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W®rld news
Collision causes highest US aviation death toll
PACIFIC Southwest 727 N533PS
collided with Cessna 172 N7711G near
San Diego Airport at 0902hr Pacific
Daylight Time on September 25. The
aircraft crashed separately into a resi-
dential area, destroying a number of houses. At 151 the death toll is the highest to result from an aircraft acci-dent in the United States. Crew and passengers on the 727 totalled 136, including at least 30 supernumerary crew; one of the latter was a Flying Tiger flight engineer who had been offered a flight in the jump seat. All were killed, as were the two men in the Cessna 172 and an estimated 13 people on the ground.

The impact took place at 2,650ft above sea level and approximately 2*2 miles north-east of the airport. The 727 was heading 090° and the Cessna was on 070°. Both aircraft were down-wind and following a right-hand pattern for an ILS approach to Run-way 27. The 727 was at 155kt, giving an overtaking speed on the Cessna of about 50kt. The aircraft were travelling into a bright sun but visi-bility was restricted by haze. Both crews had been warned of the presence of the other aircraft by air traffic control. The Cessna was struck by the 727's right wing.

The 727, making a scheduled flight from Sacramento via Los Angeles, had been handed over by the Miramar air traffic control centre to San Diego tower once the captain had indicated that the aircraft could be positioned to the runway visually. Miramar con-tinued to receive a return, including height information, from the 727's transponder and was also receiving data from the similarly equipped Cessna 172. Automatic conflict-alert-ing should have given the Miramar controllers 40sec of warning, but the equipment apparently malfunctioned and sounded the alert only 17sec be-fore impact. The centre was unable to relay a warning through the San Diego controllers in that time.

The US National Transportation Safety Board stresses that pilot ex-perience is not regarded as a factor in the accident. The Cessna 172, belong-ing to Gibbs Flite Centre of nearby Montgomery Field, was being used for an instrument training flight. Both pilots on board held commercial licences; the instructor had 4,300-hr and the student 407hr. The captain of the 727 had 14,382hr and his first officer about 10,000hr. The Cessna car-

ried full airways avionics, including transponder with height readout, and the equipment was serviceable. NTS© tells Flight that it has screened 160l

witnesses who are to be
questioned in detail in an effort to establish the flightpaths of the two aircraft. The board is interviewing controllers and is to build a full-size mock-up of the starboard wing of a 727, with which it hopes to establish the exact impact angles. A public hearing into the accident will be held in San Diego, probably in about eight weeks' time.

PSA is insured largely in London, and the $7-5 million hull value of the

727 was paid the day after the acci-dent. Third-party claims are expected to be high in view of the fatalities and damage on the ground. Expert opinion suggests that up to $50 million may be paid out. Out-of-court settlements are expected.
The last collision in American air-space to result in the death of airline passengers happened on June 29, 1972, when a North Central Convair 580 and an Air Wisconsin Twin Otter collided, killing eight passengers and five crew members. On July 6, 1971, a Hughes Air West DC-9 and a USAF F-4B collided over California, killing 44 passengers.

Airbus talks deadlocked

over British veto rights
NEGOTIATIONS between the UK and
France over British re-entry to the
Airbus consortium have hit a new
snag. The French are apparently in-
sisting that if the UK joins Airbus it
should do so as a junior partner, with no right of veto over the French and Germans on major issues such as the price of aircraft. Britain refuses to accept such a condition, seeing this as too high a price for its 20 per cent share in the consortium.

This new deadlock emerged last week after talks in Paris between UK Industry Minister Eric Varley and French Transport Minister Joel le Theule. The ministers had apparently overcome the problem of British Air-ways' reluctance to order either the A300 or the A310, with the French modifying their previously hard line on this issue. Instead of requiring a British Airways order, they are willing to accept an undertaking that if BA does have a requirement for an Air-bus-type aircraft in the future, then the airline will order the European aircraft. BA's order for the Boeing 757 is no longer seen as a rebuff to Airbus: the French have come round to the point of view that the Boeing narrow-body is not a direct competi-tor to the A310.

Details of Britain financial contri-bution to Airbus also emerged last week. According to a report in the London Financial Times, the total cost will come to £325 million spread over a period of four to five years. This comprises a £25 million entry fee, £50

million for the UK's share of A310 de-velopment costs; and a £250 million contribution to the common central costs of the Airbus consortium. The last sum would come out of British Aerospace resources. The Department of Trade confirms that the total is roughly correct but refuses to com-ment on the breakdown.

Problem
TWENTY-FOUR de Havilland Canada Twin Otters, including another 10 for Libya, were sold in the three months up to August 31. The company is discussing the sale of up to 20 Dash 7s with six airlines. Buffalo sales stand at 97, and the total DHC pro-duction backlog is worth some $120 million, the company tells Flight. The immediate future is cloudy, how-ever, since office staff stopped work recently to join factory employees who have been on strike since July
10. More than 3,100 of the 4,200 work-force are now on strike over a pay claim.
In a letter to customers, DHC presi-dent John Sandford says that the company cannot predict when produc-tion will return to normal, or what effect the strike will have on delivery dates. But DHC remains optimistic that an early settlement will be reached.

Two years of national anti-inflation policies have whetted appetites among both plant and office staff, whose