



**AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

|  |  |                                 |                 |                                |                         |                          |   |
|--|--|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---|
|  |  |                                 |                 | <b>Reference:</b>              |                         | CA18/2/3/10609           |   |
| <b>Aircraft Registration</b>   | TL-ADE   | <b>Date of Accident</b>         | 16 October 2025 |                                | <b>Time of Accident</b> | 0953Z                    |   |
| <b>Type of Aircraft</b>  | Cessna 206H Stationair   |                                 |                 | <b>Type of Operation</b>       | Private (Part 91)       |                          |   |
| <b>Pilot-in-command Licence Type</b>   | Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL)   |                                 | <b>Age</b>      | 29                             | <b>Licence Valid</b>    | Yes                      |   |
| <b>Pilot-in-command Flying Experience</b>  | <b>Total Flying Hours</b>  |                                 | 2234.1          |                                | <b>Hours on Type</b>    | 26.8                     |   |
| <b>Last Point of Departure</b>   | Manzini King Mswati III International Aerodrome (FDSK), Eswatini   |                                 |                 |                                |                         |                          |   |
| <b>Next Point of Intended Landing</b>  | Kruger Mpumalanga International Aerodrome (FAKN), Mpumalanga Province, South Africa  |                                 |                 |                                |                         |                          |   |
| <b>Damage to Aircraft</b>  | Destroyed  |                                 |                 |                                |                         |                          |   |
| <b>Location of the accident site with reference to easily defined geographical points (GPS readings if possible)</b>   |  |                                 |                 |                                |                         |                          |   |
| Songimvelo Nature Reserve near Barberton, South Africa, at Global Positioning System co-ordinates: South 25°52'8.313" East 31°5'23.5212"   |  |                                 |                 |                                |                         |                          |   |
| <b>Meteorological Information</b>  | Wind direction: 60°; Wind speed: 07kts; Temperature: 23°C; Dew Point: 16°C; Cloud Cover: Few; Cloud Base: 2500; Visibility: 9 999m; QNH: 1017hPa |                                 |                 |                                |                         |                          |   |
| <b>Number of People On-board</b>   | 1+0  | <b>Number of People Injured</b> | 0               | <b>Number of People Killed</b> | 1                       | <b>Other (On Ground)</b> | 0 |
| <b>Synopsis</b>  |  |                                 |                 |                                |                         |                          |   |
| <p>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) in Eswatini to Kruger Mpumalanga International Aerodrome (FAKN) in Mpumalanga province, South Africa, when the accident occurred. The flight was conducted under the provisions of Part 91 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, as amended.</p> <p>The aircraft did not arrive at FAKN at the expected time of approximately 0953Z. After several failed attempts to contact the pilot, the FAKN air traffic control (ATC) personnel declared an alert phase (ALERFA) and search and rescue operation was activated by the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (ARCC). 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.</p> <p>Based on the weather conditions and the Global Positioning Systems (GPS) co-ordinates data downloaded from the aircraft, it was deduced that the mountain peaks were likely obscured by cloud cover and that the pilot was flying below the altitude of the mountain peaks in the valleys. It is probable that the pilot misjudged his clearance from the mountainside due to visual obscurity and the aircraft's left wing impacted a tree, followed by the aircraft crashing on the mountain.</p> |  |                                 |                 |                                |                         |                          |   |
| <b>Probable Cause</b>  |  |                                 |                 |                                |                         |                          |   |
| <p>Due to the low cloud base, the pilot operated the aircraft below altitude of the surrounding terrain to maintain visual contact. The adverse weather conditions obscured the pilot's view of the mountainous terrain, which resulted in a controlled flight into terrain (CFIT).</p>  |  |                                 |                 |                                |                         |                          |   |

**Contributing factors**

- Adverse weather condition with low cloud base
- Poor risk management
- Reduced situational awareness
- Possible decision-making factors

|          |             |                  |              |
|----------|-------------|------------------|--------------|
| SRP Date | 9 June 2026 | Publication Date | 10 June 2026 |
|----------|-------------|------------------|--------------|

## 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** : 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 a Cessna 206H 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. Notifications were sent to the State of Registry, Operator, and 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 investigators were dispatched to the accident site.

### Notes:

- 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*
- 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

*This report is produced without prejudice to the rights of the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA), which are reserved.*

## Table of Contents

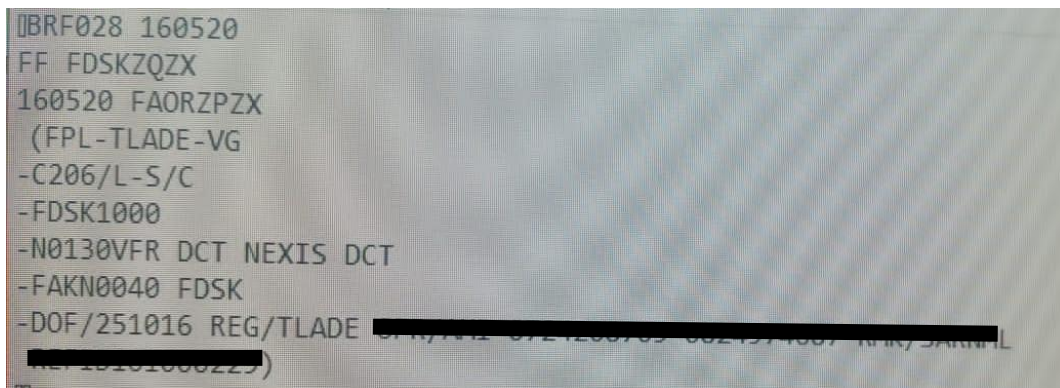
|   |    |
|---|----|
| Synopsis .....  | 1  |
| Occurrence Details .....                                | 3  |
| Investigation Process.....                              | 3  |
| Disclaimer .....  | 3  |
| Contents Page .....                                     | 4  |
| Abbreviations .....                                     | 5  |
| 1. FACTUAL INFORMATION .....                            | 6  |
| 1.1 History of Flight.....                              | 6  |
| 1.2 Injuries to Persons .....                           | 8  |
| 1.3 Damage to Aircraft.....                             | 8  |
| 1.4 Other Damage .....                                  | 9  |
| 1.5 Personnel Information.....                          | 9  |
| 1.6 Aircraft Information .....                          | 10 |
| 1.7 Meteorological Information .....                    | 13 |
| 1.8 Aids to Navigation .....                            | 14 |
| 1.9 Communication .....                                 | 14 |
| 1.10 Aerodrome Information .....                        | 15 |
| 1.11 Flight Recorders .....                             | 15 |
| 1.12 Wreckage and Impact Information.....               | 16 |
| 1.13 Medical and Pathological Information.....          | 19 |
| 1.14 Fire.....  | 19 |
| 1.15 Survival Aspects .....                             | 19 |
| 1.16 Tests and Research.....                            | 19 |
| 1.17 Organisational and Management Information .....    | 20 |
| 1.18 Additional Information .....                       | 20 |
| 1.19 Useful or Effective Investigation Techniques ..... | 20 |
| 2 ANALYSIS.....   | 20 |
| 3 CONCLUSION .....                                      | 22 |
| 4 SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS.....                           | 24 |
| 5 APPENDICES .....                                      | 24 |

| <b>Abbreviation</b> | <b>Description</b>  |
|---------------------|---|
| °                   | 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 Coordination Centre                                 |
| CAR                 | Civil Aviation Regulations  |
| C of A              | Certificate of Airworthiness  |
| C of R              | Certificate of Registration   |
| CPL                 | Commercial Pilot Licence  |
| CFIT                | Controlled Flight into Terrain  |
| CRS                 | Certificate of Release to Service                                       |
| CVR                 | Cockpit Voice Recorder  |
| EUMETSAT            | European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites |
| FAWB                | Wonderboom Aerodrome  |
| FDR                 | Flight Data Recorder  |
| FDSK                | Manzini King Mswati III International Aerodrome                         |
| FAKN                | Kruger Mpumalanga International Aerodrome                               |
| FDMS                | Matsapha Aerodrome  |
| ft                  | Feet  |
| Gal/h               | Gallons per Hour  |
| GPS                 | Global Positioning System   |
| hPa                 | Hectopascal   |
| IFR                 | Instrument Flight Rules   |
| IMC                 | Instrument Metrological Conditions                                      |
| inHg                | Inches Mercury  |
| kt                  | Knots   |
| m                   | Metres  |
| METAR               | Meteorological Aerodrome Report   |
| MHz                 | Megahertz   |
| NM                  | Nautical mile   |
| 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   |
| VFR                 | Visual Flight Rules   |
| VMC                 | Visual Metrological Conditions  |
| Z                   | Zulu (Term for Universal Co-ordinated Time- Zero Hours Greenwich)       |

# 1. FACTUAL INFORMATION

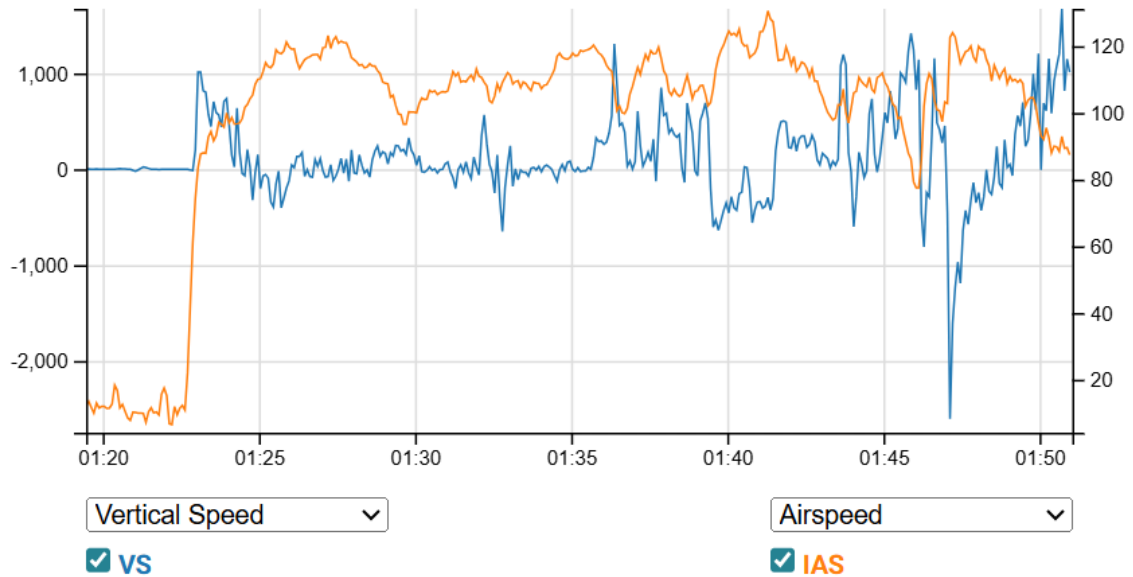
## 1.1 History of Flight

- 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 purpose of the flight was to reposition the aircraft to Wonderboom Aerodrome (FAWB) in South Africa. A visual flight rules (VFR) flight plan was filed. The flight was conducted under the provisions of Part 91 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, as amended.
- 1.1.2 According to available information, the pilot had planned to refuel at FAKN as there was no fuel available at FDSK and, thereafter, continued to Wonderboom Aerodrome (FAWB). Whilst the aircraft was en route to FAKN, the pilot encountered instrument meteorological conditions (IMC).

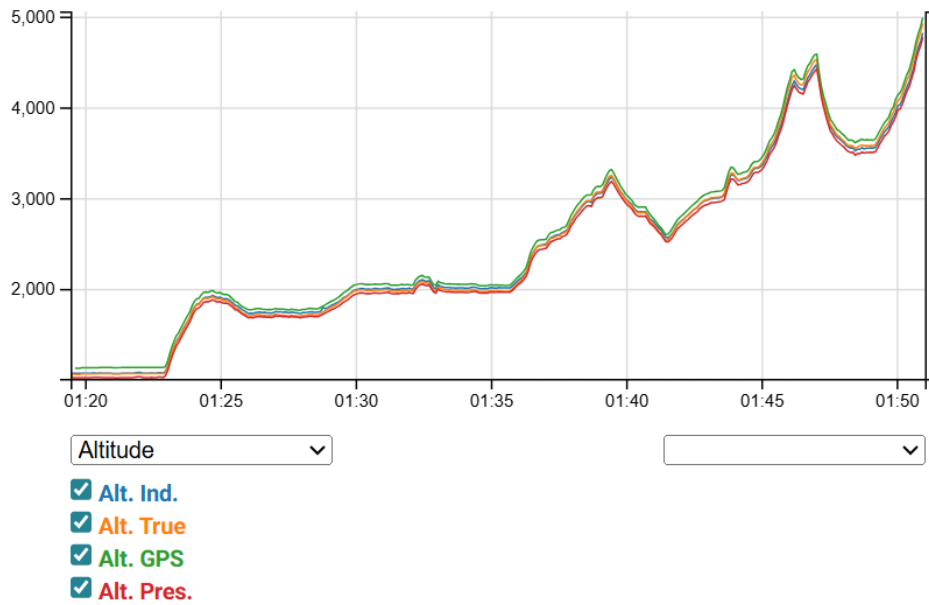


**Figure 1:** The filed flight plan (Source: Investigator)

- 1.1.3 The aircraft was found destroyed and the pilot fatally injured.
- 1.1.4 According to the Global Positioning System (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 4 994ft above mean sea level (AMSL) and was climbing at a rate of 1 189ft per minute immediately before the recording stopped. The recording stopped 31 minutes into the flight. Data also indicated that the aircraft stayed between 3 500ft AMSL and 4 994ft AMSL in the last 3 minutes of the flight. It did not exceed 4 994ft AMSL for the duration of the recorded flight (see figures 2 and 3).



**Figure 2:** The GPS data shows the aircraft's vertical speed and airspeed before the recording stopped. (Source: Investigator)



**Figure 3:** The GPS download shows the aircraft's altitude before the recording stopped. (Source: Investigator)





**Figure 5:** The wreckage at the scene of the accident. (Source: Investigator)

#### 1.4 Other Damage

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 total flying hours of 2 234.1 and total hours on type of 26.8 were taken from the pilot's application that was submitted to the Regulator (SACAA) on 20 March 2025 as 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 in his licence. The pilot had a Class 1 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 the aircraft maintenance organisation (AMO) responsible for its maintenance to ferry the aircraft from FDSK to FAWB. The pilot arrived in Eswatini in 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 then continue with the flight to FAWB as the destination.
- 1.5.4 The pilot last flew the accident aircraft on 11 September 2025 when he flew the aircraft from FAWB to Matsapha Aerodrome (FDMS) in Eswatini.

**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.*



**Figure 6:** The file picture of the aircraft. (Source: www.jetphotos.com)

**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 The aircraft was registered with the National Civil Aviation Authority of the Central African Republic (ANAC) on 8 April 2015 and was used to transport personnel and resources to support the management of protected national parks in Central Africa. The operator indicated that at the time of the accident, the aircraft was being operated under an export Certificate of Airworthiness (C of A) that was issued by the ANAC on 29 October 2024.
- 1.6.3 A review of the maintenance documentation indicated that the last 100-hour mandatory periodic inspection (MPI) of the aircraft was conducted and certified on 28 July 2025 at 5628.1 airframe hours. At the time of the accident, the aircraft had accrued 4.1 hours since the said MPI. The responsible AMO's approval certificate that was issued by ANAC had expired at the time of the aircraft's release to service. The MPI was conducted on 28 July 2025 and the AMO's approval certificate had expired on 29 June 2024. The Certificate of Release to Service (CRS) issued for the 100-hour MPI was, therefore, invalid.
- 1.6.4 The aircraft had undergone a major avionics upgrade of the old navigational equipment, communication transceiver and autopilot equipment, which were all replaced by a suite of Garmin avionics equipment.
- 1.6.5 On the day of the accident, the aircraft was scheduled to undergo a safety inspection and audit at FAWB 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 refuelled to maximum capacity (92 US gallons) with Avgas 100LL a day before the accident. Based on arrival strips from FDSK and FDMS ATC, recorded on 11 September 2025, it is estimated that when the aircraft departed from FDSK for FAKN on 16 October 2025, it had a fuel endurance of 3.5 hours at normal operating parameters.

## 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 Meteorological Aerodrome Report (METAR) for FAKN at 1000Z indicated few cloud cover at 2 500ft AMSL with wind speed of 7 kts; at 1100Z, the METAR for FAKN indicated scattered cloud cover at 3 000ft AMSL.

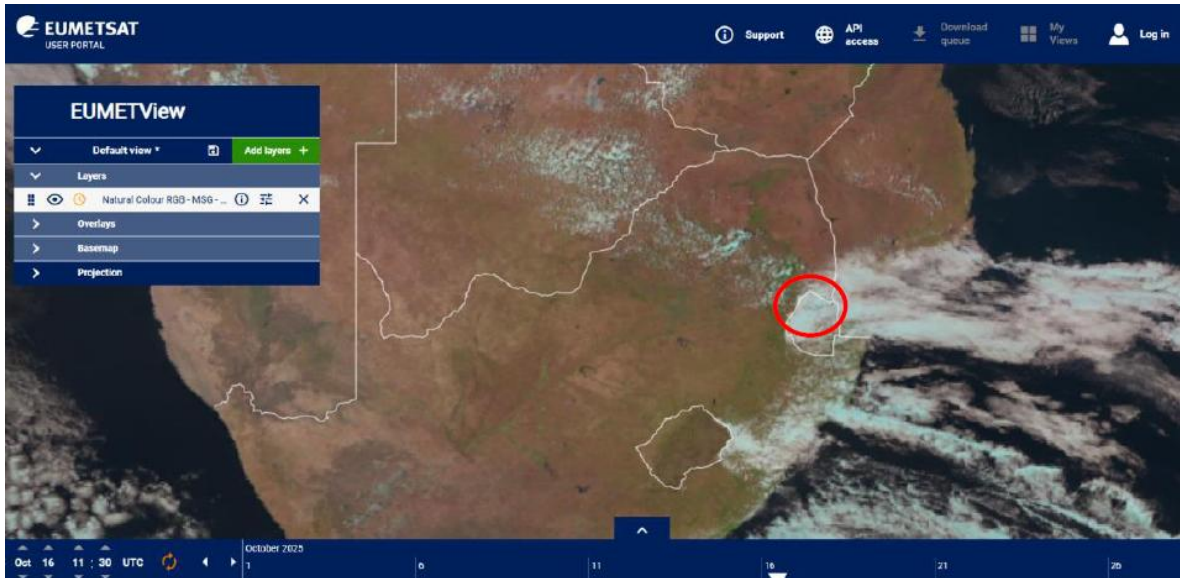
|                |      |             |         |            |             |
|----------------|------|-------------|---------|------------|-------------|
| Wind Direction | 60°  | Wind Speed  | 7kt     | Visibility | 10 km       |
| Temperature    | 23°C | Cloud Cover | Few     | Cloud Base | 2500ft AMSL |
| Dew Point      | 16°C | QNH         | 1017hPa |            |             |

1.7.2 The Kruger Mpumalanga International Aerodrome (FAKN) terminal aerodrome forecast (TAF) was used to show the prevailing weather conditions in the general area. The first TAF was issued at 0300Z on 16 October 2025 and was valid from 0400Z until 1500Z, which includes the time of the accident.

```
TAF FAKN 160300Z 1604/1615 VRB03KT 9999 SCT005 BKN020
TX29/1612Z TN15/1604Z
PROB30 TEMPO 1604/1606 5000 BCFG BKN005
BECMG 1607/1609 SCT020
BECMG 1609/1611 09010KT=
```

The TAF indicated light and variable winds that were expected to dominate for most of the morning, becoming easterly winds at 10 kts from 1100Z. A probability of visibility being reduced to 5000m in fog patches was expected between 0400Z and 0600Z, as well as clouds with bases at 500ft above ground level (AGL). An improvement in the cloud coverage and base was forecasted from 0900Z. These clouds remained at about 2 000ft AGL for the remainder of the forecast period. Thus, the mountains in Barberton area would have possibly been obscured.

1.7.3 The satellite weather image for weather conditions observed on 16 October 2025, valid for 1130Z, which was closest to the time of the accident showed broken (BKN) to overcast (OVC) low cloud in the area (circled in red). This was in line with the reported conditions. These conditions posed a threat for VFR pilots especially in mountainous areas which could be obscured. The satellite images were retrieved from the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) portal at <https://view.eumetsat.int/productviewer?v=default>



**Figure 7:** Satellite weather image for Barberton area on 16 October 2025 at 1130Z. (Source: SAWS)

## 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 flight data was successfully downloaded and handed over to the investigation team for analysis and safe keeping.

## 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.

1.9.2 The final ATC communication with the pilot occurred at 0937Z; the pilot requested a climb to 3 000ft (approved) and provided estimates for NEXIS (0943Z) and FAKN (0953Z).

1.9.3 At 0945Z, FDSK ATC attempted to contact the pilot for handover to FAKN ATC; however, there was no response. When the aircraft failed to arrive at FAKN at approximately 0953Z and after communication could not be established, personnel at FDSK and FAKN notified the Aeronautical Rescue and Coordination Centre (ARCC). The ARCC subsequently initiated an official search.

#### 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 Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) active:

##### **A3556/25 NOTAMN**

**Q)** FAJA/QPIAU/II/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/II/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/II/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.

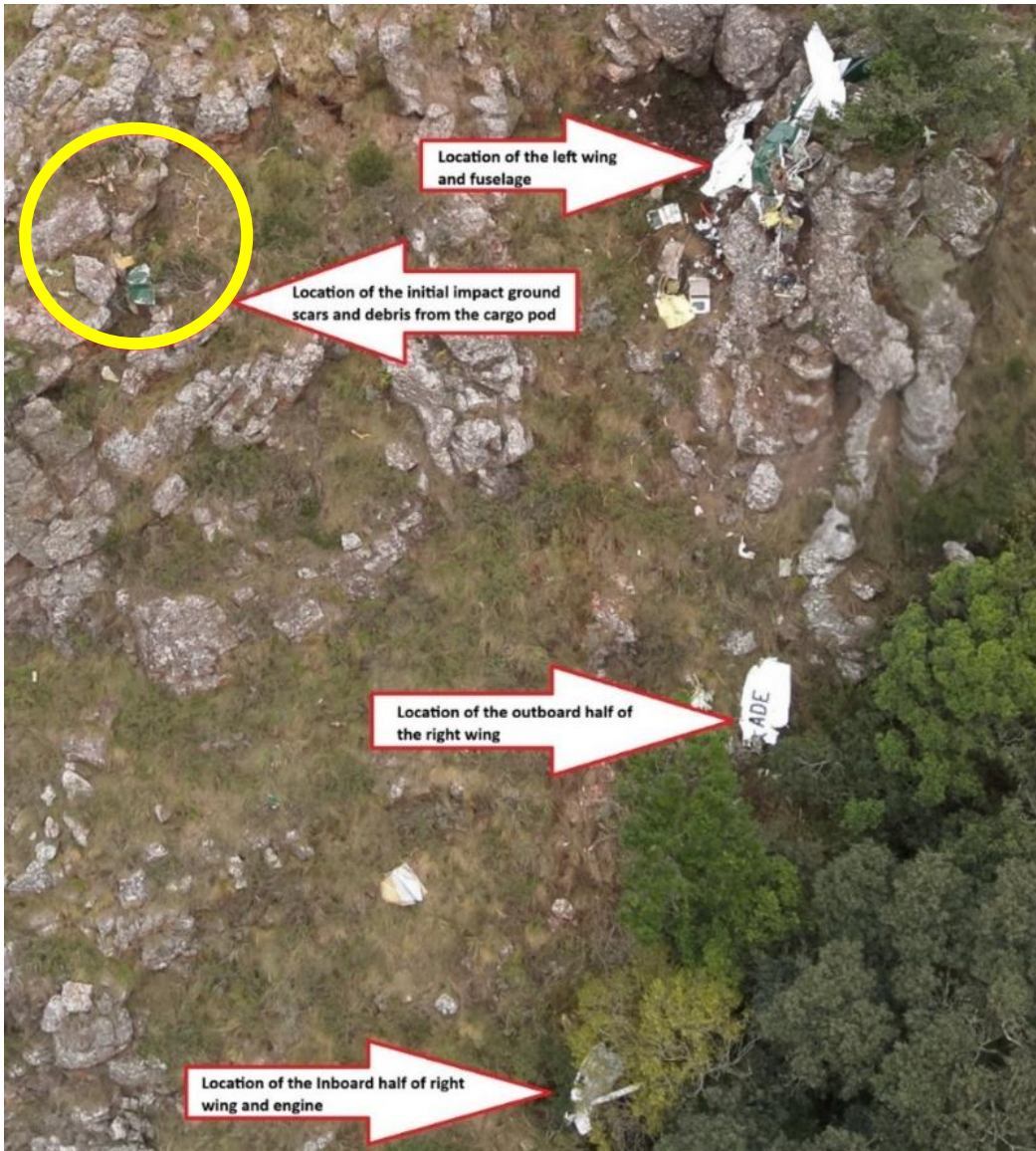
## 1.12 Wreckage and Impact Information

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 impacted rocks and vegetation, also on the side of the mountain. These impacts caused the aircraft to yaw to the left and the nose to pitch down. Thereafter, the aircraft impacted a cliff face approximately 40 metres (m) from the initial impact in a steep nose-down attitude with the engine contacting the cliff face first; thereafter, the empennage impacted the cliff face (see Figure 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:

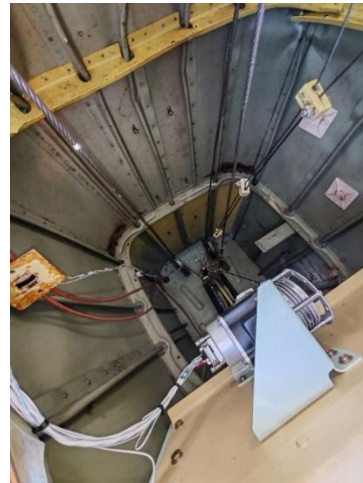
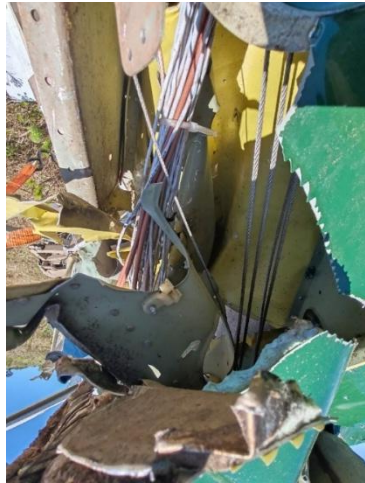
- The flap selector and control surfaces were in the retracted position (see Figure 8)
- The cowl flaps and cowl flap selector were in the closed position (see Figure 9)
- There was continuity in the flight control cables linking the flight control surfaces to the control column (see Figures 10 and 11)
- The engine throttle was depressed (in open position) (see Figure 12)
- The mixture control was extended to "lean mixture" position (see Figure 12)
- The propeller revolutions per minute (rpm) lever was depressed to "increase rpm" position (see Figure 12)
- The magneto switch was selected to "both" position (see Figure 13)
- The engine manifold pressure indicator indicated 20in Hg pressure (see Figure 14)
- The fuel flow indicator indicated a fuel flow of 20 gallons per hour (gal/hour) (see Figure 14)



**Figure 8:** The wreckage distribution. (Source: Investigator)



**Figures 9 and 10:** Flap and cowl flap selectors. (Source: Investigator)



**Figures 11 and 12:** Flight control continuity through the fuselage. (Source: Investigator)



**Figure 13:** Throttle lever, propeller rpm lever and fuel mixture lever positions. (Source: Investigator)



**Figure 14:** Magneto switch position. (Source: Investigator)



**Figure 15:** Manifold pressure and fuel flow dual indicator. (Source: Investigator)

### 1.13 Medical and Pathological Information

1.13.1 The autopsy report was not available at the time of publication of this accident report; therefore, any medical or physiological factors that may have contributed to the accident could not be determined.

1.13.2 This investigation may be reopened should new evidence become available (including the outstanding autopsy report) that could materially affect the findings.

### 1.14 Fire

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

### 1.15 Survival Aspects

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.



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

### 1.16 Tests and Research

1.16.1 Not applicable.

## 1.17 Organisational and Management Information

1.17.1 The South African-based AMO that conducted maintenance on TL-ADE did not have a valid AMO approval certificate from the Director of Civil Aviation in the Central African Republic at the time of releasing the last performed maintenance report. The latest approval had expired on 24 June 2024. At the time of the investigation, the AMO was unable to provide any documentation from the Director of Civil Aviation in the Central African Republic to prove the contrary.

1.17.2 The entity that owns the aircraft 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 more than 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 Topographical maps of the route flown by TL-ADE on the day of the accident indicated that the peaks of the mountains along the route were between 3 281ft and 5 780ft high.

1.18.2 According to the information provided by the AMO owner that contracted the pilot, the pilot communicated with him on 16 October 2025 at 0850Z via WhatsApp stating that *“he had checked the weather report, and it seemed as though the weather was going to clear shortly”*. Prior to departure from FDSK for FAKN, the pilot sent a voice note via WhatsApp at 1106Z. The voice note stated the following: *“I’m going to take-off to Kruger in the next five minutes, [uhm] weather we will see, I will let you know when I land. Planned flight time is about forty minutes”*.

## 1.19 Useful or Effective Investigation Techniques

1.19.1 None.

## 2 ANALYSIS

### 2.1 General

From the available evidence, the following analysis was made with respect to this accident. This shall not be read as apportioning blame or liability to any organisation or individual.

## 2.2 Analysis

### 2.2.1 Pilot

2.2.1.1 The pilot was suitably qualified and rated to operate the aircraft. He had a valid Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) that was issued on 11 August 2025 and expiring on 31 July 2026. His credentials included Instrument (A), Instructor Grade 2 (A) and Test Pilot (Class 2)(A) ratings. The pilot was medically fit and had a Class 1 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 15 January 2025 with an expiry date of 31 January 2026. Therefore, the pilot was appropriately licensed and medically fit.

2.2.1.2 The WhatsApp message sent by the pilot at 1106Z on the day of the accident indicated that he was prepared to “see how it goes” despite the known inclement weather conditions and having filed a VFR flight plan. This demonstrated poor risk management, which is one of the key factors of an accident.

### 2.2.2 Aircraft

2.2.2.1 The aircraft lacked a valid Certificate of Release to Service at the time of the accident because the AMO that performed the last mandatory periodic inspection did not have a valid AMO Certificate from the state of registry. Whilst operating the aircraft with an invalid certificate violated regulations, this did not contribute to the cause of this accident.

2.2.2.2 Evidence—which included GPS data, wreckage examination of the cockpit, air traffic control audio recordings, and interviews with AMO personnel—indicated that the aircraft operated normally up to the point of impact with no reported in-flight technical issues and a cruise-flight configuration. Aircraft serviceability was not a factor in this accident.

2.2.2.3 GPS data of the flight indicated that the aircraft was operated at altitudes below that of the mountain peaks along the flown route at the time of the accident. This was likely due to an effort to maintain visual flight rules as the scattered cloud base was 3 000ft.

### 2.2.3 Organisation

2.2.3.1 The AMO that issued the Certificate of Release to Service (CRS) for the last mandatory periodic inspection (MPI) performed on aircraft did not have a valid approval certificate from the State of Registry at the time of release as the approval certificate had expired on 24 June 2024. The organisation operating the aircraft was aware of the expired status of the AMO’s approval certificate at the time maintenance was conducted and certified. Consequently, the aircraft was returned to service without the required regulatory approval. The AMO should not have certified the aircraft for return to service,

and the operator should not have permitted its operation under these circumstances. Whilst operating an aircraft with an invalid certificate constituted a breach of applicable regulations, no evidence was found to indicate that this non-compliance directly contributed to the accident.

#### 2.2.4 Weather

2.2.4.1 The official weather report issued by the South African Weather Service (SAWS) for Kruger Mpumalanga International Aerodrome (FAKN) and the Barberton area indicated scattered and broken cloud cover as low as 2 000ft around Barberton and 300ft around FAKN. The low cloud base would have made maintaining visual flight rules difficult and would have obscured the mountains and other obstacles along the route the aircraft was flying.

### 3 CONCLUSION

#### 3.1.1 General

From the available evidence, the following findings, causes and contributing factors 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 conclusion 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.
- **Causes** — are actions, omissions, events, conditions, or a combination thereof, which led to this accident.
- **Contributing factors** — are actions, omissions, events, conditions or a combination thereof, which, if eliminated, avoided or absent, would have reduced the probability of the accident occurring, or would have mitigated the severity of the consequences of the accident. The identification of contributing factors does not imply the assignment of fault or the determination of administrative, civil, or criminal liability.

#### 3.2 Findings

##### 3.2.1 Pilot

3.2.1.1 The pilot had a valid Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) that was issued on 11 August 2025 and expiring on 31 July 2026. The aircraft type was endorsed in his licence, which also included instrument, instructor and test pilot ratings. The pilot had a Class 1 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 15 January 2025, valid until 31 January 2026.

3.2.1.2 The WhatsApp voice note from the pilot indicated that despite known inclement weather conditions along the planned flight path with mountainous terrain, the pilot chose to continue with the flight in visual flight rules (VFR).

### 3.2.2 Aircraft

3.2.2.1 The flight was conducted under VFR by day when instrument metrological conditions (IMC) were encountered.

3.2.2.2 The last mandatory periodic inspection (MPI) performed on the aircraft was conducted and certified on 28 July 2025 at 5628.1 airframe hours. The aircraft had accrued 4.1 hours since the MPI at the time of the accident. The Certificate of Release to Service (CRS) issued upon completion of the last MPI was invalid as the aircraft maintenance organisation's (AMO's) approval certificate from the State of Registry had expired at the time.

3.2.2.3 The aircraft operated normally up to the point of impact with no reported in-flight technical issues.

3.2.2.4 The Global Positioning System (GPS) data of the accident flight indicated that the aircraft was operated at altitudes below that of the mountain peaks along the flown route at the time off the accident.

### 3.2.3 Weather

3.2.3.1 The official weather report issued by the South African Weather Service (SAWS) for Kruger Mpumalanga International Aerodrome (FAKN) and the Barberton area indicated scattered and broken cloud cover as low as 2 000ft around Barberton and 300ft around FAKN.

### 3.2.4 **Probable Cause/s**

3.2.5 Due to the low cloud base, the pilot operated the aircraft below altitude of the surrounding terrain to maintain visual contact. The adverse weather conditions obscured the pilot's view of the mountainous terrain, which resulted in a controlled flight into terrain (CFIT).

## 3.3 **Contributing Factors**

3.3.1 Adverse weather conditions with low cloud base.

3.3.2 Poor risk management.

- 3.3.3 Reduced situational awareness
- 3.3.4 Possible decision-making factors

## **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 Message**

- 4.2.1 Pilots are reminded to exercise proper risk management and mitigation when planning flights whilst also considering en route weather conditions.

## **5 APPENDICES**

- 5.1 None.

**This report is issued by:**

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