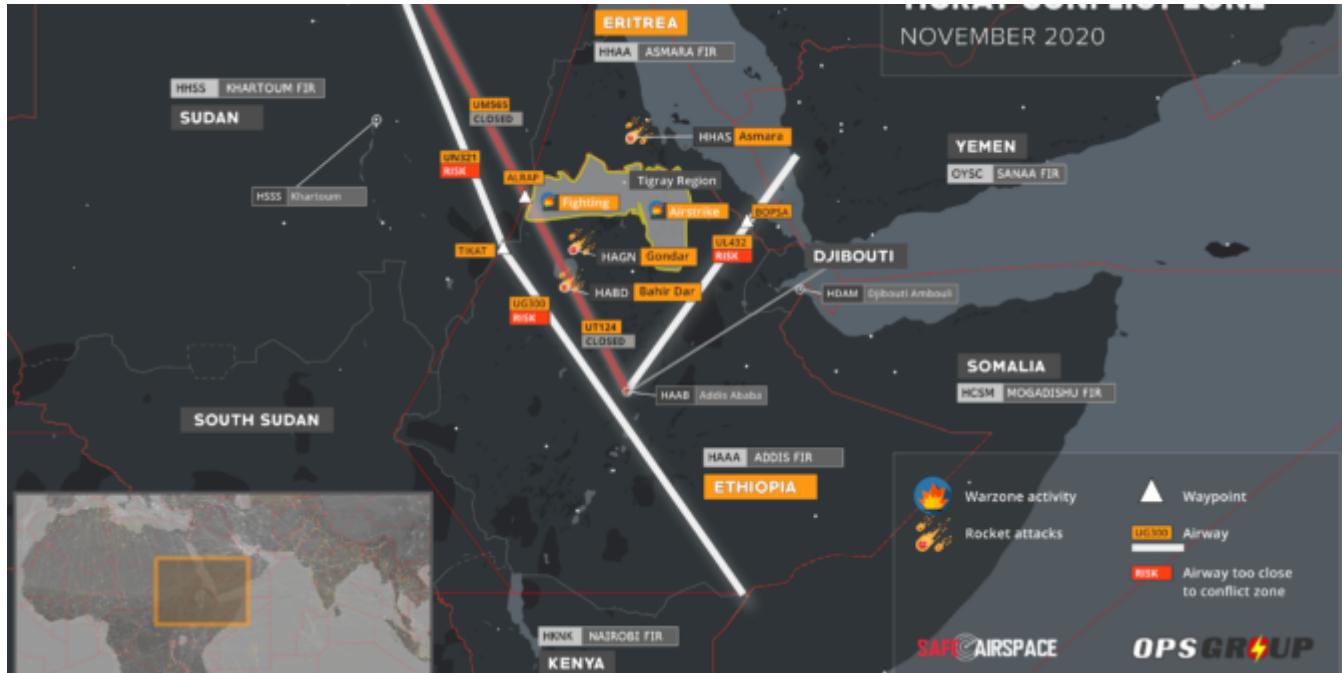


# Airspace Risk Warning - Ethiopia and Eritrea

Mark Zee

17 November, 2020



**There is a new Conflict Zone in the east of Africa**, which carries elevated risk to flight operations that may not be obvious from NOTAMs or other risk warning sources.

Some airways have been closed by the Ethiopian and Sudanese CAAs. Other airways that are still open are very close to the Conflict Zone. These are frequently used by international operators on the Europe- East Africa route. In particular: UN321, UG300 and UL432. **We are concerned that operators may be using these routes without being aware of the risk.**

**OPSGROUP has today issued an Airspace Risk Warning to its members.**



Airspace Risk Warning	
ETHIOPIA & ERITREA	HAAC FIR (ADDIS) HHAA FIR (ASMARA)

ISSUED: 17 NOVEMBER 2020

TO: OPSGROUP MEMBER AIRCRAFT OPERATORS

## Notice to Flight Crew and Dispatch

There is a new Conflict Zone in the east of Africa, which carries **elevated risk to operations that may not be obvious** from NOTAMs or other risk warning sources.

Under the SafeAirspace tier system, this airspace is assessed as **Level 2 – Danger Exists**.

## New Conflict Zone – Tigray

## LEVEL 2 – DANGER EXISTS

The conflict between government forces in Tigray's in the north of Ethiopia. Government forces are fighting a regional force that wants independence, called the TPLF. In the past week, there has been heavy fighting, multiple airstrikes, missiles launched, and a growing refugee crisis. A domestic conflict has become a cross-border war.

## Danger – Airways near Conflict Zone

Some airways have been closed by the Ethiopian and Sudanese CAA. Other airways that are still open are very close to the Conflict Zone. These are frequently used by international operators on the Europe-East Africa route. In particular:

UN221  
UG300  
UL432



See full map on following page.

## Guidance

**Enroute – Overflight:**  
If you're transiting any airspace near or over Ethiopia, Eritrea, or Sudan, take a close look at the map and cross check the airways you are operating on. Several open airways are exceptionally close to the Conflict Zone. Just because they are open does not mean they are safe.

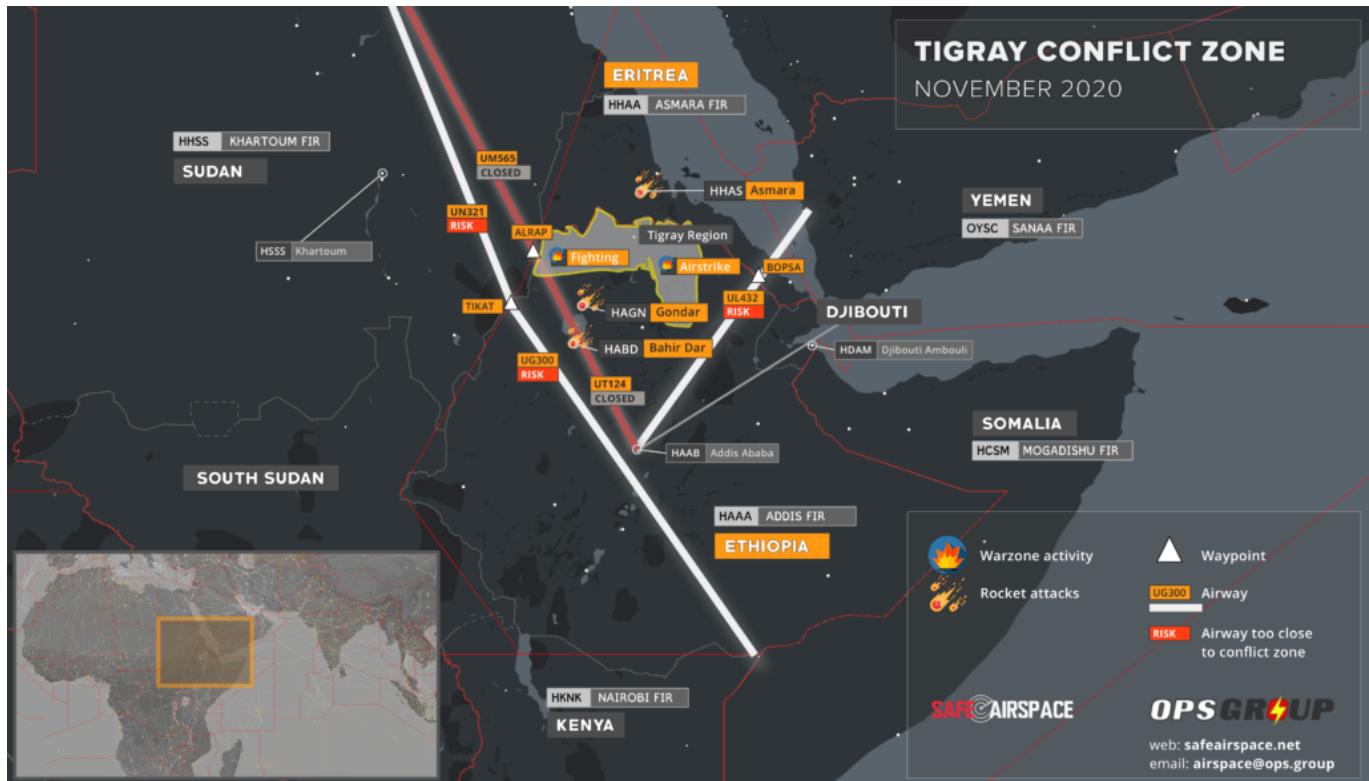
## Landing – Airports:

Airports in the north of Ethiopia, including the Tigray and Amhara regions, are unsafe at present. Many are closed. There have been missile attacks on HABD/Bahir Dar, and HAGN/Gondar.

HHAS/Asmara in Eritrea should be avoided – missile attack on Nov 14, 2020.



Download OPSGROUP Airspace Risk Warning – Ethiopia/Eritrea (PDF)



Download Hi-Res version of this Conflict Zone map

## Situation

The region being disputed is called Tigray. It's in the north of Ethiopia. Government forces are fighting a regional force that wants independence, called the TPLF. In the past week, there has been heavy fighting, multiple airstrikes, missiles launched, and a growing refugee crisis. A domestic conflict has become a cross-border war.

## Our Concerns

There are many warning flags that point to previous shootdown incidents – not least MH17 and PS752. These are the reasons we are particularly concerned about the risk to civil aviation in this region:

### **Local NOTAMs are misleading**

The NOTAMs issued by the Ethiopian CAA to close airways in the conflict zone (UM308, UT124) do not say why they are closed. NOTAMs issued to reroute traffic to adjacent routes (UN321, UL432) do not say why they are rerouted. The same applies to NOTAMs issued by the Sudan CAA to close airways and reroute traffic. Flight crews and aircraft operators are therefore not alerted to any conflict in the area by NOTAM.

### **Arbitrary Reroutes**

Traffic is being rerouted to other airways by ATC, but it's not clear, or likely, that there has been any risk assessment. European flights are now using UN321/UG300, and UL432 – all of which come exceptionally close to the conflict zone. As we've learned from MH17 and PS752, just because airspace is open and available, does not mean it is safe.

### **Previous shootdowns**

The Ethiopian Army shot down an Embraer 120 in May 2020, in Somalia. The Ethiopian Air Force shot down a US Learjet in August 1999 in the Eritrean border region. Both were misidentified.

### **No guidance to operators**

No aviation authorities or official sources have issued any guidance or warnings to date via normal channels.

### **Rapid Escalation of Conflict**

The situation has intensified rapidly, and is extremely unpredictable and unstable. The impact on aviation has not been widely reported.

## Guidance

### **Enroute - Overflight:**

If you're transiting any airspace near or over Ethiopia, Eritrea, or Sudan, take a close look at the map and cross check the airways you are operating on. Several open airways are exceptionally close to the Conflict Zone. Just because they are open does not mean they are safe.

### **Landing - Airports:**

Airports in the north of Ethiopia, including the Tigray and Amhara regions, are unsafe at present. Many are closed. There have been missile attacks on HABD/Bahir Dar, and HAGN/Gondar. HHAS/Asmara in Eritrea should be avoided – missile attack on Nov 14, 2020.

## Information Sources

The Conflict Zone & Risk Database at SafeAirspace.net contains all current published warnings and alerts for Ethiopia and Eritrea.

## Ethiopia

Risk Level: **Two - Danger exists**

[ [about risk levels](#) ]

Nov 2020: Major escalation of the conflict in the Tigray region, along the Ethiopia/Eritrea border. Some airways have been closed by the Ethiopian and Sudanese CAAs. Other airways that are still open are very close to the Conflict Zone. These are frequently used by international operators on the Europe- East Africa route. In particular: UN321, UG300 and UL432. Multiple airports have been targeted by rockets. Missiles were fired across the border into Eritrea, targeting HHAS/Asmara. Within Ethiopia, HABD/Bahir Dar and HAGN/Gondar were also targeted.

Sep 2018: Risk due to hidden ATC strike. Ethiopian ATC controllers went on strike, and the ECAA and Ethiopian Airlines recruited both retired and foreign controllers to pick up the slack. Ethiopia denied several times that there was in fact a strike happening at all. The strike ended September 7th. Many were not qualified to operate in Ethiopian airspace, due to inexperience.



The countries that issue the most relevant updates for unsafe airspace are:

- US (FAA) - through Notams and SFARs
- UK (DFT) - by Notam and then AIP
- Germany (BMVI) - by Notam
- France (DGAC) - by AIC

**Note:** Operators should not rely on EASA Conflict Zone Information Bulletins (CZIB)'s as a primary source of information. These serve only as pointers to the above sources, and often are not issued until several months after updates, if at all. Note that the Civil Aviation Authorities of the countries whose airspace is determined to be unsafe are unlikely to issue reliable guidance.

## Group effort

This information is compiled from OPSGROUP member input, information, intelligence and analysis. If you have additional information to share, please send it to [report@safeairspace.net](mailto:report@safeairspace.net).

## Members: More information



Ethiopia: What are other operators doing?

⚡ 0 % with Avoid or Do Not Land policy

Avoid	0%
Do not land	0%
Specific routes only	0%
Case by case	0%
Unrestricted	0%
No policy	100%

[TAKE PART](#)

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## Notifications

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

to receive Conflict Zone & Risk warnings.

We will alert you when there are significant changes, and send you updated summaries when

The screenshot shows the OPSGROUP platform interface. On the left, a sidebar lists navigation items: Dashboard, Briefings, Community, Airport Spy, Safe Airspace, Spy report, and APPS (with sub-options Apps and Admin Tools). Below this is a Member Score bar (195). The main content area features several modules: 'Airport Spy' (Reports from downroute, Launch button), 'GoCrow' (Route planning tool, Start button), 'Community' (Meet the others!, Go button), 'Safe Airspace' (Places to avoid), 'Briefings' (The latest changes, Read button), and a central 'Sign in' button. At the bottom, there's a 'Latest Forum posts' section with a link to 'Join the conversation' and a post about 'New Conflict Zone - Ethiopia, Eritrea' (10 mins ago). On the right, a sidebar displays news items from other users: KZZZ USA (A quarantine-free travel corridor may soon be possible between New York and London ...), LFZZ France (There is a big military exercise happening in the LFMM/Marseille FIR from November ...), MXZZ Central America (Hurricane Iota is now a catastrophic Category 5 Hurricane, currently making land ...), PAYA Yakutat, USA (Bear alert! An Alaska Airlines 737 collided with a brown bear while landing on S ...), EQLL London Heathrow, United Kingdom (A large number of airport workers including firefighters, baggage handlers and e ...), LZZZ Slovakia (There are new entry requirements for all passengers. The rules are tricky, so he ...), HHZZ Eritrea (Two rockets fired from Northern Ethiopia reportedly hit the country's main air ...), ZMZZ Mongolia (All charter flights have been banned indefinitely. They were previously allowed ...), and SCZZ Chile (Borders will reopen to foreigners on November 23 for the first time in nine mont ...). The top right corner shows a user profile for 'Mark Zee' and a small globe icon.

**OPSGROUP Members:** More information in the discussion in the Forum about Ethiopia/Eritrea:  
 Forum > International Ops > New Conflict Zone Ethiopia/Eritrea

All links to further resources are there.

## Midweek Briefing: Tokyo Typhoon, New NAT Procedure

Cynthia Claros  
 17 November, 2020



**Typhoon for Tokyo** 07SEP Tropical Storm Malou is tracking towards Tokyo and expected to intensify. Multiple Japanese airports are likely to be affected ... [Read the article](#)

**New Shanwick / NAT procedure** 07SEP Shortly all FANS 1/A flights will get a "CONFIRM ASSIGNED ROUTE" message from Oceanic ATC (Shanwick, Reykjavik, Gander) shortly after entering their OACC, to mitigate against Gross Nav Errors. [Read the article](#)

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**HHZZ/Eritrea** The US State Dept has issued a Travel Warning for Eritrea which warns of the risks of travel to Eritrea due to the unpredictable security situation along Eritrea's borders and restrictions imposed by local authorities on travel within the country. All foreign nationals, including U.S. government employees, must obtain permits to travel outside of the capital Asmara. This restriction limits the ability of the U.S. Embassy to provide consular/emergency services anywhere outside of Asmara. This replaces the Travel Warning dated May 6, 2015. Avoid travel along all border regions. In June 2016, fighting in the Ethiopia-Eritrea border region reportedly caused several deaths. Continued political and military tensions between Eritrea and the neighboring countries of Djibouti and Ethiopia pose the threat of possible renewed conflict. Due to regional sensitivities, the State Department also recommends against travel to the border region with Sudan.

**WSSS/Singapore** will be super busy during the Grand Prix weekend 14-18SEP. Ask for a slot before operating, if you don't get one, use Seletar instead.

**RPLL/Manila** has a couple of new procedures for non-scheduled flights. First, traffic arriving between 2200-0400Z daily - the peak period - should look for a slot from Manila FSS - who are at [mfss.staff@gmail.com](mailto:mfss.staff@gmail.com), or call 2 944 2098/99. Once you have the slot, get your EDCT from Manila ATC. If operating domestically, file the flight plan between 2 and 24 hrs prior departure.

**DNBC/Bauchi** is a new airport designator in Nigeria for the Tafawa Balewa International Airport.

**VLVT/Vientiane, Laos** The 28th and 29th ASEAN Annual Heads of State Summit is being held in Vientiane from 5 to 9 September; there will be road closures and delays in arrivals and departures of both international and domestic flights at Wattay International Airport.

**FOZZ/Gabon** has seen multiple security warnings in the last few days, following a disputed election result.

Widespread, violent demonstrations, rioting, looting, and road blocks continue, both in Libreville and other cities throughout Gabon. At this time the airport in Libreville is open and operational and commercial flights are available. The US Embassy recommends U.S. citizens remain in a safe location and avoid non-essential movement.

**MMSD/Los Cabos, Mexico** Hurricane Newton has passed and Los Cabos airport has officially re-opened its commercial operations, no major damage reported.

**EBOS/Ostende Air BP** is no longer providing Jet A1 fuel here.

**EKOD/Odense** will be closed on 22SEP due to an event. Jet fuel not available. You can email [twr@hca-airport.dka](mailto:twr@hca-airport.dka) for further.

**HELX/Luxor Radio**, which previously operated on HF5859 and 2562, is now off the air.

**LZIB/Bratislava** will required slots for all operations 15-17SEP, small GA aircraft not welcome on these days. Email [slots@bts.aero](mailto:slots@bts.aero).

**FNZZ/Angola** The WHO has provided an update on the yellow fever outbreak in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The WHO estimates that there have been 6,000 suspected and 1,000 laboratory confirmed cases of yellow fever since the outbreak began in Angola in December 2015. More than 400 people have died from the mosquito-borne disease since that time. However, the last confirmed case in Angola was on 23 June and in the DRC was on 12 July, which the WHO believes is an encouraging sign. Nevertheless, the organization still characterizes the outbreak as "serious" and as requiring "sustained, controlled measures." Thus far, 22 million people in Angola and 14 million people in the DRC have received vaccinations against yellow fever as part of a large-scale initiative that was prompted by this outbreak.

**SARI/Cataratas** is permanently downgraded to RFF Category 6.

**URRR/Rostov** wins the prize this week for clogging up the Notam system; the runway there is closed 29 times between now and October 21st, and they have therefore issued 29 Notams. Perfect.

**SPQU/Arequipa, Peru** is not allowing overnights until 11SEP due capacity. Non-scheduled flights limited to 3 hours parking.

[View full International Bulletin 07SEP2016](#)