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MEDIA RELEASE

RELEASE OF FINAL REPORT ON THE ACCIDENT INVOLVING A NORTH COAST AVIATION BN2B-26 ISLANDER AIRCRAFT SOUTHWEST OF WASU, MOROBE PROVINCE, PNG

The Accident Investigation Commission (AIC) today published the Final Report on the investigation conducted into an accident involving a Pilatus Britten-Norman BN2B-26 Islander aircraft that occurred on 22 December 2024.

At about 10:28 local time, a BN2B-26 Islander aircraft, registered P2-SAM, owned and operated by North Coast Aviation (NCA) Limited, was conducting a Visual Flight Rules (VFR) single-pilot charter flight from Wasu to Nadzab when it impacted terrain approximately 20 nautical miles southwest of Wasu (about 32 nautical miles north of Nadzab). The aircraft was destroyed by impact forces and an intense post-impact, fuel-fed fire. All five persons on board were fatally injured upon impact.

At 12:14, NiuSky Pacific Limited (NSPL) notified AIC via telephone that the pilot of P2-SAM had not made a position report at a designated reporting point for the flight. The AIC monitored the developing situation in coordination with both NSPL and NCA. At 13:53, after being advised by NSPL that the aircraft had not arrived at Nadzab Airport and appeared to be stationary on the operator's third-party fleet tracking system, *V2 Track*, the AIC immediately commenced an investigation under *Section 247* of the *PNG Civil Aviation Act 2000* and classified the occurrence as a missing aircraft accident.

On 23 December 2024, the wreckage of P2-SAM was located by the pilot of a search helicopter, and the occurrence was re-categorised as a controlled flight into terrain accident.

According to *V2 Track* recorded data, the aircraft initially tracked west along the coastline in a cruise climb, then turned southwest and continued climbing inland to intercept the Nadzab track. The aircraft's last recorded altitude was 8,002 feet, when it was climbing at 433 feet per minute with a groundspeed of 85 knots. It subsequently impacted terrain at 8,400 feet elevation, approximately 1.68 nautical miles southwest of the last *V2 Track* recorded position.

The investigation found that between the aircraft's last recorded position and the accident site, the aircraft's flight path did not follow the usual routes observed in historical *V2 Track* recorded data. The investigation noted intermittent gaps in the recorded *V2 Track* interrogations, which the AIC assessed as likely caused by the aircraft operating in or beneath areas of heavy cloud and/or precipitation, affecting signal continuity in the region.

The flight path and impact trajectory towards an area of steeply rising terrain indicated that the aircraft likely continued flight in significantly reduced visibility in cloud or heavy precipitation. The aircraft was flying at a cruise climb speed about 35 knots above the manufacturer's published best angle-of-climb speed. There was no evidence of an evasive manoeuvre to avoid the terrain. The aircraft impacted vegetation and the face of a steep ridge, resulting in a controlled flight into terrain.

There was no evidence of any pre-impact mechanical issues with the aircraft, its engines, controls, or systems.

The AIC issued safety recommendations to both NCA and CASA PNG, aimed at improving operational safety. According to *ICAO Annex 13 Standards*, identified safety deficiencies and concerns must be raised with the persons or organisations best placed to take safety action. The safety recommendations are included in the Final Report.

The Final Report of the investigation is available on AIC's website www.aic.gov.pg.

Authorised for release by:

Maryanne J. Wal,
Chief Commissioner