

CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD
WASHINGTON

January 23, 1961

To: Members of the Board
From: Deputy Director, Bureau of Safety
Subject: Aircraft Accident - Preliminary Notification
Douglas DC-8, Mexican Registration XA-XAX, Owned and Operated
by Aeronaves de Mexico, New York International Airport,
New York, January 19, 1961

At approximately 2025 e. s. t. January 19, 1961, a Douglas DC-8 Mexican registration XA-XAX, owned and operated by Aeronaves de Mexico as a scheduled passenger flight, crashed and burned while attempting a takeoff from runway 7R at Idlewild International Airport, New York.

On board were 97 passengers and a crew of nine. Captain Gonzales, First Officer Ruiz, Second Officer Alvarez, and Purser Sanchez received fatal injuries with all other persons on board surviving the accident including an Eastern Air Lines check pilot, William Poe, who was seated in the jump seat directly behind the captain.

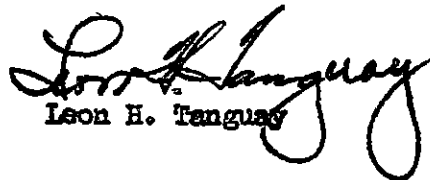
The aircraft wreckage is located in a bare terrain area on the extended centerline for runway 7R and approximately 700 feet beyond the hard surfaced over-run for that runway. The aircraft was completely destroyed by impact and the severe ground fires which followed final impact.

A low pressure system was moving eastward through the middle Atlantic states bringing continuous snow, gusty winds, and low ceilings and visibilities to the New York City area. At 2007 e. s. t. Idlewild reported a precipitation ceiling of 300 feet, sky obscured; visibility one-fourth mile; light snow and fog; surface wind east-northeast 18 knots, gusts to 24 knots; altimeter setting 29.66 inches; runway visual range runway 04 less than 2,000 feet; pressure falling rapidly. The same general conditions had existed for some time prior to the accident and continued to exist for several hours after the accident. At 2000 e. s. t. runways 13R and 31L were NOTAMED as closed and snow removal in process was indicated on runways 4L and 22R. The snow depth at Idlewild was reported by the Weather Bureau as two inches at 1900 e. s. t.

Mr. Charles S. Collar of the Board's Miami office has been assigned as investigator in charge of the investigation assisted by Henry H. Moyers. The following groups have been assigned: Operations - Iessel G. Erickson and Thomas R. Saunders; Witness - John L. McWhorter and Marvin J. Grigg; Structures - John B. Kennedy and Harry H. Black; Powerplants - James H. Lewis and Frank Taylor; Systems - Wesley D. Coven; Human Factors - Daniel J. Seyers and Billy M. Hopper; secretaries on the scene - Miss Phyllis I. Cady, Chicago, and Miss Jacqueline Joyes, Miami. Mr. Robert W. Chrisp has been designated as the hearing officer.

FLA Library

In accordance with ICAO regulations the Board extended the Mexican Government an invitation to participate in the investigation. This invitation was accepted by the Mexican Government and the Director of Mexican Civil Aviation has assigned three of his staff to participate under the direction of Mr. Charles S. Collar, investigator in charge.


Leon H. Tanguay