

Minor Aerodromes in the UK Military Low Flying System -

What The Rules Say

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- Microlight site
- Permanent avoid
- Annotation displaced for clarity

The Air Navigation Order (ANO) 2016 (the legal bit)

In accordance with Article 22 of the ANO 2016, the majority of provisions within the ANO do not apply to military aircraft. However, the Secretary of State for Defence's (SofS) Health, Safety and Environment Protection (HS&EP) policy statement requires that "...where Defence has exemptions, derogations or dis-applications from HS&EP legislation, we maintain Departmental arrangements that produce outcomes that are, so far as reasonably practicable, at least as good as those required by UK legislation". This is the reason why much of the MAA Regulatory Publications – notably the FLY 2000 Series – closely resemble both the ANO and the Rules of the Air Regulations 2015.

Several recent Airprox incidents involving military aircraft have occurred in the vicinity of minor aerodromes, where a military aircraft conducting low flying has conflicted with a light aircraft, microlight or other similarly 'small' air system either arriving at, departing from or conducting circuits at a minor aerodrome. The most recent of these incidents led the UK Airprox Board (UKAB) to recommend that HQ Air Command review the education of military pilots with regard to their responsibilities in respect to the avoidance of minor airfields. The aim of this article is to refresh aircrews' knowledge of the pertinent rules and regulations and to provide some suggestions as to how crews might further mitigate the risk of MAC on a day-to-day basis.

Regulatory Article (RA) 2307 Issue 8 dated Mar 18 (the regulatory bit)

As with all MAA regulations, RA2307 starts with the rationale behind the regulation:

'To ensure safe, efficient and expeditious air traffic all military participants in national sky must adhere to a common set of rules. The Standardised European Rules of the Air (SERA) govern air and related operations within the Community and have been adopted, with derogations, within the UK Air Navigation Order (ANO); military actors are exempted from these regulations. Nevertheless, unnecessary deviation from SERA could increase Risk to Life for Military and Civilian parties and therefore this Regulation departs from SERA to the extent necessary to facilitate military aviation.'

So, what does this mean? Well, having been told that the ANO does not apply to military aircraft we now see that the spirit of the ANO **does** actually apply through military regulations. In the case of flight in the vicinity of an aerodrome, paragraph 15 of RA2307 is the specific area we need to consider. This paragraph states that '...while flying in the vicinity of what the Aircraft Commander knows, or ought reasonably to know, to be an Aerodrome.certain actions are required to conform with what everybody else is expecting. If intending to land or join the circuit at that aerodrome then it's pretty straightforward – we do what everybody else does. However, if there's

no intention to 'fit in' with the circuit pattern then we are required to '...keep clear of the airspace in which the pattern is formed.' Therein lies the rub. How big is the pattern? Is it formed (i.e. are there actually aircraft forming a pattern)? If I don't see anything then surely there's no traffic forming a pattern, so I have nothing to avoid. This latter point is perhaps where, over time, we have lost sight of why we need to consider how our actions may affect others. Purely and simply, it's to avoid a possible mid-air collision. Many of us probably refer to minor aerodromes as 'see-and-avoid' aerodromes – **this is not what they are**. A better description would be 'see-and-remain-clear' aerodromes; when we see traffic in the pattern we either conform or stay well clear. The problem with this is that if we don't see any traffic there we may believe that there is therefore no pattern to avoid, but it may simply be that we haven't spotted the traffic.

So, the answer is to plan to avoid all minor aerodromes, right? Well, no, not exactly. Paragraph 16 of RA2307 acknowledges that it is not always possible to avoid every minor aerodrome en-route but that we should endeavour to plan to avoid minor sites where possible. This gives us the flexibility we need to conduct our training but at the same time guides us to try and avoid minor aerodromes wherever we can.

In fact, avoiding every minor aerodrome en-route (apart from being nearly impossible) may lead to channelling or

funnelling of Military low flying aircraft, which itself might then lead to reduced separation between military aircraft.

In summary, it would seem to be good airmanship to take account of minor aerodromes (Light Aircraft, Microlight, Parascending, Glider and Hang-glider sites) during sortie preparation and plan to avoid them where possible. When it is not possible to give them as wide a berth as you might like, then understand the nature of the site (circuit direction, tempo of operations, nature of possible conflicting traffic, wind direction and therefore likely launch direction for gliders/hang-gliders) and have a robust plan to stay clear if traffic is spotted in the vicinity (and this can include vertical separation if necessary).

“ it is worth noting that a minor aerodrome with a 'T' designation (signifying a training establishment) is highly likely to have an active circuit. ”

Finally, maintain an enhanced lookout in the vicinity of advisory sites in order to reduce the likelihood of losing safe separation with aircraft operating there. ■

	Aerodrome With Hard Runway Over 3000 FT		Microlight Site
	Minor Aerodrome/Airfield		Microlight Site (Standard Avoidance)
	Disused Aerodrome		Glider Site
	Minor Aerodrome/Airfield (6+ Movements/Day)		Helicopter Landing Site
	Training Movements		Mountain Rescue Training Pick-Up Point/ Civilian Police/Helicopter Support Unit/Air Ambulance