



**AIR ACCIDENT
INVESTIGATION UNIT**

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PRELIMINARY INCIDENT REPORT

This is preliminary information, subject to change, and may contain errors. Any errors in this Report will be corrected when the Final Report has been completed.

Report No:	2007-012
1. AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURER:	Agusta Westland
Model:	EH1 Merlin HC. Mk 3
State of Registry:	State Aircraft (United Kingdom)
Registration:	ZJ 137
Serial Number:	50195
Year of Manufacture:	2002
2. OPERATOR:	Royal Air Force (RAF)
3. TYPE OF OPERATION:	Military
4. DATE / TIME:	24 June 2007 @ 18.06 hrs
5. POSITION OF OCCURRENCE:	Promenade, Salthill, Co. Galway, Ireland
6. PERSONS ON BOARD:	Crew: 3 Passengers: 4
7. INJURIES:	Crew: Nil Passengers: Nil
OTHER INJURIES:	Other: 3 minor (on ground)
8. DAMAGE:	Slight impact damage to emergency egress door
9. INVESTIGATOR-IN-CHARGE:	Jurgen Whyte

The Air Accident Investigation Unit is presently conducting an Investigation into an incident in which an emergency egress door separated from a RAF Merlin Helicopter at a height of approximately 150 ft as it departed from the static display park at Salthill, Co Galway, Ireland. Three spectators received minor injuries in attempting to evade the falling door.

Following a detailed examination of the emergency egress door, it has been determined that the door and its locking mechanism were fully airworthy prior to separation and that no technical failure can be attributed to the loss of the door.

Digital Video and camera evidence provided by many sources confirms that the emergency egress door-locking handle was in the "Jettison" (unlocked) position as the helicopter commenced its lift-off and transition away.

The Investigation believes that a member(s) of the public had tampered with the emergency egress door handle, while the helicopter was being viewed at the static display park. None of the RAF flight crewmembers observed the position of the emergency egress door handle during the pre-flight inspection. Shortly after becoming airborne the unlocked door detached and fell to earth. The Investigation considers that this occurrence was not a pre-meditated malicious deed, but rather an act of mischief.

The Investigation is ongoing and a brief Synoptic Report will be published in due course.

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