



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	VENICE, Florida	<b>Accident Number:</b>	ATL99LA108
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	July 16, 1999, 08:10 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N5317V
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Hiller UH12-C	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	2 None
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

According to the pilot, the helicopter lost power while flying at 50 knots and 100 feet above the ocean during a flight to record video footage of the area. The pilot made an auto-rotation into the water. Both the pilot and passenger were immediately rescued by a nearby boat. Examination of the helicopter by the FAA found that the engine had sustained salt water contamination. Further examination established continuity throughout the engine and the drive train. Additionally, the magnetos sparked when rotated, there was oil/water in the crankcase, and there was fuel/water in the fuel tanks. The fuel shutoff valve control lock was inspected and it was found that it could be repositioned to allow movement of the control to the 'off' position by a slight downward pressure on the control knob. The fuel shutoff valve control knob was directly to the left of the passenger's left foot and approximately one inch off the floor. The exact position of the fuel shutoff valve prior to the accident was not determined. The passenger was wearing his seatbelt loosely to allow him to film directly out of the doorway.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: Loss of engine power due to fuel starvation as a result of the passenger inadvertently shutting off the fuel supply.

## Findings

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Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER

Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings

1. (C) FUEL TANK SELECTOR POSITION - INADVERTENT - PASSENGER
2. (C) FLUID,FUEL - STARVATION
3. (C) FUEL SYSTEM,FUEL SHUTOFF - CLOSED

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Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING

Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

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Occurrence #3: DITCHING

Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

Findings

4. TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER

## Factual Information

On July 16, 1999, at 0810 eastern daylight time, a Hiller UH12-C, N5317V, ditched into the Gulf of Mexico following a loss of engine power near Venice, Florida. The helicopter was operated by the commercial pilot under the provisions of Title 14 CFR Part 91, and visual flight rules. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident and no flight plan was filed for the local flight. The pilot and one passenger were not injured and the helicopter sustained substantial damage. The helicopter departed Venice, Florida, at approximately 0750.

According to the pilot, the helicopter lost engine power while flying at 50 knots and 100 feet above the ocean during a flight to record video footage of the area. The pilot made an autorotation into the water. Both the pilot and passenger were immediately rescued by a nearby boat.

Examination of the helicopter by the FAA found that the engine had sustained salt water contamination. Further examination established continuity throughout the engine and the drive train. Additionally, the magnetos sparked when rotated, there was oil/water in the crankcase, and there was fuel/water in the fuel tanks. The fuel shutoff valve control lock was inspected and it was found that it could be repositioned to allow movement of the control to the "off" position by a slight downward pressure on the control knob. The 245 pound passenger in the right seat was filming with a production type video camera and had brought several pieces of equipment on board. The aircraft was unsymmetrically loaded to the right and the doors were not installed on this flight. The passenger was wearing his seatbelt loosely to allow him to film directly out of the doorway. The fuel shutoff valve control knob is directly to the left of the passenger's left foot and approximately one inch off the floor. The exact position of the fuel shutoff valve prior to the accident was not determined.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Commercial; Flight instructor	<b>Age:</b>	57, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea; Multi-engine land; Multi-engine sea	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Left
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	Helicopter	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	Airplane	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	Airplane single-engine; Instrument airplane	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 2 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	July 19, 1998
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	UNK	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	1276 hours (Total, all aircraft), 188 hours (Total, this make and model), 1133 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 101 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 60 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 5 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Hiller	<b>Registration:</b>	N5317V
<b>Model/Series:</b>	UH12-C UH12-C	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Helicopter
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	768
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Skid	<b>Seats:</b>	3
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	December 6, 1998 Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	2500 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>	42 Hrs	<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	1750 Hrs	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Franklin
<b>ELT:</b>		<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	O-335-50
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	CANAAN HELICOPTERS	<b>Rated Power:</b>	210 Horsepower
<b>Operator:</b>	MICHAEL B. PRITCHARD	<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None
<b>Operator Does Business As:</b>		<b>Operator Designator Code:</b>	

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	SRQ ,27 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	20 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	09:53 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	340°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Clear	<b>Visibility</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	None	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	7 knots /	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	70°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	30 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	28°C / 24°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	, FL (VNC )	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>		<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	07:50 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class G

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	
<b>Airport Elevation:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	
<b>Runway Used:</b>	0	<b>IFR Approach:</b>	None
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>		<b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>	Forced landing

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 None	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>	1 None	<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	2 None	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	27.089052,-82.429695(est)

## Administrative Information

**Investigator In Charge (IIC):** Wilson, Butch

**Additional Participating Persons:** TOM GROSS;

**Original Publish Date:** August 3, 2000

**Last Revision Date:**

**Investigation Class:** [Class](#)

**Note:**

**Investigation Docket:** <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=46827>

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable causes of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for each accident or event we investigate. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

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](#).