

Why Bad Things Happen To Good People

Human Factors: The Air Industry Experience

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A 1996 report (1) on 'Human Factors in Fatal Aircraft Accidents' by the Australian Bureau of Air Safety Investigation mentioned:

'Over 70% of the accidents involved pilot factors. The most common pilot factors related to poor judgement and decision making'.

A very different, and more recent study (2) by the US Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) Aerospace Medical Institute, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on *Unmanned Aircraft Accident/Incident Data: Human Factors Implications* quotes '...involvement of human factors issues varied across aircraft from 21% to 68%'.

A recent accident report (3) of the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) quotes:

The flight crew made numerous procedural errors and deviations during the final approach segment of the VOR/DME approach to Aspen (ASE) and the crew demonstrated poor crew coordination during the accident flight, and the flight crew was under pressure to land at ASE.

These reports from different sectors of civil and military aviation all demonstrate the same issue; whatever the reasons may be: Bad Things Happen To Good People!

The 25 minutes presentation on aspects of this phenomenon in aviation focuses specifically on an accident that the author personally can relate to (4). The presentation gives an interpretation of psychodynamic elements that showed up in crew behaviours early on; well before this accident, which had a significant impact upon the outcome of this event.

These psychodynamic elements presented themselves in specific words, tones, gestures, postures and behaviours and gave away that a psychological failure mechanism had started. Unfortunately it later ended in a disaster. By being exposed to such a predictable psychological failure mechanism, the pilot sabotaged his own life. The behaviours displayed during the failure mechanism might have been decoded and consequently an appropriate intervention could have prevented the deadly outcome.

There will also be a brief example of such early warning signals as they showed up and were recorded on the cockpit voice recorder before a crash (5) that caused far more damage.

References

1. http://www.atsb.gov.au/media/28363/sir199604_001.pdfwww.atsb.gov.au/media/28363/sir199604_001.pdf
2. <http://www.hf.faa.gov/docs/508/docs/uavFY04Mishaprpt.pdf>
3. <http://www.nts.gov/publicctn/2002/AAB0203.htm>
4. http://www.bfu.admin.ch/common/pdf/2050_e.pdf
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