

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

The Taliban's seizure of the majority of Afghanistan, the collapse of Afghan governmental structures, and the ongoing threat of violent extremist organization (VEO) terrorist attacks, coupled with the coalition force withdrawal from Hamid Karzai International Airport (ICAO: OAKB), has resulted in a substantially degraded safety and security environment for U.S. civil aviation operations in the Kabul Flight Information Region (FIR) (OAKX), including at OAKB. The recent withdrawal of U.S. and coalition forces resulted in the removal of associated risk mitigation capabilities previously available at OAKB. In addition, the lack of a functioning civil aviation authority and air navigation service provider has created an unacceptable level of aviation safety risk for U.S. civil operations in the Kabul FIR (OAKX) at all altitudes. For these reasons, the FAA issued an all-altitude flight prohibition for the Kabul FIR (OAKX), Notice-To-Airmen (NOTAM) KICZ A0029/21, with an exception for transiting overflight operations on jet routes P500-G500.

Although the Taliban has assumed control of the country, the security environment in Afghanistan remains tenuous and complex and presents an enduring safety and security risk to U.S. civil aviation operating in the Kabul FIR (OAKX) at altitudes below flight level (FL) 260. Thousands of individuals have been released from Afghan prisons, and various groups, including VEOs outside of Taliban control, have seized large quantities of military equipment. In addition, some VEOs operating in Afghanistan have demonstrated their capability and willingness to target civil aviation as demonstrated by the suicide bombing, indirect fire attack and reported small-arms fire at OAKB during late August 2021 and previous instances of surface-to-air fire against U.S. government-contracted aircraft over the course of the U.S. presence in Afghanistan. On 26 August, the Islamic State in Iraq and ash-Sham in Khorasan (ISIS-K) conducted a complex attack against OAKB, and, on 30 August, ISIS-K employed indirect fire to target evacuation operations at OAKB. Military and civil aircraft operating at lower altitudes have previously encountered weapons activity, and further incidents may occur from deliberate or inadvertent targeting that could endanger flight operations.

Surface-to-air threats may include direct or indirect fire threats from small arms, rocket-propelled grenades, and low altitude anti-aircraft fire. The Taliban, ISIS-K, and other VEOs are known to possess small arms, automatic machine guns, anti-aircraft artillery (AAA), anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs) and unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) that could pose a threat to aircraft during low-altitude flight operations, including the arrival and departure phases of flight, and while on the ground at targeted airports and airfields in Afghanistan. A limited threat currently exists from possible shoulder-fired man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) use, which may be capable of reaching a maximum altitude of 25,000 feet above ground level (AGL). While the stockpile of MANPADS in Afghanistan is limited, there are VEOs seeking to acquire this capability. In the recent past, civil aircraft in Afghanistan have not been targeted with MANPADS. Military aircraft have been infrequently targeted with MANPADS since coalition operations in Afghanistan began in 2001. Although it is unlikely that Taliban would target civil aviation in the Kabul FIR (OAKX) now that they have assumed control of the country, ISIS-K and some other VEOs operating in Afghanistan are outside of Taliban control.

In addition to the above-noted weapons-related safety and security risks at altitudes below FL 260, there is also an increased safety risk to U.S. civil aviation operations in the Kabul FIR (OAKX) at all altitudes due to the lack of a functioning civil aviation authority and air navigation service provider.

This includes the lack of air traffic services (ATS) capabilities to support en route services for overflight operations.

The FAA will continue to monitor risks to the safety and security of U.S. civil aviation operations in the Kabul FIR (OAKX).

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