

## **FAA Background Information Regarding U.S. Civil Aviation in the Kabul Flight Information Region (OAKX)**

The combination of ongoing military operations and extremist/militant activity has resulted in a fragile security situation across Afghanistan. There is increasing risk to U.S. civil aviation operating in the Kabul Flight Information Region (OAKX) at altitudes below Flight Level 330 (FL330), particularly for aircraft operating at low altitudes, including during the arrival and departure phases of flight. For this reason, on 23 Dec 2018, the FAA published Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) KICZ A0027/18, which advised U.S. civil aviation to exercise extreme caution during flight operations when operating into, out of, within, or over the Kabul FIR (OAKX), and, to the maximum extent possible, operate only on established air routes, remain at or above FL330, and minimize ground time in Afghanistan.

The primary risk to U.S. civil aviation comes from indirect fire targeting airports and from surface-to-air fire targeting aircraft operating at low altitudes, including during the arrival and departure phases of flight. Airports and airfields in Afghanistan have frequently been targeted by direct assault and/or indirect fire and are also susceptible to insider threats. Flight operations at airports have been disrupted, and aircraft have been damaged by, rocket or mortar fire attacks, as demonstrated by a late-September 2017 high-profile indirect fire attack on Kabul International Airport (OAKB) when multiple munitions impacted within the airport perimeter and disrupted flight operations. Bagram Airfield was targeted by indirect fire in August 2018. The insider threat risk remains a concern, as demonstrated by the September 2017 suicide bomber attack at an entry control point at Bagram Airfield, and a November 2016 insider attack that killed four people, also at Bagram.

While operating at low altitudes, including during the arrival and departure phases of flight, aircraft are primarily at risk of encountering small-arms fire, rocket-propelled grenades, and anti-aircraft fire. U.S. and Afghan military aircraft operating at low altitudes have encountered a multitude of anti-aircraft incidents. There is also a risk from shoulder-fired man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) when operating at altitudes below FL330, subject to the caveat previously discussed regarding high elevation terrain. Although, to date, MANPADS have only been fired at military aircraft, there is a potential that they may be used against civil aviation with little or no warning. Some MANPADS are capable of reaching a maximum altitude of 25,000 feet above ground level.

The FAA is closely monitoring the security conditions in Afghanistan to determine whether further action is necessary to minimize risk to U.S. civil aviation operations in the Kabul FIR (OAKX).

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