

AIRPROX REPORT No 2010106

Date/Time: 28 Jun 2010 1539Z

Position: 5129N 00252W
(3nm N CLEVEDON
VRP)

Airspace: Lon FIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reporting Ac

Type: MICROLIGHT PUMA

Operator: Civ Pte HQ JHC

Alt/FL: 1200ft 1000ft
(QNH) (RPS)

Weather: VMC CBL C VMC CAVOK

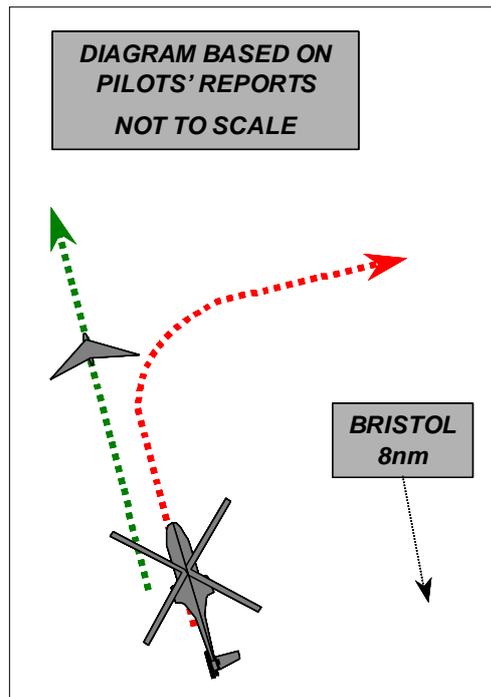
Visibility: 25nm 10km

Reported Separation:

0ft V/30m H 200ft V/200m H

Recorded Separation:

NR



HALF TRACK

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE MICROLIGHT PILOT reports flying a flexwing microlight with no SSR fitted, on a private flight from Bodmin to Broadmeadow Farm Microlight Flying Club (near Hereford) at 50kt, in good VMC and listening out on the microlight frequency. While heading 359° to the W of Bristol, despite wearing a headset he heard a noise and, on looking behind his ac, he saw a green Puma helicopter about 30m away at the same height. The Puma pulled up in his 4 o'clock position, stayed there for a few sec and then dropped away to his right, as he turned left away from it. He reported the incident by letter to the BMAA and thence to the UKAB.

He assessed the risk as being low.

UKAB Note (1): The report was received almost 2 months after the incident. The reported time of the incident was 3hr 21min in error.

UKAB Note (2): The pilot provided a map of his route. The track was tangential to the Western edge of the Bristol CTR. The position of the Airprox was indicated as being over the Bristol Channel, 8nm NW of Bristol (the CTR is 5nm radius).

THE PUMA PILOT reports that he submitted this report following the submission of an Airprox by a microlight pilot. He was on a training flight in transit from Benson to Gloucester at 1000ft, some 10nm to the W of Bristol Lulsgate, heading 010° at 120 kt and in receipt of a BS from them. He was asked by the controller if he could identify a microlight ac that had just infringed Bristol's CTR and was departing the area to the W. The reported position of the microlight was in the vicinity of their planned track and so he agreed to assist.

After some 5min his crew spotted the microlight 300m away, vertically displaced by some 200ft [below i.e. 800ft agl] and horizontally displaced by about 200m to their R. He attempted to see the microlight's registration but it was plain-white in colour with no apparent markings or lighting and so he turned away to the right from the abeam position and reported the lack of markings to ATC.

He does not consider that there was any risk at any time.

UKAB Note (3): A photograph of the microlight shows it to be predominantly white in colour with the registration on the (flex) wing (only) in standard size black letters.

ATSI reported that the incident was reported to have occurred, 3nm N of Clevedon, a VRP situated 5nm NW of Bristol Airport at 1900 (UTC).

The [reporting] microlight pilot's report was received some time after the event and consequently, the RT recordings of the event were no longer available.

The Flexwing microlight was on a flight from Bodmin Airfield to Broadmeadow Farm Microlight Flying Club while the Puma helicopter was on a VFR flight from Weston Helicopter Museum, which is situated 8.8nm SW of Bristol Airport and was inbound to Gloucestershire Airport. The Bristol Radar Controller was asked to provide a report some time after the incident and believes that the incident might have occurred much earlier. The Bristol ADC observed a microlight passing 3nm W of the airfield, tracking N and reported the sighting to Radar. The Radar Controller observed that the traffic was within the Bristol CTR and was able to track the aircraft Northbound.

At 1732 (UTC) the Puma Helicopter departed VFR, from Weston Helicopter Museum. A BS was agreed and the Puma was allocated a squawk of 5056. The Puma tracked NE and because the microlight was believed to have infringed the Bristol CTR, the Radar Controller asked the Puma pilot to assist in identifying the microlight. The Radar controller relayed the position of the microlight and this resulted in the Puma pilot sighting a white microlight, with no visible registration marks.

At 1740:01 the Clee Hill radar replay shows the Puma, 9.3nm to the NNW of Bristol Airport, indicating a Mode C altitude of 900ft, in a right turn with an intermittent contact to its NW. The Radar Controller continued to track the microlight until it disappeared from radar cover, NNW of Newport [16nm NNW of Bristol] when she considered that no further tracing action could be achieved.

The Puma helicopter was VFR in receipt of a BS.

CAP493, Manual of Air Traffic Services Part 1 (11/03/10), Section 1, Chapter 11, page 4, paragraph 3.1.1 states: A Basic Service is an ATS provided for the purpose of giving advice and information useful for the safe and efficient conduct of flights. This may include weather information, changes of serviceability of facilities, conditions at aerodromes, general airspace activity information, and any other information likely to affect safety. The avoidance of other traffic is solely the pilot's responsibility.

The Bristol International METAR was:

EGGD 281720Z 26011KT 9999 FEW025 19/07 Q1022=

UKAB Note (4): The recording of the Clee Hill Radar shows an unidentified and very intermittent primary only contact pop up at 1731:55, 3.5nm NW of Bristol Airport (inside the CTR), then disappear. At 1733:54 a contact squawking 7000 at FL009, presumed to be the Puma, first appears just to the W of Weston tracking NE. It continues to track NE, below the Bristol TMA and the primary presumed to be the Microlight reappears 7nm NNW of Bristol for 2 sweeps; at 1738:08 the Puma turns left towards the Microlight's last seen position, but it does not reappear. At 1739:19 the Puma (FL011) turns right apparently breaking away to the E. Although the Microlight contact is very intermittent, there is little doubt that it was at least 1½ nm inside the Bristol CTR. (The W/NW/N boundary of the CTR is more or less coincident with the M5 motorway, which in turn is just over a mile to the E of the coast).

UKAB Note (5): Both the Controller and the Puma pilot were subject to respective regulations as follows:

Controller:

MATS Pt 1 Ch 2 Sect 1 17.1 and 17.2

17 Search Action

17.1 The senior controller is to institute search action if the identity of an aircraft, which has been involved in an incident or has apparently infringed legislation, is not known.

17.2 Data is to be examined, other units consulted and every means used consistent with safety in an attempt to identify the aircraft. ATS surveillance systems should be used to track the aircraft until it has landed and the track and time correlated with movement at the appropriate aerodrome. If necessary, the aircraft's position indication may be transferred to another unit to enable tracking to be continued.

Puma Pilot:

JSP 550 R110.110, Formation Flying and R110.115 Flying in the Company of Civil Aircraft pertain. In these circumstances the Puma was not permitted to 'formate on' or 'fly in the company' of the Microlight.

Comment was requested from **HQ JHC** but was not forthcoming.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac, radar recordings, reports from the air traffic controller involved and a report from the appropriate ATC authority.

The HQ Air (Ops) Member informed the Board that there are several other relevant, but classified, regulations governing interception and shadowing of civil ac which ensure that, when tasked, such activities are conducted in a manner that ensures the safety of both civil and military ac. He also informed the meeting that helicopters are not permitted to conduct these tasks and that he could not be certain of the safety aspects as, to the best of his knowledge, no trials involving microlights have been conducted.

The GA Member stated that, in common with other small ac, flexwing microlights should always be avoided by a wide margin by larger ac.

There was little doubt that the Microlight had previously infringed the Bristol CTR but at the time of the incident was well outside it. It was not clear to Members whether the Controller had acted in accordance with the regulations in MATS Part 1. However, civil controller Members agreed unanimously that Bristol APR had been over-zealous in seeking the assistance of the Puma to identify the microlight after any potential danger had passed. In reacting to the controller's request, apparently in contravention of JSP 550 regulations, the Puma pilot had also acted unwisely and, although there was never any risk of the ac colliding, his chosen flightpath caused the microlight pilot concern.

Members noted that the Microlight pilot had reported the incident and the attempt to visually identify the infringing ac, although correctly marked, had not been successful; it followed therefore that the incident was unnecessary. In the view of the Board this incident would have been better investigated as an airspace infringement rather than an Airprox.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The Puma pilot flew close enough to the Microlight to cause its pilot concern.

Degree of Risk: C.