

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

On 7 January 2020, Universal Coordinated Time, the FAA published Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) KICZ A0001/20, prohibiting U.S. civil aviation operations in the Baghdad FIR (ORBB). The FAA issued this NOTAM due to heightened military activities and increased political tensions in the Middle East and the associated unacceptable inadvertent risk to U.S. civil aviation operations due to the potential for miscalculation or misidentification.

There are a wide array of military, third party, and militia activities occurring in the Baghdad FIR (ORBB) in an environment of heightened regional tension. The FAA assesses these circumstances present an unacceptable risk to U.S. civil aviation due to the challenge of de-conflicting military activities with civil air traffic and the potential for miscalculation or misidentification. On 8 January, Iran conducted multiple retaliatory ballistic missile attacks targeting U.S. airbases in Iraq, which raised tensions in the region. Shia militia groups in Iraq have conducted multiple attacks targeting U.S. armed forces with indirect fire, as well as ongoing, intermittent rocket attacks targeting the U.S. Embassy and Baghdad International Airport (ICAO: ORBI). Additionally, Shia elements armed with various anti-aircraft capabilities, including light anti-aircraft artillery and man portable air defense systems (MANPADS), have publicly threatened to defend their posts, following a string of third party airstrikes in 2019. Extremists/militants operating in Islamic State of Iraq and ash Sham (ISIS)-controlled areas may have access to anti-aircraft weapons presenting a risk to U.S. civil aviation up to 25,000 feet.

In this fluid and tense security environment, military activities affecting U.S. civil aviation safety may occur with little or no warning. In addition to the 8 January Iranian ballistic missile attack, in late May 2019, Iraq closed portions of the international air routes over Iraq due to potential military operations in northern Iraq. Both Iran and Turkey continue to conduct small-scale attacks along and across the northern and eastern borders of Iraq with little or no warning. Additionally, in September 2018, Iran conducted a ballistic missile attack on Kurdish targets in northern Iraq and a no-notice ballistic missile attack targeting ISIS positions in Syria in which the ballistic missiles transited through the Baghdad FIR (ORBB) and over congested civil air routes in eastern Iraq. Additionally, there is a potential inadvertent risk to U.S. civil aviation operations in the Baghdad FIR (ORBB) from fielded GPS jammers.

This confluence of circumstances presents a continuing unacceptable risk to U.S. civil aviation operations in the Baghdad FIR.

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