



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Military Aircraft Accident Summary

Aircraft:	Harriers T4 XW926 & GR3 XV795
Date of accident:	23 February 1983
Parent Airfield:	RAF Wittering
Place of accident:	Eye, near Peterborough
Crew:	GR3: 1, T4: 2
Casualties:	2 Fatal

Circumstances

1. On the morning of 23 February 1983, 2 instructors and a student on the Harrier Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) were briefed for a two aircraft sortie that was to include Air Combat Training. The 2-seater Harrier T4 was to lead the sortie with the student flying in the front seat and his instructor in the rear seat; the second instructor was to fly the single seat Harrier GR3 as the No 2.
2. The sortie was uneventful until the 4th combat engagement which took place at a height of about 10,000 feet. The aircraft turned towards one another to begin the combat and, as the turn developed, it seemed to the pilot of the GR3 that the T4's intention was to cross ahead of the GR3 as if to pass down its left hand side. However, the turn continued until both appeared to be pointing directly at each other. Despite a maximum rate evasive manoeuvre by the GR3, the aircraft collided. The 2 pilots in the T4 were killed instantly, the pilot of the GR3 ejected and sustained minor injuries; the wreckage of both aircraft fell into the open countryside.

Cause

3. For all combat manoeuvring there is a "NO GO" area in the shape of a `bubble' around each aircraft. The dimensions of the `bubble' are designed to provide a safe separation margin for individual aircraft. In this instance, the crews misjudged their positions relative to each other to such an extent that they allowed their aircraft to penetrate this "NO GO" area, and a collision resulted.

Subsequent Action

4. For all Harrier combat sorties, the "NO GO" area around each aircraft has been increased so as to provide an additional margin of safety.

Claims

5. Four claims were received for damage to property and agricultural land caused by the impact of the aircraft, spread of debris and salvage operations. All have been settled for a total sum of £3,551 and none further are expected.