



Ref: 7655

SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY**ACCIDENT REPORT – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Aircraft Registration	ZS-RPD	Date of Accident	7 May 2003	Time of Accident	1040Z
Type of Aircraft	EUROCOPTER AS 350-B3		Type of Operation		Crime Prevention (SAPS)
Pilot-in-command Licence Type	Commercial	Age	27	Licence Valid	Yes
Pilot-in-command Flying Experience	Total Flying Hours	1 834.4		Hours on Type	372.6
Last point of departure	Weenen				
Next point of intended landing	Weenen				
Location of the accident site with reference to easily defined geographical points (GPS readings if possible)					
Wonder Valley in Drakensberg Mountains (GPS position: 29° 05.347' South 029° 31.346' East)					
Meteorological Information	Fine: No Wind, Temperature between 22-25°C, CAVOK				
Number of people on board	2 + 3	No. of people injured	4	No. of people killed	Nil
Synopsis	<p>During the third day of a crime prevention operation in the lower Drakenberg area, which basically involved stock theft operations, the pilot accompanied by a crew member and three passengers (policemen) orbited a kraal in the Wonder Valley area, when they noted a “dagga” marijuana field from the air while flying at a speed of approximately 50kts and a height of 50-100 feet AGL (above ground level).</p> <p>A person was observed running from the field with two bags, suspected to be filled with marijuana. A right turn was executed to keep the suspect visual. After one orbit to the right the pilot felt the aircraft descending, he then rolled level, with the aircraft facing down a ridge. Collective pitch was increased to a value somewhere in the yellow arc on the FLI (First Limit Indicator).</p> <p>The aircraft continued to descend, and the pilot increased the collective pitch lever but the aircraft impacted the ground (maize field) in a level attitude on both skids. During the forward motion of the aircraft the left skid gear assembly dug into the ground and the aircraft rolled over forward and to the left and came to a rest on its left in a ditch.</p> <p>The engine was still running at that stage and the pilot managed to shut it down by closing the fuel shut off lever. The three passengers disembarked on the left-hand side of the aircraft. After switching all the electrical switches off, the pilot and crew member managed to disembark from the wreckage on the left-hand side down into the ditch.</p>				
Probable Cause					
<p>During an attempt by the pilot to keep a suspect visual he executed a right turn followed by a deceleration of the aircraft with the intention to execute a landing in order to arrest the suspect. Due to diverted attention by the pilot during the subsequent manoeuvre he most probably allowed the main rotor RPM to decay to as low as 320 rpm (information that was obtained from DECU download). The pilot noted the high rate of descent once he levelled the aircraft and attempted to recover by applying collective pitch, but due to insufficient height available the aircraft continued to descend at a substantial rate until it impacted with terrain in a level attitude, followed by a subsequent roll-over.</p>					