

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Hummingbird Air Crash-Lands In Barbuda; No One Injured

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ST. CROIX -- Hummingbird Air, the new carrier here that's seen steady growth with flights spanning various Caribbean Islands, has experienced its first accident at the Codrington Airport in Barbuda, where one of its planes veered off the runway and crashed into a nearby field, people with direct knowledge of the accident have confirmed to The Consortium. The incident occurred on Monday between the hours 10:00 a.m. and 12 noon.

According to these people, who requested anonymity because the airline asked that the incident not be publicized, there were about 5-6 passengers aboard the aircraft, including company owner Sam Raphael, however no one was hurt during the accident.

The Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority (ECCAA) has launched an investigation into the matter.

The plane was traveling from Antigua to Barbuda and while attempting to land, the right main landing gear collapsed, causing the plane to veer off the runway. The problem, said these people, could have happened to any airline and was not the fault of the pilot.

When The Consortium contacted Hummingbird Air, Isaac Raphael, who's currently running the company, confirmed the incident but failed to give any pertinent information, stating that he was "trying to find out what happened." When asked about passengers, he said there were none aboard the aircraft, contrary to what The Consortium's sources, who also provided an image of the incident, said. The information was corroborated by the [Antigua Observer](#), whose news article about the incident stated that 5 passengers ash landing.



Hummingbird Air veered off the Codrington

Airport in Barbuda. The crash was caused by landing gear problems.

In an [October 2014 interview](#), company owner Sam Raphael told The Consortium that starting an airline business was more about seeing economic growth on the island than it was about making money.

"There's a joke that people pass around, they say to become a millionaire in the aviation business is to start with a billion dollars," Raphael said, highlighting the significant costs involved in launching an airline company. "It's very, very difficult — and especially here in the Caribbean where you have these different restrictions. Every island is its own kingdom with its own rules and permits, which makes it more challenging, and operation over water is very expensive because of the salt and other factors, [plus] a whole lot of immigration issues," he explained.

Even so, Raphael is no stranger to uphill battles. He likened the situation to a real estate market where homes are being foreclosed upon and people start moving away. Raphael said that is the best time to move in and "purchase cheap" because once the economy picks back up, the ones who purchased real estate when it seems as if the market would never recover, are the ones who will reap the most fruit.

It's the exact situation Raphael faced when he started what is now rated as No. 2 on Trip Advisor's Top 25 Caribbean Destinations, [Jungle Bay Resort](#), because the location he chose to construct the hotel was what many would call "behind God's back." Today, however, it is a premier destination and employs over 60 people in Dominica. Jungle Bay has been given rave reviews by top publications around the world, including *New York*

Times, US News & World Report, Travel + Leisure Magazine, Forbes Traveler and more.

Raphael is hoping to have the same level of success on St. Croix with Hummingbird. But whether the minor accident will hinder the businessman's plans of turning Hummingbird Air into an airline with offerings spanning the entire Caribbean and beyond remains to be seen.

Feature Image: Hummingbird Air crashes into a nearby field at a Barbuda airport after veering off the runway during a accident the aircraft's landing and right maingear collapsed.

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