



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	ATLANTIC OCEAN, AO	Accident Number:	MIA96LA175
Date & Time:	02/17/1996, 0000 EST	Registration:	N956AF
Aircraft:	Piper PA-60-601P	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot had departed Swainsboro, Georgia at 1930 EST on an IFR flight. About 12 minutes later, he informed Jacksonville Center that he was very dizzy and could not see. There were no other recorded transmissions from the pilot. The airplane was tracked on radar until radar contact was lost at 2130. The airplane was at a heading of 110 degrees and an altitude of 9,000 feet the entire time. Attempts to locate the airplane by aerial intercept were uneventful. All shipping vessels along the airplane's expected course, were notified of the airplane's estimated fuel exhaustion point. No contact was reported and the search was suspended. Prior to departing Swainsboro, the pilot had mentioned to his wife that he had a headache. A review of the pilot's medical records revealed that he had twice indicated on his application for a medical certificate that he had a medical history of unconsciousness. In addition, he was being treated for hypertension with Norvasc and chlorthalidone prescription drugs.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: pilot incapacitation.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: OTHER

Findings

1. (C) AIRCRAFT CONTROL - UNCONTROLLED - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (C) INCAPACITATION(LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS) - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

On February 17, 1996, a Piper PA-60-601P, N956AF, registered to Palmetto One Ltd., operating as a 14 CFR Part 91 personal flight, crashed in the Atlantic Ocean at an undetermined time. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and an IFR flight plan was filed. The airplane is missing and is presumed to be destroyed. The commercial pilot is missing and is presumed to be fatally injured. The flight originated from Swainsboro, Georgia, at about 1930 eastern standard time and the destination airport was Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.

Transcripts of recorded communication between Jacksonville Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC), and N956AF revealed n956AF established initial radio contact with Jacksonville ARTCC at 1938. At 1942, N956AF informed Jacksonville ARTCC, "aero star six alpha fox with a problem.... I'm very dizzy and I I can't see." There were no other known recorded radio communications with N956AF.

A controller, from the Fleet Area Control Surveillance Facility (FACSFAC), located at Jacksonville Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida, stated they were notified of the in-flight emergency by Savannah Approach Control. A short time later, Savannah approach lost radio communication with N956AF, and requested FACSFAC to track the airplane on radar. Radar contact was lost with N956AF at 2130. Attempts to locate N956AF by aerial intercept were uneventful. All shipping vessels located along N956AF flight course, were notified of the airplane's estimated fuel exhaustion point based on known performance and flight path data. No contact has been reported and the search was suspended on February 19, 1996.

The pilot's wife stated her husband called her on the telephone prior to departing Swainsboro. During their conversation, he stated he had a headache and believed it was due to tension from attending a seminar earlier in the day. He informed her that he would be home no later than 8 PM, and that he would check in the airplane to see if he could find some tylenol.

A review of the pilot's medical records, on file at the Federal Aviation Administration, Aeromedical Certificate Division, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, revealed the pilot indicated on his application for a second class medical certificate on April 3, 1992, and May 5, 1993, that he had a medical history of unconsciousness and did not explain the loss of consciousness on his application. The FAA Aeromedical Certification Division sent a certified letter to the pilot on May 5, 1992 requesting an explanation for the loss of unconsciousness. The pilot replied in a letter dated May 15, 1992, that he had been involved in a car accident. Further review of the pilot's medical records revealed the pilot was being treated for hypertension with Norvasc and chlorthalidone prescription drugs.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Flight Instructor; Commercial; Private	Age:	58, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane Multi-engine	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	06/30/1994
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	9850 hours (Total, all aircraft), 7850 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N956AF
Model/Series:	PA-60-601P PA-60-601P	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	61P0515215
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	0
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	6000 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	2884 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	IO-540-S1A5
Registered Owner:	PALMETTO ONE LTD	Rated Power:	290 hp
Operator:	ROGER DUNBAR	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Dusk
Observation Facility, Elevation:	SAV, 51 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	200 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	2051 EST	Direction from Accident Site:	330°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear / 0 ft agl	Visibility	20 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	8 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	240°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	7°C / -11°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	SWAINSBORO, GA (SBO)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Destination:	HILTON HEAD IS, SC (49J)	Type of Clearance:	IFR
Departure Time:	1930 EST	Type of Airspace:	Class E

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	Unknown
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	Unknown
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	CARROL A SMITH	Report Date:	08/20/1996
Additional Participating Persons:	EARNEST W WILSON; ORLANDO, FL		
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 pubinquiry@ntsb.gov , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/ .		

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