

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 Flight Level (FL) 260 due to the potentially hazardous situation created by ongoing fighting and instability. The risk to U.S. civil aviation is primarily while on the ground and at low altitudes during approaches and departures. For this reason, on 8 AUG 2017, the FAA published Notice to Airmen KICZ A0018/17, advising U.S. civil aviation to exercise caution when operating at altitudes below FL260 in the territory and airspace of South Sudan.

South Sudan has shown little progress implementing the 2015 peace accords and establishing a transitional government incorporating opposition elements into the governmental and security apparatus. The flare-up of fighting between government forces and armed opposition elements in July 2016 in the capital, Juba, demonstrated the potential for resumed conflict. The 2016 flare-up included artillery fire and armed helicopters operating in the capital, with skirmishes reported in close proximity to Juba International Airport (HSSJ) and stray rounds impacting the airport. During 2017, the situation has remained tenuous with local fighting between governmental forces and the opposition. The transitional government continues to struggle in its effort to establish stability and security.

Airspace de-confliction in the area remains a potential concern. Opposition forces in South Sudan have 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 the 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 that preceded the 2015 peace accords, various aircraft, including civil aircraft, were attacked 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, in other instances, misidentification of aircraft and/or command and control deficiencies likely led to government and rebel forces mistakenly firing on civil aviation.

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