

AAIPU# A14-005585



AIR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION & PREVENTION UNIT CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT

NASSAU, N. P., BAHAMAS

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT REPORT

AIRCRAFT DITCHING
FERG'S AIR LIMITED
PIPER PA-31-350

C6-REV

CLIFTON PIER
NEW PROVIDENCE, BAHAMAS
2 DECEMBER, 2014





**Bahamas Department of Civil Aviation
Air Accident Investigation and Prevention Unit
P. O. Box AP-59244
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Nassau N. P., Bahamas**

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Abstract: This report documents the accident involving a Piper PA 31-350 aircraft, registered to and operated by Ferg's Air Limited as Southern Air Limited Flight 302 that occurred on December 2nd 2014 at approximately 8:45am local (1345Z). The aircraft ditched in waters in the south western vicinity of New Providence following a landing attempt to runway 09 at the Lynden Pindling International Airport, Nassau, Bahamas after experiencing landing gear problems followed by a failure of the right engine. The accident resulted in one (1) fatality.



Bahamas Department of Civil Aviation Air Accident Investigation and Prevention Unit

The Air Accident Investigation and Prevention Unit (AAIPU) is the aviation accident investigation unit of the Bahamas Civil Aviation Department (BCAD).

The AAIPU's function is to promote and improve safety and public confidence in the aviation industry through excellence in:

- independent investigation of aviation accidents and other safety occurrences
- safety data recording, analysis and research
- fostering safety awareness, knowledge and action.

The AAIPU does not investigate for the purpose of apportioning blame or to provide a means for determining liability.

The AAIPU performs its functions in accordance with the provisions of the *Bahamas Civil Aviation (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations (BASR) 2013, Schedule 19, International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Annex 13* and, where applicable, relevant international agreements.

The Civil Aviation Department is mandated by the Ministry of Transportation and Aviation to investigate air transportation accidents and incidents, determine probable causes of accidents and incidents, issue safety recommendations, study transportation safety issues and evaluate the safety effectiveness of agencies and stakeholders involved in air transportation.

The AAIPU makes public its actions and decisions through accident reports, safety studies, special investigation reports, safety recommendations and safety alerts. When the AAIPU issues a safety recommendation, the person, organization or agency must provide a written response within 90 days. That response must indicate whether the person, organization or agency accepts the recommendation, any reasons for not accepting part or all of the recommendation, and details of any proposed safety action to give effect to the recommendation.

Official Copies of accident reports can be obtained by contacting:

Mr. Ivan Cleare
Director (Acting)
Bahamas Department of Civil Aviation
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Unofficial copies of the reports can be viewed on our website at www.aaipu-bcaa.com

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FOREWARD

February 27, 2015

Mr. Ivan Cleare
Director (Acting)
Bahamas Civil Aviation Department
P.O. Box N-975
Nassau, N.P.,
Bahamas

Sir

The Air Accident Investigation & Prevention Unit is duty-bound to submit this report on the circumstances of the fatal accident involving C6-REV, a Piper PA 31-350 aircraft, registered in the Bahamas to Ferg's Air Limited, a Bahamas AOC Holder and operated as Southern Air Limited Flight 302. This accident occurred on December 2nd 2014 at 8:45am local time (1345Z) after ditching in waters in the southwestern vicinity of New Providence Island. The aircraft experienced landing gear problems followed by an engine failure which resulted in the decision to land the aircraft in water.

This report is submitted pursuant to Part XII, Regulation 80, and Schedule 19 of the Bahamas Civil Aviation (Safety)(Amendment) Regulation (BASR 2013) and in accordance with Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

In accordance with Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (ICAO), and Schedule 19 of the Bahamas Civil Aviation (Safety)(Amendment) Regulations (BASR), the fundamental purpose of such investigations is to determine the circumstances and causes of these events, with a view to the preservation of life and the avoidance of similar occurrences in the future. It is not the purpose of such investigations to apportion blame or liability.

This report contains the facts which have been determined up to the time of publication. Information is published to inform the aviation industry and the public of the circumstances surrounding this accident. The contents of this report may be subjected to alterations or corrections later if additional factual information becomes available.

Regards



Delvin R. Major
Investigator in Charge
Air Accident Investigation and Prevention Unit
Bahamas Department of Civil Aviation
2nd Floor, JL Center, Blake Road
Nassau, N. P., Bahamas



**BAHAMAS CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT
AIR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION AND PREVENTION UNIT**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On December 2nd 2014 at 8:45am (1345Z), a Piper PA 31-350 aircraft, registration C6-REV, registered to and operated by Ferg's Air Limited, a Bahamas AOC holder, and operating as Southern Air Flight 302 was ditched in waters approximately 6nm from the shoreline in the south western district of the island of New Providence. The pilot stated that he experienced an engine failure while trying to resolve a landing gear problems during initial landing approach at Lynden Pindling International Airport (MYNN) Nassau, Bahamas.

The aircraft made an initial visual approach to Runway 09 at the Lynden Pindling International Airport. Due to failure of the left main landing gear, the landing gear unsafe light remaining illuminated. The pilot made a decision to execute a miss approach procedure prior to an attempt to recycle the landing gear and execute an emergency extend procedure. The aircraft executed a fly by, of the ATC control tower to visually affirm the three landing gears were extended. The tower reported that all three landing gears “appeared to be in a down and locked position.”

The pilot next made a right turn to proceed outbound and make another approach, however on the downwind to runway 09 he began experiencing problems with the right engine. Due to the engine troubles and indications, the pilot made the decision to secure (shutdown) the engine. A later attempt to restart the engine proved unsuccessful. The aircraft was unable to maintain altitude while flying on a single engine. The pilot realized that he was unable to make the runway at the rate at which the aircraft was losing altitude, the decision was made to ditch the aircraft in the water.

Upon touching down on the water, the emergency exits were opened and the passengers and pilot were able to evacuate before the aircraft sunk beneath the surface. Small boats operating in the area picked up the occupants of the aircraft. An elderly male passenger died during the process. The aircraft sank in waters estimated in excess of 6,500 feet therefore no analysis could be made to determine the cause of the engine failure.

No person or structure on the ground was injured or damaged and no environmental impact was reported as a result of this accident.

The Air Accident Investigation & Prevention Unit (AAIPU) determines that the probable cause(s) of this accident were:

- Engine failure and inability of the aircraft to maintain safe altitude.

Contributing Factors includes:

- Failure of the left main landing gear.



**BAHAMAS CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT
AIR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION AND PREVENTION UNIT**

TITLE

Registered Owner: Ferg's Air Limited

Operator: Ferg's Air Limited operating as Southern Air Flight 302

Manufacturer: Piper Aircraft Inc.

Model: PA 31-350 Navajo

Aircraft Type: Fixed Wing Multi Engine

Nationality: Bahamas

Registration: C6-REV

Place of Accident: Off Clifton Pier, Southwestern District of New Providence, Bahamas

Date and Time: December 2nd, 2014 at 1345Z (8:45am local EST)

Notification: DCA, NTSB, ICAO, FAA,

Investigating Authority: Civil Aviation Department
Air Accident Investigation and Prevention Unit

Investigator in Charge: Mr. Delvin R. Major

Accredited Representative: Mr. Brian Rayner National Transportation Safety Board

Releasing Authority: Civil Aviation Department, Nassau, N. P., Bahamas

Date of Report Publication: March 2, 2015

ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

When the following terms are used in this report, they have the following meanings;

AAIPU	Air Accident Investigation and Prevention Unit
AIS	Automatic Information Services
ATS	Air Traffic Services
BDCA /CAD	Bahamas Department of Civil Aviation
BASR	Bahamas Civil Aviation (Safety) Regulations (April 17, 2013)
C of A	Certificate of Airworthiness
C of R	Certificate of Registration
DCA	Director of Civil Aviation
EST	Eastern Standard Time (-4 hours to convert from UTC)
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
MET	Meteorological Office / Department
METAR	Weather Report furnished by Meteorological Department
NM or nm	Nautical Miles
NTSB	National Transportation Safety Board
USA	United States of America
VFR	Visual Flight Rules
UTC / Z	Universal Coordinated Time / Zulu time

DEFINITIONS

When the following terms are used in the Standards and Recommended Practices for Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation, they have the following meaning:

Accident. An occurrence associated with the operation of an aircraft which takes place between the times any person boards the aircraft with the intention of flight until such time as all such persons have disembarked, in which:

a) a person is fatally or seriously injured as a result of:

- being in the aircraft, or
- direct contact with any part of the aircraft, including parts which have become detached from the aircraft, or
- direct exposure to jet blast, except when the injuries are from natural causes, self-inflicted or inflicted by other persons, or when the injuries are to stowaways hiding outside the areas normally available to the passengers and crew; or

b) the aircraft sustains damage or structural failure which:

- adversely affects the structural strength, performance or flight characteristics of the aircraft, and

— would normally require major repair or replacement of the affected component, except for engine failure or damage, when the damage is limited to the engine, its cowlings or accessories; or for damage limited to propellers, wing tips, antennas, tires, brakes, fairings, small dents or puncture holes in the aircraft skin; or

c) the aircraft is missing or is completely inaccessible.

Note 1.— For statistical uniformity only, an injury resulting in death within thirty days of the date of the accident is classified as a fatal injury by ICAO.

Note 2. An aircraft is considered to be missing when the official search has been terminated and the wreckage has not been located.

Accredited representative. A person designated by a State, on the basis of his or her qualifications, for the purpose of participating in an investigation conducted by another State.

Adviser. A person appointed by a State, on the basis of his or her qualifications, for the purpose of

assisting its accredited representative in an investigation.

Aircraft. Any machine that can derive support in the atmosphere from the reactions of the air other than the reactions of the air against the earth's surface.

Causes. Actions, omissions, events, conditions, or a combination thereof, which led to the accident or incident.

Fatal injury. - means any injury which results in death within 30 days of the accident.

Flight recorder. Any type of recorder installed in the aircraft for the purpose of complementing accident/incident investigation.

Investigation. A process conducted for the purpose of accident prevention which includes the gathering and analysis of information, the drawing of conclusions, including the determination of causes and, when appropriate, the making of safety recommendations.

Investigator-in-charge. A person charged, on the basis of his or her qualifications, with the responsibility for the organization, conduct and control of an investigation.

Note.— Nothing in the above definition is intended to preclude the functions of an investigator-in-charge being assigned to a commission or other body.

Maximum mass. Maximum certificated take-off mass.

Operator. A person, organization or enterprise engaged in or offering to engage in an aircraft operation.

Preliminary Report. The communication used for the prompt dissemination of data obtained during the early stages of the investigation.

Safety recommendation. A proposal of the accident investigation authority of the State conducting the investigation, based on information derived from the investigation, made with the intention of preventing accidents or incidents.

State of Design. The State having jurisdiction over the organization responsible for the type design.

State of Manufacture. The State having jurisdiction over the organization responsible for the final assembly of the aircraft.

State of Occurrence. The State in the territory of which an accident or incident occurs.

State of the Operator. The State in which the operator's principal place of business is located or, if there is no such place of business, the operator's permanent residence.

State of Registry. The State on whose register the aircraft is entered.

Note.— In the case of the registration of aircraft of an international operating agency on other than a national basis, the States constituting the agency are jointly and severally bound to assume the obligations which, under the Chicago Convention, attach to a State of Registry. See, in this regard, the Council Resolution of 14 December 1967 on Nationality and Registration of Aircraft Operated by International Operating Agencies which can be found in Policy and Guidance Material on the Economic Regulation of International

PART 1 BODY

FACTUAL INFORMATION:

1.1 HISTORY OF THE FLIGHT

On Tuesday December 2nd, 2014 at approximately 8:45 am (1345Z) a Ferg’s Air Limited, Piper PA31-350 Navajo aircraft, registration C6-REV, operated as Southern Air Limited Flight 302, ditched in waters approximately 6nm from shore in the southwestern district of New Providence. The flight originated at Governor’s Harbour, Eleuthera (MYEM) with 10+1 persons on board at approximately 8:15 am in Visual Meteorological Conditions (VMC). At around 8:30am, the aircraft 15 nautical miles east of Lynden Pindling International Airport at 4,500 feet contacted Nassau Air Traffic Control Tower. The aircraft was instructed that runway 09 was in use and they can expect a landing on that runway. Upon final approach to runway 09, with the landing gears selected to the “EXTEND” position, only the nose and right main landing gear lights indicated the “down and locked” position. The left main landing gear light did not illuminate to indicate the “down and locked” position, so the landing was aborted and the pilot requested to go around so he could recycle and troubleshoot the landing gear issue.

The pilot made a left turn, flew over the north western shoreline and recycled the landing gears a few times and also tried the emergency hand pump in an attempt to extend the gear. Despite all efforts, the left main landing gear light still did not illuminate to indicated the gear was in the safe “down and locked” position. At this time the aircraft was allowed to fly by the tower so that the controller may make a visual check of the landing gears to see if they were in the extended position. The controller advised the pilot that all gears “appeared to be extended”. Once again the pilot proceeded outbound to make another attempt for landing. For this approach the pilot made a right turn over the southwestern shoreline and proceeded downwind to runway 09.

While on the downwind to runway 09 the pilot stated he began to experience problems with the right engine. The engine eventually stopped and all attempts to restart were unsuccessful. As a result of single engine operation, level flight could not be maintained even after retracting the gears and cleaning up the airplane. The decision was made by the pilot to ditch in the water vs. attempting to make the airport where numerous trees and obstacles would make the landing more difficult if the runway could not be made.

After touching down on the water the most of the occupants were able to evacuate the aircraft through the normal and emergency exits before the aircraft sank into the ocean. One passenger died during the process. Witness stated that “the plane skipped across the water three times before rotating and hitting with a severe impact. The port (left) tail section received the bulk of the impact as did the port side of the plane.” Eye witness further stated that the passenger that died and “luggage from the baggage compartment were ejected from the rear of the plane on the port side.” “Multiple passengers could not swim or were extremely limited in their ability to swim.” Despite the plane having the full complement of survival equipment (life vests), only two were taken out of the aircraft. Passengers were holding on to bags and other debris that floated out of the aircraft as it submerged. Passengers helped each other until rescuers arrived to assist. Estimates from eye witness were that “the entire plane disappeared under water from 30 to 60 seconds after impact.” The depth where the aircraft came to rest on the water was reported as in excess of 6,500 feet. Once the aircraft settled, it submerged and was not able to be recovered. Safety concerns raised by eye witness could not be confirmed as the plane was never recovered.

1.2 INJURIES TO PERSONS

<i>Injuries</i>	<i>Crew</i>	<i>Passengers</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
Fatal		1		1
Serious				
Minor	1	?*		?*

**A full accounting of persons that received minor injuries could not be established as all passengers were transported to the hospital for evaluation and later discharged. Many of the passengers were foreign nationals and left the same day or shortly thereafter to the United States.*

1.3 DAMAGE TO AIRCRAFT

The extent of damage to the aircraft could not be determined because the aircraft sank in waters reported in excess of 6,500ft and was not recovered..

1.4 OTHER DAMAGE

No other damage, environmental or otherwise was reported.

1.5 PERSONNEL INFORMATION

A 56-year-old male piloted the aircraft. He is the holder of a Bahamas and United States of America Commercial Pilot License with Single and Multi-engine land and Instrument Airplane category ratings. The Bahamas Commercial Pilot License was issued March 28th 2013. He is also the holder of a class 1 medical certificate; with the limitation that corrective lens must be worn issued June 23rd 2014.

His total pilot hours reported at the time of his last medical certification is estimated to be approximately eight thousand six hundred and fifty hours (8,650).

1.6 AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

C6-REV, a fixed-wing multi-engine Piper PA31-350 Navajo, serial number 31-7652062, was manufactured in 1976. It was owned, registered and operated by Ferg's Air Limited. At the latest inspection recorded, the airplane accumulated total time was recorded as 11,744 flight hours.

The aircraft was fitted with two Textron Lycoming TIO-540-J2BD reciprocating engines and two Hartzell HC-E3YR-2ATF propellers. The aircraft was listed in the normal category, standard classification and was issued an airworthiness certificate on November 29th 2013 by the Flight Standards Inspectorate.

1.6.1 Aircraft Fuelling Information

The pilot reported that he had 43 gallons of fuel placed in the inboard fuel tanks of the aircraft prior to his departure for Governor's Harbour. He stated that he opted not to fuel the outboard fuel tanks because of the short distance of the flight and he considered the fuel taken in the inboard fuel tanks sufficient to complete the flight to Governors Harbour and return to Nassau.

1.6.2 Weight and Balance and Stall Information

The airplane type certificate listed the maximum allowable takeoff weight at 7000 pounds. A review of the aircraft maintenance records shows the most recent weight and balance inspection was carried out on November 21st 2013. At the time of this inspection the aircraft conformed to its type certificate.

1.6.3 Maintenance Records

A review the maintenance records for aircraft C6-REV was made following the accident. The records were found satisfactory. Ram-Aero Aviation at Aircraft Total Time 11,744.6 hours and HOBBS time 868.7 accomplished the most recent annual inspection. This inspection was completed on October 22nd 2014.

1.6.4 Airworthiness Directives

According to the maintenance records reviewed all Airworthiness Directives (AD's) were reviewed and complied with up to current AD bi-weekly period 2014-22.

1.6.5 Maintenance Actions Prior to the Accident

There is no notation in the maintenance records to indicate any further maintenance action accomplished to the aircraft after the annual inspection on 22 October 2014 up to the time of the accident.

1.7 METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

The accident occurred in visual meteorological conditions (VMC). Visibility was unrestricted and the wind was out of the northeast at approximately 10 knots.

1.8 AIDS TO NAVIGATION

Aids to navigation were not a factor in this accident. At the time of the accident the aircraft had available Nassau VOR at Frequency 112.7.

1.9 COMMUNICATIONS

Communications by C6-REV were established with Nassau Approach on frequency 121.00 and Nassau Tower Control on frequency 119.5.

1.10 AERODROME INFORMATION

Lynden Pindling International Airport (MYNN) situated on the island of New Providence is the largest airport in the Bahamas. The field has an elevation of 16 feet above sea level and coordinates of 25 02' 20" N and 077 27' 58" W. The runway options at MYNN are runways 14/32 and runways 09/27, all runways are paved surfaces, constructed of asphalt.

1.11 FLIGHT RECORDERS

No flight recorders were installed in the aircraft, as none was required by regulations for this aircraft type.

1.12 WRECKAGE AND IMPACT INFORMATION

The aircraft was not recovered so wreckage and impact information could not be determined.

1.13 MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

There was one fatality as a result of the accident. The victim was later transported to the Rand Morgue at the Princess Margaret Hospital. All survivors were examined on scene and thereafter taken by EMS personnel to Doctor's Hospital for further examination and evaluation, only minor injuries were reported.

1.14 FIRE

There was no evidence or report of fire associated with this accident.

1.15 SURVIVAL ASPECTS

The accident was survivable because the pilot made a decision to land on the water vs. trying to make the runway, which had numerous obstacles between the aircraft position and the runway. The pilot along with the passengers was able to open the emergency exits and evacuate before the aircraft sank. The aircraft was also equipped with life vests, some of which were utilized for flotation as well as other items such as luggage and seats.

Small boats being operated in the area around the time of the accident was able to lend assistance to the occupants of the aircraft. This rapid assistance also increased the survivable chances of the occupants.

1.16 TESTS AND RESEARCH

Because of the depth of the water and inaccessibility of the aircraft no tests and research was carried out.

1.17 ORGANIZATIONAL AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

1.17.1 General

Ferg's Air Limited was founded in 1997. The Department of Civil Aviation certified Ferg's Air Limited for commercial air operations as a Single Pilot AOC. Ferg's Air Limited conducted chartered flights on demand throughout the islands of the Bahamas.

Southern Air Charter Limited a certified Bahamas Air Operator Certificate holder was the company hired to transport passengers from Governor Harbour to Nassau. Southern Air Charter Limited used the services of Ferg's Air Charter to operate flight 302 without establishing a formal relationship (code share / wet / dry lease).

1.17.2 Maintenance

The aircraft C6-REV was maintained by Rams Aero Aviation based at the Lynden Pindling International Airport. The Air Accident Investigation and Prevention Unit conducted a complete aircraft records inspection. The last recorded maintenance being an annual inspection accomplished on 22nd October 2014 at 11,744.6 ACTT and 868.7 hours Hobbs.

PART 2 ANALYSIS

2.1 GENERAL

Weather was not a factor in this accident.

Air Traffic Control services were provided in accordance with established criteria and were not a factor in the cause of this accident.

The pilot was properly trained, current and qualified for the flight.

2.2 AIRPLANE HANDLING

The airplane was configured for the landing however, as the landing gear unsafe light remained illuminated, the pilot elected to execute a go around procedure and have ATC verify gears were in the down position. While trying to deal with a landing gear problem the aircraft experienced a failure of the right engine. This engine failure resulted in the aircraft inability to maintain a safe altitude, hence the decision to land in the water versus trying to make it to the runway, which contained numerous obstacles between the position of the aircraft, and the runway.

2.3 MAINTENANCE OVERSIGHT

The airplane was properly maintained in accordance with CAA and FAA regulations.

2.4 SURVIVAL FACTORS

With the exception of the one victim, the accident was survivable for the pilot and other passengers because of the decision to land in water versus trying to reach the airport. The presence and assistance of small boats operating in the area at the time of the accident also greatly increased the survivability chances of the occupants.

PART 3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 FINDINGS

1. Weather was not a factor in the accident.
2. Air Traffic Services were proper and did not contribute to the cause of the accident.
3. The pilot was properly certified, trained and qualified for the flight.
4. The loss of power on the right engine resulted in the aircraft inability to maintain a safe altitude.
5. The Police and other emergency services response were timely and effective.
6. The depth of the water where the aircraft came to rest made it impossible for the aircraft to be recovered.
7. The aircraft was properly maintained in accordance with Bahamas and United States regulations and maintenance practices.

3.2 PROBABLE CAUSE

The AAIPU determines that the probable causes of this accident as:

- Engine failure and the inability of the aircraft to maintain a safe altitude.

PART 4 SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS:

No safety recommendation can be made in this accident, as the aircraft could not be recovered for analysis due to the depths of the water where the ditching occurred.