
Security Concerns in the Papua Region of Indonesia

The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) is extremely concerned about the ongoing security issues faced by commercial aircraft and crews operating in the Papua Region of Indonesia, as reported by our local Member Association, Ikatan Pilot Indonesia (IPI).

On 9 January 2023, local militants fired bullets at a cargo plane landing at Oksibil Airport, which resulted in a go around and a diversion.

One month later, on 7 February, a New Zealand pilot was taken hostage by separatist fighters in the same Region, after landing in the district of Nduga.

This situation is not new, although it has deteriorated greatly in recent months. The whole Papua Region was already once categorized as a "high security risk area" by the Indonesian Government. Attacks by local insurgents are common, especially in the mountains and remote areas. Armed groups have been targeting aircraft, crews, and aerodrome infrastructure in an attempt to isolate the Region, draw attention to themselves, send terror messages, and force the Government to recognize the independence of the province of West Papua. Efforts by the Government to get the situation under control have, so far, not been successful.

Ikatan Pilot Indonesia has been working closely with the Indonesian Air Force to ensure the security of aerodromes in the Region, but this is proving extremely challenging. IFALPA urges the Indonesian Government to take all necessary steps to support IPI's initiatives.

In addition, though major operators have already stopped flying into the mountainous and remote Papua Region, IFALPA strongly advises crews still operating there to take extra security precautions, carefully assess the risk for every flight, and limit time spent on the ground.