

2024 Flight Ops Changes: The Big Ones

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

January

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

February

- **Expanded Free Route Airspace in Africa:** Free Route Airspace (i.e. you can fly direct between waypoints) is now available across all ASECNA airspace in Africa, FL250 and above. [Read](#)
- **Libya Airspace Risk: An Idiot's Guide:** Why have EASA eased their warning on flights to Libya? Here's a look, all wrapped up in a 7-Step Idiot's Guide to Libya Airspace Risk, with some maps, pictures, analysis, and advice for operators. [Read](#)
- **New Risk Warning: Somalia ATC Conflict:** Ongoing issue in Somalia of aircraft being contacted and given conflicting instructions by fake ATC. Bottom line, if you're overflying in the northern half of the country (i.e. where all these issues have been happening) and get a

call on the radio, ignore it. Read

- **US FAA: Who wants to land on the runway?** Flying to an airport in the US? Want to land on the actual runway, rather than some taxiway or dirt road which looks a bit like the runway? Not afraid of some basic pics showing you how not to mess it up? Well then today's your lucky day! Read

March

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

April

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

May

- **Italy New Disinsection Procedures:** For flights to Italy, if your aircraft has been in an affected country (including the US) in the past 28 days, you'll need to get it sprayed and provide a certificate. Read
- **Argentina Overflight Permits Now Required:** All foreign aircraft now need an overflight

permit for Argentina. Here's how you get one. [Read](#)

- **US Domestic Enroute CPDLC Update:** Domestic en-route CPDLC in the US is now available to everyone. To get it, you've got to have the right avionics and submit a form – the FAA has published a list of aircraft types, which you will need to check to see if you comply. [Read](#)
- **Israel tightened rules for GA Flights from the US:** Most operators will now need to either hire an approved security company to do screening in the US, or else make a stop en-route at an approved European airport. [Read](#)
- **Canada ADS-B Mandates:** Where you need ADS-B in Canada, what equipment you need, how to apply for an exemption, plus all manner of other questions answered! [Read](#)

June

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

July

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

August

- **UK Electronic Travel Authorization Guide:** Travellers from a long list of countries

(includes the US) will be able to use this from Jan 2025. Then there's another list (pretty much everywhere in Europe) who can use this from April 2025. Get the full lowdown here. [Read](#)

September

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

October

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

how straightforward the application process can be. [Read](#)

- **US Ops: CBP Gotchas and Recent Penalty Cases:** There has been a surge in CBP penalty cases recently. The top 3 reasons: failing to get Permission to Land, failing to obtain Departure Clearance, and errors in APIS data. Here's how to avoid making the same mistakes. [Read](#)

November

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

December

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

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

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

