

High praise for Garuda Flight 421

YOUR REPORT on the “crash” of Garuda Flight 421 (*Flight Safety Australia*, January-February 2002) is in need of further clarification.

After both engines failed during a rain storm on descent from FL320 to FL230 the two pilots of the 737-300 – in fading light and severe turbulence – managed to put down in a fast flowing jungle river avoiding a well populated area and saving the lives of all but one on board.

The one fatality, a stewardess, died after being swept down stream, not as a result of the “crash”.

Most of the injuries were minor and all passengers and surviving crew were able to



PHOTO: AAP IMAGE

walk to shore. The captain then called up Jakarta on his mobile phone to report the

river landing.

In fact so good was the touchdown that the entire

fuselage was still intact.

The cause of both engines flaming out is under investigation, but the action of the crew has brought immense praise from the Indonesian media. Both pilots have been given awards by the country's government for their actions.

Most Western news reports see it as just another Indonesian airliner crash.

Maybe *Flight Safety Australia* should provide its readers with a more in-depth report of this almost-miraculous emergency landing in Indonesia, Australia's near neighbour.

*Stephen J Fleay
Chiang Mai, Thailand*

Errata

In the last Flying Ops quiz (*Flight Safety Australia*, January-February 2002) we stated that the answer to question four was A. The correct answer was in fact C: as the gross weight of an aircraft increases V_{NO} remains the same. Answer A refers to manoeuvring speed, V_A . V_A is a function of stalling speed which increases with aircraft weight.

Drop us a line

- Ideal length for publication is 150 words. Longer letters may be edited to save space. Include name, address and phone number.

- Send letters to *Flight Safety Australia*, GPO Box 2005, Canberra ACT 2601; faxes to (02) 6217 1950; emails to fsa.magazine@casa.gov.au.

The best letter wins a \$50 voucher from Airservices Publications Centre.

Open doors before impact

I REFER TO Carl Holden's article “Engine Failure After Take-off” in your last issue (*Flight Safety Australia*, January-February 2002).

I had a very nasty landing on an aborted go-around in a Mooney 201 in 1991 in North Eastern Victoria.

Carl Holden's reaction after impact, “get out, get out”, was identical to my own.

But Carl couldn't exit his right-hand door as something was jamming it.

Naturally, in my incident, I was also keen to get out – thankfully my one door was not jammed.

Following my prang a very experienced pilot said to me, “You're a bloody idiot [something I already knew], you should have instructed the passenger in the right-hand



PHOTO: RAV FENNELIX

seat to open the door before impact. Planes bend when they crash and usually the doors will not open. So if you survive the impact and there is a fire...”

I have a terrible memory but

those words are permanently etched in my mind.

They leapt out at me when I read this chilling story.

*Bob Richardson
Perth, WA*

VCA "hot spots": Bring back the strobes?

IT WAS A thought provoking article on Violations of Controlled Airspace (VCA) in the November-December issue of *Flight Safety Australia*.

It's hard to tell from the diagrams published, but many of the VCAs look like "altitude" incursions.

Melbourne airspace seems to cop a comparative pasting, particularly the Western side and "Western" lane area where a westerly or south-westerly wind can be one's undoing over the relatively featureless terrain.

No doubt the VCAs have also increased since the Western Lane narrowed due to changes several years ago which extended the CTR below Essendon/Tullamarine?

In recent years we have seen the return of some old aids for private pilots – the Visual Flight Guide simplifying the planning and legislative task; and the VNC, ensuring accurate location of PRD, and CTR steps.

Rather than relying on ATC assistance, thereby increasing their non-IFR workload, is it time to reconsider one of the "old" aids that was dropped (no doubt for economic reasons) – the guide strobes for the western lane (and possibly the eastern lane)?

It may be that this is a more cost effective means of assisting prevention of VCA incursions.

Again, one cannot tell from the maps provided, but it would be interesting to know whether lanes in other cities that still use strobes do maintain a better track record?

Brian Hannan
Emerald, Victoria



AIRSERVICES Australia in conjunction with CASA, ATSB and aviation industry representatives has, for the last three years, maintained a task force to identify causal factors for VCAs and to develop strategies to address these occurrences.

Responsibility for the task force has now reverted to CASA, however, Airservices will continue the previous level of support for this group.

The "hot spot" diagrams, which the author refers to, were produced by Airservices and were a product of this task force.

Strobe lights were one of the many defence mechanisms that were (and still are) on the list of mitigating strategies for consideration. The specific strobe lights that were once installed in the vicinity of the then Melbourne CTR boundary were discussed as were the large orange billboards that also existed at about that time.

When analysing the VCA issue it becomes evident that changing airspace boundaries seems only to shift the location

of the VCA. It would appear that the situation is largely due to problems with navigational awareness for whatever reason. On that basis it would seem appropriate that any assistance to navigation would be of value and the task force addressed the issue in that vein.

The task force considered the demonstrated experience of the three remaining strobe lights servicing the Lane of Entry (LoE) to Bankstown from the North of Sydney. While the lights are still operational and presumably used by pilots navigating through the LoE, VCA rates are no different to other LoEs not serviced by strobe lights. This tends to indicate that they are not truly effective.

Additionally, the task force staged one of its regular meetings at Bankstown to discuss this and other strategies with local operators. The same methodology was used at Archerfield as a means of comparison with the views expressed at Bankstown. There was general consensus of

opinion across both meetings.

Opinion was divided on the value of strobe lights but the majority of those interviewed cited the inability to differentiate the lights as the main deterrent to their effectiveness:

- In daylight – from reflections from commercial buildings.
- At night – from the many other competing advertising lights.

Other issues identified by the task force relating to the lights were:

- *The cost of locating suitable towers in what are often high-cost commercial locations.*
- *Environmental concerns about the towers themselves.*
- *Responsibility for maintenance and reviewing their effectiveness.*

Notwithstanding these issues, the task force considered strobe lights as part of an overall package aimed at reducing VCAs and concluded they would not be justified in terms of the potential benefits that might be derived by their installation.

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