

MEDIA STATEMENT**21 September 2011****CAA interim report on the Tzaneen Albatross accident**

The South African Civil Aviation Authority's (SACAA) Accident and Incident Investigation Division has released a preliminary report on the investigation progress of the Tzaneen Albatross aircraft accidents that took place on 14 August 2011.

Whilst the investigation is still ongoing, the preliminary report has confirmed a few issues. The two aircraft, with registration markings ZS-NJX and ZU-MMI; and with 6 and 7 people on board respectively, took off from Tzaneen aerodrome on 14 August 2011 at approximately 10:20 on private flights with the intention of landing at the Rand Airport on the same day. After both aircraft failed to arrive at Rand Airport at their expected time of arrival, numerous attempts were made to contact the aircraft. After these attempts turned out to be fruitless, a search and rescue mission was initiated to look for these aircraft.

The search and rescue mission was based around the area where the aircraft were believed to have had last contact with each other and with other traffic. Unfortunately, due to bad weather in and around the area of last contact of these aircraft, they could only be located nearly two days after they had crashed into a mountain in the Lekgalametse valley. Both aircraft were destroyed by impact force and post-impact fire and all the occupants of both aircraft were fatally injured.

The report further states that according to the available information, the aircraft flew in a formation and ZS-NJX was leading this formation. The pilots were communicating to each other whilst in the air, but there is no evidence of any declaration of an emergency made before the accident occurred.

The aircraft were heard flying through the escarpment by a witness, who saw them moments before they disappeared into the clouds. The aircraft were fitted with standard navigation and communication equipment as approved at the time of certification, and no defects were entered against this equipment prior to the accidents or during the accident flights.

The aircraft were not fitted with flight data recorders, cockpit voice recorders, or emergency locator transmitters as these are not required to be fitted on this type of aircraft by the applicable civil aviation regulations. As the aircraft were not fitted with emergency locator transmitters they were missing for nearly two days before being located by search and rescue units.

At the time of the accident both pilots had valid licences. In addition, ZS-NJX aircraft had a valid certificate of airworthiness whilst ZU-MMI had a valid authority to fly.

The terrain where the aircraft that was leading the formation was found is a steep slope with a number of outcropped rocks and several trees in the vicinity, but no pre-impact damage to the trees was observed in the vicinity of the wreckage site.

The terrain where the second aircraft was found is also a steep and slippery slope with huge outcropped rocks and lots of tall trees. A number of pre-impact marks were observed on top of the tall trees, and part of the left-wing structure was found stuck on top of the tall trees.

The continuation of the accident investigation will result in the release of the final accident report which will have taken into consideration all the different factors, possible causes and any recommended safety recommendations. The sole purpose of such accident investigation is to establish the causes of aircraft accidents in order to prevent recurrence of accidents emanating from similar causes and as such, not to apportion any blame or establish legal liability.

-ENDS-

About the SACAA:

The South African Civil Aviation Authority ("SACAA") is a juristic body established in terms of the Civil Aviation Act, 2009 (Act No. 13 of 2009) ("the Act"). SACAA is governed and controlled by the Civil Aviation Authority Board ("the Board"). In terms of mandate, the SACAA is tasked with promoting and maintaining a safe, secure and sustainable civil aviation environment, by regulating and overseeing the functioning and development of the industry in an efficient, cost-effective, and customer-friendly manner according to international standards.

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