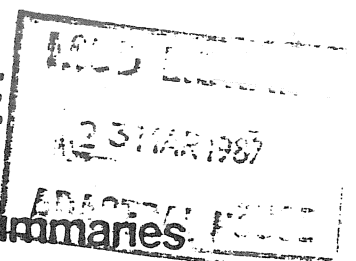




# MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

## Military Aircraft Accident Summaries



5/87

19 March 1987

### AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE LIGHTNING F6 XR772

Date: 6 March 1985  
Parent Airfield: RAF Binbrook  
Place of accident: 20 miles North East of Skegness  
Crew: One  
Casualties: One - pilot killed

#### CIRCUMSTANCES

1. On the morning of 6 March 1985, Lightning XR772 took off as the No 2 of a pair for an air combat training sortie. The sortie went as planned until the second engagement, when XR772 was seen in a climbing turn to the left then to reverse into a descending turn to the right. The aircraft levelled at about 11,000 ft, still in the right hand turn, but shortly afterwards yawed positively to the left and spun.
2. The pilot transmitted that he was spinning, and having been advised to check his height for ejection by the pairs leader called, "I am going out". A bright flash was seen as he ejected; approximately 10 seconds later the aircraft hit the sea.
3. The leader gave an emergency call on the distress frequency then descended to low-level, where he observed the pilot floating in the water about 50m from some aircraft debris and an oil slick. A Search and Rescue helicopter recovered the pilot some 35 minutes after ejection but when examined in the helicopter he was found to be dead with his parachute still in its pack.

## CAUSE

4. Although approximately 85% of the aircraft, including the pilot's ejection seat, was salvaged, no conclusive reason for the aircraft entering a spin could be established. Although mishandling may have been the cause, the possibility of structural failure or a malfunction within the flying controls system could not be discounted.

5. Specialists made exhaustive investigations to determine why the pilot died. Examination of the ejection seat, the salvaged cockpit area and the pilot's flying equipment revealed that the ejection seat had operated correctly, except that the parachute withdrawal line had been cut by the guillotine mechanism before releasing the parachute. The guillotine unit which is used to separate the pilot from the ejection seat if the automatic sequence fails, normally only operates when the pilot is clear of the seat or if he operates the Manual Separation Lever. In this accident, the reason for its operation could not be positively determined, although the gyrations of the seat after ejection could have moved the parachute pack forward, away from its container, which would in turn have activated the guillotine unit.

## SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

6. As a result of the accident, the ejection seat is being modified and some changes have been made to the Lightning Training syllabus.

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