

## Ref "C" - Statement by Capodichino concerning the flight

Subject aircraft departed Capodichino AA Base, Naples, Italy, on an IFR clearance for Bovingdon, England by way of Gorgona Island, Istres, Lyon and Paris at 0054Z, 1 November 1946. Capodichino tower gave the aircraft take-off instructions and a normal take-off was made. The aircraft contacted the tower five minutes after take-off for a radio check. Contact was made again a short time later and position was reported as "fifteen miles out; request clearance from tower frequency". Capodichino tower granted tower clearance and no further known contacts were made with the aircraft by any station.

Correspondence accompanying subject accident report (Form 14) indicates that both pilots were command pilots and experienced weather pilots. They requested a weather report from Capodichino AA Base weather station and received the following: (31 October 1946, afternoon). A low pressure centered in the Tyrrhenian Sea was causing overrunning warm moist unstable air just North of point of departure with severe thunderstorm activity between Rome and Poretta (Bastia, Corsica). Further information was given as: a cold front to the West of Capodichino, in the Tyrrhenian sea, nearly on Sardinia, which precluded a flight to the West of Sardinia then North to Istres. Information was given that the weather from Poretta to Istres and North to Bovingdon was not prohibitive for flight. At 2330A (2330 Italian local time), 31 October 1946, the actual briefing for the flight occurred with the M/Sgt forecaster on duty at that time. The weather picture given earlier in the day had materialized as predicted. The presence of severe thunderstorms over the Tyrrhenian Sea and adjacent Italian mainland had been verified by a debriefing of two arriving pilots who announced that the route was covered with heavy rain showers, turbulence and much lightning.

The response of the pilots of subject aircraft to these reports by arriving pilots was that, due to the long-distance aspect of subject flight, it was believed possible to climb to the comparative safety of 15,000 feet MSL whereas due to the short distance of the Rome - Capodichino and Marcianise - Rome flights by the arriving pilots (where the adverse weather had been encountered), they had been unable to afford to such a high level

M/Sgt Kable forecasted that at this proposed flight level of 15000 ft MSL and along a flight path leading directly from Capodichino to a point midway between Poretta, Corsica and Pisa, Italy, it would be possible to remain out of most clouds. This officer added that, there would be much lightning and some help from a new moon to aid the pilots in ascertaining the position of dangerously buildup (of) clouds on course at 15000 ft. MSL. The forecasters on duty believed that the proposed flight level of 15,000 ft and along a flight path leading directly from Capodichino to a point midway between Poretta, Corsica and Pisa, Italy would allow the pilots to avoid most of the clouds. It was added that there would be much lightning and a new moon to aid the pilots in ascertaining the position of dangerously built-up clouds on course at 15,000 ft. The forecasters emphasized the presence of icing and turbulence in all clouds between 7000 ft and 15,000 ft MSL. As much as "it is permitted of weather personnel, both this Officer and the M/Sgt attempted to infer that the weather was such that we were not happy to see the flight go at all."

All possible routes were discussed in detail and the final decision of the pilots was to fly at 15,000 ft MSL directly to a point between Pisa, Italy and Poretta, Corsica. After picking up the Pisa radio range, they then had

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decided to fly directly on course to Istres, France; to Lyon, France; to Bovingdon, England.

"The exceptionally fine professional attitude of both pilots reflected by their questions and final conclusions reached in an unhurried and most deliberate manner, allayed the initial apprehension of this officer to the extent that upon their final departure, he had no doubt that the flight would be successful. M/Sgt Kable however, made the statement after their leaving that, if he had known the pilots personally, or if they had been of lower rank, or possessed lower pilot priority, he would have told them, the flight was most foolhardy."

Aircraft still missing flight; search initiated, continued then abandoned