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## Future Combat Airspace – Airspace Change Proposal Stage 1B Engagement

*Dear UK Airspace User,*

The MoD has identified a requirement for the generation of new, suitable and safe airspace in the UK to facilitate large scale exercises, allowing for modern military aircraft and systems to train to their full capabilities. The current existing airspace structures do not provide the MoD viable airspace to facilitate this essential Defence training. An airspace sharing agreement with NATS has been used in the past to enable this MoD activity, however, feedback from recent iterations has demonstrated that this airspace sharing arrangement is untenable for both NATS and the MoD in the future. This agreement also did not incorporate other airspace users and as such, an airspace change process (ACP) [ACP-2020-026](#) has been submitted, under CAP 1616<sup>1</sup>, to deliver a permanent airspace solution.

You may be aware that the Future Combat Airspace Trial – ACP-2020-042 is currently ongoing. This engagement is in respect to the ACP-2020-026 only and is in accordance with the procedures laid down in CAP1616.

As part of the proposal the MoD seeks your views on the **design principles** for this proposal. These will allow us to understand and consider how our proposal may affect your operation and minimise any impacts where possible.

The submitted Statement of Need is below:

‘Air Command, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, has an obligation to provide relevant tactical collective training to its combat and combat support forces to ensure UK Forces are correctly prepared to defend UK interests in line with the UK Defence Strategy. An appropriate airspace that can safely facilitate exercising large forces of modern and future air platforms, in an efficient and representative combat environment is required to meet this need.’

### **Core military requirements:**

Minimising the risk of Mid-Air Collision (MAC) to the maximum extent whilst enabling;

Full tactical employment of aircraft and weapons capability

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<sup>1</sup> [CAP 1616 - Airspace change: Guidance on the regulatory process for changing the notified airspace design and planned and permanent redistribution of air traffic, and on providing airspace information](#)

Supersonic flight and rapid height changes

Overflight and loiter of rural overland (target) areas

Use of high and low altitudes concurrently

Representative employment ranges of simulated air-air and air-surface weapons

Representative operational numbers of aircraft

Ability to oppose from ground and air simultaneously in a contested in electromagnetic environment

## **Explanation of Requirements**

Changing external circumstances make current solutions untenable to deliver the required needs of Defence. Alternate airspace would diminish required training objectives for Defence and increase the risk to all air users to an unpalatable level. This change request will be, in part, informed by the associated trial data received from ACP-2020-042.

The current airspace structure (e.g. D613, D323) is used for everyday daily training; i.e. a formation or set of formations conducting in-house tactical exercises ('part-task training') at limited scale (nominally 4-8 v X), with the opportunity to increase as required. The existing areas (and sub-areas e.g. D323A, D323B etc) allow several squadrons to train at once using different airspace volumes, thereby increasing the throughput of aircraft in the airspace and hence volume of training objectives achieved each day. It is worth noting that some danger areas are activated and used every working day of the year.

ACP-2020-026 is for something else entirely: a large volume of airspace which is only activated intermittently to permit large-scale (up to 80 or so aircraft), high-fidelity tactical training. While existing areas allow a large number of daily smaller-scale training tasks, the ACP-2020-026 volume will allow a small number of occasional large-scale training tasks. This is the reason why the core military requirements for ACP-2020-026 are quite bespoke, including full (simulated) employment of long-range weapons, enough room for tankers and other support aircraft, heavily contested electromagnetic environment, long loiter over large rural overland areas etc. These are enabling airspace facets which will allow us to deliver highly complicated and demanding mission scenarios for the exercise participants. These are the sorts of missions where our frontline aircrew learn the tactical integration skills they will need to fight and win in the future.

The current airspace structure does not fulfil these requirements. The D323 complex, as the closest existing area to UK and USAFE MOBs, is the wrong size and shape (too square), it doesn't have enough overland areas and what it does have is on the short axis, meaning that there isn't enough east-to-west 'fighting' airspace to fit in all the requirements of a COMAO – tanker tracks, admin routes, holds, push lines, supersonic 'fight' airspace, target areas and Red 'airfields'.

## **Key Principles / Requirements for the Airspace**

The key principles and requirements for the Future Combat Airspace are:

- The airspace design must be safe, with any hazards identified and risks mitigated such that they are as low as reasonably practicable and tolerable.
- The training area will be within efficient reach of RAF / United States Air Force (Europe) (USAFE) Main Operating Bases.
- The design will provide a suitable training area to meet the following core requirements:
  - Full tactical employment of aircraft and weapon capability
  - Supersonic flight and rapid height changes
  - Use of high and low altitude activity concurrently
  - Representative employment ranges of simulated air-air and air-surface weapons
  - Representative formation numbers with opposing forces (>80 aircraft)
  - The design will provide a sufficient overland portion for running tactical scenarios, siting targets and simulated threats that facilitate representative collective training in a contested electromagnetic environment.
- Safe, efficient and standardised management, notification and activation of airspace, utilising Flexible Use of Airspace (FUA) principles.
- Minimise impact on other airspace users and the network, where possible.
- Minimise noise and environmental impacts, where relevant.

## Timeline

The timeline agreed with the CAA for the Airspace Change is as follows:

- **Define Gateway** – 30 April 2021 (submission NLT 16 April 2021)
- **Develop & Assess Gateway** – 25 June 2021 (Submission NLT 11 June 2021)
- **Consult Gateway** – 27 August 2021 (Submission NLT 13 August 2021)
- **Formal Submission to CAA** – 17 December 2021
- **CAA Decision** – 29 April 2022
- **AIS Submission** – 13 May 2022
- **AIRAC** – 09/2022

## Area of Interest

The potentially affected area has been identified and highlighted in Fig.1 below.



Fig. 1 – Potential area to be affected by ACP-2020-026 as identified by MoD and NATS

## Next Steps

As a potentially affected stakeholder we will be engaging with you throughout the ACP and will welcome your comments and feedback throughout. We invite you to consider the design principles of this proposal and submit any views or comments you may have by completing the return at Annex A, or free text email, via the email address [Air-AirspaceTrial@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Air-AirspaceTrial@mod.gov.uk). It is requested that any views you may have be submitted by **Fri 12 Feb 21**.

The feedback will inform the development of the airspace ahead of the further consultation period detailed in the timeline above.

We recognise there may be concerns or questions within your organisation in relation to this ACP for permanent change. We would like to reassure you that we are very early on in the process and will continue to engage with stakeholders throughout, with opportunity for you to provide comment or feedback. We would be grateful if you could confirm the best POC and contact details for continued engagement throughout this process. If you have any specific or pressing concerns or questions, please include them with any response you wish to make, and we will endeavour to respond.

**Officer Commanding 92 Squadron  
Air and Space Warfare Centre**

**Distribution (External):**

NATMAC Contact List  
USAFE

**Distribution (MoD Internal):**

Sp&BM Force  
DAATM  
SASO 1Gp  
SASO 2 Gp  
SASO 11 Gp  
SASO 22 Gp  
NCHQ  
JTEPS  
JHC / AWB  
DSF  
DACOS A7

## Annex A to Future Combat Airspace – Airspace Change Proposal Stage 1B Engagement

### ACP-2020-026 Airspace Design Principle Engagement Response

Please complete the following short questionnaire providing feedback on the proposed design principles for ACP-2020-026.

Do you agree that these principles meet the SoN?

Yes     No

Do you have any observations or concerns about the design principles?

Yes     No

Are there any omissions or additions you feel should be considered for inclusion?

Yes     No

Detail

Please provide any further comments, suggestions or considerations in relation to this airspace proposal that we should be aware of.

Detail