

No. 4

Filipinas Orient Airways, Inc., DC-3A, PI-C942 accident on Mt. Kantakan, La Carlota, Negros Occidental on 11 September 1965. Report, dated 31 May 1966, released by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Board, The Philippines

1. - Investigation1.1 History of the flight

Flight 60 was a scheduled domestic flight from Lahug Airport, Cebu City, to Bacolod Airport, Negros Occidental. It departed Lahug Airport at 1519 hours on a VFR flight plan and six minutes later it made contact with Cebu Control Tower giving its ETA at Bacolod as 1555 hours. Nothing further was heard from the flight. The estimated time en route was 45 minutes. At 1700 hours the flight was declared in distress and a communication search was started. It was subsequently found that the flight had run into some tree tops on the side of Mt. Kanlaon and had crashed at Mt. Kantakan, La Carlota, Negros Occidental, at approximately 1625 hours.

1.2 Injuries to persons

Injuries	Crew	Passengers	Others
Fatal	3	7	
Non-fatal			
None			

1.3 Damage to aircraft

The aircraft was destroyed.

1.4 Other damage

There was no other damage.

1.5 Crew information

The pilot-in-command, aged 37, held an airline transport pilot's licence valid until 22 February 1966, with type rating for DC-3 aircraft and an instrument rating. He had a current and valid medical certificate. His last satisfactory check ride was conducted by a CAA designated check pilot on 23 August 1965. He had been recently qualified on the Cebu-Bacolod route. He had flown a total of 2 427 hours including 495 hours on DC-3 aircraft.

The co-pilot, aged 32, held a commercial pilot's licence with ratings on DC-3, PA-33 and all single engine types of aircraft and an instrument rating. He was a former CAA check pilot until 13 May 1965 when he resigned. He had a current and valid medical certificate. He had flown a total of 1 345 hours including 715 hours on DC-3 aircraft.

1.6 Aircraft information

The aircraft had a certificate of airworthiness valid until 24 December 1965.

It had flown a total of 74 853 hours including 9 456 hours since last overhaul. However, only 1 098 hours were indicated in the logbook. The time flown since the last periodic check was 1 341 hours.

The aircraft's gross weight was 26 000 lb.

The type of fuel being used was not stated in the report.

1.7 Meteorological information

The weather conditions at 1400 hours were as follows:

Cebu: Ceiling 8 000 ft high cloud overcast lower broken scattered 2 500 ft, visibility 20 km, wind southsouthwest 5 to 8 kt, cloud cover 8/8

Bacolod: Overcast high cloud broken low cloud, visibility 10 to 12 km, distant precipitation, wind south-southwest 18 to 12 kt, altimeter setting 29.78 in.Hg. cloud cover 10/10

The pilot was briefed on the terminal forecast by Cebu Flight Control. According to other pilots who flew in the vicinity and to ground witnesses the actual weather in the area of the crash was very bad with heavy rain and strong winds of 25 to 30 kt.

1.8 Aids to navigation

Bacolod Airport was provided with a non-directional beacon (NDB). Lahug Airport was equipped with a VOR and an NDB.

The aircraft was equipped with two ADFs and a VOR.

1.9 Communications

There was no communication difficulty noted when the aircraft made its initial contact with Cebu Control Tower at 1525 hours.

1.10 Aerodrome and ground facilities

Not relevant to the accident.

1.11 Flight recorders

Not mentioned in the report.

1.12 Wreckage

The wreckage was spotted seven days after the accident on Mt. Kantakan (elevation 4 300 ft), 100 ft below the mountain ridge.

At initial impact the right wing tip hit some tree tops approximately 30 ft from their base in a nose down attitude. The aircraft then swerved to the right and its left wing cut a tree one foot in diameter about 25 ft from its base. The left wing was severed from the root when the aircraft finally rested on the slope of the mountain. Several parts of the wreckage were scattered in an area 50 m in diameter.

1.13 Fire

There was no evidence of fire or explosion as a result of the accident.

1.14 Survival aspects

When the fuselage was cut open along the side to facilitate the recovery of the victims, it was noted that the first front seat, left row, was uprooted together with two occupants with fastened seat belts. The four other passengers and the flight attendant were found occupying the seats almost at the mid section of the cabin with seat belts on.

1.15 Tests and research

None mentioned in the report.

2. - Analysis and Conclusions

There was no evidence of malfunction of the engines which might have contributed to the accident.

The terminal weather forecast for Bacolod, which was provided by the Cebu Weather Bureau and transmitted to the pilot, indicated that the weather en route was well below the VFR minima. In spite of this and of the fact that other flights to Bacolod were cancelled the pilot continued his VFR flight.

According to evidence and testimonies it was concluded that the pilot, encountering marginal weather conditions en route, probably decided to fly northward following the shoreline towards Bacolod Airport. However after having reached the northeast tip of Negros without finding any break, he probably decided to return by the shoreline to San Carlos and then tried to reach Bacolod by flying over the south slope of Mount Kanlaon. The fact that more than one hour elapsed between the take-off and the crash, when the estimated time en route was only 45 min, seemed to corroborate this.

According to pilots who flew over the area and elected to return to Cebu, heavy rain and turbulence prevailed around Mount Kanlaon. Ground witnesses further testified that the weather was very bad, with heavy rain and strong winds of about 25 to 30 kts. Some witnesses located at Danao Central saw and heard an aircraft flying very low in the direction of the mountain. Due to the existing weather the pilot was probably flying at low speed. With the prevailing strong winds he might have been drifted nearer from the side of Mt Kanlaon than anticipated. Also strong down-draughts were probably existing due to the configuration of the terrain and the winds. Based on

the general observation of the wreckage it was concluded that when flying at low altitude along the side of Mt Kanlaon, the aircraft was caught in a strong down-draught and hit some trees with its right wing tip. The aircraft then swerved to the right, lost considerable altitude and struck the 80° slope of the mountain.

2.2 Conclusions

Findings

The aircraft had a valid certificate of airworthiness.

The crew were properly certificated.

The actual weather en route was below VFR minima with heavy rain and thunderstorms.

While trying to reach Bacolod by flying under a very low ceiling the aircraft was caught in a down-draught and hit the tops of trees on the side of Mt. Kanlaon.

Cause or Probable cause(s)

The Board determined that the probable cause of this accident was an error of judgment on the part of the pilot to fly VFR into an instrument meteorological condition resulting in a collision with the terrain.

3. - Recommendations

Considering that Filipinas Orient Airways Inc. have flights originating from Cebu to Mindanao and the Visayas, it was recommended that the airline set up a dispatching centre at Cebu with a qualified dispatcher and a meteorologist.
