National Transportation Safety Board
Aviation Accident Preliminary Report

Location:	Swansboro, NC	**Accident Number:**	ERA20LA134
Date & Time:	03/23/2020, 2103 EDT	**Registration:**	N899ZZ
Aircraft:	Maule MT-7	**Injuries:**	2 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

On March 23, 2020, at 2103 eastern daylight time, a Maule MT-7-235 airplane, N899ZZ, was destroyed when it was involved in an accident in the Atlantic Ocean near Swansboro, North Carolina. The pilot and the passenger were presumed fatally injured. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* (*CFR*) Part 91 personal flight.

The pilot held a private pilot certificate for single-engine airplanes with an instrument rating. According to fuel receipts and the manager of the Orangeburg Municipal Airport (OGB), Orangeburg, South Carolina, the airplane and pilot were based at the OGB airport, and at 1820 the pilot added about 40 gallons of 100-low lead fuel to the accident airplane.

Preliminary radar data provided by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) revealed that the pilot departed OGB at 1835, and subsequently landed at Mount Pleasant Regional Airport-Faison Field (LRO), Mount Pleasant, South Carolina at 1905. The pilot then filed an instrument flight rules flight plan and departed to Michael J. Smith Field Airport (MRH), Beaufort, North Carolina, at 1950. The pilot was in contact with air traffic control (ATC) after he departed LRO and radar data showed that the airplane climbed to 5,000 ft mean sea level (msl) and proceeded directly on course to MRH shortly after takeoff.

The route of flight was primarily over the Atlantic Ocean, and the course and altitude showed little deviation until about 2102, when the flight track showed a right turn to the southeast. The airplane continued in a rapidly descending right turning spiral until radar contact was lost. The last radar point at 2103:31 showed the airplane flying at 108 knots groundspeed, headed 131°, at 925 ft msl at latitude 34.43809891°, longitude -77.05209351°.

Review of preliminary ATC communications provided by the Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, Cherry Point, North Carolina, revealed that the pilot's communications were routine until radar contact was lost. About 2048, the pilot checked in with Cherry Point ATC at 5,000 ft, reported he had the weather at MRH and requested the RNAV 26 instrument approach procedure. The pilot was told to expect the RNAV approach, and about 2050, the pilot was instructed to fly direct to CIGOR, which was a GPS waypoint on the RNAV 26 approach. The pilot acknowledged the instructions and no further communications were received from the

pilot; ATC attempted to reach the pilot several times after radar contact was lost, but no response was received.

According to the U.S. Coast Guard mission's coordinator, small debris fragments from the airplane were located at 2335, about 1.55 nm southeast of the last radar point at a position of latitude 34.416924°, longitude -77.034092° (see figure 1). The pilot and passenger were not located.

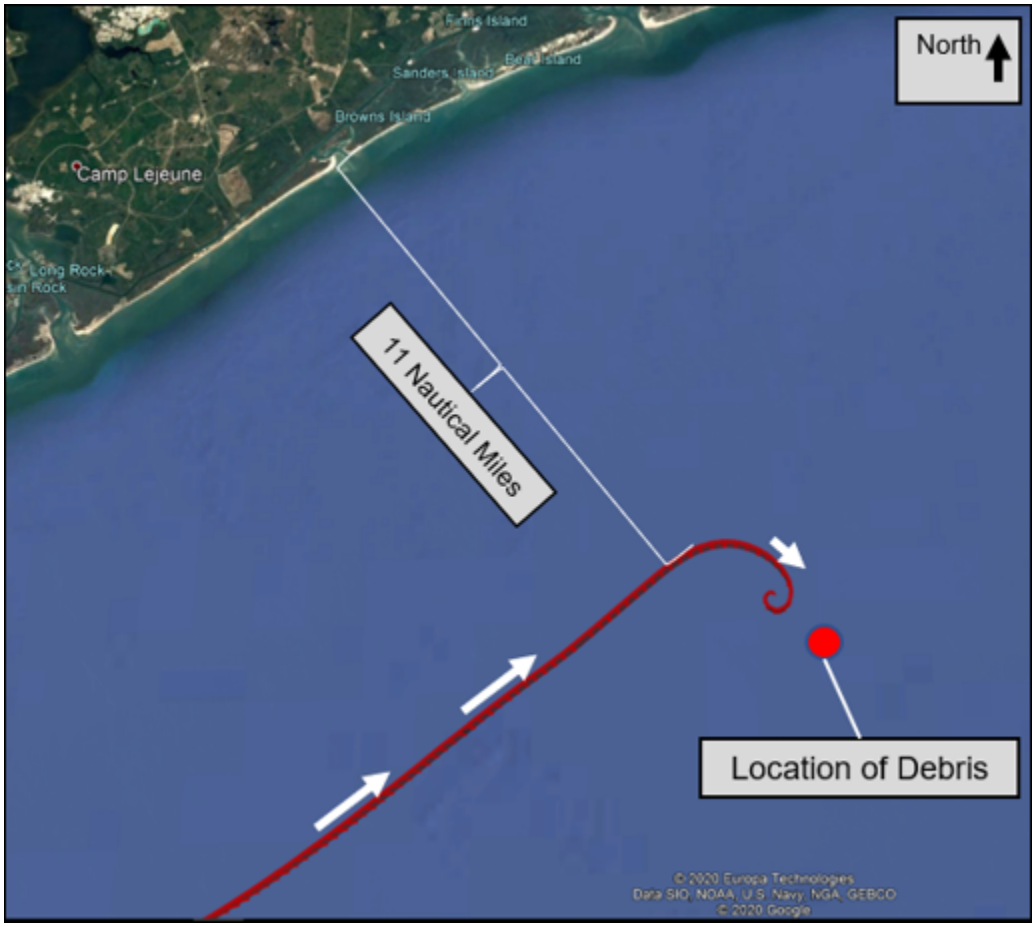

Figure 1: The airplane's final 3-minutes of flight track data (red line) and location of debris (white arrows show the airplane's direction of travel).

According to FAA airman records, the pilot completed the FAA basic medical certification on April 15, 2019. The pilot's most recent third-class FAA medical certificate was issued on September 7, 2016, where the pilot reported he had accumulated 179 hours of total flight time.

According to FAA airworthiness records, the 4-seat, single-engine, high-wing airplane was powered by a Lycoming IO-540-W1A5 235-horsepower engine. The most recent annual inspection was completed on August 29, 2019.

The 2058 recorded weather observation at MRH (the pilots destination), located about 25 miles northeast of the airplane's last known position, included an overcast ceiling at 1,800 ft

above ground level (agl), visibility 10 statute miles, wind 240° at 6 knots, temperature was 16° C, and dew point was 13° C.

According to the flight crew of the U.S. Coast Guard aircraft that supported the search and rescue, about 2345 near the debris, they observed an overcast ceiling of 1,400 ft, visibility 10 miles, wind 290° at 10 knots, and a wave height of 4 ft.

As of this publication, no major components of the airplane have been located.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Maule	**Registration:**	N899ZZ
Model/Series:	MT-7 235	**Aircraft Category:**	Airplane
Amateur Built:	No		
Operator:	Carolina Training & Safety LLC.	**Operating Certificate(s) Held:**	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument Conditions	**Condition of Light:**	Night/Dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	NJM, 21 ft msl	**Observation Time:**	2057 EDT
Distance from Accident Site:	15 Nautical Miles	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	16°C / 13°C
Lowest Cloud Condition:		**Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:**	4 knots / , 220°
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 1700 ft agl	**Visibility:**	10 Miles
Altimeter Setting:	30.12 inches Hg	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	IFR
Departure Point:	Mount Pleasant, SC (LRO)	**Destination:**	Beaufort, NC (MRH)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	**Aircraft Damage:**	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	1 Fatal	**Aircraft Fire:**	Unknown
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	Unknown
Total Injuries:	2 Fatal	**Latitude, Longitude:**	34.416944, -77.034167

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Adam M Gerhardt
Additional Participating Persons:	Corey Paczkowski; FAA/ FSDO; Greensboro, NC
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.