PRELIMINARY ACCIDENT REPORT

Accident and Incident Investigations Division

Accident
- Preliminary Report -
AIID Ref No: CA18/2/3/10609

Figure 1: File picture of the TL-ADE aircraft. (Source: www.jetphotos.com)

Description:

On Thursday morning, 16 October 2025 at approximately 0923Z, a pilot on-board a Cessna 206H Stationair aircraft with registration TL-ADE was on an international flight from Manzini King Mswati III International Aerodrome (FDSK), Eswatini, to Kruger Mpumalanga International Aerodrome (FAKN) in Mpumalanga province, South Africa, when the accident occurred. The purpose of the flight was to reposition the aircraft to Wonderboom Aerodrome (FAWB) in South Africa.

The aircraft did not arrive at FAKN at the expected approximate time at 0953Z. After several failed attempts to contact the pilot, the FAKN air traffic control (ATC) declared an alert phase (ALERFA) and an official search and rescue operation was activated by the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (ARCC). Poor weather conditions hindered the search and rescue operation. The wreckage was located on a mountainous terrain, south of Barberton in Songimvelo Nature Reserve on Saturday, 18 October 2025. The aircraft was destroyed during the accident sequence; the pilot was fatally injured.

Occurrence Details

Reference Number	**:** CA18/2/3/10609
Occurrence Category	**:** Accident (Category 1)
Type of Operation	**:** Private (Part 91)
Name of Operator	**:** African Parks
Aircraft Registration	**:** TL-ADE
Aircraft Make and Model	**:** Cessna 206H Stationair
Nationality	**:** Central African Republic
Place	**:** Songimvelo Nature Reserve, near Barberton, South Africa
Date and Time	**:** 16 October at 0953Z
Injuries	**:** One fatal
Damage	**:** Destroyed

Purpose of the Investigation

In terms of Regulation 12.03.1 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, this report was compiled in the interest of the promotion of aviation safety and the reduction of the risk of aviation accidents or incidents and not to apportion blame or liability.

All times given in this report are Co-ordinated Universal Time (UTC) and will be denoted by (Z). South African Standard Time is UTC plus 2 hours.

Investigation Process

The Accident and Incident Investigations Division (AIID) was notified of the occurrence involving an aircraft which occurred at Songimvelo Nature Reserve, near Barberton, on 16 October 2025 at 0953Z. The occurrence was classified as an accident according to the CAR 2011 Part 12 and the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) STD Annex 13 definitions.

The AIID has appointed an investigator-in-charge to conduct a full investigation. The investigators were dispatched to the accident site. A notification was sent to the State of Registry, Operator, Design and Manufacturer in accordance with the CAR 2011 Part 12 and the ICAO Annex 13 Chapter 4. The States did not appoint an accredited representative and/or advisor. The AIID will lead the investigation and issue the final report of this accident in accordance with the CAR 2011 Part 12 and the ICAO Annex 13.

The information contained in this preliminary report is derived from the information gathered during the on-going investigation into the occurrence. Later, an interim or final report may contain altered information in case new evidence is found during the on-going investigation that requires changes to the information depicted in this report.

The AIID reports are made available to the public at:
https://www.caa.co.za/industry-information/accidents-and-incidents/

Notes:

1. *Whenever the following words are mentioned in this report, they shall mean the following:*
   Accident — this investigated accident
   Aircraft— the Cessna 206H Stationair involved in this accident
   Investigation — the investigation into the circumstances of this accident
   Pilot — the pilot involved in this accident
   Report — this accident report

2. *Photos and figures used in this report were taken from different sources and may have been adjusted from the original for the sole purpose of improving clarity of the report. Modifications to images used in this report were limited to cropping, magnification, file compression; or enhancement of colour, brightness, contrast; or addition of text boxes, arrows, or lines.*

Disclaimer

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Abbreviation	Description
°	Degrees
°C	Degrees Celsius
AIID	Accident and Incident Investigations Division
AMO	Aircraft Maintenance Organisation
AGL	Above Ground Level
ALERFA	Alert Phase
AMSL	Above Mean Sea Level
ANAC	Central African Republic Civil Aviation Authority
ARCC	Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre
CAR	Civil Aviation Regulations
C of A	Certificate of Airworthiness
C of R	Certificate of Registration
CPL	Commercial Pilot Licence
CRS	Certificate of Release to Service
CVR	Cockpit Voice Recorder
FDR	Flight Data Recorder
FDSK	Manzini King Mswati III International Aerodrome
FAKN	Kruger Mpumalanga International Aerodrome
ft	feet
Gal/h	Gallons per Hour
GPS	Global Positioning System
hPa	Hectopascal
IFR	Instrument Flight Rules
inHg	Inches Mercury
kt	knots
m	metres
METAR	Meteorological Aerodrome Report
MHz	Megahertz
QNH	Barometric Pressure Adjusted to Mean Sea Level
RWY	Runway
SACAA	South African Civil Aviation Authority
SACAR	South African Civil Aviation Regulations
SAWS	South African Weather Service
TBA	To Be Announced
UTC	Co-ordinated Universal Time
VMC	Visual Metrological Conditions
Z	Zulu (Term for Universal Co-ordinated Time- Zero Hours Greenwich)

1. FACTUAL INFORMATION

1.1 History of Flight

1.1.1 On Thursday morning, 16 October 2025, a pilot on-board a Cessna 206H Stationair aircraft with registration TL-ADE departed on an international flight from Manzini King Mswati III International Aerodrome (FDSK) in Eswatini with the intention to land at Kruger Mpumalanga International Aerodrome (FAKN) in Mpumalanga province, South Africa. The pilot had filed a visual flight rules (VFR) flight plan with direct routing to the waypoint NEXIS and then FAKN. The flight was conducted under visual meteorological conditions (VMC) in accordance with the provisions of Part 91 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, as amended.

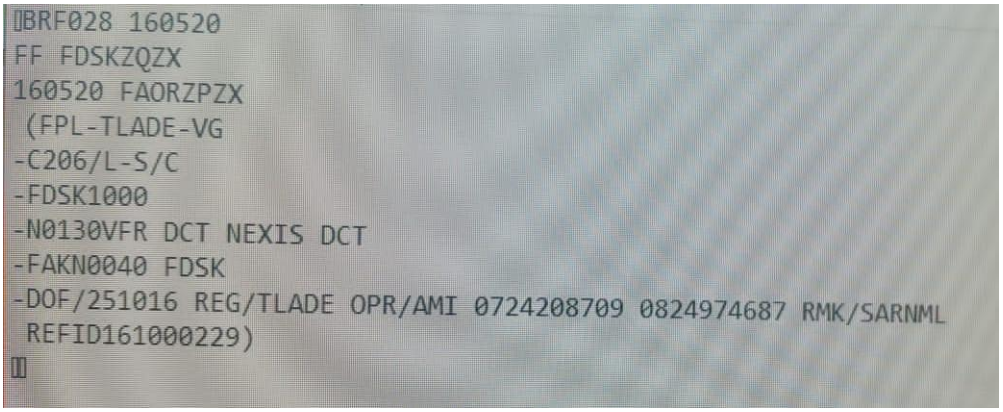


Figure 2: A copy of the flight plan.

1.1.2 The FDSK air traffic control (ATC) issued the expected time of arrival to the FAKN ATC as 0953Z. The last time FDSK ATC communicated with the pilot of the aircraft was at 0937Z. At 0945Z, FDSK ATC attempted to contact the pilot to handover to FAKN ATC but received no response. After the aircraft failed to arrive at FAKN at approximately 0953Z and after several failed attempts to establish communication with the pilot, the ATC personnel at both FDSK and FAKN notified the Aeronautical Rescue and Coordination Centre (ARCC) which initiated an official search for the missing aircraft.

1.1.3 Poor weather conditions in the defined search area hindered the search and rescue operation on 16 and 17 October 2025. A possible location of the aircraft was identified through the last transmission that was received from the Spidertracks tracking system fitted to the aircraft, as well as the signal from the pilot's mobile phone. The wreckage was located on Saturday, 18 October 2025, on a mountainous terrain south of Barberton in Songimvelo Nature Reserve, South Africa.

1.1.4 The aircraft was destroyed during the accident sequence, and the pilot was fatally injured.

1.1.5 The accident occurred during the day at Global Positioning System (GPS) co-ordinates determined to be South 25º52'8.313" East 31º5'23.5212", at approximately 4740 feet (ft) above mean sea level (AMSL).

1.1.6 According to the GPS data recovered from the aircraft's navigation system, the aircraft was flown at an indicated airspeed of 87.9 knots (kts) at an altitude of 4994 ft AMSL and climbed at a rate of 1189 ft per minute. The recording stopped 31 minutes into the flight. Data also indicated that the aircraft stayed between 3500 ft AMSL and 4994 ft AMSL in the last 3 minutes of the flight. It did not exceed 4994 ft AMSL for the duration of the recorded flight (see Figures 4 and 5).

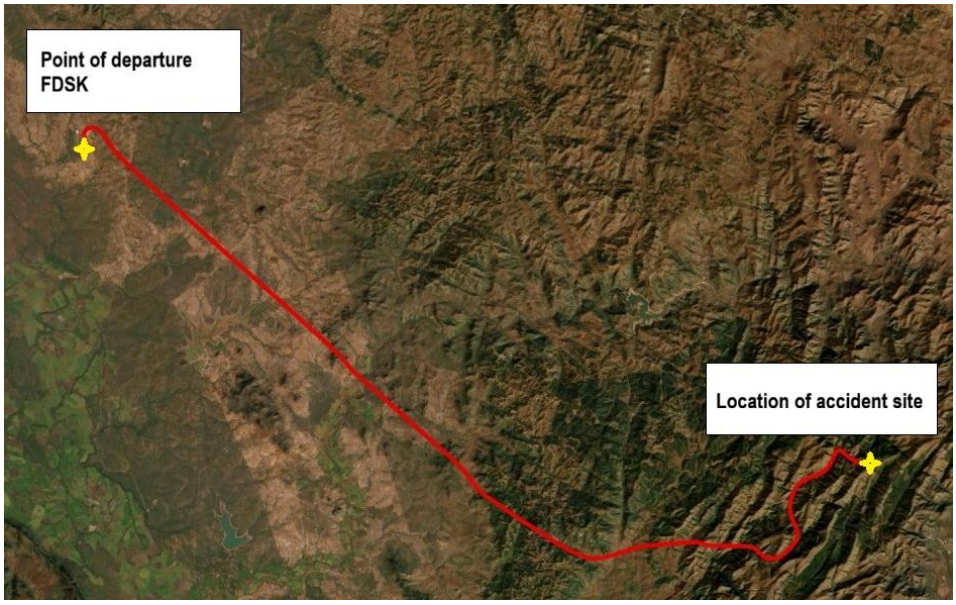


Figure 3: The flight route tracked by the on-board GPS.

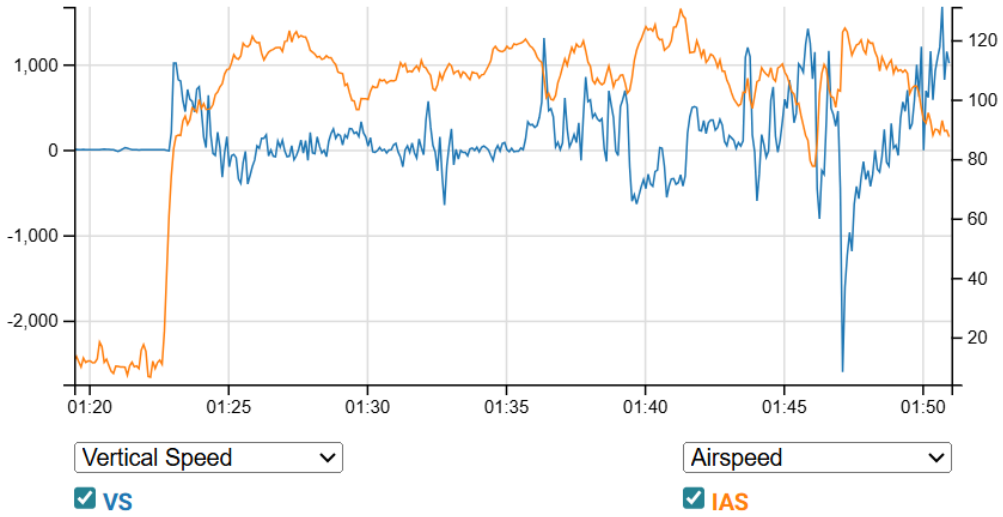


Figure 4: The GPS data shows the aircraft's vertical speed and airspeed before the recording stopped.

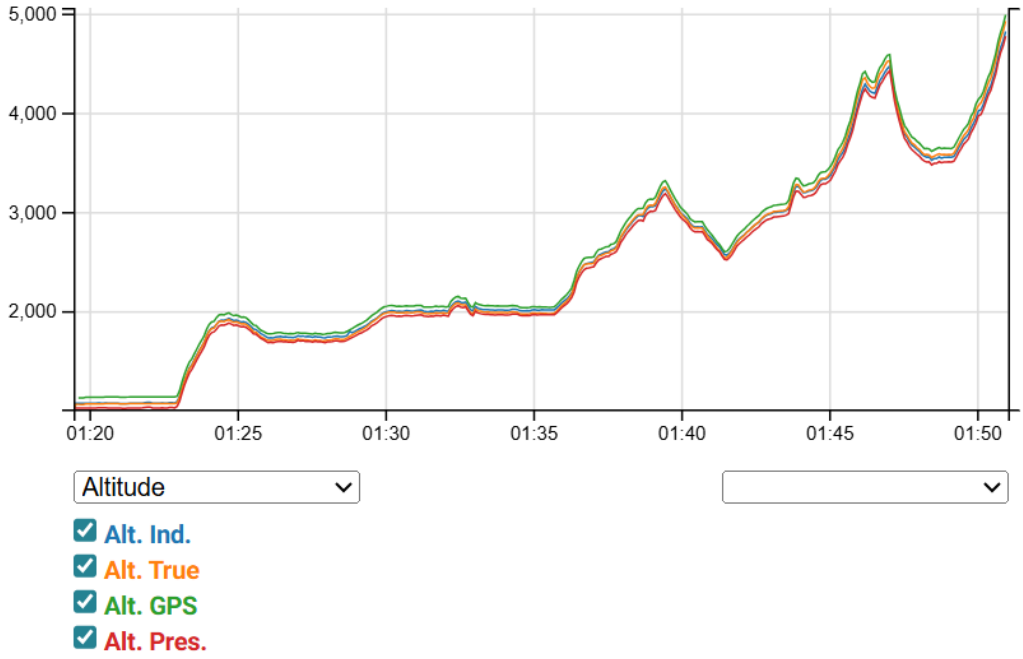


Figure 5: The GPS download shows the aircraft's altitude before the recording stopped.

1.2 Injuries to Persons

Injuries	Pilot	Crew	Pass.	Total On-board	Other
Fatal	1	-	-	1	-
Serious	-	-	-	-	-
Minor	-	-	-	-	-
None	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**1**	**-**	**-**	**1**	**-**

Note: Other means people on the ground.

1.2.1 The pilot was fatally injured during the accident sequence.

1.3 **Damage to Aircraft**

Figure 6: The wreckage at the scene of the accident.

1.3.1 The aircraft was destroyed during the accident sequence.

1.4 Other Damage

Figure 7: Some vegetation on the side of the mountain was destroyed.

1.4.1 Examination of the accident site revealed that vegetation on the mountainside was uprooted along the aircraft's impact path.

1.5 Personnel Information

Pilot-in-Command (PIC)

Nationality	South African	Gender	Male	Age	29
Licence Type	Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL)				
Licence Valid	Yes	Type Endorsed	Yes		
Ratings	Night rating, Instrument rating, Instructor Grade 2, Test pilot Grade 2				
Medical Expiry Date	31 January 2026				
Restrictions	None				
Previous Accidents	None				

Note: Previous accidents refer to past accidents the pilot was involved in, when relevant to this accident.

Flying Experience:

Total Hours	2234.1
Total Past 24 Hours	Unknown
Total on Type Past 90 Days	Unknown
Total on Type	26.8

1.5.1 The above 2234.1 total flying hours and 26.8 total hours on type were taken from the pilot's application form that was submitted to the Regulator (SACAA) on 20 March 2025. The pilot's logbook was not located.

1.5.2 According to available information, the pilot's Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) was renewed by the Regulator on 11 August 2025 with an expiry date of 31 July 2026. The aircraft type was endorsed on his licence. The pilot had a Class 1 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 15 January 2025 with an expiry date of 31 January 2026.

1.5.3 The pilot was contracted by a third party to ferry the aircraft from Eswatini to South Africa. The pilot arrived in Eswatini using a commercial flight on 16 October 2025 at 0805Z. At the time of the accident, the pilot was en route to FAKN to uplift fuel and, thereafter, continue with the flight to Wonderboom Aerodrome (FAWB) as there was no Avgas available at FDSK.

1.5.4 According to the information provided by the aircraft maintenance organisation (AMO) that contracted the pilot, he communicated with the AMO personnel on 16 October 2025 at 0850Z via WhatsApp that he had checked the weather report and it seemed as though the weather was going to clear shortly.

1.6 Aircraft Information

1.6.1 Aircraft Description (Source Cessna 206H Pilot Operating Handbook)

The Cessna 206H Stationair is a single-engine, high-wing aircraft known for its utility and six-place seating. It is powered by a Lycoming IO-540 series engine and three blade McCauley constant-speed propeller assembly. It is frequently equipped for different roles, with options for floats, tundra tyres or a cargo pod.

Airframe:

Manufacturer/Model	Cessna Aircraft Company/206H
Serial Number	206-08037

Year of Manufacture	1999	
Total Airframe Hours (At Time of Accident)	5632.5	
Last Inspection (Date & Hours)	28 July 2025	5628.1
Hours Since Last Inspection	4.4	
CRS Issue Date	28 July 2025	
Export C of A (Issue Date & Expiry Date)	29 October 2024	Expiry N/A
C of R (Issue Date) (Present Owner)	08 April 2015	
Type of Fuel Used	AVGAS 100LL	
Operating Category	Private (Part 91)	
Previous Accidents	None	

Note: Previous accidents refer to past accidents the aircraft was involved in, when relevant to this accident.

Engine:

Manufacturer/Model	Lycoming / IO-540-AC1A5
Serial Number	RL-24730-48E
Part Number	IO-540-AC1A5
Hours Since New	1695.5
Hours Since Overhaul	501

Propeller:

Manufacturer/Model	McCauley / B3D36C432-C
Serial Number	150407
Part Number	B3D36C432-C
Hours Since New	1184.7
Hours Since Overhaul	291.1

1.6.2 Initial review of the maintenance documentation indicated that the aircraft maintenance was up to date and accomplished by an approved AMO.

1.6.3 The last 100-hour maintenance inspection of the aircraft was conducted and certified on 28 July 2025 at 5628.1 airframe hours. The aircraft had undergone a major avionics upgrade of the old navigational equipment, communication transceiver and autopilot equipment which was replaced with a suite of Garmin avionics equipment. At the time of the accident, the aircraft had accrued 4.1 hours since the last maintenance inspection.

1.6.4 The operator of the aircraft stated that the aircraft was currently registered in the Central African Republic Civil Aviation Authority (ANAC), and that the aircraft was in the process of being exported to Zambia. The operator also indicated that the aircraft was being

operated under an export Certificate of Airworthiness (C of A) that was issued by the ANAC on 29 October 2024.

1.6.5 On the day of the accident, the aircraft was scheduled to undergo a safety inspection and audit that was to be conducted by an inspectorate team from the Zambian Civil Aviation Authority (ZCAA) as part of the import and registration process.

1.6.6 The aircraft was initially repositioned to Eswatini, from South Africa, on 11 September 2025. The same pilot involved in the accident had conducted the ferry flight to reposition the aircraft to Eswatini on 11 September 2025. Prior to conducting the initial repositioning flight, the aircraft was refuelled to capacity with 345 litres of Avgas at FAWB.

1.7 Meteorological Information

1.7.1 The weather information below was obtained from the official weather report that was issued by the South African Weather Service (SAWS), recorded at FAKN on 16 October 2025 at 1100Z. *The accident site is 56 kilometres (km) from FAKN*. The meteorological aerodrome report (METAR) for FAKN at 1100Z indicated scattered cloud cover at 3000 ft AMSL with wind speed of 9 kts; at 1200Z, the METAR for FAKN indicated broken cloud cover at 3000 ft AMSL, few cloud cover at 3500 ft AMSL, and towering cumulonimbus.

METAR for FAKN at 1100Z

Wind Direction	80°	Wind Speed	9kt	Visibility	10 km
Temperature	24°C	Cloud Cover	Scattered	Cloud Base	3000ft AMSL
Dew Point	17°C	QNH	1016hPa		

1.8 Aids to Navigation

1.8.1 The aircraft was equipped with the following navigational equipment as required by the Regulator:

- Garmin GFC500 automatic flight control system GMC507, serial number 5H1107785
- Garmin GFC500 automatic flight control system GSA 28, serial numbers 6N2022508, 6N2022493 and 6N2022551.
- Garmin G5 electronic flight instrument, serial numbers 4JQ079840 and 4JQ079660
- Garmin GTN650Xi navigation system, serial number 5FPO52422
- Garmin GTX335 transponder, serial number 3EE023074

There were no records indicating that the navigational equipment was unserviceable prior to the flight.

1.8.2 After recovery of the wreckage, the Garmin GTN650Xi navigation unit was taken to an approved AMO to be downloaded; the accident flight data was successfully download.

1.9 Communication

1.9.1 The aircraft was equipped with a standard communication system as approved by the Regulator. There were no recorded defects with the communication system prior to the flight.

1.10 Aerodrome Information

1.10.1 The accident occurred approximately 30 nautical miles (nm) from FAKN.

1.10.2 At the time, FAKN had the following active Notice to Airmen (NOTAM):

A3556/25 NOTAMN
Q) FAJA/QPIAU/I/NBO/A/000/999/2523S03106E005
A) FAKN **B)** 2510101138 **C)** 2601071000 EST
E) IAC RNAV-01 RNAV (GNSS) RWY 05 DATED 08 OCT 2020 SUSPENDED.
AERONAUTICAL DATA TABULATION RNAV-01A RNAV (GNSS) RWY 05 DATED 08 OCT 2020 SUSPENDED.
IAC ILS-01 ILS Z RWY 05 DATED 23 APR 2020 SUSPENDED.

A3503/25 NOTAMN
Q) FAJA/QPIAU/I/NBO/A/000/999/2523S03106E005
A) FAKN **B)** 2510080707 **C)** 2601061000 EST
E) IAC ILS-02 ILS Y RWY 05 DATED 23 APR 2020 SUSPENDED.

A2629/25 NOTAMN
Q) FAJA/QPIAU/I/NBO/A/000/999/2523S03106E005
A) FAKN **B)** 2507290636 **C)** 2510271000 EST
E) IAC VOR-01 VOR/DME RWY 05 DATED 19 JUL 2018 SUSPENDED.
IAC VOR-02 VOR/DME RWY 23 DATED 19 JUL 2018 SUSPENDED.

1.11 **Flight Recorders**

1.11.1 The aircraft was neither equipped with a flight data recorder (FDR) or a cockpit voice recorder (CVR), nor was it required by regulation to be fitted to the aircraft type.

1.12 **Wreckage and Impact Information**

1.12.1 The aircraft's left wing struck vegetation on the mountain side first. After the initial impact, the cargo pod on the belly of the aircraft and the left landing gear also impacted the rocks and vegetation on the side of the mountain. These impacts caused the aircraft to yaw to the left and pitch the nose down. The aircraft then impacted the cliff face approximately 40 metres (m) from the initial impact in a steep nose-down attitude with the engine of the aircraft contacting the cliff face first; thereafter, the roof and empennage of the aircraft impacted the cliff face (see Figures 2, 3 and 4).

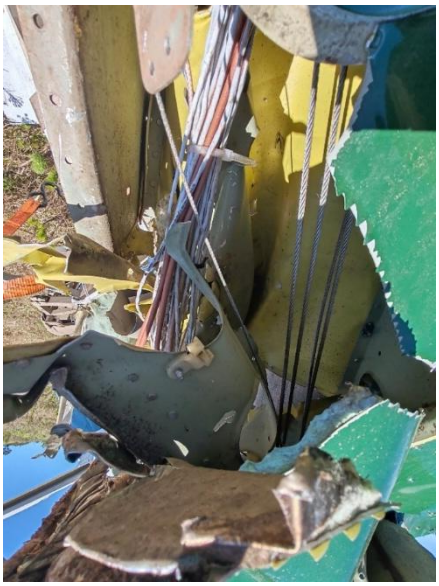
1.12.2 The left wing and fuselage remained on the cliff face, suspended by the empennage that was wedged between the vegetation. The right wing and engine separated from the fuselage; the outboard half of the right wing was found 20m from the main wreckage down the mountain side. The inboard half of the right wing and engine were found at the bottom of the valley approximately 50m from the main wreckage (see Figure 8).

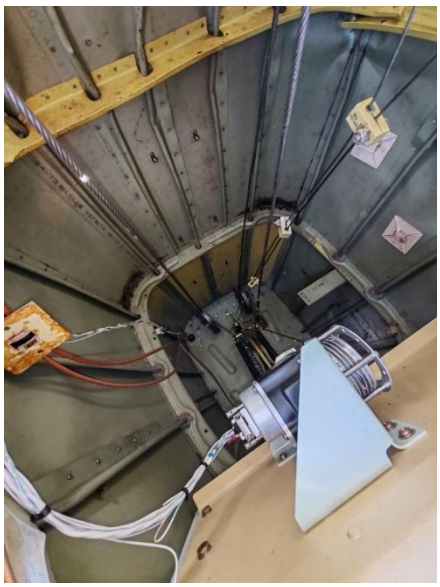
1.12.3 Inspection of the wreckage by the investigation team found the following:

- The flap selector and control surfaces were in the retracted position (see Figure 9).
- The cowl flaps and cowl flap selector were in the closed position (see Figure 10).
- There was continuity in the flight control cables linking the flight control surfaces to the control column (see Figures 11 and 12).
- The engine throttle was depressed in "open" position (see Figure 13).
- The mixture control was extended to "lean mixture" position (see Figure 13).
- The propeller RPM lever was depressed to "increase RPM" position (see Figure 13).
- The magneto switch was selected to "both" position (see Figure 14).
- The engine manifold pressure indicator indicated 20in Hg pressure (see Figure 15).
- The fuel flow indicator indicated a fuel flow of 20 gal/hour (see Figure 15).

Figure 8: The wreckage distribution.

Figures 9 and 10: Flap and cowl flap selectors.





Figures 11 and 12: Flight control continuity through the fuselage.

Figure 13: The throttle lever, propeller RPM lever, and fuel mixture lever positions.

Figure 14: Magneto switch position.

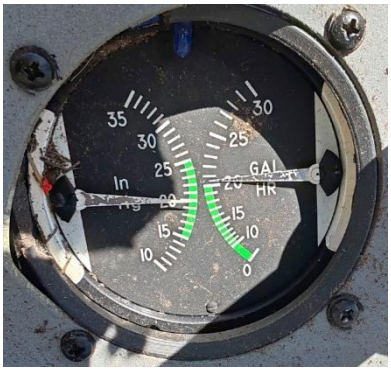


Figure 15: Manifold pressure and fuel flow dual indicator.

1.13 Medical and Pathological Information

1.13.1 To be discussed in the final report.

1.14 Fire

1.14.1 There was no pre- or post-impact fire.

1.15 Survival Aspects

Figure 16: The cockpit was completely crushed during the accident sequence (yellow highlight).

1.15.1 The accident was not considered survivable due to the extent of the damage sustained by the aircraft during the high-energy impact.

1.16 Tests and Research

1.16.1 To be discussed in the final report.

1.17 Organisational and Management Information

1.17.1 A locally based AMO that had contracted the pilot to conduct the flight had a valid AMO Certificate that was issued by the Regulator with an expiry date of 30 September 2026.

1.17.2 The aircraft owner, African Parks, is a non-profit conservation organisation that takes on the responsibility for the long-term management of protected areas in partnership with governments and local communities. African Parks manages 24 protected areas in 13 countries covering over 20 million hectares in Angola, Benin, Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, the Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Rwanda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

1.18 **Additional Information**

1.18.1 To be discussed in the final report.

1.19 **Useful or Effective Investigation Techniques**

1.19.1 None.

2 FINDINGS

2.1 **General**

From the available evidence, the following preliminary findings were made with respect to this accident. These shall not be read as apportioning blame or liability to any organisation or individual.

To serve the objective of this investigation, the following sections are included in the conclusions heading:

- **Findings —** are statements of all significant conditions, events, or circumstances in this accident. The findings are significant steps in this accident sequence, but they are not always causal or indicate deficiencies.

2.2 **Findings**

Pilot

2.2.1 The pilot had a valid Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) that was issued on 11 August 2025 with an expiry date of 31 July 2026. The aircraft type was endorsed on his licence and logbook.

2.2.2 The pilot had a Class 1 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 15 January 2025 with an expiry date of 31 January 2026.

2.2.3 The pilot had an Instrument (A) rating, Instructor Grade 2(A) rating and a Test Pilot rating (Class2)(A).

Aircraft

2.2.4 The last conducted maintenance inspection of the aircraft was the 100-hour inspection.

2.2.5 The maintenance inspection was conducted and certified on 28 July 2025 at 5628.1 airframe hours. The aircraft had accrued 4.1 hours since the said inspection.

2.2.6 The aircraft had undergone a major avionic upgrade to its navigational, autopilot and communication equipment.

2.2.7 The aircraft was operated on an export Certificate of Airworthiness (C of A) that was issued by ANAC as the aircraft was in the process of being imported to Zambia.

Weather

2.2.8 The official weather report issued by the South African Weather Service (SAWS) for Kruger Mpumalanga International Aerodrome (FAKN) indicated scattered and broken cloud cover at 3000 feet (ft) above mean sea level (AMSL). The low cloud base would have made maintaining visual flight rules difficult in the mountainous terrain over which the aircraft was flying at the time of the accident. The downloaded navigational data suggested that the aircraft was most likely flying in and out of cloud cover.

Wreckage Examination

2.2.9 The downloaded data from the aircraft navigational system confirmed that the aircraft engine was running at the time of the accident.

2.2.10 Examination of the wreckage by the investigation team revealed that the aircraft configuration settings were consistent with an aircraft in cruise setting. This supports the downloaded navigational data which indicated that the aircraft engine was still producing power before impact.

2.2.11 The examination of the wreckage also found that all flight control surfaces were present and complete, and that there was continuity in the flight control cables from the cockpit to the different flight control surfaces.

3 ON-GOING INVESTIGATION

3.1 The AIID investigation is ongoing, and the investigators will investigate other aspects of this accident which may or may not have safety implications.

4 SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 General

The safety recommendations listed in this report are proposed according to paragraph 6.8 of Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation and are based on the conclusions listed in heading 3 of this report. The AIID expects that all safety issues identified by the investigation are addressed by the receiving States and organisations.

4.2 Safety Recommendation/s

4.2.1 None.

5 APPENDICES

5.1 None.

This report is issued by:

Accident and Incident Investigations Division
South African Civil Aviation Authority
Republic of South Africa