

Fatal Drift

A CH-46E *Sea Knight* was scheduled for day and night deck landing qualifications aboard an LHA (amphibious assault ship). Delays by the ship's deck cycle prevented the four-man crew in the *Sea Knight* from achieving the day quals as scheduled. The aircraft proceeded to an amphibious transport dock (LPD), arriving after twilight, to conduct night vision device deck landing quals.

The CH-46E made eight successful landings and departures. The copilot at the controls was occupying the right seat. On the final departure, the *Sea Knight*, which was facing to port, drifted right on liftoff. It stabilized

there in a hover but then began drifting further right until it collided with the ship's antenna.

The aft rotor delaminated and the helo went out of control. The CH-46E then crashed into the water aft of the LPD. Search and rescue efforts began immediately, but there were no survivors.



Grampaw Pettibone
says:

Sad story. Turns out the pilot in command of this flight had violated crew rest requirements and was under stress from "perceived pressure related to a

supervisor." We'll never know, but maybe a properly rested pilot in command coulda stopped that fatal right drift.

There isn't a Naval Aviator around who is immune from tough personal times. There cannot be any stigma to "callin' in sick." We owe it to ourselves—and our ship-mates—to stay out of the cockpit when we're ailin' physically or mentally. Nuff said.

Viking Vertigo(?)

An S-3B *Viking* with a pilot and copilot/tactical coordinator (COTAC) on board was launched from the number two catapult at night. The aircraft commenced a climb but then began to descend.

The tower called, “Keep the climb in, keep the climb in, keep the climb in,” but there was no response from the aircraft.

The *Viking* continued downward and after 11 seconds of flight crashed into the sea, approximately 1,700 feet in front of and slightly to the starboard side of the carrier’s bow. There were no signs of an ejection attempt.

The bridge watch team had a limited amount of time to maneuver and stop the ship from colliding with the partially submerged wreckage. The lack of an airborne call and no response to the tower transmission indicated the crew may have been on the wrong radio frequency, or was unable to receive or transmit on the selected frequency.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Gol dang it! A mystery! We can only guess what went on in that cockpit. And the guess is that the pilot may have applied improper flight control inputs during climbout due to some kind of physiological problem. The mishap report used the fancy terms: somatigravic or oculogravic illusions. Spatial disorientation is another phrase that might apply. Could be the COTAC was distracted and unable to alert the pilot that they were goin’ the wrong way.

Whatever the cause, it happened at a point in the launch sequence when there is precious little time and maneuvering room to get out of trouble.

Aviate, navigate, communicate. That first one’s especially important when operatin’ around the boat.

DR Doldrums

A T-39 *Sabreliner* had completed extensive rework including installation of an Omega navigational system. The crew launched on a ferry flight over a great expanse of water. En route, the *Sabreliner* lost all navigation aid

reception and the compass system malfunctioned. The aircrew became lost and eventually had to ditch the aircraft at sea. Uninjured, all hands egressed successfully and were rescued.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

The accident investigators put it this way. Cause factor: Aircrew error; “Lack of fundamental dead reckoning navigation competency.”

There was more in the report: “poor lost plane procedures, ineffective aircrew coordination, inade-

quate knowledge of nav systems, poor preflight planning.”

It’s been some time since we’ve had a mishap where people got lost and had to dump themselves and their bird into the drink. Happened a lot in double u double u two. But it was more understandable then.

Tain’t very understandable now. Aren’t we all supposed to be a lot smarter and better trained? Over land or sea, EXPECT to lose your nav gear! Have a backup plan to get home safe and dry. If it doesn’t fail, well, that’s all to the better. (NANews, Sep–Oct 89)