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DYAMI INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

Context on the FAA “Exercise Caution” NOTAMs

Central America, Mexico & Eastern Pacific

Summary

On 16 January 2026, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued multiple NOTAMs advising operators to “exercise caution” in airspace over Mexico, Central America, and parts of Colombia, Ecuador, Panama and the Eastern Pacific, citing military activity and potential GNSS (GPS) interference.

Dyami’s analyst team assesses these NOTAMs as an aviation-safety reflection of a heightened U.S. security posture in the region, driven by expanding counter-cartel operations, strategic interests around the Panama Canal, and increased military coordination with regional partners.

Key Judgments

1. Military activity has increased across the Eastern Pacific and Central American corridor, raising the risk of civil-military airspace interaction.
2. GNSS disruption is a credible risk, especially along coastal and oceanic routes.
3. The U.S. political narrative increasingly frames cartels as national-security threats, enabling broader military tools and operational intensity.
4. Panama remains a strategic chokepoint, with canal security shaping U.S. posture in the region.

In-Depth Strategic Context

Over the past two years, U.S. security policy toward Latin America has shifted from a primarily law-enforcement-led counter-narcotics approach toward a more security- and defense-oriented framework. Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), particularly major drug cartels, are increasingly framed not just as criminal enterprises but as strategic threats

capable of destabilizing states, undermining regional security, and challenging U.S. interests through corruption, violence, and control over key logistical corridors.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly stated that major cartels should be treated as terrorist-style threats, signaling support for the use of broader military, intelligence, and financial tools against them. While not all such measures require overt kinetic action, this posture typically leads to an increase in ISR flights, maritime patrols, joint exercises, special operations support, and electronic warfare-related activities across the region.

At the same time, the Panama Canal remains a critical global trade chokepoint and a strategic asset for the United States. Ensuring the canal's security, resilience against disruption, and insulation from hostile influence has become a recurring theme in U.S.–Panama cooperation. This has resulted in enhanced military presence, joint security initiatives, and regional surveillance activities in surrounding airspace and waters.

Colombia and Ecuador, positioned along key trafficking and maritime routes, continue to serve as focal points for counter-TCO operations. Intensified interdiction efforts, evolving drone threats, and maritime security missions increase the likelihood of multi-domain military activity extending into adjacent FIRs, including the Eastern Pacific.

For civil aviation, this evolving operational environment increases the probability of airspace complexity, temporary activity zones, navigation interference, and reduced predictability, making precautionary NOTAMs a necessary risk-mitigation measure rather than a routine administrative warning.

What we know

- FAA NOTAMs warn of military operations and possible satellite navigation interference
- Validity: 16 January – 17 March 2026
- Affected areas:
 - Mexico
 - Central America
 - Colombia, Ecuador, Panama
 - Eastern Pacific FIRs

Dyami analysts assess these advisories reflect real operational activity rather than purely precautionary messaging.

Dyami assessment on why now?

Primary driver:

Increased U.S. military and security operations (ISR, maritime patrols, interdiction support) raise the likelihood of civil aviation exposure to dynamic airspace conditions and electromagnetic interference.

Secondary drivers:

- Cartels as national-security targets – political signaling enables broader tools
- Panama Canal security – strategic protection efforts elevate military presence
- Colombia & Ecuador spillover – intensified counter-TCO posture impacts regional FIRs

Implications for business, aviation & maritime security

Operational Risks

- Possible GNSS degradation / spoofing-like effects
- Increased likelihood of reroutes and altitude restrictions
- Greater need for real-time civil-military deconfliction

Travel Risk / Duty of Care

- Potential short-notice disruptions
- Heightened security visibility
- Escalation could affect scheduling

Indicators to Watch

- Additional FAA or regional NOTAM updates
- Expanded GNSS interference warnings
- U.S. policy statements on counter-cartel actions
- Panama Canal security announcements
- Military assets build up in the region
- Colombian/Ecuadorian military posture changes

Peace of mind

Aviation Risk Intelligence & Training

We understand that every underwriter, airline and aircraft operator requires a cost-effective but robust aviation intelligence solution. Dyami delivers intelligence solutions that are lean, scalable, and tailored to operational realities.

What sets us apart is our **people-centric and anticipatory approach**. Unlike many providers who rely almost exclusively on AI-driven monitoring or generic open-source reports, Dyami applies a multi-angle intelligence methodology. We combine technology with trusted human sources, expert networks, and both local and international partners. This layered approach ensures depth, reliability, and actionable context — qualities that automated systems alone cannot provide.

Our assessments and recommendations are always **tailor-made**. We carefully consider the risk appetite of the operator, recognizing that thresholds and business priorities differ.

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