

Inspector's Statement

ASI Name: Rafael C. Gonzalez

Office: SO-FSDO-63

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

RAFAEL C.
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ALBERTORIO
Digitally signed by RAFAEL C.
GONZALEZ-ALBERTORIO
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Date: June 20, 2024.

Description: C-150M, N6198K On-Site Accident Investigation

Overview:

On June 1, 2024, N6198K, a C-150M with serial number 15077583, registered to Poland Charles Fallon Pennock and operated by Ace Aviation, LLC, a Part 61 Flight School based at José Aponte de la Torre Airport (IATA: NRR, ICAO: TJRV, FAA LID: RVR), conducted a forced landing following a partial or full power plant failure. The incident occurred shortly after departure under Visual Flight Rules (VFR) from runway 09 at Fernando Luis Ribas Dominicci Airport (TJIG) in San Juan, Puerto Rico, at 1422hrs local time. Witness statements, obtained by FAA Investigator in Charge (IIC) Rafael C. Gonzalez, indicate that the aircraft initiated a left bank turn, almost completing a 180° turn before descending into the tree line. The aircraft subsequently impacted a grassy area within a public park at high velocity and a low impact angle. After initial impact, the aircraft bounced, causing damage to the nose landing gear, and came to rest approximately 50 feet from its initial impact point. The final resting place of the aircraft was a quarter mile southeast from the departure end of runway 09, at coordinates 18°27'26.7" N 66°05'18.8" W. The weather conditions at the time were reported as Visual Meteorological Conditions (VMC), with wind from 080° at 12 knots, visibility of 6 miles, scattered clouds at 3,000 feet, and broken ceilings at 7,000 feet. The temperature was 29°C, with a dew point of 26°C, and a barometric pressure of 29.96"Hg.

On board were two occupants who sustained injuries and were transported to Centro Medico hospital. The Pilot-in-Command (PIC) was identified as Victor Xavier Melendez-Castro, holding a Commercial Pilot Certificate ([REDACTED]), and his student pilot, Jabel Jose Zayas Ruiz, holding a Student Pilot Certificate ([REDACTED]). The aircraft sustained substantial damage.

Initial on-site investigation indicated that both fuel tanks contained fuel that appeared clean. Based on the pattern of the propeller strike, initial observations suggested that the engine may not have been producing power at the time of impact. Ground impact marks indicated a left-side slip and nose-down attitude. Notably, the left tire left a distinct mark, and a straight line from this mark led to the main impact point, possibly indicating the

left-wing strut's contact with the ground. The front wheel's impact mark was observed at approximately a 45° angle to the ground. The engine compartment was found twisted towards the left side, while the cockpit was inverted. The fuselage and empennage were fractured, leaving the wing assembly and cockpit roof as one piece.

The forced landing occurred in a busy business district, attracting significant local media coverage.

The wreckage was transported via flatbed to José Aponte de la Torre Airport (RVR) at 2100hrs local time. A team of airworthiness inspectors arrived at RVR Airport on June 2, 2024. They found no engine oil inside the engine cowling and no visible signs of mechanical failure in the power plant. Due to the wreckage's position and limited tools available, they were unable to verify fuel filters and other fuel system drainage points for further investigation.

On June 3, 2024, the PIC and Student Pilot were interviewed at Centro Medico Hospital. Mr. Melendez stated that the flight's purpose was to conduct flight instruction and familiarize with air traffic communication at SIG Airport. The day began with refueling the aircraft to maximum capacity at Mercedita International Airport (PSE) in Ponce, Puerto Rico. Departing from PSE, a non-controlled airport, N6198K flew to SIG Airport in San Juan, a flight lasting approximately 40 minutes. At SIG Airport, they performed a touch-and-go and a full stop landing, then proceeded to lunch. Upon return to SIG Airport, after completing preflight procedures, they taxied for departure from runway 9, with the student pilot at the controls during takeoff. The student pilot reported experiencing vibration and a full power plant failure between 300 and 600 feet altitude. Within seconds, the CFI assumed control. Mr. Zayas Ruiz had no recollection after the instructor took over. The PIC, Mr. Melendez recalled a partial power plant failure around 400 feet. He took control from the student and attempted a course change to the right (30°), followed by a 270° left turn back to SIG Airport. His memory lapsed during the left bank maneuver.