

FAA Background Information Regarding U.S. Civil Aviation in the Territory and Airspace of the Republic of South Sudan

There is continued risk to U.S. civil aviation operating in the territory and airspace of South Sudan at altitudes below FL260 due to the potentially hazardous situation created by political instability and fragile security. U.S. civil aviation is primarily at risk while on the ground and at low altitudes during approach and departure phases of flight. For this reason, on 8 August 2018, the FAA published Notice to Airmen KICZ A0014/18, advising U.S. civil aviation to exercise caution when operating at altitudes below FL260 in the territory and airspace of South Sudan.

Despite the late June 2018 ceasefire agreement between South Sudan and opposition leadership, South Sudan has historically shown little progress implementing peace accords and integrating opposition elements into the Government and establishing security. Localized flare-ups remain likely as seen since the 2015 peace accords. Over the past year, the situation has remained tenuous with localized fighting between governmental forces and the opposition as the transitional government continued to struggle in its effort to establish stability and security. The July 2016 flare-up of fighting between government forces and armed opposition elements in the capital, Juba, included artillery fire and armed helicopters operating in close proximity to Juba International Airport (HSSJ) and stray rounds impacting the airport.

Airspace deconfliction in the area remains a potential concern due to numerous threats to shoot down aircraft made by multiple parties between 2015 and 2017. In mid-2017, opposition forces in South Sudan threatened to shoot at aircraft operating in Upper Nile State. Additionally, in June 2016, Sudan threatened to shoot down cross-border airspace violators from South Sudan. This threat followed a late-September 2015 threat by Sudanese People's Liberation Army to shoot down UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) flights while they were crossing the Nile River, on approach for landing. In early December 2015, South Sudan issued a warning threatening to shoot down any aircraft flying illegally within its airspace. The government and opposition groups are both armed with a variety of anti-aircraft capable weapons, to include small arms, rocket-propelled grenades, heavy machine guns, and shoulder-fired Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS). Some MANPADS may be able to reach a maximum altitude of 25,000 feet.

During the civil war preceding the 2015 peace accords, various aircraft, including civil aircraft, were targeted between 2012 and 2014. In 2012 and 2014, United Nations contract civil helicopters were shot down. In December 2013, three U.S. military V-22 Ospreys were hit by small-arms fire while attempting to evacuate U.S. citizens from the city of Bor. While some attacks were intentional, misidentification of aircraft and/or command and control deficiencies likely led to government and rebel forces mistakenly firing on civil aircraft.

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