

Spot The Difference: Oceanic Airspace With Non-Standard Contingency Procedures

OPSGROUP Team
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On 5th November 2020 the new ICAO PANS-ATM Doc 4444 sprung into action like a super hero in a paper cape. Doc 4444 is the Standard for Air Traffic Management. It is a big deal in the world of documents. It is what provides the **worldwide recommendations on Procedures for Air Navigation Services**, including those for **Contingency and Weather Deviation situations**.

But...

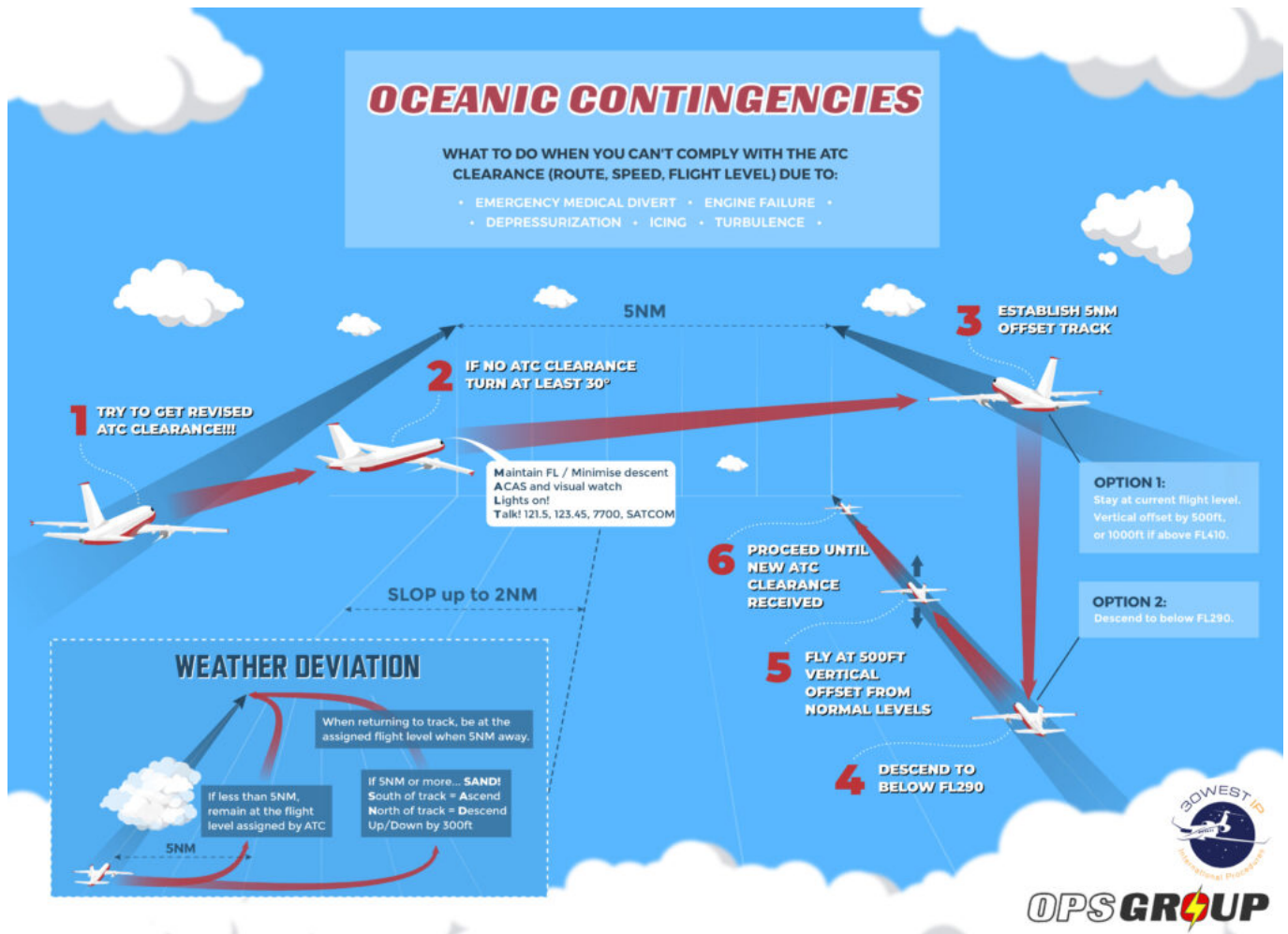
That does not mean states have to follow it. They really should. But if they don't that is ok, they just need to let everyone know in their AIP what their different procedures are.

One Contingency Procedure to Rule them All

So, on 5th November the new recommended Contingency Procedures came into being. In fact, these were the procedures that had been in place in the North Atlantic Region since March 2019. But with the release of the new ICAO Doc 4444, the plan was for these procedures to now be rolled-out everywhere – so there would be **one standard set of Contingency and Weather Deviation Procedures for all oceanic airspace worldwide**.

The procedure is straightforward: Contingency offsets that previously were 15nm are basically now all **5nm offsets** with a turn of at least **30 degrees**.

Here's how it works:



But you know this already, so why are we repeating it?

And that would be great. Pilots, no matter where they are, would know exactly what to do when something goes wrong. But...

Some places aren't playing by the (new) rules

There are four named oceans on Earth – the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian and Arctic. They are quite big. So big they are often “broken” into North and South as well, and who rules the airspace above said oceans is a mishmash of who borders what bits.

This means while you might *just* be routing over the Indian Ocean, you might not *just* be under Indian control, which also means **the contingency for each bit of airspace might vary** since it is up to each State to decide whether to implement the standard procedure over their bit of the ocean. And not all of them have.

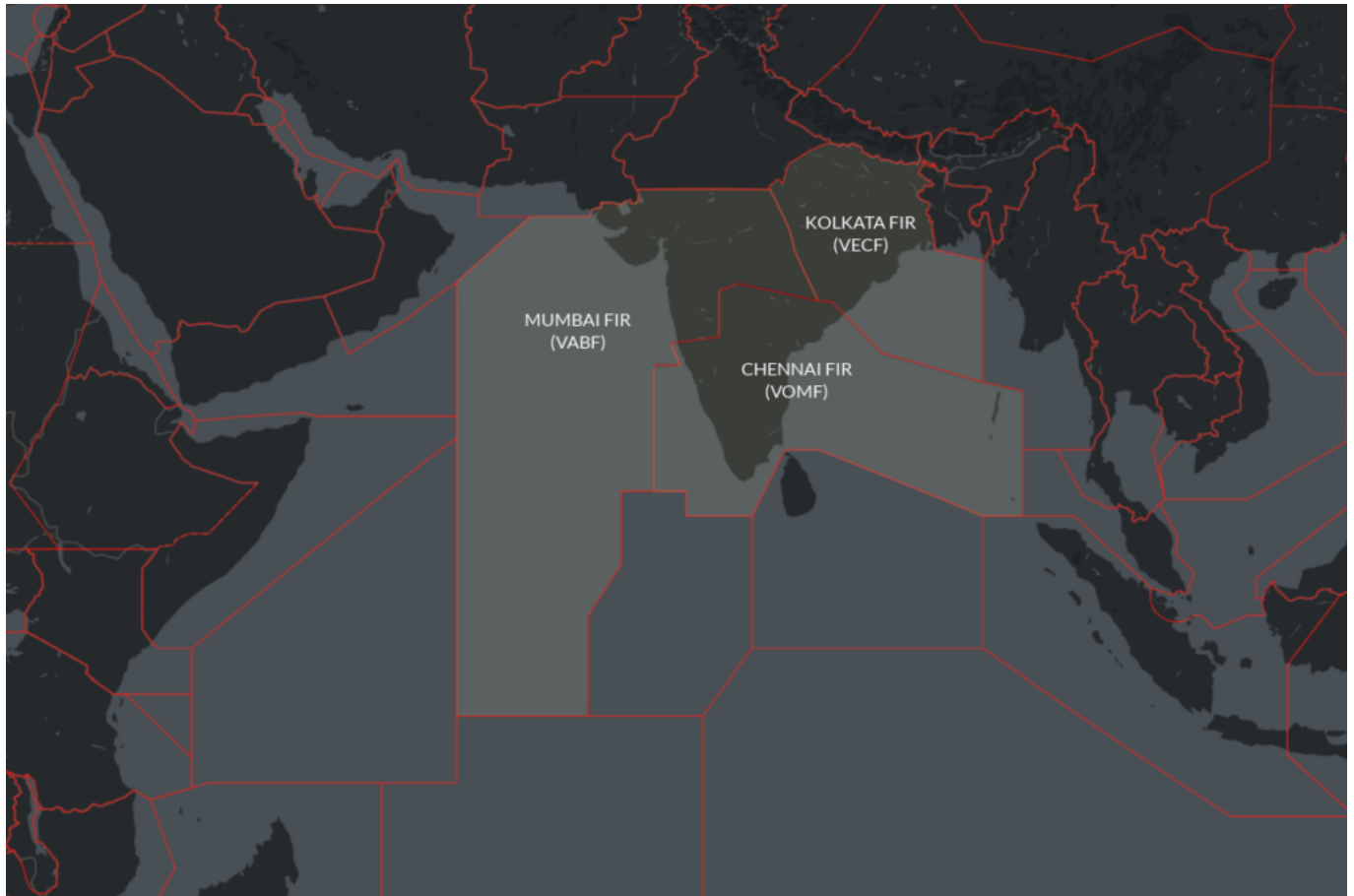
So which ones do we know of that you still need to look out for?

India

India control a big bit of Oceanic Airspace which falls under their **VABF/Mumbai, VOMF/Chennai and VECF/Kolkata FIRs**.

Until August 12 2021 India did not follow the standard ICAO contingency. From then, they do.

Here is a copy of the new AIP SUP updating their manuals.



China

The ZJSA/Sanya FIR includes an oceanic portion in the South China Sea. It is a “marginal sea” that is part of the Western Pacific Ocean (marginal meaning: would just be the ocean only a bunch of islands and archipelagoes sort of divide it off a bit).

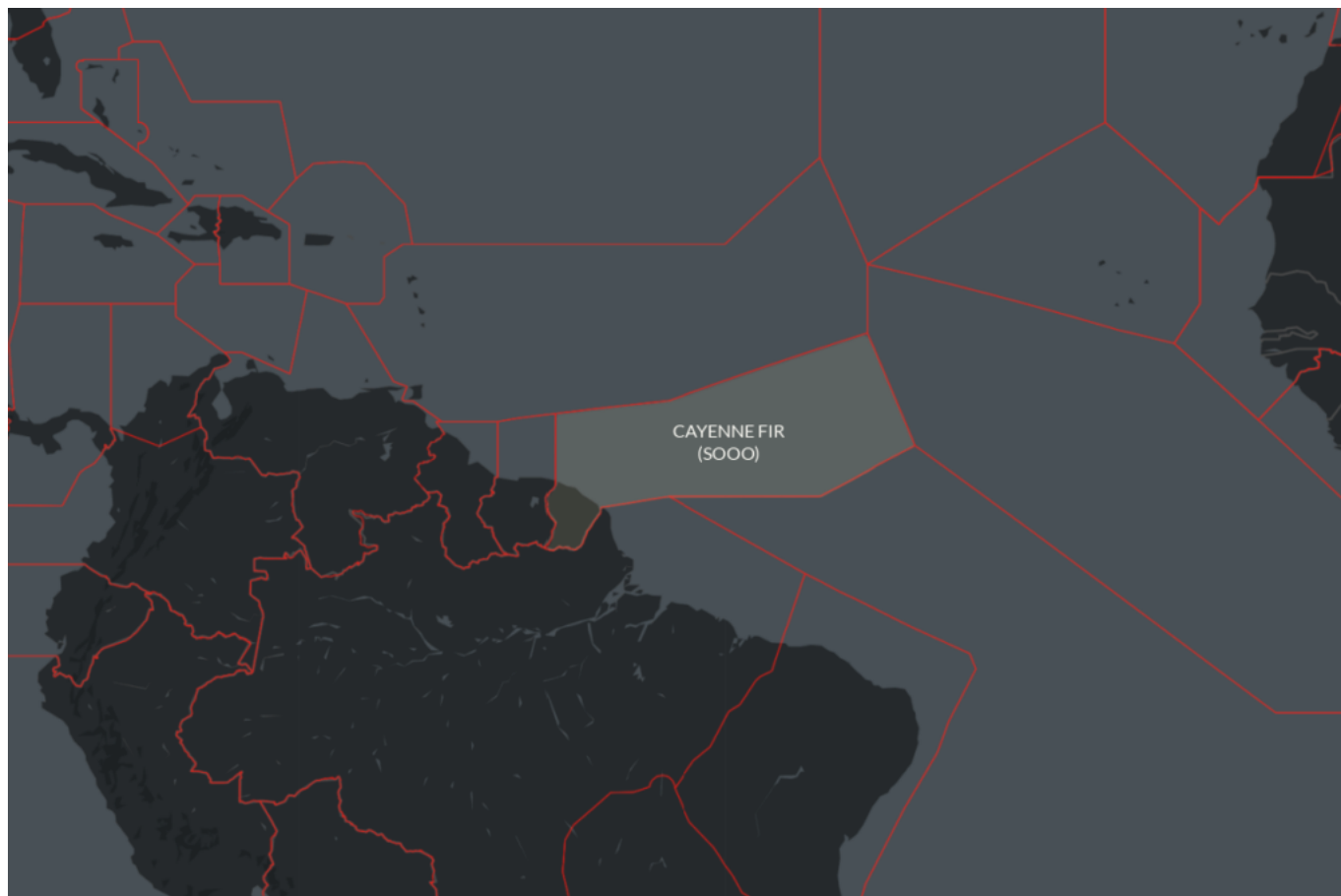
China also do not follow ICAO standard contingencies and instead require you to turn **90 degrees** right or left, **offset by 25nm** and then climb or descend 500ft.

China are pretty strict on deviations and detours. They even use different sized airways in some spots. So check their AIP and China specific Rules and Regs before a flight.



French Guiana

The S000/Cayenne FIR extends halfway across the South Atlantic Ocean towards Cape Verde and the West African coastline. The procedures here are also yet to be updated. The French AIP here has the info (ENR section 1.8.5) and tells you to turn left or right by **90 degrees, offset by 15nm** and climb or descend 500ft. Nothing strange, but it ain't your ICAO standard.



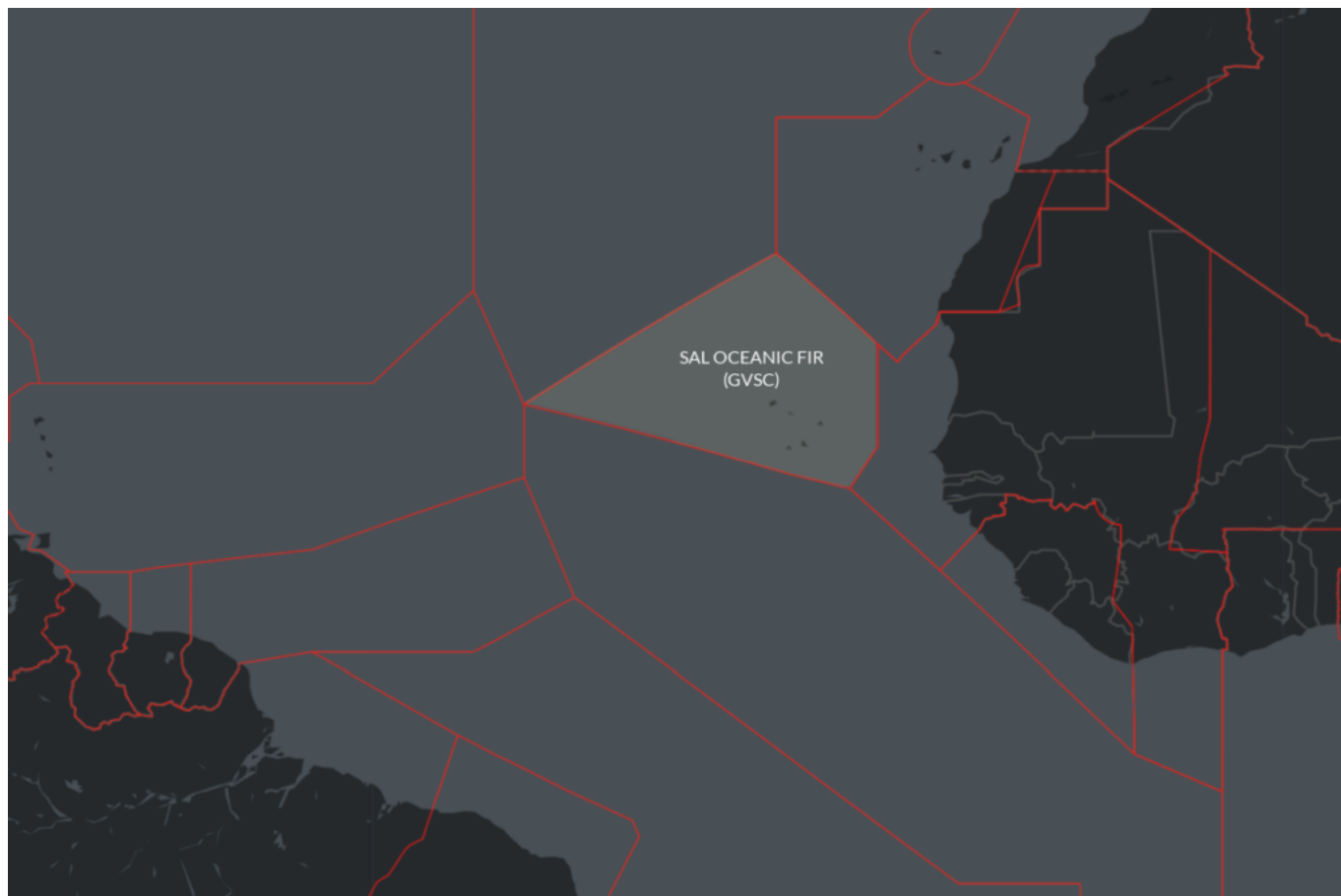
French Polynesia

The **NTTT/Tahiti FIR** in the Central Pacific ocean is another one that comes under the French AIP and still uses old procedures – the now familiar **90 degrees left or right and 15nm offset**.



Cape Verde

In the **GVSC/Sal Oceanic FIR** you are also going to find the old procedures are still in force - the **90 degrees** left or right and **15nm offset**. You might also want to keep an eye on areas with only 30nm separation and avoid shooting through those 15nm offsets.



Malaysia

The **WMFC/Kuala Lumpur** FIR Oceanic Airspace requires a **90 degree** left or right and **15nm offset**

Maldives

They don't refer to the **VRMF/Male FIR** as 'Oceanic', we think it is so we are not sure on this one. We do know that if you need to do an emergency descent, they want you to **remain on away T456**. If you are on airways **Z653 or Z749** then you can leave the route.

Seychelles

There is a special procedure if you are in FSSS/Seychelles Oceanic FIR. It is in the Seychelles AIP SUP 02/2014. The procedure is a **45 degree turn** and a **15nm offset**. If you are **able** to maintain your flight level then once at 10nm, select a level 500' different to assigned (if at or below FL410), or 1000' different (if above FL410)

If **unable** to maintain your assigned level, then pick a level you can maintain and apply the 500'/1000' difference above, but watch out for aircraft who might be on a SLOP

Where else? We need you to tell us!

If you are flying through a region and spot a non-standard contingency or "different to ICAO" note in the AIP then be a superhero and **share it with us**, and then we can share it with you all and help keep everyone safe and up to date. Email us at: news@ops.group