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Safety recommendation: AIC 20-R 25/19-1003

Addressed to: Tribal Aurora Helicopters

Date issued: 2 October 2020

Investigation link: AIC 19-1003

Action status: Issued

Introduction

On 13 September 2019, at about 01:15 UTC (11:15 local time), an Airbus Helicopter BK117 C-1, registered P2-TAH, owned by Southern Cross Aircraft Engineering (SCAE) and operated by Tribal Aurora Helicopters (TAH) was on a VFR positioning flight from Buka Airport, Autonomous Region of Bougainville to Tokua Airport, East New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea, when it impacted water approximately 2.7 nautical miles (nm) South East of Silur, New Ireland Province.

At 02:27 UTC (12:27 local time), the AIC received information from Manolos Aviation about the accident and at 04:31, PNG Air Services Limited (ASL) notified AIC by providing an Initial Notification Incident (INI) Report. At that time PNG AIC commenced its Investigation in accordance with PNG legislation, Civil Aviation Act (As Amended 2016) and ICAO Annex 13 standards.

Occurrence

On 13 September 2019, at about 01:15 UTC (11:15 local time), an Airbus Helicopter BK117 C-1, registered P2-TAH, owned by Southern Cross Aircraft Engineering (SCAE) and operated by Tribal Aurora Helicopters (TAH) was on a VFR positioning flight from Buka Airport, Autonomous Region of Bougainville to Tokua Airport, East New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea.

The investigation revealed that during flight, the pilot encountered deteriorated weather conditions. Subsequently, he tried to divert but weather was further deteriorating as the flight progressed, to an extent in which the pilot was unable to maintain visual references.

While the pilot was maneuvering to visual references, the aircraft descended and impacted the water approximately 2.7 nautical miles (nm) South East of Silur Airstrip, New Ireland Province.

Safety deficiency description

During the investigation, the Operator stated that they had been monitoring the helicopter on Spidertracks during the accident flight and noticed that the helicopter appeared stationary on Spidertracks, assuming that P2-TAH had landed somewhere along the South East coast of New Ireland due to adverse weather conditions. They did not receive emergency SOS alert from P2-TAH. Therefore, they did not attempt to contact the pilot or to deploy any emergency response action until 02:03, when they were notified by the pilot of P2-NTI about the occurrence.

It was revealed during investigation that the Operator did not have any procedure for monitoring its helicopter tracking system “Spidertracks” in an emergency SOS alert situation from the helicopter.

4.1.1 Recommendation number AIC 20-R 25/19-1003 to Tribal Aurora Helicopters

Date Issued: 2 October 2020

The Accident Investigation Commission recommends that Tribal Aurora Helicopters should implement procedures to effectively monitor its Aircraft Tracking System “Spidertracks” during their helicopter flight operations and immediately commence their Emergency Response Plan.

Action Requested

The AIC requests that Tribal Aurora Helicopters note recommendation AIC 20- R 25/19-1003, and provide a response to the AIC within 90 days, but no later than 2/1/2021, and explain including evidence how Tribal Aurora Helicopters has addressed the safety deficiency identified in the safety recommendation.

Status of the AIC Safety Recommendation: Open

Recommendation number AIC 20-R 25/19-1003 to Tribal Aurora Helicopter

Tribal Aurora Helicopters to implement procedures to effectively monitor its Aircraft Tracking System “Spidertracks” during their aircraft flight operations.

Status of the AIC Safety Recommendation: Open



HUBERT NAMANI
Chief Commissioner

Tribal Aurora Helicopters response

On 30 November 2020, Tribal Aurora Helicopters provided a response document dated 27 November 2020, via email to the AIC. Tribal Aurora Helicopters stated that a flight monitoring personnel will be appointed should the company continue to operate.

AIC assessment

The AIC has assessed the response provided by Tribal Aurora Helicopters and notes that they acknowledge the Safety Deficiency and Recommendation. The response shows satisfactory intent. However, they did not provide evidence to address the Recommendation.

The AIC understands that Tribal Aurora Helicopters is no longer in operation and may not be able to address the Recommendation. However, in the future, when its operations are planned to resume, appropriate action should be taken to address the Safety Deficiency.

The AIC assigns Tribal Aurora Helicopters' response as *unsatisfactory* rating.

The AIC has recorded the **Status of the AIC Recommendation: CLOSED.**



Hubert Namani, LLB

Chief Commissioner

23 August 2021