

The TSA Waiver Saviour

OPSGROUP Team

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TSA Waivers. These are something we haven't talked about in a while, possibly because they haven't actually changed in a while. But we saw a question on them and thought it might be a good time to have a little recap.

Let's start with the basics

Here is the TSA Waiver site. This is where you submit your requests.

And here is the TSA site on waivers. This is where you can find info on waivers.

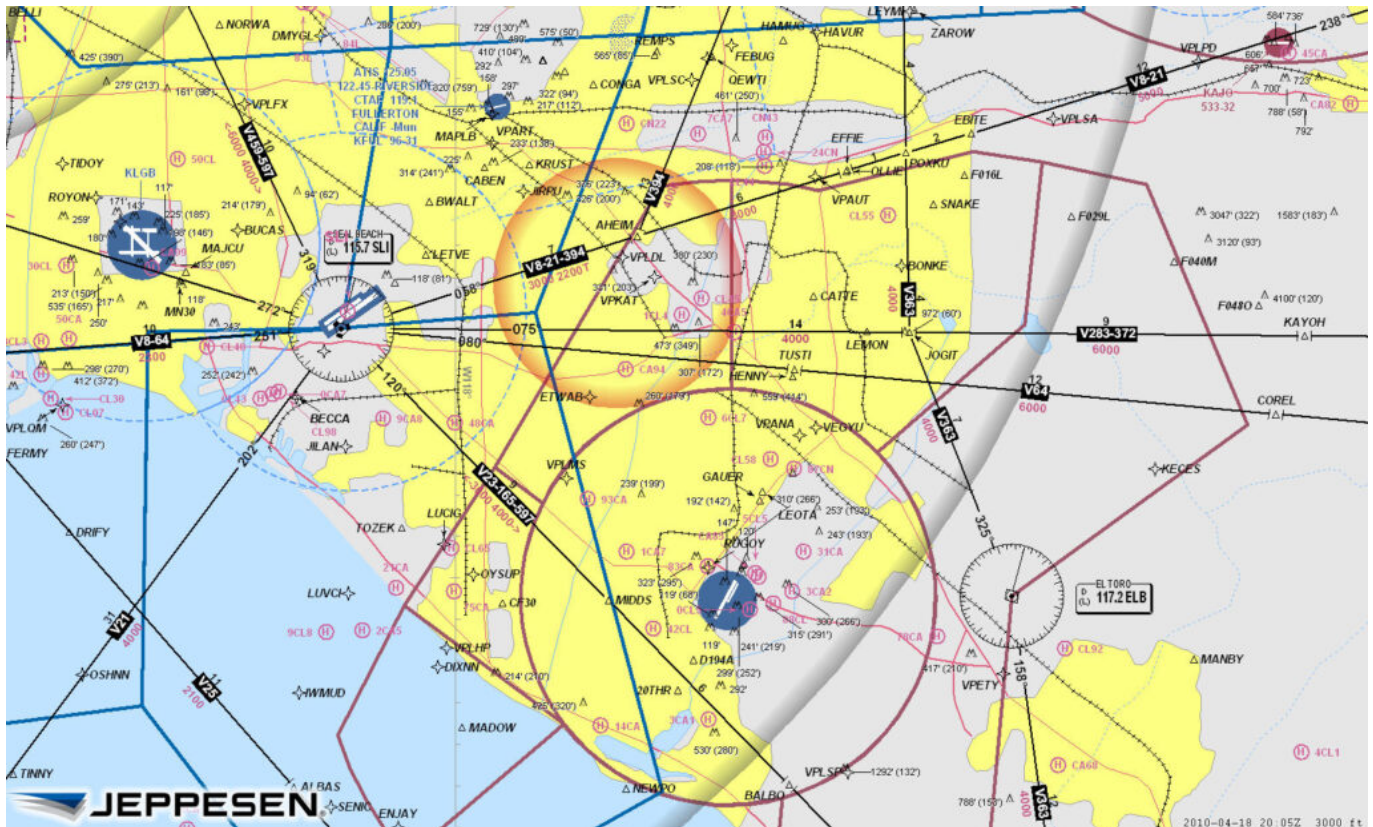
Which Waiver is Right for You?

There are a few types.

You have your Disney Theme Park, Washington DC Special Flight Rules Area/Flight Restricted Zone, Major Sporting Events and Special Events waivers.

And then you have your International Waivers which include International Air Ambulance, No Transponder and **Single Trip Waivers**.

The International Single Trip waivers are probably what most folk need a little guidance on.



The Disney Zone

The Guidance

International Waivers are required for 'various aircraft to fly within US airspace, which includes the airspace above the United States and its territories'.

Whether you need one depends on your **aircraft size, where it is registered and where you're coming from.**

Flying to and from the US

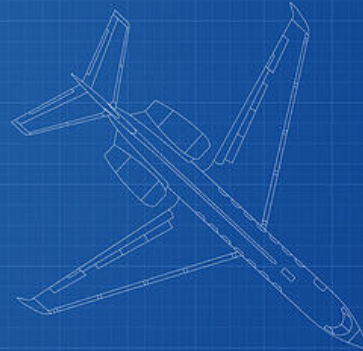
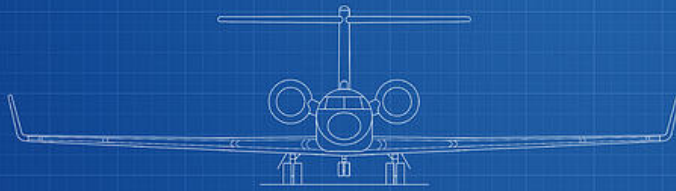
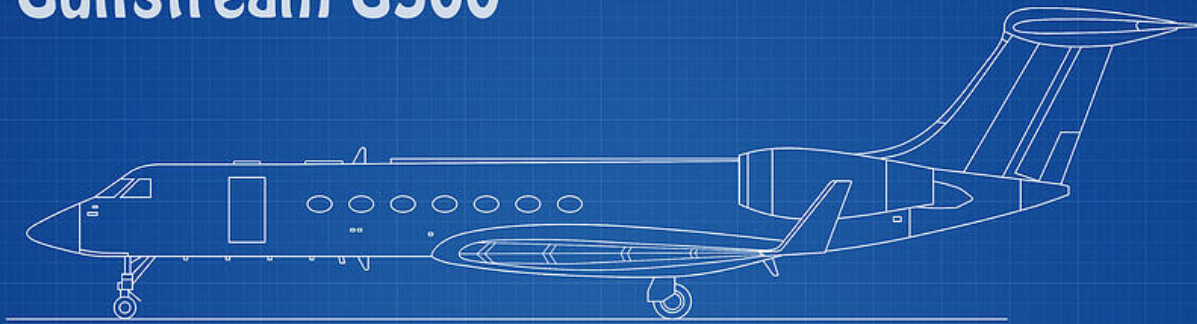
International TSA waivers are not required for any aircraft arriving to or departing from the US or its territories. So this applies if you only make one stop in the US (i.e. you fly in and straight back out again).

Flying within US airspace

Planning to make more than one stop in the US? You'll need an International Waiver if you do this in a foreign registered aircraft which is heavier than 100,309 pounds (45,500 kg).

But, since most private aircraft generally fit under this weight limit, **you probably don't need one.**

Gulfstream G500



Name: Gulfstream G500
Role: Business jet
National origin: United States
Manufacturer: Gulfstream Aerospace

First flight: May 18, 2015
Status: In service
Type: Large Jet
Crew: 2
Passengers: 19

Length: 91 ft 2 in (27.78 m)
Wingspan: 87 ft 1 in (26.55 m)
Height: 25 ft 6 in (7.78 m)
Wing area: 950 ft² (88.3 m²)
Max. takeoff weight: 79,600 lb (36,106 kg)

Propulsion: 2x P&WC PW814GA Turbofan
Engine Power: 67.36 kN (15,144 lbf)
Maximum speed: 566 knots (1,048 km/h)
Range: 5,200 nmi (9,630 km)
Service ceiling: 51,000 ft (15,545 m)

Most Bizjets are under the weight restriction.

Overflying the US

OK, here we go, the bit to know - this is for when you take off and land somewhere not in the US or its territories, and overfly the US in between.

If your aircraft weighs 100,309 lbs or more: you need a waiver, even if your aircraft is US registered.

If your aircraft weighs less than 100,309 lbs: US registered aircraft do not need one. If you are foreign registered and overflying, you do need one - unless your aircraft weighs less than 100K lbs, is registered in a "Portal Country", and is flying directly from any one of these (prior to entering US airspace).

The Portal Countries are:

- Canada
- Mexico
- Bahamas
- Bermuda
- Cayman Islands
- British Virgin Islands

Special Interest Countries

The black sheep of the World of Waivers. Probably the easiest category to work out the rules for. **You'll need an international waiver for everything** – ops to, from, within and over the US, if your aircraft is registered in one of these countries. The list currently includes: **China, Cuba, North Korea, Russia, Sudan.**

To recap...

Landings: Foreign registered aircraft over 100K lbs making 2 or more stops in the US need a Waiver.

Overflights: All overflights over 100K lbs need one – and that includes N-reg. If you are foreign registered and overflying, you need one regardless of size. There's one single exception: If overflying with an aircraft under 100K lbs registered in a Portal Country, and the flight is from any of those countries, then you're good.

Special Interest Countries: Aircraft registered in these need a Waiver for everything – ops to, from, within and over the US.

Where is this officially written?

There were some official, permanent Notams published back in 2016. **FDC 6/4255 and FDC 6/4256 (KFDC A0006/15 and A0006/16).** These have vanished though and we can't find any replacements.

The best spot to read it (officially) seems to be in the AIM Chapter 5 (*Air Traffic Procedures*), Section 6 (*National Security and Interception Procedures*), and take a look at 5-6-7 for the stuff on transiting US airspace.

How to get it and what to do with it.

You need to submit your request to the Authorization Office here. You can also contact them at +1 571 227-2071. They are open between 9am and 5pm, and it is recommended that you submit your request **at least 7 days before** your planned flight to the US.

When you apply, don't forget to include all those who may be onboard in your request.

Once you have it, it is only **valid for 90 days**. You need to **carry the hard copy** onboard with you.

Any other things to know?

If you do operate over US airspace then you need to stick to their rules which also require that you:

- Use an active VFR or IFR flight plan
- Be equipped with a Mode C or S transponder and use an ATC-assigned transponder code
- Communicate clearly with ATC

Still not sure?

We have a handy guide which tells you everything we just told you above, but in a handy **Opsicle** form. It also has a little flow chart to help you decide whether you need a waiver or not.

The TSA Waiver Opsicle

It's not that complicated (but they try hard)



This is the original source of the TSA Waiver rules which for some reason is issued in the form of a NOTAM and with the clear aim of being an incomprehensible as possible. Let's fix that!

FD-9455 ZZZ SPECIAL SECURITY INSTRUCTIONS FOR CIVIL 1) FILE AND ARE ON AN ACTIVE FLIGHT PLAN (IFR OR VFR); 2) ARE EQUIPPED WITH AN OPERATIONAL MODE C OR S TRANSPONDER AND CONTINUOUSLY SQUAWK AN ATC ASSIGNED TRANSPONDER CODE; 3) MAINTAIN TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS WITH ATC; 4) AIRCRAFT NOT REGISTERED IN THE U.S. MUST OPERATE UNDER AN APPROVED TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (TSA) AVIATION SECURITY PROGRAM OR IN ACCORDANCE WITH AN FAA/FAA AIRSPACE WAIVER. 5) ARE IN RECEIPT OF AND ARE OPERATING IN ACCORDANCE WITH AN FAA ROUTING AUTHORIZATION AND AN FAA/FAA AIRSPACE WAIVER IF THE AIRCRAFT IS REGISTERED IN A U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT-DESIGNATED SPECIAL INTEREST COUNTRY OR IS OPERATING WITHIN THE EAO THREE-LETTER DESIGNATOR OF A COMPANY IN A COUNTRY LISTED AS A U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT-DESIGNATED SPECIAL INTEREST COUNTRY, UNLESS THE OPERATOR HOLDS VALID FAA PART 129 OPERATIONS SPECIFICATIONS, FAA ROUTING AUTHORIZATION FOR OPERATIONS WITHIN U.S. TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE BY AIRCRAFT DESIGNED IN THIS SUBPARAGRAPH C WILL ONLY BE GRANTED FOR IFR OPERATIONS. VFR FLIGHT OPERATIONS ARE PROHIBITED WITHIN U.S. TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE FOR ANY AIRCRAFT REQUIRING AN FAA ROUTING AUTHORIZATION; AND 6) AIRCRAFT NOT REGISTERED IN THE U.S. WHEN CONDUCTING POSTMAINTENANCE, MANUFACTURER, PRODUCTION OR ACCEPTANCE FLIGHT TEST OPERATIONS, MUST MEET ALL OF THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS: A) A U.S. COMPANY MUST HAVE OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF THE AIRCRAFT; B) AN FAA-CERTIFICATED PILOT MUST SERVE AS PILOT IN COMMAND; C) ONLY CREWMEMBERS ARE PERMITTED ONBOARD THE AIRCRAFT; AND D) MAINTENANCE FLIGHT IS INCLUDED IN THE REMARKS SECTION OF THE FLIGHT PLAN. PART II CIVIL AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS THAT TRANSIT U.S. TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE A. CIVIL AIRCRAFT, EXCEPT THOSE OPERATING IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 5.B, C, D, OF THIS PART I, ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRANSIT THE TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE OF THE U.S. IF IN COMPLIANCE WITH ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS: 1) FILE AND ARE ON AN ACTIVE FLIGHT PLAN (IFR OR VFR); 2) ARE EQUIPPED WITH AN OPERATIONAL MODE C OR S TRANSPONDER AND CONTINUOUSLY SQUAWK AN ATC ASSIGNED TRANSPONDER CODE; 3) MAINTAIN TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS WITH ATC; 4) ARE OPERATING UNDER AN APPROVED TSA AVIATION SECURITY PROGRAM OR ARE OPERATING WITH AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH AN FAA/FAA AIRSPACE WAIVER. IF: (A) THE AIRCRAFT IS NOT REGISTERED IN THE U.S.; OR (B) THE AIRCRAFT IS REGISTERED IN THE U.S. AND ITS MAXIMUM TAKEOFF GROSS WEIGHT IS GREATER THAN 100,000 POUNDS (45,359 KGS); 5) ARE IN RECEIPT OF AND ARE OPERATING IN ACCORDANCE WITH AN FAA ROUTING AUTHORIZATION IF THE AIRCRAFT IS REGISTERED IN A U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT-DESIGNATED SPECIAL INTEREST COUNTRY OR IS OPERATING WITHIN THE EAO THREE-LETTER DESIGNATOR OF A COMPANY IN A COUNTRY LISTED AS A U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT-DESIGNATED SPECIAL INTEREST COUNTRY, UNLESS THE OPERATOR HOLDS VALID FAA PART 129 OPERATIONS SPECIFICATIONS, FAA ROUTING AUTHORIZATION FOR TRANSIT OF U.S. TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE BY AIRCRAFT SUBJECT TO THIS PART II SUBPARAGRAPH A WILL ONLY BE GRANTED FOR IFR OPERATIONS. VFR AND VFR FLIGHT OPERATIONS ARE PROHIBITED FOR ANY AIRCRAFT TRANSITING U.S. TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE REQUIRING AN FAA ROUTING AUTHORIZATION. B. CIVIL AIRCRAFT REGISTERED IN CANADA OR MEXICO, AND ENGAGED IN OPERATIONS FOR THE PURPOSES OF AIR AMBULANCE, FIRE FIGHTING, LAW ENFORCEMENT, SEARCH AND RESCUE, OR EMERGENCY EVACUATION ARE AUTHORIZED TO TRANSIT U.S. TERRITORIAL AIRSPACE WITHIN 50 NM OF THEIR RESPECTIVE BORDERS WITH THE U.S., WITH OR WITHOUT AN ACTIVE FLIGHT PLAN, PROVIDED THEY

Break it down for me

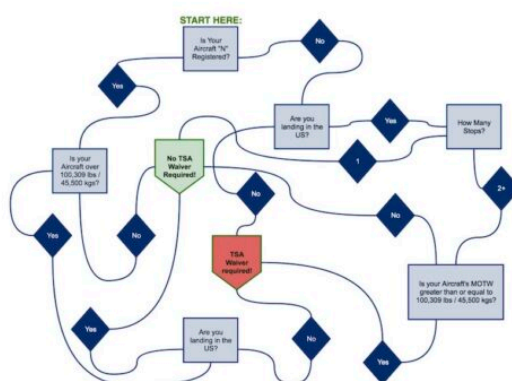
The TSA want to know **who is coming to, or overflying the US**, for security reasons. If they are comfortable with your flight, you get a **TSA Waiver**. It takes 7 days to get one – on occasion, less.

Who needs one?

Foreign registered aircraft over 100K lbs making **2 or more stops** in the US need a TSA Waiver.

All **overflights** over 100K lbs need one - and that includes N-reg. If you are foreign registered and overflying, you need one regardless of size. One single exception: If overflying with an aircraft under 100K lbs registered in a **Portal Country***, and the flight is from one of those countries, then you're good.

* Canada, Mexico, Bahamas, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, and Cayman Islands.



A few extra things...

You need to carry the **hard copy** onboard. It is only valid for **90 days**. Don't forget to include anyone **who may be onboard** when you file your initial request. You can file your request **here**, and get more info **here**.

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