

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
199700213**

**Cessna Aircraft Company
Citation II
Saab Aircraft AB
340**

24 January 1997

Readers are advised that the Australian Transport Safety Bureau investigates for the sole purpose of enhancing transport safety. Consequently, Bureau reports are confined to matters of safety significance and may be misleading if used for any other purposes.

Investigations commenced on or before 30 June 2003, including the publication of reports as a result of those investigations, are authorised by the Executive Director of the Bureau in accordance with Part 2A of the Air Navigation Act 1920.

Investigations commenced after 1 July 2003, including the publication of reports as a result of those investigations, are authorised by the Executive Director of the Bureau in accordance with the Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003 (TSI Act). Reports released under the TSI Act are not admissible as evidence in any civil or criminal proceedings.

NOTE: All air safety occurrences reported to the ATSB are categorised and recorded. For a detailed explanation on Category definitions please refer to the ATSB website at www.atsb.gov.au.

At 1222, the controller noticed that the radar return for the C550 was indicating FL 120 and was 3 NM from the SF340B on crossing tracks. There was a breakdown of separation.

Radar analysis indicated that at the time vertical separation broke down, the C550 had passed through the intended track of the SF340B by approximately 1 NM and that the closest point between the aircraft was 3 NM. The required separation standard was 5 NM horizontally or 1,000 ft vertically.

ANALYSIS

Air traffic control

Because the controller believed he had heard the crew of the C550 read back FL 130 he annotated this on the flight progress strip. This meant that, in his mind, he had provided separation for the conflict he was expecting to occur. He then monitored the aircraft as they passed in the belief that vertical separation would be maintained until he could re-establish radar separation. It was only when he observed on radar that the C550 was maintaining FL 120 that he realised that a breakdown in separation had occurred. At that time, the aircraft had already passed each other and separation was increasing.

Flight crew of the C550

The crew thought they heard FL 120 given as the descent instruction and when this read back was not questioned, they continued a normal descent to FL 120; believing it to be the assigned level. They did not see the other aircraft and considered that, as air traffic control were providing separation, any instructions to the other aircraft would not have been queried, even if they indicated a climb through the level of the C550.

SIGNIFICANT FACTORS

1. The crew of the C550 read back an incorrect assigned flight level.
2. The air traffic controller did not detect the incorrect read back.

