



PRELIMINARY REPORT

AIC 19-1003

TRIBAL AURORA HELICOPTERS

P2-TAH

Airbus Helicopters BK117 C-1

Helicopter Impact with water

4 nm south-east of Silur Mission, New Ireland Province

Papua New Guinea



ABOUT THE AIC

The Accident Investigation Commission (AIC) is an independent statutory agency within Papua New Guinea (PNG). The AIC is governed by a Commission and is entirely separate from the judiciary, transport regulators, policy makers and service providers. The AIC's function is to improve safety and public confidence in the aviation mode of transport through excellence in: independent investigation of aviation accidents and other safety occurrences within the aviation system; safety data recording and analysis; and fostering safety awareness, knowledge and action.

The AIC is responsible for investigating accidents and other transport safety matters involving civil aviation, in PNG, as well as participating in overseas investigations involving PNG registered aircraft.

A primary concern is the safety of commercial transport, with particular regard to fare-paying passenger operations.

The AIC performs its functions in accordance with the provisions of the PNG *Civil Aviation Act 2000 (as Amended)*, and the *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1951* and *Annex 13* to the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*.

The object of a safety investigation is to identify and reduce safety-related risk to the whole aviation system. AIC investigations determine and communicate the safety factors related to the transport safety matter being investigated.

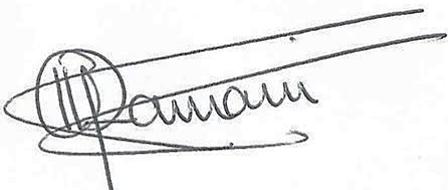
At 02:27 UTC (12:27 local time) on the 13th September 2019, an Operator notified the AIC of the overdue arrival at Tokua of a BK117 C-1 helicopter, registered P2-TAH, operated by Tribal Aurora Helicopters. At 04:31 UTC (14:31 local), PNG Air Services Limited (ASL) notified the AIC of the unreported arrival of P2-TAH at Tokua Airport by sending the AIC an Initial Notification of Incidents (INI) report. AIC immediately commenced an investigation

This *Preliminary Aircraft Accident Investigation Report* was produced by the AIC, PO Box 1709, Boroko 111, NCD, Papua New Guinea. It is publicly released by the Commission in accordance with *Para 7.1* of *ICAO Annex 13*. The report is published on the AIC website: www.pngaic.gov.pg.

The report is based on the initial investigation carried out by the AIC in accordance with *Papua New Guinea Civil Aviation Act 2000 (as Amended)*, *Chapter 31* of the *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1951*, *Annex 13* to the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*, and the *PNG AIC Investigation Policy and Procedures Manual*. It contains factual information. Analysis of that information, findings and contributing (causal) factors, other factors, are reserved for the Final Report. Safety actions have not been taken, and safety recommendations have not issued at the time of issuing this *Preliminary Report*.

The sole objective of the investigation and the *Preliminary Report* is in accordance with the AIC's obligation on behalf of PNG as a Signatory State to the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* and in accordance with *Annex 13* to that *Convention*, thereby promoting aviation safety. (Reference: *ICAO Annex 13, Chapter 7*.) Readers are advised that in accordance with *Section 219* of the *Civil Aviation Act 2000 (as Amended)* and *Paragraph 3.1* of *Annex 13*, it is not the purpose of the Commission's aircraft accident investigations to apportion blame or liability. Fact based statements in the report should not be interpreted as apportioning blame.

Consequently, AIC reports are confined to matters of safety significance and may be misleading if used for any other purpose.



Hubert Namani, LLB
Chief Commissioner

Date: 27th September 2019

Airbus Helicopters BK117 C-1 helicopter impact with water

Occurrence Details

On 13th September 2019, at about 00:15 UTC¹ (10:15 local time), an Airbus Helicopters BK117 C-1 helicopter, registered P2-TAH (TAH), operated by Tribal Aurora Helicopters departed from Buka Airport, Autonomous Region of Bougainville for the planned destination Tokua Airport, East New Britain. The planned estimated time of arrival at Tokua Airport was 01:25.

At 00:45 the pilot made a routine report to Air Traffic Services that his operations were normal, below 5,000 ft and he was estimating Tokua at 01:25. The helicopter failed to arrive at Tokua and wreckage of the helicopter was subsequently located approximately 0.9 nm seaward of the coast about 4 nm south east of Silur Mission, New Ireland Province.



Figure 1: TAH recorded track from depart to accident.

Source: *Spidertracks recorded data*²

The flight was a Charter flight with one pilot and one passenger, and was conducted in accordance with VFR³ below 5000 ft AMSL⁴.

The passenger was uninjured and swam to shore. The pilot was fatally injured, and his body was later found in the water by local residents, about 200 metres from the impact point.

During the investigation interview, the passenger informed the AIC investigators that they flew through bad weather and had to divert to the nearest land, on the south east of New Ireland Province. The cloud was very low and visibility was significantly reduced in rain.

The flight track data on *Spidertracks* showed that the aircraft diverted from its planned track about 50 nm north west of Buka Airport.

¹ The 24-hour clock, in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), is used in this report to describe the local time as specific events occurred. Local time in the area of the accident, Papua New Guinea Time (Pacific/Port Moresby Time) is UTC + 10 hours.

² Spidertracks: An innovative satellite-based tracking system, combining satellite communication and GPS technology into one simple, cost effective and portable solution.

³ Visual Flight Rules: Those rules as prescribed by national authority for visual flight, with corresponding relaxed requirements for flight instruments (Source: *The Cambridge Aerospace Dictionary*)

⁴ Above Mean Sea Level

AIC comment

The investigation is continuing and will include all circumstances surrounding the accident including, but not limited to, the flight operations, maintenance, weather, human factors and post-accident survival aspects.

The investigation analysis and findings will be included in the *Final Report*.

Safety Action

At the time of the public release of this *Preliminary Report*, no safety action had been taken.

Recommendations

At the time of the public release of this *Preliminary Report*, no recommendations had been issued by the AIC.

General Details

Date and time:	13 th September 2019 – estimated 01:15 UTC (11:15 local time)	
Occurrence category:	Accident	
Primary occurrence type:	Helicopter impacted water	
Location:	4 nautical miles South East of Silur Mission, New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea	
	Latitude: 04° 34' 13" S	Longitude: 153° 04' 29" E

Crew details

Nationality	Papua New Guinea
Licence type	PNG CPL H & FW
Licence number	P20236
Total hours	11,500+
Total hours on type	300+

Aircraft Details

Aircraft manufacturer and model:	Airbus Helicopters - BK117 C-1	
Registration:	P2-TAH	
Serial number:	7504	
Total Time Since New (hours)	5,455	
Type of operation	Charter	
Persons on board:	Crew: 1 (Pilot)	Passengers: 1
Injuries:	Crew: Fatal	Passengers: 0
Damage	Aircraft destroyed	

Engine Data

Manufacturer	Safran Helicopter Engines	
Model	Arriel 1E2	
Engine number one (Left)		
Serial Number:	18044	
Total Time Since New (hours)	1,375.9	
Engine number two (Right)		
Serial Number:	3052	
Total Time Since New (hours)	11,135	