

No. 25

Rutas Internacionales Peruanas, S.A., DC-4, OB-R-769, accident 2.5 miles north-east of runway 21 at Tocumen Airport, Panama, on 4 August 1965. Report undated, released by the Flight Safety Office, Department of Civil Aviation, Ministry of State and Justice, Republic of Panama

1. - Investigation1.1 History of the flight

The flight was a non-scheduled international cargo flight carrying wild animals from Iquitos, Peru, to Miami, U.S.A., with intermediate stops at Cali, Colombia, and Panama City, Panama. It departed Iquitos at 1325 hours GMT and reached Cali, Colombia at 1725 hours. There it was refuelled and repairs were carried out on Nos. 2 and 3 engines. It then took off for Panama City at 2120 hours, arriving there for refuelling at 2320 hours.

At 2333 hours local time, the aircraft took off normally from runway 03 for Miami. One minute later, the tower controller looked towards the aircraft before authorizing a change of frequency and saw large flames at a heading of approximately 040° but was unable to say if the aircraft was still airborne or had just crashed. He immediately gave the alarm and enquired whether the air traffic controller still had radar contact with the aircraft. On receiving a negative reply, he notified the airport authority that the aircraft had crashed. It was subsequently found that the aircraft had struck a mahogany tree at a height of about 70 ft above the ground and then several others before coming to rest on uneven ground. The accident occurred 2.5 miles north-east from the end of runway 03 at Tocumen Airport.

1.2 Injuries to persons

Injuries	Crew	Passengers	Others
Fatal	3	4	-
Non-fatal	-	-	-
None	-	-	-

1.3 Damage to aircraft

The aircraft was destroyed.

1.4 Other damage

No objects other than the aircraft were damaged.

1.5 Crew information

The pilot-in-command, aged 42, held an airline transport pilot's licence valid until January 1966 with ratings for single-engined and multi-engined aircraft types including the B-26, C-46 and DC-3. He had flown a total of 4 563 hours.

The co-pilot, aged 23, also held an airline transport pilot's licence valid until January 1966. He had flown a total of 5 012 hours.

The flight engineer, aged 50, held a valid aircraft maintenance engineer's licence.

1.6 Aircraft information

The aircraft's certificate of airworthiness was not mentioned in the report.

It was not possible to trace the maintenance logs, although they were requested from the Miami maintenance base.

At Cali a high tension cable was changed on No. 2 engine and a starter cable on No. 3 engine and the aircraft was refuelled.

At Panama the aircraft was again refuelled with 700 gallons of 100/130 fuel. Two gallons of oil were put in Nos. 1 and 2 engines, none was required in Nos. 3 and 4 engines.

1.7 Meteorological information

Not pertinent to the accident.

1.8 Aids to navigation

Not relevant to the accident.

1.9 Communications

The last message from the aircraft was when the crew acknowledged the authorization to take off. No further communication was received from the aircraft.

1.10 Aerodrome and ground facilities

Not mentioned in the report.

1.11 Flight recorders

Not mentioned in the report.

1.12 Wreckage

The fuselage of the aircraft rested on uneven ground with the crew cabin bent underneath the fuselage and burnt; from the centre section to the rear it was fairly intact. The wings were broken off and the left wing was completely burnt.

The vertical part of the tail unit was burnt. The engines and undercarriage were broken off and scattered all around the fuselage. Intense fire had occurred in No. 2 engine and the other engines were mangled by the impact.

1.13 Fire

An intense in-flight fire occurred in No. 2 engine.

1.14 Survival aspects

The seat belts had been used; however, this was a non-survivable accident.

1.15 Tests and research

None mentioned in the report.

2. - Analysis and Conclusions

2.1 Analysis

Evidence revealed that some malfunction occurred in No. 2 engine during take-off and that a fire broke out in the accessory section of No. 2 engine at the end of the first phase of the take-off. This fire was intensified by the fuel or oil escaping from lines which were broken or burned through. Loss of control of the aircraft resulted from the destruction of some of the control surfaces by the fire. It was also found that leaks in two of the tanks of the left wing caused an explosion in that wing.

2.2 Conclusions

Findings

The crew were properly certificated.

The aircraft's certificate of airworthiness was not mentioned in the report.

Some malfunction of No. 2 engine apparently occurred during the first phase of take-off and caused an intense in-flight fire. The destruction by the fire of some of the control surfaces resulted in a loss of control and the aircraft struck several trees and crashed.

Cause or Probable cause(s)

The Commission of Inquiry decided that this accident was probably caused by faulty maintenance.

3. - Recommendations

None were contained in the report.