

Airbus A320-231, G-OOAC, 27 April 1996

AAIB Bulletin No: 8/96 Ref: EW/G96/04/32 Category: 1.1s

Aircraft Type and Registration: Airbus A320-231, G-OOAC

No & Type of Engines: 2 International Aero V2500-A1 turbofan engines

Year of Manufacture: 1992

Date & Time (UTC): 27 April 1996 at 0150 hrs

Location: Cruise at FL 350

Type of Flight: Public Transport

Persons on Board: Crew - 8 Passengers - 179

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - None

Nature of Damage: None

Commander's Licence: Airline Transport Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 38 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 6,740 hours (of which 2,874 were on type)

Last 90 days - 179 hours

Last 28 days - 71 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and enquiries by the AAIB

During a return flight from Tenerife to Bristol, while in the cruise at FL 350, the commander suddenly began to feel dizzy and nauseous. Associated with the dizziness was a severe rolling sensation which improved slightly with his eyes closed. He informed the first officer of his incapacitation and handed over control of the aircraft. Within 15 minutes, the commander started to vomit and this continued intermittently for the rest of the flight and for a few hours after landing. Although he remained fully conscious, he was incapable of taking any further part in the conduct of the flight and the first officer assumed command of G-OOAC. The first officer was experienced and had been assessed by the company as suitable for command. Additionally, there was an off-duty first officer on board and he was called to the flight deck to assist. By mutual consent, the commander remained in his seat although it was reclined and pulled back from the controls; an off-duty senior cabin attendant was also on board and she looked after the commander.

For the recovery, the weather at Bristol was below Cat 1 limits and the first officer in command made the decision to divert to Birmingham where the weather was excellent. By now, the crew had declared a 'PAN' call and an uneventful approach and landing was made at Birmingham. The first officer taxied the aircraft to the parking stand and, while the passengers were disembarked, the condition of the commander was assessed by the waiting medical staff who had been pre-warned. As he was still unwell, he was immediately taken to the local hospital. On admittance, he was treated for nausea and dehydration and remained in hospital for three days.

The commander's condition was diagnosed as acute Labyrinthitis which is a transient inner ear disorder. His Class One Medical Certificate had been issued on 23 November 1995 and the only medical problem since then had been a slight cold the week prior to the incident; he had taken no medication for this cold. During his duty period which started at 1930 hrs, he had eaten a meal on the outbound flight and a further sandwich about one hour before the onset of the nausea.

The commander returned to flying duties two weeks after the incident having been assessed as fit by both his General Practitioner and Authorised Medical Examiner.