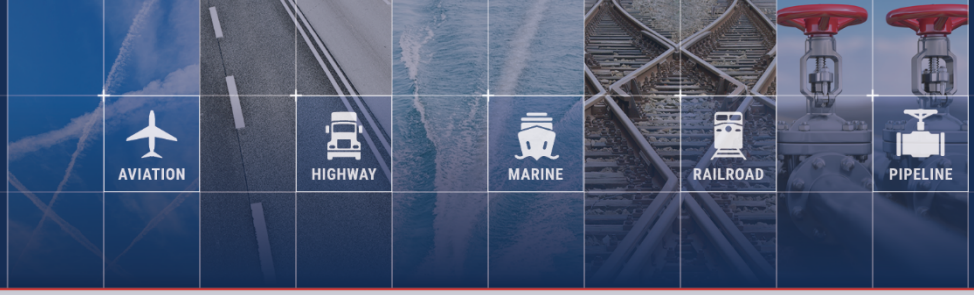

Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	PACIFIC OCEAN, Pacific Ocean	**Accident Number:**	LAX00LA066
Date & Time:	December 30, 1999, Local	**Registration:**	N9162F
Aircraft:	Hughes 369HS	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Defining Event:		**Injuries:**	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Aerial observation		

Analysis

The pilot took off from the fishing vessel with a tail wind and the helicopter settled into the water in a tail low attitude. The main rotor blades contacted the tail boom and the tail rotor contacted the water. The helicopter was equipped with permanent floats and remained in an upright position. No discrepancies were found during examination of the engine.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's decision to takeoff downwind and the subsequent failure to achieve translational lift before contact with the water.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF

Findings
1. WEATHER CONDITION - TAILWIND
2. (C) PREFLIGHT PLANNING/PREPARATION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) WRONG RUNWAY - SELECTED - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (C) TRANSLATIONAL LIFT - NOT OBTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings
5. TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER

Factual Information

On December 30, 1999, about 1200 hours local ship time, a Hughes 369HS, N9162F, crashed into the Pacific Ocean after takeoff from a fishing vessel in international waters about 1,300 miles southeast of Guam. The helicopter, operated by Hansen Helicopters, Tamuning, Guam, sustained substantial damage. The pilot, who held a New Zealand commercial pilot certificate, was not injured. The local aerial observation flight, conducted under the provisions of 14 CFR Part 91, was originating from the fishing vessel at the time of the accident. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and no flight plan was filed.

The ship's helicopter mechanic observed the accident. He reported that the accident flight was the third scheduled flight of the day. He observed the pilot perform a normal engine start-up and takeoff with a 5- to 10-knot tailwind. The ship was stationary at that time. As the helicopter lifted off from the deck, it moved sideways and dove toward the forward right-hand side of the ship. The mechanic stated that the pilot appeared to be trying to gain airspeed. About 5 seconds later, he observed the helicopter flaring as it approached the water. The tail rotor impacted the water and the tail boom bounced upward and was severed by the main rotor blades. The helicopter was equipped with permanent floats and remained in an upright position. The mechanic stated that the engine was still running at that time. The pilot closed the fuel shutoff valve and exited the helicopter. The ship crewmembers recovered the aircraft.

The mechanic stated that after the accident, the pilot reported that he had noticed a sudden increase on the TOT gauge and had experienced a loss of power after takeoff. The mechanic performed a visual inspection on the engine assembly after the accident. He found no mechanical discrepancies.

According to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) database, the pilot held no FAA airman or medical certificates. The pilot was a citizen of New Zealand and held pilot and medical certificates for that country. The operator reported that he returned to New Zealand following the accident; he was not located for interview by the Safety Board.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Foreign	**Age:**	28,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	**Seat Occupied:**	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	**Restraint Used:**	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	**Toxicology Performed:**	No
Medical Certification:	Unknown Unknown	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:	1500 hours (Total, all aircraft), 200 hours (Total, this make and model), 40 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 10 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Hughes	**Registration:**	N9162F
Model/Series:	369HS 369HS	**Aircraft Category:**	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:		**Amateur Built:**	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Restricted (Special)	**Serial Number:**	830512S
Landing Gear Type:	Float	**Seats:**	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	March 30, 1999 Annual	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	2550 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	98 Hrs	**Engines:**	1 Turbo shaft
Airframe Total Time:	17010 Hrs	**Engine Manufacturer:**	Allison
ELT:		**Engine Model/Series:**	250-C10D
Registered Owner:	MARLIN BAY HELICOPTERS INC.	**Rated Power:**	315 Horsepower
Operator:	HANSEN HELICOPTERS	**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:		**Distance from Accident Site:**	
Observation Time:		**Direction from Accident Site:**	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	**Visibility**	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Unknown	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	10 knots /	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	/
Wind Direction:	160°	**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	90°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:		**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	None
Destination:		**Type of Clearance:**	None
Departure Time:	00:00 Local	**Type of Airspace:**	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:		**Runway Surface Type:**	
Airport Elevation:		**Runway Surface Condition:**	
Runway Used:	0	**IFR Approach:**	None
Runway Length/Width:		**VFR Approach/Landing:**	None

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):	Mars, Noelani
Additional Participating Persons:	GARY SUOZZI; SAN FRANCISCO , CA
Original Publish Date:	December 14, 2001
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=48438

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.