

# Did We Really Lose an Engine?

By Lt. Will Christian

The mission was easy: depart Naples, fly out to the boat, pick up the admiral, and fly him and his staff to NAS Sigonella. The weather was nice, and the wind was light. It was a beautiful day to fly.

After preflight, we strapped in and started the checklist. As we taxied our H-3, we noted the wind was out of the west at 6 knots. Great, we'd have a slight head wind coming back with the code on board. No worries, at least it was only 6 knots.

After we were airborne, I dialed in the ship's TACAN. Right away, it locked on, and, sure enough, the ship was where it said it was going to be—45 miles due east of NAS Sigonella. I gave the controls to the copilot and dialed in the frequencies for the ship and Red Crown.

After feet wet, we climbed to 1,000 feet and flew max cruise. Approximately 25 miles out, just over halfway there, I felt a sudden left yaw. I scanned the gauges and saw the No. 1 torque was at 0, and the Ng and T5 reflected the ground-idle setting. Instinctively, I reached for the speed selectors. At the same time, I heard the crew chief yell for full power. I pushed the speed selectors full forward but noticed the No. 1 engine didn't respond to this movement, indicating an Ng-signal loss to the fuel-control unit.

When we completed the immediate-action steps, I broke out the checklist. The copilot turned toward NAS Sigonella and told the ship of our situation. Meanwhile, I declared an emergency to ATC, something I never thought I would do. I then got radar vectors to NAS Sigonella.

The flight back felt like time stood still. I glanced back to see what the crew was doing and observed our second crewman backing up

our checklist items with the NATOPS. Our crew chief stood between us, meticulously scanning the gauges to make sure we didn't miss anything and nothing else was wrong with the aircraft.

We elected to do a run-on landing. The landing checklist was completed when we were feet dry. We breathed a sigh of relief when the runway was in sight. It wasn't until after we landed that I realized things could have been a lot worse. We could have experienced a high-speed shaft failure that could have created compound emergencies. Crew-resource management was excellent, and staying calm made the flight back much easier than it actually was.

We landed without further incident. Losing an engine, especially over water and halfway to your destination, was no laughing matter. Experiencing hundreds of simulated emergencies never really prepares you 100 percent for a real emergency. It's like driving a car and blowing a tire; you never plan on it—it just happens. Anticipation and foresight will give you an advantage when an emergency occurs. What you do during the emergency is what counts. Execute your NATOPS procedures, remain calm, delegate responsibilities, and involve your crew to increase your chances of survival. 🦅

Lt. Christian flies with HC-2 Det 1.

*We cannot overemphasize Lt. Christian's comments about executing NATOPS procedures. The Naval Safety Center's database has many examples of circumstances where an emergency occurred and the aircrew did not execute NATOPS procedures or did not do them completely. The end result: what should have been a hazrep became a Class A mishap.—Ed.*