



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

8/89

SEPTEMBER 1, 1989

ACCIDENT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE BULLDOG T MK 1 XX517

Date: 25 April 1989
Parent Airfield: Royal Air Force Linton-on-Ouse
Place of Accident: Near Catterick, North Yorkshire
Crew: 1 Student Pilot
Casualties: Nil

CIRCUMSTANCES

1. A foreign national student pilot on a local area familiarisation sortie in a Bulldog T Mk 1, lost control of the aircraft after entering cloud and decided to abandon it. He landed successfully by parachute and the aircraft crashed in open farmland.
2. The student was at an early stage of his basic training and this was his first solo sortie away from his home base. He had flown the same sortie with his instructor that morning and had demonstrated his competence to fly the route solo. The solo sortie was delayed to the afternoon to allow the weather to improve to solo limits. The student was fully briefed for the sortie, including the requirement to avoid cloud, before being authorised to fly by his instructor. Approximately 10 minutes after take-off the student was forced to descend, to a slightly lower level than his planned level of 3000 ft, to remain clear of cloud. By this time he had deviated from his planned route and

was having difficulty ascertaining his position. He advised Air Traffic Control (ATC) that he was descending further to 2000 ft to avoid cloud; he was now well to the North of the area that he had been authorised to fly in. Having received clearance to cross an active air traffic zone from ATC, he found himself confronted by further cloud. This time he realised he could not fly over the cloud and he was reluctant to descend any further due to local fast-jet traffic; he therefore decided to return to base. Having turned towards base, he advised ATC that he intended to descend to 1000 ft to fly below the cloudbase on his transit home. ATC then requested the student to confirm that he was in contact with the ground. Even though he could see the ground the student replied 'negative', because he believed that ATC was asking if he was in radio contact with base. As a result ATC ordered him to climb to a height of 3400 ft to ensure adequate terrain clearance. The student commenced a full power climb and shortly thereafter entered cloud and lost control of the aircraft.

CAUSE

3. The accident was caused because the student pilot, who was at too early a stage of his training to have been given any instruction in instrument flying, entered cloud and subsequently lost control of the aircraft.

4. Within a short time of becoming airborne the student was making large deviations from the planned route and appears to have

become lost early in the sortie, despite the excellent visibility reported below cloud. Having correctly decided to return to base and turned on to heading, he misunderstood the meaning of the word "contact" (as used in contact/visual with the ground).

Consequently, although he could see the ground, he accepted a climb into cloud. Though it would have been possible for him to have flown to base below cloud, he was correctly instructed to climb by ATC who believed that he could not see the ground.

SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

5. The aircraft crashed on open farmland and was totally destroyed. Action has been taken to publicise the potential for confusion when using the word "contact", especially when speaking to one for whom English is a foreign language.

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