

At long last, Pakistan declares airspace fully open again

Mark Zee

15 July, 2019



Pakistan airspace is open! In a clearly written, yet quietly announced in-the-dead-of-night Notam, Pakistan has today declared the entirety of its airspace fully open and available for all overflights.

This is very welcome news for long-haul airlines and operators transiting the Middle East and Asia, where finding a usable and safe route through the region has become akin to navigating a level of Pac-Man with few escape options left.

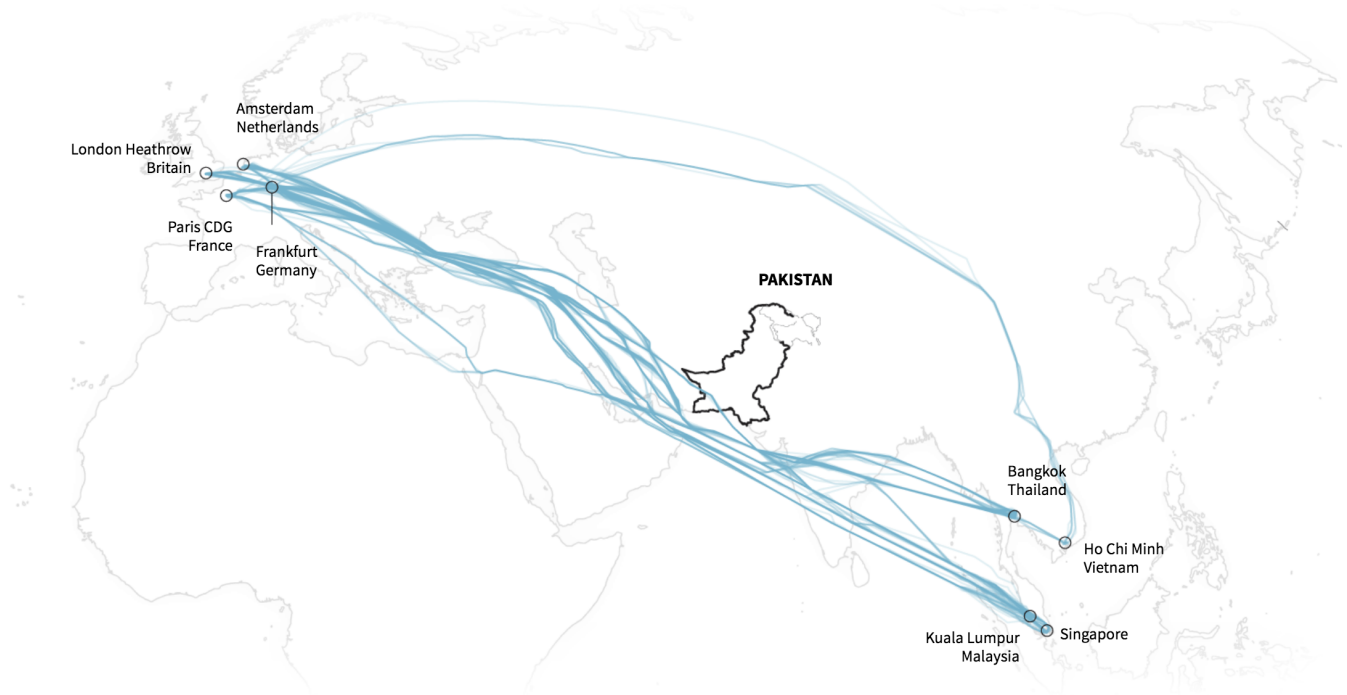
Pakistan being open again makes the traditional and preferred Europe-Asia route through Afghanistan, Pakistan, and onwards to India available again, and means that city pairs abandoned after the February shutdown will likely be restarted.

The good-news Notam was issued around midnight Pakistan time:

A0710/19 NOTAMN
Q) OPXX/QARXX///E/000/999/
A) OPKR OPLR
B) 1907151908 C) PERM
E) WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT PAKISTAN AIRSPACE IS OPEN FOR
ALL TYPE OF CIVIL TRAFFIC ON PUBLISHED ATS ROUTES

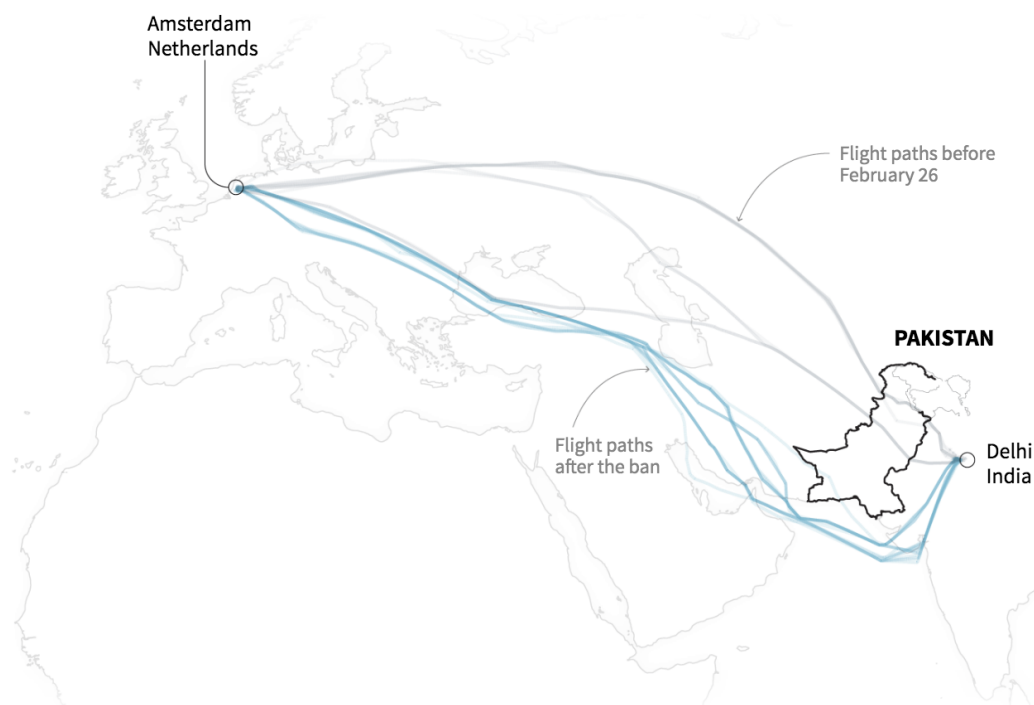
So, what does this mean?

In recent months, operators have had to avoid Pakistan and route much further south, as this graphic from an article we worked on with Reuters in April shows:

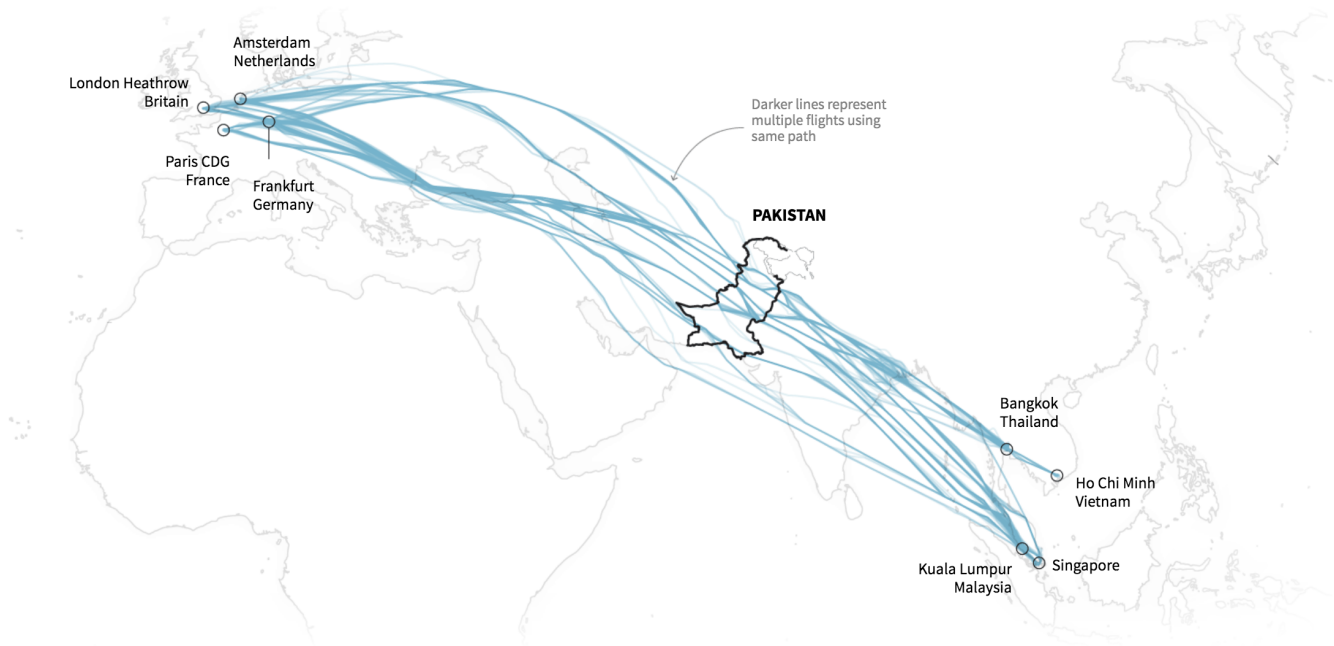


The impact has been significant. Avoiding Pakistan has meant up to an additional 410 miles, or an hours flying time, for Europe-Asia flights.

For many long-haul operators trying to get to India, the dog-leg around Pakistan made the trip unworkable, either because of fuel endurance, or crew hours. Many operators cancelled flights to Delhi, the worst located airport in terms of the airspace closure.



Now, with this reopening, we have the ability to fly closer to optimum routings once again.



So, good news for airlines and long-haul operators.

Stuck in Iran for over 2 months

OPSGROUP Team

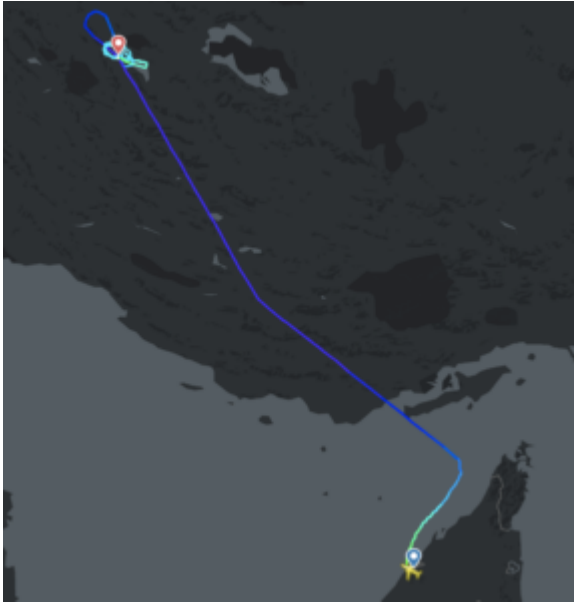
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On Feb 23, the Norwegian B737 which had been stuck in Iran for two months after an in-flight diversion finally departed OISS/Shiraz, and landed back at Stockholm's ESSA/Arlanda airport.

The brand new Norwegian Boeing 737 MAX8 was flying from Dubai to Oslo on Dec 14 when it encountered

engine problems that necessitated a diversion to Shiraz.



With the U.S. sanctions currently in place against Iran, it made it very difficult to obtain approval to get the required spare parts over to Iran to fix the aircraft – Norwegian were only able to do so after negotiating a workaround with the U.S. Office of Foreign Asset Control.

The real complication here came from the fact that the aircraft needed a replacement LEAP-1B engine. The engine is a 50/50 ownership split between GE (USA) & Safran (France). The U.S. export restrictions apply to any company that wants to sell or resell goods to Iran that contain more than 10 percent aviation parts or technology from the United States.



In the end, the aircraft was out of service for over two months, no doubt costing the airline a fortune in lost revenue. It's unclear who will be picking up the bill for "extra" complications of getting the permits with Iran, but that will be a costly exercise also.

The lesson?

Consider your overflight diversion options. If a checklist calls for a diversion to the nearest suitable airport and that airport is in a country with limited diversion support or (in this case) complicated requirements for sourcing replacement parts – is it worth the risk?

Have you operated to anywhere in Iran recently? Let us know how it went!

Further reading

- US issues new guidance on Iran overflight risk
- London to Dubai – which way is best?

Non-refundable Bangladesh permits

OPSGROUP Team

15 July, 2019



CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY OF BANGLADESH
HEADQUARTERS, KURMITOLA, DHAKA
No. CAAB/714(XT)/6505, Dated: 20 September 2018
AIR TRANSPORT CIRCULAR NO: 02/2018

Subject: Payment for flight permit for non-schedule flights by foreign registered Aircraft into or in transit across Bangladesh.

In pursuant to paragraph 11.6 of Air Transport Circular no. 01/2018, all Operational Services Provider License (OSPL) holders are requested to pay an amount of USD 195.00 (One hundred and ninety-five) through permit automation system (Permit Operation Database-POD) to process each request for non-schedule flight permit for foreign registered aircraft operated by foreign air operator/ airline/ principal. The payment is non-refundable, irrespective of the approval or rejection to the permit request.

The OSPL holders shall be responsible for the validity, authenticity and correctness of the data/document supplied/uploaded to POD, and for any unlawful activities/ cybercrime/ abuse into POD portal, which may endanger the safety and operation of POD (both software and hardware), will lead to the termination or suspension of the OSPL and punitive actions will be taken for such actions/abuse. To prevent all unlawful activities, abuse and cybercrime against POD, an agreement/undertaken, prepared by CAAB with necessary conditions, shall have to be signed by every OSPL holders to confirm their compliance in this regard.

The circular will come into effect from 08 October 2018, 0000UTC.


Air Vice Marshal M Na'im Hassan, 2017-2020, Air Vice
Chairman.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh recently published circular 02/2018 which outlines a \$195 USD overflight permit fee for non-scheduled foreign aircraft transiting the **VGFR/Dhaka** FIR. The fee is certainly on the high side but the disappointing part is :

"The payment is **non-refundable**, irrespective of the approval **or rejection** to the permit request."

Say what?

There was a similar type of no-refund situation within the **TNCF/Curaco** FIR but we now understand after some noise, operators are getting refunds as per normal industry practice.

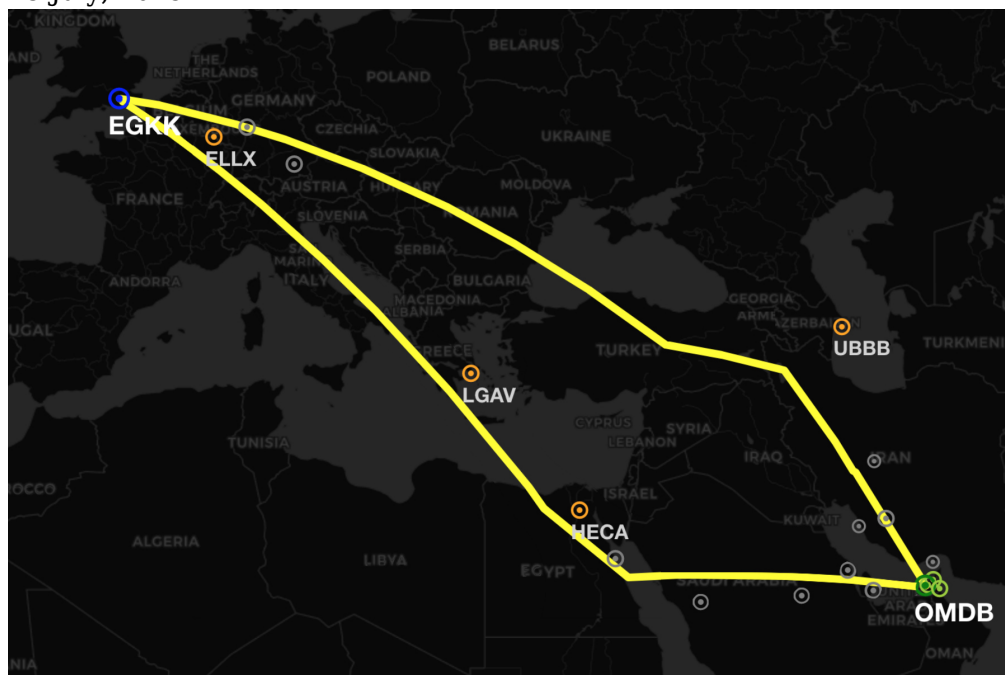
We say it's time for the CAA in Bangladesh to stop this non-refundable nonsense.

Have you had a permit denied and not received your money back? Reach out and Let us know!

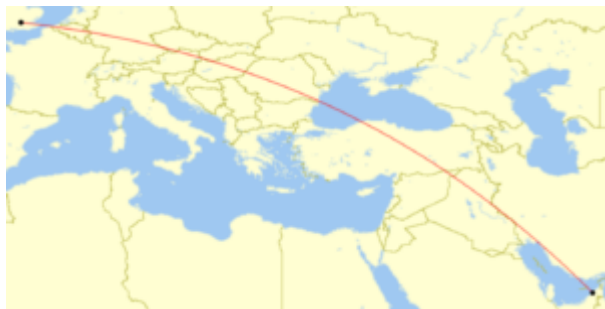
Dubai to London - which way is best?

OPSGROUP Team

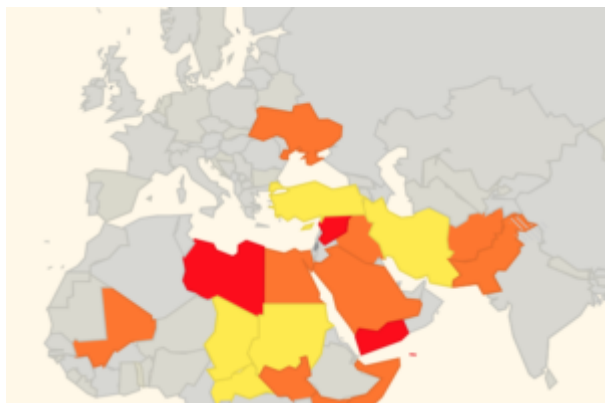
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In Short: Two main options, via **Saudi and Egypt** (safer, cheaper but longer) or via **Iran and Turkey** (shorter, busier and geo-politically more unstable). It's a **complicated** planning climate at present. **Review regularly based on latest risk factors.**



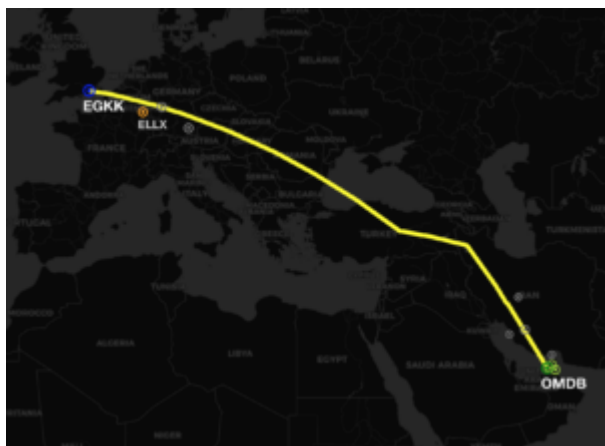
There are more business aviation operators flying between the Middle East and Europe than ever before. So we took the time to look over the route options between the two regions. For our example we will be using a flight from Dubai to London, but similar operational considerations are valid for the plethora of route combinations through this whole region.



Firstly, we are sure you are a frequent visitor to our safe airspace website. Updated all the time with the latest notes and risk recommendations based on the latest intel. So, first things first, **we want to avoid Syria, Libya and the Sinai Peninsula**. As you can see however, this is a complicated geo-political region for flight planning. The direct great circle route would take us through Syria and would be around 3125nm. But that isn't going to work. So, what else we got?

We will look at the two ways to head over the region. One is via Iran, Turkey and onwards to Europe. The other over Saudi Arabia and Egypt towards Europe.

Option 1: Iran/Turkey



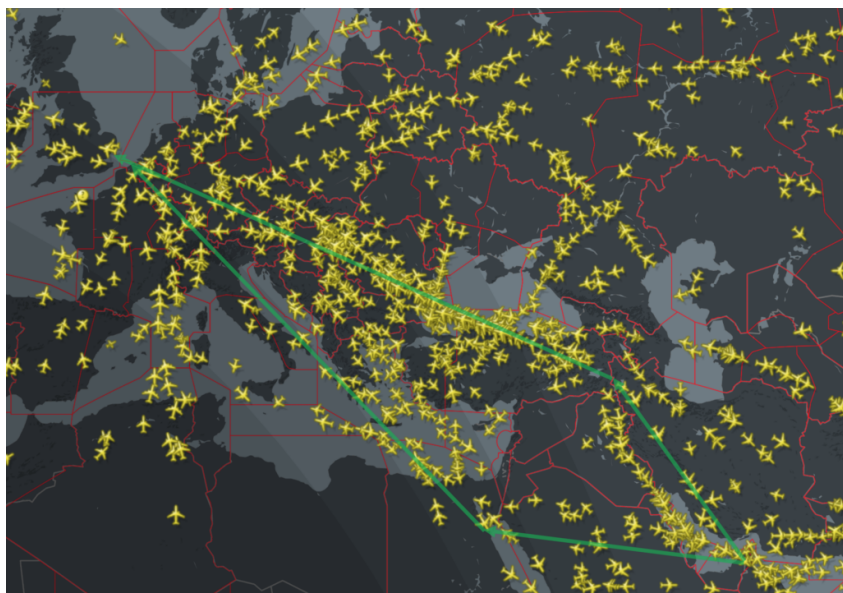
Safety: Both Iran and Turkey are FSB Risk Level: Three – **Caution**. Iran is involved in the ongoing conflict with Syria and several Russian missiles crossed the Tehran FIR and several busy international routes. There are also increased tensions between the USA and Iran at present – if you had to divert in an N-reg aircraft, Iran would not be the friendliest of places to do so. Turkey borders with Syria and we have received multiple reports of GPS interference in the area.

Distance: an extra 100nm.

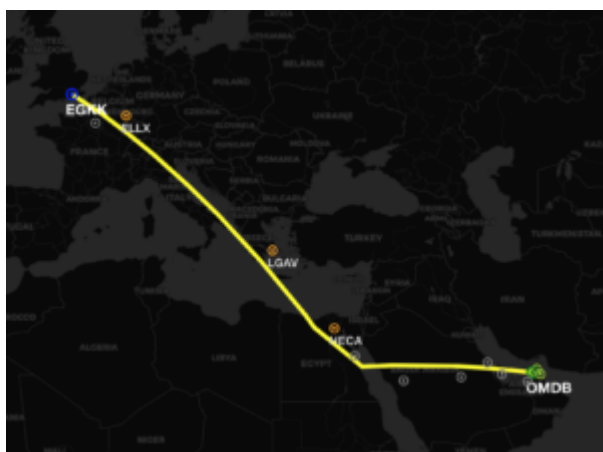
Time: About 15 minutes longer than great circle route.

Ease and Cost: Iran has higher overflight costs and for US based operators a reminder of the sanctions for dealing directly with Iran, or agencies in Iran. You'll want to use an approved agent if you're from the US (i.e.-not an Iranian company). Iran doesn't work on Fridays, so be aware there. Turkish overflight costs are reasonable and remember that Turkish authorities require the use of an agent to apply for permits.

Traffic: The biggest issue with this route is that everyone is using it! It's congested with a lot of airline traffic. It's a major corridor for Asia-Europe flights also. So, getting the levels you want, and off route deviations are more complicated. Things get busy, as you can see!



Option 2: Saudi/Egypt



Safety: In terms of airspace warnings and risk, this route is **slightly** better. We have rated Saudi and Egypt airspace as FSB Risk Level: Two – Assessed Risk. Beyond the Sinai Peninsula and the Saudi/Yemen border, generally there is less of a chance of airspace security risks at present.

Distance: An extra 300nm from the great circle.

Time: Around 45 minutes longer.

Ease and Cost: Saudi and Egyptian airspace are generally a cheaper option (\$1,000USD+). In Egypt, by law you have to get your permit through an Egyptian agent, but it's a straight forward process. In Saudi, again, using an agent is best; they normally have three-day lead time – so keep that in mind. Also remember that the CAA only work Sun-Wed during office hours.

Traffic: For most of the day, much less of a traffic bottle neck.

Bottom line

Of the two options, routing via **Saudi/Egypt** is cheaper, and safer (as long as you steer clear of Egypt's Sinai Peninsular and Saudi's border with Yemen), but it's going to take slightly longer.

What about Iraq?

We **don't** think it's a good idea. There's a lot of information out there saying certain airways are ok but only at higher levels. But if you needed to get down fast, or even make an unexpected landing, Iraq isn't the place you would want to go at present. **Treat with caution.**

Which one is your favourite choice? Let us know!

Further reading:

- US updates its Syria airspace warning
- Don't overfly the Tripoli FIR, and don't land at any Libyan airports
- France add Saudi Arabia to their airspace warning list

Russia is not closing its airspace to American flights

Declan Selleck
15 July, 2019



On April 17, the Russian Ministry of Transport extended overflight approvals for US

airlines through to October 28, 2018 - just hours before the old agreement on overflights was due to expire.

This should bring an end to the rumour that had been circulating all week that Russia has closed its airspace to US aircraft, and were denying overflights. There are a couple of unrelated events which caused this confusion:

1. US strikes on Syria on April 14, with rhetoric of Russia retaliation - which in the end didn't happen.
2. Spooked about how Russia might respond directly after the strikes, American Airlines temporarily decided not to overfly Russia on some of their flights from the US to Hong Kong... but then they quickly went back to doing so again on April 15.
3. With the deadline looming for extending the agreement, Russian civil aviation officials had reportedly cancelled a meeting in Washington earlier this week to discuss renewing the agreement.
4. Some areas of the Baltic Sea are closed on April 19 for Russian missile firing, which is a routine event.

References - all the relevant stories are here:

- [Baltic airspace closure](#)
- [American airlines reroute](#)
- [Russia's refusal to attend aviation talks could lead to ban on US carriers in its airspace](#)

ORER and ORSU: Closed to International Ops

Declan Selleck
15 July, 2019



The Iraqi CAA will ban all international flights to/from ORER/Erbil and ORSU/Sulaimaniyah starting from Friday 29th Sep.

From then on, those airports will only be open for Iraqi carriers and domestic ops.

Tensions around the Kurdish autonomous region of Iraq are rising following a referendum on independence.

The Iraqi govt has demanded that the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) hand over control of its two international airports – ORER and ORSU. Until the KRG comply with this request, the international ban on flights to these airports is set to continue.

At the request of the Iraqi govt, Iran had already closed it's airspace to ORER/ORSU traffic earlier this week, and Turkey was considering implementing the same ban.

The KRG are now deciding whether to give up control of their airports or lose their international flights. Should it be the latter, then from now on anyone attempting to travel to the region will have to transit via Baghdad.

We will update as more information becomes available.

New airspace warnings - Turkey, Iran

Declan Selleck

15 July, 2019



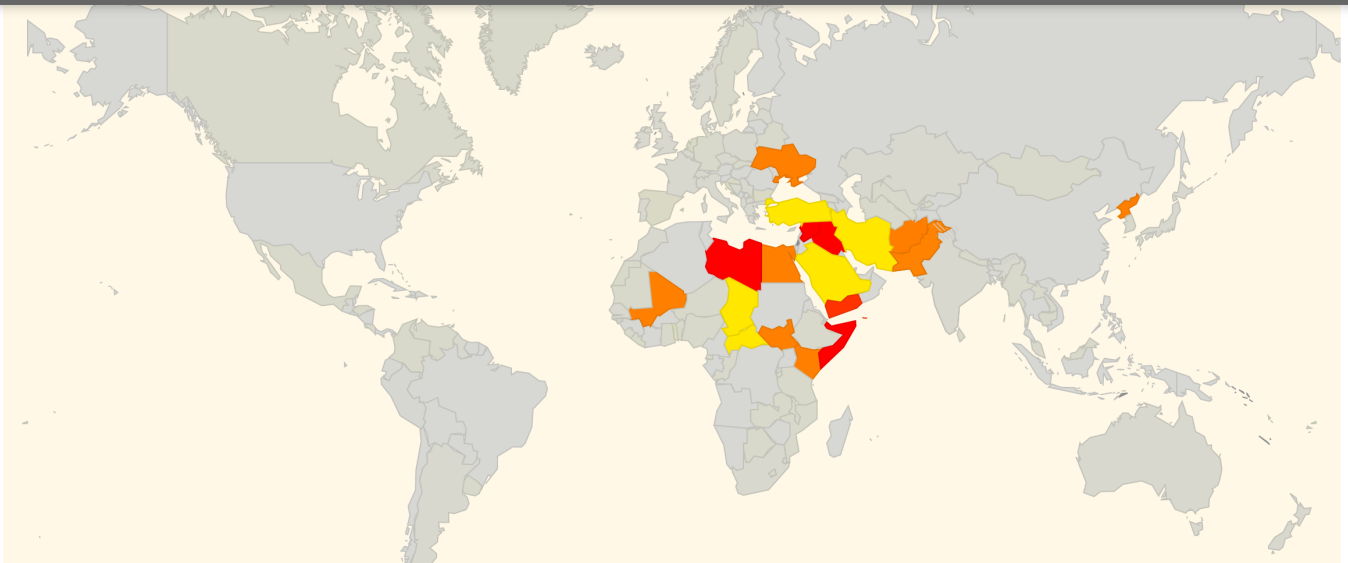
Today Flight Service Bureau has published ION05/16 – an updated **Unsafe Airspace Summary**, with new warnings for **Turkey**, and **Iran**, and a new map at **safeairspace.net**. This replaces 04/16 issued in August.

Turkey: 23SEP16 Germany B1289/16 Do not plan flights to LTAJ due potential ground to ground firing in the vicinity of LTAJ/Gaziantep Airport.

Iran: 09SEP16 FAA Notam KICZ 19/16 Exercise caution within Tehran FIR due military activity.

New information in the PDF is marked with a **I** beside it. Please distribute the PDF to anyone you like, we are keen to make sure as many operators as possible are aware of the risks.

- **Download the new Unsafe Airspace Summary**
- View the current map at safeairspace.net



Permit News: Cuba Permit requirements

Declan Selleck
15 July, 2019

- Minimum 3 working days advance notice of flight intending to cross Cuba

Data needed:

- Operator name and address
- Departure and Destination airports, and times
- Aircraft type, and registration
- Please note no requirement for airspace entry points/times, pilots licenses/medicals, C of A/R, or other documentation.

Your permit number will be sent to you by via email by return and should be inserted in Field 18 (RMK/) of your ATC flight plan, for example:

RMK/PERMIT CUBA 6821

The permit can be ordered **online here**.

