FEDERAL AVIATION AGENCY
BUREAU OF AIR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

July 7, 1960

CIVIL AIR REGULATIONS DRAFT RELEASE NO. 60-12

SUBJECT: Establishment of the Base of the Continental Control Area at 14,500 Feet Mean Sea Level

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The Bureau of Air Traffic Management has under consideration a proposal which would re-establish the lower limit of the continental control area from the present base of 24,000 feet mean sea level (m.s.l.) to 14,500 feet (m.s.l.). The reasons therefor are set forth in the explanatory statement of the attached proposal which is being published in the Federal Register as a notice of proposed rule making.

The Agency desires that all persons who will be affected by the requirements of this proposal be fully informed as to its effect upon them and is therefore circulating copies in order to afford interested persons ample opportunity to submit comments as they may desire.

Because of the large number of comments which we anticipate receiving in response to this draft release, we will be unable to acknowledge receipt of each reply. However, you may be assured that all comments will be given careful consideration.

It should be noted that comments must be submitted in duplicate to the Docket Section of the Federal Aviation Agency, Room B-316, 1711 New York Avenue, N. W., Washington 25, D. C., prior to October 13, 1960.

D. D. Thomas

D. D. Thomas, Director
Bureau of Air Traffic Management

FEDERAL AVIATION AGENCY
BUREAU OF AIR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

[ 14 CFR Part 60 ]

[ Reg. Docket No. 443 Draft Release 60-12 ]

NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULE MAKING

Establishment of the Base of the Continental Control Area at 14,500 Feet Mean Sea Level

Notice is hereby given that the Bureau of Air Traffic Management will propose to the Administrator the adoption of an amendment to Part 60 of the Civil Air Regulations, which would re-establish the lower limit of the continental control area from the present base of 24,000 feet mean sea level (m.s.l.) to 14,500 feet (m.s.l.).

Interested persons may participate in the making of the proposed rule by submitting such written data, views or arguments as they may desire. Communications should be submitted in duplicate to the Docket Section of the Federal Aviation Agency, Room B-316, 1711 New York Avenue, N. W., Washington 25, D. C. All communications received prior to October 13, 1960, will be considered by the Administrator before taking action upon the proposed rule. The proposals contained in this notice may be changed in the light of comments received. All comments submitted will be available

for examination by interested persons in the Docket Section when the prescribed date for the return of comments has expired. Because of the large number of comments which we anticipate receiving in response to this draft release, we will be unable to acknowledge receipt of each reply.

Prior to 1957, controlled airspace had, for the most part, been designated only along 10 mile wide airways and in control zones surrounding certain airport terminal areas. In December 1957, the continental control area was designated which expanded the controlled airspace network above 24,000 feet* to the boundaries of the continental United States. This action represented the successful completion of the first phase of comprehensive air traffic control improvement plans that sought the ultimate expansion of controlled airspace to all areas above 15,000 feet.

When the continental control area was first implemented in 1957, it was recognized that the second phase of the implementation plans could not be undertaken until extensive improvements in the air traffic control system were made. Since December 1957, significant advancements have been made

* All references to altitude made herein are mean sea level (m.s.l.) unless otherwise noted.

in the state of the high altitude air traffic control and navigation system. Among other developments, new and improved radar systems and displays have been developed and are in use. The numerous peripheral radio communications facilities which have been installed and commissioned throughout the country have provided for the extension of direct communications between pilots and controllers and have proven to be a most effective means of expediting the flow of en route air traffic. Semi-automatic calculating equipment has been put into operational use at several air traffic control facilities and the number of qualified air traffic controllers has increased significantly. These and other similar improvements in the air traffic control system now make it practicable to achieve the objective of expanding controlled airspace to all areas above 15,000 feet.

Although it had been originally contemplated that the "floor" or base of the continental control area would be 15,000 feet, it is proposed herein to establish the "floor" at 14,500 feet. This will permit the continued use of the cardinal altitude of 15,000 feet as an altitude for instrument flight rule (IFR) operations and will provide a 500 foot buffer between IFR and VFR flight operations.

In lowering the "floor" of the continental control area from 24,000 to 14,500 feet, the higher visual flight rule (VFR) minimum weather conditions, which currently apply only above 24,000 feet, would be made applicable to all airspace above 14,500 feet. It is believed that the risk of collision in this area will be alleviated if the minimum visibility for VFR flight is increased to 5 miles and the clearance from clouds minimums is increased to 1,000 feet vertically and one mile horizontally. These minima are believed to be appropriate for application in this airspace since the aircraft that are expected to make the greatest use of this area are the high performance aircraft whose airspeeds are such that the current VFR minimums may not provide sufficient time for pilots to observe and avoid each other. Additionally, such an increase would require a greater number of flight operations to be conducted in accordance with the instrument flight rules with separation being assured by air traffic control.

This proposed action is consistent with the overall airspace structure plans of the Agency which contemplate the movement of IFR air traffic in a three level route structure system. This structure would include the low

altitude airway system extending upwards to 14,500 feet; the intermediate airway structure (which would be within the "lowered" continental control area) extending from 14,500 feet to, but not including, 24,000 feet; and the present high altitude jet routes would continue in effect for flights operating at and above 24,000 feet.

It is recognized that in several isolated mountainous locations within the United States, the height of the terrain (13,000 feet or above) requires that the "floor" of the continental control area be set at a higher level than 14,500 feet if uncontrolled airspace is to be provided between such terrain and the "floor" of controlled airspace. Accordingly, provision is made for the exclusion of airspace which is 1,500 feet or less above the terrain.

In consideration of the foregoing, it is proposed to amend the definition of the continental control area contained in Section 60.60 to read as follows:

Continental Control Area. The continental control area is that airspace within the continental United States extending upwards from 14,500 feet mean sea level. The continental control area shall not include the airspace over the State of Alaska, the airspace which is less than 1,500

feet above the terrain or, unless otherwise designated in the Regulations of the Administrator, the airspace of prohibited or restricted areas during the time designated as such.

This amendment is proposed under the authority of Section 307 (a) and 307 (c) and 313 (a) of the Federal Aviation Act of 1958 (72 Stat. 752, 749, 49 U.S.C., 1354, 1348.)

D. D. Thomas

Director, Bureau of Air Traffic Management

Issued in Washington, D. C., on July 7, 1960.