Oceanic Area Control

The Reykjavik CTA is unique in that much of it is also designated as oceanic airspace. This page outlines the specific rules and procedures relevant to oceanic airspace.

As of 20th March 2024, aircraft **no longer** require oceanic clearance to enter the Reykjavik OCA. Updated procedures for oceanic entry are forthcoming.

The Nattrak website has **not yet been updated for OCL removal.** Therefore, controllers **must not use Nattrak** until officially notified that it has been updated.
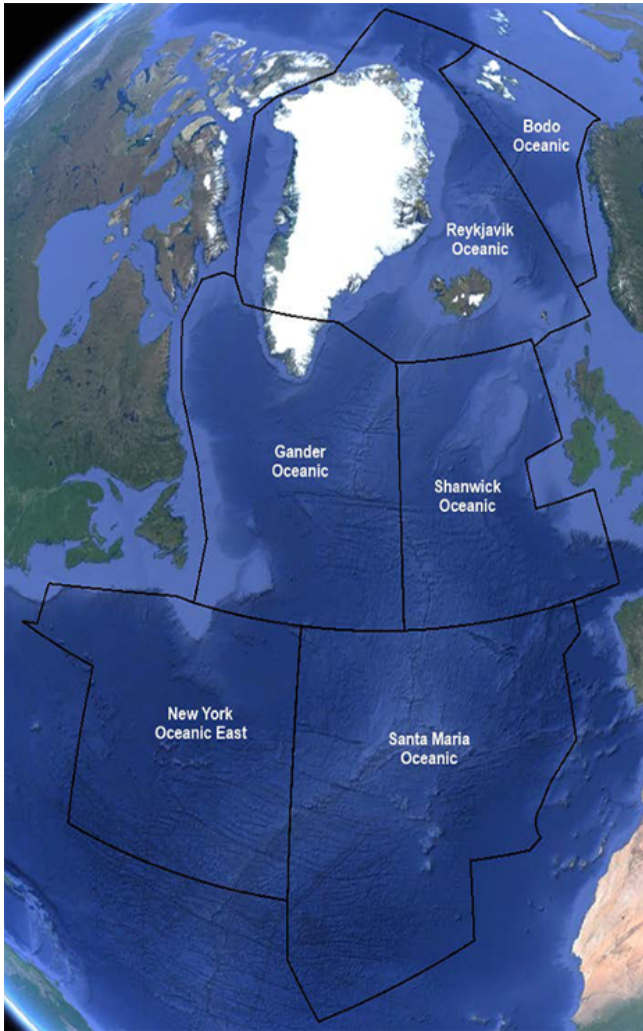
Due to software limitations, it is not possible to use the Hoppies CPDLC platform to process RCL messages.

Oceanic Airspace

Within the Reykjavik CTA, all controlled airspace outside of the Icelandic Domestic Area is considered oceanic airspace. This airspace is designated the **Reykjavik Oceanic Area (OCA).**

Because the Reykjavik ACC (Area Control Centre) is responsible for the Reykjavik OCA, it is also referred to as the **Reykjavik OAC** *(Reykjavik Oceanic Area Control Centre.)* "Reykjavik ACC" and "Reykjavik OAC" are generally interchangeable terms, at least for VATSIM purposes.

The Reykjavik OCA is one of six oceanic areas that make up the North Atlantic (NAT) oceanic airspace. The other five are Gander, Shanwick, New York, Santa Maria, and Bodo OFIR (Oceanic FIR).

NAT Tracks

The North Atlantic oceanic airspace uses a system of tracks called the **North Atlantic Organized Track System (NAT OTS,)** to regulate traffic crossing the ocean. While usually remaining in Shanwick & Gander OCAs, the tracks do occasionally enter the Reykjavik OCA.

For a detailed introduction to the NAT OTS, read this guide published by the Gander OCA on VATSIM. (Ignore the sections on the Tango routes & Concorde tracks, as they are not relevant to the BIRD OCA.) A summary of some key points for controllers to note:

- The NAT tracks change twice daily, with **Westbound** tracks being valid from **1130-1900z,** and **Eastbound** tracks being valid from **0100-0800z.**
  - ***Note:*** For VATSIM purposes, as the real-life prevailing flow of traffic is not generally followed by virtual pilots, it is considered acceptable for an

aircraft to fly on the most recently expired tracks, as long as the next set of tracks is not yet active.
- Traffic on each track must follow the published **routing** of the track, within the valid **levels** of that track.
  - The East/West semi-circular rule <u>does not apply</u> on the NAT tracks. Both odd and even flight levels may be valid for both East & Westbound tracks.
- The tracks are published in the NAT track message, which is numbered with a **TMI (Track Message Indicator)** — i.e., the Julian calendar date. Amendments are marked by a letter after the Julian date.
  - It is critical to verify pilots have the latest track message by checking they have the correct TMI.

Entering Oceanic Airspace

Aircraft entering the Reykjavik OCA must have an **IFR clearance.** VFR aircraft are **not** permitted in oceanic airspace (which is Class A); they must either fly below controlled airspace (generally, FL55 over the ocean, or FL195 over Greenland), or obtain IFR clearance.

Aircraft entering the Reykjavik OCA from **domestic** airspace, or from **oceanic airspace where ATC is <u>offline</u>**, shall report all the information below to Reykjavik OAC prior to oceanic entry:

- Oceanic Entry Point (OEP) – i.e., first waypoint in oceanic airspace
- ETA for the OEP
- Mach Number
- Requested Flight Level – i.e., intended flight level at oceanic entry
- The maximum Flight Level which can be attained at the OEP

> Even though there are no more "oceanic clearances," the above procedure is still called a **"request for clearance" (RCL)** message (yes, it is confusing...)

Aircraft must transmit the RCL message **no earlier than 25 mins before** oceanic entry (but still prior to oceanic entry itself.) This may be done via **voice** (or in the near future, via the Nattrak website, once it has been updated.)

Reykjavik OAC shall acknowledge that they have received the aircraft's RCL message. If necessary, they may **amend** the aircraft's flight plan (i.e., instructing the aircraft to fly a different routing, flight level, Mach speed, etc.) as necessary to ensure traffic separation (or to fix any issues in the original flight plan.)

For aircraft entering the Reykjavik OCA from **oceanic airspace where ATC is online**, the aircraft does **not** need to provide a new RCL message. Reykjavik OAC shall obtain the necessary information from the transferring oceanic ATC unit – generally, via the tag transfer (or by verbal coordination, if the info in the tag is insufficient.)

Voice Phraseology

Example 1: Fly current flight plan *(no changes to flight plan required)*

> " ✈ Reykjavik Control, ICE123.
>
> 🛬 ICE123, go ahead.
>
> ✈ ICE123, oceanic entry point is VALDI, estimating VALDI at 1234z, Mach .79, FL340, maximum flight level 360.
>
> 🛬 ICE123, roger.

Example 2: Amended clearance

If the aircraft's flight plan must be amended, instead of "fly current flight plan," Reykjavik OAC shall use the phrase **"amended [speed/route/level] clearance,"** followed by the details of the amended clearance. E.g.,

> " ✈ Reykjavik Control, ICE456.
>
> 🛬 ICE456, go ahead.
>
> ✈ ICE456, oceanic entry point is IPTON, estimating IPTON at 1235z, Mach .79, FL340, maximum flight level 360.
>
> 🛬 ICE456, amended route and speed clearance, after IPTON cleared direct ING, then direct NASBU, maintain Mach .76.
>
> ✈ After IPTON cleared direct ING then direct NASBU, maintain Mach .76, ICE456.
>
> 🛬 ICE456, readback correct.

Controllers may also issue a conditional instruction (e.g., cross a waypoint, climb/descend to a level, etc.) **"at," "at or before,"** or **"at or after"** a certain time, to ensure traffic separation. E.g.,

> **"** 🗣️ ICE456, cross IPTON at or after 1236z.

> If an aircraft is flying via a NAT track, Reykjavik OAC must also verify the current **TMI number** with the aircraft prior to oceanic entry.

Nattrak

– TO BE CONFIRMED | DO NOT USE NATTRAK UNTIL UPDATED –

Within Oceanic Airspace

Cost Index (ECON) Operations

In oceanic airspace, aircraft may fly in Cost Index (ECON) mode for optimal fuel efficiency – i.e., they may deviate by up to **±0.02 Mach** from the Mach number originally reported to ATC without prior permission. If they deviate by >0.02 Mach from the originally reported Mach number, they must notify ATC.

Controllers may still instruct aircraft to fly a fixed Mach number if required for separation.

> A similar procedure was previously known as "Operation Without Assigned Fixed Speed" (OWAFS.) The difference is that now (as of 20th March 2024), pilots are expected to fly ECON mode *by default,* not just when ATC instructs "resume normal speed."

Strategic Lateral Offset Procedures (SLOP)

Traffic in BIRD OCA **above FL285** may cause SLOP (Strategic Lateral Offset Procedures). This is a random offset right of the aircraft's track, intended to "artificially" induce a navigation error that reduces the likelihood two aircraft will

occupy the same airspace at once.

At pilot's discretion, aircraft with the capability to offset (using their FMS) may offset **right** of track **(left offsets are prohibited)** up to a maximum of 2 NM (the exact offset the pilot chooses should be random.) **ATC does not need to approve SLOP, or be informed when SLOP is in use.**

Aircraft shall not apply SLOP below FL285 in the Reykjavik OCA, and shall end the use of SLOP before leaving oceanic/entering domestic airspace.