

# The Strange Incident of HK-919P

written by Mario Overall | March 23, 2018



During the night of Sunday, May 16, 1999, a twin-engine Cessna 310, flown by drug traffickers, had to make an “emergency” landing at La Aurora International Airport in Guatemala City.

It all began when, at approximately 7:30 PM (local time), an aircraft later identified as a Cessna 310 flew over La Aurora from west to east at a very low altitude (reportedly 500 feet or less) without any navigation lights on. Immediately afterward, the plane made a turn to the north and performed a low pass over the airport runway, this time from north to south. As the aircraft passed the end of runway 19 and flew over the Santa Fe neighborhood, a Continental Airlines Boeing 737 had established its final approach to that same runway, prompting the La Aurora tower to turn on the runway lights. Shortly after the runway lights were activated, the Cessna pilot executed a sudden maneuver, directing the aircraft back towards the airport and skillfully touching down on runway 01, but setting the airplane in a collision course with the approaching 737!

In any case, the Cessna pilot managed to stop the aircraft right in front of the hangars of the firm Aviones Comerciales -AVCOM- and both he and his accomplice abandoned the airplane in the middle of the runway. The occupants fled towards the hangars, looking desperately for an exit to the street on the east side of the airport. After a few minutes, the pair managed to get out of the airport through the gate close to the club “Círculo Aéreo”, and caught a taxi heading south on Hincapié Avenue. However, to their misfortune, a few hundred meters ahead, the car was stopped at a checkpoint by the National Civil Police. As expected, the individuals were arrested on the spot, mainly due to inconsistencies in their alibis and lack of identification documents.

Meanwhile, the 737 landed normally, but as the crew was in the process of slowing down the aircraft, they noticed the abandoned Cessna and, according to eyewitnesses, they performed a sharp maneuver to avoid hitting the other plane, to the point where smoke was seen coming from the main landing gear tires, while the right wing nearly touched the pavement. In the end, the crew managed to stop the 737 and taxied to the end of the runway, where they notified the tower about what just had happened. Surprisingly, it was only at that moment

that the tower personnel became aware of the abandoned Cessna in the middle of the runway! On his part, the captain of the 737 refused to move the aircraft an inch further, so a towing vehicle had to be dispatched to bring it to the airport terminal.

Shortly after, the National Civil Police and Anti-Narcotics agents arrived at the abandoned aircraft. After some difficulties, they managed to open the door, discovering 500 kilograms of what was later determined to be cocaine. The arrested individuals were taken to the airplane, and one of them provided a key that opened the cargo compartment on the wing of the Cessna, where an additional load of cocaine was found.

As mentioned before, the aircraft was a twin-engine Cessna 310, painted white and turquoise, registered with the Colombian identification HK-919P. However, in order to conceal the true identity of the aircraft, a false registration N147BJ had been painted on it.

This type of aircraft has a range of approximately 2,400 km (enough to fly from Cali to Guatemala, which is supposedly where it had taken off from). However, it has been discovered that many of the aircraft used by drug traffickers have some kind of homemade fuel replenishment system installed, which violates the safety regulations of many countries.

This unprecedented incident, despite receiving limited news coverage, drew the attention of aviation enthusiasts in the country. It also raised questions about aviation security in Guatemala since the radar used at La Aurora at that time (a small 'Elta' in service since 1977) should have been able to detect the intruding aircraft. As usual, rumors circulated that the radar had been intentionally turned off during the incident. However, we will likely never know what really happened.