Webinar

Clearing the Air: Oceanic Clearance Removal

Supplemental Handout

The implementation of new OCR procedures for Gander have led to some confusion among operators and an increase in flight errors affecting airspace efficiency and safety.

The following pages, along with the webinar, provide insight on how operators should approach the transition.

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30WEST IP International Procedures

NAV CANADA

Webinar - Clearing the Air: Oceanic Clearance Removal
Gander OCA Checklist

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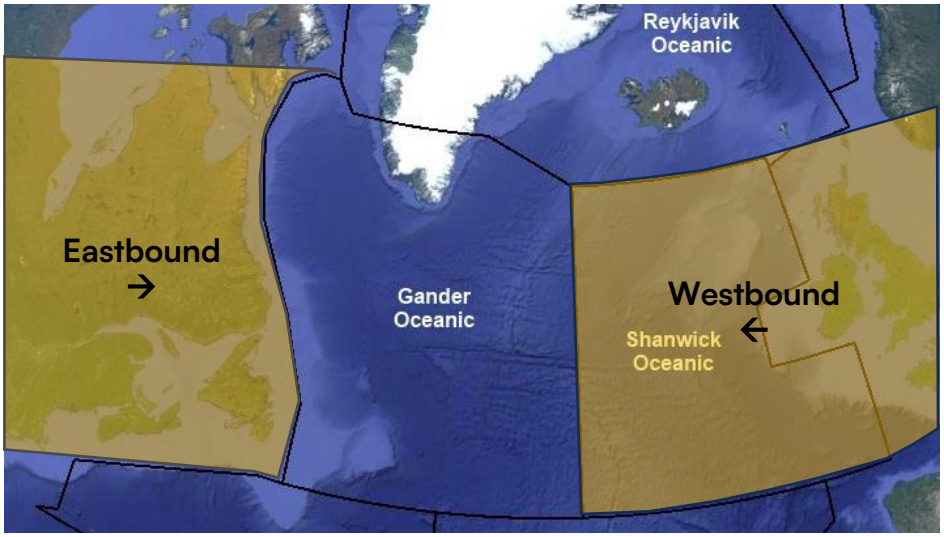
A formal Oceanic Clearance is no longer required in the Gander OCA. Crews should instead follow these procedures.

Prior to Departure

- ☐ Ensure your flight plan contains an acceptable route, altitude, and speed for oceanic entry.
- ☐ Submit revisions to your flight plan **at least 60 minutes before** departure.

Approaching Gander



Approaching Gander (Eastbound)

- ☐ (90-60 minutes prior to OEP)
  Submit an RCL message by voice (HF) or by ACARS.

  RCL message must contain the following, in accordance with your flight plan:
  - Oceanic Entry Point (OEP);
  - ETA for OEP;
  - Mach number;
  - Requested altitude (FL);
  - Highest acceptable FL which can be attained **at** the OEP.
- ☐ Fly in accordance with RCL.
- ☐ Do not make changes to FL, speed, or route unless instructed.

Approaching Gander (Westbound)

- ☐ When OEP is in Shanwick, request an Oceanic Clearance (including FL, Mach, and Route).

  Consider requesting Oceanic Clearance during departure to ensure timely entry.
- ☐ Do not enter Shanwick if clearance has not been received.
- ☐ When transiting Shanwick to Gander: No new clearance is required. Proceed as previously cleared.

RCL Reply

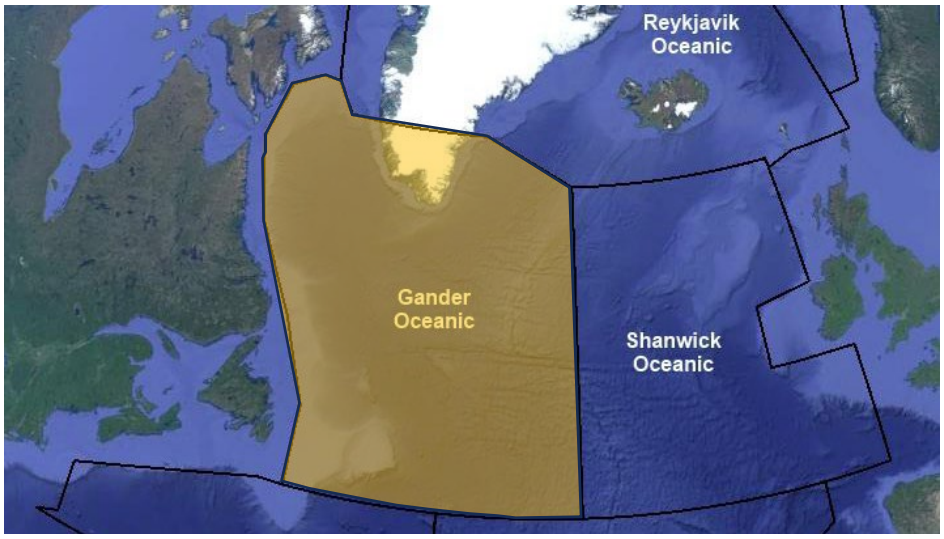
RCL Accepted

- ATC will transmit: "*RCL RECEIVED. FLY CURRENT FLIGHT PLAN OR AS AMENDED BY ATC.*"
- Gander will assign FL in accordance with RCL (no higher than the highest level communicated).
- Maintain listening watch for any re-clearances.

RCL Rejected

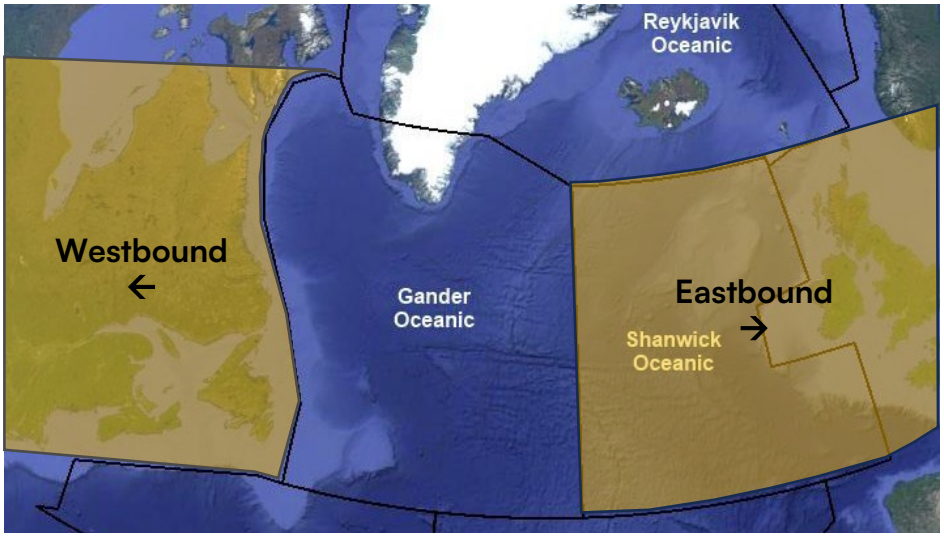
- ATC will transmit: "*RCL REJECTED.*"
- Contact ATC by voice for clarification.

Entering Gander



- Enter at the altitude assigned by Gander.

Leaving Gander



Leaving Gander (Westbound)

(No changes to existing procedures)

Leaving Gander (Eastbound)

- ☐ Do not submit a new request for an oceanic clearance. This will be handled by Gander.
- ☐ Ensure an oceanic clearance has been received before exiting Gander and entering Shanwick.
- ☐ Contact ATC for instructions prior to entry in Shanwick if no clearance has been issued.

CREW BRIEF & CHECKLIST : GANDER EASTBOUND

90-60 MINS BEFORE OEP/ENTRY

RCL (Posn, Time, Level, Speed) ..... SENT
ACK ("RCL Received by Gander") ..... RECEIVED

(IF RCL SENT ON TIME, NO FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED)

WITH GANDER DOMESTIC

OCEANIC CLEARANCE ..... NONE (REMOVED)
IF "RCL REJECTED" ..... READ RCL TO ATC
LEVEL CHANGE ..... AWAIT FROM ATC

(**NEVER** GO TO YOUR RCL LEVEL WITHOUT CLEARANCE)

AT OCEANIC ENTRY POINT

FLIGHT LEVEL ..... AS CLEARED
SPEED ..... SET (RCL or ASSIGNED MACH)
ROUTE ..... AS PER FPL OR RE-CLEARANCE

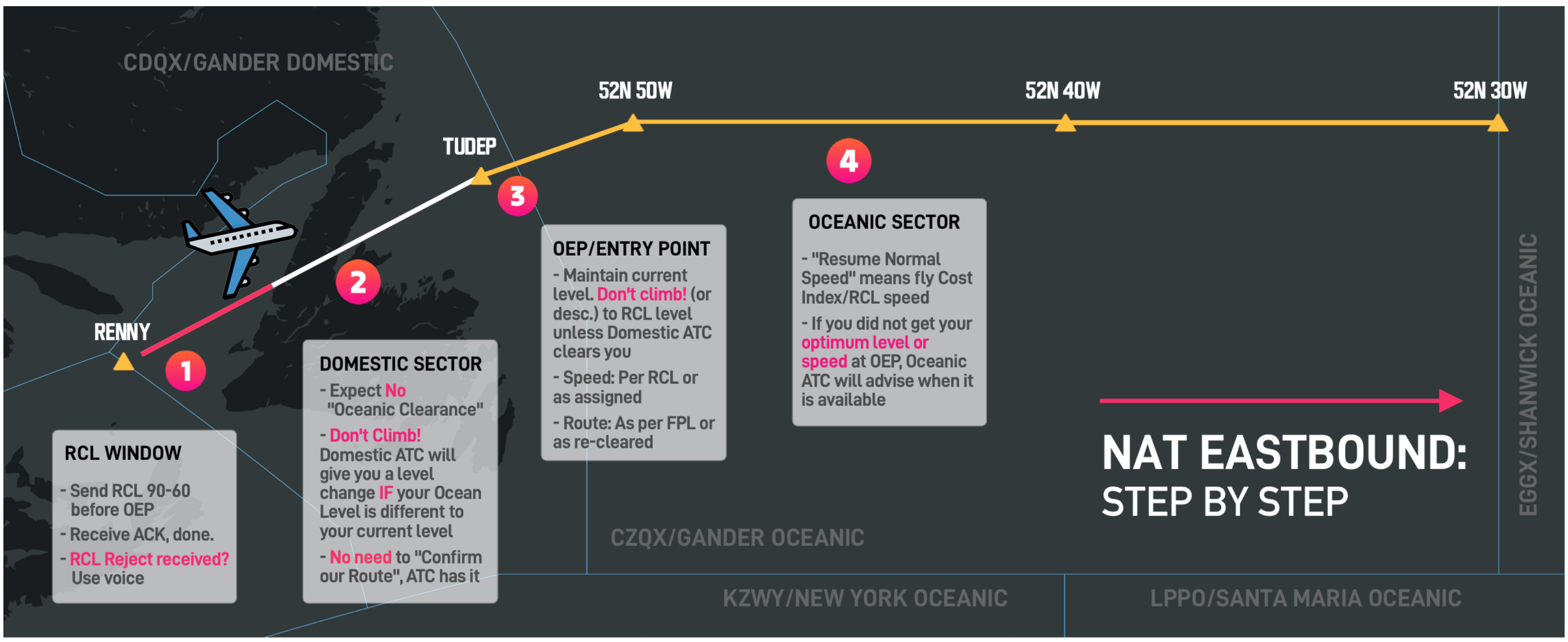
ATC SYSTEMS ARE CONTINUALLY MONITORING YOUR ROUTE, SPEED, AND LEVEL, AND WILL ADVISE OF ANY DISCREPANCY

TOP 5 PILOT ERRORS

AS REPORTED BY GANDER OCEANIC, DECEMBER 2024

DON'T DO THIS!

1. **WRONG RCL TIME.** Send it when you are 90-60 mins from your entry point. Not before, not after. The 1 hour cutoff is strict.
2. **ASKING FOR AN OCEANIC CLEARANCE.** They are gone, finished, done. (for NAT eastbound). ATC can't give you one, so don't ask!
3. **CLIMBING WITHOUT APPROVAL.** (Or descending). Too many are getting this wrong. ATC will ensure you are at the right level at the OEP. **Don't "do it yourself".**
4. **WRONG HANDLING OF "RCL REJECTED".** You'll get this if you send your RCL early or late. If late, just tell ATC on the current frequency what your RCL says. Then you're done. You won't be handled any differently. No "Oceanic Clearance".
5. **ASKING FOR ROUTE CONFIRMATION.** Don't do it, it blocks the frequency and increases ATC workload. ATC auto-queries your FMS to ensure it's correct.



1. The RCL is a **one-and-done** message with your **desired** level and speed. You **won't get a clearance**, so don't ask for one! Send your RCL **at the right time**. The 1 hour cut-off is firm. If you do have to use **voice** (e.g late, or no ACARS) - just read out the RCL with current ATC, and you're done.

2. Domestic ATC (the radar sector before the ocean) **is responsible** for getting you to the level Oceanic ATC has assigned you. **IF** your RCL level is available, they will clear you. **Don't** just climb yourself. Nil comms means no change, stay where you are.

3. At the Oceanic Entry Point, **maintain** whatever level Domestic ATC has assigned - this is your ocean level. Set speed to Econ/Cost Index, or a Fixed Mach if so assigned. Your **route** is automatically queried with a "Confirm Assigned Route" message - no need to confirm via voice.

4. Once in the ocean and traffic permits, you can expect an advisory that your RCL level is available if you didn't get it earlier. If you have an Assigned Mach, when able, ATC will issue "Resume Normal Speed". This means fly RCL speed (Cost Index), and notify of +/- 0.02 changes to this speed.

IATA Bulletin (22 November 2024) **NAT Oceanic Clearance Removal (OCR) Overview**

Effective 4 December 2024, Gander, Shanwick and Bodo will be eliminating the NAT Oceanic Clearance to be aligned with both Iceland and Santa Maria which implemented in March. All airlines operating in the NAT are invited to closely review, ***NAT Ops Bulletin 2023_001 Rev 04***; *NOB 2023 001 REV 04*.

The ACARS Request for Clearance (RCL) will now only be known as the RCL. Time window of submission and information required is unchanged. MAX FL must be populated with the maximum acceptable FL at the OEP. The following message will be received after sending the RCL.

RCL RECEIVED BY (ANSP).

NO clearance will be uplinked.

Route

- CPDLC loadable route clearance uplinks will be used for any necessary route changes (or in the case of Shanwick via voice by ATC (123.950/127.650). (Reference: ***NAT Ops Bulletin 2018_003 Rev 1*** *para 3.2-3.5*)

FL

- Your requested flight level is stored by ATC.
- Domestic ATC will assign your FL for the Oceanic Entry Point (OEP) which may not be what you downlinked in the RCL.
- A change in FL can be requested at any time after the OEP.
- The "MAX FL" will never be violated.
- In the rare event an assigned FL is significantly different than the RCL FL, expect ATC to initiate negotiations for a possible route change to accommodate requested flight level.

Never change altitude without an ATC clearance!

Speed

- Your RCL Mach is the FMS predicted Mach based on the cost index entered.
- Enter and exit the ocean in cost index (ECON). Fixed Mach no longer applies unless assigned.
- RESUME NORMAL SPEED will no longer be uplinked unless an assigned Mach is given due to traffic.
- ATC must be notified if your speed exceeds the RCL Mach by +/- .02 Mach.

****Note: There are currently no changes to NY oceanic procedures.***

Voice shall be used to submit an RCL if:

- "RCL REJECTED" message is received.
- No response to RCL is received within 15 minutes of sending RCL.
- ACARS Data Link is not operational.

Lost Comm Procedures in the NAT Region

Crews will maintain the current flight plan until reaching the Oceanic Exit Point (OXP).
No route, flight level, or speed change shall be made before the OXP unless a change is deemed necessary by the pilot in command to ensure the safety of the aircraft. For destinations within the NAT Region, follow the procedures above until reaching top of descent and then follow applicable State procedures.

NAT OPS BULLETIN

Serial Number: 2023_001 Revision 5
Subject: NAT Oceanic Clearance Removal
Originator: NAT SPG

Issued: 7 January 2025
Effective: 7 January 2025

NOTICE

The oceanic clearance removal commenced on the AIRAC dates 21 March 2024 for Reykjavik and Santa Maria OACs and 4 December 2024 for Bodø and Gander OACs. See NOTAM publication for Shanwick

The purpose of North Atlantic Operations Bulletin 2023-001 is to provide background information and guidance material to support the removal of oceanic clearances in the NAT in order to align NAT procedures with global procedures as far as possible. Other relevant NAT Documentation, State AIPs and operator and flight crew education material should be updated accordingly to facilitate the changes.

Any necessary changes to aircraft's current flight plan before the Oceanic Entry Point will be addressed by specific ATC clearances as required.

***Any queries about the content of the attached document should be addressed to**: ICAO EUR/NAT Office:*

icaoeurnat@icao.int

The NAT OPS Bulletin Checklist is available at www.icao.int/EURNAT/EUR & NAT Documents, NAT Documents, then NAT Ops Bulletins.

ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

The following are abbreviations, acronyms and definitions as used in this bulletin:

a) **Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast (ADS-B)** A means by which aircraft, can automatically transmit and/or receive data such as identification, position and additional data, as appropriate, in a broadcast mode via data link.

b) **Automatic Dependent Surveillance Contract (ADS-C)** A means by which the terms of an ADS-C agreement will be exchanged between the ground system and the aircraft, via data link, specifying under what conditions ADS-C reports would be initiated, and what data would be contained in the reports

c) **Aircraft Communications Addressing and Reporting System (ACARS)** A digital datalink system for transmission of short messages between aircraft and ground stations.

d) **Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP)** A public or a private legal entity providing Air Navigation Services. NAV CANADA (Gander), Isavia ANS (Reykjavik), Avinor (Bodo), NATS U.K. (Shanwick), NavPortugal (Santa Maria) and FAA (New York Oceanic).

e) **Cost Index (ECON)** Operators can flight plan cost index (ECON) provided that the planned true Mach number for any portion of the flight within the NAT is specified in item 15 of the ICAO FPL. Flight crews can fly FMS cost index (ECON). ATC will assign a fixed Mach number if required due to traffic.

f) Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA) – A time used in the RCL as an estimate at the OEP.

g) Flight Level (FL)

i) North Atlantic Region - (NAT Region)

- New York Oceanic East OCA / KZWY
- Gander OCA / CZQX
- Reykjavik OCA / BIRD
- Bodø OCA (above FL195) / ENOB
- Shanwick OCA / EGGX
- Santa Maria OCA / LPPO

j) **Oceanic Control Area (OCA)** Bodo Oceanic, Gander Oceanic, New York Oceanic East, Reykjavik, Santa Maria, and Shanwick, excluding the Shannon and Brest Ocean Transition Areas.

k) **Oceanic Entry Point (OEP)** The Oceanic Entry point is generally a “named” waypoint, on or close to the FIR boundary where the aircraft enters an oceanic control area.

a. Routes involving more than one OCA may result in multiple Oceanic Entry and Exit Points.

b. For aircraft entering Reykjavik from Edmonton, at or north of 82N, the Oceanic Entry Point can be an “unnamed”waypoint (Lat/Long position) on the boundary.

l) **Oceanic Exit Point (OXP)** The Oceanic Exit point is generally a “named” waypoint, on or close to the FIR boundary where the aircraft leaves the last oceanic control area.

m) **Request for Clearance (RCL)** A Voice, or Data Link message via ACARS, used to provide ETA at OEP, requested Flight Level, and Mach.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The NAT Region requires operators to obtain a specific Oceanic Clearance to operate within the region. This procedure was introduced to enable safe and efficient handling of the large volume of traffic that operated within the NAT procedural oceanic airspace utilizing HF voice communications and large separation standards.

1.2 Recently, significant technological advancements in Communication, Navigation and Surveillance have enabled NAT ANSPs to improve safety and services in the NAT Region and further reduce separation minima. These technologies include:

a) Communication – utilization of CPDLC, including route conformance check using the uplink message **CONFIRM ASSIGNED ROUTE**;

b) Surveillance – utilization of ADS-C and ADS-B, including route conformance check using the ADS-C capability to report the NEXT and NEXT+1 waypoint;

c) Improved computer interfaces between Domestic and Oceanic air traffic control sectors.

1.3 The NAT Systems Planning Group (NAT SPG) concluded that technological developments have reached a point where the oceanic clearance is no longer required.

1.4 The following is an explanation of the terms “should”, “must” and “shall” as used in this bulletin.

a) “Should” is used to indicate a recommended practice or policy that is considered as desirable for the safety of operations.

b) “Shall” and “must” are used to indicate a practice or policy that is considered as necessary for the safety of operations.

1.5 This NAT Ops Bulletin describes amended procedures that are applicable after the removal of NAT oceanic clearances.

2. FLIGHT CREW PROCEDURES

RCL

2.1 The ACARS or voice RCL must contain all of the following information:

- Oceanic Entry Point (OEP)
- ETA for the OEP
- Mach Number (based on FMS cost index (ECON))
- Requested Flight Level
- The highest acceptable Flight Level which can be attained at the OEP (via free text)
  - o provide the highest acceptable Flight Level as MAX FL
    - Example: Requesting FL360 - enter free text MAX F380
  - o If requested Flight Level is the highest acceptable; provide the requested Flight Level as MAX FL
    - Example: Requesting FL360 - enter free text MAX F360

2.2 For the ANSPs listed below, flight crews must send the ACARS RCL message prior to the OEP as follows;

- Gander 90-60 minutes
- Shanwick 90-30 minutes
- Santa Maria at least 40 minutes
- Bodo at least 20 minutes
- Reykjavik no earlier than 15 minutes

Gander: Flights departing from airports less than 45 minutes flying time from the OEP should send RCL 10 minutes prior to start up.

Reykjavik: Due to coverage limitations aircraft equipped with Inmarsat data link won't be able to send an RCL message via ACARS data link when north of 82 N. Aircraft equipped with Iridium and /or HF ACARS data link should be able to send an RCL message via ACARS data link regardless of location.

2.3 Voice shall be used to submit an RCL message if;

- Not-ACARS ARINC 623 Data Link equipped
- ACARS Data Link is not operational
- **RCL REJECTED** is received by aircraft
- No response to RCL is received within 15 minutes of sending RCL

2.4 The following response message to the RCL will be generated automatically by the ANSP and delivered to the aircraft via ACARS or voice as appropriate:

RCL RECEIVED BY [ANSP].

Revert to voice if **RCL REJECTED** is received.

Note: There will be no clearance sent via the traditional ACARS method.

Note: If ATC cannot accept the requested OEP Flight Level, the closest oceanic Flight Level to the one requested (RCL) will be determined and a clearance to climb or descend issued prior to the OEP. The "MAX FL" will never be violated.

Note: *Flight crews are reminded that a change in Flight Level, Speed or Route can be requested at any time after the OEP.*

2.5 The information in the RCL message will be processed as follows:

RCL data item	ATC Processing
Oceanic Entry Point (OEP) and ETA time	Information is used to update the currently held ATC data.
Mach Number	ATC will use the requested Mach speed information as the reference speed for cost index (ECON) operations. The aircraft should continue to operate on FMS cost index (ECON) unless it is assigned a fixed Mach speed by ATC. ATC must be advised if the speed changes by Mach 0.02 or more from the Mach in the RCL.
Flight Level	ATC will store the requested Flight Level information. The aircraft shall not change Flight Level unless it is cleared for a Flight Level change by ATC. Flight crews are reminded that a change in Flight Level can be requested at any time after the OEP as the traffic situation constantly changes and previously blocked Flight Levels may become available.

RCL data item	ATC Processing
Max Flight Level	Max Flight Level shall be provided in the RCL. ATC will store the Max Flight Level Information for traffic planning purposes. If no Max Flight Level is provided, the RCL requested Flight Level will be considered as the highest acceptable Flight Level at OEP.
Other information	Information is brought to the attention of the controller.

Oceanic Route Change Communications (Prior to OEP)

2.6 Upon receipt of the ACARS Data Link RCL, any route amendment will be issued either by voice or CPDLC loadable route clearance uplink.

Shanwick

2.7 The Shanwick oceanic controller will only issue the ACARS message **CONTACT SHANWICK BY VOICE** instructing the flight crew to contact Shanwick oceanic ATC (123.950/127.650) when:

- An oceanic route amendment is necessary due to traffic;
- Shanwick ATC considers it appropriate to do so, to ensure the most efficient oceanic route and Flight Level.

Note: Instruction to contact by voice will be no later than 30 minutes prior to the OEP.

Route Conformance Checking (After passing OEP)

2.8 **CONFIRM ASSIGNED ROUTE** will be uplinked to FANS equipped aircraft after crossing the OEP. CPDLC loadable route clearance uplinks will be used to amend the route where necessary after the OEP.

Entry Conditions

Route

2.9 The aircraft shall **not** change route unless it is cleared for a route change by ATC. No oceanic clearance is required.

Speed

2.10 Fly cost index FMS (ECON). ATC will assign a fixed Mach number if required due to traffic.

2.11 If ATC assigns a fixed Mach number for the oceanic crossing due to traffic, request NORMAL SPEED (via CPDLC or voice) after the OXP in domestic ATC airspace.

Flight level

2.12 The aircraft shall **not** change Flight Level unless it is cleared for a Flight Level change by ATC.

3. AIR-GROUND COMMUNICATIONS FAILURE

3.1 The NAT loss of communication procedure has been amended as follows:

Communications failure while operating in the NAT Region:

- The pilot shall maintain the current flight plan until reaching the OXP.
- No route, flight level or speed change shall be made before the OXP unless a change is deemed necessary by the pilot in command to ensure the safety of the aircraft.
- Aircraft with a destination within the NAT Region should follow the procedures above until reaching the top of decent point and should thereafter follow procedures published in the applicable State AIP.

4. WEBSITES

The ICAO EUR/NAT Office Website is at: **www.icao.int/eurnat**. Click on **EUR & NAT Documents** >> **NAT Documents** to obtain NAT Operations and NAT Region Update Bulletins and related project planning documents.

ATTACHMENT A – SUMMARY OF NAT OCEANIC CLEARANCE REMOVAL SPECIAL EMPHASIS ITEMS CONTAINED IN THIS NAT OPS BULLETIN

SPECIAL EMPHASIS ITEMS FOR NAT OCEANIC CLEARANCE REMOVAL. The Special Emphasis Items (SEI) listed below should be part of the flight crew education required to ensure a thorough understanding of the removal of the NAT oceanic clearance policies and procedures especially in regard to Route and Flight Level assignment.

Flight Crew

- The RCL gives ATC your OEP ETA, requested Flight Level, Mach, along with your MAX FL (highest acceptable). ATC will never violate your MAX FL. If no Max Flight Level is provided, the RCL requested Flight Level will be considered as the highest acceptable Flight Level at OEP.

- ATC response will be **RCL RECEIVED BY [ANSP].**

  - *Revert to voice if **RCL REJECTED** is received*

  Note: There will be no clearance sent via the traditional ACARS method.

  Note: If ATC cannot accept your requested OEP Flight Level, they will determine the closest oceanic Flight Level to the one requested (RCL) and issue a clearance to climb or descend prior to the OEP. The "MAX FL" will never be violated.

  Note: *Flight crews are reminded that a change in Flight Level, Speed or Route can be requested at any time after the OEP.*

  The aircraft shall **not** change route unless it is cleared for a route change by ATC. No oceanic clearance is required. Any necessary route change (prior to OEP) will be either uplinked via a loadable CPDLC message or by voice.

- OEP Flight Level

  - ATC will determine the closest oceanic Flight Level to the one received in the RCL. The "MAX FL" will never be violated.
  - The RCL Flight Level is stored by ATC for issuance when traffic permits, flight crew can request any Flight Level changes they desire after the OEP with the expectation that Flight Level changes in the NAT can be routinely accommodated.
  - Domestic ATC is fully responsible for issuing Flight Level changes to ensure aircraft crosses the OEP at the correct level.
  - **The aircraft shall not change Flight Level unless it is cleared for a Flight Level change by ATC**

- Speed

  - Fly FMS cost index (ECON). ATC will assign a fixed Mach number if required due to traffic.
  - If ATC assigns a fixed MACH number for the oceanic crossing due to traffic, request NORMAL SPEED (via CPDLC or voice) after OXP in domestic ATC airspace.

– END –

Questions?

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