

MINUTE PAPER

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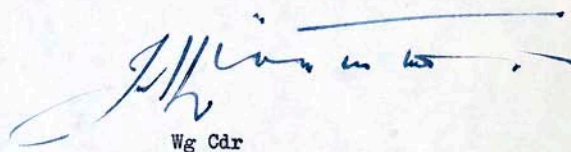
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SUBJECT:

UNIT REBUKE - FLG OFF B.G. HAMMOND

BOR

1. DFS is in complete agreement with Headquarters Operational Command on this matter.
2. That Fly Off Hammond made a wrong decision cannot be denied. However, there is no suggestion that the decision was rashly made, or that it was not based on all the best information available to the pilot at the time.
3. Had this decision been made on an operational training exercise under peacetime conditions, it could never be justified. That a young officer, trained under peacetime conditions, with the associated rigid safety rules and restrictions, recognizes that actual operations may often call for the acceptance of extraordinary risks reflects great credit on his spirit and understanding of the ultimate purpose of our existence as an Air Force.
4. I consider that, while being careful not to create an impression of encouraging rashness and the acceptance of unnecessary risks, even on operations, Department of Air should also indicate recognition of these facts, by officially advising the unit concerned that a rebuke is not considered justified under the circumstances. Such advice would be most effective if endorsed at the highest level.



Wg Cdr
DFS

29 Jan 65



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

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TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS:
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PENRITH 1W NSWIN REPLY QUOTE 33/383/24/Air(8)

Secretary
Department of Air
Russell Offices
CANBERRA ACT

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT - RAAF TRANSPORT FLIGHT VIETNAM NO 1/64
CARIBOU A4-185 FLG OFF B.G. HAMMOND

1. The report on the accident on 18 November 1964 forwarded to this Headquarters for information has been studied.
2. It is considered that a strong rebuke to the pilot would be inappropriate in the circumstances. In fact Flg Off HAMMOND demonstrated qualities which are praiseworthy.
3. Apparently Flg Off HAMMOND had not been briefed that he was not to land at A-RD and, consequently, the question was within his discretion. In exercising his discretion it is possible that he did, in fact, make a wrong decision, but the following mitigating factors should be weighed before a decision is reached to administer any form of rebuke:-
 - (a) There was urgent need to deliver the aircraft's priority one cargo to a beleaguered ground force.
 - (b) Abandonment of the mission and the consequent need for a further sortie would expose another aircraft and crew to the dangers from ground fire which had already been experienced.
 - (c) There is no suggestion that every endeavour had not been made to deliver the cargo by other means, or that failure of the delivery system was a result of any mismanagement on the part of the pilot or crew.
 - (d) The pilot took adequate precautions to satisfy himself that a safe landing could be made: he checked field dimensions and carried out a proper missed approach procedure. He wasn't assisted in reaching a decision by the conflict existing between the US Army and US Air Force classification of the strip - this conflict might well have been resolved by his superiors, and positive guidance given to him when he was briefed for the mission. He was, perhaps, put under further pressure by erroneous advice from US Army members on the ground.

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4. There is little doubt that had he landed successfully and delivered his cargo there would have been no question of a strong rebuke. In fact he would no doubt have been commended for the use of initiative and for demonstrating a will to complete a mission in spite of difficulties. Surely, Flg Off HAMMOND did demonstrate qualities which are most desirable in an operational pilot.

5. Having elected to land, the accident became inevitable. It is doubtful whether a much more experienced pilot than HAMMOND could have avoided disaster as the pools of mud could not be detected and so avoided.

6. It is recommended that HAMMOND should not be rebuked. He, and his fellow pilots, have undoubtedly learned valuable lessons from the circumstances surrounding the loss of this aircraft.

7. It is considered that the accident should be assessed as NOMC - not as AE.

W.R. Berriman

(W.R. BERRIMAN)
Wing Commander
For Air Officer Commanding

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