MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVOLVING ROYAL AIR FORCE CANBERRA B2 WK 116

Date:	25 February 1982
Parent Airfield:	RAF Wyton, Cambs
Place of Accident:	RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus
Crew:	Two
Casualties:	One major

CIRCUMSTANCES

1. On 25 Feb 82 the crew of Canberra WK 116 took-off from Runway 11 at Akrotiri to measure the performance, at high and low level, of the station navigational aid. Having completed the major part of the sortie, the aircraft was positioned at 1800 ft for a trial check of a new high level Tactical Air Navigation (TACAN) procedure, which involved a descent and approach to Runway 29. On completion of the approach the pilot descended to 250 ft above the ground, and, at a range of 2½ nm, he aligned his aircraft with the runway. He applied almost maximum power and accelerated to 360 kts. He flew along the length of the runway at a height of 250 ft, and just before reaching the end he commenced a steep climb. As the aircraft climbed the speed decreased rapidly and, at 7000 ft as the speed fell below an estimated 100 kt, the pilot attempted to recover the situation by banking his aircraft to the left and simultaneously pushing forward on the control column. The negative g generated by this manoeuvre was sufficient to fill the cabin with displaced dust and debris; the navigator's spare headset and his navigation bag rose above his head and various aircraft documents were pinned to the cabin ceiling. The pilot then righted the aircraft, descended to 6000 ft and increased speed to 160 kt. During or immediately following the wing-over manoeuvre both engines were starved of fuel and flamed out.

2. The pilot warned the navigator of the double flame-out and immediately attempted to relight the port engine; this was unsuccessful and so he tried an immediate relight of the starboard engine and at the same time increased speed to 170 kt. This relight attempt was also unsuccessful. Thereafter the pilot followed the relight procedures on both the port and starboard engines in turn, but both attempts failed.

3. The pilot flew the aircraft out to sea and informed ATC that he and the navigator would abandon the aircraft when clear of land. He tried once more, unsuccessfully, to start the port engine and, at 1500 ft and 150 kt, the navigator ejected. The pilot ejected some 6 seconds later; subsequently, the aircraft flew in a gentle, descending, right hand turn until it struck the sea. Several items of wreckage were salvaged but the major parts of the aircraft, lying in 280 ft of water, were not recovered.

CAUSE

4. It was established that the pilot had climbed so steeply that, even with close to full engine power, he could not have prevented a rapid and dangerous deceleration.

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T[illegible]ecover the situation he had pushed the aircraft into such an excessive manoeuvre to regain level flight that the engines, which are not designed for such manoeuvring, failed, either because of fuel starvation or through a combination of over-fuelling and engine pressure surge. The failure to relight was attributed to aeration of fuel lines during the negative g manoeuvre.

SUBSEQUENT ACTION

5. It was concluded that the pilot of Canberra WK 116 had mishandled the aircraft so that the engines had flamed-out and could not be relit. He was considered to have carried out a manoeuvre which was in breach of flying regulations and which had resulted in the aircraft crashing into the sea. Consequently the pilot was tried by a General Court Martial and was found guilty of negligently causing the loss of the aircraft.

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