

Here We Go Again

There was another negative drone story in the headlines last week. This time, a drone “narrowly avoided” hitting a passenger plane in a “very near miss” as it flew near the Shard in central London.

The drone was flying above 4,000ft. Let’s just let that sink in. Commercial drones are limited to 400 ft. by law, so by anyone’s definition it was operating illegally, and by my definition - potentially lethally. Added to that height issue, the Shard is a 1,016ft skyscraper – the tallest in western Europe – and it’s in a no-fly zone.

The plane, an Airbus 320 with 165 passengers on board, was flying at 4,900 ft. I can only imagine how the passengers and crew must have felt when they spotted it from the window and watched it pass over the right wing.

The drone operator has not been found, but I have no hesitation in saying the law enforcement services will be looking for a hobbyist - no commercial drone pilot in their right mind would have done this.

It reinforces, yet again, the need for proper regulation and for companies to thoroughly examine the backgrounds, qualifications, accreditations and documentation of their hired-in drone services.

I spoke about this with Craig Lippett, Chairman of ARPAS UK - the Association of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems. He reinforced the need for drone commissioners to do their homework and said: “It’s critical that organisations looking to secure drone services ensure that the operator is correctly authorised to do so. Each operating pilot should be individually qualified, the operator company should hold a CAA issued Permission for Commercial Work (PFCO), and there should be sufficient level of insurance cover to enable safe, successful completion of the task at hand.

“To commission operators who do not hold these is to invite unsafe and illegal flying activity, placing the public at risk and ultimately jeopardising the reputation of the client organisation. Would you want to be seen in the media as a company who cut corners and abandoned safety principles to save costs or get the job done quicker?

“I would urge all organisations looking to secure drone services to do your due diligence and protect your business, it is the socially responsible thing to do.” I couldn’t agree more.

Ben Gorham, Director.

Ends.

Notes for Editors

Sky Revolutions Ltd.

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