

FLEET AREA CONTROL & SURV FAC VACAPES OCEANA (N42239)

ALL HORNET AIRCRAFT ACTIVITIES ()

ALL ATC ACTIVITIES ()

ALL TACAIR AIRCRAFT ACTIVITIES ()

ALL UAV COMMANDS ()

Classification: ~~UNCLASSIFIED FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY (FOUO)~~

From: STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON 106 - VFA-106 N09679

Subject: HAZARD REPORT OF, UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT OPERATING IN W-72 WITHOUT COORDINATING WITH CONTROLLING AGENCIES, Class HAZARD FLIGHT, NEAR MID-AIR HAZARD - NEAR MID-AIR

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References:

A. OPNAVINST 3750.6 SERIES

B. JAGINST 5800.7 SERIES

1. General Information:

A. Hazard Severity: HAZARD, Classification: FLIGHT HAZARD - NEAR MID-AIR

B. WESS Serial Number: 1396294112301

C. Local Serial Number: 14-14

D. RAC: 03 - MODERATE RISK

E. Endorser: FLEET AREA CONTROL & SURV FAC VACAPES OCEANA

F. Event: Hazard Aircraft (HA) entered W-72 (Warning Area) for a scheduled Air-to-Air training event, utilizing Air-2A and Air-2B under "exclusive use," meaning no other aircraft were authorized to be within the confines of that area. HA was part of a four-aircraft event, and was operating at the time of incident as a flight of two with Hazard Wingman (HW). Hazard Flight (HF) executed a first engagement with the opposing two aircraft and, after terminating this run, HA detected a radar apparent track in the eastern portion of Air-2B. This track showed an altitude of 19,000' and airspeed of Mach 0.1. Hazard Pilot (HP) called the radar track out to his wingman, who noted no indications on his radar screen. HP initially thought the radar track was a false track file, due to the high winds noted in the area (100+ knots at 18,000'). As HP closed on the trackfile, he noted a small metallic object within the Heads Up Display symbology box (TD Box). The unknown aircraft appeared to be small in size, approximately the size of a suitcase, and silver in color. HA passed within 1000' of the object, but was unable to positively determine the identity of the aircraft. HP attempted to regain visual contact with the aircraft, but was unable. HP passed the information on the unidentified aircraft to the local Fleet Area Controlling and Surveillance Facility (FACSFAC). The controlling agency saw no radar returns nor a squawk that correlated to the unidentified aircraft.

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Ref: SECNAVINST 5720.42, OPNAVINST 3750.6 Series and OPNAVINST 5102.1 Series.

G. Hazard Date, Local: March 26, 2014

H. Hazard Time, Local: 1630

I. Time Zone: Q

J. Condition: DAY

2. Data:

A. Reporting Activity: STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON 106 - VFA-106 N09679

B. Aircraft or UAV:

B1.

(1) Aircraft: UNKNOWN

(2) BUNO:

(3) Reporting Custodian: -

(4) Controlling Custodian: NOT APPLICABLE

(5) Departure Location:

(6) Destination:

(7) # Aircrew:

(8) # Injured Aircrew:

(9) # Passengers:

(10) # Injured Passengers:

(11) TMR: 1A1

(12) VMC/IMC N

B2.

(13) Aircraft: F/A-18E

(14) BUNO: 168482

(15) Reporting Custodian: N4544A - STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON 106 - VFA-106 DET A

(16) Controlling Custodian: COMNAVAIRLANT (CNAL)

(17) Departure Location: OCEANA NAS

(18) Destination: OCEANA NAS, UNITED STATES

(19) # Aircrew: 0

(20) # Injured Aircrew: 0

(21) # Passengers: 0

(22) # Injured Passengers: 0

(23) TMR: 1A6

(24) VMC/IMC N

3. Environment:

A. Hazard Location Description: ATLANTIC OCEAN (MID - MIDLANT) W-72 AIR 2B (EXCLUSIVE USE AIRSPACE DURING THE TIME OF INCIDENT)

B. Hazard Country:

C. Hazard State:

D. Latitude: XX XX XX N

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E. Longitude: XXX XX XX W

F. Location: -

4. Weather:

A. Briefed By: PILOT

B. Briefing Utilization: USED

C. Air Temp: 60 F

D. Relative Humidity:

E. Dewpoint: F

F. Water Temp: 52 F

G. Wind Direction: 300

H. Wind Gust:

I. Ceiling Agl (100s ft):

J. Sky Condition: CAVU

K. Horizon: VISIBLE

L. Visibility Statute Miles: 10.0

M. Altimeter Setting: 30.13

N. Icing: N

O. Obstruction of Vision:

P. Precipitation:

Q. Extreme WX:

R. Briefing Accuracy: SUBSTANTIALLY CORRECT

5. Damage and Hazard Cost:

A. Non-DoD Damaged/Destroyed Property: \$0.00

B. DoD Damaged/Destroyed Property: \$0.00

C. Total Hazard Cost: \$0.00

6. Factors:

6A. ACCEPTED CAUSE FACTORS

A. HumanFactor - Unknown agency failed to notify controlling agency of UAS operations.

(1) Analysis: The airspace controlling agency was unaware of a UAS operating in exclusive use airspace. Post flight investigation indicated that the range space was not scheduled for UAS operations, nor was any attempt made by a UAS operator to contact the airspace controlling agency.

(a) Act: AE103 - Procedure not followed correctly. UAS agency not following proper airspace coordination measures IAW FACS FACVACAPESINST 3120.1M OPS MANUAL.

(b) Supervisory:

(1) SV001 - Failure to enforce existing rules. UAS organizations not adhering to standard airspace coordination procedures.

7. Recommendations:

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Ref: SECNAVINST 5720.42, OPNAVINST 3750.6 Series and OPNAVINST 5102.1 Series.

A. Recommendation: #1

- (1) Description: Brief to all aircrew operating in W-72.
- (2) Remarks:
- (3) Action Agency: ALL HORNET AIRCRAFT ACTIVITIES
- (4) Applies To:
 - (a) Type: HUMAN FACTOR
 - (b) Statement: Unknown agency failed to notify controlling agency of UAS operations.

B. Recommendation: #2

- (1) Description: Continue to investigate UAS operations in warning areas.
- (2) Remarks: FACSFAC Vacapes has received multiple UAS sightings in the recent months. These have been sightings of actual aircraft that are not utilizing IFF squawks or communicating intentions with FACSFAC. FACSFAC Vacapes has asked Command Strike Fighter Wing Atlantic (CSFWL) aircraft to continue to report any UAS sightings and attempt to identify any aircraft seen operating in W-72.
- (3) Action Agency: N42239 FLEET AREA CONTROL & SURV FAC VACAPES OCEANA
- (4) Applies To:
 - (a) Type: HUMAN FACTOR
 - (b) Statement: Unknown agency failed to notify controlling agency of UAS operations.

8. CO Comments:

A. N09679 - STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON 106 - VFA-106

- (1) The unknown aircraft in this latest NMA incident was a very small target, and was not detected by HW using his radar. The object was also so small it was almost impossible to detect with the naked eye at range. FACSFAC Vacapes cannot detect a target this size if it is not squawking IFF or communicating via radio. This presents a significant safety concern, given that this unknown aircraft was detected in an exclusive use area. I feel it may only be a matter of time before one of our F/A-18 aircraft has a mid-air collision with an unidentified UAS.

9. Point of Contact:

- A. Name (b)(6)
- B. Phone: (b)(6) DSN:
- C. Email (b)(6)

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