



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

MAAS 20/85

4 October 1985

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE NIMROD MR2 XV257

Date: 3 June 1984

Parent Airfield: RAF St Mawgan, Cornwall

Place of Accident: Near Lands End

Crew: 2 Pilots, 2 Navigators, 1 Air Electronics Officer, 1 Air Engineer, 7 Air Electronics Operators

Casualties: Nil

CIRCUMSTANCES

1. On 3 June 1984, a Nimrod aircraft took off on an exercise Search and Rescue (SAR) sortie from its base at RAF St Mawgan. It was carrying in the bomb bay, as part of the SAR equipment, a normal load of 5 inch reconnaissance flares. In accordance with normal practice, the first navigator switched the flare's release units to live shortly after take-off. Some 30 seconds later a cockpit indicator warned the crew of a fire in the bomb bay. The captain immediately instructed the co-pilot to fly the aircraft back to base while he transmitted a MAYDAY call and informed the rest of the crew.

2. During the return flight ground witnesses saw the Nimrod trailing smoke, with several burning flares, a parachute and other objects falling from the aircraft. The crew were alerted by other fire and overheat warnings in the cockpit together with indications of hydraulic problems, but the aircraft was landed

safely and all the occupants evacuated it without injury. Although the fire services quickly extinguished the intense fire, the aircraft was extensively damaged.

CAUSE

3. The accident was caused by a reconnaissance flare becoming detached from its carrier and subsequently igniting in the bomb bay. How it came to be released could not be positively determined.

SUBSEQUENT ACTION

4. Pending the results of an investigation into their safety, 5 inch reconnaissance flares were temporarily withdrawn from use. Once it was established that the flares were safe, and that this case was exceptional, they were reintroduced into service. However, as an additional safeguard, it was decided that they should not be fused unless the bomb bay doors were already open.

5. The station fire crews were commended for their part in saving the aircraft.

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