

Crash of Sea King Helicopter

CHSS-12402 from HMCS Bonaventure crashed on 30 November 1967. Ships in group were HMCS Bonaventure, Provider, Fraser and Gatineau.

The helicopter crashed at 0045Z or 2045 Local time north of Bermuda while carrying out helicopter operations. Position of the crash was at 35° 52' North, 61° 47' West.

Crew members were:

1. Pilot – Lt. Leo Wolfe, survivor
2. Co-Pilot – SLt Brian Roberts, survivor
3. Tactical Officer – Commissioned Officer Claire Tully, killed in accident, never recovered.
4. Radio Navigator Rad Nav 081 – PO1 Douglas Mander, killed in accident, never recovered.

HMCS Gatineau was the rescue ship and picked up the survivors.

Info from the Investigation

The crew had been airborne for 3.5 hours under (IMC) Instrument Meteorological Conditions and was scheduled to fly an additional 30 minutes prior to final recovery. Distracted by the presence of another Sea King (12427) operating in the same area, neither pilot recognized the subtle aircraft descent until water impact. They simply flew into the water. Both pilots immediately were ejected through the aircraft front windows while still strapped in their seats. The observer and naval aircrewman in the aircraft cabin area both perished on impact, while the two pilots miraculously survived and were rescued by naval rescue personnel.

Fatalities – Two: CMDO Claire Tully, PO Douglas Mander.

Factors: Probable – Pilot Distraction/Fatigue.

Findings: Identified the requirement for both pilots to continuously monitor aircraft flight instruments during low level, over water during IMC operations.