



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Military Aircraft Accident Summary

MILITARY AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT SUMMARY

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AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE

CANBERRA T MK4 WJ877

Date:	18 March 1991
Parent Airfield:	Royal Air Force Wyton
Place of Accident:	Royal Air Force Wyton
Crew:	Three
Casualties:	Three Fatal

CIRCUMSTANCES

1. In the late afternoon of 18 March 1991 three crew members were authorised to conduct a training sortie from RAF Wyton in Canberra T Mk4 WJ877, including a simulated engine failure after take off (SEFATO). The crew comprised two pilots and a navigator, all of whom had considerable experience on the Canberra. There were no natural or operating hazards present at Wyton, and, although it was raining, the weather was fair with a southerly wind at 20 knots.
2. The handling pilot transmitted a request for take off and acknowledged clearance for the take off and the subsequent SEFATO. After this, no further radio transmissions were made to or heard from the aircraft. The aircraft was cleared for take off on Runway 27 at 1625 hours (local). The take off appeared to be normal until a point abeam the Air Traffic Control tower shortly after the undercarriage had retracted. However, the aircraft was then seen by a number of eye-witnesses to bank to the left, return to approximately wings level, and then bank slightly to the right. After pausing in this attitude, the right bank began to increase and the aircraft began to turn to the right. The bank and rate of turn increased further and the aircraft descended rapidly. With about 90° of starboard bank and a nose down attitude, the aircraft struck a road sweeper and destroyed a small garage before breaking up and scattering wreckage across the A141 road adjacent to the north side of the airfield and into farmland beyond. Two nearby houses were also damaged. The Air Traffic Controller initiated

Flash action shortly before the aircraft hit the ground. The emergency services arrived at the scene very quickly and extinguished the small ensuing fire. Tragically, all three crew members were killed in the accident.

CAUSE

3. Because the Canberra is not fitted with a flight data recorder and the crew was killed, the investigation was unable to determine with certainty the cause of the accident. However, the investigation was able to eliminate a number of possible causes and concluded that the most likely cause was a loss of control following a SEFATO.

SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

4. Operating procedures for practising SEFATOs in the Canberra have been reviewed. The review determined that it is necessary to continue to practise SEFATOs, as such training has enabled crews to save lives and aircraft on a number of occasions. However, the review also recommended some refinements to existing procedures, all of which have been implemented.

CLAIMS

5. Claims to the value of some £4,000 have been settled so far in respect of damage caused by this accident.