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Compound Emergency

The lieutenant was scheduled to give the lieutenant commander his annual NATOPS evaluation flight as aircraft commander in the S-2D *Tracker*. Owing to the nature of the mission, the briefing, preflight of the aircraft and cockpit checks were very thorough.

Receiving IFR clearance and departure instructions, they began their takeoff. Liftoff was at 105 knots. One to three seconds later, the pilot experienced a swerve to starboard and was immediately notified by the copilot that they had lost the right engine which was auto-feathering. Being primed for a possible NATOPS simulated engine failure, the pilot believed at first that he was facing a drill and, rather than abort his takeoff, retracted the landing gear and climbed out straight ahead.

The lieutenant inspected the engine for any sign of fire. Seeing none and noting that no fire warning light was on, he was authorized by the pilot to actuate the fuel dump switch. He then switched the UHF radio to tower fre-



quency and announced their intention to turn downwind for immediate landing. As he looked back at the engine, orange-yellow flames were suddenly seen coming from the bottom of the engine nacelle. He announced to the pilot that they were on fire only to discover that the ICS had failed. Shouting to the pilot above the noise, he se-

cured the fuel dump and activated the hydraulic, oil and fuel emergency cut-off switches.

Meanwhile the pilot, experiencing a smooth, increasing swerve to starboard, was having extreme difficulty maintaining directional control of the aircraft. With all available rudder applied, the ball was still fully out to the left. The aircraft would not turn to the left without a reduction in power on the good engine. At 400 feet and 105 knots, things became critical, but the pilot continued to nurse the aircraft toward the runway.

Approaching the 90° position, the landing gear handle was lowered, but the gear failed to come out of the wheel wells. The lieutenant commander immediately attempted to lower the gear, using the emergency system, with no success. When it became apparent that the wheels would not extend, he elected to execute a waveoff.

Shortly thereafter, the copilot was finally able to get the word to him that the starboard engine was in fact on fire. Because of the excessive noise and lack of an ICS, this was the first time that the pilot realized that he was confronted with an inflight fire.

Since it was now too late to land the plane on this approach, a turn downwind was initiated. They quickly decided to land on the next pass, regardless. The wide, easy turn was continued at low altitude with less than full power on the left engine. Throughout the approach, witnesses observed large portions of the aircraft falling from the starboard engine nacelle. The aircraft touched down on the centerline of the runway with the starboard engine feathered and with the port main mount up, the starboard one trailing. It skidded 1,900 feet and came to a halt 40 feet left of the centerline.

A Coast Guard helicopter which was in the traffic pattern practicing GCA's



followed the burning *Tracker* around the pattern. As soon as it halted on the runway, the pilot positioned his chopper in such a way that the down wash blew the flames away from the cockpit, allowing both pilots to exit through the overhead hatches without injury. Damage to the starboard engine nacelle and wing was classified as beyond repair.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Egads, lads! My knees still feel a little weak after that'un. Quite a bit of luck saved the day for those two. (Another S-2 engine fire which has occurred since then was not so fortunate. The wing burned in two in flight.)

Not only did these guys lose the engine, they also had a fire, which caused not only a complete electrical failure but also a complete hydraulic failure. The rudder boost had been lost as well as the ability to secure the fuel, oil, hydraulic shut-offs. The only possible solution was to get on deck immediately or bail out. The key point is that the pilot at the controls didn't know about the fire soon enough to take the correct course of action. Maybe we should install a more positive means of communications. Think the gossip'll make a comeback?

Quick Exit

The *Skywarrior* was returning from a routine four-hour mission to a European air base with seven crewmen on board. Radar vectors were received to intercept GCA final approach course. Descent from their cruise altitude of 39,000 feet was made at 5 to 6,000 feet per minute with a short pause at 23,000 feet. The landing gear and flaps were lowered at 2,700 feet.

Shortly after the EA-3B started down the glide path, it began a rather rapid pitch up which quickly became completely uncontrollable. As the nose of the *Skywarrior* reached 30° up, the pilot ordered a bailout.

Although the crew was taken completely by surprise, execution of the command was initiated immediately. The navigator blew open the escape chute, and the five aft crewmen followed each other out like clockwork, encountering only minor difficulties.

The pilot meanwhile was able to roll the plane into a left wing-over and regained response to yoke pressure. He called, "Hold it" over the interphone, but the men had already unplugged



their headsets. He then grabbed the navigator by the arm who, in turn, tried unsuccessfully to restrain the last crewman from plunging out the hatch. The navigator returned to his seat while the pilot completed a pullout at about 800 feet above the ground.

Two of the bailed-out crew received minor injuries upon landing in trees 100 to 150 feet tall. The pilot and navigator landed their undamaged craft a few minutes later at the air base.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Those aviators were really cookin' with gas — on the front burner. The only chance they had for survival in that bird, if it hadn't recovered, was to have done exactly as they did and as quickly as they did it. A tip o' the hat to a professional air crew.

A bucket o' mud to the maintenance crew and supervisory authority which let that *Skywarrior* be sent on a mission with improperly rigged wing slats, seized needle bearings and dirty slat tracks. A malfunction of the slats on the A-3 will do it every time. It could well be the cause of many unexplained losses of planes and crews.

Well, You See, Sir. . .

The UH-1 *Iroquois* helicopter slipped in and landed almost unnoticed at the outlying airfield. The only person aboard was the young pilot who climbed out and hurried away

from the bird while it was still running. An instant later, the helicopter was observed approximately two feet off the ground and spinning rapidly, counterclockwise. The pilot ducked just in time to avoid being decapitated by the tail rotor as it passed over him. He quickly turned and began running around the machine in the same direction it was rotating. After about one revolution, the frantic airman managed to scramble aboard the right front doorway of the still twirling helo, standing with his feet on the floor and holding on to the top of the doorway with both hands.

Seconds later the bird descended to the ground still rotating. No damage was evident.

Five minutes later, the pilot stated, over the radio, that he knew what had happened and requested takeoff clearance. This was given and he immediately departed the area.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Holy mackerel! Fetch me another aspirin tablet. The only thing which kept this hilarious story from being a tragedy is the fact that the guy got away with it. Wow! How close can you get?

Did you ever get out'a your car, not set the hand brake and have it start to roll down the street? Embarrassin', isn't it? One item would have prevented all this. **CHECKLIST!**