Russia restricts flights over Crimea and Black Sea

OPSGROUP Team
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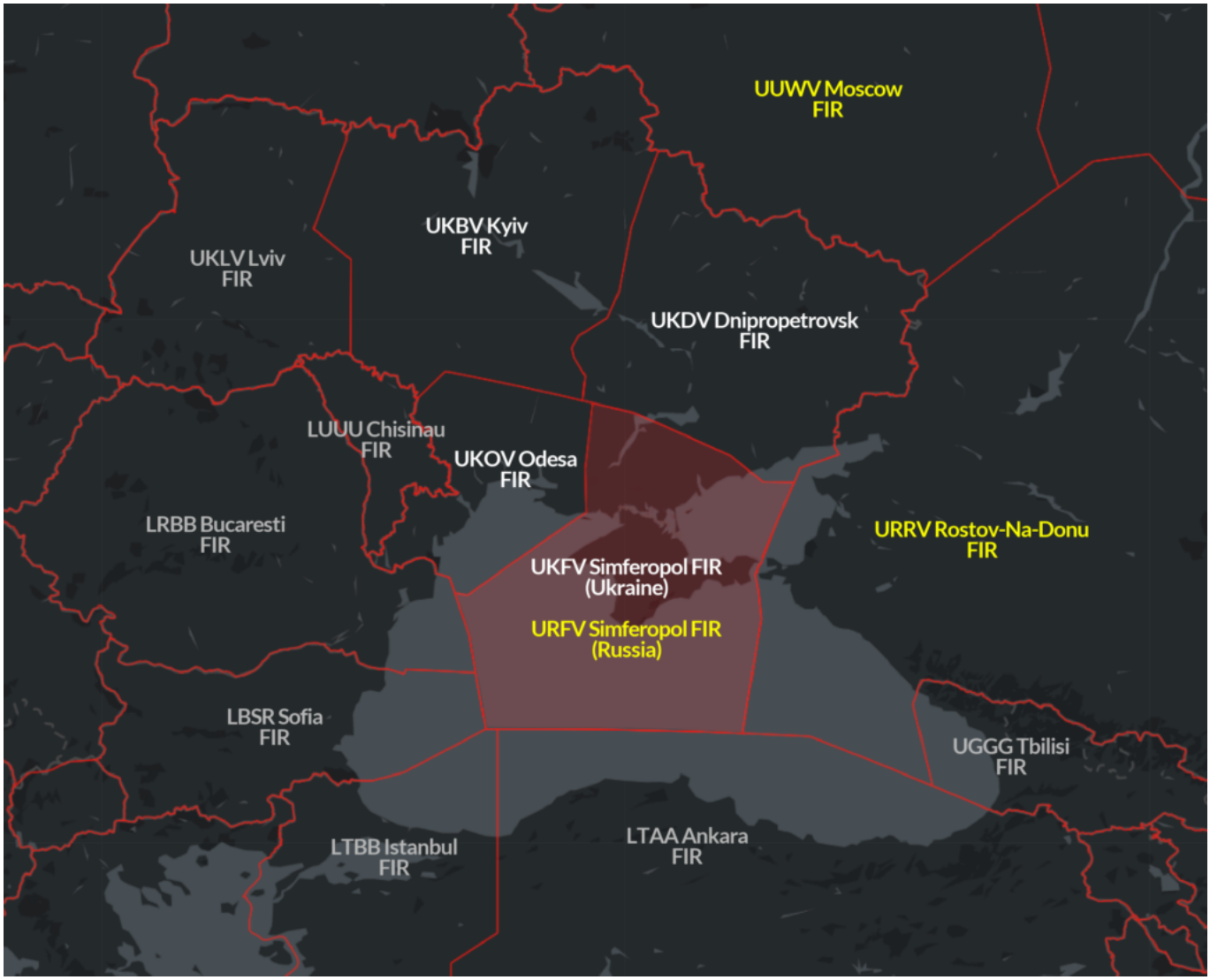
The airspace warnings for the Ukraine are on the rise again, and for good reason – Russia seem to be going on a **renewed military offensive**, focusing their efforts on the area of **disputed airspace over Crimea**.



Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, the ATC Center in Simferopol has been run by Russia. Russia claims the airspace, and publishes Notams under the **URFV code** they invented for it. Ukraine refuses to recognise the change, and still controls the airspace under the internationally-recognised **UKFV code**.

So what jurisdiction do Russia have, and how much attention should we be paying to the Notams which they issue for an area of airspace that is not theirs to control?

What are Russia saying?

Russia have published a long series of URFV Notams advising of **danger areas and limitations to airways** across the Simferopol FIR. These run from **April 20-30** – some only apply from FL350 upwards; others apply to all flights from SFC right up to altitudes higher than most aircraft can fly (we saw a FL670 thrown in there). These danger areas are most likely due to **military activity**, which may include live firing exercises.

The zone of restriction of flights includes some areas over the southern part of Crimea, from Sevastopol to Feodosia, the territorial waters adjacent to the Southern coast of Crimea, and part of the international waters of the Black Sea, and are possibly in relation to Russia's plan to move warships into the area.

URFV	N3421/21	Internati...	05/01/2021 0200	05/06/2021 1900	AIRSPACE CLSD WI AREA: 451200N0344400E-450100N0344400E-450100N0343100E- 451200N0343300E-451200N0344400E F) SFC G) 1000M AMSL
URFV	N3535/21	Internati...	04/27/2021 0500	04/30/2021 1700	ATS RTE SEGMENTS CLSD: L850 BOMKI - LUNAT FL195-FL660 L851 BANUR - LAGIR FL135-FL660 L99 TUREL - ARBAD FL275-FL660 M747 TALAM - DOLOT FL195-FL660 M854 BOMKI - SUGUL FL135-FL660 M856 RAKUR - LARO...
URFV	N3537/21	Internati...	04/27/2021 0500	04/30/2021 1700	TEMPO DANGER AREA ACT: 443800N0325400E-442400N0331400E-441000N0332700E-424800N0312600E- 424800N0311600E-432500N0304300E-442800N0322000E-443800N0325400E. F) SFC G) FL670
URFV	N3534/21	Internati...	04/27/2021 0200	05/01/2021 1200	ATS RTE SEGMENTS CLSD: L850 KULEM - DESEL L98 NEROB - KUGOS L981 NIKOLA NDB (NL) - SOBLO L99 ARBAD - SOBLO M136 REBKO - PISEM M406 TISOM - OTPOL M747 DOLOT - SOBLO M853 REBKO - SOGTA N605 URITA - SO...
URFV	N3536/21	Internati...	04/27/2021 0200	05/01/2021 1200	TEMPO DANGER AREA ACT: 442530N0331306E-442500N0333000E-442000N0334000E-442000N0341000E- 443500N0343000E-444000N0344000E-444500N0350000E-444949N0352139E- 430500N0353000E-430000N0350000E-442530N0331306E...
URFV	N3552/21	Internati...	04/27/2021 0010	05/07/2021 2359	AIRSPACE CLSD AS FLW: 1. WI 5KM EITHER SIDE OF LINE JOINING POINTS: 453858N0341949E-454124N0340619E-454856N0340816E-455141N0342033E. 2. WI 5KM EITHER SIDE OF LINE JOINING POINTS: 454650N0344352E...
URFV	N3481/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0500	04/30/2021 1700	DANGER AREA ACT: URD121. F) GND G) FL670
URFV	N3482/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0500	04/30/2021 1700	ATS RTE T504 EGMENT SOROK-BALED CLSD. F) SFC G) FL670
URFV	N3483/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0500	04/30/2021 2359	DANGER AREA ACT: URD122. F) SFC G) FL230
URFV	N3484/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0500	04/30/2021 2359	ATS RTE N613 SEGMENT NIKOLA NDB (NL) - SOTAM CLSD. F) SFC G) FL230
URFV	N3491/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0500	04/30/2021 2359	ATS RTE SEGMENT CLSD: N604 PERUN-NIBTA. F) SFC G) FL240
URFV	N3492/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0500	04/30/2021 2359	DANGER AREA ACT: URD150. F) GND G) FL240
URFV	N3493/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0500	04/30/2021 2359	ATS RTE SEGMENT CLSD: N604 PERUN-NIBTA. F) SFC G) FL140
URFV	N3494/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0500	04/30/2021 2359	DANGER AREA ACT: URD151. F) GND G) FL140
URFV	N3485/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0200	04/26/2021 2359	FLW ATS RTE SEGMENTS CLSD: L850 BOMKI-LUNAT, L99 TUREL-ARBAD, N613 NIKOLA NDB (NL)-IBROK, T504 SOROK-BALED. F) SFC G) FL290
URFV	N3486/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0200	04/26/2021 2359	DANGER AREA ACT: URD123. F) GND G) FL290
URFV	N3487/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0000	05/01/2021 2359	FLW ATS RTE SEGMENTS CLSD: M136 MAPUT-PISEM, P567 LEMTO-OLENA. F) SFC G) FL280
URFV	N3488/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0000	05/01/2021 2359	DANGER AREA ACT: URD132. F) GND G) FL280
URFV	N3489/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0000	04/30/2021 2359	DANGER AREA ACT: URD133. F) GND G) FL280
URFV	N3490/21	Internati...	04/26/2021 0000	04/30/2021 2359	ATS RTE P567 SEGMENT LEMTO - OLENA CLSD. F) SFC G) FL280

A long list of Notams from Russia

What are Ukraine saying?

Ukraine aren't happy about it, and have issued a bunch of Notams for the same periods effectively establishing **danger areas at all levels in the portions of the FIR that are over water** – i.e big chunks of the Black Sea and Sea of Azov (to the northeast of Crimea).

All the Ukrainian UKFV Notams advising about these danger areas carry this note:

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DUE ACTIVITY PUBLISHED BY RUSSIAN FEDERATION.
THE PUBLICATION BY RUSSIAN FEDERATION OF INFORMATION
RELATED TO AIRSPACE UNDER RESPONSIBILITY OF UKRAINE
DOES NOT COMPLY WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE ICAO
AIR NAVIGATION PLAN - EUROPEAN REGION (DOC 7754)
AND THE ICAO ANNEXES 11 AND 15.
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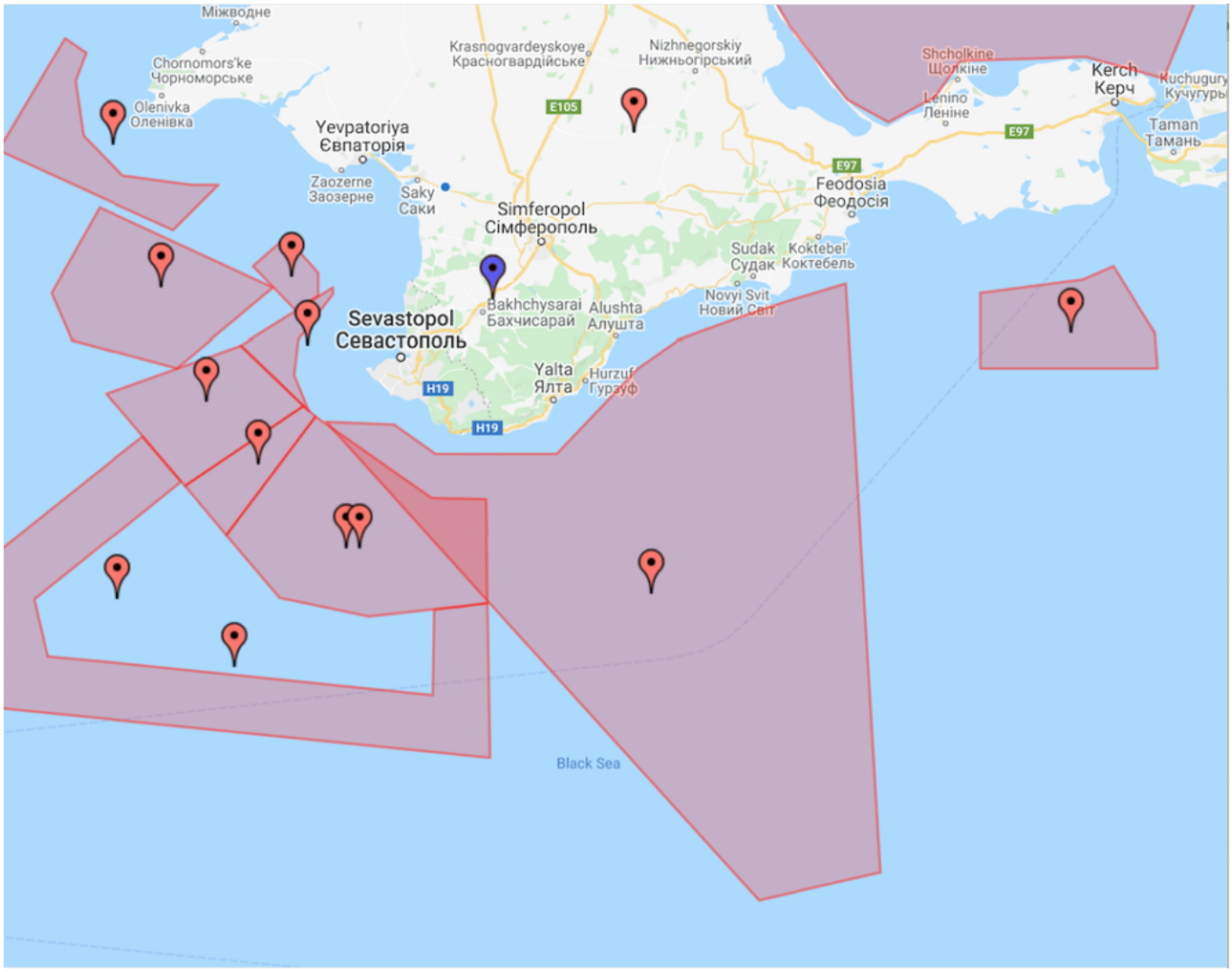
In other words – although Russia do not have jurisdiction in this airspace, they have published a bunch of danger areas here, so we (Ukraine) had better do the same, to make the warning "official".



A quick plot of the danger areas published by Ukraine under the UKFV code looks something like this

What are other authorities saying?

So far, none of the other state authorities around the world have published or updated their own warnings in response to this recent issue specific to the airspace over Crimea.

Just last week, the US FAA updated their airspace warning for Ukraine – but this was in relation to the **UKDV/Dnipropetrovsk FIR** in the east of the country along the border with Russia. The US warning to operators in this region was to **exercise extreme caution within 100nm of the entire Russia-Ukraine border**, due to risks associated with recent increased tensions between the two countries. They said that if hostilities escalate here, the airspace on both sides could be exposed to potential weapons activity posing a **risk to civil aircraft from misidentification or miscalculation.**

The most recent US advice for the **UKFV/Simferopol FIR** came in October 2020, when they actually **removed their restrictions on overflights of this airspace.** At that time, they said the security situation had sufficiently improved here – while Russia continued to assert territorial claims over the region, Ukraine had established appropriate risk management measures to ensure safe operations for aircraft along the Black Sea routes.

Several other states have existing warnings in place for Ukraine. Canada advise operators to **avoid the UKFV/Simferopol and UKDV/Dnipropetrovsk FIRs entirely**, whereas the UK and France say that overflights of eastern Ukraine should only be planned on airways over the Black Sea to the south of Crimea.

For more details on Ukraine and other airspace warnings, head to SafeAirspace.net

What are we saying?

Two major points –

1. Russia do not have jurisdiction over the Simferopol airspace, so the Notams to follow are those published by Ukraine under the UKFV code.
2. Regardless of what is out there, clearly extreme caution in this area is required. Russia are making all the moves to increase their military presence and potentially reignite the ongoing conflict.