



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	Vega Baja, PR	Accident Number:	MIA04LA133
Date & Time:	09/29/2004, 1859 AST	Registration:	N902GD
Aircraft:	Britten-Norman BN-2A-27	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air Taxi & Commuter - Non-scheduled		

Analysis

On September 29, 2004, about 1859, Atlantic standard time, the accident airplane, N902GD, operating as an "on demand" air taxi flight, transporting bank financial documents, departed Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, and was later reported as not having arrived at its destination. Search and rescue assets later discovered airplane related debris, specific to the missing airplane, floating in the Atlantic Ocean, in the vicinity of geographic position 18 degrees 29 minutes north latitude, 066 degrees 27 minutes west longitude. The NTSB evaluated radar and weather data, and radar track data for the flight showed that after departure the accident airplane climbed to 1,700 feet, and then descended to 1,300 feet at 1840. From 1840 to 1850, the radar data indicated that the flight was proceeding east along the northern coast of Puerto Rico, at an altitude of 1,100 feet. About 1855, the data showed that the airplane climbed to 1,400 feet, and about 1856, it descended to about 1,000 feet. About 1858, the airplane descended to 800 feet, and then to 600 feet, before disappearing from radar at 18:59:18. Weather data showed that a weak upper air trough, a moist low level southeasterly flow and associated showers and thunderstorms had formed over Puerto Rico during the time of the accident flight. The weather data showed that at departure visual meteorological conditions existed, but doppler weather radar data showed that a 50 dBz (level 5) rain shower was positioned about 3 to 5 miles off the airplane's right wing from 1837 to 1838, and from 1855 to 1901 there was a level 4-5 (45-50 dBZ) rain shower along the accident airplane's track, and the radar track data along with the doppler weather radar data was consistent with the flight having penetrated the rain shower corresponding to the time radar contact with the flight was lost. The NTSB Weather Group Chairman's Report has been included as an attachment to the factual report.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's improper inflight planning which resulted in an inflight encounter with weather (low ceilings and thunderstorms), his loss of aircraft control, and an inflight collision with the ocean during uncontrolled descent.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER
Phase of Operation: CRUISE - NORMAL

Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - LOW CEILING
 2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - THUNDERSTORM
 3. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
 4. (C) VFR FLIGHT INTO IMC - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #2: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings

5. AIRCRAFT CONTROL - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

6. TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER

Factual Information

On September 29, 2004, about 1859 Atlantic standard time, a Britten-Norman BN-2A-27 airplane, N902GD, registered to and operated by Air Charter Inc., as Air Flamenco, an on-demand Title 14 CFR Part 135 air taxi flight, crashed into the Atlantic ocean. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed in the area when the flight departed, and no flight plan was filed. The commercial-rated pilot received fatal injuries, and the airplane was destroyed. The flight originated in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, the same day, about 1830.

The president/owner of Air Flamenco said that the pilot made a Unicom radio communications call announcing his departure from Mayaguez, en route to Isla Grande Airport, San Juan, Puerto Rico. He further stated that the airplane had been transporting bank financial documents, and after the flight did not arrive at its destination, he filed an overdue report.

Upon receiving notification on September 29, 2004, about 2036, search and rescue assets initiated a search for the missing airplane. After several searches, airplane related debris, specific to the missing airplane, was discovered floating in the vicinity of geographic position 18 degrees 29 minutes north latitude, 066 degrees 27 minutes west longitude. In addition, light airplane wreckage and cargo associated with the accident flight was found to have washed ashore at Manatee, Puerto Rico.

Examination of radar track data for the flight showed that after departure the accident airplane climbed to 1,700 feet, and then descended to 1,300 feet at 1840. From 1840 to 1850, the radar data indicated that N902GD was flying east along the northern coast of Puerto Rico at a constant altitude of 1,100 feet. About 1855, the data showed that the airplane climbed to 1,400 feet, and about 1856, it descended to about 1,000 feet. About 1858, the airplane descended to 800 feet, and then to 600 feet before disappearing from radar at 18:59:18.

Weather data showed that a weak upper air trough, a moist low-level southeasterly flow, and associated showers and thunderstorms, had formed over Puerto Rico during the afternoon and evening of September 29, 2004. Synoptic and surface data, satellite imagery, and weather radar indicated that there had been no significant weather in the Mayaguez area at the time of departure, and that visual meteorological conditions had existed at the time of departure.

Infrared satellite data showed the presence of broken to overcast cloud layers off the right side of N902GD's northward radar track over interior portions of northwestern Puerto Rico. In addition, the presence of a southeasterly flow and cloud-top temperatures were consistent with there being an overcast cloud layer after departure, along the airplane's track. Doppler weather radar data for the nominal time of 1838 indicated a 50 dBz (level 5) rain shower about 3 to 5 miles off the accident airplane's right wing from 1837 to 1838, and the data indicated there was very light to light reflectivity along the flight path. Doppler weather radar data for the time period 1855 to 1901 showed a level 4-5 (45-50 dBZ) rain shower along the airplane's track, consistent with the flight having penetrated the rain shower, at which time all radar contact with the flight was lost. A NTSB Weather Group Chairman Factual Report has been provided as an attachment to this report.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Flight Instructor; Commercial	Age:	28, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Seatbelt
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane Multi-engine; Airplane Single-engine; Instrument Airplane	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last Medical Exam:	09/13/2004
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Manufacturer:	Britten-Norman	Registration:	N902GD
Model/Series:	BN-2A-27	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	905
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	10
Date/Type of Last Inspection:		Certified Max Gross Wt.:	6360 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	O-540-E4C5
Registered Owner:	Air Charter Inc.	Rated Power:	260 hp
Operator:	Air Charter Inc.	Air Carrier Operating Certificate:	On-demand Air Taxi (135)
Operator Does Business As:	Air Flamenco	Operator Designator Code:	UOIA

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument Conditions	Condition of Light:	Dusk
Observation Facility, Elevation:	TJSJ, 9 ft msl	Observation Time:	1856 AST
Distance from Accident Site:	23 Nautical Miles	Direction from Accident Site:	97°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 4200 ft agl	Temperature/Dew Point:	28° C / 23° C
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility	
Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	5 knots, 90°	Visibility (RVR):	
Altimeter Setting:	29.88 inches Hg	Visibility (RVV):	
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	Mayaguez, PR (TJMZ)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	San Juan, PR (TJAJ)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1845 EST	Type of Airspace:	Unknown

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	18.493333, -66.441667

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	John W Lovell	Adopted Date:	03/30/2005
Additional Participating Persons:	Marcos A Rivera; FAA Caribbean FSDO; San Juan, PR		
Publish Date:			
Investigation Docket:	NTSB accident and incident dockets serve as permanent archival information for the NTSB's investigations. Dockets released prior to June 1, 2009 are publicly available from the NTSB's Record Management Division at pubinq@ntsb.gov , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/ .		

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