

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety

Washington, DC 20594



ERA24NA237

WRECKAGE IDENTIFICATION

July 30, 2024

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A. ACCIDENT

Location: Lake Champlain, Vermont
Date: January 27, 1971
Time: 1955 Local
0055 UTC
Airplane: Aero Commander 1121, N400CP

B. WRECKAGE IDENTIFICATION

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C. SUMMARY

On January 27, 1971, about 1955 eastern standard time, an Aero Commander 1121 airplane, N400CP, was destroyed when it impacted Lake Champlain, Vermont. The two pilots and 3 passengers were presumed fatally injured. The airplane was operated by Cousins Property as business/ executive flight.

The airplane departed under an instrument flight rules flight plan from the Burlington International Airport (BTV), Burlington, Vermont, from runway 33 about 1952 local. The destination was Providence Airport (PVD), Providence, Rhode Island.

According to air traffic controller recollection, the airplane climbed on runway heading, turned left to the west, then south. Radar contact was lost a few minutes after departure over Lake Champlain, Vermont.

D. DETAILS OF THE INVESTIGATION

Following the accident, no significant portions of the wreckage were located despite an 8-day search. The search was suspended due to the winter weather conditions.

An additional search in the spring of 1971 was commenced, however, this search also discovered no significant portions of the wreckage. The original NTSB report concluded that the wreckage was likely located in Lake Champlain near the Four Brothers Islands.

On May 19, 2024, multiple private organizations located a target with a high resolution EdgeTech 4125-P side scan sonar system.

On May 25, 2024, an underwater submersible recorded video images of what appeared to be several large fragments of aircraft wreckage. This report provides a factual review of the wreckage identified as compared to the Illustrated Parts Catalog for an Aero Commander 1121. The footage was provided to the investigation by GK Consulting. As part of this investigation, the NTSB was not provided physical wreckage to examine nor is the investigation aware of activities to surface the wreckage at the time of this writing.

Figure 1 below provides an overview of the reported flight path based upon the original NTSB investigation and the controller's recollection of its radar flight path. The red circles denote the radar reported position per the controller's recollection and the yellow circle denotes the approximate location of the discovered wreckage.

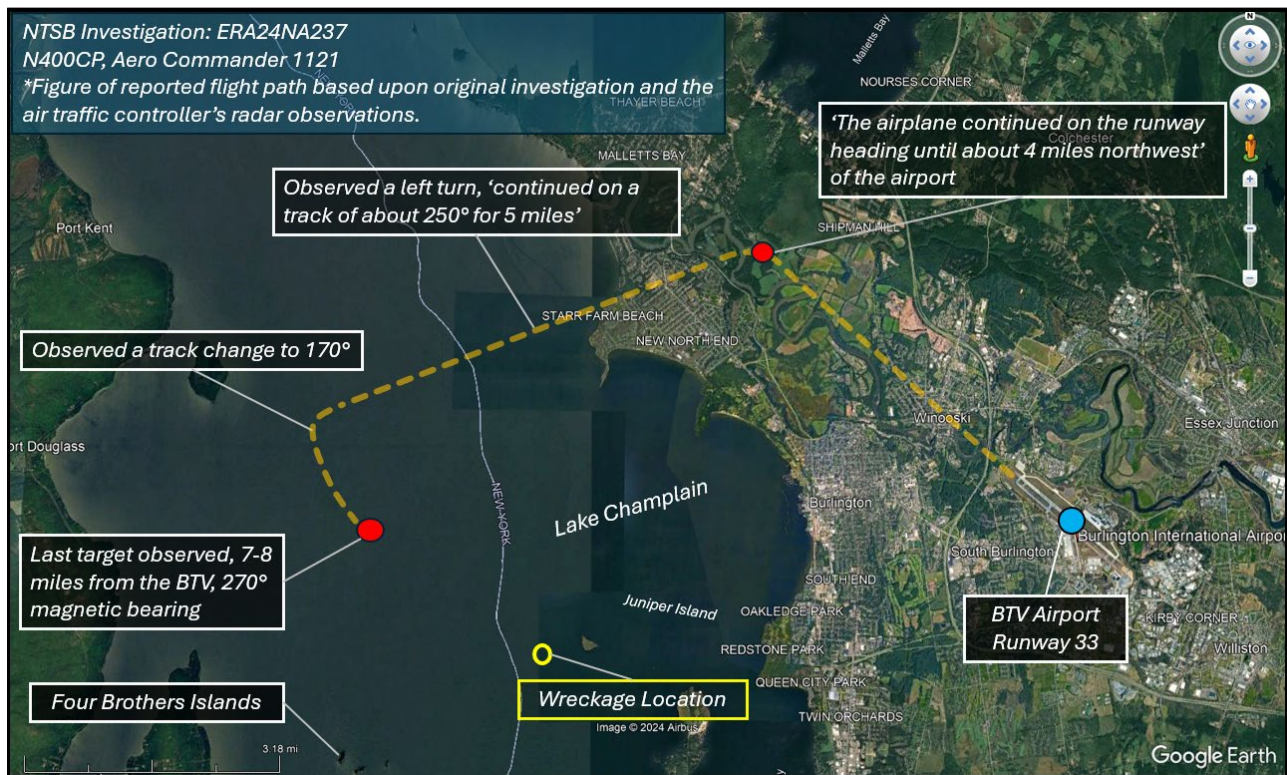


Figure 1: Overview of the reported flight path based upon the original investigation and the newly discovered wreckage approximate location.

E. WRECKAGE IDENTIFICATION

Review of underwater drone video found multiple components that were consistent with fragments and parts from an Aero Commander 1121. The wreckage was destroyed and observed in the video in a highly fragmented condition. The following screenshots have been paired with excerpts from the Illustrated Parts Catalog exhibiting fragments consistent with the accident airplane.



Figure 2: Photograph provided by GK Consulting reportedly showing the accident airplane preaccident at an unknown date.

Engine Nacelle and Pylon Areas

The part No. 4613026-50 'Exit Assy Engine Stage 4' was identified.

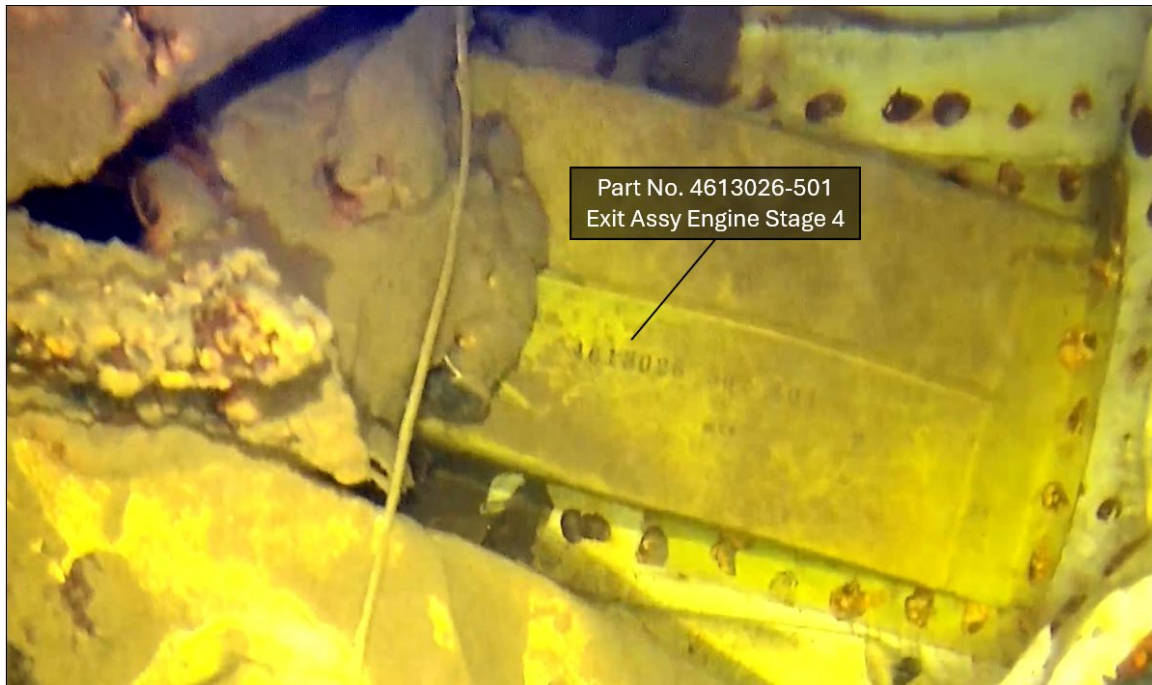


Figure 3: Part No. 4613026-501 'Exit Assy Engine Stage 4'.

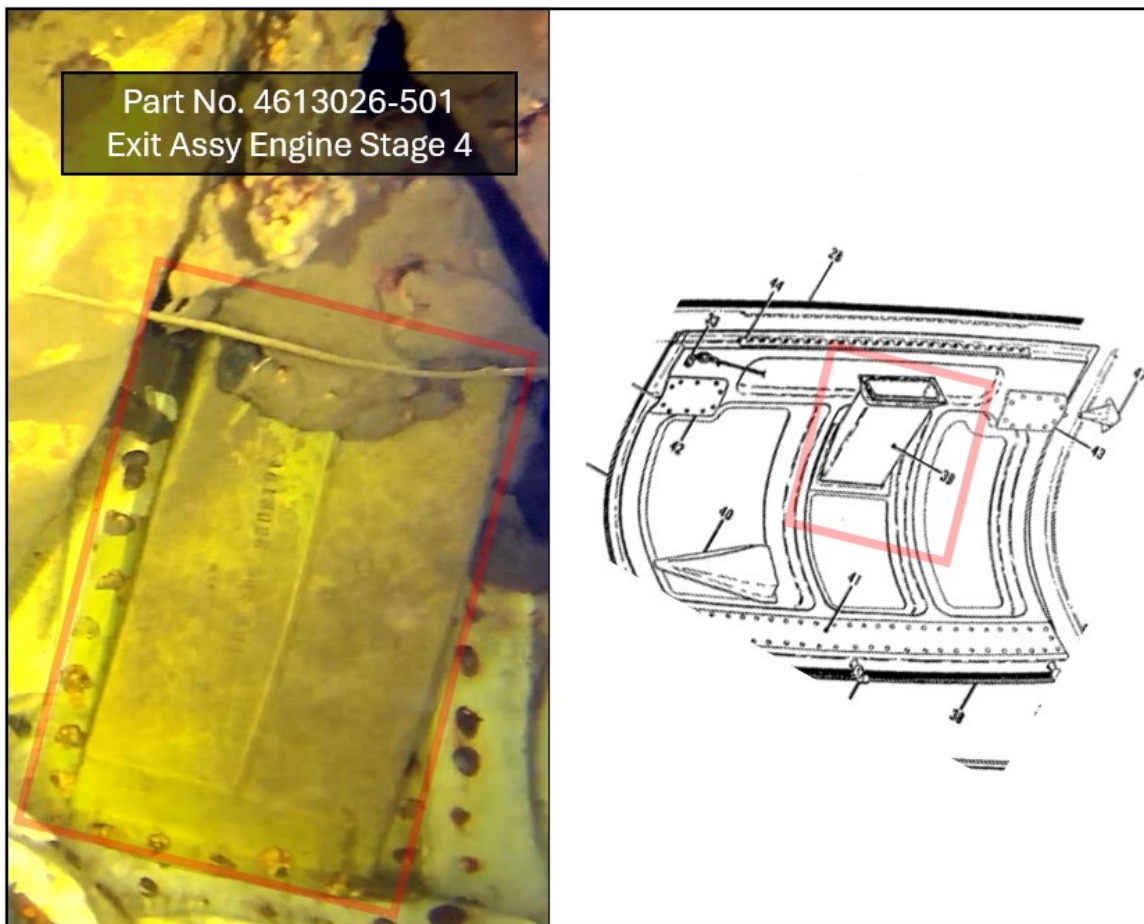


Figure 4: Additional View Part No. 4613026-50 'Exit Assy Engine Stage 4.'

Tail Pipe Assembly

Areas of the engine tail pipe assembly were identified.

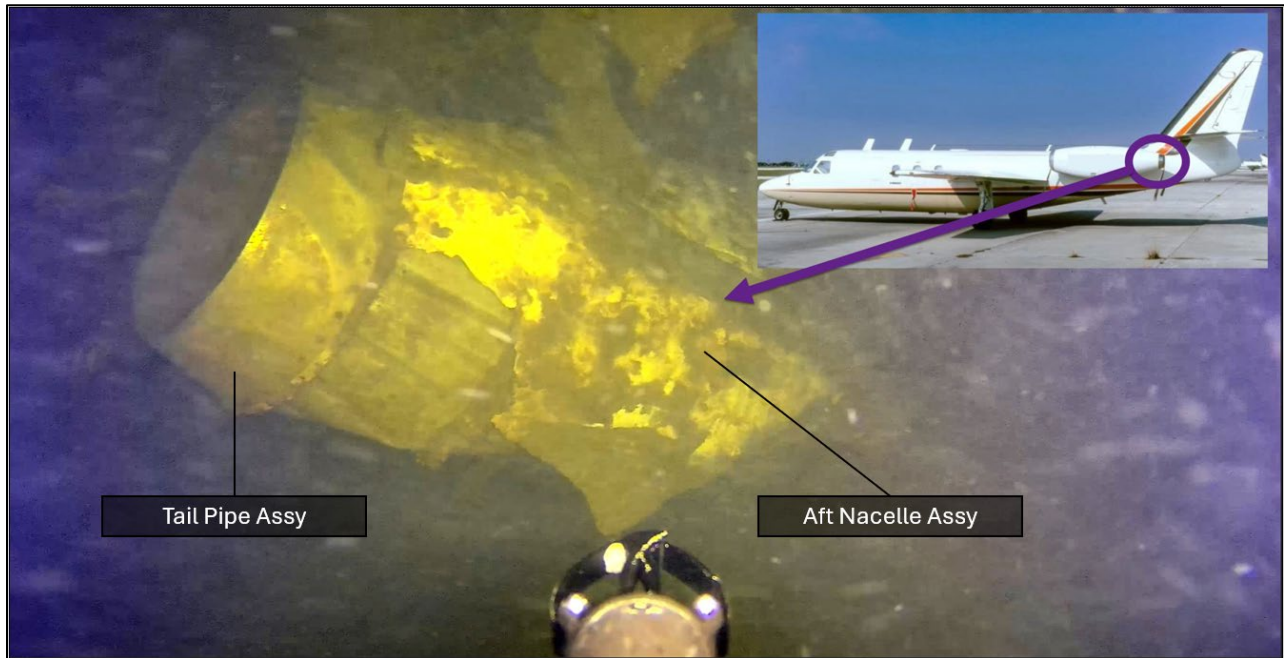


Figure 5: Engine Tail Pipe Assembly. Note the airplane is an exemplar Aero Commander.

COMMODORE JET +
ILLUSTRATED PARTS CATALOG

Section II
Power Plant

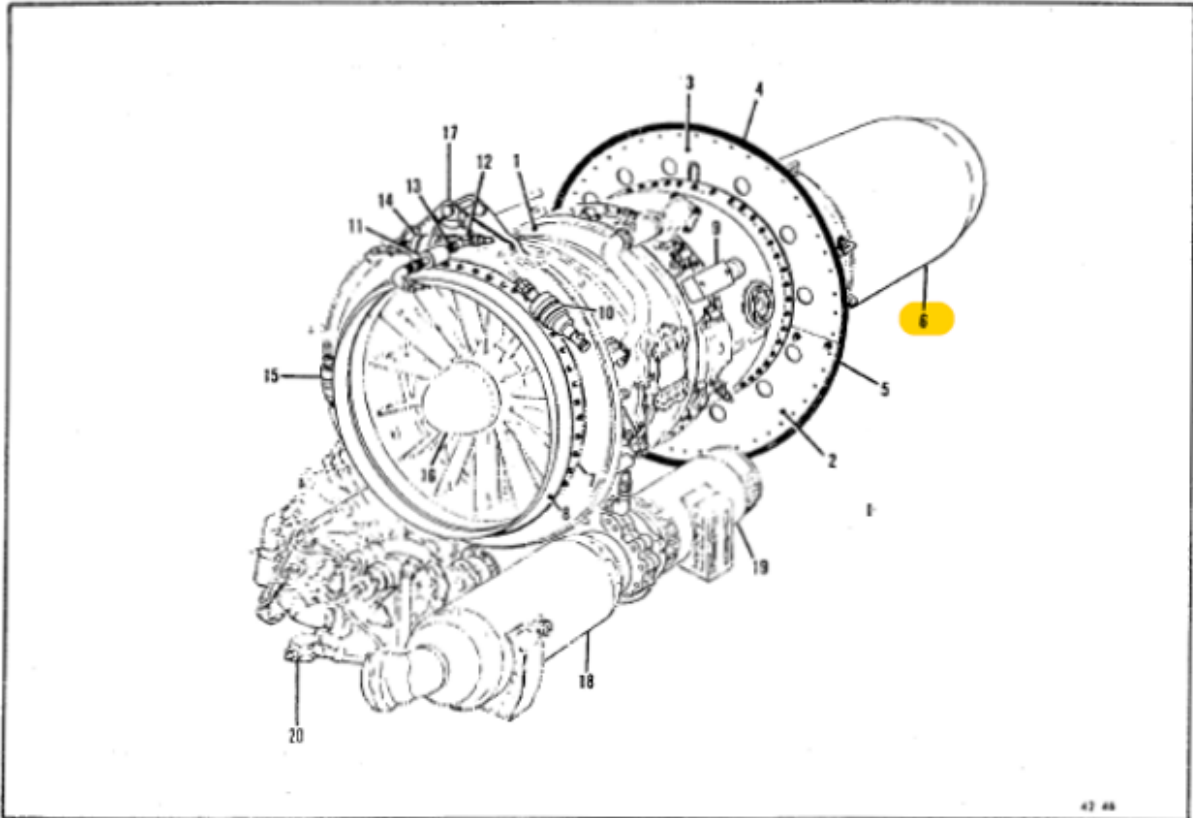


Figure 41. Engine Equipment - LH Side Of Engine

Section II
Power Plant

COMMODORE JET +
ILLUSTRATED PARTS CATALOG

Figure & Index No.	Part Number	Description							Units Per Assy	Usable - Or Code
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
ENGINE EQUIPMENT - LH SIDE OF ENGINE (CONTD)										
41-6	5613000-503	. TAIL PIPE ASSY							1	O
	5613000-505	. TAIL PIPE ASSY							1	N
		(ATTACHING PARTS)								
	MS9033-08	. BOLT							39	
	MS9033-10	. BOLT (also secures tail pipe drain support at bottom hole) .							1	
	H33-3	. NUT (75237)							40	

Figure 6: Illustrated Parts Catalog Excerpt, Tail Pipe Assembly.

Fuselage Aft Section

An exemplar airplane's aft fuselage access door with the latch was identified.



Figure 7: Exemplar airplane showing location of Aft Fuselage Access Door with latch.

Additional areas of aft fuselage plating were identified near station '403.'



Figure 8: View of fuselage plating denoting the station location near '403' and an excerpt of Part No. '3035'.

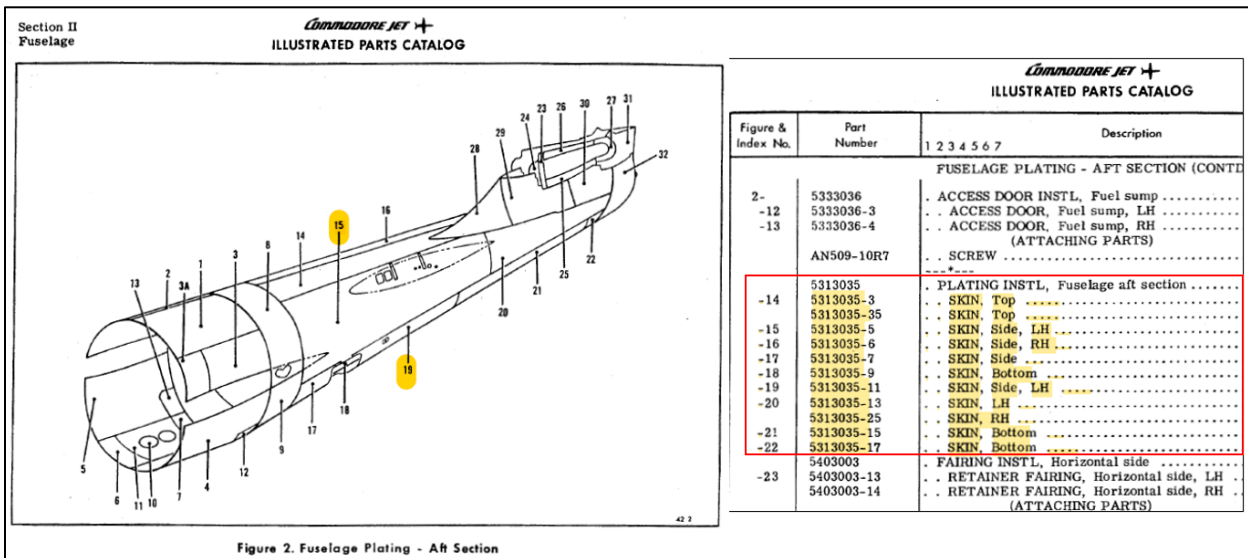


Figure 9: Illustrated Parts Catalog Excerpt, Fuselage Plating

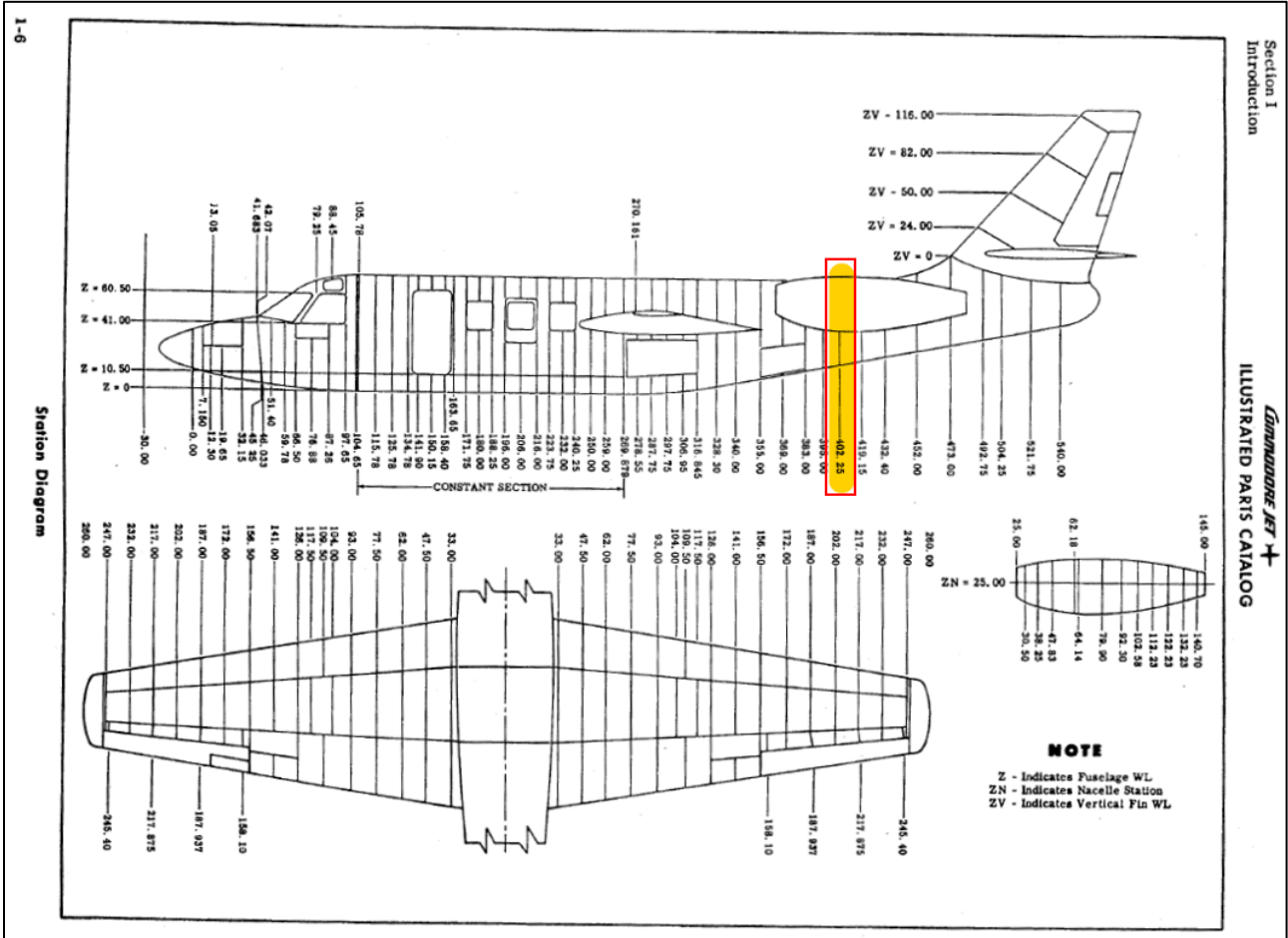


Figure 10: Illustrated Parts Catalog Excerpt, Station Diagram Denoting Position near '403.'

Wing Plating and Access Doors

Multiple wing plating and access panels were identified.

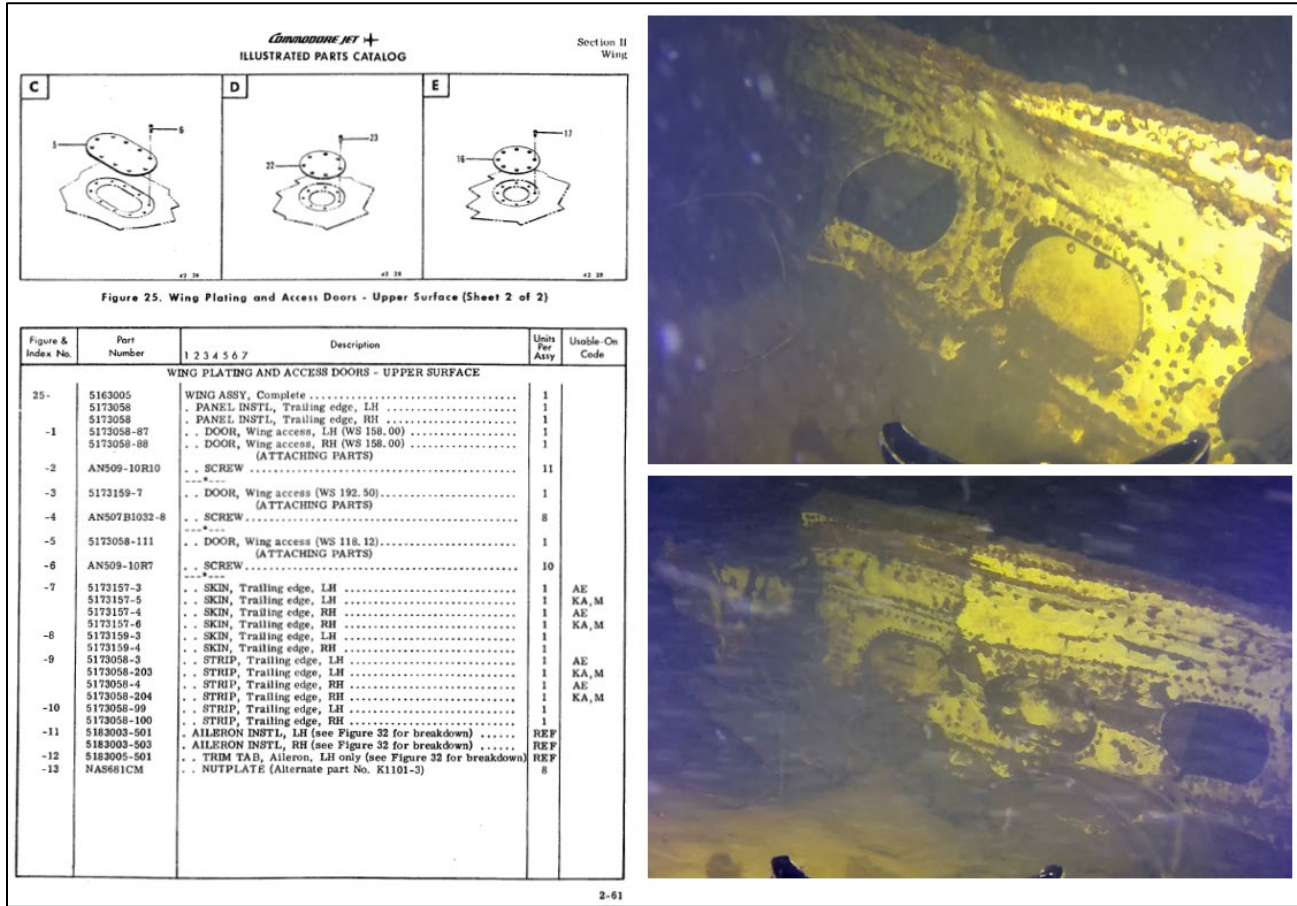


Figure 11: Views of wing plating and access doors.

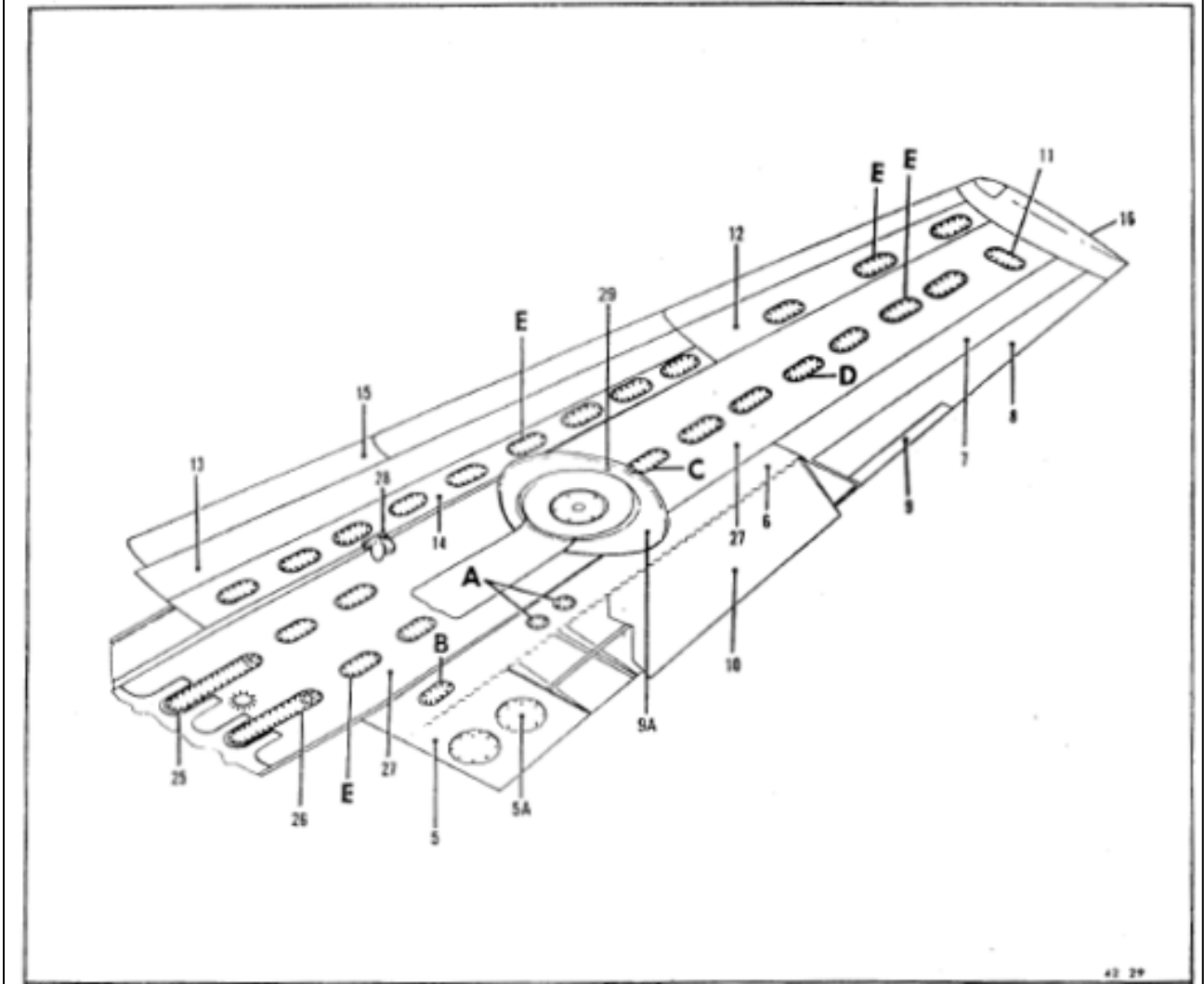


Figure 12: Additional views of wing plating and access doors.

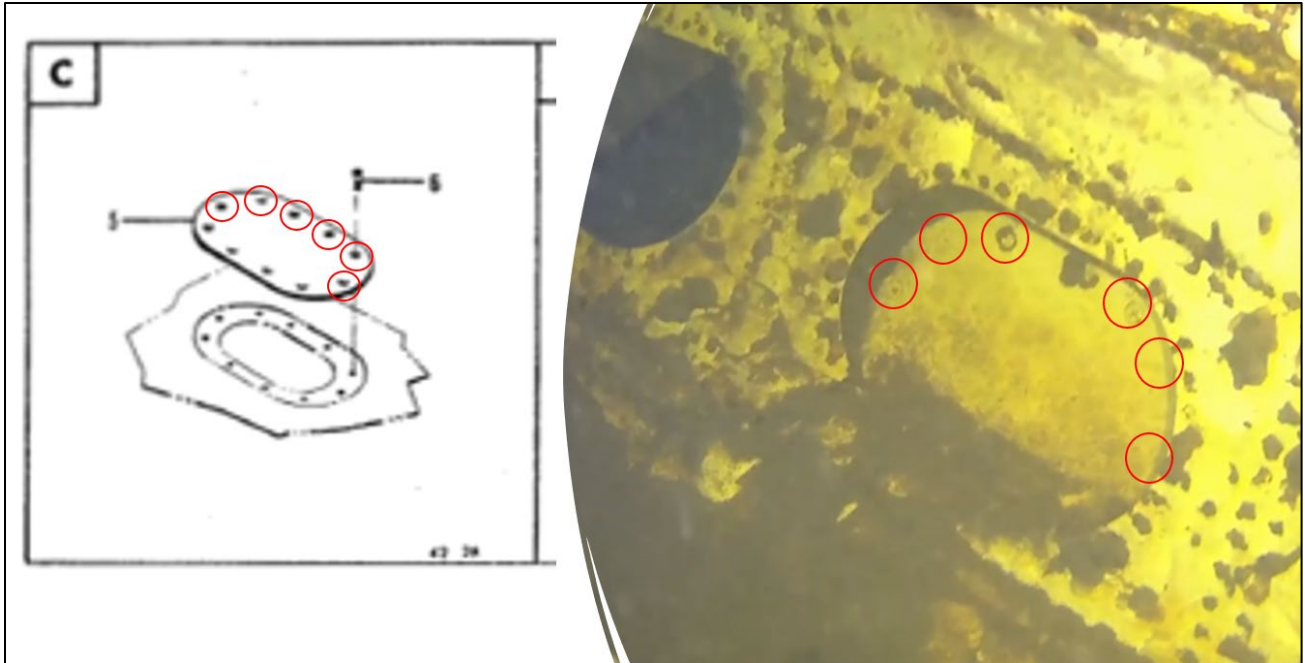


Figure 13: Additional view of wing plating and access doors.



Figure 14: Additional view of paint scheme and fuselage skin matching reported picture of accident airplane.

Submitted by:

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