



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: December 4, 2006

In reply refer to: A-06-82

Honorable Niamatullah Ehsan Jawid
Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
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The National Transportation Safety Board of the United States of America (U.S.) is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and formulating safety improvement recommendations. The Safety Board, upon delegation from the Transitional Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, accomplished an investigation of a civil airplane accident within the territory of Afghanistan that involved a U.S. operator and a U.S.-registered airplane. As a result of the investigation, the Safety Board desires to propose a safety recommendation that it believes will benefit the civil aviation interests of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and will ultimately save the lives of those who may be in need of assistance following a civil aviation accident.

Background

On November 27, 2004, a Construcciones Aeronauticas Sociedad Anonima C-212-CC (CASA 212) twin-engine, turboprop airplane, registered to Aviation Worldwide Services, LLC, in the United States as N960BW and operated by Presidential Airways, a U.S. civilian operator, was destroyed when it collided with a mountain near Bamiyan, Afghanistan. All six people on board were killed, and all were U.S. citizens. One passenger survived for at least 8 hours after the accident, but he died before help arrived. The accident site was not located until about 24 hours after the airplane crashed, then adverse weather prevented rescue personnel from reaching the site until 3 days after the accident. The Safety Board conducted this delegated accident investigation in accordance with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Convention on International Civil Aviation, Annex 13.

Search and Rescue Response

The Safety Board recognizes the major accomplishments that have taken place as the civil aviation structure within the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is being rebuilt. The Safety Board is pleased to take part in the progress through this accident investigation. As the facts were

developed in the CASA 212 accident investigation, the Safety Board discovered that the airplane crashed in an area where radar coverage was not available. Although the airplane's 121.5-megahertz (MHz) emergency locator transmitter (ELT) emitted an alert signal, a local search and rescue system was not available that could monitor for ELT signals or that could provide timely assistance to survivors of a civil aircraft accident.

Afghanistan is not yet participating in the international civil search and rescue system known as "COSPAS-SARSAT" (Cosmicheskaya Sistyema Poiska Avariynich Sudov [Space System for the Search of Vessels in Distress] – Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking). The COSPAS-SARSAT system utilizes satellite and ground equipment to detect and locate the signals from 121.5-MHz and 406-MHz ELTs, and it forwards the information to the search and rescue authorities of participating countries and organizations to expedite identification of crash locations.

The Safety Board recognizes that Afghanistan is fully committed to the development of its civil aviation infrastructure, but, at this time, other priorities may not allow for a State-supported, fully operational search and rescue system. As Afghanistan continues to expand the civil aviation sector, it follows that this growth will result in a concurrent need for the expansion of search and rescue services. The Safety Board would like to suggest a potentially timely alternative. According to the Standards and Recommended Practices outlined in ICAO Annex 12, a Contracting State may establish search and rescue services in cooperation with other States.¹ The ICAO standard suggests that this regional cooperation for search and rescue services need not be limited by territorial boundaries and need not be limited to only neighboring States.² The Safety Board, with due respect to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and its neighboring States, encourages Afghanistan to consider such a cooperative agreement with other States and locally available organizations in order to establish search and rescue services.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation:

Consider improving search and rescue services in accordance with the Standards and Recommended Practices of the International Civil Aviation Organization Annex 12, "Search and Rescue," with particular emphasis on cooperation with other States and locally available organizations that maintain search and rescue capabilities. (A-06-82)

¹ ICAO Convention on International Civil Aviation, Annex 12, "Search and Rescue," as amended on July 12, 2004.

² COSPAS-SARSAT participants include the four parties to the COSPAS-SARSAT International Programme Agreement (Canada, France, Russia, and the United States), 24 ground segment providers, nine user states and two organizations, as follows: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, People's Republic of China, Denmark, Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Madagascar, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the International Telecommunication Development Corporation, and the Marine Department of Hong Kong, China.

The Safety Board is interested in any actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations and would kindly appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or considered with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation A-06-82 in your reply.

Chairman ROSENKER, Vice Chairman SUMWALT, and Members HERSMAN and HIGGINS concurred with this recommendation.

[Original Signed]

By: Mark V. Rosenker
Chairman