

AeroPeru Flight 603

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AeroPeru Flight 603 was a scheduled Lima(LIM)-Santiago (SCL) flight, originating in Miami, which crashed on October 2, 1996.

On October 2, 1996, just past midnight, the Boeing 757 airliner

| AeroPeru Flight 603 | |
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| Summary | |
| Date | October 2, 1996 |
| Type | Error in maintenance |
| Site | Pasamayo, Peru |
| Fatalities | 70 |
| Injuries | 0 |
| Aircraft | |
| Aircraft type | Boeing 757-200 |
| Operator | AeroPeru |
| Tail number | N52AW |
| Passengers | 61 |
| Crew | 9 |
| Survivors | 0 |

crew, shortly after takeoff, reported receiving contradictory emergency messages, such as rudder ratio, overspeed, underspeed and flying too low, from the onboard computer; asked for an emergency to be declared and decided to return to base. Faced with the contradictory warnings, the pilot decided to descend. It was only when one wing touched water, almost an hour after emergency declaration, that the pilots realized how confused and disoriented they were. All nine crew members and sixty-one passengers died.

As the subsequent investigation proved, the primary cause of the crash was the masking tape left over the static ports after cleaning the aircraft (procedures required that the static ports be covered during cleaning) — an error by the maintenance crew. The static ports need to be cleared since they are particularly necessary for altitude and airspeed data. This put the pilots in a very confusing situation with conflicting and false flight data, which affected even the ability of ground radar to assist. The investigation put the responsibility on the flight deck crew since they did not react in the best possible way, and tried to return to Lima, something impossible under VFR (visual flight rules), the only way to do it without accurate data from the instruments.

Furthermore, they tried to get guided from the ATC. Unfortunately, the information available for the ATC was coming from the transponder of the plane itself. In other words, the information was incorrect since the source was the same that pilots had at the flightdeck.

Had they know the real problem (a tape over the static port) the solution should be very easy: Breaking the glass of a pressure instrument. At that moment, they should start getting readings from the instruments. These readings should be almost fully correct if they equal the inside pressure with the outside one.

Rumors abounded that the crash was caused by sabotage because supposedly the Peruvian Mafia wanted one of the passengers (a prisoner who was being extradited to Argentina) dead. Those rumors were never confirmed. The official leading the Peruvian investigation lost a nephew (the ill-fated flight's First Officer) in the crash. It has been stated by coroners that some passengers survived the crash but drowned afterwards. Also, it is perfectly clear that the passengers and crew were aware during their time in the air that the plane was in danger and that their lives were at risk.

Peruvian justice only sentenced the actual maintenance technician that had left the tape on the static ports, while not apportioning blame on supervisors for poor procedures and the crew for inadequate pre-flight checkups.

The Flight 603 incident contributed to the demise of AeroPeru, which was already plagued with financial and management difficulties. The airline folded in the late 1990s.

On December 13, 1999, the family members of the passengers aboard the flight, received one of the largest cash awards stemming from an airplane crash outside the United States aboard a non-U.S. carrier. According to the complaint, the control panel errors were caused by careless maintenance by AeroPeru, and negligence and defective design by The Boeing Company, the airplane's manufacturer. The suit was filed against Boeing in federal court in Miami in May, 1997. After extensive litigation, the parties agreed to transfer the case against Boeing and AeroPeru to

an international arbitration in Santiago, Chile, for a determination of the damages. The defendants agreed not to contest liability in Chile.^[1]

In the aftermath of the accident, Aeroperú had redesignated its evening Miami-Lima-Santiago Boeing 757 service as flight 691^[2]

See also

- Lists of accidents and incidents on commercial airliners
- Air Crash Investigation

References

- ↑ http://www.colsonhickseidson.com/CM/PressReleases/pr-121399.asp
- ↑ *Volando* (Aeroperú's inflight magazine), Issue 17, July-August 1997

External links

- "Clarín" - Argentinean newspaper investigation about AeroPeru 603 (http://www.clarin.com/diario/96/10/03/E-04401d.htm)
- AvWeb - AeroPeru 603 Cockpit Voice Recorder transcript (English) (http://www.avweb.com/other/peru603.html)
- AvWeb - AeroPeru 603 Alarms activity from the CVR (http://www.avweb.com/other/peru603a.html)

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