



## Accident to the SPORTINE AVIACIJA – LAK17 - A registered F-CJLL

on 17 April 2021

at Oloron-Herrère (Pyrénées-Atlantiques)

<sup>(1)</sup> Except where  
otherwise indicated,  
times in this  
report are local.

<b>Time</b>	16:57 <sup>(1)</sup>
<b>Operator</b>	Centre école de vol à voile du Haut Béarn
<b>Type of flight</b>	Local
<b>Persons on board</b>	Pilot
<b>Consequences and damage</b>	Glider 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.

## Confusion between controls, loss of control in turn before landing, collision with vegetation

### 1 - HISTORY OF THE FLIGHT

*Note: the following information is principally based on statements and FLARM data from the aircraft.*

The pilot took off at 13:40 for a local flight. After around three hours and fifteen minutes of flight, he announced that he was in the downwind leg for runway 07. An instructor who was flying in another glider and wanted to use runway 25 for an exercise with his student, asked him to make a short landing on right runway 07.

The pilot of F-CJLL started the final approach to right runway 07, with a ground speed of approximately 130 km/h<sup>(2)</sup> (see [Figure 1](#), point ①). He flew over the runway in descent reaching a minimum height of 18 m (see [Figure 1](#), point ②) and made a U-turn at the end of runway 07 (see [Figure 1](#), point ③). He flew over the runway again facing west. In the middle of the runway, the ground speed was approximately 130 km/h with a minimum height of 7 m (see [Figure 1](#), point ④). Upon reaching the end of runway 25, he attempted another U-turn to align with the centreline of runway 07. During this last turn, he lost control of the glider which hit some trees.

The pilot evacuated the glider without difficulty.

<sup>(2)</sup> The final approach speed recommended in the flight manual is 90 km/h. There was a crosswind during the runway manoeuvres (see para. 2.3).

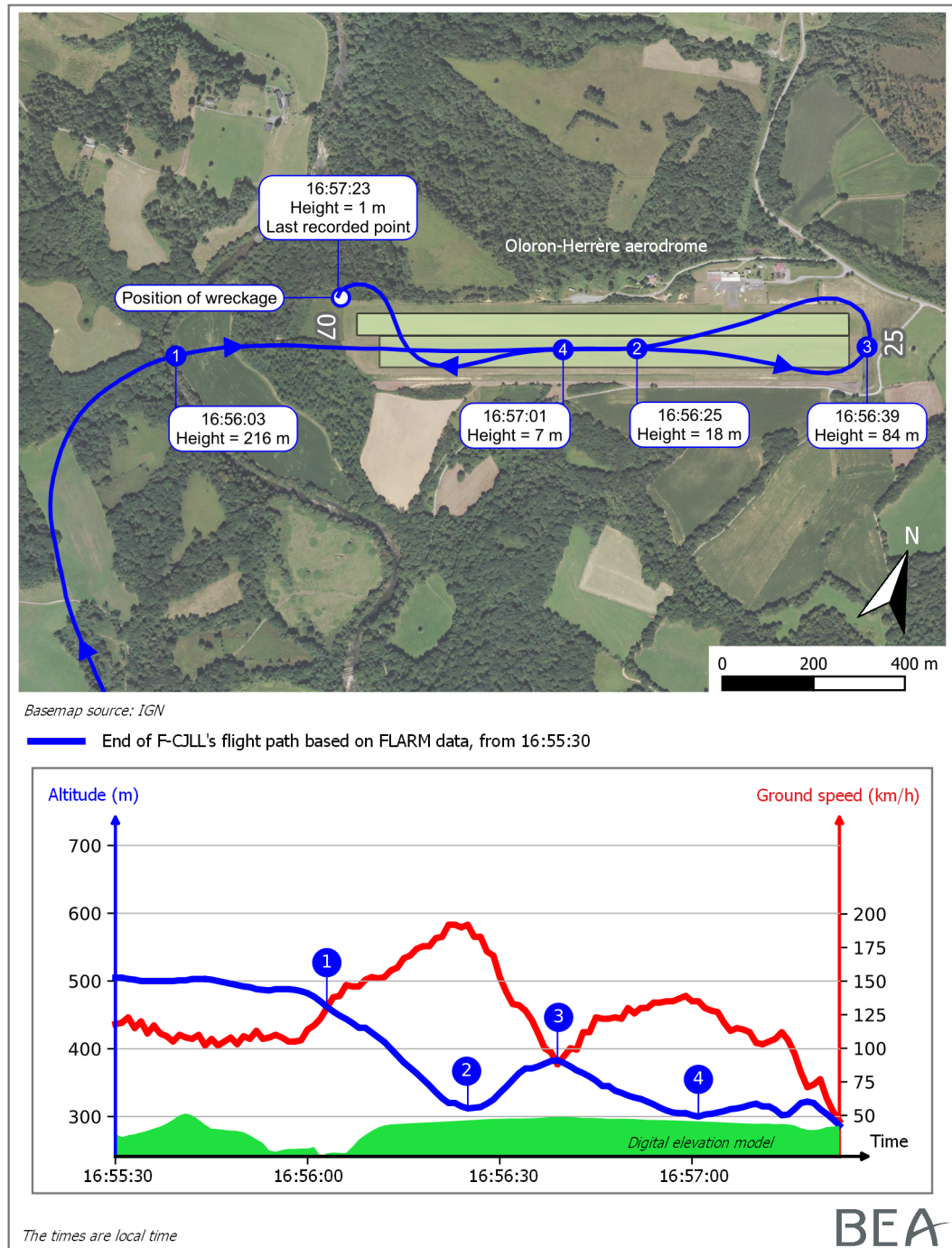


Figure 1: F-CJLL path

## 2 - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### 2.1 Aerodrome information

Oloron-Herrère aerodrome has two unpaved runways 07-25. The northern runway (1,080 x 50 m) is used by aeroplanes, the southern runway (1,030 x 70 m) by gliders. The aerodrome circuit for gliders is located to the south. The aerodrome users use the A/A frequency.

### 2.2 Pilot experience

The 63-year-old pilot held a glider pilot licence (SPL) issued in 1989. He had logged 850 flight hours, 7 h of which in a LAK17. He had last flown in this glider approximately two

years before. Since the start of 2021, he had performed two flights for a total duration of two hours and fifty-five minutes: one 45-minute check flight with an instructor in a Twin Astir, and one flight in an Astir.

### 2.3 Meteorological information

The weather conditions were favourable for gliding. Uplifts could rise as high as 1,800 m. The conditions estimated at the aerodrome were as follows: wind from 360° of 5 kt, visibility greater than 10 km, scattered cumulus at 6,000 ft, temperature 9°C.

### 2.4 Glider information

The LAK17 is equipped with a speed brake control, the blue handle of which points downwards. It is located on the left side of the cabin. The flight manual states that the control must be pulled to extend the speed brakes and pushed forward to retract and lock them.

The glider is equipped with flaps operated by a grey control, also located on the left side of the cabin, but pointing upwards.



Source: Aérotechnics Grenoble

Figure 2: LAK17 cockpit  
In blue the speed brake control, in grey the flap control

### 2.5 Statements

#### Pilot

The pilot indicated that, at the end of the downwind leg, an instructor made radio contact asking him to make a short landing on runway 07. He added that on final, he estimated the approach path to be steep and was looking for a solution to comply with the request. Upon reaching the runway, considering that he was too high, he pushed on the stick and the speed increased. He then decided to land on runway 25 by limiting the bank angle during the turn. On final to runway 25, he estimated that he was still too high and that the glider's speed was too fast. He turned to the right with a slight bank angle before joining the centreline of runway 07 with a left turn. During this turn at low height, the glider hit the top of the trees.

He believed that on final, he had focused on complying with the request to carry out the short landing. Once on the ground, the pilot noticed that he had been using the flap control instead of the speed brake control as he had thought. He added that he had been under too much mental strain at the time to analyse a situation that he did not understand.

However, he remembered turning with a slight bank angle during the last two turns to limit the load factor.

He did not consider that the flight had caused excessive fatigue prior to the landing phase. He had not briefed on the ergonomics of the LAK17 before the flight.

### **Instructor**

The instructor indicated that he had wanted to carry out a towing incident exercise with his student. He had therefore needed an unoccupied runway. During the towing operation on runway 25, he heard the LAK17 pilot announce that he was in the downwind leg to runway 07. The instructor then decided to perform a runway circuit with a landing on runway 25. He asked the LAK17 pilot to make a short landing on runway 07.

He added that he saw the LAK17 fly over the runway twice before hitting the trees.

He had flown with the accident pilot on a refresher flight at the beginning of the season and considered him to have a good level of flying proficiency.

The instructor specified that it is customary for glider pilots to use both QFUs. QFU 25° is preferred for take-off and instruction. QFU 07° is preferred for landing.

## **3 - CONCLUSIONS**

*The conclusions are solely based on the information which came to the knowledge of the BEA during the investigation. They are not intended to apportion blame or liability.*

### **Scenario**

During the approach, the pilot received a request to make a short landing on runway 07 from an instructor of another glider who wanted to start an exercise with a student. On final, estimating that he was too high, the pilot meant to use the speed brake control to correct the approach path but operated the flap control instead. Not realising his mistake, he flew over the runway to line up on runway 25. On final to runway 25, he noticed that the glider was still too fast and had an approach path that was too steep. He flew over the runway again, trying to limit the bank angles to position himself on final to runway 07. In the final turn, the glider's low energy meant that he was unable to avoid collision with the trees adjacent to the runway.

During his first approach, the pilot did not analyse why he could not follow the usual approach slope. He stayed confused throughout the end of the flight, not realising that he was operating the flap control instead of the speed brake control.

### **Contributing factors**

The following factors may have contributed to the confusion between controls:

- The lack of a before flight briefing to recall to mind the position of the controls in the cabin: the pilot had recently flown other types of glider and had not flown the LAK17 for approximately two years.
- The pressure of trying to comply with the request to carry out a short landing made by an instructor who was performing an exercise in another glider. This instructor had also performed a refresher flight with the accident pilot at the beginning of the season.

## Safety lessons

The use of opposite QFUs is a common practice in gliding. It is often intended to simplify manoeuvres on the ground. The operational constraints that this practice can cause for pilots and the associated consequences are often underestimated.

In 2015, the French Gliding Federation (FFVP) published an article entitled "[La confusion des commandes, comment s'en protéger](#)" (how can pilots prevent themselves from confusing controls?).