



NEWS RELEASE

AMERICAN AIRLINES FLIGHT 331 ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION UPDATE

Release #5

August 31, 2010

For Immediate Release

As part of its continuing investigation of the runway excursion of American Airlines flight AA331 in Jamaica, in December 2009, the Jamaica Civil Aviation Authority (JCAA), has put forward the following release. It should be noted that this release contains only factual information.

The Boeing 737-823 aircraft, registration N977AN, operated by American Airlines Inc. as a Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 121 international scheduled passenger flight from Miami, Florida, to Kingston, Jamaica, originated at Miami International Airport at about 8:22 pm eastern standard time (EST) on December 22, 2009. At about 10:22 pm EST the aircraft ran off the eastern end of Runway 12 while landing at the Norman Manley International Airport (MKJP), Kingston.

Instrument Meteorological Conditions prevailed in the area and heavy rain was reported at the airport at the time of the accident. The aircraft was flying on an Instrument Flight Rules Flight Plan.

more

There were 154 persons on board the aircraft, including the pilot, co-pilot and 4 flight attendants. There were no fatalities, but numerous injuries were reported.

According to the Norman Manley Tower Controller, as the aircraft was approaching Jamaica the Automatic Terminal Information Service (ATIS) for MKJP, which relays recorded airport and weather information, was broadcasting Runway 12 as the runway designated for arrivals.

The crew contacted Jamaican Air Traffic Control and requested the Instrument Landing System (ILS) approach for Runway 12. The controller advised the crew of tailwind conditions on Runway 12 and offered them a circling approach for landing on Runway 30. The crew repeated their request for Runway 12 and was subsequently cleared to land on that runway, with the controller further advising the crew that the runway was wet. The Captain, who was the pilot flying, reported that he used the Heads Up Display (HUD) during the approach and landing.

The crew reported that after descending through the cloud cover, they made visual contact with the runway at between 1000 feet and 700 feet above ground level. According to the Flight Data Recorder (FDR), the aircraft was traveling at the Vref (landing) airspeed of 148 knots, with a groundspeed of 162 knots, i.e. with a tailwind component of 14 knots, when the wheels made initial contact at about 4,000 feet down the 8,900-foot runway. The FDR further indicated that the aircraft bounced once, then settled onto the runway; the autobrakes then engaged, and reverse thrust and the spoilers were deployed.

The crew reported that at that point they felt that the aircraft did not decelerate normally, and they subsequently applied maximum manual (pedal) braking. The FDR indicates that the aircraft decelerated normally for an autobrake 3 setting.

more

The FDR indicates that during the landing rollout the aircraft veered to the left of centerline and departed the end of the runway at a groundspeed of 63 knots. Examination of the crash site indicates that the aircraft then exited the runway, went through the perimeter fence, crossed a road, and came to rest on a rock-strewn beach about 175 feet beyond the departure end of Runway 12 and about 40 feet from the water line.

The aircraft's fuselage was broken into three major pieces. The right engine, right inboard aft trailing edge flap and the right main landing gear separated from the aircraft during the accident sequence. The left winglet was almost broken off the wing.

The FDR did not indicate any anomalies or malfunctions with the operation of the brakes, spoilers or thrust reversers. The FDR indicates the rate of deceleration appears normal for a wet runway.

The ground-based navigation and landing aids were evaluated by a check aircraft after the accident, and were determined to be functioning normally.

The flight plan designated Grand Cayman as the alternate airport and the aircraft had sufficient fuel on board to reach that destination.

The aircraft was slightly below the maximum permitted landing weight when it landed in Kingston.

The wreckage of the aircraft remains under the control of the JCAA, through the NTSB, and has been shipped to the USA. There it will be kept in a secure facility and be available for further examination, until such time as it is no longer required for the investigation.

more

An evaluation of the runway surface conditions at the time of landing is in progress, to determine the effect of this on the braking forces. To this point in the investigation, no mechanical problems have been found with any aspect of the aircraft.

The aircraft performance group has commenced work on that part of the investigation.

Flight Operations Investigators went to American Airlines HQ in Dallas from 18 to 23 January, 2010 to conduct interviews with relevant operational personnel there. Other information such as training programs and records, human performance information, dispatch, ATC, AA Station at NMIA, etc. continues to be gathered.

Airworthiness Investigators attended the teardown and examination of brakes and other relevant components, along with NTSB and other parties.

CVR transcript and tape has been completed and delivered to the JCAA.

The JCAA continues its investigation of this event, and will provide additional updates as progress is made.

30

Contact: Information Services Department
(876) 501-9522, (876)-823-7135 or (876)836-5900
Jamaica Civil Aviation Authority
4 Winchester Rd
Kingston 10