

AIRPROX REPORT No 2010129

Date/Time: 2 Sep 2010 (Thursday) 1518Z

Position: 5229N 00005E
(Chatteris – elev 5ft)

Airspace: Lon FIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: SKYDIVER R44

Operator: NK Civ Trg

Alt/FL: 2500ft 1500ft
(agl) (NK)

Weather: VMC NK VMC NK

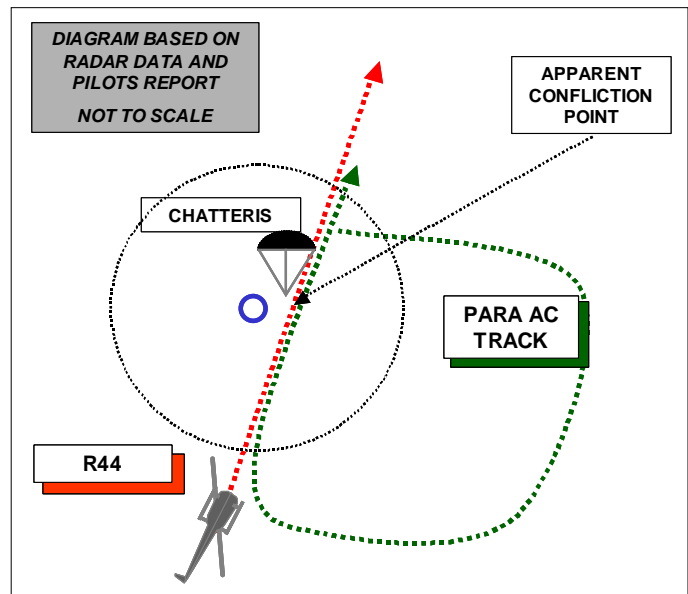
Visibility: unltd unltd

Reported Separation:

NK NK

Recorded Separation:

NK



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE SKYDIVER reports that he is the CFI of North London Skydiving Centre and jumped from their Twin Otter ac at 5000ft agl following an AFF (Accelerated Free-Fall) student who deployed his main canopy 7sec after exit. He then deployed his multi coloured canopy which opened at 3000ft and had a fully operational parachute at 2500ft when he 'released his brakes' and looked to his right, immediately seeing a helicopter coming straight towards him. His immediate reaction was to pull down on both brakes, which had the effect of slowing his descent rate and the black helicopter, which looked like an R44, passed directly below him. It was difficult to tell the helicopter's exact height but the parachutist could clearly see the single helicopter occupant wearing a pink shirt, with blue trousers and he had brown hair. As the helicopter went away from him he tried to see the registration, but due to the angle he was unable to see the markings. He landed as soon as possible and immediately spoke to the DZ controller who was in RT contact with their ac and was talking to RAF Lakenheath Radar who reported that they had tracked the helicopter.

He assessed the risk as being high.

THE R44 PILOT provided a very brief report stating that he was flying a black and white helicopter on a qualifying NAVEX from a private site near Salford. Although he was in the area at the time he saw nothing at the reported time of the incident.

UKAB Note (1): The recording of the Debden Radar shows the dropping ac and a contact squawking 7000 with Mode C, presumed to be the R44. At 1511:18 the Twin Otter first shows on radar 1nm NE of Chatteris tracking 110° and passing FL006 climbing; meanwhile the R44 is 8nm S of it tracking N at FL013. At 1513 the R44 turns right onto a track of 015° and the Twin Otter is 2nm SE of the airfield in a right hand climbing turn passing FL032. At 1514:54 the Twin Otter passes over the airfield on an N'y track at FL050, having completed one full orbit; at that time the R44 is 2nm due S of the airfield still tracking 015°. At 1518 the R44 passes 0.2nm to the E of the airfield centre (probable incident position) at FL014 (1710ft amsl) still tracking 015°; at that time the Twin Otter is 1.6nm to the NE still in a second RH orbit passing through E. The ac then pass 1.4nm apart on opposite headings. Although both ac show throughout, the precise geometry of the incident cannot be determined. It is assumed that the jump takes place as the Twin Otter passes just to the E of the

airfield at FL050, tracking 015°, at 1515:43. The R44 passes through the precise position some 1min 15 sec later at 1517:58.

UKAB Note (2): Chatteris is promulgated in the UKAIP ENR 5-5-3-1 as a Free-Fall Drop Zone of 1.5nm radius, up to FL150 and is active daylight hours Tue-Sun & PH. (Incident day Thursday). This is a warning not a prohibition.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the skydiver, the R44 pilot and radar recordings.

The Board considered this a very straightforward example of inadequate flight planning by an inexperienced pilot. Chatteris DZ is promulgated and clearly marked on recognised VFR charts and electronic navigation systems; therefore the Board could not understand why the R44 pilot had not avoided it by a reasonable margin and, apparently, was not aware of its existence. While recognising that like many others, Chatteris Free-Fall DZ is not restricted airspace, Members agreed that, in order to ensure the safety of both skydivers and aircraft, pilots should avoid the site by a suitable margin during promulgated operating hours.

Bearing in mind the Skydiver's very limited ability to manoeuvre, that the R44 pilot did not see or avoid the former and that, although the actual separation could not be estimated, it was clearly very close, Members agreed unanimously that there had been a risk that the skydiver would have collided with the R44 most likely with fatal consequences.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The R44 pilot flew into a notified and active Free-Fall DZ and into conflict with a Skydiver.

Degree of Risk: A.