

Aviation Investigation Preliminary Report

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| Location: | Port Allen, LA | Accident Number: | CEN23FA142 |
| Date & Time: | March 26, 2023, 02:38 Local | Registration: | N441PD |
| Aircraft: | ROBINSON HELICOPTER COMPANY R44 II | Injuries: | 2 Fatal |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General aviation - Aerial observation | | |

On March 26, 2023, about 0238 central daylight time, a Robinson R44 II helicopter, N441PD, was destroyed when it was involved in an accident near Port Allen, Louisiana. The pilot and tactical flight officer sustained fatal injuries. The helicopter was operated as a Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 aerial observation flight.

According to Baton Rouge Police Department (BRPD) personnel and automatic dependent surveillance-broadcast (ADS-B) data, the BRPD helicopter, call sign Air 1, departed the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport (BTR), Baton Rouge, Louisiana, about 0226, to provide aerial support to ground BRPD units that were conducting a high-speed pursuit of a fleeing vehicle. Air 1 advised dispatch and ground units via radio that they were assisting and requested updates to the vehicle movement and location. ADS-B data showed the helicopter depart BTR to the south, turn west, then overfly Highway 190, west of Baton Rouge. Unable to maintain a safe pursuit of the vehicle, BRPD terminated the pursuit to all BRPD units, including the helicopter, via radio at 0235. There were no further communications received from the helicopter. About that time, the data showed the helicopter execute a shallow left deviation to the south of Highway 190. Following the deviation, a left turn initiated, and the turn rate increased, followed by a series of turns and altitude changes (see Figures 1 and 2.). The ADS-B data ended at 0238 at an altitude of about 1,450 above ground level. There were no witnesses to the accident.



Figure 1. ADS-B data overlaid on Google Earth

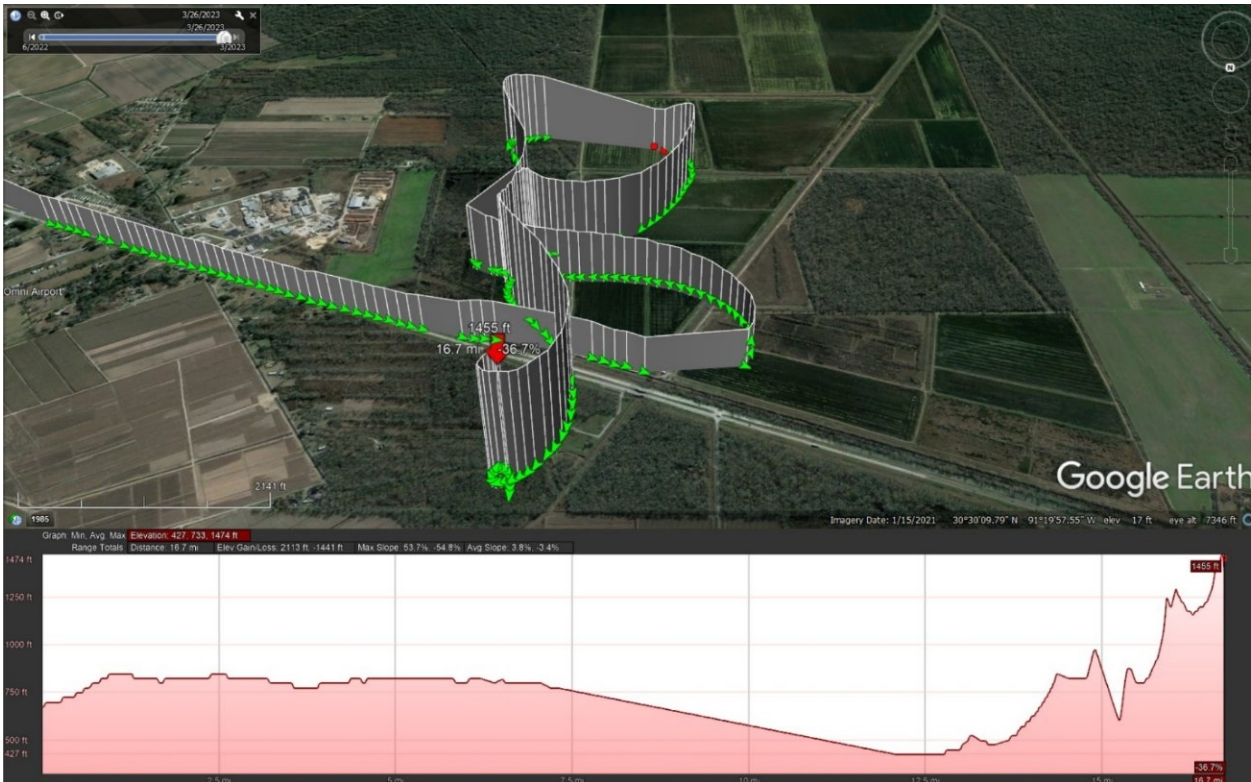


Figure 2. ADS-B data overlaid on Google Earth with an elevation profile

According to the West Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's office, at 1049, a family member reported that the tactical flight officer had not returned home, and his cellular phone was sending a signal from a remote area in West Baton Rouge Parish. The sheriff's department searched the area and located the helicopter at 1114.

The main wreckage, which consisted of the cockpit, fuselage, and tailcone, came to rest inverted next to an irrigation ditch at the edge of a sugar cane field (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Main wreckage

The main rotor transmission, mast, and main rotor blades came to rest in a wooded area about 250 feet east of the main wreckage. Fragmented windshield Plexiglass, forward and upper cockpit structure, instrument console components, and observer station (left seat) equipment were scattered between the main rotor assembly and main wreckage. The helicopter was equipped with a 406 MHz emergency locator transmitter, which was found separated from the mounting structure, and the antenna wire was severed about 4 inches from the transmitter. The helicopter wreckage was retained for further examination.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Aircraft Make: | ROBINSON HELICOPTER COMPANY | Registration: | N441PD |
| Model/Series: | R44 II | Aircraft Category: | Helicopter |
| Amateur Built: | | | |
| Operator: | BATON ROUGE POLICE DEPARTMENT | Operating Certificate(s) Held: | None |
| Operator Designator Code: | | | |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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|---|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site: | IMC | Condition of Light: | Night |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | KBTR,67 ft msl | Observation Time: | 02:37 Local |
| Distance from Accident Site: | 9 Nautical Miles | Temperature/Dew Point: | 24°C /22°C |
| Lowest Cloud Condition: | | Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction: | 8 knots / , 180° |
| Lowest Ceiling: | Overcast / 900 ft AGL | Visibility: | 10 miles |
| Altimeter Setting: | 29.86 inches Hg | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | |
| Departure Point: | Baton Rouge, LA (BTR) | Destination: | Baton Rouge, LA (BTR) |

Wreckage and Impact Information

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|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Crew Injuries: | 2 Fatal | Aircraft Damage: | Destroyed |
| Passenger Injuries: | | Aircraft Fire: | None |
| Ground Injuries: | | Aircraft Explosion: | None |
| Total Injuries: | 2 Fatal | Latitude, Longitude: | 30.511753,-91.324385 |

Administrative Information

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| Investigator In Charge (IIC): | Sauer, Aaron |
| Additional Participating Persons: | Jose Areizaga; FAA; Baton Rouge, LA Ken Martin; Robinson Helicopter Company; Torrance, CA David Harsanyi; Lycoming Engines; Williamsport, PA |
| Investigation Class: | Class 3 |
| Note: | |