



Accident to the TECNAM - P2008- JC registered F-ORVY

on 13 March 2021

off the coast of Tahiti (French Polynesia)

⁽¹⁾ Except where
otherwise indicated,
times in this
report are local.

Time	Around 17:45 ⁽¹⁾
Operator	Centre Polynésien de Perfectionnement au Pilotage (C3P)
Type of flight	Cross-country
Persons on board	Pilot
Consequences and damage	Aeroplane and pilot missing
This is a courtesy translation by the BEA of the Final Report on the Safety Investigation published in March 2022. As accurate as the translation may be, the original text in French is the work of reference.	

Pilot and aeroplane missing at sea

1 - HISTORY OF THE FLIGHT

Note: the following information is principally based on statements, radio communication recordings, radar data and GPS location data from a telephone.

The unlicensed pilot took off alone at around 16:40 from Tahiti-Faa'a airport to fly to Moorea-Temae airport at which he made a full-stop landing. At 16:59, he took off from Moorea airport and headed in the direction of Tairapu Peninsula.

After 17:08, F-ORVY disappeared from the controller's radar display screen. The radar coverage is unable to display aeroplanes flying below 1,000 ft in this sector. The aeroplane never reappeared on the screen.

At 17:17, the air traffic controller asked the pilot if he was passing abeam Taravao in order to give him a traffic update. The pilot replied in the affirmative.

At 17:30, the controller asked the pilot to report his position and altitude. The pilot reported that he was at 1,000 ft off the coast of Papara.

Shortly after this, the controller called the pilot back to inform him that a local resident had seen him flying extremely low, between 100 and 150 ft over the sea at Papara. The controller asked him to respect a minimum height of 500 ft. The pilot acknowledged the request.

The controller then informed the pilot of the presence of an aeroplane higher up, flying between Taravao and the Sierra Tango navigation fix. The pilot of F-ORVY stated that he did not have sight of this aeroplane.

At 17:36, the controller asked him to confirm that his altitude was still at 1,000 ft. Not receiving a response, the controller called again.

At 17:39, the controller asked the pilot of another aeroplane in the area to try to contact the pilot of F-ORVY. These calls also went unanswered. No emergency message had been sent by the pilot.

Having no news of the pilot, the air traffic control services initiated alert and search phases.

2 - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2.1 Aeroplane information

F-ORVY was a Tecnam P2008 aeroplane constructed in 2014, equipped with a 100 hp Rotax 912 S2 engine

The aeroplane had logged 26 flight hours and 50 flight minutes since the last maintenance operation⁽²⁾ completed on 26 February 2021. The study of the maintenance documents revealed no element likely to have contributed to the occurrence of the accident.

The investigation was unable to determine the amount of fuel available in the tanks to make the flight.

2.2 Site and wreckage

The aeroplane wreckage and the pilot were not found during the sea and land search operations.

2.3 Meteorological information

The French met office, Météo-France, indicated that on Saturday 13 March 2021, the archipelago was under the influence of a dry and undisturbed trade wind. At the time the aeroplane went missing, the conditions forecast by the Météo-France services for south-east Tahiti, incorporating the Tairapu Peninsula, were an east to south-east light to moderate wind, with few clouds.

2.4 Pilot information

The 17-year-old pilot was training for his Private Pilot Licence - Aeroplanes at C3P. He had logged around 50 flight hours, 17 hours and 30 minutes of which in solo flight. In the last three months, he had logged around 13 flight hours, six hours of which in supervised solo flight. Within the training organisation, he was considered to be a good and diligent student who demonstrated the right qualities for flying.

He started his PPL(A) training in November 2019. He needed to make one more solo cross-country flight of 150 NM to be able to take the PPL(A) test. He had scheduled this flight on six occasions but had had to cancel for various reasons, the last time in January 2021 due to a transponder problem.

Before the accident flight, he cancelled all future flights scheduled with respect to his PPL(A) training. For the accident flight, he filed a flight plan under a false name with the Regional Offices for Flight Information and Assistance (BRIA). No instruction flight was scheduled for the pilot on the day of the accident.

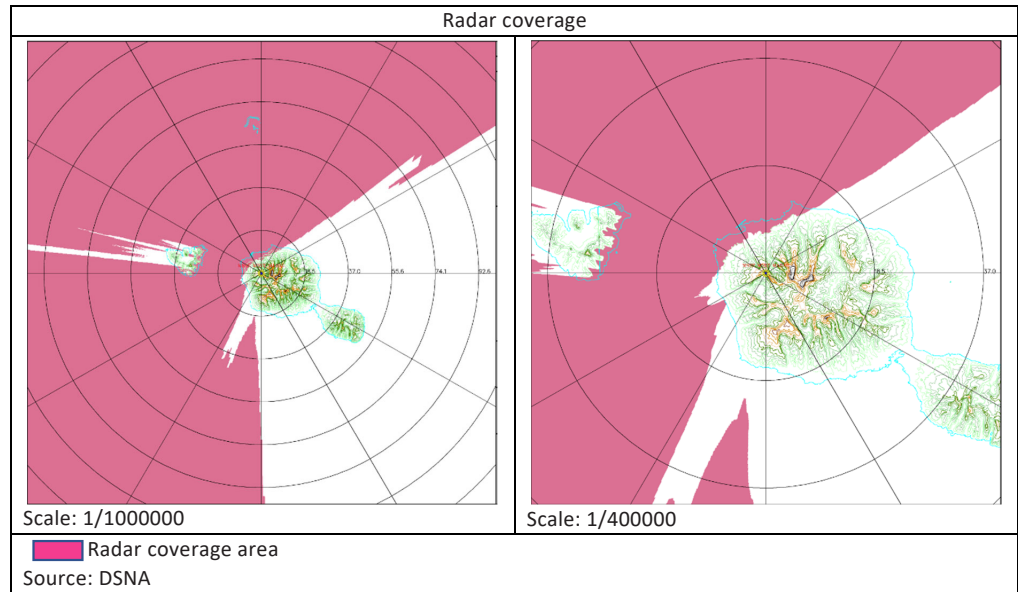
At the training organisation's facilities, aeroplanes are not locked and ignition keys are left on board⁽³⁾. Consequently, the pilot was able to easily access and take off on board F-ORVY.

⁽²⁾ 100-hour maintenance inspection.

⁽³⁾ When aeroplanes are in the hangar at the flying club, they are not locked and the ignition keys are left on board so that the aeroplanes can be quickly removed from the hangar in the event of a fire.

2.5 Location of the pilot's telephone

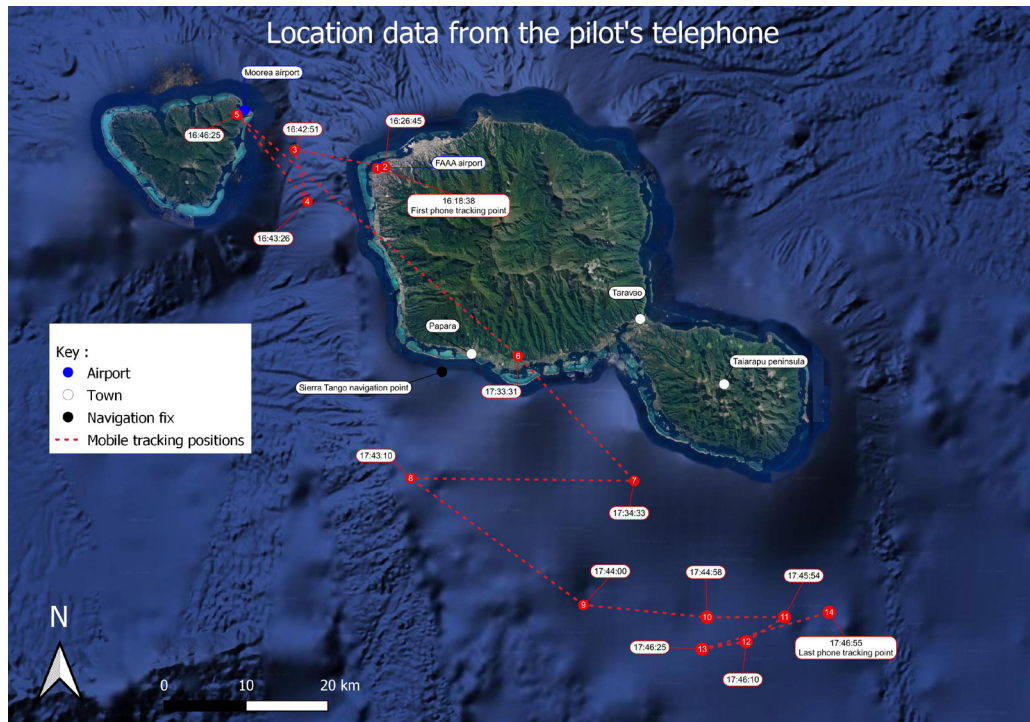
The radar coverage is unable to display the end of the aeroplane's path.



This is why the air transport gendarmes (GTA) asked the phone provider for the location data from the pilot's telephone.

The positions recorded between 16:26 and 17:33 were consistent with the flights made by the pilot. The last recorded positions show an outbound leg southwards, over the sea, moving away from Tairapu Peninsula.

The last recorded position, at 17:46, was located approximately 10 NM south of Tairapu Peninsula.



Location data from the pilot's telephone

2.6 Statements

According to the different statements collected, the pilot was a flying enthusiast. He wanted to become a fighter pilot or a career pilot. He had been experiencing difficulties both at school and on a personal level for some time. These difficulties made him question his professional future as a pilot.

3 - CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are solely based on the information which came to the knowledge of the BEA during the investigation. They are not intended to apportion blame or liability.

The investigation was unable to explain why the pilot and the aeroplane went missing at sea.

However, the description of the pilot's state of mind, the circumstances in which the flight took place and the manoeuvres observed during the flight suggested that he intentionally took risks.