

ALL ATC ACTIVITIES ()

ALL TACAIR AIRCRAFT ACTIVITIES ()

ALL UAV COMMANDS ()

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

From: STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON 143 - VFA-143 N09281

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: 1386708970442
- C. Local Serial Number: 04-14
- D. RAC: 02 - SERIOUS RISK
- E. Endorser: FLEET AREA CONTROL & SURV FAC VACAPES OCEANA
- F. Event: Hazard Pilot (HP) entered W-72 1A/B to perform a currency flight. Upon check-in HP was told by the controlling agency that there was no traffic in the area. Shortly after check-in, HP detected a radar track off his nose at 12,000' traveling at Mach 0.1. Shortly after detecting the radar track, HP was able to visually acquire a small aircraft. The aircraft had an approximately 5 foot wingspan and was colored white with no other distinguishable features. Due to the small size, the aircraft was determined to be a UAS. The HP tracked the Hazard UAS (HUAS) for approximately 1 hour, and relayed position data to the controlling agency. Surface traffic was light with only a single stationary commercial fishing trawler and a single unidentified US Naval vessel traveling south in the vicinity of the HUAS location. At no point in the flight did the controlling facility see a radar return or a squawk that correlated with the HUAS. Post flight, the controlling agency contacted numerous local UAS operators, but none claimed knowledge of the HUAS. Additionally, the identity of the Naval vessel in the vicinity was undetermined.

- G. Hazard Date, Local: November 18, 2013
- H. Hazard Time, Local: 1255
- I. Time Zone: R
- J. Condition: DAY

2. Data:

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

A. Reporting Activity: STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON 143 - VFA-143 N09281

B. Aircraft or UAV:

B1.

- (1) Aircraft: F/A-18E
- (2) BUNO: 166602
- (3) Reporting Custodian: N09281 - STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON 143 - VFA-143
- (4) Controlling Custodian: COMNAVAIRLANT (CNAL)
- (5) Departure Location: OCEANA NAS
- (6) Destination:
- (7) # Aircrew: 1
- (8) # Injured Aircrew: 0
- (9) # Passengers: 0
- (10) # Injured Passengers: 0
- (11) TMR: 1A1
- (12) VMC/IMC N

B2.

- (13) Aircraft: UNKNOWN
- (14) BUNO: 000000
- (15) Reporting Custodian: N63393 - NAVAL SAFETY CENTER NORFOLK VA
- (16) Controlling Custodian: PENDING
- (17) Departure Location:
- (18) Destination:
- (19) # Aircrew:
- (20) # Injured Aircrew:
- (21) # Passengers:
- (22) # Injured Passengers:
- (23) TMR: 1A1
- (24) VMC/IMC N

3. Environment:

- A. Hazard Location Description: ATLANTIC OCEAN (WESTERN - WESTLANT) W-72 AIR-1A and AIR-1B
- B. Hazard Country:
- C. Hazard State:
- D. Latitude: 36 32 00 N
- E. Longitude: 075 20 00 W
- F. Location: -

4. Weather:

- A. Briefed By: PILOT
- B. Briefing Utilization: USED
- C. Air Temp: F

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- D. Relative Humidity:
- E. Dewpoint: F
- F. Water Temp: F
- G. Wind Direction:
- H. Wind Gust:
- I. Ceiling Agl (100s ft):
- J. Sky Condition:
- K. Horizon: VISIBLE
- L. Visibility Statute Miles:
- M. Altimeter Setting:
- N. Icing: U
- 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. Special - Unknown agency failed to notify controlling agency of UAS operations

(1) Analysis: The airspace controlling agency was unaware of a UAS operating in their area. 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.

7. Recommendations:

A. Recommendation: #1

(1) Description: Brief to all aircrew.

(2) Remarks:

(3) Action Agency: ALL TACAIR AIRCRAFT ACTIVITIES

(4) Applies To:

(a) Type: SPECIAL FACTOR

(b) Statement: Unknown agency failed to notify controlling agency of UAS operations

B. Recommendation: #2

(1) Description: Brief to all UAS operators.

(2) Remarks: Due to their small size, many UASs are less visually significant and radar apparent and therefore pose a significant risk for midair collision. Proper coordination with ATC agencies is required to help prevent a midair with a manned aircraft and save aircraft and lives.

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(3) Action Agency: ALL UAV COMMANDS

(4) Applies To:

(a) Type: SPECIAL FACTOR

(b) Statement: Unknown agency failed to notify controlling agency of UAS operations

C. Recommendation: #3

(1) Description: Brief to all ATC activities.

(2) Remarks:

(3) Action Agency: ALL ATC ACTIVITIES

(4) Applies To:

(a) Type: SPECIAL FACTOR

(b) Statement: Unknown agency failed to notify controlling agency of UAS operations

8. CO Comments:

A. N09281 - STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON 143 - VFA-143

(1) With the increased prevalence of UASs, the midair potential between manned and unmanned aircraft is a growing concern. In many ways UASs pose a greater midair risk than manned aircraft. They are often less visually significant and less radar apparent than manned aircraft. Additionally, they may not be squawking and typically have less SA to the aircraft in their vicinity than manned aircraft. The unmanned aircraft community, manned aircraft community, and ATC need to proactively manage this hazard before we are faced with a mishap.

B. N42239 - FLEET AREA CONTROL & SURV FAC VACAPES OCEANA

(1) UAS operations within FACSFAC VACAPES operating areas are scheduled in Exclusive Use airspace. Participating exercise aircraft are permitted into the Exclusive Use airspace only after proper deconfliction, and approval by, the Officer Conducting Exercise (OCE). No UAS operations were requested or scheduled in W-72 this day. Giant Killer Ocean Sector controller had no RADAR awareness to any air traffic within W-72 1A/B. Queries were made to all navy surface vessels operating in the area and to all known UAS operators. Giant Killer, to date, has received no acknowledgement of any UAS operations in W-72 this day. Events of this nature stress the importance of proactive air traffic control and heightened awareness of aircrews in the dynamic arena of an offshore operating area. While FACSFAC VACAPES operating areas can be effectively scheduled and deconflicted amongst participating units, non participating UAS usage is a possibility that we must remain vigilant against. FACSFAC VACAPES ATC personnel and operational users of the airspace should be spring loaded to recognize unexpected and potentially adverse situations and take immediate action to identify and avoid conflict, and report any such sighting. Proper scheduling and procedural adherence to published guidance is critical for ALL users of the Special Use Airspace (SUA). The importance of compliance cannot be overstated or repeated enough to ensure efficient access to finite training airspace while maintaining the highest level of safety. All units that utilize FACSFAC services to include all seaborne vessels with UAS capability must adhere to the contents of FAA JO 7610.4 and FACSFACVACAPESINST 3120.1. With proper planning and procedural adherence, efficient use of the airspace is maximized while the likelihood of conflicts between manned flight and UAS are minimized. Proper scheduling, situational awareness, and open communication by all participating assets will greatly increase the margin of safety.

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

9. Point of Contact:

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

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