



Accident to the PIPER PA23-250
registered **N14040**
on Thursday 26 December 2024
at Saint-Barthélemy airport

Time	Around 12:50 ¹
Operator	Private
Type of flight	Cross country
Persons on board	Pilot
Consequences and damage	Aeroplane substantially damaged

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.

**Landing with landing gear retracted, runway veer-off,
collision with a sign**

1 HISTORY OF THE FLIGHT

Note: the following information is primarily based on statements, radio-communication information provided by the airport operator and video footage.

The pilot of the PA23 contacted the AFIS² officer at Saint-Barthélemy airport to report that he was abeam COCO³, returning from F. D. Roosevelt airport (Caribbean Netherlands) situated in the southwest. He planned to land on runway 28.

The pilot of a Britten-Norman BN2 Islander, on approach to runway 10 and already on the frequency, asked him to specify his exact position. The pilot of the PA23 replied that he was on the left-hand base leg for runway 28. The pilot of the BN2 indicated that he was established on final for runway 10 and asked about the sequencing for landing. The pilot of the PA23 replied that he would like to be number one for landing, which the pilot of the BN2 agreed to.

When the PA23 was on the base leg for runway 28, the AFIS officer noticed smoke continuously coming from the left-hand engine and reported this to the pilot.

During the flare, the AFIS officer noticed that the landing gear of the PA23 was not extended and warned the pilot. He anticipated that the runway would be blocked and immediately informed the pilot of the BN2.

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](#).

³ See paragraph 2.4 Aerodrome information, **Figure 2**.

The aeroplane touched down on its underside and slid along the runway. It came to a stop after colliding with the taxiway D sign. The AFIS officer activated the emergency services. The pilot of the BN2 carried out a go-around, and seeing that the aeroplane had come to a stop, in his opinion, "just outside the runway safety area," asked if he could still land. The AFIS officer informed all traffic of the runway closure.

2 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2.1 Meteorological information

The weather information for the airport at the time of the accident indicated wind from 080° of 11 kt, a QNH of 1014 hPa and a temperature of 31°C.

The pilot had noted, when preparing the flight (via the ForeFlight application), wind from 040° of 7 kt.

2.2 Pilot information

The 60-year-old pilot held a commercial pilot licence with the instrument multi-engine rating. At the time of the accident, he had logged approximately 6,000 flight hours, including around 1,280 hours on type. He had totalled 7 flight hours including 3 hours on type in the previous 30 days.

He stated that he chose to land on runway 28 rather than on runway 10 because the wind he had noted, less than 8 kt⁴, made this possible. He explained that following the exchange with the pilot of the BN2, while on the left-hand base leg for runway 28, he felt some pressure to land as quickly as possible in order to allow this aeroplane to land. He indicated that he then completed his before landing checklist without noting anything in particular.

On short final, the AFIS officer informed him of smoke coming from the left-hand engine. He was concerned by this information for the remainder of the approach.

Upon reaching the threshold and touchdown, he heard the AFIS officer inform him that the landing gear was not extended. He landed on the aeroplane's underside, slid along the runway, and came to a stop against the Delta taxiway sign in the grass. He did not hear any warnings or see that the landing gear locked indicators were not illuminated.

Although he was convinced he had extended the landing gear, he later thought that he may have missed this step. He also indicated that the smoke from the left-hand engine was due to an oil leak.

2.3 Site and wreckage information

Given the circumstances, the BEA did not go to the accident site and did not conduct an examination of the PA23. The taxiway D sign was embedded in the aeroplane's wing, level with the right-hand engine. The left-hand engine showed signs of an oil leak, including a visible oil run on the exhaust pipe.

⁴ The Piper PA23 flight manual does not specify a tailwind limitation for landing.



Figure 1: final position of PA23 in runway safety area (source: GTA)

2.4 Aerodrome information

Saint-Barthélemy airport is a restricted-use airport with a paved runway 10/28, measuring 646 m long and 18 m wide. It is reserved for aircraft with appropriate characteristics and performance and for authorized pilots. This use restriction is notably due to the airport's geographical specificities: there is high ground to the north, west and south-east of the airport, and to the east, the runway is limited by the coast.

Therefore, take-offs from runway 28 are prohibited due to the terrain at the end of the runway, and for the same reason, according to the AIP, "*Go around QFU 283° approach restricted to a right turn before reaching decision point abeam "Eden Rock" (southern tip of land).*"

Runway 10 is the preferred runway.

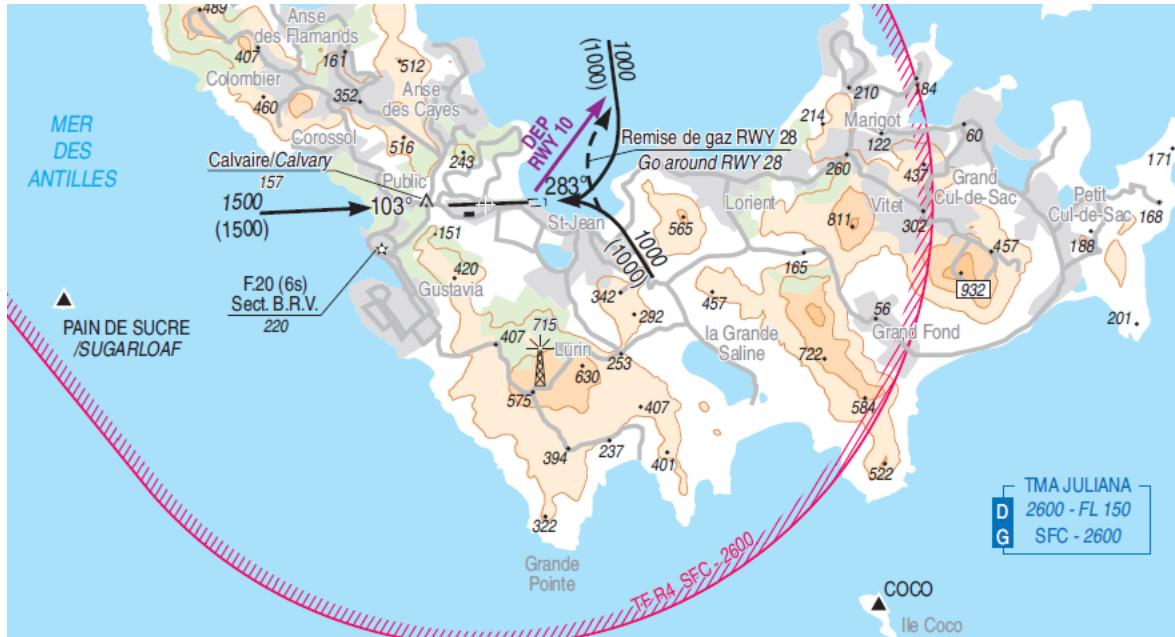


Figure 2: airport circuit and published go-around path for runway 28 (source: SIA)

The airport is not controlled, and flight information and alert services are provided by AFIS officers. AFIS officers can only provide information about the traffic they are aware of. They do not give instructions, clearances, or prohibitions to pilots. Pilots are therefore responsible for maintaining their separation from other traffic, based on the information provided by the AFIS officers.

3 CONCLUSIONS

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

Scenario

The pilot of the PA23, flying in from F. D. Roosevelt airport (Caribbean Netherlands), contacted the AFIS officer at Saint-Barthélemy airport when he was at reporting point COCO in order to join the circuit for runway 28. A pilot of a Britten-Norman BN2 was at this time, on final approach for reciprocal runway 10. After several exchanges, the pilot of the BN2 left the priority for landing to the PA23.

When the PA23 was in the left-hand base leg, the AFIS officer saw continuous smoke escaping from the left-hand engine and informed the pilot of this. The latter continued his approach, concentrated on the situation of the engine and under pressure from the impending landing of the BN2 in the opposite direction.

During the flare, the AFIS officer noticed that the landing gear was not extended and informed the pilot. Given the terrain at Saint-Barthélemy, a go-around on runway 28 was not possible.

The aeroplane touched down with the landing gear retracted, slid along the runway and came to a halt after colliding with the taxiway D sign. The pilot was uninjured.

In a context where the pilots are responsible for ensuring separation with other traffic in the vicinity of an airport which has an AFIS service, the pilot's desire to land first on a reciprocal runway when another aeroplane was already on final in the opposite direction, generated an accumulation of constraints. These constraints may have led the pilot to rush certain critical actions during the approach phase, to the detriment of fully managing the aircraft's configuration before landing.

Contributing factors

The following factors may have contributed to the pilot landing with the gear retracted:

- the pilot not detecting that the landing gear had not extend although he indicated that he had carried out the approach checklist;
- the pilot's increased concentration on a perceived anomaly (smoke from left-hand engine) which may have diverted his attention from certain critical tasks during the approach phase;
- the perception of a time constraint due to the simultaneous arrival of other traffic on the opposite approach, which may have limited the pilot's ability to fully utilize his cognitive resources to manage the approach effectively;
- the impossibility of a go-around on short final for runway 28 due to the surrounding terrain.

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