

# Bizav Roadblock: Turkey and Armenia

OPSGROUP Team  
29 October, 2024



UPDATE 30 Oct 2024:

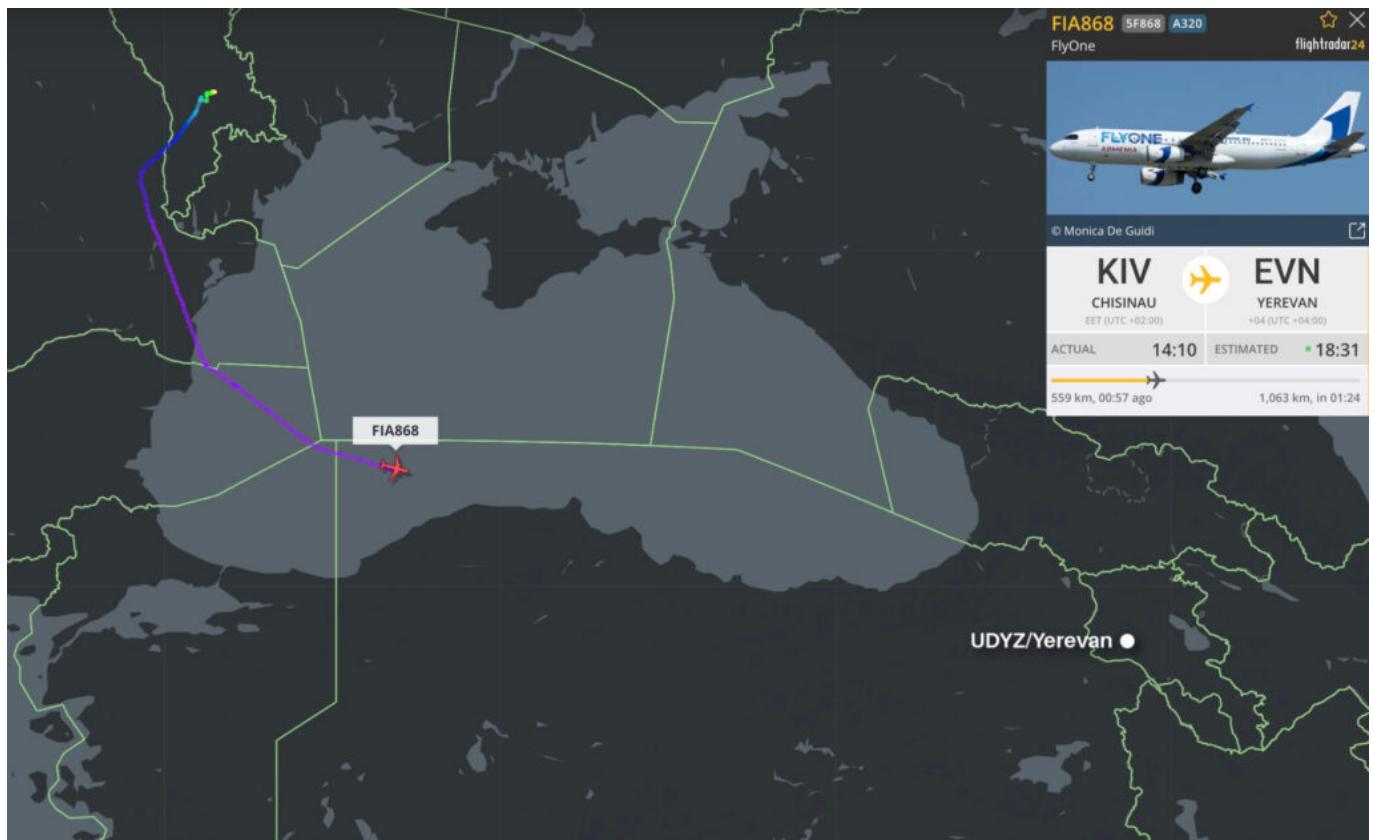
- Turkey has reportedly started allowing bizav overflights heading to/from Armenia.
- This issue stretches back to May 2023, but Turkey dropped the restriction in Sep 2024.
- So if you're heading to Armenia (UDYZ/Yerevan, for example), you can now overfly Turkey - you no longer have to route around the country or make a stop somewhere like UGTB/Tbilisi in Georgia.

## Turkish Ban

Back in May 2023, Armenian airline FlyOne operating a Paris-Yerevan flight had to make an emergency landing in Chisinau after being **denied entry to Turkish airspace**.

Turkey reportedly applied this **last-minute ban** in response to a monument erected in Yerevan the previous week, which they were unhappy about.

Pretty soon after, FlyOne evidently managed to resume Turkey overflights, but it seems that this restriction was **still informally applied to bizav overflight requests**.



30 Oct 2023: FlyOne from Chisinau to Yerevan merrily overflying Turkish airspace again.

## OPSGROUP Member Reports

There was no Notam published on this issue, nor anything mentioned in the Turkish AIP. But some operators made **tech-stops in Georgia** to fix the problem. In Oct 2023, two **Airport Spy reports** were received from OPSGROUP members, where they required a tech-stop at **UGTB/Tbilisi (Georgia)** before continuing on to **UDYZ/Yerevan (Armenia)** in order to overfly Turkish airspace:



### Tbilisi, Georgia

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Rated 4 from 3 reviews

Large International Airport | Longest Rwy: 3,000 m / 9,840 ft (13R/31L) | Elev: 1624

This was a necessary stop enroute to UDYZ. Turkey does not allow private aircraft to overfly their airspace to land in Armenia, so a "tech stop" in UGTB is the easiest way to get around that restriction. Handler chosen via EVO fuels operations due to their eastern European connections.

Inbound to UGTB starting in the Istanbul FIR and the entire Ankara FIR we had GPS jamming. We were prepared for this given the FIR NOTAMs and OpsGroup reports. It was a non-event with the system using DME-DME or IRS throughout the term of GPS outage. GPS started working again right on the Tbilisi FIR border at fix NOLGA.

Arrival was the LAGAS 1A to an ILS Z Rwy 31L. ATC cleared us for the approach via the STAR fairly early. Good notes on the chart about the military airport which you will see first just under the approach course. Runway was not as rough as we were expecting based on previous reports. Exited via Taxiway A and met by follow-me car. Taxied to spot 10D, which is a taxi-in/taxi-out stand. Fuel truck waiting. Fueling allowed with pax onboard with fire services standing by. Pax were allowed out on the ramp during fueling in the shadow of the airplane to stretch their legs. With fueling included total turn time was 44 minutes.

Departure was taxi out with follow me again. They take you all the way to the runway at taxiway A. Back track and line-up on Rwy 31L. Departure via the TAVRO 1E. Coming back out of UDYZ was similar experience with slightly different STAR and SID. No fuel or services required for the second stop, but they still make you park and open your door as part of the requirements for the Turkish "cleansing". Turn time was 26 minutes. Could have been faster, but that was our issue, not theirs. Departure from Tbilisi airspace was via Fix ROLIN. GPS outage started in the Tbilisi FIR and continued until 40 miles east of LTBA.

All in all, this was an easy airport with reasonable ATC service.



### Yerevan, Armenia

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Rated 4 from 1 reviews

Large International Airport | Longest Rwy: 3,849 m / 12,625 ft (09/27) | Elev: 2838

Destination was UDYZ coming from the west, which means Turkish overflight. That requires a stop in UGTB because Turkey is not allowing private aircraft to overfly and land in Armenia. Same for the departure. An extra added complication (see UGTB report).

As part of the trip prep received some notes from a European airline that serves the airport. Highlight of which are:

- Be aware of high Elevation and mountainous surroundings
- Highest MSA is 18,100 feet
- Mount Ararat is 15NM south.
- Very high radio tower ENE of Rwy 27 threshold
- Expect Arrival via INDUR or TIBLO. Conservative Speed management required to enable straight in APP.
- Tailwind operations for RWY 09 are common
- After TIBLO you may descend to MNM ALT of OKUDA (even if below MTCA)
- Preferential landing RWY 09
- Preferential takeoff RWY 27
- Check and observe gradient, speed, and ALT requirements of SIDs. Strictly adhere to given or charted routing and altitudes.

Not all of those notes were applicable since we were coming from UGTB, but good intel if the Turkish issue gets resolved and one can arrive directly without the UGTB stop.

Our arrival was the SEVAN 3A to the ILS DME Rwy 09 via the teardrop procedure turn. Cleared for the approach via the full procedure. Exited Rwy 09 at taxiway B and assigned stand 21, which is a taxi-in/taxi-out stand. Used EVO Fuels to arrange our handler, who was okay on the arrival. Fuel, lav, and water all done on arrival. Immigration is via the private VIP terminal, which was quick and efficient. Transport to the Marriott hotel in the evening took about 25-30 minutes, much quicker on our early morning departure. Marriott was a good hotel right in the center of the city. The city seems safe and is convenient for walking. They even have working water fountains throughout city, which the city is quite proud of.

Departure was early morning back to UGTB. Handling on the departure was disappointing. Pax said they waited 10 minutes until greeted after car dropped them at the VIP entrance.

Taxi out from the stand was via a right turn out from stand 21 to join the main twy to full length at D. Departed Rwy 27 via the SEVAN 3E then TISOT 1A, which makes for a quick flight. ATC did clear us direct TISOT prior to reaching SEVAN which put us off airway below the Grid MORA. Night and IFR so we elected to climb above the Grid MORA.

### Spy Reports

If you have managed to get a Turkey overflight permit for a flight heading to/from Armenia, please let us know! You can also reach us directly on [news@ops.group](mailto:news@ops.group), or file an Airport Spy report.

OPSGROUP members can access the **full Airport Spy database** via the members dashboard here.

### Turkey or Türkiye?

Just a final note on this... In June 2022, the United Nations agreed to a formal request to recognise Turkey as "Türkiye", as part of a rebranding campaign launched by the Turkish president.

However, no major media outlets have changed their spelling so far. **So for now at least, Turkey remains Turkey.**

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## Armenia-Azerbaijan Airspace Update

OPSGROUP Team  
29 October, 2024



#### Key Points

- **Renewed conflict** between Armenia and Azerbaijan on Sep 19, with military operations and exchange of fire in the Nagorno-Karabakh border region. **Ceasefire agreed on Sep 20**, coordinated by Russia.
- Azerbaijan published new Notams saying that cross-border waypoints were closed. These Notams were cancelled on Sep 20, but most operators are still **actively avoiding the region**, and routing north **via Georgian airspace (UGGG/Tbilisi FIR)** instead.
- There have been **no changes to state-issued warnings**.

#### Update: 20 Sep 2023

**Azerbaijan has cancelled its Notams which closed its airspace on the border with Armenia.** But most operators are still actively avoiding the border region, and routing north via Georgian airspace (UGGG/Tbilisi FIR) instead.

**A ceasefire has been agreed on Sep 20**, coordinated by Russia, with further talks set for Sep 21.

Several sources report that on Sep 19 Azerbaijan targeted Armenian forces using drones, artillery, and surface-to-air-missiles. This followed a statement from the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan accusing Armenia of shelling the positions of the Azerbaijani Army in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

There has been no update yet to EASA's Conflict Zone Information Bulletin.

No new foreign airspace warnings for Armenia or Azerbaijan have been issued yet either. Several of these were withdrawn at the end of the war in 2020. Following brief clashes in Sep 2022, only Canada issued a new airspace warning (for both countries) advising caution due to potential risk from anti-aviation weaponry and military ops.

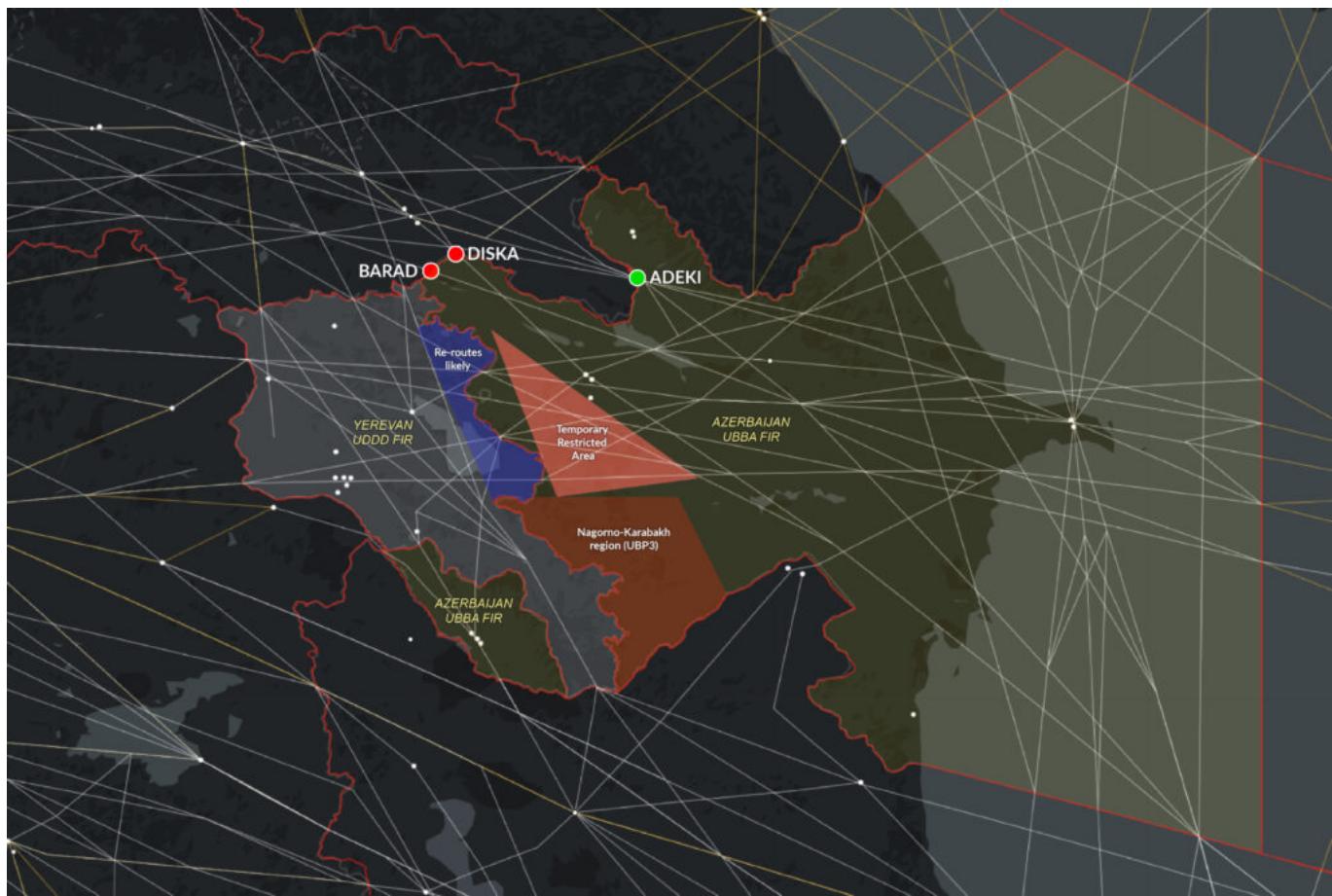
But with the latest escalation in hostilities, we currently assess both Armenia and Azerbaijan on SafeAirspace.net as **Risk Level 2: Danger Exists** - any further large-scale ceasefire violations involving missiles or anti-aircraft weaponry present a risk to overflights in the border region.

## Update: Sep 2022

- In September 2022 there were renewed border clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia – the worst flare-up in hostilities since the war ended in 2020.
- The waypoints along the border between the two countries (VETEN, PEMAN, ELSIV, MATAL) were temporarily closed on Sep 13, but reopened the next day, after Russia brokered a ceasefire to end the fighting.

## Update: Oct 2020

At the peak of the conflict in late October 2020, the airspace picture looked like this:



Here's what happened at that time:

### Azerbaijan

- Azerbaijan established a Temporary Restricted Area along the border with Armenia, which meant that all East-West airways between the two countries were effectively closed.
- They also issued a Notam advising caution across the UBBA/Baku FIR due to the spillover of the conflict, with the specific warning of the threat posed by long-range missiles which they claimed Armenia had been using to target locations throughout Azerbaijan.

### Armenia

- Armenia never closed any parts of its airspace. Instead, they issued a Notam advising

operators to expect tactical rerouting and short notice closures in the airspace along the border, and recommended they carry additional fuel.

## Germany

- Germany issued airspace warnings for both Armenia and Azerbaijan. It did not advise that overflights be restricted to a certain altitude, but instead warned of a “potential risk to aviation... from military operation including anti aviation weaponry.”

## France

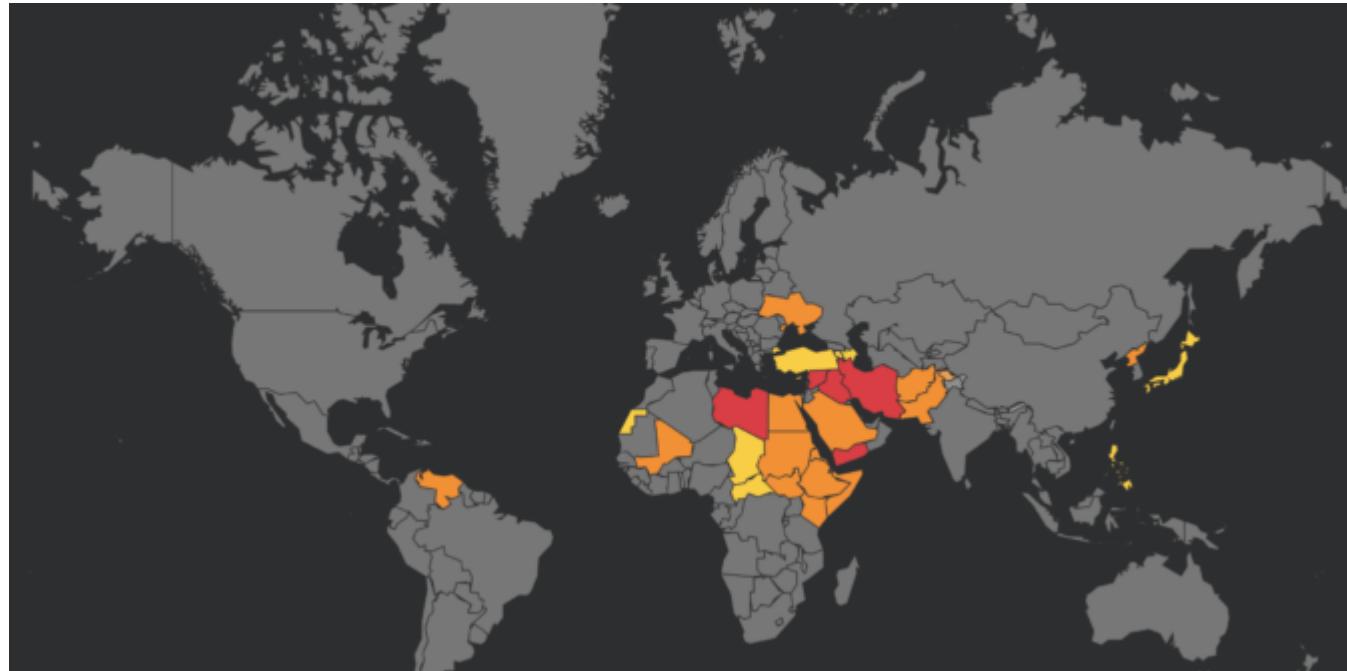
- The airspace warnings issued by France were a bit different. Essentially, they said that operators should not overfly the border region except on certain airways in the far north of the UBBA/Baku FIR at FL340 or above.

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# SafeAirspace: 2021 Update

OPSGROUP Team

29 October, 2024



2020 was a heck of a ride. But therein lies the risk – **what else might you have missed amongst all the Covid-related noise?** Sadly, conflicts and their risks to civil aviation have not taken a break during the pandemic.

As it's a new year, we thought **a summary of Airspace Risk** was called for. Here's what's making headlines at the moment:

## Saudi Arabia & Yemen

Houthi rebels in Yemen are regularly firing **explosive drones and rockets** across the border into Saudi Arabia, and these usually target airports in the south such as **OEAH/Abha** and **OEGN/Jizan**. Their latest attack was on **OYAA/Aden** airport in late December which resulted in mass casualties.

Saudi Arabia continues to retaliate with airstrikes. The latest was in the capital **Sanaa** just weeks ago, where multiple munitions landed near the airport.

The risk to aviation is that **overflying aircraft may get caught in the crossfire** or might be **misidentified by Saudi air defences**. Active terrorist groups in Yemen may also use anti-aircraft weaponry to target foreign interests.

The FAA prohibit all US operators from entering most of the OYSC/Sanaa FIR at any level. Only two airways are allowed, and they are well off the coast – **UT702** and **M999**.

There are no restrictions on Saudi Arabia but **use caution in the southern regions**. France and Germany have issued their own warnings.

*SafeAirspace **Yemen** page – click here.*

*SafeAirspace **Saudi Arabia** page – click here.*

## Iraq

**Rocket attacks** on military interests at airports have become a common occurrence. They are generally fired by local militia without warning. **ORBI/Baghdad** is frequently targeted, along with other airports including **ORER/Erbil**. There is a clear risk to aircraft at low levels.

US relations were further strained through 2020 with multiple attacks on the US embassy in Baghdad. The tensions escalated to a point where the US considering closing it.

Foreign aircraft continue to be at risk from **armed militia who have access to portable anti-aircraft weaponry**, while **misidentification by the air defence systems** of multiple foreign forces in the country is also possible.

The FAA has extended its ban on US operators entering the Baghdad FIR **at any level**. Even though the SFAR says you can enter above FL320, the long-running Notam KICZ A0036/30 says otherwise.

*SafeAirspace **Iraq** page – click here.*

## Syria

There have been several recent **Israeli airstrikes on targets throughout Syria**. In late December there are reports that Israeli fighters transited Lebanese airspace at low level causing alarm in Beirut before attacking targets in Western Syria. Just weeks ago, several sites around Damascus were targeted by Israeli missiles.

The primary risk is that aircraft may be **misidentified by Syrian air defence systems** which are regularly activated. Civil operators may get **caught in the crossfire** as missiles may erroneously lock on to the wrong aircraft.

The FAA are taking no chances – the ban on US operators entering the OSTT/Damascus FIR at any level has been extended a full three years to 2023.

*SafeAirspace **Syria** page – click here.*

## South Sudan

Just this week ICAO issued a concerning warning about the risk to aircraft operating below FL245 in the **HSSX/Khartoum FIR over South Sudan**, or flying in and out of **HSSJ/Juba**. They are 'gravely' concerned about ATC disruptions, a lack of contingencies, inadequate training of controllers, limited info about equipment outages and a lack of co-ordination with other ATS units.

SafeAirspace **South Sudan** page – [click here](#).

## Emerging Conflict Zones

2020 saw **three new conflict zones** emerge, here is what is happening with them now.

### Ethiopia

A civil conflict erupted in October last year in the **Tigray region of Northern Ethiopia**. The government went to war with the TPLF – a regional force seeking independence.

The region's airports were closed and TPLF showed an intent to internationalise the conflict by attacking aviation interests. They fired rockets into Eritrea targeting **HHAS/Asmara**, and also attacked multiple airports to the South of the Tigray region.

**Two airways were closed** (T124, and M308) with **no explanation of the risk**. Other airways remained open but uncomfortably close to the fight – especially UG300, UN321 and UL432. **No airspace warnings** were issued despite the dangers.

### **What's the latest?**

In late November Ethiopian forces captured the region's capital **Mekelle** and regained control. Remaining TPLF forces have retreated leaving behind a humanitarian disaster and a vow to continue the fight. Since then, the **airway closures have been removed** and things have gone quiet, **but an airspace risk remains** – armed militia continue to be active in Northern regions and may be looking to make a statement. **Be wary of operating in the area.**

### Western Sahara

Late last year the region's independence movement (the Polisario) declared war on Morocco for breaching a ceasefire agreement. The FAA published a warning that the Polisario **might have access to anti-aircraft weaponry** left over from previous conflicts.

### **What's the latest?**

It is still an **active conflict zone**. The fight has reached the international stage after the US declared their support for Morocco. The Polisario have indicated they are willing to at least talk, but so far have not put down their weapons. So, it is a wait-and-see type deal.

The risk to overflying aircraft remains. The GCCC/Canarias FIR keep extending a Notam advising operators to **not fly below FL200** on the following airways: **UY601, UN728 and UT975**. However, the reason is still missing: because of the **risk of anti-aircraft fire**. The GOOO/Dakar FIR haven't issued any warnings despite the threat. Take care if operating in the area.

### Armenia-Azerbaijan

In September last year, an ethnic conflict erupted over a disputed territory in Western Azerbaijan – **Nagorno-Karabakh**. The fight was between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

As a major air corridor for en-route traffic, there were **significant flight disruptions**. Azerbaijan swiftly closed all but one west/eastbound airway and routed traffic via Georgia. Armenia asked aircraft to take extra fuel and expect re-routes. The conflict was short but intense, with heavy artillery fire from both sides. The conflict eventually spread beyond the contested regions with longer range weapons. The entire border region posed a **risk for civil aircraft**.

### **What's the latest?**

For once the news is good. In November a ceasefire agreement was signed with the help of Russia. Armenia effectively lost and withdrew from the region and **the conflict was officially over**. Armenia removed its airspace warning, while Azerbaijan re-opened the affected airways and a large section of airspace near the border.

With the conflict now over, and no new reports of significant fighting since the peace agreement in November, direct crossing traffic between the two countries is now technically possible again. However, **most East-West flights are currently still electing to go further north** instead, connecting between Azerbaijan and Georgia's airspace, avoiding Armenia.

### **What about Safeairspace.net?**

Our conflict zone and risk database is **updated constantly**. We assess risk with official sources and build a simple picture for you of those need-to know-places.

There are currently 5 regions which are assessed as a **Level 1 Risk - No Fly**. These are: **Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Libya, and Syria**.

Head over to SafeAirspace.net and take a look. With a single click you can download a **risk briefing** of the entire world in just a few pages of nice simple English.

The mission of SafeAirspace is this: to provide a single, independent, and eternally free resource for all airspace risk warnings, so that airlines and aircraft operators can easily see the current risk picture for unfamiliar airspace. If you know of a risk not listed on the site, or you have anything else to add, please get in touch with us at [news@ops.group](mailto:news@ops.group)