ACL Guidance V9 – Military action and related airspace restrictions over the Middle East and Gulf Region plus potential aviation fuel shortages

1. PURPOSE

The following paper provides guidance in response to airspace closures and restrictions being imposed by Regulatory Authorities, and uncertainty the situation is causing requiring air operators to cancel services or amend operational flight plans resulting in increased block time requirements and possible cancellation of services. As a direct result of the conflict, there may be aviation fuel supply impacts that require a reduction in uplift to avoid exhausting stocks and in the worst case an airport running out of aviation fuel.

2. REFERENCES

AIRPORTS SLOT ALLOCATION (AMENDMENT) (EU EXIT) REGULATIONS 2021 OF DECEMBER 2021 amending Council Regulation (EEC) No 95/93 on common rules for the allocation of slots at United Kingdom airports as amended including by EU Regulation 2020/459 of 30 March 2020 and by Commission Delegated Regulation 2020/1477 of 14 October 2020.

The Airports Slot Allocation (Alleviation of Usage Requirements) Regulations 2026

Council Regulation (EEC) No 95/93, as amended by Regulation (EC) No 793/2004

Sydney Airport Demand Management Regulation 2025

Worldwide Airport Coordination Group (WWACG) – Interpretation of alleviation

Worldwide Airport Slot Guidelines (WASG)
8.8 Justified non-utilisation of slots
9.2.3 Misuse of slots

Where interpretations differ the Regulation in a particular jurisdiction will take precedence.

3. SCOPE

The following guidance will apply for the Northern Winter 2025 (NW25) for cancellations made post 27 February 2026 and Northern Summer 2026 (NS26) scheduling season or until the situation ends plus six weeks (whichever comes sooner) and will be kept under review as the situation evolves.

4. REQUIREMENT TO RE-CLEAR SLOTS & SLOT MONITORING ACTIVITIES

Airlines are not required to re-clear slots. Air operators can maintain their planned slots if operating late due to increased block times caused by airspace closures and available routings.

ACL will take into consideration the political situation when performing slot monitoring activities. Air operators are required to operate to the cleared slot whenever possible and the burden of proof remains with the operator to demonstrate the performance is directly related to the political situation and the available airspace.

Operators that require to retime slots should make a request to ACL in the normal method using a SCR. ACL will review the request against available capacity. ACL will be pragmatic when reviewing infrastructure constraints but is unable to guarantee the slot will be cleared at the time required. ACL can only accept overages where it is unlikely to cause prejudice to the airport operation.

Changes will be made on a non-historic basis but will continue to count towards the utilisation target even if the change is greater than the tolerance as described in our guidance on Historic Determination.

Once a slot has been retimed or a request was made and declined our normal slot monitoring activities will apply.

5. REQUEST FOR ALLEVIATION FOR CANCELLED FLIGHTS – AIRPORT & AIRSPACE CLOSURES, RESTRICTIONS AND SERIOUS DISTURBANCE/EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

UK and European Airports

ACL will grant alleviation to operators that are required to cancel services as a direct result of airport and/or airspace closure and restrictions.

Where serious disturbance exists because of the situation, ACL will grant alleviation for the period of the disturbance plus six weeks. To satisfy the requirement for such disturbance to be for a substantial part of the relevant scheduling period, ACL will view that to be met for the NW25 season should the situation continue for the remainder on the season and for the NS26 season the disturbance continues for the first six weeks of the season.

ACL will review the situation in each airport that alleviation is requested to determine if a serious disturbance can be applied and if so, that it continued for a substantial part of the relevant scheduling period

As per our standard alleviation policy, alleviation will only be applied until the end of the NS26 season, after which the situation would be considered foreseen.

The UK Government has amended the UK Slot Regulation to provide additional alleviation during NS26 and NS26. Additional guidance related to this provision can be found here.

United Arab Emirates/New Zealand

ACL will grant alleviation to operators that are required to cancel services as a direct result of any airport and/or airspace closure and restrictions.

Where serious disturbance exists because of the situation, ACL will grant alleviation for the period of the disturbance plus six weeks.

As per our standard alleviation policy, alleviation will only be applied until the end of the NS26 season, after which the situation would be considered foreseen.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

JNUS will be granted where appropriate to operators who are required to cancel services as a direct result of any airport and/or airspace closure and serious disturbances.

Where serious disturbance exists because of the situation, ACL will grant alleviation for the period of the disturbance plus six weeks.

As per our standard alleviation policy, alleviation will only be applied until the end of the NS26 season, after which the situation would be considered foreseen.

Sydney Airport

ACL will grant alleviation to operators that are required to cancel services as a direct result of non-availability of airport and/or airspace or restrictions.

Where exceptional circumstances exist because of the situation, ACL will grant alleviation for the period of the disturbance plus six weeks.

ACL will review the situation in each other end of route airport that relates to the alleviation being sought to determine if exceptional circumstances can be applied.

The following applies to all jurisdictions

Based on the current available information, the Airports that ACL considers to be experiencing serious disturbance/exceptional circumstances are included in appendix 1 to this document. Airports at both ends of the route will qualify for alleviation. Airlines/airports that would like ACL to consider amendments to the list should request ACL make an assessment.

Commercial considerations would not be considered as a reason for alleviation.

Consequential impact and/or cancellations caused directly by this measure may also be considered for alleviation to allow operators flexibility to mitigate the impact. The burden of proof remains with the carriers to demonstrate that the consequential impact is as a direct result of the airspace closures.

Carriers should inform ACL as soon as possible of cancellations related to this situation to confirm alleviation.

6. FUEL SUPPLY

Alleviation will be granted for flights cancelled as a direct result of a shortage of aviation fuel.

The trigger for alleviation will be the requirement of the appropriate authority (for example Government, Regulator, Airport or Fuel Supplier) for an airline to reduce uplift leading to a requirement for the flight to be cancelled.

ACL may seek validation of the fuel situation from other sources prior to granting alleviation.

Alleviation will be granted for the period that the requirement to reduce demand is in place plus six weeks to allow for recovery of services.

7. COST OF FUEL

ACL is unable to grant alleviation for any cancellation related to the cost of aviation fuel. Such cancellations will count towards the 20% allowance afforded to airlines.

8. REVIEW

ACL will continue to monitor the situation closely and will adapt our position and amend this guidance as required.

Appendix 1 – Airports experiencing serious disturbance/exceptional circumstances

Country	Airport	Alleviation End Date
Qatar	DOH/DIA	
UAE	DXB/DWC/AUH/SHJ/RKT/AAN/FJR	
Kuwait	KWI	
Bahrain	BAH	
Iran	All Airports	
Lebanon	BEY	
Israel	TLV	
Iraq	All Airports	
Syria	ALP/DAM	
Jordan	AMM/AQJ	
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	RUH/DMM	