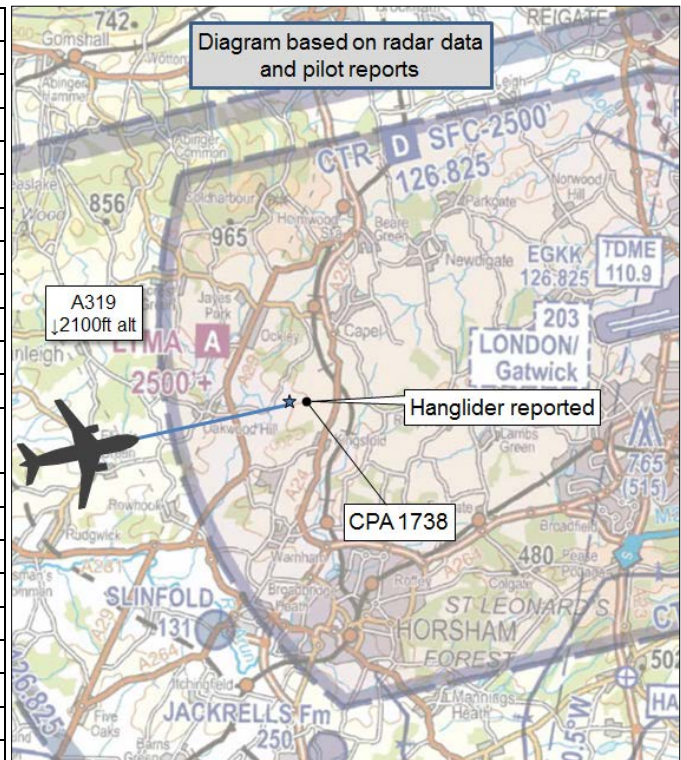


AIRPROX REPORT No 2017083

Date: 06 May 2017 Time: 1738Z Position: 5107N 00021W Location: 6nm Gatwick

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

| Recorded | Aircraft 1 | Aircraft 2 |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Aircraft | A319 | Unknown Aircraft |
| Operator | CAT | Unknown |
| Airspace | Gatwick CTR | Gatwick CTR |
| Class | D | D |
| Rules | IFR | |
| Service | Aerodrome | |
| Provider | Gatwick | |
| Altitude/FL | 2100ft | |
| Transponder | A, C, S | |
| Reported | | |
| Colours | Company | White |
| Lighting | Strobes, Beacon, Nav | |
| Conditions | VMC | |
| Visibility | >10km | |
| Altitude/FL | 2000ft | |
| Altimeter | QNH | |
| Heading | 078° | |
| Speed | 160kt | |
| ACAS/TAS | TCAS II | |
| Alert | None | |
| Separation | | |
| Reported | 300ft V/0m H | |
| Recorded | NK | |



THE A319 PILOT reports that he was on an ILS approach to RW08 Gatwick; at about 6nm DME the crew noticed what they believed to be a hang glider. It was on a reciprocal heading and passed 300ft below. Had it been at the same height, they would have collided. He estimated that from seeing nothing to the point that the hang glider passed underneath was 2 seconds, so he did not believe it would have been possible to initiate avoiding action.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE UNKNOWN AIRCRAFT PILOT could not be traced.

THE GATWICK AIR CONTROLLER reports that the A319 was on a 6nm final to RW08 and descending into the LGW control zone, Class D airspace, out of the LTMA. The pilot had already previously reported on frequency, he transmitted 'Tower, just seen a hang glider go underneath us, 200-300ft below us'. This was acknowledged and both the Tower controller and the Tower Supervisor called Gatwick Radar and Group Supervisor (Airports) at Swanwick to pass on the traffic report. Nothing could be seen on the tower ATM to indicate a zone infringer and no further reports were received from any other arriving aircraft. The A319 made an uneventful landing.

Factual Background

The weather at Gatwick was recorded as follows:

METAR EGKK 061720Z 05008KT 8000 BKN032 15/08 Q1012=

Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The A319 and unknown aircraft pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard¹. If the incident geometry is considered as head-on or nearly so then both pilots were required to turn to the right².

Comments

BHPA

With the location and weather, it could not have been an unpowered hang glider or paraglider, it is also very unlikely to have been a powered hang glider. Regardless of what it was it obviously shouldn't have been in the CTR without a clearance.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when an A319 and an unknown aircraft flew into proximity at 1738 on Saturday 6th May 2017. The A319 pilot was operating under IFR in VMC, and in receipt of an Aerodrome Service from Gatwick. The unknown aircraft could not be traced.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of a report from the A319 pilot, transcripts of the relevant RT frequencies, radar photographs/video recordings, reports from the air traffic controllers involved and reports from the appropriate ATC and operating authorities.

The Board first discussed what the conflicting traffic might have been bearing in mind the BHPA comments that weather conditions meant that it was unlikely to have been either an unpowered or powered hang glider. The A319 pilot had obviously seen something which looked like a hang glider, and the Board wondered if it was more likely to have been a flex-wing microlight which, as it passed below the A319, may have looked like a hang glider if the fuselage structure was obscured. Unfortunately, without a radar track it had been impossible to trace the other pilot and so it was not possible to make any certain judgement. Nevertheless, whatever it had been, its pilot was not entitled to operate in that position on the approach lane to Gatwick within the Gatwick CTR, and the Board were clear that this was a serious breach of regulations by the pilot concerned.

Turning to the actions of the A319 crew, the Board thought that there was little more they could have done in the circumstances. They had no Traffic Information from ATC (because ATC didn't know it was there due to lack of radar conspicuity or any previous reports), nor would it have shown up on TCAS (because the other aircraft wasn't transponding). See and avoid was the only available barrier, which was a highly unsatisfactory state of affairs for an airliner in controlled airspace. Although the A319 crew saw the other aircraft, they reported that they didn't have any time to react and so it was purely fortuitous that the unknown aircraft was at a different height to the A319 and passed below.

In determining the cause of the Airprox, the Board were quick to agree that because the unknown aircraft was not entitled to operate in that airspace it had effectively been flown into conflict with the A319. The achieved separation had been purely serendipitous, and the Board assessed that the description of the incident by the A319 pilot indicated that safety margins had been reduced well below the norm; accordingly, they assessed the risk of collision as Category B.

¹ SERA.3205 Proximity.

² SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(1) Approaching head-on.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The unknown aircraft was flown within the Gatwick CTR and into conflict with the A319.

Degree of Risk: B.

Safety Barrier Assessment³

In assessing the effectiveness of the safety barriers associated with this incident, the Board concluded that the key factors had been that:

ANSP

Situational Awareness & Action was assessed as **ineffective** because the unknown aircraft did not show on the radar and so the controller had no way of knowing that it was there.

Flight Crew

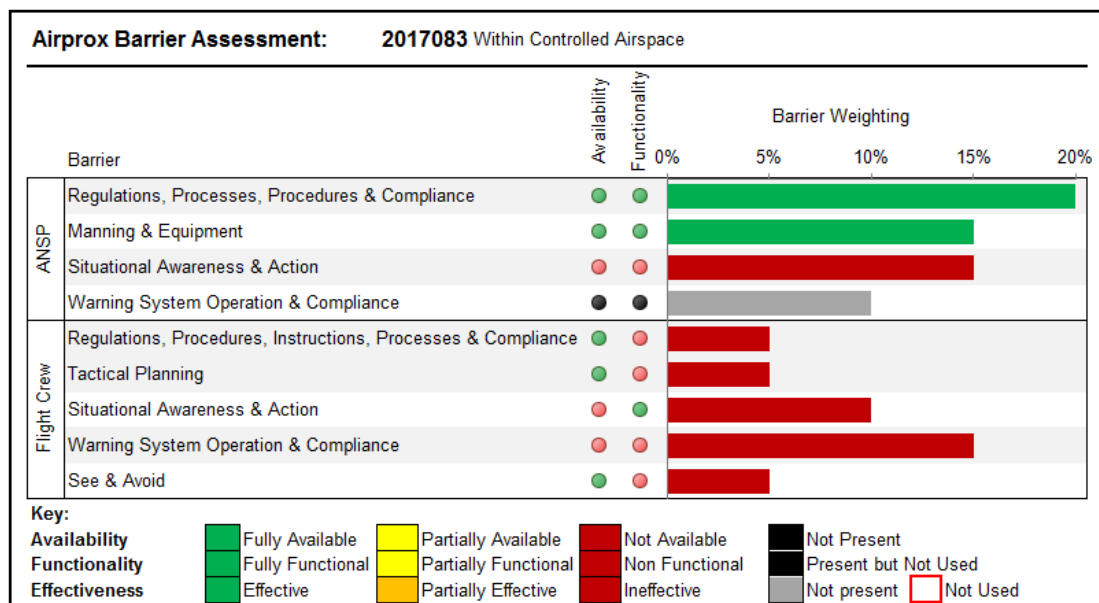
Regulations, Procedures Instructions, Processes & Compliance was assessed as **ineffective** because the unknown aircraft should not have been flown in the Gatwick CTZ.

Tactical Planning was also assessed as **ineffective** because the pilot of the unknown aircraft should have known that he wasn't allowed to fly there.

Situational Awareness & Action was assessed as **ineffective** because the A319 pilot had no information about the unknown aircraft, nor was there any way for him to receive such information.

Warning System Operation and Compliance was assessed as **ineffective** because the A319's TCAS could not alert the pilot to the unknown aircraft because it wasn't squawking.

See and Avoid was assessed as **ineffective** because the A319 pilot estimated he only had 2 seconds to take avoiding action, which was not enough time for him to react.



³ The UK Airprox Board scheme for assessing the Availability, Functionality and Effectiveness of safety barriers can be found on the [UKAB Website](#).