

Airspace infringements: Detailed information

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Summary

The following three chapters contain detailed information regarding airspace infringement, including detailing how incidents that constitute an airspace infringement are reviewed in the first chapter entitled “Airspace infringements” (sub-heading “How incidents are reviewed”). The second chapter entitled “Reviewing the process and our actions” details the steps the CAA has taken to do this. The third chapter entitled “CAA infringement review recommendations and responses” presents a detailed list of ten recommendations and their related responses, with each recommendation paired with its corresponding response.

Chapter 1

Airspace infringements

Airspace Infringements (AI - the unauthorised entry of an aircraft into notified airspace) occur frequently, and across most parts of the UK; on average, around 1,200 are reported annually by ANSPs (Air Navigation Service Providers) through the MOR (Mandatory Occurrence Report) process.

When we receive these reports, we must investigate the circumstances of each one and determine whether lessons can be learned, and whether action can be taken to prevent or reduce future events.

It is up to each ANSP to first internally review every infringement before reporting it to us as an MOR if the circumstances dictate it.

We recognise that UK airspace can be complex and that there are many causal factors as to why an airspace infringement may occur; every infringement, however, has the possibility to cause a significant risk to the safety of aircraft; it is important therefore that all infringements are reported and all are subject to the same process regardless of its apparent immediate effects. For example, a pilot may not be immediately aware of the knock-on effect an infringement has had to air traffic control. The process must be smart-enough to examine the circumstances of each event and determine the best route-forward.

The vast majority of all incidents that we receive (around 99.5%) are processed through the CAP1404 Airspace Infringements: review and actions process. Throughout all our work we follow and promote Just Culture, in which people are treated fairly and are not punished for actions, omissions or decisions taken by them that are commensurate with their experience and training. The aim is to promote continuous learning from previous mistakes and to encourage pilots to openly and freely share essential safety related information.

When addressing safety-related issues within a Just Culture, it is vital that investigations and decisions are fair and timely and that we make all reasonable efforts to decide any action without delay.

Under “Just Culture”, any CAA investigation is not looking to apportion blame for an incident – it is seeking to establish the facts to fully-understand why the incident occurred and what remedial training/education actions can be taken to prevent a repeat. The best way the PIC can help is to engage with the investigation and be open and honest. “Threat and Error Management” (TEM) will also be looked at – did the PIC do everything possible to prevent the infringement? Were all tools available utilised? Did the PIC react as could be reasonably expected on the basis of the level of training and experience? The investigation will look at all the causal factors of the incident and what actions can be taken to ensure it does not happen again. This could be anything: improving the provision of information to pilots, correcting mistakes with information already provided, providing additional services to prevent reoccurrences or providing assistance in re-educating pilots