

United Kingdom Overseas Territories Aviation Circular

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Aerodrome Certification and Inspection

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GENERAL

Overseas Territories Aviation Circulars are issued to provide advice, guidance and information on standards, practices and procedures necessary to support Overseas Territory Aviation requirements. They are not in themselves law but may amplify a provision of the Air Navigation (Overseas Territories) Order or provide practical guidance on meeting a requirement contained in the Overseas Territories Aviation Requirements.

PURPOSE

Aerodromes are required to hold a certificate if they are to conduct certain types of flight operations. An aerodrome certificate is issued to a certificate holder, normally an aerodrome operating company, on successful completion of the certification process. Once an aerodrome certificate is issued, the certificate holder has an obligation to maintain compliance with laws and regulations to ensure the aerodrome certificate is not suspended or revoked. To assess compliance with laws and regulations, Aerodrome Inspectors of Air Safety Support International (ASSI) or the designated Overseas Territories Aviation Authority (OTAA) will undertake visits to the aerodrome, both for initial certification and continuing compliance. This circular provides guidance on the conduct of such visits.

RELATED REQUIREMENTS

OTAR Parts 139, 140 and, where applicable, 178.

CHANGE INFORMATION

The fourth issue has been revised and updated to include new reference guidance for applicants.

ENQUIRIES

Enquiries regarding the content of this Circular should be addressed to Air Safety Support International at the address on the ASSI website www.airsafety.aero or to the appropriate Overseas Territory Aviation Authority.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) determines Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) to be adopted by States that sign the Convention on International Civil Aviation. The SARPs for Aerodromes are specified in Annex 14 to the Convention.

1.2 In this context the State is the United Kingdom.

1.3 The United Kingdom implements ICAO SARPs in the Overseas Territories by means of the Air Navigation (Overseas Territories) Order as amended and Overseas Territories Aviation Requirements Parts (OTAR) 139 (*see 1.4, also*).

1.4 Depending on the type of aerodrome, activities that may be integral parts of its operation also include:

OTAR 140 – Rescue and Fire-Fighting Services (RFFS) Requirements

OTAR 171 – Aeronautical Telecommunication Services

OTAR 172 – Air Traffic Service Organisation Requirements

OTAR 174 – Meteorological Services for Aviation

OTAR 175 – Aeronautical Information Services

OTAR 177 – Aeronautical Charts

OTAR 178 – Aviation Security (where applicable)

Evidence of those applicable being in place will need to be demonstrated for certification. The regulator will provide guidance on the requirements.

1.5 The Air Navigation (Overseas Territories) Order (AN(OT)O) as amended, prescribes the type of aerodrome that is required to be certificated. OTAR 139 sets out the requirements to meet the criteria for certification. In addition, any person or organisation may apply for an aerodrome certificate for their aerodrome. The aerodrome certificate is issued by the OTAA of the Territory in which the aerodrome is located.

1.6 To assess whether the aerodrome complies with laws and regulations sufficiently to be granted a certificate, ASSI or the designated OTAA will undertake visits to aerodrome, both for initial certification and subsequently to assess continuing compliance.

Note: *Subsequently, were the term “regulator” is used it refers to ASSI or the OTAA as appropriate.*

1.7 This Circular provides guidance on the types of processes and procedures that may be applied to certification and continuing compliance inspections undertaken by aerodrome regulators in the Territories.

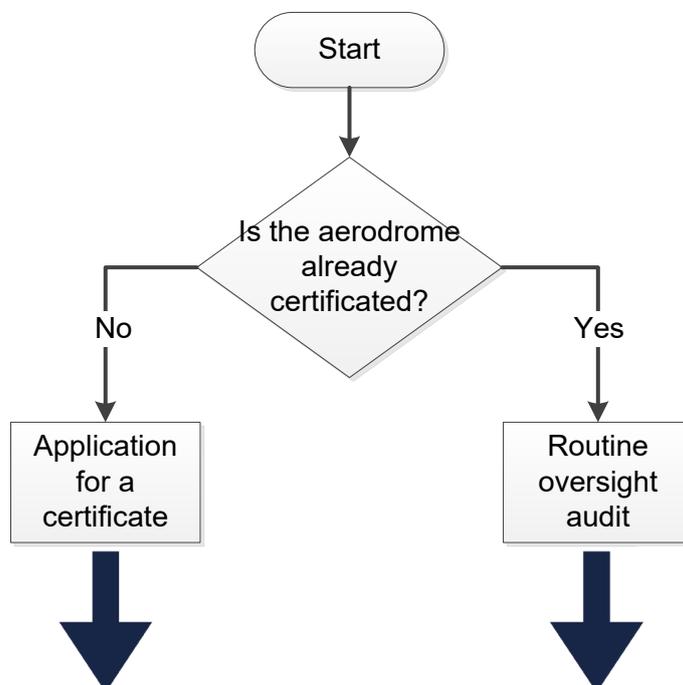
2 General

- 2.1 There are four types of inspection/audit. All are very similar in principle:
- a. **initial certification** – By necessity, this is a lengthy and comprehensive process. It is likely to take place over an extended period of months and require a number of inspections. Early engagement with the regulator at the planning stage is vital in aiding the certification process. Applicants for an aerodrome certificate for an aerodrome that has not previously been certificated should not underestimate the work required.
 - b. **continuing compliance** – As part of the routine oversight programme, this process may be normally completed in one or two days;
 - c. **those in response to particular issues or concerns** – These will vary in notice, duration and resource depending on the matter(s) being examined.
 - d. **Desktop or remote audits** – This kind of audit focuses on documentation and records. It may be carried out to:
 1. to gauge the level of readiness prior to an on-site inspection, or
 2. in response to particular issues, or
 3. in response to concerns that do not warrant an on-site inspection, or
 4. if a scheduled inspection has to be delayed for an overriding reason.
- 2.2 Aerodrome Inspectors may also provide technical advice during these processes, particularly in the case of newly certificated aerodromes, or where the applicant has little prior experience of managing aerodromes, or where an aerodrome is planning/carrying out a significant change or development.
- 2.3 There are some key elements that are common to each of the processes. These include examination of:
- a. required documentation manuals, systems, operating procedures, etc;
 - b. the applicant's/operator's organisation (structure, qualifications, competencies, etc);
 - c. the services proposed or required by the applicant's/operator's operation (eg Air Traffic Control, Flight Information Services, Rescue and Fire-Fighting Service etc) and their applicable approvals.
- 2.3.1 Vital in enabling the process is early engagement with the regulator. Ideally, dialogue should be established at the planning stage. This should help ensure issues are addressed as early as possible and delays minimised.
- 2.3.2 If there are commercial sensitivities associated with the plans, confidentiality agreements can be set up to protect the applicant, but early engagement remains important.

- 2.3.3 The aerodrome certification assessments carried out by the regulator comprise the following steps:
- a. **Evaluation/dealing with an application/expression of interest.** One of the first steps in the process of certification of an aerodrome is to consider the application/letter of interest. This is where early engagement with the regulator is important to enable planning and implementation of the certification project. Dialogue between the applicant and the regulator is key in determining the requirements, timescales and resourcing for the certification process.
 - b. **Assessment of the formal application, including evaluation of the aerodrome manual.** The aerodrome manual shall be thoroughly checked by the regulator to see whether the structure and content of the aerodrome manual meet the requirements of OTAR 139. The document must be in a finished state before the regulator can consider it as part of the certification process.
 - c. **Assessment of the aerodrome facilities and equipment.** Once the desktop audit evaluating the aerodrome manual is complete, an on-site verification of the aerodrome facilities, services and equipment shall be undertaken with due co-ordination with the applicant.
 - d. **Issue or refusal of the aerodrome certificate:**
 1. **Issue.** When the aerodrome manual is completely checked and found satisfactory and the on-site inspections show no safety critical non-compliances the aerodrome inspector(s) will make recommendation for the issue of the certificate.
 2. **Refusal.** If the application is unsuccessful, the applicant shall be advised of the additional steps that need to be taken prior to certification. For example, the aerodrome manual may need to be amended to incorporate any changes to the aerodrome facilities and equipment that may be required in order to enable compliance with the standards specified in Annex 14, particularly where an exemption from compliance with a Standard is requested. If, after being advised of the additional steps that must be taken to rectify the shortcomings identified during the verification visit, the aerodrome operator is still not able to satisfy the requirements of the regulations, the regulator may refuse to grant a certificate.
 - e. **Promulgation.** On completion of issue or variation of the aerodrome certificate any change to the status of the aerodrome must be advised to aeronautical information services and published in the AIP.

3 Application and oversight Processes

3.1 The processes for issue of a certificate and the routine oversight of a certificated aerodrome are broadly the same. The table below sets out in parallel the two processes. Simply keep to the appropriate column to follow the process.



3.1.1 Application for a certificate process	Routine oversight audit process
3.1.1.1 The application or pre-audit process is triggered on receipt of an application for an aerodrome certificate or an expression of interest from an applicant, such as an aerodrome operator, in the case of initial certification.	The routine audit process is based on an ongoing programme of oversight carried out by the designated regulator. Normally it is based on a periodic cycle the periodicity of which will be based on the level of operational safety risk identified by the regulator.
3.1.1.2 An on-site or tabletop audit may be triggered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. to gauge the level of readiness prior to a full certification on-site audit, or b. in response to particular issues. 	An on-site or table top audit may be triggered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> as part of the routine oversight activity, or at the request of the certificate holder, or in response to particular issues/concerns.
3.1.1.3 During the Application or Pre-audit Process a lead Aerodrome Inspector will be assigned. The lead inspector will be responsible for correspondence with the applicant or the certificate holder, and for managing the certification or audit programme. An applicant or certificate holder should direct all of their communications to the lead Aerodrome Inspector.	The inspector will be responsible for correspondence with the certificate holder, and for managing the audit programme. A certificate holder should direct all of their communications to the assigned inspector.

3.1.1 Application for a certificate process		Routine oversight audit process
3.1.1.4	<p>The lead inspector will draft a certification plan detailing the schedule of audits.</p> <p>Applicants are counselled to be aware of the time that is likely to be required to complete the certification process depending on complexity of the aerodrome and its operation. This will be measured in months rather than weeks. Therefore, early engagement with the regulator is highly recommended.</p>	<p>For a routine audit for continuing compliance the audit plan will be relatively straightforward, and will be agreed with the aerodrome certificate holder not less than 1 month before the planned audit. This timescale is primarily to give sufficient notice to the aerodrome certificate holder.</p>
3.1.1.5	<p>The lead inspector will request that the applicant supplies copies of the proposed or current Aerodrome Manual, RFFS Manual, Aerodrome Emergency Plan and other supporting documents.</p>	<p>The inspector may request that the certificate holder supply copies of the current Aerodrome Manual, RFFS Manual, Aerodrome Emergency Plan and other supporting documents prior to the audit.</p>
3.1.1.6	<p>Sufficient time will need to be allowed to evaluate the documents before any on-site audit, and may indicate areas that may require closer attention.</p>	-
3.1.2. Application for a certificate process		Routine oversight audit process
3.1.2.1	<p>The aerodrome audit team will meet the management team of the aerodrome certificate holder for the full certification audit initial briefing.</p>	<p>The aerodrome audit team will meet the management team of the aerodrome certificate holder for the audit initial briefing.</p>
3.1.2.2	<p>The lead inspector will detail the process to be followed for the audit. The applicant should ensure that all key personnel are available to participate in the audit as required.</p>	<p>The inspector will detail the process to be followed for the audit. The aerodrome certificate holder should ensure that all key personnel are available to participate in the audit as required.</p>
3.1.2.3	<p>The lead inspector will outline what action will be taken on discovery of any non-compliance.</p>	<p>The inspector will outline what action will be taken on discovery of any non-compliance.</p>
3.1.2.4	<p>In turn the applicant should brief the audit team on any relevant local safety procedures for the aerodrome, including use of safety clothing and equipment prior to working airside.</p>	<p>In turn the certificate holder should brief the audit team on any relevant local safety procedures for the aerodrome, including use of safety clothing and equipment prior to working airside.</p>
3.1.2.5	<p>Critical non-conformities will be notified to the applicant immediately on discovery, and rectification action agreed accordingly. The impact of remedial action on the schedule may change the certification timetable.</p>	<p>Critical non-conformities will be notified to the certificate holder immediately on discovery, and rectification action agreed accordingly. In the case of active aerodromes a NOTAM or restriction of activity may be required if any of the aerodrome facilities are affected.</p>

3.1.1 Application for a certificate process		Routine oversight audit process
3.1.2.6	The audit team members will meet daily for progress meetings at the beginning and end of each day, and will include the certificate holder's management team as required.	The audit team members will meet daily for progress meetings at the beginning and end of each day, and will include the certificate holder's management team as required.
3.1.2.7	At the end of the on-site audit process the audit team will meet the applicant's management team for an on-site audit debrief.	At the end of the on-site audit process the audit team will meet the certificate holder's management team for an on-site audit debrief.
3.1.2.8	Any nonconformity reports will be presented to the management team for rectification/safety management action.	Any nonconformity reports will be presented to the management team for rectification/safety management action.
3.1.3 Application for a certificate process		Routine oversight audit process
3.1.3.1	On return from the on-site audit process the audit team will finalise the report. In the case of an aerodrome being certificated for the first time the report may recommend the issue of an aerodrome certificate, possibly with conditions.	On return from the on-site audit process the audit team will finalise the report.
3.1.3.2	The report will list any non-conformities, and the applicant will be required to agree an action plan to remedy/adequately manage all non-conformities prior to issue of a certificate.	The report will list any non-conformities, and the certificate holder will be required to agree an action plan to remedy/adequately manage all non-conformities. In some cases a NOTAM or variation or restriction on the certificate may be required pending rectification of the non-conformity.
3.1.3.3	An aerodrome certificate will be issued by the regulator on successful completion of the certification or audit process.	Depending on the process in place, either the certificate will continue in force for an open-ended certificate or, a time-limited certificate will be issued by the regulator on successful completion of the audit process.
3.1.3.4	The aerodrome certificate and final certification audit report should be presented to the applicant no more than 20 working days after the on-site debriefing. On receipt of the aerodrome certificate the certificate holder should confirm receipt of the certificate to the issuing authority.	The audit report should be presented to the certificate holder no more than 20 working days after the on-site debriefing.

Note: Guidance on the Certification of Aerodromes for Applicants is provided in OTAC 139-29. |

4 Promulgation Process

- 4.1 The holder of an aerodrome certificate must promulgate any changes to the status of the aerodrome, including any changes to air traffic services, instrument flight procedures and rescue and fire fighting services, to aeronautical information service providers, including via NOTAM if necessary. Ultimately changes will need to be published in the Aeronautical Information Publication for the Territory.
- 4.2 Aerodrome Inspectors may audit the arrangements for promulgation of such changes during the initial certification or continuing compliance audits.

5 Aerodrome Operator's obligations post-certification

Grant of an aerodrome certificate obliges the aerodrome operator to ensure the safety, regularity and efficiency of operations at the aerodrome. OTAC 139-15, General Requirements for Aerodrome Certificate Holders, provides more guidance on the obligations of aerodrome certificate holders.

6 Continued surveillance/oversight by the Regulator

The regulator will carry out periodic inspections and audits (some may be at short notice) of the aerodrome to check/ensure that aerodrome certificate holder is meeting their obligations under the terms of the certificate and that the aerodrome continues to maintain the level of safety as at the time of certification.

An aerodrome certificate shall remain in force until it is suspended or revoked.

7 Summary

- 7.1 Aerodrome certification is a long and complex process. All stakeholders must be familiar with all aspects of managing an aerodrome, including the applicable laws and regulations, the conditions and restrictions of their aerodrome certificate and the contents of the aerodrome manual and other documents.
- 7.2 It is also essential for the aerodrome operator to maintain a good relationship and communications with its regulatory authority.

Appendix A – Exemptions

In exceptional circumstances, the regulator may issue an exemption, to an aerodrome operator from complying with specific provisions of the requirements. When an aerodrome unable to meet the requirement of a standard or practice specified in Annex 14, the regulator may determine, after receipt of a safety assessment (see OTAC 139-15 – Safety Assessments) from the applicant (prospective certificate holder), only if and where permitted by the standards, the conditions and procedures that are necessary to ensure a level of safety equivalent to that established by the relevant standard.

An exemption is subject to the aerodrome operator complying with the conditions and procedures specified by the regulator in the aerodrome certificate as being necessary in the interest of safety. Exemption from a standard and the conditions and procedures shall be set out in an endorsement on the aerodrome certificate.

The refusal may be based on one or more of the following determinations, for which details should be given:

- a. the inspection of aerodrome facilities and equipment identifies safety critical non-compliance with OTAR 139;
- b. the assessment of the aerodrome operating procedures reveals that they do not make satisfactory provision for the safety of aircraft operations;
- c. the assessment of the aerodrome manual reveals that it does not contain the particulars set out in OTAR 139; and
- d. the assessment of the above facts and other factors reveals that the applicant will not be able to properly maintain a safe aerodrome operation.

Grant of an aerodrome certificate obliges the aerodrome operator to ensure the safety, regularity and efficiency of operations at the aerodrome. OTAC 139-15 – General Requirements for Aerodrome Certificate Holders, provides more guidance on the obligations of aerodrome certificate holders.