

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report  
199303121**

**SOCATA - Groupe Aerospatiale  
Trinidad**

**05 October 1993**

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**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](http://www.atsb.gov.au).**

**Occurrence Number:** 199303121      **Occurrence Type:** Accident  
**Location:** 7km SW Kanangra Walls  
**State:** NSW      **Inv Category:** 3  
**Date:** Tuesday 05 October 1993  
**Time:** 0900 hours      **Time Zone:** EST  
**Highest Injury Level:** Fatal  
**Injuries:**

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None	Total
Crew	1	0	0	0	1
Ground	0	0	0	0	0
Passenger	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

**Aircraft Manufacturer:** SOCATA - Groupe Aerospatiale  
**Aircraft Model:** TB-20  
**Aircraft Registration:** VH-JTI      **Serial Number:** 379  
**Type of Operation:** Non-commercial Pleasure/Travel  
**Damage to Aircraft:** Substantial  
**Departure Point:** Bankstown NSW  
**Departure Time:** 0830 EST  
**Destination:** Forbes NSW

**Crew Details:**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Class of Licence</b>	<b>Hours on Type</b>	<b>Hours Total</b>
Pilot-In-Command	Private	2.7	107

**Approved for Release:** Friday, April 26, 1996

After completing a TB-20 aircraft type endorsement at Nowra the pilot hired the aircraft for a return flight to Forbes via Bankstown. During the afternoon of Friday 1 October he completed the Nowra to Bankstown sector but had to postpone the flight to Forbes due to en route weather conditions which precluded flight under visual flight rules (VFR).

On Sunday 3 October the pilot obtained area weather forecasts and an aerodrome forecast for Forbes which indicated that the weather at Forbes was fine but the en route weather was not suitable for VFR flight. The pilot was also advised that two helicopters bound for Bathurst had turned back to Bankstown due to poor visibility. Despite the forecasts and reports of adverse en route weather the pilot decided to attempt the flight to verify the accuracy of the forecasts which had predicted an improvement after 0900 hours. The pilot did not submit details of his proposed flight to the CAA, nor did he request a SAR watch or leave a flight note.

VH-JTI subsequently departed Bankstown at 0830 EST and after the pilot changed from the tower frequency there was no further radio contact with the aircraft. At about 0900 bushwalkers in the Kowmung River valley saw a single engine light aircraft flying in a southerly direction in the valley. The aircraft, which was not identified, was observed turning west to enter the Christies Creek Gorge. The unbroken cloud base obscured the tops of the ridges and the aircraft, which appeared to be operating normally, was flying about midway between the valley floor and the cloud base.

JTI was reported missing during the evening of Sunday 3 October after it failed to arrive at Forbes. An intensive air search was commenced the following day. The bushwalkers did not report sighting an aircraft in the valley because a Sydney daily newspaper they had read incorrectly identified the date on which the aircraft was reported missing.

The wreckage was located on the eastern side of the Boyd Range on Sunday 24 October by a bushwalker who was about 2 kms from the site on the opposite side of the valley. The accident site was at an elevation of 2,500 ft on steeply sloping terrain which was moderately timbered with trees 18 to 25 m in height. The occupants survived the impact forces but suffered burns from a fuel fed fire which started when the aircraft began to break up during the collision with trees. Several days later they perished from the combined effects of their burns and exposure after they had walked about 2 km down to Wheengee Whungee Creek.

Examination of the wreckage found the landing gear and the wing flaps retracted. Propeller inspection indicated that the engine was operating at a low power setting at ground impact. No defects which may have influenced the circumstances of the accident were identified.

A removable emergency locator transmitter was attached to the floor of the luggage compartment at the rear of the cabin. The transmitter assembly had a self-contained aerial and was therefore capable of operating remotely from the aircraft. The transmitter was destroyed by intense fire which gutted the cabin area and there were no reports of any transmissions being received from the transmitter.

## CONCLUSION

### Significant Factors

The following factors were considered relevant to the development of the accident.

1. Forecast and observed weather conditions over the Blue Mountains and Great Dividing Range in the general area of the proposed route were unsuitable for flight in accordance with visual flight rules.
2. The pilot continued flight over mountainous terrain in weather conditions which were unsuitable for flight under visual flight rules.
3. The pilot was inexperienced, both generally and on the accident aircraft type.
4. The aircraft was not configured for the optimum manoeuvring speed in the prevailing conditions.