



Accident to the LINDSTRAND 180A
registered **F-HCMP**
on Tuesday 4 March 2025
at Castelnau-la-Chapelle

Time	Around 17:15 ¹
Operator	JLJballoon (Montgolfières du Périgord)
Type of flight	Passenger commercial air transport
Persons on board	Pilot and seven passengers
Consequences and damage	Pilot seriously injured
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.	

Collision with trees, during cruise

1 HISTORY OF THE FLIGHT

Note: the following information is principally based on statements and data from the pilot's GPS.

The pilot, accompanied by seven passengers, took off at around 17:00 from a take-off site at La Roque-Gageac (see Figure 1, point ①). The balloon headed westwards and climbed to a height of around 600 ft² (point ②). The pilot descended to a height of around 100 ft to fly over the Dordogne (point ③) and then rose again. On approaching a second branch of the Dordogne, with the cliff ahead of him, he descended once more. The pilot then activated the burners again to fly over the cliff. The balloon took time to gain height and the envelope caught on trees (point ⑤). The basket came to a stop on a bank, on the side of the cliff. The pilot closed the fuel tanks, extinguished the pilot lights, bled the systems and closed the valves.

As a young passenger was panicking, the pilot decided to evacuate him, while the other passengers secured the basket to prevent it from slipping. While descending a very steep slope, the pilot slipped and injured his back. A second passenger exited the basket to join the pilot and the young passenger. The other passengers stayed in the basket to wait for the emergency services which arrived rapidly.

¹ Except where otherwise indicated, the times in this report are in local time.

² The glossary of abbreviations and acronyms frequently used by the BEA can be found on its [web site](#).

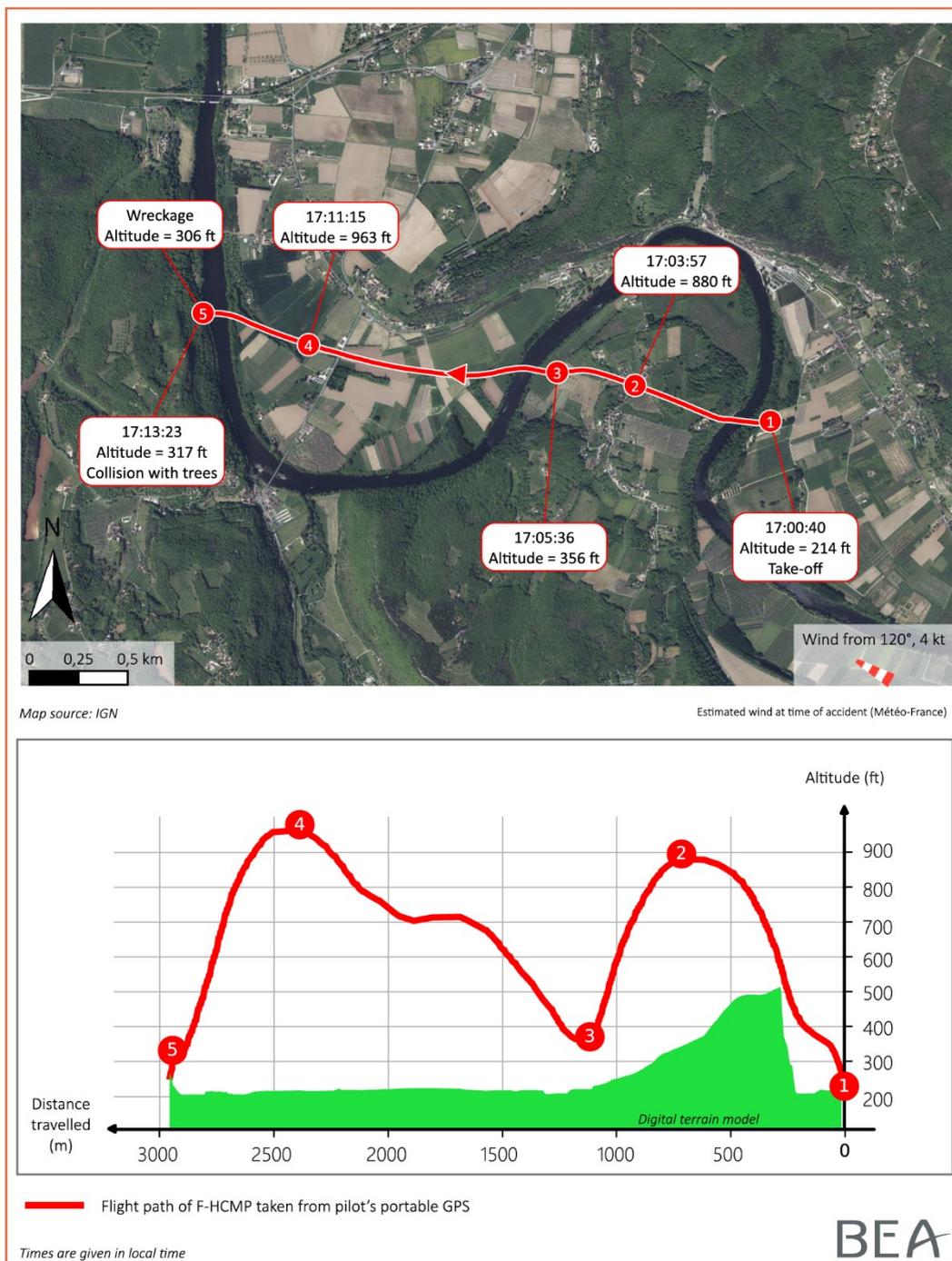


Figure 1. flight path of balloon (source: BEA)

2 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2.1 Meteorological information

Météo-France estimated that the meteorological conditions on the accident site were: wind from 120° of 4 kt with gusts up to 14 kt, visibility greater than 10 km, a few high clouds, temperature 19°C, dew point temperature 1°C, QNH 1020 hPa.

The flight sheet prepared by the operator indicated a south-easterly wind of 13 km/h (i.e. 7 kt), CAVOK, temperature 18 °C.

2.2 Pilot information

The 64-year-old pilot held a balloon pilot license. He had logged around 4,300 ascents.

2.3 Pilot's statement

The pilot stated that the flight had been planned for a few days and that the weather conditions were favourable. After checking the weight of the passengers for the weight sheet and briefing them, he inflated the envelope. The take-off proceeded smoothly.

The easterly wind directed the balloon towards the Marqueyssac cliffs. The pilot specified that the cliffs face east and the sun was to the west. As the balloon was descending, it passed into the shade. The pilot explained that normally, when a balloon passes into the shade, the cold air slows down the descent. He did not notice that the balloon continued to descend quickly and did not take the controls earlier enough. He was busy providing tourist information to the passengers. In hindsight, he thought he had not been sufficiently vigilant, probably due to his experience. At the end of his commentary to the passengers, he realized the balloon had descended too low. He restarted the burners, including the backup burners, but the balloon did not rise quickly enough. The envelope caught on some trees, and the basket came to rest on a bank. The pilot stated that the basket was stable, that he had secured the balloon by following the post-landing procedure, and therefore there was no danger. One of the passengers, a ten-year-old boy, was terrified after the collision with the trees. The pilot decided to evacuate him. As the slope of the cliff was quite steep, he secured himself with the strap of his harness. While descending a very steep slope, he slipped on a pebble and injured his back.

He explained that he was unable to give a further briefing to the passengers before the collision with the trees due to the noise from the burners. He explained that the before flight briefing includes checking the suitability of the passengers' footwear, explaining the onboard equipment, recalling safety instructions, and reminding passengers to refer to the pictograms displayed in the basket. He added that the passengers were all young and healthy, and therefore he had not dwelt on the safety demonstrations.

2.4 Overflight height

Commission implementing regulation (EU) No 923/2012 of 26 September 2012 laying down the common rules of the air and operational provisions regarding services and procedures in air navigation, known as SERA, states in paragraph SERA.5005 concerning visual flight rules that, outside congested areas of cities, towns or settlements or over an open-air assembly of persons, balloons may fly below the minimum height of 150 m (500 ft) provided they do not pose a risk to persons or property on the surface and maintain a distance of at least 150 m from any person, vehicle, surface vessel and any artificial obstacle.

The operator's operations manual (OM) reiterates these rules and specifies that, as an exception, flight at a very low height is authorized when necessary, particularly during approach and landing manoeuvres.

3 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are solely based on the information which came to the knowledge of the BEA during the investigation.

Scenario

While flying below the minimum height stipulated by the SERA regulations (which can be waived for balloons under certain conditions), the pilot, busy providing tourist information to the passengers, did not notice that the balloon was still descending and did not take the controls earlier enough. The balloon's inertia, when the pilot restarted all the burners, meant that the collision with the trees could not be avoided.

The pilot was injured while evacuating a passenger on the inhospitable landing site.

Contributing factors

The following factors may have contributed to the collision with the trees:

- the pilot's decision to fly at a very low height with a cliff ahead of him;
- the pilot's overconfidence, due to his experience, leading to reduced vigilance.

Safety lessons

Balloon pilots are exempt from the minimum flight height stipulated by the SERA regulations, so that they can carry out flights in optimal aerological conditions. However, it must be borne in mind that flying at low height reduces safety margins and increases the risk of collisions with obstacles. Therefore, during this type of flight, when excessive attention is given to the passengers, this can significantly compromise flight safety.

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