

Member Meetup: July 3rd - Agenda

OPSGROUP Team

3 July, 2024



Member Meetup - July 3rd

- **OPSGROUP Meetup** starts at **1900 UTC today**
- New member intros, Ops Topics, Workshop, OPSGROUP Updates
- **Final Agenda** below: highlights are GPS Spoofing, NAT Chat, Euro Summer Ops

Hi all, here is the final agenda for today's **Member Meetup** at 1900 UTC (Wednesday 3rd July)

Abbreviated Agenda

- **Welcome!**
- What's all this about then? Quick intro to Member Meetup
- **New members** - 968 new people so far this year, a round of hello's, intro's, where you are and what you fly or operate
- **OPS Topics** - group discussion and action items
 - **GPS Spoofing** - discussion, locations, OEM updates, IRS/Hybrid infection, plan for Workshop on the issue.
 - **NAT Chat** - discussion of changes in 2024, RCL/OCR, Don't Climb problem, NAT jamming.
 - **Euro Summer** - discussion of major pain points in Europe this summer: parking issues, ATC Strikes, CPDLC logon lists, EU LISA.

- **Workshop Projects** – EVS vs LED lights, Stand Guidance, GPS Spoofing, Euro First time ops, and suggestions for new projects
- **OPSGROUP Update** – Report-A-Thing, Daily Brief changes, Below The Line Workshop, GoCrow/Route Check
- **Danger Club** – conversations about cockpit happenings we normally don't talk about. New series, suggestions for incidents.
- **Meetup Notepad:** shared **Google Doc**

How do I take part?

- Meetup starts at **1900 UTC, Wednesday 3rd July** – that's 1500 New York, 2000 London, 2100 Amsterdam, 2300 Dubai.
- **Register** for the call **here**.
- For full Meetup info, visit the **Meetup page** in your Dashboard.
- If you have any issues registering or accessing the link, just email team @ops.group.



MEMBER MEAT-UP NEW INTRO'S WORKSHOP
REPORT-A-THING BURGERS INTERNATIONAL OPS
ASK-OPSGROUP-ANYTHING EURO-SUMMER OPS
JUST STOP VANDALS NAT CHANGES BIG IDEAS
DANGER CLUB CONTRAIL COCKTAILS GROUP WORK

Ops to Paris for the Olympics

David Mumford

3 July, 2024



Key Points

- Paris will be busy from July 22 to Aug 11 (Olympics) and Aug 26 to Sep 8 (Paralympics).
- LFPB/Paris Le Bourget will likely be the airport you want to go to, but expect quick turns only with reposition elsewhere for parking (options below).
- There's a procedure to know about (slots, PPR, no late changes).
- Paris will be a no-fly zone on July 26 for the opening ceremony.

France has published new AIC 13/24 (effective 27 June 2024) with procedures for operators to follow if they want to fly to a Paris airport during the Olympics. *It's essentially a corrected AIC, because the previous one had confusing advice for business aviation!*

Here's what bizav flights have to do

- You must **file a "flight intention" for each flight** (send this to your handler/FBO no later than 2 hours before take-off for flights to LFPB/Paris Le Bourget, or 4 hours for other airports).
- There's **no accreditation** for pilots or operators during the Olympics, and everything will proceed pretty much as normal. The AIC only applies to VFR flights.
- The airport authorities will implement **slots/PPR** from July 12 to Sep 16 (these are obtained by the handler and sent to the operator), so you just need to fill out the FPL with the airport slot

ID in Field 18.

- LFPB/Le Bourget airport authorities will **not allow any updates with two hours prior arrival or departure** – no change of timing, no change of crew or pax. The handler will send this info to the authorities prior to the flight, and if they don't reply then the flight is approved. If there is any issue with the pax or crew, the handler will be notified, and the flight will be refused.
- It's going to be busy, so LFPB/Le Bourget will **only be accepting quick turns** with parking elsewhere.
- **If you get a slot, you best keep it** – if you cancel it there's no guarantee you're going to get another one.
- Check with your handler of choice about their fees cancellation policy, as some of these will be **non-refundable**.

At LFPB/Le Bourget you have a few options for handling:

Astonsky – website
lfpb@astonsky.com

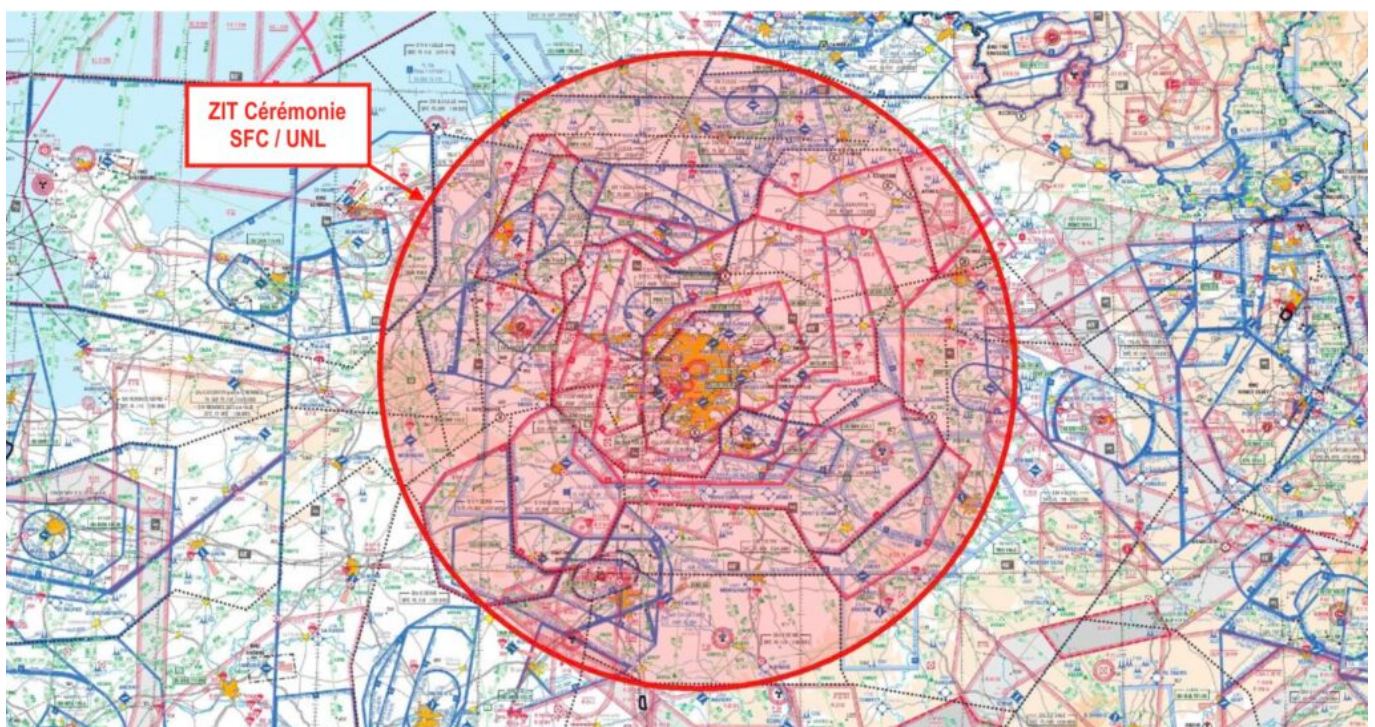
Dassault Falcon Service – website
handling@dassault-falcon.com

Jetex – website
fbo-lbg@jetex.com

Signature – website
lbgt1@signatureflight.fr

The Opening Ceremony

France has published a SUP showing the **closed airspace for the opening ceremony** of the Olympics in Paris on **July 26**.



On that day, between 1630-2200z, **Paris will basically become a no-fly zone** - no flights will be able to enter the airspace or go to/from the airports. Watch out for overflights too - these won't be allowed either!

Flight plans to Paris airports will be rejected starting 1530z. Departures from LFPG/Charles De Gaulle might be allowed starting 2130z with special approval.

Where to go?

LFPB/Paris Le Bourget, LFAQ/Albert, and LFOK/Vatry seem like the best bets.

LFPT/Pontoise and LFPM/Villaroche might be options too, but there's no customs available here, so these airports are only available for flights between EU/Schengen airports only (i.e. not direct from the likes of the US).

Ones to cross off your list

- **LFPO/Orly and LFPG/Charles De Gaulle** as they are dedicated to airline flights
- **LFOB/Beauvais and LFOP/Rouen** as they have no support for bizav flights.



Most operators are doing one of the following

1. **Drop and go:** Get a slot into LFPB/Le Bourget, fly in, drop off pax and then reposition elsewhere for parking. LFPM/Villaroche and LFPT/Pontoise are good options for this.
2. **Clear customs elsewhere:** Clear customs at some intermediate EU airport (somewhere like LFAT/Le Touquet or LFOP/Rouen), do fast turns for just customs, and then fly to either LFPT/Pontoise or LFPM/Villaroche for parking and pax can access Paris directly. This avoids

the slot situation at LFPB/Le Bourget.

3. **Do everything elsewhere:** Use LFOK/Vatry (2:30 drive into Paris) or LFAQ/Albert (2:10 drive into Paris) directly, where there is customs, and avoid a positioning, but have a very long car journey into Paris.
4. **Avoid!** Just avoid the Olympics altogether. Go somewhere else for your holiday instead.

Tell me more about LFPM/Villaroche

Here's a report from local handler Elyxan Aviation: ops@elyxan-aviation.fr

LFPT/Pontoise does not have a customs facility and neither do we. This is frustrating as we are the two main Paris airports within a reasonable driving distance of the city centre.

LFPM/Villaroche is actually a good option as we have lots of parking and a modern FBO/with VIP lounge. We can offer 24/7 operations, which even LFPB/Le Bourget cannot. That the French authorities don't allow LFPT/Pontoise or LFPM/Villaroche customs and immigration is extremely unfortunate, especially as LFPB/Le Bourget is overloaded even normally in the summer.

LFPM/Villaroche is marginally closer to Paris than LFPT/Pontoise in real world times as we have better and closer motorway connections. We're 45-50 mins from the center and LFPT/Pontoise is 50-55 mins. In reality we are the best for South Paris, and LFPT/Pontoise and LFPB/Le Bourget are better for North. LFPM/Villaroche and LFPT/Pontoise are about equidistant for the Versailles region in real driving times. As the heliport is on the south side of Paris, we at LFPM/Villaroche are better situated for heli transfer into the city (10-15 mins from LFPM/Villaroche and 20-25 from LFPT/Pontoise).

LFPM/Villaroche is less well known, but a substantial airfield and a longer runway than LFPT/Pontoise. Sadly, the airport is managed by the French State and not the private company ADP that manages LFPB/Le Bourget and LFPT/Pontoise. Hence, the lamentable marketing of our airports capability and absolutely superb position.

You can download the brochure for the Elyxan Aviation FBO at LFPM/Villaroche [here](#).

Don't Climb! A Big NAT No-No

Chris Shieff
3 July, 2024



Last week, **Gander Oceanic** asked us to get the word out on this growing problem. More and more crews are getting this wrong, especially since OCR/RCL is starting to happen elsewhere on the ocean. The same issue is common on the other side of the pond, most frequently in the **Shannon FIR**.

What's the problem?

Pilots climbing without a clearance.

Why would we do that?

Because we think we have a clearance.

OK, tell me more

When you get your **Oceanic Clearance - or send your RCL**, it contains an Oceanic Entry Point, Flight Level, and Speed. From that point, that's what you should fly. But if you are currently at a different level to the Oceanic Cleared Flight Level, you have to **ASK** for the level change. That's really all there is to it.

Oceanic Clearance is not a Domestic Clearance

Your Oceanic Clearance is valid **only** from the Oceanic Entry Point (OEP). Take this example.

ACA123 CLRD TO LFPG VIA **NEEKO** 54N050W 56N040W 57N030W 57N020W PIKIL SOVED
FM NEEKO/1348 MNTN F330 M082

Your Oceanic Clearance commences at NEEKO. You must be at FL330 by the time you reach NEEKO, and then track to 54N50W.

But, if you're still somewhere over Newfoundland at say FL320, you have to request higher from Gander Domestic ATC, before you climb to your Oceanic Level.

If you just decide to climb without asking, that's where your day will start to go wrong.

DON'T CLIMB!

Got your Oceanic Clearance? Good job. Now: **DON'T CLIMB!** (or descend). ASK Domestic ATC for a level change. Your Oceanic Clearance is **not** a clearance to go to your Oceanic level.

Short story: One of the most popular pilot 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!

DOMESTIC SHANNON
ASK!
FL350
OCEANIC SHANWICK
OEP RESNO
FL370

Recent procedural changes to the NAT may also be compounding the problem, so let's take a closer look.

Wait, I thought Oceanic Clearances on the NAT were a thing of the past?

Soon soon, but not yet. While Reykjavik and Santa Maria have removed oceanic clearances, Bodø, Gander and Shanwick are still targeting December 4 for the big switch. Until then, expect to receive a conventional oceanic clearance when approaching their airspace.

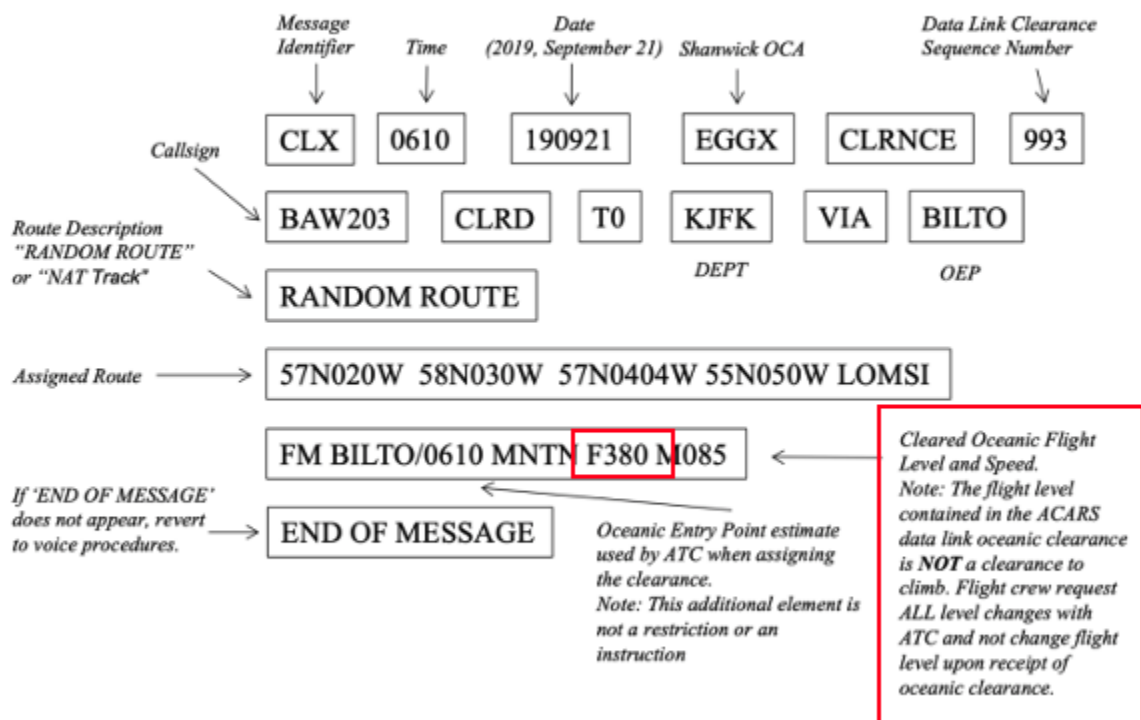
Oceanic Clearances

You can read all about them in NAT OPS Bulletin 2020_001 Rev 1, but the crux of the issue is found in Section 5.3 (Clearance Delivery):

... The flight level contained in the ACARS data link oceanic clearance is the "cleared oceanic flight level" for the purposes of complying with the lost communication procedures detailed in State AIPs, ICAO Doc 7030 (North Atlantic Regional Supplementary Procedures) and NAT Doc 007. ATC is responsible for providing a clearance to enable the flight to reach this flight level before reaching the OEP. If there is a concern, flight crews should contact ATC...

They made this handy picture too:

12. EXAMPLE OF ACARS DATA LINK OCEANIC CLEARANCES



In other words, the flight level contained in the ACARS datalink oceanic clearance is NOT a clearance to climb (or descend). You need to request this with your active ATC.

Why is this becoming a problem again?

We can only speculate – Gander aren't sure either. But we suspect the use of datalink, in addition to recent RCL changes may be the culprit. For instance, back in May, the automated response to an RCL message was changed (ironically to reduce any ambiguity). It now only reads "RCL Received by (ANSP)." In other words, the "fly current flight plan or as amended by ATC" bit was removed. A full oceanic clearance therefore contains more information, and the use of ambiguous phrasing such as 'cleared level' may be creating more confusion on the NAT than ever before.

Questions?

Comment below, or email the OPSGROUP Team for help!

SAFA Ramp Checks: The Top 5 Offenders (+Alcohol test)

David Mumford
3 July, 2024



Highlights (updated 2024)

- The Top 5 SAFA Ramp Check Findings are Flight Planning, Aircraft Documents, Defects, Charts, and Cabin Safety
- It's not a knowledge test, so feel free to say "I don't know"
- Alcohol testing is now common, see below for a guide

Ramp check! Not our favourite couple of words in the aviation vernacular, but when your number's up, wouldn't it be good to know **what things most of us are getting wrong?**

Well, here they all are, in a handy little guide. Download, print, attach to wall-of-your-choice, and enjoy.

What do we base this on? Well, something pretty special happened recently. The French DSAC partnered up with IS-BAO to take a look at **hundreds of de-identified ramp check findings** in order to analyse **the most frequent CAT 2 and CAT 3 findings in business aviation.**

This is "special" for three reasons

1. It's great that an aviation regulator has actually shared this info because **now we can see the top things we're getting wrong.**
2. If we can see the top things we're getting wrong, we can stop getting them wrong, and then **ramp checks become faster and more efficient for everyone.**
3. It's great that this specific aviation regulator happens to be the one from **France - because that's where a lot of ramp checks seem to occur!**

So, all good. IS-BAO published the results here, and it's worth giving that a read first before we press on...

The Top 5 Offenders

As the good folks from IS-BAO point out – EASA Ramp checks cover **52 inspection items** spread over 5 areas: **flight deck, cabin, aircraft condition, cargo, and general/other.**

But some of those 52 items generate more findings than others. The DSAC/IS-BAO study found that the **top inspection items by number of CAT2 and CAT3 findings for business aviation** were these ones:

1. Flight preparation (RI checklist item A13)
2. Mass and balance calculations (A14)
3. Manuals (A04)
4. MEL (A07)
5. Checklists (A05)
6. Defect notification and rectification (A23)
7. Navigation/instrument charts (A06)

So essentially, these findings all relate to five key areas: **Flight Planning, Documents, Defects, Charts, Cabin Safety**. Get these right, and your “sweatin over a ramp checkin” days are over, partner!

Have you been ramp checked recently?

Let us know! **Where did it happen? How did it go? What things surprised you?**

As always, we will de-identify anything you share with us before we tell anyone else about it. But we’d love to hear your stories, and other people will too! Our idea is to gather together as many of these stories as possible, and put them into a little book to **help give other pilots and operators an idea of what to expect**. So if you’ve got a story to share, send us an email at news@ops.group

In related news: the EASA RIM has been updated.

What’s the EASA RIM? Europe’s version of the Pacific Rim movie only with **ramp inspectors saving the aviation industry from danger?** Or just an updated version of a rather boring manual?

Sadly, just an updated manual.

EASA have made some amendments, corrections and added some other details to their **Ramp Inspection Manual**, so here is **our guide to their 131 pages of guidance** (and an Appendix).

What’s up?

The Changes to the RIM are contained in a 131 page document here. So this is the doc that **crew** might want to read. (The massive doc that ramp inspectors use is called the Appendix – we’ll get to that later).

The big stuff to look out for (that we could see) is stuff on **Alcohol testing** and they’ve changed the name of the **“Standard Report” to “Safety Report”**.

Page 76.

Let’s start with something small.

This isn’t actually a change, but just something we think might be of particular use. It is the Checklist for on-the-job training for ramp inspectors. Basically, it is a long list of all the stuff they need to check. Which means it’s **a long list you might want to check so you know what you are going to get checked on**.

Alcohol Testing.

Scroll to page 98 (section 10.3) and it lays out all the info on alcohol testing and how it should be carried out. There is a lot of info here (most of it for the inspecting agents rather than you) but still not

uninteresting to read.

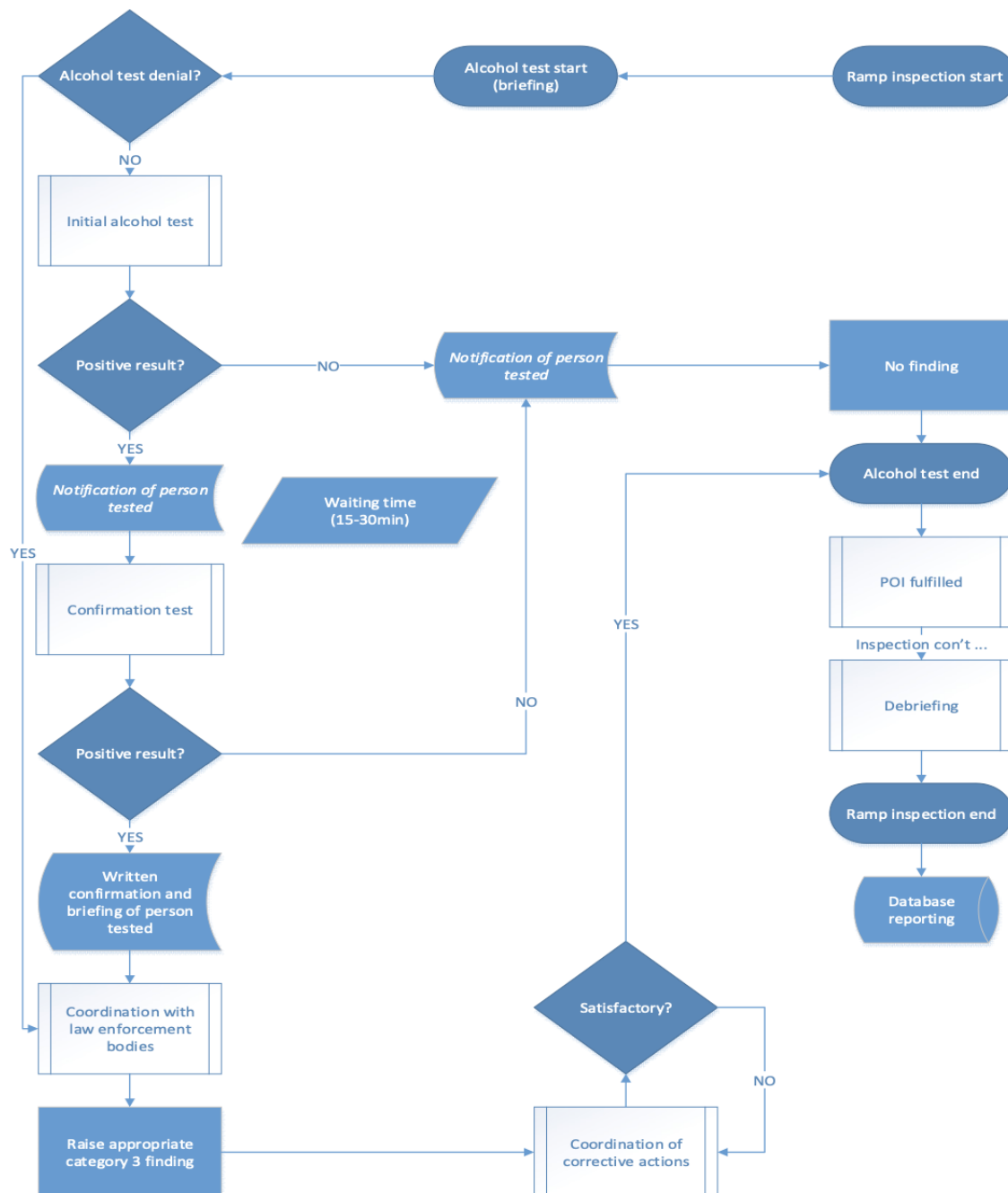
The general principles are that **it should be done somewhere private**, out of sight of anyone else, and if you aren't happy with the spot they pick then chose another.

They're testing to see if you blow **more than 0.2 grams of blood alcohol concentration**. If you blow below that then you pass. If you test above then don't panic straight out, **they must do a follow up confirmation test** which mustn't happen before 15 minutes, or outside of 30.

Certain drinks can mess up the results:

- "Aromatic beverages" like fruit juice (*never heard them called that*)
- Mouth sprays with alcohol content
- Medical juices (*I don't even want to know what that might be*)
- Burping on the test can create false positives.

Here is a particularly hideous flow chart of the entire process.



We think it's easier to sum up stuff like this:

1. **Don't ever go to work drunk.** Most operators/states specify a minimum time between drinking and working but if you aren't sure 12 hours is a generally decent one to work off.
2. Of course even **12 hours won't get you sober in time** if you've been on a mega bender the night before. So don't do that.
3. If you wake up before you're report time and realise you're drunk/potentially drunk then **CALL SICK!**
4. If you think a colleague is drunk, **stop them from going to the airport!** Report them if you need to.
5. If you are at work, and get picked for a random test, **make sure they do it correctly**, in a

private space following the right procedures.

6. **If you blow positive then don't panic** (unless you are drunk in which case do panic, you've messed up bad, partner). Have a think if you've maybe ingested something that could cause a false positive. Tell the inspector and wait for the confirmation test. They leave it at least 15 minutes, but don't push for more than 30.

Moving onto The Appendix.

The Appendix to the RIM is a whole 304 pages filed with **information on ramp check instructions and pre-described findings.**

Many of which have just been updated.

Now, you might be thinking "*why do I care how they're instructing their inspectors on stuff?*". But you should care because if you know how they're inspecting stuff, then it makes it a whole lot easier to not mess up on ramp checks and getting told off.

If you just want to scroll through **the list of changes**, then take a look here at the first 7 or so pages.

If you want a **full description** in standard EASA English, then read the whole 304.

If you want a **summary of the changes** then check this out.

Other useful stuff.

We wrote a whole post on ramp checks a while back and the stuff we wrote in that hasn't really changed that much.

While ensuring you are complaint is important, remember it works both ways. **Ramp Inspectors need to follow the rules and procedures as well.** Particularly when it comes to not delaying you or disrupting your duties too much.

The manual only recommends they must give you **8-10 minutes of quality quiet time** to set up for a flight. If you need more for safety reasons then tell them the time you need them to complete their checks by.

Final note.

Ramp checks can be frustrating. The best way to reduce that is make sure everything is in order and be prepared for them.

There are some airports we've heard are particularly *vigorous* with them:

- Anywhere in France
- Florence, Italy
- Edinburgh, Scotland
- London Heathrow
- Copenhagen, Denmark (*keen on the breath tests*)
- Amsterdam, Netherlands (*also keen on the breath tests*)

Let us know where you've experienced them so we can update the list!

Making a Ramp Check painless (with checklist)

Declan Selleck

3 July, 2024



The **EU Ramp Inspection Program (RIP)** is still alive and kicking – or the **EU SAFA Programme**, as it used to be called.

The RIP is not exclusive to Europe. Your aircraft can be inspected under the program in 49 different countries around the world, including Canada, Morocco, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates.

Here are the key points:

- Even though it's now called the EU Ramp Inspection Program, ramp inspections for third country operators are still referred to as “SAFA ramp checks”. Yeah, it's confusing.
- Ramp checks are possible in every country in the world – but follow a more regulated and common structure in SAFA countries – totalling 49 – see the map and list below.
- There is a **standard checklist** that is used by Inspectors in all SAFA countries, which you should be familiar with – see further down.
- Three categories of findings have been defined. A “**Category 1**” finding is called a minor finding; “**Category 2**” is a significant finding and “**Category 3**” a major finding. The terms “minor”, “significant” and “major” relate to the level of influence on safety.
- If there is a “**corrective actions before flight authorised**” finding – then the inspector is concerned and a repair must be made before the aircraft is released to fly.



Unless your aircraft looks like this, you have little to worry about.

Here's how a ramp check normally goes down:

- The flight selected will either be your last of 6 legs for the day, or after a gruelling 12 hour jetlag-inducer, or at 3am when you were thinking about a quick nap during the turnaround. This much is guaranteed.
- As you pull on to the stand, **you will notice more yellow vests than normal hanging around.**
- Two of these will be your friendly ramp inspection team (to be fair, they almost always are)
- A short time later, those yellow vests will be in the cockpit, and the first request will be for a look at your license, medical, aircraft documents (like Insurance, Airworthiness), and flight paperwork. Make sure you've done your fuel checks and there are a few marks on the flight plan.
- If you get a good cop, bad cop scenario, one will disappear down the back (this will be the nice guy) and check the cabin, while the first will stay and ask you tough questions about the TCAS system.
- Some time later, you'll get a list of findings. The average check is probably about 30 minutes.
- You can be guaranteed they will always have at least one finding - which will probably be obscure.
- Sign off the checklist, and you're on your way.

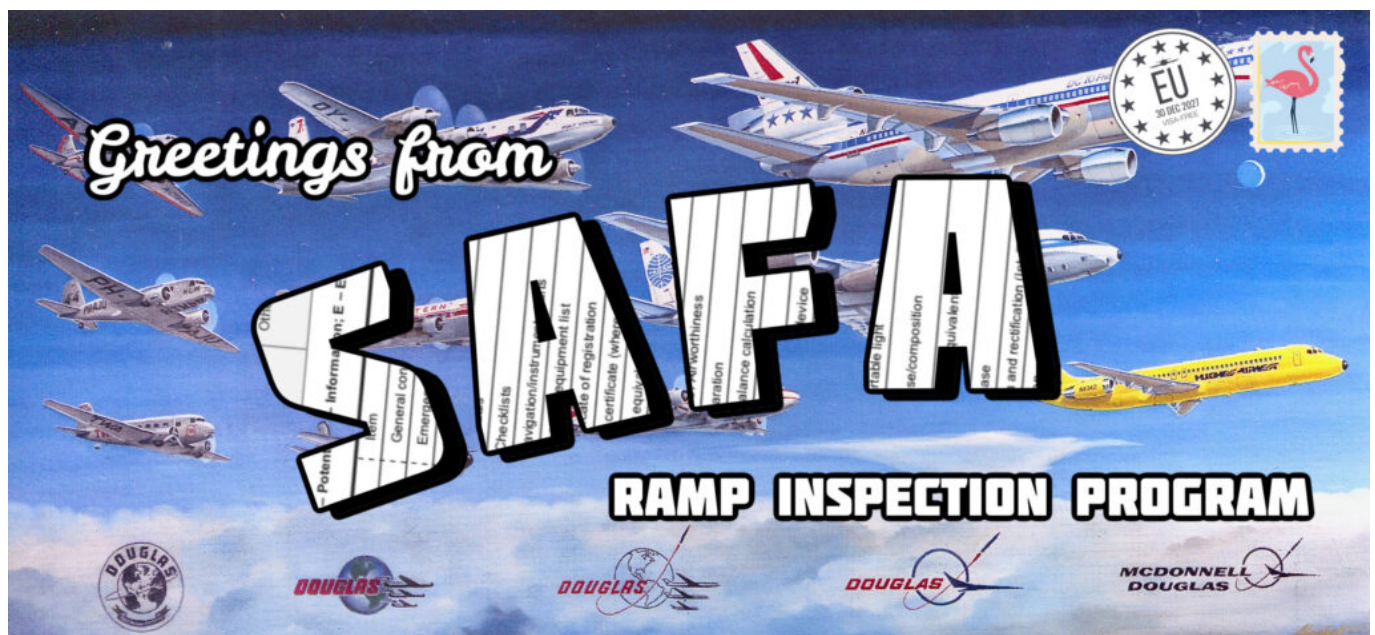
Some interesting points:

- The Inspectors can ask you for manuals, documents, or guidance - but they are not supposed to test your knowledge of procedures, regulations, or technical matters. **This doesn't always happen in practice** - so if you get a tough question - just say "I don't know" - and let them note it if they want to. This isn't a classroom test.
- This guidance is given to Inspectors: Delaying an operator for a non-safety related issue is not only frustrating to the operator, it also could result in unwanted human factor issues with possible negative effects on the flight preparation. **They can (should) only delay your flight**

for a safety related issue.

- Remember, it's not you that's being inspected. It's your aircraft. If you're uncomfortable with the questions, get them noted and allow your operator to discuss later.
- **Every inspector is a little different.** Work with them and you'll find that 90% of your ramp checks will be over in 20 minutes with little issue.
- Private Operators - especially in GA (even more so under the 5700kg mark) - are **far less likely to get ramp checked**. EASA guidelines do apply to General Aviation, but they are far more interested in Commercial Operators.
- The items checked during ramp checks are based on a risk based approach and can differ from operator to operator (for example depending on findings raised during previous inspections). Meaning that operators who get ramp checked with findings will most likely **get ramp checked again**, to see if they've sorted out the problems!
- EASA regulations requiring **alcohol testing** during ramp checks will take effect across all SAFA countries in **Aug 2020**. But some countries have already started doing this: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, UK, and Singapore. More info

Common Findings:



See article: **SAFA Ramp Checks: The Top 5 Offenders**

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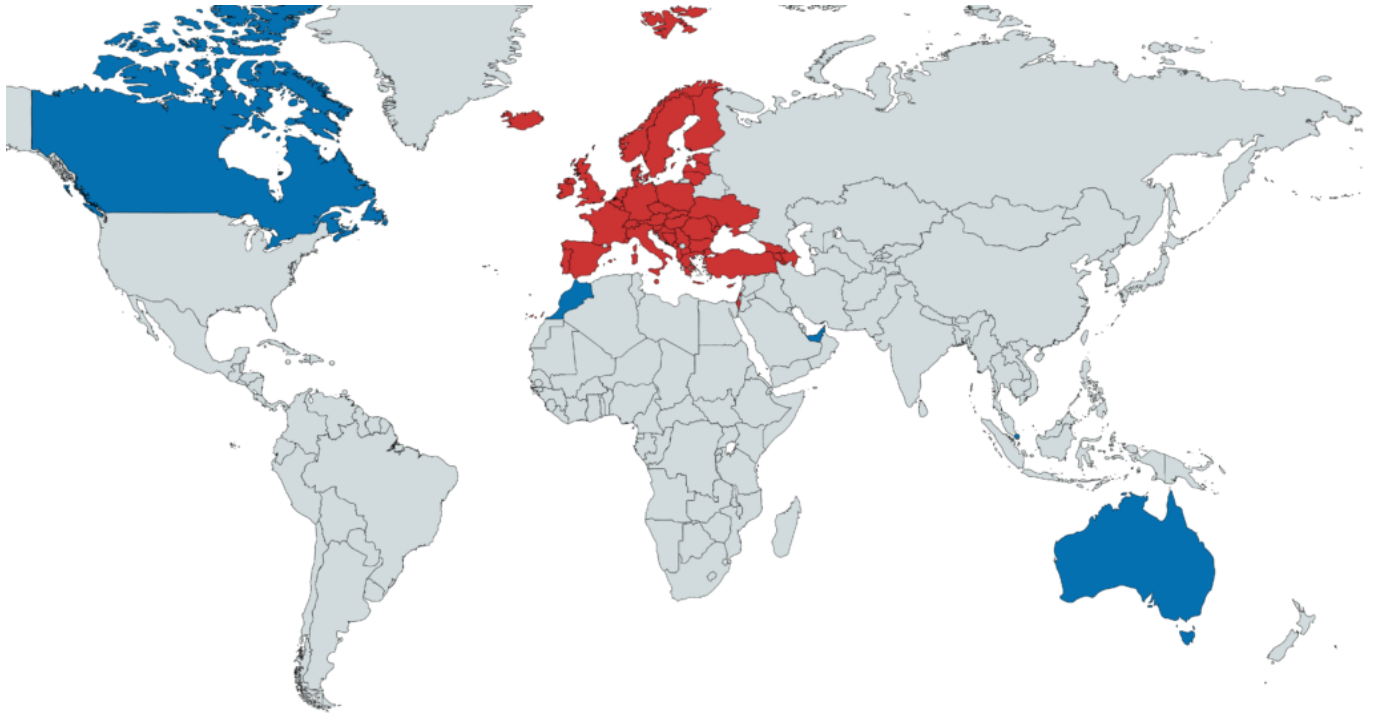
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5. Checklists (A05)

6. Defect notification and rectification (A23)

7. Navigation/instrument charts (A06)

So essentially, these findings all relate to five key areas: **Flight Planning, Documents, Defects, Charts, Cabin Safety**. Get these right, and your “sweatin over a ramp checkin” days are over, partner!

The Countries:



The 49 Participating States engaged in the EU Ramp Inspections Programme are:

Europe: Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Republic of North Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, and United Kingdom.

Rest of world: Canada, Morocco, Singapore, United Arab Emirates.

The Checklist:



Ramp Inspection Checklist (SAFA)

DOC NO OPG/SAFA-CL
REV 07
DATED 01JUN2020
PAGE 1 OF 3

Operator	Date	Flight No.	Location	Aircraft Type	Registration No.
Captain	Cert. No.	First Officer	Other Crew	Lead F/A	Inspector

S – Satisfactory; U – Unsatisfactory; P – Potential; I – Information; E – Exceeds; N – Not Observed

	Code	Item	Checked	Remarks
A. Flight Deck	A01	General condition		
	A02	Emergency exit		
	A03	Equipment		
Documentation	A04	Manuals		
	A05	Checklists		
	A06	Navigation/instrument charts		
	A07	Minimum equipment list		
	A08	Certificate of registration		
	A09	Noise certificate (where applicable)		
	A10	AOC or equivalent		
	A11	Radio license		
	A12	Certificate of Airworthiness		
Flight Data	A13	Flight preparation		
	A14	Mass and balance calculation		
Safety Equipment	A15	Hand fire extinguishers		
	A16	Life jackets / floatation device		
	A17	Harness		
	A18	Oxygen equipment		
	A19	Independent portable light		
Flight Crew	A20	Flight crew license/composition		
Journey Log Book / Technical Log or Equivalent	A21	Journey log book or equivalent		
	A22	Maintenance release		
	A23	Defect notification and rectification (Int. Tech. Log)		
	A24	Preflight inspection		
B. Safety / Cabin	B01	General internal condition		
	B02	Cabin crew station and crew rest area		
	B03	First aid kit / emergency medical kit		
	B04	Hand fire extinguishers		
	B05	Life jackets / floatation device		
	B06	Seat belts and seat condition		
	B07	Emergency exit, lighting and independent portable light		
	B08	Slides / life-rafts (as required), ELT		
	B09	Oxygen supply (cabin crew and passengers)		
	B10	Safety instructions		

Download by clicking above, or here: [Opsgroup Ramp Checklist](#)

If you want to delve deep into each item on this checklist to find out exactly what inspectors should be looking for, check out this document published by EASA in Sept 2019, which has the inspection instructions in full. For all things Ramp Inspection Program related, check EASA's dedicated webpage [here](#).

Oceanic Clearance Removal mess - Version 4!

OPSGROUP Team

3 July, 2024



Update: 19th June 2024

Our excitement at seeing another OACC cross the “Oceanic Clearance Removal” finish line has been short lived. Bodø implemented the change on June 17, but it **did not go well**. As a result, they’ve rolled back the software, and have now decided to try again on **December 4**, when Shanwick and Gander are doing theirs. So, as things stand – **Iceland and Santa Maria have removed the clearance requirement**, and **Bodø, Shanwick, and Gander** will now all transition on the same day in December.

Original Story

Last August, the headlines pointed to a promising development for all of us: **No More Oceanic Clearances Required** on the North Atlantic. The reason? Rapid improvements in comms and surveillance coverage (through satellite-based CPDLC and ADS-C) have created an environment far more like a regular radar sector. The idea of getting a separate Oceanic Clearance was becoming dated.

The reality from the pointy end is – you guessed it – **not quite as exciting**. After the Oceanic Centre changes to OCR (Oceanic Clearance Removal), you don’t have to request an Oceanic Clearance. This is true. But you **do** have to send a new-style “RCL message”, which is precisely the same message as if you **were** getting an Oceanic Clearance. In fact, that Oceanic Clearance does still exist, behind the scenes. You just don’t get a copy of it any more. More on that below.

The bigger issue for operators and pilots is trying to align cockpit procedures and crew expectations with the ever-shifting dates of **when this is happening**. Originally, all 5 Oceanic Centres (Shanwick, Gander, Iceland, Bodø, Santa Maria) were going to do this in March of this year. The current dates are now:

- **Shanwick:** April 9 May Q4 2024 **December 4**

- **Gander:** ~~March May 3~~ **December 4**
- **Bodø:** ~~March May 6 June 17~~ **December 4**
- **Santa Maria:** completed March 21
- **Iceland:** completed March 21

Shanwick, Gander and Bodø have now delayed OCR implementation until December 4. This creates a 2024 year-long limbo for NAT crews, and raises some questions about the way in which changes to this complex airspace are made.

OCR Delayed - So, what now?

- If you are crossing the NAT solely via **Shanwick** and **Gander's** airspace, don't worry about OCR/RCL changes until **December 4**. Do everything as you normally do. You will request, and get, a clearance as normal. **But** keep in mind that a lot of confusing documentation will now be out there with incorrect dates and procedures that are not yet in place.
- If you are entering via **Iceland** or **Santa Maria**, the Oceanic Clearance Removal has been completed. You don't need a clearance, but you **do need** to send an **RCL message**. The same will apply in **Bodø** from December 4. If you are transiting into Shanwick or Gander, **you don't need** a separate clearance. Iceland/Santa Maria will take care of that for you.
- If you are entering via **New York**, nothing has changed, and won't. New York already operate without Oceanic Clearances, and your flight is coordinated tactically with the next Oceanic Unit.
- ICAO NAT Bulletin 001/23 (Rev 4) was issued on June 20, and all the dates are now finally correct!

Gotcha's to watch out for

- **NAT Doc 007 is unreliable.** The Chapter on Oceanic Clearances (Chapter 5) was removed for the current edition, and crossings now refer to an RCL process that the majority of traffic will not use.
- **Your EFB/Ops manuals** are likely to have incorrect dates and procedures regarding Oceanic Clearances.
- AIP, AIP SUP, and AIRAC updates relating to Oceanic Clearances are likely to be confusing, as a lot of AIP changes have already been made for the planned March/May dates - which are now not happening.

Complexities and Confusion

The North Atlantic is probably the most complex piece of airspace in the world for crews to get to grips with. NAT Doc 007, the bible for NAT Ops, runs to about 170 pages. This complexity is the primary reason for the NAT "HLA" airspace itself, and needing specific approval to be able to operate within it. Crews need to know **a lot**.

Every **change** on the North Atlantic imputes responsibility on the flight crew to understand and execute it. Being able to do that requires clear and simple wording, and above all, for the information to align

between the various centre's and domestic units involved. Potential confusion for flight crew should be minimised, and not underestimate just how hard it is for pilots to keep up with the litany of changes around the world every month.

The Oceanic Clearance Removal change has now created quite significant doubt in the minds of crews as to what is happening, and when. In the first place, the headline story "No More Clearances" is misleading. There is still an Oceanic Clearance, we're just not getting a copy of it (An Oceanic Clearance Message (OCM), is still sent to domestic ATC units, so they can see your clearance!). This mismatch between what the pilot *thinks* is happening (no Oceanic Clearance), and what is actually happening (there is still an Oceanic Clearance) gives rise to understandable confusion, and potential for errors. This explains why an RCL is still required ... and also explains why trying to think of the RCL as something other than "Request for Clearance" is difficult.

The **continual shuffling of dates** further creates a big workload for operators and pilots, and points to the need for a more integrated approach to making changes on the North Atlantic. **One single date** for a change of this magnitude would have been ideal, but as mentioned, it's complex airspace. Nonetheless, the way this has played out has been frustrating for everyone involved.

Clearance game update

We've updated the "Clearance or No Clearance" game with the **new dates**, and some FAQ.

Download the current version (PDF, 0.5 Mb).

CLEARANCE OR NO CLEARANCE



A GAME FOR TWO TRANSATLANTIC PILOTS!



A NEW BREXING GAME FROM
CYBERBOUT © 2024. DO NOT PLAY
WITH JET LAG. DO NOT
NAVIGATE SOLELY ON THIS
INFORMATION YOU WILL GET
LOST AND RUN OUT OF FUEL.

EDITION 4! (19 JUN 24)

PLAY THIS IF
YOU HEARD SOMETHING
ABOUT NO MORE
NAT TRACK
CLEARANCES*

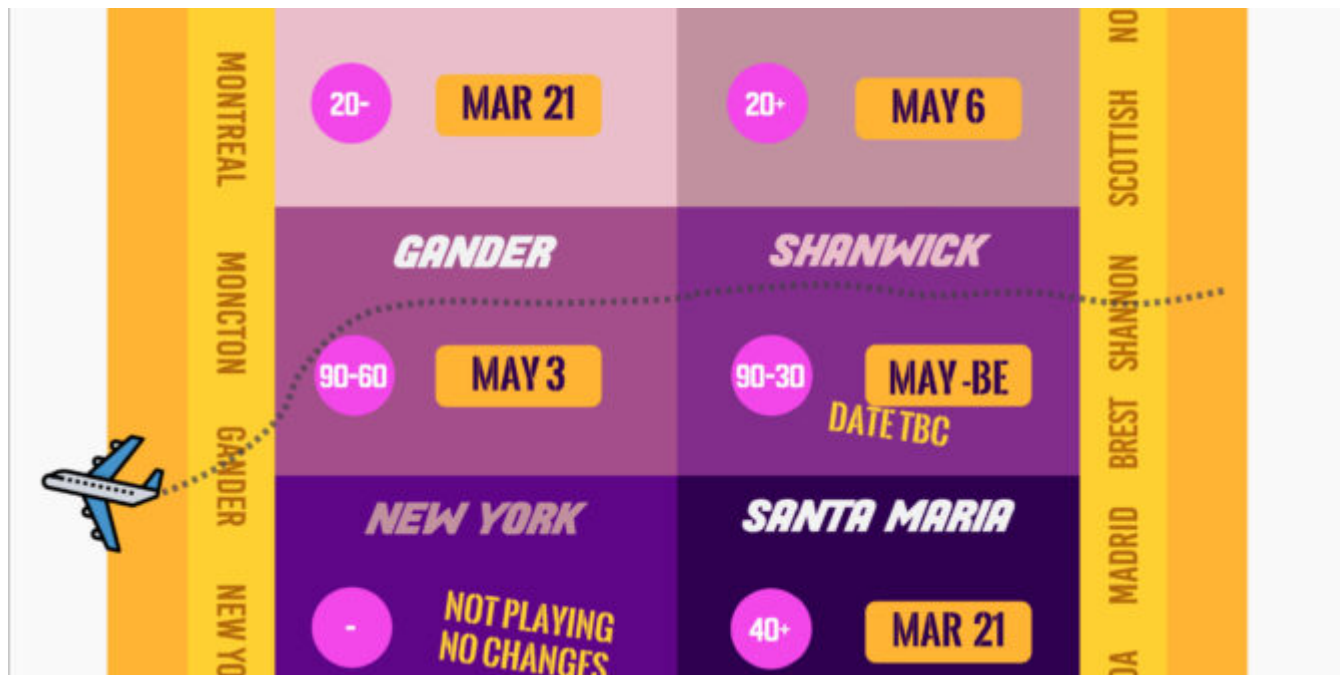
The game board is a 4x2 grid of colored squares representing flight paths across the North Atlantic. The top and bottom edges are yellow, with airport codes: NUUK, PIARCO, SAL, CANARIAS at the top; ED, MONTREAL, MONCTON, GANDER, NEW YORK on the left; LISBOA, MADRID, BREST, SHANNON, SCOTTISH, NORWAY on the right. The grid contains the following information:

ICELAND	BODO
20- MAR 21 ✓	20+ DEC 4
GANDER 90-60 DEC 4	SHANWICK 90-30 DEC 4
NEW YORK - NOT PLAYING NO CHANGES	SANTA MARIA 40+ MAR 21 ✓

A dashed line with an airplane icon starts at GANDER and ends at SHANNON. A red starburst at the bottom left says: * AND IT'S NOT JUST THE NAT TRACKS. IT'S THE WHOLE NORTH ATLANTIC.

NAT Clearance changes - a game! (V4)

David Mumford
3 July, 2024



- We've made a little game to help with Oceanic Clearances changes on the NAT.
- You can download it [here](#).
- **Updated June 19, 2024 - Edition 4!**

Why the game?

By **Christmas** of 2024, all OACC's on the NAT will stop transmitting an Oceanic Clearance to you. They still want you to send an "RCL" message, which used to mean "Request Clearance", but now it just means "Tell us your latest preferences". Think of it as Checking In.

There are different dates when Oceanic Clearances will cease to be issued in the following FIRs:

- **Shanwick:** April 9 May Q4 2024 **December 4**
- **Gander:** March May 3 **December 4**
- **Bodo:** March May 6 June 17 **December 4**
- **Santa Maria:** completed March 21
- **Iceland:** completed March 21

But let there be no further blather about it here! We've done enough of that already - check here for our full post on the topic. **Just play the game - it's fun, and will tell you everything you need to know in 3 pages!** Print it out, share it, pin it on a wall somewhere if you so desire. We *do* so desire.

And if you have a question not covered in the game, send it to us at team@ops.group, and we'll help you out - and add it into the next version.

Edinburgh security rules create painful delays

David Mumford
3 July, 2024



Key Points

- **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.**
- **If planning a trip to the region, consider EGPF/Glasgow instead!**

There's a rule in the UK that means outbound security screening is required for commercial flights over 10 tonnes MTOW, and all flights over 45.5 tonnes whether commercial or private.

But at **EGPH/Edinburgh**, outbound screening is required for all flights, regardless of weight or type of flight.

This means all crew and pax must pass through security, and abide by the 100ml liquid rule for carry-on luggage.

A recent Airport Spy report says that this **whole process took around an hour**, and they were the only crew there at the time!

Another Airport Spy report says to consider using **EGPF/Glasgow** instead, where they just have the standard UK rules for screening, and also don't have arrival or departure slots.

The reason that EGPB/Edinburgh has this strange rule is something to do with it being a **"Critical Part" airport**.

What is a “Critical Part” airport?

Some folks we spoke to called this term “*Critical Park*”, others “*Critical Path*”, but we think it’s “*Critical Part*”.

Either way, there’s nothing about it in the UK AIP or seemingly anywhere else online.

It’s apparently something to do with how the *specific layout of the airport affects zoning for security purposes*.

And that’s all we know.

Are there any other UK airports that do this?

Yes. **EGLL/Heathrow** and **EGKK/Gatwick** are both “Critical Part” airports, so both have the same rule: all outbound flights must have security screening here.

EGWU/Northolt is the only other airport in the UK that we know of which has mandatory outbound security screening for all outbound flights, but that’s due to some kind of requirement in place from the military there, as the airport is a joint civil/military field.

We contacted a whole bunch of other airports (EGSS/Stansted, EGGW/Luton, EGMC/Southend, EGLC/London City, EGTK/Oxford, EGLF/Farnborough, EGKB/Biggin Hill), and they all said the same thing: no weird “Critical Part” stuff here – the normal UK rules apply.

So tell me the rules again?

EGPH/EGLL/EGKK/EGWU: Outbound screening is required for all flights, regardless of weight or type of flight.

All other UK airports: Outbound screening only required for commercial flights over 10 tonnes MTOW, and all flights over 45.5 tonnes whether commercial or private. You can read more about this [here](#).

Mexico Permit Confusion - The Latest

David Mumford
3 July, 2024



Right on the heels of the implementation of the new **Single Entry Authorization**, known as an “AIU”, the Mexican Civil Aviation authority (AFAC) has issued a new **Mandatory Circular** which is **causing issues at certain airports for BOTH Part 91 and Part 135 operations**. Here’s the lowdown:

Issue #1: Private flights might get mis-identified as Commercial flights. The Circular claims that the “majority” of non-mexican registered aircraft indicate the type of service they are authorized to perform in their Registration or Airworthiness Certificates. Mexican registered aircraft identify their intended use through their tail number XA-Commercial, XB-Private, XC-Government. However, this claim in the circular could lead to an incorrect interpretation of Standard Airworthiness Certificates in the commuter, or transport categories to be an indication of the type of operation being performed. With this incorrect interpretation, a Private operation could be mis-interpreted to be a Commercial operation.

Issue #2: You need a noise certificate to get a landing permit. The minimum documents required now include a noise certificate. While required under 14 CFR 91.703 (a) (5) many pilots and operators do not know where to find it. In turboprop and turbojet aircraft, it is usually in the AFM. Smaller aircraft may need to create their own using the FAA Circulars AC 91-86 and AC_36-1H

Issue #3: You also need a Journey Logbook. An aircraft Journey Logbook is indicated as a required document. The aeroplane journey log should contain aeroplane nationality and registration, dates of flights, crew member names and duty assignments, departure and arrival points and times, purpose of flight, observations regarding the flight, signature of the pilot-in-command.

Issue #4: You also need Radio Station Licenses. Radio Station Licenses are now specifically required. While required under US law, many pilots/operators have chosen to ignore this and could be in for a harsh surprise.

Issue #5: Watch out for cabotage rules. Charter flights can only extract from Mexico those passengers that they brought in and cannot make any flights from one Mexican airport another.

Issue #6: You might need Mexican insurance for private flights. The circular states that the insurance policy for all aircraft must be a Mexican approved policy. It does not indicate that for private aircraft, the policies issued in their country of registry are accepted. This may be interpreted that ALL aircraft must now buy Mexican policies. **More news to follow!**

Issue #7: You might need a copy of the Mexican AIP. The circular states that the Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP) must be carried aboard in physical or electronic form. In the past, an

equivalent document (Jeppesen Trip Kit) was accepted in lieu of the AIP. **More news to follow!**

Issue #8: You might need a review of your AOC. The circular states that for charter/freight/ambulance flights, a Mexican AOC must be obtained. There is no guidance on whether this is simply a review of the existing AOC of the operator or they actually want operators to undergo some new procedure to obtain a Mexican AOC. **More news to follow!**

The circular is sufficiently ambiguous and referring to numerous articles and sections of Mexican laws and Circulars that it will require a lot of homework to understand. As such, **much appears to be left to interpretation** which will most likely go against a pilot rather than to their benefit.

We recommend that you **contact the civil aviation authorities at the Mexican airport of your intended arrival** to determine what they are going to require of you.

If you are a Part 135 charter operator AND even if you have a blanket Mexican Charter Permit, you should **contact your handler immediately** to determine whether you will be allowed to operate at your intended Mexican airport of landing. We were informed that over the past weekend, **well over a dozen charter flights were denied entry** as a result of this Mandatory Circular.

Unfortunately, this Mandatory Circular is sufficiently vague that it is being **handled differently airport to airport**. However, we are receiving reports of charter flights being denied entry into Mexico at huge cost to all involved. We have not heard any reports yet regarding Part 91 but the ambiguity in this Circular leaves that door open as well. Just **check in advance** to avoid unpleasant surprises on arrival in Mexico.

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

South Korea Airspace Risk Update

Chris Shieff
3 July, 2024



Key Points

- **There are no official airspace warnings for South Korea, but the risk situation seems to be getting worse.**
- **Airspace safety is gradually deteriorating due to several factors: GPS Interference, North Korean space launches and missile tests, military drills and failed agreements with North Korea, and weird balloon incidents.**

If you're operating in the **RKRR/Incheon FIR**, it is important to stay up to date with airspace risk.

In stark comparison to North Korean airspace, which is rife with warnings and flight prohibitions, operations over South Korea continue with almost **no active advisories** to crew – save for the odd FIR Notam.

It is not so much a matter of disinformation, but a **lack of it** that can create complacency amongst pilots operating there.

The situation on the Korean Peninsula is unique. The two nations are not at war but remain in a state of **constant readiness** to engage in one. They live in what was once described as a 'reciprocal fear of surprise attack.'

This means South Korea's airspace is at constant risk of instability caused by some kind of political crisis. Things have potential to change quickly, and **without warning**.

It is therefore vital to monitor changes in airspace that is considered by most to be completely safe. Here is a review of what has been happening in the RKRR/Incheon FIR lately that may have subtly been **increasing risk** to civil aircraft.

GPS Interference

The US FAA previously published a warning for GPS interference in South Korean airspace via a KICZ Notam – but this was cancelled back in 2018. The signs are that this advice may need to be re-visited.

On March 11, the RKRR/Incheon FIR issued a new warning advising **extreme caution for GPS interference** including the vicinity of RKSI/Incheon, Seoul. The nature of the interference wasn't specified but was likely to have included spoofing.

RKRR Z0558/24 - CAUTIONARY INFO FOR ACFT OPERATING IN INCHEON FIR :
PILOTS HAVE REPORTED THAT GPS SIGNALS ARE UNRELIABLE OR LOST
INTERMITTENTLY IN INCHEON FIR(AROUND INCHEON AND SEOUL AREA) .
EXERCISE EXTREME CAUTION WHEN USING GPS.
10 JUN 05:51 2024 UNTIL 17 JUN 15:00 2024.
CREATED: 10 JUN 05:51 2024

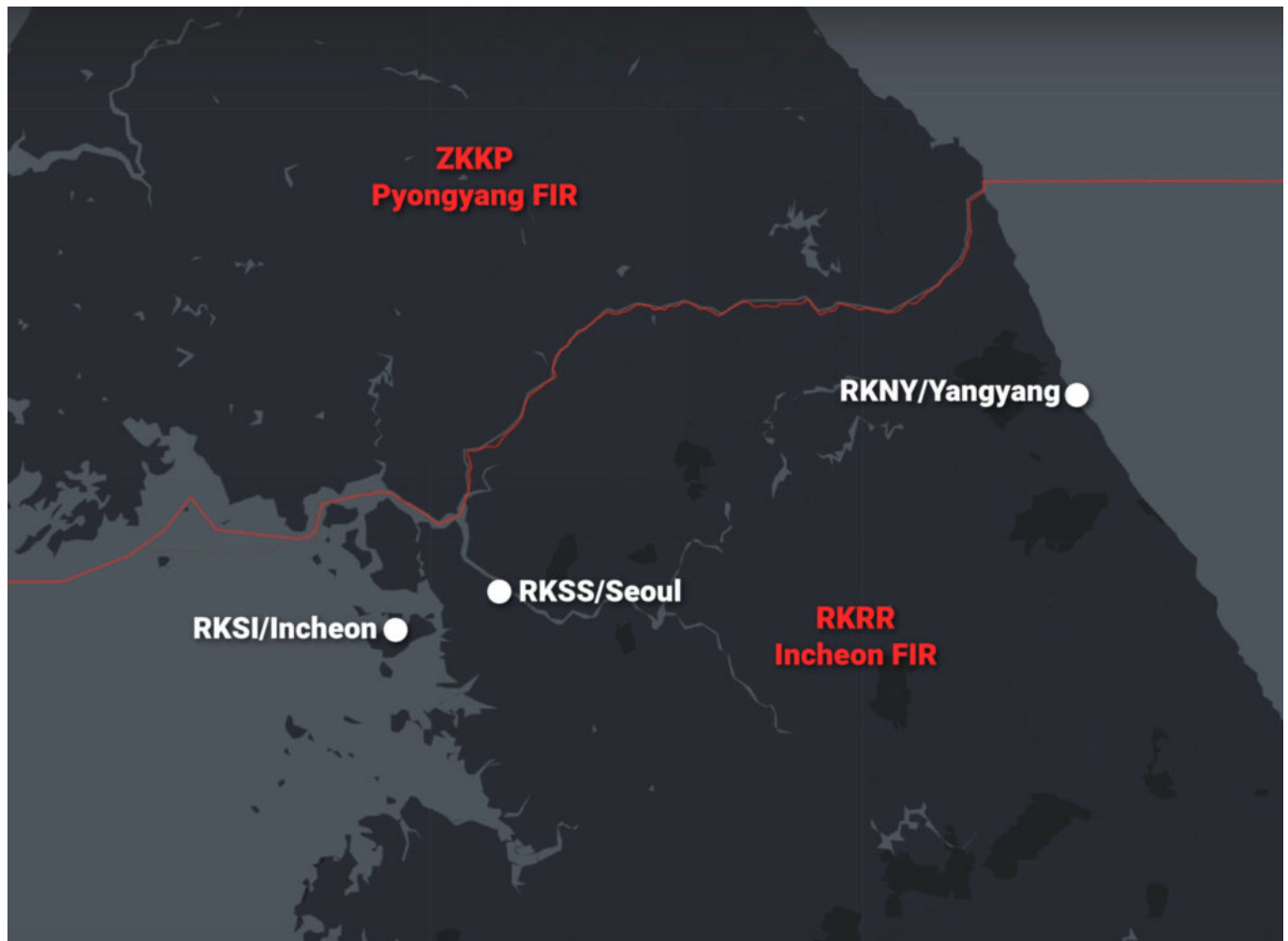
The source of the interference was suspected to be North Korea attempting to interfere with military drills in the area.

This was followed by an **OPSGROUP member report** of GPS interference during an approach to RKSS/Seoul on May 16:

"GPS spoofing into RKSS/Seoul [while] on approach to RWY 32R. We disabled hybrid and deselected GPS after seeing the risk reported on ATIS..."

Any kind of GPS interference, especially when operating in and out of Seoul, is cause for concern. It's 20nm

from the North Korean border and a bunch of prohibited areas which carry chart warnings that say in very clear language that **you may get shot at** if you inadvertently enter.



North Korea's Race to Space

Late last year, North Korea surprised the world by launching a satellite into space creating a potential **debris field** in the Yellow Sea between South Korea and China. The launch prompted a missile warning in Southern Japan.

Unlike conventional missile tests, space launches create hazards to aviation that **extend far beyond the ZKKP/Pyongyang FIR** rendering existing airspace warnings arguably inadequate. Here is an example of a warning hurriedly issued for large portions of the RKRR Incheon FIR following a previously attempted space launch.

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

EXPECT FALLING AREAS ARE AS BLW :

1. 360656N 1233307E-352431N 1232247E-352001N
1234837E-360226N
1235911E
2. 340554N 1230159E-332328N 1225153E-331632N
1232940E-335858N
1234004E
3. 145410N 1284006E-111918N 1291050E-112649N
1295408E-150142N
1292403E

Then just weeks ago, North Korea attempted to launch another (with no prior warning) which failed spectacularly in a mid-air explosion. This prompted South Korea to conduct **air drills** with over twenty military fighter jets near the demilitarised border zone.

North Korea have since announced to Japan their intention to try again with another **potential debris field** near the Korean Peninsula, and the Philippines Island of Luzon. The original target was June 4 but we're still waiting.

Behind this persistence to have satellites in space is Pyongyang's ability to gather intelligence on South Korea should a conflict escalate - **it seems that risk to civil aviation is an afterthought.**

Ballooning Tensions

Earlier this month, North Korea sent at least three and a half thousand balloons across the border into South Korea carrying animal excrement, garbage and scrap paper. Some landed in Seoul.

No flight disruptions were reported, but images circulating in the media show that the balloons were not small and could easily cause **low level hazards** to aircraft operating in South Korean airspace near the border.

Failed Pact

On June 4, Seoul axed a six-year old agreement with Pyongyang that was designed to calm things down between the two countries. It hoped to achieve this by prohibiting provocative military drills or carrying out psychological warfare near the border.

Just two days later, joint drills with the US were carried out using a long-range bomber to drop **precision-guided bombs** over the Korean Peninsula. It was the first time this has happened in seven years.

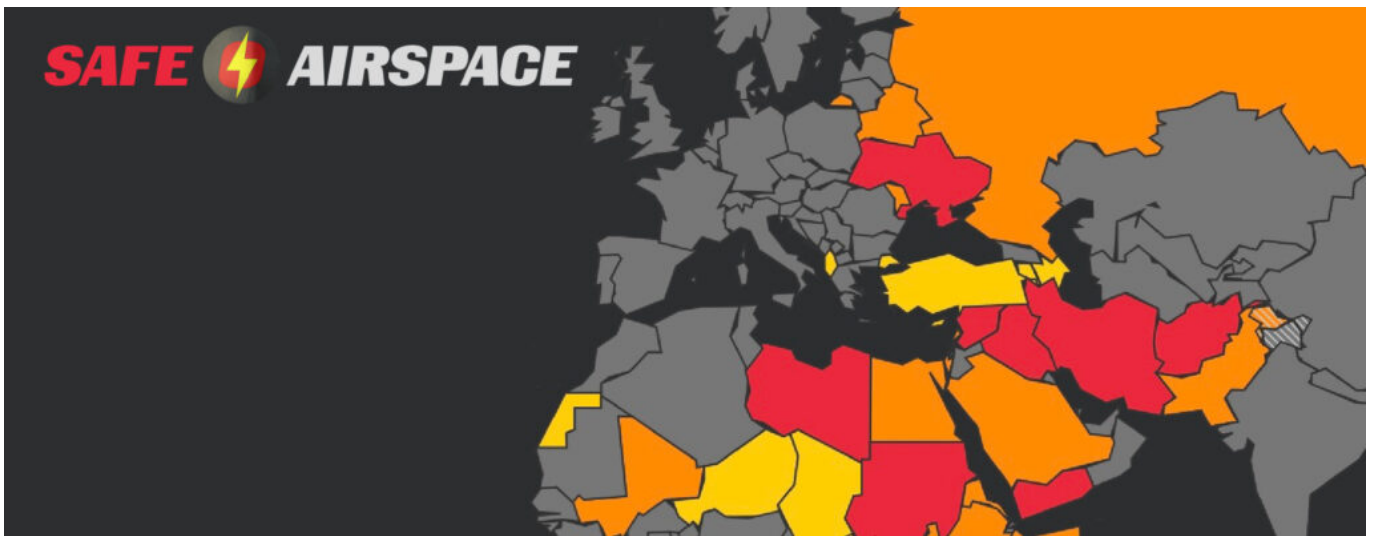
Existing Airspace Warnings for South Korea

They're extremely limited. The Incheon FIR routinely issues temporary ones by Notam, under the RKRR designator but these can be easily missed in briefing packages. There are no other state issued warnings or advisories to report.

Safe Airspace

Perhaps more concerning to airspace safety than a single large event (such as the outbreak of war) are situations where risk **gradually deteriorates** in open and busy airspace.

This is arguably what we are seeing right now over South Korea. All of these changes are reported on safeairspace.net – our conflict zone and risk database.



If you have more information to add to this briefing, we'd love to hear from you. You can reach us on team@ops.group.

OPSGROUP is hiring: Writer wanted

David Mumford
3 July, 2024



OPSGROUP is hiring. We're looking for a Writer – someone to help write some articles and interview some people.

What are we looking for?

- Someone with great energy! The most important thing is that you enjoy working with us, and we with you.
- **Writing experience!** The ability to tell good stories, and bring a sense of humour.
- *Experience in international flight operations is a bonus – pointy end, on the ground, dispatcher, flight planner, trip specialist – all good.*

What will you do?

- Write helpful, clear articles in plain, human-friendly English.
- Listen to members! Set up interviews with members to get their stories.
- Communicate with CAA's, FBO's, ATC, Airports to get the lowdown on the latest risks and changes.
- Research larger operational risks and changes.
- Interview pilots, dispatchers, and other ops people to get a story straight

About the role:

- Working hours: Weekdays, daytime hours, preferably based in the Americas (North or South) or Euro timezones, but flexible.
- Payment: Monthly, fixed-rate, 20 hours or so of work a week. Some weeks more, some weeks less – depends what's going on.
- Location: Anywhere you like!

What is OPSGROUP?

OPSGROUP is a membership organisation of Pilots, Air Traffic Controllers, Flight Dispatchers, Ops Managers and other dedicated people that realise that sharing information on dangers and changers is what keeps us all safe. We come together to make aviation more human-friendly for all of us.

How to apply?

You can do your first interview already! It'll take about 10 minutes, we'll take you on a little adventure, ask you some things, tell you some things. All you need is your big computer (couple of practical things to do, so your phone isn't ideal) and a little time.

Ready? Go ... (or open in a new window)

SE Asia Monsoon Season: What Are LSWDs and Why Will They Cost You Fuel?

Chris Shieff
3 July, 2024



June marks the start of **monsoon season** throughout Southeast Asia. From now until October, enroute weather deviations will routinely exceed 100nm.

This creates a significant challenge for controllers and coordination between the high number of FIRs that span congested air corridors between **Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Indonesia**.

To make matters worse, the 2024 Monsoon season is predicted to be a bad one.

And so, the answer is something called **Large Scale Weather Deviation Procedures (LSWD)** already innocuously appearing in FIR Notams like the one below.

RPHI/MANILA B1982/24 02JUN 0023Z

(NOTAMR B1981/24) - RNAV RTE FL ALLOCATION LTD TO:

N884 - (LAXOR-LEGED) - FL310, FL350, FL390

M767 - (TOKON-TEGID) - FL320, FL360, FL400

DUE TO ACTIVATION OF LARGE SCALE WX DEV (LSWD) PROC. 02 JUN 00:23 2024 UNTIL
02 JUN 09:00 2024 ESTIMATED.

This raises two important questions:

- **What does LSWD actually mean?**
- **What are operators doing about it?**

In a nutshell, your standard contingency allowance may no longer be enough - meaning unfamiliar operators (especially on fuel critical routes) may unexpectedly be caught with their pants down.

So, let's take a closer look.

The 2024 monsoon season is going to be bad.

The clever folk at the World Meteorological Organization recently said so.

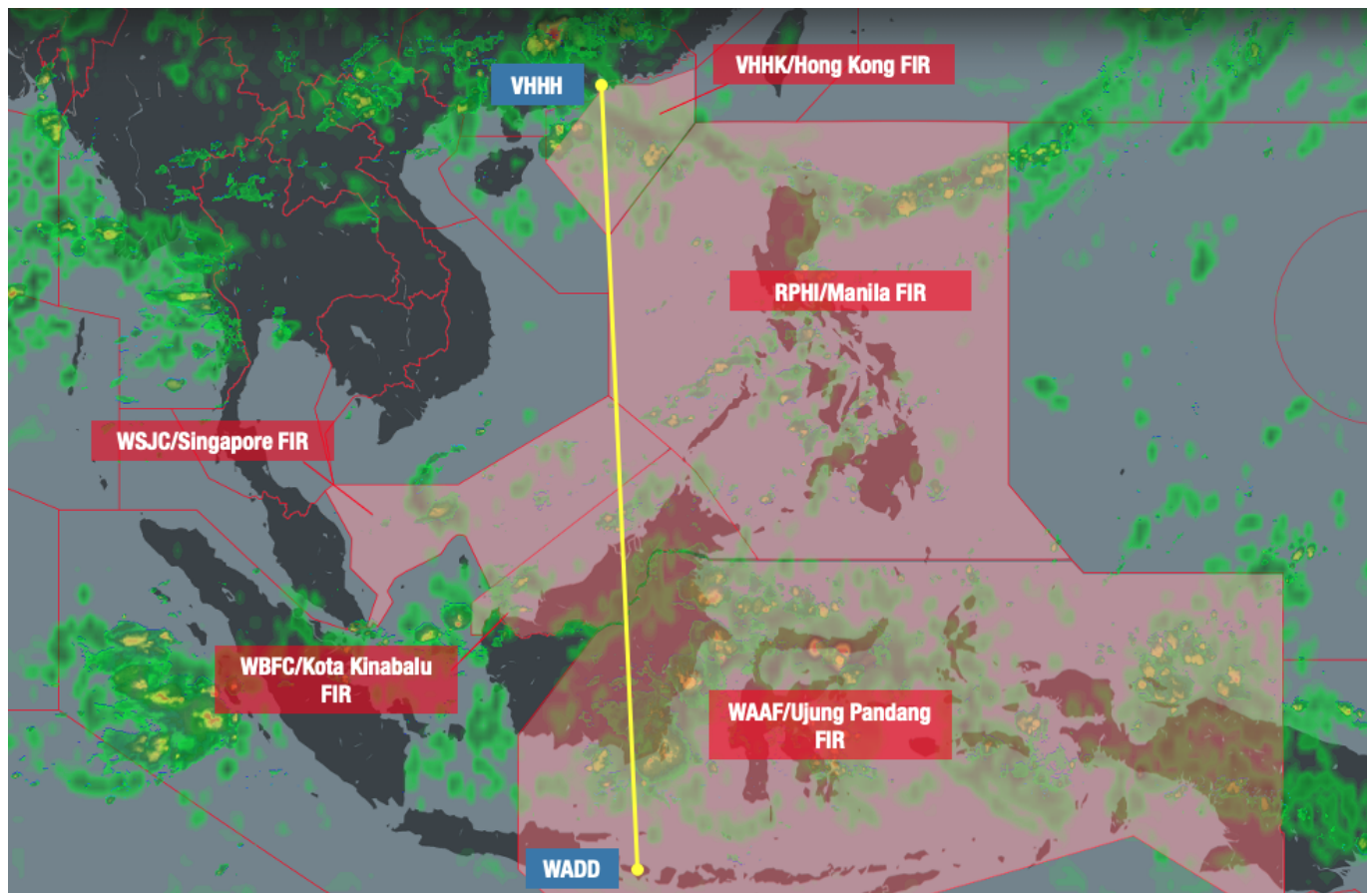
Last year, in comparison, was weak.

You can take a look at their full report [here](#), but the short story is that thanks to a spicy combination of 'ninas and ninos' much of Southeast Asia is about to receive up to ninety percent of its annual rainfall in the next few months. Which means **large scale build-ups** will be everywhere.

The airspace picture.

Spanning this area of unstable weather is a **large number of adjacent FIRs** serving some of the busiest air corridors in the world.

Take this routing (WADD/Bali to VHHH/Hong Kong) as an example, overlaid with current precipitation in the region. It's very early days, but you can already begin to see the extent of the deviations FIRs are dealing with.



The sheer scale of weather deviations required by aircraft in this area creates a **major challenge for air traffic control**.

The lateral separation between adjacent airways is often far less than the deviation each aircraft will require, along with the narrower vertical margins of RVSM airspace.

This creates numerous problems for controllers – providing priority handling to one aircraft creates delays and disruptions for others. **It's your standard ripple effect.**

To create room, ATC has specific protocols to manage these deviations. They call them LSWDs and they are used to reign in the mess.

How do these procedures work?

Traffic will be processed through a **limited number of routes with level restrictions bound by their**

direction of flight. These routes can be found in each state's respective AIPs.

Here's an example found buried in Singapore's docs:

4.2.2 FLAS for Large Scale Weather Deviations (LSWD) in Western Pacific / South China Sea Area as applicable by Singapore ACC:

Flight Level Allocation (LSWD)	ATS Route and Direction of Flight					
	L642	M771	N892	L625	N884	M767
	SW	NE	SW	NE	NE	SW
410						
400	400		400			400
390		390		390	390	
380						
370						
360	360		360			360
350		350		350	350	
340						
330						
320	320		320			320
310		310		310	310	
300						
290						

To make co-ordination easier between the numerous ATS sectors, **all traffic operates with the same level availability whenever LSWDs are active.**

For business jets, this may become problematic as **higher flight levels (FL400+) may not be available** for extended periods of time.

As a locally-based G550 Captain explains:

"Even if higher flight levels are available in one FIR, controllers may be reluctant to give them to you. This is because there is no guarantee that the next sector can accommodate it and it can be hard to get you down again..."

...The main thing with LSWD is knowing that a lot of levels we usually get won't be available. And so, we carry more fuel accordingly. It may also be worth briefing the pax that conditions may be bumpier than they're used to..."

Flow control and crossing time restrictions are also common which may mean the use of **less efficient mach numbers.**

This can also lead to **delays for start-up clearances** due to enroute spacing. When asked what additional fuel our local G550 Captain carries for these procedures, his answer was this - *"at least thirty minutes."*

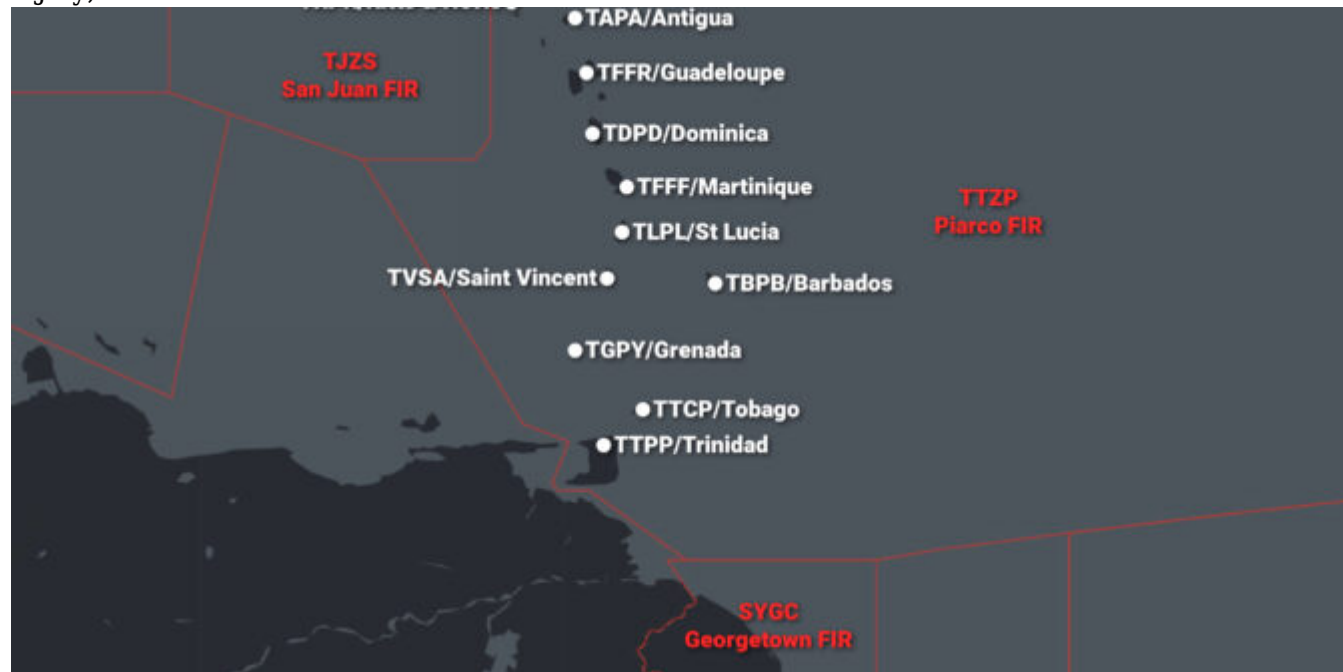
Have more to add?

Local operator feedback is invaluable to everyone in the group. If you've got anything to add to this article, get in touch with us at team@ops.group

Caribbean: File Your Flight Plans Early!

David Mumford

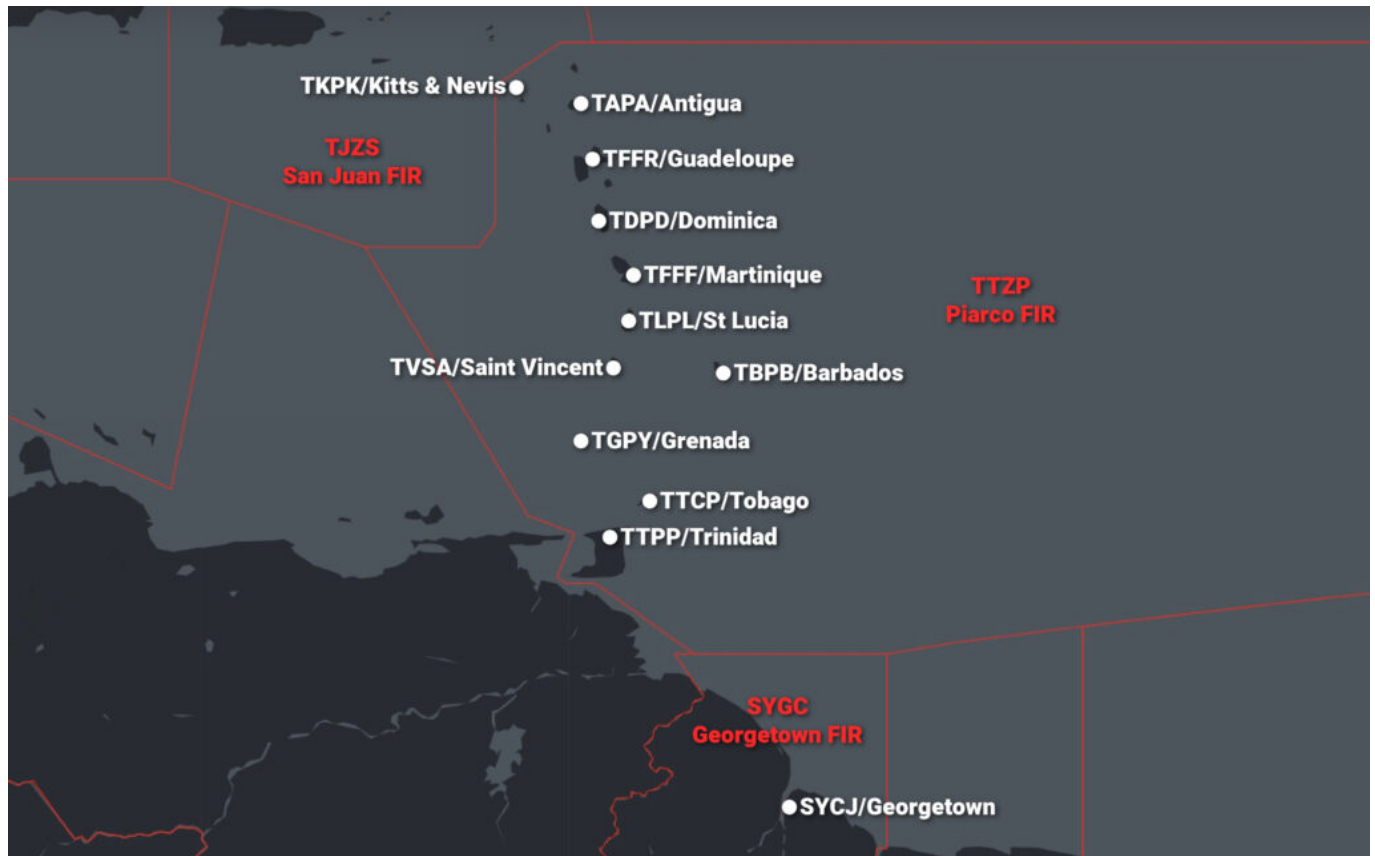
3 July, 2024



The Cricket T20 World Cup is taking place at various spots in the USA and West Indies throughout June.

From May 20 to July 15, if you want to operate a flight to any airports within the TTZP/Piarco or SYGC/Georgetown FIRs, they want you to **submit your flight schedule to the authorities 72hrs before departure.**

So that's basically **every airport in the island chain** from TKPK/St Kitts & Nevis in the north down to SYCJ/Georgetown in the south.



Check AIC 1-24 for details of how this is going to work. But essentially, if you're heading to any of these airports, send an email to piarcoatfmu@caa.gov.tt 72hrs before departure telling them the following info:

- (a) Aircraft call sign
- (b) Aircraft type
- (c) Point of departure
- (d) Date of flight
- (e) Estimated Time of Departure (ETD)
- (f) Destination
- (g) Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA) for arrivals to airports within the Piarco (TTZP) FIR and airports within the Georgetown (SYGC) FIR
- (h) Estimated Elapse Time (EET) for Piarco FIR
- (i) Route
- (j) Flight Level (FL) requested.

They also want you to **file your flight plan early**, to avoid delays. **4hrs prior to departure** should do the trick.

They're also warning of **extra delays in the TJZS/San Juan FIR** to the north.

For updates, keep an eye on the Cadena website.

CANSO


Advisories

Information Regional TMM Active Reroutes Delays Advisories **13** Español



Regional Operations Plan

- ▶ SENEAM Mexico: 27/May/2024 13:41
- ▶ ECNA Cuba: 27/May/2024 12:44
- ▶ JCAA Jamaica: 27/May/2024 12:29
- ▶ OFNAC Haiti: 27/May/2024 12:24
- ▶ TTCAA Trinidad & Tobago: 27/May/2024 12:16
- ▶ IDAC Dominican Republic: 27/May/2024 11:55
- ▶ FAA San Juan: 27/May/2024 10:23
- ▶ EANA Argentina: 27/May/2024 09:21
- ▶ AAC Panama
- ▶ FAA ATCSCC
- ▶ Bahamas Air Navigation Services Authority
- ▶ CADENA HQ

THE NEXT CADENA PLANNING WEB CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, MAY 27, 2024 AT 1400 UTC
UTC: 27/May/2024 14:17:16

France Wants Your Cash

David Mumford
3 July, 2024



Key Points

- You must make a customs declaration when entering or leaving the EU with €10,000 or more in cash or its equivalent in other currencies - this rule has been around forever.
- But watch out for this gotcha in France - if you're planning on bringing in cash over

this threshold and leaving it on the aircraft, you need to declare it in advance, or else you might get fined.

- Both reports we have received relate to LFPB/Paris Le Bourget airport. It's not yet clear whether this issue is just limited to this airport, or affects other airports in France.

OPSGROUP member report

On arrival at **LFPB/Paris Le Bourget** recently, we were met by a team of customs officials who **asked us if we carried aircraft cash on board**. We were told that we should have declared any amount over €10,000.

As we had not attempted to take any cash into the country we asked if we could file at that time. The answer was that we have to file before departure online and that failure to do so was counted as attempting to bring in undeclared cash from outside of the EU. **Unaccompanied cash must be declared online before entry and before departure.**

There is no limit to the amount of cash that you can declare, and once declared any amount can be taken into the country and spent. I would imagine that there may be a requirement to account for any difference between the amount declared inbound and the amount declared outbound, but have not tested this.

We were fined a substantial sum, put on a EU watchlist for 5 years and told that any repeat violations will be subject to a sliding scale of sanctions up to complete confiscation of the funds. We have flown in the area for many years, but have never been notified of the this rule.

ANOTHER member report

We had Customs officials board our aircraft in **LFPB/Paris Le Bourget** for a "routine pre-departure check" and they were **exclusively focused on declared/undeclared cash**.

We had not declared (we were not carrying anything close to the qualifying amounts of cash), so they **asked questions about our onboard safe**. They knew most Global models had one, and they knew exactly where it was. We never use it, so we didn't even take the key on the trip and were unable to open it for inspection.

That made them suspicious, so we were delayed 20 minutes while they phoned supervisors to **decide if we were grounded or not**. They even discussed bringing in a team to **physically break into the safe** to verify contents, but supervisors decided to forego that option.

They cautioned us to have the key with us next time we entered France. **Needless to say, it is onboard now.**

Bottom line: They know about safes and want to inspect their contents. Be able to open it.

What are the rules?

These are all in EU Regulation 2018/1672, which got updated in 2021, and are basically as follows:

1. You must lodge a cash declaration to customs when entering or leaving the EU with €10,000 or more in cash or its equivalent in other currencies (banknotes, coins, cheques, traveller cheques, promissory notes, money orders without a named beneficiary, and all manner of gold coins/bars/nuggets etc).
2. If customs think you're bringing in cash over this threshold in any kind of "unaccompanied

way” they can tell you to lodge a “disclosure declaration” – which you have to have to then do within 30 days.

So, nothing about having to tell them in advance.

Even on the French customs website, there’s **no mention of having to declare or disclose anything in advance**. It says you either do it on arrival, or use their DALIA website to declare it online.

Where and when to file your declaration

A declaration can be submitted by the person transporting the funds:

- To French Customs, **at the time of entry into or exit from French territory**
- Online, via **DALIA**, the online declaration service, **at the soonest 30 days before the transfer date and at the latest before crossing the border**. To do so, you must create a user account on douane.gouv.fr.

How to make the declaration?

As of 2021, there’s now a standard form that the EU have published for this.

This is available in other languages, if you’re headed somewhere in the EU and they want a copy in something other than English.

Why the weird rule in France about having to do it in advance?

As far as we can tell, it’s an incorrect reading and application of the EU Regulation.

Both reports we have received relate to **LFPB/Paris Le Bourget airport**. It’s not yet clear whether this issue is just limited to this airport, or affects other airports in France. If you have experienced similar at LFPB or other airports in the country, please let us know: news@ops.group.

We did reach out to some local agents at LFPB, one of whom told us that from their understanding the principle is to do the declaration online before arrival, or if you are already on ground – go spontaneously to the customs advising that you have something to declare before they make any check!

US Domestic Enroute CPDLC Update

David Mumford
3 July, 2024



Key Points

- **Domestic en-route CPDLC in the US is now available to everyone - the Notam limiting GA/BA participation to approved trial participants has been removed.**
- **To get CPDLC, 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.**

Here's a very brief summary. For the full, untarnished info, head to the dedicated FAA site [here](#).

So for a long time, domestic en-route CPDLC in the US was only available to operators of bizav aircraft who were signed up to the FAA trial. That trial has now ended, and as long as your avionics make the grade, you can now make use of this service.

The FAA has published a list with a whole bunch of aircraft types on it.

If your aircraft is highlighted in **yellow** or **green**, you **can get datalink** (as long as you complete and submit the participation form).

If it's highlighted in **red** (or not on the list at all), you **can't get datalink**.

L3Harris have provided this guidance:

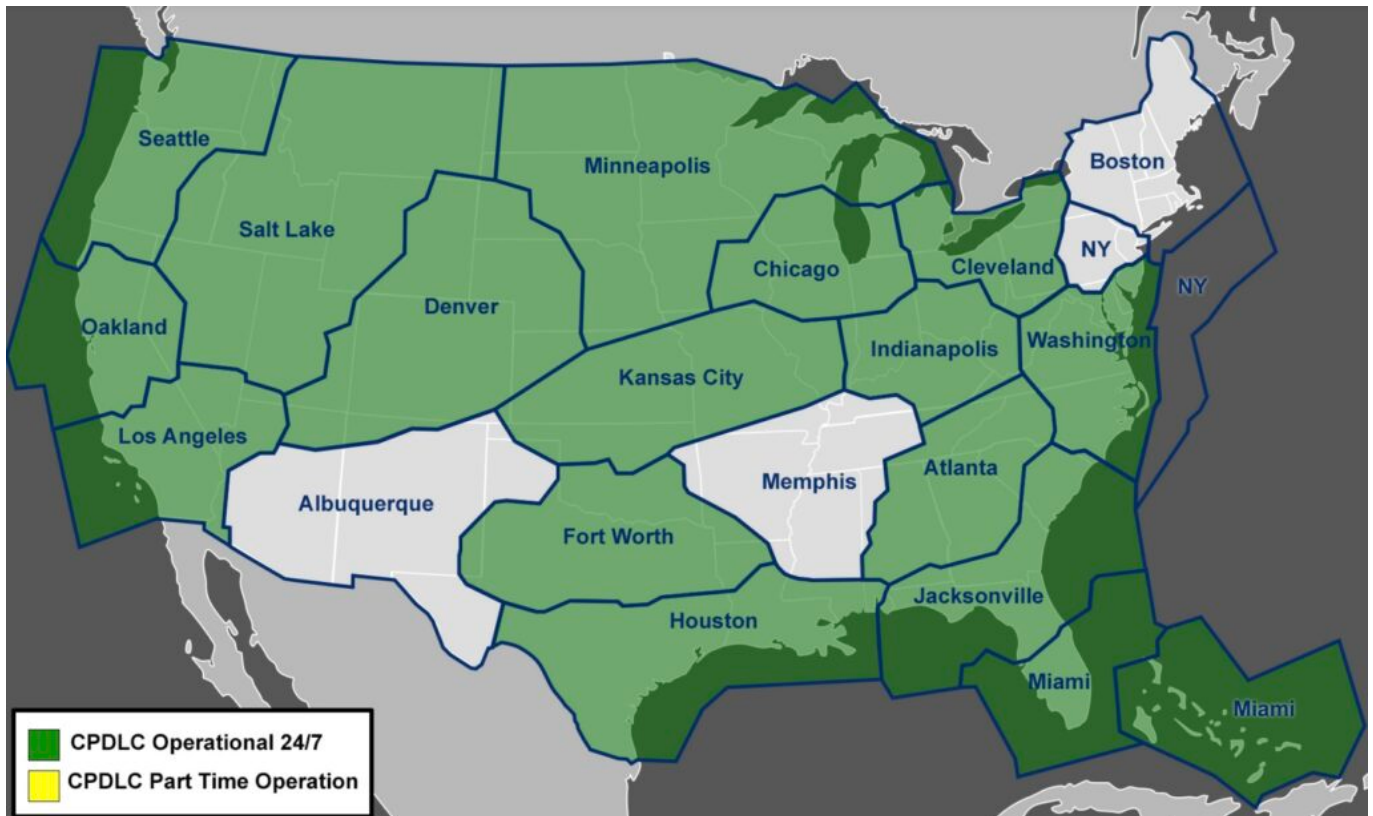
- *Ensure that your avionics are configured to use VDL Mode 2 as the primary media for U.S. Domestic En Route CPDLC. VDLM2 is the only approved media for participation in the domestic U.S.*
- *Ensure that both the 'J4' code in the field 10a equipment field as well as the FANSE (e.g. '1FANSE2PDC') DAT Code in field 18 (other information/DAT) are both included on the flight plan to indicate eligibility for U.S. Domestic En Route CPDLC (see the US Domestic Flight and Planning Guide for more information).*
- *Verify that VHF3/COM3 is set to DATA.*
- *The aircraft registration/tail in field 18 (other information/REG).*

- *If you are still researching your avionics in response to questions from L3Harris, please continue to file for CPDLC-DCL only (FANS) until your verification of eligibility is complete.*

Also, a member has reported that if you're now eligible but tried to log on in the past when you were not eligible, **your aircraft reg might have been placed on a "blocked list"**. To get off this list, you need to contact L3Harris, who will forward to the FAA to ask to unblock you (should take less than 24hrs).

Where is CPDLC available in the US?

L3Harris published this updated map on 3 June 2024:



Come on, Albuquerque and Memphis!

So do I need CPDLC now?

No. US domestic datalink is not mandated.

What if I'm flying into the US internationally?

L3Harris have published a guide answering this very question. You can access it here:

For those of you who aren't so familiar with the US, **KUSA is the CPDLC logon code** – and that is the one and only logon code you need, all the way across.

Report-A-Thing is a new thing to report stuff

Mark Zee

3 July, 2024



We love a good snitch here at OPSGROUP.

The Daily Brief, Weekly Bulletin, Ops Alerts – pretty much everything we put out usually comes from **one helpful member** sharing something new.

Introducing the Report-A-Thing

We just built this. It's new. Prepare to be amazed.

Currently operating with 2Mb of RAM and an 80Mb HDD, this machine is fully set up and ready to go. You can use Report-A-Thing to share new useful things with the rest of the group, and do so **anonymously**.

Try it out, and bookmark the address: **OPS.GROUP/RAT**



What should I share?

- Something new, something dangerous, something risky
- Something that will annoy other pilots (like a new parking procedure at TEB)
- Something that affects airspace risk or security
- Something shady
- Something scary
- Something interesting

Up to you. If you read the Daily Brief, you'll know what kind of stuff appears there: so ... that type of thing.

Are there other ways to report stuff?

Yes.

HOW TO REPORT



EVERYTHING COMES FROM OUR MEMBERS. HERE ARE THREE WAYS FOR YOU TO SHARE DANGERS, RISKS, CHANGES AND ANNOYANCES WITH THE REST OF THE GROUP. DO IT.

What's App



SHARE WHAT YOU SEE - INCLUDE A PIC!
SAY HELLO AT +1 747 200 1993

Email



EMAIL IS THE EASIEST WAY TO REPORT
SOMETHING - REPORT@OPS.GROUP

Report-A-Thing



TRY OUT OUR NEW COMMODORE 64 INTERFACE FOR
MAXIMUM 1980'S STYLE SECURITY AND
ANONYMITY. OPS.GROUP/RAT

Argentina: Overflight Permits Now Required

Chris Shieff
3 July, 2024



Key Points

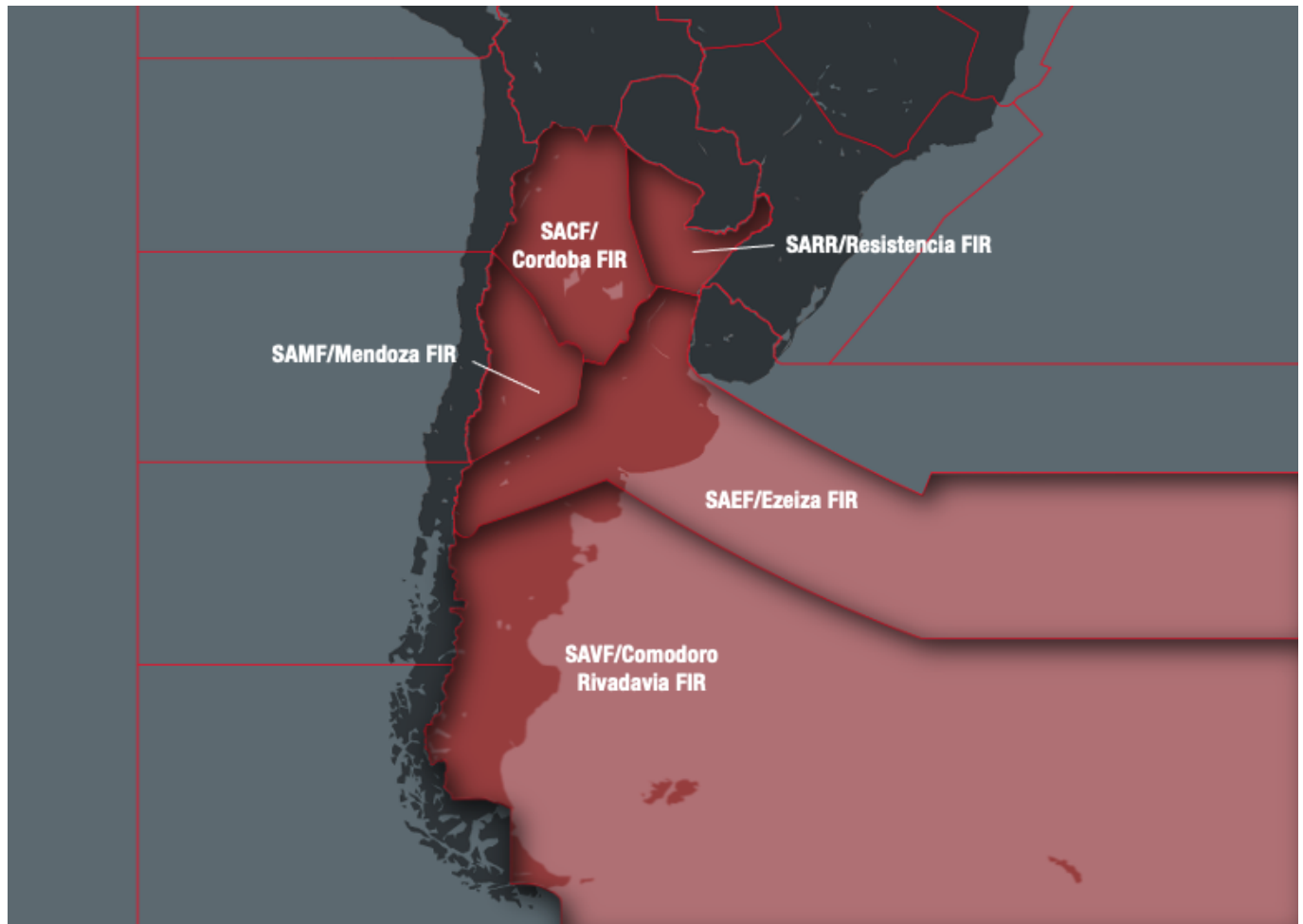
- **Effective March 13, all foreign aircraft now need an overflight permit when transiting Argentinian airspace.**
- **There's been no change to landing permit requirements: private flights don't need one, all other flights do (including tech stops).**
- **AI is still not great at making images with planes or handshakes in them ☹️**

AIP SUP 32/2024 has been published with all the new requirements – but here's a quick summary of what you need to know.

Airspace Affected

This change applies to **all Argentinian airspace**, namely the:

- SAVF/Comodoro Rivadavia FIR
- SAEF/Ezeiza FIR
- SACF/Cordoba FIR
- SARR/Resistencia FIR
- SAMF/Mendoza FIR



How to apply

You'll need to provide at least **72 hours'** notice.

Send your application to the National Administration of Civil Aviation (ANAC)'s AFTN address SABAYAYX, and via email to ovf@anac.gob.ar (also cc. in interaerodromosbis@gmail.com). For emails, use the subject line 'Application for Overflying the Argentine Territory.'

If you need to give ANAC a call, you can also reach them on +54 11 5941 3000.

Private operators will need to provide copies of two documents:

- **Certificate of airworthiness**
- **Proof of insurance**

Commercial operators also need to provide an air operator certificate.

Important: It may sound obvious, but they are quite specific about it. Don't assume you have been granted a permit until you have specifically heard back from them.

Exemptions to the 72-hour rule

You can only get around this if you are operating an **essential flight**. This basically means SAR, humanitarian, air ambulance or firefighting ops.

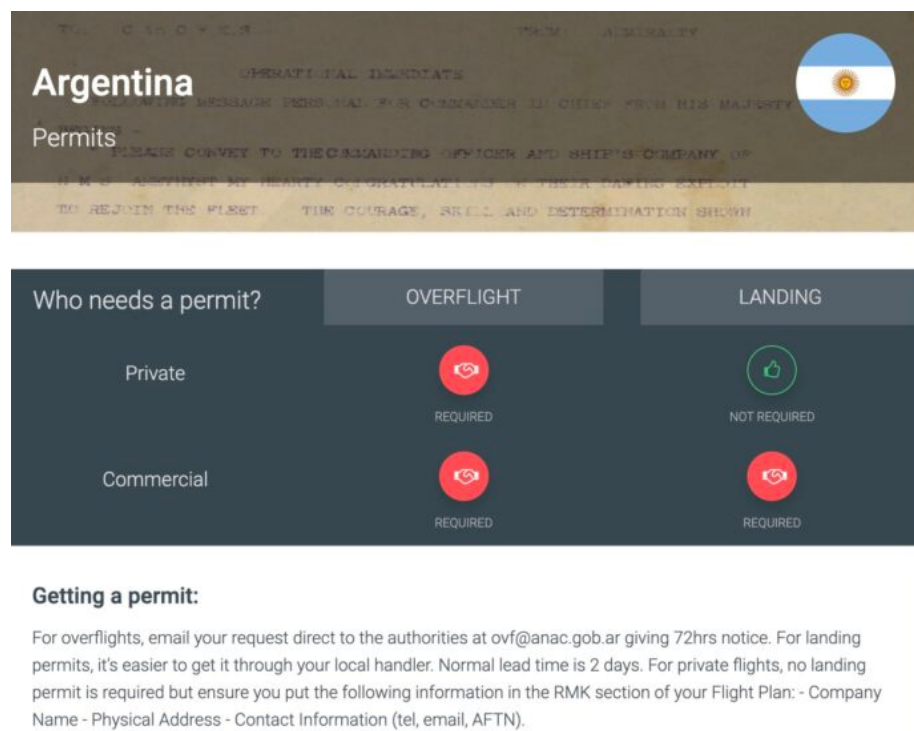
What about landing permits?

Nothing has changed! Private flights don't need one – but make sure you include your company name, physical address and contact info (tel, email, AFTN etc) in the RMKS section of your flight plans.

All other flights (including tech stops) must obtain one.

Need help with other permits?

OPSGROUP members have access to the Permit Helper, found under 'Apps' in your Member's Dashboard. Just search for the country you are planning to visit to see current overflight and landing permit requirements.



Who needs a permit?	OVERFLIGHT	LANDING
Private	REQUIRED	NOT REQUIRED
Commercial	REQUIRED	REQUIRED

Getting a permit:

For overflights, email your request direct to the authorities at ovf@anac.gob.ar giving 72hrs notice. For landing permits, it's easier to get it through your local handler. Normal lead time is 2 days. For private flights, no landing permit is required but ensure you put the following information in the RMK section of your Flight Plan: - Company Name - Physical Address - Contact Information (tel, email, AFTN).



Civil Aviation

National Administration of Civil Aviation (ANAC)

+54 11 5941 3000
info@anac.gob.ar
AFTN: SABAYYX



Agent

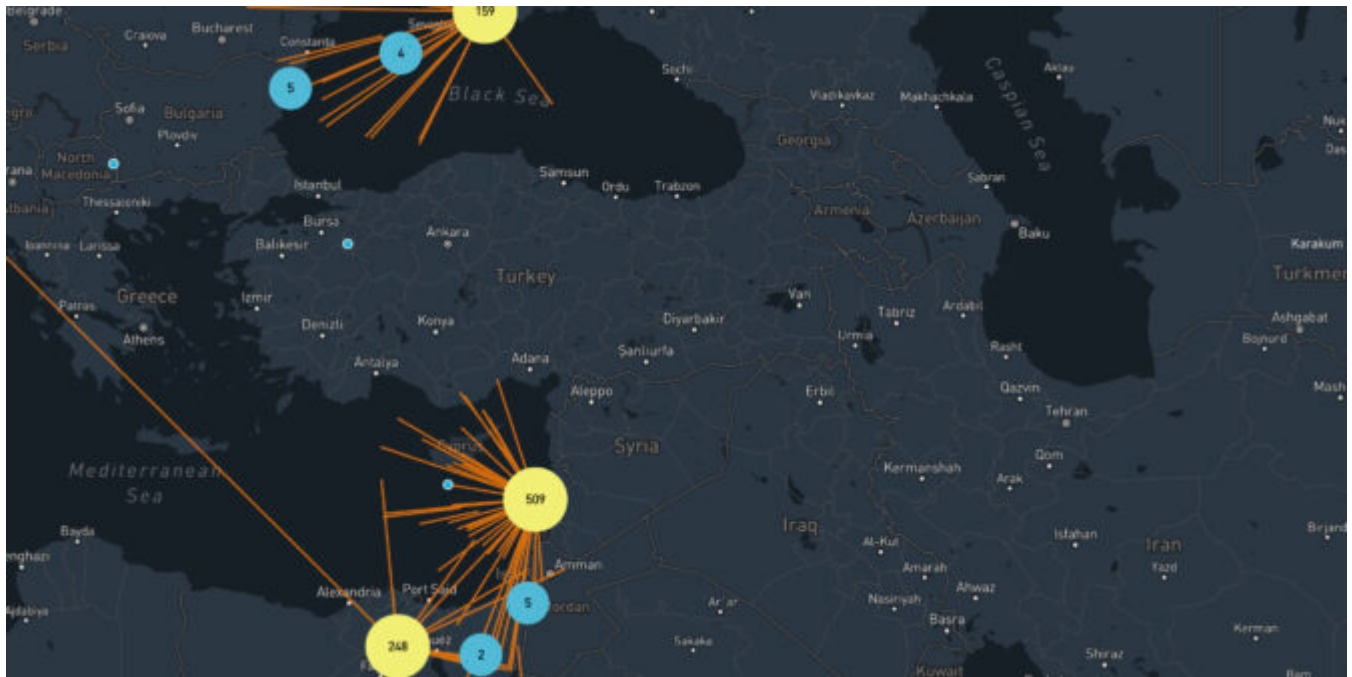
Air Dispatch FBO

+5411 5984 1258
ops@airdispatchfbo.com
\$ Included as part of handling fees

You can also reach out to the team (and other members) via the Slack channels, or email us team@ops.group.

Where is the spoofing today? Two maps to help

Mark Zee
3 July, 2024

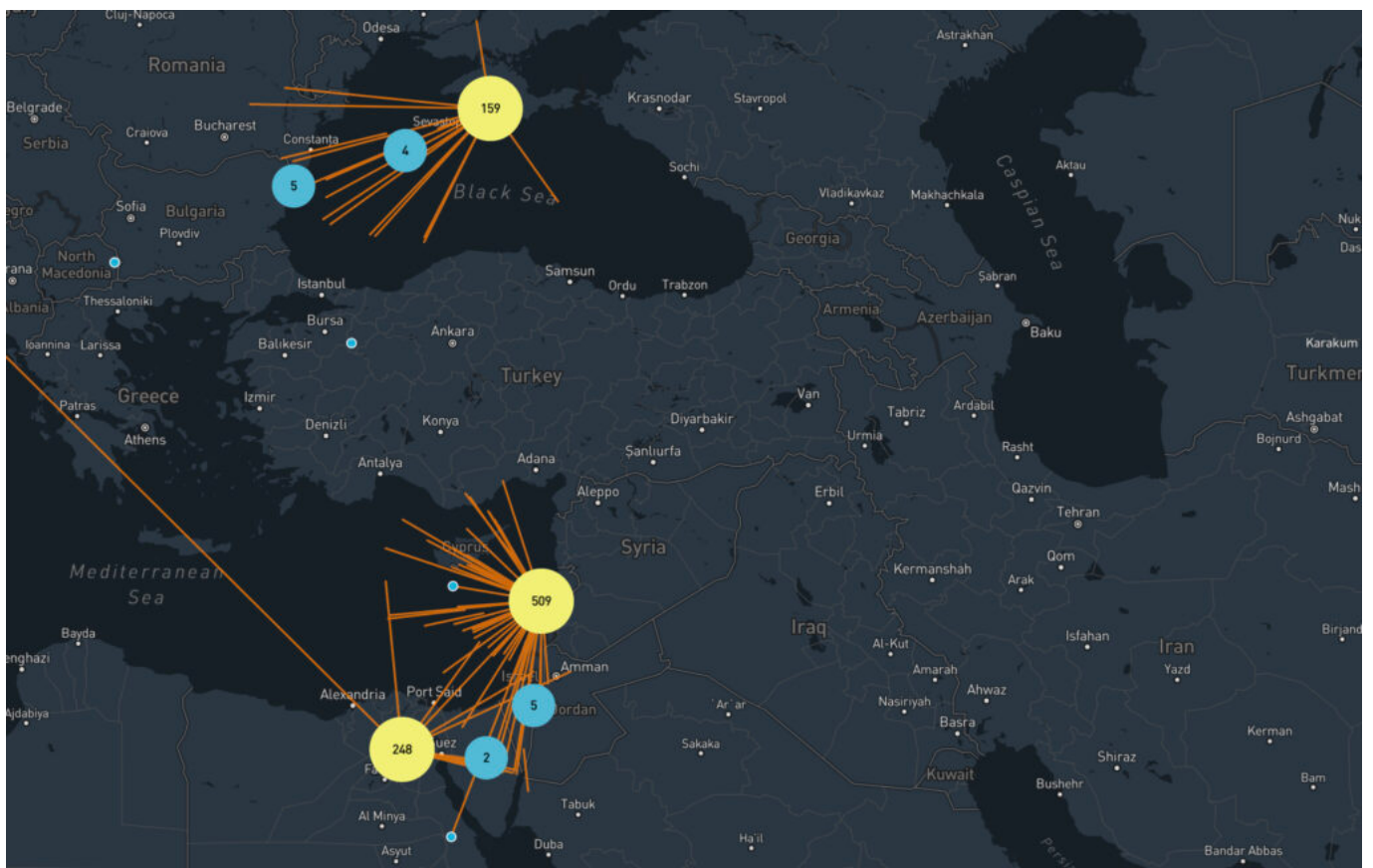


If you're keen to know exactly where GPS Spoofing – or GPS Jamming – might be happening today, there are two handy live maps to share with you.

Both of these use data from flight tracking websites to look for position anomalies, and convert those into hotspots that show where the activity is.

These are very useful in-flight to get a heads up on where you might encounter issues with GPS interference.

Live GPS Spoofing tracker



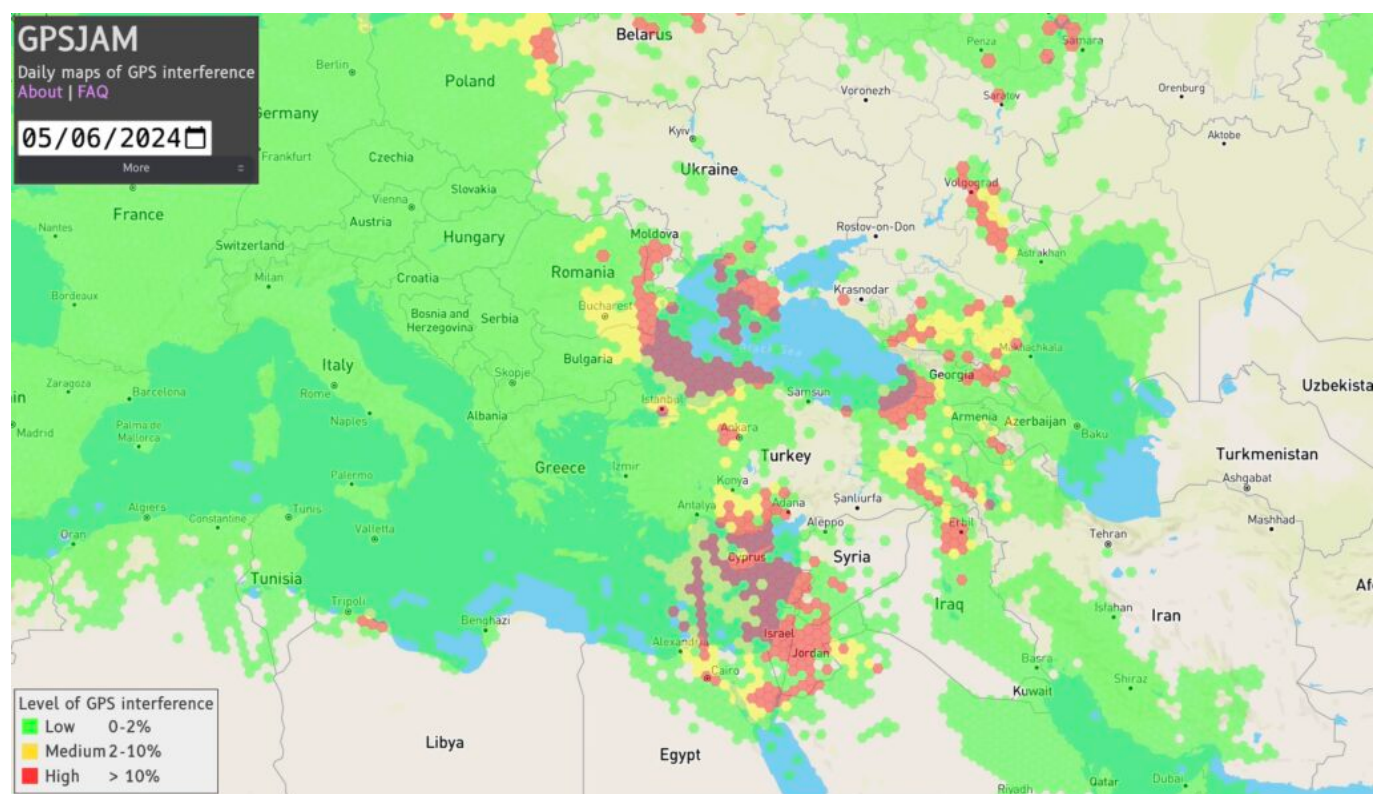
First up is this live **GPS spoofing tracker** from SkAI Data Services, in partnership with the Zurich University of Applied Sciences.

About a month ago, SkAI and Zurich University were following the discussions about GPS spoofing, and wondered if they could detect spoofing in real-time based on the ADS-B data from the OpenSky Network. As it turns out, they can. Having up-to-date information can help raise the situational awareness and prepare the flight crew for the possibility of spoofing.

Their algorithm can detect spoofing anywhere in the world where they have ADS-B coverage. The website is free to use. Unfortunately, the receiver network doesn't quite have the same coverage as other ADS-B websites, let alone space-based ADS-B. Regardless, it's a great tool for planning flights into areas of potential GPS issues.

The screenshot above is from this morning, May 7th. It matches exactly the three primary GPS spoofing hotspots this year: **Sevastopol**, **Beirut**, and **Cairo**. These are the three locations that you can expect your GPS to "think" it's at, when you are over the Black Sea, Eastern Med/Israel, and Egypt, respectively.

GPS Jamming tracker



This map has been around a little longer, and will be familiar to some. GPS Jam uses data from ADS-B Exchange, and looks for aircraft indicating low navigation accuracy. More details are in their FAQ.

This was created when jamming was the only type of GPS interference we encountered, but now that spoofing is on the scene, it most likely shows both jamming and spoofing. That said, when being spoofed, the aircraft doesn't know it has an issue with navigation accuracy (and that's the very problem). Maybe someone knows more about this.

Either way, it's a great map to see potential GPS trouble spots.

What's the latest on GPS Spoofing?

The spoofing tracker above is probably the best answer to that!

Since OPSGROUP first reported the new GPS Spoofing phenomenon in September last year, we continue to receive daily reports of spoofing. However, the areas affected remain largely the same. Our GPS Spoofing Pilot QRH from November last year still holds true, except that we've seen far fewer reports from the Iraq/Iran area, and a new area in Sevastopol affecting Black Sea transits.

We continue to ask members to report GPS spoofing events (pictures are very useful too) to us at team@ops.group, or via WhatsApp to +1 747 200 1993. Thank you!

Philippines: Down The Permit Rabbit Hole

David Mumford
3 July, 2024



Key Points

- **Charter/Non-Sched/Pt135 landings in the Philippines need a Foreign Air Operator Certificate (FAOC).**
- **It's a bit of a pain to get one. Takes 2-3 weeks, but local agents can help get a landing permit while the FAOC is in process.**
- **Read below for the latest on all Philippines Permits**

A Cautionary Tale

An OPSGROUP member recently reported the following:

- *To operate non-scheduled air services into the Philippines we were told that we need a **Foreign Air Operators Certificate**.*

- We were also asked to supply an **ICAO Airline Three letter code**. This is not something as a non-scheduled operator that we believe we can get!
- We used a local agent as our Third Party. They supplied the FAOC application form.
- We were successful in getting a **one-off permit**, however we still had to complete everything in the application form.
- We haven't determined if what we have submitted now as a one-off will be sufficient for the entire FAOC application – we'll find out soon...

The Application Form

You can download it here:

What are the Philippines Permit Requirements?

Here's some **utterly useless official stuff** to "help" start you on your journey.

The Philippines AIP

Requires a log-in. Don't have one, and can't get one. Website doesn't even load most days.

I sent them an email and got a reply saying that even if you have a login, the site *doesn't actually have the eAIP on it*. But if you would like to pay them \$324 USD each year, they can send you a hard copy.

Nope.

Philippines CAA Website

Searched for "eAIP". Nothing found. Moved on.

GEN 1.2

Backdoor access achieved via the EAD website! We have found the elusive AIP GEN 1.2!

But wait... it's dated 2011, and is an enraging mix of INCORRECT INFO and NOTHINGY PAP.

The quest continues...

Ask An Expert

We asked Jeff at Airmach Aviation for help – a local agent in the Philippines who knows **all the answers**:

- **All flights need a permit.** Landings, overflights, private, charter, scheduled, weird non-standard airworthiness... whatever you're doing, if you enter Philippines airspace, you need a permit.
- You'll want to use an agent here, as **Navigation Fees** and **CAA fees** must be paid prior to getting any permit.
- Permit approvals take anywhere between **48-72 hours**.
- They require the routing you'll use to calculate the **navigation fees**.
- **Permit fees** can add up, especially for Charter flights as there are different permits you need to get – one from CAAP (the CAA) and another from CAB (Civil Aeronautics Board).

- Scheduled and Charter landings will need a **Foreign Air Operator Certificate**.

OPSGROUP members can access all this info via the **Permit Helper** app on the Dashboard. This tool has **permit info for every country in the world** – what’s required, and who to contact to get your permit.

Tell me about the Foreign Air Operator Certificate one more time

- This is required for Non-Scheduled (i.e. Charter/Pt135 landings) as well as Scheduled (i.e. Airline) flights landing in the Philippines.
- The application form is [here](#).
- Download it, fill it in, gather together the required docs listed in the form, and ask a local agent in the Philippines to get it for you. We recommend Airmach Aviation. Other agents are out there.
- Yes, you could try going direct to the authorities instead (CAAP: odg@caap.gov.ph). We once knew some people who tried. Their bodies have never been found.

Have you been through this FAOC process? **Got any extra tips to share?** Or maybe you’ve operated a flight to the Philippines recently and have some stories to share? Let us know!

We Want Your Ops Stories!

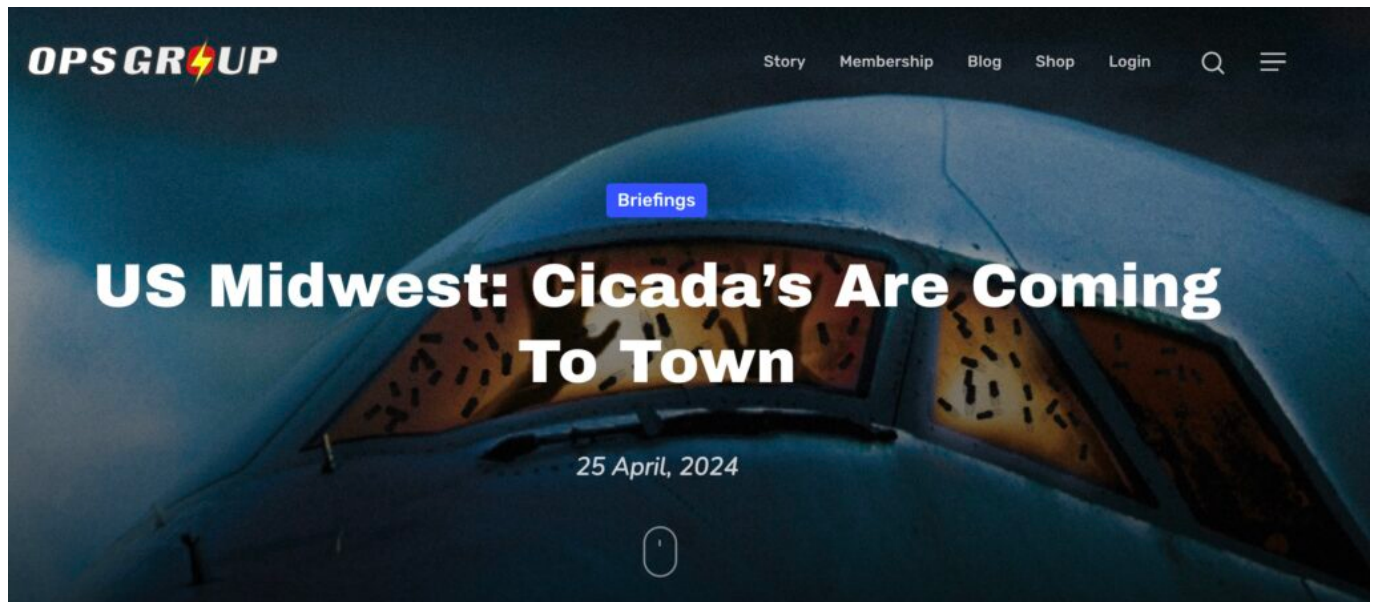
David Mumford
3 July, 2024



Know something worth knowing about something? **Got a story to share?** Let us know! That’s basically how OPSGROUP works – you tell us, and we’ll tell everyone in the group.

- **Been to Nicaragua and had to use their silly new overflight permit system?** Let us know!
- **Experienced one of those annoying security checks at an airport in Germany where they try to sneak onto the plane?** Let us know!
- **Had to disinsect your aircraft heading into Italy?** Let us know!

Or maybe your story is weirder still. Maybe it's a NIGHTMARE. Something like this recent account of **what to do when trying to take-off in a cicada swarm...**



Ooh, that's a nasty one! But an *excellent story* - and **USEFUL!**

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

So tell us your story! Chances are that other pilots and operators would be interested in what you know.



Or maybe you know how specific stuff works?

- **Know how to get an Australian TSP approved with minimal misery?** Let us know!
- **Got the lowdown on operating over Central Africa?** Let us know!
- **Fly regularly to China and know about Himalayan routings?** Let us know!

We've already published a bunch of posts written by people in the group who know about specific things like these. Here are some of our faves: (give em a click if you like!)

[Briefings](#)

NAT Conundrums Volume IV: Contingency Procedures

22 January, 2024

[Briefings](#)

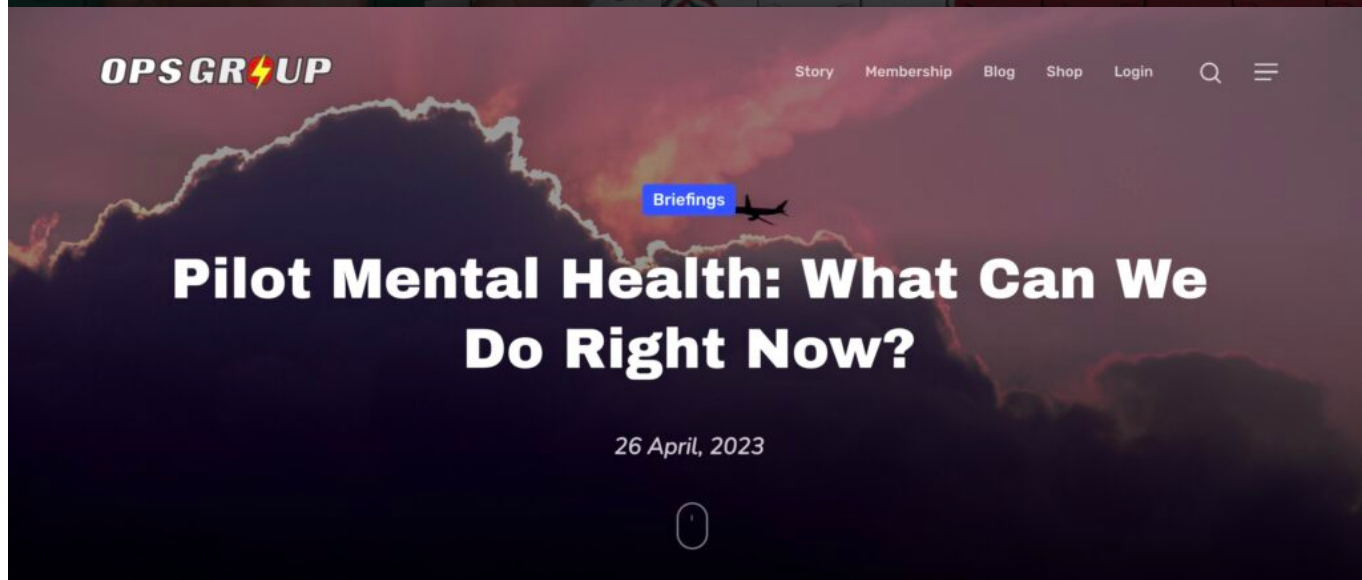
Private Flights To The US

25 September, 2023

[Briefings](#)

EU Temporary Admission Of Aircraft – Busting Myths

11 September, 2023



So if you've got a **story**, or you know about **some specific thing**, and you think other pilots and operators would be interested to hear about it, let us know!

Why do we see US Military Notams?

Chris Shieff

3 July, 2024



Back in March, an OPSGROUP member reached out to us after the following Notam appeared in their flight plan briefing package.

EGKB: V0381/23 INSTRUMENT APPROACH PROCEDURE/NOT AVBL
QPIAU/ / /A/0/999 Valid: 05/12/2023 21:28 - 17/04/2024 23:59
(MILITARY NOTAM)
[US DOD PROCEDURAL NOTAM] INSTRUMENT APPROACH PROCEDURE NOT
AUTHORIZED ILS/LOC/DME/VOR RWY 21

As **EGKB/Biggin Hill** (UK) was their filed alternate, the Notam was of some interest. A quick email to the airport authority confirmed that the ILS was fully serviceable and available.

The member contacted Jeppesen directly about the Notam, and here was their response:

"The Notam in question is actually a US DOD procedural Notam which only applies to US military pilots and those flying under contract/partnership with the DOD. So, while the tower may confirm that the approach is in-service, the US military is not authorized to fly it for reasons known only to them..."

The following questions remained:

- **Why are we seeing these Notams in the first place?**
- **What is the reason for the restriction on military aircraft?**

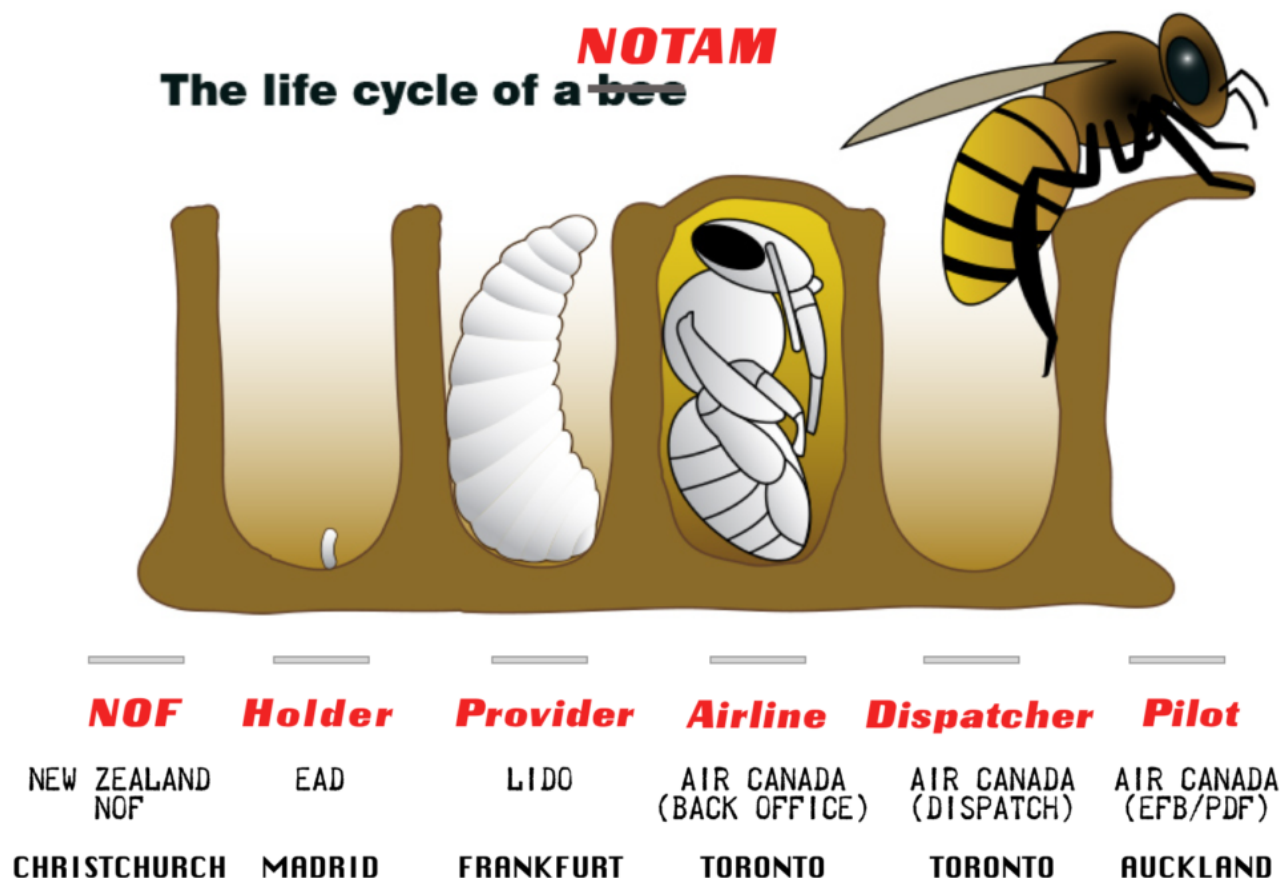
The short answer is that the response from Jeppesen was correct – but could use a little more explanation.

Where we get our Notams from.

There are **two primary “original” sources** for Notams around the world:

1. **The European AIS Database (EAD)** - run by Eurocontrol
2. **The US DoD (Department of Defense)**. It supplies Notams to the FAA for their ‘Notam Search’ app, and their SWIM feeds - the FAA’s information-sharing platform.

If your flight plan package is sourcing Notams from the US DoD (and not being filtered correctly), you will see military Notams included - like the one above. Think of them like company notams, for internal use. In this sense, they are not ‘true’ Notams and should be **completely disregarded by civilian operators**.



But why the UK?

To use the DoD Notam feed correctly, military Notams need to be filtered out. But there may be more to it than that.

You'll see the EGKB Notam above has a 'V' designator.

In the UK 'V' series Notams mean the following:

"Notification of Security Advice to UK Air Operators by Government to provide guidance/instructions on Airspace Security Risks. Volcanic Ash related information within En-Route Airspace London FIR/UIR, Scottish FIR/UIR, Shannon FIR/UIR and Shanwick Oceanic FIR..."

In the US, they mean something different:

“A NOTAM information pertaining to a location’s published instrument procedures, i.e., Standard Instrument Approach Procedure (SIAPs), Standard Instrument Departure (SIDs), Departure Procedures (DPs). These NOTAMs shall be published under the direction of TERPS personnel...”

Which is why in this case (and many others) we may still see these Notams find their way into our briefing packs.

In a Notam-tale as old as time: **just because they’re there, doesn’t mean they’re relevant.** The potential for confusion holds strong – especially if civilian operators misinterpret Notams never meant for them in the first place.

Why does the military have their own restrictions?

Because they do! In the same sense one airline can do something another does not allow.

Common sense indicates that the way military aircraft are operated differs substantially from civilian aircraft – and that the margins and procedures designed for us do not necessarily work in the same way for them.

Have more info?

If you have something you’d like to add to this article, **we’d love to hear from you.** You can reach us at team@ops.group.

US Midwest: Cicada’s are coming to town

Andy Spencer
3 July, 2024



This spring, the US Midwest will see Cicada’s emerging in numbers that have not been seen in generations.

This is quite frankly terrifying. It may sound ridiculous that something like this matters, but rest assured, it

is crucial. **I know from first-hand experience.**

It was a hot summer afternoon in 2021 on the ramp at **KSUS/Spirit of St Louis airport**. There were **massive bugs EVERYWHERE**, buzzing around, hitting you in the head, flying into the rental car or aircraft if the door was open for even ONE second. Their dead bodies were scattered across the ramp from being run over or stepped on. **It was Cicada swarming season, according to the line guys.**

We had the APU running and the main cabin door open, attempting to cool the cabin while waiting for our passengers. **Even with the curtain closed, the Cicadas entered the cabin and cockpit through the cracks.** It was truly disgusting, and I still have nightmares to this day.

The captain was busily chasing the bugs around, attempting to capture each one and throw it back outside. Meanwhile, the FA and I were cowering in the corner, trying to stop them from flying into our hair. When the passengers arrived, they DASHED as fast as they could from their SUV towards the aircraft, hoping to escape getting hit in the face by a Cicada (spoiler: they did not escape this). The SECOND we opened the curtain for them to run in, a load more Cicadas flew in, and we were back to square one, trying to capture/dispose of each one. I heroically went outside, hastily loaded the bags, and shut the cargo door. **We had no choice but to close the main cabin door with many 2-3 inch bugs still hiding inside.**

Our attempt to escape was met with a **HUNG START**. QRH blah blah... after several minutes on the phone with our maintenance department and a few more attempts, we were fresh out of ideas. Right then, **a frightened Cicada almost flew right into my mouth**, prompting the realisation, that, of course this unique variable must be the thing causing the problem.

A quick climb up a ladder confirmed that the APU intake was COVERED in dead Cicadas. It wasn't getting enough air to provide high-load pneumatic functions. We got a ladder and a broom and brushed some cicada-carcass off the intake, a feeble attempt in rectifying a problem that was concentrated far deeper than the external grate. Somehow, though, we managed to get #1 running (it took precisely 59 seconds, of course), and we were off to the races.

As we taxied off the ramp the most foul, PUTRID smell began to penetrate our nostrils. **The smell of HOT/DEAD/LARGE BUGS is not a smell I'd wish on my worst enemy.** We quickly switched the bleeds over to the engines and prayed for no circumstances requiring us to switch them back.

Upon arrival, our maintenance team opened the APU and manually removed the burnt cicada crust. It took almost a year for the smell to be removed entirely from any APU-fed PACK usage. **We would later learn that Cicadas are attracted to the high-pitched sound of the APU, hence so many of them flew into the intake.**

If you're still reading, I'm surprised, but here's the point: **this year is supposed to be the most giant Cicada swarm in decades across the Midwest, specifically concentrated in Illinois (St.Louis and Chicago).** Allegedly this swarm will be at least twice as large as the one in the story above.

For my crews, given that we will likely find ourselves in these locations this spring, I've set out the following procedures for operating in a Cicada swarm (think of it like you would a cold weather operational procedure):

1. **Do not run the APU until RIGHT before you want to start the engines.**
2. **Attempt to leave all aircraft doors shut as much as possible.**
3. **If it is very hot and the swarms are very bad, try to get a hangar the night before departure. Also, have the aircraft put online as close as possible to departure so that the cabin isn't extremely hot for passenger boarding**

4. **As a precaution ahead of departure, research whether an air cart is available on the field and what the procedures would be to get it (just in case).**

I hope our “Cicada QRH Actions” can save you a new cabin fragrance for your aircraft this spring!

Got a story to share? Let us know!

If you come across a new risk, a new danger, a new procedure, something weird, something unusual – **tell us, and we’ll tell everyone in the group.**

Saudi Arabia Overflights - Free Route Gotcha

Chris Shieff

3 July, 2024



Key Points

- **The Southeastern section of the OEJD/Jeddah FIR is now Free Route Airspace.**
- **It’s not straightforward. New procedures have been published in the Saudi AIP.**
- **If your flight plan does not comply, you are likely to be instructed to descend below FL300.**

Background

We’ve received a new report from an OPSGROUP member after a recent run-in with ATC in the **OEJD/Jeddah FIR.**

The problem stemmed from a small (and confusing) change that became effective on April 18.

Essentially, ATC were upset that their filed route did not comply with newly published **Free Route Airspace (FRA)** procedures buried deep within the bowels of the Saudi AIP.

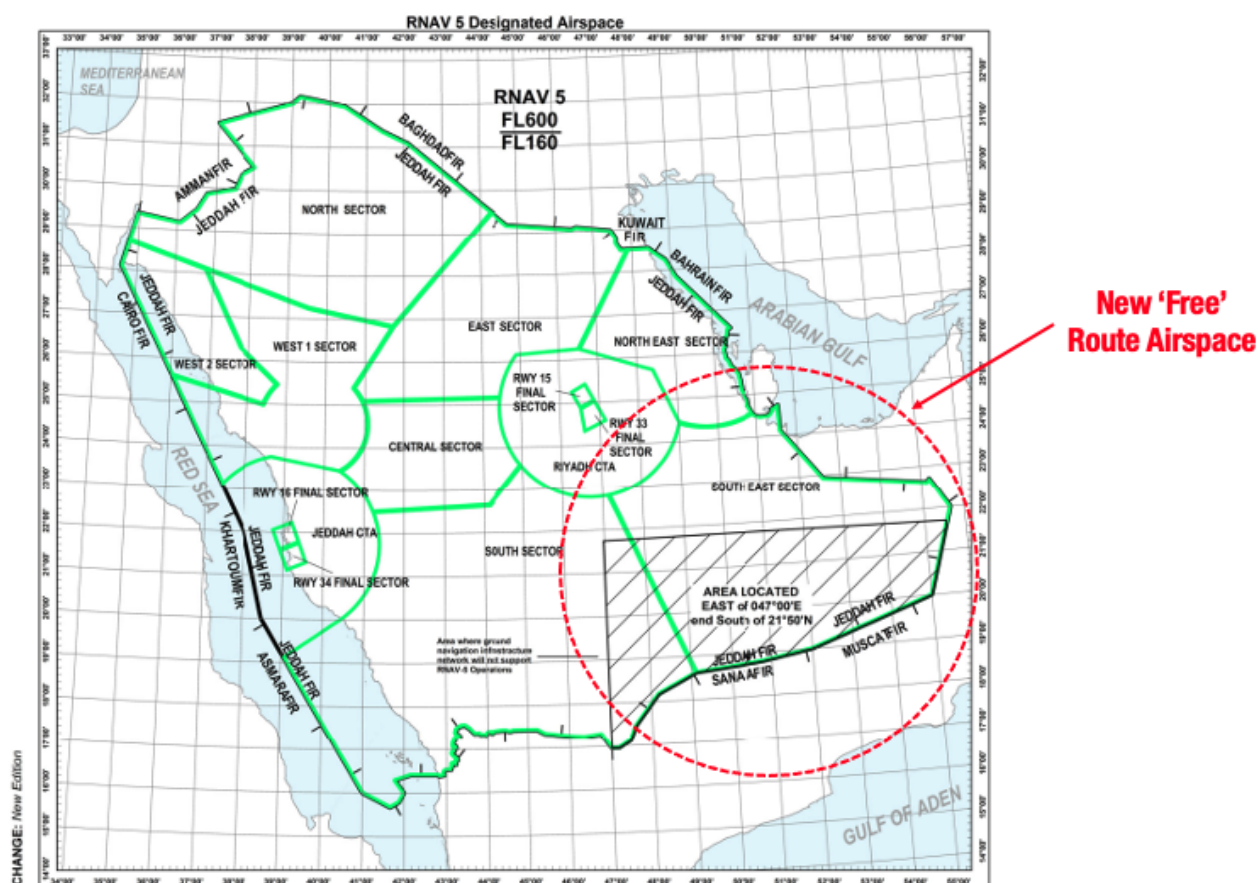
The fallout of non-compliance is the ATC equivalent to the 'naughty corner' with aircraft directed to **descend below FL300** for the duration of their crossing of the affected airspace.

In this case, the member was able to negotiate to remain at their preferred level but not before a fair amount of head scratching as to why they got in trouble in the first place.

As large amounts of traffic are now **transiting Saudi Arabia to avoid Iran** further north, it is especially relevant right now.

New Free Route Airspace

On April 18, a large chunk of Southeastern Saudi Arabia (known as the **SE Sector**) became Free Route Airspace (FRA).



Typically, FRA means that pilots can freely plan any route they like between defined entry and exit points without reference to the ATS route network. This saves both money and time – simple.

However, this is where things get hazy.

The change was notified in this **easily overlooked FIR Notam**:

A0648/24 NOTAMN Q)
OEJD/QOATT/IV/BO/E/000/999/2501N04522E005 A)
OEJD
B) 2404180000 C) 2405012359
E) TRIGGER NOTAM - PERM AIRAC AIP AMDT 04/24
WEF 18 APR 2024 IS PUBLISHED AND CONTAINS:
1- UPDATE ON DEP PROCEDURES FOR OEGS.
2- UPDATE ON ATC SURVEILLANCE PROC FOR OETB.
3- UPDATE ON LVP FOR OERK.
**4- IMPLEMENTATION OF FREE ROUTES AIRSPACE IN
THE SE SECT.**

This directs you to the **Saudi AIP**. This is great if you have a spare half an hour to prove who you are, download a special app and access it. To save you the trouble, the relevant bit is ENR 2.2.4 which you can find [here](#).

Here's the kicker – it's Free Route Airspace, but not really. **You still need to plan and file via the standard routes** found via the link above.

In other words – *'fly whatever route you like, as long as it is one of these ones.'*

Turns out if you don't, they will want you out of the 'FRA' which means a descent below FL300 (or a climb above FL600 if you're piloting the Space Shuttle).

Keep listening out.

There are also some really specific **comms requirements** you need to follow along each route as the sector is controlled by several VHF frequencies. It seems you cannot rely on ATC to tell you when to switch.

"Normal" routes.

Don't forget the **Free Route Airspace only applies to the SE Sector** of the Jeddah FIR. Everywhere else in Saudi airspace, you'll need to follow **"normal" ATS routes as per usual**.

But even these "normal" routes are a pain. Saudi Arabia (like many other countries in the region) has **preferred routes** depending on where you're flying from/to – so you'll need to make sure you file on one of these. For some reason Jeppesen recently stopped publishing them, so now you have to get them from (yes, you guessed it) the **Saudi AIP!** SUP 8/24 talks about it. You basically download this Route Availability Doc and work out a route from there.

Other Free Route Airspace in the region.

Qatar and the UAE are the only other countries in the Middle East that have implemented FRA, and unlike Saudi Arabia, both seem fairly straightforward.

Qatar – has implemented a corridor of FRA straight through the middle of the OTDF/Doha FIR, available from FL275-460. The Qatar AIP does not currently list any restrictions on its use.

The UAE – has implemented FRA in parts of the OMAE/Emirates FIR from FL355-600 – basically the parts around all the airports, and the airspace connecting with the OOMM/Muscat and OIIX/Tehran FIRs. Like Qatar, the UAE AIP does not currently list any restrictions on its use.

Please report back.

Thank you to the member who got in touch.

These changes can be hard to spot. Especially when you pay an operational penalty for procedures like this one that are poorly written, hard to find, or obscure.

We need your help to spread the word whenever you come across something different – in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere. Thousands of other like-minded pilots will thank you later.

If you have something you'd like to share, you can reach us on team@ops.group. We'd love to hear from you.

International Ops Bulletin

Declan Selleck

3 July, 2024



Hey! Are you here for our World Famous International Ops Bulletin? The one where you get all this weeks new dangers and changes in International Ops? The one that 50,000 people read every week?

Cool. Here's how to get it.

Every Wednesday, OPSGROUP issues a weekly **International Ops Bulletin** for International Pilots, Dispatchers, ATC, Regulators, Authorities, Airlines and Aircraft Operators.

We cover this weeks changes to International Flight Operations – Airports, ATC, Procedures, New rules, Visas, Airspace alerts, Weather issues, and warnings and dangers to international aviation.

You got choices:

1. Get the free version. Grab a copy!

2. Join OPSGROUP and get the full version.

Want to see a sample first?

Sure thing. It looks a little like this (click to open the full sample):

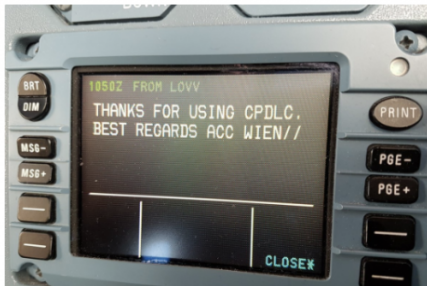
Talk to us at news@ops.group

Wednesday 24 July 2019

[View in browser](#)



International Ops Bulletin



Europe: Most GA/BA aircraft now exempt from next year's Datalink Mandate

The [original plan](#) was for datalink to be required for **all aircraft** operating in Europe **above FL290** from 5 Feb 2020. But now it looks like [most GA/BA aircraft](#) will be **exempt** from this.



Africa: Hajj 2019 routes now in operation

The [Hajj routes](#) will be in effect from now through to Oct 9. Across the northern half of Africa, there will be a **big increase in flights operating east-west**, [crossing the normal flow](#) of north-south traffic between Europe and Africa.

Outsmarting the GPS spoofers: A clever app

Andy Spencer
3 July, 2024



GPS spoofing is fast becoming a real headache in aviation, causing **confusion and navigation problems for pilots** in several hotspots around the world.

We first saw this happening in September 2023, when we started getting reports of spoofing across the Middle East, including instances near **Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Cyprus, and Lebanon.**

Since then we've had reports from all kinds of strange places including **Pakistan, Niger, and China.**

GPS spoofing involves **sending false GPS signals to aircraft**, leading to potential navigation errors and safety risks.

Manufacturers have been slow to work out **what advice to pass on to pilots and operators** on how to counteract these issues. But the effectiveness of these measures can be limited without the right tools, especially during live spoofing events where the reliance on ATC becomes critical.

NaviGuard, developed by APG, is a **new tool designed to counter GPS spoofing threats**. It's a plotting application that uses traditional ground navigation aids (e.g., VORs, DMEs, NDBs) to cross-check and verify the aircraft's GPS-reported position. And best of all – **it's free**. You can download it [here](#).

When NaviGuard **detects discrepancies indicative of GPS spoofing**, it alerts the pilots with a clear "GPS anomaly detected" message, enabling them to take corrective action promptly.

NaviGuard offers pilots a straightforward solution for maintaining navigational accuracy amidst GPS spoofing threats.

I used NaviGuard last month when I was spoofed whilst operating in Cairo. I got to try out the app for 30 minutes **while our GPS tried to convince us that we were flying on top of Beirut.**

As promised by Michael and the team at APG, the app was easy to use, and it allowed me to **quickly verify that my IRS position was not compromised** (we have a Hybrid IRS, so a spoofed GPS signal can corrupt the position data).

This is a no-bells-or-whistles solution, which I believe is an excellent addition to any pilot's EFB; after this flight, I installed the app on all of our aircraft's EFBs. It takes up very little space and is free. **This is the great insurance when doubting your GPS position's integrity.**