

AIRPROX REPORT No 2012033

Date/Time: 14 Mar 2012 1351Z

Position: 5521N 00132W (Amble
Light - elev 41ft)

Airspace: UKDLFS/Sco FIR (Class: G)

<u>Reporting Ac</u>	<u>Reported Ac</u>
---------------------	--------------------

<u>Type:</u> Tornado GR4	Untraced
--------------------------	----------

<u>Operator:</u> HQ Air (Ops)	NK
-------------------------------	----

<u>Alt/FL:</u> 700ft ↓	NK
RPS (1019hPa)	NK

<u>Weather:</u> VMC CLBC	NK
--------------------------	----

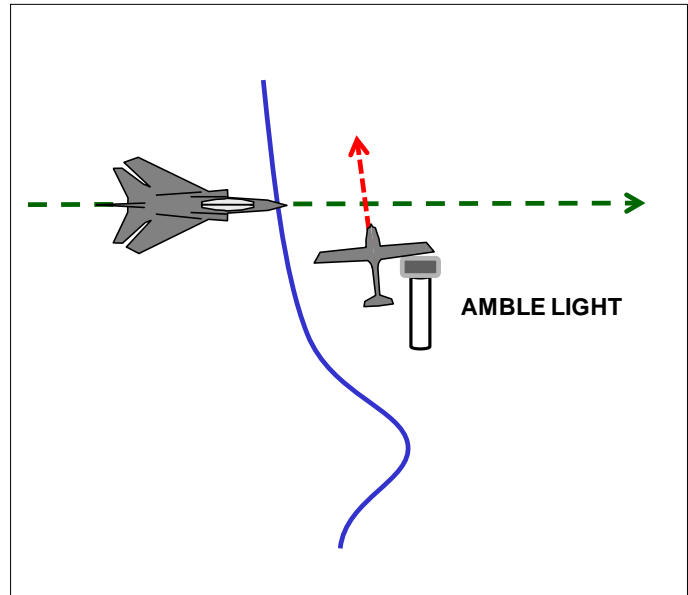
<u>Visibility:</u> 8km	NK
------------------------	----

Reported Separation:

50ft V/300ft H	NK
----------------	----

Recorded Separation:

NK



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE TORNADO PILOT reports that he was leading a formation of 3 ac on a tactical low level training sortie, squawking 7001 with Modes C and S but TCAS was not fitted. Following a climb to 'coast out', heading 090° at 420kt, they were in a shallow descent through 700ft Rad Alt when a light ac was seen about 50ft above them and 300ft to their R and crossing for the R to L. The ac, which was not seen prior to that point, appeared to be heading 350°, paralleling the coast just out to sea. The ac had a single propeller, mid-blue over-cockpit wings and a white fuselage and it was not seen to manoeuvre. Due to the lateness of their sighting they were unable to manoeuvre before their flightpaths crossed.

The pilot observed that they were busy rejoining with his wingman and his view in the direction of approach of the light ac was obstructed by the canopy arch.

He reported the incident to Newcastle APR on the RT and assessed the risk as being medium.

UKAB Note (1): Despite extensive radar and procedural tracing action the other ac could not be identified.

UKAB Note (2): The Great Dun Fell radar was not available due to refurbishment and the incident did not show on any other recorded radars.

UKAB Note (3): The position given by the Tornado was taken from the Mission recording system, and is 1nm off the coast.

HQ AIR (OPS) comments that this report highlights the conflicting requirements of an OCU instructor. On the one hand he is required to monitor the actions of his student during a formation rejoin, yet on the other he is still required to perform lookout for the formation. He must divide his priorities carefully to ensure he does not focus on one task to the exclusion of the other.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the Tornado pilot and operating authorities. The Prestwick and Swanwick recordings did not show the event but it did show on the Newcastle Radar which was not (on this occasion) available to the Board due to technical difficulties. However, the assistance of Newcastle ATC and the Eshott Airfield operators in attempting to trace the light ac, albeit unsuccessfully, was appreciated.

An Advisor with knowledge of the local area informed Members that it is not unusual for light ac and microlights to fly up or down the coast in that area as it is very picturesque. Although the Board was not certain of light ac flight details, it appears that both ac were operating legitimately in Class G airspace of the FIR/UKDLFS where 'see and avoid' pertains.

The pair of Tornados was rejoining just after coast-out and the lead crew reported that they were busy rejoining with their No2 and would have been searching for him. In addition, although the crew might have seen the light ac sky-lined prior to pulling up to cross the coast, once they had climbed to above its level it would have been difficult to see against the dark background of the sea. The issue of the Tornado canopy-arch blind spot is a well known problem which pilots should be aware of and move their head or upper body to see round it (this is also an issue in many other ac types including GA and helicopters).

Bearing in mind the proximity of the two ac, Members were surprised that the light ac pilot did not see or hear (apparently) the Tornado and also file a report.

Although there was some separation extant, it was minimal and the Board agreed that in this instance there was a risk that the ac would have collided.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: Effectively a non-sighting by the Tornado crews and a presumed non-sighting by the light ac pilot.

Degree of Risk: A.