

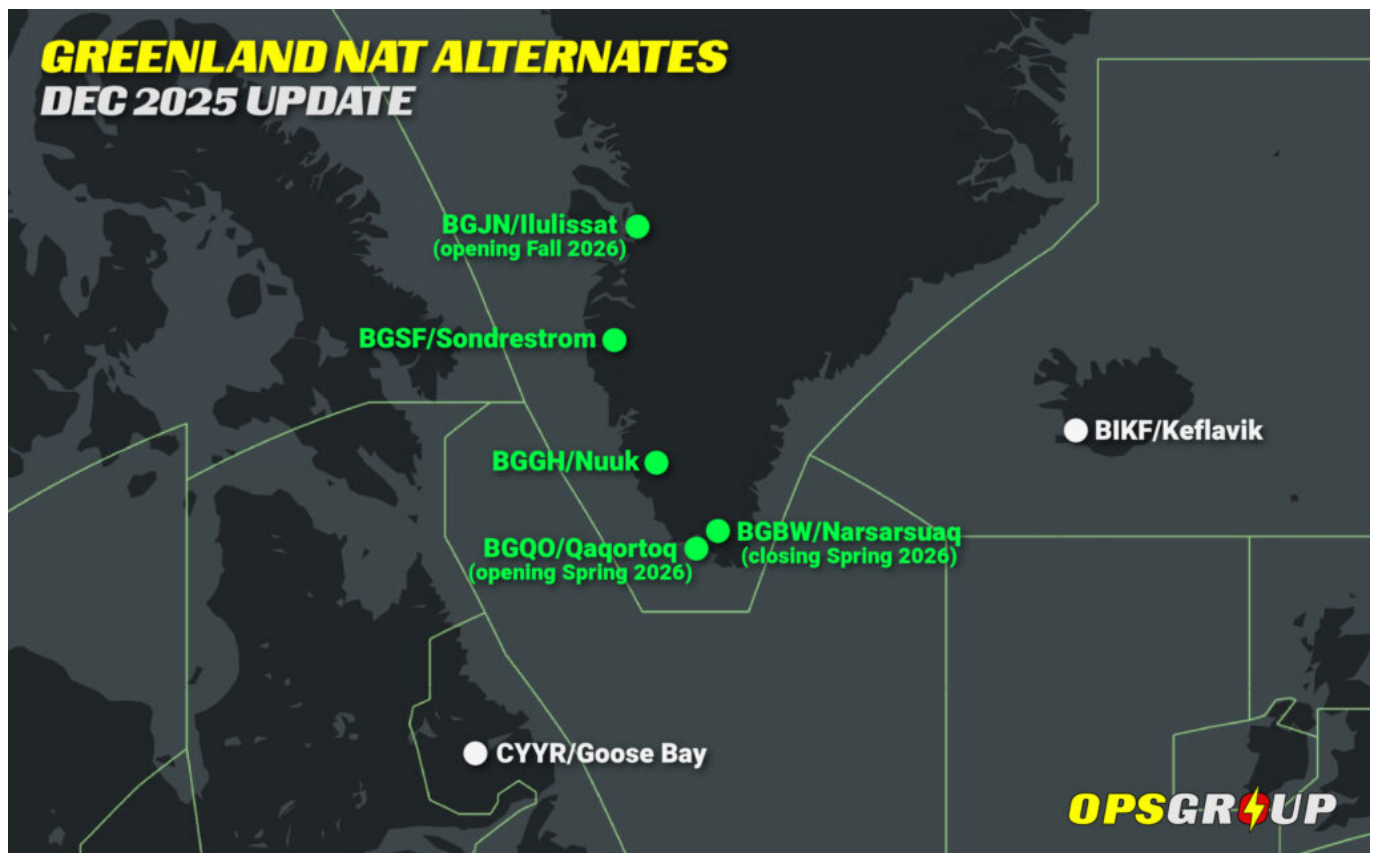
Greenland NAT Alternates: Dec 2025 Update

Chris Shieff

8 December, 2025



It has been a busy year of change for Greenland's airports! Here is the current operational picture for the main NAT alternates as of December 2025.



BGSF/Sondrestrom

Plans to downgrade Sondrestrom from ATC to AFIS have been cancelled. In one of the shortest AICs we've

ever seen, Naviair (Denmark’s ANSP) confirmed that BGSF would remain **fully controlled** until further notice.

Word from behind the scenes is that it was recently evaluated that ongoing demand for BGSF was solid enough to warrant **full ATC**.

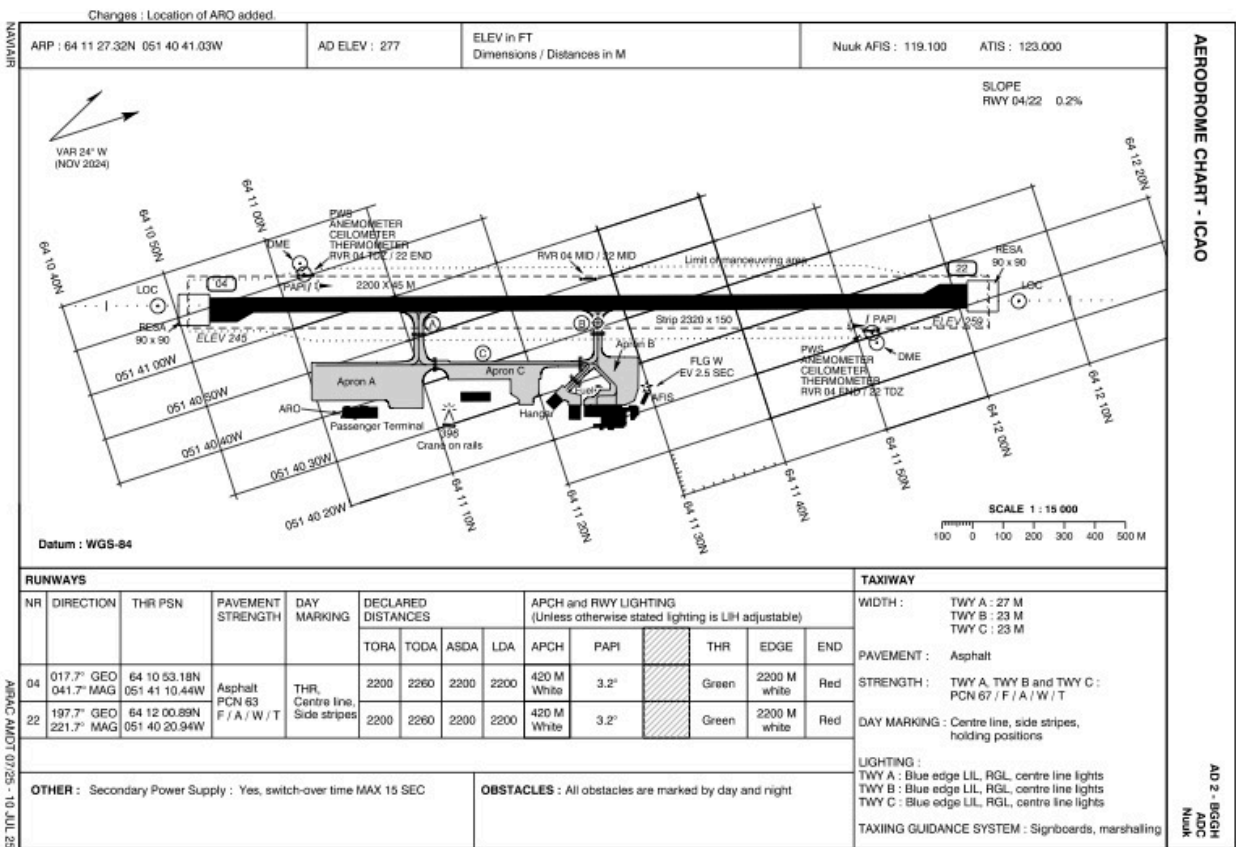
However, radar service remains unavailable due to equipment issues, with procedural separation expected for the foreseeable future:

A1821/25 NOTAMR A1709/25
Q) BGGL/QCMAS/IV/M /A /000/999/6701N05041W005
A) BGSF B) 2510271014 C) 2601301700 EST
E) BGSF MSSR U/S. RADAR SERVICE UNAVAILABLE.

Other than that, BGSF continues to be a reliable NAT alternate thanks to its long 2800m runway and generally more stable weather conditions.

BGGH/Nuuk

Nuuk has been extensively upgraded with a 2200m runway and precision approaches at both ends. It has been receiving heavy jet traffic for some time and is now well-equipped to serve as a NAT alternate.



Nuuk has been significantly expanded to accommodate large jet aircraft.

However, the BGGH Notams put a lump of coal in your stocking. They say that **no PPR or slots will be granted to GA (which GL airports have confirmed includes BizAv)** until at least the end of Jan 2026.

If you want to list BGGH as an alternate, they say you need to apply for PPR. Sounds like NAT flights needing a Greenland stopover should probably use BGSF/Sondrestrom or BGBW/Narsarsuaq instead.

We asked why, and apparently it was a decision made by the Danish CAA due to concerns over traffic. It's not the first time Nuuk has struggled a little with its new-found size! Here's a list of complaints we've received from members about BGGH over the past few months:

- **Slot confusion:** Slots for BGGH must be requested via GCR to scr@airportcoordination.com, but the system is difficult to navigate – one member misread a rejection, flew anyway, and still found only light traffic despite the airport being considered “full.”
- **Last minute closures:** Watch out for Notams which are popping up some days closing the airport for 30-min periods to accommodate specific one-off airline flights.
- **August security screening chaos:** International flights were suspended on Aug 27 after Danish authorities halted security screening, citing non-compliant training of local staff. A United flight from Newark turned back mid-route and SAS cancelled services. Screening resumed the following day with certified staff flown in from Denmark.
- **Several other reliability issues:** with members reporting unexpected holding, slow fuelling, and ground handling delays despite recent expansion.

BGBW/Narsarsuaq

Narsarsuaq is still scheduled to close in Spring 2026 and will be downgraded to a heliport. Word on the street is May 1, but this may change.

Operationally, Narsarsuaq remains challenging due to non-precision approaches, frequent poor weather, and a short 1800m runway.



Narsarsuaq will become a heliport only in May 2026.

New runways at BGQO/Qaqortoq and BGJN/Ilulissat

Both strips are finished, but work continues on lighting and approach systems.

The new **BGQO/Qaqortoq airport is on track to open in Spring 2026** with a 1500m runway. This will replace BGBW/Narsarsuaq as the southern airport option, though only for small to medium jets initially.

The new 2200m runway in **BGJN/Ilulissat is due to open in Fall 2026.**

A reminder about after-hours fees

Look out for surprise fees if you use **BGBW/Narsarsuaq** or **BGSF/Sondrestrom** as alternates after hours (overnight 20-11z or anytime on Sundays). You will be charged the better part of \$3000 USD to keep standby equipment on watch, and runways clear of snow.

Some insider advice - advance notice reduces the cost. If you need one of these cheaper outside of normal operating hours, provide at least 24 hours' notice.

A special thanks to our agent in the field

Spare a thought for the **unsung hero** of this article. The average low in Greenland at this time of year is 12 deg F (- 11 deg C). With wind chill, this can feel like -22 deg F (-30 deg C) or lower.

Apparently, high quality jackets are no joke – as evidenced below. **Thank you** for your help assembling this article!



Greenland NAT Alternates: July 2025 Update

Chris Shieff
8 December, 2025



□ July 2025 Update

Radar services at **BGSF/Sondrestrom** will be ending around Nov 1, 2025. From that point, only procedural (non-radar) separation will be available. Iceland's ADS-B offers some situational awareness over Greenland but can't be used for control.

This follows the planned downgrade from tower to AFIS at the airport between Aug-Oct, driven by reduced traffic as BGGH/Nuuk expands. All controlled airspace will become Class G, with a radio mandatory zone within 20 NM below 7000ft, and FISCOM available via Nuuk FIC after hours.

RWY 27 is typically used for departures and RWY 09 for arrivals – be especially careful of opposite direction traffic. AIC 01/25 has more info.

□ June 2025 Update

The extensively expanded **BGGH/Nuuk** is now open, and receiving regular jet traffic.

With an operating length of 7218' (2200m) and ILS approaches available for both runway ends, it is now a solid choice for NAT enroute alternates (and ETOPS/EDTO if that's your thing). The Greenland AIP has been updated, and you can find the current airport chart here. Both runway and apron PCNs are **67/F/A/W/T**.

The airport has an **AFIS** on watch Monday to Saturday, 09:00 – 18:00 LT (11:00 – 20:00z) with RFF Category 5.

For handling, contact **Greenland Airports**: nuuk@mit.gl

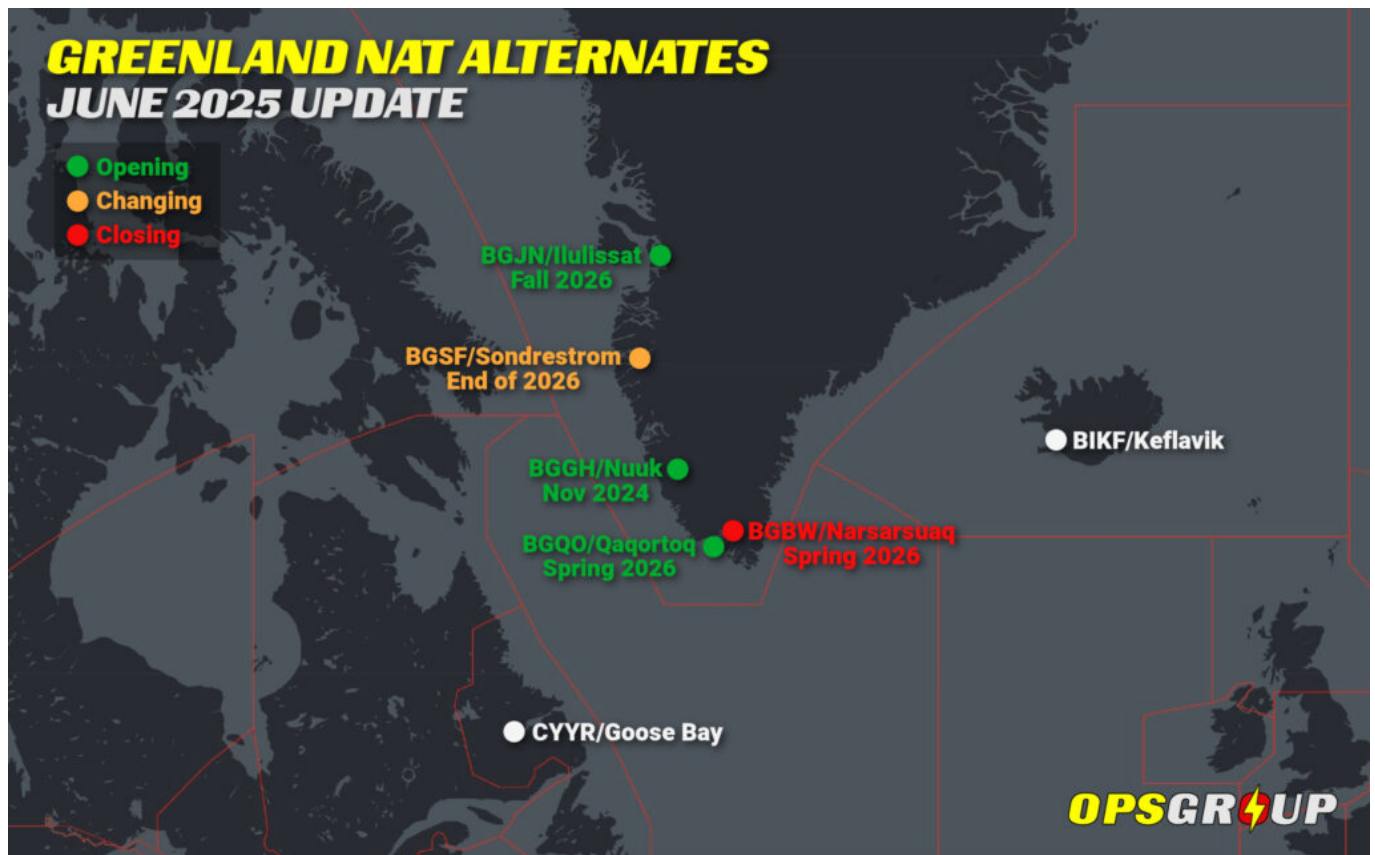
Original Article

Each day thousands of aircraft routinely cross the NAT and use airports in Greenland as enroute/ETOPS alternates – mainly **BGSF/Sondrestrom** and **BGBW/Narsarsuaq**.

It's big business for Greenland's major airports, but over the next few years **major changes are coming** that will directly impact on the operational use of these airports as NAT alternates.

Here's the lowdown on what's changing:

- **Opening:** BGGH/Nuuk (Nov 2024), BGQO/Qaqortoq (Spring 2026), BGJN/Ilulissat (Fall 2026).
- **Changing:** BGSF/Sondrestrom downgrading ATC to AFIS (Aug – Oct 2025).
- **Closing:** BGBW/Narsarsuaq (likely Spring 2026).



ETOPS Airports...

Before we get stuck into the finer points of what's changing at each airport, a big question many will have is: **"What airports can I use as enroute/ETOPS alternates?"**

Answering that is tricky, because it will depend on a number of factors that will be different for each operator – if the airport has a long enough runway for your particular aircraft / the necessary facilities and services / the minimum approach procedure / fire cover / weather minima etc.

But here's a quick reference table showing what's changing, and when, which *might* be helpful:

Airport	What's Happening?	When?	Rwy Length	OK for ETOPS?
BGGH/Nuuk	New runway being built	Nov 2024	2200m	Probably fine
BGSF/Sondrestrom	Possibly downgrading ATC to AFIS	End of 2025	2800m	Probably fine
BGBW/Narsarsuaq	Scheduled to close	Spring 2026	1800m	Not if it's closed!
BGQO/Qaqortoq	New runway being built	Spring 2026	1500m	Short runway, so probably not
BGJN/Ilulissat	New runway being built	Fall 2026	2200m	Probably fine

BGGH/Nuuk

Nuuk's found on the western edge of Southern Greenland, close to the NAT HLA. It's Greenland's capital city but until now, the airport has not been 'capital-sized'.

Hence why larger aircraft have not considered BGGH/Nuuk as a viable alternate due to its **short runway length (3,050'/930m) in addition to poor weather and the mountainous terrain** that surrounds it.

But things will soon get easier. A major expansion has been underway since 2019 to replace its aging runway and improve the airport infrastructure to accommodate the wide body airliners of the territory's flagship carrier who are relocating their hub there.

28 Nov 2024 has been earmarked as its full re-opening – just weeks away. **A new runway will now measure 7,200'/2200m.** Better yet, ILS approaches will be operating at both ends with much lower minimas. A new terminal building, tower and apron are already in use.

If you have any doubts as to Nuuk's viability as a well-equipped NAT alternate, it may be reassuring to hear that at least one **US legacy carrier** will also commence scheduled services to the improved airport from Newark twice a week from mid-next year.

Keep an eye out for an upcoming OPSGROUP briefing on the new and improved Nuuk soon.

BGQO/Qaqortoq

A new airport will be opening in Spring 2026, **35nm away from Narsarsuaq** on Greenland's southern tip.

Right now Qaqortoq is a heliport (operating under a different ICAO code), but will **re-open with a 4,921'/1500m runway** due to a decision by Greenland's government a few years back to convert it for fixed wing traffic.

At that length Qaqortoq will likely only be an option for **small to medium sized jets**, but there is also room for future expansion to 5,905'/1800m – so watch this space in years to come. Word on the street is that it will also be equipped with both LOC and RNP approaches.

BGJN/Ilulissat

A new international airport is under construction which will be equipped with a **7,217'/2200m runway.** It's scheduled to open in Fall 2026 and will replace the existing domestic airport. By in large, it will be equipped with the same equipment as the upgraded airport in Nuuk.

Next up, a look at what's happening at the existing airports BGSF/Sondrestrom and BGBW/Narsarsuaq...

BGSF/Sondrestrom

The much-improved airport in Nuuk will undoubtedly take a heavy toll on traffic levels at **Sondrestrom** – in the vicinity of a 90% reduction.

But all is not lost for BGSF as a solid NAT alternate – it will continue to operate, with almost **full services available** with one notable exception – **ATS will be downgraded to an AFIS sometime between Aug - Oct 2025.**

The **runway (9,186'/2800m)** is longer than Nuuk, and the weather much more predictable – it should remain a solid option to consider.

BGBW/Narsarsuaq

The airport is scheduled to **close in 2026!** ☐

Despite its geographical convenience to NAT traffic, it remains a **difficult option**. For some, it is considered only in the case of extreme circumstances (such as fire).

The reason for this is predominantly **weather, and the non-precision approaches** that serve the airport. The runway itself is also short at only **5,905'/1800m**.

Reminder - Look out for Surprise Fees

We've written about this before, but worth a reminder.

Be careful – if you file BGBW or BGSF as an alternate after hours (overnight 20-11z or anytime on Sundays) you will be charged the better part of **\$3000 USD** for the privilege of keeping standby equipment on watch, and runways clear of snow. Even if you don't actually divert there.

A little insider advice – **advance notice will reduce the cost** as it allows for cheaper planning. If you need one outside of normal operating hours, provide at least 24 hours' notice.

For regular use, operators can also apply directly for a reduction in these rates.

Know more about changes to Greenland Ops?

We'd love to hear from you. You can reach us via news@ops.group

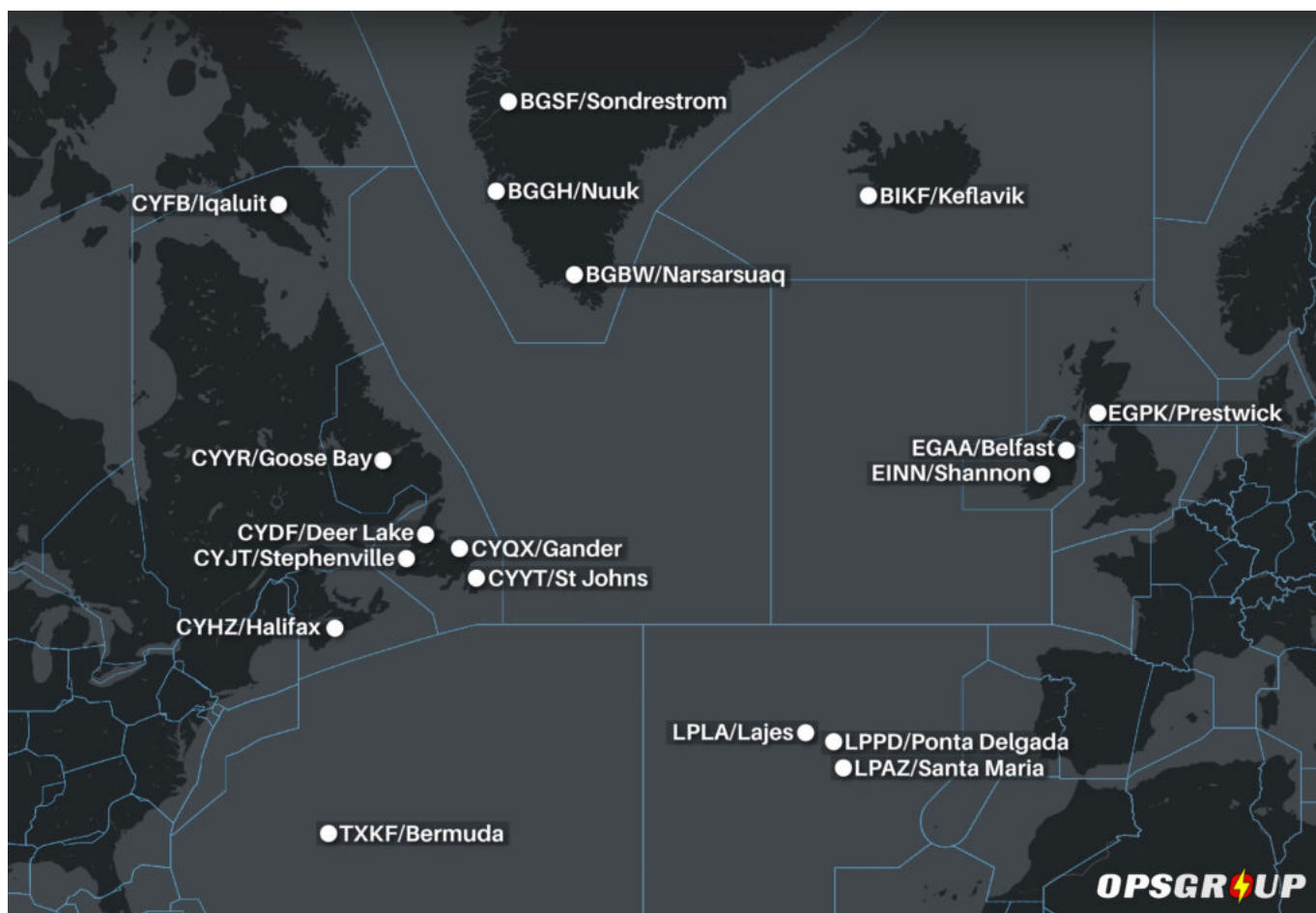
FIRE on the NAT! Where to go in an emergency?

David Mumford
8 December, 2025



In OPSGROUP, we talk a lot about the North Atlantic. Whether it's a Plotting Chart you need, or an explanation of the Datalink Mandate, or a summary of big changes stretching back to the dawn of time – we've got you covered. We love the NAT so much we even enjoy asking ourselves annoying questions about it over and over again to see if we can answer them (we can).

But here's something we haven't fully looked into before – **if you're in big trouble on the NAT (like an engine on fire, for example), where can you go?**



Turns out there's quite a bit of complexity to this. **Some airports don't have amazing levels of fire**

cover, some are closed at night, and some have weird setups where you have to pay them in advance to make sure they stay open in case you need them.

We'll start with these **odd ones**. And we're going to do everything in **local time** to keep things easy. Also, for the uninitiated, **RFFS** means Rescue and Fire Fighting Services (i.e. what level of fire cover an airport has), and if you're confused about what number means what, you can read all about it [here](#).

Odd Ones

CYFB/Iqaluit

- **Airport open:** Mon-Fri 08-17, other times 12hrs notice required
- **RFFS:** 5
- **Why odd?** So it's basically closed at night unless you make a special request for them to stay open in case you need them. If extended hours are needed, additional costs will apply to keep staff on standby. Requests to extend operating hours at the airport must be submitted using a specific document for either RFF5 or RFF7. CYFB provides extra RFF coverage at night on average 40 to 50 times a month. The cost for them to stay open with RFF5 is \$1714 which gives you a 4 hour block of time. For RFF7 it's \$3427.

BGGH/Nuuk

- **Airport open:** 06-21 every day
- **RFFS:** 5 (or RFFS 8 with 4 hours notice)
- **Why odd?** Technically it's open at night, but as it's a brand new airport, night opening is unrealistic at the moment - especially in winter. In the summer months, when there's no snow and it's daylight almost all day every day, there won't be the same need for runway sweeping and using the airport as a diversion alternate might be more possible because they will only require standby personnel on short notice.

BGBW/Narsarsuaq

- **Airport open:** Mon-Sat 08-17 (yep, closed on Sundays!)
- **RFFS:** 7
- **Why odd?** Can be requested to stay open at night most of the time. But watch out! As we reported before, Greenland airports will charge you the better part of \$3k if you list either of them on your flight plan as diversion alternates when they're closed.

BGSF/Sondrestrom

- **Airport open:** Mon-Fri 08-16 (yep, recent change here is that they're closed on weekends!)
- **RFFS:** 5 (or RFFS 8 with 4 hours notice)
- **Why odd?** Same as BGBW, can be requested to stay open at nights or on weekends, but same costs will apply.

EGPK/Prestwick

- **Airport open:** H24
- **RFFS:** 7
- **Why odd?** Often at night they close the terminals building (they always Notam it) so there are no facilities for diversions at these times.

LPPD/Ponta Delgada

- **Airport open:** 0615-0000
- **RFFS:** 7 (can be increased to RFFS 9 with 24hrs notice at a cost of 70 Euros per hour, although they say this can usually be increased for emergencies too).
- **Why odd?** At night (0000-0615), the airport has told us that they are closed and will only guarantee reopening for urgent medical evacuation flights, or humanitarian flights at the request of the Portuguese Air Force. LPLA/Lajes is the only airport in the Azores that is open all night for divers.

LPAZ/Santa Maria

- **Airport open:** It's complicated.
- **RFFS:** It's complicated.
- **Why odd?** Ok, here we go. So from **0635-2130** they are fully open with RFFS 6 (RFFS 8 available for a surcharge if you arrange in advance). Then from **2130-0000** the airport is closed but you can request they stay open for around 900 Euros (plus a fee to the handling agent). Then from **0000-0645** the airport is completely closed and cannot accept emergency divers at all. Bottom line, just go to LPLA/Lajes instead.

TXKF/Bermuda

- **Airport open:** 07-23 every day
- **RFFS:** 9
- **Why odd?** To get them to open at night (ATC and RFFS) for emergencies, you need to give them 30 mins notice - so not ideal if your needs are super urgent. Also, they do sometimes publish Notams saying that ATC will not be available for certain periods at night, even for emergencies.

Not Odd Ones

Ok great! Here are all the straightforward airports that are open H24 with decent fire cover:

CYYR/Goose Bay

Open H24

RFF 5 (RFF 8 on request)

CYQX/Gander

Open H24
RFF 5 (RFF 6/7/8 with 2hrs notice)

CYDF/Deer Lake

Open H24
RFF 6 (RFF 7 with 30 mins notice)

CYJT/Stephenville

Open H24
RFF 5 (RFF 6 with 30 mins notice)

In winter months, they often have a Notam saying that they might need 2hrs notice at night to clear the runway of snow.

CYYT/St Johns

Open H24
RFF 7

CYHZ/Halifax

Open H24
RFF 7

BIKF/Keflavik

Open H24
RFF 8 daytime 05-19 (RFF 7 overnight 19-05)

EGAA/Belfast

Open H24
RFF 7 (RFF 8/9 with 24hrs notice)

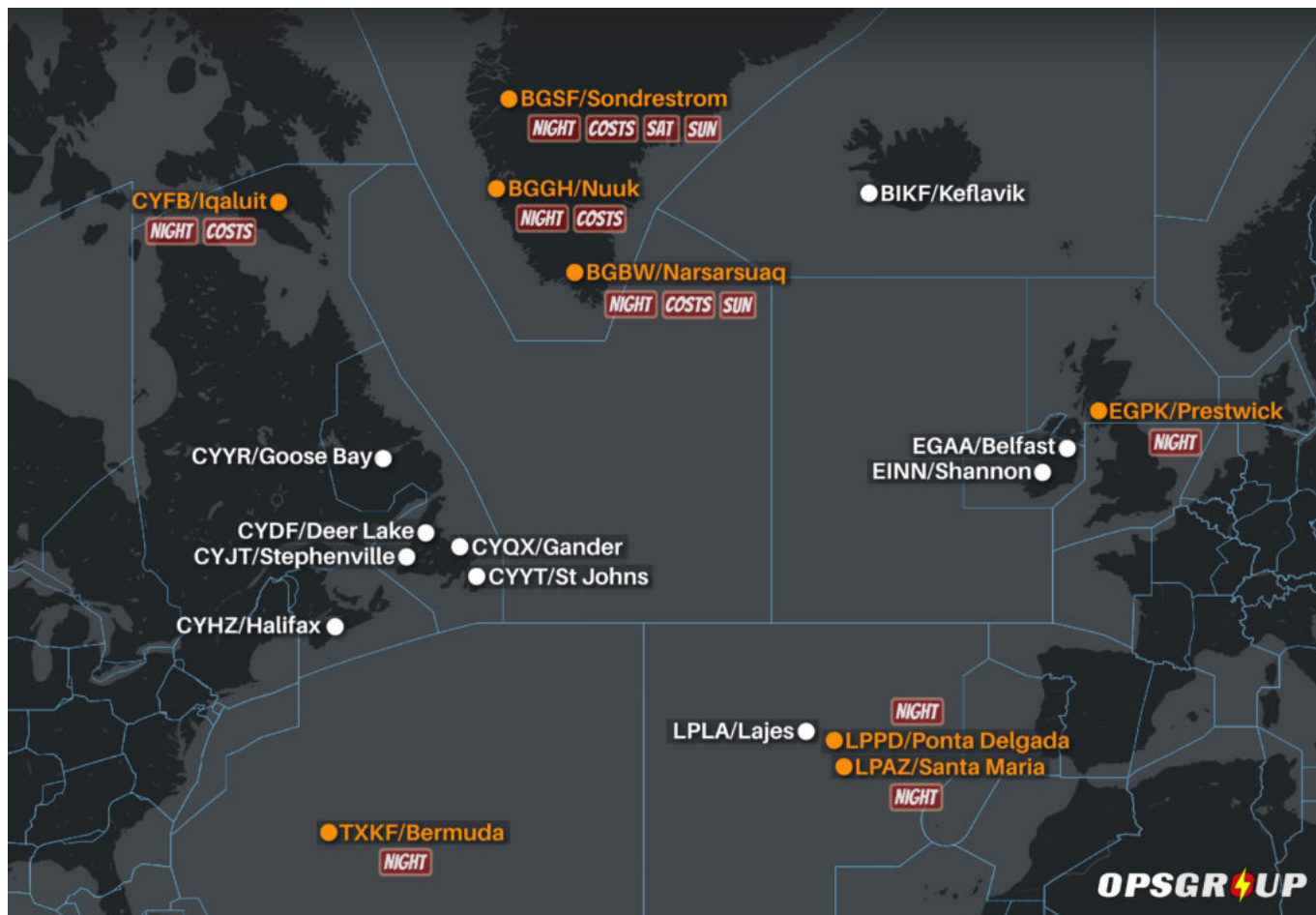
EINN/Shannon

Open H24
RFF 9 (may on occasion be reduced to RFF 7 depending on staffing)

LPLA/Lajes

Airport open 07-21 (but H24 for emergencies)
RFF 8 at all times

So let's give that map another try, this time with a tasteful splash of orange colour...



So there you have it, friend! While we're on the subject of **Emergency Diverts**, you might also be interested to read about NAT Contingency Procedures (what to do when you need to deviate from your ATC clearance due to an emergency). For more info about recent changes to **Greenland Airports**, click [here](#). And to download the latest **OPSGROUP NAT/North Atlantic Plotting and Planning Chart 2025**, head over [here](#).

As usual, any questions, let us know at team@ops.group.

Greenland closes its airports to (nearly) all passenger flights

OPSGROUP Team
8 December, 2025



Greenland have closed (nearly) ALL their airports to international passenger flights.

Well, apart from ones that come from Denmark. But don't go thinking you can make a quick stop off there first, they've even specified those are not allowed.

There is a provision for you to get special permission if you are transporting someone particularly important to the Greenland economy, but beyond that, no pax.

Here is the NOTAM:

BGGL SONDRESTROM FIR/FIC

A0621/20 - COVID-19: FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS.

ALL CIVIL FLIGHTS FROM OUTSIDE BGGL FIR, ARE BANNED FROM LANDING AT AERODROMES WITHIN BGGL FIR. FOLLOWING EXEMPTIONS APPLY:

1. FLIGHTS FROM AERODROMES IN DENMARK

1A. FLIGHTS ORIGINATING IN OTHER COUNTRIES THAN DENMARK, WITH INTERMEDIATE STOP IN DENMARK BEFORE CONTINUING TO GREENLAND, ARE NOT EXEMPTED FROM THE BAN.

2. FLIGHTS TO BGTL. SPECIAL PERMISSION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DANISH TRANSPORT-, HOUSING- AND CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY FOR THE PURPOSE OF TRANSPORT OF PERSONS WITH PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO THE ECONOMY OF SOCIETY. FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT RESTRICTIONS AND PROCEDURE FOR THE APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL PERMISSION CAN BE OBTAINED VIA THE FOLLOWING LINK: [HTTPS://TBST.DK/EN/CIVIL-AVIATION](https://tbst.dk/en/civil-aviation). THE FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS DO NOT IMPACT THE USE OF AERODROMES AS ETOPS ALTERNATE OR FOR EMERGENCIES.

Still confused? Fear not, the government have now published a full clarification of the rules here – in **plain language** (which we like very much).

Can I do a tech stop?

Yes! Ferry flights and tech stops (gas and go) can continue – but you'll need to remain onboard.

Overnight tech stops are not allowed without special permission.

Can I pick up passengers in Greenland?

Yes! You are allowed to ferry an empty aircraft to collect passengers. You just can't bring them in.

What about ETOPS? Polar Alternates?

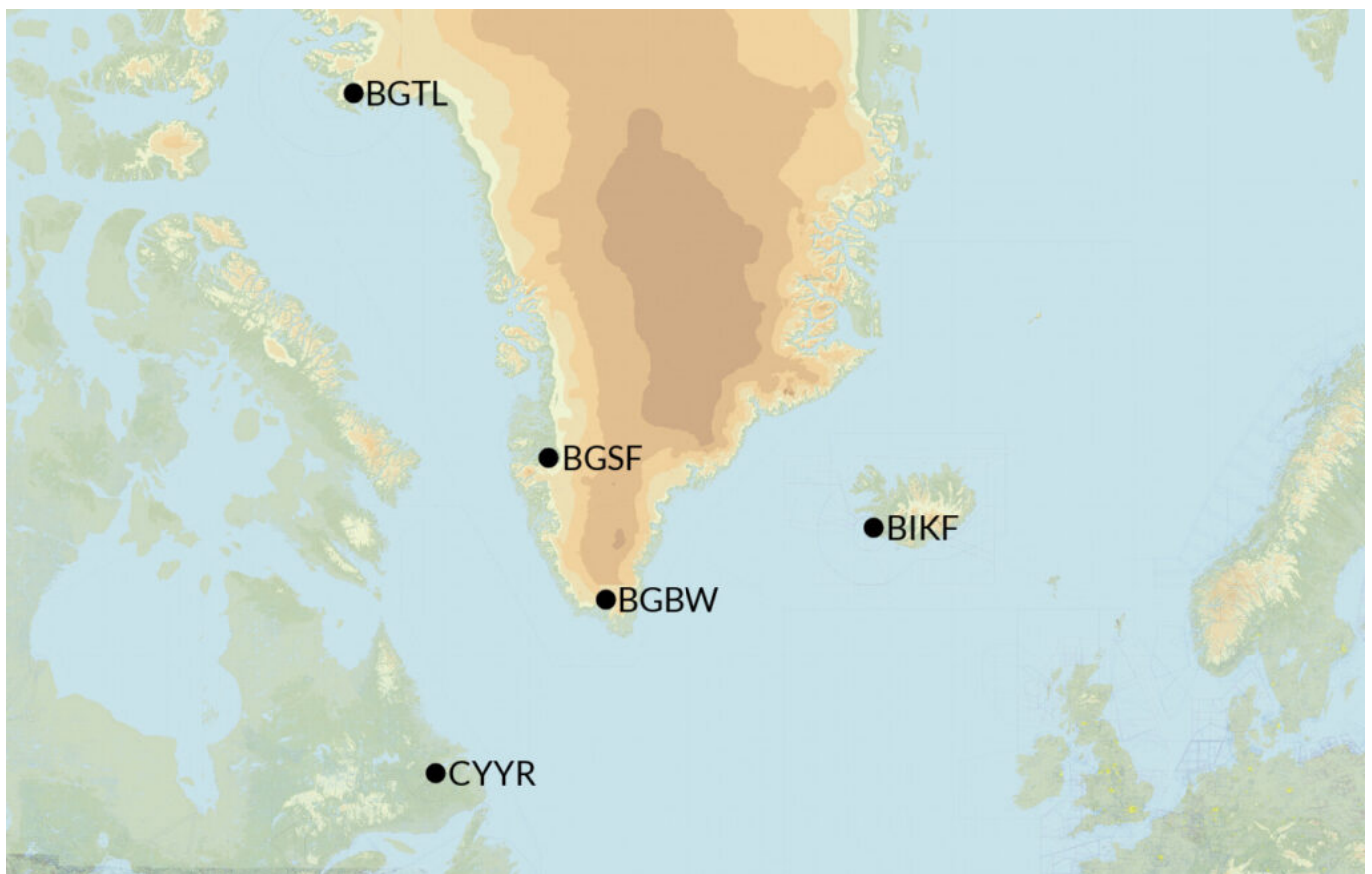
Yes! These are still permitted at BGBW/Narsarsuaq and BGSF/Kangerlussuaq. But watch out for extra charges if filing one of these airports on your flight plan as an alternate.

BGTL/Thule is only open to emergency divers - not as a planning alternate because it's a military airfield which has no passenger facilities.

Who is this going to impact?

Mainly anyone who wants to bring in passengers for entry to Greenland. If you want to do it, you will need to apply for a special exemption at least 48 hours in advance. And you'll need a really good excuse.

Greenland serves as an important spot for ETOPS aircraft, and for an en-route alternate for polar operations - to repeat, you can still use BGBW and BGSF as ETOPS alternates.



So far they think the rule will remain in place until the end of January next year. Given the current mutated mink situation Denmark have found themselves in, we don't expect it to reopen sooner.

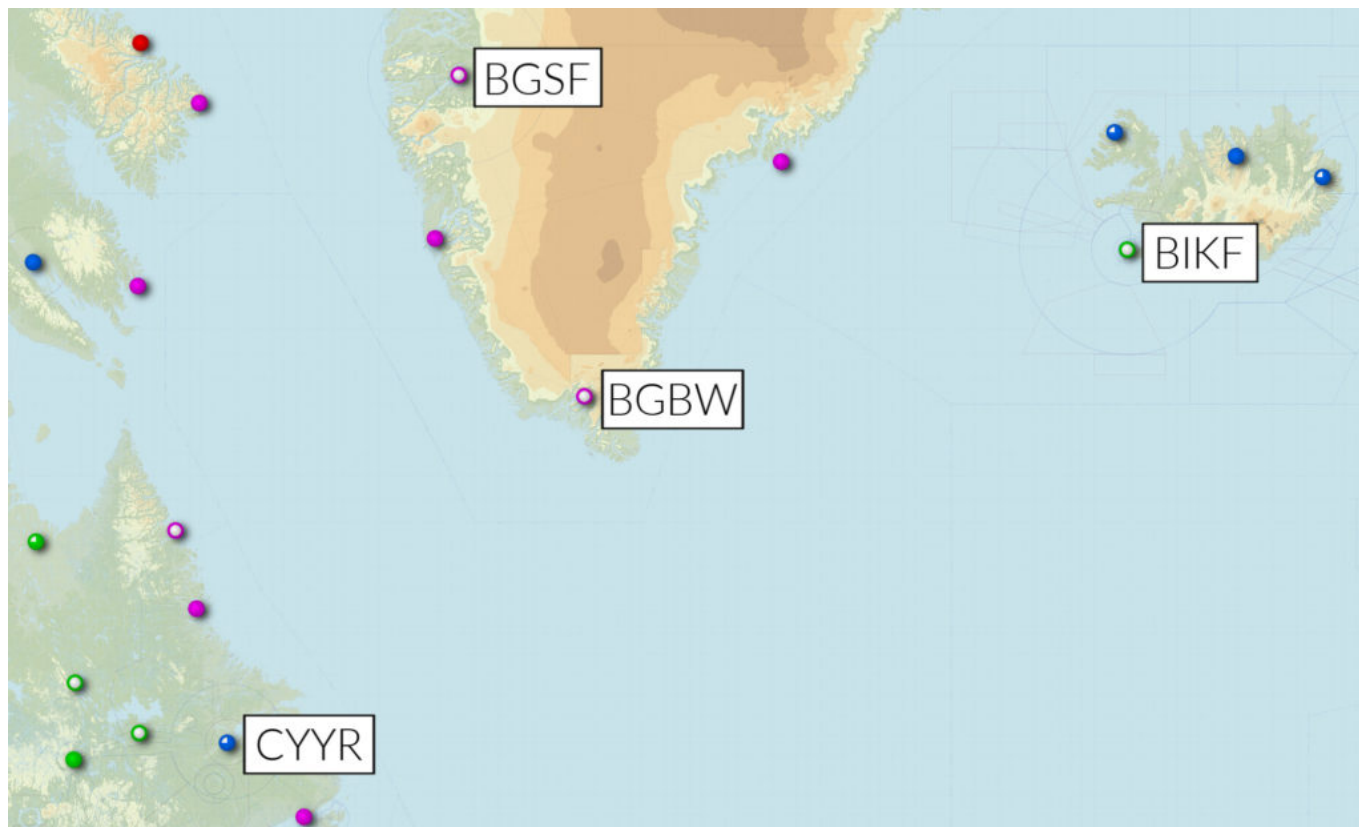
Greenbacks and Greenland - \$3000 to file as an alternate

David Mumford
8 December, 2025



Trans-atlantic operators who have been putting **RALT/BGBW** or **RALT/BGSF** on their flight plans have been receiving **hefty invoices post-flight**.

Both BGBW/Narsarsuaq and BGSF/Kangerlussuaq are popular airports to use in flight planning as an emergency divert and for ETOPS, as they are perfectly positioned right in the middle of the big empty chunk of nothing that exists between the east coast of Canada and Iceland.



Both airports are open Mon-Sat 11-20z (8am-5pm local time), and completely closed on Sundays and on public holidays (watch out for these sneaky ones!).

So if you file a flight plan with either as alternates from Mon-Sat 11-20z, you won't get charged.

But outside these hours, you **will** get charged. It gets slightly complicated here: the charges in the box below apply when they stay open for you to use as an ETOPS alternate at any time that they are **closed** (which is between 20-11z), but there's an extra 10% charge on top of that for any time they are **closed and fast asleep in bed**, (which is between 00-08z). Got it?

F. Openings in connection with ETOP operations:

f.1. 1 May – 30 September, for every hour commenced

Scheduled Flights

-

Non-Scheduled Flights

4.440,00 kr.

However minimum

-

13.320,00 kr.

f.2. 1 October – 30 April, for every hour commenced

-

5.290,00 kr.

However minimum

-

15.870,00 kr.

Important to note: these get charged even if you don't actually divert to BGBW/BGSF. 15,870 Danish Krone equates to \$2585 USD!

If you want them to stay open for you to use as an ETOPS alternate, you need to put RALT/BGBW or RALT/BGSF in your flight plan – they'll see it, and will stay open for at the times you need. But bear in mind that if they're closed already at the time you file your flight plan, they won't see it! So they prefer you to do it properly and arrange everything in advance by email: get in touch with them at PPR@mit.gl

If you get an invoice from a company called Global Aviation Data A/S, unfortunately it's not a scam email – they are the guys who work with Greenland Airports to collect the monies owed when operators request these airports to stay open for them.

The really interesting thing is this – if more than one operator asks BGBW/BGSF to stay open for them **at the same time**, the costs are **not shared** between these operators – they both have to pay the standard fees! That’s great news for the Government of Greenland, who will be getting paid multiple times by different operators for BGBW/BGSF to stay open at the same time!

Greenland FIR to change its name

David Mumford
8 December, 2025



The BGGL/Sondrestrom FIR, that covers all of Greenland’s airspace, is changing its name to the ‘Nuuk’ FIR, effective Mar 1.

This name change has come about following the reallocation, during autumn 2014, of the COM Centre, Rescue Coordination Centre and the Flight Information Centre from BGSF/Kangerlussuaq Airport (commonly referred to as Sondrestrom airport) to Greenland’s capital, Nuuk.

So “Nuuk Information” is the new identification/radio callsign for the aeronautical station serving the Flight Information Centre in Greenland; whereas “Nuuk AFIS” will still get you through to the aerodrome flight information service at BGGH/Nuuk Airport.

You can read the full AIC **here**.

Further reading:

- Do you use BGBW/Narsarsuaq as a trans-atlantic alternate? Watch out, you may receive a hefty bill. Full details **here**.

BGSF/Sondrestrom to shut on August 27th

Declan Selleck
8 December, 2025



For NAT Ops on **Sunday August 27th**, note that BSGF/Sondrestrom will be closed to all traffic, as they are upgrading infrastructure. Sundays in Greenland see most airports closed in any case, but the option of paying \$1000 or so to have them open for you is normally there. On this date, BGSF won't be, which may affect your diversion options.

They do say that if there's an emergency, call them on +299 52 42 27 to determine availability.