

MILITARY AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT SUMMARY
(JOINT HELICOPTER COMMAND) ROYAL NAVY

Aircraft Type: Lynx AH Mk7, Serial No XZ614

Time and Date: 1347D, 06 May 06

Parent Unit 847 Naval Air Squadron

Place of Accident Basra, Iraq

Crew Aircraft Commander
Handling Pilot
Lynx Door Gunner

Casualties	Aircraft Commander	Fatal
	Handling Pilot	Fatal
	Lynx Door Gunner	Fatal
	2 Passengers	Fatal

Aircraft Damage Category 5 (Scrap)

SYNOPSIS

1. On Sat 06 May 06, a Lynx AH Mk7 XZ614 of 847 Naval Air Squadron (NAS) Detachment (Det), assigned to the Joint Helicopter Force (Iraq) (JHF(I)) based at Basra Air Station (BAS), was conducting a local area recce overhead Basra city. The aircraft exploded in mid-air and crashed onto the rooftop of a residential building in the centre of Basra. The 5 occupants of the aircraft were fatally injured. There were no immediate fatalities on the ground, however the incident sparked local unrest and there were reports that several civilians died during the resultant rioting.

AIRCRAFT DAMAGE

2. The aircraft was extensively damaged by the crash and was assessed as Category 5 (Scrap).

CAUSE

3. A Board of Inquiry concluded that the cause of the crash was that the aircraft was shot down by a hostile Surface-to-Air Missile

CIRCUMSTANCES

4. This was the second sortie of the day for the aircrew. The crew conducted a pre-flight brief for a JHF(I) internally tasked local area recce of Basra Helicopter Landing Sites (HLS) for the benefit of the Comd JHF(I) (Designate), and also a recce of the Old State Building (OSB) in central Basra. The aircraft started engines/rotors without incident and departed Basra airfield. It was observed in the hover at the Shatt Al Arab Hotel (SAAH) to the North of Basra, before departing and following the river to the South,

towards Basra Palace (BP). The aircraft hovered over the BP HLS for approximately one minute before departing low-level North-West up the river, and then climbing to medium level before turning towards the OSB. The aircraft transited a further 2 kms and then exploded, still at medium level, 500m South of the OSB, descending thereafter in an uncontrolled manner before crashing onto a residential building in the centre of Basra city.

5. Evidence from witness statements suggested that the aircraft had been struck by a ground-launched weapon, resulting in a mid-air explosion emanating from the starboard rear quarter of the aircraft, between the fuselage and the tail pylon. This partially severed the tail pylon leaving it loosely attached to the fuselage. The aircraft was engulfed by a fireball and plummeted to the ground. On impacting the ground, the wreckage burned for approximately 45 minutes before being extinguished by the local Iraqi Fire Service. Soon after the event an inner and outer cordon around the crash site was established by MND(SE) troops. Throughout the recovery phase, troops maintaining the cordon were subjected to sniper and mortar fire as well as blast and petrol bombs.

SALVAGE

6. The aircraft came down on top of an Iraqi residential dwelling. The roof of the building was constructed from steel reinforced concrete. The aircraft had partially penetrated the roof and was held in place by the steel reinforcing bars. Damage was sustained to the roof, a first floor room and ground floor windows.

7. The roof was at third floor level and the narrow alleyway had no direct street access to it, making physical recovery of the wreckage extremely challenging. The severity of the local situation meant that an initial decision was taken to recover man-portable wreckage only, as there was a risk that the cordon would be over-run. The RAF Fire Immediate Response Team from BAS arrived on site at 2100 and, with the Royal Engineers (RE) and an 847 NAS engineering downbird party, proceeded to cut the wreckage into manageable sections for quick recovery. Preparation continued until 0400, when a lighting failure forced work to cease. Throughout the morning of Sun 07 May the aircraft parts were lifted from the 3 principal sites with considerable difficulty by both hand and by RE crane and recovered by road to BAS. Although huge efforts were made to recover as much wreckage as possible, some of it was removed by local Iraqi members of the public and many smaller pieces were left unsecured at the site following the collapse of the cordon during the afternoon of 07 May. The crash site was open to contamination and interference from the outset.

CONCLUSIONS

8. Following consideration of all the evidence, including witness statements and subject matter expert advice, the Board concluded that the main cause of the crash was a hostile Surface-to-Air Missile attack.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. The BOI made 7 recommendations.