



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MILITARY AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE HERCULES C Mk1 XV298

DATE: 11 June 1999

LOCATION OF ACCIDENT: Kukes Airstrip, Albania

CREW: Six

CASUALTIES: Two major injuries (one crew, one passenger)

Ten minor (five crew, five passengers)

Issued by Secretariat (Air Staff), Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MILITARY AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE HERCULES C Mk1 XV298

DATE:	11 June 1999
LOCATION OF ACCIDENT:	Kukes Airstrip, Albania
CREW:	Six
CASUALTIES:	Two major injuries (one crew, one passenger) Ten minor (five crew, five passengers)

Issued by Secretariat (Air Staff), Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB

Synopsis

1. On the night of 11 June 1999, Hercules XV298 was tasked to collect personnel and equipment from Kukes airstrip, Albania. The aircraft flew from Italy and landed on the unlit airstrip using normal Night Vision Goggle (NVG) procedures. After loading personnel and equipment it began its take-off run along the remaining available runway, but soon hit a fence and several other ground obstacles. XV298 slowed then veered to the right, suffering severe damage to its right wing before stopping. Fuel leakage from the damaged wing ignited and the subsequent fire destroyed much of the aircraft.
2. The Board of Inquiry concluded that the accident was caused because the take-off distance was insufficient for the aircraft to get airborne safely.

Background

3. There was adequate time to plan the sortie, and the crew received several briefings about their task. These included information on the airstrip, landing / take-off procedures as well as meteorological and tactical information.

Circumstances

4. As XV298 began its take-off run, the crew were unable to see the end of the airstrip as artificial lighting in the near distance interfered with their night vision goggles. They had been briefed that there would be sufficient runway remaining from the pickup point to the end of the airstrip. But in marking out the runway the airstrip marking party had assumed the aircraft would land, load and then either turn and take-off in the opposite direction, or backtrack before beginning its take-off run.

Consequently the airstrip had been marked to allow a longer landing run than prescribed, and the crew believed they had more take-off distance ahead of them than was in fact the case.

Rescue/Salvage Operation

5. There were two major injuries (one of the aircrew had a dislocated thumb and one of the passengers sustained serious injuries to one of his legs resulting in disablement after being struck by cargo that became loose in the cargo compartment) and ten minor ones, as a result of the impacts and deceleration. Although the Captain's webbing got caught as he attempted to leave the aircraft through a window, everyone on board managed to escape from the burning wreckage.

Aircraft Damage

6. The aircraft was destroyed by the ground fire and disposed of locally with Albanian agreement.

Investigation

7. The Board quickly discounted aircraft performance or serviceability as factors in the accident, concluding that the take-off distance was insufficient for the aircraft to get airborne safely. This was partly due to anomalies in the operating instructions for tactical landing zone operations which were contained in three separate documents - one used by the aircrew, one for personnel training, and the other used by the airstrip marking party. Consequently each party had different expectations as to what procedure would be followed, which in turn led to the airstrip markings having been laid out differently to those briefed to the aircrew. Further, the Board established that the airstrip data used to plan the sortie was significantly different from the actual airstrip dimensions; and also concluded that reduced night vision goggle performance contributed to the accident.

Safety Recommendations

8. The Board recommended that:

- documentation outlining this kind of operation be amended so that all parties operate to identical guidance;
- briefing procedures be more specific; and
- amendments are made to the procedures for passing operational data.

