



AIB Bulletin

AIB Bulletin No. 17/99 **Ref.:** CAV/ACC/17/99 **Category:** 1.4
Aircraft Type & Reg. Cameron A 315 Balloon **Reg:** 5H-IPO
No. & type of Engines: 4 no. MK4 Super Burners
Year of Manufacture: 1996
Date and Time (UTC): 26 November 1999 at 0415 hrs
Location: Seronera, Serengeti National Park (02 28S 34 50E)
Type of Flight: Passenger Game viewing
Persons on Board: **Crew - 1** **Passengers 9**
Injuries: **Crew - Nil** **Passengers - 2 serious 7 none**
Nature of Damage: Minor damage to basket, burner & canopy
Commander's Licence: CPL
Commander's Age: 50
Commander's Experience: 1360 hours of which 500 were on type
Last 90 days 25 hrs
Last 28 days 9 hrs
Information Source: Fax message from Operator

5H - IPO was launched at 03:30 hours from the bank of Seronera river. It was carrying one pilot and 9 passengers who were to make a game viewing flight in the Serengeti National Park. The weather at 03:30 hours was reported to be fine with a 5/7 kt easterly wind.

The pilot testified that after about 35 minutes he told the passengers that they were approximately 5 minutes from landing and that they should make preparations. He subsequently initiated a descent heading for an area of small scattered thorn bushes where he expected to make a safe landing. He also told the passengers to take up their landing positions. As the balloon continued descending, it lost speed. Amongst the bushes and to the left, there was one large tree about 10ft tall. Since the pilot expected to continue to turn to the right he was happy that the tree was well to the left of the landing line. The final approach was good and the speed was about 12 kt and dropping. With less than 50 meters (160ft) to touch down, the balloon's heading suddenly and unexpectedly changed to the left, towards the tall tree. At this stage it was too late to take any evasive action. Realizing that collision with the tree was imminent, the pilot instructed the passengers to keep down and hold tight.

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 circumstances of the accidents at the preliminary/stage and must necessarily be regarded as tentative and subject to alteration or correction if additional evidence becomes available.

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The balloon clipped the tree with the left front corner of the basket causing (the basket) to turn through 45° before it made a ground contact with the leading corner and continued to turn on the short end. After dragging for about 15 meters (50ft) the balloon came to rest.

Two passengers were injured in the accident: one was suspected to have sustained a fractured collar bone and another had a whiplash injury to his neck. They were subsequently flown to hospital in Nairobi, Kenya. No further news about the injured passengers was available.

The pilot, who had flown many times in Seronera, was of the opinion that there was a sudden and unexpected change in the direction of the wind from right to the left and this occurred at the critical stage when evasive action could not be taken. The passengers were not available for interview.