



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

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ACCIDENT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE BUCCANEER S2B XV160

Date: 20 September 1982

Parent Airfield: RAF Laarbruch, Germany

Place of Accident: Capo Frasca Air Weapons Range, Sardinia

Crew: Two

Casualties: One major Injury

CIRCUMSTANCES

1. Buccaneer VX 160 was one of a number of aircraft detached to Decimomannu airfield in Sardinia to enable aircrew to practise weapon deliveries on Capo Frasca range. On 20 September 1982, the aircraft was flown by an experienced pilot, though one relatively new to the Buccaneer and its role, accompanied by an experienced Buccaneer navigator. The sortie was designed to practise several types of attack, the first 3 of which were entirely successful. The fourth was to be a visual computer directed bombing attack, with an automatic weapon release during a programmed and steep climb from a low level. During the ensuing climb by the pilot, following the indications of his computer, the navigator prepared the weapons systems and counted down to expected bomb release. At this stage, the pilot heard the aircraft's stall warning system signalling that his aircraft was about to stall. Moments later the aircraft went out of control, rolled sharply right and then left, and eventually descended flatly and slowly. Meanwhile the pilot applied anti-spin controls, but the aircraft did not respond and, at an indicated height of 4,000 ft, with the aircraft still out of control, the pilot ejected, followed immediately by the navigator. Both crew members landed safely, although the pilot suffered a spinal injury. The aircraft crashed into the edge of cliffs short of the target area and was destroyed.

CAUSE

2. It was established that no pre-impact structural failure had occurred. Although some parts of the aircraft and its systems could not be recovered for specialist examination, the likelihood of any technical failure having contributed to the accident was considered to have been remote. It was concluded that the aircraft had probably pulled-up more sharply than is usual, which resulted in a lower airspeed than normal at weapon release and a correspondingly higher angle of climb. Smooth careful handling would have ensured a safe recovery. However, the margin for error was small and the pilot's instinctive attempt to recover from the attack when he heard the stall warning was thought to have precipitated autorotation, resulting in the loss of control. It was confirmed that there had been insufficient height available to regain controlled flight once the aircraft had stalled.

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SEQUENT ACTIONS

3. The attack profile flown on this occasion has been reviewed, and procedures for safe execution standardized.

Issued by - Public Relations
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

01-218-3253/3254 (Royal Air Force