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MAY 02 2013

MEMORANDUM

From:  J. P. CURRIER, VADM
VCG

To: Distribution

Subj: FINAL DECISION LETTER REGARDING COAST GUARD AIR STATION
SACRAMENTO CLASS "A" AVIATION FLIGHT MISHAP INVOLVING HC-130H
CGNR 1705 AND USMC AH-1W BUNO: 164596 ON 29 OCT 09

Ref: (a) Safety and Environmental Health Manual, COMDTINST M5100.47

1. Purpose. This document represents the conclusion of U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy joint safety analysis of a Class A aviation flight mishap, involving the midair collision of a Coast Guard HC-130H and U.S. Marine Corps AH-1W, which occurred off the Southern California coast the evening of 29 October 2009. The safety analysis process is a systemic review of the factors (material, human, and organizational) that combine to result in a mishap.

2. Synopsis. At 292123Z (1423L) October 2009, the D11 Command Center directed Coast Guard Air Station Sacramento to launch the ready C130 to search for an overdue skiff south of Santa Catalina Island. CG RESCUE 1705 launched from Air Station Sacramento at 1527L with a crew composed of an Aircraft Commander (AC), Co-Pilot (CP), Flight Engineer (FE), Navigator (N), Radio Operator (R), Drop Master (DM), and Basic Aircrew (BA). CG RESCUE 1705 filed an Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) flight plan to the Santa Catalina navigational aid, with an en route time of one hour and 30 minutes. At 1651L, after arriving on scene, CG RESCUE 1705 descended to 1000 feet AGL and commenced a parallel search created by USCG Sector Los Angeles / Long Beach (SLA/LB). At 1830L, War Horse (WH) SECTION, a flight of two USMC CH-53E Super Stallions, departed from Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar to conduct a live fire training exercise in the Shore Bombardment Area (SHOBA) on San Clemente Island. The WH LEAD (WHL) crew consisted of an AC, CP, 4 Crew Chiefs (CCs), and a Public Affairs Officer (PAO). The WH-2 crew consisted of an AC, CP, 4 CCs, and a Pilot Aircrew (PA) passenger. At 1845L, Vengeance (VG) SECTION, a flight of two USMC AH-1W Cobra Attack Helicopters departed MCAS Camp Pendleton to join WH SECTION and provide a pre-briefed escort to SHOBA. The VG LEAD (VGL) crew consisted of an Instructor Pilot (IP) and a CP. The VG-2 crew consisted of an IP and a CP. At 1850L, the WH SECTION and VG SECTION joined up to create the WH FLIGHT (WHL, WH-2, VGL, and VG-2 flying in formation) and proceeded westbound towards SHOBA. At 1909L, a midair collision occurred between CG RESCUE 1705 and VGL 15 miles east-southeast of San Clemente Island in position 32-59.17N, 118-07.06W. A massive explosion destroyed both aircraft in flight. Some debris from both aircraft was recovered by military assets in the immediate vicinity. The majority of the wreckage sank in approximately 2700 feet of water. None of the nine aircrew members aboard the two mishap aircraft survived. There were no additional injuries or damage.

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3. Classification. Per reference (a), this is a Class "A" Flight Mishap. The aircraft damage estimate was \$70,600,000.00 detailed as follows: CGNR 1705 - \$48,300,000.00, USMC Bureau Number (BUNO) 164596 - \$22,300,000.00. There were nine fatalities including five aircrew and four pilots.

4. Final Decision. The Joint Service analysis efforts for this mishap were unprecedented for the Coast Guard. I extend my thanks to the Marine Corps and Navy for their cooperation. I have directed corrective action via an internal Final Decision Message (FDM) for dissemination to help prevent similar future mishaps. I approve the FDM, a privileged document, for dissemination to the Coast Guard, Marine Corps and Navy. Additionally, I approve the Joint Safety Board report, also a privileged document, which contains the joint board's opinions, findings and conclusions. The joint report may be accessed by authorized Coast Guard personnel upon request to CG-1131. Recommendations have been assigned to cognizant staffs and field activities for completion. I further direct CG-1131 to add all recommendations contained in the full report to our internal tracking system.

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