

Aviation Law

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Foreword

The history of aviation is as dynamic as it is compelling. What began with the daring ambition of early pioneers quickly became shaped by the strategic imperatives of warfare, eventually maturing into a global commercial industry that now links even the most remote regions of the planet. Yet the vulnerability of this intricate system was laid bare by a recent global pandemic, which brought about an unprecedented disruption: virtually overnight, air travel came to a halt. Passenger aircraft, once ubiquitous in the skies, became a rare sight. Departure boards at airports stood empty, bustling terminals fell silent, and space to accommodate grounded aircraft became scarce.

The consequences for passenger aviation were profound. Numerous airlines ceased operations altogether, while others battled to survive – turning to investors, restructuring financially, or relying on government intervention. In contrast, air cargo assumed a new level of importance, ensuring the continuity of global trade and supply chains. Passenger aircraft were rapidly converted for freight use, giving rise to the term “preighter” – a hybrid of “passenger” and “freighter.” Concurrently, private and corporate aviation experienced a surge in demand, as travellers sought alternatives to constrained commercial services.

Beyond these immediate developments, the aviation sector is undergoing a far-reaching transformation. Innovative business models are emerging, such as autonomous air taxis, commercial drones, and virtual airlines. At the same time, the industry faces mounting scrutiny over its environmental impact, widely recognized as a significant contributor to climate change. Governments and international institutions have responded with a range of regulatory measures – emissions trading schemes, fuel efficiency standards, and restrictions on short-haul flights among them. Yet these challenges are paralleled by new opportunities, propelled by technological innovation, digital transformation, and a continued global fascination with flight.

This book offers a thorough and current overview of Aviation Law, capturing the most recent trends in legislation, regulation, and case law. More than a century after its birth, aviation is now governed by a complex and far-reaching legal framework that deeply influences operational practices. Few sectors are as extensively regulated. To guide readers through this intricate landscape, the book explores key legal questions and challenges in aviation, moving beyond conventional legal categories. It is designed both as an accessible introduction to the subject and as a practical reference for professionals in the field, including lawyers, in-house counsel, judges, and regulators.

This work is informed by extensive academic teaching, research, and practical legal experience. The authors warmly welcome feedback and insights from readers to help shape future editions.

Cologne/Berlin in the winter 2025/2026

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