An Aircraft Move Isn't Routine

By AD1(AW) Michael Gnacinski

The day began with a 0630 shift change. An SH-60B from Det 4—dubbed Warlord 14—was undergoing a phase A, and each workcenter received a passdown on required maintenance actions. It wouldn't take long for a normal day to go crazy.

The phase coordinator believed the aircraft should be on deck, with rotors spread, to work on the remaining items. The mechs needed to service the tail and intermediate gearboxes, and the AEs had to do stabilator checks. These maintenance actions would take most of the remaining time to complete, so the phase coordinator decided to move Warlord 14 to the flight deck.

The detachment prepared to move the aircraft: The move team assembled for a quick brief; communications were established with the bridge; and the flight-deck director (FDD) got permission to traverse the SH-60B onto the flight deck. After the move team was in place, the FDD began a walk around, verifying it was safe to move the helo.

After finishing the safety checks, the FDD directed the team to remove the chocks and chains. The aircraft clearance then was verified, and the FDD signaled the brake rider to release brakes. The operator of the rapid-securing device (RSD) began to move the aircraft aft. About one foot of movement later, the FDD heard an unusual pop that seemed to come from the starboard side of the aircraft. Sensing something out of normal, the FDD told the RSD operator to stop. He then called for brakes, chocks and chains. After a quick walk around, the FDD discovered the starboard landing-gear mainmount was skewed at an unusual angle.

The FDD immediately called for additional chains on the aircraft highpoints and tail section, removed unnecessary personnel from the hangar, and requested the officer of the deck to maintain course and speed until the aircraft fully could be secured.

Taking a closer look at the starboard mainmount, the FDD and the starboard chock-and-chain man found the starboard drag-beam assembly had fractured around the jack-pad bolt, splitting the beam in two. The aircraft was secured, and jacks were installed to prevent further damage to the aircraft.

The day had started with what should have been a routine move and now served to reenforce a sound maintenance practice: Aircraft moves are not routine. The dynamics found in a shipboard environment make any aircraft move a potentially dangerous job. Aviation-safety procedures are in place to prevent injury to personnel and damage to our assets.

Vigilance by each member of a move team is the key to avoiding mishaps. This FDD trusted his instincts and stopped an aircraft move when it didn't seem normal. A component on Warlord 14 failed, and a trained and briefed move team quickly responded, preventing what could have been a more serious mishap.

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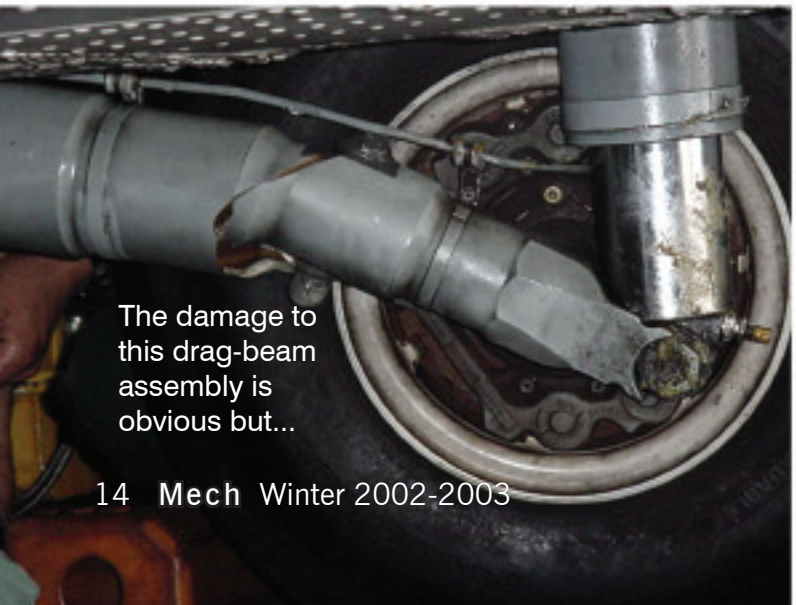

The damage to this drag-beam assembly is obvious but...

We're fortunate it wasn't worse.