

# US FAA allows Iraqi overflights

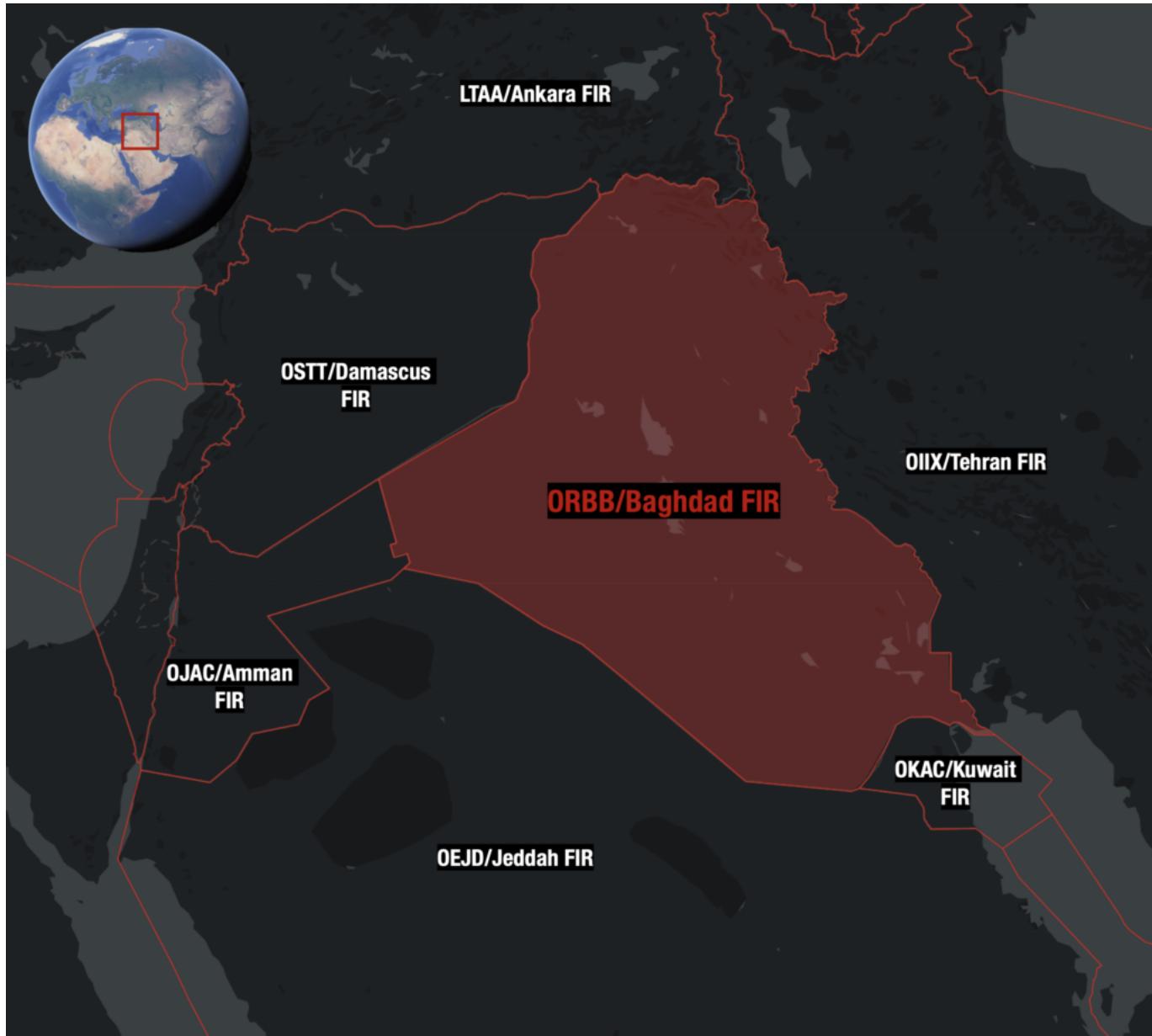
Chris Shieff  
2 November, 2021



On October 22, the US FAA cancelled a long standing Notam that barred US operators from entering the ORBB/Baghdad FIR at all levels (KICZ A0036/21).

The standard SFAR for Iraq now applies, which allows overflights **at or above FL320**. *But does that mean it's safe?*

Iraq remains an active conflict zone which exposes aviation to high levels of risk. So, let's take a look at the dangers of operating in the Baghdad FIR and why those risks should continue to be carefully considered at all levels before you decide to overfly.



US Operators can now overfly the Baghdad FIR at or above FL320, but need to be aware of the risks.

### **Hang on, why was there both a SFAR and a Notam in the first place?**

The political and security environment in Iraq is unpredictable. Local and foreign military continue to fight against an armed insurgency there. Things can change quickly.

To allow the FAA more flexibility with the rules, they published the Notam (now cancelled) with extra restrictions over and above the SFAR.

The idea was that they could continually assess the threat to US aircraft in Iraqi airspace, and easily reduce restrictions again to allow some operations to continue through this air corridor. This is where we are now.

### **But the overflight risk remains.**

The primary risk to overflying aircraft hasn't changed. Terrorist groups are still very much active in Iraq and may **intentionally target civil aircraft with anti-aircraft weaponry**. They are known to have conventional man portable air defence systems (MANPADS) - the ones you can move around and launch

from your shoulder. These were previously assessed to reach aircraft as high as FL260, but the danger zone was later increased by the FAA to FL320.

### *Why?*

Because these groups are being funded and armed by other political interests in the Middle East with increasingly sophisticated weapons.

Case in point. On October 21, news broke that militia in Iraq may have access to a new type high tech anti-aircraft missile. Intelligence suggests that it is 'loitering', or in other words that it hangs around for a while before selecting a target. While such a weapon hasn't been used yet in Iraq, the evidence that it is there is credible.



Militant groups are being supplied with increasingly advanced surface-to-air weaponry that can reach higher and further than ever before – such as this example of a 'loitering' weapon found recently in Iraq.

The same militia also have a long track record of **targeting US military interests at airports** such as ORBI/Baghdad with rockets. We have reported on such attacks more than a dozen times already this year alone.

### **Don't forget about the military - at all levels.**

Iraq is an **active conflict zone**, so foreign and local military have their own air defences too.

The US military have systems that can reach higher than anyone can realistically fly, while the Iraqi military have surface-to-air missiles that can target aircraft as high as FL490.

In the last 12 months, there has been an increase in the use of weaponised drones by militant groups. Which means that if these air defence systems are used to target them, it may increase the risk that civil aircraft are misidentified or mis-targeted - or in other words, being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

### **Other recent events.**

The *ability* is clear, but what about the *intent*?

It's important to remember that airspace risk can change quickly, based on what is happening on the ground. (Not just in Iraq, but everywhere.)

And in Iraq, there are two things to be aware of in recent times...

- The first is that Iraq is still politically unstable. There was a big election on Oct 10 which has since been disputed. Militant groups found themselves on the wrong side of the result, which may imply an increasing desire to make some kind of statement.
- The second is that the US Government has committed to withdraw US troops from Iraq by the end of 2021. As that time draws closer, political tensions are likely to rise. If anything, recent events in Afghanistan may serve as a warning of things to come.



A disputed election held on Oct 10 has lead to widespread political unrest. This may have increased the risk of terrorism as a form of statement.

### **I still want to overfly. Are some areas safer than others?**

Based on active airspace warnings alone, authorities in France and the UK agree that eastern airways **UL602** (between TAMSI and ALPET), **UM860** and **UM688** are generally acceptable – but as always, it is up to operators to carry out their own risk assessments. The US FAA regs don't define any specific region and consider the **risk present below FL320 throughout the entire Baghdad FIR**.

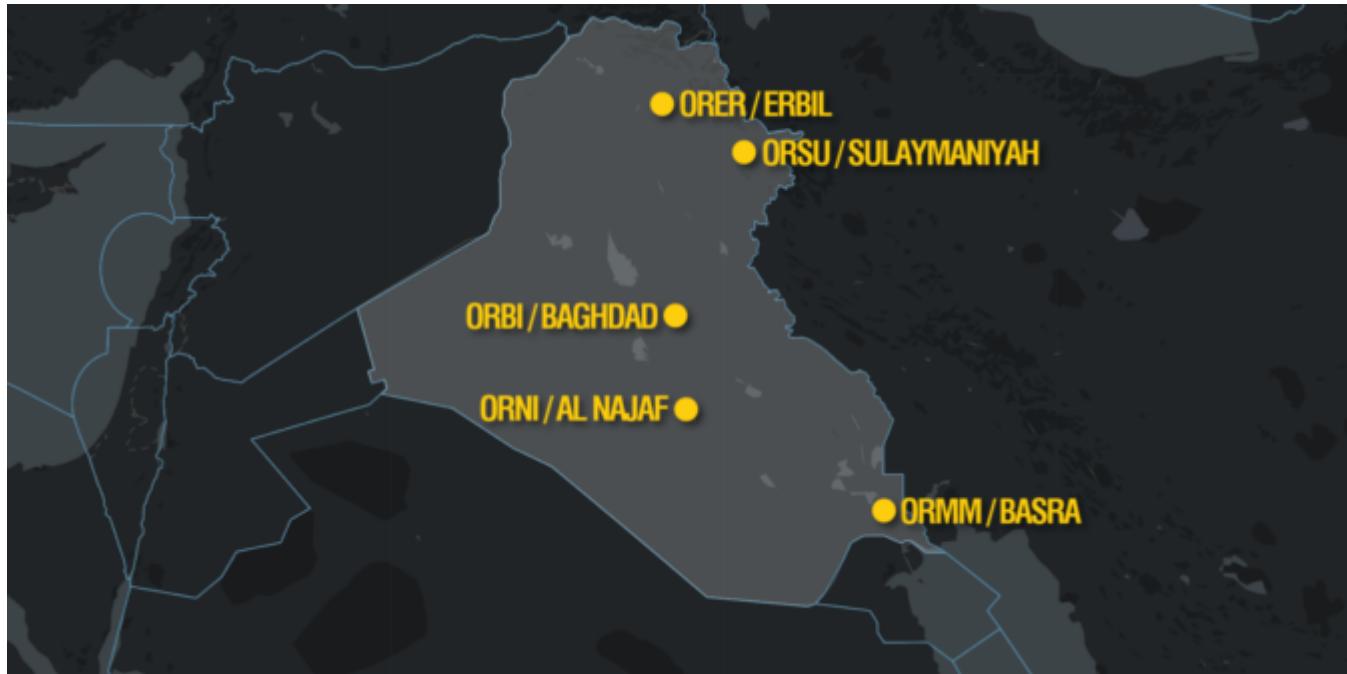
### **Want a full briefing?**

Just click [here](#). **Safeairspace.net** is our conflict zone and risk database run by OPSGROUP. We continually assess the risk to operators the world over. It presents that information in a way that will always be simple, clear, and free. You can also add your email to our new fortnightly **airspace risk briefing** that contains only what you need to know, delivered every second Monday.

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## **Oct 2021: Iraq Airport Closures**

OPSGROUP Team  
2 November, 2021



**Please note the date on this story - Oct 2021. We're keeping the info here for reference purposes only.**

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Iraq is closing for a few days while their elections take place.

Here is a quick look at what this will mean for traffic who are planning to operate over or into Iraq over the closure dates.

### **Why and what are they closing?**

They are closing all airports and border crossings for **security reasons**.

The election will take place Oct 10th. **The closures will run from 2300LT on Saturday Oct 9th to the morning of Oct 11th.** You will not be able to operate in or out of Iraq during this time.



Any further information on this has not yet been provided, but when elections took place in 2018, there were a number of strikes which reduced public services to nearly zero, as well as violent protests and riots across the country. This resulted in a 24 hour closure in May 2018.

In September 2018, several Katyusha rockets were fired directly at Basra airport during further protests against the government and elections.

### **It is volatile at the best of times.**

**ORBI/Baghdad airport** is situated around 100nm southeast of a **major airbase** which is **often targeted by rockets and weaponised drones**. Baghdad itself is a target for rebel groups, and while attacks are generally low level, they do pose a risk to civil aviation and also heighten the **risk of misidentification** by air defense systems.

### **But can you still overfly?**

The Notam published by ORBI/Baghdad Airport suggests you can:

**A0239/21 - AD CLSD DUE TO IRAQ ELECTION DAY. WITH EXEMPTION TO EMERGENCY SITUATIONS DECLARED BY FLIGHTS OVERLYING IRAQ. 09 OCT 18:00 2021 UNTIL 11 OCT 03:00 2021. CREATED: 30 SEP 19:11 2021**

ATC through Baghdad is provided by a large, international air traffic services provider, Serco, and you often hear US accents on frequency. Kuwait also provide some control of the southern sector when they hand over. So ATC control is not thought to be impacted.

The days leading up to and following the elections may well see some **increased traffic across Iraq** as dignitaries, government officials etc fly in, out and about.

Iraq and the ORBB/Baghdad FIR are a main connection between the Middle East and Far East to Europe. There are really only 4 options -

- Via Iraq
- Via Iran
- Via Saudi Arabia
- Via Pakistan into Eastern Europe

**ORBB/Baghdad FIR Notams A0235/21 and A0236/21** advise on the routes available for civilian aircraft overflying the region. This is also covered in their AIP ENR 1.10-2 section 4.5.3.

Heading Northbound you can file TASMI SEPTU ROXOP UM860 NINVA

Heading Southbound you can file RATVO SISIN UM688 SIDAD

## Airports

**The airports will be closed.** All international airports (ORER, ORSU, ORNI, ORMM) have published identical Notams to the one for ORBI/Baghdad, saying that they will remain available for emergency diverts, but they will not be available for “general” en-route alternates.

Iraq borders **Iran** (another region with airspace warnings in place) and **Syria** to the other side (which is a No Fly Zone) so you may be limited on where you can go – turning around and heading back to Kuwait and Saudi, or routing to Turkey (depending on which direction you are heading from).

Eastern Turkish airports are generally smaller and less capable than the larger ones to the West. There are also often skirmishes along the border between Iraq and Turkey, with military on both sides sometimes **closing portions of airspace during military activities.**

## What should you do?

Continue to plan overflights, but be aware that diversions will likely not be supported during this time.

Be aware that government offices and services will likely be closed and unavailable during the election period, so don't submit overflight and permit requests last minute because they won't be handled until afterwards.

## What is available (when they aren't closed for elections?)

Check out SafeAirspace – US Operators are banned from operating over or into Iraq, and other authorities **advise against flights below FL260.**

ORBI/Baghdad airport, in the capital, has a decent runway, however they do currently have **works on 15L/33R** and it is closed (when the weather permits) and between 0300-0500z.

**Runway 15R/33L is only available during daylight hours** and in VMC because the instrument approaches are suspended. 33L also currently has a **displaced threshold (400m)** and the declared distances are now 2901m.

So keep an eye on the weather and be aware of what might or might not be available. **Notams A0222/21 and A0193/21** are the ones to read.

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# International Bulletin: Hong Kong pain in the ass, Haiti relief operations

Cynthia Claros  
2 November, 2021

**INTERNATIONAL  
BULLETIN**

**ISSUED BY FLIGHT SERVICE BUREAU**

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**Hong Kong is a pain in the ass - it's official** 20OCT Authorities in Hong Kong confirmed yesterday that the airport is a giant pain, especially for non-scheduled operators. Lining up slots, parking, permits and handling is extremely difficult. End result: a mountain of frustration. Read the article.

**Haiti relief operations - and Airbus Flight 101** 20OCT After Hurricane Matthew last week, MTPP/Port-au-Prince (Toussaint Louverture) became a central focus in relief efforts for Haiti. **OpsGroup member Airbus** operated an amazing relief flight from Lyon. Read the article.

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**VTZZ/Thailand** is in a period of mourning following the death of His Majesty, King Bhumibol on 13 October. This is a time of deep sorrow for Thai people – refrain from any behaviour that may be interpreted as festive, disrespectful or disorderly. Abide by local laws and respect Thai customs. There may be some disruption of commercial and public services during the mourning period, especially during the first 30 days (until 13 November). Tourist attractions are open with the exception of Wat Pra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha) and the Grand Palace in Bangkok. Expect traffic disruptions and heightened security around these areas as people pay their respects to the late King.

**EBBR/Brussels** All non-scheduled flights destined to EBBR are allowed only after special permission by Airport Authority before start of flight. Contact +32 2 7536900 or inspect@brusselsairport.be.

**DTZZ/Tunisia** extended the state of emergency on 18OCT, set to expire, by three months. The state of emergency went into effect following a series of terrorist attacks in 2015 and has been extended multiple times.

**ORBB/Baghdad FIR** Traffic entering from Baghdad FIR (ORBB) to Ankara FIR (LTAA) shall file their FPL as follows: NINVA-OTKEP-SRT at FL320 and above. NOTAM A4572/16 refers.

**Solomon Islands** There has been a confirmed outbreak of dengue fever in the capital city, Honiara; you should follow the advice of the local authorities and take steps to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes; you should take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance before travelling to the Solomon Islands

**TXKF/Bermuda** Due to maintenance, the Bermuda Radar system will be out of service on Friday. Recommended reroute to avoid airspace. New York Center overflight procedures will be in effect. Routes have been developed to provide limited non-radar service within the airspace. All departures from Bermuda will be held down at FL310.

**OJAI/Amman, Jordan** Runway 26L/08R will be closed for urgent pavement maintenance on these days in November: 01,08,15,22,29: from 0930-1330Z. The airport will not be available for either normal operations or emergency diverts during the closure period.

**OEZZ/Saudi Arabia** From 8 to 10 October there were several missile attacks reported near the Saudi / Yemeni border and the southern Red Sea.

**ZZZZ/Worldwide** Regulatory and voluntary bans on Samsung Galaxy Note7 smartphones is spreading as airlines and airport authorities around the world are announcing bans or restricted usage on the device, which has been withdrawn by Samsung after some devices caught fire. Ban notices are being issued primarily through airline online check-in pages, as well as via public announcements in airport terminals and onboard aircraft. The US Department of Transportation (DOT) was first to issue a total ban on taking the device on board, as a passenger or as air cargo, when it gave an emergency order Oct. 15 with FAA. The devices are being banned because of fire concerns, and the fallout following an incident involving a smoking smartphone on board a Southwest Airlines aircraft in Louisville, Kentucky on Oct. 5.

**YZZZ/Australia** will not be implementing the changes in the ICAO PANS-ATM (Doc 4444), as they say they haven't had enough time to work on the safety case - ie. figuring out if these changes are dangerous in any way. In short, they won't be saying "Climb via SID" or "Climb via STAR", which are the new phraseologies.

**TTZP/Piarco** wins the award for most confusing AIC of the week, namely AIC03/16 issued on 13OCT. Titled "RVSM Implementation", it appears that Trinidad is finally implementing RVSM in their airspace. But wait, they did that in 2005. So what's new in this AIC? It's a mystery. Take a look and see if you can spot it.

**KLAX/Los Angeles** 3 out of the 4 runways at KLAX have now been renovated. Runway 6R/24L reopened on 16OCT after renovations. Improvements to the fourth and final runway, 07L/25R, will begin OCT22 and continue until June 2017. This last runway will be partially closed until January, and then closed completely to allow for more extensive work to be done

**FSIA/Seychelles** Runway will be closed on Thursday 20 and 27 Oct between 1815-0245z and Friday 21 and 28 Oct between 1900-0215z. Can be opened in cases of emergency.

**UHPP/Petropavlovsk** Eruption in progress at Klyuchevskoy volcano (N5603E16038) near UHPP. Ash cloud reported at 0720z on 17 Oct from ground level up to FL300.

**VVZZ/Vietnam** Typhoon Sarika is forecast to bring hazardous sea and weather conditions to parts of northern Vietnam from around 19 October 2016; heavy rainfall could lead to flooding and landslides

**KLAS/Las Vegas** Because of the next presidential debate that will be held in Las Vegas on October 19, 2016, intermittent road closures will affect access to McCarran International Airport (LAS) between 4 pm and 10 pm on that date. The recommended route to the airport from the east side of the valley is westbound Flamingo Road to southbound Paradise Road. The recommended route to the airport from the

west side of the valley is eastbound Tropicana Avenue to southbound Paradise Road.

**OIIX/Tehran FIR** The minimum safe level on R462 between DENDA and METBI has been raised to FL140.

**KSFO/San Francisco** has a new ATC Tower operational since Sunday last, located between Terminals 1 and 2. Per the local report, it "offers controllers a 650-square-foot work area with unobstructed 235-degree views of the airport's runways and taxiways". Hopefully there's not much going on in the other 125 degrees.

**OSZZ/Syria** Russia's only aircraft carrier, Admiral Kuznetsov, is nearing the end of a work-up period outside the port of Murmansk before heading for the eastern Mediterranean, reportedly to begin air operations against targets in Syria.

**EGPK/Prestwick** will be closed from midnight to 0400Z on 21OCT, due to a planned ATC power outage. ATC reachable during outage at +447917 424603.

**RPZZ/Philippines** Typhoon Sarika recently passed through the island of Luzon as a category 4 storm. Transportation routes, power and telecommunications systems could be affected in some areas. Other services that may be affected in these areas include emergency and medical care, as well as water and food supplies. If travelling to affected areas, exercise caution, monitor local news and weather reports, and follow the advice of local authorities.

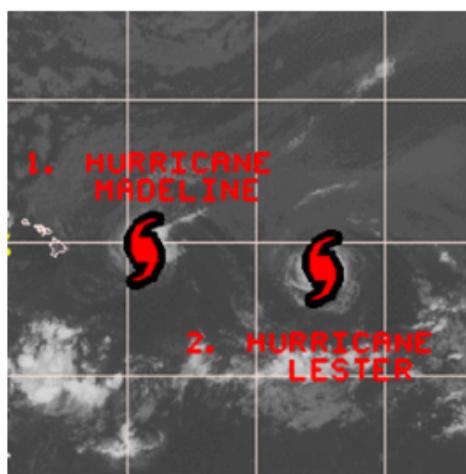
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## Midweek Briefing: End of Canada Leniency, Two hurricanes inbound Hawaii

Cynthia Claros  
2 November, 2021

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**End of Canada Leniency** 31AUG Earlier this year Canada introduced a requirement for an eTA - like the

US Esta. For a while, it was OK to travel without one. **That's ending in September** ... Read the article

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**Two hurricanes inbound Hawaii** 31AUG Madeline is first, followed by Lester – both are tracking west towards Hawaii with landfall expected – should it occur – on Wednesday and Thursday. Read the article

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**LTCC/Diyarbakir, Turkey** Kurdish militants fired rockets at Diyarbakir Airport in southeastern Turkey. The militants reportedly targeted a security check-point outside the airport lounge. All personnel were taken inside terminal building for safety reasons. No flights were disrupted, and there were no reports of casualties.

**EHAM/Amsterdam** It's that time of year again, watch out for the migrating geese in Amsterdam at sunrise and sunset. They operate between 300 and 700ft without transponder.

**VVVV/Hanoi FIR** If you're cutting a line through the Hanoi FIR on the W1 airway, you'll be held down at FL290 unless you have RNAV5. ATC says so.

**DNZZ/Nigeria** Members of aviation unions staged rallies at four major airports in Nigeria to protest the planned concession of the facilities to private investors. Protests occurred at Abuja (DNAA/ABV), Kano (DNKN/KAN), Lagos (DNMM/LOS) and Port Harcourt. So far, the protests have not disrupted ops. Lagos has been suffering from some power outages lately as well.

**SOCA/Cayenne, French Guyana** has staff shortages, and from September 1st will not accept any diversions unless in an emergency. Do not plan SOCA as an enroute alternate. If inbound, with an ETA for SOCA 0200-1100Z, you need to call for an arrival slot. If you need it, ATC phone is +594 594 35 9372 or 9302.

**OIZZ/Iran** has approved the use of its airbases by Russian fighter aircraft; Russia has notified intention to launch missiles in the direction of Syria from the Caspian Sea fleet. The Russian Air Force has deployed six Tu-23M3 BACKFIRE bomber aircraft and multiple Su-34 FULLBACK strike fighter jets to Hamedan Air Base (OIHS/NUJ).

**ORBB/Baghdad FIR/Iraq** The Iraqi government has given permission to the Russian MoD to use its airspace in support of air operations in Syria. Russian media outlets are also reporting the Russian MoD has requested use of the FIR for the "passage of cruise missiles" as well, highlighting the potential for such activity to occur in the coming days from the airspace over the Caspian Sea.

**LTZZ/Turkey** Russia has lifted its ban on charter flights to Turkey.

**HAZZ/Ethiopia** Reports indicate that flights to HAGN/Gondar (GDQ) and HABD/Bahir Dar (BJR) have been indefinitely suspended. The suspension of flights comes amid ongoing unrest in Gondar and Bahir Dar, as well as in other cities in the Amhara and Oromia regions, over the marginalization of ethnic groups by the Tigray-dominated Ethiopian People's Democratic Front (EPRDF) regime. Ethiopian government officials have not commented on the cancellation of flights to those cities or international flights to Addis Ababa, which has not been largely affected by the unabated unrest occurring in outlying regions.

**WSSS/Singapore** air quality has deteriorated to a Pollution Standards Index (PSI) of 105, due to the cross-border haze from Indonesian slash-and-burn fires. The agricultural practice, during which farmers burn a patch of land in order to clear land for new crops, creates haze, which then drifts through the region. Experts believe the level of pollution — which in 2015 cost the region more than 700 million US dollars in damage and severely disrupted the aviation sector — will be lower in 2016 due to a rainy dry season.

**NFNA/Suva, Fiji** is closed during September for runway repairs. Available with 30 mins PN in an emergency. Call them on 9906102.

**SUEO/Montevideo** Air Traffic Controllers strike until end of September, closures and departure restrictions in place. Info is sketchy, got some updates? Let us know ... bulletin@fsbureau.org.

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## Monday Briefing: Thanksgiving ATC Traffic Plan, New Missiles Warning - Baghdad FIR

Cynthia Claros  
2 November, 2021

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**Thanksgiving ATC Traffic Plan** 23NOV The FAA have published details of Traffic Management plans for the east coast of the US during the Thanksgiving holidays, effective 24NOV to 30NOV. The highest volume days will be 25NOV and 29NOV, expect delays on north/south routes to Florida during this period. Read the full details of the airspace initiatives [here](#).

**New Missiles Warning - Baghdad FIR** 23NOV A NOTAM issued today by the Iraqi CAA indicated anticipated cruise missile traffic across the FIR from the Caspian Sea, leading also to the closure of Erbil Airport until Wednesday. See below for further.

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**EGGX/CZQX Shanwick/Gander** The new NAT Track Structure and Reduced Lateral Separation Minima procedures, initially planned for 12NOV, are now re-planned for Monday 30NOV, following the resolution of computer issues related to the new format.

**UIII/Irkustk** will close the main runway on 01, 08, 15 and 22DEC from 1210-1450Z for repairs, not available as alternate during these times. As this is a common Polar alternate, check NOTAMS for current

information.

**UEEE/Yakutsk** will close 31DEC-02JAN, not available for movements or as alternate after 0500Z on 31DEC.

**EINN/Shannon** has a runway closure on 23NOV from 2345Z-0500Z, not available as alternate. Caution before using as NAT alternate on this date. If another ETOPS alternate is required, consider EIDW/Dublin, EGAA/Belfast or EGPF/Glasgow.

**ORBB/Baghdad FIR** Iraq published the following NOTAM (A0413/15) effective today 23NOV CRUISE MISSILES CROSSING NORTHERN PART OF IRAQ, FROM CASPIAN SEA TO SYRIA, NORTH OF REP OTALO, NO CRUISE MISSILE OPS IN THE REST OF ORBB FIR, FLIGHTS OPERATING AT FL310 OR ABOVE AND FLIGHTS OPERATING AT ORBI, ORNI AND ORMM NOT AFFECTED. SFC - 30000FT MSL, 23NOV 0500Z - 25NOV 0500Z. In addition Erbil and Sulamaini airports will be closed until Wednesday.

**OLBA/Beirut FIR** Initially issued a NOTAM on 20NOV, closing a large part of the FIR including routes G2/UG2, R219/UR219, L620/UL620, in response to Russia's request for a training exercise in their airspace. Subsequently the government reversed their decision, and the NOTAM was cancelled on 22NOV, reference A0293/15.

**BKPR/Kosovo** Airspace to the north of Kosovo was released from UN/KFOR restriction, to Serbian control, on 20NOV, meaning that arrivals and departures from Europe will no longer have to make a circuitous approach and can depart to the north. Procedures are not yet in place, but technically the airspace is no longer restricted. For most operators this will see a route saving of up to 100nm.

**GABS/Bamako, Mali.** With great sadness we must report that 6 crew members of Volga-Dnepr Airlines were amongst those killed in the attack on the Radisson Hotel in Bamako on Friday.

**KXXX/USA** Thanksgiving Holidays 26NOV and 27NOV leading to increased traffic flows across US, but anticipated reduced traffic across the NAT region.

**KXXX/USA** Runway Closures DTW-RWY 4L/22R CLOSED SEA-RWY 16C/34C CLOSED LAS-RWY 7L/25R CLOSED LAX-RWY 6R/24L CLOSED 23/1430

**FJDG/Diego Garcia** Parking Stands A6-11 and B4-8, as well as some taxiways, closed for repair effected 19NOV.

**NWWW/Noumea** continues with runway closures 23-26NOV affecting the main runway.

**FABL/Bloemfontein**, South Africa will not accept widebody diversions 19-26NOV.

**GCCC/Canarias FIR** will have a HF outage today 23NOV from 0900-1500Z. In case of non-contact, use CPDLC, or HF via Santa Maria or Sal for relay.

**LIXX/Italy** ATC Strike planned for 24NOV 1200-1600Z has been postponed, refer NOTAM A8227/2015.

**HLLL/Tripoli FIR** Additional new southbound route available via RASNO UY751 LOSUL, for those operators using the airspace.

**LFEE/Rheims** ATC Strike 23NOV/0500Z - 28NOV/0500Z Confirmed for Monday only at this time - NOTAM F2093/15 refers. AOs are advised to reroute, avoiding LFEE area of responsibility. Those that are not able to reroute may expect delay.

**RJJJ/Japan FIR** will have a comms outage affecting Flight Plan filing on 25NOV, from 1410-1720Z. To avoid delays and missing plans, Flight Plans should be filed earlier than normal to RJJZQZX for overflights and landings. Refer to J7545/15 for specifics.

**SPJC/Lima, Peru** Effective 12NOV the Location Indicator for the main airport in Lima, Jorge Chavez, changes from SPIM to SPJC.

**TTZP/Piarco ATC** has issued a request for operators to include KNYCZZZ when filing plans entering New York Oceanic airspace from the Piarco FIR, or operating east of 58W within the Piarco FIR, in order that New York has details of the aircraft.

With regard to business aviation, but equally interesting for airlines and private operators, the NBAA has published a useful list of the Top10 Issues for International Operators in 2016.

**[View the full International Operations Bulletin for 23NOV2015](#)**