

FAA Background Information Regarding U.S. Civil Aviation in Yemen

The FAA has determined that there is an unacceptable risk to U.S. civil aviation operating in specified areas of the Sanaa (OYSC) Flight Information Region (FIR) resulting from ongoing military operations, political instability, and violence from competing armed groups involved in combat operations and other military-related activity resulting from the unrest. The continued fighting and instability has the potential to span a large area of Yemen, which creates a significant risk to the safe operation of U.S. civil aviation. As a result, on 22 May 2015, the FAA published Notice to Airmen FDC 5/5575, which prohibited U.S. civil flight operations at all altitudes within specified areas of the Sanaa FIR.

International civil air routes that transit Yemeni airspace and aircraft operating to and from Yemeni airports are at risk from terrorist and militant groups potentially employing anti-aircraft weapons, including Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS), small-arms fire, and in-direct fire from mortars and rockets. Due to the fighting and instability, there is a risk of possible loss of state control over more advanced anti-aircraft weapons to terrorist and militant groups, and some of these weapons have the capability to target aircraft at higher altitudes and/or upon approach and departure and have weapon ranges that could extend into the near off-shore areas along Yemen's coastline. U.S. civil aviation is also at risk from combat operations and other military-related activity associated with the fighting and instability. There is also a continuing threat of terrorism. The terrorist group al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is active in Yemen and has demonstrated the capability and intent to target U.S. and Western aviation interests. Attacks against aircraft in-flight or Yemeni airports can occur with little or no warning.

The FAA will continually review the situation regarding potential threats to U.S. civil aviation in the Sanaa (OYSC) FIR and make adjustments, as necessary, to its prohibition on U.S. civil aviation operations in that airspace.

Posted: 22 May 2015