

AFGHANISTAN OPS All Call: Responses	ISSUED BY OPSGROUP EMAIL TEAM@OPS.GROUP	
	V1 / 21 AUG 2021	

CIRC: OPSGROUP MEMBERS

Situation/Event


On Sunday, August 15, Taliban forces gained control of Kabul city, and routine operations at OAKB/Kabul (Hamid Karzai Intl) came to a halt due to the security situation. Since then, US Military has retained control over airport operations, but access to the airport from the city became difficult due to Taliban control of the roads to it. Since then, military-led evacuations of civilians has continued, primarily on military transport aircraft, with some civilian operations. On Monday, August 16, the Kabul FIR (OAKX) suspended ATC operations, and the airspace has remained uncontrolled since.

ALL CALL Responses

We asked OPSGROUP members to share any information available on Afghanistan and Kabul, to assist any operators planning to conduct relief operations. This note contains a summary of responses received. If you have any corrections or additions, please email team@ops.group. **Thank you to all members who have helped so far.**

As the situation is developing, revisions of this note may be issued, so please check with other sources before relying on anything here for flight planning.

Pilot/Operator Reports (OPSGROUP)

 See full reports in your member dashboard at <https://ops.group/dashboard/airport-spy/OAKB/>

Flight date: Aug 19. Control tower is run by USAF. Take off from Runway 11 is preferred for published climb gradient - tower controller knows this. Fuel is limited and likely to get worse, tankering fuel good idea. Northern route in and out makes most sense; DoD mostly using southern route. Intermittent power lighting issues not too bad, but runway lights were out for half an hour at one point. Security kinda stable. Taliban wants us out and seems to allowing it. Traffic flow is solid. ATC working well. Due in large part to CENTCOM airflow control measures. The "ATO" I assume civil flights will get listed on it as well. Airport is very congested on the ground. Carriers should do all they can do to maximize passenger loads to get the folks who need to leave out. The math is daunting. Time is limited.

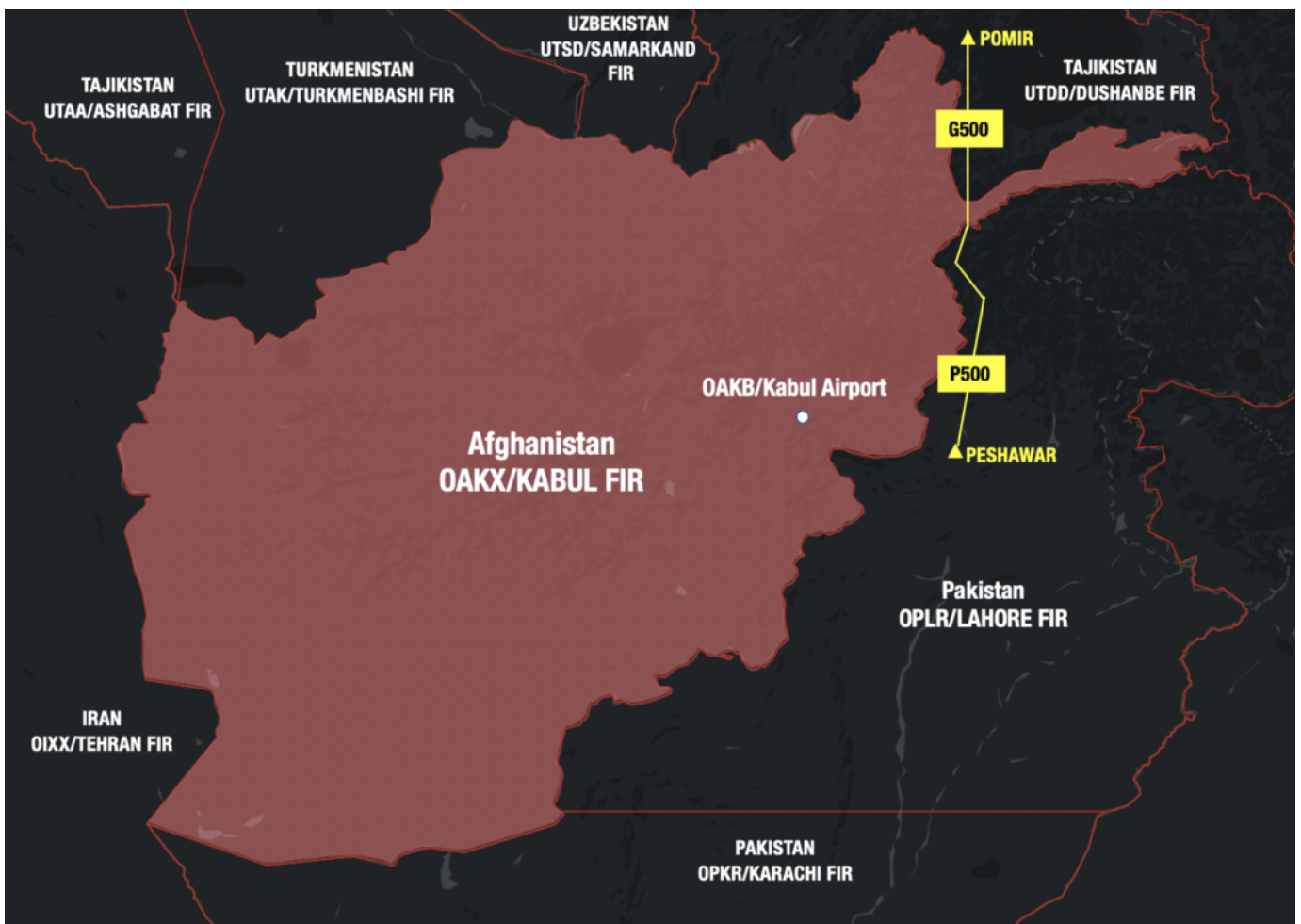
Flight date: Aug 19 Kabul Tower is controlled by US/Allied forces. A US Air Force Boeing RC 135 is stationed overhead Kabul as and when evacuation flights are moving to act as communications relay. The airspace is closed to civilian traffic. Most all traffic now exclusively military transport aircrafts, C17, A400 etc. All Afghanistan Airspace is uncontrolled. Some European countries are using airports in Turkmenistan to base the Civil aircraft, eg. Tashkent, Navoi, Samarkand, Bukhara.

Flight date: Aug 20 Fuel is cash only. Tashkent is the alternate. USAF ATC. As long as the military is there, providing cover with helicopters on takeoff not sure if this is all flights. Taliban is running civilian side, as in gunfire and scaring people off. US running military side.

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Airspace – Kabul FIR (OAKX)

There is no civilian ATC operating in the OAKX FIR. Service had been provided for the last few years by civilian contractors (IAP), with controllers based in a compound at Kabul Airport. That facility has been evacuated and in part destroyed/looted during fighting. **All ex-pat enroute controllers were evacuated to Qatar on Aug 17**, and onwards home. It appears unlikely that there will be any possibility of Enroute ATC for the Kabul FIR for the foreseeable future.



OAKX Notam A0635/21 was issued Aug 18, advising that Kabul ACC is ‘released to military’, no ATS available, and aircraft transiting Kabul FIR will be flying in uncontrolled airspace at their own risk.

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Overflights – Kabul FIR (OAKX)

With FAA Notam KICZ 24/2021 (re-issued Friday, Aug 20) **US operators** are prohibited from entering the OAKX FIR, with the exception of one route: **G/P500** – which transits Afghanistan at its narrowest part in the east of the country. France and Italy have also prohibited their operators from entering.

The FAA cites three specific risk factors: extremist/militant activity, limited risk mitigation capabilities, and disruptions to Air Traffic Services. There are several exceptions stated in the order:

1. **You can** operate into **Kabul International** (Hamid Karzai) (OAKB) if you follow the PPR (Prior Permission) process, and are aware of the service limitations at the airport including lack of fuel and no possibility of overnighting.
2. **You can** operate in the **Kabul FIR** (OAKX) if another US government agency authorizes it together with the FAA, or by way of “deviation, exemption, or other authorization” issued by the FAA Administrator. If you do plan to fly, you must call the FAA Operations Center in Washington.
3. **You can** overfly on one airway: Use of airway P500/G500 is authorized for transiting overflights. (That airway cross the sliver of Afghan airspace in the east of Afghanistan between Pakistan and Tajikistan)

Specific guidance to operators planning to fly to Afghanistan is also detailed in the NOTAM:

1. Operations into Kabul airport (OAKB) must comply with the PPR issued by the OAKB Airport Manager (call +97444589561)
2. Minimize time spent in the OAKX FIR below FL260, and maintain 5000 feet AGL to the maximum extent possible when not in contact with ATC or Kingpin (US Military).

The greater majority of traffic is avoiding the Kabul FIR [source: ICAO]

ICAO advise likelihood of non-normal traffic situations in the following FIRs: Bahrain, India, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and UAE.

This NOTAM was published by Pakistan on behalf of Afghanistan – with frequencies in use.

A0635/21 NOTAMR A0630/21 Q) OAKX/QAFAM/IV/NBO/E/000/999/ A) OAKX B) 2108180445 C) 2108201300 EST E) FOLLOWING NOTAM IS ISSUED ON REQUEST OF KABUL ACC. DUE SECURITY REASON KABUL ACC IS RELEASED TO MILITARY. NO ATS WILL BE AVBL. ACFT TANSITING THROUGHY KABUL FIR WILL BE FLYING IN UN-CONTROLLED AIRSPACE AT THEIR OWN RISK.

1. TRAFFIC ON ATS ROUTE **L750** TO CONTACT ON FREQ **134.5 MHZ AT POINT RANAH.**
2. TRAFFIC ON ATS ROUTE **N644** TO CONTACT ON FREQ **134.5 MHZ AT POINT LEMOD.**
3. TRAFFIC ON ATS ROUTE **A466** TO CONTACT ON FREQ **134.3 MHZ AT POINT AMDAR.**
4. TRAFFIC ON ATS ROUTE **P500** TO CONTACT ON FREQ **133.1 MHZ AT POINT MOTMO.**

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Safe Airspace – Afghanistan

Risk Level: One - Do Not Fly

SafeAirspace.net has elevated Afghanistan to **Risk Level 1 – Do Not Fly**. The **primary risks** are direct and indirect fire targeting airports and from surface-to-air fire targeting aircraft operating at low altitudes. Additionally, the current conflict has led to zero normal ATC control across the entire airspace and an extreme threat to aircraft and crew safety and security if emergency landings are made.

Air defense forces in all neighboring states are likely at high alert status within respective border regions - target misidentification by military air defense operators under stressful situations remains a credible scenario

See <https://safeairspace.net/afghanistan/> for full info.

Current warnings list (21 Aug)

Source	Reference	Issued	Valid to
USA	Notam KICZ A0024/21	20 Aug 2021	Ongoing
Europe	EASA Information Note	17 Aug 2021	Ongoing
France	Notam LFFF F1296/21	16 Aug 2021	01 Sep 2021
Canada	Notam CZQX H2286/21	28 Jul 2021	28 Oct 2021
Germany	AIC 10/21	07 Jul 2018	Ongoing
UK	UK AIP ENR 1.1 (1.4.5)	09 Oct 2015	Ongoing

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Airport situation – Kabul Hamad Karzai International (OAKB)

The airport is operating, PPR only, with limitations. VFR only, limited ATC service provided by US Military, with KC135 as top cover (Kingpin). Updates and reports listed below with source information. Key points:

- Airport is VFR by day only – runway lights mostly inop
- Fuel limited and supply likely to be exhausted soon – tanker in
- USAF providing ATC
- Prior Permission (PPR) process described in NOTAM OAKB A0006/21
- Civil side of airport is closed, only military side operating
- Expect no handling service (airstairs etc.)



Satellite Overview of OAKB showing Mil side/Civil side of Kabul airport [source: Reuters Graphics]

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Satellite Overview of OAKB showing city, terrain, and Airport location [source: Reuters Graphics]

ICAO Kabul CCT (Contingency Coordination Team)

During non-routine events, ICAO activates a CCT to manage information flow for Air Traffic Operations. The Kabul CCT has been active since the events began on Sunday. Following points from ICAO:

- The military organizations managing the **Prior Permission Required (PPR) programme** for operations Kabul International Airport have emphasized the need for all flights to Kabul to strictly comply with the PPR process described in NOTAM OAKB A0006/21 and any subsequent NOTAM that updates the information. Flights that do not comply with the PPR process cannot be accommodated due to limited aircraft parking capacity.
- Military ATC are providing a **limited Tower VFR service** (no IFR services) from the alternate control tower on the North side with limited radios and no landline communications.
- The military support services are seeking to establish a **procedural arrival/departure advisory service** in the vicinity of Kabul International Airport to help with civil/military de-confliction and flow to the airport. Establishment of this service will be reported by CCT Bulletin.
- **Secure ramp space at OAKB is very limited** and aircraft are expected to remain on the ground only long enough to embark passengers and depart. Expect no more than 30 minutes of ground time. No fuel or services are available.

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- Due to the requirement to keep arriving/departing aircraft as high as possible, **all flights transiting the Kabul FIR are requested to operate at or above FL300**. Note: Kabul FIR ATM Contingency Plan also refers. <https://aaaa.gov.af/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Afghanistan-ATM-Contingency-PlanV2.1-APR-2021.pdf>
- NOTAMs for Kabul FIR (OAKX) and Kabul International aerodrome (OAKB) have been published on the USA Defense Internet NOTAM Service (DINS, <https://www.notams.faa.gov/dinsQueryWeb/>).

EU Security assessment

On Aug 16, the EU Integrated Risk group met and issued some guidance to civilian operators. An abridged summary is below, see the full report at <https://safeairspace.net/afg-eurisk>

Existing information on the armed clashes were reviewed, in particular the significant developments taking place from 6 August 2021 to date, where the Taliban have taken control of the vast majority of the country, including the following major airports in Afghanistan: Kandahar (OAKN/KDH), Herat (OHR/HEA), Jalalabad (OAJL), Mazar-i-Sharif (OAMS/MZR), Konduz (OAUZ/UND) and Farah (OAFR/FAH). The meeting also noted that the Taliban has usurped a substantial amount of military equipment in the process of taking control of military installations, airports and airbases across Afghanistan which possess additional threats to civil aviation. The rapid deterioration of the security situation at Kabul International Airport was also discussed by the Group. On 16 August 2021 a NOTAM was issued for Afghan airspace stating that due to security reasons Kabul ACC is released to military control and no ATS will be available.

The meeting also acknowledged that the threat posed to civil aircraft comes not only from ground-to-air weaponry but also from the potential use of the Afghan airspace by military aircraft operated by the Taliban, whose training, capability to deal with civil/military coordination is not assessed. The lack of navigational aids and the poor security and safety services on the ground would be critical in case of engine failures or emergencies on board, including the events of unlawful interference. The Group also noted that as of 16 August 2021 all commercial flights at Kabul International Airport have been suspended indefinitely, with only military and humanitarian evacuation flights authorised. On the basis of the information available, the Integrated EU Aviation Security Risk Assessment Group agreed that the situation in the region is unstable, with increasing safety risks to commercial aviation due to lack of Air Traffic Services. Therefore, EASA advises commercial operators as a precautionary measure not to conduct any flights in the OAKX/Kabul FIR until further notice. This recommendation is valid until further notice and will be revisited at the next regular meeting of the Group which is scheduled to take place on 20 September 2021.

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OAKB/Kabul PPR Process and Airport contacts

For military/defence related flights:

Approval for OAKB ops comes from SHAPE/NATO in Belgium, through RSFCC.
RSFCC can only process MRFs/PPRs from Nato Nations or Nato registered contractors.

For approval PPR req:

RSFCC Ops Workflow (NU): rsfccops@shape.nato.int

RSFCC Ops Workflow (NS): rsfccops@ns.shape.nato.int

For Civilian operations:

Request PPR from Airport Manager Phone: +97444589561 (checked working Aug 20)

PPR requests to HKIAPPRS@GMAIL.COM

Additional contacts (unverified):

PPR Requests for Governments of Third Countries and for all other flights can be made to:

North HKIA Air Operations (Eagle Ops)

General Contact: isafkiaairopsnu@hq.rs.nato.int

PPR Coordinator: hkiappr@gmail.com

Additional PPR Coordinator: isafkiaairopspprnu@hq.rs.nato.int

Airport Operator Contact:

Mr. Mohammad Sameem (Sam) Raheemi - Acting Director: Phone +93202300017 / +93778790000

Email: sam.raheemi@gmail.com

Reroutes to avoid Kabul FIR

From OG article at <https://ops.group/blog/afghanistan-do-not-fly/> : For overflights of the region, flights between Europe and parts of Asia will be those most affected by the effective closure of the OAKX/Kabul FIR. All major international airlines have now stopped using Afghanistan's airspace for overflights, most electing to route **south via the airspace over the United Arab Emirates and Arabian Sea** off the south coast of Pakistan.

However, there are **risk warnings** to consider for the airspace here too. Several countries have warnings in place for **Iran's airspace** (the [OIIX/Tehran FIR](#)), including a total flight ban by the US, which were issued following the shoot-down of Ukraine Int Airlines flight 752 over Tehran in Jan 2020. The southern part of **Saudi Arabia's airspace** (the [OEJD/Jeddah FIR](#)) carries risk as well, with increasing Houthi drone and missile attacks over the past year.

To the north of Afghanistan, the options for overflights are fairly limited – via Kyrgyzstan, Kazhakstan, or even farther north via Russia. So these are not really practical unless operating from northern Europe to China, Hong Kong, Japan, etc.

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Risk to overflying traffic near Afghan borders: There have been reports of Afghan Air Force aircraft being shot down by Uzbek forces on 15 August. Likely that many Afghan military aircrews have fled Afghanistan into neighboring countries by means of using their aircraft. **Air defense forces in all neighboring states are likely at high alert status within respective border regions** - target misidentification by military air defense operators under stressful situations remains a credible scenario. Therefore overflying traffic passing near to the OAKX/Kabul FIR should ideally do so as far from Afghan borders as possible.

Updates

If you have any updates or corrections to this document, please email team@ops.group.

Further information

Below links contain further information on the Afghanistan situation.

OPSGROUP Members

- **Dashboard** login: <https://ops.group/dashboard>
- **#flightops channel** in OPSGROUP Slack: <https://opsgrouptalk.slack.com/>
- **Airport Spy**: OAKB/Kabul: <https://ops.group/dashboard/airport-spy/OAKB/>

General resources

- Safe Airspace – Afghanistan page: <https://safeairspace.net/afghanistan/>
- IFALPA summary: <https://www.ifalpa.org/publications/library/kabul-fir-updated-information--3490>
- Afghanistan AIS Portal: <https://www.afgais.com/> (has been updated but service not guaranteed)
- Monitor DINS for latest NOTAMs for OAKX/OAKB