



**President's Letter
to
Delegates
and
Committee Chairmen
24th July 2005**

ANTI COLLISION DEVICES IN IGC CHAMPIONSHIPS

Dear Friends

In 2004 the anti-collision system FLARM was introduced to the IGC at our Plenary meeting in Lausanne. It is now in extensive use in Europe and is also used elsewhere in the world.

The IGC endorsed the use of such technology as providing a significant benefit to flight safety.

In April 2005 the gliding board of the German Aero Club endorsed the use of FLARM in soaring competitions and championships.

In May 2005 Aerokurier published a comment about FLARM:

"The Swiss collision avoidance system for gliding, FLARM, cannot be used in international gliding competitions. The exclusion is purely a formality. The FAI competition regulations forbid the exchange of data during competitions, but FLARM relies on extensive exchanges of data in order to work." (Translation courtesy of Fred Weinholtz).

This opinion was picked up by at least one other gliding magazine, the Gliding Kiwi in the June/ July 2005 issue:

"FAI has ruled that Flarm (sic), the Swiss collision avoidance system cannot be used in international gliding competitions. FAI competition regulations forbid the exchange of data during competitions. FLARM relies on extensive exchanges of data in order to work. Common sense will prevail on this issue for sure."

I do not know if other gliding magazines and publications have picked up this erroneous opinion, but the time has come to end this speculation.

Fact: FLARM uses a comparison of electronic data between aircraft to determine if a collision risk exists (no collision risk equals no warning).

Fact FLARM only provides relative position information for the aircraft creating the risk (position in a 360 degree circle).

Fact: FLARM is very short-range.

Fact: FLARM does not provide relative position information if there is no collision risk (so it cannot be used to leech!)

The relevant Annex A Rule currently states:

5.3.1 Radio Transmitters and Transceivers *Radios are for voice transmissions between team members and between them and the Organisers only.*

b. Any other data transmission between competitors, or between them and the ground, except as required by the Organisers, is prohibited.

This Rule was written to stop the transfer of data – such as from GNSS units that would provide information about air mass and rates of climb, etc - especially when gliders were out of sight of each other. It was never intended to void flight safety.

The existing Annex A wording competition permits organisers to require all gliders to carry FLARM, for example, as a means of reducing the risk of mid-air collisions.

We have had a number of debates in the last few years about how to minimise the mid-air collision risk in competitions. As a result, I find it extremely frustrating that interpretations have been placed on a sound and workable Rule in this way without seeking advice or clarification from the Bureau.

I would be very concerned if I thought that someone might lodge a protest about the carriage of a device such as FLARM during a contest.

As a result of this situation the Bureau is making an immediate amendment to this Rule so that it will now read:

5.3.1b "Any other data transmission between competitors, or between them and the ground, except as required: (i) by the organisers; or (ii) for safety purpose or; (iii) for anticollision warning, is prohibited"

I have received an email that suggests that this is just a “*storm in a teacup*”, but this action is, I believe, necessary to make the Bureau’s intentions absolutely clear.

This does not, however, help us in our aim of making the Rules simpler.

Enjoy your flying and keep a good lookout!



Bob Henderson
President, IGC
July 24th, 2005