



**FAA**  
**Indianapolis Flight Standards District Office (GL-11)**

## Inspector Statement

N201QB

March 23, 2012 – 113

Pilot in Command - Brent D. Sears

Accident # CEN12LA195

### **03/23/2012**

On March 23, 2012 at approximately 9:25 pm EDT (0125Z), I received a call from the Great Lakes Regional Operations Center (GL ROC) about an aircraft accident/incident in Bloomfield, IN. The aircraft was identified as N201QB, a M20J. I was told two occupants were aboard, but was given no names at the time. I was asked to call back after speaking to the Indiana State Police (ISP), who were on scene. I was given the number to the ISP Post in Bloomington, IN [REDACTED]. Upon contact with the ISP Post, the dispatcher stated the aircraft had gone into a ditch with two people on board. I was given Trooper Adam Davis' phone number [REDACTED] who was on the scene.

My initial contact with Trooper Davis went to voicemail as he was assisting with getting the occupants out of the aircraft. Trooper Davis returned my call at approximately 9:40 pm EDT (0140Z). He told me the pilot's name was Brent Sears [REDACTED] and his pilot certificate number was [REDACTED]. Trooper Davis got this information from Mr. Sears' wallet. He did not have the passengers name at this time but stated he was a male. He stated that Mr. Sears and the passenger were being transported to Indiana University Hospital in Bloomington, IN and that another Trooper was going to try and retrieve statements from the two gentlemen. He stated the passenger had a broken back and was unsure of Mr. Sears' injuries. He also stated that Mr. Perry Ausman [REDACTED], may have witnessed the accident.

After speaking with Trooper Davis, I contacted my Front Line Supervisor, John Henderson, and told him what I knew about the accident. We decided to leave for the scene first thing in the morning. I then called Inspector Robert (Bob) Curley, who would be assisting in the investigation, and gave him the details as well. We decided to meet and depart the office at 6:00 am on March 24, 2012.

I called Trooper Davis one more time. I asked Trooper Davis to secure the aircraft and treat it like a crime scene. I told him we would be on scene at approximately 7:30 EDT (1130 Z) the next morning. He stated he would secure the scene and that a trooper would stay there overnight.

I then called the GL ROC back and gave them the details I received from Trooper Davis. I asked to be connected with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). They connected me with Leah Yeager [REDACTED]. I told Ms. Yeager all of the information I had on the accident and that I would contact her in the morning after we looked at the wreckage.

### **03/24/2012**

Bob Curley and I arrived at the scene at 7:30 am EDT (1130Z). (See Inspector Curley's statement attached for the aircraft damage description.) Trooper Davis stated that the aircraft had been moved up the hill about 10-15 feet to ensure it did not slide into the stream. The aircraft appeared to impact the embankment nose first. I noted that the left fuel tank had fuel visible in the tank and the right tank had no visible fuel. As the pictures show, the right fuel gauge was the only one registering fuel. The fuel selector had been shut off as well.

I spoke with Ms. Yeager while we were still on scene. She asked us to retrieve any handheld GPS devices, which I did. She stated the aircraft could be released to be moved, but no one was to work on the aircraft.

We debriefed with Trooper Davis before departing. At this time, he gave us a contact number for Mrs. Sears, Brent's wife, of [REDACTED]. He also stated they were attempting to contact Mr. Ed Woods, one of the owners of the aircraft.

I spoke with Mrs. Sears briefly. She told me Mr. Sears had a broken back as well as the passenger who she identified as Stephan Sutton. Both gentlemen were being prepared to be moved to Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis.

We departed the scene at approximately 9:30 am EDT (1330Z).

At approximately 10:45 am EDT (1445Z) Trooper Davis called me with Mr. Woods' contact number [REDACTED]. I provided this number to Inspector Curley who arranged for Mr. Woods to drop the aircraft logbooks off at the FSDO on April 2, 2012. Mr. Woods left the logbooks with me at approximately 9:00 am on April 2, 2012.

### **03/26/2012**

I spoke with Trooper Davis and requested that he send me his police report and any pictures from the scene. He agreed and sent them to me later in the day. The report and pictures are included in this file.

I also spoke with Mr. Perry Ausman. He was not very willing to say that he witnessed the accident but did state he saw/heard the aircraft go around the airport 3 times with its lights on. He did not see the accident and didn't know anything happened until he heard the sirens from the fire trucks.

### **03/28/2012**

Inspector Curley and I went to Methodist Hospital to interview Mr. Brent Sears. Mr. Sears stated he was the pilot in command and they were repositioning the aircraft to Shawnee Field from Sullivan, IN for its annual inspection. He stated he had attempted to land three times but went around and this was the fourth attempt. He stated the wheels touched down but he did not feel the brakes were working. When he realized he wasn't going to get stopped, he attempted another go around. He thought he was going to get airborne but he states the aircraft never left the ground. He remembered the impact and calling 911 but did not recall turning off the fuel selector. Before leaving, Mrs. Sears told us that Mr. Sutton had received recent news that he had some paralysis. Inspector Curley and I decided not to interview Mr. Sutton until a later date.

During the investigation it was noted that the area around Shawnee Field received a brief period of rain which may have left the grass strip wet and slick. This may be why Mr. Sears felt the brakes were not working as the aircraft could have been sliding.

### **04/09/2012**

After several attempts to contact Mr. Stephan Sutton, the passenger, I was able to speak with him. Mr. Sutton told me was paralyzed from the waist down as a result of this accident. He was obviously upset about the event but was very honest with me. He stated Mr. Sears had been his CFI and was a very professional throughout his training. He reaffirmed the purpose of the flight was to position the aircraft in Bloomfield for its annual inspection.

As they approached the airport it was just getting dark and Mr. Sears activated the runway lights. Mr. Sutton stated that Mr. Sears was turning to his base leg a little too early, which was causing them to come in high on the approaches. Mr. Sutton stated Mr. Sears took three attempts at landing, not four as Mr. Sears stated. On the first attempt, an airborne go around was initiated. On the second attempt, the wheels touched down, but Mr. Sutton estimates only 200 feet of runway were remaining as he only saw one runway light from the end. Mr. Sears initiated another go around. On the third attempt the aircraft touched down again, this time with 400 feet of runway remaining per Mr. Sutton's estimate. Mr. Sutton stated that Mr. Sears slammed on the brakes and the aircraft began to slide. Upon exiting the end of the runway, Mr. Sears applied full power and pitched up. As the wheels crossed over the dirt road separating the runway and plowed field, the aircraft became airborne briefly. Mr. Sutton recalls seeing the stall warning light, but does not remember hearing a stall horn. Mr. Sutton said the aircraft stalled and impacted the field while continuing forward, ultimately impacting the opposite side of the creek bank.

Mr. Sutton told me his father, John Sutton, had pictures of the aircraft tire tracks going through the field as he described. I contacted Mr. John Sutton and requested these pictures and he agreed to email them to me.

Mr. Sutton's recollection and state of mind seemed more vivid than that of Mr. Sears as he could recall minor details such as the runway distance remaining. Mr. Sutton stated that the actions of Mr. Sears were not characteristic of him. He had heard he recently suffered a heart attack but had been cleared to return to fly.

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