

## **FAA Background Information Regarding U.S. Civil Aviation in the Territory and Airspace of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**

There continue to be risks to U.S. civil aviation operating in the territory and airspace of Afghanistan, particularly at altitudes below Flight Level (FL) 330, due to ongoing military operations and extremist/militant activity. Additionally, significant areas of high elevation terrain in parts of Afghanistan, including along a number of air routes, may create the potential for some threats to U.S. civil aviation to be encountered at or above FL330 in those areas. However, there have been no anti-aircraft fire incidents at or above FL330 reported to date. The security situation in Afghanistan continues to present an ongoing concern for U.S. civil aviation interests, particularly for aircraft on the ground and aircraft operating at low altitudes during the arrival and departure phases of flight. For this reason, on 24 Dec 2016, the FAA published Notice to Airmen KICZ A0022/16, advising U.S. civil aviation to exercise extreme caution during flight operations when operating at altitudes below FL330 in the territory and airspace of Afghanistan and to operate only on established air routes and at altitudes at or above FL 330 to the maximum extent possible.

There is a risk of weapons fire and attacks against U.S. civil aviation in Afghanistan. Airports/airfields in Afghanistan may be targets of direct assault and indirect fire and are susceptible to insider threats. Aircraft on the ground at airports/airfields have been damaged or destroyed by indirect rocket or mortar fire from extremist/militant attacks. Insurgents continue to conduct indirect fire attacks targeting various airports/airfields. Aircraft are at risk of encountering small-arms fire, rocket-propelled grenades, anti-aircraft fire, and shoulder-fired man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS), particularly at low altitudes. The risk to aircraft at low altitudes is demonstrated by anti-aircraft incidents targeting U.S. and Afghan military aircraft. In October 2015, the Afghan military suffered crashes of two MI-17 helicopters, which the Taliban subsequently claimed to have shot down.

Although MANPADS have been fired at military aircraft, there is a potential that they may be used against civil aircraft with little or no warning. Some MANPADS may be able to reach a maximum altitude of 25,000 feet.

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