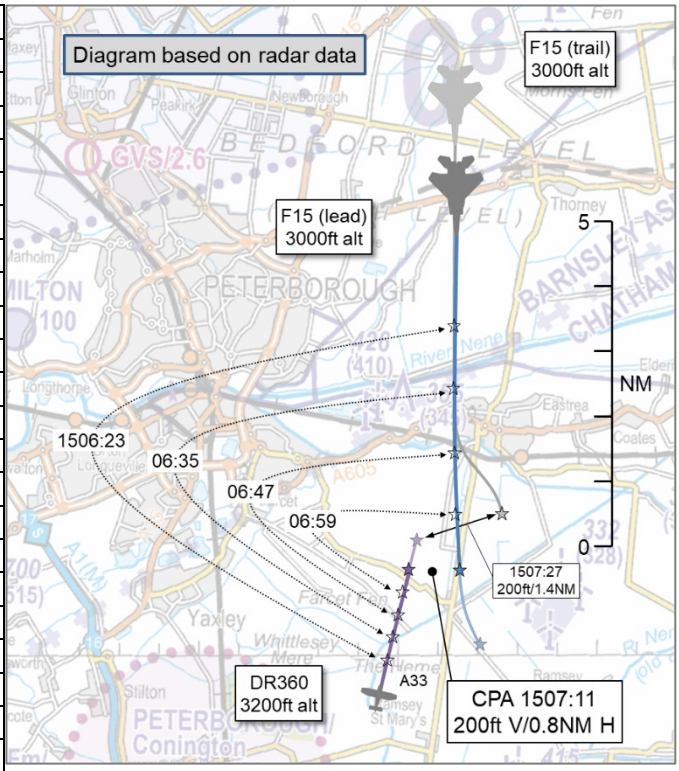
AIRPROX REPORT No 2026003

Date: 08 Jan 2026 Time: 1507Z Position: 5231N 00009W Location: 4.5NM SE Peterborough

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	F15 (lead)	DR360
Operator	Foreign Mil	Civ FW
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	IFR	VFR
Service	Deconfliction	None
Provider	Lakenheath	N/A
Altitude/FL	3000ft	3200ft
Transponder	A, C	A, C, S
Reported		
Colours	Grey	White/orange
Lighting	Nav, anti-col	Strobe
Conditions	IMC	VMC
Visibility	<5km	>10km
Altitude/FL	3000ft	~2600ft
Altimeter	QNH (NK hPa)	QNH (NK hPa)
Heading	180°	017°
Speed	300kt	100kt
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	Not fitted
Alert	N/A	N/A
	Separation at CPA	
Reported	0ft V/<1NM H	300ft V/~2NM H
Recorded	200ft V/0.8NM H and 200ft V/1.4NM H[1]	



THE F15 PILOT reports leading a flight of 2 F15s [in 1.5NM trail] under radar vectors [with a] Deconfliction Service from Lakenheath approach in IMC, returning to Lakenheath from the north to approach RW05. Whilst IMC, the lead F15 pilot noticed traffic displayed on their radar and called the traffic on the formation frequency. The lead directed a 10° left turn to the second [F15] to avoid traffic. After the second F15, which was behind and to the right of the first, had begun the left turn, the second aircraft crew sighted [the other aircraft] through intermittent breaks in the weather, noticed they were still on a collision course and increased their turn a further 30° to the left to avoid. The aircraft was sighted within 1NM, passing the 3 o'clock, co-level. It was fortuitous that the weather broke enough to sight [the other aircraft] given the collision course. The formation lead called the turn and traffic to ATC. The formation had selected a Deconfliction Service due to weather, which limited their ability to sight other traffic. ATC had not called the traffic or 'offered a Deconfliction Service' [sic] in advance. In formation in IMC, the 2nd aircraft in formation uses [their] aircraft radar to maintain station on the lead. The lead aircraft [crew] was using their radar to assist with situational awareness to identify traffic.

The pilot assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium'.

THE DR360 PILOT reports flying in Class G airspace in good VMC above low cloud [when they] saw both the F15s in the 12 o'clock at a range of 4NM, which were on a southeasterly track and passed well clear (2NM) down the starboard side. They did not feel on this occasion there was any compromise of safety and felt that an Airprox filing was 'totally disingenuous'. If the F15 pilot (who, they believed, actually filed the report) felt their safety had been compromised, then they should consider operating in that area above FL100, where they were less likely to encounter GA traffic. A reliable Deconfliction Service in that particular area, between 2000ft and 3000ft amsl, was generally not available. It was [Class G airspace] and they really ought to be aware of the rules which applied. Their and other traffic's safety would be less compromised if everyone observed the 250kt speed limit below FL100, which was

[1] Separation at CPA with the lead and trail elements of the F15 formation respectively.

there for a very good reason. They hoped their comments and suggestions would be passed on to the F15 pilots and their Commanding Officer.

The pilot assessed the risk of collision as 'None'.

THE LAKENHEATH CONTROLLER reports they were working all positions combined, with 6 formations of fast jets on frequency routeing from the north, recovering to RW05 at Lakenheath. They were focussed on building the sequence for the formations, providing vectors to all formations. They accepted [the Airprox F15] formation (and others) under Deconfliction Service on handover from Swanwick Mil. Prior to the Airprox there was some complexity in the ordering of the sequence due to a change required for a priority aircraft. The controller recalled that [the Airprox F15] flight reported deviating during the approach but was not aware of why; at the time the controller was monitoring a formation on the ILS approach to RW05 at Lakenheath. The controller did not recall seeing the conflicting aircraft or STCA on the radar.

Factual Background

The weather at Lakenheath was recorded and forecast as follows:

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METAR EGUL 081455Z AUTO 11005KT 9999 OVC007 03/02 A2949=
TAF EGUL 081400Z 0814/0920 10006KT 9999 BKN008 OVC012 QNH2954INS
       TEMPO 0814/0816 BKN006
       […]
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The F15 and D360 pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard.[2] If the incident geometry is considered as head-on or nearly so then both pilots were required to turn to the right,[3] notwithstanding their responsibility not to endanger other aircraft. Although only the trail F15 crew saw the DR360, separation at CPA with the lead F15 was smaller than that with the trail F15 and thus the lead F15 is considered the Airprox aircraft.

Lakenheath Occurrence Investigation

An investigation was completed by the RAF Lakenheath Radar Chief Controller [CCTLR] on an incident that occurred 08 January 2026 involving F15s assigned to RAF Lakenheath and a light civilian aircraft operating in East Anglia airspace. The CCTLR interviewed the Watch Supervisor and line controllers that were working during the times noted on the daily events log.

RAF Lakenheath aircraft were recovering from their training missions in the D323 complex (5 formations). All flights were handed off under a Deconfliction Service due to existing weather conditions, and the Approach/Arrival controller established that on initial contact with all formations recovering. All formations required vectors and sequencing back to RAF Lakenheath with RW05 in use. Near the middle of this recovery phase, a light civilian aircraft was observed approximately 25 miles west of Lakenheath, tracking northbound between 3000ft and 3200ft MSL (unverified). Two of the formations [callsigns] were on headings of 180° with assigned altitudes of 3000ft AMSL. Both formations met criteria to be issued traffic advisories and additional control instructions to achieve safety and separation from the light civilian aircraft. This did not happen on this occurrence. Neither formation was issued Traffic [Information] on the light civilian aircraft, and [the Airprox F15] flight's target came very close to merging while level at 3000ft AMSL. [The lead Airprox F15] requested a ten-degree course deviation, which the Approach/Arrival controller approved but was clearly not aware why the pilot requested this manoeuvre. [The Airprox F15] flight's number 2 aircraft [pilot]

[2] (UK) SERA.3205 Proximity. MAA RA 2307 paragraphs 1 and 2.
[3] (UK) SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(1) Approaching head-on. MAA RA 2307 paragraph 13.

advised on frequency that they had descended to 2000ft AMSL and then [the lead Airprox F15 pilot] advised they had just passed by an aircraft.

In reviewing the radar playback, the 3 controllers working had workloads up to moderate with routine complexity. The approach controller was the busiest, with numerous control instructions and pilot readbacks occurring on their frequency, but with routine complexity. The Approach/Arrival Assist controller and the Watch Supervisor's workloads were slightly lower and it was determined that both were capable and could have identified the confliction by owning their responsibilities by pointing out the conflict to the approach controller to ensure safe operations. It is normal, and expected, for Assist controllers and Watch Supervisors to see and point things out to a line controller that they may have missed or been too busy to recognise.

The RAPCON's investigation is closed with a determination that the 3 controllers working during this period share responsibility in the breakdown of procedures and safe operations. The CCTLR [took further administrative action]. This scenario will be debriefed as a lesson learned and used to further identify to all RAPCON's controllers that all positions in the control room have responsibilities to carry out, in order to ensure RAPCON provides safe and expeditious service to all aircraft under their control.

Comments

AOPA

As has been recommended in the past, it is advised to take the best FIS available. In this case, with the weather as it was, a Deconfliction Service was taken by the F15's and the DR360 pilot could have obtained a Traffic Service if VFR and a Traffic Service or Deconfliction Service if IFR. Had this been the case, the controller would probably have passed Traffic Information to everyone. If a controller declines any service, it should be remembered that form FCS1522[4] is available for reporting such incidents.

USAFE

This event occurred during a busy arrival phase of fast jets returning to RW05 at Lakenheath. Although RW05 is the less commonly used runway, the aircraft were being vectored and sequenced in the usual area to join the ILS at around 15 miles. During the event, 5 formations of fast jets were sequenced through the same area over the course of about 15min, and it is possible the DR360 pilot sighted a previous formation. The preceding pair of F15s passed approximately 2-3 miles to the east of the DR360 a few minutes prior.

Due to the experience of the F15 crews, who are aware that there is regularly traffic in the area that is not necessarily speaking to the same controller, they requested a Deconfliction Service to assist them with avoidance of other traffic during a high workload phase of flight. Operating mostly in cloud, the see-and-avoid barrier was not available so the crew were relying on ATC and their onboard radar for situational awareness of traffic. Having selected a Deconfliction Service, the crew had expected to be kept 5NM [or] 3000ft away from traffic observed on radar but not speaking to Lakenheath Approach. The crew were used to light traffic not visible to ATC radar operating in the area, usually on better weather days. To mitigate this, the crews were using their onboard primary and secondary radar systems to scan for traffic ahead. This proved to be an effective barrier by allowing them to turn away from the observed traffic. Having observed a track on their onboard radar, the crew assumed it was not visible to ATC. The crew took appropriate action to increase separation but were concerned by the proximity and the lack of SA they had on the traffic.

Lakenheath approach was staffed with a single approach controller and a controller in the assistant position, as well as the Supervisor. During the traffic conditions present at the time of the occurrence, the local procedures instruct the Supervisor to open 2 further positions to support the workload. It was apparent from the unit investigation that the approach controller was saturated, and task-

[4] https://applications.caa.co.uk/CAAPortal/servlet/SmartForm.html?formCode=fcs1522

focussed on vectoring and sequencing the multiple formations whilst also monitoring the parameters on final. Due to this overloading situation, the controller did not assimilate the conflicting traffic (the DR360) despite it showing a full information track and an STCA sounding on the radar display. STCA began 1506:31 and continued to CPA. No other alarms displayed on the radar recording in the 30sec before or after CPA.

The investigation concluded that the other control positions had lower workloads and had capacity to have seen the conflicting traffic and point it out to the Approach controller. This did not happen. The CCTLR determined that appropriate procedures were in place to support the control team, however, they were not appropriately executed. Due to this, the CCTLR took executive action. This was important to ensure that safety and standards are assured.

After reviewing the METARs in the area for the day, lack of other GA traffic and the PIREPS of the weather, it is surprising that the DR360 pilot reported VMC and 10km visibility. Crews operating in the area should be minded that, even on IMC days, the military operators may still be operating IFR, with significant numbers of large transport and fast jet aircraft. Use of ATC services and EC displays can assist crews in mitigating MAC risk.

The military run regular airspace user working groups and, in this case, the East Anglia working group is held at RAF Marham. Aircraft crew who operate in the area are welcome to attend to share awareness and appreciation of differing operations and work on contributing to a safer operating environment.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a flight of 2 F15s and a Robin DR360 flew into proximity 4.5NM southeast of Peterborough at 1507Z on Thursday 8th January 2026. The F15 pilots were operating under IFR in receipt of a Deconfliction Service from Lakenheath and reported in IMC. The DR360 pilot was not in receipt of a FIS and reported operating under VFR in VMC.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots, radar photographs/video recordings, a report from the air traffic controller involved and a report from the appropriate operating authority. Relevant contributory factors mentioned during the Board's discussions are highlighted within the text in bold, with the numbers referring to the Contributory Factors table displayed in Part C.

The Board members were first given an updated brief by the USAFE advisor. They explained that it had been a busy afternoon at Lakenheath with 6 F15 formations recovering to RW05 within 15min, each of between 2 and 4 aircraft and in poor weather. The Airprox F15 formation pair had been the 5th of those 6 formation recoveries. Some 30min before the Airprox event, during a lull in activity, the Lakenheath Supervisor had reduced the number of positions so there remained the Supervisor, the Approach controller and an assistant controller. Lakenheath instructions required the provision of a defined number of positions depending on the workload and weather conditions and, in this case, a second position should have been set up as the workload increased with recovering formations, but this had not been done. The Approach controller had been task-focused on building the approach sequence for the multiple F15 recoveries and had had to re-sequence the F15 formations due to a fuel priority recovery 5min previously. The Approach controller had then not assimilated the DR360 track, which had been displayed on the radar screen for some 15min prior to the Airprox, and the formation ahead of the Airprox F15 formation had passed some 2NM to the east of the DR360 without Traffic Information being passed. The radar Short Term Conflict Alert (STCA) had also activated on the Airprox formation, with audio in the control room, which had possibly been drowned out by phone call activity.

The Board members first thanked Lakenheath for their comprehensive report and then discussed the Lakenheath ATC actions. It appeared that the ATC team had been somewhat unprepared for the rapid increase in workload caused by multiple F15 formation recoveries in bad weather. Consequently, the Supervisor had not allocated the correct number of positions (**CF1**, **CF2**) and the controllers had become task-saturated (**CF7**), to the extent that the Approach controller had not assimilated the

presence of the DR360 on screen (**CF6**) or the STCA activation (**CF8**, **CF9**). The conflict had therefore not been detected (**CF4**) with the resultant inability to pass Traffic Information (**CF3**) or provide conflict resolution (**CF5**) as required under a Deconfliction Service.

Turning to the pilots, the Board discussed the F15 lead pilot's actions and commended them for having taken positive control, both for themselves and for the trail F15, when they had detected the DR360 using on-board sensors. They had had sufficient situational awareness of the DR360 to have taken effective action for both formation members, in contrast to the DR360 pilot who had had no situational awareness on the F15 formation (**CF12**) until they had sighted them at a reported range of 4NM. Members wondered why the DR360 pilot had then maintained course and altitude and had closed to within a mile of the lead F15, the pilot of which had reported being in cloud (**CF14**) and who had consequently not seen the DR360 (**CF13**). The Board wondered whether the DR360 pilot had seen the lead F15 at all, because their description of separation at CPA was closer to that recorded with the trail F15, the pilot of which had seen the DR360, albeit at about their CPA. Some members wondered whether the DR360 pilot had perhaps only seen the preceding formation. Members noted that the DR360 pilot had stated that '*They did not feel on this occasion there was any compromise of safety* …'. The Board agreed, but only to the extent that sufficient separation at CPA had been achieved by dint of the lead F15 pilot's actions. Similarly, in response to the comment, '*If the F15 pilot … felt their safety had been compromised, then they should consider operating in that area above FL100, where they were less likely to encounter GA traffic*', the Board noted that, whilst F15 formations did normally operate above FL100, it was inevitable that they would have to operate at a somewhat lower level in order to land and that this would normally occur near their base. On this occasion, the provision of a Deconfliction Service to the F15 formation had not functioned as it should have, but this was not to say that a reliable surveillance-based FIS had not been available to the DR360 pilot. They had been operating within the DOC of a service from RAF Marham or Cambridge Airport, both of which had been operating normally at the time, and which could have provided a Traffic Service or Deconfliction Service. However, the Board emphasised that Lakenheath had been operating and felt that a request from the DR360 pilot to the Lakenheath Approach controller for a Traffic Service or Deconfliction Service, both of which would have required the controller to identify the DR360, would have resulted in the controller assimilating the presence of the DR360 and consequently being able to provide effective deconfliction advice. In fact, a request for any kind of FIS would have alerted the Lakenheath controller to the DR360 pilot's presence and impending proximity to the F15 formation. Given the availability of service provision and the prevailing weather conditions, Board members' opined that the DR360 pilot had not obtained an appropriate ATS (**CF10**), and considered that they had not planned to do so (**CF11**). Turning to risk, the Board members agreed that the lead F15 pilot had taken sufficient action to avert any risk of collision, Risk C.

Members discussed the DR360 pilot's comments and agreed that, whilst regulation of Class G airspace allowed for freedom of operation to a large degree, it did not provide for a 'one-way street' of entitlement. In the Board members' opinion, the key to safe operation in class G airspace was for all pilots to include the essential ingredients of communication and consideration, in addition to an effective lookout, which in this case would have pre-empted the situation in which the conflicting pilots found themselves.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

	2026003			
CF	**Factor**	**Description**	**ECCAIRS Amplification**	**UKAB Amplification**
	Ground Elements			
	• Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance			
1	Human Factors	• ATM Regulatory Deviation	An event involving a deviation from an Air Traffic Management Regulation.	Regulations and/or procedures not fully complied with
	• Manning and Equipment			
2	Human Factors	• ATM Leadership and Supervision	An event related to the leadership and supervision of ATM activities.	
	• Situational Awareness and Action			
3	Human Factors	• ANS Traffic Information Provision	Provision of ANS traffic information	TI not provided, inaccurate, inadequate, or late
4	Human Factors	• Conflict Detection - Not Detected	An event involving Air Navigation Services conflict not being detected.	
5	Human Factors	• Conflict Resolution – Not provided	An event involving the non provision of conflict resolution	
6	Human Factors	• Monitoring of Equipment/Instruments	Events involving an individual or a crew/ team not to appropriately monitoring equipment or instruments	Equipment misinterpreted
7	Human Factors	• Task Monitoring	Events involving an individual or a crew/ team not appropriately monitoring their performance of a task	Controller engaged in other tasks
	• Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance			
8	Human Factors	• ATM personnel operation/interpretation of equipment	An event involving the operation or interpretation of ATM equipment by ATM personnel	Controller did not adequately act on the EWS indications
9	Technical	• STCA Warning	An event involving the triggering of a Short Term Conflict Alert (STCA) Warning	
	Flight Elements			
	• Tactical Planning and Execution			
10	Human Factors	• Communications by Flight Crew with ANS	An event related to the communications between the flight crew and the air navigation service.	Pilot did not request appropriate ATS service or communicate with appropriate provider
11	Human Factors	• Pre-flight briefing and flight preparation	An event involving incorrect, poor or insufficient pre-flight briefing	
	• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action			
12	Contextual	• Situational Awareness and Sensory Events	Events involving a flight crew's awareness and perception of situations	Pilot had no, late, inaccurate or only generic, Situational Awareness
	• See and Avoid			
13	Human Factors	• Monitoring of Other Aircraft	Events involving flight crew not fully monitoring another aircraft	Non-sighting or effectively a non-sighting by one or both pilots
14	Contextual	• Visual Impairment	Events involving impairment due to an inability to see properly	One or both aircraft were obscured from the other

Degree of Risk: C.

Safety Barrier Assessment[5]

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

Ground Elements:

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

Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because the Lakenheath ATC team had not operated in accordance with the Lakenheath procedures.

Manning and Equipment were assessed as **ineffective** because the Lakenheath Supervisor had not opened further positions to cope with the increased workload.

Situational Awareness of the Confliction and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because the Lakenheath controller had not assimilated the DR360, displayed on the radar screen.

Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because the Lakenheath controller had not assimilated the STCA between the F15s and DR360.

Flight Elements:

Tactical Planning and Execution was assessed as **partially effective** because the DR360 pilot had not contacted Lakenheath or obtained a surveillance-based FIS.

Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because the DR360 pilot had had no situational awareness of the F15 formation(s).

Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **not present** because neither aircraft had been fitted with a TAS or TCAS.

See and Avoid were assessed as **not used** because the lead F15 had been in cloud so each aircraft had not been visible to the other pilot.