

Forgotten Warriors

written by Mario Overall | May 30, 2023



In February 2005, Hector Leiva, a skilled aviation photographer from El Salvador and one of the founding members of the LAAHS, came across a remarkable find as he was driving on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti. Within a vast and quiet junkyard, he stumbled upon a collection of abandoned airplanes and helicopters.

Exhibiting a high degree of courage, considering the precarious conditions in Haiti at the time, Leiva swiftly requested the taxi driver to stop and wasting no time, got out of the car, venturing into the junkyard. To his surprise, he was greeted by a civilian who happened to be the junkyard's guard. Leiva anxiously asked for permission to photograph the aircraft and couldn't believe it when the guard replied with a smile as he stood apart signaling the planes with his right hand. From then on, Leiva was in for a treat. He didn't know it at this point, but in front of him was the entire fleet of what once constituted the entire Haitian Air Force before its disbandment ten years before!

Surrounded by scrapped cars and trucks, the aircraft were prominent in the scenery. Near the junkyard's entrance there were three Sikorsky S-58T helicopters, one of them in VIP configuration. Close to the choppers were two Cessna O-2 / 337s (Sentry Modified, apparently) and a couple of yards across them, four more, totaling six planes in a more or less restorable condition. Lined up near the guard's house there was a bunch of utility airplanes, including a Cessna 140, a Beechcraft 95, a Cessna T303 Crusader, a Cessna 172 and a pair of Piper PA-34s, all of them sporting civilian colors but with Haitian Air Force's serials.

As anticipated, Leiva devoted the rest of the afternoon meticulously capturing photographs of the aircraft. Subsequently, he inquired about their origins from the guard, who informed him that they had been relocated to the junkyard the previous year following the closure of the nearby Chancerelles Airport (previously referred to as Bowen Field). The guard further clarified that the junkyard encompassed the former grounds of the aforementioned airport. When Leiva sought information regarding the current ownership of the aircraft, the guard merely shrugged his shoulders and offered a smile in response.

Leiva departed from the Junkyard after a few hours, never to return. The subsequent events of the story can only be approximated through satellite images. By July 2010, the government had established a massive camp to accommodate the numerous individuals displaced by the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12 of that same year. By April 2013, the camp and all the aircraft, except for the Beechcraft 65, had vanished. Around September 2013, a wall was erected around the nearby National Police Inspectorate building, cutting in half the aircraft's former location.

The following is possibly the most complete roster of the aircraft discovered at the junkyard in February 2005:

Type	C/N	HAF Serial	Remarks
Cessna 140	140-14538	1234	Ex N186GJ. In very poor shape.
Beechcraft 95	TH531	1251	In very poor shape.
Cessna O-2 / 337	01624	1252	Parts missing.
Cessna O-2 / 337	01626	1254	Parts missing. Nose section damaged.
Cessna O-2 / 337	01628	1256	Parts missing.
Cessna O-2 / 337	01629	1257	Parts missing. No forward engine.
Cessna 402B	0901	1259	Seemed to be complete.
Cessna O-2 / 337	01688	1264	Seemed to be complete.
Cessna O-2 / 337	01699	1265	Parts missing, no forward engine.
Beechcraft D50	DH341	1269	Parts missing.
Piper PA-34		1288	Seemed to be complete.
Cessna T303		1291	In poor shape.
Beechcraft 65		1292	In very poor shape.

Piper PA-34		1293	Parts missing.
Sikorsky S-58T	58-1536	H-1	VIP-configured. Ex BuNo 150750 and N82823. Seemed to be complete.
Sikorsky S-58T	58-1526	H-7	Ex N37707. Parts missing.
Sikorsky S-58T	58-1583	H-10	Ex BuNo 150773. Parts missing.

Regarding how the aircraft ended up in that particular spot, as previously mentioned by the guard, the junkyard was formerly a section of the Chancerelles / Bowen Airport, which served as the primary base for the Haitian Air Force. However, in 1995, the air force was disbanded as part of a broader initiative to reduce the size of the military and promote democracy in the country. As a result, their airplanes were stored in a remote area of the air base. Then in 2005, the decision was made to close down Chancerelles Airport and relocate all commercial and private aviation operations to the nearby Toussaint Louverture International Airport, which is situated less than six kilometers northeast.

Over time, the Chancerelles airport along with its infrastructure, including the air base, slowly vanished, giving rise to an open space dotted with some warehouses and buildings. As a result, the location where the aircraft were left behind became entirely secluded, except for a single access road. It was in this isolated spot that Leiva discovered them.

Regarding the fate of the aircraft, two accounts exist: one suggests that all were scrapped, while the other claims that most were sold as spare parts to foreign buyers. The actual truth remains unknown. So, if you have any information about what happened to these aircraft, please [contact us!](#)

Beechcraft 65 Haitian Air Force serial 1292

Beechcraft 95 Haitian Air Force serial 1251

Cessna 140 Haitian Air Force serial 1234

Cessna 402B Haitian Air Force Serial 1259

Cessna T303 Haitian Air Force serial 1291

Cessna O-2 / 337 Haitian Air Force serial 1252

Cessna O-2 / 337 Haitian Air Force serial 1254

Cessna O-2 / 337 Haitian Air Force serial 1256

Cessna O-2 / 337 Haitian Air Force serial 1264

Piper PA-34 Haitian Air Force serial 1288

Sikorsky S-58T Haitian Air Force serial H-1

Sikorsky S-58T Haitian Air Force serial H-7

Sikorsky S-58T Haitian Air Force serial H-10

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