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TERRAIN CLEARANCE
FOR ARRIVING AND DEPARTING HKIA TRAFFIC

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) is located adjacent to areas of high terrain with a number of peaks on Lantau Island and the New Territories, it is of paramount importance for pilots to maintain high situational awareness and alertness when operating in the vicinity of HKIA.
- 1.2 Air operators and flight crews of aircraft arriving at and/or departing from the HKIA shall always remain vigilant and adhere to the approach and descent procedures as promulgated in the Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP) Hong Kong. Unless otherwise instructed by ATC, pilots should strictly follow the published Instrument Approach Procedures (IAP) and Standard Instrument Departures (SID) when arriving to/departing from HKIA (see also AIC 28/19).

2. Terrain in the Vicinity of HKIA

- 2.1 The more prominent high peaks around HKIA include:
- (i) Lantau Peak (3 066 ft AMSL) is 3.6 NM south of HKIA;
 - (ii) Sunset Peak (2 850 ft AMSL) is 3.7 NM southeast of HKIA;
 - (iii) Castle Peak (2 057 ft AMSL) is 5.3 NM northeast of HKIA;
 - (iv) Tai Mo Shan (3 277 ft AMSL) is 13.2 NM northeast of HKIA.

3. Adherence to SID and IAP/MAP to Ensure Terrain Clearance

- 3.1 In general, ATC can only provide limited assistance to pilots whilst the aircraft is below the Minimum Sector Altitude (MSA).
- 3.2 To ensure aircraft maintain clearance from terrain it is essential that pilots ensure the correct SID for the correct departure runway has been programmed prior to departure.
- 3.3 Once airborne, pilots are further reminded to remain on SID track and follow the appropriate waypoint until passing the MSA, unless otherwise instructed by ATC.
- 3.4 Likewise, pilots should ensure the correct IAP for the correct arrival runway has been programmed prior to commencing the approach to HKIA.

3.5 In the event a missed approach is initiated, it is equally essential for pilots to closely follow the published MAP until passing the MSA, unless otherwise instructed by ATC.

4. ATC Intervention

4.1 The Hong Kong Air Traffic Management System (ATMS) is equipped with an Approach/Departure Path Monitor (APM/DPM), which provides ATC with an audio and visual warning when an arrival or departure, as appropriate, deviates off the defined final approach path or the SID path.

4.2 In the event of receiving an APM/DPM alarm, ATC will provide the pilot with a terrain alert, for example:

- (i) “(Call sign) TERRAIN ALERT, CLIMB IMMEDIATELY TO (altitude)”,
or;
- (ii) “(Call sign) LOW ALTITUDE WARNING, CHECK YOUR ALTITUDE IMMEDIATELY”.

4.3 Due to proximity of terrain, ATC vectoring is only available at or above the Minimum Vectoring Altitude (MVA). Relevant information has been published in AIP Hong Kong (ATC Surveillance Minimum Altitude Chart, VHHH AD 2.24).

4.4 Should a pilot inadvertently deviate from the assigned SID or IAP/MAP, they can expect the following warning from ATC:

- (i) When below MSA:
“(Call sign) TERRAIN ALERT, CLIMB IMMEDIATELY TO (altitude)”.
- (ii) When above MSA:
“(Call sign) TURN (left or right) HEADING (heading)”.