

2023 Flight Ops Changes: The Big Ones

OPSGROUP Team
20 December, 2023



"The only constant in life is change" – once said a Greek philosopher... or maybe Russel Crowe in Gladiator.

Either way, it's been another busy year of change in the world of international flight ops! Here are some of the big'uns from 2023...

January

- **Beirut Gunfire Damage:** At OLBA/Beirut, two jets (and almost a person) were hit by falling bullets. Celebratory gun fire is common in Lebanon – including on New Years. [Read](#)
- **FAA Equipment Codes:** Addition of new equipment codes for Field 18 in international flight plans. [Read](#)
- **US Flight Grounding:** FAA grounded all flights due to a Notam system glitch. [Read](#)
- **Somalia Airspace:** US reg aircraft remain banned but now allowed to transit for flights to HDAM/Djibouti. [Read](#)
- **ICAO Doc 007:** New ICAO Doc 007 for the North Atlantic with significant changes. [Read](#)

February

- **More ICAO Doc Updates:** ICAO updated more of their North Atlantic Docs, not just 007! Both NAT Doc 006 (the one about Contingency Situations) and NAT Doc 008 (the one about Separation Minima) too. [Read](#).
- **Africa Airspace Risk:** Alert regarding border airspace between Rwanda and Congo DRC, after a military jet was shot at near FZNA/Goma. [Read](#)

- **US Arrivals:** The US FAA introduced continuous descent arrivals into eleven airports in Florida, Kansas City, Omaha and Reno. [Read](#)
- **Big Fuss Over Big Balloons:** And then other unidentified objects in the upper levels of North American airspace. [Read](#)
- **Ops Differences:** Comparison between ops in Europe and the US. [Read](#)
- **Haneda Airport Update:** Publication of a runway incursion hazard map for RJTT/Tokyo Haneda airport. [Read](#)

March

- **Mali Warning:** Expanded airspace warning for Mali by the US FAA. [Read](#)
- **Oman's Open Skies:** Oman allows flights to overfly its territory, easing routes between Israel and Asia. [Read](#)
- **Private Flights to US:** Deeper insights for private operators to the US. [Read](#)
- **Aviation Safety in Indonesia:** Deteriorating security in Indonesia's Papua region and incidents targeting aircraft. [Read](#)
- **Global Reporting Format:** Insights on the Global Reporting Format for runway surface conditions. [Read](#)
- **China Reopens:** China reopened its doors to tourists after three years of border restrictions. [Read](#)
- **MAYDAYS:** Danger Club looked at why pilots are getting MAYDAYS wrong. Between us all, we did some figuring out. [Read](#)

April

- **NAT Datalink Exempt Airspace:** North Atlantic datalink exempt airspace boundaries changed – airspace over Greenland now requires it. [Read](#)
- **US Aviation Rules:** New rules for foreign operators doing P135 charter flights to the US. [Read](#)
- **Updated Risks on the South China Sea:** Recent incidents involving civil aircraft and military warships. [Read](#)
- **European Flight Planning:** Insights on planning flights in Europe without alternate routes. [Read](#)
- **Sudan Airspace Closure:** Sudan's airspace was closed following a military coup. [Read](#)

May

- **Circling Approaches:** We wrote about the dangers of circling approaches, and the difference between PANS OPS and TERPS. [Read](#)
- **Formidable Shield 2023:** North Atlantic airspace closures for Formidable Shield exercises. [Read](#)
- **FAA's Northeast Improvements:** The FAA finally finished its big North-East Corridor

Improvement Project. Operators need to file preferred routes to avoid delays. [Read](#)

- **NOTAMs Fixed:** We hosted the Great Notam Sprint. Three hundred volunteers found an AI-based solution that fixes the Notam problem – a working model that ingests all NOTAMs for a flight, and outputs a simple, colourful, ranked and pilot-friendly briefing the way we want it. [Read](#)
- **US Airport CBP Fact Sheets:** With help from the NBAA, we built a collection of handy CBP cheat sheets. [Read](#)
- **NOPAC Routes Redesign:** Redesign of the North Pacific NOPAC routes by the FAA. [Read](#)
- **North Korea's Satellite Launch:** Potential risks to aircraft due to North Korea's recent satellite launch. [Read](#)

June

- **TCAS in North Atlantic:** We talked to Shanwick and Gander about whether TCAS was essential to cross the NAT. [Read](#)
- **5G Retrofit Deadline:** FAA's decision not to delay the 5G aircraft retrofit deadline. [Read](#)
- **Mexico Challenges:** Overview of challenges affecting bizav ops to Mexico. [Read](#)
- **ADS-B Mandates:** Changes and mandates for ADS-B globally. [Read](#)
- **China's Limits Lifted:** China's removal of domestic sector limits for foreign bizav flights. [Read](#)
- **ATC Short Codes:** Inmarsat published an updated list of Short Codes for getting hold of various ATC & ACC centres worldwide. [Read](#)

July

- **NAT Region Changes SSR Transponder Procedures:** EGGX/Shanwick FIR updated, with other NAT FIRs to follow. [Read](#)
- **US Operators Can Overfly Venezuelan Airspace Below FL260:** Long-standing Notam cancelled, allowing overflight. [Read](#)
- **INMARSAT Device Registration for China:** You might need to register your INMARSAT device if headed to China.
- **Tightened Passport Control in Iceland:** Increased scrutiny during tech-stops. Expect to have to get off the plane for passport checks, even in grotty weather. [Read](#)
- **Air Traffic Controller Shortage in Australia:** Uncontrolled airspace due to staff shortage. [Read](#)
- **Portugal's New Punishment Tax:** New tax in Portugal, targeting business aviation and small aircraft. Similar costs can be expected for an Azores (LPAZ, LPLA for example) tech stop. [Read](#)
- **Mexico City Airport Safety Alert:** Several reports of loss of GNSS signal in the terminal area. [Read](#)
- **New Datalink Mandate in France:** If you're flying in France above FL195 and you have ATN CPDLC – you must use it! [Read](#)

August

- **US Operators Can Overfly Afghanistan at FL320:** Contingency routes in place, but risks persist. [Read](#)
- **Niger Airspace Closure Due to Coup:** Significant impact on Central Africa traffic. [Read](#)
- **ZSSS/Shanghai Off-Limits:** Bizjets had to re-route to ZSPD/Pudong for a few months. [Read](#)
- **Libya: Aircraft Evacuation Due to Clashes:** Reminder of ongoing risks here. Avoid! [Read](#)
- **Navigating NO FIR Airspace in Eastern Pacific** – Procedures for uncontrolled oceanic airspace. [Read](#)
- **Approved Airports for Flights to Israel:** Our guide on all things “ops to Israel” related. [Read](#)
- **CPDLC Gotcha - Clearance Busts:** In 2022, the FAA recorded 20 aircraft deviations due to issues with CPDLC and partial reroute messages. Here’s what not to do! [Read](#)

September

- **Canada Mandates ADS-B Above FL180:** Flight plan requirements, exemptions, and application process. [Read](#)
- **Niger Airspace Reopens After Coup:** Major airlines resume traffic, but security concerns persist. [Read](#)
- **EU Temporary Admission of Aircraft:** OPMAS debunks myths about EU aircraft admission. [Read](#)
- **Armenia-Azerbaijan Airspace Risk:** Brief flare-up in the conflict, closure of cross-border waypoints, most East-West flights started avoiding the region and routed via Georgia’s UGGG/Tbilisi FIR instead. [Read](#)
- **WATRS Renamed:** The US FAA officially renamed WATRS airspace to WAT. Existing B050 authorizations will be re-issued within 24 months. [Read](#)
- **GPS Spoofing in Iraq:** We several reports of enroute aircraft being targeted with fake GPS signals, leading to complete nav failures. [Read](#)

October

- **OPSGROUP Goes To Vegas:** We had the pleasure of meeting up with OPSGROUP members at NBAA-BACE 23 in Las Vegas! [Read](#)
- **New Rules for Outbound US Private Flights:** APIS updates for passenger changes and ETD. [Read](#)
- **EU-LISA Screening System Postponed:** The EES bit will be delayed to some time towards the end of 2024, and the ETIAS bit will start no earlier than 2025. [Read](#)
- **Tel Aviv Airspace Risk:** Israel is now an active war zone. The Safe Airspace assessment is at Level 1 – Do Not Fly. Operators should especially avoid LLBG/Tel Aviv, despite assurances from the authorities that the airspace is “safe”. It isn’t! [Read](#)

- **Bizav Clampdown at Amsterdam Airport:** Reduction in slots with potential future ban for bizav. [Read](#)
- **NAT Changes 2024 Announced:** No more Oceanic Clearances, simplified procedures, squawking changes. [Read](#)
- **US Border Overflight Exemptions:** We made a super simple How-to Guide. [Read](#)
- **More GPS Spoofing:** Watch out if you're in the Cairo, Nicosia, or Amman FIRs – at some point, your GPS sensor inputs may try to tell you you're overhead LLBG/Tel Aviv airport. [Read](#)

November

- **Bizav Roadblock: Turkey and Armenia:** Turkey blocks bizav overflights to/from Armenia. [Read](#)
- **GPS Spoofing Update and Types Identified:** GPS spoofing incidents detailed, including the Beirut scenario. [Read](#)
- **The Annual Shanghai Airports Meltdown:** Restrictions in November for bizav flights. [Read](#)
- **UK Airspace Warning for Red Sea and Gulf of Aqaba:** Caution urged due to increased military activity. [Read](#)
- **North Atlantic Volcanic Threat:** Iceland impending eruption may impact NAT traffic. [Read](#)
- **US Visual Approaches:** Ooh, people got angry about this one! A cautionary tale involving a crew of an A350 inbound to KSFO who found themselves in a seemingly unnecessary last-minute diversion to Oakland after a long-haul flight. The incident highlighted issues with visual approaches in the US, particularly during late-night arrivals. [Read](#)
- **New GPS Spoofing Scenario - The Black Sea:** Several reports from members of GPS spoofing over the Black Sea in Turkish airspace. [Read](#)
- **Datalink Rules in Europe:** All your European Datalink questions answered! Plus there are now some additional places where Datalink logon will soon be mandatory. [Read](#)

December

- **UK Implements ETA for Passengers:** Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme for passengers. [Read](#)
- **US Domestic Enroute CPDLC Update:** CPDLC available with specific avionics. [Read](#)
- **New Approaches at KDEN/Denver:** RNAV/RNP Approaches introduced to mitigate TCAS RA events. [Read](#)
- **Niger Overflights:** Several reports of aircraft being denied entry into Niger airspace at short notice, even though a valid overflight permit was in place.
- **Anti-Aviation Protests:** Some anti-aviation protestors targeted a couple of airports in Belgium. Here's a look at some of the most notable incidents over the past few years. [Read](#)

As the year draws to a close, we wanted 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 Bulletin emails over the holiday period. It's all fairly straightforward this year dates-wise, we'll basically be **closed from Mon 25 to Fri 29 Dec** – as this tasteful, festive postcard points out.



Happy Holidays everyone, and see you in 2024! ♥❄️🌨️➡️

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Dear Santa...

We do hope we've been good little boys and girls this year. Last Christmas we received no presents from you at all, which was disappointing.

We did get one from ICAO that got lost in the post and then turned up in January – an update to the NAT Doc 007. *Truth be told, Santa, we didn't actually like that very much.*

It's been another busy year of international flight ops changes, Santa!

We thought you probably missed most of it, hunkered down in your Arctic grotto, beavering away on all the presents you must be making for us this year. **So we've written you a little list** – just the big stuff that's happened this year.

If you don't want to read it all, that's okay, we know you're busy! You can get nearly all the same info by playing our **Snakes On A Plane & Ladders game** that we made! ☐ ☐

We designed it in bright **RED** and **YELLOW** colours to make it easier for you to play in the dim pre-dawn light as you're zipping around the skies on Christmas Eve! ☐

You can **download a PDF of the game** here, or just click on the picture!

In fact, before we get to the long-version list of stuff that's happened...

Our Christmas Wishlist

- *No more hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, floods, domestic conflicts, international invasions, drone and missile attacks, or global pandemics please.* We've put this one at the top, because this is the one we **really want the most.**
- **An EU-LISA teddy bear.** The one where you press its tummy and it tells you a nice clear definition of what a "carrier" is.
- **A set of walkie-talkies.** We'll keep one and give the other to North Korea, so they can use it to tell us when they're launching test missiles.

- **A big pair of scissors.** So when we're doing flights over Greece or Turkey we can snip out all the pages of whingey, irrelevant Notams they publish about each other.
- **Some earplugs.** We'll use them in January when the postman knocks on the door with ICAO's annual NAT Doc 007 present, late again.

Ok, Santa, on to the good stuff – *here's* the long-version list of stuff that's happened...

January

- The US went into a **ground stop** at their west coast airports after North Korea launched a missile. [Read](#)
- The US delayed their **5G roll out** because of concerns at airports. [Read](#)
- Honduras got **new airport** – MHPR/Palmerola. [Read](#)
- UAAA/Almaty airport, **Kazakhstan closed** (and later reopened) due to violent protests and unrest across the country. [Read](#)
- The Yemen conflict reached the UAE when several **ballistic missiles** targeted Abu Dhabi. [Read](#)
- NTF/Fua'amotu airport in Tonga closed after the **eruption of Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai**, and the ash also disrupted some overflights in the South Pacific. [Read](#)

February

- Airlines started to avoid Ukrainian airspace after Russia's invasion, and **insurance companies started cancelling cover** for flights in Ukraine. [Read](#)
- Singapore mandated **RNP4 and RNP10** on some of its main oceanic airway from FL290 and above. [Read](#)
- **NAT Tracks were abolished** from FL330 and below. [Read](#)

March

- As the Russia-Ukraine conflict escalated, Russia brought in **"tit for tat" flight bans**, including bans on all US operators, and operators had to start finding new routes avoiding Ukraine and Russia. [Read](#)
- **Spillover into Europe** from the conflict and "traffic jams" in other airspace started occurring. [Read](#)
- We first heard mention of EASA's new dreaded **EU-LISA (EES/ETIAS) system**. [Read](#)
- Iran kicked off against Iraq again, sending **missiles towards ORER/Erbil** region. [Read](#)
- In the US, the military ran tests on **GPS interference** and it jammed civilian aircraft. [Read](#)
- **Fuel shortages in Nigeria** and bandits at the airport raised concerns. [Read](#)
- Ethiopia announced a **ceasefire** between fighting factions in the Tigray region. [Read](#)

April

- **EASA's new fuel policy** was announced and it was really hard to read. [Read](#)
- A new airport opened in **Mexico City** (MMSM/Santa Lucia) and everyone said don't use it. [Read](#)
- **Fuel prices started rising** due sanctions particularly on US east coast; and in other countries they started to announce shortages, particularly across Africa. [Read](#)
- FAA announced **new flight planning codes** for advanced capabilities. [Read](#)
- Iceland became completely **covered with ADS-B**. [Read](#)
- The **mass ATC walkout in Poland** was narrowly avoided. [Read](#)

May

- Reports of **flights being tracked** for nefarious reasons started to concern BizAv folk. [Read](#)
- We talked about **EMAS** because no-one seemed to know what it was. [Read](#)
- **ATC returned to Somalia** with Class A reinstated above FL245 during the day. [Read](#)
- We took a look at some common **NAT Conundrums!** [Read](#)
- US eased rules for **flights to Cuba**. [Read](#)

June

- Everyone was still **confused by EU-LISA**, who still couldn't make it clear which operators need to register to use the new system (i.e. who counted as a "carrier"). [Read](#)
- The **South China Sea dispute** got worse with China building islands and putting weapons on them and running lots of military drills. [Read](#)
- Sri Lanka completely **ran out of fuel** [Read](#)
- Bahamas delayed their **Click2Clear** because no-one understood it. [Read](#)
- Antigua brought in **new Nav/ATC fees** that they want in advance if you're overflying up to FL245. [Read](#)
- Saudi Arabia risk level was reduced as **Houthi attacks drop off**. [Read](#)
- We published a book on **European Slot Rules**. [Read](#)
- **Kathmandu got RNP** (and you should use it). [Read](#)
- The **5G rollout was delayed** in US. [Read](#)

July

- We decided **Safety used to be far more sexy** and tried to bring it back again. [Read](#)
- Flights to/from Israel got easier as **Israel got friendlier** with their neighbours. [Read](#)

- EASA published **new All Weather Operations** stuff and we were all confused by it. [Read](#)
- **EU-LISA is postponed** (thank goodness!). [Read](#)
- **VHHH/Hong Kong's new runway** finally opened. [Read](#)
- ICAO **expanded SELCAL** to include new codes. [Read](#)
- The FAA postponed the final phase of **Northeast Corridor Atlantic routes** project until April 2023. [Read](#)
- We made a picture book to help people understand the new **EASA fuel rules**. [Read](#)

August

- Qatar finally got the go-ahead from ICAO to set up their **own airspace**. [Read](#)
- China got angry with Taiwan and held massive drills that **shut Taiwan** because they effectively surrounded it with prohibited areas. [Read](#)
- Canada delayed their **ADS-B mandate** until Aug 2023 to give folk time to install equipment. [Read](#)
- **NAT 006** is updated, and we're proud of our James Bond pun which no-one else got. [Read](#)
- **EIDW/Dublin** opened a new runway. [Read](#)
- We put together on the **London Airport options**, made with help from the London Underground tube map publishers, circa 1962. [Read](#)
- EASA updated their RIM and we posted a reminder of all the things people keep getting into trouble with during **ramp checks!** [Read](#)

September

- The **hurricane season** was in full force with Earl closing Bermuda, Kay closing La Paz in Mexico and then the massive Fiona reaching Canada, and Ian devastating parts of Florida.
- A big military exercise threatened to close a chunk of **EGGX/Shanwick** impacting the NAT, but then it didn't. [Read](#)
- EASA delayed their **ELT mandate** by 2 years. [Read](#)
- **Azerbaijan and Armenia** kicked off again and the border airspace closed, then quickly reopened. [Read](#)
- CYYZ/Toronto **capped slots for GA/BA** flights. [Read](#)
- African ATC went on a **mega strike!** They brought in fake ATC and we put out a big safety alert over it. [Read](#)
- The **FAA extended** their Iran and Iraq warnings for another 2 years. [Read](#)

October

- North Korea sent a **missile directly over Japan** causing them to issue a public warning. [Read](#)

- **Major airways** in Iraq are in close proximity to areas of airspace with high risk from drones and missiles. [Read](#)
- Florida airports reopened after **Hurricane Ian** raged through. [Read](#)
- We discovered more info on the **CPDLC trial** in the US and how BizAv are (or aren't) involved. [Read](#)
- The FAA published new **winter holdover times**. [Read](#)
- Everyone started planning for the **Qatar world cup** because Doha is small and no-one was sure where to park. [Read](#)

November

- A **cyber attack** brought down a fair few Jeppesen planning products. [Read](#)
- **ADS-B privacy issues** reared its head again with more groups questioning the privacy and security. [Read](#)
- Shannon published info on **level busts** and US BizAv are to blame for a lot of them! [Read](#)
- **KTEB/Teterboro** added new waypoints to help with the challenging circle for RWY 01. [Read](#)
- Canada published a **safety watchlist** that applies to everyone, everywhere really. [Read](#)
- The Russia-Ukraine spillover impacted more countries, with **a wayward missile** hitting Poland and concerns about UAS. [Read](#)
- Saudi Arabia got **CPDLC from FL150 up**. [Read](#)
- We started to **worry about Turkey** - they are fighting with Syria and Iraq and their southern region is higher risk. [Read](#)
- Germany issued a warning against low level **flights in Myanmar**. [Read](#)
- An Emirates aircraft might have been **hijacked**. [Read](#)

December

- Possibly because of power outage issues, but **South Africa lost CPDLC** and FAOR/Johannesburg Oceanic airspace turned into one big IFBP area for a day or so. [Read](#)
- **Ski season started** in Europe with parking restrictions and PPR requirements aplenty. A lot of folks also head off to the **Caribbean** this time of year. We made our own pirate map. [Read](#)
- **Auckland** got bad fuel. Not ideal for long haul flights (so any flight trying to get to Auckland). [Read](#)
- Someone asked us about weird **Mexican timezone changes** and we realised that in April 2023 most of Mexico will stop using DST but some places along the border won't. Highly bamboozling. [Read](#)
- **France banned domestic airline flights** under 2.5 hours. [Read](#)
- **KPHL/Philadelphia** decided they didn't want international GA flights heading in there anymore. [More](#)

Fare-thee-well, 2022

And that brings us bang up to date, Santa, if you're still reading.

If not, we hope this whirlwind of flight ops bulletpoints has been of interest to someone out there. **Maybe a few of you weary aviation folk** who have stuck with us throughout the year ☐