

= Eastern Air Lines Flight 663 =

Eastern Air Lines Flight 663 was a scheduled domestic passenger flight from Boston , Massachusetts , to Atlanta , Georgia , with scheduled stopovers at John F. Kennedy International Airport , New York ; Richmond , Virginia ; Charlotte , North Carolina ; and Greenville , South Carolina . On the night of February 8 , 1965 , the aircraft serving the flight , a Douglas DC @-@ 7 , crashed near Jones Beach State Park , New York , just after taking off from JFK Airport . All 79 passengers and five crew aboard perished .

National Transportation Safety Board ( NTSB ) and Civil Aeronautics Board ( CAB ) investigations determined that evasive maneuvers undertaken by Flight 663 to avoid an oncoming Pan Am Boeing 707 caused the pilot to suffer spatial disorientation and lose control of the aircraft . The accident is the third @-@ worst accident involving a DC @-@ 7 .

= = Flight history = =

The Douglas DC @-@ 7 serving Flight 663 made its first flight in 1958 , and had subsequently accumulated a total of 18 @,@ 500 hours of flight time . It was piloted by Captain Frederick R. Carson , 41 , who had been employed by Eastern Air Lines for 19 years and who had accumulated 12 @,@ 607 hours of flight time . His copilot , First Officer Edward R. Dunn , 41 , a nine @-@ year veteran of Eastern Airlines , had 8 @,@ 550 hours of flight time . The flight engineer was Douglas C. Mitchell , 24 , with two years ' employment and 407 pilot hours and 141 hours flight engineer time . All had passed proficiency checks with the DC @-@ 7B aircraft . The two flight attendants aboard were Linda Lord and Judith Durkin .

The flight from Logan International Airport in Boston , Massachusetts , to John F. Kennedy International Airport , in New York , proceeded normally . Flight 663 departed JFK at 6 : 20 p.m. EDT on an instrument flight rules ( IFR ) clearance to Byrd Field ( now Richmond International Airport ) , in Richmond , Virginia . Take @-@ off proceeded normally , and the airport control @-@ tower prepared to hand over control to the New York Air Route Traffic Control Center ( ARTCC ) on Long Island , noting that Flight 663 was executing a Dutch seven departure , a routine takeoff procedure that required a series of turns over the Atlantic Ocean in order to avoid flying over New York City . The New York ARTCC responded with the information that Pan American Airways Flight 212 , a Boeing 707 , was descending to 4 @,@ 000 feet ( 1 @,@ 200 m ) in the same airspace .

Though the control tower responded that Flight 663 was at a higher altitude than Flight 212 , it was , in fact , lower . Subsequently , the control tower radioed the Pan Am flight that there was traffic in his airspace at 11 o 'clock , six miles away travelling southeast of Pam Am 's position , climbing above 3 @,@ 000 feet ( 910 m ) . Pan Am 212 acknowledged . Air traffic control then radioed Flight 663 a similar advisory : at 2 o 'clock , five miles away travelling , below Flight 663 's position . In reality , the traffic , Pan Am 212 , was above Flight 663 , descending from 5 @,@ 000 feet ( 1 @,@ 500 m ) . Captain Carson acknowledged that he saw the traffic , that he was beginning to turn into the Dutch seven departure , and signed off , saying , good night .

Flight 663 's radioed good night at 6 : 25 p.m. was the last transmission received from the flight .

= = Crash = =

The night of February 8 was dark , with no visible moon or stars , and no visible horizon . As the two airliners approached similar positions , their pilots had no points of reference with which to determine actual separation distance or position . Flight 663 's departure turn , and Pan Am 's subsequent turn left to its assigned heading , had placed the two aircraft on an apparent collision course . The Boeing rolled right and initiated a descent in an attempt to avoid a collision . In response , Eastern 663 initiated an extreme right turn in order to pass safely . The captain of Pan Am 212 later estimated that the two aircraft had passed between 200 and 500 feet ( 60 and 150 m ) of each other , while the first officer estimated that the distance was only 200 to 300 feet ( 60 to 90 m ) .

Flight 663 was unable to recover from its unusually steep bank and plunged into the icy water of the Atlantic Ocean , where it exploded with bright orange flames . The Pan American 707 was the first to relay news of the crash , as it was receiving permission to land . Air Canada Flight 627 , which had departed a few minutes prior to Flight 663 , also radioed news of an explosion in the water .

After the initial explosion , the wrecked aircraft sank to the bottom of 75 feet ( 23 m ) of water . Numerous air crews , including Pan Am 212 , Air Canada 627 , and Braniff Airlines Flight 5 , radioed ATC controllers in the area with news of an explosion . The aircraft broke up upon impact , and was destroyed . All five crewmembers and 79 passengers died on impact .

= = Aftermath and investigation = =

Fifteen ships , accompanied by eleven helicopters and numerous rescue divers converged on the scene of the crash in hopes of rendering aid to survivors . Two hours after impact , debris began floating up to the surface . By sunrise , seven bodies had been recovered ; three more were discovered in the course of the following three days . In locating the wreckage , the United States Navy provided underwater sonar to assist with the operation . Thirteen Coast Guard vessels helped searching the shores of Long Island and provided salvage efforts . Rescue workers and volunteers scoured 40 miles ( 64 km ) of beaches , collecting debris that washed ashore .

The Civil Aeronautics Board ( CAB ) investigated the accident . The DC @-@ 7 was not required to be equipped with a flight recorder , which would have automatically recorded the pilots ' every control input . Thus , the CAB was forced to rely on witness testimony , radio recordings , and a best guess based on experience . Nevertheless , the CAB determined that the evasive maneuvers taken by the pilot of Flight 663 in order to avoid the oncoming Pan Am jet caused spatial disorientation . The disorientation , coupled with the extreme maneuver , made it impossible for the pilot to recover from the roll in the few seconds remaining before the DC @-@ 7 crashed into the Atlantic Ocean . The CAB also determined that Captain Carson had neither the time nor adequate information to assess Flight 663 's position relative to Pan Am 212 and , given the illusion of a collision course , he had acted appropriately in initiating evasive maneuvers . The CAB made no recommendations in the final accident report . Although early news reports reported the near miss of Flights 663 and 212 , the FAA denied that there was ever any danger of a collision .

At that time , the crash of Flight 663 was the fifth worst aviation accident to have occurred in the United States . It was and remains the third deadliest crash of a DC @-@ 7 ( after Caledonian Airways Flight 153 and Northwest Airlines Flight 293 ) , and is the 25th deadliest single @-@ plane accident to have occurred in the United States .