

History of the Flight

The aircraft was operating a company charter flight from Dar es Salaam to Mbeya where it was to night stop. It was to return to Dar es Salaam on the following day with a refueling stop at Dodoma.

The flight to Mbeya was uneventful and 5H-LZY landed at Mbeya at 0745 hours. The pilot reported to have refueled the aircraft at Mbeya from on board jerry cans shortly after arrival. 160 liters of avgas were added for a total of about 300 liters.

No snags were reported. Two pilots and three passengers boarded the aircraft for the flight to Dar es Salaam via Dodoma.

Take off for Dodoma was initiated at 0543 hours from runway 13. The commander said that he selected two notches of flaps and applied full power on brakes for short field takeoff. The initial phase of the takeoff roll was normal. When the aircraft was accelerating through 90 kt, the nose landing gear retracted, causing the aircraft nose to strike the ground. The aircraft subsequently came to an abrupt stop on the runway centre line.

There was no fire and all the five occupants disembarked without injuries. The aircraft sustained substantial damage to the nose underside section and both propellers.

The inspector of accidents arrived at the Mbeya five hours later and found the aircraft resting on the two mains and the nose. It was about 700 meters beyond the threshold of runway 13.

Examination of the wreckage

Examination of the main landing gears showed that they were both down and locked. The nose landing gear had retracted into its well. When the aircraft nose was raised, the nose landing gear

lowered freely and locked without any problem.

The gear lever in the cockpit was found in the DOWN position.

When the master switch was put on, there were two green lights indicating that both mains were down and locked. However, the green light for the nose landing gear light did not illuminate. Instead, the red unsafe nose landing gear warning light came on.

The weather

It was a bright sunny morning. The weather does not appear to be a factor in this accident.

Mbeya airport

Mbeya airport, elevation 5,600 feet, has one runway 13/31 which is 1500 meters long. The surface is grass. At the time of the accident the runway was outgrown by tall grass. However, the grass was cut along the centre line of the runway.

There are a number of foot paths used by pedestrians, bicycles, animals and cars that frequently cross the runway at different points.

The airport is located in the township of Mbeya separating the down town from a large residential area.

There is a barbed wire fence on both sides of the runway. However, the fence is frequently cut by unknown persons. At the time of the accident there were many openings in the fence and some traffic across the runway.

Remarks

The reason for the nose landing gear retracting during the take off roll has so far

not been established.

At first it was thought that the nose landing gear had collided with some obstacle during the takeoff roll. However, examination of the runway surface along the aircraft track from the beginning of the runway to the final point of rest did not reveal anything untoward. The nose landing gear itself did not show any impact marks.

It is the intention of the Tanzania Accident Investigation Branch to jack up the aircraft and conduct a detailed examination of the landing gear retraction mechanism in order to assess the circumstances of the accident.

Further work