

## Faro survivor: “There is justice now, but we remain losers”

<https://www.mbs.news/2020/01/faro-survivor-there-is-justice-now-but-we-remain-losers.html>

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Many tears have shed in Maassluis since the verdict of the court in The Hague on Wednesday about the plane crash at Faro in Portugal in 1992. “We did not dare hope, it is unbelievable,” sighs Corrie Vroombout (63). from Maassluis. She was in the disaster machine with her husband Iem (67) and their only daughter Brenda. Together they would spend Christmas there. Brenda (14) did not survive the disaster.

Vroombout: „We have fought for 26 years for justice. No one has ever dared to tell us that mistakes have been made. We are always portrayed as unbelievable. Now the judge says this. Our fight has not been for nothing. ”

What mainly concerns her is the question of the cause of the disaster. “We wanted to get rid of the story that the cause was only the wind. We succeeded. We were not interested in winning from all instances. We remain losers. But there is justice now. “

### **Higher compensation**

The court ruled Wednesday in a protracted civil case a remarkable verdict on the plane crash in Faro; in which 54 passengers, all Dutch, and two crew members were killed and 106 people were injured. The court then ruled that the then Council for Aviation, which investigated the accident, acted ‘negligently and unlawfully’.

For example, the Council has claimed “too firmly” that a suddenly changing wind, a so-called *windshear*, was the main cause, and not the actions of the crew. In addition, the Council has been ‘negligent’ by not saying that its findings were not shared by the Portuguese Research Council. It assigned a greater role to human error.

This ‘unlawful’ action by the Council deprived victims and survivors of the chance of higher compensation at the time, according to the court. “The state must therefore still compensate 20 percent of the damage that plaintiffs have not yet received from Martinair.”

### **“Press and drop”**

“We were never concerned about the money,” says Corrie Vroombout. That the state is liable for this damage? So be it. Much more important to them is that a judge finally does not exclusively believe in the reading that only the bad weather in Faro caused the crash. Just like Martinair boss Martin Schröder and the Aviation Council have always told them.

The victims and relatives attach much more value to what aviation expert Harry Horlings has put forward after years of extensive research: that the aviation authorities have lied about a series of incorrect estimates that the crew at the time made, perhaps under pressure from Martinair’s corporate culture. Horlings: „They should not have landed. They should have waited until the shower was over. Or they should have moved to Lisbon. That would have taken time, and the use of buses for passengers. The atmosphere at Martinair was: press and drop. Anyone who did not do that would get Martin Schröder. “

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## Sensible moments

In this judgment, the court does not rule on the precise circumstances of the accident. It is clear, however, that the captain and the co-pilot in the cockpit must have gone through sensible moments. Horlings, former head of test flights for the Royal Netherlands Air Force: “The biggest mistake the crew made was that there was no response to traffic control reports that the runway was under water, *flooded*. In that case you can only land if the crosswind is less than five knots. There was much more wind, twenty knots, they also read that from the navigation themselves, the captain mentioned the numbers aloud. ”

As with any disaster, this ‘mistake’ was preceded by a number of undesirable developments. For example, upon departure, Horlings required a repair to one of the three jet reversers that assist in braking was not carried out. “That *thrust reverser* has not been repaired against the regulations, but only secured. ”

In addition, the co-pilot, who operated the aircraft, had the aircraft “blow out of the bend” when approaching the airport due to the strong crosswind, Horlings says. “The commander has not corrected him. As a result, the aircraft did not fly straight for the runway, but diagonally. That is a real shame. ” Shortly before the crash, the co-pilot had also closed the three gas levers “way too early”, Horlings said, so that the aircraft dropped quickly and could not rise quickly when the captain decided to make a restart. Finally, Horlings argues, the commander and the co-pilot had been sitting at the very last moment simultaneously on their control stick, in the opposite direction. “They steered against each other.”

## “What we do is survive”

The daughter of Iem and Corrie Vroombout does not return certainty about the circumstances of the accident or the appointment of those responsible. “Life has stopped with her death, what we do is survive,” says

Corrie Vroombout. Her husband was in construction but was rejected. “I too was no longer allowed to do paid work after that. The lack is huge. We always wonder what she would have been like at the age of forty-two. ”

Most people constantly talk about their children and grandchildren, she notes. “We are not included. There is not even a word for parents who have lost their child. Before ’92 everything was fun and pleasant. Then we were suddenly old. The shine is off. We were on the plane in row 19. Brenda was in row 21. In between was a family with children who also died. We sometimes say to each other: if only we had sat in that family’s place. ”

## Reaction Benno Brick “I would have landed in that weather too”

**Benno Brick** was chairman of the Dutch Traffic Aviation Association at the time of the Faro disaster. He rejects the claim that errors from the DC-10 crew would have caused the accident. “I would have used the landing just like the crew, I would have done the same,” he says. That the runway *flooded* does not mean that you cannot land. “That is not a standard term. You can interpret that information in different ways. ”

That one of the jet inverters had not been repaired is not an issue. “It often becomes *thrust reverser* not even used. ” According to Baksteen, the fact that the aircraft initially flew

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diagonally in front of the runway was part of the procedure at Faro. “And then it is difficult due to the strong wind to get him straight for the runway at the last minute.” However, the crew was hindered by sudden gusts of wind.

He does not believe that the report of the then *Council for Aviation* contains important omissions. “Everything is in it.” The accusations are not justified. “You get this when you look at accidents afterwards. Legal glasses are used to say that someone has not exactly followed the procedures. But the practice is different. I have often been told by relatives that it was animal weather there. Well, it was what we usually call “interesting weather.” That *weather would not have stopped me starting landing.*

### Remarks by Cor ten Hove on this article:

This article is, probably automatically, translated from the original article in Dutch newspaper *NRC* of January 8, 2020.

This hinders proper reading and calls for mistakes: accidentally, the last name of chairman of the *Dutch Traffic Aviation Association*, is also translated. As *Brick*. His last name is *Baksteen*

Last part of final sentence in this article (in Italics) added by Cor ten Hove.

This sentence was ‘lost’ in copying the original text. The original final Dutch sentence was translated and added by me. For reference the complete final sentence in Dutch: ‘Dat weer zou mij er niet van hebben weerhouden de landing in te zetten.’

On ‘animal’ weather, misleading remark by Benno Baksteen.

‘Animal’ weather’, if properly translated from the Dutch article, should read ‘beastly weather’. Benno Baksteen states that the phrase ‘animal / beastly weather’ was used by passengers and that we [pilots?] usually call this ‘interesting weather’.

In the transcript of the Cockpit Voice Recorder (07:12:45) the First Officer [Pilot Flying] calls the weather in Dutch ‘beestenweer’. In English this translates as ‘beastly weather’. The captain agrees with this. Two minutes later the captain tells a Cabin Attendant ‘over there it is lousy weather’.

So, the pilots of the crashed plane do not seem to regard the weather as ‘interesting’.

As a closing side remark:

20 minutes before the crash, the captain agrees with the F/O (Pilot Flying) that it is beastly weather. This makes the passivity of the captain during approach all the more remarkable. *From the investigation report (P 127): The captain's intervention during the whole approach seems to have been too passive, and concerning the last power increase, it came too late .*