Iraq ATC strike – update

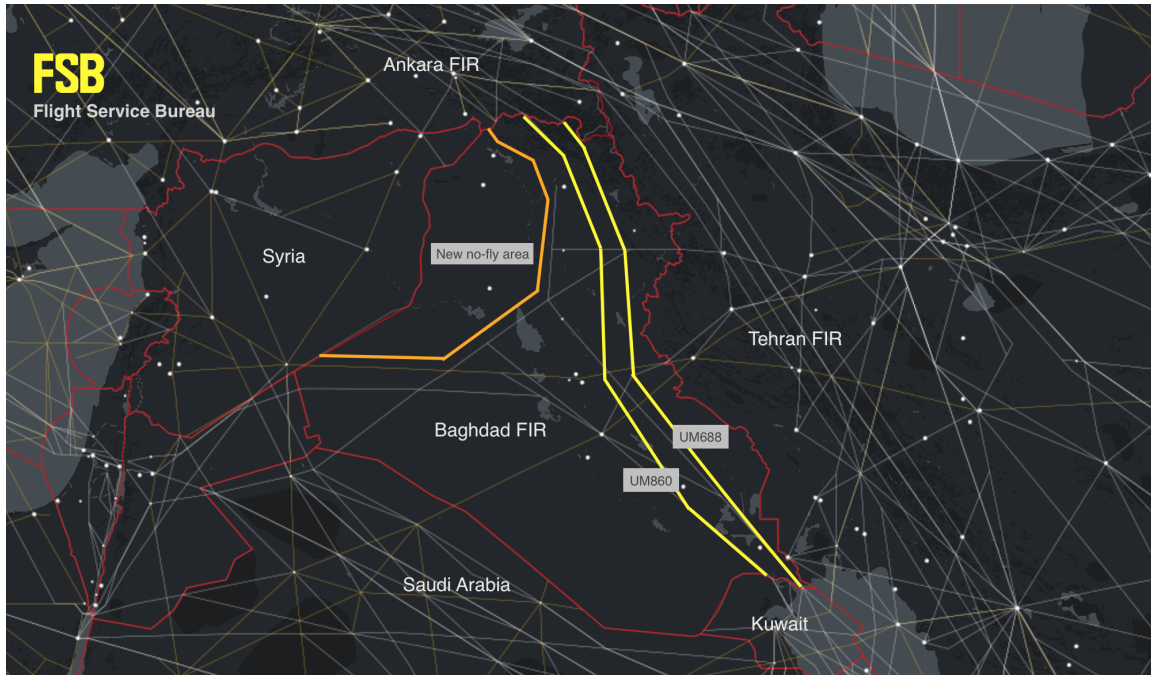Declan Selleck
2 November, 2017

At 0800 local this morning, Iraqi controllers returned to work. For the last few days, Iraqi ATC had been on strike for better pay, effectively closing the Baghdad FIR and intermittently Baghdad and Basra airports. An 80nm in trail requirement has been removed. Military controllers, pictured above, who had been running ORBI/Baghdad Airport have completed their duties.

Local ATC controllers tell us that the strike is over – they are running what they call 'ops normal' for two weeks, before they will/may strike again as negotiations continue. Inside word is that a number of local controllers have been fired, and Serco were providing most of the staff to cover the centre. Baghdad FIR Control Centre and Iraqi Airports are running normally – for now.

We are still expecting the FAA to remove the restriction for US operators using the Baghdad FIR, this is a separate issue. No further news on that just yet.

Iraq Airspace to re-open for overflights
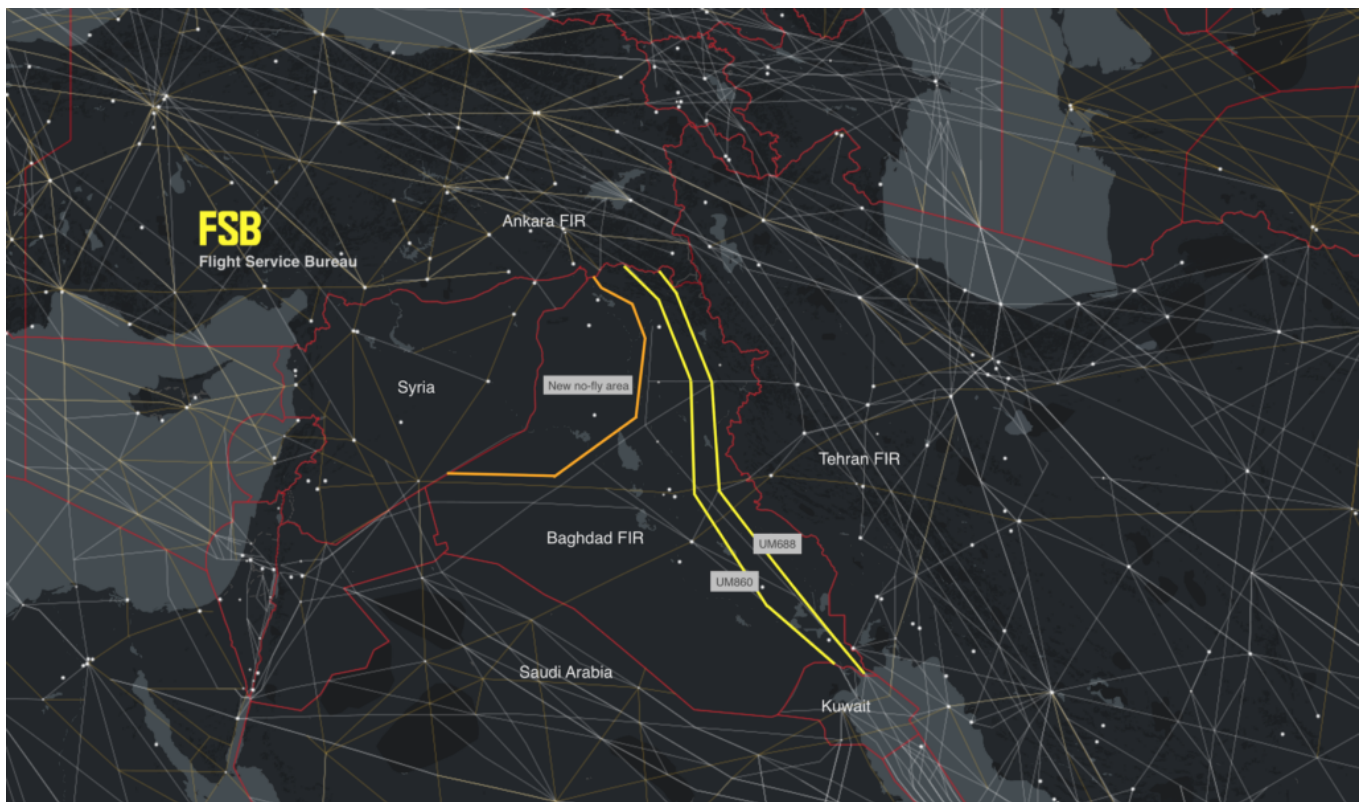
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ORBB/Baghdad FIR Overflights of Iraq may be permitted to resume as early as next week, allowing international carriers access again to several previously heavily used routes through the eastern side of the Baghdad FIR.

In May of this year, SFAR 77 – banning US operators from operating within Iraqi airspace – lapsed, and was replaced by Notam KICZ 10/2017 – which had much the same wording.

However, on October 3rd, Iraq issued a new Notam (A0477/17) – with a **new restricted area** in the northwest of the FIR, from Surface to FL460. The previous restricted areas 601 and 701 were withdrawn.

This re-shuffling of restricted airspace paves the way for two major international air routes to be reopened, UM860 and UM688 – which were realigned in April for this purpose, allowing operators additional route options through the Middle East to Europe and vv.

FSB expects an official announcement shortly, and will update operators further. OpsGroup members will be notified directly.