

FAA Background Information Regarding U.S. Civil Aviation in the Territory and Airspace of Kenya

Due to extremist/militant activity, there is a risk to U.S. civil aviation operating into, out of, within, or over the territory and airspace of Kenya at altitudes below Flight Level (FL) 260. As a result, on 26 February 2016, the FAA published Notice to Airmen KICZ A0005/16 advising U.S. civil aviation to exercise caution when flying into, out of, within, or over the territory and airspace of Kenya at altitudes below FL260.

While primarily active in Somalia, al-Shabaab, an al-Qa'ida-affiliated terrorist group, has demonstrated the capability and intent to conduct terrorist attacks in Kenya targeting government, civilian, and U.S./Western interests, to include aviation interests. In April 2015, al-Shabaab conducted several attacks in Kenya, including an armed attack on Garissa University College. Prior to 2015, al-Shabaab conducted other significant attacks in Kenya, including on the Westgate Mall in September 2013 in Nairobi. These attacks by al-Shabaab align with their media statements expressing intent to conduct terror attacks in retaliation for Kenya's counter-terrorism operations in Somalia as part of the African Union Mission to Somalia. However, the US Government assesses that counterterrorism pressures since early 2015 have probably degraded al-Shabaab's ability to conduct high profile attacks against hard targets outside of Somalia.

Al-Shabaab has demonstrated the capability to target aviation interests in Kenya. In January 2014, four suspected al-Shabaab operatives attempted an improvised explosive device (IED) bombing of a coffee shop outside of the international terminal at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) in Nairobi. Although the incident was likely targeting civilian interests, rather than civil aviation operations, it demonstrated the potential threat to civil aviation facilities. In neighboring Somalia, Al-Shabaab has conducted multiple attacks against civil aviation, including ground assaults against Mogadishu International Airport and weapons fire against aircraft operating at low altitudes in southern Somalia. Al Shabaab possesses the capability and intent to utilize weapons, including MANPADS, small-arms, and indirect fire weapons, such as mortars and rockets, which could target airports, aircraft on the ground, and/or aircraft at low altitude, including during the arrival and departure phases of flight. Some MANPADS may be able to reach a maximum altitude of 25,000 feet. The last terrorist attack using MANPADS regarding a civilian aircraft in Kenya was in November 2002, when Al Qa'ida in East Africa fired two MANPADS missiles at an Israeli civil airliner following take-off from Moi International Airport in Mombasa, Kenya.

The continued threat of extremist/militant activity in the East Africa region, and the possible flow of MANPADS and/or other anti-aircraft capable weapons from Somalia or from former Libyan regime stockpiles into East Africa, could pose a risk to U.S. civil aviation operating in Kenya. As a result, U.S. operators and airmen should exercise caution when operating in the territory and airspace of Kenya below FL260.

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