

0. KLM 4805: PRESSURE TO LEAVE - Story Preface

1. POTENTIAL FOR DISASTER

2. KLM 4805: PRESSURE TO LEAVE

3. PAN AM 1736: MISSED EXIT

4. UNAUTHORIZED TAKE-OFF

5. TOO LATE

6. THE CRASH

7. INFERNO



This image depicts KLM Boeing 747-200B (PH-BUF), the actual plane involved in the Tenerife crash flying, from Tenerife on 27 March 1977, as KLM 4805. The name of the plane was "The Rhine," as noted on its starboard side, near the nose. The photo is by "clipperarctic" and was taken before 1977. [Click here](#) for a greatly expanded view. Image online via Wikimedia Commons; License: [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

When Pan Am 1736 ("Clipper 1736") landed at Tenerife (about 30 minutes after KLM 4805 had arrived), the weather was clear and sunny. It was shortly after 2 p.m. local time.

Pilots and passengers diverted to [Tenerife](#) hoped they would soon be on their way to Las Palmas. Soon after Flight 1736 landed at Tenerife, the all-clear signal was given from Las Palmas. Many smaller aircraft were able to take off.

With its passengers still on board, the Pan American Clipper would also have been able to make a quick departure - except for one major problem. The KLM plane was [blocking](#) the holding area exit to the runway, and all *its* passengers were inside [the terminal](#).

Worse, Las Palmas no longer had an available gate for the KLM plane. It would be awhile before Flight 4805 and the 248 people on board could leave.

As the afternoon wore on, the weather deteriorated. Visibility became so bad no one in the tower could see planes on the tarmac.

[Captain van Zanten](#) was concerned. His work day would not be over when he finally arrived at Las Palmas. He and his crew needed to complete the round trip. The last leg of their flight, KLM 4806, would return to Amsterdam with passengers waiting at Las Palmas.

If KLM 4805 could not take off quickly [from](#) Tenerife, fully loaded with fuel to make the round trip, van Zanten would not be able to return the waiting Las Palmas passengers to Amsterdam that night. Under Dutch law, flight crews who exceeded their authorized duty time could be prosecuted.

The pressure was on to leave immediately when the weather cleared.

Meanwhile, Pan Am 1736 was hemmed in. Its pilots and passengers were most unhappy.

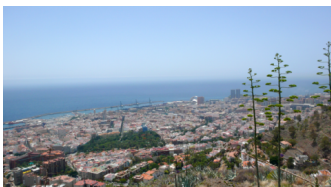
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Media Stream

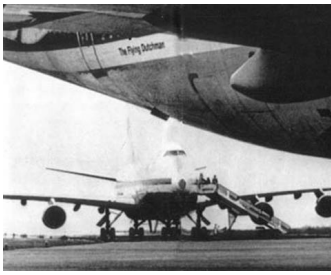


[Santa Cruz de Tenerife](#)

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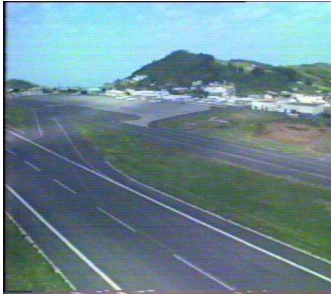


Pan Am 1736 and KLM 4805 at Tenerife Before the Crash

Image online, courtesy project-tenerife.com, a dutch-language website.

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The Old Terminal at Los Rodeos Airport, Tenerife

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KLM Captain Jacob van Zanten

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Runway at Tenerife

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