

## **PRELIMINARY REPORT ON ACCIDENT IN THE ISFJORDEN WATER AT SVALBARD, NEAR BARENTSBURG ON 26 OCTOBER 2017, INVOLVING MI 8AMT, RA-22312 OPERATED BY CONVERSE AVIA AIRLINES CJSC**

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*This report is a preliminary and incomplete representation of AIBN's investigations in connection with the relevant aircraft accident. The report may contain faults and inaccuracies. The final report will be the Accident Investigation Board's official document concerning the accident and investigation.*

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Aircraft:  
- Type and reg.: Mi 8AMT helicopter, RA-22312

Serial No.: 171C00643116106U

Call sign: CVS312

No. and Type of Engines: 2 x MOTOR SICH TB3-117BM

Date and time (local): Thursday 26 October 2017 at 13:08 (UTC) hours

Year of Manufacture: 19 April, 2013

Accident site: Svalbard, Norway (Pos. 78<sup>0</sup>07'22"N 14<sup>0</sup>14'16"E)

Weather conditions: METAR ENSB 261250Z 10012KT 6000 –SN SCT015 BNK020 M02/M04 Q0995 RMK WIND 1400FT 14005KT QNH 994

From AFIS dispatcher at Barentsburg: Horizontal visibility approx. 1000 m, vertical visibility approx. 100 m

Light conditions: Twilight

Operator: Converse Avia Airlines CJSC

Type of Operation: Commercial Air Transport (CAT), Non-scheduled operations

Persons on board: Crew - 3 (Fatal) Passengers – 5 (Fatal)

Nature of damage: Helicopter substantially damaged

Information Source: AIBN Investigations/ Recorders readout at Interstate Aviation Committee (IAC)

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*All times given in this report are UTC unless otherwise stated.*

### **Introduction**

The intention of this preliminary report is to give a brief update on the progress and findings one month into the investigation. The report is factual and contains neither conclusions nor safety recommendations. The investigation is conducted according to ICAO Annex 13 and Regulation (EU) No 996/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 on the investigation and prevention of accidents and incidents in civil aviation history of Flight

## **History of the Flight**

On 26 October 2017 at 13:08 hours a MI-8AMT helicopter with 8 persons on board crashed into the sea near the home base close to Barentsburg on Svalbard (ENBA). The planned flight was from Pyramiden to Barentsburg ENBA. According to the records of the GPS unit, the take-off from Pyramiden was performed at 12:43 hours. The crew was last in contact with the air traffic services at Longyearbyen (ENSB) at 13:06 hours. There was a normal conversation before they changed frequency from Svalbard Airport Longyear to the homebase frequency. At this time the helicopter was 5 Nm from homebase. The helicopter never arrived Barentsburg and it was reported missing at 13:30 hours to the AFIS Longyear. Two local AS332 L1 (Super Puma) helicopters were directed from Longyear to the Barentsburg area where the first arrived approximately at 14:12 hours.

A SAS flight departing from Longyear at 13:37 hours attempted to contact CVS312 on 121.5Mhz without receiving any answer. Due to weather conditions (poor visibility), the SAS flight was unable to perform a visual search for the missing helicopter.

## **Search and Rescue**

An extensive air, sea and land search operation was launched immediately after RA-22312 went missing. In addition to the two Super Puma helicopters, several local vessels, the ship belonging to the Governor of Svalbard (Sysselmannen), two Coastguard vessels with advanced autonomous scanning devices, a scientific research vessel with ROV, and a Danish surveillance aircraft were involved in the search and rescue operations from an early phase. The operations were further strengthened by a Russian search and rescue team, including divers. A few days into the search a large offshore supply vessel arrived from the mainland. It had two large ROVs and a crane capable of lifting the helicopter onto the deck. Several underwater search devices together with Russian divers and equipment were used in the search and later recovery.

On the 29 October the helicopter was found at 209 meters depth approximately 2 km off the coastline northeast of the helicopter base.

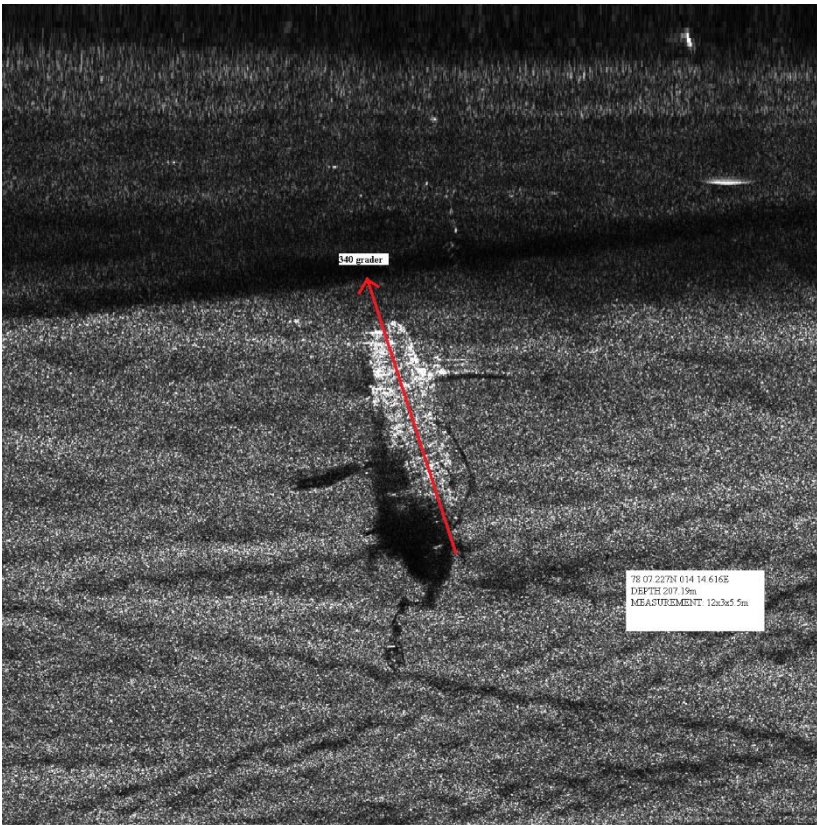


Figure 1: Helicopter at the seabed as detected by AUV Hugin. Photo: Royal Norwegian Navy

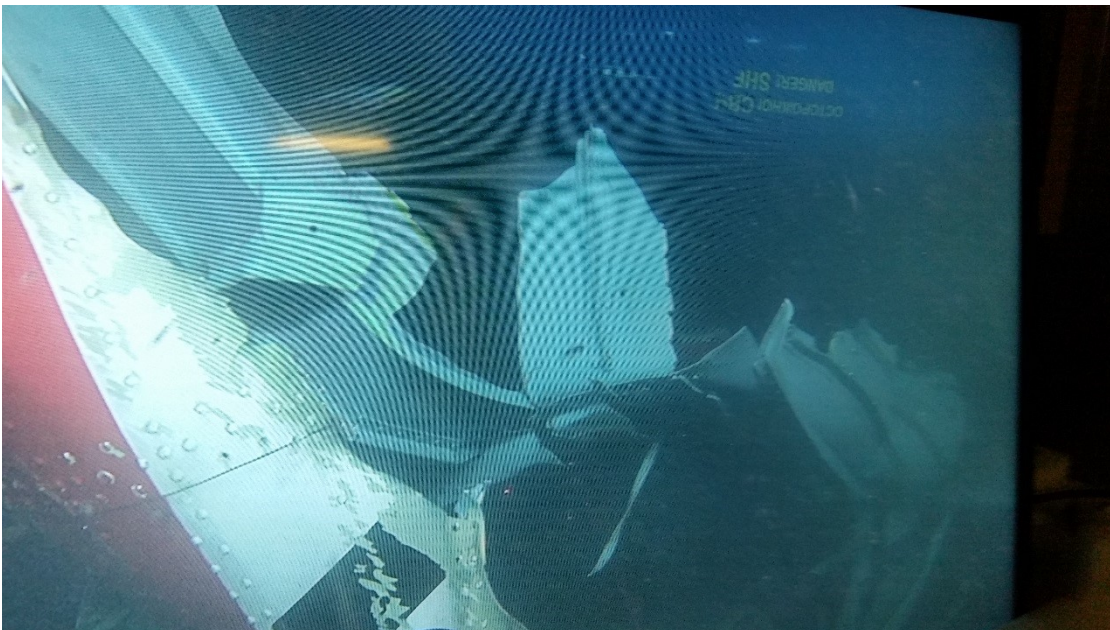


Figure 2: The helicopter at the seabed. Photo: G.O.Sars

The primary search was for survivors and, later, as it at a point into the search operation became evident that no one had survived the accident, for missing persons. The search for passengers and crew went on continuously from the time of the accident and until Wednesday 8 November.

Using all the resources mentioned above, the search and rescue operation was coordinated by the Joint Rescue Coordination Centres (JRCC) in Bodø, and was locally led by Governor of Svalbard, which also serves as a rescue sub centre for the JRCC.



Only one person from RA-22312 has been found. He was located at 12:30 on Monday 30 October at the seabed, 130 meters from the helicopter. There were no persons inside the helicopter. Further enquiries about the search for missing persons should be directed to the Governor of Svalbard.



Figure 3: The helicopter is lifted up on Maersk Forza. Photo: AIBN

## The Investigation

The Accident Investigation Board Norway (AIBN) was notified shortly after the accident and initiated an investigation supported by the Interstate Aviation Committee (IAC). The recovery of the helicopter was conducted in cooperation with the Governor of Svalbard, the Police, Russian participants and others

The helicopter's body, tail, Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) and GPS units were recovered early on 4 November. The Flight Data Recorder (FDR) was mounted on the underside aft on the tailboom. It had been hit by a main rotor blade and separated from the helicopter. The recorder was found severely damaged and without the memory unit one day later. Searched for the memory unit went on for another day. Based on the condition of the recovered parts of the FDR, it was decided to discontinue the special search for the memory unit. Neither the FDR nor the CRV were equipped with Underwater Location Beacons (ULB). ULB will normally ease search for recorders and, thereby the helicopter wreckage.

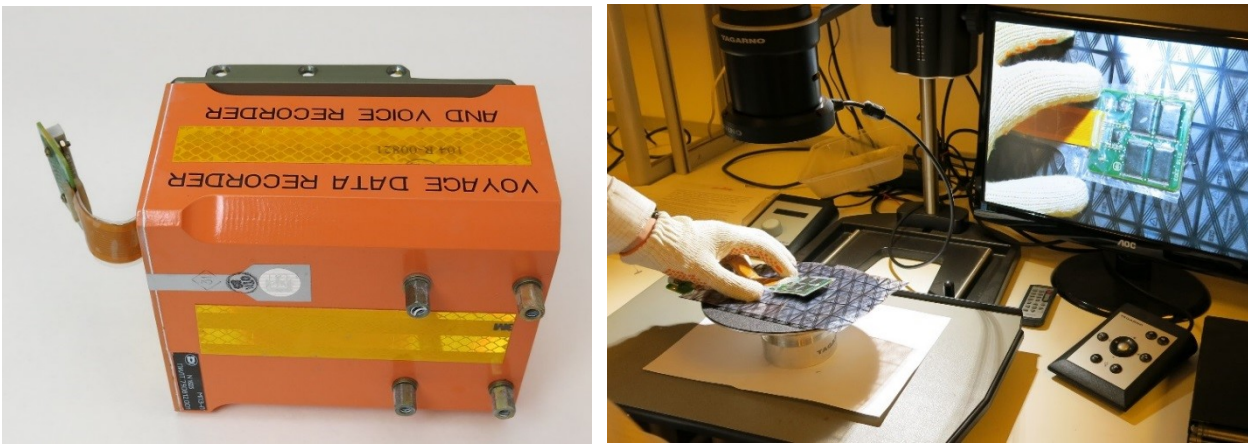


Figure 4: The Cockpit Voice Recorder and readout at IAC. Photo: AIBN



Figure 5: The destroyed Flight data recorder. Photo: AIBN

The CVR and the GPS-units were transported by the AIBN to the IAC laboratories in Moscow for downloading and analysis. All audio files have been successfully downloaded, including the one from the helicopters last flight. Further analysis will continue. This include frequency analysis to check for possible technical errors in rotating components. Only one of the two GPS units contained data from the last flight.

The helicopter was transported via Hammerfest to Stavanger. In Stavanger it is secured in a warehouse suitable for the further examination. This examination is ongoing and is conducted by AIBN in cooperation with the Interstate Aviation Committee and the helicopter manufacturer.

Preliminary analysis of the cockpit voice recorder indicates that the crew apparently did not identify any technical abnormalities before the helicopter impacted the sea. This is to be further investigated before any conclusions are drawn. Damage to the helicopter indicates that it struck the water



relatively flat with the tail low. It is reason to believe that all persons on board evacuated the helicopter before it sunk.

The helicopter was neither equipped with floatation gear nor life rafts, but life jackets were installed under all the seats and thus for all the eight persons on board. The life jackets were not used, and all but one has been accounted for under the seats in the helicopter. The remaining life jacket has been found on the seabed. Survival suits were not in use.



*Figure 6: Damage to the underside of the helicopter. Photo: AIBN*

### **Further Investigation**

The results from the examination of the helicopter, CVR and GPS unit will be gathered and supplemented with further information such as interviews, weather conditions, company policies, company operational procedures and other data.

### **Closing remark**

This investigation is still at an early stage, and the photos only illustrate some areas of interest. They do not exclude that other areas of interest may exist or will emerge.

The Accident Investigation Board Norway

Lillestrøm, 1 December 2017