THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

Telephone :+255 (026) 2322703
Telefax : +255 (026) 2322704
Email: km@uchukuzi.go.tz
Website: https://www.uchukuzi.go.tz

Government City Mtumba, 1 Ujenzi Street,
P.o.Box 638,
40470 DODOMA.

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION UNIT BULLETIN

ACCIDENT

AIB No. ACC 2-25	Ref. CAV/ACC/2/25 **Category**: Helicopter
Aircraft Type & Reg:	AS 350 B3 **Reg**. 5H-KMA **Serial No.** 7946
No. and type of Engines:	One Arriel 2D
Year of Manufacture:	2015
Date and Time (UTC):	24 December 2025 at 1500 hours
Location:	Near Barafu Camp, Mt. Kilimanjaro, **Lat.** S 03º 06.345′ **Long.** E 037º 23.624′ Elevation**:** 14,346 ft
Type of Flight	Air charter
Persons on Board:	**Crew** - 1 **Passengers** – 4
Injuries:	**Crew** – 1 Killed **Passengers** – 4 Killed
Nature of Damage:	The aircraft was destroyed
Commander's Licence:	CPL (Helicopters)
Commander's Age:	43 years
Commander's Experience:	3,323 hours of which 846 were on type **Last 90 days**: 85 hours **Last 28 days:** 30 hours
Name of Operator:	Kili Medair Aviation Ltd
Information Source:	Telephone call from TCAA Kilimanjaro.

The Bulletin contains facts relating to the accident which have been determined up to the time of issue. This information is published to inform the public and the aviation industry of the general circumstance of the accident at the preliminary/stage and must necessarily be regarded as tentative and subject to alteration or correction if additional evidence becomes available.

Short extracts can be published without specific permission providing that the source is dully acknowledged.

SUMMARY

The accident was notified by TCAA Kilimanjaro shortly after it occurred.

It was reported that shortly after airborne the helicopter collided with a ridge and crashed. The helicopter was destroyed by impact with the terrain and the subsequent fire. All the five occupants were killed. At the time of the accident the weather was described as marginal.

History of the flight

The helicopter was operating a charter flight to pick two mountain-climbing tourists for a flight to Moshi airport. One of the tourists had fallen sick and was being airlifted for treatment.

5H-KMA was carrying a complement of five persons including one pilot, one doctor, two tourists and their tour guide.

On 24 December 2025 at 1440 hours the helicopter took off from its base at Moshi airport (Elevation 2,800 feet) for a flight to a mountain side camp called Barafu (Elevation 14,346 feet). The two destinations are 16.5 nautical miles (30.5 km) apart. Barafu Camp is 11,546 feet (3.52 km) above the elevation of Moshi airport.

It arrived at the camp at 1455 hours with the pilot and a doctor. Three persons (2 tourists and 1 tour guide) boarded the flight, one of whom among the tourists was reported to be sick. At 1500 hours 5H-KMA initiated take-off for Moshi airport.

One eyewitness who was near the take-off helipad at the material time testified that the flight took off and started its climb in a northerly direction. Moments later, it was observed to initiate a right turn at which time it struck a ridge and fell on a lower ground, breaking up into many pieces on impact. Fire erupted and the aircraft was destroyed. There were no survivors among the five occupants.

Damage to aircraft

The aircraft was destroyed by impact with the terrain and the subsequent fire.

The wreckage

Many pieces of the wreckage were distributed over a large area of a side of a valley which was below the elevation of the helipad at 14,422 ft. The main wreckage was found at a location 0.32 nautical miles east of Barafu camp helipad. The mast with two main rotor blades still attached was among the large pieces found on the

wreckage trail. The third main rotor blade had separated in the accident sequence. Its impact with the terrain may have contributed to the separation of the gearbox.

One of the skids was missing from the wreckage parts at the crash site. It was not recovered. It is cosidered that it may have been the first part of the helicopter to hit the terrain.

The weather

There is no weather station at Barafu Camp. The nearest weather station is to be found at Moshi airport.

The weather at Barafu Camp, or for that matter, all areas around the mountain is often very unstable. It is possible to have a bright sunny day at one moment only to change into bad weather with poor visibility in a matter of 10 to 15 minutes. For this reason, the conventional weather forecast reports for this particular region may not be altogether reliable.

The Crash Site

The helicopter came down on a side of a valley located near the plateau between the Kibo and Mawenzi peaks of the mountain. The surface is a rugged countryside with scattered stones on soft earth and stands at the elevation of 14,346 ft with Latitude S S 03º 06.345′ and Longitude. E037º 23.624′.

Discussion

Examination of the wreckage did not show any technical defects which could have contributed to the accident. The helicopter was flying in the late hours of the day and by the time it landed at Barafu Camp helipad, the weather had started to deteriorate.

It was reported that at the time of take-off there was a cloud cover over much of the area around the helipad. There was a small weather window on the northern side of the helipad, extending over a ridge that rose to the peak of the mountain.

The decision to take off in the northern direction appears to have been made for the purpose of taking advantage of that weather to climb out of Barafu Camp. The aircraft continued to climb against rising terrain, gaining altitude before it was seen to attempt a right turn. As it did so, the helicopter could have collided with a ridge and crashed.

The turn to the right was expected as it was the only direction with the lower ground necessary for the flight to be continued.

However, the turn needed increased power which may not have been available given the weight and altitude. There is also a possibility of a tail wind which may also have contributed to partial loss of altitude.

Safety recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The Authority should ensure that the helicopter operations are strictly conducted within the limitations approved in the operator's SOPs.
2. The helipads operator at Mount Kilimanjaro should establish a formal MOU with Tanzania Meteorological Authority (TMA). This agreement should cover the installation of the Automated Weather Observation Stations (AWOS), capable of reporting real time wind, visibility and pressure (QNH) directly to the TMA and TCAA systems to support safe mountain helicopter operations.
3. Helicopter operators should align business models with safe operating procedures that require focus on safety management systems (SMS) and the mitigation of commercial pressure.
4. The Authority and air operators should collaborate to conduct an immediate priority safety risk assessment (PSRA) for airspace design and aircraft mountain operations.

.....

The Tanzania AAIB investigations are conducted in accordance with ICAO Annex 13 to the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation and The Civil Aviation (Investigation of Air Accidents and Incidents) Regulations 2017.

The sole objective of the investigation of an accident or incident under these Regulations is the prevention of future accidents and incidents. It is not the purpose of such an investigation to apportion blame or liability.

Accordingly, it is inappropriate that AAIB reports should be used to assign fault or blame or determine liability, since neither the investigation nor the reporting process has been undertaken for that purpose.

Extracts may be published without specific permission providing that the source is duly acknowledged, the material is reproduced accurately and is not used in a derogatory manner or in a misleading context.