

AIRPROX REPORT No 2010049

Date/Time: 13 May 2010 (Thursday) 1718Z

Position: 5307N 00005W (3nm
ENE Coningsby - elev
24ft)

Airspace: Coningsby MATZ (*Class: G*)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: Typhoon Untraced Glider

Operator: HQ AIR (OPS) NK

Alt/FL: 2000ft ↓ NK
(QFE 1011mb)

Weather: VMC NK

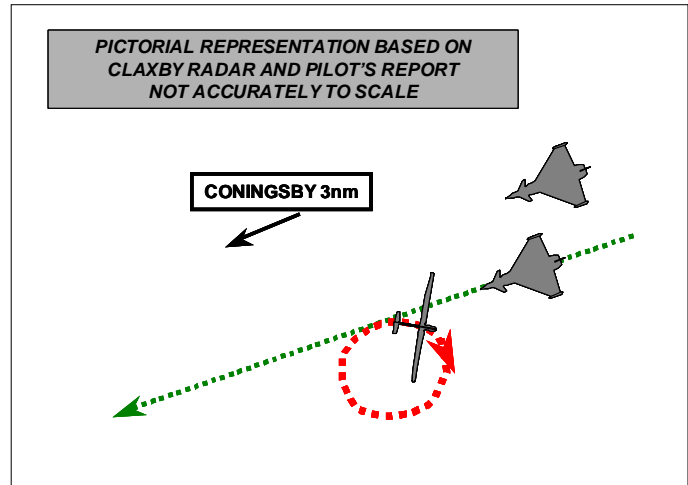
Visibility: 30km

Reported Separation:

200ft V/ NR H

Recorded Separation:

NK (See UKAB Note (2))



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE TYPHOON PILOT reports flying dual, leading a pair of Typhoons recovering visually to Coningsby RW27 (L) in echelon formation, from a routine training sortie in contact with Coningsby TWR squawking as directed with Mode C. As the formation approached initials [070°/3nm@2000ft QFE] the No2 pilot called 'Bunt, Bunt, Bunt' in order avoid a [white] glider [which he saw 0.25nm away]. The lead Typhoon bunted aggressively and the No2 subsequently called that the collision risk had been averted. The lead Typhoon pilot did not see the glider at any stage.

The formation then recovered normally. The pilot assessed the risk as being high.

Subsequent analysis of the mission recording system revealed that the glider was on the extended centreline at 3nm and 2000ft, well within the MATZ.

UKAB Note (1): Despite extensive procedural tracing action the glider could not be identified.

UKAB Note (2): The recording of the Claxby Radar shows the Typhoons on the approach to Coningsby but they drop out in the left turn onto the centreline, reappearing 2 sweeps later with NMC. There is a primary-only return for 1 sweep only at 2.2nm on the approach, which might be the glider, coincident with Typhoon Leader. There is another intermittent primary contact 2min later, 2nm S of the position of the original primary contact but it again disappears and cannot be tracked. The Cromer and Debden radars only show the Typhoons intermittently with no primary contacts in the area.

HQ AIR BM ATM Safety Management comments that Coningsby APP then TWR were providing a TS to the Typhoon formation for a visual recovery. APP called traffic to them prior to releasing them to TWR; although not visual with the traffic, the formation reported that they were happy to continue and would keep a good look out. The Coningsby SUP reported seeing a contact on the HiBrite radar display in the VCR only after the Airprox was reported. The contact correlated with the position of the glider reported by Typhoon Leader.

Further investigation indicated that the contact seen on radar(s) was intermittent and therefore not assimilated as a threat. The lack of solid radar return presented to ATC at the time of the incident reduced the perceived threat level; however, best practice remains to pass TI in this situation if time permits.

HQ AIR (OPS) comments that this is another event caused by a non-SSR equipped ac flying in inappropriate airspace. The see and avoid principles applied in class G airspace will continue to break down while non-SSR equipped ac continue to fly in busy approach lanes to airfields without contacting the relevant controlling agency.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac, transcripts of the relevant RT frequencies, radar recordings, reports from the air traffic controllers involved and reports from the appropriate ATC and operating authorities.

The Board agreed that soaring in the vicinity of or, as in this case, actually on the approach to a busy airfield is poor airmanship, particularly without making radio contact with them. Members were briefed by the Secretariat that an intermittent primary contact, probably the glider concerned, can be seen on the radar recordings flying in the Coningsby area for about 1 hour around the incident time, at one time just on the ATZ boundary (height not determined). That being the case, and given the time of day, the BGA Member suggested that it had probably been locally based.

It was not clear to the Board whether the TI passed by APP to the Typhoon formation prior to their handover to TWR concerned the glider they encountered or another ac; they presumed, however, that it was the subject glider. Members also concurred the HQ Air view that, in these circumstances with an intermittent primary return, most likely a glider, the passing of incomplete or HiBrite based TI can be most helpful to aircrews.

In this instance the lead Typhoon crew did not see the glider; however, possibly as result of the previous TI generating an enhanced lookout, his wingman did see it, albeit late, and issued a correct 'bunt' instruction to his leader. The timing of the wingman's call could not be correlated with the (presumed) glider radar response and therefore the separation when the call was made could not be determined. Similarly, it was not possible to measure the increased separation as a result of the bunt manoeuvre. However, the Board considered that the manoeuvre had been effective in increasing the separation between the leader's aircraft and the glider, thus mitigating any risk that the ac would have collided. As is the usual procedure in the case of untraced ac having a close encounter, since the glider pilot did not submit a report, the Board assumed that he did not see the opposing ac.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A probable non-sighting by the glider pilot, a non-sighting by the lead Typhoon crew and a late sighting by the No2 Typhoon pilot.

Degree of Risk: B.