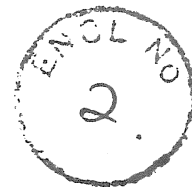




# MINISTRY OF DEFENCE



## Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

MAAS 2/80

6 August 1980

### AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVOLVING A ROYAL AIR FORCE PUMA HELICOPTER

Date: 27 December 1979

Parent Airfield: Royal Air Force Odiham, Basingstoke, Hants

Place of Accident: Mtoko, Rhodesia

Crew: Three (2 Pilots and Crewman)

Casualties: Three killed

### CIRCUMSTANCES

1. The aircraft was one of a detachment of six Pumas which had been deployed to Rhodesia in support of the ceasefire monitoring arrangements prior to the creation of the State of Zimbabwe. The detachment had been in the country for 5 days and the crew were tasked to redeploy the aircraft from the Rhodesian Air Force Base at New Sarum to Kotwa, some 100 km to the north-east. The aircraft took off at 0810 and, in fine weather, the flight apparently proceeded normally with routine radio calls being received at 0827 and 0844. A third call was initiated at 0856 but only the call-sign was transmitted.

2. At about the same time a farmer was working in a field beside the road which runs from Mtoko to Kotwa. He heard an aircraft approach from the west along the direction of the road but he could not see it. Suddenly he heard the sound of breaking wire and this was quickly followed by an explosion; he then saw the burning wreckage of the aircraft sliding along the road towards him. Soon afterwards some members of the Rhodesian security forces arrived but the fire was too fierce for any rescue attempts to be made, and the bodies of the crew could not be recovered until after the fire had burnt out. There were no civilian casualties.

### CAUSE

3. The aircraft had struck a set of steel cored telephone wires where they crossed the road at a height of 18 ft. Because of the fire it was not possible to discover the precise part of the aircraft which first came into contact with the wires.

/However ...

However it was established that immediately after the collision, the aircraft had banked to the right and one of the main rotor blades struck a steel fence post. This impact initiated the disintegration of the main rotor assembly and the aircraft rolled rapidly to the left onto the road. No evidence of technical malfunction or hostile action could be found and, in the absence of any evidence from the crew, it was not possible to determine why the aircraft was flying so low.

#### SUBSEQUENT ACTION

4. Compensation has been arranged for the damage to the telephone wires and the steel fence. The accident draws attention to the vulnerability of a helicopter's main rotor head to wire-strikes and the provision of some form of protection which could cut wires under operational or emergency conditions is being investigated.