

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

Due to ongoing fighting between military forces and extremist/militant elements and the continuing extremist/militant threat to civil aviation, the FAA assesses there is continued risk to U.S. civil aviation operating into, out of, within, or over the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula in the Cairo Flight Information Region (FIR) (HECC), within the lateral limits described in NOTAM A0010/21, at altitudes below Flight Level (FL) 260.

Civil aircraft operating on established international civil air routes transiting the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula in the Cairo FIR (HECC) at altitudes below FL 260 and aircraft operating to and from Sinai airports are at risk from extremist/militant attacks involving a variety of anti-aircraft capable weapons, including man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS), anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs), small arms-fire and indirect fire weapons, such as mortars and rockets targeting aircraft and Sinai airports. Some MANPADS present a risk up to a maximum altitude of 25,000 feet.

The Islamic State in Iraq and ash-Sham in the Sinai (ISIS-Sinai), an Egypt-based affiliate of ISIS, continues to conduct attacks in the Sinai Peninsula, some of which have demonstrated their intent and capability to target critical infrastructure and civilian targets. During 2020, ISIS-Sinai continued attacks against Egyptian security forces and civilian targets in northern Sinai, including multiple improvised explosive device (IED) attacks against residential areas and an attack against a gas pipeline. From 2014 to 2017, ISIS-Sinai attacked multiple aviation-related targets, most notably in December 2017, when the group used an anti-tank guided missile to destroy a military VIP helicopter at Al 'Arish International Airport (ICAO: HEAR).

While predominately operating in the northern portion of the peninsula, ISIS-Sinai has demonstrated the capability to conduct attacks in southern Sinai. In February 2017, ISIS-Sinai militants in southern Sinai fired rockets across the border toward Eilat, Israel. In October 2015, ISIS-Sinai claimed responsibility for an IED attack, which destroyed a Russian passenger aircraft en-route to St. Petersburg, Russia, shortly after its departure from Sharm el-Sheikh International Airport (ICAO: HESH) in the southern Sinai. The group claimed the IED was placed aboard the aircraft prior to departing HESH, raising concerns about potential insider threats at the airport. In June 2015, ISIS-Sinai fired rockets towards El Gora Airport (ICAO: HEGR), located in northern Sinai. Regarding aircraft in flight, in January 2014, ISIS-Sinai fired small arms at an Egyptian military aircraft and used MANPADS to shoot down an Egyptian military helicopter flying at low altitude. Although MANPADS have not been used to target civil aircraft in the Sinai, extremists/militants have the capability to do so with little or no warning.

The FAA will continue to monitor for changes in the risks to U.S. civil aviation operations in the Cairo (HECC) FIR and will adjust its advisory for U.S. civil aviation operations as conditions warrant.

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