

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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(202) 426-8787

ISSUED: February 16, 1977

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Forwarded to:

Honorable John L. McLucas  
Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-77-9 and 10

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On September 13, 1976, a Cessna 414 and a United States Air Force F-4E Phantom II fighter collided in midair near Brighton, Florida. The F-4E, one of a formation flight of three fighters from Homestead Air Force Base (AFB), Florida, was on a composite instrument flight rules (IFR) - visual flight rules (VFR) flight plan to the Avon Park Restricted Area and return to Homestead AFB. The Cessna 414, N8PR, was operating under VFR and the pilot had not filed a flight plan.

The National Transportation Safety Board's investigation of this accident revealed that it was accepted practice for military tactical flightcrews from Homestead AFB to cancel IFR as soon as possible before reaching the clearance limit fix so that the pilots could descend below the Lake Placid Military Operating Area (MOA), so that they could obtain radio reports of essential gunnery range information. The flight leader was required to call Avon Operations to obtain this information. The Miami Air Route Traffic Control Center (Miami Center) controller could not relay the information because there was no communications land line between Avon Control and Miami Center. The flightcrews were copying low-level wind information from Avon Control when the collision occurred, as they were descending to the restricted area. If military tactical flightcrews could obtain the necessary information while remaining in positive control airspace (PCA), there would be no incentive for early departure from PCA and subsequent en route VFR descents. If the formation flights are provided separation in PCA by air traffic control while the range information is being disseminated, there would be no necessity for the pilots to clear the area while they are being distracted by other operational requirements.

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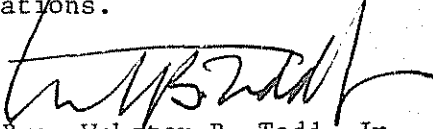
The other two aircraft in the formation orbited the crash site and communicated with Avon Control on the ultrahigh-frequency (UHF) guard channel (243.0 MHz). Avon Control provided search and rescue assistance. The Miami Center controller, who was no longer tracking the military flight, was alerted to the mishap by an emergency squawk from the orbiting flight leader. However, the controller had no UHF guard-transmitting capability at his control sector. He could only speculate as to the origin of the emergency squawk, and he could not guide or assist the search and rescue activities. In certain other emergency situations, a controller could be deprived of an opportunity to provide vital lifesaving assistance to tactical flightcrews if he has no UHF guard-transmitting capability.

Consequently, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Establish direct lines of communication between appropriate air traffic control facilities and military tactical operations so that essential tactical information can be relayed to military flightcrews while they are being afforded instrument flight rules separation in positive control airspace. (Class II - Priority Followup) (A-77-9.)

Assure UHF guard-transmitting and receiving capability at all control positions where air traffic control services are provided routinely to military tactical flights. (Class II - Priority Followup) (A-77-10.)

TODD, Chairman, BAILEY, Vice Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.



By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.  
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.