Dealing with the new rules of worldwide documentation

Evolving regulatory requirements complicate trip planning.

By Grant McLaren
Editor-at-large

Once upon a time the big challenge in planning an international corporate trip was preparing the aircraft and flying it to a destination. Today the major hurdles are often regulatory requirements—sourcing the right documentation, arranging assorted permits and providing sufficient lead time for operating requests.

Preflight documentation requirements run the gamut from relatively straightforward (in the case of ops to Canada or the Caribbean) to challenging (China or India) and virtual nightmare scenarios (for longer stays in Venezuela).

While all operators need to carry aircraft registration, airworthiness and insurance certificates we’re seeing more unique documentation requirements surface worldwide. This trend will only increase.

“International documentation requirements and regulations are changing all the time and it can be tough to keep ahead of this,” says Rockwell Collins Ops Mgr Tim Bartholomew. “We’re also finding a lack of consistency in documentation requirements as these mandates are often interpreted differently depending on the country, airport location and individual government officer. In some cases documentation requests can be particularly unusual and nonstandard.”

If you’re flying to the Philippines, for example, your landing permit will not be issued until you’ve provided a color photograph of your aircraft. Jeppesen Intl Trip Planner Courtney Gould points out that Colombia requires your ELT beacon ID as well as engine serial numbers as part of the overflight or landing permit process. Oman requires a copy of your radio license sent in advance, prior to issuance of a landing permit says Jeppesen Vendor Relations Mgr Eastern Europe, Russia & Africa Ian Humphrey. Prior to landing at KTM (Kathmandu, Nepal) an operator must provide evidence that pilots have completed advance training on landing at this high-altitude airport. If you’re flying to or overflying Libya you must go through a third party agency to apply for your landing permit and this agent must have a power of attorney in order to act on your behalf.

Some of the more challenging international documentation requirements involve charter permits in Asia and Europe says Universal Weather Master Trip Owner Marc Amberson. “In Germany, for example, it can take weeks to satisfy documentation requirements for a charter and partial applications will not be accepted,” he says. “You need to have all your paperwork and ducks in a row before submitting anything.”

Nonstandard and idiosyncratic documentation requirements can end up frustrating a permit request or causing delays. “Brazil requires operators to carry original documentation on board and this causes operational glitches from time to time,” says Intl Trip Planning Services (ITPS) COO Phil Linebaugh. “We had a case recently where a client did not have originals on board and the aircraft was not permitted to leave until the originals were presented. A company mechanic ended up flying down to Brazil with the originals on a commercial flight before the aircraft was released.”

Problem potential

Charter operators generally face more stringent documentation requirements than private operators. “While many countries make no distinction between charter and private operators in terms of documentation, some do,” says Avplan Ops Mgr Phil Tyler. “There are certain parts of the world where charter operators must provide unique and additional documentation when applying for permits. In Japan, for example, you need to provide a copy of your char-
ter contract with client names and the dollar value of the contract. In other countries charter operators must submit specific security program details and/or questionnaires prior to permits being issued.

Documentation mandates can vary between airports, even within the same country. "If you're operating a charter from the US to NRT (Narita, Tokyo, Japan) you'll need to provide a DOT issued notice of consistency," says Universal Weather Senior Trip Support Specialist Katherine Scheer-Perry. "But if you land at HND (Haneda, Tokyo, Japan) this document is not needed." This particular notice describes the charter involved and the timeframe during which it will be performed and notes that the flight is "consistent" with the aviation agreement between the countries.

Insurance requirements can be pesky at some locations. The European Union (EU) has special insurance mandates, liability limits and formats that must be followed. Mexico, in most cases, requires liability policies from providers in Mexico and these documents must be in Spanish. Hong Kong is particularly obsessive in terms of insurance requirements, liability limits and specific wording/format of policies. "We had a case of a Hong Kong landing permit request being denied because one comma was missing on the insurance policy," says Linebaugh.

Many countries, particularly in Latin America, require that both pilots be type rated on the aircraft and they want to see copies of pilot licenses and medicals prior to arrival says Scheer-Perry. In some cases pilot licenses must be from the same regulatory authority as the aircraft's state or registry.

Be aware also of age restrictions. When operating a charter to France the PIC must not be over 60. "The same restriction is in place for ops to PAP (Port-au-Prince, Haiti)," notes Scheer-Perry.

Special security documentation requirements may be in place—most often for charters—and paperwork can involve weeks of advance arrangement.

An approved transportation security program is needed for charter operations to Australia and this takes time," says Jeppesen Mgr Global Vendor Relations Matt York. "It's a document intensive process and can require weeks of effort on the operator's part."

Germany also requires charter operators to have an accepted security program in place prior to a landing permit being issued adds Bartholomew. Israel has unique security procedures in place that involve providing fathers' names of all passengers and crew.

Joint use civil/military airports not only take longer from a permit perspective, but often involve unique documentation. When landing at a joint use military airfield in the UK—such as NHT (RAF Northolt, London, England)—operators must provide evidence of a Crown Indemnity Waiver. This is a special rider on your insurance policy to cover any liability issues that may arise while at the airfield. If you plan on landing at ASI (Ascension Island) in the South Atlantic you must not only obtain preapproval from both British and US military authorities—you need to provide evidence of insurance to cover emergency medical evacuation. To obtain a landing permit for a joint use civil/military airport in India crew will need to provide mothers' maiden name as well as fathers' names.

Unique documentation at certain locations includes written confirmation that the aircraft has TCAS. Authorities may also want to see copies of your radio license. In some regions—Russia, for example—you must have recent maintenance records on board. "While maintenance records are not needed to obtain a permit you'll need to provide this documentation if asked," says Humphrey.

Certain overseas locations require that you provide a local business sponsor/contact prior to obtaining approval to operate. In some cases—China, Qatar and Saudi Arabia—a "sponsor letter" is needed while at other locations, including Israel, it's a matter of providing a local business contact with full details. Your permit will not be issued without this information and your sponsor will be contacted.

Avoiding problems overseas

It's best to work with your international support provider (ISP) and local ground handler to confirm any specific or unique documentation requirements during the early flight planning stage. For travel to Canada there are CANPASS procedures and forms to be aware of and the Caribbean region has CARICOM APIS procedures and paperwork requirements. Argentina has a reciprocity form that must be filled out, and fees paid, unique to that country. If you're traveling to Australia or New Zealand you'll need to release an approved insecticide in the cabin prior to landing and supply proof of having done this—either a signed certificate or used spray can.

ISPs offer assorted "elective" documentation tips—not necessarily mandated procedures—to help avoid potential glitches overseas. If you're traveling with a minor child—without both parents being aboard—it's best to carry a letter signed and notarized by the absent parent that it's

Landing approval for KTM (Kathmandu, Nepal) requires the PIC to complete a simulator approach prior to first arrival. You will need to provide documentary evidence that this has been done.
okay for the child to be on board. To avoid cabotage issues it’s recommended that private operators carry a letter stating the relationship of all passengers to the company and reasons why they’re on board. Such a letter may help when traveling on private aircraft to Canada or Mexico. “While some countries, including Colombia and Peru, are not overly concerned with cabotage others are very vigilant. In Ecuador, for example, they will not let local nationals fly domestically on your aircraft even if the passenger is a company employee. For private operations within Mexico it’s very important to carry a letter stating the passenger’s relationship with the company. This letter should be sent to your local ground handler in advance for every trip. “You cannot have too many generics on board when you arrive,” says Bartholomew. “Everyone wants to see them.”

Customs and immigration documentation requirements vary around the world. Some locations will want to see a customs stamp from your immediate departure point. “Non-US and non-Canadian registered aircraft must show customs their customs stamp from the previous departure location on all flights to Belize,” says LaFleur. “Fiji has similar requirements.”

Special training may be required pre-arrival at certain destinations including CUZ (Cuzco, Peru), KTM, LCY (London City, England) and PBH (Paro, Bhutan). In the case of CUZ special training may be done online but other locations require evidence of flight simulator training on a particular approach. Jeppesen Vendor Relations Mgr North America and Caribbean David LaFleur notes that SMV (St Moritz, Switzerland) mandates that flightcrew undergo familiarization training on the approach and carry evidence of completion of this training to show to authorities on landing.

Noise certificates are required at many locations. If you’re operating older or hushkitted aircraft, airport authorities overseas may want to see additional noise data evidence. “It’s always best to carry your noise certificate so that there are no questions or issues at international locations,” says Jeppesen Vendor Relations Mgr Central and South America Mike Rossi.

Pets, guns, artworks and onboard cash

Don’t assume you can just blast off and head overseas with your onboard weapons, extended ammo clips and assorted onboard pets. Almost every country requires paperwork, permits and advance notification of any weapons being brought into the country. In some cases onboard weapons will not be approved and at other locations, such as in Canada, they may be approvable based on having necessary paperwork and permits. Requirements concerning pets vary from straightforward to onerous and complex. In the EU, for example, pets must have a “pet passport” and evidence of vaccinations and will only be permitted to land at certain airports. “When traveling to the US all animal paperwork and records must be in English,” says Amberson. In Japan and Barbados it’s straight off to quarantine unless your pet has all required documentation. LaFleur points out that Turks & Caicos requires an animal import application to be submitted 48 hrs in advance and notes that certain species of dog are prohibited.

“If you’re carrying large amounts of cash or valuables, jewelry and/or artworks, this all requires paperwork,” says Tyler. “Every country has its own documentation and reporting requirements.”

Know before you go

Prior to any international launch check with your ISP and destination ground handlers regarding all documentation and permit requirements. In some cases you’ll need to provide unique or specific documentation in advance of obtaining a permit. In other cases documentation may not be required upfront but must be on board when you land. If you’re carrying copies of original aircraft documents it’s best to have these certified or notarized. It’s also a good idea to have digital backup copies of aircraft and crew documentation on hand with your ISP.

Not all special documentation requirements are well publicized. “While information on specific documentation requirements is available for most destinations it’s always a good idea to check with your ground handler on any special documentation or procedures in effect at specific locations,” says Scheer-Perry. “And don’t overlook the basics. It’s surprising how many people still forget to bring passports when they travel.”

Looking forward, Amberson envisions a continuing trend toward additional documentation requirements. “More specific requirements are coming,” he says particularly in areas of security and maintenance paperwork. There’s greater emphasis worldwide on particular documentation to prove you’re properly certified and insured to enter a country’s airspace. These additional and potentially onerous requirements are not going away!”

Editor-at-Large

Grant McLaren has written for Pro Pilot for over 20 years and specializes in corporate flight department coverage.