

Log 2501B



# National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594  
Safety Recommendation

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Date: MAY 18 1994

In reply refer to: A-94-110

Honorable William J. Perry  
Secretary of Defense  
Room 3E 880  
The Pentagon  
Washington, D. C. 20301

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On August 18, 1993, at 1656 eastern daylight time (EDT), a Douglas DC-8-61 freighter, N814CK, registered to American International Airways (AIA), Inc., d/b/a Connie Kalitta Services, Inc., and operating as AIA flight 808, collided with level terrain approximately 1/4 mile from the approach end of runway 10, after the captain lost control of the airplane while approaching the Leeward Point Airfield at the U.S. Naval Air Station, (NAS) Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The airplane was destroyed by impact forces and a postaccident fire, and the three flight crewmembers sustained serious injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan had been filed. The flight was conducted under 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 121, Supplemental Air Carriers, as an international, nonscheduled, military contract flight.<sup>1</sup>

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable causes of this accident were the impaired judgment, decision-making, and flying abilities of the captain and flightcrew due to the effects of fatigue; the captain's failure to properly assess the conditions for landing and maintaining vigilant

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<sup>1</sup>For more detailed information, read Aircraft Accident Report--"Uncontrolled Collision with Terrain, American International Airways Flight 808, Douglas DC-8-61, N814CK, U.S. Naval Air Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, August 18, 1993" (NTSB/AAR-94/04)

situational awareness of the airplane while maneuvering onto final approach; his failure to prevent the loss of airspeed and avoid a stall while in the steep bank turn; and his failure to execute immediate action to recover from a stall.

Additional factors contributing to the cause were the inadequacy of the flight and duty time regulations applied to 14 CFR, Part 121, Supplemental Air Carrier, international operations, and the circumstances that resulted in the extended flight/duty hours and fatigue of the flightcrew members. Also contributing were the inadequate crew resource management training and the inadequate training and guidance by American International Airways, Inc., to the flightcrew for operations at special airports, such as Guantanamo Bay; and the Navy's failure to provide a system that would assure that the local tower controller was aware of the inoperative strobe light so as to provide the flightcrew with such information.

The Safety Board was concerned by the lack of available printed information, and the limited knowledge of the crewmembers regarding the Guantanamo Bay, Leeward Point Airport. This airport is one of 11 such airports described in the "special airports" qualification video tape used by AIA crewmembers during either initial or recurrent training. The Safety Board found that this training was self-monitored and that no additional or supporting information was provided either by AIA or the Department of Defense (DOD) during these training sessions. In addition, flight crewmembers are disadvantaged when they operate at special airports because of the randomness of their schedules and the time that may have elapsed between the viewing of the videotape and the actual flight into the special airport.

The Safety Board believes that the video tape prepared by DOD does not adequately convey the difficulty and potential hazard involved in the approach to runway 10 at Guantanamo Bay. The tape is a pictorial of the airport, including the coastline and Cuban boundary, as viewed from the cockpit of an airplane during the turn from downwind and base leg on to final. The tape accurately shows that the final alignment with the runway occurs at low altitude and nearly over the runway threshold. However, there is no discussion about the factors that make the approach particularly challenging to the pilots of airplanes with high approach speeds. These factors include steep bank angles and increased approach speeds necessary to compensate for the load factors associated with the bank angle, the adverse effect of a southerly wind, and the criticality of the turn initiation point in achieving proper runway alignment without excessive maneuvering.

The video presentation alone does not ensure that the flightcrew members retain all the information necessary to conduct a safe approach or departure from special airports. The Safety Board conducted a survey of other air carriers operating into Guantanamo Bay, and it revealed that nearly all of them use a video tape supplemented by a special airports manual, and require a company briefing before departure, and/or access to the information in a Leeward Point Airport briefing package. Additionally, several air carriers also require a check airman to accompany an unqualified crew or captain into a special airport. Several airlines that had dispatch operations also kept records of special airports qualifications and currency for crewmembers.


In this accident, the captain and first officer had viewed the special airports video tape approximately 5 months and 5 days, respectively, before the accident flight, and confusion was still apparent among the crew while they were preparing for the approach. The Safety Board believes that in addition to the video presentation, it is incumbent upon DOD to provide crewmembers with up-to-date printed training and reference material for use at Guantanamo Bay.

Therefore, as a result of its investigation of this accident, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Department of Defense:

Provide to all civilian contract operators and flightcrew members either verbal and/or written airfield briefing information regarding normal and emergency operations and flight restrictions pertaining to those airfields classified as "special airports." The briefing information would contain special considerations for airplanes with high approach speeds and emphasize the effects of high bank angles and increased load factors, adverse wind conditions, and required flightpath profiles necessary to perform the approach. This information would be provided in addition to the regularly published notices to airmen (NOTAMs). (Class II, Priority Action) (A-94-110)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations A-94-105 through -107 to the Federal Aviation Administration and A-94-108 and A-94-109 to American International Airways, Inc.

Chairman VOGT, Vice Chairman HALL, and Members LAUBER and HAMMERSCHMIDT concurred in this recommendation.

By:   
Carl W. Vogt  
Chairman