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ASTRAL HOUSE

Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

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18 March 1985

ACCIDENT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE BUCCANEER S2B XX891

Date: 11 August 1983

Parent Airfield: RAF Laarbruch, Germany

Place of Accident: 4nm NE of RAF Laarbruch

Crew: Two

Casualties: Navigator killed

CIRCUMSTANCES

1. Following the take-off as the leader of a pair of Buccaneers, the pilot of XX891 selected the undercarriage and flaps up but the undercarriage position indicator lights did not extinguish. He levelled the aircraft at approximately 600 ft, reduced power in order to keep the speed below the undercarriage limiting speed, and informed his No 2 of the problem. He then reselected the flaps to the take-off configuration and at about the same time the undercarriage lights extinguished. In view of the malfunction, the crew of XX891 elected to return to the airfield for a visual inspection and commenced a gentle turn onto a wide downwind position. During this turn, a short radio conversation took place between the leader and his No 2 concerning their further intentions. Initially the pilot had difficulty in hearing the transmission from his No 2 because the signals from the audio angle of attack facility in XX891 were masking the radio reception. He therefore turned down the volume of the audio warning and did not recall hearing the signals again, but shortly after the radio conversation ceased, the navigator in XX891 warned the pilot that the aircraft was in danger of stalling. The pilot pushed the control column forward, but as he did so the aircraft stalled. He realised that recovery from the stall would be impossible within the height available and told the navigator that he was going to eject. He then ejected followed shortly afterwards by the navigator. The pilot's parachute deployed just before he hit the ground and he sustained slight injuries. However, by the time the navigator ejected, the combination of the aircraft's attitude, height and rate of descent had exceeded normal safety parameters and he was killed. The aircraft crashed in open countryside and was destroyed.

CAUSE

2. The accident occurred because the aircraft stalled at a height which precluded a safe recovery. The stall appears to have been due to the aircraft's speed and height deteriorating while the crew were distracted by the emergency situation, the pilot being engaged in a radio conversation and the navigator probably consulting his emergency check list.

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SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

3. The circumstances of this accident have been publicised widely within the Service to warn of the dangers of distraction, and the necessity to monitor all available information.

CLAIMS

4. Claims covering agricultural damage have been settled in the sum of £1425.

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