* **AIRPROX REPORT No** 055/08

*Oare/Time:* 2 May2150

; 5232N 00156W (8nm NWofBHX)

***Airspoce:*** I.on FIR!B'ham CTR (Class;G/0)

*Reportir.q Ac Repo,tedAc Type:* EC135 Unknown

*Operator:* C1v Pol NK

*All/FL:* 1500ft NK

(QNH 1Q22mb)

*Woafh"r* VMC CAVOK

[nocloud,no moon wind 4kt]

*Vlslb/liry:* >30km

*Reported Separation:*

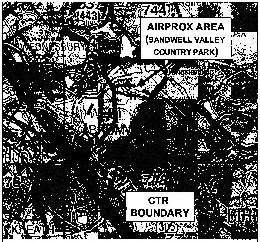
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*Recorded Separation:*

NR

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**PART A: SUMMARY QF INFORMATIONREPORTED** TOUKAB

THE EC135 PILOT reports flying a routine night pallce survelllance task on the edge 0181rmln9n m CTR squl'Wk.ir,g 0060 with Mode C and in receipt of a RC service from them. He was operating around 1500ft on th& QNH and lnltlally In an orbit at 80kt when the front observer sew unidentified

:ights flying around tlleir ac. The pilot estabfished vtsualcontact.he estimated 1OOm away but it was

very dlftlcult to tell,ashel'l'\.al\08UVl'e(Jthe ae to avoid 8 r:::ollisiori Bildtoidentny the lightsource.

The li t• appeared to continue to Circle their ac the same height, fl$W aw•Y to the N slightly then

·etumed. Contact was broken by flying E to Birmingham City and descending to a IO\V&r height 10 Anable tt'le ugr,tsto be seen against the<&ark sk)'buttheolher ac returned to their area.

They searched the openland in the area below them with their thermal camera looldnQ for any slgr\S of radio=ntrolladmodal activity but nothing ob•ious was found.

He believes thelights may have come from a radio oontrolled fixed wing ac.the lights being to c'.>::.sist with night ftytng, and that It was l)llrposaly flown around them. He also thought Illa!the intent may either have been sinister. or just someone "'messing around•. H$informed Blrmlrigharn Radar at the &me who as \VOUld l:>e expected saw nothing on theradar. probably due to tile smallsize of th& other ac.

**ATSI** hadnott>ing lo add.

UKAB Note (1): The pilot of the EC135 was very co-operative aod provided ttdditiunel intonnation wt,en <:ontected by the Secretariat. He is a very experienced helicopter piiot particularly In night aporations. He was engaged on a routine police &IJrveillance task. accompanied by 2 fully trained pofice observers, one visuaf in theleft hand seatandonein the rear operating thG ac aqulprna11t and, al th& time, U$;ing NVGs. All 3 orewmernbers saw 2 continuous (not flashing} blue/green lights and

::he front seat observer saw an object behind u,e l(ghts. Thera..1r seat observec- sawthe lights on his NVGs hut nothing else due to 'blooming'. None of the crewmembeB couki offer any explana1loh as 10 the source of tho lights othorthan that givenbythepllot. The RTrecording verifies thatthe ECt35

1

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·• pitot reportecl thein<:ldent *to* Radar and llley responded by saying that there were *no* o1her contacts in the area.

The pilot discounted eny 'flashing· from the rotor blades (as reponed as taking place In some heliropter operations In the Middle East). He also stated that *they* thought that the source of Iha lights might be a reflection from the NVG lensss onto the Inside of Ille **ao** canopy: this was later discounted alter anO\her ac conducwcl a k!ston a later flight.

UKAB Note (2): All available radar rerordlngs were examined and Ille EC135 shows throL19hout. squawking with Mode C, operating on the edge of the Birmingham CTR, both inside and outside Class D airspace. The RT recorcling shows !hat the pilot wasIn ron!act with Binningham Radar and deared *ID* operate in Iha area. Al ll'le Hme the only other ac seen **in** the area and the mly other In oontact with radar, is a routine Birmingham CAT inbound which passes over the EC135. well above. (Although he did not reportseeinglt, the EC135 pilot was certain that the lights did not emanate from that ac). There were several 'one swoop only' primary contacts over 10nm to Iha W and slightly beforethe·incident timethat were attribullld to enaprop [ar,omalous propa\_gatioo].

UKAS N.ota (3}: Duelo the pilot's report Illefirst organisation contacted by the UKABin attempting to trace the source of the lightswas the Blitish Model Flyin9 AsscclaHon. Their view was that the objeci could not have been a model ac as it would ha•re been too high and they had no reports of any activity at night. In addition it would not, In their view been l)C$Sible to conlrol a normal (in size and control system) model ac at that height since any liijht would not have been sufficient to enable control. In pursuing more sophisticated unmanned aerlal vehicles, known civil, police and military operators of UAVs were contacted and no acllV!ty was reported (in any ca,;e it was a most unlikely

loca on ancl time for lhe operation of UAVs, indeed virtually imposslble for mllltary UAV activity). Military ftigi,b were ruled out sil1()8 there was no uawk observed **and** the area is outwith the UKLFS. Gliders, kites, tethered and untethered balloons were ruled out due *ID* the light and weather conclilions. Thefe are *no* Met balloon launch s as in the area. All local GA alrftelds (exoept Halfpenny Green) reported no night activity onIlledate c;,f the incident. The activity from Halfpenny Green waspolice operations that had landed before the incident time. Since the incident occurred in good radar coverage (both Birmingham and Ctee Hill) and no contacts ellher squawking or primaiy­ only were evident within 2Qnm of the incident position, tt Is thought most unlikely that the lights emanated from nomial GA, other police *or* air ambulance activity. A laser light show was also discountecl since there was 1'10 doudba&a for the lights to ba reflected on. Fireworks or flares were also discounted since the light source oid not descend towards the ground ea, even with parachute flares, would be the case and, in *any* case, the lights reported were not bright enough to be pyrotechnics. The authofiijas for the parks close to1heincident area ware c;ontacted but they ha<Ino activity reroroed for the evening of 2 May.

Although the pasoibility *of* a civilianclandestine flight by a microlight or similar ac pould not be ruled out, it is thought unlikely that any pilot engaged on illegal airborne activity would **omit** what could probably be identified as **a** police helic:opter.

Regrettably therefore, despiteextensive tracing the source of thelights c:ouldnot be identified.

**PART** B: SUMMARY.OF TKEBOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the helicopter pilot, a recording of the relevant RT frequency, radar video reco«Jings and a report from the epproprlate ATC authorities.

The Board noted·the extensive tracing action taken by the Secretariat anq accepted lhat any further elfon was unlikely to determine the source of the lights reported by *the* E:C135 pilot which, despite there being no information to support the crew's (unanimous) sighting, Memb&rs accepted totally as being accurate. The Board, which Included a veiy experienced helicopter pilot Member with exk!nsive experience of clvll, mllitaiy and pofice helicopter operaHons, was Invited to offer an explanation as to lhe source of lhe lights: none was forthcoming. The possibility of a clandestine

2

Catalogue Reference:dele/24!2450/1

* ftlght was only one of several possibiMlles and Members were not convinced that, other th n by exclusion of other logical posslblllttes. there was \_sufficient information to mention this in the cause, Certainly however, the ac from which lhe lights 9manated had been small and probably oon-metallic since It was not displayed on eilher of the radars examined **and** had not been displaying the lighting required by the ANO. Members agreed unanimously that they did not have enough infonnation to delermine a degree ofrisk involved In theIncident

**PART C; ASSESSMENT OFCAUSE ANORISK**

Cause: **An** apparent conflict with an unidentified ac displaying non-standard lights.

Degree of Rlsk: D.

3

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