



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE CHRISTMAS SEASON 2018

HAZARDS TO AVIATION

George Town, Grand Cayman, (December 13, 2018) – The Christmas season is here and with it will come new presents to be enjoyed and events to be celebrated.

Unfortunately, some of these presents and celebrations can pose a threat to both the public and the aviation industry and the purpose of this advisory is to identify the requirements necessary to ensure the safety of all without detracting from the enjoyment of the Season.

Activities likely to present the greatest risk to aviation and public safety in general include the flying of small unmanned aircraft (also known as drones or unmanned aerial vehicles) kites, sky lanterns and firework displays.

Small Unmanned Aircraft

The interest in and operation of small unmanned aircraft (SUA) has continued to increase significantly across the Cayman Islands particularly in the congested areas of West Bay, Seven Mile Beach and Smith's Cove, George Town and in the vicinity of the airports. Such operations pose a high risk of an incident or accident involving an SUA and a conventional aircraft. In addition to aircraft taking off and landing at the airports, there are also frequent flights involving the MRCU spray plane and the RCIPS and CIH helicopters all of which operate at low-level throughout the Cayman Islands.

As a protective measure, "no-fly" zones were introduced in February 2015 and it is now illegal to fly an unmanned aircraft within 3 nautical miles of Owen Roberts International Airport (Grand Cayman), Charles Kirkconnell International Airport (Cayman Brac) and Edward Bodden Airfield (Little Cayman) without a specific written permission issued by the Civil Aviation Authority.. In addition, a "no fly" zone has also been established around HM Prison Northward and it is illegal to fly an unmanned aircraft within 1 nautical mile of the Prison perimeter without the specific written permission of the Director of Prisons.

Legislation covering the operation of SUA in Cayman Islands airspace can be found in Article 73 of the Air Navigation (Overseas Territories) Order 2013 (AN[OT]O 2013) as amended (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/2870/article/73/>).

Article 73 makes the SUA operator legally responsible for:

- i) The safe conduct of each flight;**
- ii) Avoiding collisions with other people and objects including aircraft;**
- iii) Maintaining unaided visual line of sight with the SUA at all times;**
- iv) Not flying within 150m of any congested areas, or over gatherings of people**
- v) Not flying within 50m of a person, vehicle, vessel, building or structure**

The use of an SUA for commercial purposes requires a Permission issued by the CAACI.

Any person who contravenes the provisions of the Article or flies an SUA within the ‘no fly’ zones identified above, is guilty of an offence and may be liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding CI\$3,400.00.

Kites

The flying of kites in the vicinity of airports is potentially dangerous to aircraft particularly during the taking-off and landing phases. Not only is there a risk that the body of the kite could damage the aircraft or be ingested by a jet engine with possibly catastrophic results, but the control lines, sometimes made of high tensile steel wire on performance aerobatic models, can pose a significant hazard to propeller driven aircraft.

Article 71 of the (AN[OT]O 2013) effectively limits the height at which a kite can be flown to a maximum of 100ft above ground level (AGL) within a 3 nautical mile radius of an airport. Beyond this distance, a kite cannot be flown above 200ft AGL within the Cayman Islands.

The rules regulating kite flying may not be generally known and the purpose of this advisory is to provide the necessary information to allow the public to understand the potential hazards to aviation and to enjoy this recreational activity within the limits established by law.

In order to protect the safety of aircraft, the operators of kites being flown above the heights specified are liable to be prosecuted and may have their equipment confiscated.

Fireworks and Light Displays

Firework displays can vary from small domestic events to major commercial or ceremonial displays whilst light shows include all outdoor laser and searchlight displays. The associated risk posed by these events is increased when the activities take place in the vicinity of aerodromes, particularly during critical phases of flight including approach, landing and take-off.

Organizers planning firework and light displays during the coming season are reminded of the legal requirement under Article 165 of the (AN[OT]O 2013) to coordinate their proposed events with the Civil Aviation Authority of the Cayman Islands (CAACI) in order to prevent potential threats to aircraft operations.

Coordination with the CAACI is required for all firework activity that takes place within 3 nautical miles of an airport or under the approach and departure paths. Firework displays outside this area where the display height is expected to exceed 200ft above ground level must also be coordinated with the CAACI. Proposed laser and searchlight events within the same areas are similarly subject to coordination with and approval by the CAACI.

Firework, Laser and Light displays which come into this category must be formally approved in advance by the CAACI and will incur the appropriate fee, as per the Air Navigation (Overseas Territories) Order Fees Regulation 2010.

Sky Lanterns

Sky Lanterns are forming an increasingly significant part of community and individual celebrations in the Cayman Islands and the number and size of lanterns being released is increasing to a point where they can pose a hazard to aircraft.

Unlike other forms of recreational and celebratory activities including SUA and kite flying, firework displays and laser light shows, all of which can be controlled from the ground, sky lanterns cannot be controlled once released and the larger lanterns, some of which exceed 4ft in height and diameter, are able to climb in the prevailing wind to a height of several thousands of feet.

Many such products are described by the manufacturers or the retailers as being “bio degradable” inferring that they burn themselves out and leave no trace behind them. Whilst this may be true of successful launches over the sea, it is not necessarily the case of Sky lanterns which are blown back over the land. There are documented incidents in which fires have been started, property destroyed or damaged by the smouldering remains and of livestock injured from digesting bamboo or wire debris.

In addition, the risk to aviation is obvious and although there is currently no legislation in place to regulate the release of sky lanterns the need for caution and careful planning before a launch will be equally obvious.

Any individual or organization planning to release sky lanterns should consider their personal liability in the event that damage to property or injury to humans or animals is caused either by the release of a sky lantern or the debris generated by them.

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