



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Office of Aviation Safety
Washington, D.C. 20594

December 29, 2016

Attachment 5 – FAA Personal Interview Summaries

OPERATIONAL/ HUMAN FACTORS

DCA17IA020

Interviewee: Mr. Philip Michael McKinney

Date: December 1, 2016

Location: South Florida Certificate Management Office Training Room, Miramar, Florida

Time: 0801 EST¹

Present: Shawn Etcher, Sathya Silva – NTSB, and Robert Hendrickson – Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

Mr. McKinney was represented by Mark Tomicich – Trial Attorney for the FAA

During the interview Mr. McKinney stated the following:

He was 70 years old.

He graduated college during the Vietnam war and joined the Air Force. While in the Air Force he went through pilot training and was assigned to the Dover Air Force Base flying the Lockheed C141 [Starlifter] then moved to Charleston, South Carolina where he continued flying the C141 for a year and a half. He then went to Guam with the airlift command for 15 months then went to a tactical radar squadron as a senior director. He left active duty and joined the Air Force Reserve in Charleston for 8 years and had a total of 18 years in the reserves and 18 years' active duty. While in the military he eventually become the Chief Pilot and aircraft squadron commander. He retired from the reserves in 1995. In 1978, he went to work for Braniff Airlines and was trained as a flight engineer and subsequently a first officer in the DC 8. He was then furloughed from Braniff but went to Capitol Airlines and was a captain flying the DC8. After he was furloughed, he went to Peoples Express and was a first officer and a captain in the Boeing 737 (100 and 200 models) until Peoples Express was taken over by Continental Airlines 6 years later. When he left Peoples Express he was hired by United Airlines training department for the Boeing 727 as a flight engineer and was an FAA designee for the flight engineer rating on the 727. He also taught captains and first officer through the training curriculum and conducted Boeing 727 first officer checkrides but did not conduct the type rides for captains. After 5 years, he went to fly the Boeing 757 and 767 out of JFK airport. He subsequently returned to the Boeing 737 and was based in Chicago on the 100 and 200 series. He flew the Airbus for about 8 years and retired at age 60 in 2006, he was also a checkairman for about 6 years. After retiring, he did instructing in the simulators for two Part 142 schools in the Boeing 757/767 and in the Airbus. He conducted the TCE (Training Center Evaluator) initial rating checkrides in the Airbus A320. He went to work for an on demand operator who flew the very light jet, Eclipse 500. He came to the FAA in September 2007. When he started, at the FAA, he was a geographical inspector. He was then was assigned to Gulfstream Airlines, who flew Beechcraft 1900 aircraft, as an assistant Principal Operations Inspector (POI),. He then became an assistant POI for Spirit Airlines which lasted until about 5 months ago at which point he took the POI position at Eastern Air Lines which became his main task. He has not gone to any school to get recurrent in the 737.

¹ Eastern Standard Time

He summed up his flying career as having about 26 years in the military and 28 years in Part 121 flying.

He has about 21,000 to 22,000 hours of total flying experience and about 6,500 of those hours are in the Boeing 737.

He was also the facility flying safety officer for the Certificate Management Office (CMO). He described that duty as one in which he makes sure every inspector gets their yearly safety briefing and he also passes along safety information that comes from the regions. He also was required to make sure every inspector was current in the 4040 program. He described the 4040 program as what the FAA utilized to keep the inspectors current and was usually only simulator flying, except for the Beech 1900 and he was required to make sure those inspectors were airplane qualified. Now everything, except the Beech 1900 was conducted in category D simulators.

He stated that not all POIs were current in the airplane they provided oversight on. If the inspector was in aircrew pilot designees (APD) program, then they were usually sent to training. However, due to resources available to the FAA, not everyone had been sent for training. He ran out of currency on the Airbus, but stated that he has not broached the subject with his superiors. They are applying for an APD for Eastern. However, under the APD program, an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) air carrier was responsible for the training of the inspector in the air carrier's airplanes. They just started this process with Eastern.

To accomplish that it has to go up to region; however, that paperwork had not gone out of the office. He was not sure how long that would take, but hoped the decision would only take 30 to 60 days. Once that was approved, he would be required to open up a position in order to hire someone, which usually took a couple of months. That position would be open to all employees within the FAA. There was not a lot of paperwork associated with opening up the job announcement, such as the paperwork associated with permanent change of station.

He communicates with the Director of Operations and the Chief Pilot at Eastern most often, as well as the Director of Training. He does speak with the Director of Inflight and the Director of the Operations Control Center (OCC) on occasion, since the flight follower group fell under his area of oversight responsibility.

Normally with his communication he would generally discuss if there were any issues with their manuals. Eastern Air Lines would send revisions and bulletins to him for review prior to those changes being disseminated to all employees. Some of Eastern Air Lines' manuals were listed as requiring approval status which required him to approve those manuals. Other manuals that Eastern Air Lines had did not require approval and were under an acceptance status where he would have to ensure no objections. The Eastern Air Lines training manual had to be approved; however, the flight operations manual was considered an acceptance manual. He further stated that if a manual was an approved manual it had his signature on it. The approval time frame was usually about the same time frame as reviewing the acceptance manual. He still looks at both of them and makes suggestions. He normally will scan the acceptance manual but will thoroughly read the approval manuals. Most of the manuals were already in place prior to him becoming the POI so he is primarily looking at changes to the existing manuals.

He felt the working relationship was “really good” with Eastern. The main challenge though, he felt, was the limited number of people doing the work and that it was a small carrier. He further classified that there were a limited number of people doing a lot of jobs and things may have been forgotten about, which required him to remind those at the airline that needed to accomplish whatever was needed. He further stated that it did not happen “all that often.” He was typically on the phone with Eastern Air Lines every day he was in the office.

Eastern Air Lines was the only certificate he managed, which was part of the normal protocol with the CMO office compared to the Flight Standards District Office that had many certificates to manage. He feels he had enough time to get things accomplished; however, FAA resources were limited as only one person in the office was able to give checkrides in the Boeing 737. That individual was also associated with the certificate management team for the Boeing program. Sometimes that would cause a delay. They were usually able to schedule someone for a type rating within 2 or 3 weeks.

There was an issue earlier as Eastern wanted to get 2 checkairman approved; however, due to resources at the FAA it may take up to a month to get that scheduled. If he had the resources, he felt he could schedule the observation within the week, or the next day if possible. His superiors were aware of the problem he had with scheduling; however, once the APD comes on everything will be able to change for the better.

He had received POI training which consisted of training in the various tasks he has to do in 3 levels of progression and he had an on-the-job (OJT) instructor. As part of the training he had to go through incident investigation, how to do occurrences, and various other items that the job entails. The process required him to go through string training at the academy and then, once back in the office, there were more items. He estimated it took about 6 months for all the training. Most of the training is OJT. He felt the training was effective and there was nothing he could recall that he would change.

In general, he would describe Eastern Air Line’s operation as a “fairly good operation.” The problem they seem to have were areas that the airline may not have been “up to speed” on. An example he provided was, was when the airline had an issue with how they determined cargo weights. Since the airline conducted sport team charters, they utilized the weight provided to them from the team; he suggested a change to them for the way they determine cargo weights and they implemented his suggestion. He further described that those problems did not occur often and he classified them as “fine tuning” of the operation.

The transition from the former POI to him was fairly seamless as the former POI sat in the next cubicle to him. Not long after he took over the Eastern Air Lines certificate, the FAA had an inspection team look over Eastern’s operation, which he stated was a benefit as he was still learning the operation. The inspection team consisted of a team of inspectors from the certificate holder evaluation program, which was a group from AFS 900. The inspection team looked over maintenance and operations and utilized the system assurance system (SAS) models. That was the same models that he utilized; however, the inspection team selected elements of those models and may not select all of the SAS elements. He had lots to read to keep up with changes for Eastern.

He characterized his workload as full time. He was busy but had enough time to complete what was needed. He had a cabin safety inspector and a dispatch inspector who did not work for him and that Eastern Air Lines was only one of many certificates those inspectors had to oversee. There were also maintenance inspectors for Eastern. None of them had an assistant due to the small size of the carrier. He was not sure what size the operator had to be before the FAA provided him with an assistant. He provided an example of Spirit Airlines who had a POI, assistant POI, Aircrew Program Manager (APM), and assistant APM but they had almost a 100 airplanes in the fleet. He reiterated that he was not sure at what point an assistant became a requirement.

He further provided that at Eastern Air Lines their flag and domestic authorization had been put on hold as there was an issue with operational control at the carrier. He further stated that the issues were communication issues; however, it happened prior to him being assigned to the POI position. The contacts with maintenance and subcontract maintenance numbers were not able to be determined; however, that issue had been corrected. The FAA was still in the process of holding the flag and domestic request. He had not been made aware of or seen any issues on the flight following and dispatch side of the carrier. He felt that the authorization will be occur sometime after the first of the upcoming year. The front line manager was the point person for their flag and domestic certification and the front line manager will make that determination at some point when to start the process again.

When asked to describe a typical day he stated that each day of his work day was a little different. An example, he provided was, if he had manuals to review he will spend the majority of his day looking over the manuals or if there was SAS work he would work on that. Sometimes, other tasks, not associated with Eastern Air Lines, required of him, will take some of his time. He clarified that all of his work day was spent on working with Eastern Air lines, anything else he had to do did not take much of his time.

He has observed three initial captain operating experience (OE) and he has sat in on a flight attendant training class for an afternoon, which was when they were going through hazmat training.

He estimated that he goes to Eastern Air Lines a couple of times a week and they also have a weekly meeting with the Part 119 personnel. He has also gone out on the ramp and observed the operation which was probably once every week to week and a half. He has not sat in on Eastern Air Lines' pilot training yet.

During OE he was observing both the captain and the checkairman at the same time. During his observation he had not observed any issues at Eastern. He has had a few other inspectors do line checks with the flightcrew and have not observed any issues either.

When asked how their training program is evaluated, he said that he talks to the inspectors that do the check rides. He reported that so far there had only been one failure on a checkride. During a captain's OE he felt he could get a "feel" if the training program was working well or not.

Eastern Air Lines would notify him of any issues they may have and he would classify their communication as “very good.” Sometimes they were a little slow but they do communicate with him.

Since the incident he and Eastern Air Lines management have talked about some possible changes. The simulator profiles were conducted at various airports. The airports they utilized in the simulator were usually longer runways so the suggested change was to utilize airports with shorter, more challenging runways. He further stated that he felt it would be nice to have rain and slippery runways; however, he was not certain if the simulators had that ability. They were also going to emphasize who has control of the airplane on the ground and greater emphasis will be placed on positive transfer of control, between the pilots. Also they had discussed requiring a better briefing for where the airplane must be on the ground by and if it was not then they would conduct a go around. Usually in training go around maneuvers were done in low visibility and missed approach; he had suggested that there should be an external issue that would require the pilots to determine that they should go around. They also want to emphasize crew resource management portions especially when it dealt with who had control of the airplane, where the pilots were going to land, and communication within the flight deck. As in the incident event, he felt there was a communication issue when the first officer was attempting to maintain the centerline but the captain was trying to take it off the runway. He said the first officer could have questioned when he felt an issue and the captain could have called for the controls in this instance.

He communicates with the cabin safety inspector and dispatch inspectors, however not daily. He specified that 2 dispatch inspectors have done work with Eastern. He speaks with the Principal Maintenance Inspector (PMI) every day and feels there is a good working relationship within the team.

When asked if he had issues getting approval for overtime, he said that if he has to do something, management was usually okay with overtime. He tries to shift the activity to occur during duty times whenever possible. He said he can do a “random” line check. There was an issue with the OE schedule for observation as the FAA can’t fly to Cuba according to a state department policy. He has done an OE to Bedford, MA, whereupon he “uberred” to Boston to catch a flight back. He said this was the challenge with supplemental operators. When asked if conversations had been open about travelling to Cuba, he said that the discussion was above his pay grade and he did not know the reason why they could not travel there. When doing OEs he tried to depart out of Miami. He considered a flight between Newark and Philadelphia, but wasn’t able to work it.

He had a good relationship with his Front Line Manager (FLM). The FLM has a mechanic background and flew as a flight engineer. He said that the team works well together.

He talks with the Eastern director of safety in meetings, typically not in the office. If there are issues, he usually goes through the director of operations. The former Director of Safety (DOS) previously had worked at the FAA office. He said the PMI is more the point of contact for SMS².

² Safety Management Systems

He hasn't seen the ARMS³ software that Eastern was planning to use. Until he's seen the software and has approved it, they have to use the SMS in the other format.

He described FOQA⁴ as a good benefit for everyone, however in order for the benefit to occur they have to use the information and have to have someone looking at the information all of the time. He said that Spirit had a good FOQA program that could recreate scenarios. They provide examples for FAA review, however the FAA does not have access to all of their data. He has talked to Eastern about ASAP⁵, but he does not know where they are in terms of implementation. He is a proponent of ASAP, however said that it takes funds, time, and personnel. Until Eastern gets someone fulltime on the event review committee, there are going to be issues getting ASAP implemented. He would like to see it as a higher priority.

He does think they are adequately prioritizing what is important at the moment.

When asked if was aware of any unsatisfactory checkrides, he replied that he was aware of only one which he thought had to do with briefing and flying a non-precision RNAV⁶ approach, but he could not recall specifically the details of the failure. He said that they retrained and the next check ride was OK.

When asked why he had not attended any pilot classes at Eastern Air Lines, he clarified that in the five months, since he became the POI the airline had not conducted any new hire pilot training. He intends to attend the next class they hold. He doesn't plan on sitting in on the initial "welcome to Eastern" part of the training but will sit on parts day to day for the 8-week training.

He stated that the training for a go around was similar to every other syllabus utilized by airlines. He assumed that they did some in the flare and some in low visibility. When asked if there was any discussion of training go arounds on the ground, he said that they discussed this after the incident and should discuss this further.

He clarified that he felt that the bigger an airline was determined the requirement for a POI to have an assistant. If Eastern got bigger, they would need more surveillance. He would still be putting in things into the computer but more help would enable better surveillance and going to observe the operation.

He felt the electronic flight bags were a good idea. The process for obtaining approval to utilize an electronic flight bag (EFB) was complicated. He has directed Eastern Air Lines to talk with other carriers who utilize EFBs as well as for Eastern Air Lines to learn about other carrier programs that were in use.

³ Aviation Resource Management Software

⁴ Flight Operations Quality Assurance

⁵ Aviation Safety Action Program

⁶ Area navigation

He recommended to Eastern to talk with Miami Air and Spirit Airlines about their SMS program. At Spirit, a pilot and PAI⁷ had spearheaded the initiative for EFB. He thinks that the chief pilot needs help and has too much to do.

The interview concluded at 0919 EST

Interviewee: Mr. George M. Hambrick

Date: December 1, 2016

Location: South Florida Certificate Management Office Training Room, Miramar, Florida

Time: 0936 EST⁸

Present: Shawn Etcher, Sathya Silva – NTSB, and Robert Hendrickson – Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

Mr. Hambrick was represented by Mark Tomicich – Trial Attorney for the FAA

During the interview Mr. Hambrick stated the following:

He was 70 years old.

His father was a pilot in the Air Force. He began his aviation career after graduating from high school, at which time he attended LSU. He subsequently joined the army and flew cobra helicopters in Vietnam. After Vietnam he went to Savannah, Georgia where he taught tactical training to foreign soldiers. He went to Louisiana Tech and received his bachelor of science degree in aviation science and technology. After he got out of the army he flew for Petroleum Helicopters (PHI) for about 3 years, during which time he also flew small aircraft and small cargo flight in order to increase his fixed wing flight time. He subsequently went through the Air Force OCS⁹ training and flew the F4. He was stationed in England and while there became the wing flying safety officer. After his tour in England concluded he went Shaw Air Force Base where he was an instructor and a wing safety officer. While there he also helped with the conversion to the F16 aircraft. He then went to Texas and handled all tactical air command training for the guard units west of the Mississippi. He then went to Langley as the primary safety and F4 standardization officer which he did for 3 years. He worked at Maxwell Air Force Base on the F16. He was then sent to Korea with an F16 unit for 1 year until he retired with 20 years of military service.

After he left the military he went to American Airlines for 16 years with 6 of those years based in Chicago flying the MD80 and 10 of those years in Miami, 2 years in the Boeing 727, 2 years in the Airbus A300 and A310, 2 years on the Boeing 777, and 2 years on the Boeing 757/767 until he retired due to his age. Three and a half years after he retired he was called and offered a contractor position with the FAA working on the Enterprise Information Systems (EIS), a subcontractor for SAIC¹⁰, and worked in AFS-400 that did policies and regulations, providing

⁷ Principal Avionics Inspector

⁸ Eastern Standard Time

⁹ Officer Candidate School

¹⁰ Science Applications International Corporation

mostly support to AFS-410 that does terminal operations, LAHSO¹¹, CAT II and III, and helicopter landing facilities. He liked the job, but was commuting to Washington, DC. He subsequently applied in numerous locations throughout the FAA and was offered an inspector position. After a year as an inspector he applied and was awarded the Assistant Aircrew Program Manager (APM) at Spirit Airlines which he did for 6 months. Subsequently, he became the Principal Operations Inspector (POI) at Silver Airways which he did for about 1 year. Silver Airways operated Beechcraft 1900 and Saab 340 aircraft. The certification of Eastern Air Lines started during that time and for about 4 or 5 months he was doing both Silver Airways duties and Eastern Air Lines certification. Once Eastern Air Lines was viable to continue their certification he became their POI in January 2015, which was his permanent position starting in May 2015. He bid for and subsequently, on July 10, 2016, received a manager position. He clarified that he started as a contractor with the FAA in May of 2010 and became and FAA employee in August of 2012.

He had about 12,000 hours of total flight experience; however, he had no Boeing 737 flight time. When he took over the certification of Eastern Air Lines, they applied and provided all of their manuals as well as a plan on how they were going to run the operation. Starting in August of 2014 they began going through every program Eastern Air Lines had in place.

The certification of a new carrier is mainly run by AFS-900, who were the ones that provided team leads and expertise, he provided local expertise. He had 3 operations inspectors who were Boeing 737 rated pilots, 2 cabin safety inspectors, and 1 dispatch safety inspector. During that time, they all worked together as a team going through all of Eastern Air Lines manuals. There were 27 areas that the FAA has for data collection tools (DCTs). Some of those areas include weather operation, flight operations, training, pilot training, flight follower training, dispatcher training, and curriculum. They looked through all of the manuals and noted areas that were not met and relayed those to Eastern. That process took place over a period of about 6 months. They looked at all of the facilities that Eastern Air Lines wanted to utilize as well. Once Eastern Air Lines met the minimum standard then they began to work into the operational areas. Part of what they did was began with the initial class of check airmen. He also utilized an inspector, who was assigned to the CMT¹² for Boeing, to train the check airmen. He was provided three subject matter expert inspectors that assisted in setting up the training. During the initial class of pilot training they monitored the training. They also did the same thing for the flight follower and flight attendant training. After that they evaluated the airlines evacuation program in order to make sure the evacuation occurred within the required timeframe. They also evaluated the emergency evacuation and ditching training and procedures.

The inspectors assigned to the evaluation of the airline also conducted oversight on proving runs as a table top exercise, which included diversions, minimum equipment list (MEL) usage, foreign operations, and preparation for unknown locations. Those demos took approximately one week. Since the airline was only preparing for supplemental operations there were items that they did not have to do, as those were only required for domestic or flag operations. The table top exercise included scenario based items and how the airline would deal with the scenario. If the airline failed a part of the scenario, then they had to start over. The airline was required to pass a number of scenarios prior to beginning the proving runs in the airplanes.

¹¹ Land and Hold Short Operations

¹² Certificate Management Team

Once the proving runs began in the airplanes they had to fly a minimum of 50 hours, which were on routes that the airline were anticipating flying on. That allowed the FAA inspectors to observe how the airline would conduct the flight including maintenance for the flights. They would pick locations, look at maintenance logs, and look at operations logistics. During the proving runs they also conducted cabin safety tests, MEL tests, and evaluated the operational control. During the proving runs they also conducted diversions, simulated medical issues to evaluate the use of the Med-I-Link system. The inspectors evaluated if the airline and employees conducted the operations as was written in the manuals.

On May 13, 2015, Eastern Air Lines received their certification from the FAA. During that same time frame the FAA went to the Safety Assurance System (SAS) from the Air Transport Oversight System (ATOS).

He stated that there were two parts for a principal inspector to monitor, continual certification and surveillance, with the most important part being surveillance of the airline. As an inspector they had to identify where the risks were and allocate resources according to those risks. SAS started July 1, 2015, at that point he set up the plan on how the FAA was going to conduct what was required in their duties. The risks are divided up into three categories: high, medium, and low. If a risks was determined to be in the high risk category then the surveillance was required to be conducted on a semi-annual basis, if the risk was in the medium category then the surveillance was required on an annual basis, and if it was in the low category it was conducted every 2 years. When they evaluated the airline's operational area they determined that there were 3 high risk, 4 medium risk, and the rest were low risk areas.

Some of the risks included areas of safety, operations which included the aircrew and dispatchers, as well as operational control. When he set up the surveillance he set it so the aircrew and operation was to be conducted in the first quarter and spread the various risks over different quarters of the year, which allowed the FAA to ensure that all the surveillance was accomplished. During the surveillance they evaluated four items: rules, laws, ops specs, and company manuals, of which the airline had to operate within those four areas. He further reported that it takes a while for an inspector to accomplish all of what was required. He provided an example in that if an area was in the high risk category then the inspectors may look at those areas three or four times during the surveillance period. One example was when they surveilled the Director of Safety they evaluated how that person would interact with all of the programs required including the Voluntary Disclosure Reported Program. Since the airline was not in the FAA's 4040.9 program, he scheduled inspectors to be able to conduct the various tasks and what was required under the SAS program. He scheduled the surveillance on a quarterly basis and would schedule 2 high risk areas, 1 medium risk, and a couple of low risk areas.

He further stated that since Eastern Air Lines was a startup airline there were certain requirement in their ops specifications; however, the airline did not RVSM¹³ or CAT II requirements. The airline was required to at least meet the minimum standard required.

¹³ Reduced Vertical Separation Minimum

When asked what was the future plans with the airline he stated that Eastern wanted to utilize EFBs, conduct Class II navigation, and ETOPS. He stated that would be classified using risk based management and the 5 phases of getting ops specs approved, and that the inspectors would need to work with the next generation branch as well.

He stated that working on with Eastern Air Lines took about 85% of his time. The rest of his time was working on other internal FAA items, some of which was administrative tasks such as all hands and the ops specs working group. He felt he could accomplish what he needed to have done; but, that they could have used more resources.

He worked a solid 8 to 10 hours per day and felt like it was sufficient time to complete his tasks. He described one time that he gave a poor rating on something and that he wanted another inspector to evaluate it; however, the FAA did not have the geographical resources to do what he requested. He clarified that he had enough time to work with Eastern every day.

He stated that he had interacted with everyone at Eastern Air Lines who was required under Part 119 in addition to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). That included the Director of Operation, Chief Pilot, and the Director of Safety, which he elaborated and stated they were his three key personnel. He also worked with the Director of Training and the Director of Flight Following. Within the FAA the personnel within the cabin safety area changed often and he also worked with the Principal Avionics Inspector. He stated that the personnel within the FAA worked together a lot and that anytime they [FAA] went to the airline they went in pairs of two.

He felt that the relation he had with the company was “very good;” however, he elaborated that the CEO attempted to remove him four times from their certificate as he had requested that they do certain things. He further classified he had a “very dynamic relationship” with the Director of Operations and the Chief Pilot. He felt the airline may not have a complete understanding of the things that were required to be done.

When asked if there were challenges with working with Eastern Air Lines he stated that there were and stated that the Director of Safety was the most challenging. He further described that the Director of Safety was a retired FAA employee and he classified him as “old school.” There was a lot of the information the Director of Safety used; however, it was not the most up to date information that was required. He provided an example of the Safety Management System (SMS) program, the Director of Safety had been part of the old SMS program at the FAA and did not include the part 5 area of the new SMS program. He felt that the DOS had difficulty transitioning to the new SMS. He further elaborated that that was the area he gave a negative rating. He tried to keep it professional. He felt like with the Director of Operations and the Chief Pilot, he would be listened to. He did not feel that the DOS was as amicable.

He felt that the communication with the Director of Operations and the Chief Pilot could be either verbal or via email; however, with the Director of Safety he always would communicate in writing in order to keep it professional.

He stated that he would send a letter to the CEO documenting areas of concern when he first observed issues with the DOS. After 6 months he would look at that area again. Some of the time

he noticed no significant change in quality that resulted from a change in what was done. Sometimes that change was what he would classify as detrimental to that area. He felt that the former CEO did attempt to make changes to the various situations. He was not sure of the extent of change once he left the position.

Typically, he would go to Eastern Air Lines headquarters about once or twice a week; however, due to the logistics in getting there he did most of the work with them via the telephone or email. The FAA would also go to the training center Eastern Air Lines was utilizing. He stated that there was some form of communication or interaction with Eastern Air Lines, between all the inspectors, almost daily. He felt this was sufficient frequency of communication. He felt he was in contact with them 8 hours per day.

He felt Eastern had an excellent business plan to start. They wanted to move fast and did not work on their domestic or flag operations in the beginning. He further felt that had they continued with their business plans they would have been “light years” ahead of where they were. The airline was able to obtain lucrative flights to Cuba. However, he further reported that the problem with flying to Cuba was that it took the FAA a minimum of one month to get approval from the state department, to conduct surveillance on those flight.

Once the Eastern started to work on obtaining their domestic and flag operation certification the operational control got “bogged down” trying to do both. He further stated that domestic operations required different manuals.

Originally, the airline’s business plan was to get 30 jets including 20 Mitsubishi very light jets; however, the airline started acquiring airplanes from Mexico, Brazil, and 2 from Russia and had to get them viable and airworthy. If further felt that had the airline had just a few more employees, they could have stopped some of the setback to their business plan.

While he was the POI he did monitor the airline’s training. He monitored some of the flight attendant and dispatch training; however, there were inspectors assigned to those areas who were the experts that sat on that training. He concentrated heavily on the flight crew training. When they certified the program it did not include the new ops specs like B36¹⁴ for Class II navigation which required them to get approval from the FAA.

He did attend the airlines crew resource management (CRM) program and he classified it as “basic.” There was nothing he would change about the CRM program; however, he felt that had he been the Director of Training it would have been a more “robust” training. The interaction in the FTD¹⁵s was good, but he felt they could have incorporated more robust scenarios. An example was that it took a year to get the LOFT¹⁶ up to the minimum standard required. He made sure they had all the InFOs¹⁷ and SAFOs¹⁸. He was concerned about whether the information would transfer

¹⁴ OpsSpecs B36 authorizes operations beyond the scope of Class I navigation: Source: FAA Inspector Handbook Chapter 9 Section 8 “Validation Test Requirements” 1655

¹⁵ Fixed Training Device

¹⁶ Line Oriented Flight Training

¹⁷ Information for Operators

¹⁸ Safety Alert for Operators

to the simulator and whether they were understanding it. The CRM training was in the ground school and they did a “good job.” He felt it was better than minimum expectation on their training program.

While he was the POI, there was only one unsatisfactory proficiency training event; this occurred within the first group of pilots. He thought that it could have been because that pilot had been out of the aircraft for too long. He felt that the airline brought in good people, had a lot of knowledge at their disposal and it consisted of a “strong group” within management. He had no problems with the initial cadre. He further felt that the current unsatisfactory rate through training was less than 10%. Most of the pilots had airline experience. He did provide a caveat that he didn’t feel the data was very good on unsatisfactory rates.

When asked if he was aware of any go around conducted at Eastern Air Lines, he stated that during the proving runs there were at least two done as part of the proving runs. He saw one go around in the aircraft when someone pulled onto the runway and another due to a lack of separation. He said they do a bunch in the simulator. He clarified that both times he saw a go around; air traffic control had called for it.

He had only written up one person, and that was for entry door procedures. He liked to ask different questions when he observes them. He said they mostly do very well.

When Eastern had the incident with the light pole he was notified. They sat down with the procedures and Eastern did an investigation. Their fix was plausible. It made a progressive change and included more robust procedures.

Interview concluded at 1045 EST.