National Transportation Safety Board
Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	St. Thomas, VI	**Accident Number:**	MIA06LA125
Date & Time:	07/19/2006, 0720 AST	**Registration:**	N782T
Aircraft:	Douglas DC-3	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Defining Event:		**Injuries:**	1 Minor, 3 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Positioning		

Analysis

The captain stated that the accident flight was a return flight to San Juan, Puerto Rico, after delivering U.S. Mail. The airplane was empty of cargo at the time of the accident. The first officer was flying the airplane. The takeoff roll and rotation at 84 knots was uneventful until about 100 feet above the ground when the gear was called out to be retracted. At that time, the left engine's rpm dropped from 2,700 to 1,000. He communicated to the first officer that he would be assuming control of the airplane. He then proceeded with verifying that the left engine had failed. Once confirmed, he proceeded with the failed engine check list and feathering the propeller. They advised air traffic control (ATC) of the situation and informed them that they were returning to land. The airplane would not maintain altitude and the airspeed dropped to about 75 knots. The captain stated that he knew the airplane would not make it back to the airport. Instructions were given to the two passengers to don their life vests and prepared for a ditching. The captain elected to perform a controlled flight into the water. All onboard managed to exit the airplane through the cockpit overhead escape hatch onto the life raft as the airplane remained afloat. About ten minutes later the airplane sank nose first straight down. The airplane came to rest at the bottom of the ocean, in about 100 feet of water. The airplane was not recovered. Underwater photos provided by the operator showed the nose and cockpit area caved in, the left engine's propeller was in the feathered position, and the right engine's propeller was in a low pitch position.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The airplane's inability to maintain altitude for undetermined reasons, following a loss of power from the left engine.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - INITIAL CLIMB

Findings
1. 1 ENGINE - FAILURE,TOTAL
2. REASON FOR OCCURRENCE UNDETERMINED
3. PROPELLER FEATHERING - PERFORMED - FLIGHTCREW

Occurrence #2: DITCHING
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

Findings
4. (C) ALTITUDE - NOT POSSIBLE - FLIGHTCREW
5. (C) REASON FOR OCCURRENCE UNDETERMINED

Factual Information

On July 19, 2006, about 0720 Atlantic standard time, a Douglas DC-3, N782T, registered to and operated by MBD Corporation, ditched in the Caribbean Sea shortly after takeoff from the Cyril King, Charlotte Amalie Airport, Saint Thomas, Untied States Virgin Island, while on a Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 positioning flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time and a company flight plan was filed. The airline transport-rated pilot, commercial-rated copilot and one of the two passengers were not injured; the other passenger received minor injuries. The airplane incurred substantial damage. The flight was originating at the time.

The air traffic controller at the departing airport stated he cleared the airplane for takeoff from runway 28. He observed the airplane airborne by just short of mid field. He then he observed the airplane turn slightly left of the runway heading followed by a turn back to the runway heading. Once the airplane reached the departure end of the runway, a flight crew member communicated that they needed to return and land due to an engine failure. They were cleared to land on either runway. The controller observed the airplane losing altitude and realizing the airplane would not make runway 28, he advised them to land on runway 10. Shortly after that he observed the airplane ditch about a mile away from the departure end of runway 28. The controller started the rescue coordination at that time.

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The airplane came to rest at the bottom of the ocean, in about 100 feet of water. The airplane was not recovered. Underwater photos provided by the operator showed the nose and cockpit area caved in, the left engine's propeller was in the feathered position, and the right engine's propeller was in a low pitch position.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline Transport; Flight Instructor	**Age:**	72, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	**Seat Occupied:**	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	**Restraint Used:**	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	**Second Pilot Present:**	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane Multi-engine; Airplane Single-engine; Instrument Airplane	**Toxicology Performed:**	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 With Waivers/Limitations	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	04/01/2006
Occupational Pilot:		**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	02/01/2006
Flight Time:	15750 hours (Total, all aircraft), 152 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 52 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 4 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Co-Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	**Age:**	26, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	**Seat Occupied:**	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	**Restraint Used:**	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	**Second Pilot Present:**	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	**Toxicology Performed:**	No
Medical Certification:	Class 1 None	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	02/01/2006
Occupational Pilot:		**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	02/01/2006
Flight Time:	305 hours (Total, all aircraft), 50 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Douglas	**Registration:**	N782T
Model/Series:	DC-3	**Aircraft Category:**	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		**Amateur Built:**	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Transport	**Serial Number:**	4382
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tailwheel	**Seats:**	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	05/01/2006, AAIP	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	26900 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	49 Hours	**Engines:**	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	32278 Hours at time of accident	**Engine Manufacturer:**	Pratt & Whitney
ELT:	Installed, not activated	**Engine Model/Series:**	R-1830-92D
Registered Owner:	MBD Corporation	**Rated Power:**	1200 hp
Operator:	MBD Corporation	**Operating Certificate(s) Held:**	On-demand Air Taxi (135)
Operator Does Business As:		**Operator Designator Code:**	FIUA

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	**Condition of Light:**	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	TIST	**Distance from Accident Site:**	
Observation Time:	0730	**Direction from Accident Site:**	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 1600 ft agl	**Visibility**	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 6000 ft agl	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	11 knots /	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	/
Wind Direction:	140°	**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.03 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	29°C / 24°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	St. Thomas, VI (TIST)	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	Company VFR
Destination:	San Juan, PR (TJSJ)	**Type of Clearance:**	VFR
Departure Time:	0719 EST	**Type of Airspace:**	

Airport Information

Airport:	Cyril E King Airport (TIST)	**Runway Surface Type:**	
Airport Elevation:	23 ft	**Runway Surface Condition:**	
Runway Used:	NA	**IFR Approach:**	None
Runway Length/Width:		**VFR Approach/Landing:**	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 None	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Minor, 1 None	**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	1 Minor, 3 None	**Latitude, Longitude:**	18.333333, -64.966667

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Jose Obregon	**Report Date:**	04/30/2008
Additional Participating Persons:	Ramon Ruez; FAA San Juan FSDO-29; San Juan, PR		
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 pubinq@ntsb.gov, or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at http://dms.ntsb.gov/pubdms/.		