

A380 flap overspeed after unstable approach, New York on Oct 11th 2010

An Air France Airbus A380-800, registration F-HPJA performing flight AF-6 from Paris Charles de Gaulle (France) to New York JFK, NY (USA), had been cleared for a visual approach to runway 31L.

The first officer was pilot flying using the autopilot but did not engage the approach mode. As a result the aircraft was above glidepath, the first officer disengaged the autopilot and continued manually. While descending through 2800 feet with thrust at idle, still above glidepath, the gear was extended and flaps were set to position 2.

About 5nm before touchdown, descending through 2200 feet, the aircraft was still at 210 KIAS. Descending through 1840 feet the aircraft was two dots above glidepath, thrust was at idle, speed 210 KIAS, the vertical speed was 1600 fpm and the speedbrakes had been fully deployed.

At 1600 feet, still at 210 KIAS, the first officer ordered the flaps to position 3, the flap relief kept the flaps at position 2. At 480 feet AGL the speed was still 210 KIAS and above glidepath about 1nm before the threshold, when the captain, pilot monitoring, ordered a go-around surprising the first officer.

The thrust levers were moved to the TOGA detent and initiated a go-around, the aircraft quickly assumed a climb rate of about 3400 fpm, pitch attitude about 2 degrees nose up. The first officer moved the thrust levers to the MCT detent, unnoticed by the captain.

The aircraft accelerated exceeding the maximum speed for the flaps at position 2, an alert sounded and the flap relief moved the flaps to position 1, about 2 seconds later the flaps were selected to position 1, the vertical speed increased to +4200 fpm.

The aircraft climbed through the go-around altitude of 1000 feet, at 1600 feet the first officer attempted a first level off, the speed rose through 301 KIAS. Now the thrust levers were pulled into the CLB detent, which effectively commanded the autothrust into speed mode, the engines were spooled down to idle.

ATC subsequently cleared the aircraft to maintain 2000 feet and a speed of 220 KIAS, the aircraft stabilized at 2000 feet and 220 KIAS, positioned for another approach and landed safely on runway 31L about 10 minutes later.