

# Paris Ramp Checks: Illegal Charters and Tax Avoidance

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We recently received a report from an OPSGROUP member of a surprise ramp check at **LFPB/Le Bourget**.

Police attended the aircraft after boarding and requested fuel receipts and questioned if the passenger was also the aircraft owner.

This did not appear to be a routine **SAFA check**, so we reached out to the group for more info and it turns out this isn't uncommon.

France has always been strict with its enforcement of charter rules, but subsequent reports from members indicate an uptick in active enforcement lately – not just a random one-off.

The responses we received confused us a little, until we realised there are two independent and distinct issues authorities are checking:



❑ **Illegal charter flights disguised as private flights.**

❑ **False declarations to reduce fuel tax.**

Here is a closer look at both of these issues, so you can have your paperwork in order when next les forces de l'ordre come a knockin at your jet.

## **Is this really a private flight?**

This one has to do with the **charter pax levy**.

In France, if you are operating a charter, air taxi or any other commercial flight departing the country under Part 135, it is treated the same as an airline flight.

Three taxes are applied to these flights per passenger.

The first is the **Civil Aviation Tax (TAC)**. This varies between €4-9 depending on whether you flight is short haul or long haul. Think of this like a standard departure tax.

The second is **Airport Tax (Taxe d'Aéroport)**. The charge is between €10 – 18 depending on the airport class. Big Class 1 airports (like Le Bourget) are the most expensive. This is used to fund things like RFF, security and airport infrastructure.

Lastly, there's Solidarity Tax (the big one). This is what most people mean when they refer to 'Charter Tax.' This increased massively in 2025. A typical BizAv charter flight would incur a charge of €420 per passenger for flights within Europe, or up to €2100 per passenger for longer-haul flights.

No wonder authorities are checking you've paid it, and it's the one causing all the noise.

| Distance / Band                  | Service Type                                    | Category                                    | Tax Rate Per Passenger   |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Short Haul<br>up to 1,000km      | Commercial Aviation                             | Standard                                    | €7.40 Euro pp            |
|                                  |                                                 | With additional service                     | €30.00 Euro pp           |
|                                  | <b>Business Aircraft<br/>(19 seats or less)</b> | <b>Piston, Prop &amp; Turboprop engines</b> | <b>€210.00 Euro pp</b>   |
|                                  |                                                 | <b>Jet engines</b>                          | <b>€420.00 Euro pp</b>   |
| Mid-Range<br>1,000km to 5,500 km | Commercial Aviation                             | Standard                                    | €15.00 Euro pp           |
|                                  |                                                 | With additional service                     | €80.00 Euro pp           |
|                                  | <b>Business Aircraft<br/>(19 seats or less)</b> | <b>Piston, Prop &amp; Turboprop engines</b> | <b>€675.00 Euro pp</b>   |
|                                  |                                                 | <b>Jet engines</b>                          | <b>€1,015.00 Euro pp</b> |
| Long Haul<br>over 5,500 km       | Commercial Aviation                             | Standard                                    | €40.00 Euro pp           |
|                                  |                                                 | With additional service                     | €120.00 Euro pp          |
|                                  | <b>Business Aircraft<br/>(19 seats or less)</b> | <b>Piston, Prop &amp; Turboprop engines</b> | <b>€1,025.00 Euro pp</b> |
|                                  |                                                 | <b>Jet engines</b>                          | <b>€2,100.00 Euro pp</b> |

Distance / Band is calculated between Paris and the capital's main airport of the country you are flying to, for all flights departing Metropolitan France (irrespective of actual departure airports and arrival airports).

Flights departing from overseas French territories will be calculated from the principal airports of these territories.

Bottom line (and try saying this quickly three times over) – when departing France under Part 135, expect a per-pax tax stack.

On rare occasions, charter operators have declared their flights as private to **avoid** these charges. It seems authorities are clamping down on these 'fake' private flights.

For this issue, authorities are checking **who actually owns or controls** the aircraft. The red flags they're looking for include passengers who are not registered owners or share holders, complex ownership structures (such as trusts) with no clear links, passengers who appear to be 'clients,' and empty legs that aren't truly private repositioning.

Hence why the passenger in the report was asked if he was the owner of the aircraft.

## VAT on Fuel

It's an entirely **separate issue**.

In France, VAT is paid on fuel as you buy it – but whether you can re-claim it **depends on your operation**. Because of this, France is one of the more expensive countries to uplift.

Flights operated under an AOC (charter, airline etc) are exempt and can seek reimbursement later.

Private and non-commercial flights aren't, meaning VAT becomes a real cost (typically around 20%).

The gap is significant, and so there is an **incentive to mis-declare a private flight as commercial**.



In France, flights operated under an AOC (charter, airline etc) are exempt from VAT.

When authorities board your aircraft, they want to check your fuel uplift receipts and other docs.

Red flags include using an AOC number that doesn't match the actual flight, inconsistencies in your flight plan (G vs N), AOC status or a paper trail that leads to an invalid AOC.

**Penalties** can include back payment of VAT and fines.

### **So why are they sniffing around so much at Le Bourget?**

These issues aren't new, but it appears the frequency of enforcement is.

LFPB/Le Bourget is **Europe's busiest business aviation airport**. It receives a huge volume of private aircraft, with very little airline traffic to dilute the numbers.

Recent tax increases (especially the solidarity tax) have unashamedly targeted premium travel, private jets and high-emission-per-passenger ops.

Le Bourget fits the profile perfectly for active enforcement. It isn't being singled out by name in the rules, it's just the biggest, most concentrated, and most unavoidable BizAv hub in the country.

If you operate there, the safest approach is to **assume you will be checked**.