

[News story: UK Chief of Defence Staff reaffirms commitment to Australia](#)

Updated: Amend to copyright.

During a visit to the country, Sir Stuart Peach met his Australian counterpart, Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin AC, to discuss how both countries' Armed Forces can work together on a number of fronts.

Sir Stuart also met with the Australian Minister of Defence, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, to discuss an aligned approach to both global and regional issues, such as North Korea, Iraq, Syria and countering terrorism.

Both nations are already part of the Five Eyes defence relationship and work together on tackling shared threats, but are seeking to build upon this further.

Whilst in Canberra, Sir Stuart laid a wreath at the tomb of the unknown Australian soldier in the Australian War Memorial and met the Director, Dr Brendan Nelson.

The Chief of Defence Staff Sir Stuart Peach said:

From the First World War right up to the fight against Daesh, the UK and Australia have stood shoulder to shoulder as the strongest of allies. We work together on a range of regional and global challenges, advocating and defending the rules-based international system and promoting rule of law as the basis of peace and security.

Our strong defence and security relationship reflects a modern and dynamic partnership. We learn from each other as our soldiers train together, we collaborate in defence science and technology and I have no doubt our partnership will continue to go from strength to strength as we face upcoming global challenges together.

[News story: The evolution of incident reporting, from pure statistics to](#)

nuanced insight

Rarely did anyone attempt to grasp the wider implications of a particular incident for the future, or spot trends or patterns or read across issues to other aircraft. There was a corresponding lack of corporate memory as to related incidents which had occurred in the past...

[The Nimrod Review: An independent review into the broader issues surrounding the loss of the RAF Nimrod MR2 Aircraft XV230 in Afghanistan in 2006](#), Charles Haddon-Cave QC, October 2009, P149

I make recommendations for a new safety culture...

Ibid, P569

A reporting culture is one of the cornerstones of an engaged safety culture. As such, the Military Aviation Authority (MAA) requires that all air safety occurrences are reported and managed, with appropriate action taken, see [RA 1410: Occurrence reporting](#). As such, the MAA provides the Air Safety Information Management System (ASIMS) as both a 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' system: ASIMS is designed to help the defence aviation community report air safety occurrences in order that Aviation Duty Holders (ADH), see [RA 1020: roles and responsibilities: ADH and ADH facing organisations](#), may actively manage air safety, monitoring and mitigating associated Risks to Life (RtL) within their defined areas of responsibility (AOR) to As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP) and Tolerable. In addition, ASIMS is used by the MAA in the monitoring and oversight of the Defence Aviation Environment (DAE) as a whole and is one of the main tools used to establish the 'risk picture' across the DAE, enabling the MAA to practice risk based assurance.

As with any system of this kind, there are 2 components that make it a success, or failure. The design of the system itself, and the willingness and ability of personnel to fully engage with it, with the former often influencing the latter. Following the analysis of ASIMS report data-quality in 2013, it was recognised that, whilst there was a healthy reporting culture (with reporting increasing year-on-year), codification of why incidents occurred was inconsistent, hindering the MAA's ability to gain a true picture of aviation safety risk held by Defence.

Whilst personnel understood the need for and were willing to report incidents, they either could not, or would not, complete the process. One major issue was the outcome-focussed taxonomy, which led reports to focus in on the outcome of an occurrence, not what led to that outcome. Another issue was allowing reports to be closed-down without mandating that investigation findings were declared.

Consequently, in April 2016 the MAA introduced a major ASIMS upgrade. From improved codification and taxonomy, to the introduction of hashtags, the upgrade has provided a step change in the ability to positively influence aviation safety through improved recording, trending and analysis of safety occurrences. The most significant changes are discussed below. However, the system remains reliant on the willingness of personnel to fully engage.

The stats

Currently, every location in which military aviation is conducted, and every unit which conducts military aviation, has access to ASIMS through DII. There are over 19,400 user accounts* belonging to 1,063 units registered at 212 stations** (including every aviation-capable ship). An average of 13,000 individual reports are raised each year, and there are over 225,000 unique reports stored on ASIMS (the vast majority of which pre-date the system).

*It should be noted that a user account is not required to raise an occurrence report within ASIMS.

**[ASIMS statistics page](#) dated 15 January 2018.

Investigations

The ASIMS v3 upgrade added the requirement to record the level of investigation being undertaken: Local Investigation (LI), Occurrence Safety Investigation (OSI) or Service Inquiry (SI). Investigators could devote as much or as little time to the investigation as required to satisfy the Aviation Duty Holder/Accountable Manager (ADH/AM) Review Group that the details of the occurrence have been accurately identified and recorded. If appropriate for the occurrence, an LI could be as simple as performing a desk-level investigation.

Findings

The introduction of a mandatory requirement to complete the Findings section and the associated recommendation details for the Cause and each Causal Factor was the single biggest element of the upgrade. The understanding of why an incident occurred was further enhanced by allowing multiple findings, which improved our overall analysis of occurrences.

This mandatory requirement to report findings, and the ability to report multiple findings has caused some additional work for the report investigators, but has added far greater value to each report submitted and thus the insight possible from analysis of ASIMS.

From 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, only 27% of reports recorded why an occurrence had happened. Following the upgrade, from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 that figure had risen to 93%, however, there is still some way to go. Recent analysis (December 2017) has shown that 25% of Causal Factors are recorded as 'Cause Undetermined'.

Further understanding of why this is the case is ongoing: defence aviation cannot claim to have good corporate memory, or an effective learning culture,

if a quarter of occurrences are not codified in such a way as can be readily exploited.

Why record multiple findings?

A technical fault in flight may have resulted in a report-worthy safety incident. However, the subsequent investigation may establish that an associated maintenance activity had been both incorrectly completed and not properly supervised. The conclusion is that 3 elements led to the incident occurrence and each element requires investigation:

- why was the maintenance activity being carried out incorrectly?
- why was supervision inadequate?
- why did the technical fault in flight lead to an air safety incident?

Previously, only the top level would be recorded, i.e. the technical fault. However, by having the ability to add a separate finding for each phase of the occurrence, allowing each element to have their own outcome, cause and causal factors, it is possible to easily see which causal factor initiated which cause and subsequently led to the outcome.

In addition, this function enables improved analysis of the data; allowing deeper interrogation to establish not only multiple findings for a main outcome, but also multiple outcomes from a single finding.

Recommendations

Recommendations are formal and require ADH/AM approval. The upgrade introduced the requirement for the Investigator to make a recommendation against the cause and each causal factor for every finding. There are occasions when it is appropriate that no recommendations are made. These occasions must be positively acknowledged and recorded and as such, an associated free text field has been made available for this purpose.

Acceptable reasons for recording 'No Recommendations' are:

- the risk remains ALARP and tolerable, therefore no mitigation or action is required
- one recommendation mitigates multiple entries. Thus the mitigation is managed on one entry only and 'Mitigated by Recommendation xxxx/xxx/Rx' is entered in the 'No recommendation' field for the others
- the intention is to implement local mitigation/prevention action however, it does not change the current level of associated risk and so does not require ADH/AM approval. These actions can be implemented and managed outside of ASIMS

Hashtags

The hashtag functionality enables the tracking and management of local issues as well as analysis of global trends. Hashtags are created via the MAA ASIMS helpdesk. However, Occurrence Managers (OMs) are responsible for reviewing every report within their AOR for completeness and accuracy and it is their responsibility to add appropriate hashtags to a report once created. This

action is vital for ensuring the reliability of hashtags when interrogating ASIMS at either a local, or a global level. An example of adding hashtags can be seen at Figure 1.

The screenshot displays the ASIMS report form with the following sections:

- Aircraft Involved (Not for ATM use):** Includes fields for Embarked on ship (No), Aircraft Registration (XX123), Aircraft Type/Mark (Tomado -> GR4/4A), and Other (Please State).
- Briefed Task (No Operationally Sensitive Information):** Contains the text "UK Currency flying".
- Description of Event:** Includes a Brief Title ("Birdstrike at Low Level") and a Narrative Description of Event ("On crewing out of the jet after a training sortie which involved a period at low level, the see in team notified the crew that there was a birdstrike on the leading edge of the right wing. The crew were unaware of the strike in flight.").
- Hashtags Sidebar:** A list of tags such as #3rd_party_animals, #3rd_party_horse, #3rd_party_people, #4worlds_aircrew, #4worlds_airspace_atm, #4worlds_maintainers, #4worlds_support_staff, #AAR, #AEA, #Airfield_Incident, #airspace, #airspace_infingement, #air_display, #Abion, #ALM, #Argus, #ArmBays, #ATC equip, #ATC_Info, #ATM_regs, #Bay_Class, #birdstrike, #Bulwark, #CFIT, #circuits, #communications, #composites, #controller_overload, #controller_report, #dangerous_goods, #deck_landing, #distraction, #ejection_seat, #engines, #ES, #ESA, #F2FP_Aircrew/ATC, #F2FP_Groundcrew, #F2FP_Maintenance, #falling_article, #fatigue, #FCM, #fire, #lightservicing, #flyingcontrols, #FOD, #Fort_Austin, #Fort_Rosalie, #Fort_Victoria, #fueling, #fumes, #GPS, #ground_equipment, #harness, #hostile_action, #IFRP, #In-Form, #Incursion, #Infrastructure, #JHF(US), #landing_gear, #laser, #level_bust, #lightning_strike, #load_lifting, #lookout, #loose_article, #LOS, #lost_article, #MAC, #maintenance_activity, #maintenance, #marshalling, #Mars_Class.
- SUGGESTED TAGS:** A list of tags including #birdstrike, #landing_gear, and #WTC.
- TAG DROPZONE:** A field for entering additional tags.

Figure 1: Adding Hashtags

ASIMS has proven that full, open, timely and accurate reporting of aviation occurrences is essential to the maintenance of aviation safety. The changes discussed here: the clarification of investigative levels, the mandatory reporting of findings and recommendations and the addition of hashtags to enable easier monitoring and analysis, all contribute to vastly improved data fidelity within the system.

Accurate reports, which include details of resulting investigations, allow important lessons to be identified and so play a major part in future accident prevention. ASIMS provides the mechanism for all reports to be passed to higher and other associated formations to form part of the wider situational awareness of the aviation safety risk picture, and for details of remedial or preventative actions to be recorded and promulgated through the appropriate specialist channels.

The success of all ASIMS activity is dependent upon User input and engagement, in a positive reporting culture. Continual upgrading of ASIMS to make it easier to use therefore directly influences the generation, maintenance and promotion of a positive reporting culture, which in turn influences aviation safety. For us to successfully interrogate ASIMS regarding both trends and culture, it is essential that the key fields are completed accurately. Fostering this behaviour is a key step on the path to a

fully engaged Aviation safety culture, and we all need to play our part.

Further help and feedback

ASIMS continues to be developed and enhanced through the ASIMS Working Group and by suggestions from users. The Working Group is open to station flight safety teams and local occurrence managers and meets every 6 months, if you would like to get involved please contact the ASIMS helpdesk. If you have any suggestions or feedback on ASIMS please complete the online form, accessible from the ASIMS logon page, or contact the helpdesk via email dsa-maa-asims@mod.gov.uk or by phone 030 679 84188.

[News story: MOD confirms the death of Captain Dean Sprouting](#)

Updated: Minor amend

It is with regret that the MOD must announce the death of Captain Dean Sprouting of the Adjutant General's Corps at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, on 31st January 2018. He was serving with Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, Royal Regiment of Scotland. The incident is currently under investigation, but we can confirm that it was not the result of enemy activity.

Lt Col Rob Hedderwick, Commanding Officer, The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, said:

It is hard to do justice to a man such as Dean Sprouting with simple words. In no time at all he had become an indispensable part of the battalion, not only for his professional expertise but also for his compassionate manner and camaraderie. His intelligence and sharp wit was apparent from the outset; there was an ever-present twinkle in his eye and he would gladly admit that his youth had been full of adventure.

Dean was simply one of those people whose infectious humour and enthusiasm drew others to him. His professional knowledge was second to none and his sage advice already something I had come to rely on. His loss is keenly felt by us all and our thoughts and prayers are with his wife and children whom I know he cherished more than anything else in this world. I am hugely proud and thankful to have known him. He was a very good man.

Warrant Officer Class One Tam Millsip, Visiting Warrant Officer, 51 Infantry Brigade said:

Dean's warm, personable nature was never diluted while conducting his duties and those who he had dealings with were always left smiling after Dean imparted his unique wisdom and outlook on life.

Dean was a tremendously entertaining man to be around. He would bring a great deal of joy and laughter to those around him often at the expense of himself; there was never a boring day spent with Dean and my thoughts go out to his family at this very sad time.

Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

It is with deep regret that the Ministry of Defence confirms the death of Capt Dean Sprouting of the Adjutant General's Corps, who died earlier this week at Al Asad Air Base in Iraq. Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this very difficult time. An investigation is underway to establish the detail but it is not a result of enemy activity.

[News story: Defence Secretary discusses threats with US counterpart](#)

Both countries have recently unveiled new plans for improving security, following the UK's announcement of the Modernising Defence Programme and the US publication of its National Defense Strategy.

The two programmes are closely aligned in their thinking, with a strong emphasis on modernising forces to tackle the increasing shared threats faced on several fronts, while strengthening international alliances and forging new ones.

In his first visit to Washington DC as Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson said:

Our two countries face the same threats in an increasingly dangerous world. We stand shoulder to shoulder on the battlefield, we share vital intelligence and technology, and our century-long relationship is the closest of any two allies across the globe. Together, we will always keep the streets of the UK and the US safe, protect our citizens, and defend our way of life.



The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and his US counterpart, Jim Mattis, have been discussing how to tackle the increasing threats faced by both allies. Crown copyright.

Current threats to prosperity and safety, including Russia, North Korea and the ongoing fight against Daesh, were high on the agenda during a meeting at the Pentagon that reinforced the UK's position as the US's defence partner of choice.

NATO remains the cornerstone of UK and US defence and ahead of the NATO Summit in July, both countries have been calling for other nations to invest more in security. The US and UK are the two largest contributors to NATO, and among just six countries pledging at least 2% of their GDP to defence.

The UK's defence trade partnership with the US is worth \$3billion, including collaboration on several key projects such as the F-35 programme, Unmanned Air Systems and a Common Missile Compartment for UK-US Ballistic Missile Submarines.

An even closer bond is expected after Brexit, as the UK pursues new relationships and trade deals outside of Europe, which the Secretary of State emphasised when he visited the British-American Business Association during his visit.



The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and his US counterpart, Jim Mattis, have been discussing how to tackle the increasing threats faced by both allies. Crown copyright.

[News story: Huge new Atlas aircraft hangar opened by Defence Minister](#)

The Atlas maintenance, repair and overhaul facility, which covers 24,000 metres squared and is 28 metres high, is now fitted out and fully operational in support of RAF transport operations all over the world.

Minister for Defence Procurement Guto Bebb said:

From deploying troops and armoured vehicles to a war zone, to getting vital support to humanitarian disasters, our Atlas fleet plays a global role and it needs a home to match.

This huge hangar provides exactly that, and will see Brize Norton ready our Atlas fleet for action wherever they are needed in the world.



A £70 million hangar large enough to contain three of the RAF's new Atlas transport aircraft at the same time was officially opened by Defence Minister Guto Bebb at RAF Brize Norton today. Crown copyright.

The hangar was built under Defence Infrastructure Organisation contracts and has cost approximately £70 million including fit-out work, with activity on the facility ramping up since late 2016 when it was handed to Defence Equipment and Support, the MOD's procurement organisation.

The hangar is designed to make Atlas maintenance easier, safer and more efficient. The internal layout is the result of extensive feedback from support delivery teams and has been designed to be highly adaptable with easy access to specialist tools and equipment.

Support for the UK's Atlas fleet is enabled through a £410 million agreement between DE&S and Airbus Defence and Space – part of the UK's ongoing commitment to the Atlas programme which is sustaining 8,000 jobs across the national supply chain.

RAF Atlas aircraft, a familiar sight in the skies above RAF Brize Norton where they are based, recently formed part of the UK's relief response to Hurricane Irma in the Caribbean where they made shuttle flights from Barbados to destinations across the region to deliver key support, including to the British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos and Anguilla.

Defence Equipment and Support Director Air Support, Adrian Baguley, said:

The Atlas programme is delivering a world-class fleet for the RAF,

offering the UK next-generation transport and airlift abilities for operations all over the world.

Expert support on the ground in the UK is an essential part of that capability and this new facility will ensure that work continues for decades to come.

The aircraft can carry up to 37 tonnes over a range of 2,000 nautical miles. It is able to deploy troops and equipment between and within theatres of operation either by parachute or by landing on short, potentially unprepared airstrips.

Atlas can also carry armoured vehicles, drastically reducing the time it takes for a deploying force to be ready to fight. For humanitarian roles, it is capable of deploying mobile cranes, excavators and large dump trucks for disaster relief operations— for example clearing earthquake sites.



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Wing Commander Ed Horne, the Officer Commanding 70 Squadron RAF which operates the UK's Atlas aircraft said:

This new hangar provides us with a world-class maintenance facility to match the world-beating capability of the Atlas aircraft.

The UK has ordered 22 Atlas aircraft for the RAF, 18 of which have been delivered. The entire fleet is due to be delivered by 2022.



A £70 million hangar large enough to contain three of the RAF's new Atlas transport aircraft at the same time was officially opened by Defence Minister Guto Bebb at RAF Brize Norton today. Crown copyright.