



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Preliminary Report

Location:	Big Grand Cay, Bahamas	Accident Number:	ERA19FA210
Date & Time:	07/04/2019, 0154 EDT	Registration:	N32CC
Aircraft:	Agusta AW139	Injuries:	7 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

On July 4, 2019, about 0154 eastern daylight time, an Agusta AW139, N32CC, owned and operated by Challenger Management LLC, was substantially damaged when it impacted the Atlantic Ocean near Big Grand Cay, Abaco, Bahamas. The commercial pilot, airline transport pilot rated copilot, and five passengers were fatally injured. The helicopter was being operated under the provisions of Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 as a personal flight. Night visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time and an instrument flight rules flight plan was filed for a flight from Walker's Cay Airport (MYAW), Walker's Cay, Bahamas, to Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport (FLL), Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The flight departed from a concrete pad at Big Grand Cay, which was located about 5 nautical miles (nm) southeast from MYAW, about 1 minute prior to the accident.

The purpose of the accident flight was to transport two of the passengers to FLL for medical treatment.

The helicopter departed from Palm Beach International Airport (PBI), West Palm Beach, Florida, about 0057, and a witness reported that it landed on the concrete pad at Big Grand Cay between 0130 and 0145. After landing, the helicopter remained on the ground with the engines operating, while the passengers boarded. During the subsequent takeoff to the east, the witness reported that the helicopter climbed to about 30 to 40 ft and accelerated while in a nose-down attitude. He did not notice anything unusual while he observed the helicopter depart.

Another witness, who was located about 1.6 nm southwest of the accident site reported seeing the helicopter lift off and climb to between 40 and 50 ft above ground level; then shortly thereafter, he noted blue and white lights spinning to the left at a rate of about 1 to 2 seconds between rotations while descending. He estimated that the helicopter rotated to the left three to four times. He then heard a "whoosh whoosh whoosh" sound, and lost sight of the helicopter, which was followed by the sound of an impact. The witness reported what he had heard to the "caregiver" of Big Grand Cay. The witness went out on his boat about 0205 and used spotlights to search the area where he thought the helicopter had crashed but was unable to locate it.

The Federal Aviation Administration issued an alert notice for the overdue flight about 1521. The helicopter was subsequently located by local residents sometime between 1600 and 1700, in about 16 ft of water about 1.2 nm north-northeast of the departure point.

The helicopter was found inverted and the tailboom was separated from the aft fuselage and was recovered in multiple pieces. All five main rotor blades were separated but recovered. The tail rotor assembly, which was also separated was subsequently recovered. All four tail rotor blades were separated, and one tail rotor blade was not recovered. The recovered wreckage was retained for further examination, to include examination of the airframe, engines, flight controls, seats and restraints.

The helicopter was equipped with a multi-purpose flight recorder, an enhanced ground proximity warning system and several additional components capable of storing non-volatile memory, which were retained for evaluation and data download.

The accident investigation was initially under the jurisdiction of the Air Accident Investigation Department (AAID) of the Bahamas. On July 6, 2019, in accordance with Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, the AAID requested delegation of the accident investigation to the NTSB, which the NTSB accepted on July 8, 2019.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Agusta	Registration:	N32CC
Model/Series:	AW139 No Series	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Amateur Built:	No		
Operator:	Challenger Management LLC	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Night/Dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	MYGF, 8 ft msl	Observation Time:	2000 EDT
Distance from Accident Site:	46 Nautical Miles	Temperature/Dew Point:	29° C / 25° C
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Few / 2500 ft agl	Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	4 knots / , 160°
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 25000 ft agl	Visibility:	10 Miles
Altimeter Setting:	29.95 inches Hg	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Departure Point:	Big Grand Cay, FN	Destination:	Fort Lauderdale, FL (FLL)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	5 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	7 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	27.238056, -78.304444

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Timothy W Monville
Additional Participating Persons:	Patrick D Lusch; FAA AVP-100; Washington, DC Giorgio Dossena; Leonardo Helicopters (Technical Advisor); Cascina Costa, Merryn Spielman; Pratt & Whitney Canada (Technical Advisor); Longueuil, QC Delvin R Major; Air Accident Investigation Department; Nassau N.P., Marc Hamilton; TSB of Canada (Accredited Representative); ON Alvaro Neves; EASA (Technical Advisor); Cologne, Mikael Amura; ANSV (Accredited Representative)
Note:	The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.