



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

MAAS 6/83

8 March 1983

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVOLVING ROYAL AIR FORCE HARRIER GR3 XZ139

Date: 25 August 1981
Parent Airfield: Royal Air Force Gutersloh,
Federal Republic of Germany
Place of Accident: 10 nm West of Sogel, Federal Republic
of Germany
Crew: One pilot
Casualties: Nil

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AUTH	
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CIRCUMSTANCES

1. Harrier XZ139 was being flown as No 4 of a 4 Harrier formation engaged in a 2 versus 2 low level training exercise. During the initial stages of an engagement the aircraft began to pitch up; movement of the control column fully forward had no effect and the aircraft began to rock violently from side to side. The pilot continued to try and regain control as the aircraft climbed but was unable to do so. The aircraft reached some 2000 ft above ground level before beginning to descend. The pilot ejected as XZ139 was descending through 400 ft with about 60° of bank and at low forward speed. He landed uninjured in a flat, soft-earthed field some 200 metres from his aircraft which was destroyed on impact with the ground.

CAUSE

2. A control rod in the tailplane operating linkage was found disconnected. The nut, bolt and washer that should have secured the connection were found nearby in the wreckage and there was no evidence that the impact had caused the disconnection. Moreover, there was no sign of the split-pin which should have been fitted to lock the nut and bolt, nor was there any evidence to suggest that it had been fitted.

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3. A major servicing had been completed on the aircraft at the parent base 19 days before the final flight; since then XZ139 had flown 3 flight tests. The documentation for the servicing had not been completed adequately and it was impossible to determine precisely when, or by who, the control rod had been disturbed. Furthermore, the normal independent check for correct assembly and locking was not carried out because of a further, but separate, documentation error.

SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

4. Improvements have been made to the documentation used during Harrier servicings to prevent a recurrence, and personnel have been reminded of the need to follow precedures.

CLAIMS

5. Claims amounting to £1,300 for damage to civilian property have been settled.

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