



December 2023

Diplomatic Clearances

Conditions and Code of Practice for authorisations

Reference: FOCA / 313.320.1-1

1. General information

Pursuant to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, done at Chicago on 7 December 1944, and in application Article 4 of the Ordinance on the Safeguarding of the Sovereignty of Swiss Airspace ([SR 748.111.1](#)) and the Exchange of Notes of 1 and 9 May 2000 between Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein regulating the overflight of the territory of the Principality of Liechtenstein by military or other State aircraft, non-Swiss State flights within the territory of Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein require a Diplomatic Clearance, issued by the Federal Office of Civil Aviation (FOCA).

2. State flights

State flights are flights operated for missions on behalf of State, Military, Customs and Police interests.

This includes, in particular:

a) Missions:

- Flights on State affairs
- Transport of heads of state and senior dignitaries travelling on State business
- Current Police and Customs operations
- Military flights

b) Aircraft if used in missions as per a)

- State aircraft
- All aircraft (including leased or rented)
- Military aircraft (in use by the State and Military)
- Police and Customs aircraft

The following are excluded:

- Aircraft not being used as part of a relevant mission (see Section 2 a), including State, Police and Customs aircraft
- Military aircraft operated by a non-military support or manufacturing service

3. Restrictions

By agreement with Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS), the Federal Office of Civil Aviation (FOCA) grants authorisations only with due consideration of Switzerland's policy of neutrality and the safeguarding of the sovereignty of Swiss airspace.

Consequently, flights that breach the rules of international law and flights used for the direct preparation and/or the assistance of hostilities may not be carried out within the airspace of the Swiss Confederation and the Principality of Liechtenstein, and are not authorised.

The operations of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations (UN) are supported by Switzerland.

4. Authorisations (Diplomatic Clearances)

Through its Federal Office of Civil Aviation, Switzerland grants single authorisations and annual authorisations. These authorisations grant the right to carry out State flights within the territory of the Swiss Confederation and, by agreement with the Principality of Liechtenstein, also overflight rights within the Principality's airspace.

4.1. Single authorisations

A request for a single authorisation must be submitted to FOCA using the «DC application form»¹. Single authorisations are valid for the specific flight(s) only and expire, once the authorised term has elapsed (Section 4.1.2).

4.1.1. Application formalities

The diplomatic representation in Switzerland of the State making the application is responsible for submitting the request to the FOCA.

FOCA contact: Federal Office of Civil Aviation FOCA
Headquarters: Papiermühlestrasse 172, CH-3063 Ittigen
Postal address: 3003 Bern
Phone: +41 58 465 91 77
Fax : +41 58 465 80 60
Email : diplomatic.clearances@bazl.admin.ch
Web: www.bazl.admin.ch/diplomaticclearances

The FOCA liaison office for Diplomatic Clearances is staffed during normal office hours from 08.00 to 12.00 and from 13.00 to 17.00 local time. Outside these hours, phone calls will automatically be forwarded to the Swiss Air Force duty officer. Please note that the duty officer only treats inquiries, which cannot be processed during the normal office hours of the FOCA.

A request for a single authorisation must be submitted to FOCA at least five (5) working days before the State flight is due to take place, and applications for State flights for the transport of dangerous goods must be submitted to FOCA not later than eight (8) working days before the State flight is due to take place.

Where an application is filed late, FOCA cannot guarantee the timely issuance of an authorisation.

¹ Available on the webpage of the FOCA: www.bazl.admin.ch/diplomaticclearances

An exemption to the five working day advance notification rule may be made under the following circumstances:

- Flights of special urgency: Urgent medical evacuation, humanitarian and disaster assistance and search and rescue operations.

Additional information required:

- medical urgency
- name of the hospital

- Short-Notice VIP flights for official state events

Additional information required:

- name of the VIP
- location of the official business

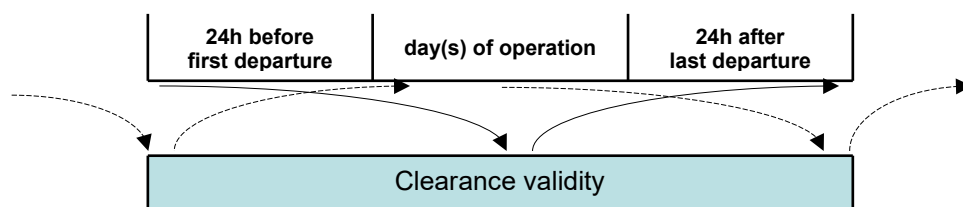
Applications must be submitted to FOCA using the «DC application form» and must contain the following information:

- Requesting state
- Specific type and model of aircraft
- Registration mark (tail number)
- Radio call sign. Maximum seven (7) characters
- Point of departure and destination: Name of the aerodromes and ICAO four-letter codes
- Flight route and departure/arrival times (in UTC)
- Date of flight
- Purpose of flight, Remarks (including name and position of the VIP if any, the name of the conference, military exercise, etc.)
- Date and signature

4.1.2. Validity

Single authorisations are valid for the specific flight(s) only and lapse once the authorised term has expired.

Single authorisations are valid 24 hours before the first planned departure of a flight, until 24 hours after the last planned departure of a flight.



State flights are permitted at Swiss airports only during the opening hours for private traffic; these are published in the Swiss AIP. Applications for flights taking place outside these opening times must give appropriate grounds for this. In these cases, the compulsory latest landing or departure time is specified in the authorisation.

4.2. Annual authorisation

Annual authorisations are valid only for overflights of the Swiss territory and the territory of the Principality of Liechtenstein, and for flights to which the restrictions under Section 4.2.1 do not apply.

Applications for an annual authorisation must be submitted to the FOCA by the end of October of the preceding year, and contain an aircraft list containing all aircraft intended to be used for State flights under the authorisation. In the list, the exact aircraft models including ICAO type codes, registration marks, radio call signs and any special equipment must be specified.

Switzerland normally grants such annual authorisations through FOCA in accordance with the principle of reciprocity.

4.2.1. Restrictions annual authorisation

The following flights may not be carried out under an annual authorisation and a request for a separate, single authorisation must be submitted («DC application form»):

- Flights operating below flight level 100 (FL100/10'000ft AMSL) in Swiss territory and below flight level 120 (FL120/12'000ft AMSL) in the territory of the Principality of Liechtenstein
- Flights to and from an airport on Swiss territory
- Landings within the territory of Liechtenstein (see Section 5.2)
- Flights operating partly or entirely under Visual Flight Rules (VFR)
- Flights transporting dangerous goods²
- Flights with aircraft equipped with electronic warfare, reconnaissance and/or surveillance systems
- Flights with armed aircraft
- Flights with combat aircraft
- Flights to perform military exercises and flight displays
- Flights transporting troops or arms, munitions and military equipment in terms of the Federal Act on War Material of 13 December 1996 ([SR 514.51](#)) and the corresponding Ordinance on War Material of 25 February 1998 ([SR 514.511](#))

4.2.2. Flight Notification

Overflights with annual authorisations by the organisations OSCE, OPCW and UN shall submit a flight notification to FOCA no later than one day in advance of the flight including the following information:

- Responsible organisation
- Mission
- Type of aircraft
- Registration marks (tail number)
- Airport of departure and destination

² Dangerous goods in terms of the ICAO standards (International Civil Aviation Organisation, ICAO Annex 18, Technical Instructions), as well as the Dangerous Goods Regulations of the International Air Transport Association (IATA)

4.2.3. Validity

FOCA grants annual authorisations for a period of one calendar year and these can, upon receipt of a request, be renewed for a further year.

Annual authorisations may when justified be withdrawn or amended at any time.

5. General conditions and traffic rules

5.1. Traffic rules

State flights carried out in the territory of the Swiss Confederation and the Principality of Liechtenstein are subject to the legal provisions set out in the air traffic publications of Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein. Any additional requirements contained in the authorisation granted must be strictly adhered to.

Under the international rules and standards of the ICAO, flights must be operated in accordance with the instructions of air traffic control.

The provisions, guidelines and regulations governing the use of military infrastructure such as airfields, procedures or airspace stipulated in military aviation publications must be adhered to. The military aviation publications can be obtained from the military Air Operations Center (AOC).

AOC contact: Swiss Air Force, Air Operations Center
Flugsicherungsstrasse 1
8602 Wangen bei Dübendorf
Phone: +41 58 460 30 00
Email: aoc@vtg.admin.ch

5.2. Flights within the territory of the Principality of Liechtenstein

Pursuant to the following provisions, Diplomatic Clearances granted by the FOCA of the state of Switzerland are also valid for flights within the territory of the Principality of Liechtenstein (hereinafter referred to as 'Liechtenstein').

The following flights are not included in the authorisations (Diplomatic Clearances) granted by Switzerland's FOCA:

- I. Landing of military and State aircraft within the territory of Liechtenstein;
- II. Overflights below flight level 120 (FL120/12'000ft AMSL) within the territory of Liechtenstein using military aircraft;
- III. Overflights within the territory of Liechtenstein using military aircraft fitted with weapons, munitions or other military equipment, or
- IV. Overflights within the territory of Liechtenstein using military aircraft and other aircraft used for the preparation or the assistance of hostilities.

For State flights pursuant to I., an additional single authorisation (Diplomatic Clearance) must be requested from the government of Liechtenstein, and for all State flights pursuant to II. to IV. a separate, single authorisation must be requested from the FOCA in Switzerland.

Contact: Amt für Bau und Infrastruktur (ABI)
Stabstelle Landerwerb, Recht, Sekretariat, Zivilluftfahrt Postfach 684
FL-9490 Vaduz
Fürstentum Liechtenstein
Phone: +423 236 62 61
Web: www.abi.llv.li

5.3. Flights with aircraft not compliant with ICAO Annex 16

Take-offs and landings within the territory of the Swiss Confederation and the Principality of Liechtenstein by

- using aircraft not in possession of noise certification in accordance with the standards of Annex 16 to the International Civil Aviation Convention;
- using aircraft whose noise certification does not conform to the standards set out in Section 3 of Part 2 of Volume 1 of Annex 16 to the International Civil Aviation Convention

are not permitted as a matter of principle. FOCA may in exceptional circumstances authorise State flights using such aircraft for essential missions on important sovereign affairs, upon submission of a separate, single application.

Such special authorisations for landings at and departures from Swiss airports may be granted only during the following times:

- Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 19.00 local time
- Generally, no flights are permitted on Saturdays, Sundays and official public holidays

5.4. Banned aircraft by the EU/EFTA

State flights may be operated with aircraft of air carriers which are banned or restricted to operate within the European Union or the European Free Trade Association.

When operating with such aircraft, the ICAO designator code (as per ICAO Doc 8585) of this air carrier shall not be used.

5.5. Flight plan

The crew of the aircraft must file an international flight plan according to the guidelines of the Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP) with the air traffic control services in Zurich or Geneva at least one hour prior to entry of the aircraft into Swiss airspace.

The flight plan must contain the following information:

- a) Type of aircraft
- b) Registration mark
- c) Radio call sign
- d) Point of departure and destination
- e) Exact flight routing
- f) Date of the flight
- g) In **item 18** of the flight plan («Other information», sub-field RMK):
 - Authorisation number
(single or annual authorisation number; e.g. *RMK/DIP CLEARANCE SWITZERLAND CH123 2021*)
 - for flights on behalf of the OSCE, OPCW or the UN: the name of the responsible organisation

5.6. Spot Checks

Swiss authorities may, based on the Ordinance on the Safeguarding of the Sovereignty of Swiss Airspace ([SR 748.111.1](#)), carry out «spot checks» on State flights.