

GA1328

Posted on 28.02.2023 by Steve Forward

Category: [General Aviation](#)

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Report Title Potential RA(T) infringement

Initial Report

On the morning of the flight I was briefing myself ahead of taking 3 passengers around the local area. As part of that briefing I had noted a RA(T) that was to be in place during the weekend (SFC – 1500). However, knowing my flight would be away from the NOTAM area and, following local booking-out processes in the knowledge of the airfield operations team, I considered the flight could safely proceed in line with the RA(T).

I departed the airfield before the RA(T) came into effect, leaving in full visibility and comms with the coordinators on A/G radio for my 1 hour flight. After flying locally outside the RA(T), I headed back to the airfield from the north. On approach to the airfield I was aware of other traffic in the RA(T) with some showing on SkyDemon via SkyEcho, I also noted that they were doing non-standard approaches and circuits into the airfield. I therefore adjusted my join for RWY01, intending to remain outside of the RA(T) for as long as possible. I was also aware of the cautionary non-standard radio calls being made by event participants as they came into proximity of the airfield.

I maintained my clearance of the RA(T) and decided not to descend into the deadside, maintaining no lower than 1800ft QFE and, during the circuit join, climbed back to 2000ft QFE when I observed other traffic joining the circuit close to the top of the RA(T) based on SkyDemon information. Maintaining normal circuit radio calls for situational awareness, I delayed my turn onto the downwind to fly a wider circuit [beyond the western boundary of the RA(T)] as I was concerned for the circuits being flown by the other aircraft. Keeping the downwind leg high (2000ft QFE) as I turned cross-to-downwind, I descended to approx 1600ft QFE for my downwind-to-base turn whilst remaining outside [to the west of] the RA(T). I became aware of an aircraft on SkyDemon that had appeared to depart RWY19 to commence a race circuit so I delayed my base turn to maintain separation and turned base leg as number 2 to a different aircraft, keeping a good lookout. This longer final allowed me to retain height above the RA(T), only descending into the RA(T) as I flew the base leg as number 2.

After taxiing-in to park and escorting the passengers from airside I arranged refuelling and sometime later was approached by another pilot and an organiser. The organiser and I chatted for

some time in a civil way as he had been advised that I had infringed the RA(T), discussing and agreed that there was a valuable lesson to be learned in how briefing of pilots operating 'with a permission' of the local airfield could be managed. Due to my stress levels following this event and the accusation of the RA(T) infringement, I returned the aircraft to my hangar as I considered that I was not in a position to fly.

There was no local briefing material available, this was left to self-interpretation which is where I believe my confusion crept in. I also think there needs to be a more strongly worded caveat to the "Flights conducted under permission of the [Airfield] Ground radio". As I've reflected over time on this one, I've also come around to the wording being problematic here as technically A/G radio cannot issue permissions or instructions to aircraft in the air, meaning it also potentially put the A/G operator in a difficult position should an aircraft request permission to land or take off.

Comment

The RA(T) [AIC M 081/2022](#) is shown and essentially required non-participating pilots to remain above 1500ft amsl within the bounded area. The key point though is that the area could be penetrated if aircraft were operating with the permission of the A/G service. This is where the confusion lay because the reporter thought that completing the booking-out process (presumably showing a flight duration that started before but ended during the RA(T) exclusion) implied that they had such permission. One might have hoped that during the booking-out and departure process the restrictions of the RA(T) would have been raised by the A/G operator but it seems that they were not. In all other respects, it certainly appears that the reporter tried their best to accommodate the RA(T) into their flight based on their understanding of it, but this incident highlights the need to fully understand any potential restrictions that might be in place at airfields as a result of NOTAMs such as this; a specific phone call or visit to the Aerodrome Operator during the pre-flight planning process would hopefully have resolved any misunderstandings. As the reporter comments, the AIC is somewhat misleading in Para 3 about who would give 'permission', and it would probably have been better written as '[Airfield] Aerodrome Operator' rather than '[Airfield] air-ground service' (although the effect was probably the same in that any 'permission' would likely have been passed through the A/G operator); however, by stating '[Airfield] Aerodrome Operator' this might have triggered the reporter to make a positive effort to gain permission rather than assume that they had it by dint of talking to the A/G operator. Ultimately, the Aerodrome Operator could have prevented any confusion by issuing their own written brief to all home-based pilots providing clarity on what was required in order to comply. Finally, although it seems that the problem was discussed and resolved to the Aerodrome Operator's satisfaction after the incident, we can understand that the reporter might have been troubled by their seeming transgression and they absolutely did the right thing in not flying again that day if their mind was not in the right place at the time.

Key Issues

Dirty Dozen Human Factors

The following 'Dirty Dozen' Human Factors elements were a key part of the CHIRP discussions about this report and are intended to provide food for thought when considering aspects that might be pertinent in similar circumstances.

Awareness – clarity on what was required to comply with the RA(T) was not available or sought

Knowledge – misunderstanding of information

Communication – poor communication of RA(T) requirements and pilot's intent

Deviation – pilot did not comply with the AIC

loss_of_awarenessAwareness

lack_of_knowledgeKnowledge

poor_communicationCommunication

normalisation_of_deviationDeviation



