



Air Force Act 1955

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PART V

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Powers of command

177 Powers of command

- (1) It is hereby declared for the avoidance of doubt that Her Majesty may make regulations as to the persons, being members of Her Majesty's forces, in whom command over Her Majesty's air forces, or any part or member thereof, is to be vested and as to the circumstances in which such command as aforesaid is to be exercised.
- (2) In relation to members of Her Majesty's air forces when in aircraft, the last foregoing subsection shall have effect as if references to members of Her Majesty's forces included references to any person in command of an aircraft.
- (3) Nothing in this section shall affect any power vested in Her Majesty apart from this section.

178 Powers of command of members of co-operating naval or military forces

In so far as powers of command depend on rank, a member of any of Her Majesty's naval or military forces who—

- (a) is acting with, or
- (b) is a member of a body of any of those forces which is acting with,

any body of the regular air force shall have the like such powers as a member of the regular air force of corresponding rank; and for the purposes of sections thirty-three and seventy-four of this Act any such member of the said naval or military forces shall be treated as if he were a member of the regular air force of corresponding rank.

Status: This is the original version (as it was originally enacted).

Attachment to naval or military forces

179 Attachment of members of air forces to naval or military forces

- (1) An officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or airman of the regular air force may be attached temporarily to any of Her Majesty's naval or military forces.
- (2) Regulations made by the appropriate service authorities may prescribe circumstances in which officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and airmen of the regular air force shall be deemed to be attached to any of Her Majesty's naval or military forces, as the case may be, under the last foregoing subsection.
- (3) In this section the expression "appropriate service authorities" means—
 - (a) in relation to attachment to any of Her Majesty's naval forces, the Admiralty and the Air Council,
 - (b) in relation to attachment to any of Her Majesty's military forces, the Army Council and the Air Council.
- (4) A person shall not cease to be subject to air-force law by reason only of attachment in pursuance of this section.

Redress of complaints

180 Complaints by officers

- (1) If an officer thinks himself wronged in any matter by a superior officer or authority and on application to his commanding officer does not obtain the redress to which he thinks he is entitled, he may make a complaint with respect to that matter to the Air Council.
- (2) On receiving any such complaint it shall be the duty of the Air Council to investigate the complaint and to grant any redress which appears to them to be necessary or, if the complainant so requires, the Air Council shall through the Secretary of State make their report on the complaint to Her Majesty in order to receive the directions of Her Majesty thereon.

181 Complaints by warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and airmen

- (1) If a warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or airman thinks himself wronged in any matter by any officer other than his commanding officer or by any warrant officer, noncommissioned officer or airman, he may make a complaint with respect to that matter to his commanding officer.
- (2) If a warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or airman thinks himself wronged in any matter by his commanding officer, either by reason of redress not being given to his satisfaction on a complaint under the last foregoing subsection or for any other reason, he may make a complaint with respect thereto to any air-force, naval or military officer under whom the complainant is for the time being serving, being an officer not below the rank of air officer or corresponding rank.
- (3) It shall be the duty of a commanding or other officer to have any complaint received by him under this section investigated and to take any steps for redressing the matter complained of which appear to him to be necessary.

Exemptions for members of regular air force

182 Officers on active list not to be sheriffs

An officer of the regular air force on the active list (as defined by order under section two of the Air Force (Constitution) Act, 1917) shall not be capable of being nominated or elected to be sheriff of any county, borough, or other place.

183 Exemption from jury service

A warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or airman of the regular air force shall be exempt from serving on any jury.

184 Exemptions from tolls, etc.

- (1) Duties or tolls for embarking from or disembarking on any pier, wharf, quay or landing place in the United Kingdom or any colony, or for passing over any road or bridge in the United Kingdom or any colony, shall not be payable in respect of—
 - (a) members of the regular air force on duty ;
 - (b) vehicles in air-force service, being vehicles belonging to the Crown or other vehicles driven by persons (whether members of Her Majesty's forces or not) in the service of the Crown;
 - (c) goods carried in such vehicles ;
 - (d) horses or other animals in air-force service.
- (2) In the last foregoing subsection the expression " in air-force service " means employed under proper air-force authority for the purposes of any body of the regular air force or accompanying any body of the regular air force.
- (3) Members of the regular air force on duty when using ferries in Scotland shall be entitled to be carried at half rate.

185 Exemption from taking in execution of property used for air-force purposes

No judgment or order given or made against a member of any of Her Majesty's air forces by any court in the United Kingdom or a colony shall be enforced by the levying of execution on any property of the person against whom it is given or made, being arms, ammunition, equipment, instruments or clothing used by him for air-force purposes.

Provisions relating to deserters and absentees without leave

186 Arrest of deserters and absentees without leave

- (1) A constable may arrest any person whom he has reasonable cause to suspect of being an officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or airman of the regular air force who has deserted or is absent without leave.
- (2) Where no constable is available, any officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or airman of the regular air force, or any other person, may arrest any person whom he has reasonable cause to suspect as aforesaid.

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- (3) Any person having authority to issue a warrant for the arrest of a person charged with crime, if satisfied by evidence on oath that there is, or is reasonably suspected of being, within his jurisdiction an officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or airman of the regular air force who has deserted or is absent without leave or is reasonably suspected of having deserted or of being absent without leave, may issue a warrant authorising his arrest.
- (4) Any person in custody in pursuance of this section shall as soon as practicable be brought before a court of summary jurisdiction.
- (5) This section shall have effect in the United Kingdom and in any colony.

187 Proceedings before a civil court where persons suspected of illegal absence

- (1) Where a person who is brought before a court of summary jurisdiction is alleged to be an officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or airman of the regular air force who has deserted or is absent without leave, the following provisions shall have effect.
- (2) If he admits that he is illegally absent from the regular air force and the court is satisfied of the truth of the admission, then—
 - (a) unless he is in custody for some other cause the court shall, and
 - (b) notwithstanding that he is in custody for some other cause, the court may,
 forthwith either cause him to be delivered into air-force custody in such manner as the court may think fit or commit him to some prison, police station or other place provided for the confinement of persons in custody, to be kept there for such reasonable time as the court may specify (not exceeding such time as appears to the court reasonably necessary for the purpose of enabling him to be delivered into air-force custody) or until sooner delivered into such custody.

Any time specified by the court may be extended by the court from time to time if it appears to the court reasonably necessary so to do for the purpose aforesaid.

- (3) If he does not admit that he is illegally absent as aforesaid, or the court is not satisfied of the truth of the admission, the court shall consider the evidence and any statement of the accused, and if satisfied that he is subject to air-force law and if of opinion that there is sufficient evidence to justify his being tried under this Act for an offence of desertion or absence without leave then, unless he is in custody for some other cause, the court shall cause him to be delivered into air-force custody or commit him as aforesaid, but otherwise shall discharge him:

Provided that if he is in custody for some other cause the court shall have power, but shall not be required, to act in accordance with this subsection.

- (4) The following provisions of the Magistrates' Courts Act, 1952, or any corresponding enactment in force as respects the court in question, that is to say the provisions relating to the constitution and procedure of courts of summary jurisdiction acting as examining justices and conferring powers of adjournment and remand on such courts so acting, and the provisions as to evidence and the issue and enforcement of summonses or warrants to secure the attendance of witnesses, shall apply to any proceedings under this section.
- (5) This section shall have effect in the United Kingdom and in any colony.

188 Deserters and absentees without leave surrendering to police

- (1) Where in the United Kingdom or any colony a person surrenders himself to a constable as being illegally absent from the regular air force, the constable shall (unless he surrenders himself at a police station) bring him to a police station.
- (2) The officer of police in charge of a police station at which a person has surrendered himself as aforesaid, or to which a person who has so surrendered himself is brought, shall forthwith inquire into the case, and if it appears to that officer that the said person is illegally absent as aforesaid he may cause him to be delivered into air-force custody without bringing him before a court of summary jurisdiction or may bring him before such a court.

189 Certificates of arrest or surrender of deserters and absentees

- (1) Where a court of summary jurisdiction in pursuance of section one hundred and eighty-seven of this Act deals with a person as illegally absent, then when that person is delivered into air-force custody there shall be handed over with him a certificate in the prescribed form, signed by a justice of the peace, containing the prescribed particulars as to his arrest or surrender and the proceedings before the court; and for any such certificate there shall be payable to the clerk of the court, by such person as the Air Council may direct, such fee (if any) as may be prescribed.
- (2) Where under the last foregoing section a person is delivered into air-force custody without being brought before a court, there shall be handed over with him a certificate in the prescribed form, signed by the officer of police who causes him to be delivered into air-force custody, containing the prescribed particulars relating to his surrender.
- (3) In any proceedings for an offence under section thirty-seven or thirty-eight of this Act—
 - (a) a document purporting to be a certificate under either of the two last foregoing subsections, and to be signed as thereby required, shall be evidence of the matters stated in the document;
 - (b) where the proceedings are against a person who has been taken into air-force, naval or military custody on arrest or surrender, a certificate purporting to be signed by a provost officer, or any corresponding officer of a Commonwealth force or a force raised under the law of a colony, or by any other officer in charge of the guardroom or other place where that person was confined on being taken into custody, stating the fact, date, time and place of arrest or surrender shall be evidence of the matters stated in the certificate.
- (4) In this section the expression "prescribed" means prescribed by regulations made by a Secretary of State by statutory instrument.

190 Duties of governors of prisons and others to receive deserters and absentees

- (1) It shall be the duty of the governor of a civil prison in the United Kingdom or of the superintendent or other person in charge of a civil prison in a colony to receive any person duly committed to that prison by a court of summary jurisdiction as illegally absent from the regular air force and to detain him until in accordance with the directions of the court he is delivered into air-force custody.
- (2) The last foregoing subsection shall apply to the person having charge of any police station or other place (not being a prison) provided for the confinement of persons in

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custody, whether in the United Kingdom or in a colony, as it applies to the governor or superintendent of a prison.

Offences relating to air-force matters punishable by civil courts

191 Punishment for pretending to be a deserter

Any person who in the United Kingdom or any colony falsely represents himself to any air-force, naval, military or civil authority to be a deserter from the regular air force shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding fifty pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or to both such a fine and such imprisonment.

192 Punishment for procuring and assisting desertion

- (1) Any person who, whether within or without Her Majesty's dominions,—
- (a) procures or persuades any officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or airman of the regular air force to desert or to absent himself without leave; or
 - (b) knowing that any such officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or airman is about to desert or absent himself without leave, assists him in so doing; or
 - (c) knowing any person to be a deserter or absentee without leave from the regular air force, conceals him or assists him in concealing himself or assists in his rescue from custody,
- shall be guilty of an offence against this section.
- (2) Any person guilty of an offence against this section shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding fifty pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or to both such a fine and such imprisonment, or on conviction on indictment to a fine not exceeding five hundred pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to both such a fine and such imprisonment.

193 Punishment for obstructing members of regular air force in execution of duty

Any person who, in the United Kingdom or any colony, wilfully obstructs or otherwise interferes with any officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or airman of the regular air force acting in the execution of his duty shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding fifty pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or to both such a fine and such imprisonment.

194 Punishment for aiding malingering

Any person who, whether within or without Her Majesty's dominions,—

- (a) produces in an officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or airman of the regular air force any sickness or disability; or
- (b) supplies to or for him any drug or preparation calculated or likely to render him, or lead to the belief that he is, permanently or temporarily unfit for service,

with a view to enabling him to avoid air-force service, whether permanently or temporarily, shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one hundred

pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or to both such a fine and such imprisonment, or on conviction on indictment to a fine not exceeding five hundred pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to both such a fine and such imprisonment.

195 Unlawful purchase, etc., of air-force stores

- (1) Any person who, whether within or without Her Majesty's dominions, acquires any air-force stores or solicits or procures any person to dispose of any air-force stores, or acts for any person in the disposing of any air-force stores, shall be guilty of an offence against this section unless he proves either—
 - (a) that he did not know, and could not reasonably be expected to know, that the chattels in question were air-force stores, or
 - (b) that those chattels had (by the transaction with which he is charged or some earlier transaction) been disposed of by order or with the consent of the Air Council or of some person or authority who had, or whom he had reasonable cause to believe to have, power to give the order or consent, or
 - (c) that those chattels had become the property of an officer who had retired or ceased to be an officer, or of a warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or airman who had been discharged, or of the personal representatives of a person who had died.
- (2) Any person guilty of an offence against this section shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or to both such a fine and such imprisonment, or on conviction on indictment to a fine not exceeding five hundred pounds or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to both such a fine and such imprisonment.
- (3) A constable may arrest without warrant any person whom he has reasonable grounds for suspecting of having committed an offence against this section, and may seize any property which he has reasonable grounds for suspecting of having been the subject of the offence.
- (4) Any person having authority to issue a warrant for the arrest of a person charged with crime may, if satisfied by evidence on oath that a person within his jurisdiction has, or is reasonably suspected of having, in his possession any property which has been the subject of an offence against this section, grant a warrant to search for such property as in the case of stolen goods ; and any property suspected of having been the subject of such an offence which is found on such a search shall be seized by the officer charged with the execution of the warrant, and that officer shall bring the person in whose possession or keeping the property is found before a court of summary jurisdiction.
- (5) In this section—

the expression " acquire " means buy, take in exchange, take in pawn or otherwise receive (whether apart from this section the receiving is lawful or not);

the expression " dispose " means sell, give in exchange; pledge or otherwise hand over (whether apart from this section the handing over is lawful or not);

the expression " air-force stores " means any chattel of any description belonging to Her Majesty, which has been issued for use for air-force purposes or is held in store for the purpose of being so issued when required, and includes any chattel which had belonged, and had been issued or held, as aforesaid at some past time.

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- (6) For the purposes of subsection (4) of this section property shall be deemed to be in the possession of a person if he has it under his control, and whether he has it for his own use or benefit or for the use or benefit of another.

196 Illegal dealings in documents relating to pay, pensions, mobilisation, etc.

- (1) Any person who—
- (a) as a pledge or a security for a debt, or
 - (b) with a view to obtaining payment from the person entitled thereto of a debt due either to himself or to any other person,
- receives, detains or has in his possession any official document issued in connection with the payment to any person of any pay, pension, allowance, gratuity or other payment payable in respect of his or any other person's air-force service shall be guilty of an offence against this section.
- (2) Any person who has in his possession without lawful authority or excuse (the proof whereof shall lie on him) any such document as aforesaid, or any official document issued in connection with the mobilisation or demobilisation of any of Her Majesty's air forces or any member thereof, shall be guilty of an offence against this section.
- (3) Any person guilty of an offence against this section shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or to both such a fine and such imprisonment.
- (4) For the purposes of this section a document shall be deemed to be in the possession of a person if he has it under his control and whether he has it for his own use or benefit or for the use or benefit of another.
- (5) This section shall have effect in the United Kingdom and in any colony.

197 Unauthorised use of and dealing in decorations, etc.

- (1) Any person who, in the United Kingdom or in any colony,—
- (a) without authority uses or wears any air-force decoration, or any badge, wound stripe or emblem supplied or authorised by the Air Council, or
 - (b) uses or wears any decoration, badge, wound stripe, or emblem so nearly resembling any air-force decoration, or any such badge, stripe or emblem as aforesaid, as to be calculated to deceive, or
 - (c) falsely represents himself to be a person who is or has been entitled to use or wear any such decoration, badge, stripe or emblem as is mentioned in paragraph (a) of this subsection,
- shall be guilty of an offence against this section:

Provided that nothing in this subsection shall prohibit the use or wearing of ordinary regimental badges or of brooches or ornaments representing them.

- (2) Any person who purchases or takes in pawn any air-force, naval or military decoration awarded to any member of Her Majesty's air forces, or solicits or procures any person to sell or pledge any such decoration, or acts for any person in the sale or pledging thereof, shall be guilty of an offence against this section unless he proves that at the time of the alleged offence the person to whom the decoration was awarded was dead or had ceased to be a member of those forces.

- (3) Any person guilty of an offence against this section shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding fifty pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or to both such a fine and such imprisonment.

Provisions as to evidence

198 General provisions as to evidence

- (1) The following provisions shall have effect with respect to evidence in proceedings under this Act, whether before a court-martial, a civil court or otherwise.
- (2) A document purporting to be a copy of the attestation paper signed by any person and to be certified to be a true copy by a person stated in the certificate to have the custody of the attestation paper shall be evidence of the enlistment of the person attested.
- (3) The attestation paper purporting to be signed by a person on his enlistment shall be evidence of his having given the answers to questions which he is therein recorded as having given.
- (4) A letter, return or other document stating that any person—
- (a) was or was not serving at any specified time or during any specified period in any part of Her Majesty's forces or was discharged from any part of those forces at or before any specified time, or
 - (b) held or did not hold at any specified time any specified rank or appointment in any of those forces, or had at or before any specified time been attached, posted or transferred to any part of those forces, or at any specified time or during any specified period was or was not serving or held or did not hold any rank or appointment in any particular country or place, or
 - (c) was or was not at any specified time authorised to use or wear any decoration, badge, wound stripe or emblem,
- shall, if purporting to be issued by or on behalf of the Air Council, the Admiralty or the Army Council, or by a person authorised by any of them, be evidence of the matters stated in the document.
- (5) A record made in any service book or other document prescribed by Queen's Regulations for the purposes of this subsection, being a record made in pursuance of any Act or of Queen's Regulations, or otherwise in pursuance of air-force duty, and purporting to be signed by the commanding officer or by any person whose duty it was to make the record, shall be evidence of the facts stated therein; and a copy of a record (including the signature thereto) in one of the said service books, purporting to be certified to be a true copy by a person stated in the certificate to have the custody of the book, shall be evidence of the record.
- (6) A document purporting to be issued by order of the Air Council and to contain instructions or regulations given or made by the Air Council shall be evidence of the giving of the instructions or making of the regulations and of their contents.
- (7) A certificate purporting to be issued by or on behalf of the Air Council, the Admiralty or the Army Council, or by a person authorised by any of them, and stating—
- (a) that a decoration of a description specified in or annexed to the certificate is an air-force, naval or military decoration, or

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- (b) that a badge, wound stripe or emblem of a description specified in or annexed to the certificate is one supplied or authorised by the Air Council, shall be evidence of the matters stated in the certificate.
- (8) A certificate purporting to be signed by a person's commanding officer or any officer authorised by him to give the certificate, and stating the contents of, or of any part of, standing orders or other routine orders of a continuing nature made for—
- (a) any formation or unit or body of the air force, or
 - (b) any command or other area, garrison or place, or
 - (c) any ship, train or aircraft,
- shall in proceedings against the said person be evidence of the matters stated in the certificate.
- (9) Any document which would be evidence in any proceedings under the Army Act, 1955, by virtue of section one hundred and ninety-eight of that Act shall in like manner, subject to the like conditions, and for the like purpose be evidence in the like proceedings under this Act.

199 Proof of outcome of trial

- (1) Where a person subject to air-force law has been tried before a civil court (whether at the time of the trial he was subject to air-force law or not), a certificate signed by the clerk of the court and stating all or any of the following matters,—
- (a) that the said person has been tried before the court for an offence specified in the certificate,
 - (b) the result of the trial,
 - (c) what judgment or order was given or made by the court,
 - (d) that other offences specified in the certificate were taken into consideration at the trial,
- shall for the purposes of this Act be evidence of the matters stated in the certificate.
- (2) The clerk of the court shall, if required by the commanding officer of the person in question or any other officer, furnish a certificate under this section and shall be paid such fee as may be prescribed by regulations made by a Secretary of State.
- (3) A document purporting to be a certificate under this section and to be signed by the clerk of the court shall, unless the contrary is shown, be deemed to be such a certificate.
- (4) References in this section to the clerk of the court include references to his deputy and to any other person having the custody of the records of the court.

200 Evidence of proceedings of courts-martial

- (1) The original proceedings of a court-martial purporting to be signed by the president of the court and being in the custody of the Judge Advocate General or of any person having the lawful custody thereof shall be admissible in evidence on production from that custody.
- (2) A document purporting to be a copy of the original proceedings of a court-martial or any part thereof and to be certified by the Judge Advocate General or any person authorised by him, or by any other person having the lawful custody of the

proceedings, to be a true copy shall be evidence of the contents of the proceedings or the part to which the document relates, as the case may be.

- (3) This section applies to evidence given in any court, whether civil or criminal and whether in the United Kingdom or in any colony.

Miscellaneous provisions

201 Restrictions on reduction in rank of warrant officers and non-commissioned officers

- (1) A warrant officer or non-commissioned officer of the regular air force shall not be reduced in rank except by sentence of a court-martial (whether under this Act, the Naval Discipline Act or the Army Act, 1955) or by order of the Air Council, or of an officer, not below the rank of air commodore, flag officer or brigadier, authorised by the Air Council to act for the purposes of this section.
- (2) An authorisation under the last foregoing subsection may be given generally or subject to such limitations as may be specified by the Air Council.
- (3) For the purposes of subsection (1) of this section reduction in rank does not include reversion from acting rank.

202 Temporary reception in civil custody of persons under escort

- (1) Where a person is in air-force custody when charged with, or with a view to his being charged with, an offence against Part II of this Act, it shall be the duty of the governor, superintendent or other person in charge of a prison (not being an air-force prison), or of the person having charge of any police station or other place in which prisoners may be lawfully detained, upon delivery to him of a written order purporting to be signed by the commanding officer of the person in custody to receive him into his custody for a period not exceeding seven days.
- (2) This section shall have effect in the United Kingdom and in any colony.

203 Avoidance of assignment of or charge on air-force pay, pensions, etc.

- (1) Every assignment of or charge on, and every agreement to assign or charge, any pay, air-force award, grant, pension or allowance payable to any person in respect of his or any other person's service in Her Majesty's air forces shall be void.
- (2) Save as expressly provided by this Act, no order shall be made by any court the effect of which would be to restrain any person from receiving anything which by virtue of this section he is precluded from assigning and to direct payment thereof to another person.
- (3) Nothing in this section shall prejudice any enactment providing for the payment of any sum to a bankrupt's trustee in bankruptcy for distribution among creditors.
- (4) This section shall have effect in the United Kingdom and in any colony.

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204 Power of certain officers to take affidavits and declarations

- (1) An officer of the regular air force of a rank not below that of squadron leader (hereinafter referred to as an " authorised officer ") may, at a place outside the United Kingdom, take affidavits and declarations from any of the following persons, that is to say, persons subject to air-force law and persons not so subject who are of any description specified in the Fifth Schedule to this Act.
- (2) A document purporting to have subscribed thereto the signature of an authorised officer in testimony of an affidavit or declaration being taken before him in pursuance of this section and containing in the jurat or attestation a statement of the date on which and the place at which the affidavit or declaration was taken and of the full name and rank of that officer shall be admitted in evidence without proof of the signature being the signature of that officer or of the facts so stated.