

Elmendorf Aero Club

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PIF 09 - 06

Proper Decision Making

11 Jun 2009

This Safety Gram concerns the point of activity awareness and proper decision making in all aspects and phases of flight – Flight Preparation, Pre-Flight, Flight, and Recovery, as well as Aircraft Run Check, Take Off, Cruise Flight, Descent, Landing, and Aircraft Post-Flight. Further activities in the case of the Elmendorf Aero Club would be all pre-flight and post flight documentation as well as all required currency documents.

The story given shows what can occur when proper attention is NOT given to detail during the different phases and activities of flight. The questions that a pilot needs to ask themselves is “have I and am I aware of all the duties, events, and situations that will and could occur during the flight I am about to take”.

The pilot in command *MUST* be aware of his and the aircrafts limitations.

Have an awesome and safe summer flying season.

Flight Safety “Make It First, , Make It Last”

This PIF is to be in effect until 30 June 2010 or until contained dated material has expired



SAFETYGRAM

Jun 2009

I was looking for a topic for this month's Safety Gram, when I came across this story from years past. I decided to simply share this with you for numerous reasons, and I hope you enjoy it as much as I did. However, as you read, see if you can count how many opportunities this pilot had to make things different. Sometimes the strangest motivators can cause us to make the dumbest decisions. Sure it worked out in this case...this time...but definitely more because he was lucky than good.

Our detachment (at Chu Lai) had an Australian pilot on exchange, and he discovered that he could get an allocation of Aussie beer from the RAAF supply detachment at Danang because he was essentially a one-man RAAF detachment if you were liberal with the rules (which the Aussies were when it came to drinking beer). We took an OV up to Danang for phase and picked up one coming out, then taxied over to the RAAF ramp on the other side of the field. We checked in and they promptly pulled out an entire pallet (72 cases) of beer! It seems that was the smallest unit of issue for a monthly allotment to a forward detachment of the RAAF. Being a gung ho Lt, and not too up on the differences between weight and cubes, we just started stuffing cases into the aircraft. We got the rear cargo bay loaded with about 60 cases of beer, and then discovered that a beer can was about 2.70 inches in diameter, thus fit nicely down the tubes of the 2.75" rocket launchers (we had 4 new 7-tube LAU-79 pods on the aircraft, each capable of carrying 49 cans of beer (two cases). Eventually, we got about 68 cases of beer in the airplane and pressed on for Chu Lai.

The first hint of trouble was on takeoff roll when I told my companion (in the back seat) to get off the brakes as we started rolling. He wasn't on the brakes, he said. We continued to accelerate slowly, but weren't too concerned because Danang had 11,000 feet of runway. Somewhere around 8,000', and 20 kts below rotation speed, we started to get worried. It was getting really close to the end of the runway and at the end of the overrun was a minefield! As we passed the end of the runway we jerked it off the ground and barely wiggled out over Danang Harbor, airborne...thanks only to the benefits of ground effect... about 5-10 feet off the water. We were accelerating very slowly (like a knot a minute!!) but still not even at a real flying speed. After about two miles, we suddenly realized we couldn't bank (thus turn) without stalling, and there was a big Navy hospital ship about two miles away, directly on our nose. We had no choice (other than ejecting) so we pressed on and hoped for the best. We gained about three more knots before we got to the ship and I was able to change the heading slightly with the rudder and we passed about 50' behind the ship, but still well below the main deck. We bravely waved at people on the ship like we were having fun. We pressed on out over the South China Sea about 20 miles before we had

enough airspeed to slowly make a wide right turn around Monkey Mountain (an island off the coast) and headed south. We made it to Chu Lai (about 40 miles south) but never made it above 50'. We had to land opposite direction at Chu Lai because we were afraid we couldn't clear the radio towers off the approach end of the duty runway.

The word eventually got back to my boss via chatter among the maintenance crews who helped us unload the beer. He chewed me out good, then slyly demanded 10 cases of beer or he'd report me to the Squadron at Danang. He got his beer. I later figured that we were about 2000 lbs over max gross weight, and given that it was a day with light wind and about 98 degrees, it's a miracle we survived. On the other hand, I figured if I jettisoned the four brand new LAU-79s (which were in tight supply) and centerline fuel tank to survive, the jig was up at Danang and we'd probably be court marshalled anyway, so we decided to either save the beer or die...the AF would have crucified me anyway! The beer was good!! We did, however, haul smaller loads from then on.

The follow up:

Probably about 45 minutes total flying time. It's funny now, but I was scared shitless for most of the flight...essentially a 45 minute slow flight/approach to the stall demo! Boy, was I dumb...I just figured that if the designer put 200 cu ft of space in the back, I could put whatever I wanted there as long as it fit. Jack had been out with his Aussie buddies the night before (basically all night!) and was barely functional...I don't think he ever really grasped the problem!

Yes, we have regulations to follow, but most importantly we have to follow the Laws of Physics. There are no waivers for those. Please think of what you are doing on every flight, and as always....

Fly Safe!



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