NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: April 25, 1975

Forwarded to:

Mr. James E. Dow
Acting Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-75-35 thru 38

The National Transportation Safety Board is continuing its investigation of the midair collision between a Cessna-150H and a USAF T-29D at Newport News, Virginia, on January 9, 1975. Thus far, the investigation has disclosed that the Cessna was on a local VFR flight, that the pilot had not filed a flight plan, and that he was not, at the time of the accident, in radio contact with any air traffic control (ATC) facility. The T-29 was on its final approach to Langley Air Force Base, and was under the control of the ground control approach (GCA) final controller. The final controller had issued two traffic advisories concerning the Cessna to the T-29's flightcrew. Although it was dark, the weather was clear, and the reported visibility was 7 miles. Despite these facts, there is no conclusive evidence to indicate that either pilot saw the other's aircraft.

The Safety Board believes that this accident again points out the hazards of an IFR-VFR traffic mix, and the inadequacies of the "see and avoid" concept in terminal areas, in which moderate to heavy traffic exists. The very nature of operations within a terminal area defeats the viability of the "see and avoid" doctrine since the flightcrew in at least one, or possibly both, aircraft become involved with the duties and problems of landing. Within these areas, aircraft must be protected, and the only method is the control of traffic by the air traffic control system.

The Tidewater area around Norfolk, Virginia, should have a terminal control area. There are six major civil and military airports within 35 nmi of each other: Norfolk Regional Airport, Patrick Henry Airport, Oceana Naval Air Station, Norfolk Naval Air Station, Langley Air Force Base, and Felker Army Airfield. Numerous general aviation airfields are situated throughout the Tidewater area. These fields generate a traffic mix ranging from small general aviation aircraft, helicopters, and air carrier aircraft (both prop-jet and turbine), to the various tactical aircraft of the military.

During 1974, there were 205,600 IFR operations in the Tidewater area. Based on data compiled by the Langley Air Force Base Air Traffic Control Board, the Safety Board has estimated that the combined IFR and VFR operation in this area totaled about 709,000, and that these will increase to about 886,000 in 1975.

The Safety Board believes that the traffic situation in the Tidewater area and at Langley Air Force Base requires corrective action to avoid a recurrence of such midair collisions. We also believe that the nature of the traffic mix and the volume of the traffic within the Tidewater area warrant the establishment of a terminal control area which would encompass the area's major airfields. Therefore, the Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

1. Establish a Group II traffic control area to encompass the following airports in the Tidewater area: Oceana Naval Air Station, Norfolk Naval Air Station, Norfolk Regional Airport, Langley Air Force Base, Patrick Henry Airport, and Felker Army Airfield. Should this prove impractical, we recommend that the FAA and Department of Defense (DOD) Joint Review Group coordinate and establish a Terminal Radar Service Area (TRSA), similar to the one in Sacramento Valley, California, which will encompass the Tidewater area. (Class II)

2. Extend the approach gates to runways 7-25 at Langley Air Force Base to a distance of 12 nmi. (Class II)

The Safety Board's investigation has disclosed other areas of the military-civilian aviation interface within the U. S. wherein air traffic control procedures could be instituted in a further effort to prevent midair collisions. Therefore, the Safety Board further recommends that the FAA-DOD Joint Review Group:

3. Determine which other military bases or areas require the establishment of either a terminal control area or terminal radar service area and establish them. (Class III)

4. Initate action to enable DOD to establish and maintain Group I type terminal control areas around selected military facilities. (Class III)

The Safety Board believes that these recommended procedures require no new hardware, are well within present capabilities and methodologies and, if adopted, will lower the exposure rate of both military and civil aircraft to the dangers of terminal-area midair collisions.

Our Bureau of Aviation Safety staff is available for additional discussion if desired.

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

By: John H. Reed
Chairman

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