

[News story: AAIB Special Bulletin S1/2019 published: 25 February 2019](#)

The AAIB has published a [Special Bulletin](#) on the loss of Piper Malibu aircraft N264DB. The Special Bulletin includes validated factual information gathered in the early stages of our investigation. It also explains the aircraft permissions and pilot licencing requirements relevant to a US-registered aircraft carrying out a cross-border flight within Europe with a passenger on board.

We have gathered evidence from radar, weather reports, video of the aircraft on the seabed and interviews with witnesses. Some operational aspects are yet to be determined, such as the validity of the pilot's licence and ratings.

Our priority now is to go through the evidence, much of which is extensive and complex, so we can piece together what happened between the aircraft being lost from radar and it coming to rest on the sea bed. This will help us understand the potential causes of the accident.

We continue to speak to the families of the pilot and passenger to keep them updated on the progress of our investigation. If any urgent safety issues arise during our investigation, we will issue a further Special Bulletin. When our investigation has concluded, we will publish a final report.

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Update 4: 7 February 2019

Following extensive visual examination of the accident site using the remotely operated vehicle (ROV), it was decided to attempt recovery operations.

In challenging conditions, the AAIB and its specialist contractors successfully recovered the body previously seen amidst the wreckage. The operation was carried out in as dignified a way as possible and the families were kept informed of progress.

Unfortunately, attempts to recover the aircraft wreckage were unsuccessful before poor weather conditions forced us to return the ROV to the ship. The weather forecast is poor for the foreseeable future and so the difficult decision was taken to bring the overall operation to a close. The body is currently being taken to Portland to be passed into the care of the Dorset Coroner.

Although it was not possible to recover the aircraft, the extensive video record captured by the ROV is expected to provide valuable evidence for our safety investigation.

We expect our next update to be an interim report, which we intend to publish within one month of the accident occurring.

Update 3: 4 February 2019

Having identified a priority search area last week, the AAIB agreed a search strategy with Blue Water Recoveries Ltd to maximise the chance of locating the aircraft wreckage.

The AAIB commissioned specialist vessel Geo Ocean III and Blue Water Recoveries Ltd commissioned FPV Morven and the search area was divided between the vessels. Both vessels began their search on the morning of Sunday 3 February.

Early in the search, the Morven identified an object of interest on the seabed using its side-scan sonar equipment. It cleared the immediate area for the Geo Ocean III to use its underwater remotely operated vehicle (ROV) to survey the area of the seabed in which the object was located. Based on analysis of ROV video footage, the AAIB investigators on board the vessel concluded that the object is wreckage from the missing Piper Malibu aircraft, registration N264DB.

The ROV carried out a further search of the area overnight, but did not identify any additional pieces of wreckage.

Tragically, in video footage from the ROV, one occupant is visible amidst the wreckage. The AAIB is now considering the next steps, in consultation with the families of the pilot and passenger, and the police.

The image shows the rear left side of the fuselage including part of the aircraft registration.

We intend to publish an interim report within one month of the accident occurring.

Update 2: Wednesday 30 January 2019

Since we opened our safety investigation on Tuesday 23 January, we have been gathering evidence such as flight, aircraft and personnel records, and have been analysing radar data and air traffic tapes. We have been working closely with other international authorities and have kept the families of those involved updated on our progress.

On the morning of Monday 28 January, we were advised by the Bureau d'Enquêtes & d'Analyses (BEA), the French safety investigation authority, that part of a seat cushion had been found on a beach near Surtainville on the Cotentin Peninsula. A second cushion was found in the same area later that day. From a preliminary examination we have concluded that it is likely that the cushions are from the missing aircraft.

From the moment we were notified of the missing aircraft, we have been looking at the feasibility of conducting an underwater seabed search for

aircraft wreckage. Based on a detailed assessment of the flight path and last known radar position, we have now identified a priority search area of approximately four square nautical miles. Through the Ministry of Defence's Salvage and Marine Operations (SALMO) Project Team, we have commissioned a specialist survey vessel to carry out an underwater survey of the seabed to try to locate and identify possible aircraft wreckage.

Due to the weather and sea conditions, we currently expect our underwater seabed search to start at the end of this weekend and to take up to three days. Side-scan sonar equipment will be used to try to locate the wreckage on the seabed. If the wreckage is found, a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) will be used to visually examine the wreckage.

We are aware that a privately operated search is also being conducted in the area, and we are liaising closely with those involved to maximise the chance of locating any wreckage and ensure a safe search operation.

Our remit is to undertake safety investigations to establish the cause of accidents. We do not apportion blame or liability.

Update 1: Wednesday 23 January 2019

On Monday night, a US-registered Piper PA-46-310P Malibu aircraft (registration N264DB) was lost from radar north of Guernsey. The aircraft was en route from Nantes, France to Cardiff, United Kingdom, with one pilot and one passenger on board.

In accordance with international protocols, the AAIB is investigating the loss of the aircraft. Since Tuesday morning, we have been working closely with international authorities including the US National Transportation Safety Board, the Bureau d'Enquêtes & d'Analyses (BEA) in France and the Junta de Investigación de Accidentes de Aviación Civil (JIACC) in Argentina.

We will be gathering all the available evidence to conduct a thorough investigation. However, if the aircraft is not found it is likely to limit the scope of the investigation.