



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

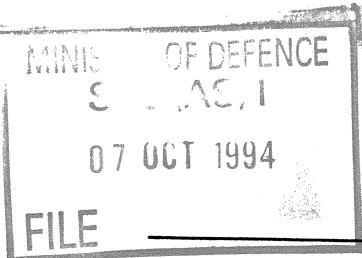
Military Aircraft Accident Summary

MILITARY AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT SUMMARY

PUBLISHED BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVOLVING ROYAL AIR FORCE

WESSEX HC2 XT 667



Date:	17 September 1993
Parent Airfield:	Royal Air Force Sek Kong
Place of Accident:	South China Sea
Crew:	4
Casualties:	Nil

CIRCUMSTANCES

1. On 17 September 1993, a Wessex helicopter was scrambled from RAF Sek Kong to locate a Chinese fishing vessel reported to be in difficulty just outside Hong Kong waters. A severe tropical storm was rapidly approaching Hong Kong, and conditions at the time of take-off were low cloud, rain and high, gusting winds. On approaching the search area at low level, the crew heard a loud banging noise which was accompanied by airframe vibration and indications that the port engine was seriously malfunctioning. The pilot turned the aircraft towards the nearest land and transmitted a MAYDAY call. While maintaining flight on the starboard engine alone, he was able to stabilize the port engine and regain its use. However, 10 min later there was a further loud bang accompanied by a long sheet of flame from the starboard engine. On this occasion both engines rapidly lost power. Faced with no other alternative, the pilot carried out a successful ditching into the very heavy seas.

2. The flotation gear deployed and kept the aircraft afloat for some time, before it eventually sank. The crew egressed safely, and were rescued by 2 other Wessex helicopters alerted by the earlier MAYDAY call. The aircraft was not salvaged, primarily because of the difficulty of recovery in the area of the accident but also because of the continuing inclement weather for an extended period of time.

CAUSE

3. The Board of Inquiry determined that the accident was most probably caused by a double engine surge due to salt accretion. However, it could not rule out the possibility of engine damage caused by the ingestion of pools of rainwater or detached pieces of the aircraft's structure. Contributory factors identified by the Board included: the severe turbulence encountered in the storm; and the lack of formal guidance to aircrew on operating the Wessex aircraft in a salt-laden environment.

SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

4. It is intended to improve the information currently available to Wessex aircrew on operating the aircraft in a salt-laden environment.