



Serious incident to the ATR72-212A
registered **F-ORVO**
on Monday 29 September 2025
at Nuku Hiva airport (French Polynesia)

Time	Around 15:20 ¹
Operator	Air Tahiti
Type of flight	Passenger commercial air transport
Persons on board	Captain (PM ²), co-pilot (PF), 2 cabin crew members, 40 passengers
Consequences and damage	None

This is a courtesy translation by the BEA of the final report on the safety investigation. As accurate as the translation may be, the original text in French is the work of reference.

**Restriction in nose-down deflection then uncoupling of
elevator controls during final approach**

1 HISTORY OF THE FLIGHT

Note: the following information is principally based on the CVR and FDR.

The crew were carrying out flight VT807 between Hiva Oa and Nuku Hiva airports.

They checked for the full deflection of the flight controls while taxiing in accordance with procedures and then took off at 14:47.

During the final approach, at a height of around 80 ft, the co-pilot (PF) felt the control column was jammed preventing her from pushing it. For around ten seconds, she applied nose-down inputs without this affecting the position of the control column, the elevators and the attitude of the aeroplane. She verbalized the go-around and that the control was jammed while pushing the power levers forward.

During the go-around, when the pitch attitude increased, the force on the co-pilot's control column reached a recorded 44 daN without this having an effect on the elevators. The Pitch Uncoupling Mechanism (PUM)³ was activated and the **PITCH DISC** warning appeared one second later. The co-pilot then recovered use of the control column.

¹ Except where otherwise indicated, the times in this report are in local time. Nine and a half hours should be added to obtain UTC time.

² The glossary of abbreviations and acronyms frequently used by the BEA can be found on its [web site](#).

³ The system uncouples the elevator on the captain's side/co-pilot's side, each pilot thus independently controlling the elevator on their side.

Just after the uncoupling, the captain called out that he was taking the controls and applied nose-up inputs to the control column. There were slight simultaneous inputs on the control column for a few seconds and the captain continued the go-around. The captain's nose-up inputs resulted in consistent effects on the left-hand elevator.

At an altitude of around 1,800 ft, the crew tested the flight controls in turn, in accordance with the PITCH DISCONNECT procedure. These tests allowed the crew to determine that the elevator control was only jammed on the captain's side (see paragraph 2). The crew continued the procedure. The co-pilot became PF again and landed without further incident.

2 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The analysis of the flight parameters confirmed the restriction in the nose-down deflection of the elevator control channel on the captain's side without being able to explain the reason for this.

Given that the inputs applied to the controls are measured by a dynamometric rod situated under the cockpit floor, before the departure of the control cables, the hypothesis of an object in the cockpit having jammed the control channel was excluded.

Likewise, the various elevator positions during the restriction meant that it was possible to exclude jamming due to the Gust Lock and Stick Pusher.

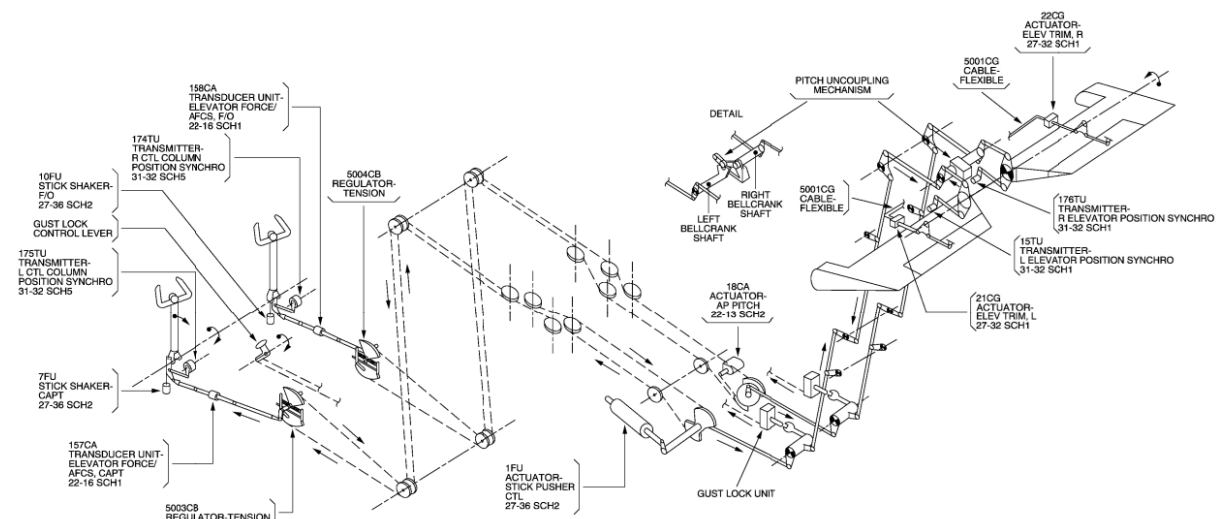


Figure 1: diagram of elevator flight controls (source: ATR)

Between 30 September and 21 October, all of the elevator control channel was inspected by Air Tahiti in coordination with the BEA and ATR. Apart from some bird nests found at the top of the vertical stabilizer, no anomaly was reported.



Figure 2: area where nests were found and then removed (source: Air Tahiti)

Air Tahiti found several nests or nest material on a few aeroplanes, including F-ORVO, inside the vertical stabilizer and in particular at the feedthrough of the elevator control rods.

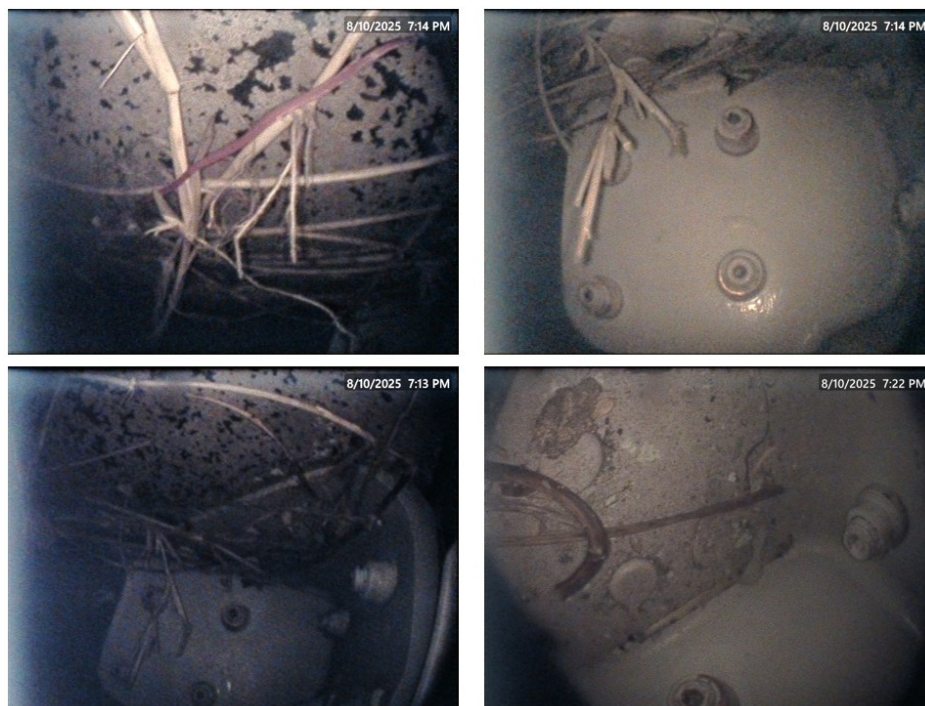


Figure 3: nest material identified on F-ORVO during the complete inspection of the elevator control channel, carried out several days after the detection and removal of the first nests the day of the incident (source: Air Tahiti borescope inspection)

The presence of nest material in certain areas of an aeroplane is a phenomenon sometimes observed by operators and aircraft manufacturers. Similar cases of nest building have been reported in the past by ATR operators on completion of inspections. Their presence had not been detected by the crews during the before take-off control deflection tests and had not had an operational impact.

As there was no other hypothesis to explain the restriction in the nose-down deflection during the occurrence, ground tests were carried out on an ATR test plane in the presence of the BEA to assess the possibility of the elevator control having been jammed by nest material inside the vertical stabilizer.

None of the tests performed reproduced jamming of the elevator controls by nest material at the junction between the aeroplane's horizontal stabilizer and vertical stabilizer, the area in which the nests had been identified during inspections carried out by Air Tahiti.

3 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are solely based on the information which came to the knowledge of the BEA during the investigation.

Scenario

During the final approach, the crew experienced a restriction in the nose-down deflection of the elevator control on the captain's side. The Pitch Uncoupling Mechanism (PUM) which separates the captain and co-pilot elevator controls, was activated by the nose-down inputs applied by the co-pilot who was PF at the time. The PUM system operated in accordance with its specifications and with what it was designed for, namely the jamming of the controls. It allowed the crew to control the aeroplane during the go-around up to the landing performed without difficulty by the co-pilot.

The pilots reacted in an appropriate way to the situation and continued to work together until landing.

When requested by the BEA and ATR, Air Tahiti inspected all of the elevator control channel without finding any anomaly. Tests were also carried by the BEA and ATR to assess a possible link between the nose-down restriction and the presence of nests discovered in the aeroplane after the occurrence. The tests proved inconclusive.

No other anomaly affecting the elevator control was reported on the aeroplane after its return to service.

The investigation was not able to determine what caused the restriction in the nose-down deflection of the elevator control.

The BEA investigations are conducted with the sole objective of improving aviation safety and are not intended to apportion blame or liabilities.