

FAA Background Information Regarding U.S. Civil Aviation in the Territory and Airspace of Pakistan

There are continuing risks to U.S. civil aviation operating in the territory and airspace of Pakistan, particularly for aircraft on the ground and aircraft operating at low altitudes, including during the arrival and departure phases of flight, from various extremist/militant groups. For this reason, on 30 Dec 2019, the FAA published Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) KICZ A0036/19, advising U.S. civil aviation to exercise caution when operating into, out of, within, or over the territory and airspace of Pakistan. With the ongoing presence of extremist/militant elements operating in Pakistan, there is continued risk to U.S. civil aviation from small-arms fire, complex attacks against airports, indirect weapons fire, and anti-aircraft fire, any of which could occur with little or no warning.

Between 2014 and 2019, extremist/militant groups operating in Pakistan have demonstrated their ongoing capability and intent to target civil aviation through multiple attacks on aviation infrastructure, including airports. In August 2019, two individuals were arrested for firing small arms directed at a commercial aircraft on approach into Islamabad International Airport (OPIS). In July 2017, media sources reported on extremists' intent to conduct attacks at Jinnah International Airport (OPKC) in Karachi. In 2015, extremists/militants attacked two remote airfields in Baluchistan Province and one Pakistani Air Force Base in Peshawar, resulting in a number of deaths and injuries. In an August 2015 attack on Jiwani International Airport (OPJI), extremists/militants destroyed an air traffic control radar facility, and in June 2014, extremists/militants attacked OPKC, resulting in over 30 deaths and damage to airport facilities. During several separate incidents in 2014, aircraft on approach into Peshawar's Bacha Khan International Airport (OPPS) were fired on by small arms, which resulted in one fatality.

In addition to the extremist/militant threat to U.S. civil aviation operations in the territory and airspace of Pakistan, there may be flight disruptions and airspace closures implemented due to clashes in the Kashmir Region with little or no warning. On 26 February 2019, the Indian Air Force crossed the Line of Control and claimed to have conducted air strikes against Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) extremist/militant training camps, in response to a JeM attack against Indian forces in Indian-administered Kashmir on 14 February. On 27 February 2019, Pakistan carried out retaliatory air strikes on unidentified targets in Indian-administered Kashmir and subsequently claimed to have shot down two Indian fighter jets entering Pakistani airspace. India and Pakistan employ a variety of advanced air-to-air fighter aircraft and surface-to-air missile systems capable of targeting aircraft up to and beyond overflight altitudes typically used by civil aircraft. Although India and Pakistan have no intent to target civil aviation, if military operations were to resume, such operations could present an inadvertent risk to U.S. civil aviation. Historically, Pakistan and neighboring air navigation service providers have managed their airspace appropriately to deconflict and protect civil aviation overflight operations in response to clashes in the Kashmir Region.

While, to date, there have been no reports of man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) being used against civil aviation in the territory and airspace of Pakistan, some extremist/militant groups operating in Pakistan are suspected of having access to MANPADS. As a result, there is a potential risk for extremists/militants to target civil aviation with MANPADS. Some MANPADS are capable of reaching a maximum altitude of 25,000 feet above ground level.

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