



(Under the Incorporation of the City of Wollongong Aerial Patrol)

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Hon. Secretary, P.O. Box 162, Dapto NSW 2530

Our Ref.:

Your Ref.:

January 5 1998

The General Manager  
Australian Aerial Patrol  
PO Box 162  
DAPTO NSW 2530

Dear Sir

## RESCUE 251

The following are my recollections of the encounter with a P3 Orion in area O1 on December 28 1998 during search operations associated with the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race.

Unfortunately the time and position of the incident was not noted.

The C402 VH-PEH was tasked by AUSSAR in the early hours and obtaining its brief tracked direct Wollongong to the start position of area O1. Contact was made with Melbourne as to the status of the restricted areas which would be encountered and were informed they were not active. The enroute altitude was 3000 ft ASL. On approaching our search area the aircraft was descended to 1000 ft ASL which was our allocated altitude as we had a P68 to our north and a P3 Orion to our south both supposedly operating at 500 ft ASL. The aircraft was navigated visually to the start position with the aid of a KLN89B GPS and the search legs were also flown utilising this GPS. Visual conditions prevailed throughout the search. At the western end of the area a visual check of a WAC chart confirmed our position in the required area. Also visual identification with the P68 aircraft operating to our north was made.

On one of the west bound legs an Orion was observed slightly to our north on a parallel easterly course. The Orion then instigated a right turn across our track and slightly higher. The aircraft then turned left to our parallel our track and continued east. Communications were attempted with the Orion with no reply. Shortly after the Orion established comms and proceeded to "interrogate" us as to our operations, tasking authority, altitude etc. At the time I considered this most distracting to our operations. The Orion then advised that he would maintain not below 1500 ft ASL (not his assigned 500 ft). Our aircraft was squawking 2000 mode C which was being interrogated by, I assumed, the Orion. At the time I commented to my observer leader



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that the Orion was probably on track Nowra to his allotted area. At the time and considering the VFR conditions I dismissed the incident as minor.

Shortly afterwards the Orion advised that he would be returning direct to East Sale as the crew were becoming fatigued.

If you require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact me further.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Cherry'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'S'.

Chief Pilot