



Aviation

Home > Investigations > Aviation Investigation (ERA26FA309)

ERA26FA309

What Happened

On August 19, 2026, at 1852 eastern daylight time, a Bell Helicopter Textron Canada 407, N873ST, and a Cessna 150H airplane, N23330, collided in flight near Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The two commercial pilots onboard the helicopter were seriously injured, and the helicopter was substantially damaged. The commercial pilot on board the airplane was fatally injured and the airplane was destroyed. The helicopter was operated by the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) as a public aircraft. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 personal flight.

According to the PSP, the helicopter crew departed from Capital City Airport (CXY), Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and flew to Carlisle Airport (N94), Carlisle, Pennsylvania, about 15 nautical miles away, to conduct flight instruction training exercises at the airport. ADS-B flight track data obtained from the FAA revealed the helicopter crew flew a straight in approach to runway 28 at N94 and crossed about 50 ft above the runway threshold at 1851. The helicopter then slowly descended and transitioned into a hover taxi about 1,800 ft down the 4,008-ft-long runway before exiting the paved surface to the north over a grass-covered field.

While the helicopter was approaching the airport, ADS-B data showed that the airplane crossed over the airport to the northeast, then made left turns to enter a left crosswind leg to downwind leg of the traffic pattern for runway 28 (figure 1). A witness stated that he heard the airport Common Traffic Advisory Frequency (CTAF) communications between the helicopter flight crew and the airplane pilot; one of the helicopter pilots told the airplane pilot to extend his downwind. The airplane pilot acknowledged the communication.

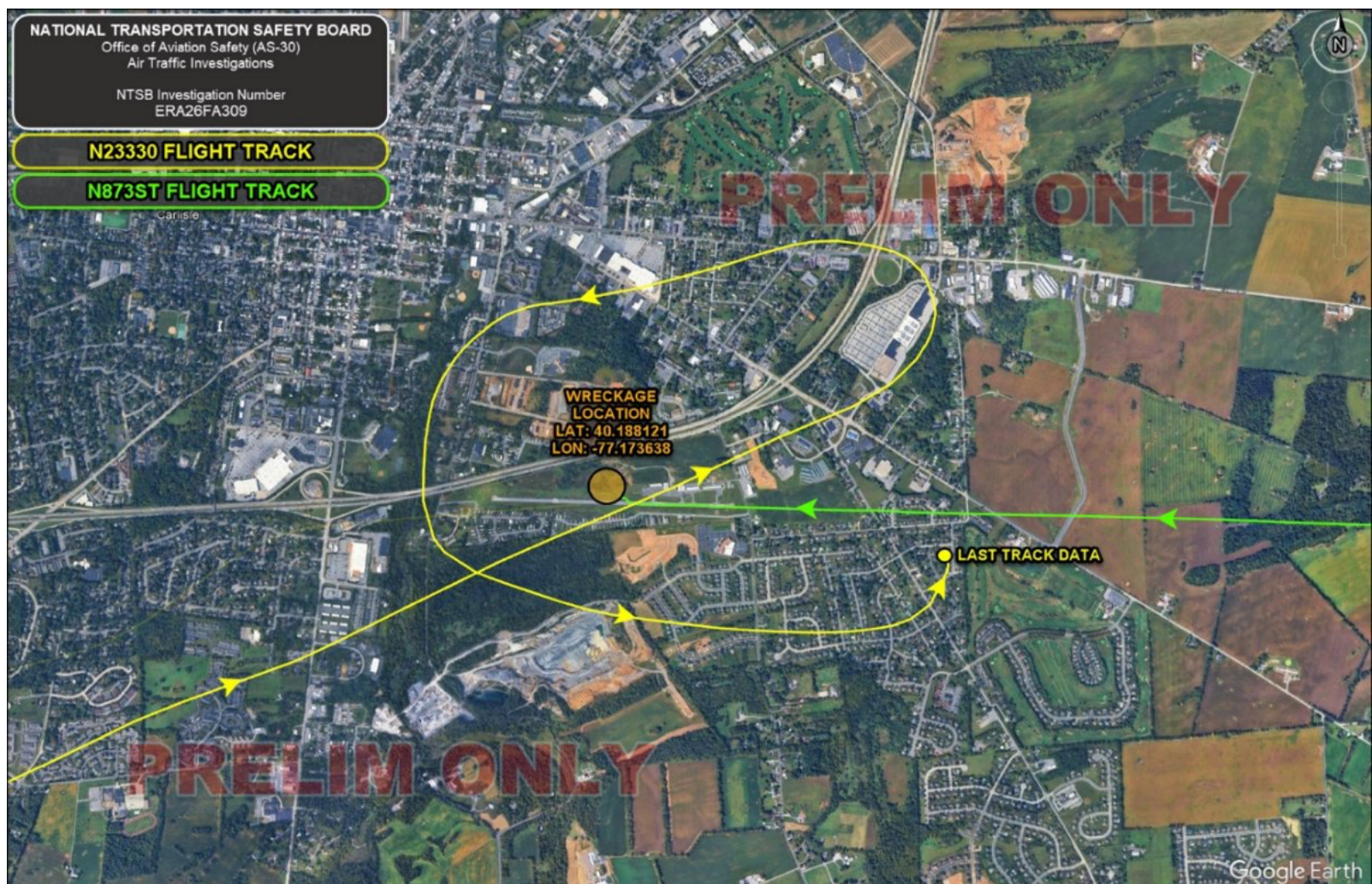


Figure 1 – ADS-B flight track data for the helicopter (green) and airplane (yellow) during their approaches to the airport.

During a postaccident interview, the flight instructor onboard the helicopter stated that they saw the airplane on the helicopter's Traffic Alert and Collision Avoidance System first, then saw the airplane while it was on the crosswind leg of the airport traffic pattern. The flight instructor then made a radio call stating the helicopter's position on final approach. The airplane pilot asked if they wanted him to extend his downwind, and the flight instructor responded, “yes, extend your downwind.” The airplane pilot acknowledged and stated that he was number two for landing.

Airport surveillance video combined with ADS-B flight track data showed that the pilot turned onto the left base leg of the traffic pattern about 2,500 ft from the runway 28 threshold and continued his approach. Shortly after the pilot initiated the left turn onto base leg, ADS-B track data was lost. Airport surveillance video captured the remainder of the flight.

There were three security cameras on the airport that captured the aircraft immediately before and during (figure 2) the approach of both aircraft. Timestamped airport security camera footage showed the helicopter on short final approach to runway 28. The helicopter crossed over the runway threshold while the airplane was on the left base leg. About 30 seconds later, the airplane crossed over the threshold as the helicopter was still over the runway. The airplane's wings rocked to the left and right as the airplane flew low over the runway surface, and it appeared to make several lateral and vertical movements as it flew over the runway with the flaps extended. The airplane did not touch down on the runway. As the airplane approached the helicopter, the helicopter hovered off the runway and transitioned over the grass field, with its nose still oriented toward the departure end of runway 28 and parallel to the runway. The helicopter pilots stated that due to the helicopter's position and orientation relative to the runway, they were unable to observe the approaching airplane, which was behind them.

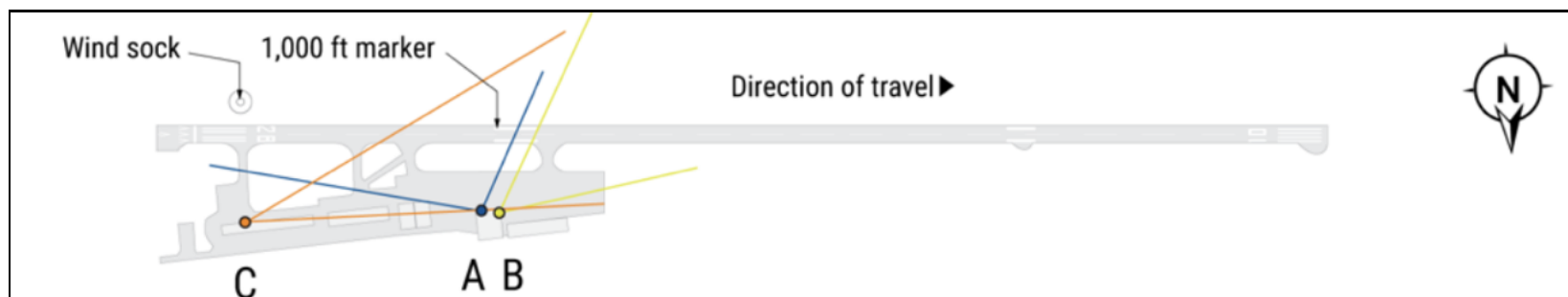


Figure 2: Airport security camera locations labeled A, B, and C, showing their orientation relative to the airplane and helicopter's direction of travel down runway 28.

The airplane continued to fly along the runway with the wings rocking before it pitched up and began climbing. After the airplane reached the apex of its climb, about 1 1/2 wingspans above the runway, the right wing dropped and the airplane immediately turned right and descended towards the northwest. The helicopter was in a hover about 50 ft north of the runway when the approaching airplane's wings rolled level, before it rapidly pitched up, and collided with the rear of the helicopter, striking the tail rotor and main rotor blades. About 8 seconds elapsed from the time the helicopter exited the runway surface until the collision.

The following four still video images (figure 3) from two of the airport security cameras show the time, locations, orientation of the aircraft and their relative position to each other.

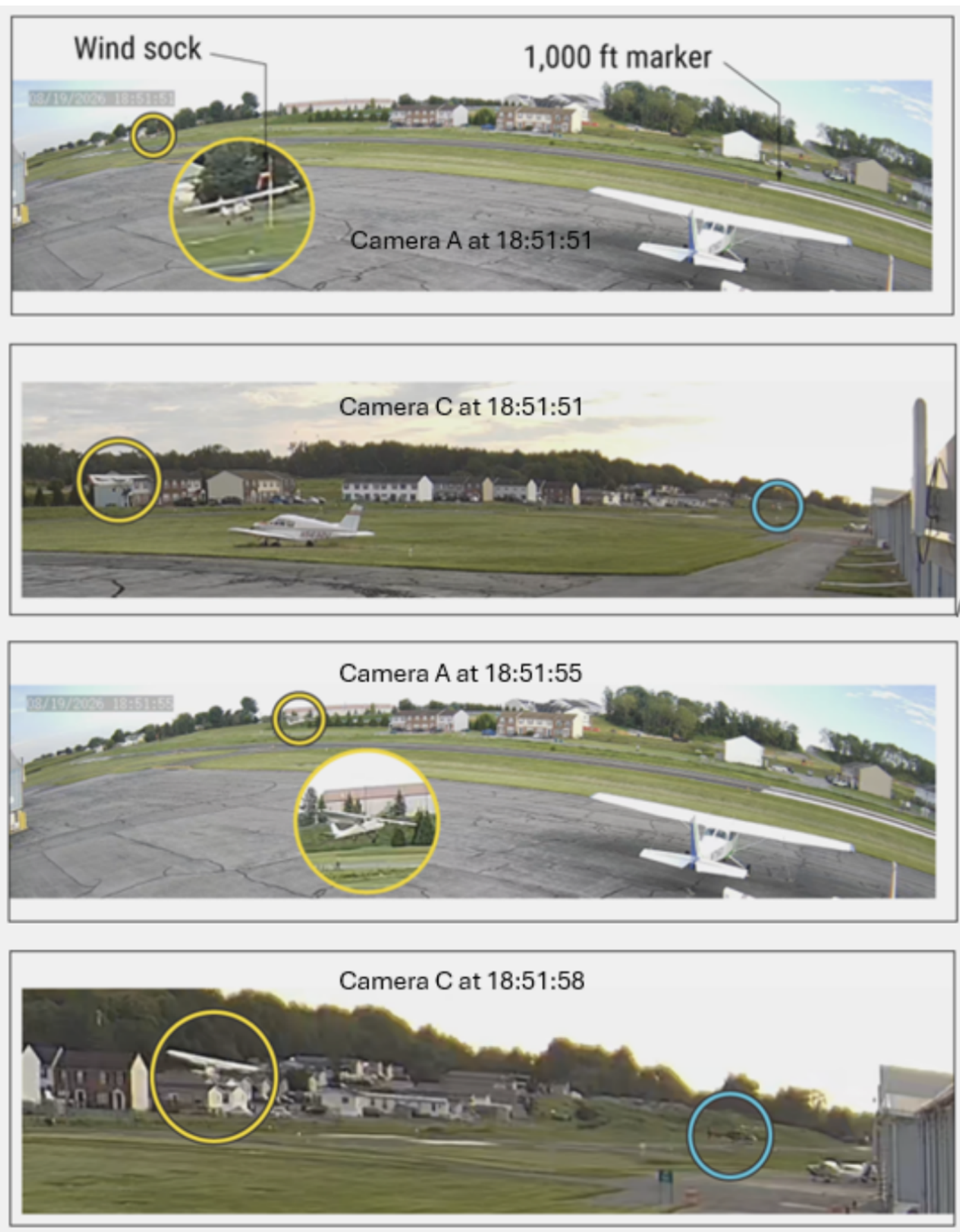


Figure 3 Four still video images from cameras A and C showing the airplane and helicopter as they maneuvered in the vicinity of the runway. The airplane is circled in yellow, and the helicopter is circled in blue.

Following the collision, the helicopter's main rotor blades and tail boom separated. The main wreckage of the helicopter, consisting of the entirety of the fuselage, cockpit, engine, and transmission remained relatively intact and fell onto its left side before coming to rest.

During the collision, the airplane separated into four major sections; the engine compartment, wings, empennage, and lower fuselage were spread over a distance of about 250 ft along a magnetic heading of about 330°. Additional parts of the airplane were significantly fragmented and spread throughout the area in a fanlike pattern.

All major portions of the helicopter and the airplane were accounted for at the accident site and recovered. Damage signatures to both aircraft including paint transfer marks, and cuts to the fuselages were indicative of a collision. Postaccident examination of both aircraft revealed no evidence of any preimpact mechanical malfunctions or failures that would have precluded normal operation. During the onsite examination of the airplane, the flaps actuators were observed to be in the retracted position.

The wreckage of both aircraft, along with avionics capable of recording digital data were recovered and retained for further examination.

History of Flight

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Pilot Information

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Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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Airport Information

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Wreckage and Impact Information

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Administrative Information

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Investigation Details

Status

Ongoing

Investigation ID

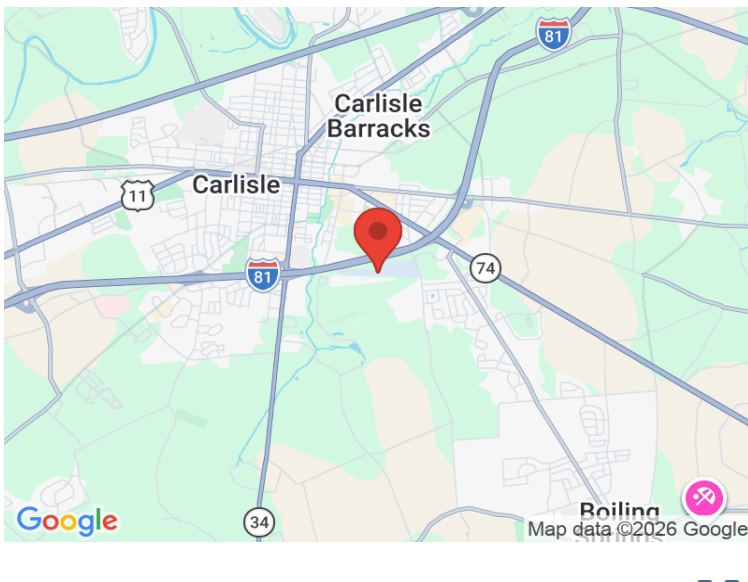
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Event Date

8/19/2026

Location

Carlisle, Pennsylvania, United States



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