

Flying abroad without the aid of an ATSU

By Tony Purton

Some years ago, as a recently qualified PPL, I was flying from a private airfield. When I wanted to fly abroad without landing first at a 'designated' UK airfield, or one with an ATSU, I had to file my own flight plans with NATS and my own Customs/Immigration/Police notifications which made me familiarise myself with the do-it-yourself procedures written into the UK AIP.

My findings may help other PPLs who do not have the benefit of a permanent ATSU to perform these vital services. It may also help those who always rely on an ATSU to understand what happens to the paperwork they fill in, because the ultimate responsibility for its correct submission lies with the aircraft commander.

This article is offered as a practical aid to encourage the intrepid PPL to tackle what appear at first sight to be formidable obstacles

to flying outside the UK. It is actually quite simple, once you get the hang of it.

The procedures

Depending where you are going, you have to inform at least three out of four independent and separate UK authorities using two forms which you would normally submit to the airfield ATSU to 'file' on your behalf.

Authority 1. Your parent UK Flight Briefing Unit (FBU):

There are three FBU parent units – London, Manchester, Scottish ACC. See UK AIP ENR 1-10-4, link <http://www.ais.org.uk/aes/pubs/aip/pdf/enr/20110.PDF>. Their areas of responsibility are shown in map form at UK AIP ENR 6-1-10-1, link <http://www.ais.org.uk/aes/pubs/aip/pdf/enr/26011001.PDF> (See also page 11 of Pooley's Flight Guide 2006)

Form 1 – Flightplan (Form CA48) –

www.ais.org.uk/aes/en/CA48.PDF. Advice on the completion of Form CA48 can

Above: flight plan form CA48 must be faxed to your FBU and cannot be amended

be found in AIC 55/2003 (Yellow 109) 29 May. It is important to get it right and to print the details clearly.

The completed Form CA48 has to be faxed to your parent unit FBU at least one hour

FLYING ABROAD AND BACK FROM UK NON-DESIGNATED AIRPORTS GENERAL AVIATION REPORT (GAR) DISTRIBUTION					
Sources: UKAIP at 8 July 2006 (AIRAC 7/2006) and GAR 1 Mar 2004					
ASSUMES FLIGHTS TO AND FROM DESIGNATED AIRPORTS ABROAD - ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE PROCEDURES AT NON-DESIGNATED AIRPORTS ABROAD					
AUTHORITIES		UK CUSTOMS		UK IMMIGRATION	
OFFICES RELEVANT TO YOUR LOCATION		National Co-ordination Unit NCU e-mail: ncu@hmce.gsi.gov.uk Fax: 0870 240 3738 Tel: 0870 785 3600		See GAR Page 2	
All offices open 24/7/365					
EU/EEA COUNTRIES		OUTBOUND	INBOUND	OUTBOUND	INBOUND
except: Isle of Man Republic of Ireland		NO GEN 1-2-3: 3.1	YES - 4 hours GEN 1-2-3: 2.2(i)	NO	YES - 4 hours GEN 1-2-3: 2.2(ii)
either direct or through the airport operator - GEN 1-2-3: 2.2.1					
Non-EU COUNTRIES		OUTBOUND	INBOUND	OUTBOUND	INBOUND
except: Channel Islands		YES - 24 hours GEN 1-2-4: 1.4.1	YES - 24 hours GEN 1-2-4: 1.2	YES - 24 hours GEN 1-2-4: 1.4.1	YES - 24 hours GEN 1-2-4: 1.2
through the airport operator - GEN 1-2-4: 1.2 & 1.4.1					
THE COMMON TRAVEL AREA (CTA)	Northern Ireland (UK)	NO	NO	NO	NO
	Irish Republic (EU) Isle of Man (EU)	NO GEN 1-2-3: 3.1	YES - 4 hours GEN 1-2-3: 2.2(i)	NO	NO
	Channel Islands (non-UK) (non-EU)	YES - 12 hours GEN 1-2-4: 1.4.1	YES - 12 hours GEN 1-2-4: 1.2	NO	NO
through the airport operator					

FORCED LANDINGS GEN 1-2-2: 8.1 - If an aircraft is required ... or is compelled by accident, stress of weather or other unav- place other than a Customs and Excise airport the commander of that aircraft must as soon as possible report the landing to an Excise or a police constable and an immigration officer.

before departure. The FBU re-types the information you provide into its own format which is then issued as an official document to your destination airfield, the diversion airfields you specify and to the relevant FIRs on your route. The flight plan will be copied to you personally if you ask for it and give a fax number to receive it on. Otherwise, to verify promulgation of your flight plan you need to telephone the FBU before you depart. The FBU-issued flight plan represents ATC 'clearance' to conduct your intended flight.

If you want to change your flight plan after you have filed it, and before departure, you must **cancel** that flight plan and **file a new one** – you cannot amend a filed flight plan.

If after filing a flight plan you decide not to go after all you should cancel that flight plan even though it has not been activated.

Flight plans can only be **activated** (opened) after take-off. You either have to get some 'trustworthy person' on the ground to notify the FBU of your take-off time, or you can do it yourself by contacting the local FIR once airborne, stating which FBU your plan was filed with and your take-off time and asking them to activate your flight plan.

Once activated, a flight plan must be **closed** whether the flight is completed as planned, you divert to another airfield, or you return to your starting point.

When you arrive at your foreign destination you must make sure that the ATSU there **closes** your flight plan. If not, it is your responsibility to close the flight plan with the local FIR within 30 minutes of your arrival (you do NOT phone your UK FBU!).

When returning to your home UK airfield you must **close** the flight plan you filed abroad within 30 minutes of your arrival by telephoning your parent unit FBU, or ask the local FIR to do it for you when you are overhead your destination.

Failure to file a flight plan could result in your being intercepted by a military aircraft (either abroad or in the UK) and instructed to land at the nearest major airfield and explain yourself to police officers.

Failure to close a flight plan could result in a large bill for the rescue services who will have started the emergency procedures to locate your missing aircraft.

Authorities 2, 3 and 4 – Customs, Immigration, Police

Authority 2. HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) – for travel to all countries

Authority 3. Home Office Immigration – for travel to EU and non-EU countries

Authority 4. UK Police Force – for travel to and from the 'Common Travel Area' of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic

Form 2 – General Aviation Report: GAR March 2004

This form is common to all three of these UK authorities and can be downloaded from the following HM Customs website link: http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/channelsPortalWebApp.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=pageLibrary_Forms&propertyType=document&id=HMCE_PROD_009149

What the form does is notify the relevant authorities of your intended flight – a one-way exercise. Unlike the Flight Plan, there will be no confirmation of receipt of your GAR from any of them: ATSUs don't get any confirmation when they file a GAR on your behalf. The



Tony Purton MCIPS, here at the controls of Denham-based C182 G-BBGX, is a former Director of Contracts for the MoD who learned to fly in 1999 at the age of 64 and added an IMC in 2002. He now flies abroad frequently in an Archer II and a Cirrus SR22. His research on this article was prompted by what he calls "myths, rumours and silly procedures" surrounding 'going foreign', and was brought to a head when his airfield introduced a £10 charge for filing a GAR – a charge that was recently dropped.

initiative then rests with the authorities; they will find you if they want to, you do not have to go looking for them.

Although these three authorities use a common form, they are in all other respects separate entities and must be dealt with separately. Talk of HM Revenue & Customs NCU becoming a one-stop-shop for all three organisations is a long-term pipe dream!

The rules for the distribution of the GAR set out in the UK AIP are summarised in the matrix (below left) with references to the relevant sections of the AIP:

You may or may not get a visit from any one of these authorities as you go about your declared intention of flying to and from an overseas destination. But woe betide you if they catch you doing something you have not

LOAD ARE ADDITIONAL	
UK POLICE FORCES	
See GAR Page 2	
OUTBOUND	INBOUND
NO	NO
NO	NO
YES - 24 hours GEN 1-2-2: 5.5 direct or through the airport operator	YES - 24 hours GEN 1-2-2: 5.5
YES - 24 hours GEN 1-2-2: 5.5 direct or through the airport operator	YES - 24 hours GEN 1-2-2: 5.5
YES - 24 hours GEN 1-2-2: 5.5/GAR 1 Mar 2004 direct or through the airport operator	YES - 24 hours
avoidable cause to land at a in officer of Customs and	

Below: GAR form is a PDF that cannot be filled in online



Left: Flight plans can be cancelled through the ATSU when overhead your destination

told them about! The view of the authorities is that people who fly to and from the UK without telling them are most likely up to no good.

And if you change your plans, don't forget to inform the relevant authorities or you may get involved in long explanations later.

And finally, make sure you and your passengers carry valid passports. As aircraft commander it is your responsibility to ensure that your passengers are entitled to enter the country you are visiting and, as importantly, to re-enter the UK on your return.

Some further tips

Aircraft documentation – Remember to take the aircraft documents with you when you fly abroad. The French Customs seem to take particular delight in checking UK aircraft documentation and have recently started demanding proof that VAT has been paid on the aircraft. They will impound any aircraft whose documentation is not complete.

Flying to a non-designated airfield abroad -

If you wish to fly to a non-designated airfield abroad you must notify the ATSU at that airfield of your intentions (separately from your flight plan) declaring the names, nationality and passport numbers of yourself and your passengers so that your destination ATSU can alert their national Customs/Immigration authorities. The airfield plate will usually tell you how much notice is needed. You could even send them the relevant information on the UK GAR form. In my experience the Dutch authorities will meet you every time you fly to their non-designated airfields direct from the UK.

Flights between Schengen countries -

Once you arrive in a country which is party to the Schengen Agreement on immigration (the UK is NOT a signatory to Schengen) you are free to travel direct to any other 'Schengen' country without further Customs/Immigration formality. The Schengen countries are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden. You still have to file an ATC flight plan if crossing any international boundary. Some countries require you to file a flight plan for every internal flight (Spain) or for particular areas (Maritime France).

And the good news is... When you fly abroad (including Channel Islands and Isle of Man) you export all the fuel in your tanks (including the unusable fuel) and are entitled to claim from HM Revenue & Customs, on

their form HO 60, drawback of UK excise duty of £0.281 per litre on all that fuel, even if you bring a lot of it back again – *provided it has been uplifted in the UK since the aircraft was last abroad; i.e. that the same fuel is not being exported for the second time!* A flight outside UK airspace without landing would not count.

Customs & Excise Fuel Duty Drawback Claim Form HO 60 is not available for download from HMRC website www.hmrc.gov.uk but can be ordered by telephone from C&E National Advice Centre Tel: 0845 010 9000/Option 3. A downloadable DIY fair copy of Form HO60 is available on a friendly private website – see below.

Happy foreign touring! ■

The following information has been assembled for your convenience in downloadable form at www.modernpilot.com/flying.abroad.without.the.aid.of.an.ATSU

ATC Flight Plan Clearance:

UK FBU Parent Units
Form CA48 Flight Plan
AIC 55/2003 (Yellow 109) 29 May, how to fill in Form CA48

Typical entries on Form CA48 for GA flight

Customs/Immigration/Police notification:

The GAR (Mar 2004) copied from the HMRC website

The GAR Distribution Matrix

The relevant extracts from the AIP/GAR

Fuel duty drawback

A 'fair copy' of Customs fuel duty drawback form HO60.

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