

80% of drone airprox reports are misclassified by the UK Airprox Board

Following a Freedom of Information Act request, the UK Airprox Board, the official body which collates airprox ('near miss') reports from pilots, described the process they use for classifying a drone airprox:

the Board adopts a pragmatic approach wherein if a pilot can positively identify the object as a drone (e.g. number of rotors, recognition of a particular type) then the reporter's identification is taken at face-value. If a reporter can only describe the object in generic terms (e.g. a rectangular object) then the UKAB classify it as an unknown object.

Analysis of the 216 airprox reports published in the current format using this 'pragmatic approach' reveals that 187 (over 80%) have been misclassified as 'drone'. Shockingly 6 out of the 7 airproxes published in April 2019 were misclassified as 'drone'.

Some examples:

Airprox 2018032 - 'Drone'

The F15 pilot reports that he was on the ILS approach when both crew saw something go down the right side of the aircraft. They both thought that **it was not a bird but that it could be a 'gyrocopter' or some type of UAS**. The pilot advised the crew in an aircraft that was behind them on the approach who did not see anything.

Airprox 2018089 - 'Drone':

The B787 pilot reports that on passing 800ft in the climb-out from Heathrow RW09R, **a black object about 1-2ft wide, believed to be 'copter' shaped**, passed 100ft down the left-hand-side of the aircraft. ATC were informed.

Airprox 2018222 - 'Drone':

The B737 pilot reports that they were being vectored for RW22 at Stansted when the Captain called 'drone', at which point the FO looked up and saw **a dark coloured square/rectangle shaped object** pass down the right side of the aircraft with minimal separation. The airframe was inspected on the ground after landing for any evidence of suspected contact or damage and none was observed. The incident was reported to ATC immediately after making visual contact and, following confirmation, ATC confirmed they would be filing a report.

Airprox 2018275 - 'Drone':

The A319 pilot reports that they were at 7nm final on the ILS to Heathrow RW27L, when they passed **a flying object**. It was V shaped, yellow and about 1m in diameter. **The type of the object was not clearly identifiable**, but it was thought to be a drone.

Simon Dale of Airprox Reality Check said *"Using the UK Airprox Board's own stated 'approach', more than 80% of drone airproxes should in fact have been published as 'Unknown Object'. In other words, in the last two years the UKAB's figure is in fact forty three drone airprox reports, not two hundred and sixteen. The rest are literally UFO reports."*

"The UK Airprox Board must reclassify all of their more than three hundred and fifty published drone airprox reports and notify the Minister for Aviation as soon as possible. New legislation which will

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come into force in November is based on this incorrect data and it is essential that this is corrected before the change is implemented and irreparable harm is done to the drone industry, model flying community and, in the longer term, the whole aviation industry.” said Mr Dale.

ABOUT AIRPROX REALITY CHECK:

Airprox Reality Check (www.airproxrealitycheck.org) was formed as a response to the misrecording of drone airproxes in the UK, and the resulting economic and societal damage this is causing. It analyses drone airprox reports using a series of filters and awards each one a 'Reality Score'.

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