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ICAO RISK ASSESSMENT SEMINAR FOR
CIVIL AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS NEAR OR
OVER CONFLICT ZONES

Nairobi, Kenya : 23 -25 June 2025



Nigeria's Comprehensive Strategy for the Protection and Securing of Civil Aircraft Operations in Conflict and War Zones

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ICAO Regional Risk Assessment Seminar for Civil Aircraft Operations Over or Near Conflict Zones.

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- As a strategic enabler of economic growth, regional integration, and international connectivity, Nigeria's aviation sector plays a pivotal role in facilitating trade, tourism, and socio-economic development.
- Recognizing the increasing complexities posed by regional security challenges ranging from armed conflict to transnational threats Nigeria remains resolutely committed to ensuring the safety and continuity of civil aviation operations.
- This presentation offers a comprehensive overview of Nigeria's strategic framework for risk mitigation, highlighting the regulatory, operational, and collaborative measures being undertaken to protect civil aircraft operating over or near conflict zones, while aligning with international best practices and fostering regional cooperation.

Regulatory Frameworks: Strengthening Legal and Policy Foundations

A robust regulatory framework is the cornerstone of aviation security. Nigeria's strategy is anchored in the following key policies and standards:

- Civil Aviation Act – The foundational legislation governing aviation safety and security, ensuring compliance with national and international best practices.
- ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) – Nigeria's adherence to International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) guidelines ensures alignment with global aviation security protocols.
- National Civil Aviation Security Program (NCASP) – A structured framework outlining preventive measures against unlawful interference, terrorism, and sabotage in aviation operations.

However it is important to state that Nigeria has not developed a robust NCASP for aircraft operating in conflict zones.

Risk Assessment and Management: Proactive Threat Mitigation

To preemptively address security challenges, Nigeria must adopt a dynamic and intelligence-driven risk management system:

- Comprehensive Threat Assessment – Regular evaluation of emerging threats, conflict zones, and terrorist activities to identify vulnerabilities.
- Strategic Risk Mitigation – Implementation of enhanced security protocols, real-time intelligence sharing, and adaptive flight planning to minimize exposure to high-risk areas.
- Dynamic Flight Route Optimization – Leveraging geopolitical intelligence and airspace monitoring to reroute flights away from conflict zones or enforce heightened security measures when transit through such areas is unavoidable.

International Cooperation: A Unified Global Defense

Aviation security is a shared responsibility, requiring cross-border collaboration:

- ICAO Partnership – Active engagement with ICAO to adopt evolving security standards and contribute to global aviation safety initiatives.
- Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements – Strengthening intelligence-sharing pacts with allied nations to enhance threat detection and response.
- Regional Security Alliances – Participation in ECOWAS and African Union aviation security programs to harmonize safety protocols across West Africa.

No-Fly Zones & Border Restrictions in Nigeria

To enhance operational safety and support national security objectives, Nigeria has implemented targeted airspace restrictions in certain regions.

A no-fly zone is an area of airspace where aircraft are not permitted to fly, typically imposed to prevent security threats or support military operations.

in Nigeria, some areas are designated as no-fly zone : these areas include

- DNP-4 : this is a prohibited airspace around the presidential villa and any incursion is sanctioned under Nig.CARS part 8.8.1.21.
- A designated no-fly zone was declared in March 2021 over Zamfara State due to heightened security concerns.
- Calls to extend restrictions to states like Borno, Yobe, Taraba, and Benue were made, but ultimately not approved by the government.

These restrictions support coordinated military operations, disrupt terrorism activities, and enhance civil aviation security.

International Restrictions:

- As of 3 August 2023, a no-fly zone was established between Nigeria and Niger Republic, suspending commercial flights and overflights in that corridor until reversed by presidential directive in the year 2024.
- Overflying aircraft must obtain NOTAM/AIC clearance and submit requests to the Nigerian Ministry of Aviation for approval.

These measures reflect Nigeria's commitment to dynamic, intelligence-based responses to evolving threats.

Why the Restriction?

The national security authorities recommended the imposition of airspace restrictions to achieve the following objectives:

- **Curb Banditry and Kidnapping:** While such incidents remain isolated, high-profile cases such as the 2021 abduction of schoolgirls in Zamfara State have prompted the development of targeted national risk mitigation measures aimed at enhancing public safety, such as Coordination of air traffic routings by adjacent FIRs.
- **Disrupt the Gold-for-Arms Trade:** Intelligence reports suggested that unauthorized actors, allegedly including some foreign elements, were engaged in the exchange of illegally mined gold for weapons. The no-fly zone was introduced as a deterrent to disrupt these illicit supply chains.
- **Support Military Operations:** Restricted airspace provided the Nigerian Armed Forces with greater control, enabling coordinated aerial operations against insurgent groups operating within the affected regions.

Conclusion: A Secure and Resilient Aviation Future

While Nigeria may not yet have a fully detailed and robust strategy specifically tailored for managing aircraft operations in active conflict and war-torn zones, Efforts have been adopted to de-escalate insecurity and curb criminal profiteering in affected areas by the establishment of No-Fly Zones, Enhanced Airspace Surveillance by provision of RADAR surveillance, coordination of traffic with adjacent FIRs amongst others .



Thank You!