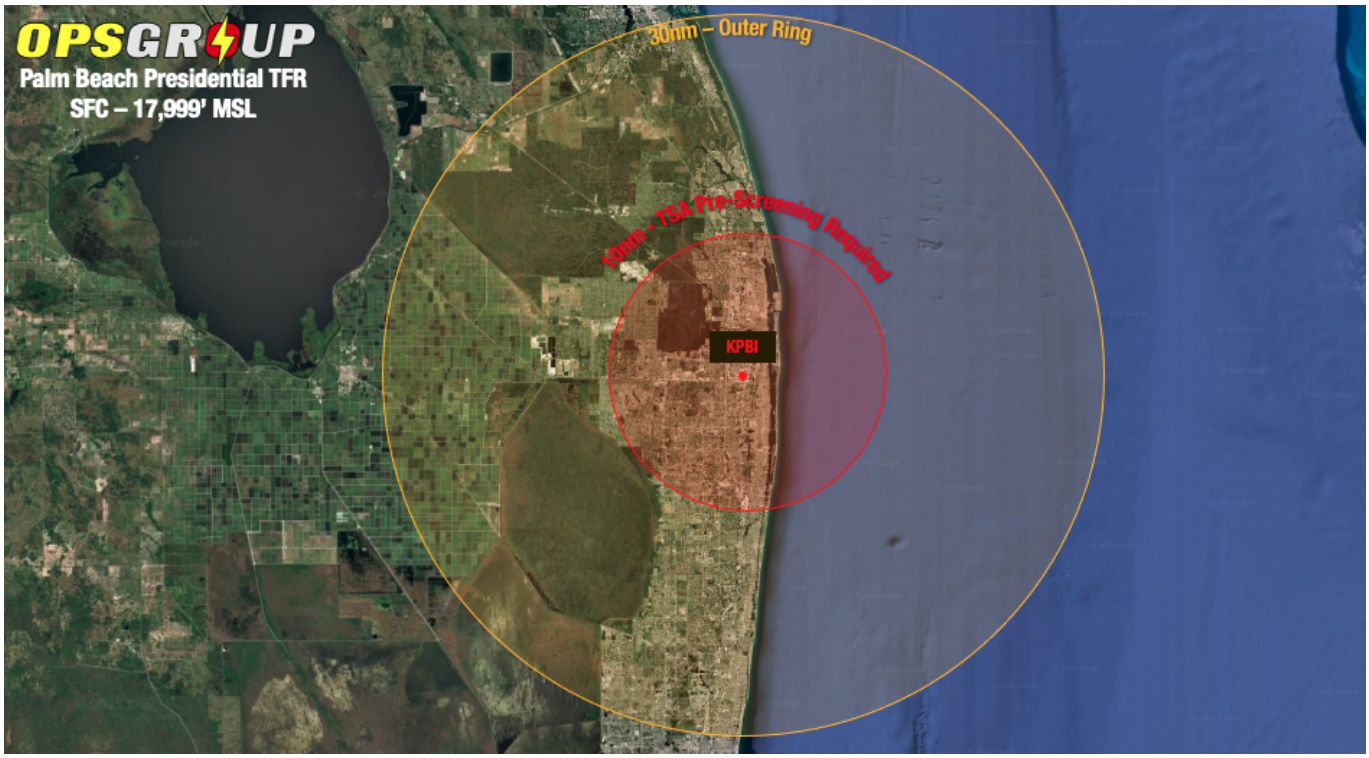
The start of President Trump's second term in the White House also means a return of a TFRs over **KPBI/Palm Beach** and Southern Florida.

The Mar-a-Lago Estate has been his primary residence since 2019 – a little over 5nm east of the field. Which means that whenever he comes and goes, operations will be heavily disrupted at the airport.

The FAA has published a reminder of procedures for when the presidential TFRs are active. Here is a brief summary of what you need to know.

Flight Restrictions

The Presidential TFR is comprised of two rings, centered on KPBI airport.



The FAA has warned operators that TFR activation will be **unpredictable in frequency and duration**, so make sure you continue to check the current NOTAMs.

The Inner Ring (Most Restrictive)

A 10nm radius applies and extends from surface to **17,999' MSL.**

When active, all aircraft in and out of **KPBI/Palm Beach** will require **TSA pre-screening.** Once complete, aircraft details will be broadcast over the FAA Domestic Events Network – which includes all ARTCCs and various other Federal agencies.

For departures, this is available at the following FBOs between 0800 and 1700 local: Atlantic, Jet, Net Jets and Signature.

For arrivals, you will need to depart from one of the following five gateway airports:

- *KHPN/White Plains*
- *KTEB/Teterboro*
- *KIAD/Washington Dulles*
- *KMCO/Orlando*
- *KFLL/Fort Lauderdale*

Once pre-screened, **intermediate stops are not allowed** unless you have a bona-fide emergency.

In both cases you'll need to register for screening at least 24 hours before your departure. Reservations are available by calling 561-616-9650.

Air Force One Inbound

If you happen to be on the field when the President arrives, a **ramp freeze** will be enforced starting from seven minutes (or so) prior to his arrival.

A security inspection will be carried out on the runway after which it will be kept clear.

Once he (or any other VIP) has left the airport, the freeze will be…well, defrosted, and normal ops will resume – albeit Air Force 1 itself will remain under heavy security.

An **important note** from the FAA that's easy to miss! If a pre-screened aircraft is holding for this process and reaches minimum or divert fuel, let ATC know. They may be able to get you special permission to land, but it's not a guarantee.

Consider **extra holding fuel** if arriving during an active TFR. For obvious reasons, his precise arrival and departure times will not be made publicly available.

Outer Ring (less restrictive)

The outer ring extends from 10 to 30nm from PBI airport, from surface to 17,999' MSL.

TSA pre-screening is **not required,** however only aircraft arriving or departing local airfields will be allowed. If things are *really* quiet, a transit clearance may be granted by ATC. However, any 'loitering' or other such tomfoolery is not allowed.

Discrete Squawks

All aircraft inside either ring will be required to **squawk a discrete code** and maintain constant contact with ATC on VHF.

The friendly folk at PBI ATC have clarified the following:

- *Departing PBI* – code will be allocated by clearance delivery.
- *Departing a satellite airport* – call TRACON prior to departing on 561-684-9047 to request a squawk and departure frequency.
- *Arriving at a satellite airport* – call ATC prior to entering the 30nm ring to obtain a code and get radar identified.

Or better yet, avoid the TFRs completely.

All sounds too hard?

Presidential TFRs will only be activated when the president is in town. At all other times it will be **ops-normal** at PBI and nearby airfields.

If you're planning a trip here, it's important you monitor the NOTAMs closely. The FAA endeavors to provide at least 72 hours' notice. You can also check the TFR website here.

Asking for a friend, what do you do if intercepted?

Don't panic. Talk to them in plain English on **121.5** and follow their instructions.

Notify ATC that you have been intercepted – expect a number to call when you're back on terra firma.

Clarifying Cuba Overflight Permits and NAV Fees

David Mumford
24 February, 2025

Key Points

- **There are several overwater airways in the north-west corner of Cuban airspace where an overflight permit is not required.**
- **If using these airways, you still need to pay NAV fees, otherwise you risk being denied entry to the airspace at some point.**

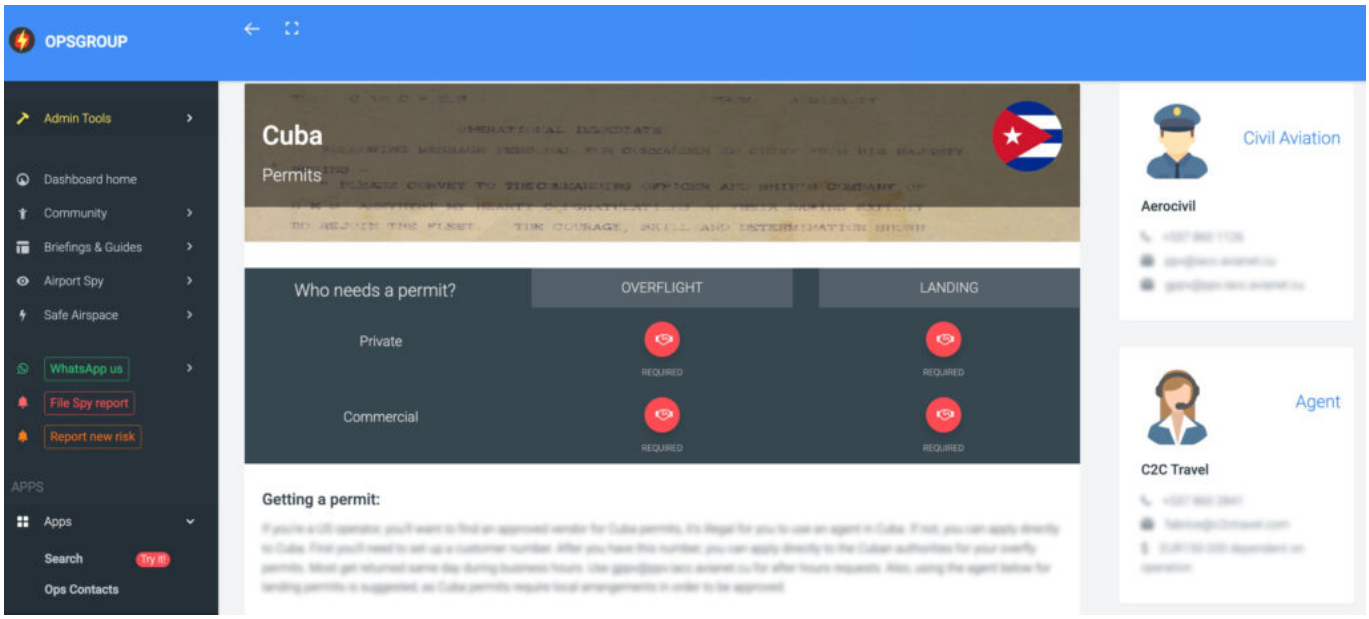
For the longest time, we've been confused about the rules around Cuba overflight permits and NAV fees. Once upon a long ago, the requirements for these were contained in the MUFH/Havana FIR Notams, but alas, no more. We couldn't find all the info we really wanted on them in the Cuban AIP either.

But thanks to CST Flight Services, we now have some answers in the report below. *CST Flight Services provides a wide range of international trip support services in Mexico, Central and South America, The Bahamas and the Caribbean. You can contact them for more info at: customersvc@cstflightservices.com*

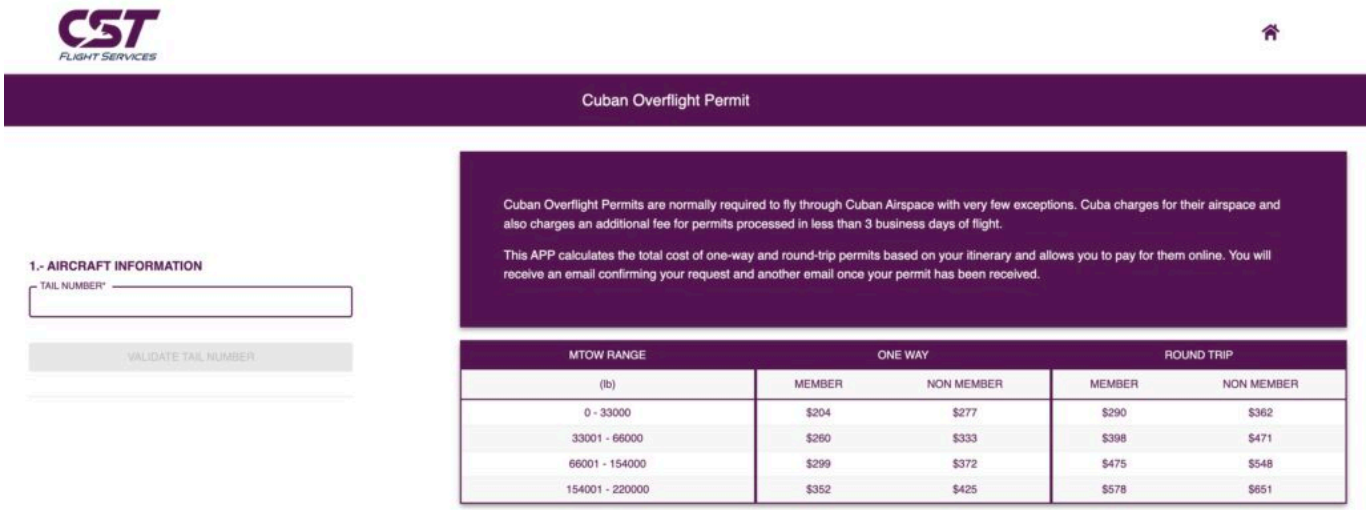
Overflight Permits

For airways that go through Cuba's MUFH/Havana FIR and penetrate Cuba's inner Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) or overfly the island, a Cuba overflight permit is required and a permit fee, plus NAV fees, will need to be paid to Cuba.

If you're not a US operator, you can apply directly to Cuba for your overflight permit if you like. First you'll need to set up a customer number. After you have this number, you can apply directly to the Cuban authorities for your permits. Most get returned pretty quickly – same day or next if you apply during business hours. OPSGROUP members can use the online Permit Helper tool in the members Dashboard to help with this, which includes email contacts.

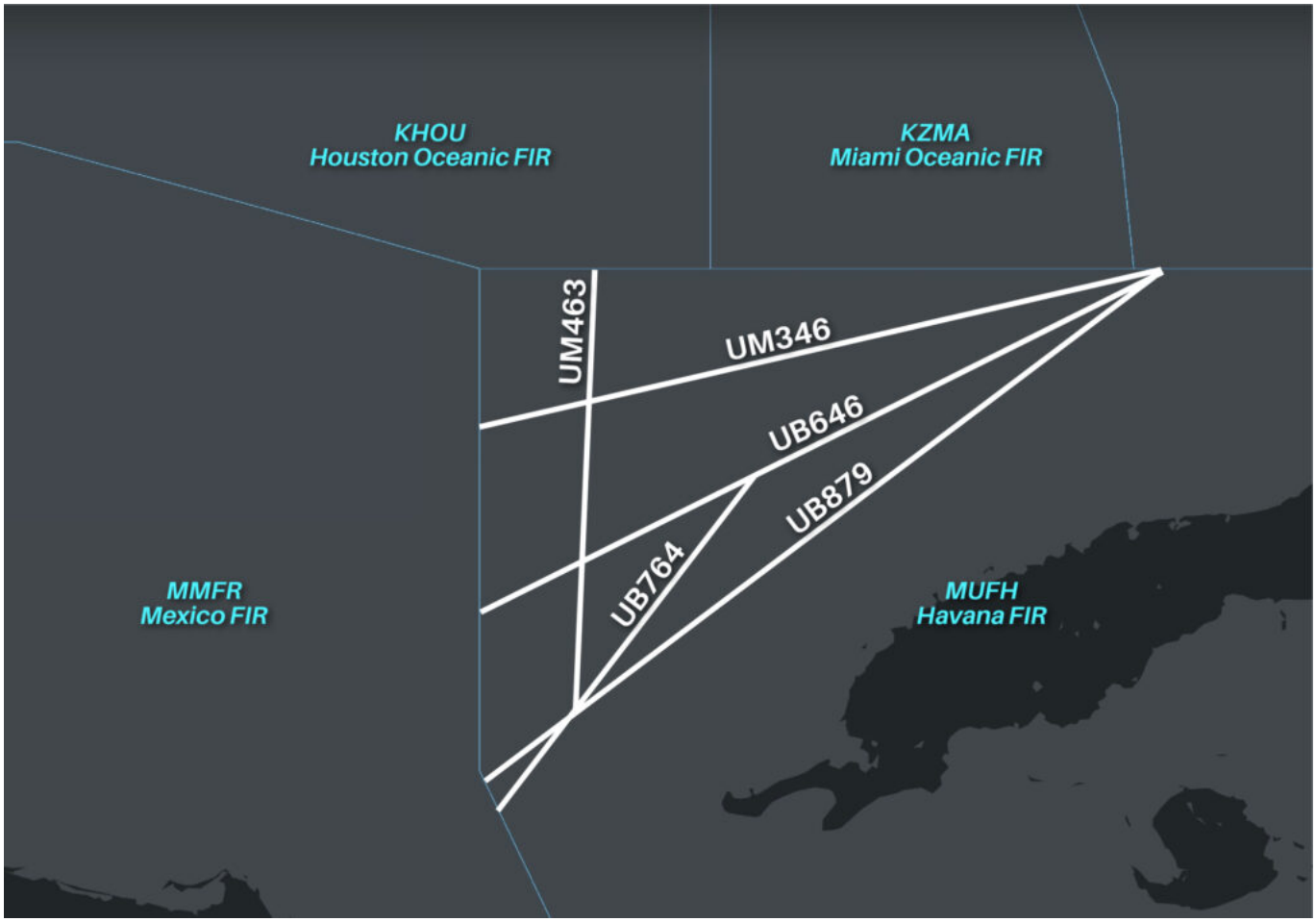


But if you're a US operator, you'll want to find an approved vendor for Cuba permits. CST have a service where you can apply for Cuba overflight permits online. The system determines whether you will need one, and calculates what the fee will be based on Cuba's fee structure. You pay for it online, and CST get your permit for you.



However, there are several overwater airways in the north-west corner of Cuban airspace where an **overflight permit is not required.** These are:

- **B646/UB646**
- **B764/UB764**
- **B879/UB879**
- **M346/UM346**
- **UM463**



But if you're flying these airways and not paying any NAV fees, watch out! …

NAV Fees

Cuba overflight permits are issued by Cuba's Civil Aviation Department IACC, while airspace fees are assessed by Cuba's ECNA – a different agency of the Cuban government.

When an aircraft flies on an oceanic airway, an airspace fee is still assessed but as no permit was issued ECNA doesn't know who to bill and the **unpaid fees accumulate against that tail number.**

Over time, and with enough flights, that **tail number will be blocked** and that information given to the IACC and to Cuba's ATC which can result in that aircraft being **denied entry into Cuban airspace.**

Therefore, if you have been using these oceanic airways, and have not been paying Cuba NAV fees for those flights, you may be denied entry on your next attempt to fly through the airspace.

NAV fees need to be paid to ECNA in Cuba in Euros – which becomes a bit of a challenge for many operators! Again, CST can help with this. Contact them at customersvc@cstflightservices.com for more info.

Flights TO Cuba

Now we're getting into murky legal and political waters. **If you want to actually fly TO Cuba, rather than overfly it, the short story is this:**

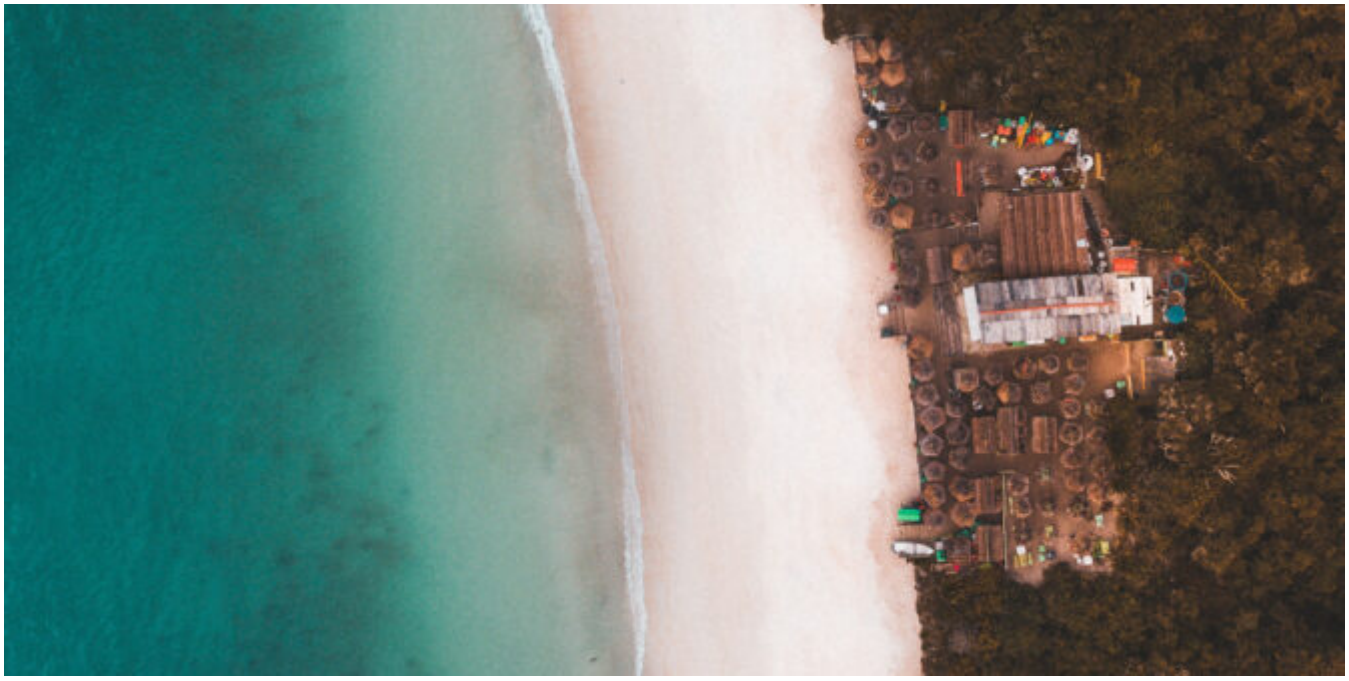
US Part 91 (Private) flights: these have been **completely banned** since June 2019. Applies to all N-reg aircraft flying directly or indirectly to Cuba (i.e. from the US or another country). This was a policy introduced by the US Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), which meant that U.S. operators could no longer operate an N-reg aircraft privately to Cuba for any reason – it doesn't matter if your passengers meet OFAC's "permitted categories of travel" or not, **it's a no-go**.

US Part 135 (Charter) and Part 121 (Airline) flights: these are **allowed to operate** to Cuba. However, it's a tricky business to do these flights and stay within the rules. Policies introduced by the Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) in 2017 mean that there are only a handful of **categories of permitted travel** between the US and Cuba.

Non-US operators: If you're heading to Cuba from anywhere other than US territory, it should be fairly straightforward. Get a landing permit, arrange your ground handling, file your flight plan, and off you go. Just double-check your insurance policy – if it's provided or underwritten by a US company, you might not be covered for ops to Cuba. Check out our article for more info.

Watch out for Cape Verde Runway Closures

David Mumford
24 February, 2025



Two issues in Cape Verde

1. **There are ongoing runway closures at Cape Verde airports that pilots and operators would only know about if they checked the AIP.**
2. **There are Notams published for these airports which do not show up in the FAA Notam search. Again, you would likely only know about them if you checked the Notams tab on the AIP website.**

What are the closures?

As of Jan 2025, the runway at GVAC/Sal continues to be closed on weekday mornings (slightly different times each day) until April 2025. The runway at GVSV/Sao Pedro is also closed for an hour every morning Mon-Sat. There were similar closures at GNVP/Praia throughout 2024, but the work here is now complete and the runway is open again.

CAPE VERDE

GVAC, Amilcar Cabral

Sal, Rwy 01/19 closed due to work in progress: Mon 0220-1235, Tue & Wed 0220-1230, Thu 0220-1100, Fri 0220-1000 Est 15 Apr 25.

GVSV, Cesaria Evora Intl

Sao Pedro, RWY 06/24 will be clsd due to work in progress Tue-Sat 0700-0800 until Est 31 Jan 25.

If you have a Jepp subscription, you might have seem these closures pop up in the NavData Change Notices, but if not, **the only place you'll find them is in the AIP SUPs.**

Where is Cape Verde?

Here:

GVAC/Sal and GVNP/Praia are the two Cape Verde airports most popular for use as **mid-Atlantic enroute alternates**. GVSV/Sao Pedro and GVBA/Boa Vista are the other international airports. But **GVAC/Sal** is the one you'd most likely be considering for an enroute alternate, or maybe even a fuel stop, as this is the airport best set up to handle bizav and airline flights – they have a 9843ft runway, are open H24, and have an FBO run by Safeport (other ground handlers are also available: Aviation Services Cabo Verde, Cabo Verde Express, and CV Handling).

Why are we not seeing these closures on the Notams?

It's because these are long-term runway closures. They are no longer publishing them by Notam because **they exceed the 3-month time limit** allowed by ICAO for publication, as per their Notam Improvement Campaign. So once the closures go on for longer than 3 months, they no longer get published as Notams but as AIP SUPs instead.

Whilst that's great, in theory, for de-cluttering the Notam system of old Notams, it does leave **pilots and operators having to scratch around to find the information.** And in this case, we don't even have a Notam warning us to check the AIP SUPs as the place to find it.

Worse than that, **we don't seem to be getting any Notams at all** out of Cape Verde! They publish them on their own website, but for some reason none of them seem to show up on the FAA Notam search – the one that most of us use to check Notams.

Bottom line

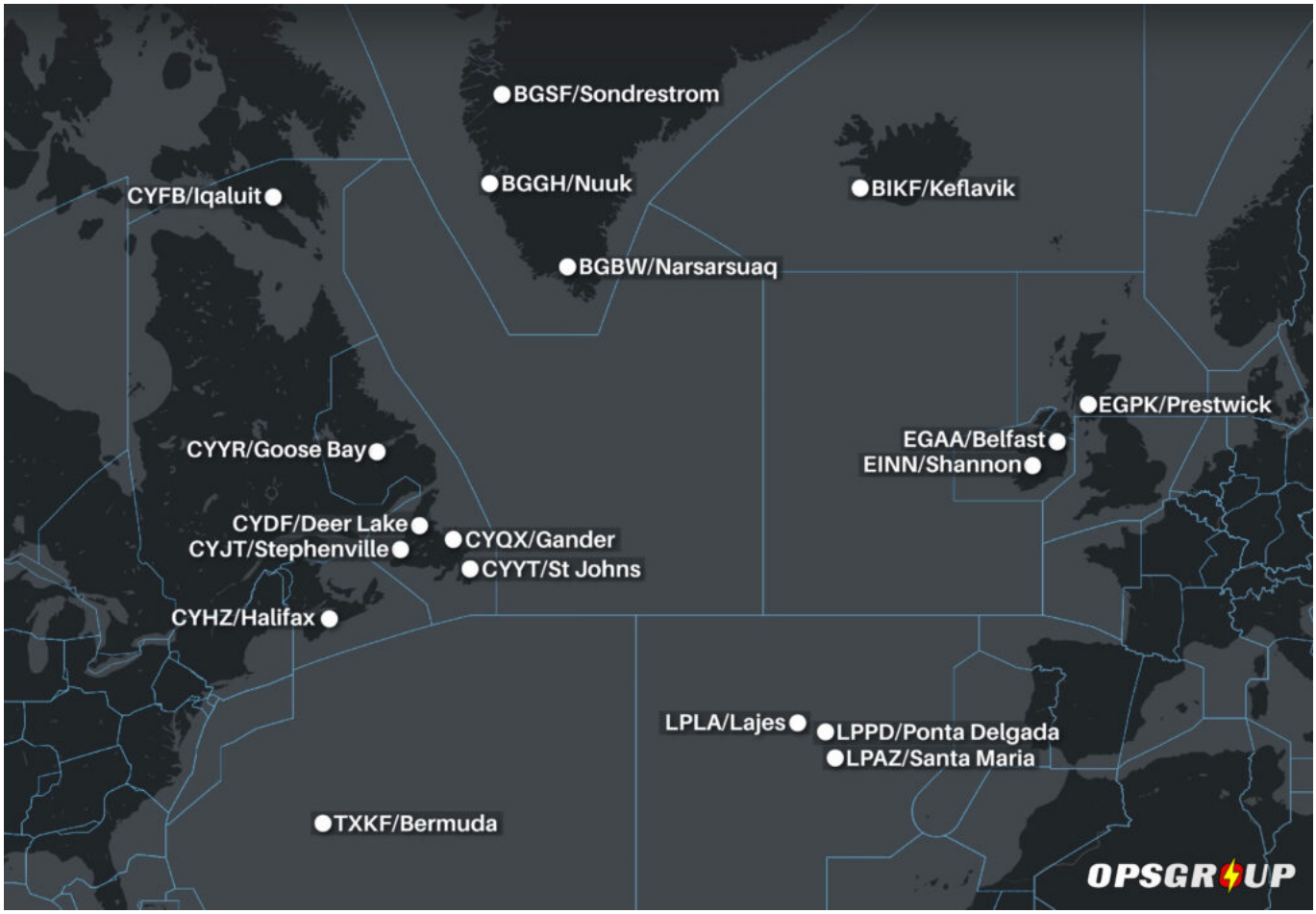
For any ops involving GVAC or GVNP, **watch out for morning weekday runway closures** for the next little while, and know that **you'll likely be missing a bunch of Notams** – make sure you check the Cape Verde official page for updates on both!

FIRE on the NAT! Where to go in an emergency?

David Mumford
24 February, 2025

In OPSGROUP, we talk a lot about the North Atlantic. Whether it's a Plotting Chart you need, or an explanation of the Datalink Mandate, or a summary of big changes stretching back to the dawn of time – we've got you covered. We love the NAT so much we even enjoy asking ourselves annoying questions about it over and over again to see if we can answer them (we can).

But here's something we haven't fully looked into before – **if you're in big trouble on the NAT (like an engine on fire, for example), where can you go?**



Turns out there's quite a bit of complexity to this. **Some airports don't have amazing levels of fire cover, some are closed at night, and some have weird setups where you have to pay them in advance to make sure they stay open in case you need them.**

We'll start with these **odd ones.** And we're going to do everything in **local time** to keep things easy. Also, for the uninitiated, **RFFS** means Rescue and Fire Fighting Services (i.e. what level of fire cover an airport has), and if you're confused about what number means what, you can read all about it here.

Odd Ones

CYFB/Iqaluit

- **Airport open:** Mon-Fri 08-17, other times 12hrs notice required
- **RFFS:** 5
- **Why odd?** So it's basically closed at night unless you make a special request for them to stay open in case you need them. If extended hours are needed, additional costs will apply to keep staff on standby. Requests to extend operating hours at the airport must be submitted using a specific document for either RFF5 or RFF7. CYFB provides extra RFF coverage at night on average 40 to 50 times a month. The cost for them to stay open with RFF5 is $1714 which gives you a 4 hour block of time. For RFF7 it's $3427.

BGGH/Nuuk

- **Airport open:** 06-21 every day

- **RFFS:** 5 (or RFFS 8 with 4 hours notice)
- **Why odd?** Technically it's open at night, but as 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 because they will only require standby personnel on short notice.

BGBW/Narsarsuaq

- **Airport open:** Mon-Sat 08-17 (yep, closed on Sundays!)
- **RFFS:** 7
- **Why odd?** Can be requested to stay open at night most of the time. But watch out! As we reported before, Greenland airports will charge you the better part of $3k if you list either of them on your flight plan as diversion alternates when they're closed.

BGSF/Sondrestrom

- **Airport open:** Mon-Fri 08-16 (yep, recent change here is that they're closed on weekends!)
- **RFFS:** 5 (or RFFS 8 with 4 hours notice)
- **Why odd?** Same as BGBW, can be requested to stay open at nights or on weekends, but same costs will apply.

EGPK/Prestwick

- **Airport open:** H24
- **RFFS:** 7
- **Why odd?** Often at night they close the terminals building (they always Notam it) so there are no facilities for diversions at these times.

LPPD/Ponta Delgada

- **Airport open:** 0615-0000
- **RFFS:** 7 (can be increased to RFFS 9 with 24hrs notice at a cost of 70 Euros per hour, although they say this can usually be increased for emergencies too).
- **Why odd?** At night (0000-0615), the airport has told us that they are closed and will only guarantee reopening for urgent medical evacuation flights, or humanitarian flights at the request of the Portuguese Air Force. LPLA/Lajes is the only airport in the Azores that is open all night for diverts.

LPAZ/Santa Maria

- **Airport open:** It's complicated.

- **RFFS:** It’s complicated.
- **Why odd?** Ok, here we go. So from **0635-2130** they are fully open with RFFS 6 (RFFS 8 available for a surcharge if you arrange in advance). Then from **2130-0000** the airport is closed but you can request they stay open for around 900 Euros (plus a fee to the handling agent). Then from **0000-0645** the airport is completely closed and cannot accept emergency diverts at all. Bottom line, just go to LPLA/Lajes instead.

TXKF/Bermuda

- **Airport open:** 07-23 every day
- **RFFS:** 9
- **Why odd?** To get them to open at night (ATC and RFFS) for emergencies, you need to give them 30 mins notice – so not ideal if your needs are super urgent. Also, they do sometimes publish Notams saying that ATC will not be available for certain periods at night, even for emergencies.

Not Odd Ones

Ok great! Here are all the straightforward airports that are open H24 with decent fire cover:

CYYR/Goose Bay
Open H24
RFF 5 (RFF 8 on request)

CYQX/Gander
Open H24
RFF 5 (RFF 6/7/8 with 2hrs notice)

CYDF/Deer Lake
Open H24
RFF 6 (RFF 7 with 30 mins notice)

CYJT/Stephenville
Open H24
RFF 5 (RFF 6 with 30 mins notice)
In winter months, they often have a Notam saying that they might need 2hrs notice at night to clear the runway of snow.

CYYT/St Johns
Open H24
RFF 7

CYHZ/Halifax
Open H24
RFF 7

BIKF/Keflavik
Open H24
RFF 8 daytime 05-19 (RFF 7 overnight 19-05)

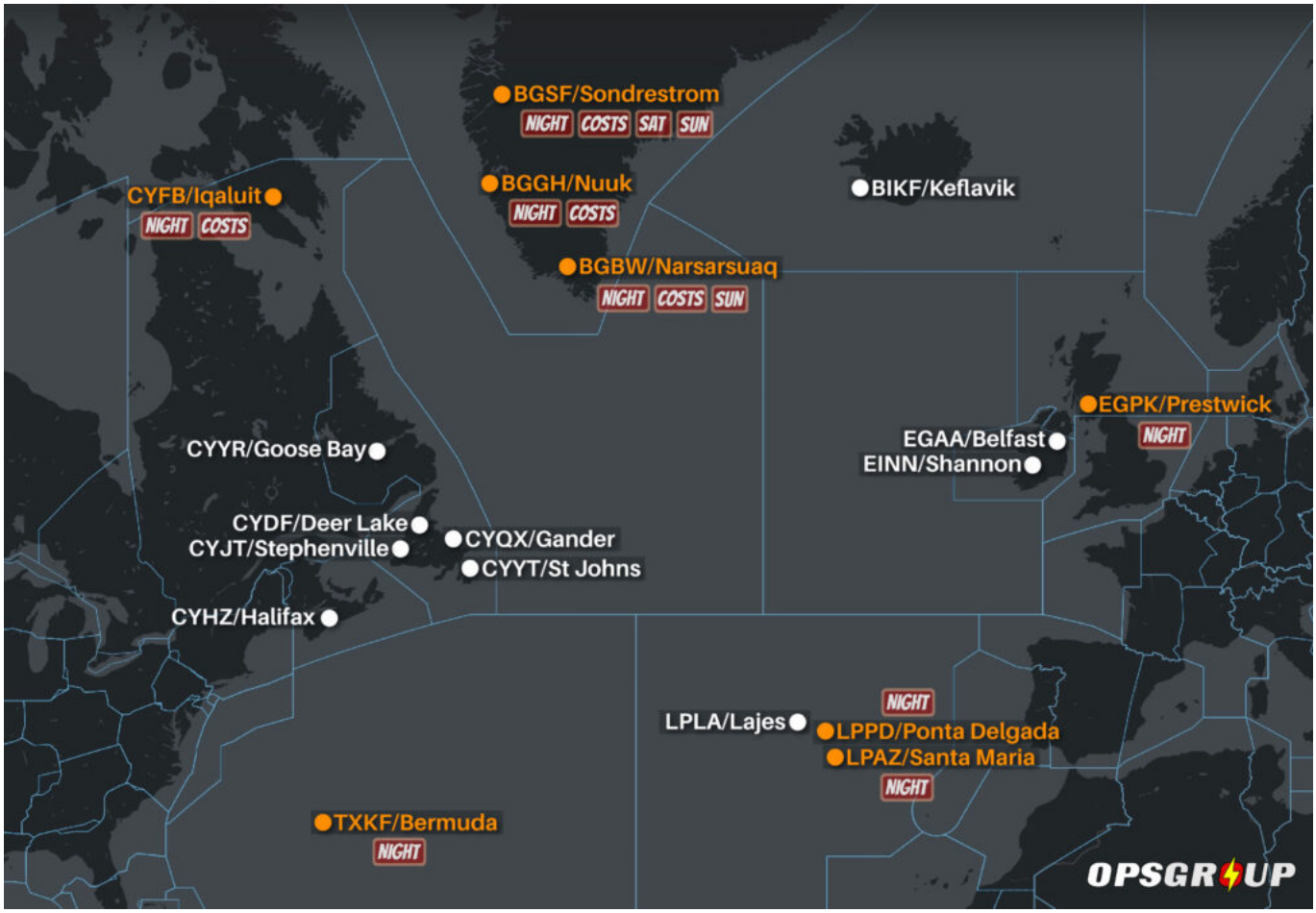
EGAA/Belfast

Open H24
RFF 7 (RFF 8/9 with 24hrs notice)

EINN/Shannon
Open H24
RFF 9 (may on occasion be reduced to RFF 7 depending on staffing)

LPLA/Lajes
Airport open 07-21 (but H24 for emergencies)
RFF 8 at all times

So let's give that map another try, this time with a tasteful splash of orange colour...

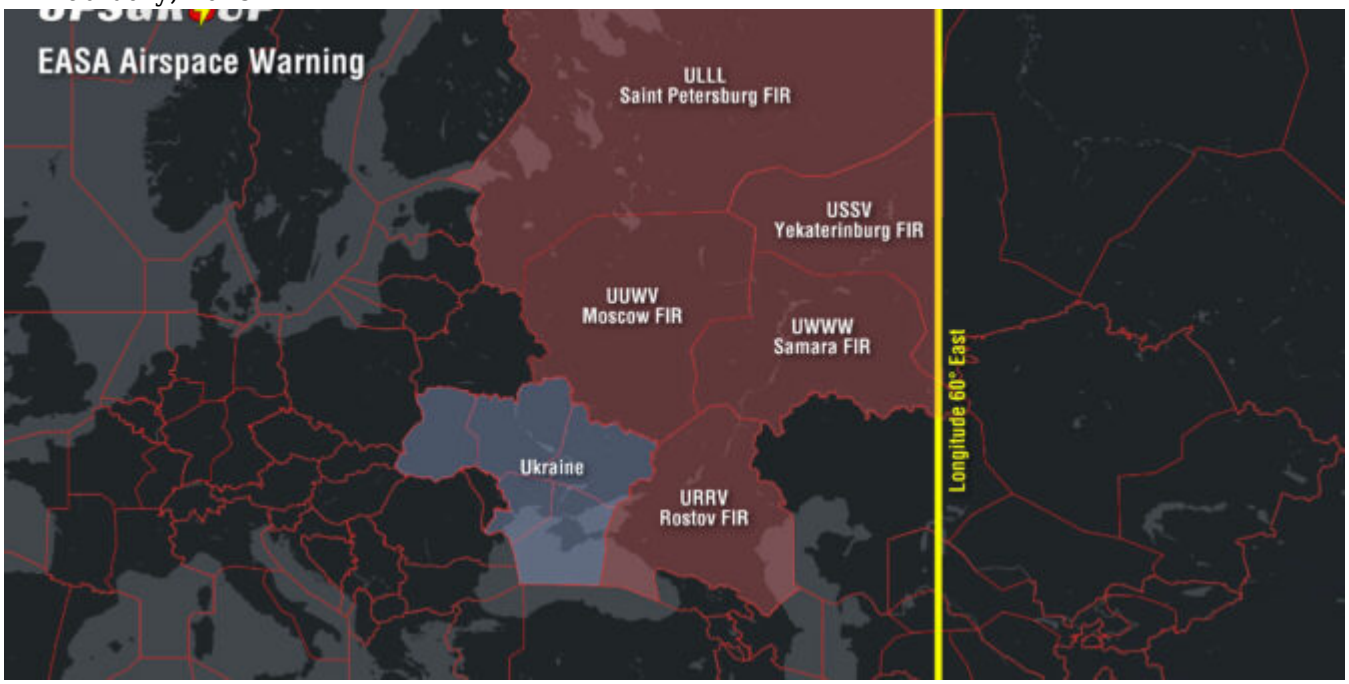


So there you have it, friend! While we're on the subject of **Emergency Diverts**, you might also be interested to read about NAT Contingency Procedures (what to do when you need to deviate from your ATC clearance due to an emergency). For more info about recent changes to **Greenland Airports**, click here. And to download the latest **OPSGROUP NAT/North Atlantic Plotting and Planning Chart 2025**, head over here.

As usual, any questions, let us know at team@ops.group.

Russia: Aircraft Shot Down, New EASA Airspace Warning

Chris Shieff
24 February, 2025



Key Points

- **EASA has issued a new airspace warning for Russian airspace following the likely shoot down of Azerbaijan Airlines Flight 8243 on approach to URMG/Grozny Airport on December 25 by a surface-to-air missile.**
- **Operators are advised not to enter Russian airspace west of longitude 60 degree east (the entirety of Western Russia) at all levels due to the risk of being unintentionally targeted by air defence systems, and extensive GPS interference.**
- **Previous state-issued airspace warnings have been confined to areas in close proximity to the Ukrainian border. The new EASA warning suggests a significant escalation in airspace risk.**

What's changed?

Ukraine has strengthened the frequency and intensity of missile and drone attacks on targets well within Russian territory.

The latest occurred this week on January 14 – a combination of cruise and ballistic missiles and the largest drone strike yet (over one hundred and forty devices) against infrastructure across Western and Southern Russia, as far as 680 miles from the border. Russian air defences reportedly shot down a number of them.

The war with Ukraine has entered a new phase which no longer limits airspace risk to the primary conflict zone.

Azerbaijan Airlines Flight 8243

EASA's new airspace warning appears to be in direct response to the downing of an Embraer passenger jet on December 25 at URMG/Grozny airport, Southern Russia.

The crew were on approach when the aircraft suffered sudden damage which was initially misidentified as a bird strike.

The aircraft later crash landed following a diversion to UATE/Aktau airport in Kazakhstan.

Limited analysis of the wreckage appears to indicate shrapnel damage consistent with a surface-to-air missile. The most likely culprit was a Pantsir air defence system – a radar guided medium range SAM not dissimilar to the Buk system used to shoot down MH17 over Eastern Ukraine in 2014.

It was later confirmed that air defence systems were responding to a Ukrainian drone strike in the area at the time.

While not official, it is almost certain AZ 8243 was mistakenly targeted. In any event we will have more answers soon – ICAO Annex 13 requires a preliminary report to be issued within thirty days of the accident (**of which Russia is a member state**).

No one's overflying Russia anyway, right?

This simply isn't the case. It's true the Russia has imposed reciprocal airspace bans on aircraft registered to a large number of countries (including the US, Canada and the EU). **This is in response to political sanctions, not risk.**

Those from China, Turkey, the Gulf States and others are still allowed. And until now, they have been overflying airspace with no active warnings in place.

The EASA warning

EASA issued its new warning on January 9 via a Conflict Zone Information Bulletin (CZIB).

A note about EASA. Its advice isn't binding – it is provided for the consideration of its member states and does not represent an actual flight prohibition.

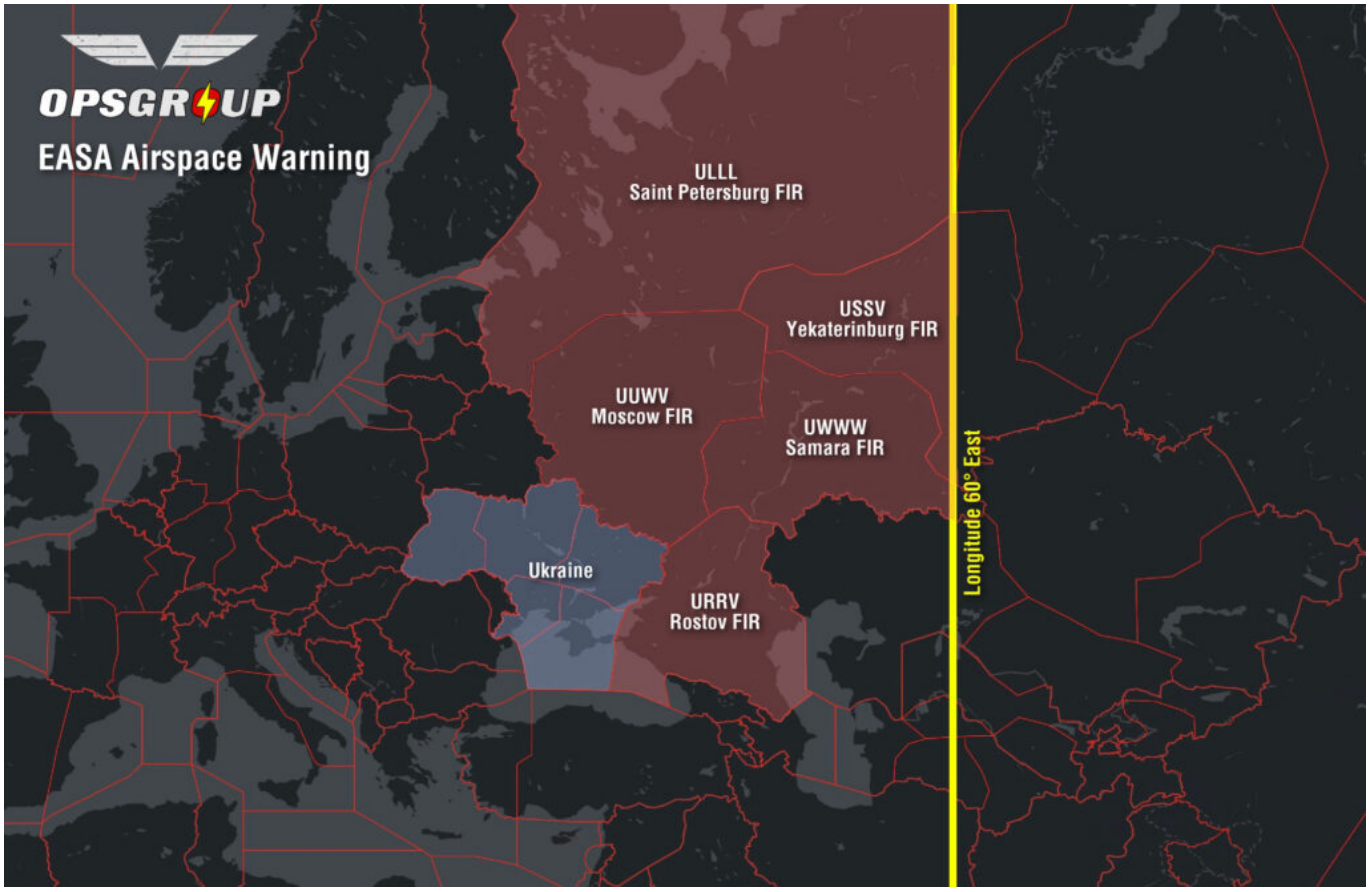
However, history has shown it does have a strong bearing on the rules imposed – as a result, we are likely to see to number of new state-issued warnings for Russia in the coming weeks.

The CZIB recommends operators do not enter Russian airspace (**west of longitude 60 degrees east**) at all levels. This affects the Moscow, Rostov, Saint Petersburg, Yekaterinburg and Samara FIRs.

EASA advises that the deployment of Russian air defence systems to these areas in response to Ukrainian drone and missile attacks could directly threaten the safety of overflying aircraft.

It argues Russia does not have adequate protections and procedures in place to ensure the safety of civil aviation. The apparent downing of AZ8243 is testament to that fact.

Beyond the risk of misidentification, the warning also cites dangers related to GPS interference (including spoofing) being used to deter aerial threats with little regard to the effect on civil aircraft in the area.



Safe Airspace

At safeairspace.net, our team faces a conundrum.

Russia oversees well over 6.6 million square miles of sky and is transcontinental in scale.

Towards its south-eastern borders with China and Mongolia the risks associated with the conflict in Ukraine are low to non-existent.

To the west, the risk is high which is why EASA's new warning makes a distinction based on a line of longitude that divides the country in two.

The same applies to our level of warning for Russia at safeairspace.net – where a **Level 2 (Danger Exists)** remains in place. But in light of recent events, we would **advise against overflights of Western and Southern Russia at this time.**

Get in touch with us

Our team is available around the clock. You can reach us at blog@ops.group – we'd be happy to help with any questions you may have.

ReFuelEU: Europe's new anti-tankering rules

explained

David Mumford
24 February, 2025

Key Points

- **There are new anti-tankering rules from 1st Jan 2025 that heavily restrict large commercial operators from tankering fuel into or within Europe.**
- **There are also complex reporting obligations for these operators to prove they are not breaking the rules. And the deadline for the first annual report is coming up in March 2025!**

There's a newish thing in Europe called **ReFuelEU**, and it looks like it's going to be a real headache for operators.

Effective this month, the new rules apply to all **large commercial operators** (those doing 500+ flights from EU airports each year). Over the course of a calendar year, operators must ensure that, on average, 90% of the fuel required for flights departing from a specific EU airport is uplifted at that airport. **The reporting is done annually, so it's about maintaining compliance as a yearly average rather than for each individual flight.**

These rules applies to **all commercial operators** – both EU-based and non-EU-based. Private flights and all non-commercial operations are exempt.

This whole ReFuelEU thing is being run by the EU. They claim it's part of the general push to **"make things more green"**. Maybe. Or maybe these anti-tankering rules are actually more to do with the **EU getting fed up with big airlines blazing into Europe with their tanks still half-full** of the cheap fuel they brought from "home". European airports, unable to sell as much of their expensive fuel, have been missing out.

But remember – the rules apply to intra-EU flights as well! So it's not just all those Middle East to Europe flights that are affected. For example, a flight from Bulgaria (cheap fuel) to Germany (expensive

fuel) will not be allowed to tanker either.

Politics aside, these new rules are going to be **disproportionately tough on bizjet operators** with unscheduled, last-minute flights. Whilst one could claim this whole thing might make some sense for airlines, it will make planning extremely tricky for other large non-scheduled commercial operators who don't necessarily know what they'll be doing next week, let alone across the entire year! Also, there's really not so much value on the "make things more green" front either. 777s, A380s and A380s often tanker tonnes of fuel; Citations, Falcons and Gulfstreams – not so much. Then there's the added complexities with reporting, reduced fuel flexibility, and even potential safety risks if operators start running tighter fuel margins.

Reporting rules for operators

Welcome to hell. We're not going to dive deep down into this basket of snakes here, but just to give a rough outline of what operators have to do…

1. Prepare an annual report.

This should include:

- The yearly aviation fuel required (trip and taxi fuel for all flights departing from a given EU airport).
- The yearly aviation fuel uplifted at that airport.
- Any fuel shortfalls below the 90% requirement, with justifications (e.g., safety or other exemptions).

2. Pay to get the report verified.

The verifier will ensure the report is accurate, complete, and compliant with the rules. They will review the operator's data, including:

- Fuel uplift records.
- Supporting docs (e.g. flight logs, fuel invoices, operational flight plans) to justify fuel usage, especially for exemptions.
- Justifications for exemptions (if applicable). If operators want an exemption, they have to justify it with detailed reasons (e.g. safety concerns, operational difficulties) and provide evidence to the authorities.

Any discrepancies or missing data must be resolved before the report is finalized.

3. Submit the report.

- After verification, the report has to be submitted to the competent authority of the Member State responsible for the operator, as well as the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA).
- The report must follow a specific format (specified in Annex II). This includes tables and fields for annual aviation fuel required, fuel uplifted, and justifications for exemptions.

Key dates for reporting.

The reporting period is the calendar year, from January 1 to December 31. So the key dates for this are as follows:

- **January 1 – December 31:** Reporting period.
- **(following year) January – March:** Verification by an independent verifier, with March 31 submission deadline to competent authorities and EASA.

Note that the first annual report must be submitted by March 2025! (for the reporting period of Jan 1 to Dec 31, 2024)

What airports in the EU are impacted?

Not all of them!

The rules apply to "Union Airports" that meet certain thresholds – mainly **those where pax traffic exceeds 800,000 passengers annually.** Smaller airports that do not meet these thresholds are excluded to avoid placing "undue operational and financial burdens" on them.

Also, airports in **"Outermost Regions"** (e.g. the Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands, and French overseas territories) are generally excluded too, due to their geographic and logistical challenges. These airports can opt-in to the rules if they like though.

The EU publishes an **annual list of airports** that fall under the scope of these rules. You can access it here.

Other concerns for Business Aviation

The European Business Aviation Association (EBAA) are currently working on presenting some of the issues to the EU. But ultimately, they highlight **three big issues:**

1. **Lack of flexibility.** Business aviation's dynamic and diverse operations require more flexibility than what the anti-tankering rule allows.
2. **Administrative Burden.** Reporting requirements, including detailed fuel data, create significant workload and could divert resources away from safety-critical tasks.
3. **Safety Risks.** Increased risks include in-flight fuel emergencies, crew fatigue, missed ATC slots, fueling-related hazards, and more. There are also concerns about compromised fuel quality and strained infrastructure due to increased refueling requirements.

For more info on all this, check the ReFuelEU website. It includes the list of airports affected, plus the official rules in full (Article 5) – check the docs at the bottom of the webpage.

Germany: Crew Being Charged for Sneaky Security Checks

Chris Shieff
24 February, 2025

Key Points

- **July 2024: We wrote about some strange happenings reported by OPSGROUP members at German airports – random security checks performed by LBA staff (Germany's Civil Aviation Authority) to ensure the proper protocols were being followed by crew.**
- **These are not ramp checks, they are sneaky checks to see whether crew follow the right security procedures. They basically try to enter the aircraft, and your job is to make sure you stop them.**
- **Jan 2025: We're now hearing that the LBA have started charging operators for these checks! One member reported receiving a 330 Euro invoice for a check that took place at EDDM/Munich. Another reported the same thing at EDDV/Hannover and EDDS/Stuttgart. It seems that opting-out of these checks is not possible!**

Surprise invoices

In December and we received a fresh report from an OPSGROUP member. During a recent stop at **EDDM/Munich**, they were the unwitting recipients of one these surprise security checks.

Later, they received an invoice from the LBA for 330 Euros – despite having no ability to opt out. Here's an excerpt:

Gebühren

Amtshandlung	Rechtsgrundlage für die Gebührenerhebung	Anzahl	Einzelbetrag EUR	Gesamtbetrag EUR
Vor- und Nachbereitung einer Inspektion LFU / Pre- and post-processing of an air carrier inspection	§ 1 LuftSiGebV i.V.m. Ziffer 17.2.1.1 Geb.- u Ausl.Verz.	1,00	271,50	**271,50**
Durchführung der Inspektion beim LFU / Inspection at the air carrier	§ 1 LuftSiGebV i.V.m. Ziffer 17.2.1.2 Geb.- u Ausl.Verz.	1,00	29,26	**29,26**
			Summe Gebühren	**300,76**

Auslagen

Auslagen	Rechtsgrundlage für die Gebührenerhebung	Anzahl	Einzelbetrag EUR	Gesamtbetrag EUR
Dienstreisekosten (Reisezeiten) Inspektion LFU / official travel expenses (travel times) air carrier inspection	§ 1 LuftSiGebV i.V.m. Ziffer 19.1 Geb.- u Ausl.Verz.	1,00	29,26	**29,26**
			Summe Auslagen	**29,26**

What the LBA had to say

It was the first we had heard of crew being involuntarily invoiced for these random security inspections and so reached out to the LBA directly.

Apparently, a legal document called the **Aviation Security Fees Ordinance** (or *Luftsicherheitsgebührenverordnung* for short) was amended in February 2024 to enable LBA to collect fees to cover the costs of 'surveillance measures' which includes the surprise security checks in question.

Fair or not, it looks as though this practice will continue at German airports indefinitely.

The checks themselves

We previously enquired as to the **legality** of these checks and were referred by the LBA to another document – the EU Implementing Regulation 2015/1998 which is all about *basic standards on aviation security*.

We read it so you don't have to – and couldn't find anything in it warning crew to look out for weird notes or unwelcome visitors in high-viz vests entering your aircraft with no ID.

The legal framework is there, but from an operational perspective but we still have the following concerns:

- **Crew are being tricked into compliance.**
- **These invasive checks have now been incentivized.**
- **There is no ability for crew to opt out of being charged.**

Aviation security is a team effort, not a commercial enterprise. And for that reason, we feel this a concerning precedent to set.

Please get in touch with us

When we write Ops Alerts to members we have a specific category for costs, as they often come as an **unwelcome surprise** to operators. We do our best to get the word out to help others. If you come across these in your travels, please reach out to us on team@ops.group so that we can keep the group informed.

UK Electronic Travel Authorization – The BizAv Guide

David Mumford
24 February, 2025

Key Points

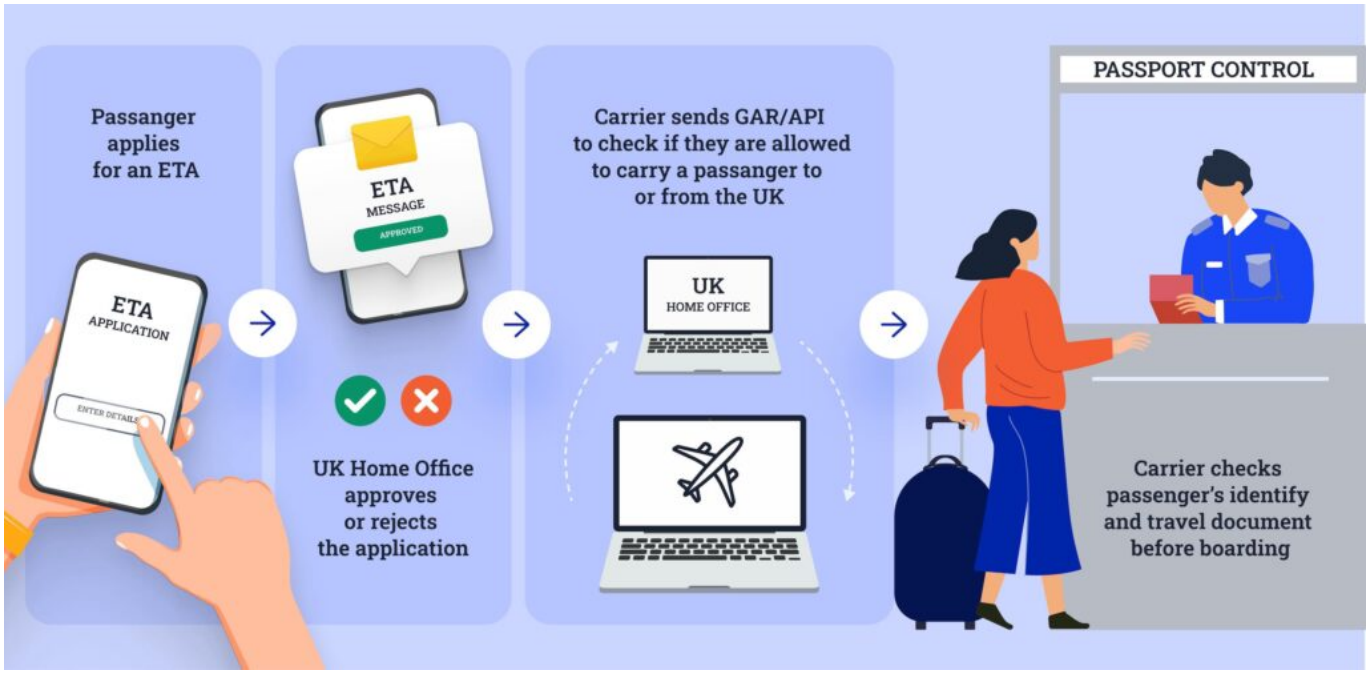
- **The UK is bringing in an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme for passengers, much like the US ESTA.**
- **It started in Nov 2023 for travellers from Qatar. It then applied to travellers from more Gulf states from Feb 2024. Nationals from a long list of countries (includes the US) will be able to use this from 8 Jan 2025. Then there's another list (pretty much everywhere in Europe) who can use this from 2 April 2025 (can apply from March 5).**

The UK will be implementing its Universal Permission to Travel (UPT) scheme in 2025. Under a new Carrier Liability Scheme, operators will be obliged to check immigration permissions for non-visa nationals (in addition to visa nationals). This will affect both GAR and API submissions.

With ESTA in the States, eTA in Canada, and ETIAS coming soon in the European Union, the introduction of Electronic Travel Authorisation in the United Kingdom comes as no surprise. What does ETA mean and how can operators prepare for the upcoming changes?

Part of the bigger picture: Universal Permission to Travel

ETA is a digital record linked to a person's passport (valid for 2 years, or less if the passport expires). It is being introduced as part of a broader scheme called Universal Permission to Travel. The general aim of UPT is to strengthen the UK border security by ensuring that **all travellers have a valid travel permission in advance**. The plan is for the majority of these permissions to become **digital-only** in the future (e.g. e-visas). This way, operators will be able to check and confirm a passenger's permission prior to travel. This will reduce the number of people denied entry at the border, and the associated detention and removal costs (which operators need to bear).



Who and when: The scope of the UK ETA

In general, the UK ETA applies to **visa-exempt passengers and those who do not have a UK immigration status**. There will be some limited exceptions for those who cannot be required to hold a permission, e.g. diplomats.

ETA will <u>not</u> be required for people with either:

- a British or Irish passport;
- permission to live, work, or study in the UK;
- a visa to enter the UK.

People living in Ireland who are not Irish citizens will only be exempt if: they are legally resident in Ireland, do not need a visa to enter the UK, AND they are entering the UK via the Common Travel Area. All three conditions must be met.

It's worth noting that **ETA is also required for passengers transiting through the UK.**

The launch of ETA will happen in phases:

1. **From 15 Nov 2023:** the nationals of Qatar.
2. **From 22 Feb 2024:** the nationals of Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the

UAE.

3. **8 Jan 2025:** loads more nationalities – basically all of the world except Europe.
4. **2 April 2025 (can apply from March 5):** pretty much all of Europe.

You can see the full lists of nationalities here.

Travellers can apply for the ETA here. Expect a confirmation within 3 working days, often quicker. The cost is £10. The ETA is valid for two years, and can be used for multiple visits, but if you get a new passport within that time then you'll need to apply for a new ETA.

There are some nationalities who won't be able to apply for the ETA. The ETA scheme is broadly for visitors who do not need a visa for short stays to the UK. Travellers who currently need a visa will most likely continue to need one when the scheme goes live.

New ETA: What does it mean for operators?

The introduction of ETA has affected the Authority to Carry regulations, which constitute the UK's "no fly" scheme. **Travellers who are refused an ETA, as well as those whose ETA gets cancelled, are now included on the list of people whom operators cannot carry to or from the UK**.

An operators may get fined (up to a max of £50,000!) when:

- they do not check if they can carry a person;
- they carry a person who has no valid permission to travel.

This means that operators will need to send their API data in an 'interactive' way in order to check the ETA status (the submissions will trigger a response from the Home Office). There are different ways to meet this requirement (depending on the type of operation and terminal type):

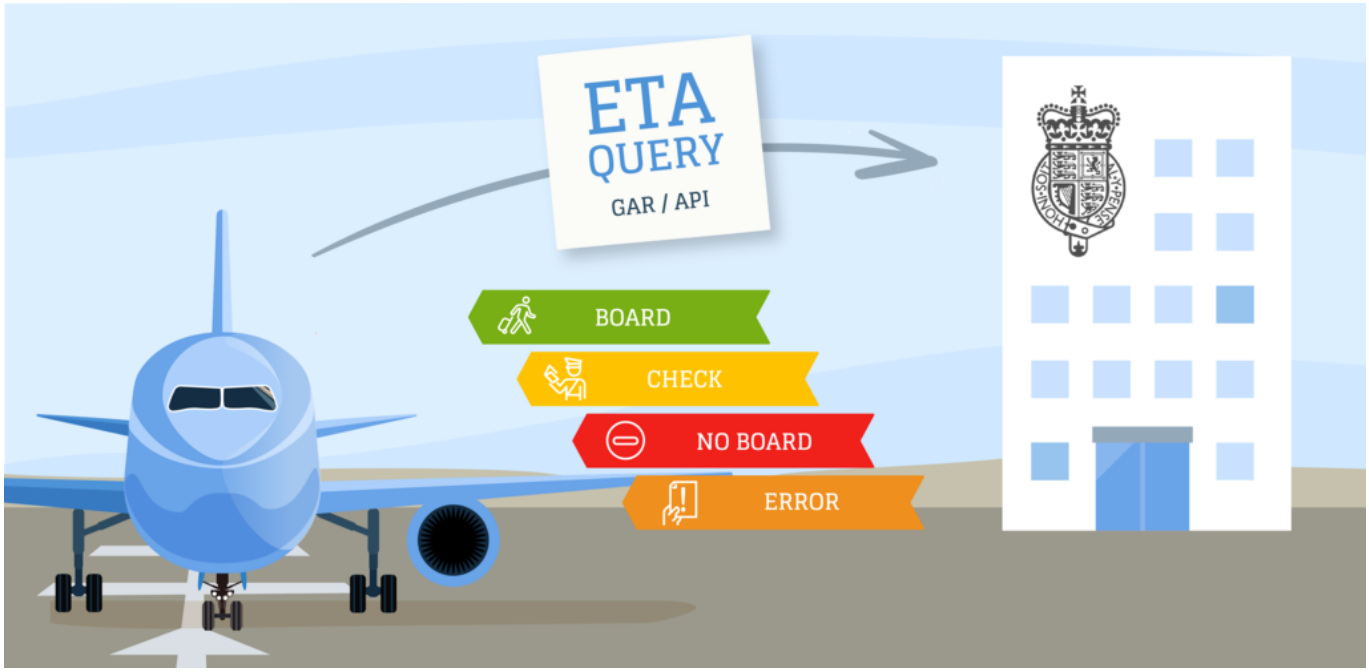
- submitting GAR data manually via the sGAR web-portal;
- submitting API data from DCS via the UK iAPI system;
- requesting a third-party (e.g. your Ground Handler / FBO / Data Provider) to submit the data on your behalf.

ETA status check: Four possible outcomes

Regardless of the submission method, there will be four basic results (board / check / no board / error), with additional codes or descriptions for operators to know what needs to be done:

- **BOARD**: A valid permission to travel has been found. Once the identity and passport / travel document check is completed, the passenger can board the plane.
- **CHECK**: There is no record of a valid permission to travel. The operator has to conduct a manual check of immigration or exemption documents as well as identity checks. If the check is satisfactory, the passenger may board.
- **NO BOARD**: The permission to carry is refused. The person must not board the plane. Carrying such a passenger entails a risk of a civil penalty.
- **ERROR**: The permission to travel cannot be confirmed due to some missing data. The operator

should correct the data, resend it, and wait for the check result.



What are operators expected to do now?

Passenger scenario	**Action for the operator**
Passenger has a Visa or Biometric Resident's Permit	Verify the visa or check the validity of the Biometric Resident's Permit (a valid visa or Biometric Resident's Permit is still recognized as a travel permission, just like ETA)
Passenger has an ETA	OK to board
Passenger is still waiting for their ETA application to be approved	OK to board
Passenger did not apply for an ETA	Ask them to apply before boarding
Passenger/UK confirms that the ETA has been rejected or cancelled	Do NOT board

It is also important to know that operators **must continue to check the passenger's identity and travel document** (ETA changes do not affect these checks in any way).

Does this all apply to Private Flights too?

Yes. The scheme applies to all operators – including General Aviation.

Do flight crew need an ETA?

No, not for most flights. We asked the UK authorities this question, and they said:

- Crew who arrive and depart by aircraft as operational crew within seven days of arrival will not require an ETA.
- Crew who are arriving in the UK as deadheading or positioning crew do not qualify for this exemption – they will need an ETA. However, the UK does operate a concession for deadhead and positioning visa national crew leaving by 23:59 the day after their arrival.

Another thing to watch out for if flying to the UK with ground crew or engineers on board who are intending to work airside. These staff are **not allowed to enter as crew on a gendec** – you must get a work permit for them 48hrs in advance. The only alternative is to apply to the UK Border Force to make an exception, in which case you need to fill out this form and email it to them.

What about the UK GAR rules?

Effective 6 April 2024, there were some big changes to the UK's General Aviation Report (GAR) submission for international GA flights:

- The GAR form is now **required for departures** (not just arrivals).
- If you get it wrong, **you can now get fined** up to £10,000 (there were no fines before).
- You have to submit it via an **online portal**, or through your handler, (no longer directly to UK Border Force via email).
- And after you submit it, you will get a response telling you whether that crew/pax is allowed to travel (you will still need to check their passport/visa/travel docs etc).

More info on these new GAR rules can be found here.

Thanks to PnrGO for help with this article! If you're flying to the UK and are impacted by these changes, you can contact PnrGO if you'd like to save yourself some UPT/ETA/GAR/API related misery – they have some tech that lets you do all of this automatically. Click here for more info.

2024 Flight Ops Changes: The Big Ones

David Mumford
24 February, 2025

It’s been another **busy year of change** in the world of international flight ops! Here are some of the big ones from 2024…

January

- **Secret Overflight Requirements in Antigua:** If you enter the Antigua TMA/TCA (the airspace around Antigua up to FL245), you’ll need to apply for a “cross-border permit”. Without it, they won’t let you enter! Read
- **Mexico Permit Chaos: New Rules Explained:** Some recent changes to the permit procedures in Mexico caused stress and delays. Here’s how the new process works. Read
- **NAT Conundrums Volume IV: Contingency Procedures:** We love North Atlantic conundrums so much, we’re into our fourth Volume! This one looks at Contingency Procedures in depth, for those times when you need to deviate from your ATC clearance. Read

February

- **Expanded Free Route Airspace in Africa:** Free Route Airspace (i.e. you can fly direct between waypoints) is now available across all ASECNA airspace in Africa, FL250 and above. Read
- **Libya Airspace Risk: An Idiot’s Guide:** Why have EASA eased their warning on flights to Libya? Here’s a look, all wrapped up in a 7-Step Idiot’s Guide to Libya Airspace Risk, with some maps, pictures, analysis, and advice for operators. Read
- **New Risk Warning: Somalia ATC Conflict:** Ongoing issue in Somalia of aircraft being contacted and given conflicting instructions by fake ATC. Bottom line, if you’re overflying in the northern half of the country (i.e. where all these issues have been happening) and get a call on the radio, ignore it. Read
- **US FAA: Who wants to land on the runway?** Flying to an airport in the US? Want to land on the actual runway, rather than some taxiway or dirt road which looks a bit like the runway? Not afraid of some basic pics showing you how not to mess it up? Well then today’s your lucky

day! Read

March

- **Singapore Airspace Changes:** Singapore and Indonesia realigned their FIRs in March 2024. There's one thing this will hopefully fix for good – no more intercepts of civil aircraft by Indonesian fighter jets! Read
- **Haiti Crisis: Airport Attacked, Aircraft Shot:** MTPP/Port-au-Prince was closed from March-May 2024 due to sustained gang violence across Haiti. Aviation came under direct threat during the worst of the violence, with several reports of several armed attacks at the airport. Then in November, two aircraft were hit by gunfire on approach, and the airport was closed again. Since then, several countries have issued new airspace warnings for Haiti. Read
- **NAT Changes March 2024: No More Oceanic Clearances:** Three big changes announced for the North Atlantic: NAT Comms Failure Procedures have been simplified, squawking 2000 ten minutes after OEP are now standard everywhere in the NAT, and there will be no more Oceanic Clearances. Read *(unfortunately this last one turned into a bit of a mess – check the entries for November/December below for more info!)*

April

- **The MEL vs MMEL issue:** US aircraft have often had ramp check findings in Europe because EASA decided that the D095 LOA wasn't good enough (they wanted to see a D195 LOA instead). In April, the FAA announced that operators could get these D195 LOAs much more quickly. Read
- **TIBA in Australia: What's Going On?** TIBA still seems to be an issue in Australia – shortage of ATC resulting in big bits of restricted Class G airspace, often at short notice. Read
- **Outsmarting the GPS Spoofers:** We came across a new tool designed to alert you if you are being spoofed. We liked it – it works, so here are the details. Read
- **Saudi Arabia Overflights – Free Route Gotcha:** There is some new Free Route Airspace in the OEJD/Jeddah FIR, specifically in the south-east portion. If you don't file the right way, you'll be descended to FL300. This is especially relevant now, with so much EU-Asia traffic operating via Egypt-Saudi. Read
- **New GAR Procedure for UK Flights:** There were some BIG changes to the UK's General Aviation Report (GAR) submission for international GA flights. Read

May

- **Italy New Disinsection Procedures:** For flights to Italy, if your aircraft has been in an affected country (including the US) in the past 28 days, you'll need to get it sprayed and provide a certificate. Read
- **Argentina Overflight Permits Now Required:** All foreign aircraft now need an overflight permit for Argentina. Here's how you get one. Read
- **US Domestic Enroute CPDLC Update:** Domestic en-route CPDLC in the US is now available to everyone. To get it, you've got to have the right avionics and submit a form – the FAA has published a list of aircraft types, which you will need to check to see if you comply. Read

- **Israel tightened rules for GA Flights from the US:** Most operators 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. Read
- **Canada ADS-B Mandates:** Where you need ADS-B in Canada, what equipment you need, how to apply for an exemption, plus all manner of other questions answered! Read

June

- **Mexico Permit and APIS Issues:** New guidelines for landing permits caused yet more confusion for both private and commercial flights to Mexico. There are also now different options for submitting APIS, and these have been causing issues too! Read
- **Edinburgh security rules create delays:** EGPH/Edinburgh airport has a rule that means all aircraft have to go through outbound security screening, regardless of weight or type of flight. Airport Spy reports suggest this can easily take an extra hour to complete, so plan for departure delays! (or go to Glasgow instead, as many members suggest). Read
- **SAFA Ramp Checks: The Top 5 Offenders (+Alcohol test):** We had several reports indicating a ramp up of ramp checks in sunny Europe (especially Germany). High on the list of findings are: fuel checks not done, bogus flight planning to alternates, and for business jets – beds not folded up for landing/departure. Also increasingly popular is a breath test to get things rolling! Read
- **Don’t Climb! A Big NAT No-No:** One of the most popular pilots mistakes on the NAT is to start climbing or descending when you get your Oceanic Clearance (or send your RCL). Prior to the entry point, you are still with Domestic ATC – you have to ask them for any level change. Don’t ruin your day! Read

July

- **NAT Crossing after GPS Spoofing Guide:** An increasing problem on the NAT is aircraft crossing the ocean following a GPS Spoofing encounter. This reduces your capability from RNP4 to RNP10, and in busy westbound flows causes problems for Shanwick. It has also led to descents to FL280 and diversions to Iceland. Here’s the full guidance on what to do. Read
- **German Ops Gotchas:** OPSGROUP members reported several strange things happening at airports in Germany – new rules about baggage holds, reports of sneaky security checks of bizav aircraft, and a snageroo for commercial flights when paying for fuel. Read
- **Afghanistan Overflight Update:** An update on the risks of Afghanistan overflights, following an easing of the rules for N-reg aircraft. Plus a full crew report from a recent flight over the country – to give you an idea of what it’s really like. Read

August

- **UK Electronic Travel Authorization Guide:** Travellers from a long list of countries (includes the US) will be able to use this from Jan 2025. Then there’s another list (pretty much everywhere in Europe) who can use this from April 2025. Get the full lowdown here. Read

September

- **GPS Spoofing: Final Report published by WorkGroup:** We published the Final Report of the GPS Spoofing WorkGroup. Over a six-week period between July 17-August 31, the WorkGroup tackled the complex issue of GPS Spoofing affecting civil aviation. The result is a comprehensive study of the GPS Spoofing problem, including detailed analysis of the technical background, impacts to aircraft handling and operation, best practices for flight crew, and a series of safety concerns and recommendations for industry attention. Read
- **Hong Kong's new APIS system:** Hong Kong brought in a new APIS system in Sep 2024. GA/BA flights will have to start doing it from April 2025. Here's how it will work, plus the lowdown on ops to VHHH/Hong Kong if you're headed there for the first time – or the first time in a long time. Read
- **Watch out for Cape Verde Runway Closures:** Popular mid-Atlantic tech stop airports GVAC/Sal in Cape Verde has some long term runway closures going on – but you won't find out about these from the Notams. Read
- **TSA Waiver Guide:** If you're heading to the US and are trying to work out whether you need a TSA Waiver for your flight, we have a guide to help with that. Read
- **US Border Overflight Exemptions Guide:** Want to fly from Mexico to the US and land wherever you like? You'll need a thing called a US Border Overflight Exemption. The CBP has just increased the validity period of these to three years (previously two). Here's how to get one. Read

October

- **Middle East / Israel Update – October 2024:** Israel carried out airstrikes on Tehran on Oct 26, in response to Iranian strikes on Israel on Oct 1. The en-route traffic situation has since largely returned to normal. Most operators continue to avoid Iran and Israel. Iran in particular has a heightened risk of misidentification or interception for overflights at the moment. Middle East transits should consider going south via Egypt/Saudi instead. Read
- **EU-LISA Update:** A more in-depth look at the requirements for operators when the first phase of Europe's Entry/Exit System starts in November 2024. Read
- **Blue Spruce Routes Guide:** Most flights on the North Atlantic have all the necessary bells and whistles to merrily zip along between FL290-410 right through the centre of NAT HLA. But if you fly old planes, broken planes, little planes, or planes straight outta the factory – you will most likely be flying the Blue Spruce Routes. Here's how they work, and what to expect when flying them. Read
- **Greenland Airports Guide:** Each day thousands of aircraft routinely cross the North Atlantic and use airports in Greenland as enroute/ETOPS alternates. But some major changes are coming that will directly impact on the operational use of these airports as NAT alternates. Read
- **US LOA Guide:** Applying for Letters of Authorization (LOAs) from the FAA can be a tricky old process. Here's an updated guide which tells you what LOAs are, when you need them, and how straightforward the application process can be. Read
- **US Ops: CBP Gotchas and Recent Penalty Cases:** There has been a surge in CBP penalty cases recently. The top 3 reasons: failing to get Permission to Land, failing to obtain Departure

Clearance, and errors in APIS data. Here's how to avoid making the same mistakes. Read

November

- **NAT Guide 2025 – My First NAT Flight is Tomorrow:** The OPSGROUP NAT Guide 2025 (aka My First North Atlantic Flight is Tomorrow) is now available to all members, as well as an updated Circle of Entry. Read
- **2025 North Atlantic Plotting & Planning Chart:** We also updated the OPSGROUP North Atlantic Plotting and Planning Chart! This is our chart showing North Atlantic Oceanic and adjoining domestic airspace, with easy to read NAT Tips, Airspace Requirements, Emergency Procedures, and much more! Read
- **US Pre-Clearance Guide:** Everything you ever wanted to know about US Pre-Clearance! Where you can do it, where you can fly to in the US once you've done it, and how the process works on the ground. Read
- **Dodging Danger: The Three Routes Through the Middle East:** Middle Eastern transits have become more challenging of late, with no "zero risk" options available anymore. Most flights are heading via three distinct routes: South via Saudi Arabia and Egypt, Central via Iraq and Turkey, or North via the Stans and the Caspian Sea. Here's a detailed look at each. Read
- **Shanwick postpones Oceanic Clearance Removal:** Shanwick has delayed its Oceanic Clearance Removal (OCR) until further notice. Bodo and Gander went ahead with their transition on Dec 4, and Reykjavik and Santa Maria did theirs back in March. Review the full briefing, with FAQ, new procedure, and full details here. Read
- **Red Sea Conflict Zone – Airspace Risk:** The Red Sea is an active Conflict Zone. A missile intercept incident near Jeddah on Nov 3 (observed at close proximity by transiting air crew) has highlighted the risk to civil aviation, and has made it clear that this area is an extension of the Israeli conflict. Many Europe-Asia Middle East routes fly over this area. Read

December

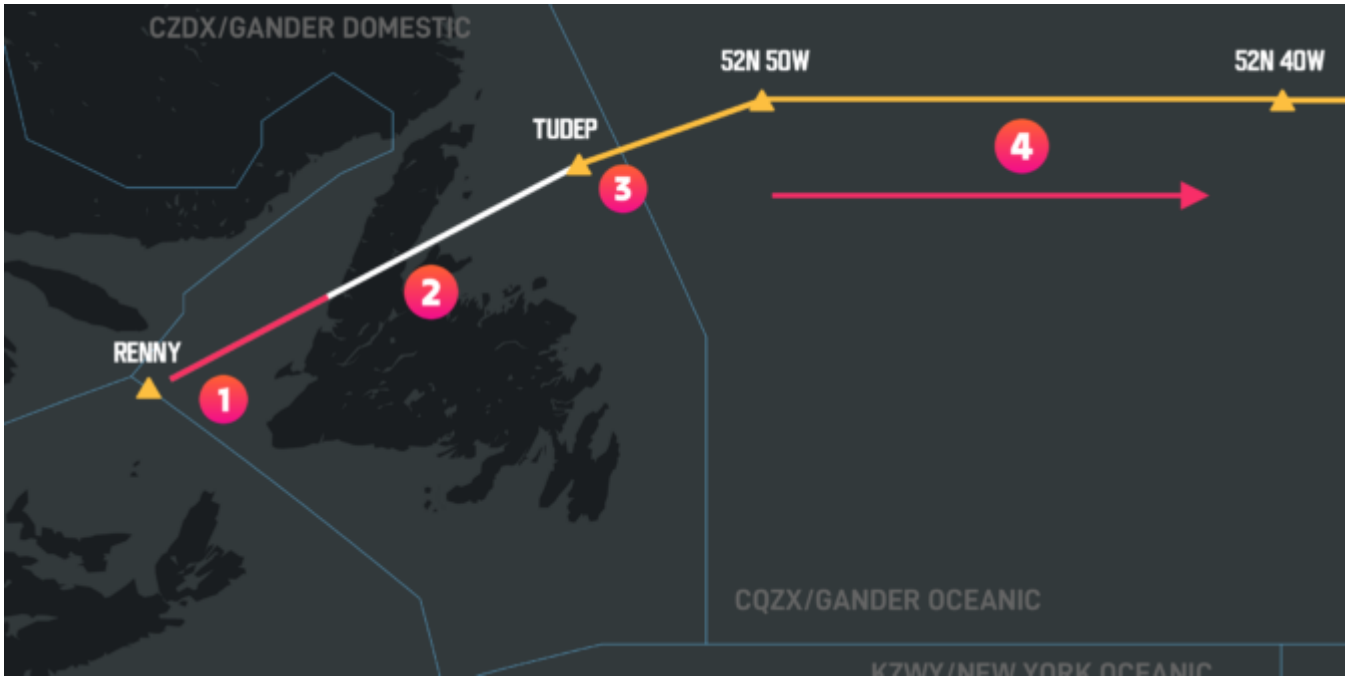
- **CENAMER Flight Planning Requirements:** A couple of new things to know if you're operating in the MHCC/Central American FIR – two countries there have ADS-B mandates coming soon, and there's a new website where you can pay for your nav fees. If you've never flown here before, check out this guide. Read
- **South Atlantic Bulletin: CPDLC Warning:** Some operators have been incorrectly logging onto GOOO/Dakar rather than DIII/Abidjan when transiting the South Atlantic. ATC are concerned, and so a new SAT Ops Bulletin has been published. Here's a closer look at what it contains, and how to not mess it up on your next crossing. Read
- **High levels of Pilot Error with NAT RCL – New Briefing and Checklist:** Since the Dec 4 "No Oceanic Clearance" procedure, high levels of pilot errors are creating traffic restrictions in Gander Oceanic airspace. As a result, we issued a new Crew Brief and Checklist: download it and avoid making some of the common mistakes! Read

As the year draws to a close, we want to say **a big thank you to everyone in OPSGROUP** for showing up, sharing stories, experiences, and information, and in turn keeping us all safe and up to date.

We'll be taking some time off from the Daily Brief and Weekly Bulletin emails over the holiday period. Last day in the office will be Monday 23rd Dec, and we'll be back again on Thursday 2nd Jan. Happy Holidays everyone, and see you in 2025! ❤⚡✈✈

High levels of Pilot Error with NAT RCL: New Briefing and Checklist

OPSGROUP Team
24 February, 2025

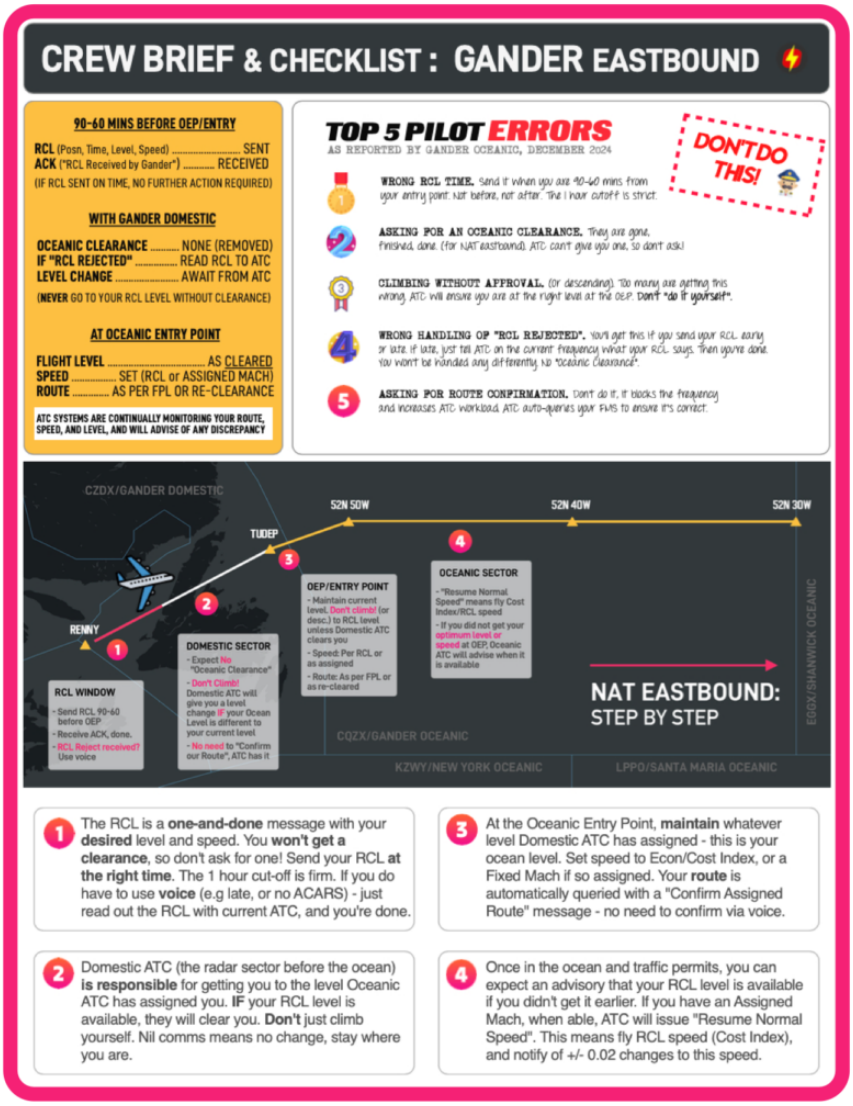


The number of **pilot errors** following the introduction of the new "*No Oceanic Clearance*" procedure is turning out to be far higher than expected. As a result, Gander have had to implement an evening Airspace Flow Program (AFP), restricting eastbound traffic.

Since December 4th, Oceanic Clearances are no longer being issued by Gander for eastbound flights, and a **new procedure** is in place using an RCL message to send your desired time, level and speed at the Oceanic Entry Point (OEP).

However, the **very high level** of non-compliance with this new procedure is surprising and troubling. Errors by flight crew fall into a number of different categories, but can be summed up in a "Top 5", including sending the RCL at the wrong time, asking for an Oceanic Clearance, "DIY" level changes, wrong handling of RCL Rejected messages, and repeated voice requests for "route confirmation" blocking active ATC frequencies.

A new **Crew Brief and Checklist** has been published today, which you can download below. **Please save a copy, and send to your crew and colleagues**!

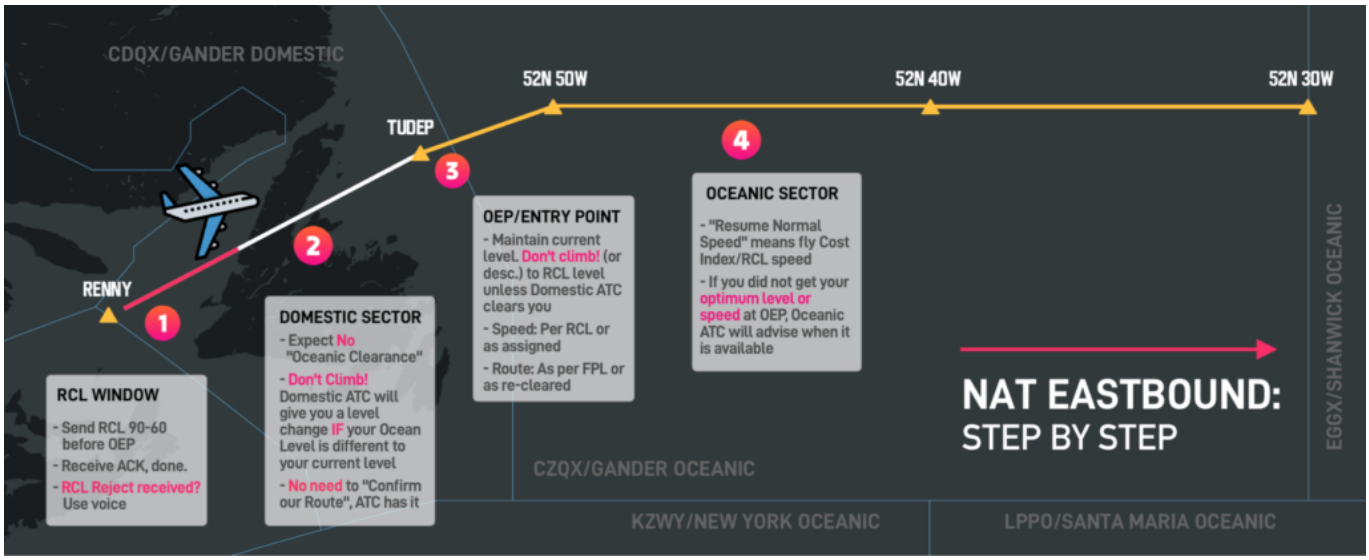


Download the **Gander RCL Crew Brief and Checklist** (PDF, 1Mb)

Top 5 Pilot Errors

1. **WRONG RCL TIME**. Send it when you are 90-60 mins from your entry point. Not before, not after. The 1 hour cutoff is strict.
2. **ASKING FOR AN OCEANIC CLEARANCE**. They are gone, finished, done. (for NAT eastbound). ATC can't give you one, so don't ask!
3. **CLIMBING WITHOUT APPROVAL**. (Or descending). Too many are getting this wrong. ATC will ensure you are at the right level at the OEP. **Don't "do it yourself".**
4. **WRONG HANDLING OF "RCL REJECTED"**. You'll get this if you send your RCL early or late. If late, just tell ATC on the current frequency what your RCL says. Then you're done. You won't be handled any differently. No "Oceanic Clearance".
5. **ASKING FOR ROUTE CONFIRMATION**. Don't do it, it blocks the frequency and increases ATC workload. ATC auto-queries your FMS to ensure it's correct.

Notes on the RCL process



1. **The RCL is a one-and-done** message with your desired level and speed. You won't get a clearance, so don't ask for one! Send your RCL at the right time. The 1 hour cut-off is firm. If you do have to use voice (e.g late, or no ACARS) – just read out the RCL with current ATC, and you're done.
2. **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. Don't just climb yourself. Nil comms means no change, stay where you are.
3. At the Oceanic Entry Point, **maintain** whatever level Domestic ATC has assigned – this is your ocean level. Set speed to Econ/Cost Index, or a Fixed Mach if so assigned. Your route is automatically queried with a "Confirm Assigned Route" message – no need to confirm via voice.
4. **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. If you have an Assigned Mach, when able, ATC will issue "**Resume Normal Speed**". This means fly RCL speed (Cost Index), and notify of +/- 0.02 changes to this speed.

Worried about getting it wrong?

Of course, it always makes sense to double check any uncertainties, but if you can keep it off the frequency, that's very helpful for ATC. At the moment, there is a **high volume** of extra requests (which makes life hard for the controller). **Remember one key point**: ATC systems are continually monitoring your route, speed, and level, and will advise of any discrepancy. Your route in the FMS is queried by a UM137 message ("CONFIRM ASSIGNED ROUTE"), to ensure both you and ATC have the same understanding of your track, or random route acoss the Ocean.

If you're not certain about how the procedure works, use the Crew Brief and Checklist (developed specifically for Gander Oceanic), and refer to NAT Ops Bulletin 2023_001 Rev 4, and NAT Doc 007.

Can you share? Please do.

The quicker we can get this information out to all NAT crews, the better. **Please share** with your flight department, fleet, or operation – just **download** the Crew Brief and Checklist and pass it on.

Questions? Can we help?

If you have a question about the new RCL process, just comment below or **send us an email**. We want to help make sure that we are all on the same page!

US FAA Improves Flight Tracking Privacy

Chris Shieff
24 February, 2025

Dec 2024 Update:

- The FAA's Privacy ICAO Address Program (PIA) has been updated. **CPDLC services are now available for flights using a PIA.** To receive it, pilots must file the PIA ICAO 24-bit address and N-reg in the flight plan.
- Two other important changes – aircraft info held by the FAA and associated with a PIA are **exempt from the Freedom of Information Act**, and pilots can now **request a new PIA every twenty days** if they want. You view the updated FAA Privacy page here.

Feb 2024 Update:

- The FAA's Privacy ICAO Address program has been **expanded to include some new oceanic and Gulf of Mexico routes.**
- Check below for exactly which routes this program now applies to, and our **Opsicle with**

steps on how to register.

If you're not familiar with this program, it prevents users' aircraft registration from being tracked by third parties using ADS-B output during US domestic flights. We wrote about it before here. But to explain what this program is and how it works in two sentences:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How to apply?

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

More questions?

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

South Atlantic Bulletin: CPDLC Warning

Chris Shieff
24 February, 2025

There's been a lot of noise lately from the NAT, especially as we all come to grips with the **removal of oceanic clearances.**

But it's important not to forget about the SAT – or **South Atlantic**. And it seems a CPDLC issue has been regularly occurring in the Abidjan Area Control Center – a large chunk of airspace found south of Africa's Ivory Coast.

The issue arises from the fact that while the **Abidjan ACC** is geographically constrained by the much larger **Dakar FIR,** it is responsible for its own control.

It seems that pilots have been incorrectly logging onto **GOOO/Dakar** rather than **DIII/Abidjan** when transiting this airspace. ATC are concerned, and so a new SAT Ops Bulletin has been published. Here's a closer look at what it contains, and how to mitigate this error on your next crossing.

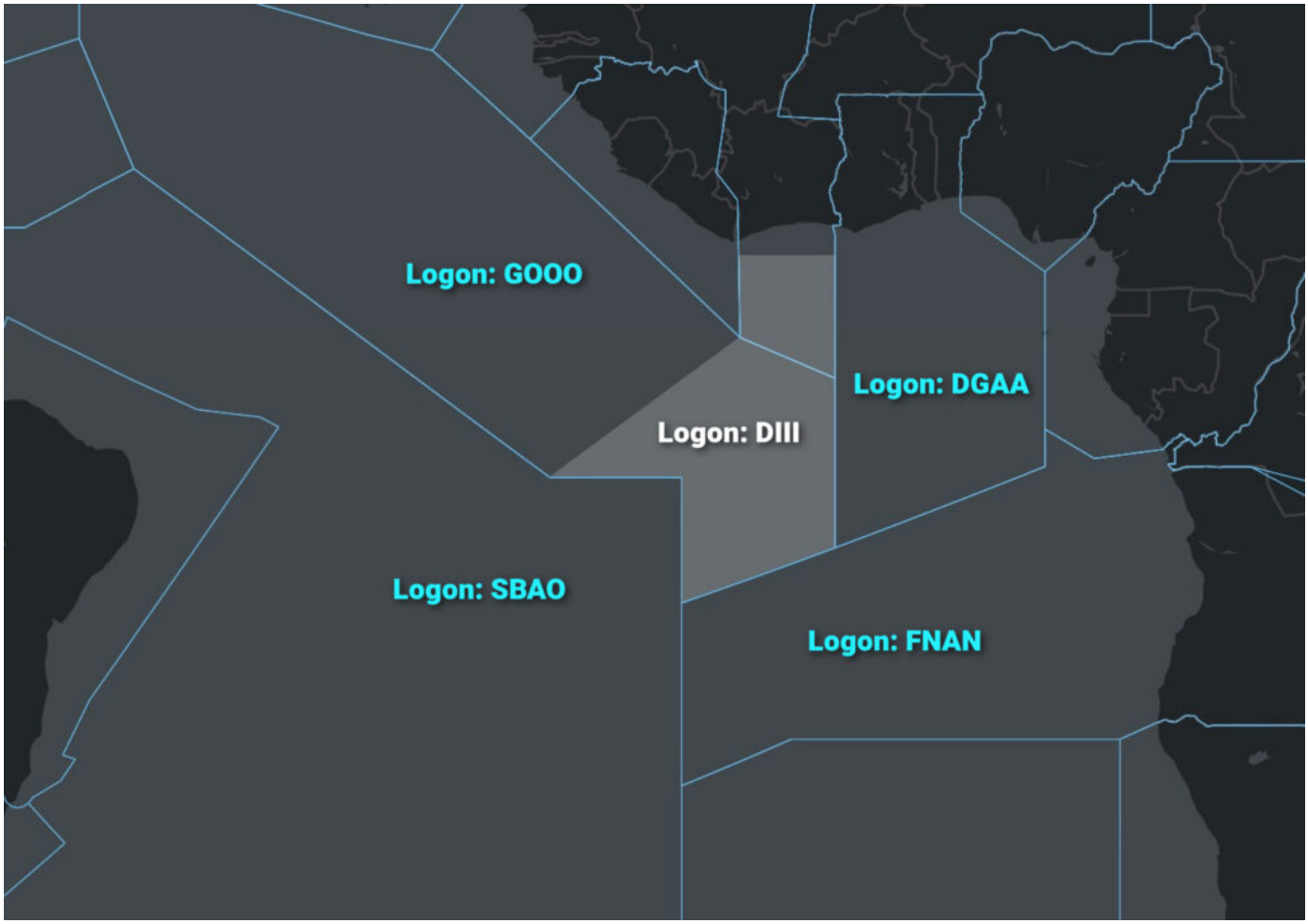
The Airspace Picture

Part of the problem may be that pilots crossing the SAT are **far less familiar** with the airspace picture than they are of its big brother, the NAT. So, he's a quick crash course.

Over the South Atlantic lies the '**Atlantic Ocean Random Routing Area**', or AORRA.

This is essentially a volume of airspace between FL290 – FL410 within the Atlantico, Accra, Comodoro Rivadavia, Dakar, Dakar Oceanic, Ezeiza, Johannesburg Oceanic, Luanda and Montevideo FIRs.

This article is concerned with the Eastern Side of the AORRA – specifically the **DIII/Abidjan ACC** (Ivory Coast) which is contained within the much larger **GOOO/Dakar FIR** and where the confusion is occurring. Aircraft on routes that transit between South America and Sub-Saharan Africa will likely overfly this airspace.



The folk at the South Atlantic Steering Group (SAT SG for short) have reported more and more instances of transiting aircraft **incorrectly logging onto GOOO when they should be logging onto DIII** while in Abidjan's airspace.

This then creates communication issues for ATC.

Panic Slowly

While this is cause for concern, SAT SG are quick to explain that in most cases this can be managed safely but vastly **increases workload** for controllers who must manually resolve the mis-connection.

But occasionally the loss of comms has led to the activation of something called **INCERFA** – a top-secret ICAO catchphrase for where uncertainty exists as to the safety of an aircraft or its occupants. **This alert phase carries its own protocols for ATC.**

And so, the key message from the bulletin is this:

'While Abdijan Airspace is geographically included within the Dakar FIR, it is essential that it is treated as a separate sector for CPDLC logon purposes…'

Simple!

What to do

None of us like unexpected paperwork. So, the SAT SG has also provided us with **flight crew procedures** to prevent communication problems when overflying Abidjan airspace. Check the SAT Ops Bulletin for these in full, but here's the lowdown:

Before Entering: Check logged onto Abidjan ACC using correct code (DIII). Confirm logon active by checking uplink message response. Don't log onto Dakar (GOOO) by mistake.

Failed Logon: Manually log on to DIII if auto fails. Notify Abidjan by voice ASAP if unable to establish CPDLC connection. If practical, trouble shoot before entering.

Transition between Dakar and Abidjan: Monitor handoff carefully. Ensure CPDLC switches before crossing the boundary. Verify correct CPDLC connection is active, especially entering Abidjan airspace.

Have more questions about the SAT?

You can reach the **ICAO EUR/NAT** office directly via icaoeurnat@icao.int.

For ops in the region, you might also be interested in this little guide on the **South Atlantic Corridor** we wrote before. OPSGROUP members cash download it from the Dashboard here.

Winter Ops: Fun Fuel Facts

OPSGROUP Team
24 February, 2025

Fuel is to airplanes what coffee is to pilots – something you just cannot fly without. But just as there are different types of coffee, you're going to come across different types of fuel as well…

The Menu

Jet-A1 – The most traditional drink, it is straw coloured with a flash point of 38°C (100°F), and a freezing point of -47°C.

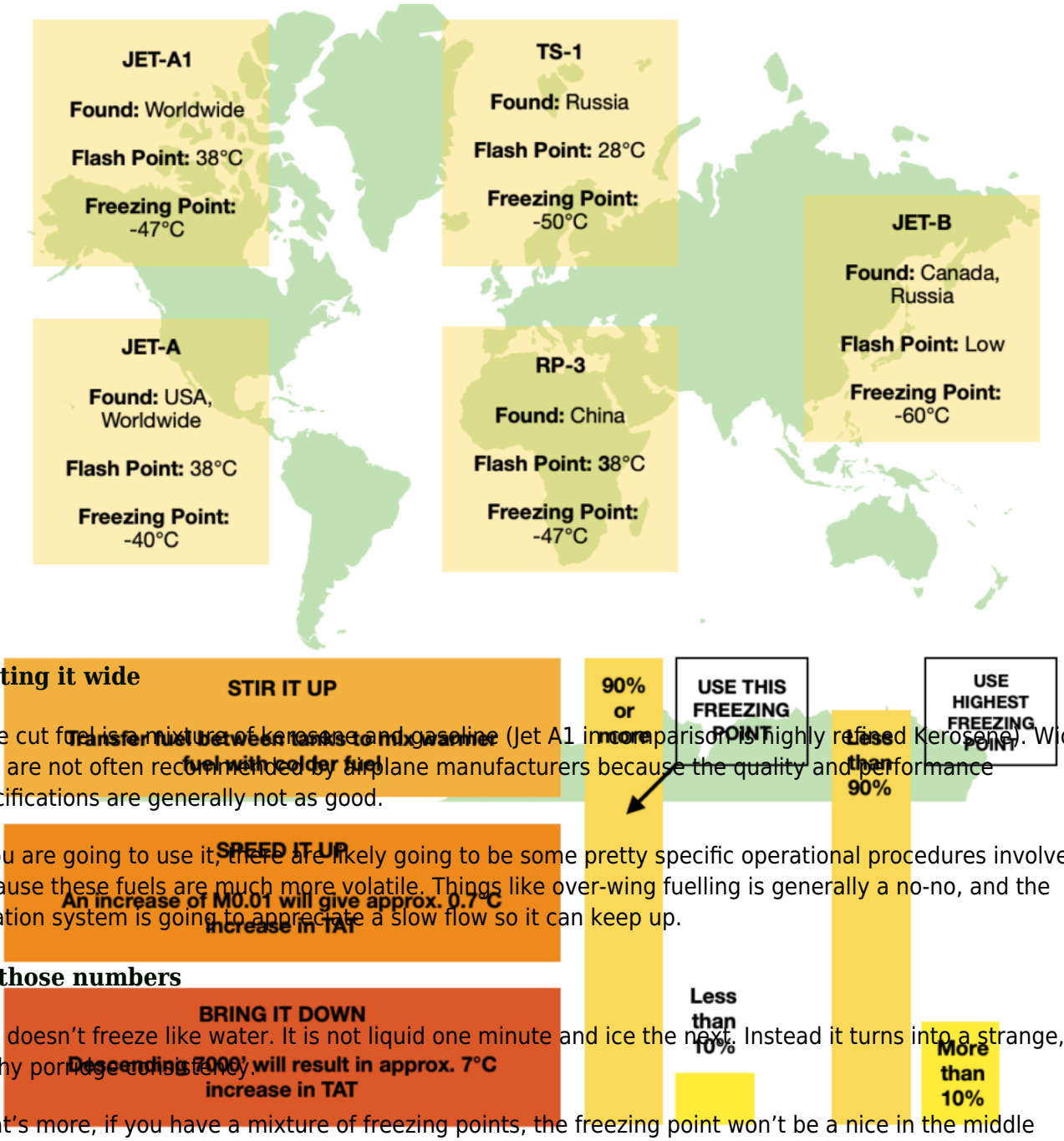
Jet A – Another tasty kerosine grade fuel which will work just fine. The flash point is the same but this turns into an icy slushie at only -40°C.

Jet B – A delicacy from the Northern Regions. This is a cocktail of kerosine and naphtha – the stuff dragons produce out their nostrils (ok, that is not true, but it might as well be because this stuff is hard to handle with its higher flammability). Wide cut, and only really used in colder climates, with its freezing point of -50°C.

TS-1 – A Russian cocktail, more flashy than most at 28°C, but with a freezing point of -50 °C. It is also sometimes called RT (which looks like PT when it is written in Russian). RT is a superior grade TS-1, but not widely available.

RP – Brewed in China, the RPs come in a variety of styles. RP-1 has a freezing point of -60°C, RP-2 -50°C, but it is RP-3 we really recommend because it is basically Western Jet-A1 produced at export grade.

Chip fat oil – Not literally, but if you fly into a remote airport in some regions you might find fuel is not of the standard required. Look out for anything that isn't straw coloured, doesn't smell right, or has things floating in it.



Cutting it wide

Wide cut fuel is a mixture of kerosene and gasoline (Jet A1 in comparison is highly refined Kerosene). Wide cuts are not often recommended by airplane manufacturers because the quality and performance specifications are generally not as good.

If you are going to use it, there are likely going to be some pretty specific operational procedures involved because these fuels are much more volatile. Things like over-wing fuelling is generally a no-no, and the filtration system is going to appreciate a slow flow so it can keep up.

All those numbers

Fuel doesn't freeze like water. It is not liquid one minute and ice the next. Instead it turns into a strange, slushy porridge consistency.

What's more, if you have a mixture of freezing points, the freezing point won't be a nice in the middle -44.5°C so the only reliable way to work this out when you've mixed a load together is to take a

measurement – assuming you're carrying your own Fuel Freezing Point Measuring Gadget…

If not, the next best method to use is this –

- **90% or more of your fuel is one type?** Use that freezing point.
- **89% or less of your fuel is one type?** Use the highest (worst case) freezing point.
- **You have 900 gallons of Jet A1 freezing at -47°C and 100 gallons of Jet A freezing at -40°C?** Then call it -47°C and be off on your merry way.
- **You have 899 gallons of Jet A1, and 101 gallons of Jet A?** Then take the highest freezing point which in this case would be Jet A at -40°C

Do we really care about freezing points of fuel?

Yes, very much so, especially if you are flying some long haul treks over the North Pole at high altitude in the winter.

With outside air temperatures lower than -60 degrees, freezing fuel can get you into some very hot water, (or cold fuel to be more accurate.)

In Jan 2008, British Airways Flight 38 crashed just short of the runway at EGLL/Heathrow after flying from Beijing, China. They had been cruising between FL350 and FL400, with OATs reported to be between -65 to -74°C. While the fuel itself never froze, it did become cold enough for ice crystals to form in the fuel system.

These pesky little ice particles blocked stuff up and reduced the fuel flow, starving the engines, and causing a big loss in thrust right when the pilots needed it.

What can we do about it?

Ultimately, you need to **turn up the temperature!** There are only a few ways to heat your fuel up if it starts getting too chilly:

Stir it Up – Unlike Bond who preferred his drinks shaken and not stirred, mixing cold fuel with warmer fuel makes it better. Some larger aircraft with complex fuel systems do this automatically, but if you are able to do so manually there will probably be a checklist and following it to avoid turning off the wrong pumps might be wise.

Speed it Up – Flying faster means more drag which means more energy converted into hotness. Not much though… an increase in Mach 0.01 will increase the TAT by around 0.7°C, and increasing your speed also increases your fuel burn.

Bring it Down – Warmer air will help, and by descending 7000' you can increase the TAT by around 7°C. In seriously cold air masses, descent to at least FL250 might be required, but this all means a much higher fuel burn.

Tanker? No thank ya…

Tankering fuel if you are operating into somewhere chilly might cause you some problems. The fuel is likely to get cold in flight, and up the likelihood of some frosty wings on the ground. So check the de-icing situation at your destination if you are tankering and it's cold out.

Some other useful info

- 1 imperial gallon = 1.2 US gallons.
- You can monitor the price of jet fuel here.

Swerving off the road: Why are pilots avoiding EMAS?

Chris Shieff
24 February, 2025

Update November 2024:

Over two years have passed since we first published this article on **EMAS**.

A recent report identified that **runway excursions** are still one the leading causes of business aviation accidents in the US – which has put this valuable technology back on our radar.

It's pleasing to see that the adoption of these life-saving blocks of crushable energy absorption has steadily continued to increase across the world including recent news that it is coming to Australasia for the first time.

The FAA now reports that EMAS is installed at 121 runway ends at seventy-one US airports and growing.

To date it has safely stopped twenty-two overrunning aircraft carrying 432 pax and crew – the latest, a Hawker 900XP at **KTEX/Telluride** back in July.

Outside of the US, a number of aviation authorities have introduced or are planning to install EMAS beds to **current US FAA standards** at airports in countries including the UK, Canada, France, Spain, China and

Taiwan.

A first for Australasia

Two promising pieces of news recently emerged from down under in recent months.

New Zealand is installing EMAS at two of its most challenging airports characterized by windshear, short runways and RESAs geographically constrained to the minimum 90 meters (295'). Both receive high volumes of jet traffic.

NZQN/Queenstown is currently in the process of installing EMAS at both runway ends. Work is happening at night and is expected to be completed soon.

Just last week, **NZWN/Wellington** announced it would follow suit, with major runway safety upgrades. It hopes to have EMAS in action by the end of March.

A familiar problem remains

If there is any doubt as to the effectiveness of EMAS, consider this. A typical EMAS installation in a 90m (295') RESA effectively increases its stopping power to the equivalent of 240m (787') – **that's nearly three-fold.**

And yet pilot awareness remains limited. There are no ICAO SARPs for EMAS. And the FAA's guidance is limited – the only advice for an imminent EMAS encounter is to maintain the extended runway centreline. And once stopped, don't try and taxi the aircraft.

The reality is that 90m from 70kts looks darn short – and vacant space on either side of the runway makes for an attractive option in the heat of the moment.

Pilots may simply not know it's there (how often do we brief EMAS?) or act out of instinct. Which means incidents are still occurring where we're **swerving to avoid it.**

More on that in our original article below.

Original Article:

Across the US alone, over one hundred runways at 71 airports have a safety critical system fitted to help prevent a major cause of aviation accidents – **runway overruns.**

It's called **EMAS**, or 'Engineered Materials Arresting System', which is a technical of way of using drag to safely stop an airplane when all else fails. And better yet, it has your back in **all runway conditions** – water, snow, ice, you name it. It's a proven life saver.

But the problem is there are still accidents happening where **pilots have actively avoided it**, instead choosing to veer off the runway.

Why?

IFALPA recently put out a new position paper which may provide some solid clues. And along with work that others have done, the reasons seem to fit into one of two camps:

- **Knowledge about what EMAS is and does.**
- **In the heat of the moment, pilots just didn't know it was there.**

For such an effective safety system that protects crew, passengers and even those on the ground, is it possible that we're just not giving it the attention it deserves?

Let's tackle both camps.

EMAS 101

Dip into the regs and you'll see that the US FAA requires all airports to have runway safety areas. They are typically 500 feet wide and extend 1000' past the runway end, and are clear of obstacles in case an aircraft either overruns, or undershoots. Sounds safe, right?

But what if there isn't enough space? Take KMDV/Chicago Midway for example. It's not always practical. That's where EMAS comes into it. It achieves a similar level of safety, only using a lot less room.

It is essentially a concrete bed (or 'arrestor pad') of increasing depth which contains thousands of blocks of crushable material that are designed to quickly slow down an aircraft with little or no damage – likely your nose wheel, and that's about it.

And it works really well too. In fact, it's so effective it can stop an aircraft travelling as fast as 70kts – which is a good thing as 90% of all overruns happen below this speed.

It's not even a big deal to replace it – it's *modular.* Only the blocks that have been damaged need to be changed out.

Grass and dirt

Some EMAS pads are only 150' long. When faced with obstacles like trees, buildings, and roads it's no wonder that **the instinct is to avoid ploughing straight ahead.**

Instead, the grass and dirt off the side of the runway begins to look like a very appealing option to slow an airplane down. And as the FAA itself once phrased it, *'there's a myth that if you take the dirt, you won't be on the news...'*

But the reality is that **EMAS will do a far better job** and with a safer outcome and less damage.

What about approach lights?

Lights on an EMAS arrestor pad are designed to break away and do **very little damage to your ride.**

You may not know it's even there

This is where IFALPA get really stuck in. **Some crew actively steered away from EMAS** simply because they didn't know, or forgot, that it was there.

Knowledge is one thing, but *you can't brief what you can't see.*

Yellow chevrons indicate an EMAS arrestor pad, but there is no standardised *signage* in place for it. Take a look a look again at the list of US airports with it installed – if you operate in and out of any of them, how often are you thinking about EMAS?

And the story doesn't end with signage either. What about approach and airport charts? Leading chart manufacturers indicate where EMAS is present on ground charts only. But not on approach charts – the argument is that it won't fit.

It seems as though the work hasn't been finished just yet. EMAS is really effective, but as an aircraft departs the runway, there just isn't enough time to figure out it's there or not. And that all starts with crew

awareness with the tools available when ops are normal.

Regulators in the US and abroad need to be doing more to illuminate this valuable piece of safety tech. At least five hundred lives have already likely been saved because of it.

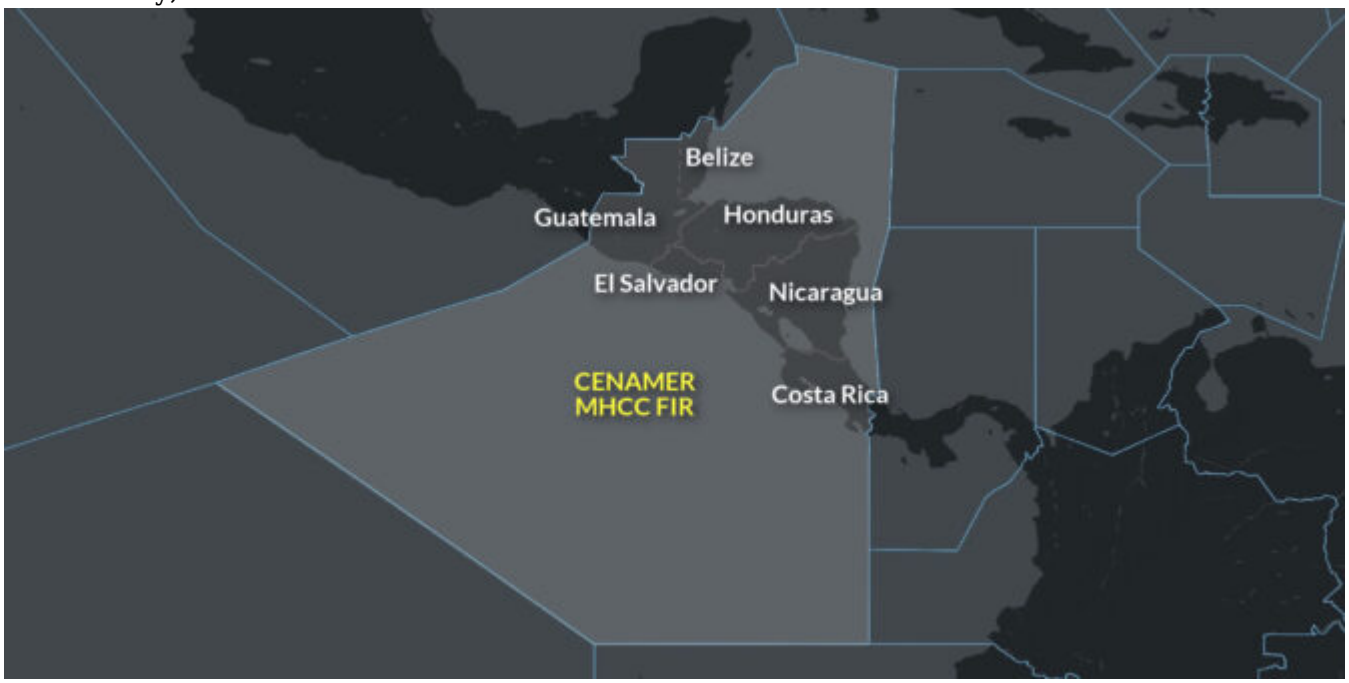
Knowledge is power

Which is certainly the case with EMAS. Combine both camps, and pilots (myself included) can understand how valuable an obscure sign that says 'EMAS' may be, and also know when it is available before you need it the most.

Only then will it live up to its full potential.

CENAMER Flight Planning Requirements

David Mumford
24 February, 2025



CENAMER is a combination of CENtral AMERican countries that work together as one for ATC Service. The controlling Authority is COCESNA. It's real name is the MHCC/Central American FIR – but most people just call it Cenamer. The actual controllers are in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, but control the airspace of **Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.**

Recent Updates

- **Dec 2024: ADS-B Mandates.** Two of the six countries in the MHCC/Cenamer FIR are mandating ADS-B at the end of 2024. Guatemala will require it from Dec 31 (AIC 44/24), and El Salvador from Jan 1 (AIC 46/24). None of the other countries (Belize, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua) have published any ADS-B mandates yet. You can download the AICs here. *Note that the airspace above FL195 for all these countries is controlled by MHCC/Cenamer ATC based in Honduras.*
- **Dec 2021: New Honduras airport.** All scheduled international flights were transferred from MHTG/Toncontin to MHPR/Palmerola – the new international airport in Honduras which commenced commercial operations in Dec 2021. MHTG/Toncontin will now be used for domestic flights, but is still available for international bizav flights. Check our article for more info.
- **Oct 2020: New AFTN code when filing flight plans.** For flights through the MHCC/Cenamer FIR above FL195 you must include the AFTN address MHFPZYZX. This is the address of a new automated system they've got, which will check if you've written your flight plan properly (i.e. according to ICAO standards). If you have, you'll get an ACKNOWLEDGE (ACK) or ACCEPTANCE message, and the system will then fire it off to all of the individual countries within the MHCC/Cenamer FIR that you'll be overflying/flying to. If you've got it wrong, you'll get a REJECTED (REJ) or ERROR message, with the reason why, and you'll have to file it again.

The fabled "Cenamer Notification"

For flights intending to operate within the MHCC/Cenamer FIR **require notification**. Every FIR worldwide requires the same thing, but because of the grouping of countries, the process is a little different here. A

pre-formatted AFTN message must be sent containing the flight details and planned schedule, to both the AIS office, and to the various billing departments.

The latter is most important, because it give them the opportunity to warn in advance if airspace entry will be denied because of **unpaid Navigation Fees**. The Cenamer Notification confirmation is normally in the format MPTOXXXX192330, being the originating AFTN address and a date/time stamp.

Notification Requirements

Notification: All flights entering the MHCC/Cenamer FIR must send notification 48 hours prior to entry.

Documents Required: None.

Lead Time: Official requirement is 48 hours before flight. Notification can be made up to 1 hour prior to airspace entry, but there is a risk that not all departments will have had time to process the message. Assuming there are no billing issues, denial of entry into the airspace is unlikely.

Validity: Once notification is made, there is no need to revise it for a new schedule. The Notification can be considered valid for 72 hours.

Permit Format: Confirmation is normally in the format MPTOXXXX192330, being the originating AFTN address and a datetime stamp. FPL Field 18 entry is not mandatory, but you can include it as PERMIT/CENAMER NOTIFICATION MPTOXXXX192330.

Do I need AFTN access to make this happen?

They do have this website where you can **check whether an aircraft reg has any outstanding payments:** https://apps.cocesna.org/fycbilling/pages/fyc/fycbilling.jsp

It also allows you to calculate the approximate cost of a flight depending on the point of entry and exit into the airspace. Then you can calculate the total cost (any outstanding fees + the fees for your upcoming flight) and pay online.

You can also **contact COCESNA direct** (facturacionycobros@cocesna.org, invoices@cocesna.org), in good time prior to the flight, requesting details of any outstanding navigation charges and a copy of the invoice. But their office is only open from 8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday, so you might not receive a reply right away to say that everything is paid. In this case, you'll need AFTN to file the Notification and to follow-up with any countries which reply to say you owe them nav fees.

Also – if you **don't** receive an email reply and there **are** outstanding charges, you'll only know about it when you come to file your flight plan, at which point you'll receive a reply on AFTN from the specific country (or countries!) you owe money to. At this point, you're at their mercy as to whether they **accept or reject your flight plan** – and you may not have time to pay for any outstanding charges. These individual countries won't email you, they'll send you a message via AFTN (to the same address you use to file the Notification).

Bottom line, whoever files your Notification (and then, later, your actual flight plan) **will need access to the AFTN system** so that they are able to reply to these messages as they come through – and to check to make sure that your flight plan is accepted! This is where using a third party agent for overflights in this region can come in handy, as they should manage this whole process for you and communicate with all the relevant countries via AFTN.

Which AFTN addresses do I send messages to, and what should I say?

Your message should read something like this:

```
CENAMER NOTIFICATION OF FLIGHT REF XXXX
PLEASE ADVISE IF ANY OBJECTION TO OPERATE

AIRCRAFT: XXXXX
CALLSIGN: XXXXX
TYPE: XXXXX
OPERATOR NAME: XXXXX
DATE OF FLIGHT: 20DEC2020

PLEASE CONFIRM RECEIPT OF THIS NOTIFICATION
PLEASE CONFIRM OK TO OPERATE BY AFTN TO (INSERT YOUR AFTN HERE)

SCHEDULE:
20DEC ETD KDEN1300 ETA SBGR2230

NAVIGATION FEES SETTLED BY: XXXXX
OPERATOR: XXXXX
EMAIL: XXXXX

COPY TO ALL CONCERNED:

MHCCYSYX/CENAMER CONTROL
MHCCZQZX/CENAMER CONTROL FPL
MHTGYAYX/HONDURAS CAA
MHTGYOYX/HONDURAS AIS
MHLMYGYX/HONURAS RCO
MROCYAYX/COSTA RICA CAA
MROCYOYX/COSTA RICA AIS
MROCYGYX/COSTA RICA RCO
MNMGYAYX/NICARAGUA CAA
MNMGYOYX/NICARAGUA AIS
MNMGYGYX/NICARAGUA RCO
MSLPYGYX/EL SALVADOR RCO
MSSSYAYX/EL SALVADOR CAA
MSSSYOYX/EL SALVADOR AIS
MGGTYAYX/GUATEMALA CAA
MGGTYOYX/GUATEMALA AIS
MGGTYGYX/GUATEMALA RCO
MZBZYAYX/BELIZE CAA
MZBZYGYX/BELIZE RCO
```

And here’s the list of AFTN addresses to send it to:

```
MHCCYSYX
MHCCZQZX
MHTGYAYX
MHTGYOYX
MHLMYGYX
MROCYAYX
MROCYOYX
```

MROCYGYX
MNMGYAYX
MNMGYOYX
MNMGYGYX
MSLPYGYX
MSSSYAYX
MSSSYOYX
MGGTYAYX
MGGTYOYX
MGGTYGYX
MZBZYAYX
MZBZYGYX

Is the Cenamer Notification the same as an Overflight Permit?

No. It's important to note that this is **not a permit**, this is just to ensure the Cenamer countries receive notification of your planned flight, and can check for any unpaid Navigation Fees. Each individual country in this region requires an **overflight permit** as well (except for El Salvador and Costa Rica, if you're operating a private flight).

For more information on permit requirements, OPSGROUP members can use the dedicated Permits App in your Dashboard. If you're not a member, you can get a copy of the same information in our Permit Book, or alternatively, join OPSGROUP here!

Dodging Danger: The Three Routes Through the Middle East

Chris Shieff
24 February, 2025

Navigating the airspace of the **Middle East** has become a major headache for international operators.

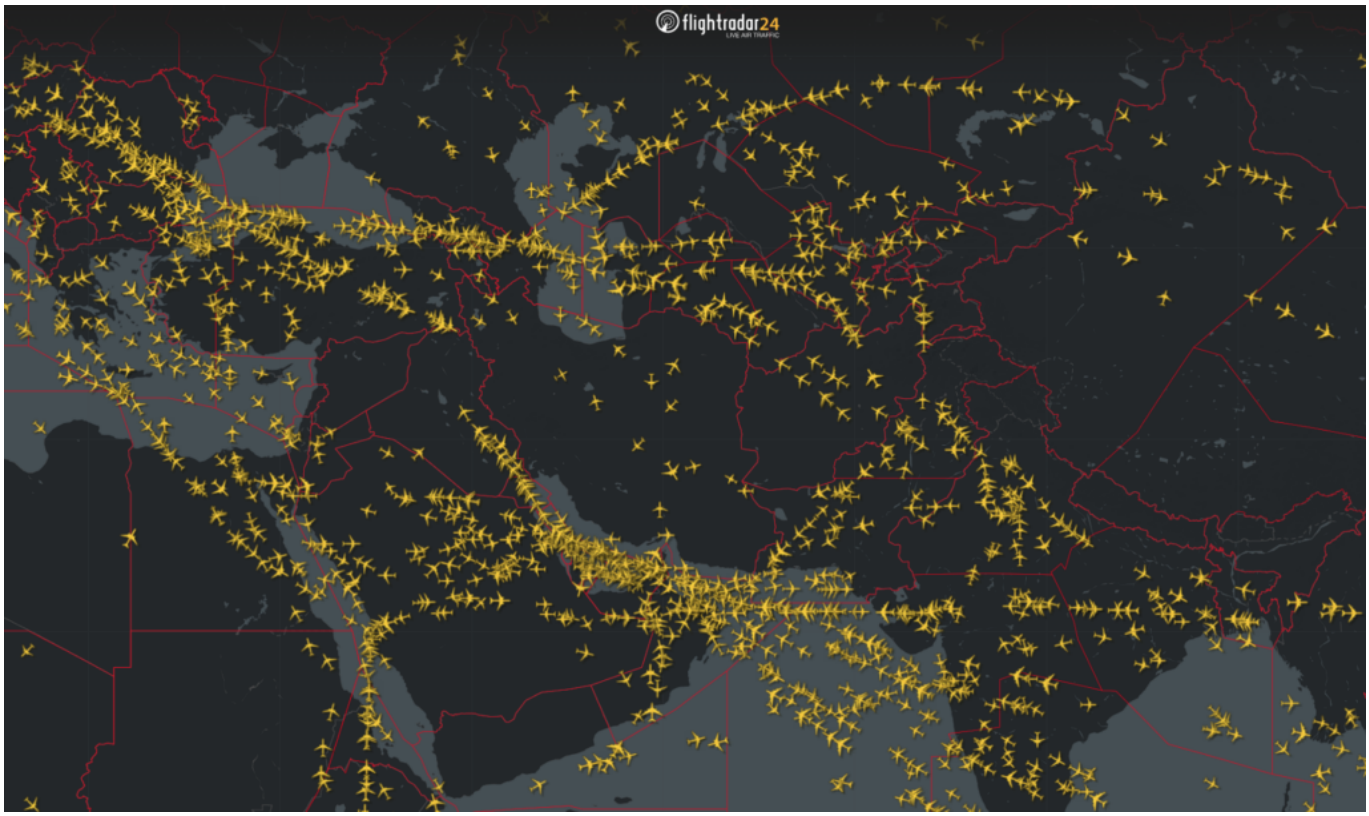
In recent times, risk to civil aviation in the region has changed at a pace we have never seen before.

Transits are now faced with a common conundrum: it no longer seems to be a simple question of *'is this route safe?'* but instead, of one's own appetite for known risks.

There simply is **no 'risk-zero' route available.**

Therefore, a common question that bizav operators are asking OPSGROUP is '*what are the major airlines doing?'* A snapshot of flight tracking right now shows that Middle Eastern transits are managing risk through the use of three distinct routes:

- **South** via Saudi Arabia and Egypt
- **Central** via Eastern Iraq and Turkey.
- **North** via the Stans and the Caspian Sea.



This article provides a **brief risk profile** for each of these routes to help operators carry out their own risk assessments when choosing a route to fly.

A Note About Risk

OPSGROUP also runs safeairspace.net – a database of all **state-issued airspace warnings**, along with risk briefings for each country in plain simple English.

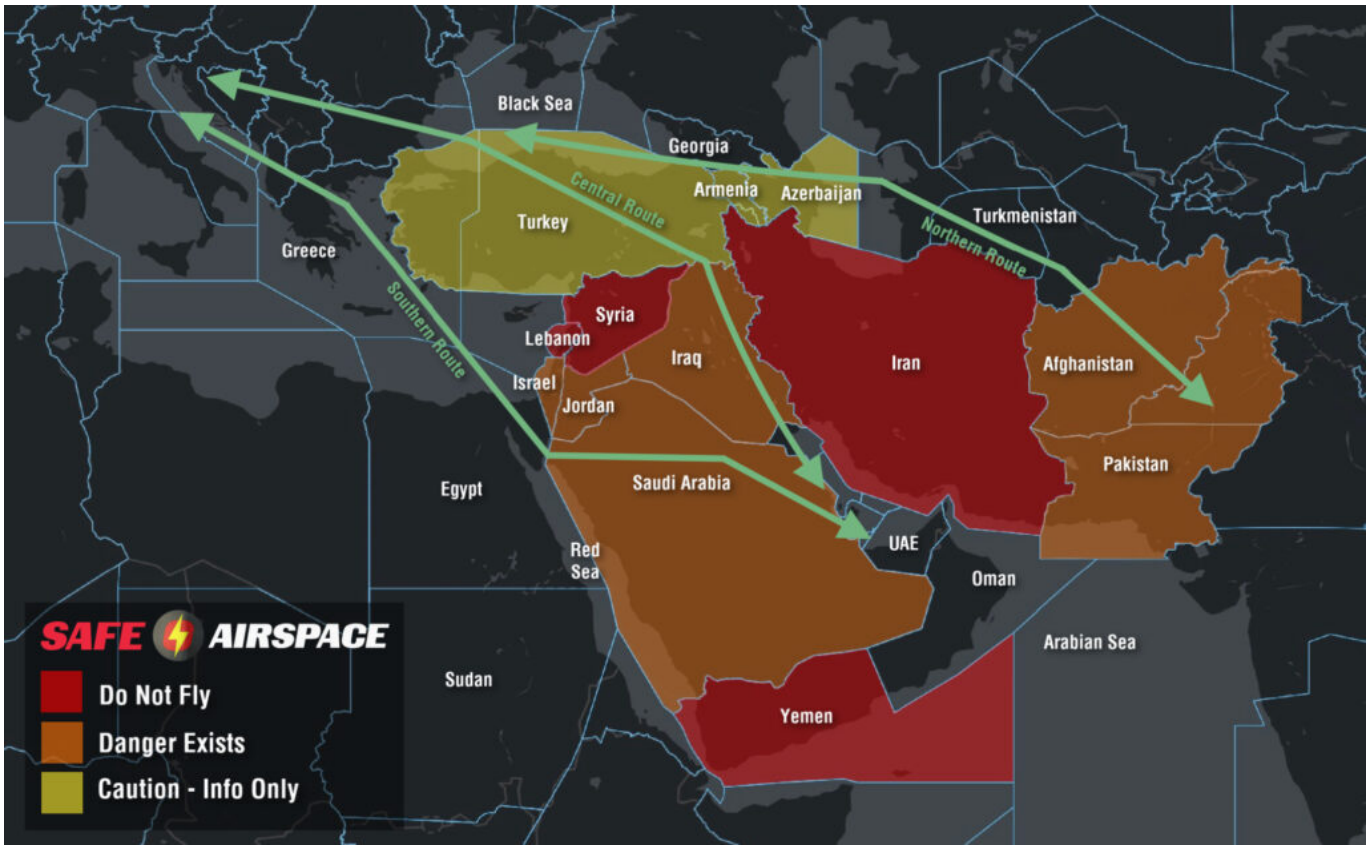
We take into account both official advisories, recent and past events, advice from other specialists and potential for emerging risk when making a risk assessment.

To keep things simple we have three levels:

- **Level 1 Do Not Fly (Red)**
- **Level 2 Danger Exists (Orange)**
- **Level 3 Caution (Yellow).**

None of the three routes above enter any country's airspace we have classified as 'Do Not Fly.'

For the rest, you'll see the map below is color coded according to the same risk profile.



The Southern Route

This route begins with a lengthy crossing of Saudi Arabia, steering clear of Israeli and Lebanese airspace to the north before crossing the Red Sea into Egypt.

It's considered advantageous because it keeps tracks miles down (compared to the Northern Route) and avoids the potential for a sudden escalation of hostilities between **Israel** and **Iran.**

From a contingency perspective, it also provides **safer diversion options** than a transit of Iraq.

But now for the more-risky stuff.

The Houthi Campaign:

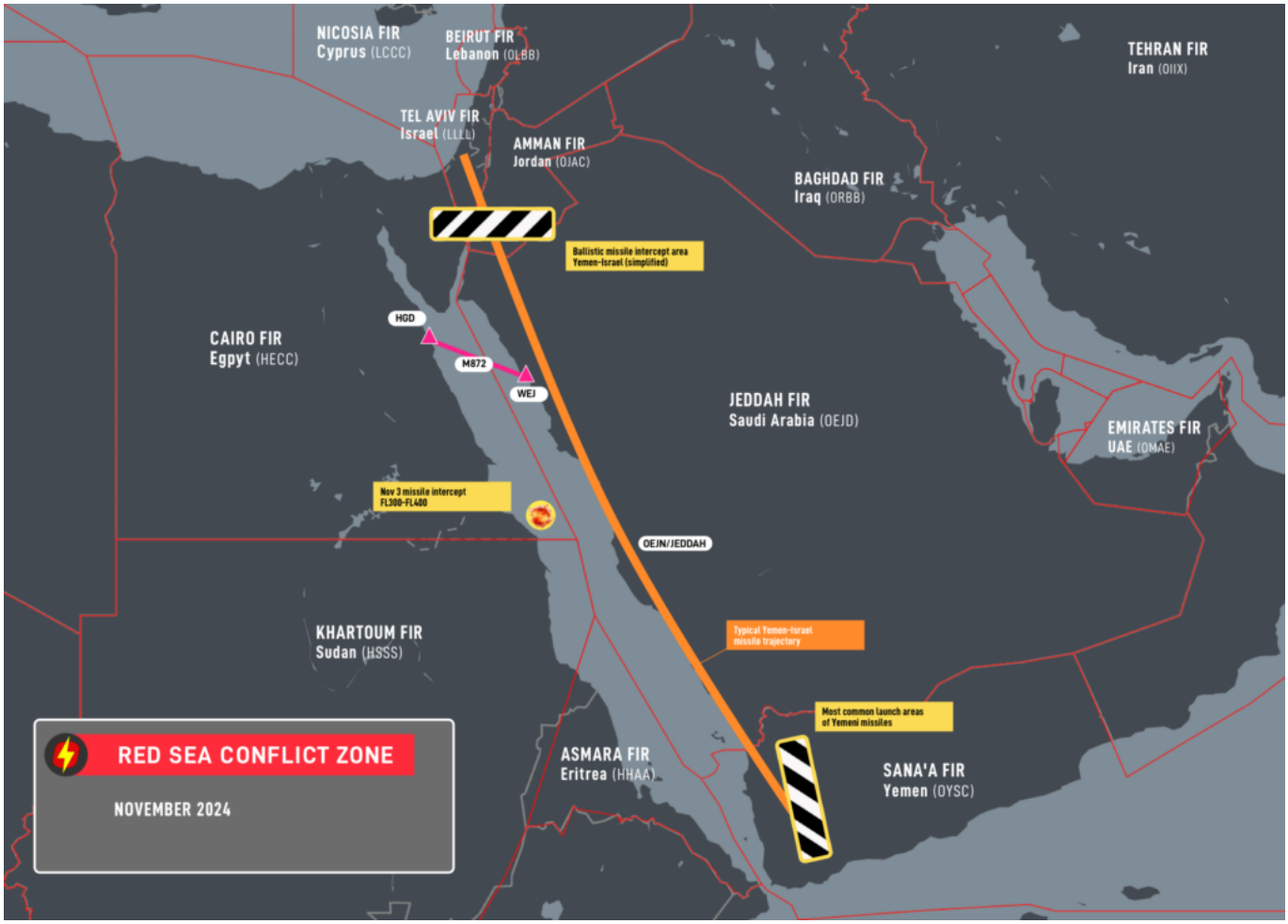
There is currently heightened risks to civil aviation in this area.

Houthi Rebels in **Yemen** are currently engaged in a long-term campaign to use **missiles and drones** to target Israel (therefore infringing the Jeddah FIR) along with shipping channels in the **Red Sea.**

The military response to these activities is the use of **air defence systems** to destroy them.

The latest incident occurred on Nov 3, where a crew witnessed the interception of a missile at a similar

level in open airspace near **Jeddah**. OPSGROUP members can access a special briefing on this latest event here.



Of particular concern to aircraft at altitude is the use of ballistic missiles which originate from Western Yemen and are destroyed by defensive intercepts while on descent toward their target – which puts the airspace of **Northern Saudi Arabia** at heightened risk given its proximity to Israel and Gaza.

This essentially creates three risks to overflying aircraft – a direct hit by a missile (extremely unlikely), debris fields from inflight break ups or successful interceptions, and **misidentification**.

For the latter, many well-known incidents affecting civil aviation have come from **mistaken identity**. Malaysia 17, Ukraine 752 and Iran Air 652 were all due to misidentification.

Egypt ATC Congestion:

OPSGROUP has received several recent member reports of **severe frequency congestion** in the Cairo FIR apparently due to ATC overload.

One crew even reported that during an entire portion between the North Coast of Egypt to the Red Sea (MMA – M872 – SILKA) that they were **unable to talk to ATC.**

The corridor is much busier than usual which may present latent threats. Good airmanship at this time would be to keep a close eye on TCAS, ensure all anti-collision lights are on and consider the use of a PAN call if a deviation becomes necessary without a clearance.

We have approached both the Egyptian CAA and ANSP for feedback and have yet to receive a response. If you have experienced this yourself in the **HECC/Cairo FIR**, please get in touch with us at team@ops.group.

The Central Route

This more conventional route tracks northwards along the Persian Gulf before an extended transit of **Eastern Iraq** using the UM860 and UM688 airways which run parallel to Iranian airspace before crossing **Turkey** and a southern portion of the **Black Sea.**

The overriding question from this route is *"is it safe to overfly Iraq?"*

In our opinion, yes but with some disclaimers.

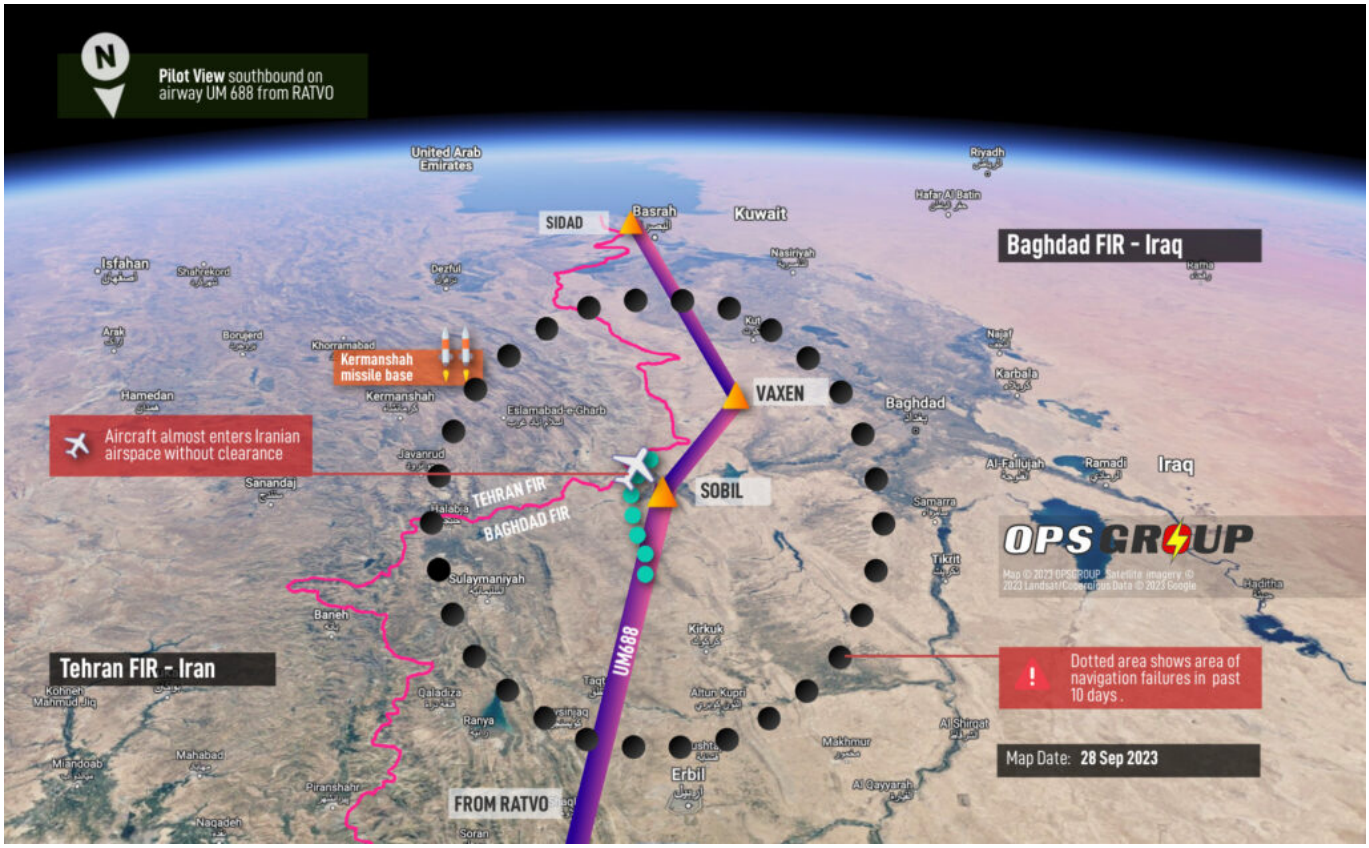
UM860/UM688 Airways:

The UM860/UM688 have been **considered safe** for a long time. And prior to 2021, remained the only option available for **US operators** to enter the **Baghdad FIR** at all.

They continue to see heavy traffic by major carriers and can be considered a viable option.

When using them, an important consideration is their **proximity to Iranian airspace.** Due to the recent escalation in hostilities between Israel and Iran, many states prohibit operators from entering the Tehran FIR due the risk of anti-aircraft fire at all levels.

Extensive **GPS interference** (including spoofing) can be expected in Northern Iraq and on at least one occasion has led an aircraft to almost inadvertently enter Iranian airspace without a clearance.



Extra vigilance for the early signs of GPS interference is essential for the safety of this route, along with early notification to air traffic control if it is suspected. Radar vectors remain your best fail safe.

Also beware of the potential for sudden closures of the **ORBB/Baghdad FIR** should further fighting occur between Israel and Iran. It closed completely during recent Israeli airstrikes and remains geographically sandwiched between the two, along with Jordan and Syria.

Free Routing:

In 2021, the FAA changed the rules. A new SFAR was issued that allowed N-reg overflights anywhere in Iraqi airspace, provided they're conducted **at or above FL320**, which has opened-up new options for free routing.

Great for fuel, but arguably not safety. We continue to advise against flights away from the above airways due to well publicized risks of militant and terrorist activity which may target civil aircraft with **anti-aircraft weaponry.**

They may also be misidentified by air defense systems targeting drones which are frequently used to conduct attacks in Northern Iraq that originate from Turkey and Iran.

Crew and passenger safety is also an important concern should an emergency landing be required.

Turkey (beware of GPS interference):

We maintain a low-risk rating of caution for Turkey. As two of the three routes in this article include a lengthy overflight of the country, it is worth touching upon why any risk rating has been applied at all.

There is minor risk to overflights from misidentification by local militia who infrequently target Turkish military aircraft with anti-aircraft weaponry. This risk is predominantly near the border with Syria and Iraq where a higher level of airborne military traffic and UAS is present.

Far more prevalent is GPS interference – there have been frequent reports of both jamming and spoofing

by aircraft well inside Turkish airspace. It appears to be common throughout the LTAA/Ankara FIR, especially anywhere near the border with Iran or Iraq. PIREPs also extend to Turkish airspace over the Black Sea. Reports share very similar symptoms: Un-commanded turns, position errors, and multiple GPWS warnings. The spoofed locations tend to center on Sevastopol on the Crimean Peninsula – a difference of between 120-250nm from the actual aircraft position. OPSGROUP members can access a special briefing on this hazard here.

The Northern Route

This is the route being favored between destinations in Europe and India/South East Asia.

It begins with a transit of Pakistan, before an uncontrolled crossing of Afghanistan and into Turkmenistan. A westerly turn is then made cross the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey before rejoining the central route over the Black Sea.

While a fairly conservative option, it is the longest in terms of track miles.

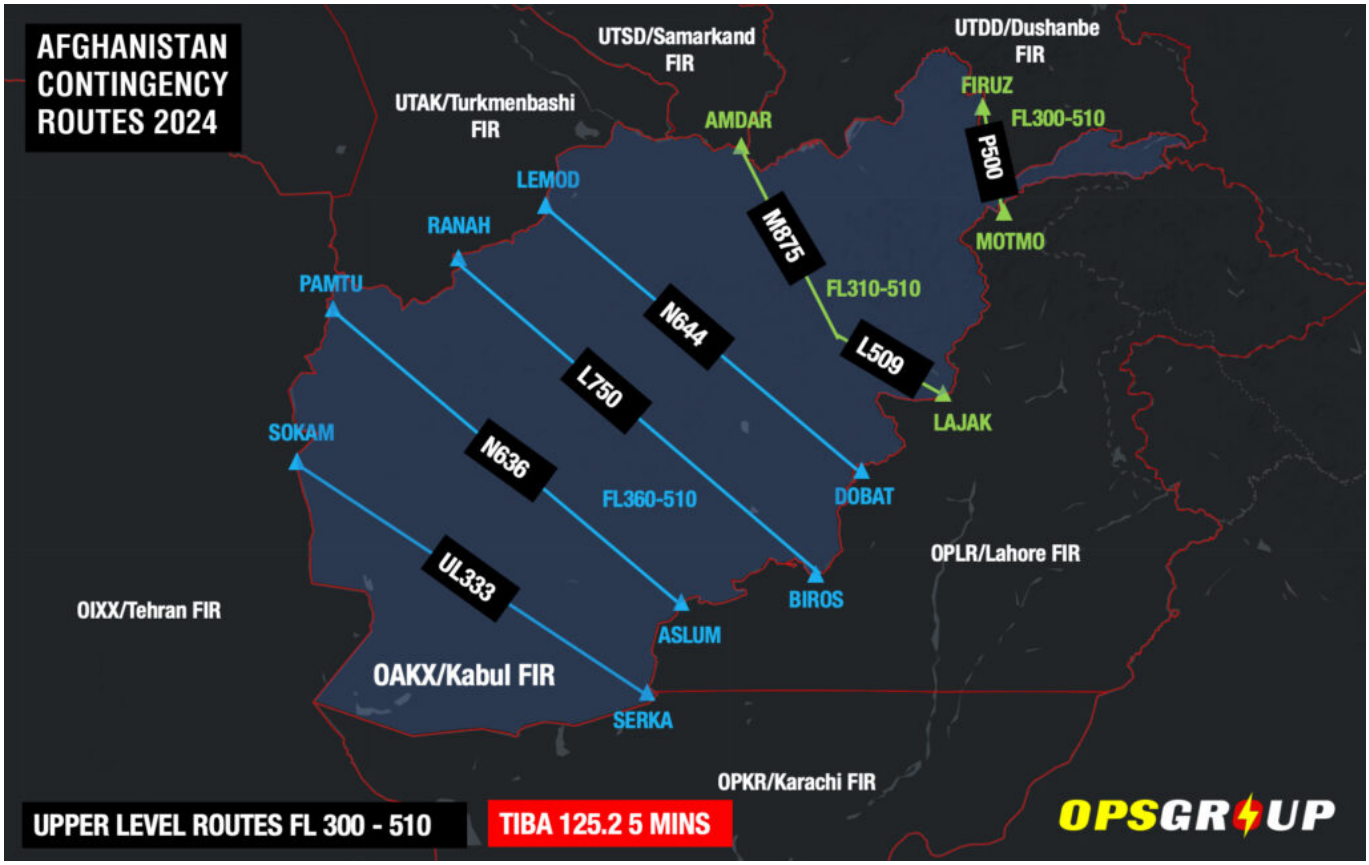
Afghanistan:

For all intents and purposes, airspace safety in the **Kabul FIR** has not changed since the Taliban re-assumed control of the country in late September 2021.

The entire FIR remains **uncontrolled** and there is no guarantee of crew or passenger safety if you need to land. In that sense it remains the most important consideration in the selection of this route.

With that said, adjacent FIRs are managing the entry and exit of traffic and separating them with miles-in-trail and level restrictions.

Once inside, fairly robust contingency procedures (including the use of TIBA) appear to be working, with major carriers the likes of Lufthansa and KLM making **safe crossings** every day.



Aside from potential **insurance complications** of extended flight in uncontrolled airspace, it seems the predominant risk for overflights is what happens if you have an emergency and **need to divert.**

The overriding consensus (along with common sense) is **don't land in Afghanistan.** In our recent article we explained it would be wise to consider it akin to ditching i.e. a last resort. Careful consideration of critical fuel scenarios to clear the Kabul FIR in event of de-pressurization, engine failure or both is essential to moderate this risk.

Azerbaijan and Armenia:

We maintain a level of caution for overflights of these countries given their history of conflict, but for now the risk to overflights remains low.

A ceasefire agreement is in place, and most states have lifted their airspace warnings for the **YDDD/Yerevan** and **UBBA/Baku FIRs**.

When sporadic fighting has occurred, it has been confined to border regions. A contingency to keep to mind is the use of northerly waypoints BARAD, DISKA and ADEKI to avoid the area and **transit from Azerbaijan through Georgia instead.**

Stay Informed

The situation in the Middle East has recently proven that **airspace risk can change quickly and without warning.**

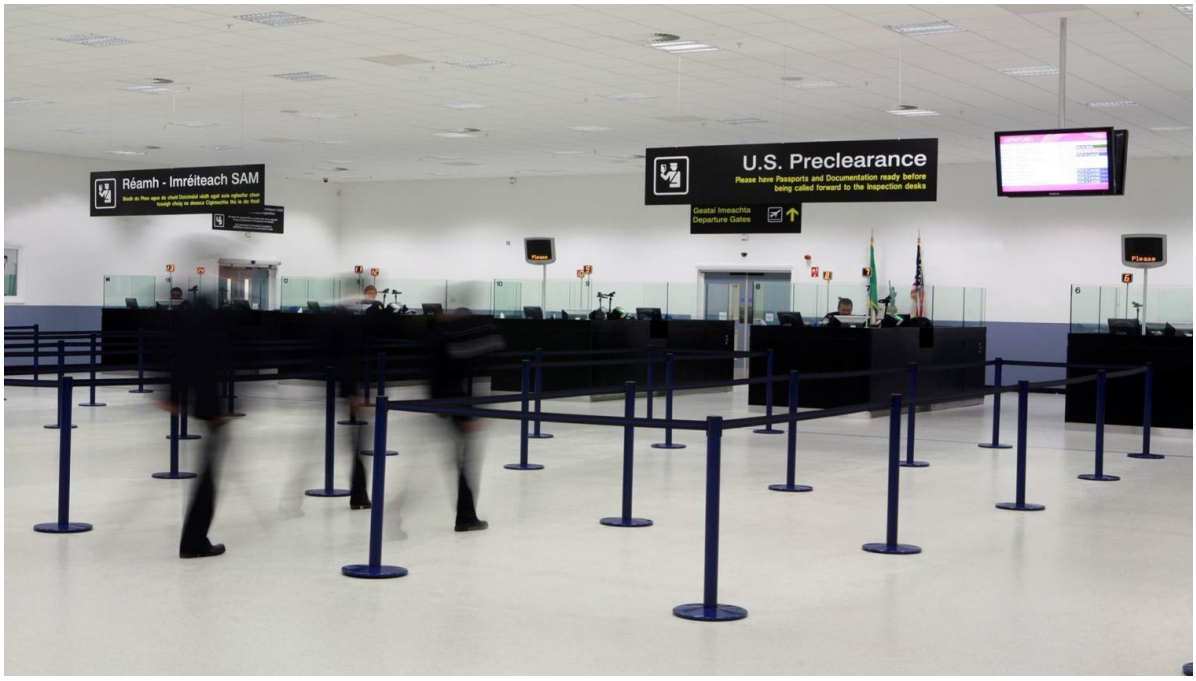
Overflights need to stay informed and have good contingencies in place to manage unexpected re-routes and airspace closures, along with suitable diversion airports.

OPSGROUP issues Ops Alerts for members on a daily basis, but our risk and security alerts are also available for free on safeairspace.net which our team keeps updated around the clock.

If you have more questions, you can get in touch with us on team@ops.group. We'd love to hear from you.

US Pre-Clearance: How does it work?

David Mumford
24 February, 2025



What is US Customs and Border Protection Pre-Clearance?

This service basically allows aircraft flying from certain approved airports direct to the US to complete their entry procedures at their departure airport – instead of on arrival in the US.

Where can I do it?

If you're a bizav flight (i.e. private or charter), you can only do it at **EINN/Shannon** and **TNCA/Aruba.**

Scheduled airline flights can do it at these airports too:

- ***The United Arab Emirates*** *– OMAA/Abu Dhabi*
- ***The Bahamas*** *– MYGF/Freeport or MYNN/Nassau*
- ***Bermuda*** *– TXKF/Bermuda*
- ***Canada*** *– CYYC/Calgary, CYEG/Edmonton, CYHZ/Halifax, CYUL/Montreal, CYOW/Ottawa, CYYZ/Toronto, CYVR/Vancouver, or CYWG/Winnipeg*
- ***Ireland*** *– EIDW/Dublin*

Where can I fly to in the US once I've Pre-Cleared?

Turns out it's not that easy to find a list of US airports approved for the arrival of Pre-Cleared aircraft. But thanks to Signature FBO at EINN/Shannon, here is a copy:

Finding a list of US International Airports of Entry is pretty easy, just go to the CBP website and use their interactive map. But it's worth noting that **not all US International Airports of Entry are on the list of those approved to accept Pre-Cleared flight**s, due to lack of agriculture agreements, and/or local CBP agreements there.

How does Pre-Clearance work in reality?

US CBP has published this guide on exactly **how the Pre-Clearance service works**, but here's the lowdown:

1. **Request the service with CBP** – Get in touch with CBP telling them that you want to do it! Pass them a bunch of information – details about the flight, passengers and crew. You can do this step through your ground handler (recommended).
2. **Submit APIS** – Slightly tricky here, because for Pre-Clearance you have to submit this no less than one hour before the scheduled Pre-Clearance processing time itself, rather than the departure time from the Pre-Clearance airport. For example, you want to fly from EINN-KALB at 2pm, and you've got your Pre-Clearance set up for 1pm, so that means you need to file your APIS no later than 12pm!
3. **Pre-Clearance approval** – US CBP will email notice of approval, including the appointment confirmation number.
4. **The Pre-Clearance procedure** – When you arrive at the Pre-Clearance airport, CBP will conduct the same procedures as if you were at an airport in the US. Travelers and luggage are screened and the aircraft is inspected.
5. **Departure** – Crew, passengers and luggage board the aircraft, and off you go. (And remember – no opening of any aircraft doors from this point before departure!) The kindly CBP chaps you've just dealt with will zap your info across to their counterparts at whichever US airport you're flying to, so everything should be nice and smooth on arrival.
6. **Arrival** – Upon arrival in the US, bag up your garbage for CBP to collect. Note that if you have to land somewhere other than where you said you'd be landing in your APIS, Pre-Clearance approval will be voided and you'll have to go through the normal entry process.

Remember, if you're a bizav flight, you can only do Pre-Clearance at EINN/Shannon Airport or TNCA/Aruba. So here's some info specific to both of these airports…

Pre-Clearance at EINN/Shannon

One of the FBOs there is **Signature Aviation**, and they have provided a summary of what you can expect when you Pre-Clear, with a few more details than the basic summary above. You can download the PDF here, but key points are: you must give 24hrs notice, and the CBP office opening hours are 0900-1700 local each day with out of hours available between 0700-0900 and 1700-2100 local. You can contact them at snn@signatureflight.ie.

Pre-Clearance at TNCA/Aruba

Jet TNCA is the only FBO at Aruba, and they can provide Pre-Clearance to bizav flights. They need 24hrs notice, it costs $315, and CBP there are open from 0930-1100 and 1530-1700 local time each day (not available on afternoons at weekends). You can find more info here, and contact them at ops@jet-tnca.com.

A note on the US Virgin Islands

Technically, airports in the Virgin Islands "offer" this service too, but it's not really Pre-Clearance in the same sense as at EINN and TNCA – here it's actually more of a requirement than an optional extra. The US CBP say the following:

For flights leaving the USVI enroute to other United States locations, GA aircraft operators are required to contact CBP in the USVI prior to departure. Aircraft cannot be moved from the U.S. Virgin Islands to other U.S. locations until CBP Agriculture Specialists (CBPAS) have:

- *had the opportunity to inspect the aircraft;*

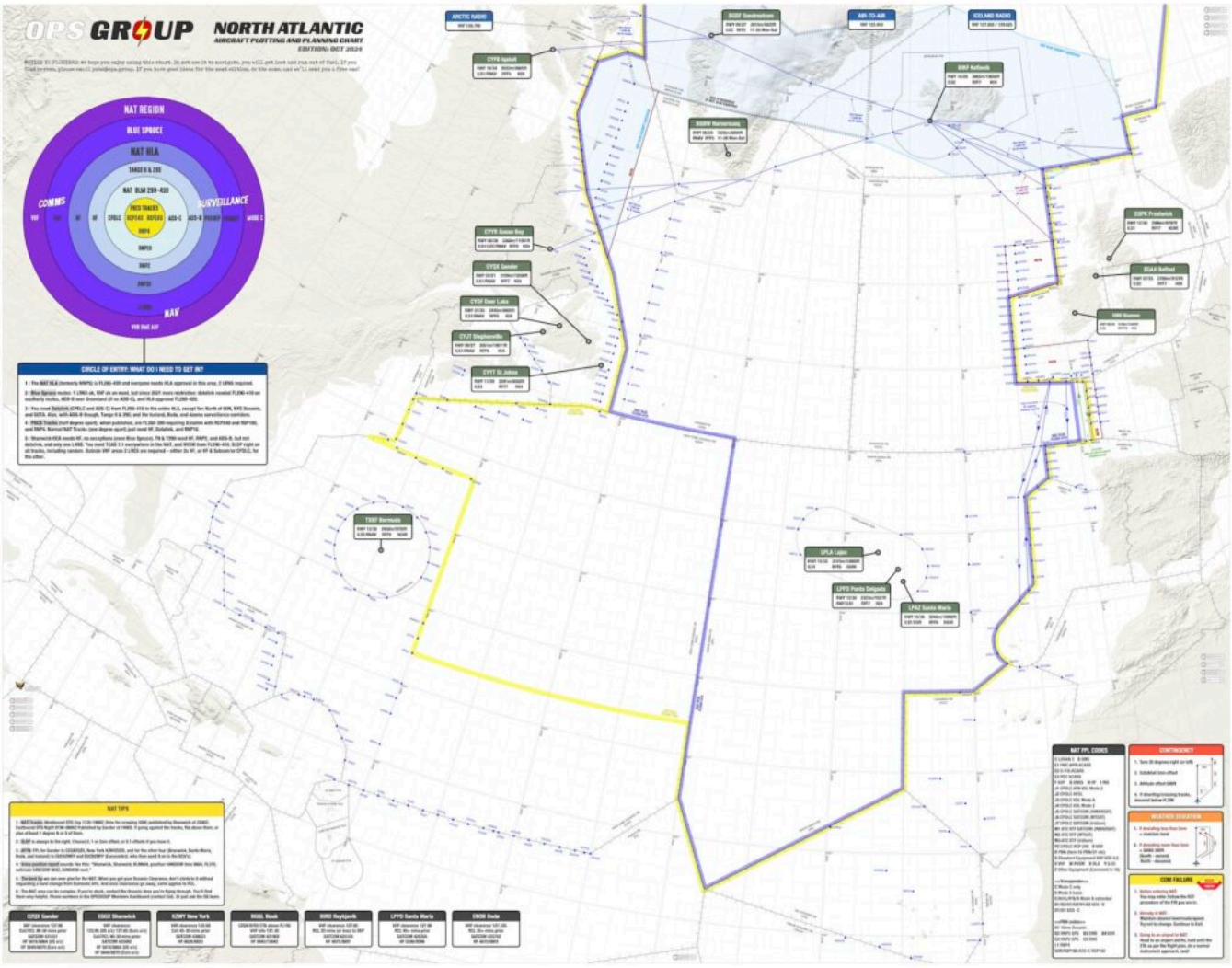
- *crew, and passengers; and*
- *the CBPAS has provided clearance for departure from the USVI.*

Standard Aviation FBO at TIST/St Thomas say that Customs requires a minimum notice of 2hrs in advance of the appointment time. Appointments are available 7 days a week from 0800-1630 local, and it costs $250. Contact them at ops@sa-stt.com.

2025 North Atlantic Plotting & Planning Chart

David Mumford
24 February, 2025

The new OPSGROUP NAT/North Atlantic Plotting and Planning Chart 2025 is released today! This is our chart showing North Atlantic Oceanic Airspace and adjoining domestic airspace, with easy to read NAT Tips, Airspace Requirements, Emergency Procedures, and much more!



OPSGROUP members – you can grab a copy in your Dashboard. View it on your iPad or Laptop etc. as a PDF, or print it out! If you're not a member, read on for how to get a copy…

Changes in this NEW edition (Oct 2024):

- **FULLY UDPATED** for 2025!
- **UPDATED!** NAT Tips – using NAT Tracks, SLOP, filing an Oceanic Flight Plan, and helpful tips.
- **UPDATED!** Quick reference for contingency, weather, and comms failure with easy graphics.
- **UPDATED!:** NAT Airspace Circle of Entry 2025 – easily check what you need for Nav, Comms and ATC Surveillance depending on which bit of the NAT you will be flying through.
- **Additional** diversion airports, now 16 total primary NAT alternates with runway, approach, length, RFF, and hours.
- **Easy view** of boundaries for HLA and DLM/Datalink mandated airspace.
- **Updated** NAT FPL codes, clearance frequencies, Satcom, and HF.
- **Fully updated** "South East Corner" with new Tango routes.
- and … Treasure Boxes!

Other chart features:

- Requirements for NAT tracks, PBCS tracks, datalink mandate.
- Common NAT Diversion Airports.
- Runway Orientation, Length, best IFR Approach.
- RFF Category and Opening hours.
- NAT FPL Codes and sample FPL.
- Blue Spruce routes and equipment requirements.
- All NAT Entry/Exit points with associated required landfall fixes.

There are two options to download a copy of the NAT Chart:

OPSGROUP Members

You can get it in your Dashboard, under **Briefings and Guides**.

Get it from the OPSGROUP Store

Not a member? Get a copy from the **OPSGROUP Store**.

Member Meetup – NAT Special: Nov 6, 1500 UTC

David Mumford
24 February, 2025

Member Meetup November 2024

- November 6, 1500 UTC
- North Atlantic Special
- Release of 2025 NAT Guide and NAT Plotting/Planning Chart
- **Non-members welcome** to attend this one (see below)

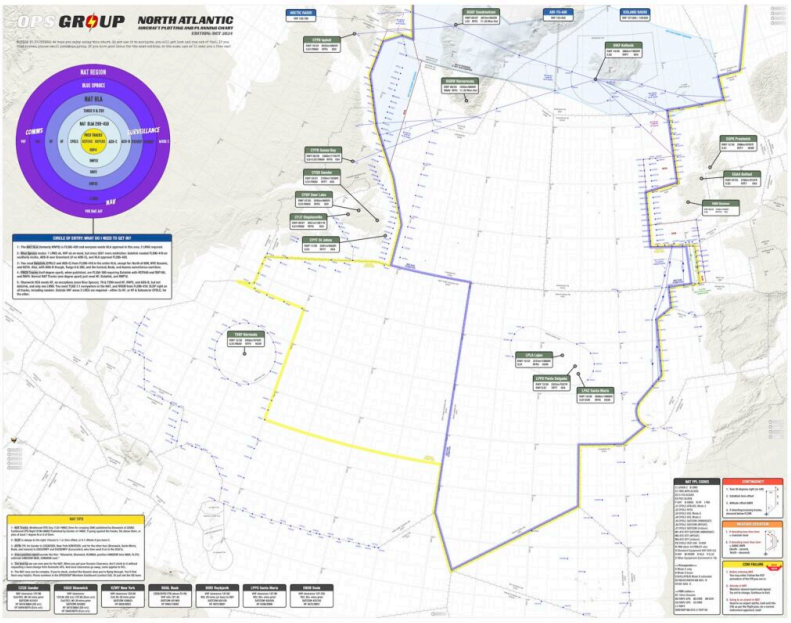
Member Meetup November 2024

Hi everyone! This months OPSGROUP Member Meetup has a special focus: the North Atlantic (NAT), and upcoming changes. This will be the final monthly meetup for 2024. (□□□)

Here is the running order of topics – yes, a long list!

- Blue Spruce Routes removal.
- Oceanic Clearance Removal (Shanwick/Gander) coming up on Dec 4th.
- PBCS Half-Track usage.
- Use of RNP4 on the NAT, more than advertised.
- Current “Hot Errors” to avoid.
- FL280 operations.
- New NAT Doc 007 scheduled for March 2025.

- **New OPSGROUP NAT Chart 2025** released today! (download your copy here)



We'll also look at:

- New ICAO Doc 4444 coming later this month.
- FF-ICE.
- Greeland big changes for ETOPS/Alternate availability.
- OPSGROUP NAT Guide 2025 walk-through.

Join fellow members to say hello, meet some new people, discuss the latest in international ops, and get the latest from the OPSGROUP Team.

OPSGROUP Members

Save your spot: Register here!

OPSGROUP Member Meetup: **November 6th 1500 UTC** (on Zoom)
In local times: 10am, New York / 3pm, London / 4pm, Amsterdam / 7pm, Dubai

Non-Members

For this particular NAT Special, we are inviting non-members to participate. The North Atlantic update portion is open to everyone.

OPSGROUP NAT Special: **November 6th 1500 UTC** (on Zoom)
In local times: 10am, New York / 3pm, London / 4pm, Amsterdam / 7pm, Dubai

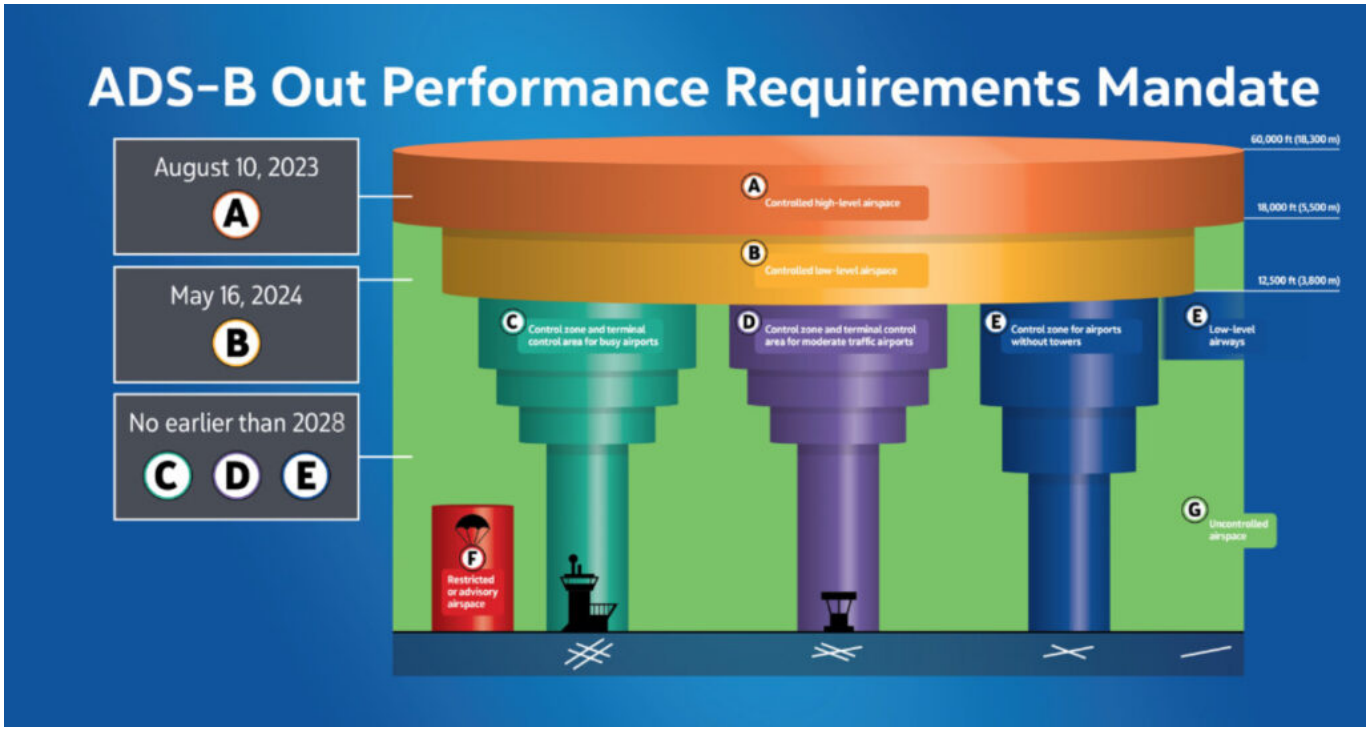
Use **this link** to register for the call.

Canada ADS-B Mandate

Chris Shieff
24 February, 2025

Key Points

- **ADS-B became mandatory in Canadian Class A airspace in Aug 2023 (above FL180). It then became mandatory in Class B airspace (above FL125) in May 2024. Mandates in any Class C, D and E airspace will be determined no sooner than 2028.**
- **You need an antenna able to broadcast to ADS-B receivers both on the ground and in space, and you need to include some extra stuff on your flight plan.**
- **If you don’t have ADS-B, you have to apply for an exemption online from NavCanada.**



What equipment do I need?

- A transponder with **ADS-B out capability** that meet the minimum performance standards (or better) found in this fancy document. This needs to be attached to an antenna that can broadcast to ADS-B receivers both on the ground, and in space.
- You can also find more on this in section 551.103 of the **Canadian Aviation Regulations.**

Extra Flight Planning Requirements

- If you plan on entering airspace where the ADS-B mandate applies, there is some extra stuff you need to include in item 10b of your **ICAO flight plan** (assuming you have all the right gear on board).
- Use the code **B1** if you have ADS-B Out only, or **B2** if you have ADS-B In *and* Out.
- You'll also need to include **SUR/CANMANDATE** in item 18.
- **One other gotcha** – make sure the flight identification (flight number or aircraft reg) broadcast by your ADS-B equipment exactly matches the one used in item 7 of your flight plan. Lest there be trouble down the track!

My ride doesn't have this fanciness. What are my options?

- NavCanada will do their best to accommodate aircraft who don't have the right gear on board, in the same way they'll work to fit non-transponder equipped aircraft into transponder mandatory airspace.
- They'll assess each application on a **first-come, first-served basis.** It takes time to figure out behind the scenes, and so you'll need to ask **at least three business days** before your flight.
- There may also be suggested re-routes to make your request possible, along with special comments to include in Item 18 of your flight plan.

- **You can apply for an exemption online, here.** If you have a number of flights to operate, you can also submit a blanket request via service@navcanada.ca.

More Info

You can find that in the Canadian AIP (ENR 1.6.3), or even better – this page from NavCanada dedicated to the ADS-B Mandate. This includes a fairly extensive FAQ section at the bottom.

Bizav Roadblock: Turkey and Armenia

Chris Shieff
24 February, 2025

UPDATE 30 Oct 2024:

- **Turkey has reportedly started allowing bizav overflights heading to/from Armenia.**
- **This issue stretches back to May 2023, but Turkey dropped the restriction in Sep 2024.**
- **So if you're heading to Armenia (UDYZ/Yerevan, for example), you can now overfly Turkey – you no longer have to route around the country or make a stop somewhere like UGTB/Tbilisi in Georgia.**

Turkish Ban

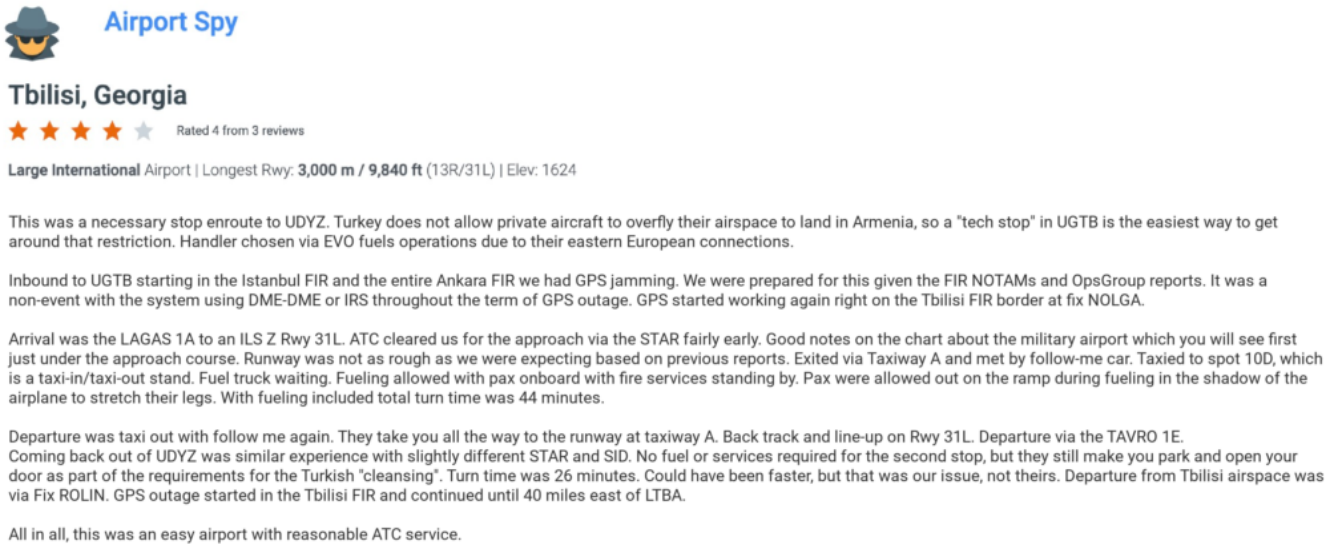
Back in May 2023, Armenian airline FlyOne operating a Paris-Yerevan flight had to make an emergency landing in Chisinau after being **denied entry to Turkish airspace.**

Turkey reportedly applied this **last-minute ban** in response to a monument erected in Yerevan the previous week, which they were unhappy about.

Pretty soon after, FlyOne evidently managed to resume Turkey overflights, but it seems that this restriction was **still informally applied to bizav overflight requests.**

OPSGROUP Member Reports

There was no Notam published on this issue, nor anything mentioned in the Turkish AIP. But some operators made **tech-stops in Georgia** to fix the problem. In Oct 2023, two **Airport Spy reports** were received from OPSGROUP members, where they required a tech-stop at **UGTB/Tibilisi (Georgia)** before continuing on to **UDYZ/Yerevan (Armenia)** in order to overfly Turkish airspace:



Airport Spy

Tbilisi, Georgia

★★★★☆ Rated 4 from 3 reviews

Large International Airport | Longest Rwy: **3,000 m / 9,840 ft** (13R/31L) | Elev: 1624

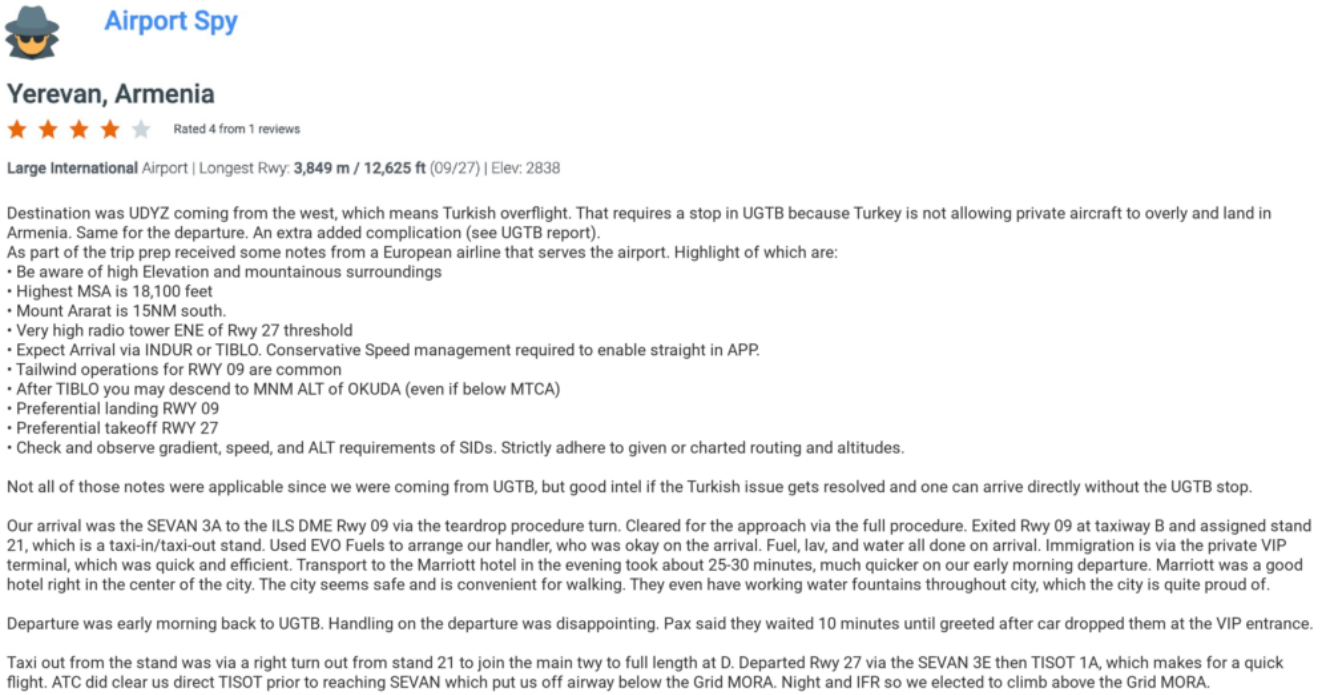
This was a necessary stop enroute to UDYZ. Turkey does not allow private aircraft to overfly their airspace to land in Armenia, so a "tech stop" in UGTB is the easiest way to get around that restriction. Handler chosen via EVO fuels operations due to their eastern European connections.

Inbound to UGTB starting in the Istanbul FIR and the entire Ankara FIR we had GPS jamming. We were prepared for this given the FIR NOTAMs and OpsGroup reports. It was a non-event with the system using DME-DME or IRS throughout the term of GPS outage. GPS started working again right on the Tbilisi FIR border at fix NOLGA.

Arrival was the LAGAS 1A to an ILS Z Rwy 31L. ATC cleared us for the approach via the STAR fairly early. Good notes on the chart about the military airport which you will see first just under the approach course. Runway was not as rough as we were expecting based on previous reports. Exited via Taxiway A and met by follow-me car. Taxied to spot 10D, which is a taxi-in/taxi-out stand. Fuel truck waiting. Fueling allowed with pax onboard with fire services standing by. Pax were allowed out on the ramp during fueling in the shadow of the airplane to stretch their legs. With fueling included total turn time was 44 minutes.

Departure was taxi out with follow me again. They take you all the way to the runway at taxiway A. Back track and line-up on Rwy 31L. Departure via the TAVRO 1E.
Coming back out of UDYZ was similar experience with slightly different STAR and SID. No fuel or services required for the second stop, but they still make you park and open your door as part of the requirements for the Turkish "cleansing". Turn time was 26 minutes. Could have been faster, but that was our issue, not theirs. Departure from Tbilisi airspace was via Fix ROLIN. GPS outage started in the Tbilisi FIR and continued until 40 miles east of LTBA.

All in all, this was an easy airport with reasonable ATC service.



Airport Spy

Yerevan, Armenia

★★★★☆ Rated 4 from 1 reviews

Large International Airport | Longest Rwy: **3,849 m / 12,625 ft** (09/27) | Elev: 2838

Destination was UDYZ coming from the west, which means Turkish overflight. That requires a stop in UGTB because Turkey is not allowing private aircraft to overly and land in Armenia. Same for the departure. An extra added complication (see UGTB report).
As part of the trip prep received some notes from a European airline that serves the airport. Highlight of which are:
• Be aware of high Elevation and mountainous surroundings
• Highest MSA is 18,100 feet
• Mount Ararat is 15NM south.
• Very high radio tower ENE of Rwy 27 threshold
• Expect Arrival via INDUR or TIBLO. Conservative Speed management required to enable straight in APP.
• Tailwind operations for RWY 09 are common
• After TIBLO you may descend to MNM ALT of OKUDA (even if below MTCA)
• Preferential landing RWY 09
• Preferential takeoff RWY 27
• Check and observe gradient, speed, and ALT requirements of SIDs. Strictly adhere to given or charted routing and altitudes.

Not all of those notes were applicable since we were coming from UGTB, but good intel if the Turkish issue gets resolved and one can arrive directly without the UGTB stop.

Our arrival was the SEVAN 3A to the ILS DME Rwy 09 via the teardrop procedure turn. Cleared for the approach via the full procedure. Exited Rwy 09 at taxiway B and assigned stand 21, which is a taxi-in/taxi-out stand. Used EVO Fuels to arrange our handler, who was okay on the arrival. Fuel, lav, and water all done on arrival. Immigration is via the private VIP terminal, which was quick and efficient. Transport to the Marriott hotel in the evening took about 25-30 minutes, much quicker on our early morning departure. Marriott was a good hotel right in the center of the city. The city seems safe and is convenient for walking. They even have working water fountains throughout city, which the city is quite proud of.

Departure was early morning back to UGTB. Handling on the departure was disappointing. Pax said they waited 10 minutes until greeted after car dropped them at the VIP entrance.

Taxi out from the stand was via a right turn out from stand 21 to join the main twy to full length at D. Departed Rwy 27 via the SEVAN 3E then TISOT 1A, which makes for a quick flight. ATC did clear us direct TISOT prior to reaching SEVAN which put us off airway below the Grid MORA. Night and IFR so we elected to climb above the Grid MORA.

Spy Reports

If you have managed to get a Turkey overflight permit for a flight heading to/from Armenia, please let us know! You can also reach us directly on news@ops.group, or file an Airport Spy report.

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

Turkey or Türkiye?

Just a final note on this… In June 2022, the United Nations agreed to a formal request to recognise Turkey as "Türkiye", as part of a rebranding campaign launched by the Turkish president.

However, no major media outlets have changed their spelling so far. **So for now at least, Turkey remains Turkey.**

LOA Guide for US Operators

David Mumford
24 February, 2025

Applying for Letters of Authorization (LOA) from the FAA can be a tricky old process. Because there are so many different things you need permission for, you might need various LOAs.

An LOA is a formal "you're allowed to do that" certificate given to an operator, permitting them to conduct a **specific flight operation**, fly in **certain airspace**, or use a **particular bit of equipment**, or **document.**

The folks at Nimbl (the new name for AviationManuals) have issued an updated guide which tells you what LOAs are, when you need them, and how straightforward the application process can be.

You can **download a copy of the guide here.**

The guide includes:

- Who needs what and where, for Part 91 and Part 135 operators.
- List of key terms, and explanations of the most common LOAs and why you would need them.

- Separate elements of an LOA application – some discussion on the process.
- Turnaround timeframes for different LOAs.

Who issues me my LOA?

The FAA, but more specifically, your local FAA Flight Standards District Office (FSDO). You can find a location of those here.

So, a Principle Operations Inspector, known as a **POI** is the person at the **FAA FSDO** who will issue your **LOA**. Don't you just love aviation acronyms

How to apply

1. First things first, check the guide, and **work out what LOAs you need.**
2. Then decide **who the actual operator is.** The FAA say this is "the person or entity who has operational control of the aircraft." But they don't mean the pilot flying it – they mean the person who has **legal control, not operational control.**
3. Decide who is the **responsible person**, what your primary address is, and then work out which FSDO is going to be the closest. *Sometimes operators get confused about this point and think they are able to choose which FSDO they can submit to, not realizing that the address on the documents matters a lot to where they can submit.*
4. **Contact your local FSDO**, work out what they need you to send them, and send it.
5. **Now the FAA will review your application.** Turnaround times vary according to which LOA you've applied for – it can take anywhere from three weeks to six months, so you'll want to get it right the first time! If it gets rejected, they will send you a detailed list of why to help you when you re-apply.

Anything else?

If you have any questions about the process, or if you need help with any of the above, visit www.gonimbl.com or send them an email at info@gonimbl.com. They have a dedicated team of LOA experts who provide support to operators in preparing all the paperwork, plus ongoing support as you go through the FAA submission process. (Also, we've known them for a long time, and can confirm they're nice people!)