



# MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

## Military Aircraft Accident Summaries

4/88

May 9, 1988

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT TO ROYAL AIR FORCE  
TORNADO GR1's ZA605 AND ZA611

Date	10 December 1986
Parent airfield	RAF Marham
Place of accident	Near Thorney, Cambridgeshire
Crew	Four
Casualties	Two slightly injured

### CIRCUMSTANCES

1. On 10 December 1986 two Tornados took off from RAF Marham to undertake a night close formation sortie. The leader in ZA605 levelled his aircraft at 6500 ft and the Number 2 (ZA611) levelled at 6000 ft some 2 miles behind. The leader then turned right through 90 degrees, and the number 2 cut the corner to close up. Once the leader was established on the new heading, he cleared the number 2 to join in close formation. Six seconds later, the crew of the lead aircraft (ZA605) felt a severe impact as the number 2 hit them from below and from the right. The lead crew realised that their aircraft was out of control, and so ejected; their aircraft crashed in open farmland and was destroyed. The crew of ZA611 managed to recover their damaged aircraft to RAF Marham.

CAUSE

2. The primary cause of the accident was that the crew of ZA611 failed to establish a stable position behind and below their leader before moving into close formation: as a result, their aircraft was still climbing, was closing faster than either aircrew was aware: their aircraft thus collided with the rear underside of the lead aircraft.

SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

3. Procedures for Tornado night done formation flying have been reviewed and new instructions issued. Modifications are also being made to facilitate the assessment of range in-flight and to improve the effectiveness of Tornado external lighting.

Issued by: Public Relations  
(Royal Air Force)  
Ministry of Defence  
Main Building  
Whitehall  
London SW1A 2HB

Tel: 01-218 3253/3254