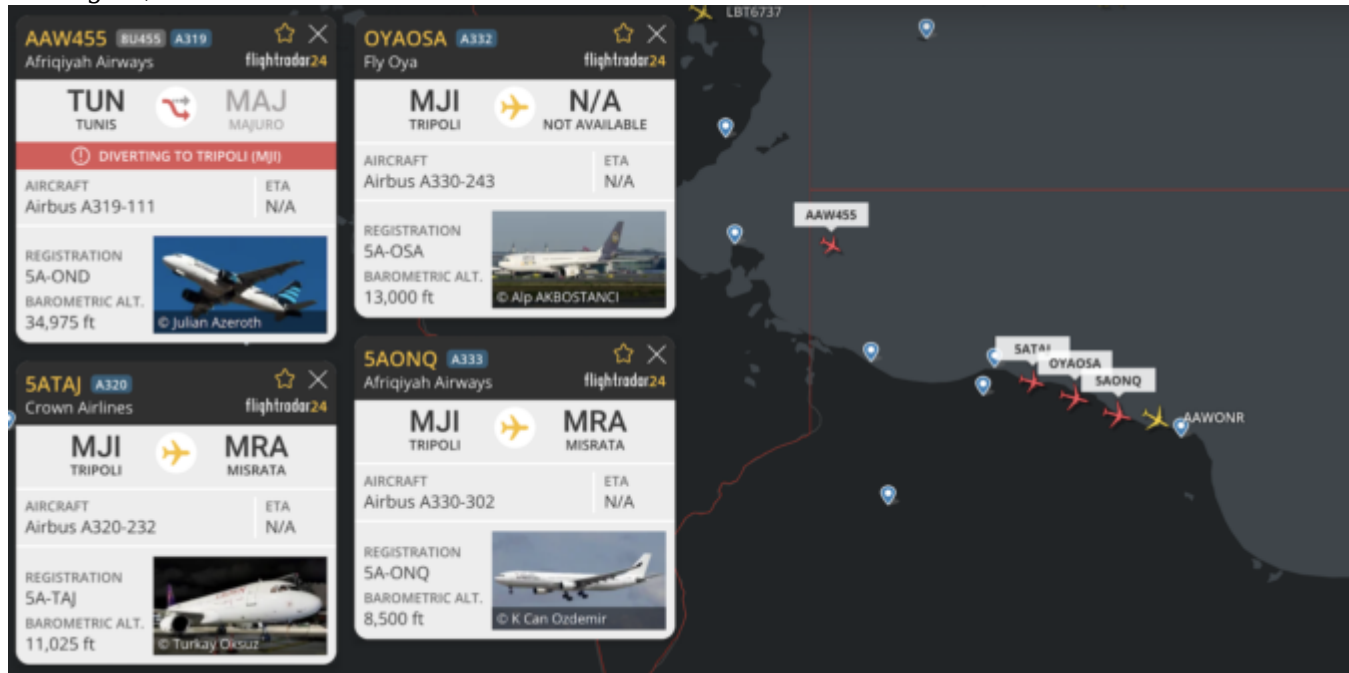


Mass evacuation of aircraft - Libya

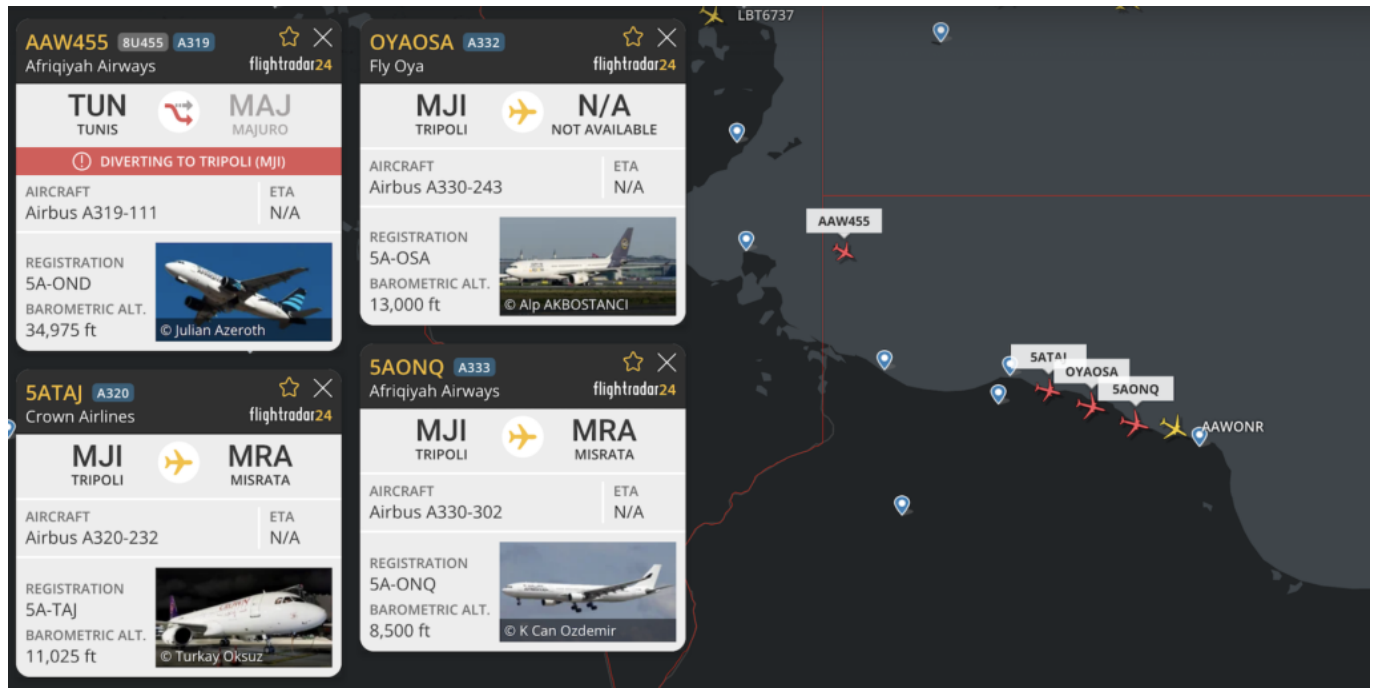
OPSGROUP Team

14 August, 2023



Ops Alert - August 14, 2300Z

- **A mass evacuation of aircraft is taking place at the moment from Tripoli**, including a number of A330 and A320 aircraft from both the largest carrier (Afriqiyah) and smaller operators. Inbound flights are also diverting, and the Libyan government aircraft, a King Air 350, is also being taken out of Tripoli. Almost all aircraft are being repositioned to Misrata (HLLM) - with approximately 25 aircraft being moved.
- The reason for the evacuation is **violent clashes involving gunfire taking place at Tripoli Mitiga airport (HLLM)**, as well as on road leading into Tripoli itself. Earlier on Monday night the head of '444 brigade' that controls much of Tripoli, was detained at Mitiga airport by the Special Deterrence Force. The resulting risk to aircraft operations was deemed sufficiently high to begin the removal of aircraft to a safer location.
- This situation highlights the instability of the security situation in Libya. With the **airspace closure in Niger last week, routes over Africa have become very limited**, and Libya/the Tripoli FIR may seem a tempting alternative.
- **Operators considering a Libya overflight should consider routings very carefully.** This is the most significant aviation security event in Libya in the last few years, and highlights the ongoing risk to operations.



Refer to safeairspace.net/libya for the background, and ops.group/blog/2023-is-libya-safe-to-overfly-yet for more information.

A timely summary of the risk to civilian operators in the Tripoli FIR, from earlier in 2023, gathered by OPSGROUP from neighboring ATC units:

- The ATM/CNS situation in the HLLL FIR is very basic and from our experience there are **issues with communications and surveillance** (or the lack of it).
- There is a lot of **military activity** which is not always known to Tripoli and Benghazi ACCs also due to these communication and coverage issues.
- There are still issues regarding **coordination between the Tripoli and Benghazi ACCs**. One seems to have certain rules which the other ignores. It is very frequent for example that either one or both reject overflights resulting in significant re-routings which we have to sort out (normally military flights) but not excluding civilian flights – sometimes even Libyan flights.
- We see a lot of **remotely piloted aircraft** operating in the airspace which as far as we know are not operating in segregated airspace nor are they being controlled by the ATC units.
- Only recently Libyan controllers went on a flash strike informing us that they **cannot continue to handle the traffic with no radar equipment**.
- **The AIS services are not functioning properly** and the status of the airports is unknown.

Libya Airspace Update Oct 2019

David Mumford
14 August, 2023

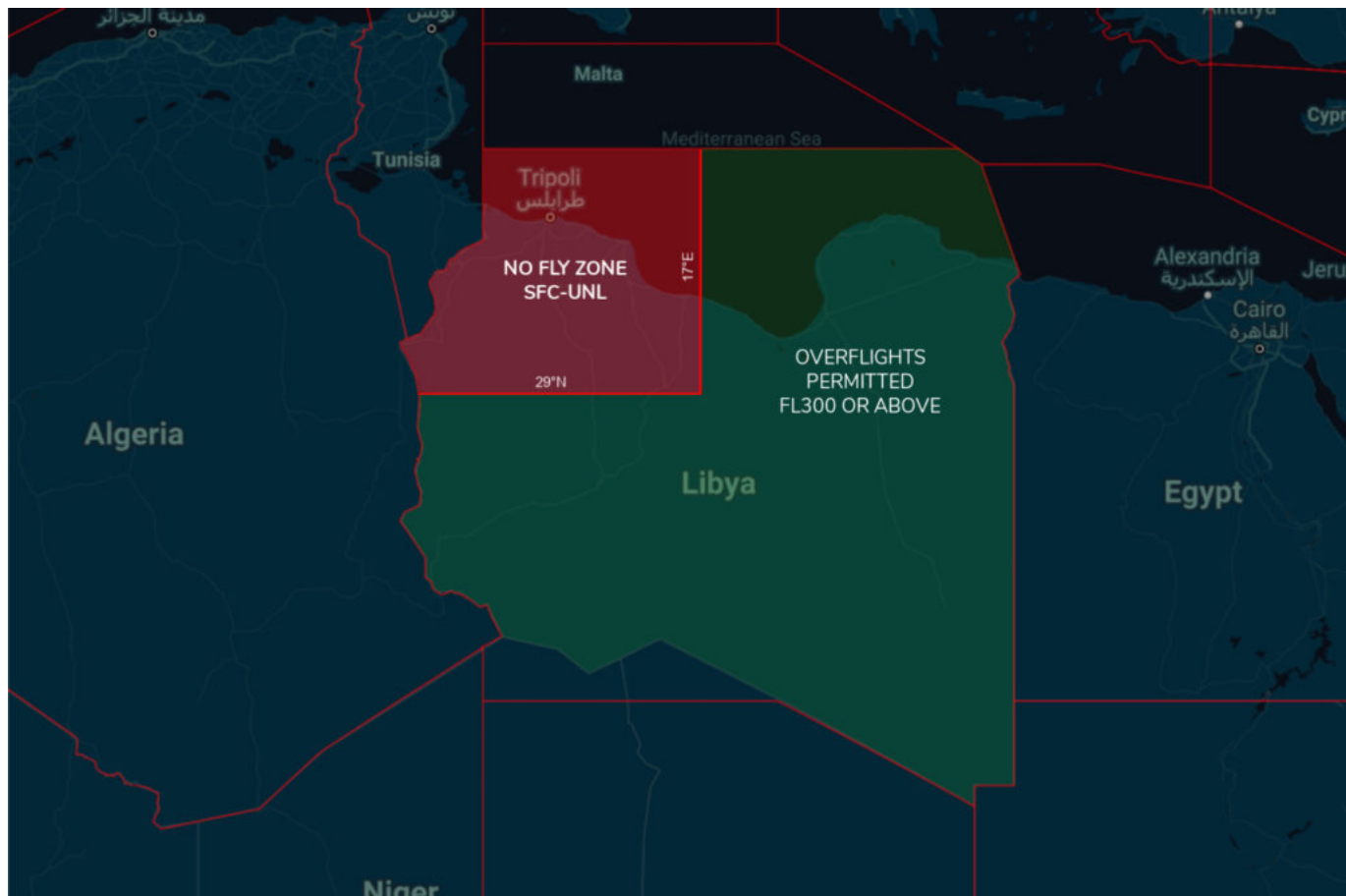


On 23rd Oct 2019, the US issued an emergency order **prohibiting U.S. operators from flying in Libyan airspace**. The guidance here is very clear: **do not operate anywhere in the HLLL/Tripoli FIR, at any flight level.**

This follows months of civil war in Libya, with militia from the east mounting a campaign to seize control of Tripoli, including HLLM airport, and threatening to shoot down aircraft operating in western Libya.

In recent months there have been a number of airstrikes targeting HLLM/Mitiga airport, the latest coming on Aug 15, which reportedly killed two people and forced the airport to close. There are videos on social media showing **planes landing at the airport as shells are falling** in the background.

Prior to yesterday's announcement, the U.S. guidance on Libya was that operators were allowed to overfly Libya at FL300 or above, except an area in the north-western part of the country over Tripoli, where all flights were prohibited. Here's what that looked like:



But this guidance is now defunct. The FAA website now shows the **updated guidance** for Libya – including the Background Notice.

Germany and **Malta** still have warnings in place which mirror the **old advice** of the U.S. – do not fly over the north-western part of Libya, but overflights of the rest of the country are permitted at the higher flight levels. **The UK** and **France** advise against all overflights. These warnings may be updated in the coming days, following the new advice from the U.S.

Libya remains politically unstable, with a fragile security situation across the country. In their SFAR issued back in March 2019, the U.S. said that the main threat to aviation at the lower flight levels stems from the widespread proliferation of man-portable air-defence systems (MANPADS) across the country:

“Both GNA and advancing LNA forces have access to advanced man portable air defense systems (MANPADS) and likely anti-aircraft artillery. These ground-based weapon systems present a risk to aircraft, but only at altitudes below FL300. LNA forces have tactical aircraft capable of intercepting aircraft at altitudes at and above FL300 within the self-declared military zone in Western Libya, which may present an inadvertent risk to civil aviation operations in Western Libya. While the LNA tactical aircraft threat is likely intended for GNA military aircraft, an inadvertent risk remains for civil aviation at all altitudes due to potential miscalculation or misidentification.”

However, there are factions on the ground in Libya which possess weapons capable of targeting aircraft above FL300. The LNA is one of many [armed groups in Libya](#) which continues to use various rocket systems looted from Gaddafi’s stockpiles at the end of the war in 2011. In May 2018, the LNA [proudly displayed a refurbished Russian-made surface-to-air missile system](#) at HLLB/Benina Airbase in Benghazi. This system has the capability to engage aircraft at altitudes up to FL450.

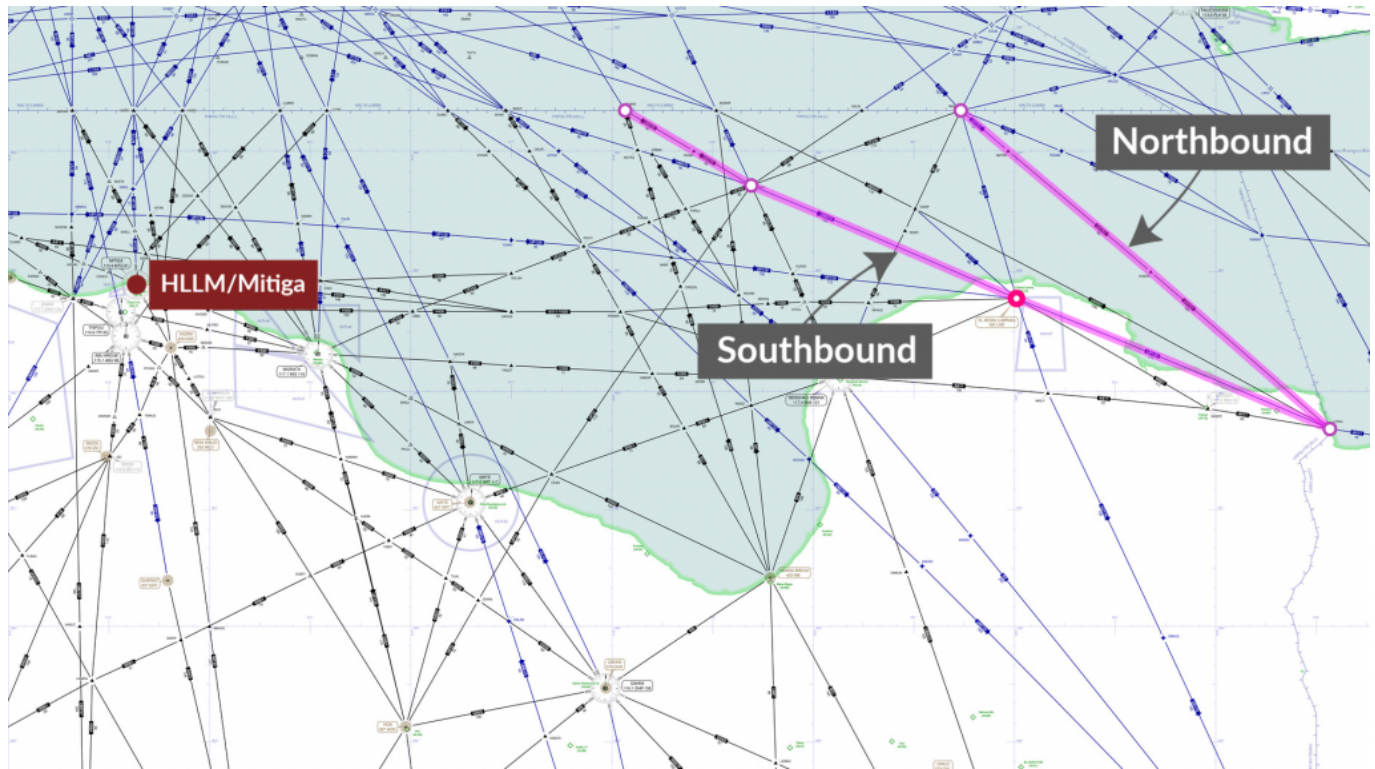


The opposing GNA forces have surface-to-air missile systems of their own. Some reports indicate that the GNA are in possession of the Russian-made SA-3 system, which has the capability to engage aircraft at altitudes over FL800.

With the current conflict between these and other rival factions on the ground in Libya now escalating, it's not clear what level of control the main players hold over their missile systems.

Bottom line, there's still a potential risk to aircraft **at all altitudes** and **across all parts** of Libya.

Even if you are allowed to overfly the country, there are only two approved routes available, in the far north-eastern corner of the country, as per HLLL Libyan Notam A0063/17:



Northbound: LOSUL UP128 LAB UM979 RAMLI UZ270 OLMAX (even levels)

Southbound: RASNO UY751 LOSUL (odd levels)

Even on these routes, reliable ATC services cannot be guaranteed. The past few years have seen regular ATS and radar outages across the HLLL FIR airspace, and severe limitations in VHF capability, with operators having to communicate with Malta ATC for guidance.

Given the current security concerns, we continue to list the entire country as “**Level 1 - Avoid**” at SafeAirspace.net

Conflict Zone & Risk Database

All current warnings, in one place

Updates

Alerts

Level 1 ●

Level 2 ●

Level 3 ●

Libya

24 Oct

New US Notam, advice changed: U.S. operators are prohibited from flying in Libyan airspace.

Libya

24 Oct

The old SFAR issued for Libya. The guidance here is now defunct, following the issuance of Notam A0026/19 on 23rd Oct 2019 which prohibits all flights by U.S. operators in Libyan airspace.

Africa: Hajj 2019 routes in operation

David Mumford

14 August, 2023



The Hajj routes for 2019 will take effect from 18 Jul through to 9 Oct.

What are Hajj routes?

Every year, millions of pilgrims travel to Mecca and other sites in Saudi Arabia – and this changes the predominant traffic flow over the African continent. ATC in the FIRs most affected put in place standard routings to help flow that traffic.

Normally, traffic is very much north-south predominant, with Europe-Africa flights being the main flow. When Hajj operations start up, a good amount of traffic starts operating east-west (ie. Africa-Saudi Arabia and vice versa), and this is something to be aware of when cruising along at FL330 with spotty HF comms.

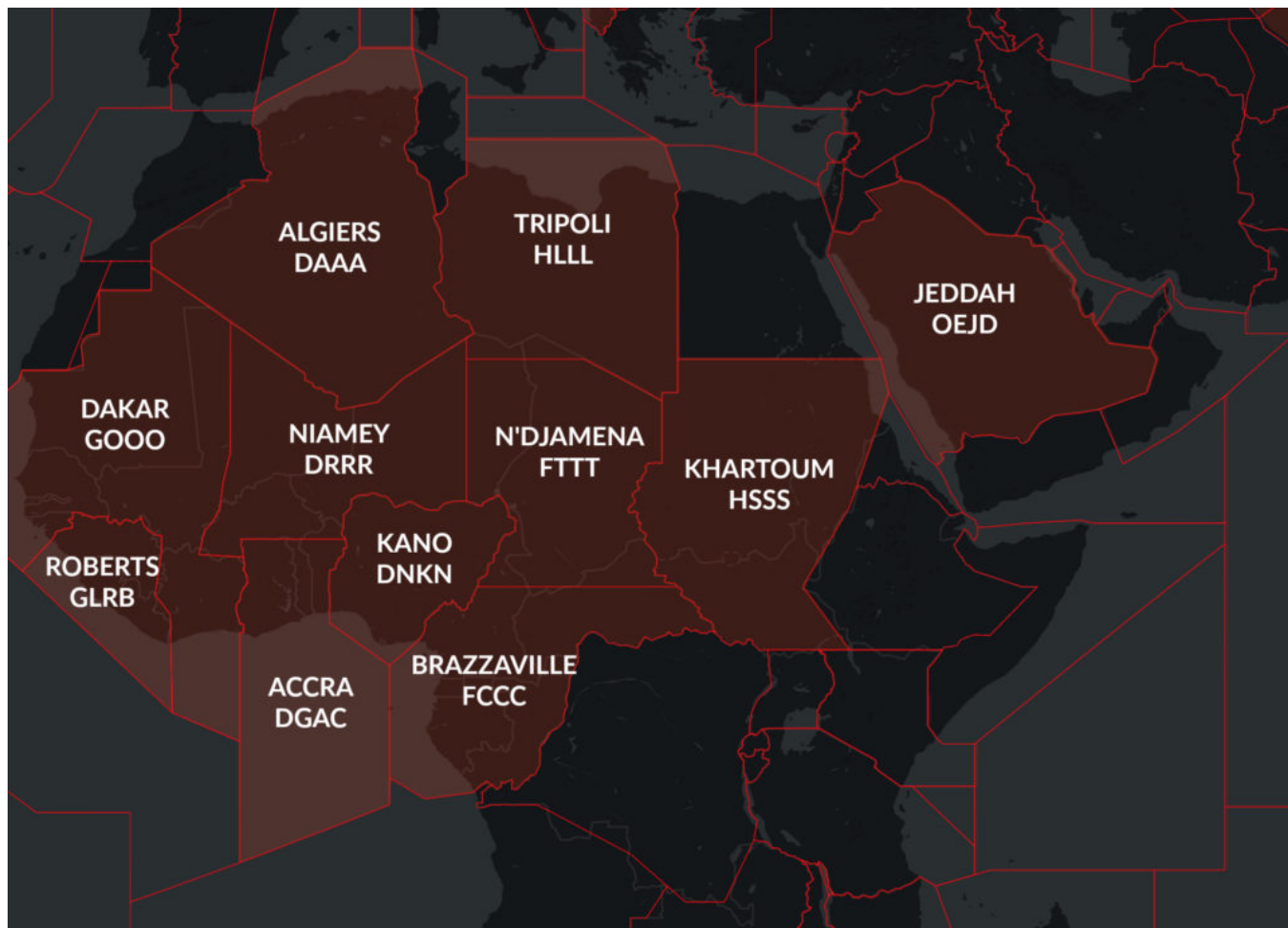
So, in addition to the normal IFBP belt and braces on 126.9, keep an eye out for a much higher amount of crossing traffic during the coming months.

The FIR's affected are: Algiers, Accra, Brazzaville, Dakar, Jeddah, Kano, Khartoum, N'Djamena, Niamey, Roberts, and Tripoli.

Of these, **watch out for Tripoli** – risk remains high across Libyan airspace at all flight levels, and multiple countries have “**do not fly**” warnings in place. There are **daily airstrikes** taking place, severe limitations in ATC services, and massive areas of the FIR are without surveillance and communications capabilities.

Malta FIR is currently managing all east-west routes in this airspace, and operators can contact them for additional information on email: airspace.cell@maltats.com

The Hajj routings are contained in this **ASECNA AIP Supplement**.



Further reading:

- Read IFALPA's information on recommended procedures when operating in the African region [here](#).

A319, A330 hit by gunfire at Tripoli

David Mumford
14 August, 2023



Heavy clashes broke out in the Libyan capital Tripoli on Jan 15, leaving at least twenty people dead and forcing HLLM/Mitiga airport to close for five days, re-opening again on Jan 20.

Gunfire at the airport damaged multiple aircraft, including a few A319s and at least one A330.

Here are some photos of some of the damage:



Both airports in Tripoli are focal points for fighting. Given their strategic value, they periodically serve as headquarters for various local militias.

HLLT/Tripoli has been more or less completely closed since mid-2014, when at least 90% of the airport's facilities were destroyed in fighting between local militias. Since then, international flights to and from Tripoli have been using HLLM/Mitiga instead. Technically, HLLT/Tripoli is now only available for VIP, emergency and ambulance flights; but in reality, it should be avoided at all costs.

HLLM/Mitiga is the old military airfield, which is now being used for civilian traffic, since the closure of HLLT/Tripoli. However, the airport has been plagued by violence over the past few years, and has been forced to close a number of times.

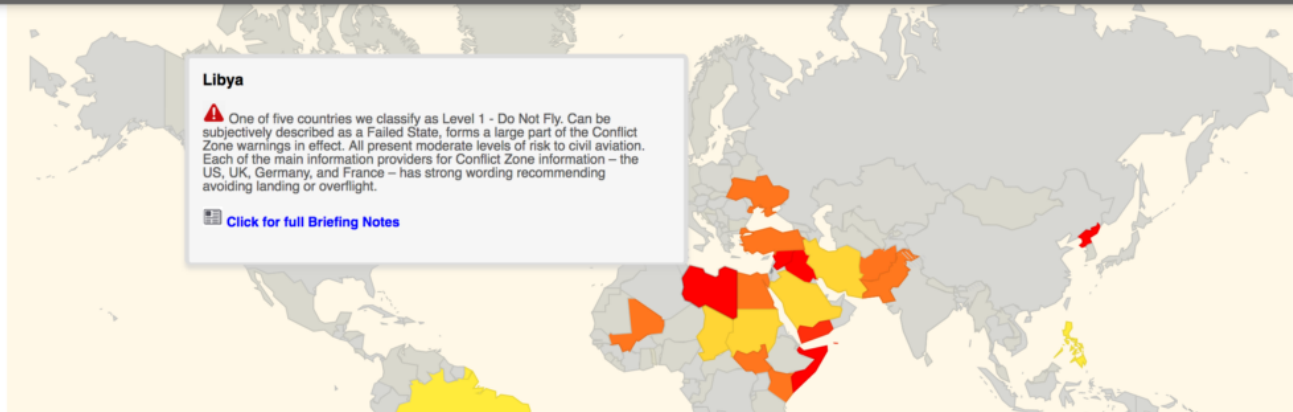
Back in July 2017, we reported on the **intense fighting that took place at Mitiga airport where 5 people were killed and 32 injured**, and then on 19 Oct 2017, a Libyan Airlines A330 at the airport was hit by gunfire during an exchange of fire between local militia in the district directly south of the airport.



A number of countries already have blanket warnings in place against operating to Libya, and they all say pretty much the same thing: avoid the entire country - don't land at any airport, don't even overfly.

So we suggest you ignore whatever gets pumped out on the HLLL FIR Notams about airports being "AVAILABLE H24 FOR INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS AND EN-ROUTE DIVERSIONS". (You can read that nonsense in full by clicking **here**.)

Libya remains categorised as a Level One country (Do Not Fly) at **safeairspace.net**



Libya: it's simple - don't land, don't overfly.

Declan Selleck
14 August, 2023



There has been a flurry of activity in Libya of late. The people with their hands on the AFTN printer for Libya have been putting out all kinds of information, advertising availability of aerodromes and the Tripoli FIR. **All are welcome!**

Don't be too hasty.

Libya is still a desperately unstable country. A Notam published today (A0070/17) indicates that **HLLM/Mitiga** is open and available "H24 for International Flights and Diversions".

We'd love you to come visit, they say. What the Notam doesn't mention is that two weeks ago, 5 people were killed and 32 injured during fighting at the airport.

As a matter of update on the Libyan ATM situation, we can inform operators that there are regular outages

in the provision of ATC services especially at the main airports due to security or technical failure issues.

The main ACC in Tripoli is also subject to severe limitations with **no radar service** and **limited provision of CNS/ATM services** in most of the HLLL FIR airspace.

Overflight through HLLL FIR is only approved by the Libyan authorities on one southbound route from RASNO-LOSUL but even this is subject to severe limitations and a degree of confusion as to who is actually authorizing flights to transit the airspace.

There are several NOTAMs issued by adjacent States prohibiting overflights on certain entry/exit points creating further complications.

Here's a simple guide for you from FSB:

1. Don't overfly Libya or enter the Tripoli FIR, and don't land in Libyan airports.
2. Refer to 1.

Libya remains categorised as a Level One country (Do Not Fly) at **safeairspace.net**

