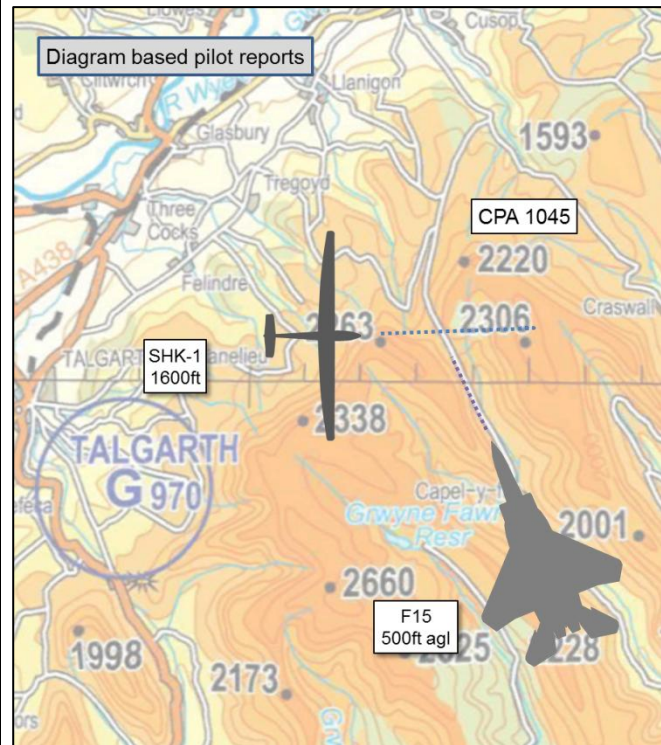


AIRPROX REPORT No 2015123

Date: 30 Jul 2015 Time: 1045Z Position: 5200N 00306W Location: IVO Talgarth

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	SHK-1 Glider	F15
Operator	Civ Pte	Foreign Mil
Airspace	Lon FIR	LFA 7
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	None	None
Altitude/FL	NK	NK
Transponder	Not fitted	A,C,S
Reported		
Colours	White	Grey
Lighting	Nil	Anti-colls, 3 x position lights
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	NK	12km
Altitude/FL	1600ft	500ft agl
Altimeter	QFE	QNH
Heading	090°	330°
Speed	60kt	450kt
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	Not fitted
Separation		
Reported	200ft V/0ft H	Not Seen
Recorded	NK	



THE GLIDER PILOT reports ridge soaring in the Black Mountains at ridge-top height. He was flying from one ridge to another, passing over Gospel Pass Valley, when an F15 flew underneath the glider, crossing right to left, in a south to north direction.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE F15 PILOT reports that he descended low-level at Pandy into the UKLF structure and transmitted on the low-level common frequency his intentions to remain within LFA 7 for 15-20 minutes. He flew down the Llantony Valley at 500agl and followed the planned route up the eastern-most valleys of the Black Mountains, marked on the UKLFD chart with a fast jet flow arrow. He then executed a ridge crossing at Gospel Pass, which is between 1600-2200ft MSL: in accordance with training regulations to remain 500ft agl, he was 2100-2700ft AMSL. He was aware of the glider site on the NW side of the black Mountains, and addressed the site in his mission planning and brief. Consequently he executed a clearing manoeuvre to the left and was looking west in the direction of the site during the ridge crossing. The crew did not see the glider.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'None'.

Factual Background

The weather at Cardiff was reported as:

METAR EGFF 301020Z 31011KT 280V350 9999 FEW032 SCT048 16/08 Q1020

Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

Both pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard¹. When two aircraft are converging at approximately the same level, the aircraft that has the other on its right shall give way, except as follows: (i) power-driven heavier-than-air aircraft shall give way to ... sailplanes...²

Comments

Black Mountains Gliding Club Safety Officer

The Llantony valley has long been used as a low-level route and was (and probably still is) designated as such on the RAF low-level maps. During the 1990s that route was much used by the Harrier force, and we then had an understanding with the RAF that we would try to avoid crossing the Gospel Pass below 3,000 ft (QNH) on weekdays. That normally put any low-level fast-jet traffic well below the gliders. However military low-level activity is much reduced in recent years so this guidance may have been forgotten by our members, but I see no reason why previous understandings cannot be revived. The glider was 1600 ft on QFE Talgarth which would have been 2600 ft QNH.

USAFE

The F-15 crew were aware of the glider site and had planned accordingly. However, they - and indeed the wing - were unaware of any informal agreement made in the 1990s between the former Harrier Force and Talgarth.

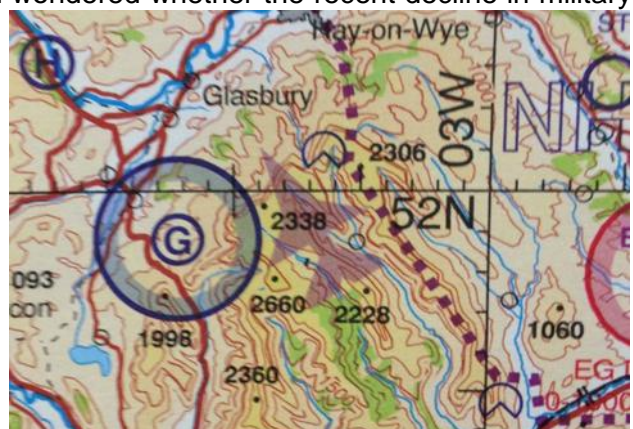
Summary

An Airprox was reported on 30 July at 1045 between a glider and an F15. Both aircraft were flying VFR and VMC and neither were receiving an ATS. The glider was ridge soaring in the Black Mountains and saw the F15 pass beneath him. The F15 was in LFA 7 and did not see the glider.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from the pilots of both aircraft.

The Board first looked at the actions of the glider pilot. He was ridge soaring, which the Board were told can involve a high cockpit workload. The Board wondered whether the recent decline in military fast-jet low-flying meant that he was unused to seeing aircraft low-flying in that area. They noted, as they had on previous Airprox, that military flow arrows do not appear on civilian charts, and wondered whether, had it been, this may have enhanced the glider pilot's awareness that fast-jet traffic may use the area, and also the direction in which they would be travelling (see diagram for the military version of the map which shows the flow arrow just to the East of the glider site). The Board noted that the Safety Officer at Talgarth referred to previous informal agreements between the military and the glider site, which he offered to resurrect. Whilst members welcomed such endeavours, they cautioned against setting up informal agreements,



¹ SERA.3205 Proximity.

² SERA.3210 Right-of-way.

which invariably get forgotten about over time, and instead advocated making any such procedures more formal and therefore published in the AIP for all to see. Military members indicated that it would be possible to set up such agreements again, should personnel at the glider site wish to instigate them.

The Board were informed by the USAFE representative that the F15 pilot was based in the UK and was very familiar with the UKLFS. He had noted during his planning the glider site to the north-west of his exit point of the valley, and the Board commended him for proactively looking for gliders as he went past; it was simply unfortunate that, in this case, the glider was further north-east and above him and so he didn't see it.

Ultimately, the Board agreed that this was see-and avoid airspace where both pilots were entitled to operate. An ATS was not available to either pilot due to height and the terrain, and neither pilot had TAS or FLARM at their disposal to help in the detection of the other aircraft. Both pilots were therefore relying on look-out to mitigate the risk of collision.

In looking at the cause of this Airprox, the Board agreed it was a non-sighting by the F15 pilot and, because he hadn't seen it until it passed underneath him, effectively a non-sighting by the glider pilot. When assessing the risk, the Board agreed that, although neither pilot had had time to take avoiding action, the separation had been sufficiently large that this could be assessed as Category B, recognising that safety margins had been much reduced below the norm.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: Non-sighting by the F15 pilot and effectively a non-sighting by the glider pilot.

Degree of Risk: B.