

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

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P. S. S. S.



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**Report of the Court of Enquiry on the
accident to Indian Airlines' Dakota Aircraft
VT-COZ on the 21st January, 1955 near
Gauhati Airport**

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REPORT
OF THE COURT INVESTIGATION OF THE ACCIDENT
TO 'INDIAN AIRLINES' DAKOTA AIRCRAFT
VT-COZ ON 21ST JANUARY 1951
NEAR GAUHATI AIRPORT

**COURT
ASSESSORS**

**SHRI N. S. LOKUR
SHRI K. L. PURI
CAPT. K. VISHWANATH**

SECRETARY TO THE COURT . . . SHRI B. S. GIDWANI

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

NOTIFICATION

Dated, February 5, 1955.

No. 17-A/3-55.—WHEREAS on January 21, 1955, an accident occurred five miles south of Gauhati aerodrome to a Dakota, aircraft VT-COZ of the Indian Airlines Corporation, engaged in a scheduled flight from Calcutta to Gauhati on a freighter service, resulting in the death of all the three members of the crew on board,

AND WHEREAS it appears to the Central Government that it is expedient to hold a formal investigation of the said accident.

2. Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by rule 75 of the Indian Aircraft Rules, 1937, the Central Government directs that a formal investigation of the said accident be held.

The Central Government is further pleased to appoint Shri N. S. Lokur, Chairman, Railway Rates Tribunal and Air Transport Licensing Board, to hold the said investigation.

The Central Government is also pleased to appoint:

- (1) Shri K. L. Puri, Director of Aeronautical Inspection, Civil Aviation Department; and
- (2) Capt. K. Vishawanath, Divisional Operations Manager, Air India International

to act as Assessors to the said investigation.

B. N. JHA,

Secretary to the Government of India.

MADRAS AIRPORT

23rd March, 1955.

To

The Secretary to the Government of India,
Ministry of Communications,
New Delhi.

SIR,

By Notification No. 17-A/3-55, dated February 5, 1955, issued by the Central Government under Rule 75 of the Indian Aircraft Rules, 1937, I was appointed to hold a formal investigation into the crash of the Dakota aircraft VT-COZ near Gauhati when engaged in carrying freight in a scheduled flight from Calcutta to Gauhati on the morning of 21st January 1955, resulting in the death of all the three members of the crew.

2. By the same Notification Shri K. L. Puri, Director, Aeronautical Inspection and Captain Vishwanath, Divisional Operations Manager of Air-India International, were appointed as Assessors to the said investigation.

3. A public notice was published in the local and various outside papers requesting anyone who had any relevant information to communicate it to the Secretary.

4. Accordingly, I arrived at Calcutta on 8th March 1955, and obtained all the available information from the Aerodrome Officer, Shri Sundararajan and Shri Y. R. Malhotra, who had already made a preliminary investigation of the accident. On the next day I flew to Gauhati in the company of the two Assessors, Shri Malhotra and the Secretary, Shri B. S. Gidwani. We all went to the scene of the accident about 3 miles from the Airport, and inspected the wreckage and the various marks made by the aircraft in its trail. Some parts had been removed to the Airport, and I examined them with the help of the Assessors and Shri Malhotra. I recorded the statements of ten witnesses including the eye-witnesses who had seen the ill-fated aircraft crashing and burning, and returned to Calcutta in the evening.

5. On the next two days I recorded evidence of thirty-five witnesses at Calcutta (Dum Dum) Airport. The Indian Airlines Corporation was represented by Capt. Braganza, who was present throughout the investigation and was allowed to assist the Court by suggesting questions to be put to witnesses, either to elicit further information or to elucidate any statement already made. He also gave evidence himself. I am thankful for his co-operation.

6. The public hearing was concluded on 11th March 1955, and the report was finalised in Madras. I have now the honour to present

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my report together with the record of the evidence and the proceedings of the investigation. Both the Assessors gave their full cooperation during the investigation and my report represents our unanimous and well-considered opinion. I am grateful to both of them for all the assistance which they willingly gave me.

7. My thanks are also due to Shri Y. R. Malhotra who had already done the spade work before I arrived at Calcutta and placed at my disposal all the information he had gathered. His help throughout the investigation was indeed invaluable. When the evidence as to whether fire had broken out in the aircraft during flight was conflicting, Shri Malhotra's evidence in Court was so clear, logical and convincing that after weighing all the evidence, the Assessors and I had no difficulty in accepting his view that there was no fire during flight.

8. I must also express my thanks to Shri Jung, Controller of Aerodromes, Calcutta Region, Shri Sundararajan, Aerodrome Officer, Calcutta (Dum Dum) Airport, and Shri Hajra, Aerodrome Officer, Gauhati, who made excellent arrangements for the sittings of the Court and also looked after every convenience required.

9. I join the Assessors in recording our appreciation of the hard and intelligent work of the Secretary, Shri B. S. Gidwani, both during the investigation and in the drafting of the report. The knack which he showed in getting things done quickly and satisfactorily is indeed superb.

I must also express my satisfaction at the work done by the staff of the Court.

Yours faithfully,

N. S. LOKUR.

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