ACCIDENT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE TORNADO GRI ZA603

Date : 8 November 1984
Parent Airfield : RAF Marham
Place of Accident : 13 km south of Schweinfurt, Federal Republic of Germany
Crew : Two
Casualties : One major injury

CIRCUMSTANCES

1. Tornado ZA603 was detached to RAF Laarbruch in West Germany when, on the morning of 8 November 1984, it took off as the lead aircraft of a pair for a low level training sortie in southern Germany.
2. The sortie proceeded normally until the 2 aircraft were travelling towards the second target when the pilot saw a USAF A-10 on a collision course immediately ahead of his aircraft. He pulled up suddenly and banked the aircraft to the left to avoid the A-10. The navigator, who had been looking down into the cockpit to study the Projected Map Display, was forced down by the acceleration (g force) into an unfamiliar position. He looked out to the left and saw the ground but no horizon. Sensing that the aircraft was rolling rapidly to the left and descending, and believing the aircraft to be out of control and about to crash, he ejected. Tornado ZA603 had the facility for command ejection selected to 'Both'. As a result, the pilot was automatically ejected as soon
as the navigator had left the aircraft. Both ejections were successful.
The aircraft crashed in open countryside.

CAUSE

3. Examination of the Accident Data Recorder read-out revealed that the
aircraft had been serviceable up to the moment when the crew ejected. It was
apparent that the navigator’s head down posture at the beginning of the
manoeuvre, and the force to which he had been subjected had resulted in him
becoming disorientated to such an extent that he thought the aircraft was
rolling rapidly to the left and descending. As a result, he had considered
that the aircraft was about to crash and so had seen his only option as ejection.
Appropriate action has been taken.

SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

4. New procedures for the setting of the Command Ejection Lever in Tornado
have been introduced.

CLAIMS

5. Six claims were received as a result of the accident. Five have been
settled but the sixth has yet to be paid. The total cost of the claims is
DM 6647 (approximately £1777).

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