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Feds to impose 'no-fly zone' for small planes during NATO summit

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The government is warning small-plane pilots they could be shot down if they violate a no-fly zone in Chicago during the NATO summit.

The Federal Aviation Administration has issued a flight advisory for May 19 to 21, banning non-commercial aircraft from flying within 10 nautical miles of downtown Chicago and below 18,000 feet.

“The United States Government may use deadly force against the airborne aircraft if it is determined that the aircraft poses an immediate security threat,” according to the advisory.

The only aircraft allowed to fly within the 10-mile ring includes regularly scheduled commercial passenger and cargo carriers — along with police, ambulance and military aircraft supporting the Secret Service.

In addition, the temporary flight restrictions include an outer ring between 10 and 30 miles of downtown Chicago.

Only aircraft arriving at local airfields or departing from them are allowed to fly within the outer ring. But flight training, seaplane operations and other types of flights are banned in the outer ring.

The advisory, obtained Tuesday by the Chicago-Sun-Times, warns pilots to check to make sure parking and ramp services are available at airports in the Chicago area during the NATO summit.

Authorities say some NATO delegations might avoid O'Hare and Midway airports and fly to smaller airports in the area for security purposes — making them busier than usual.

Temporary flight restrictions for small planes have been imposed in Chicago in recent years for presidential visits. For instance, small planes have been banned from flying within 60 nautical miles of President Barack Obama's South Side home during his visits.

A nautical mile is slightly longer than a standard mile.

On several occasions, the government has also imposed flight bans over downtown Chicago because of terrorism-related concerns following the September 2001 attacks.

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