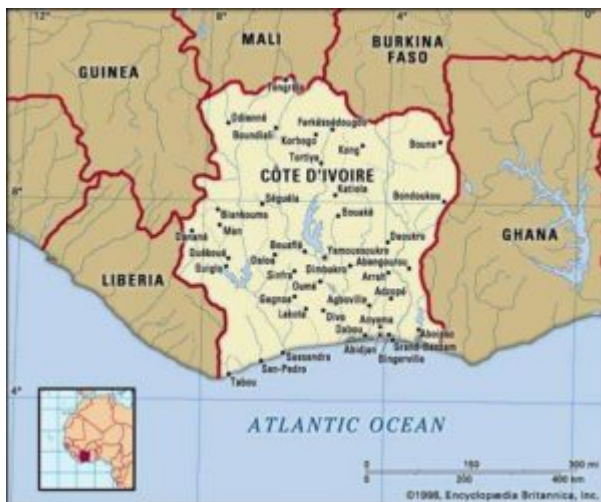


Pay up or else! Crew held hostage by Customs agents in Ivory Coast

OPSGROUP Team
25 October, 2018



“Beware all pilots traveling to Abidjan, Customs is waiting for you!”



That is the message we received in a disconcerting report this week from one of our long-time members which certainly troubled us here at OpsGroup. We thought it was important to share.

The pilot told us that he and his business jet were recently “held hostage” by airport custom officials in the port city of **DIAP/Abidjan**, Ivory Coast, West Africa.

The crew **had all the appropriate** landing and overflight **permits** as required. GenDec’s, passports and associated documents were also **in order**. Therefore, all the evidence points to a **good old fashioned shakedown** and a convoluted scheme setup between local Customs agents and certain ground handlers to extort bribes from foreign crew.

The report we received explains how the crew were ramp checked by Customs officials after landing. The aircraft documents were confiscated and the Captain was “interrogated until 1am” the following morning.

The officials claimed that the pilot both failed to declare their arrival, as well as the “aircraft contents, passengers and baggage.”

The **fine** was CFA 6,900,000,000 (yes billion!) francs, which equates to **USD \$12,066,720 (yes, million!)**

Ay Caramba!



The offence was purported to be importing a high value item (aircraft) without customs approval. The high fine figure was “based on the insurance value of the aircraft.”

The crew were held hostage in the country for 10 days until senior Customs officials could finally agree on the appropriate “accusation” and that the associated fine was actually “legal”.

After the 10 days, the crew were able to negotiate a deal and depart safely – although not without having to involve the aircraft’s insurance underwriter, **who paid a ‘substantial amount’** for the aircraft to be allowed to depart.

On reflection, the crew noted that if Customs does meet your aircraft without you arranging it in advance, “*you can be sure you are about to be trapped.*” They do not tell you why they are looking for documents, more specifically, your aircraft documents, and will not tell you anything as they walk away to call their seniors, carrying your documents with them.

So in short: **do not let go of your documents!**



The advice from our member:

- Contact the handling agent first hand and **double check that they are an approved, recognized handler** and **have approval from the various authorities** (immigration, customs, police, anti-drug) to operate airside. Also check that they can arrange for you to get to the Customs and Immigration officers landside. **Do not assume** because the handler takes all your documents and gives you an invoice and receipts that the authorities have been advised of your arrival and situation.
- The Abidjan Customs authority **does not recognize** a GenDec as an approved form of advice about passengers, health and cargo. They will also not sign off on the submitted GenDec. They will not come to your aircraft unless you specifically arrange for them to do so.



It's important to stress that we are not talking about a small African airstrip in the back lots. This is a large international gateway with many major international airlines serving the city. Over 4 million people live here and it's the economic capital of the Ivory Coast. But corruption is endemic, it spills over every sector of the public administration; clearly even into Customs!

As Brookings put it, *"for the inspector, the temptation is large because his salary is relatively small compared to the potential bribe."* It still doesn't make it right and this experience serves a timely warning for all crew operating through the airport.

Have you been subjected to similar behavior when passing through **DIAP/Abidjan**? Let us know.

Extra Reading

- Cote d'Ivoire Travel Advisory
- Understanding the Roots of Corruption in Cote d'Ivoire
- Why there is (petty) corruption in Ivory Coast

Midweek Briefing 10AUG: EASA Cockpit Rules, Ukraine extends Russia Ban

Cynthia Claros
25 October, 2018

INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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EASA: New Cockpit Rules 10AUG EASA has published a new SIB with guidance for operators on, well, how best to arrange the swap of *pilot-taking-a-pee* and *flight-attendant-now-up-front* ... Read the article

Ukraine extends Russia ban 10AUG Ukraine has extended the ban on Russian registered operators overflying or landing, until November 10th, 2016. In an operational notice.. Read the article

UZZZ/The Moscow Area will get busy between 26AUG and 04SEP (we're not entirely sure why), but ... The Main Air Traffic Management Centre (MATMC) has issued notice that there will be increased regulation for flights to UUWW, UUDD, and UUEE. Permission to depart **will expire 30 mins after planned off blocks time**, after which the Operator (that's you) must call MATMC for a completely new permit.

MWCR/Cayman recorded its first local transmission of the Zika virus on 08AUG. Several other people on the Cayman Islands have reported symptoms of the virus; however, authorities stated that in these cases the patients contracted Zika during travel abroad.

MKJK/Kingston, Jamaica is carrying out work on its Comms lines until the end of the week, and is expecting to lose some Flight Plans. The outage is 0415-1100Z daily. If you are operating to Jamaica, or through the FIR, it's worth sending your FPL early, and not during that time. Maybe send it a few times to be sure, should minimise delays due to missing FPL's.

VIZZ/India Independence Day on 15AUG. Multiple restrictions. No overflights within 150nm of Delhi. VIDP/Delhi will not allow non-scheduled flights 0030-0430Z, and 1030-1330Z. Check with your handler for specific restrictions on 15AUG.

LIRA/Rome Ciampino will be completely closed from 14-29OCT for runway maintenance and upgrades. According to CIA, maintenance work will be carried out on a 24/7 basis on parts of runway 15/33, at various junctions and taxiways.

EVVA/Ventspils is closed for the week from today, due to repairs to the main runway. One of the three main airports in Latvia, it reopens on 15AUG.

GUCY/Gbessia, Guinea Opposition leaders have announced the postponement of opposition demonstrations planned for 10-16AUG. Marchers will reportedly demonstrate on the Autoroute Fidèle

Castro, between Aéroport International de Gbélia (GUCY/CKY) and the Palais du Peuple. The demonstration was originally slated to occur on 4 August but was later postponed until 10 August.

WIZZ/Indonesia Travel advice updated: Political tensions have given rise to occasional mass demonstrations in cities in Papua; take extra care and seek local advice on your travel plans.

SOCA/Cayenne FIR has broken its SITA system and has no CPDLC or ADS-C until, they think, at least 14AUG. Revert to HF and use 8855/5526; failing that try 3023.

RJZZ/Japan On 08AUG, Japanese military officials placed the country's armed forces on alert for the potential of a North Korean missile launch. According to an official statement, the Japanese military will be ready to strike any North Korean missile that threatens Japan. Because some North Korean missile tests are difficult to detect, the current state of alert will last for three months. Previously, Japanese defense officials issued a series of temporary orders in response to imminent North Korean missile launches.

LWKS/Skopje Flooding on 6-7AUG2016 in Skopje and neighbouring areas has resulted in over 20 deaths. Some roads, including part of the Skopje ring-road, are closed. Alternative routes are available, but traffic may be slow moving. You should travel with extreme care.

LTZZ/Turkey Per new dictat from the DGAC in Turkey, all Ambulance flights entering Turkish airspace are to report "ACTIVE AMBULANCE FLIGHT" on first contact with Turkish ATC.

DIZZ/Cote D'Ivoire Effective 15SEP2016 Ivory Coast will withdraw the following HF frequencies: BOUAKE 5710KHz, 1578KHz; DALOA 5701KHz, KHOROGO 6673KHz; Man 5710.5 KHz; ODIENNE 6673 KHz; SAN PEDRO 6012KHz

EDDV/Hannover has special runway configurations on 14AUG due to (yet another) bomb from WW2 being removed. Between 1100-1400Z all approaches to 27L/09R are suspended.

VVZZ/Hanoi ACC reports that a lot of flights operating through the Hanoi ACC area of responsibility have not been submitting flight plan messages to VVHNZRZX or VVHNZQZX. In order to avoid missing / delay of FPL messages, copy these AFTN addresses when submitting your FPL's.

EGZZ/United Kingdom 8AUG Rail staff in southern England, including London, began a five-day strike, which will reduce rail services by 40 percent. Travellers should expect major delays and large-scale traffic disruptions

BGSF/Kangerlussuaq Daily Closures between 09AUG and 30AUG for runway work. Double check NOTAMR A0295/16 for complete list of timings. Only Medivac, Search and Rescue and PPR confirmed operations allowed.

KTEB/Teterboro Landing Fees here are to increase by about 25% on September 1st. Comments regarding the fee changes can be submitted to The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and must be received by 10AUG2016.

Measles Myanmar/Taiwan On August 6th health officials confirmed a measles outbreak in the Sagaing region, a mountainous area located in northern Myanmar, bordering eastern India. We have also received report from Taiwanese health officials confirming a link between two cases of measles and Taipei's Songshan International Airport (RCSS/TSA). The two cases, which were first detected on 15JUL, involved an airline ground crew worker and a passenger who traveled to the airport.

SECU/Cuenca, Ecuador Operations at Cuenca airport will be suspended from mid-August 2016 for 3 weeks to 1 month due to the need for additional runway works.

OMDB/United Arab Emirates On 04AUG both runways at Dubai International Airport (OMDB/DXB) resumed full operations following the 03AUG 777 accident. Expect delays and some cancellations as the

airport is still struggling to catch up.

UTZZ/Turkmenistan and **UAZZ/Kazakhstan** On 04AUG Turkmenistan temporarily closed its border with Kazakhstan, citing security concerns. Officials stated that the closure will last for five days. Turkmenistan instituted a similar border closing on 20JUL. Authorities did not release details on the purported security concerns that prompted 04AUG closure.

UZZZ/Russia 03AUG Polish officials stated that they did not have a specific date to reopen visa-free border traffic between Poland and the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad. Security concerns associated with the NATO Summit and Roman Catholic Church's World Youth Day led officials to temporarily restart border checks at Poland's borders. Residents of border areas, however, will be able to travel across the border for cultural, social or family reasons.

UNKL/Yemelyanovo Runway11/29 is closed for all types of aircraft THU 0600-0700, WED FRI 0610-0710, MON TUE SAT SUN 0500-0700, 01SEP until 29OCT

View the full International Bulletin 10AUG2016

US, Canada may lose EU visa rights, More Free Route Airspace for Northern Europe

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13.40	GENEVE	VL
13.45	PARIS	SAS
13.55	ROME	Alitalia
14.00	NAPLES	Alitalia
14.05	MADRID	airberlin
14.15	TUNIS	airberlin
14.25	ZURICH	airberlin



US and Canada may lose EU visa rights 13APR The European Commission published warning on 12APR that visa-free travel by US and Canadian citizens to Europe is at risk, due to the lack of a full reciprocal arrangement for EU citizens. **Read the full article.**

More Free Route Airspace for Northern Europe 13APR Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Estonia and Latvia will be increasing free route airspace from 23JUN16. This allows operators to utilize User Preferred Routes above FL285. Details of the implementation can be found through the AIC A3/2016 from Sweden.

RKSS/Gimpo is set to open South Korea's first purpose-built FBO next month. It includes a passenger terminal with customs and a large hangar that can accommodate up to eight large jets. The FBO is a partnership between Korea Airport Crop and Avjet Asia.

EBBR/Brussels Controversial ATC Strike occurred without notice yesterday 12APR, restricting traffic at EBBR and in Belgian Airspace. Eurocontrol advises 4 of 6 sectors operational Wednesday 13APR, at this stage no significant further effect likely.

KZZZ/USA New security measures in the U.S. are being enacted in response to the Brussels Airport Bombings. The Senate voted to increase the vetting of airport workers, expand the number of TSA viper teams that sweep through airports unannounced to stop and search suspicious people, and double the number of TSA's bomb-sniffing dogs. Also, local law enforcement may also conduct random checks of cars and taxis heading towards the airport.

KZZZ/USA the FAA has provided its NextGEN update for 2016. It highlights all the completed items along with the expected achievements for the year. You can find all the info through the NextGEN website.

EZZZ/Europe as of 05APR Eurocontrol as been publishing Target Time information together with Calculated Take-off time (CTOT) in the Slot Allocation and Slot Revisions Messages (SAM and SRM). The purpose of the initiative is to provide flight crew with operational awareness of their flight's planned time at the congestion point in the air, rather than solely providing the corresponding delayed departure time (CTOT) to implement ATFM measures.

EGZZ/United Kingdom A large scale military exercise named 'Joint Warrior 16-1' has been taking place since 09APR16 and will last until 22APR06. EGPX and EGTT FIR/UIRs are affected. However, low to medium impact on airline operations is expected.

LFZZ/France beginning 03MAY16 France will be implementing CPDLC services within LFFF, LFEE, LFRR, LFMM and LFBB FIR's. The full details of the IOC can be found in AIC 10/16.

EGGX/Shanwick OCA implemented a trail of 5 minute separation minimum between aircraft which are following the same track, irrespective of whether they are East or Westbound. Full details can be found through AIC Y 022/2016.

LOWW/Vienna every weekend until 24MAY16 LOWW will be operating under single runway ops beginning 2100 on the Friday until 1600 on the Sunday. The closures are weather dependent and the closure will be recalled if the forecast calls for the use of runway 11/29. In any single runway scenario use at Vienna delays are a guarantee.

OEZZ/Saudi Arabia The U.S. State department updated a travel warning to Saudi Arabia on 11APR16. It outlines the risk to travellers due to an increased risk with the threat of terrorism.

SKZZ/Colombia The U.S. State department has updated the travel warning to Colombia. They have actually improved the travel warning as the security in the country has improved significantly in recent years. Foreigners should still exercise caution though.

LTCC/Diyarbakir is now able to handle international flights due to a new terminal building that has opened.

OLBA/Beirut two airport employees were detained on suspicion of terrorist activity involvement on 08APR16. Traces of explosives and a handgun were found on the two individuals.

DIAP/Cote D'Ivoire has reduced the passenger departure tax by 50% and have also removed the solidarity contribution tax levied on airline tickets.

GABS/Mali began renovations last month (MAR16) to increase the airports capacity to handle 1.5 million passengers which is up from the 800,000 annual passenger traffic. The project is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

[View the full International Bulletin for 13APR2016](#)