

[REDACTED]

Date: 19 July 2023
Reference: F0006317

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request of 29 June 2023, for the release of information held by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). For reference your original enquiry was as follows:

I write to you with a Freedom of Information request. My request is regarding reports of drones being flown in restricted airspace.

For each of the last three years (27 June 2020 – 26th June 2021, 27th June 2021 – 26th June 2022 and 27th June 2022 – 26th June 2023) can you please provide the following information:

- 1) How many reports did you receive of drones illegally operating within the restricted airspace around UK airports? Please provide a list of instances for each airport.*
- 2) How many arrests were made as a result of reports for 1?*
- 3) What other action was taken in respect of 1 and 2 such as fines/drone equipment being confiscated?*

Your request has been considered in line with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). I can confirm the CAA does hold information within scope of the original request; if I may I shall address each of your points in turn:

1) How many reports did you receive of drones illegally operating within the restricted airspace around UK airports? Please provide a list of instances for each airport.

Please see the attached spreadsheet. The following data validation should be read in conjunction with the supplied spreadsheet:

-The supplied information was compiled via a search of relevant information using the key search terms “drone” as aircraft registration and containing Flight Restriction Zone (FRZ) in the narrative for reports inclusively between June 2020 and June 2023.

-These reports are of drone sightings in the vicinity of the named airport; this does, therefore, not necessarily mean they were in the FRZ at the time of reporting as no coordinates were provided.

-A report of a sighting within the vicinity of the named airport does not necessarily mean the drone was acting illegally. It would, therefore, be wrong to infer from the released

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Email: foi.requests@caa.co.uk

information that every report indicates an 'illegal operation'. This level of information is not recorded within the searched reports.

-The supplied information represents only those entries validated within our systems and may not include recent reports that have not yet been validated. It should be noted that at the time our records were reviewed there was a small backlog (as is operationally normal) yet to be entered or validated.

2) How many arrests were made as a result of reports for 1?

Following a review of held information it has been determined that the CAA holds no information with respect to the number of arrests as a result of a reported infringement of FRZs. It is not within the remit of the CAA to hold such information as we as a public authority do not have the power of arrest. May I therefore suggest, if you have not already done so, that you contact the relevant police authority for each of the named airports as their records may better suit your area of study. Please note as separate and unique public authorities I am unsure as to how much, if any, additional information they will be able to supply.

3) What other action was taken in respect of 1 and 2 such as fines/drone equipment being confiscated?

It should be noted that, as mentioned, a reported FRZ infringements (as documented in the released information for Question One) does not necessarily infer a level of illegality which required formal CAA investigations. The FRZ formal reporting process is not, in the main, designed to detect illegality but rather to promote and foster good safety practices. I can, however, inform you that for the periods mentioned within the above original request the CAA has undertaken the following investigations:

27 June 2020 – 26 June 2021: Nil

27 June 2021 – 26 June 2022: Nil

27 June 2022 – 26 June 2023: 2.

Of the two mentioned in the period 27 June 2022 to 26 June 2023 both are still under investigation.

Disclosure of information for the purpose of maintaining or improving aviation safety

However, if you consider that you require further information for the purpose of maintaining or improving aviation safety, you are able to make an application to the CAA on that basis using the form at the following linking:

www.caa.co.uk/srg1605.

If you are not satisfied with how we have dealt with your request in the first instance you should approach the CAA in writing at:-

FOI.Requests@caa.co.uk

The CAA has a formal internal review process for dealing with appeals or complaints in connection with Freedom of Information requests. The key steps in this process are set out below. A request for an internal review should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of this letter.

Should you remain dissatisfied with the outcome you have a right under Section 50 of the FOIA to appeal against the decision by contacting the Information Commissioner at:-

Information Commissioner's Office
FOI/EIR Complaints Resolution
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
SK9 5AF
<https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>

If you wish to request further information from the CAA, please use the form on the CAA website at <http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/modalapplication.aspx?appid=24>.

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Team
Information Rights Specialist

CAA INTERNAL REVIEW & COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- The original case to which the appeal or complaint relates is identified and the case file is made available;
- The appeal or complaint is allocated to an Appeal Manager, the appeal is acknowledged and the details of the Appeal Manager are provided to the applicant;
- The Appeal Manager reviews the case to understand the nature of the appeal or complaint, reviews the actions and decisions taken in connection with the original case and takes account of any new information that may have been received. This will typically require contact with those persons involved in the original case and consultation with the CAA Legal Department;
- The Appeal Manager concludes the review and, after consultation with those involved with the case, and with the CAA Legal Department, agrees on the course of action to be taken;
- The Appeal Manager prepares the necessary response and collates any information to be provided to the applicant;
- The response and any necessary information is sent to the applicant, together with information about further rights of appeal to the Information Commissioners Office, including full contact details.