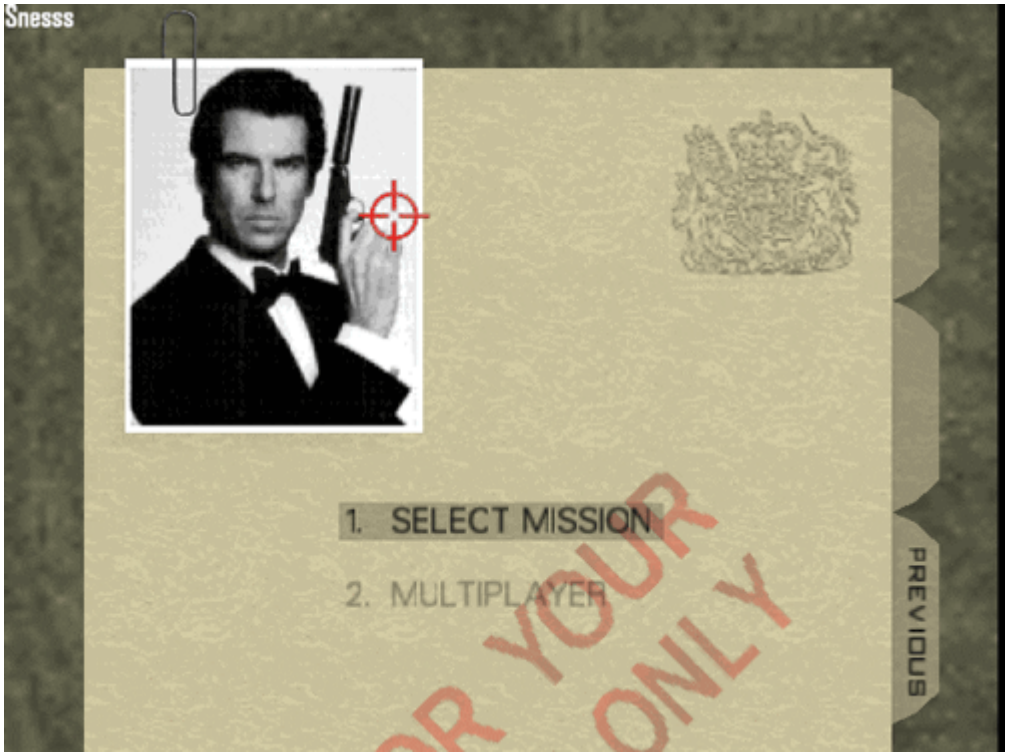
New NAT Doc 007: North Atlantic Changes from March 2026

David Mumford
30 January, 2026

A new NAT Doc has landed, effective March 2026. As ever, it's a meaty sucker, and probably not something you'll want to read cover to cover. So we've done that part for you. We've gone through it and pulled out the changes that actually matter operationally, plus a few important "this hasn't changed" reminders. If you're crossing the North Atlantic, this is the stuff worth knowing.

You can access the **new 2026 version** of the doc here, and the **old 2025 version** here, if you want to compare the two.



Shanwick OCR delay

The new NAT Doc now clearly states what operators have known for a while: **Shanwick has not implemented Oceanic Clearance Removal.** A specific note states that, due to delayed OCR implementation, Shanwick will continue issuing oceanic clearances following submission of an RCL, until further notice.

The document itself does not give a timeline. However, Shanwick has separately confirmed that **OCR is not expected to go live before summer 2026.** Operationally, nothing changes at Shanwick for now – crews must still request and fly an oceanic clearance. The key point is that, despite much of Chapter 6 reading like an OCR-style environment, Shanwick is explicitly not there yet.

Ref: Chapter 6, Section 6.3.

RCL timing switches from ETA to ETO – new terminology

The new 2026 edition **introduces ETO – Estimated Time Over Significant Point** for the Oceanic Entry Point in RCLs, replacing the way ETA was used in previous editions.

Doc 007 doesn't explicitly explain the change, but the logic is pretty clear. ETA can be vague and is often taken as a general arrival estimate. ETO is much more precise – it's the FMS-predicted time over a specific waypoint. That's what ATC actually uses for longitudinal separation in procedural airspace.

The shift also lines up with two big themes in the new doc: the move toward OCR-style operations, and growing concern about time accuracy after GNSS jamming and spoofing.

Ref: Chapter 6, Sections 6.3.23-6.3.25

Reykjavik no longer requires an RCL

Reykjavik effectively steps away from the RCL process altogether in the 2026 edition. Doc 007 now says that **an RCL is not required for Reykjavik, and that if one is sent anyway, crews will be told it wasn't needed.**

Other NAT OCAs still require RCLs, so this doesn't simplify things overall. It just means procedures are even more mixed than before. The main risk for operators is assuming the same process applies everywhere across the NAT, when it very much doesn't!

Ref: Chapter 6, Section 6.3.24

Bigger push on FMS waypoint and route verification

The 2026 doc puts much more weight on careful FMS programming and verification. It highlights known traps with half-degree waypoints, ARINC 424 coding, and CPDLC route amendments that arrive in full LAT/LONG and don't visually match stored waypoint names.

There's a strong emphasis on independent PF/PM crosschecks and verifying expanded coordinates, courses, and distances. This isn't theoretical – it's a direct response to navigation errors seen since OCR and more frequent CPDLC route changes.

Ref: Chapter 6, Sections 6.3.18-6.3.32

GNSS interference treated as a routine NAT problem

GNSS jamming and spoofing are no longer treated as rare edge cases. In the 2026 doc, they're framed as a normal operational hazard. The guidance highlights how GNSS interference can quietly degrade aircraft time, with knock-on effects to ADS-C, ADS-B, CPDLC, and longitudinal separation – even after position accuracy appears to have recovered.

The practical takeaway is simple: "it recovered" doesn't mean "it's fine". So operators need to think about downstream impacts before entering the NAT. More detailed guidance is in NAT Ops Bulletin 2025-001, which sets out what to watch for and what to do if you're entering the NAT with GPS problems. This mainly affects westbound flights coming out of spoofing or jamming areas. Bottom line – tell ATC early in your RCL if there are any issues. Doing so can help avoid off-track reroutes, step-downs, and delays.

Ref: Chapter 1 and Chapter 6 (Plus referenced NAT Ops Bulletin as above)

Flight Level Allocation Scheme (FLAS) – now gone

Until now, NAT Doc 007 included a Flight Level Allocation Scheme (FLAS). It was a simple table that gave crews and dispatchers a sensible planning starting point for random routes outside the OTS, mainly by **biasing eastbound and westbound traffic onto different flight levels.** It wasn't mandatory, but if you planned within FLAS, you were usually aligned with what ATC expected.

Level	Time (UTC)	Direction
FL430	H24	Westbound. May be Flight Planned as eastbound by non-RVSM aircraft.
FL410	H24	Eastbound.
FL400	0801 – 2229	Westbound.
	2230 – 0059	Westbound (avoiding OTS). Eastbound OTS (subject to westbounds).
	0100 – 0800	Westbound (avoiding OTS). Eastbound (OTS).
FL390	1901 – 1029	Eastbound.
	1030 – 1129	Eastbound (avoiding OTS). Westbound OTS (subject to eastbounds).
	1130 – 1900	Eastbound (avoiding OTS). Westbound (OTS).
FL380	0300 – 0700	Westbound (ODL, on and to the North of the North datum line).
	0801 – 2229	Westbound.
	2230 – 0059	Eastbound (subject to westbounds).
	0100 – 0800	Eastbound (OTS and ODL).
FL370	1901 – 1029	Eastbound.
	1030 – 1129	Eastbound (avoiding OTS). Westbound OTS (subject to eastbounds).
	1130 – 1900	Eastbound (avoiding OTS). Westbound (OTS).
FL360	0801 – 2229	Westbound.
	2230 – 0059	Westbound (avoiding OTS.) Eastbound OTS (subject to westbounds).
	0100 – 0800	Westbound (avoiding OTS). Eastbound (OTS).
FL350	1901 – 0959	Eastbound.
	1000 – 1129	Eastbound (avoiding OTS). Westbound OTS (subject to eastbounds).
	1130 –2000	Eastbound (avoiding OTS). Westbound (OTS).
FL340	0801 – 2229	Westbound.
	2230 – 0059	Eastbound (subject to westbounds). Eastbound OTS (subject to westbounds).
	0100 – 0800	Eastbound (OTS and ODL).
FL330	1901 – 0959	Eastbound.
	1000 – 1129	Westbound (subject to eastbounds).
	1130 – 1900	Westbound (OTS and ODL).
FL320	0801 – 2229	Westbound.
	2230 – 0059	Westbound (avoiding OTS). Eastbound OTS (subject to westbounds).
	0100 – 0800	Westbound (avoiding OTS). Eastbound (OTS).
FL310	H24	Westbound. (ODL).
FL300	H24	Westbound.
FL290	H24	Eastbound.

In the March 2026 edition, FLAS has quietly disappeared. The attachment has been removed and there's no replacement scheme. Instead, the new wording says that **random-route flights can plan any flight level**, as long as it works with traffic flows and ATC can make it fit.

4.1.9 Flights which are planned to remain entirely clear of the OTS, or which join or leave an OTS track (i.e. follow an OTS track for only part of its published length), are all referred to as Random Flights. Flight crews intending to fly on a random route or outside the OTS time periods may plan any flight level, taking into account feasibility of flight profiles due OTS and traffic flows, additional guidance described paragraphs 4.1.11 and 4.1.12 below.

So there's nothing in the new Doc to say that the old FLAS separation logic has disappeared – it's just no longer explicitly written down! We're guessing the practical impact will be less predictability up front and more tactical level changes, especially if you're flying counter-flow or close to track changeover times.

What didn't change

Despite all the discussion around NAT procedures lately, the new NAT Doc **does not introduce new requirements in several key areas:**

- NAT HLA approval is still required (though there was some chatter about this last year)

- CPDLC and ADS-C mandates are unchanged
- No new equipage requirements
- No new separation standards

So the real changes here are about **clarity, procedures, and reducing error**, not new boxes to tick.

Ref: Chapters 1, 5, and 6

So what do crews actually do now? (RCLs and oceanic clearances, made simple)

Even when the 2026 version takes effect in March, OCR will still be uneven across the NAT, so **procedures depend on which OCA you're entering.** Here's what crews will need to do at Gander, Shanwick, and Reykjavik:

Eastbound via Gander (no change)

Gander is fully in OCR mode. You still send an RCL 90-60 minutes before the OEP, but it's for planning only. You are not asking for an oceanic clearance, and none will be issued. Fly your last domestic clearance unless ATC gives you a change before the OEP. Once oceanic, expect any further changes via CPDLC or HF. This is the area that caused most of the early confusion, but the rule is simple: RCL yes, oceanic clearance no.

Westbound via Shanwick (no change… yet)

Shanwick is not on OCR yet. You must send an RCL or make a voice clearance request 90-30 minutes before the OEP, and you will receive an oceanic clearance by ACARS or voice. Fly that clearance. NAT Doc 007 confirms this will continue until further notice. Shanwick has separately said OCR is not expected until sometime after summer 2026.

Departing Iceland (changes from March 2026)

From March 2026, Reykjavik will not require an RCL. If you send one anyway, they'll tell you it wasn't needed. You'll enter the Reykjavik OCA on your existing ATC clearance unless instructed otherwise.

What the NAT Doc does not spell out is what happens next for flights leaving Reykjavik and entering either Gander or Shanwick!

We've asked Gander and Shanwick directly to confirm what the deal will be, and here's what they've said:

- **Eastbound flights entering Shanwick**: No additional RCL or oceanic clearance is required. Iceland will coordinate electronically with Shanwick, so crews should not expect to request a clearance or submit an RCL when exiting Reykjavik into Shanwick. This is similar to how flights entering Gander from New York FIR are handled today.
- **Westbound flights entering Gander:** The same applies. Flights transitioning from Reykjavik into Gander will do so via electronic coordination between Iceland and Gander. An RCL is not required in this case. Gander RCLs are only required for flights transitioning directly from a Canadian domestic agency into Gander Oceanic.

In short: **if you're coming out of Reykjavik, don't add an extra step.** The handoff to both Shanwick and Gander will be coordinated automatically.

Other NAT Doc changes spotted by OPSGROUP members!

Thanks to everyone who wrote in with extra details they'd spotted in the new NAT Doc! A few of these aren't brand-new changes, but they're easy to miss and worth flagging. Here's a round-up of the most useful bits members sent in.

- **WATRS terminology unchanged:** The NAT Doc still uses the term WATRS and continues to defer the details to the US AIP. This hasn't been updated, despite the FAA having moved to "WAT" terminology in its own AIP.
- **Squawk 2000 timing (10 minutes after OEP):** This wasn't new in the 2026 NAT Doc, but we missed it in our write-up back in 2025 so it's worth flagging here! The NAT Doc says aircraft should retain the last assigned SSR code and squawk 2000 10 minutes after passing the oceanic entry point, everywhere in the NAT except when operating in the Reykjavik CTA or when transitioning Bermuda radar, where assigned codes are retained due to radar coverage. (Some older guidance and legacy SOPs often referred to squawking 2000 after 30 minutes, particularly in New York OCA.)
- **WAH reports no longer treated as mandatory:** The updated Doc removes earlier ambiguity around "When Able Higher" reports. WAH is now clearly optional unless ATC specifically requests it, aligning with how several FIRs have already been operating.
- **SLOP still treated as a blanket NAT procedure:** The NAT Doc continues to describe SLOP as standard NAT practice and does not list route-specific or FIR-specific limitations. In practice, some published ATS routes and oceanic areas have local procedures that restrict the routine use of automatic offsets. Examples include T9 and T290, which are treated as RNP 2 continental offshore routes in the UK AIP, and parts of the WAT structure in New York OCA, where procedures expect aircraft to remain on the cleared route unless otherwise instructed. These nuances come from State AIPs rather than the NAT Doc, so crews still need to check local rules before applying SLOP.
- **Magnetic variation tolerance still inconsistent:** A new note highlights that magnetic variation tables and track reference points can shift displayed tracks by up to ±3 degrees. However, nearby guidance still refers to ±2 degree tolerances, and earlier numeric tolerances have been removed from the sample checklist, leaving some internal inconsistency.
- **Oceanic checklist partly modernised:** The sample oceanic checklist removes the old taxi groundspeed check, which no longer makes sense for modern navigation systems. However, the present-position check remains, even though its operational value is limited on newer aircraft.
- **RCL maximum level wording updated:** The recommended RCL format for requesting a maximum flight level is now "MAX FL380", replacing the older "MAX F380" wording. Some State AIPs still show legacy formats, so crews may see differences.
- **Azores departures – no RCL to Santa Maria:** If you're departing from the Azores, you don't need to send an RCL to Santa Maria. This exemption has been in place since 201, but it isn't clearly reflected in NAT Doc 007. It's published in Portugal AIP ENR 1.1.15.1.
- **Some Santa Maria local procedures still sit outside the NAT Doc:** The NAT Doc applies a generic NAT baseline to Santa Maria, but several Santa Maria-specific procedures only live in the Portugal AIP. These include squawk handling in the surveillance area, limits on routine offsets in some sectors, exemptions from voice position reports when space-based surveillance is in use, and CPDLC-related SELCAL and RCL differences. None of this is new, but it still isn't captured in Doc 007. Bottom line – don't rely on the NAT Doc alone for Santa Maria.

Anything we missed?

Spotted any other big changes in the new NAT Doc that we missed? Please let us know, and we will update this article! Email: news@ops.group

NAT Changes 2025: No More Blue Spruce Routes

David Mumford
30 January, 2026

Key Points: Updated 19 March 2025

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

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

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

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

Deletion of Blue Spruce Routes

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

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

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

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

Updated NAT Doc 007

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

Deleted sections, New sections, and Chapter Switcheroos

Deleted sections:

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

New sections:

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

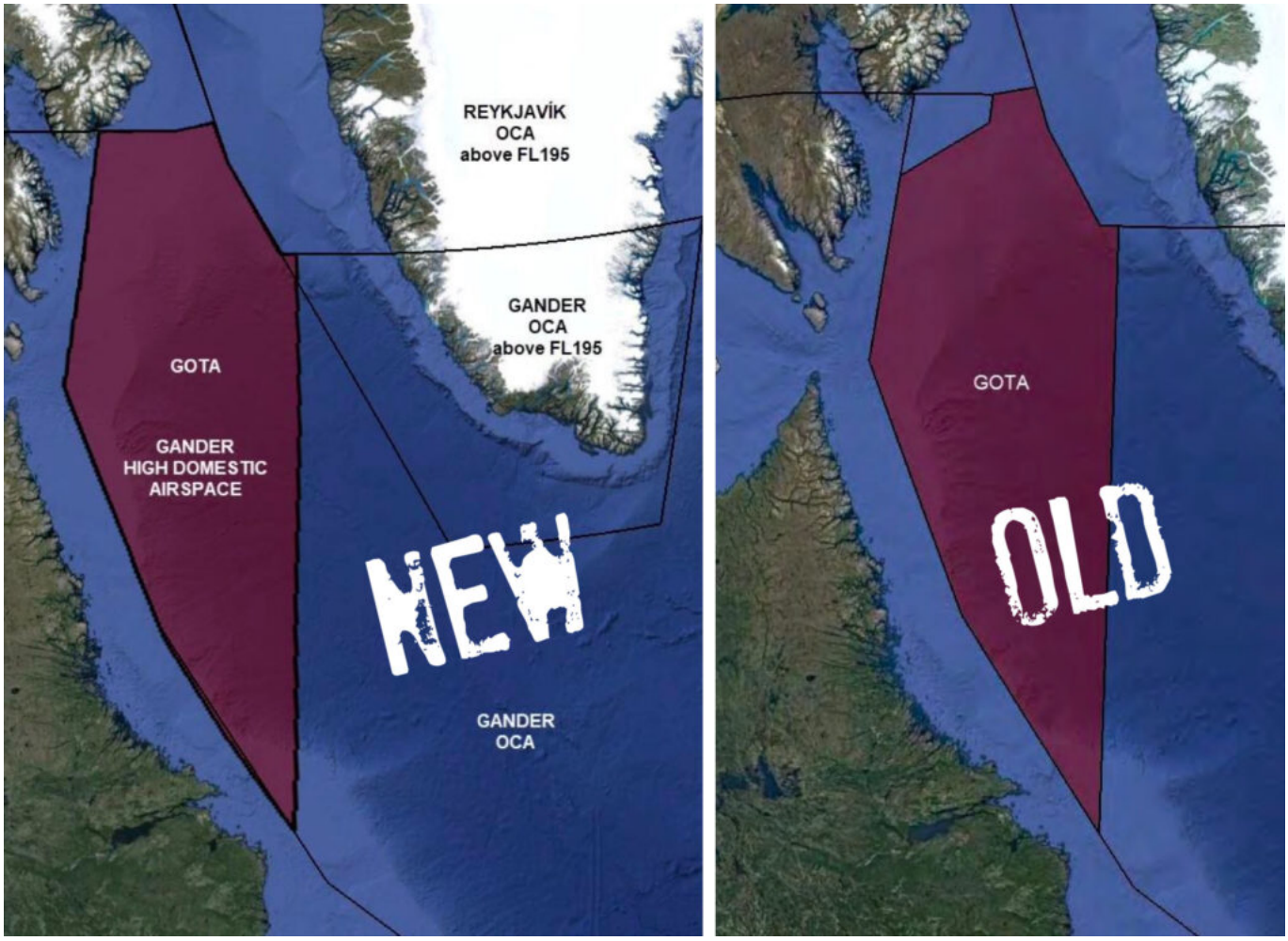
Chapter Switcheroos:

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

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

GOTA

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



RCL timings & Squawking 2000

A couple of minor updates here:

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

Prior to oceanic entry

Send RCL message

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

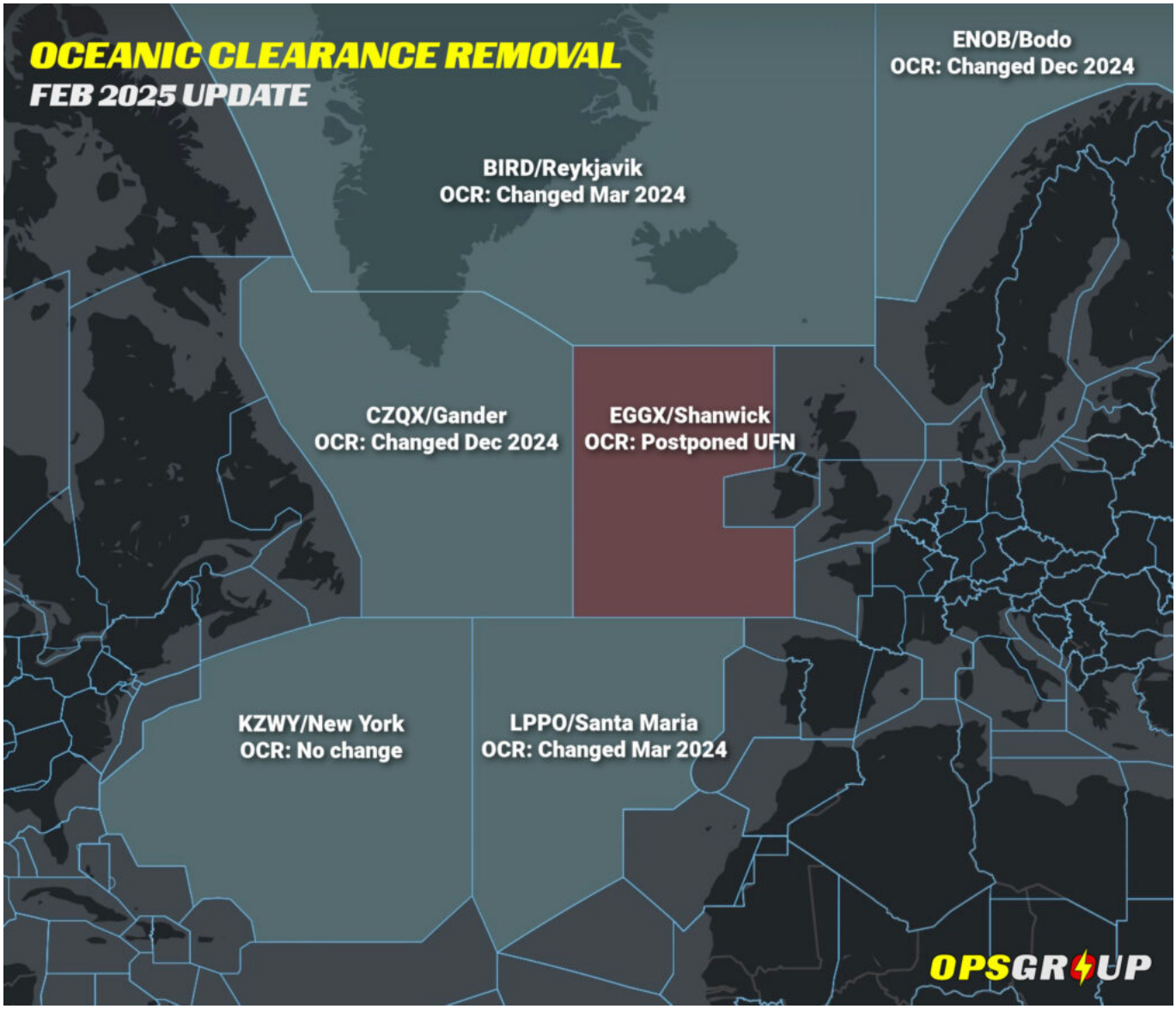
- Gander OCA 90-60 minutes;
- Shanwick OCA 90-30 minutes;
- Santa Maria OCA at least 40 minutes;
- Bodo OCA at least 20 minutes;
- Reykjavik OCA **no earlier** than 15 minutes;
- New York OCA East no requirement for RCL.

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

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

Continued confusion about the Removal of Oceanic Clearances

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



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

So here's the lowdown!

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

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

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

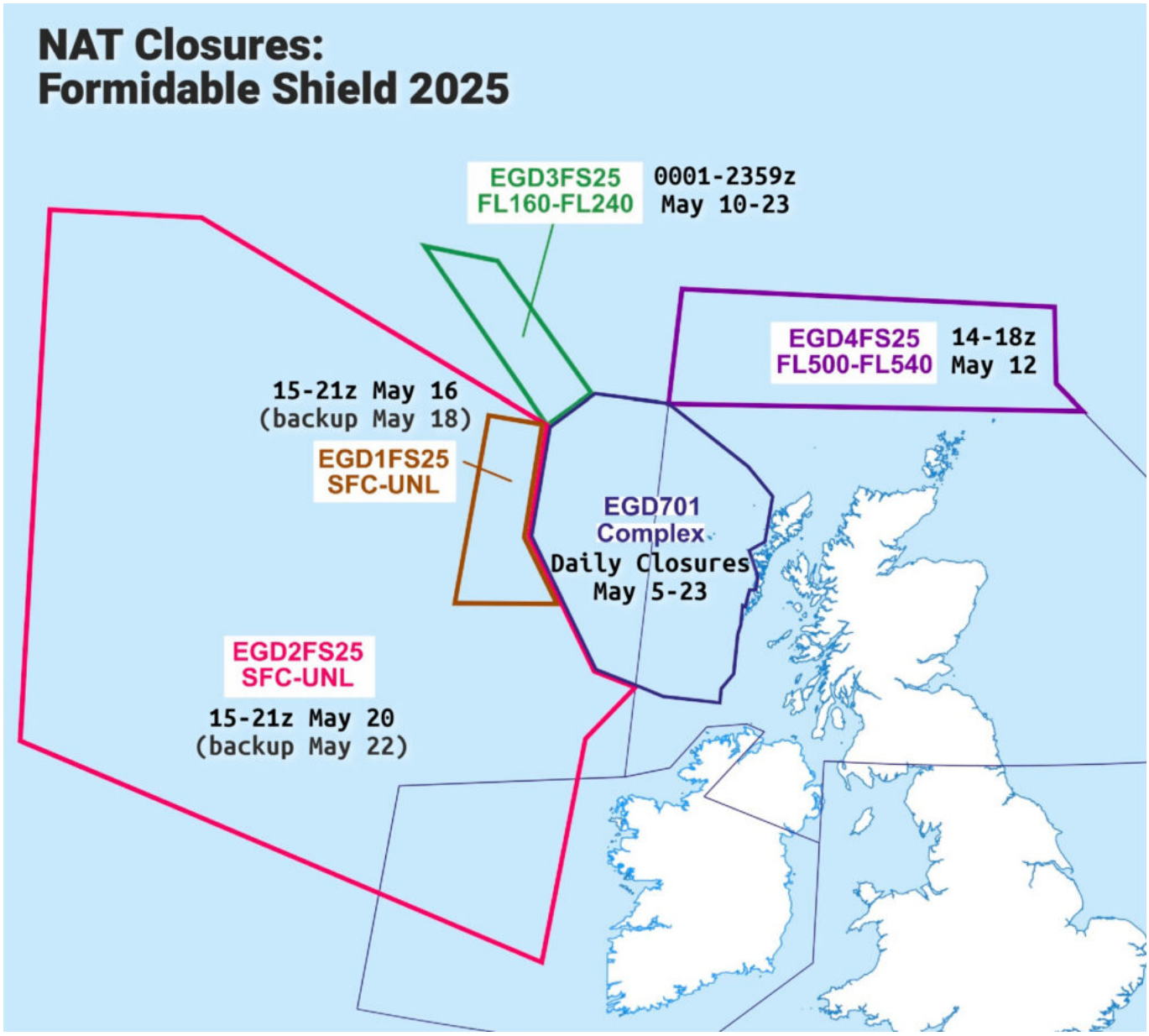
Other important NAT stuff to look forward to

Formidable Shield military exercise expected in May 2025

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

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

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



Changes to Greenland NAT alternates

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

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

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

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

Did we miss anything?

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

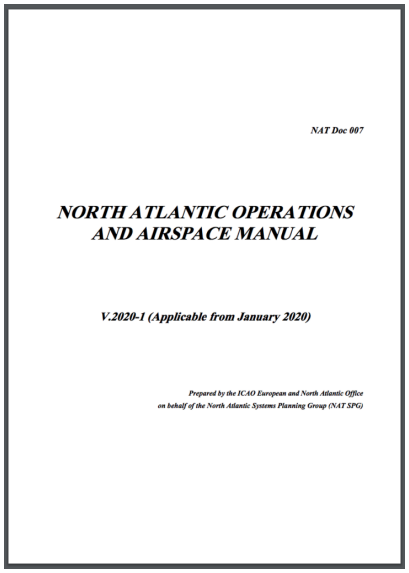
More help with North Atlantic ops

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

2020 Edition: New NAT Doc 007 – North Atlantic Airspace and Operations Manual

David Mumford
30 January, 2026

July 2020

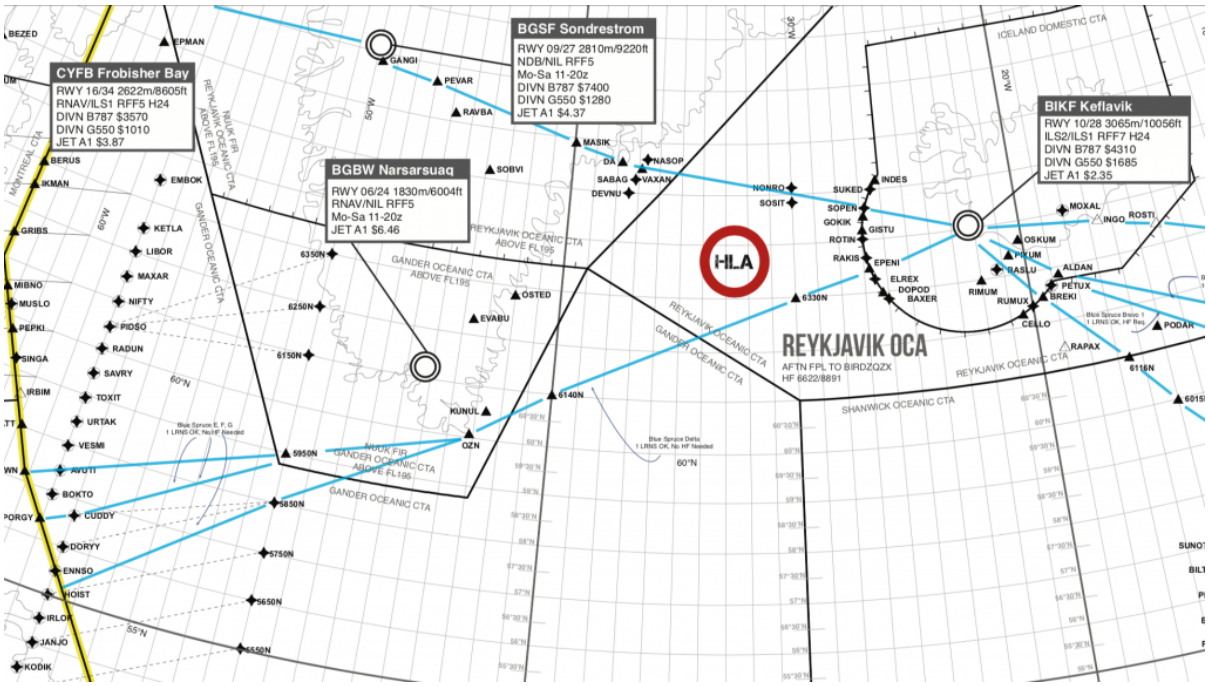


ICAO have published a **new NAT Doc 007** too. Download it here!

The only changes in this edition are to do with the rules and guidance relating to the Datalink Mandate.

Despite the expanded mandate, there are still some places where you won't need datalink:

- **Everything north of 80° North**
- **New York Oceanic East FIR**
- **ATS Surveillance airspace** These are areas where surveillance is provided either by: Radar, VHF, or ADS-B – which is basically the airspace over Iceland, the southern half of Greenland, and a big fish shape of airspace over the Azores (see image below)
- **Tango Routes** T9 and new route T290 that was also introduced today (the other Tango routes T213, T13, and T16, will all require datalink).



To figure out where you are welcome on the NAT, depending on what equipment and training you have, **check out our NAT guides and charts** here.