

REPORT OF THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD
of the
Investigation of an Accident Involving Aircraft in Air
Carrier Operation

A ground collision accident which occurred at the Municipal Airport, Abilene, Texas, at about 6:40 p.m. on January 21, 1942, resulted in the destruction of two Aeronca airplanes, model 65TL, NC 29424, and NC 34455, and major damage to Aeronca model 65 TAL, NC 36683, all owned by Abilene Aviation School. None of them was occupied. A Douglas DC-3 airplane, NC 21794, owned and operated by American Airlines, Inc., also received major damage. None of the 21 passengers in the Douglas or its crew of three received any injuries. The crew consisted of Captain Henry T. Myers and First Officer Victor E. James, both of whom were properly certificated and appropriately rated, and Stewardess Dorothy Murphy.

The Douglas was making the flight designated by American Airlines as Trip No. 23/4-1, which originated at New York with Los Angeles as its destination. Intermediate stops were scheduled at various points, including Abilene, Texas.

Trip 1 departed from Fort Worth on schedule and proceeded without incident until it reached Abilene. As a normal landing was being completed and while the plane was rolling west on the east-west runway at about 50 miles per hour, its landing lights picked out a military aircraft directly in its path and only 600 or 700 feet away. The military plane was taxiing south to north across the runway, and its camouflaging made it scarcely discernible. Captain Myers slowed down as quickly as possible by use of his brakes, but as this would not have been sufficient to prevent a collision, he unlocked his tail wheel and swerved to the left. This swerve carried him clear of the plane on the runway, but also started a groundloop to the left which he was unable to stop until the Douglas had collided with the three unoccupied Aeroncas, two of which were parked in front of the hangar and the third in the hangar door.

Subsequent investigation disclosed that the military plane on the runway was one of nine which had been refueling near the administration building just south of the east-west runway at the time loud speakers announced the approach and intended landing of Trip 1. The airport manager had intended that the pilots of these nine planes cross the east-west runway at a runway intersection farther west and then return east to a designated parking space north of the east-west runway. However, he did not issue specific instructions as to how these planes should proceed to the parking area.

PROBABLE CAUSE: Action of the pilot of the military plane in taxiing across the path of the air carrier aircraft making a night landing.

- CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:
1. Failure of station manager for the air carrier involved to take precautions to have the runway kept clear pending arrival of the scheduled flight.
 2. Failure of the city airport manager to take proper precautions in handling the Army aircraft on the field at a time when an airline trip was scheduled to arrive.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Darwin Charles Brown
Secretary