BEA
Bureau d'Enquêtes et d'Analyses
pour la sécurité de l'aviation civile

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SAFETY INVESTIGATION
PRELIMINARY REPORT

Accident to the ROBIN DR400-180 registered **F-GGQQ** on Sunday 7 December 2025 at Bethmale

Time	Around 17:35[1]
Operator	Aéroclub de l'Ariège
Type of flight	Local
Persons on board	Pilot and three passengers
Consequences and damage	Pilot and passengers fatally injured, aeroplane destroyed
This is a courtesy translation by the BEA of the Final Report on the Safety Investigation. As accurate as the translation may be, the original text in French is the work of reference.	

Loss of control, collision with terrain in mountainous region

1 HISTORY OF THE FLIGHT

Note: the following information is principally based on the examination of the site and the wreckage, the read-out of the occupants' smartphones and radar recordings.

The pilot, who was also an instructor in the flying club, was carrying out a local flight, at sunset, out of Saint-Girons - Antichan aerodrome heading for the Pyrenees. He was accompanied by three passengers - a pilot sat in the front left-hand seat and two student pilots. It was a pleasure flight and not an instruction flight[2].

The pilot reported that he was backtracking runway 33. Take-off was at 17:19 in a south-easterly direction.

At around 18:00, concerned that F-GGQQ had not come back, the club members alerted the emergency services.

The wreckage of the aeroplane was located in the bottom of a valley at an altitude of around 2,000 m. Its rapid location was made possible by an alert system on one of the occupants' smartphones which triggers in the event of an accident.

[1] Except where otherwise indicated, the times in this report are in local time.
[2] No educational aspect to the session was established.

2 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2.1 Analysis of radar data and radio-communications

The flight path shown below is based on the radar data recording provided by the south ANS, that is to say the Toulouse DACOTA[3] tracking data. One of the functions of the DACOTA system is to track aircraft by merging (or rejecting) individual radar detections in order to create a single point. When it no longer receives radar data for a designated aircraft, the DACOTA system extrapolates the aircraft's position based on a few updated consecutive positions. This is why it is possible that certain points are derived from an extrapolation and do not represent the actual position of the aeroplane. However, the points shown to reconstruct the flight path are relevant and consistent. The radar track stops before the end of the flight due to the detection floor with respect to the terrain flown over.

The analysis of the Saint-Girons aerodrome radio-communication recordings made it possible to determine that the aeroplane took off at 17:19. This time was consistent with the first radar detection of F-GGQQ at 17:21.

The pilot of F-GGQQ and a second instructor in flight had previously had discussions about the start of the aeronautical night which was estimated at 17:51 by the pilot of F-GGQQ.

The second instructor's attempts to contact the pilot of F-GGQQ by radio between 17:45 and 17:50 went unanswered.

[3] DACOTA (*Dispositif d'Association et de Corrélation du Trafic Aérien*)

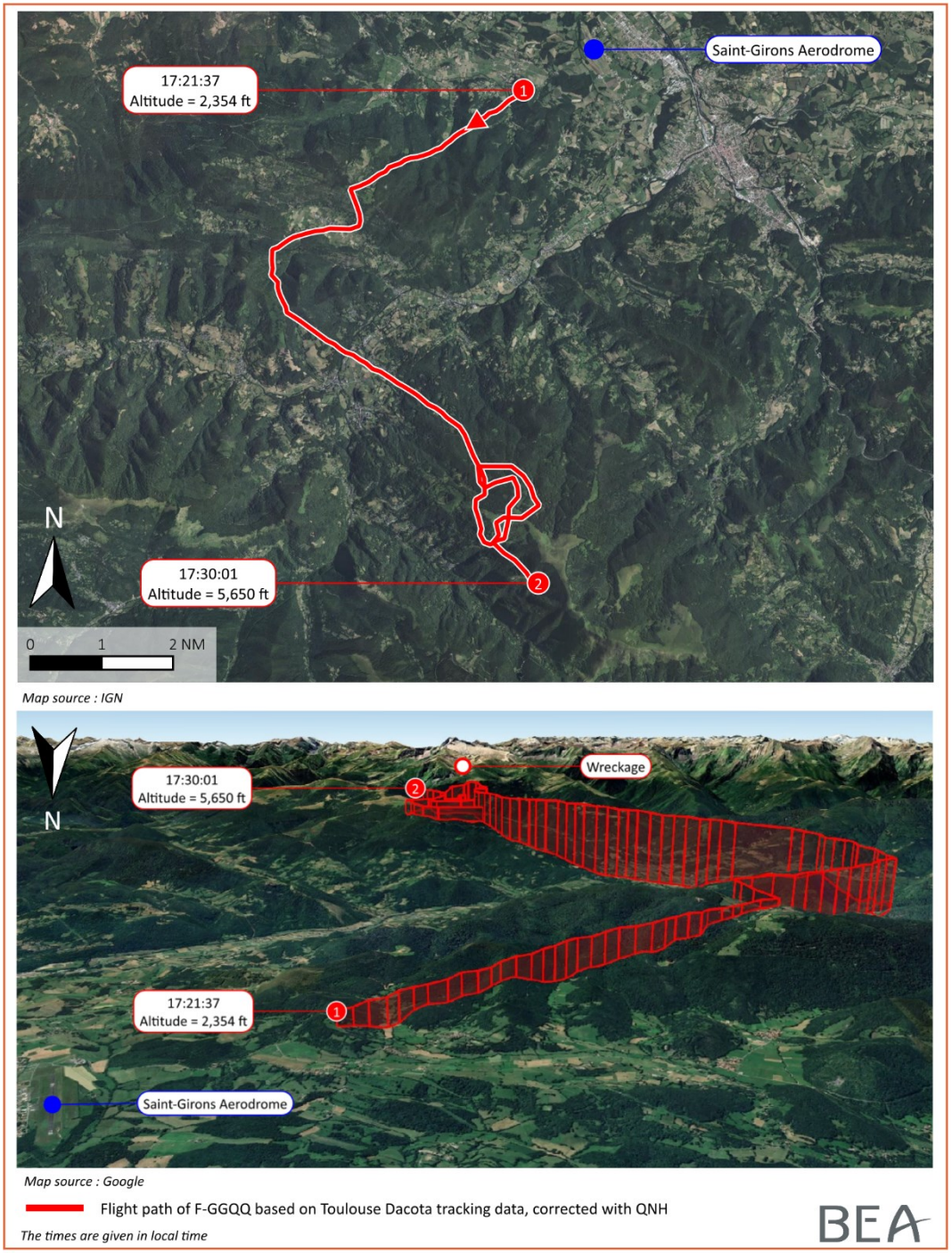

Figure 1: flight path of F-GGQQ based on radar data (source: BEA)

2.2 Analysis of mobile phone data

The mobile phones of the occupants of the aeroplane were found at the accident site. Some of them were repaired in order to read-out their contents. The data from the recordings is being analysed.

Initial indications suggest that the flight occurred in quite favourable weather conditions, despite the presence of some scattered clouds.

The analysis of a video of a duration of 1 min 30 s revealed that:

- the pilot in the right-hand seat had the controls;
- the aeroplane was flying at a low height in a valley;
- there were large variations in speed, altitude and attitude;
- the engine speed was controlled between 1,500 rpm and 2,850 rpm;
- a stall warning was audible from the beginning of the last right-hand turn, at a steep bank angle and low speed, for 10 s;
- during this manoeuvre, the pilot lost control of the aeroplane.

2.3 Site and wreckage information

2.3.1 Site and wreckage

The site of the accident was in the district of Bethmale, just above Eychelle lake, level with the mountain hut of the same name, situated at an altitude of around 2,000 m.

Figure 2: accident site, photo taken in morning light (source: GTA drone)

The wreckage was lying in the middle of an ascending valley, oriented north-south, the valley ridges reaching a height of between 2,200 m and 2,300 m. It was located on a small hill, on rocky terrain partially covered with snow. No impact marks were visible near the main part of the wreckage. It was grouped together in an area approximately ten meters wide by three meters long. Some components (pieces of the rudder) had slid on the snow and were found a few meters down the slope.

The aeroplane was completely destroyed, but its main components were present. The airframe was compressed along its longitudinal axis. The wing was broken on both sides of the airframe. The horizontal and vertical stabilizers were only slightly damaged. All of the flight controls were examined. The roll, pitch, and yaw controls were continuous, from the cockpit controls (stick and rudder pedals) to the control surfaces.

The engine was embedded in the ground up to half of cylinder No 1, i.e. about 50 cm from the nose. The engine's longitudinal axis relative to the ground indicated a collision at a very steep angle (approximately 75°).

During the recovery of the wreckage, a large amount of fuel leaked from the carburettor, which had been partially torn from the engine.

Neither the canopy debris examined nor the leading edges of the wings showed any biological traces resulting from the collision with an animal.

2.4 Persons on board information

All the occupants of the aeroplane knew each other. They were all member of the Ariège flying club. The passengers were students at the ENAC engineering school and were following a course in safety management and aviation operations. The pilot was a teacher at the ENAC and gave theoretical courses on air operations.

2.4.1 Pilot

The 25-year-old pilot held a private pilot licence PPL(A) along with single-engine piston SEP (land and seaplane) and multi-engine piston MEP (land) ratings, a night rating, instrument ratings IR/SE and IR/ME and an instructor rating since 2023. His licence and all his ratings were obtained between 2020 and 2023. He held a theoretical ATPL and a valid class 1 and 2 medical certificate.

The pilot probably used a digital pilot logbook. The investigation has not yet determined his exact experience. In June 2025, his reported experience was as follows:

- Overall experience: 732 flight hours.

He was sat in the right-hand seat of the aeroplane during the accident flight.

2.4.2 Passengers

The passenger sat in the front left-hand seat was 21 years old and had obtained his light aircraft pilot licence (LAPL(A) one week before the accident flight. He had followed this training with the Ariège flying club. The pilot of the accident flight had been his instructor.

The passengers sat in the rear left-hand and rear right-hand seats were respectively 21 and 18 years old. They had joined the Saint-Girons club one week before the accident. They had each carried out one hour of instruction flight in the morning of the accident.

2.5 Aircraft information

The DR400-180 registered F-GGQQ, was a single-engine, low-wing aeroplane equipped with a 180 hp engine. It had a fixed medium-pitch propeller and a tow hook. Each seat was equipped with a three-point harness consisting of a lap belt and a shoulder strap.

This aeroplane was used by the flying club for a variety of purposes, including towing gliders, cross-country flights and instruction.

F-GGQQ was equipped with conventional avionics and did not have a Flarm.

One week before the accident, it had undergone a scheduled maintenance check (annual or 100-hour) during which no anomalies were noted.

2.6 Meteorological information

At the time of the accident, the estimated meteorological conditions at Saint-Girons were the following: light variable wind, clear sky, visibility greater than 10 km. The outside air temperature was 13°C with a dew point of 9°C, the QNH was 1019 hPa. There was no turbulence. Sunset at Saint-Girons was at 17:21[4].

3 CONTINUATION OF SAFETY INVESTIGATION

The collection and analysis of the data will continue. The BEA will publish a final report setting out its conclusions.

The BEA investigations are conducted with the sole objective of improving aviation safety and are not intended to apportion blame or liabilities.

[4] The pilot was aware of this information.