



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

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AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVOLVING ROYAL AIR FORCE CANBERRA B2 *WH067*

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| Date: | 7 November 1980 |
| Parent Airfield: | Royal Air Force Marham, Norfolk |
| Place of Accident: | Royal Air Force Akrotiri, Cyprus |
| Crew: | Pilot and Navigator |
| Casualties: | 2 fatal |

CIRCUMSTANCES

1. On 7 November 1980 the Canberra crew prepared to fly a sortie which involved towing a banner behind the aircraft as a target for simulated air-to-air gun firing practice by Phantom aircraft. The pilot started up, taxied onto the runway and halted to allow the ground party to attach the banner tow line to the underside of the aircraft. He then obtained Air Traffic clearance and began the take-off run. Everything appeared to be normal until shortly after lift-off the aircraft yawed markedly to the right and vapour was seen to be coming from the starboard engine cowlings. This was followed very shortly afterwards by 2 explosions and jets of flame and engine debris. The aircraft rolled slowly to the right and crashed in scrubland to the north of the runway and within the airfield boundary. The pilot did not eject and was killed when the aircraft impacted the ground. The navigator did eject shortly before the crash but the ejection was outside the design parameters of the escape system and he was killed on impact with the ground. The aircraft disintegrated and was destroyed by the subsequent fire.

CAUSE

2. The aircraft suffered a catastrophic, uncontained failure of the starboard engine brought about by fatigue in part of the seventh stage compressor. This led to an instantaneous loss of power, quickly followed by the break up of the engine and explosions and fire as high pressure fuel ignited. The aircraft had just become airborne and was below its safety speed. It is probable that the sudden loss of power together with the drag produced by the severely damaged engine and probably the banner, prevented the aircraft

accelerating to a speed where full and positive control could be regained before it hit the ground.

SUBSEQUENT ACTION

3. The Avon engine has given reliable service over many years in the Canberra fleet. However, following this accident some engines suspected of having potentially similar defects were withdrawn from service for examination by the manufacturers.

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