

MILITARY AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT SUMMARY

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AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE PUMA HC MK1 XW233

AND ARMY AIR CORPS GAZELLE AH1 ZB681

Date:	26 November 1992
Parent Airfield:	Royal Air Force Aldergrove
Place of Accident:	Bessbrook Mill, Northern Ireland
Crew:	Puma: Pilot, Navigator, Crewman Gazelle: Two Pilots
Passengers:	Puma: Army Officer
Casualties:	Puma: Four fatal Gazelle: Two major injuries

CIRCUMSTANCES

1. In the late evening of 26 November 1992 a RAF Puma helicopter and an Army Air Corps Gazelle helicopter collided while making their final approaches to the Bessbrook Mill Helicopter Landing Site in South Armagh. Both aircraft were on operational sorties in support of the security forces in Northern Ireland. As a result of the collision the Gazelle fell to the ground while the Puma remained airborne for a short time before diving into a fence and bursting into flames. All four personnel on board the Puma were killed; the Gazelle crew suffered major injuries.

CAUSE

2. The investigation determined that the accident was caused by the failure of both the Gazelle and Puma crews to see each other's aircraft in time to take avoiding action. The major contributory factors were: a breakdown in the passage of information on aircraft movements; an inadequate use of radio procedures to deconflict aircraft flight paths and the simultaneous use of conflicting approach paths.

SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

3. The procedures for notifying and deconflicting operational aircraft movements in Northern Ireland have been improved. A Joint Service Theatre Flight Safety Committee has been established to monitor and co-ordinate relevant issues and improve flight safety in the Province.