

BN2B-20 Islander, G-CHEZ

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| AAIB Bulletin No: 6/2002 | Ref: EW/G2002/03/03 | Category: 1.2 |
| Aircraft Type and Registration: | BN2B-20 Islander, G-CHEZ | |
| No & Type of Engines: | 2 Lycoming IO-540-K1B5 piston engines | |
| Year of Manufacture: | 1990 | |
| Date & Time (UTC): | 1 March 2002 at 1638 hrs | |
| Location: | Hawarden Airport, North Wales | |
| Type of Flight: | Police Air Support | |
| Persons on Board: | Crew - 3 | Passengers - None |
| Injuries: | Crew - None | Passengers - N/A |
| Nature of Damage: | Substantial damage to the outer portion of right wing | |
| Commander's Licence: | Commercial Pilots Licence with Instrument Rating | |
| Commander's Age: | 58 years | |
| Commander's Flying Experience: | 2,730 hours (of which 1,035 were on type) | |
| | Last 90 days - 46 hours | |
| | Last 28 days - 18 hours | |
| Information Source: | Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot, a report by the airport authority and AAIB enquiries | |

History of the accident

At 1605 hrs, ATC had initiated an exercise for the airport services to respond to a simulated emergency based on an aircraft fuselage located just north of Taxiway 'N'. The exercise involved fire and medical vehicles, which were parked either side of the taxiway. At 1617 hrs, ATC contacted the 'Fire Officer' to ask if aircraft could get past on Taxiway 'N'; the 'Fire Officer' confirmed that the taxiway was clear.

At 1637 hrs, the commander of G-CHEZ contacted ATC to request taxi clearance for a police support flight to Chester. ATC gave him the option of Runway 23 or 05 with a surface wind of 020°/ 10 kt and he was subsequently cleared to taxi to the 'November Hold' for Runway 23. At the time, the AFS had completed the exercise and were in the process of recovering their equipment.

All the emergency vehicles and equipment were moved off the taxiway. The pilot of G-CHEZ saw vehicles on both sides of the taxiway and realised that there was some form of exercise taking place. While his attention was focused on the firemen and their equipment, he was also manoeuvring his aircraft to avoid the vehicles. The right wingtip of G-CHEZ struck a wing mirror of a fire tender and this swung the aircraft to the right where it struck an ambulance; the aircraft left the taxiway onto the grass. Both the fire tender and the ambulance were on a hardstanding, which joined with the taxiway, but were positioned very close to the taxiway edge.

Relevant information

Taxiway 'N' is 15 metres wide and, as a code 'C' taxiway, should have a cleared area of 28.5 metres each side of the centre-line; G-CHEZ has a wing span of 14.94 metres. The pilot reported that no-one was seated in the right cockpit seat and considered that he was on the centre-line of the taxiway when the first collision occurred. He acknowledged that he was taxiing at a fast speed and this was confirmed by the Air Traffic Controller and by perusal of the timing of the R/T recording.

Discussion

Although the AFS had reported their vehicles as clear of the taxiway, they were positioned on a hardstanding close to the edge of the taxiway and within the cleared area. Therefore, there was little margin for error for a taxiing aircraft passing between the vehicles. ATC had not specifically warned the pilot of the exercise and associated vehicles but the pilot was in visual contact with them. Without the assistance of another 'pair of eyes' in the right seat, maintaining adequate clearance would have been difficult and would have required care; a fast taxi speed reduced the margin for error.

The airport authority has now issued a new instruction requiring that areas, in which AFS exercises are being held, be closed to aircraft. Additionally, vehicles parked adjacent to taxiways are to be considered as temporary obstructions. If they are within the cleared area of the taxiway, appropriate information on them is to be passed to pilots approaching the area.