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Date : 5 May 2016
Type : Eurocopter AS350B3e
Registration : RP-C6828
Operator : GCA Skyline Aviation
Fatality : 6
Nature : Aircraft crashed into river
Location : Sungai Batang Lupar, Kuching, Sarawak

SUMMARY

On the 5 May 2016, a Philippines registered helicopter bearing registration RP-C6828 departed Kuching, Sarawak at 0930 LT with six (6) persons on board. After landing at three (3) locations, it landed Betong at 1602 LT. After several minutes on ground, with the engine and rotors running, five (5) passengers who have been waiting at Betong boarded the helicopter and departed for Kuching at 1612 LT. The fuel endurance reported was one hour thirty two minutes. At 1615 LT, it made a radio call on operating frequency that gave the estimated time abeam Triso at 1630 LT and Simunjan in 20 minutes". According to witnesses flying during that time, the weather en-route from Betong to Kuching was observed to be raining with thunderstorm. There was no more communication with RP-C6828 even though several attempts were made to communicate with the helicopter. Search and Rescue (SAR) was activated at 1926 LT and declared missing. SAR was carried out along Batang Lupar but there was no sighting of any helicopter. There was no distress call made or received in any of the operating radio frequencies. A body of one of the passengers was recovered in the Batang Lupar on 06 May 2016 and subsequently all other occupants and several helicopter parts were found in the Batang Lupar by the SAR team within the next three days.

Two (2) Investigators from AAIB were dispatched to Kuching on the 6 May 2016 and the investigation began on the same day. Eight (8) investigators were appointed by the Minister of Transport to carry out the investigation. The investigation was led by Investigator-In-Charge, Capt. Dato' Yahaya bin Abdul Rahman.

PROBABLE CAUSE

The most probable cause of the accident is the inability of the pilot to use all available information's to make the correct decision, so as not to make the flight susceptible to disorientation when flying over water at low altitude in bad weather with limited visibility.

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Malaysia and Philippines Civil Aviation Authorities are to ensure that VFR single pilot operations to have sufficient knowledge on decision making process when flying in marginal weather or in the vicinity of thunderstorm. It is for these authorities to make CRM or Aeronautical Decision Making course a mandatory knowledge to single pilot operations.



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2. DCA Air Traffic Controller should adhere to all procedures related to emergency responses as published in the Manual of Air Traffic Services, especially on the timing for declaration of each phase of emergency so that other SAR Agencies will be able to react accordingly.
3. Foreign pilots flying in Malaysia are to be familiar with and exposed to local terrain and weather pattern prior to flying on his own operationally. It is recommended 10 hours of under supervision flying prior to flying on his own.