

Airprox report number 2023152

Airbus A321 pilot reports Airbus A319 as a drone

The UKAB have published airprox report 2023136 detailing an event at 18:00hrs on 21st June 2023 where the pilot of an Envoy IV reported missing a drone by 10m at 9700ft whilst descending from the North towards Bristol. (The Envoy IV is the military name for the Dassault Falcon 900LX.) The pilot reported that the drone was silver/white with red flashes. UKAB have classified this as '*a situation where providence had played a major part in the incident and/or a definite risk of collision had existed.*'

Analysis by Airprox Reality Check of ADS-B data reveals that at the time the event was reported to the Bristol controller, and at the location stated, Envoy IV G-ZAHS, descending from the North through 10,000ft, has just had G-VGBR (Airbus A330) cross six miles ahead, and two miles higher, from left to right. At that distance an A330 would appear drone size. G-VGBR is white (with the lower white surfaces appearing silvery from slightly below) with red flashes: this precisely matches the white/silver and red reported. The reporting aircraft would have lost sight of G-VGBR before it crossed ahead, due to the restricted cockpit upward view and the Envoy being in a descent, producing the effect of G-VGBR disappearing over their left side.

It is an indisputable fact that the white/silver with red flashes A330 was in front of the reporting aircraft. There is no evidence to support the claim that any drone was present. (And the likelihood of a drone operating at nearly 10,000ft is infinitesimally small.) If the pilot's report had stated 'between us and the A330' or 'just after the A330 also passed our left-hand side' or something similar then it would be possible to imagine that two 'objects' (a white/silver with red flashes drone, and a white/silver with red flashes A330) passed over the Envoy's left side within seconds of each other. But this is not the case. The reasonable conclusion is that the distant white/silver with red flashes A330 was misidentified as being a nearby white/silver with red flashes drone, and that there was never any risk of a collision.

RPR1333
Hex: 48708F Copy Link
adsbxchange.com

Image © Lewis Rowland

Reg: G-ZAHS
United Kingdom
DB flags: none
Type: DASSAULT Falcon 900
Type Desc.: L3J
Squawk: 6236

History +

SPATIAL
Groundspeed: 285 kt
Baro. Altitude: ▼ 12125 ft
WGS84 altitude: ▼ 12625 ft
Vert. Rate: -2112 ft/min
Track: 167.2°
Pos.: 51.797, -2.867
Distance: n/a

SIGNAL
Source: ADS-B

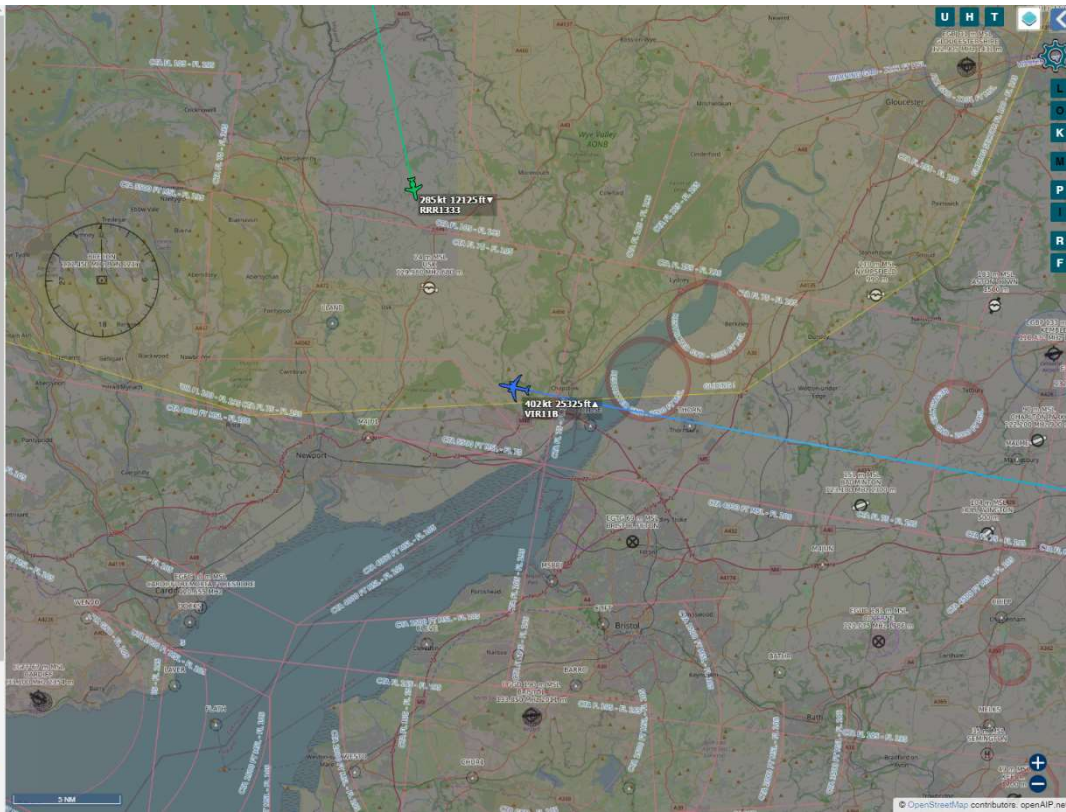
FMS SEL
Sel. Alt.: 11008 ft
Sel. Head.: n/a

WIND
Speed: 28 kt
Direction (from): 239°
TAT / OAT: 8 / -4 °C

SPEED
Ground: 285 kt
True: 302 kt
Indicated: 243 kt
Mach: 0.472

ALTITUDE
Barometric: ▼ 12125 ft
Baro. Rate: -2112 ft/min
Geom. WGS84: ▼ 12625 ft
Geom. Rate: -2080 ft/min
QNH: 1013.6 hPa

DIRECTION
Ground Track: 167.2°
True Heading: 172.2°
Magnetic Heading: 172.4°



RPR1333
Hex: 48708F Copy Link
adsbxchange.com

Image © Lewis Rowland

Reg: G-ZAHS
United Kingdom
DB flags: none
Type: DASSAULT Falcon 900
Type Desc.: L3J
Squawk: 6236

History +

SPATIAL
Groundspeed: 292 kt
Baro. Altitude: ▼ 11925 ft
WGS84 altitude: ▼ 12425 ft
Vert. Rate: -2048 ft/min
Track: 167.3°
Pos.: 51.790, -2.865
Distance: n/a

SIGNAL
Source: ADS-B

FMS SEL
Sel. Alt.: 11008 ft
Sel. Head.: n/a

WIND
Speed: 28 kt
Direction (from): 239°
TAT / OAT: 8 / -4 °C

SPEED
Ground: 292 kt
True: 302 kt
Indicated: 241 kt
Mach: 0.472

ALTITUDE
Barometric: ▼ 11925 ft
Baro. Rate: -2048 ft/min
Geom. WGS84: ▼ 12425 ft
Geom. Rate: -2016 ft/min
QNH: 1013.6 hPa

DIRECTION
Ground Track: 167.3°
True Heading: 172.2°
Magnetic Heading: 172.4°





Copyright: ikeharel

Airprox Reality Check note that the majority of drone airproxes published by UKAB are wrong, and are in fact cases of distant full-sized aircraft being misidentified as nearby drones in fleeting encounters by startled pilots. The Envoy IV was travelling at 230knots and the Airbus A330 at 400knots. Psychologists specialising in human visual perception have explained that in the sky, humans have none of the cues they use on the ground to judge size and distance, making such errors commonplace.