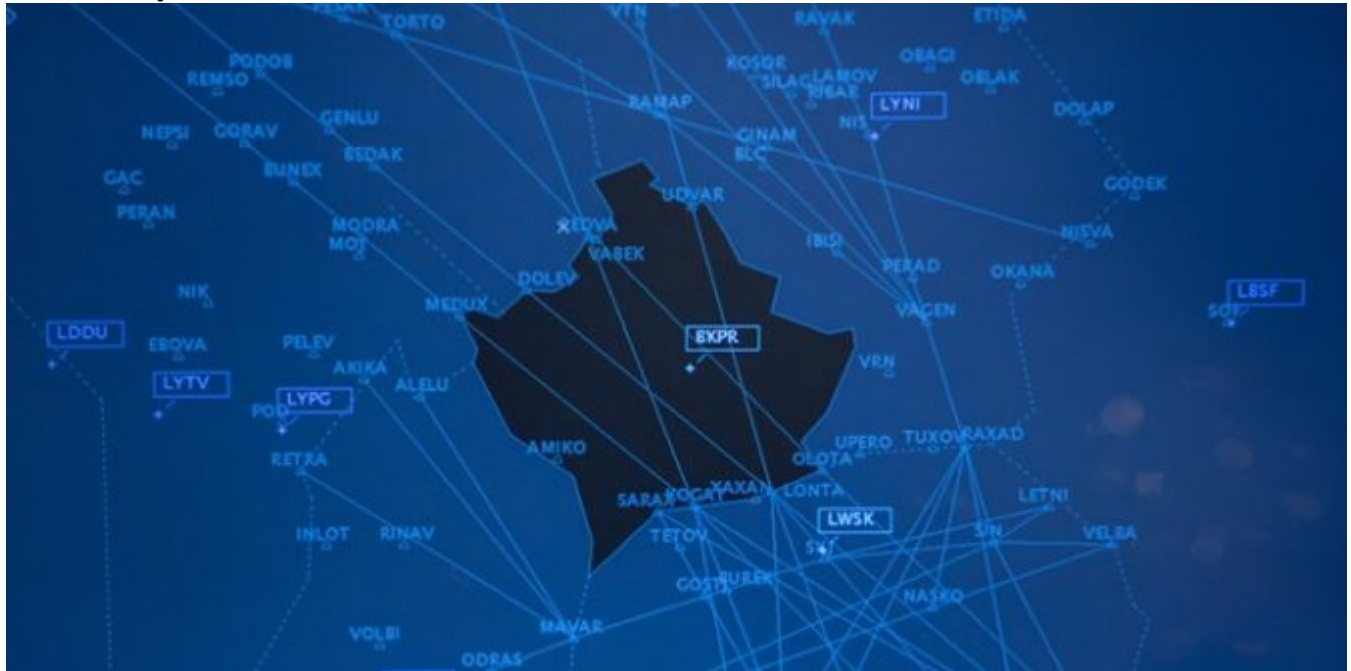# The Normalising of Balkan Airspace

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 Kosovan 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.
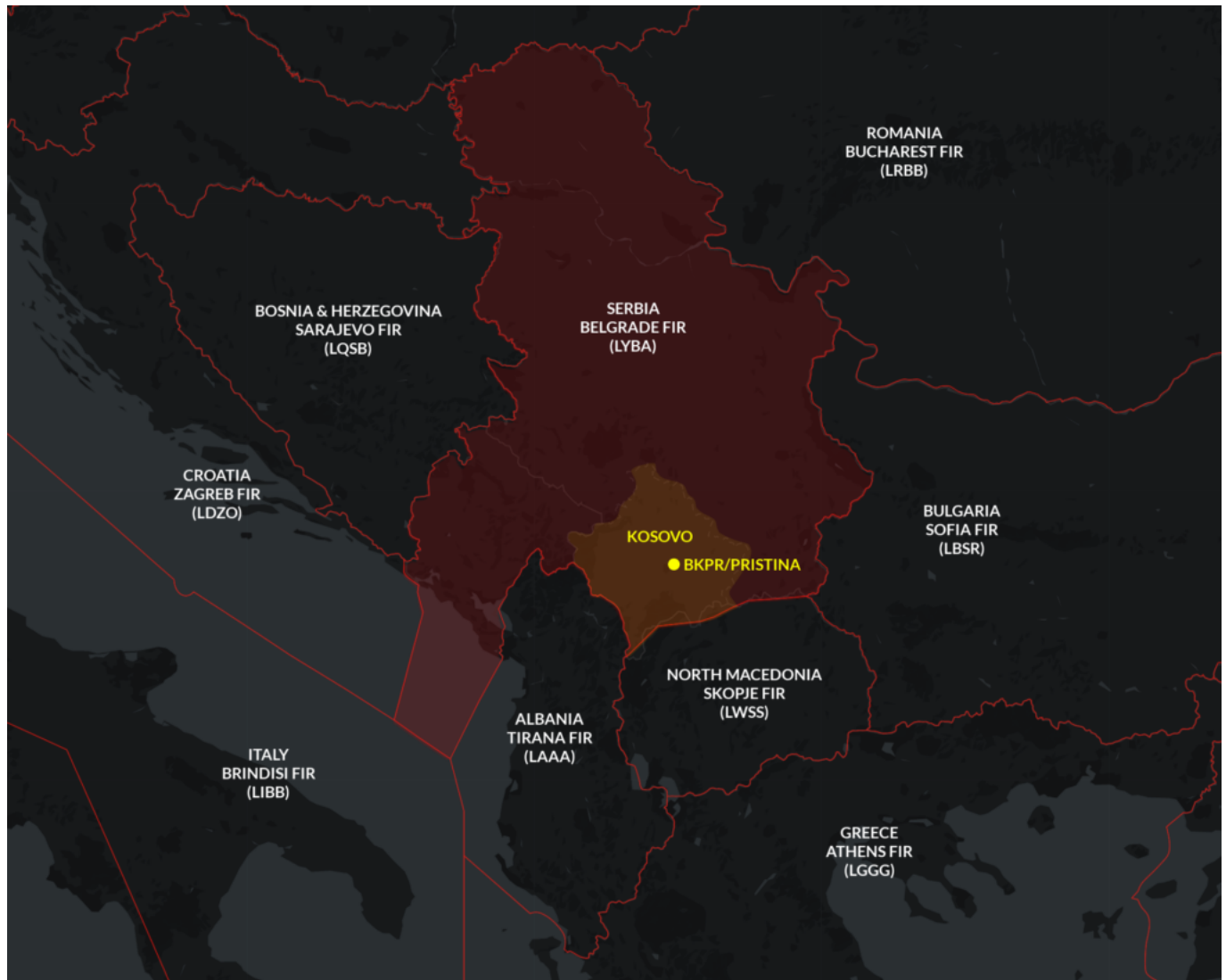
What was the airspace issue?

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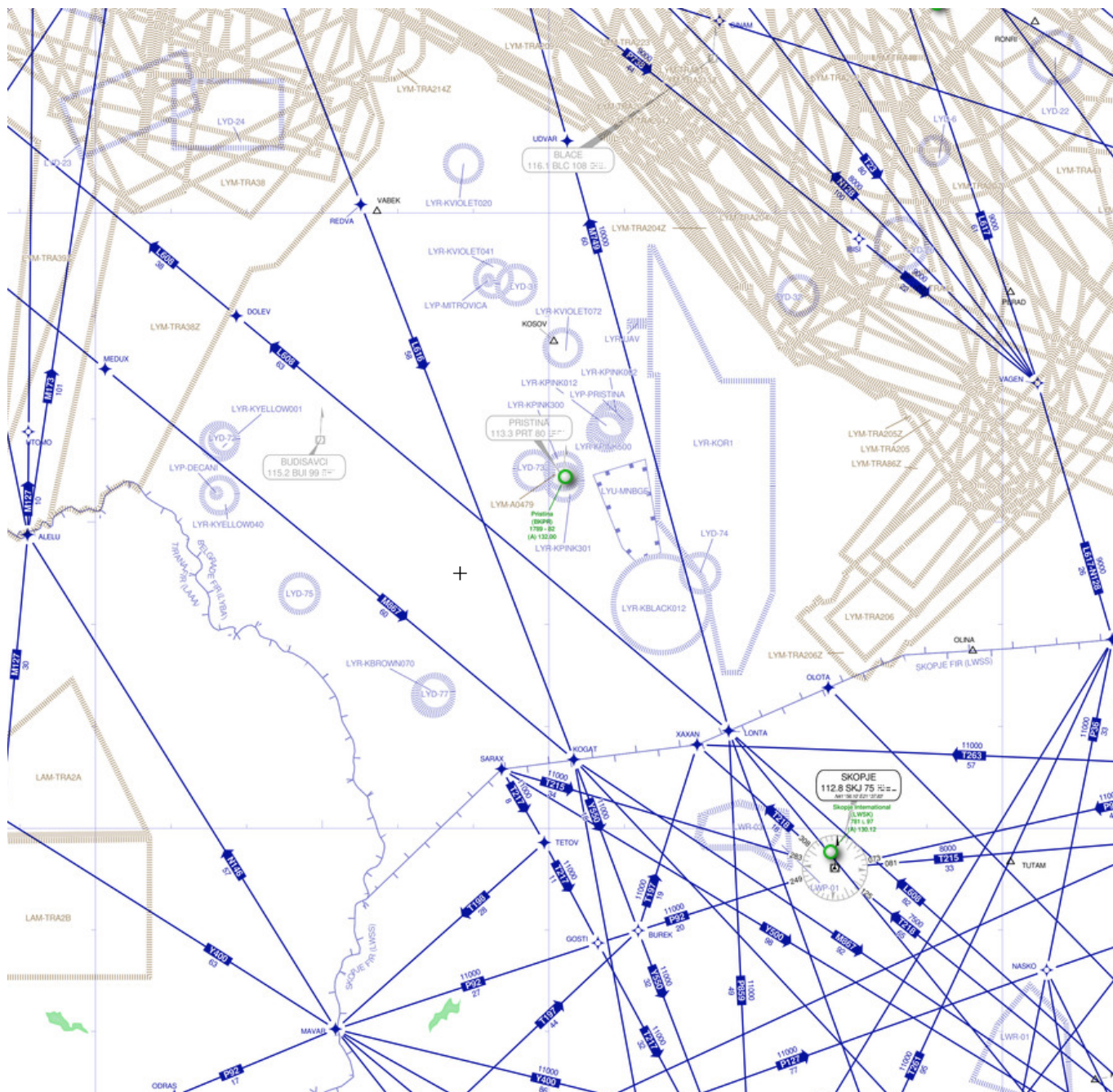
XAXAN (in) and SARAX (out) are the main routes into Kosovo from North Macedonia

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. Outride 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: Kenya concerns, Serbia flooding

Declan Selleck
16 February, 2021

19MAY Operators have cancelled flights to **HKMO/Mombassa** amid increasing terrorist concerns in the

north-east of Kenya; some have repatriated tourists mid-stay. The US Embassy is reducing staff numbers.

19MAY **Catastrophic flooding in Serbia and Bosnia** has led into increased aid traffic at LYBE/Belgrade and delays and parking restrictions may apply; the flooding is the worst since records began.

LYBE/Belgrade is seeing increased traffic due to aid activity as a result of flooding in the country. Delays of up to 2 hours for non-scheduled traffic possible.

LSGG/Geneva – anticipate high traffic volume and some delays due to EBACE traffic 20-22MAY. Aircraft static display is open on 22MAY.

SKCG/Cartagena, Colombia has restrictions until 28MAY requiring non-scheduled operators to seek permission at least 24H before arrival (though longer is recommended) SKBQ/Barranquilla is a sensible alternate during this period.

VYYY/Yangon, Myanmar is closed 29MAY 0730-0815Z for a live fire drill.

EGLL/London Heathrow ATC Regulation Trial continues, with a pre-tactical EGLLTC regulation of 52 aircraft per hour in place 0400-0800 daily until 31OCT.

HLLB/Benghazi, Libya closed until further notice due to security situation.

LDPL/Pula, Croatia is closed 23MAY 1600-1800Z due emergency exercise.

LIML/Milan Linate will close overnight for runway repairs between 03JUN-04JUL.

ULLI/St. Petersburg SPIEF International Economic Forum 21-24MAY. Refueling is available only on arrival and crews must be at the airport no less than two hours ahead of their departure time. Slots allocated to allow approx 10 arrivals per hour for the Forum. No overnight parking is available for unconnected flights during this period.

UKxx/Ukraine FIR's (L'viv, Kyiv and Dnipro FIRs) Several airline reports of loss of GPS signals flying through this airspace.

Brazil has issued airport slots for World Cup 2014 on 15MAY, most are allocated already. An AVANAC domestic operating permit is required for all operators before a slot can be requested. Slot validity is 15 minutes. All pax and most crews will require a visa before arrival during World Cup operations – there is no possibility to obtain on arrival.

European Union The European Commission has adopted a new regulation that requires commercial air transport (CAT) operators from outside the European Union (EU), also known as "third-country operators" (TCOs), to obtain a single EU-wide safety authorization to fly to, from or within the EU. The registration requirement applies to CAT TCOs, who must demonstrate to the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) compliance with ICAO standards. CAT operators include all airlines and charter operators. The TCO authorization is a single process for all operators flying to the 28 European Union states, EU overseas territories and the four European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland). The authorization will be a prerequisite to operating in these states and territories. A TCO authorization is not required for operators only overflying the EU member states, EU overseas territories and the four EFTA states. All existing operators must reapply for authorization, even if they hold authorization from individual EU member states. The regulation is in effect from 26MAY and EASA recommends approval be gained within 6 months.

Turkey The previously announced Turkish e-Visa scheme, abolishing Visa on Arrival, scheduled to become effective 10APR14, has been postponed until 31DEC14. https://www.evisa.gov.tr/en/ for an e-Visa.

United States The FAA's Flight Standards Service (AFS) has created OpSpec/MSpec/LOA A153, a new and

more efficient operations authorization for U.S.-registered aircraft in order to comply with early automatic dependent surveillance – broadcast (ADS-B) directives mandated by a growing number of other countries, primarily in the Asia-Pacific region. The new approval is in the final stages of development and is expected to be available to operators at the end of June 2014.

Belarus A visa-free regime will be in place for the official participants of the 2014 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship and foreign tourists for the period from 25 April until 31 May 2014. An original or electronic ticket to a game of the 2014 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship will become the basis for a visa-free entry in the territory of Belarus for tourists.