



# NAT OPS BULLETIN

Serial Number: 2023\_001 Revision 4  
Subject: NAT Oceanic Clearance Removal  
Originator: NAT SPG

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## NOTICE

**The oceanic clearance removal is scheduled to commenced on the AIRAC date 21 March 2024 for Reykjavik and Santa Maria OACs.**

**Refer to NOTAMs to confirm the final implementation date for each the other NAT States.**

The purpose of North Atlantic Operations Bulletin 2023-001 is to provide background information and guidance material to support the removal of oceanic clearances in the NAT in order to align NAT procedures with global procedures as far as possible. Other relevant NAT Documentation, State AIPs and operator and flight crew education material should be updated accordingly to facilitate the changes.

Oceanic clearances will cease to be issued according to the following schedule:

- Bodø, Shanwick and Gander OACs – 4 December

Any necessary changes to aircraft's current flight plan before the Oceanic Entry Point will be addressed by specific ATC clearances as required.

***Any queries about the content of the attached document should be addressed to:***

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## ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

The following are abbreviations, acronyms and definitions as used in this bulletin:

- a) **Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast (ADS-B)** A means by which aircraft, can automatically transmit and/or receive data such as identification, position and additional data, as appropriate, in a broadcast mode via data link.
- b) **Automatic Dependent Surveillance Contract (ADS-C)** A means by which the terms of an ADS-C agreement will be exchanged between the ground system and the aircraft, via data link, specifying under what conditions ADS-C reports would be initiated, and what data would be contained in the reports
- c) **Aircraft Communications Addressing and Reporting System (ACARS)** A digital datalink system for transmission of short messages between aircraft and ground stations.
- d) **Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP)** A public or a private legal entity providing Air Navigation Services. NAV CANADA (Gander), Isavia ANS (Reykjavik), Avinor (Bodo), NATS U.K. (Shanwick), NavPortugal (Santa Maria) and FAA (New York Oceanic).
- e) **Cost Index (ECON)** Operators can flight plan cost index (ECON) provided that the planned true Mach number for any portion of the flight within the NAT is specified in item 15 of the ICAO FPL. Flight crews can fly FMS cost index (ECON). ATC will assign a fixed Mach number if required due to traffic.
- ~~f) **Current Flight Plan** The flight plan route, including changes, if any, brought about by subsequent clearances. From a flight crew perspective this means the route that what is loaded in the FMS.~~
- g) **Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA)** – A time used in the RCL as an estimate at the OEP. **h) Flight Level (FL)**
- i) **North Atlantic Region - (NAT Region)**
  - New York Oceanic East OCA / KZWY
  - Gander OCA / CZQX
  - Reykjavik OCA / BIRD
  - Bodø OCA (above FL195) / ENOB
  - Shanwick OCA / EGGX
  - Santa Maria OCA / LPPO
- j) **Oceanic Control Area (OCA)** Bodo Oceanic, Gander Oceanic, New York Oceanic East, Reykjavik, Santa Maria, and Shanwick, excluding the Shannon and Brest Ocean Transition Areas.
- k) **Oceanic Entry Point (OEP)** The Oceanic Entry point is generally a “named” waypoint, on or close to the FIR boundary where the aircraft enters an oceanic control area.
  - a. Routes involving more than one OCA may result in multiple Oceanic Entry and Exit Points.
  - b. For aircraft entering Reykjavik from Edmonton, at or north of 82N, the Oceanic Entry Point can be an “unnamed” waypoint (Lat/Long position) on the boundary.

- l) **Oceanic Exit Point (OXP)** The Oceanic Exit point is generally a “named” waypoint, on or close to the FIR boundary where the aircraft leaves the last oceanic control area.
- m) **Request for Clearance (RCL)** A Voice, or Data Link message via ACARS, used to provide ETA at OEP, requested Flight Level, and Mach.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The NAT Region requires operators to obtain a specific Oceanic Clearance to operate within the region. This procedure was introduced to enable safe and efficient handling of the large volume of traffic that operated within the NAT procedural oceanic airspace utilizing HF voice communications and large separation standards.

1.2 Recently, significant technological advancements in Communication, Navigation and Surveillance have enabled NAT ANSPs to improve safety and services in the NAT Region and further reduce separation minima. These technologies include:

- a) Communication – utilization of CPDLC, including route conformance check using the uplink message **CONFIRM ASSIGNED ROUTE**;
- b) Surveillance – utilization of ADS-C and ADS-B, including route conformance check using the ADS-C capability to report the NEXT and NEXT+1 waypoint;
- c) Improved computer interfaces between Domestic and Oceanic air traffic control sectors.

1.3 The NAT Systems Planning Group (NAT SPG) concluded that technological developments have reached a point where the oceanic clearance is no longer required.

1.4 The following is an explanation of the terms “should”, “must” and “shall” as used in this bulletin.

- a) “Should” is used to indicate a recommended practice or policy that is considered as desirable for the safety of operations.
- b) “Shall” and “must” are used to indicate a practice or policy that is considered as necessary for the safety of operations.

1.5 This NAT Ops Bulletin describes amended procedures that are applicable after the removal of NAT oceanic clearances.

## 2. FLIGHT CREW PROCEDURES

### RCL

2.1 The ACARS or voice RCL must contain all of the following information:

- Oceanic Entry Point (OEP)
- ETA for the OEP
- Mach Number (based on FMS cost index (ECON))
- Requested Flight Level
- The highest acceptable Flight Level which can be attained at the OEP (via free text) or provide the highest acceptable Flight Level as MAX FL

- Example: Requesting FL360 - enter free text MAX F380 o If requested Flight Level is the highest acceptable; provide the requested Flight Level as MAX FL
- Example: Requesting FL360 - enter free text MAX F360

2.2 For the ANSPs listed below, flight crews must send the ACARS RCL message prior to the OEP as follows;

- Gander 90-60 minutes
- Shanwick 90-30 minutes
- Santa Maria at least 40 minutes
- Bodo at least 20 minutes
- Reykjavik no earlier than 20 minutes

Gander: Flights departing from airports less than 45 minutes flying time from the OEP should send RCL 10 minutes prior to start up.

Reykjavik: Due to coverage limitations aircraft equipped with Inmarsat data link won't be able to send an RCL message via ACARS data link when north of 82 N. Aircraft equipped with Iridium and /or HF ACARS data link should be able to send an RCL message via ACARS data link regardless of location.

2.3 Voice shall be used to submit an RCL message if;

- Not-ACARS Data Link equipped
- ACARS Data Link is not operational
- **RCL REJECTED** is received by aircraft
- No response to RCL is received within 15 minutes of sending RCL

2.4 The following response message to the RCL will be generated automatically by the ANSP and delivered to the aircraft via ACARS or voice as appropriate:

**RCL RECEIVED BY [ANSP]. FLY CURRENT FLIGHT PLAN OR AS AMENDED BY ATC**

Revert to voice if **RCL REJECTED** is received.

*Note: There will be no clearance sent via the traditional ACARS method. Flight crew must fly what is loaded in the FMS or as amended by ATC.*

*Note: If ATC cannot accept the requested OEP Flight Level, the closest oceanic Flight Level to the one requested (RCL) will be determined and a clearance to climb or descend issued prior to the OEP. The "MAX FL" will never be violated.*

*Note: Flight crews are reminded that a change in Flight Level, Speed or Route can be requested at any time after the OEP.*

2.5 The information in the RCL message will be processed as follows:

| RCL data item                          | ATC Processing   |
|--|--|
| Oceanic Entry Point (OEP) and ETA time | Information is used to update the currently held ATC data. |

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Mach Number          | ATC will use the requested Mach speed information as the reference speed for cost index (ECON) operations. The aircraft should continue to operate on FMS cost index (ECON) unless it is assigned a fixed Mach speed by ATC. ATC must be advised if the speed changes by Mach 0.02 or more from the Mach in the RCL.  |
| <b>RCL data item</b> | <b>ATC Processing</b>   |
| Flight Level         | ATC will store the requested Flight Level information. The aircraft shall not change Flight Level unless it is cleared for a Flight Level change by ATC.<br>Flight crews are reminded that a change in Flight Level can be requested at any time after the OEP as the traffic situation constantly changes and previously blocked Flight Levels may become available. |
| Max Flight Level     | Max Flight Level shall be provided in the RCL.<br>ATC will store the Max Flight Level Information for traffic planning purposes. If no Max Flight Level is provided, the RCL requested Flight Level will be considered as the highest acceptable Flight Level at OEP.   |
| Other information    | Information is brought to the attention of the controller.  |

### Oceanic Route Change Communications (Prior to OEP)

2.6 Upon receipt of the ACARS Data Link RCL, any route amendment ~~to the current flight plan (what is loaded in the FMS)~~ will be issued either by voice or CPDLC loadable route clearance uplink.

#### *Shanwick*

2.7 The Shanwick oceanic controller will only issue the ACARS message **CONTACT SHANWICK BY VOICE** instructing the flight crew to contact Shanwick oceanic ATC (123.950/127.650) when:

- An oceanic route ~~amendment different from the current flight plan (route that what is loaded in the FMS)~~ is necessary due to traffic;
- Shanwick ATC considers it appropriate to do so, to ensure the most efficient oceanic route and Flight Level.

*Note: Instruction to contact by voice will be no later than 30 minutes prior to the OEP.*

### Route Conformance Checking (After passing OEP)

2.8 **CONFIRM ASSIGNED ROUTE** will be uplinked to FANS equipped aircraft after crossing the OEP. CPDLC loadable route clearance uplinks will be used to amend the ~~route current flight plan~~ where necessary after the OEP.

### Entry Conditions

#### Route

2.9 The aircraft shall **not** change route unless it is cleared for a route change by ATC. ~~Enroute aircraft shall enter oceanic airspace in accordance with their current flight plan (route that what is loaded in the FMS), or as amended by ATC. No oceanic clearance is required.~~

**Speed**

- 2.10 Fly cost index FMS (ECON). ATC will assign a fixed Mach number if required due to traffic.
- 2.11 If ATC assigns a fixed Mach number for the oceanic crossing due to traffic, request NORMAL SPEED (via CPDLC or voice) after the OXP in domestic ATC airspace.

**Flight level**

2.12 The aircraft shall **not** change Flight Level unless it is cleared for a Flight Level change by ATC.

**3. AIR-GROUND COMMUNICATIONS FAILURE**

- 3.1 The NAT loss of communication procedure has been amended as follows:

**Communications failure while operating in the NAT Region:**

- The pilot shall maintain the current flight plan until reaching the OXP.
- No route, flight level or speed change shall be made before the OXP unless a change is deemed necessary by the pilot in command to ensure the safety of the aircraft.
- Aircraft with a destination within the NAT Region should follow the procedures above until reaching the top of decent point and should thereafter follow procedures published in the applicable State AIP.

**4. WEBSITES**

The ICAO EUR/NAT Office Website is at: [www.icao.int/eurnat](http://www.icao.int/eurnat). Click on **EUR & NAT Documents** >> **NAT Documents** to obtain NAT Operations and NAT Region Update Bulletins and related project planning documents.

**ATTACHMENT A – SUMMARY OF NAT OCEANIC CLEARANCE REMOVAL  
SPECIAL EMPHASIS ITEMS CONTAINED IN THIS NAT OPS BULLETIN**

**SPECIAL EMPHASIS ITEMS FOR NAT OCEANIC CLEARANCE REMOVAL. The Special Emphasis Items (SEI) listed below should be part of the flight crew education required to ensure a thorough understanding of the removal of the NAT oceanic clearance policies and procedures especially in regard to Route and Flight Level assignment.**

**Flight Crew**

- The RCL gives ATC your OEP ETA, requested Flight Level, Mach, along with your MAX FL (highest acceptable). ATC will never violate your MAX FL. If no Max Flight Level is provided, the RCL requested Flight Level will be considered as the highest acceptable Flight Level at OEP.

- ATC response will be **RCL RECEIVED BY [ANSP]. FLY CURRENT FLIGHT PLAN OR AS AMENDED BY ATC**

- Revert to voice if **RCL REJECTED** is received

*Note: Current Flight Plan – From a flight crew perspective this means what is loaded in the FMS.*

*Note: There will be no clearance sent via the traditional ACARS method. Flight crew must fly what is loaded in the FMS or as amended by ATC.*

*Note: If ATC cannot accept your requested OEP Flight Level, they will determine the closest oceanic Flight Level to the one requested (RCL) and issue a clearance to climb or descend prior to the OEP. The “MAX FL” will never be violated.*

*Note: Flight crews are reminded that a change in Flight Level, Speed or Route can be requested at any time after the OEP.*

- The aircraft shall **not** change route unless it is cleared for a route change by ATC. **Enroute aircraft shall enter oceanic airspace in accordance with their current flight plan (what is loaded in the FMS), or as amended by ATC. No oceanic clearance is required.** Any necessary route change (prior to OEP) will be either uplinked via a loadable CPDLC message or by voice.
- OEP Flight Level
  - ATC will determine the closest oceanic Flight Level to the one received in the RCL. The “MAX FL” will never be violated.
  - The RCL Flight Level is stored by ATC for issuance when traffic permits, flight crew can request any Flight Level changes they desire after the OEP with the expectation that Flight Level changes in the NAT can be routinely accommodated.
  - Domestic ATC is fully responsible for issuing Flight Level changes to ensure aircraft crosses the OEP at the correct level.
  - **The aircraft shall not change Flight Level unless it is cleared for a Flight Level change by ATC**
- Speed
  - Fly FMS cost index (ECON). ATC will assign a fixed Mach number if required due to traffic.
  - If ATC assigns a fixed MACH number for the oceanic crossing due to traffic, request NORMAL SPEED (via CPDLC or voice) after OXP in domestic ATC airspace.

– END –