

The Normalising of Balkan Airspace

OPSGROUP Team
16 February, 2021



The Kosovo War took place several decades ago. It was a conflict between the Serbs (former Yugoslavia) who had controlled Kosovo before the war and considered the land sacred, and the Kosovar ethnic Albanian rebel group who wanted Kosovo to have their independence (and ethnicity) from Serbia recognized.

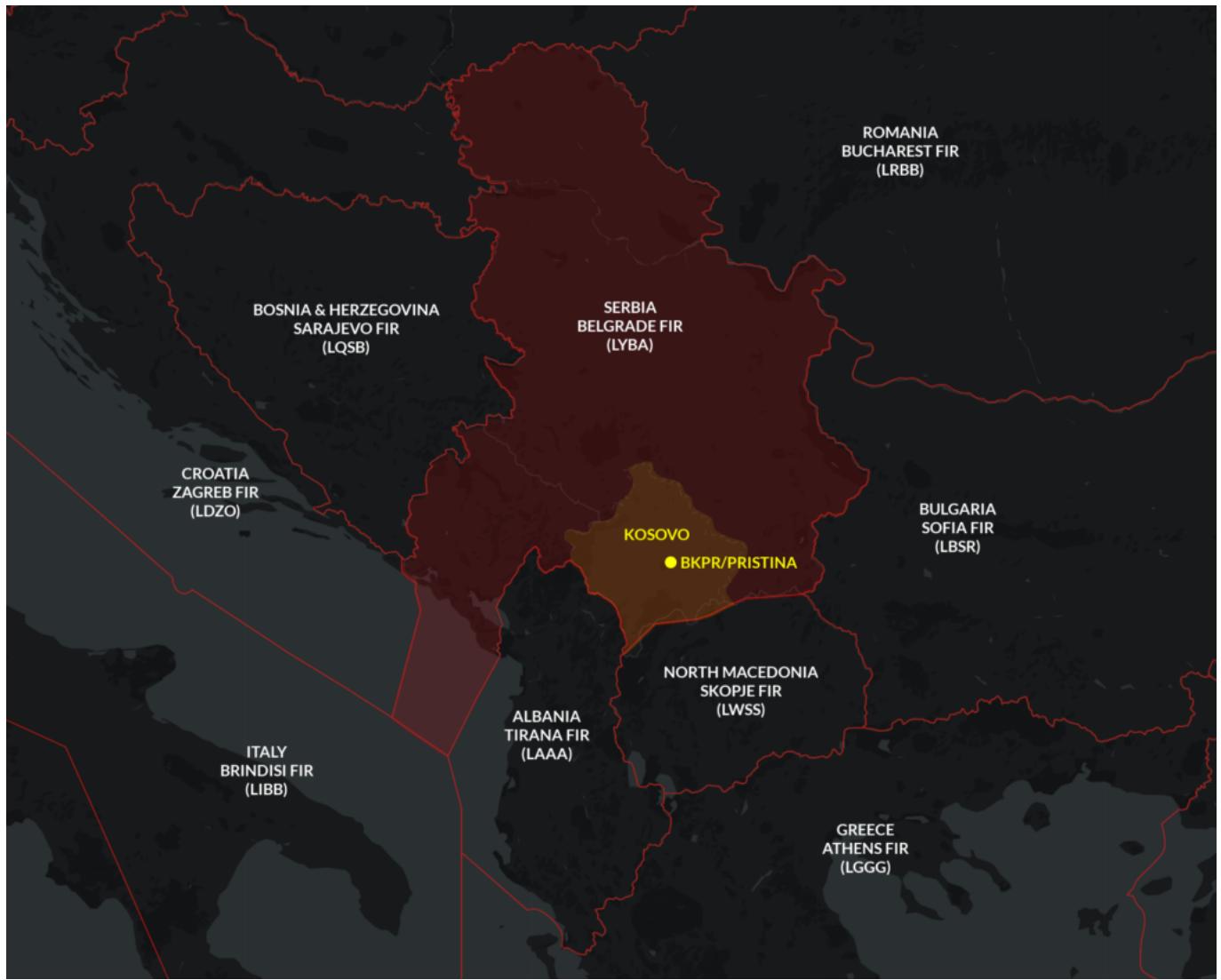
Following the war, the usual sort of reaction from all parties involved ensued – namely Serbia refusing to talk to their new neighbour, Kosovo. Despite the conflict having been resolved several decades ago, there has been an **ongoing impact on aviation** in the region because of the continued political tensions between the two countries.

Tell us something about Kosovo?

Kosovo is a landlocked country bordered by Serbia to the Northeast, Montenegro to the Northwest and North Macedonia and Albania on the other sides.

It only has three airports – two small domestic airports, and then **BKPR/Pristina International**.

Pristina International, also known as Adem Jashair, is a single runway airport. Runway 17/35 is 8,205' (2501m) and has a CAT II ILS onto 17 and VOR DME onto 35. They have limited maintenance facilities and JET-A1 on prior request.



What was the airspace issue?

In short, Serbia **refuses to allow Kosovan bound aircraft to route through Serbian airspace**. This included upper and lower airspace.

Since the bit where Serbia borders Kosovo makes up approximately half of Kosovo's entire border, the overflight ban resulted in **a major detour for any aircraft wanting to fly in or out Kosovo**, and control and safety was limited.

What happened next?

In 2014, Hungarocontrol (Hungarian ATC) **sorted the upper half the problem** by assuming responsibility for all the upper airspace in the region. With them **controlling all flights over FL205** (the lowest available flight level being FL210) this made it a lot easier for aircraft to route over some of Serbia. Aircraft still had to **route around to Albania and North Macedonia** in order to descend into Kosovo since SMATSA (Air Traffic Control of Serbia) continued to refuse aircraft to overfly the territory of Serbia below FL205.

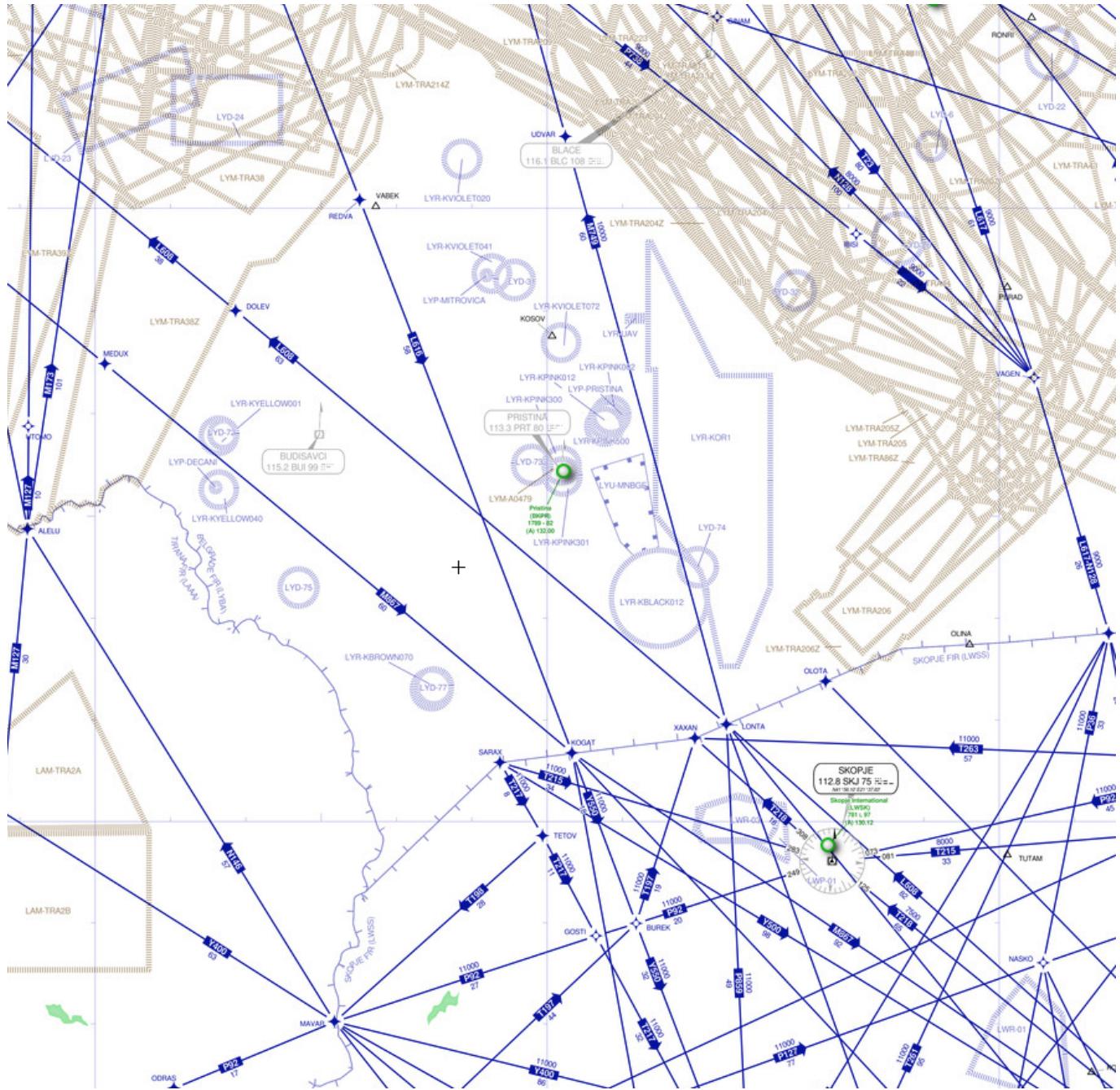
The official re-opening of the upper airspace info can be found [here](#). It is seven years old but still an interesting bit of historical Notamage.

This airspace falls under KFOR. Kosovo also has no designated RCC. Operations are under the control of the Combined Air Operations Centre Torrejón – a military (NATO) command centre in Spain. Actually, they are kinda cool. They secure the skies, respond to crisis, protect territory and populations and do a bunch of

other impressive peacekeeping stuff. So while Kosovo airspace is referred to under the Balkans airspace, it is still looked after by NATO.

But back to Kosovo – control for Pristina Airport was therefore from surface level to FL205, with Hungaro taking over from there. The only way in and out of the airport was **via the southern border with Macedonia.**

What has happened now?



XAXAN (in) and SARAX (out) are the main routes into Kosovo from North Macedonia

Newly formed south-west air routes in the lower airspace will allow more efficient routings into Kosovo for civilian aircraft.

The new lower airspace will be **controlled by Iceland**, organized by NATO under their Balkans Airspace Normalisation program. Iceland will offer safety oversight and also help support technical solutions to allow

more airlines to launch flight to and from Pristina in the future.

This is the official NATO news on this news.

Airspace up to FL205 over Kosovo forms the Pristina ANSP. Everything in the CTR and CTA is Class D. Outside of that is Class G. General Air Traffic are not allowed in the Class G bits without prior permission (keep this in mind if you need to make weather deviations - it all has to be cleared by ATC unless a proper emergency).

General Aviation Traffic have the following routes available to them:

- From North Macedonia, you can plan to route inbound by XAXAN and out via SARAX.
- From Albania, you can route in via ARBER and then expect a direct to Pristina airport. Outbound will be via KUKAD.
- From Montenegro the waypoint is MEDUX - but this is for *Military only*.
- From Serbia flights along the L680/M867 routes (KUKES/JAKOV waypoints) are *Military only*.

Although this does not mean a major change for routings, the “normalisation” of control and airspace (high and low) is a step forward.

What next?

Well, that's about it for now. There was apparently an agreement signed in 2020 between Serbia and Kosovo to **start allowing flights between BKPR/Pristina and LYBE/Belgrade**, but so far no sign anyone is planning on starting up this route.

The Kosovan CAA page is here (although much of it does not work). There are some old AIPS published so keep an eye out for the new ones showing the shiny new ATS routes.

Some planning info

If you are looking to fly into Kosovo then you are going to need a slot. You can email occpm@imakkosovo.aero, or call +383 38 501 502 2222

They want at least 3 days notice.

All the forms for requesting slots, and all the information on this can be found document entitled “Regulations for aircraft operating as General Air Traffic in the Balkans’ v4.0” which we have provided right here for you.

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

Cynthia Claros
16 February, 2021



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.

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

Monday Briefing: Confusion over Crimea, Kosovo Upper Airspace reopens

Declan Selleck
16 February, 2021

Confusion over Crimea: Special Report Apr 3 : Simferopol ACC re-opened 03APR creating confusion as to who should be providing ATC service in the Crimea region. We have published a Special 6 page International Ops Notice (03/2014) "2014 Airspace and Regulatory Changes in Crimea".

Kosovo Upper Airspace re-opens Apr 3 : After 15 years, the last remaining chunk of European airspace closed to overflying traffic in the Balkans has reopened. The KFOR sector over Kosovo became available on 03APR, with route savings immediately apparent to operators.

Kxxx/USA Operators should be aware of the new FAA ATC phraseologies effective 03APR. The FAA will implement "climb via" phraseology and procedures for departure operations consistent with existing "descend via" phraseology and procedures. "Climb via" and "descend via" are abbreviated ATC clearances that require compliance with the procedure's lateral path, associated speed restrictions, and altitude restrictions published on the SID or STAR. Some good information at <http://www.nbaa.org/ops/cns/pbn/climb-via/>

LLOV/Ovda, Israel will be closed to all flights 01MAY-07MAY

DGAA/Accra, Ghana Until 23JUN, The main runway (03/21) is open daily from 0500-2300Z only; no traffic accepted outside these hours.

LFMN/Nice Change in parking procedure; if approval is granted for parking, but operator changes to another, larger aircraft, then the previous approval will be cancelled. Co-ordinate all aircraft changes with Airport Ops.

YPXM/Christmas Island has reopened after the recent Cyclone in the Indian Ocean.

OSDI/Damascus FIR - For those still overflying, Syria has closed airway L513 from BURSA to LEBOR UFN.

HSSM /Malakal, South Sudan is only accessible with permission from the government security services. This is very difficult to obtain and makes the airport effectively shut.

HSWW /Wau, South Sudan is open without any specific additional permission being required.

MGGT/Guatemala City ChevronTexaco, for any fueling on the east and military ramps from 0900-1600 LT, requires a minimum of 24 hours' notice.

HLLS/Sebha, Libya remains closed until 07APR.

CAA Closures. Myanamar has an extended closure due to public holidays from 12-21APR. The Chinese CAA are celebrating National Tomb-Sweeping Day on 07APR.

UK Charter Permits. Significant changes to the approval process for Landing Permits for the UK will take effect on 06 APR. CAA will take over the responsibility for issuing approvals from the Department for Transport (DFT). Also, previously, a cabotage objection could be raised by a group of UK Charter Operators - this is removed. A fee is likely to be charged by the CAA for permits from this point forward.

Turkey. Effective 10APR2014 Visa on Arrival is no longer available at Turkish Airports. Visitors must apply online through <https://www.evisa.gov.tr/en/> for an e-Visa.

Australia. A reminder to all operators who are not ADS-B equipped, of the restrictions when operating into Australian Airspace effective from 15DEC13. If you not ADS-B equipped you must file with CASA, a Form 208 exemption application 14 days in advance of proposed operations into Australian Airspace. Then operations will be confined to the SSR radar coverage area extending from 200 nm north of Cairns down the East coast to 200 nm west of Adelaide. This is commonly referred to as the J curve. If you intend operating into the Brisbane or Melbourne FIRs from the west and north west of Australia, and are not ADB-B equipped you will be required to operate at FL290 or below.