

0. PAN AM 1736: MISSED EXIT - Story Preface

1. POTENTIAL FOR DISASTER

2. KLM 4805: PRESSURE TO LEAVE

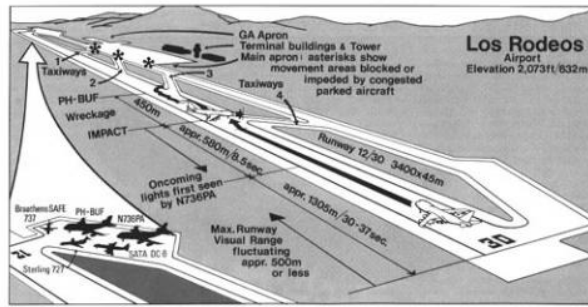
3. PAN AM 1736: MISSED EXIT

4. UNAUTHORIZED TAKE-OFF

5. TOO LATE

6. THE CRASH

7. INFERNO



North facing aerial perspective of Los Rodeos Airport, Tenerife, with positions of key events leading to the accident indicated. The reader should not be deceived by the drawing's clarity - horizontal visibility at the time was 500 metres or less in fog. (Matthew Tesch)

As the Pan Am 747, known as "Clipper 1736," was making its way in a "back taxi" on Runway 30, its crew was instructed to turn off at Exit C3. Visibility was bad, however, and the Pan Am crew missed the exit. This drawing, by Matthew Tesch, depicts the runway and Exit C3.

Of the 396 passengers and crew aboard the Pan Am plane, 275 had boarded in Los Angeles. On their way to a Canary Islands cruise ship, the LA passengers were flown to New York City where more passengers and a new crew boarded the jumbo jet.

By the time their plane was blocked by KLM's 747, the LA passengers had been traveling about 13 hours.

Captain Victor Grubbs was in command of Clipper 1736 (the plane's call sign). He was assisted by First Officer Robert Bragg and Flight Engineer George Warns. Wanting to leave leave Tenerife, Bragg and Warns measured the distance behind the refueling KLM plane.

They confirmed what Captain Grubbs believed: There was not enough maneuvering room for Clipper 1736.

When Las Palmas radioed Tenerife that a gate was finally available for the KLM plane, Captain van Zanten was given permission to start his engines. The big jet was now fully loaded with enough fuel to fly to Amsterdam, after it dropped off and picked up passengers at Las Palmas.

KLM 4805 was cleared to commence a "back taxi" down active "Runway 30" where it would do a 180-degree turn at the end, to position for take-off.

The Pan Am flight was also given clearance to start engines. Captain Grubbs wanted to hold until after the KLM jet had taken off, but ground control instructed the Pan Am crew to ALSO commence a back taxi down Runway 30.

Clipper 1736 was instructed to turn off the active runway on exit C3. That turn would have put the Pan Am 747 on the taxiway where it would hold for its turn to take off. But the Pan Am crew missed the designated exit.

As the Pan Am plane continued toward exit C-4, the KLM jet had ALREADY made its 180-degree turn at the end of the runway. Both planes were now facing each other. Due to bad weather, neither crew could see the other plane.

At least, not yet.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/PAN-AM-1736-MISSED-EXIT-Tenerife-Deadliest-Air-Accident>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/PAN-AM-1736-MISSED-EXIT-Tenerife-Deadliest-Air-Accident>



Victor Grubbs, Captain of Pan Am

Image online, courtesy everythingpanam.com website.

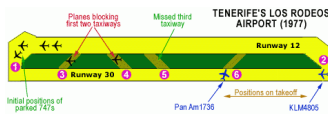
View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Victor-Grubbs-Captain-of-Pan-Am->



Pan Am 1736 First Officer Robert Bragg

Image online, courtesy the project-tenerife.com website.

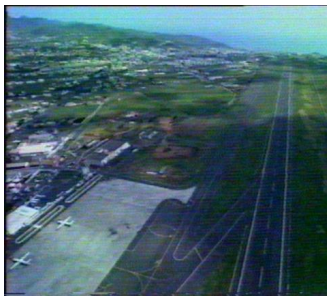
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Position of 747s Before KLM's Take-off

Image online, courtesy the Aviation Sri Lanka website.

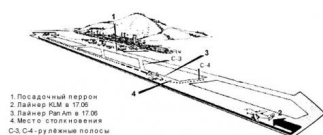
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The Missed Exit

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Planes Face Each Other on the Active Runway

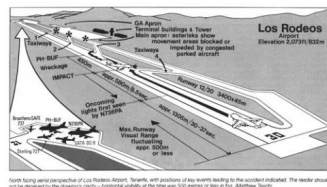
Dialogue between ground control and Pan Am 1736 from the official Spanish investigation (modified for ease-of-use here).

Robert Bragg quote from the transcript of NOVA's documentary, *The Deadliest Plane Crash*.

The above image is from a Russian-language web site on the Tenerife disaster.

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Aviation's Deadliest Aircraft Accident: Collision at Tenerife

Online, via YouTube.

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