



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	FAJARDO, Puerto Rico	Accident Number:	ATL97LA101
Date & Time:	July 6, 1997, 08:30 Local	Registration:	N4515T
Aircraft:	Piper PA-34-200	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot reported that he had been doing touch-and-go landings for an hour when he experienced a loss of elevator control during climbout. He said that the airplane had climbed to 400 feet when the control yoke stuck. Efforts, to regain control of the airplane failed. After transmitting several 'may day' calls, the pilot prepared the airplane for ditching. The airplane ditched in about 130 feet of water 200 meters east of the Fajardo shoreline. The airplane was not recovered for examination. The pilot did not report any previous flight control problems with the airplane.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: a malfunction (jamming) of the elevator flight control system for undetermined reason(s).

Findings

Occurrence #1: AIRFRAME/COMPONENT/SYSTEM FAILURE/MALFUNCTION

Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - INITIAL CLIMB

Findings

1. (C) FLIGHT CONTROL,ELEVATOR - JAMMED
2. (C) REASON FOR OCCURRENCE UNDETERMINED

Occurrence #2: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT

Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - INITIAL CLIMB

Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

3. TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER

Factual Information

On July 6, 1997, at 0830 atlantic standard time, a Piper PA-34-200, N4515T, ditched in 130 feet of water during an attempted takeoff from the Diego Jimenez Airport in Fajardo, Puerto Rico. The personal flight operated under Title 14 CFR Part 91 with no flight plan filed. Visual weather conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. The airplane sustained substantial damage. The commercial pilot was not injured. The flight departed Fajardo, Puerto Rico, at 0730.

The pilot reported that he had been doing touch and go landings for an hour when he experienced a loss of elevator control during climbout. The pilot said that he had climbed to 400 feet when the control yoke stuck. Efforts, to regain control of the airplane, failed. After transmitting several "may day" calls, the pilot prepared the airplane for ditching. The airplane ditched in about 130 feet of water 200 meters east of the Fajardo shoreline.

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Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	35, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	May 20, 1997
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	548 hours (Total, all aircraft), 154 hours (Total, this make and model), 548 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 6 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N4515T
Model/Series:	PA-34-200 PA-34-200	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	34-7250120
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	6
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	4200 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	IO-360-C1E6
Registered Owner:	CARLOS R. RODRIGUEZ-BOTET	Rated Power:	200 Horsepower
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	X95	Distance from Accident Site:	3 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	07:27 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	270°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 2600 ft AGL	Visibility	9 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 3800 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	8 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	60°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	29°C / 24°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	(X95)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	07:30 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	FAJARDO REGIONAL X95	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	0 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Forced landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Powell, Phillip
Additional Participating Persons:	RAMON T RODRIGUEZ; SAN JUAN , PR
Original Publish Date:	May 29, 1998
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=3872

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The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “accident/incident investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties ... and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person” (Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* section 831.4). Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report (Title 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b)). A factual report that may be admissible under 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b) is available [here](#).