

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 A.M., E.D.S.T., FEB. 25, 1975

ISSUED: February 25, 1975

Forwarded to:

Honorable James R. Schlesinger
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D. C. 20301

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-75-14 and 15

The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating a midair collision between an Aero Commander 6T and a F-111A. The accident occurred on November 12, 1974, near Bryce Canyon, Utah. The F-111A was in the military aerial refueling track AR-316. The Safety Board believes that the base altitude selected for the refueling area did not provide a sufficient margin of safety.

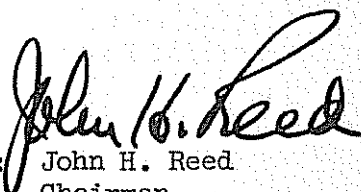
Aerial refueling operations were being conducted at assigned altitudes from FL 180 through FL 210. The pilot aboard the Aero Commander, which was operating according to visual flight rules, advised air traffic control that he was at 17,500 feet and requested an instrument flight rules clearance with an assigned altitude of 18,000 (FL 180). Before a clearance could be issued, a collision occurred between the F-111A and the Aero Commander.

Initially, the lead F-111A, one of two, had navigational difficulties because of a malfunctioning inertial navigation system and TACAN while attempting a rendezvous with the tanker. Immediately following a change of lead, the F-111A flight began to join up when the pilot established visual contact with a flashing red light, which appeared to emanate from an aircraft operating within the blocked airspace. Unfortunately, the red light was on the Aero Commander and not the tanker.

On the basis of the above findings, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Department of Defense:

1. When military aerial refueling operations are conducted within positive control areas, designate a base altitude for the block airspace sufficiently higher than the base altitude of the positive control area so as to provide a buffer between aerial refueling activities and unrelated visual flight rules activities below the positive control area.
2. When military aerial refueling operations are conducted below positive control areas, revise aircraft lighting requirements so as to enhance the conspicuity of the military aircraft during night operations.

REED, Chairman, McADAMS, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members of the Board, concurred in the above recommendations. THAYER, Member, did not participate.


By: John H. Reed
Chairman

THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.

CC: Alexander P. Butterfield