

BIRD CONTROL FROM SCRATCH - AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The success of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operation in Afghanistan relies for a great part on support by military aircraft, deployed from airbases located near the big cities of Afghanistan. Most people associate Afghanistan with bare, dry deserts, areas that would not be attractive to many birds. However, the airbases and adjacent cities are situated along rivers which water is used to irrigate agricultural fields. These river valleys attract many birds like raptors and waterfowl, with numbers of 3,000 Black-eared kites and 2,000 Demoiselle cranes crossing Bagram airbase and 1,000 Pink-footed and Greylag geese staging during 1 month at the airbase of Mazar-e-Sharif. At all airbases, gulls, waders and plovers pop up during migration.

A collision between an USAF F-15 and a Black-eared kite near Bagram in March 2007 resulted in 1.4 million US\$ damage.

In spring and summer, birds feeding on seeds and insects occur in high numbers at the airbases. Since shepherds don't have access to the airbases, their goats and sheep are not grazing the vegetation at the airports. For this reason, the vegetation at all airports is more natural, lush and dense than the – partly overgrazed – vegetation at the other side of the fences. This results in a vegetation with loads of seeds and insects, attracting thousands of Indian house and Tree sparrows and hundreds of Barn swallows and tens of Bee-eaters.

During landing on 15 August 2007, the RNLAf KDC-10 struck 3 flocks of birds. In total 120 individual birds of the mentioned species were involved.

As appeared during two visits (September 2007 and March / April 2008), bird control was not or very poorly executed at the main ISAF airbases.

This presentation will show how the first steps of bird control were implemented at the ISAF airbases.