



MEDIA RELEASE

Update on aircraft accident between Yalumet and Saidor Gap, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea, 23 December 2017

At 08.50am on 26 December 2017, the PNG Accident Investigation Commission (AIC) management team was informed that the pilot of the North Coast Aviation aircraft, a Britain Norman Islander, that crashed near the Saidor Gap, Morobe Province on Saturday 23 December, had passed away. Adverse weather and heavily vegetated steep mountainous terrain had severely hampered rescue efforts for nearly 3 days.

Ground and airborne search and rescue teams were unable to locate the missing aircraft until Sunday morning 24 December. Observers, including an AIC investigator, in a North Coast Aviation PAC 750 fixed-wing aircraft reported sighting the aircraft's tailplane. Unfortunately, adverse weather prevented the PAC 750 going closer to the higher area where the main wreckage was assumed to be, and no further flights were able to be conducted on Sunday due to the adverse weather. The aircraft had impacted trees and terrain at an altitude of around 9,500 feet.

Rescue attempts from the air continued all day on Monday 25 December, but the adverse weather continued to prevent them reaching the main wreckage and the trapped pilot. Ground rescuers continued to make progress towards the accident site under the extremely difficult conditions.

On Tuesday 26 December, with favourable weather conditions, a four-person specialist rescue team from the Porgera Joint Venture Mine rescue team rappelled from a helicopter and reached the pilot. Sadly, he was found deceased in the wreckage. The AIC investigator at Nadzab was informed at 06:57am, and subsequently informed the AIC management team. The weather at the accident site continues to be a major concern, and is presenting a significant challenge to the AIC investigation team preparing to examine the aircraft wreckage.

The AIC's role is not search and rescue. However, its investigators deployed to Nadzab/Lae in readiness to commence the on-site accident investigation have been providing assistance, and have been supported by the AIC's management team.

As part of its investigative function under ICAO *Annex 13*, with respect to investigating aircraft accident survivability, the AIC has been monitoring the extensive efforts to rescue the pilot, who it was known had survived the impact. As with all aspects of the AIC's investigations, this survivability aspect is conducted in a no-blame approach. Any findings or recommendations emanating from the AIC's overall investigation will be solely for future safety and survivability enhancement.

The AIC's investigation AIC 17-1004. is continuing, and a preliminary report will be issued within 30 days of the date of the accident, in accordance with ICAO *Annex 13* obligations.

Approved:

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