

Causal Factor Analysis of Airspace Infringements in the United Kingdom

1 January – 31 December 2017

A report by the Causal Factor Working Group, a sub-group of
the CAA's Airspace Infringement Working Group

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Published by the Civil Aviation Authority

Civil Aviation Authority
Aviation House
Gatwick Airport South
West Sussex
RH6 0YR

Published January 2019

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Introduction

An airspace infringement is the unauthorised entry of an aircraft into notified airspace. This includes flight in controlled airspace (Control Areas, Control Zones and Terminal Manoeuvring Areas), Prohibited or Restricted airspace (either permanent or temporary in establishment), active danger areas, aerodrome traffic zones (ATZ), radio mandatory zones (RMZ) or transponder mandatory zones (TMZ).

Any airspace infringement has the potential to be a serious safety incident which may result in a mid-air collision or AIRPROX. In 2017 there were a total of 1165 airspace infringements reported through Mandatory Occurrence Report (MOR) or Alleged Breach of Air Navigation Legislation (ABANL) reports. Of these, 307 were investigated by the CAA's Infringement Coordination Group for one or more of the following reasons:

1. The airspace infringement resulted in a loss of standard separation between air traffic operating within notified airspace and an infringing aircraft;
2. The airspace infringement resulted in a controlling action being initiated to establish or maintain standard separation between air traffic operating/intending to operate within controlled airspace and an infringing aircraft. Historically this has been known as 'service disruption'. It should be noted that this action is taken as a safety measure to prevent point 1 above from occurring. This may include one or more of the following actions:
 - a) Avoiding action;
 - b) Airborne holding instructions or tactical vectors;
 - c) A cessation/suspension of planned departures or modification of a departure route.
3. The airspace infringement was carried out in an aircraft where the registration and or callsign (if different) has been recorded as having previously infringed.

In all cases above, the pilot will, where known, be contacted and asked to submit a report. This report may take the form of a pilot-initiated MOR, the use of the Post-infringement Questionnaire (found at <https://airspacesafety.com/infringement/infringement-form/>) or via free text emails or letters. The CAA has no regulatory powers to make a pilot submit such a report. These reports serve 2 purposes: they form a supplementary report to the MOR/ABANL and are used by the Infringement Coordination Group in its investigation and handling process of airspace infringements; and they are analysed annually by the Airspace Infringement Working Group (AIWG) to identify causal factors and trends. The latter plays a vital role in allowing the CAA to identify work streams and focal areas that will