



## Further information:

Visit our website:  
<https://www.gov.uk/low-flying-in-your-area/>

Write or call:

Low Flying Complaints and  
Enquiries Unit,  
RAF Wittering,  
Peterborough,  
PE8 6HB.

Tel: 01780 417558  
E-mail: [swk-lowflying@mod.uk](mailto:swk-lowflying@mod.uk)

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

## Military Low Flying in the United Kingdom



The Essential Facts

For some years, operations have shown that the ability to operate effectively at low-level by day and night is vital to both helicopters and transport aircraft as they support ground forces. Whilst fast-jets often take advantage of operating at medium level, some operational situations also require fast-jets to make use of the low-level environment to provide effective ground support, and future contingencies may require fast-jets to make more extensive use of this environment.

To maintain operational capability, our Armed Forces must train effectively so that they are ready on arrival in their operational theatres for the tasks that face them. This is the case whether the operational theatre requires war-fighting operations, peace-support or peace-keeping duties, or humanitarian relief. It is vital therefore that military aircrew are fully trained to operate in the low-level environment for the tasks that they face during operations.

Whilst some low flying training is exported overseas, the majority of training takes place in this Country, within the UK Low Flying System. The current UK Low Flying System was established in 1979, along the principle of making as much airspace available for low flying so that the activity can be distributed as widely as possible, rather than concentrated into specific areas with a corresponding increase in low-level traffic for those affected. In practice, there are many areas of the UK where low flying does not take place, such as major centres of population, civil airspace and key industrial, medical and environmental areas. In addition, the pattern of low flying is also affected by aircraft basing and training requirements. As a result, some areas of the Country see more low flying than others.

The amount of low flying conducted is monitored carefully, and measures are available to regulate activity to ensure safety and potential disturbance are properly controlled. Low flying policy, regulations and levels of activity are regularly reviewed to ensure that there is a continuing operational requirement for low flying, and that the training conducted matches these requirements. The focus of low flying training is on preparation

for current operations and, where possible, some continuation training is conducted for future contingency operations to maintain a broad capability base.

The amount of low flying training conducted in the UK varies according to the number of aircraft deployed on operational duty, and specific training requirements. The level of activity may decrease when there are significant operational deployments, and increase when operational activity is complete and forces return to the UK.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

**Q.** What heights do military aircraft fly down to?

**A.** Fixed-wing aircraft fly down to 250 feet routinely, but occasionally operate down to 100 feet in three designated tactical training areas shown on our website. Helicopters routinely operate down to 100 feet, but may operate down to ground level for certain tasks.

**Q.** Why not practice over the sea or in simulators?

**A.** The flat and featureless sea does not provide realistic training that is necessary to prepare aircrew for operations. Flight simulators are already extensively used as part of our training programmes.

**Q.** Can low flying aircraft permanently avoid over-flying livestock?

**A.** Most rural areas have livestock, and avoiding all these areas would significantly reduce the area available for training. Instead, we distribute low flying as widely as possible to reduce the amount in any particular area.

**Q.** Is it possible to gain temporary avoidance for specific events?

**A.** In some circumstances the answer is yes. Please visit our website for more information or write to us with details of the event at the address shown.

**Q.** Why don't you practice all low flying abroad?

**A.** We currently deploy to a wide variety of overseas locations to conduct low flying training, but we must achieve a balance between the cost of these deployments and ensuring effective training, so most training is conducted in the UK.

**Q.** Do foreign aircraft train in the UK?

**A.** Our NATO partners and other allies do train in the UK, but only on a strict reciprocal basis, usually as part of exercises or exchange visits.

**Q.** Can you provide prior notice of low flying training activity?

**A.** Most low flying is planned on the day of the flight to account for weather, training requirements and airspace restrictions. A forecast of daily activity is available for most areas from 0800 515 544. When pre-planned exercises and other events are scheduled, they are notified on our website and in local media.

