

FAA Background Information Regarding U.S. Civil Aviation – Egypt Sinai Peninsula in the Cairo (HECC) Flight Information Region (FIR)

The FAA assesses that U.S. civil aviation operating into, out of, within, or over the Sinai Peninsula in the Cairo (HECC) Flight Information Region (FIR) at altitudes below FL260 within the lateral limits described in [insert appropriate NOTAM identifier] remains at risk from hazards associated with extremist/militant activities. International civil air routes that transit the Sinai Peninsula and aircraft operating to and from Sinai airports are at risk from potential extremist/militant attacks involving Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS), anti-tank missiles, small-arms fire and indirect fire from mortars and rockets. Some MANPADS have the capability to target aircraft at higher altitudes up to a maximum altitude of 25,000 feet and/or during approach and departure.

Despite an increase in Egyptian counterterrorism operations, the extremist/militant group formerly known as Ansar Bait al-Maqdis (ABM) — now known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Sinai Province (ISIL-Sinai) — has increased the frequency and deadliness of their complex attacks in the northern Sinai. ISIL-Sinai has fired small arms at Egyptian military aircraft in the region and used MANPADS to shoot down an Egyptian military helicopter flying at low altitude in January 2014. The group has also fired on airports with mortars and other small arms. Although MANPADS have not been used to target civil aircraft in the Sinai, ISIL-Sinai is known to possess MANPADS which could potentially be used to engage civil aircraft. Attacks may occur with little or no warning.

There is an added threat to civil aviation in the form of improvised explosive devices (IED). ISIL-Sinai claimed responsibility for the 31 October 2015 bomb attack that destroyed a Russian passenger airliner en route from Sharm el-Sheikh (HESH), Egypt to St. Petersburg, Russia. The group claimed the IED was placed aboard the aircraft prior to its departure from Sharm el-Sheikh, raising concerns about insider threats at the airport.

The FAA will continue to monitor risks to U.S. civil aviation in the Sinai Peninsula and the Cairo (HECC) FIR and will make adjustments to its advisories for U.S. civil aviation operations as necessary.

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