MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

MAAS 2/85

18 March 1985

ACCIDENT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE HARRIER XW767

Date: 6 November 1982

Parent Airfield: RAF Stanley

Place of Accident: 3nm N of RAF Stanley

Crew: One

Casualties: Nil

CIRCUMSTANCES

1. The pilot of XW767 was the leader of a pair of Harriers which were returning to RAF Stanley following a routine training sortie. Some 2nm from the airfield the No 2 pilot saw a puff of smoke envelop the tail of XW767 and at the same time, the pilot felt a heavy high frequency vibration, a marked loss of thrust, and saw his engine rpm gauge indication drop from 75% to 64%. Other indications were normal but the engine did not accelerate when the pilot moved the throttle forward. He judged that the engine was producing insufficient thrust for a safe landing, and in a final attempt to restore thrust he closed the engine down and carried out a manual relight; however, the engine would not accelerate beyond 40% rpm and the vibration persisted. At this point the No 2 pilot saw a large flame extend from XW767's starboard cold nozzle to beyond its tail. The pilot of XW767 ejected safely and was rescued by an SAR helicopter. The aircraft crashed into the sea, 300 yards from the shore

CAUSE

2. A detailed examination of the engine revealed extensive pre-crash damage to the low pressure (LP) compressor, the most likely cause of which was believed to be failure of a 2nd stage rotor blade. Unfortunately the reason for this failure could not be determined positively because of the extensive damage sustained in the crash. However, a previous failure of a similar blade in another Harrier engine had been caused by a fatigue crack which had originated from foreign object damage. It was concluded, therefore, that the most likely cause of the blade failure in the engine of XW767 was damage from a foreign object, but it proved impossible to determine when or how this might have occurred.

SUBSEQUENT ACTION

3. A review of preventative measures has since been undertaken.

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