



## The 'Aviation Tales' Newsletter: September 2024.

So far, we have had an: excellent / windy / wet / sunny but positive start to our Kapiti Coast Springtime.



A very different 'windsock' for especially "high wind" areas!

### Recent Aviation News.



Goodness' what a disaster and this aircraft obviously fell straight out of the sky.

Brazilian investigators on Saturday began analysing the black boxes from a São Paulo-bound flight to try to understand why the passenger plane fell from 17,000 feet on Friday, in a crash that killed all 62 on board.

But to aviation ‘experts’ around the world who watched the videos showing the 89-foot plane spinning slowly as it plummeted before crashing almost directly on its belly, the question of what had happened was simple to answer: The plane had stalled.

In other words, the plane’s wings had lost the lift needed to keep the aircraft aloft, causing it to stop flying and start falling.

“You can’t get into a spin without stalling,” said John Cox, an airline pilot for 25 years who now aids plane crash investigations. “It’s A plus B equals C.”

The question of why Flight 2283 might have stalled, however, remained a mystery:

Did it lose significant speed? Did its nose pitch up too high? Did ice build-up on its wings?

Did an engine fail? Was its stall-warning system working? Were the two pilots tired or distracted?

“The main thing we know is that it’s never one thing,” said Thomas Anthony, director of the aviation safety programme at the University of Southern California.

The plane was carrying 58 passengers and four crew members on the nearly two-hour scheduled flight from Cascavel, Brazil, to São Paulo on Friday when it crashed in a gated community in the small city of Vinhedo, shortly before reaching its destination.

No one on the ground was injured.



An example of a VOEPASS ATR-72 from the same fleet.

Crash investigators in Brazil said on Saturday that they had recovered the plane’s two black boxes, one containing flight data and the other recordings from the cockpit.

They are working diligently to extract flight information from them.

## Aviation Personalities / Stories from the past.

### Viktor Belenko (Who was this young man?)



Many years ago, on 6th September 1976, a young ‘Soviet’ fighter pilot flew south in what was then his country's newest and most secretive MiG-25P fighter interceptor over the Sea of Japan and landed at a small civilian airport near Hakodate on the island of Hokkaido.

Viktor immediately requested to be given political asylum in the United States.



Belenko’s Mig -25 aircraft on Japanese soil.

“As we talked about airplanes and aviation hijinks, our conversation turned to Belenko himself.

He assured me that his daredevil Cold War escape from the Soviet Union was as dramatic as I’d heard. He was right. These days, fewer people remember him, let alone the details surrounding his wild flight to freedom.”

*An excerpt from a story by Susan Katz Keating: Aviation Commentator*

Viktor Belenko had been a respected pilot with the Soviet Air Defence Forces, but by 1976, he had wanted to leave the Soviet Union. At the time, he was based way out east, near Vladivostok, being part of the 11th Air Army.

It is worth noting that the Soviet Air Defence Forces were a separate aerial branch from the Soviet Air Force, and that its members were an elite and trusted band. As such, Belenko, too, would be trusted. So much so, that when his blood pressure was elevated on the morning he planned to escape, the flight surgeon believed Belenko when he said he wasn’t nervous about anything, and that his BP was up because he’d been exercising!

Lieutenant Viktor Ivanovich Belenko at the time was learning to fly the new Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-25 supersonic interceptor jet. Western analysts had not yet examined a real “Foxbat,” and considered it to be a highly capable threat to NATO aircraft.

The Secretary of the Air Force, Robert Seamans, had said the MiG-25 was “probably the best interceptor in production in the world today.”

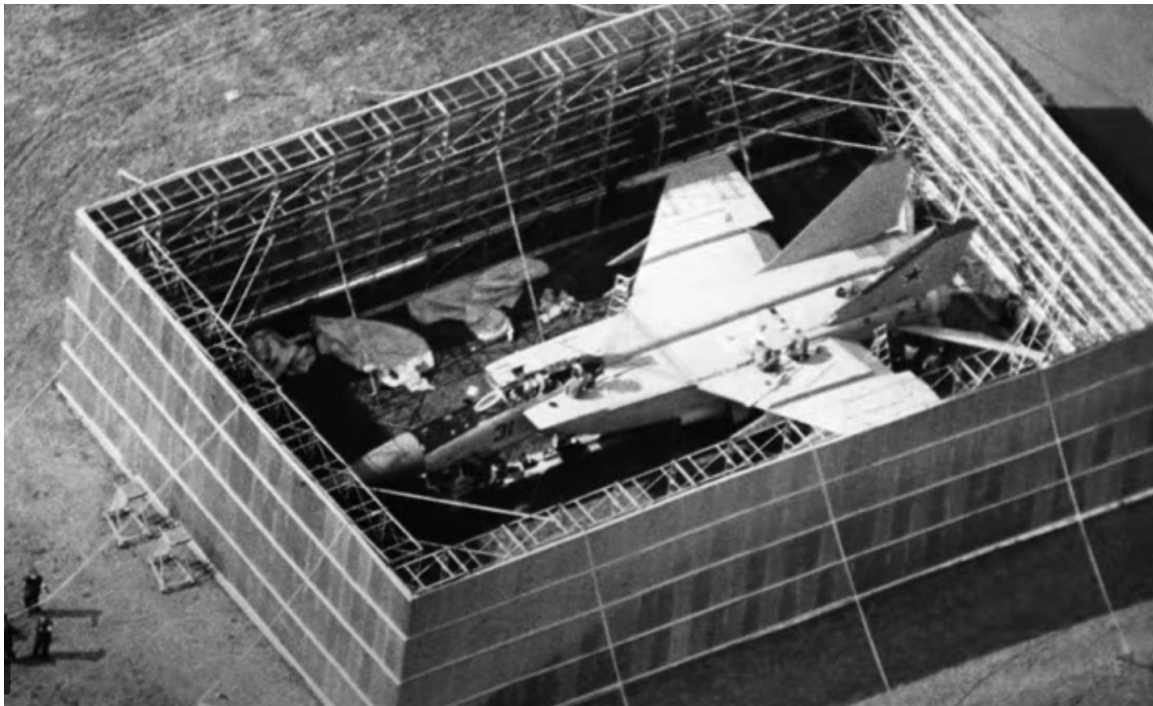
The 29-year-old Belenko correctly assumed that the United States would be happy to obtain a ‘Foxbat’.

Viktor planned to deliver one in person, in exchange for asylum. However this large jet was a voracious consumer of fuel and in theory could just reach an airfield in Japan.

The escape would be a gamble, but Belenko went for it.

The aircraft was ‘impounded’ and then taken apart and shipped back to the Soviet Union.

The government of Japan sent Moscow a bill for \$40,000, to cover shipping, along with damage to the airport runway. Moscow in turn asked for \$10 million, to cover losses.



According to reports, neither side paid the other!

“That day when Belenko and I met at the Reno Air Races, he was jovial, happy, and full of jokes. I asked him if he was glad, he defected.”

Of course! he grinned. “I have a good life here in ‘our country’, the United States of America.”

An excerpt from a story by Susan Katz Keating: Aviation Commentator

Viktor Belenko passed away during September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

## Restoration News

### A 'Red Arrows' Folland Gnat to fly in NZ



Photo courtesy of Matt Willcock.

Now being restored to fly here in NZ is Folland Gnat XR987 has been given the registration:

ZK-RAJ (Red Arrows Jet)

A British-built Folland Gnat trainer that flew with the Royal Air Force's famed Red Arrows display team is being restored to fly in New Zealand.

The aircraft, Gnat T.1 XR987, is the first of its kind in New Zealand and is being worked on near Auckland for Matt Wilcock, an airline captain whose love for the type goes back to his childhood.



Photo courtesy of Rachelle Willcock

Matt Wilcock became hooked on aviation after his parents gave him an aviation picture book on his seventh birthday, the cover of which featured several Red Arrows Gnats.

The Folland Gnat; XR987 that will fly with the New Zealand civil registration ZK-RAJ, first took-off during May 15, 1964.

This aircraft was operated by the RAF and was flown by both the Yellowjacks and the Red Arrows demonstration teams before being retired from RAF service in 1979.

A period in open storage in the UK followed and by December 1995 this aircraft had reached the U.S. where it flew for some years wearing the famous Red Arrows paint scheme.

After arriving in New Zealand the aircraft spent some time on public display at the Classic Flyers NZ museum at Tauranga before heading to Paul Levitt's Aero Restoration facility south of Auckland for recommissioning after several years out of the sky.

### **Paul Levitt's Aero Restoration facility.**

*Aero R* is based in Auckland New Zealand, specializing in sheet metal fabrication, full rebuild, restoration and maintenance of aircraft structures and aircraft systems.

Originally from the UK, 'Aero R' engineer and director, Paul Levitt moved to New Zealand 20 years ago bringing with him his expertise, skills and knowledge in rebuilding Warbird and Vintage aircraft. Paul has over 25 years of experience in the aircraft restoration business.

Paul can be contacted on: 021 030 0563 ([info@aerorestoration.co.nz](mailto:info@aerorestoration.co.nz))



Folland Gnat XR987 sporting the Red Arrows livery of the day.

## Tailpiece



After the Mig-25 appeared in public for the first time in July 1967 during a record-setting spree, it appeared the Soviets had a wonder weapon that could match the best in the West.

The “Foxbat” carved its niche in aviation history with a blend of awe and mystery.

There was a certain amount of “Foxbat hysteria” and it’s presence did achieve its mission in one way, though. It kept the SR-71 out of Soviet airspace for several years while the allies pondered the big MiG’s true capabilities.

The unexpected arrival Viktor Belenko and his Mig-25 was an unexpected gift the ‘West.’

- Do you have any interesting aviation topics you would like mentioned in future newsletter edition?
- Have any of the articles you have read in this newsletter edition require further explanation?

### **This month’s motivational statement:**

“There are no shortcuts to any place worth going”

Beverly Pepper.

The ‘Aviation Tales’ newsletter is produced monthly

For further information and services

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