

2.5. FALCONRY FOR THE CONTROL OF BIRDS DANGEROUS IN THE AIRPORTS
RESULTS OF THREE YEARS PRACTICE

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USE OF FALCONS FOR THE CONTROL OF BIRDS HAZARDOUS TO AIRCRAFT

CONCLUSIONS

COMMUNICATION FROM Dr. RODRIGUEZ DE LA FUENTE =====

(The paper was not presented at the meeting as Dr. Rodriguez was unable to attend).

- 1) On August 3rd, 1968, we started the program called "Operation Bahari" at the Military Torrejon de Ardoz Air Base at Madrid (Spain). For this operation we used six (6) peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) perfectly trained in order to drive out of the airfield a population of little bustard (*Otis tetrax*) flocking in thousands.
- 2) Little bustards, birds to be cleared from the Torrejon airfield, are very hazardous to aircraft due to their straight flight, not very light specimens and important volume (from 700 grs to one kilo). Furthermore, these cannot be persecuted with firearms since they raise their flight at more than 200 meters from the hunter.
- 3) Thanks to the work realized with our falcons, three months after starting such Operation, the airfield was completely cleared from little bustards, finding not a single bird of such specie. Since then up to this date there has been no birdstrike. During 1967 (before starting such program) there had been three important collisions.
- 4) On May 1, 1970, Operation Bahari II was started at the BARAJAS-MADRID civil airport, to drive out a population of little bustards (*Otis tetrax*), Stone curlews (*Burhinus oedienemus*) and Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) bigger than 2.000 individuals. After six months, the runways and the civil airport itself was absolutely free from the three abovementioned species of birds, resulting quite impossible to find out a single specimen.
- 5) For both Operations, our falcons have killed a relatively small number of birds:

Operation Bahari I 60 birds during the first year
Operation Bahari II100 birds during the first year.

Once the birds are driven out, the falcons are flown every day to the lure - device made of leather and feathers - which substitute the natural quarries.

(A report on the development of Operation Bahari II from May to January has been sent to the Committee).

6) As a result of these important experiences we are in a position to state that the use of trained falcons is absolutely efficient to discourage the presence of any type of birds hazardous to aircraft and is more efficient than any other systems for various reasons:

- a) Because it will kill a small number of birds.
- b) Because it will not ecologically modify the environment.
- c) Because it will not cause any hazard to aircraft or men.
- d) Because its cost is relatively small in comparison with any other system.

7) The not very satisfactory results or failure obtained in other foreign airports using falcons is due, according to our observations, to various circumstances:

- a) Lack of skill of the falconers handling the hawks.
- b) Use of inadequate species of falcons to fight the birds hazardous to aircraft.
- c) Lack of continuous sessions of flight which must take place daily and at any time of the year.
- d) Bad training of falcons which are unable to capture at any circumstances the persecuted birds.

8) To terminate, we wish to emphasize that in order to obtain the best success with a program with falcons the following circumstances are to be met:

- a) The falcons are to be perfectly trained because if they are unable to capture the birds they are flown at, these flights are producing the opposite of the desired effect and the birds hazardous to aircraft are losing their natural fear to their winged enemies.
- b) Falcons are to be flown and must hunt every day in the airfields, in the morning and in the afternoon.

- c) After the airfield has been cleared from the birds population, the falcons must still be flown at least once a day so that such birds may not come back.
- d) Falcons unable to attack and kill the mentioned quarries should never be flown in any airport because, by not attacking such birds, they will inhibit their fear to falcons and impede their future expulsion by good falcons.
- e) Each type of quarry will need a determined specie of falcon, having species such as *Falco peregrinus*, with a very ample specter of quarries, starting from geese to birds of the size of a pigeon.
- f) Well trained falcons may fly at any time of the year and at any moment except during night, with dense fog or with very heavy storm and rain.
- g) Any type of quarry may be fought with the use of falcons taking into account that both the falconers and the falcons are to be well trained.