

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

KC-135R, S/N 63-008886  
92<sup>d</sup> Air Refueling Wing, Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington  
26 September 2006

On 26 September 2006, KC-135R tail number 63-008886 (MA1), assigned to the 92d Air Refueling Wing, Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington, landed at Manas International Airport (MIA), Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, at approximately 2003 hours, local time (L), following a combat mission. Mishap pilot two (MP2) landed MA1 on runway 08 and was directed by the Kyrgyzaeronavigation (KAN) air traffic controller (controller) to vacate the runway at taxiway Golf (Golf). Mishap pilot one (MP1) acknowledged the controller's instruction by responding with their call sign, "Shell 93." The controller's instruction conflicted with a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) which stated Golf was open during daylight hours. While MA1 was still proceeding toward Golf, MP1 contacted the coalition tower liaison/safety observer (LNO) to obtain clarification on the conflicting guidance. The LNO said "if you're gonna exit at Golf, hold short of Alpha, I'll have to get a follow-me for you." Based on the LNO's response and past experience, MP1 thought the LNO was going to discuss with the controller whether they should exit at Golf. MP1 responded "holding short of Golf." The LNO missed the incorrect read back and began attempting to contact transient alert for a follow-me truck.

MP2 stopped MA1 at the intersection of the runway and Golf, at approximately a 30-degree angle, awaiting the determination of whether they were to exit at Golf. Soon after MA1 came to a stop, the controller again directed the crew of MA1 to "vacate the runway." MP1 acknowledged the instruction with their call sign, "Shell 93." Immediately thereafter, the controller said "continue to taxi." MP2 advanced the throttles and began to move MA1 onto Golf. The LNO then interrupted the controller and told him MA1 needed a follow-me truck. The controller immediately directed MA1 to "stop taxi" and "hold position." Because only four seconds passed between the time MA1 began to move and the controller's direction to stop, MA1 moved only a few feet. MA1's left wing and tail still extended over the runway. Controllers in the tower cannot determine visually, at night, whether an aircraft is on the runway or Golf. Neither the controller nor the LNO asked where MA1 was located or whether MA1 was clear of the runway.

Three seconds after directing MA1 to hold position without knowing its location, the controller cleared a TU-154 (MA2) in Russian for takeoff. Based on the angle of MA1, the pilot of MA2 could not distinguish MA1 was partially on the runway and proceeded down runway 08. At 2006L, MA2's right wing struck MA1's #1 engine and caused the left wing to catch fire. The three MA1 crewmembers evacuated the aircraft with no notable injuries. The left wing and #1 engine of MA1 were damaged beyond repair. Other portions of MA1 suffered damage from the impact and fire. MA2 lost approximately 6 feet of its right wing but continued takeoff. The pilot of MA2 successfully landed at MIA with no loss of life, injuries or additional damage.

The collision between the TU-154 and KC-135 aircraft was clearly an accident and not the result of any intentional conduct. The board president found by clear and convincing evidence the cause of the mishap was the KAN controller clearing MA2 for takeoff without verifying, visually or verbally, MA1 was clear of the runway. There was substantial evidence the following factors also contributed to the mishap:

- a. The published NOTAM and the controller's instruction to vacate at Golf after dark conflicted. The LNO did not clarify the apparent discrepancy.
- b. The mishap crew misperceived the LNO's statement to hold short of Alpha and stated "holding short of Golf." The LNO failed to catch the read back error.
- c. The controller failed to maintain awareness of MA1's location.
- d. The LNO failed to maintain situational awareness and intervene when the controller's actions endangered MA1 and the mishap crew.

Although the board president found the KAN controller primarily at fault, the MA1 crew and the LNO also had responsibilities to ensure MA1 cleared the runway to a safe location following landing. The accident might have been avoided had any of them exercised better situational awareness.

Under 10 U.S.C. 2254(d), any opinion of the accident investigators as to the cause of, or the factors contributing to, the accident set forth in the accident investigation report may not be considered as evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding arising from the accident, nor may such information be considered an admission of liability of the United States or by any person referred to in those conclusions or statements.