

05-23-2003 South Africa – Michael Bradley - LEO PSD Recovery

Michael Bradley

Aged 35, Police diver searching Lesotho Katse Dam for victims of a helicopter crash. Reported as stopping breathing, probable natural causes, but no details.
South African Press Association

<http://www.thediversassociation.com/index.php/sheets>



Crashed helicopter: Search diver dies

<http://iafrica.com/news/sa/239202.htm>

Fri, 23 May 2003

A Bloemfontein-based police diver taking part in the search for the victims of a helicopter crash in Lesotho's Katse Dam was certified dead on arrival at the Bloemfontein Medi-Clinic on Friday afternoon, police said.

Inspector Michael Bradley (35) was certified dead at 2.50pm after being taken to the hospital by helicopter from Maseru where efforts to revive him had failed, Senior Superintendent Mary Martins-Engelbrecht told Sapa.

Bradley, a qualified diver, was based at the Bloemfontein dog unit as a rescue dog handler.

George van der Merwe, spokesperson for the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, said Bradley apparently stopped breathing at a depth of 30 metres.

A doctor at the Maseru Private Hospital, where the diver was flown from the dam, said he showed no signs of life upon arrival and did not respond to resuscitation efforts.

He was then flown to the Medi-Clinic in Bloemfontein.

Van der Merwe said police divers started searching the dam on Friday morning down to depths of 30m to 40m.

A team of four deep sea divers from Durban proceeded with combing the dark water with a camera at 60m, Van der Merwe said.

The divers are searching for a Lesotho Defence Force helicopter which crashed into the dam on Tuesday with five people on board.

The pilot, Lieutenant Lererileng Maloi, and passengers Sethunya Nthako, engineering manager of the Lesotho Highlands Development Agency, are still missing.

The three remaining passengers, a crew who was filming the dam for a German television station, escaped from the sinking helicopter and swam to safety.

Sapa

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Journalists injured in helicopter crash

<http://iafrica.com/news/sa/238216.htm>

20 May 2003

The three German journalists injured in a helicopter crash in Lesotho's Maluti mountains on Tuesday were not in a critical condition, a Bloemfontein hospital spokesperson said.

The spokesperson for the Medi-Clinic, said the Ambulance Air Africa plane that transported them was expected to land on Tuesday afternoon.

The journalists were to be taken from the Tempe airport outside Bloemfontein to the Medi-Clinic after being picked up at the Katse Dam in Lesotho.

The pilot and a Lesotho Highlands Water Project official were still missing at noon on Tuesday after the helicopter crash.

The journalists swam to safety across the Katse Dam.

Sapa

Pilot, Lesotho Water official still missing

<http://iafrica.com/news/sa/238356.htm>

Wed, 21 May 2003

The search for two men, missing after their helicopter crashed into Lesotho's Katse Dam on Tuesday morning, was resumed on Wednesday.

It is feared that the pilot and a senior official of the Lesotho Highlands Development Agency (LHDA) went down with the helicopter when it hit the water between 9am and 10am.

The Katse Dam is the deepest in southern Africa and the wreckage of the Lesotho Defence Force helicopter is lying under 98 metres of water, around 50 metres from the side of the dam near Bokong.

George van der Merwe, spokesperson for TCTA, the South African project authority for the Lesotho highlands water project, said the chances of their having swam to safety and being out of contact were "very slim".

Names will be released later on Wednesday. The men's families have not yet been informed.

Survivors stable

Three survivors, all members of a German film crew, were in a stable condition in a Bloemfontein hospital after receiving treatment.

They swam out of the wreckage to safety, said Van der Merwe.

Quoting hospital sources on Tuesday night, SABC radio news named the survivors as Jan du Toit and Herman Botha, both South Africans, and Dominique van Eisenhart, a German citizen.

Search hampered by water depth

Van der Merwe said the search operation was severely hampered by the depth of the water and sheer cliffs surrounding the dam.

South African police divers left Bloemfontein's Bloemspruit Air Force base at 8am on Wednesday. They are highly-trained divers able to reach depths of 100m. Officials suspect the helicopter wreckage is at that depth.

Senior military personnel from the Lesotho Defence Force and officials from both the LHDA and the Lesotho Highlands Water Commission were also flown to Katse.

Helicopter narrowly missed boat

Van der Merwe said that when the helicopter crashed, it nearly struck a boat whose crew were taking water samples from the dam. The survivors were rescued by the boat crew.

They were stabilised at the Katse Clinic, from where they were flown to Bloemfontein by Ambulance Air Africa.

The trio had completed filming over the Katse Dam and were on their way to the Mohale Dam when the accident happened.

Van der Merwe said it was unclear what caused the helicopter to lose altitude. According to eyewitnesses it was flying low over the water.

Refiloe Tlali, the acting chief executive of the LHDA, said the accident was a major setback for the organisation.

The missing official was a member of its executive management.
Sapa

Hi-tech search for helicopter wreck

<http://iafrica.com/news/sa/238895.htm>

Fri, 23 May 2003

Advanced technology is being employed in the search for the sunken helicopter which crashed into Lesotho's Katse Dam this week with five people on board.

George van der Merwe, a spokesperson for the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, said on Thursday that deep sea divers spent the whole day scanning the area with sonar equipment.

Due to the depth and lack of visibility in the water at the site of the accident, they had to determine the exact location of the wreckage before diving down.

"In the darkness one can miss the wreckage while walking (sic) right past it," Van der Merwe said.

The helicopter is lying under 98 metres of water.

Pilot Lieutenant Lererileng Maloi and the engineering manager of the water project, Sethunya Nthako, who was also in the helicopter, are still missing.

Three other passengers, a crew who filmed the dam for a German television station, managed to escape from the sinking helicopter and swim to safety.

Van der Merwe said the divers determined on Thursday that the wreckage might be around 12 metres from where it was originally thought to lie.

They developed a grid of 300 by 250 metres, which they were to scan on Friday with real-time video cameras. The cameras, with attached lights, would be lowered into the water from two boats.

If this method did not provide them with the necessary information, they might lower a more sophisticated, remote-controlled camera, Van der Merwe said.

Further options included additional sonar equipment which could be towed behind a boat, or to call in the help of the SA Navy.

Van der Merwe said cost was not at this stage a concern. The Highlands project had promised the families of the missing men that they would find them.

Sapa

Divers May Have Found Lesotho Helicopter Wreck

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200305270268.html>

May 25, 2003 Posted to the web May 27, 2003 South African Press Association (Johannesburg)

Johannesburg

Police divers believe they may have located the helicopter that crashed in Lesotho's Katse Dam earlier this week, an official said on Sunday.

Lesotho Highlands Water Project acting chief executive Refiloe Tlali said the wreckage was believed to be lying about 150 metres deep in the dam.

Tlali said the divers were still trying to establish whether the debris they had found was indeed the helicopter.

George van der Merwe, spokesman for the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, said sound sonar was used to pinpoint what was believed to be the chopper about 150-metres away from where it was first thought it would be.

He said extension cables were being brought from Durban, South Africa so that camera equipment could be sent down to view the debris. A grappling hook would be used if it was the chopper to pull it from the water on Monday, Van der Merwe said.

He said if the debris was not the helicopter, additional equipment would be flown to Lesotho from Cape Town or Britain to allow the search party to dive deeper into the water.

The divers have been searching for a Lesotho Defence Force helicopter which crashed into the dam on Tuesday with five people on board. The pilot, Lieutenant Lererileng Maloi, and passenger Sethunya Nthako who was the engineering manager of the Lesotho Highlands Development Agency, are still missing.

The three remaining passengers, a crew filming the dam for a German television station, escaped from the sinking helicopter and swam to safety.