

## *Record of Interview*

**Name:** William Siegel, Chief Pilot, Synfuels Holdings Finance, LLC  
**Address:** [REDACTED] Birmingham, AL [REDACTED]  
**Phone:** [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
**Date:** 6/19/2014, 8:30 am  
**Description:** Purpose of the flight on 6/18/2014 in N793BG and background on the aircraft maintenance

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Mr. Siegel stated that Mr. Robin Smith had been hired to conduct Pilot Proficiency rides in Westwind, N793BG for two local pilots, Mr. William Christopher and Mr. Kenneth Rousseau, both are contract employees of Synfuels. Mr. Smith is a PPE, type rated in the Westwind 2 and authorized as a PPE in the Westwind 2. Mr. Siegel has used Mr. Smith on a numerous previous occasions. Mr. Siegel presented training certificates dated May 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013, and issued by Mr. Smith to Mr. Christopher and Mr. Rousseau, respectively.

Mr. Siegel stated that both pilots were "right-seaters" with Synfuels. Bill Christopher would sometimes fly in the left as captain but Ken Rousseau was only interested in being a co-pilot. Both pilots had also taken a checkride last month or so with Mr. Smith in the Merlin operated by Owen Vickers and hangared next door in the "condo" hangar. Mr. Siegel stated that he thought Mr. Christopher may have also been flying Russell Warren's King Air. Mr. Siegel does not have any pilot records for either pilot other than last year's training certificate which he only keeps on file for insurance records. Mr. Siegel also stated that Mr. Rousseau's wife had passed away about 1 ½ years ago and that Mr. Rousseau wanted to do more flying and Mr. Siegel was trying to use him when he could. Mr. Siegel did not know how either pilot maintained their pilot logbooks or where they were. Mr. Christopher's wife, Laurie can be contacted at [REDACTED]

Mr. Siegel stated that the typical scenario for the training profile conducted by Mr. Smith was to spend some time on a ground school refresher on the airplane and then to fly. Typically with two pilots, he would put one in the left seat and then he would act as co-pilot in the right seat while also conducting the pilot proficiency check. The third pilot would sit in the back. They would depart and climb to altitude to conduct airwork manuevurs such as stalls, steep turns, etc. At altitude, the two pilots would swap seats so the second pilot could do his airwork. That pilot would then shoot some approaches, land and swap seats on the ground so that the first pilot could do some approaches.

Mr. Siegel stated that Mr. Smith would usually do a V1 cut just after takeoff. Mr. Smith would reach down to raise the gear and then retard the right throttle. Mr. Siegel stated that the Westwind can be a bit tricky to control at V1. You have to watch your speed.

Mr. Siegel stated that the aircraft is maintained by Jet Harbor in Fort Lauderdale, FL and that they have done all the maintenance since 2003. Mr. Siegel also stated that there are nine aircraft maintenance logbooks and that the most recent, #9 would have been on the aircraft. The last A & B checks were done on the aircraft in July 2013 and that the aircraft had flown 68 hours last year.

As of May 31, 2014:

A/C TT 7616.9 hours      Aircraft flew 1.2 hours on 6/16/2014 plus the time flown on 6/18/2014  
prior to crash

Left engine TT 7571.5 hrs, 5636 cycles

Right engine TT 7454.9 hrs, 5619 cycles

Mr. Siegel stated "there have been no issues or problems with the airplane of any sort." The engines were overhauled in January 2003 and hot sections done in 2008.

Mr. Siegel stated there was a CVR installed by Garrett "or whoever they are now, might be Honeywell" in Augusta, GA but that was before they bought the airplane in 2003.

Mr. Siegel stated that the owner always maintained the airplane and believed the airplane should always look good to the people riding on board.

Jet Harbor can be reached at [REDACTED]  
Manager: Damien Weber, Jr [REDACTED] cell email: [REDACTED]

Mr. Siegel later stated to Inspector McBride that he had seen to the fueling of the aircraft himself on 6/18/2014 and stated that it had 4800 pounds of fuel prior to departure from BHM on 6/18/2014. Mr. Siegel stated that the two pilots and Mr. Smith had completed the ground training around 11:00 am that morning and then gone to lunch. They returned close to 12:30 at which time Mr. Smith, Mr. Rousseau and Mr. Christopher boarded the aircraft to conduct the flight portion of the recurrent training.

[REDACTED]

Nina A. McBride  
Aviation Safety Inspector, OPS  
ASO-FSDO-09, AL/NW Florida FSDO

## *Record of Interview*

**Name:** Captain James Christopher (Chris) Scott, Huntsville Airport Dept of Public Safety

**Address:**

**Phone:** [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

**Date:** 6/19/2014 12:41 CDT

**Description:** Witness to aircraft accident N793BG

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Mr. Scott stated that he was standing at the W5W intersection on the non active side of the hold short line for runway 18R. He was standing next to a disabled Dash 8 aircraft which was shut down. He and other members of the Department of Public Safety were assisting the disabled aircraft which had experienced an overheated brake. The disabled aircraft was facing east and Mr. Scott was standing behind but near the left wing tip with his back to runway 18R.

He heard a loud noise behind him and to the west. It sounded like an airplane on the runway had full power, "had thrown all the throttle to it". He had no idea if the airplane was landing or taking off at that time. His first thought was "What are they doing?" and he turned around. He remembers thinking "no, they're in trouble." He remembers thinking they were low.

He saw the aircraft bank to the right and it was almost banked 90°. He used a small airplane model to demonstrate that the aircraft was banked almost 90°. He then saw it roll over and the aircraft went out of sight below the edge of the runway. He then immediately heard the impact. It all happened in seconds. He knew when he saw the airplane rolling that they were going to crash. He described the aircraft as sliding through the air like a car skids sideways as it rolled over out of sight below the runway edge. It was almost instantaneous that he heard the impact and saw the smoke/debris cloud rising. The last sight he had of the airplane was of it rolling over and immediately heard the impact. Mr. Scott said that he is not a good judge of height and that he knows that from where he was standing, his judgement would not be accurate. All he would say was that the aircraft looked low but was airborne. He did not think that it ever got higher than the top of the ATC tower (the tower was not in his view. We discussed the height of the tower as a comparison).

Mr. Scott stated that he did not see anything out of the ordinary with the aircraft; he did not see debris, smoke, vapor, or fire when he saw the airplane rolling through the air. He also stated that the weather was good that day, pretty warm but the winds were light. They had to set up fans to cool the brakes on the disabled airplane on the taxiway.

Mr. Scott has worked for the Airport Department of Public Safety for 10 years, starting as an officer and worked his way up to the administrative position he now holds. He has responded to probably 7-8 accidents in his career and lots of alerts. He has flown in small GA airplane with a friend who is a pilot.

[REDACTED]

Nina A. McBride  
Aviation Safety Inspector, OPS  
ASO-FSDO-09, AL/NW Florida FSDO

## *Record of Interview*

**Name:** Ryan Gardner, HMCAA Operations Manager

**Address:**

**Phone:** [REDACTED] **email:** [REDACTED]

**Date:** 6/20/2014 10:15 a.m.

**Description:** N793BG

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Mr. Gardner stated that he was on taxiway whiskey at the W5 intersection assisting with a disabled aircraft, a Dash 8. He had just returned to the disabled aircraft after traveling down the Whiskey taxiway on the tug and had passed the Westwind that was stopped on taxiway Whiskey between taxiway Juliet and Kilo. He next saw the Westwind when it was airborne at approximately 100 feet above the ground and it seemed to stay at 100 feet. It was barely even with Mr. Gardner or not quite to him when when it banked about 60° to the right or more. He thought it looked like the nose of the aircraft was up slightly. Then the aircraft looked like it lost all its thrust and then slid below his field of view.

Mr. Gardner stated that runway 18R had just reopened after they had towed the disabled aircraft clear of runway 18R. He said it was his natural instinct to turn and look at an aircraft as it was taking off because the runway had just reopened. He kept watching the airplane because it did not seem to be climbing and was staying level along the runway and then it banked to the right and dropped out of his view. Then he saw the dust and smoke plume. He did not see anything out of the ordinary coming off the airplane, such as smoke, debris, vapor or flames. What was unusual was the aircraft's attitude being barely nose up and the low altitude and not climbing any more.

Mr. Gardner has been Airport Operations Manager for 3 years and has been employed by the Airport for 6 years. About 10 years ago, Mr. Gardner took flying lessons and has a total of 20 hours flight time.

[REDACTED]

Nina A. McBride  
Aviation Safety Inspector, OPS  
ASO-FSDO-09, AL/NW Florida FSDO

## *Record of Telephone Conversation*

**Name:** Jonathan Comeaux, F.O., PSA Airlines Flight 4774 on 6/18/2014  
**Address:**  
**Phone:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** 6/23/2014 3:00 pm  
**Description:** Witness to aircraft accident N793BG, 6/18/2014, KHSV

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Mr. Comeaux was the first officer on PSA flight #4774 on 6/18/2014 as it was on final approach to runway 18R at KHSV. Mr. Comeaux stated that their flight had just switched over to the tower frequency and had been cleared to land. He heard N793BG call ready for takeoff on runway 18R. Tower cleared N793BG for takeoff as PSA 4774 was passing through ~1000 feet. He saw the airplane take the runway and begin the takeoff roll. As the PSA flight was passing through 500 feet, he saw N793BG rotate. It looked like he pitched up and was in a steeper than normal climb and then made a hard right turn. He thought it was odd because the airplane had been given runway heading in the takeoff clearance. He saw the aircraft banking hard to the right, like 70° - 90°. He did not see them try to regain wings level but continued in a hard right turn with the nose dropping. He then saw the aircraft hit the ground in a 45° nose down position with the right wing tip hitting the ground first. He immediately saw black smoke and a billowing cloud with dust, smoke and flames. The airplane was not inverted but in almost a 90 degree bank when it hit the ground. He called the tower and asked if they "had seen that." At around 300 feet, the tower issued a go around clearance to PSA 4774 so he focused on his first officer duties.

Mr. Comeaux added that it seemed like "they got off the ground kinda quick." Like it was early for them to have rotated but, "of course, I don't know how heavy they were and I haven't flown a westwind. I have friends that have flown them and they said they love the ground." That's why he thought that the airplane would have had a longer takeoff roll than what he saw.

Mr. Comeaux stated that he has been flying for 15 years and had gotten his private pilot license at 17 years old. He is a F.O. for PSA on the CRJ-700.

[REDACTED]

Nina A. McBride  
Aviation Safety Inspector, OPS  
ASO-FSDO-09, AL/NW Florida FSDO

## *Record of Telephone Conversation*


**Name:** Christian Salistean, Captain, PSA Flight 4774 on 6/18/2014, KHSV  
**Address:**  
**Phone:** 317-496-5432  
**Date:** 6/23/2014 4:10 pm  
**Description:** Witness to aircraft accident N793BG, 6/18/2014, KHSV

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Mr. Salistean was Captain on Flight 4774 into KHSV on 6/18/2014 and was flying the CRJ-700 at the time of the accident involving N793BG. Mr. Salistean stated that he had been cleared to land by HSV tower. He remembers hearing N793BG was cleared for takeoff. He was probably well inside the outer marker when his first officer remarked that "he is off the runway," meaning that the aircraft that had been cleared for takeoff had just rotated. He looked outside and saw N793BG climbing at what seemed like "a really good rate of climb, he was climbing really steeply and I could see the top of his wings completely, it was that steep." Mr. Salistean then saw the airplane make a really hard right turn and he thought, "why is he turning?" Then he saw the aircraft going down and thought, "What is he doing?" Then it hit the ground and there was a huge dirt plume and dust went into the air. Mr. Salistean stated he thought that when he saw the airplane start its' right turn that it was level or maybe slightly higher in altitude than he was. His copilot said "did you see that" and then the co-pilot immediately asked the tower if they saw it. Then PSA 4774 were issued a go around clearance and he was concentrating on flying.

Mr. Salistean then stated that, because he was flying his airplane, his head was back and forth in and out of the cockpit as this was all happening. Mr. Salistean also stated that he may have heard the airplane on the frequency when they were first contacting HSV Approach. He thinks he remembers them saying something about staying in the pattern for a few landings. He remembers thinking that the pilot of that airplane had a really strong southern accent.

Mr. Salistean has been flying for PSA for 30 years and is the most senior pilot on the line.

  
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Aviation Safety Inspector, OPS  
ASO-FSDO-09, AL/NW Florida FSDO

## *Record of Interview*

**Name:** William Siegel, Chief Pilot, Synfuels Holdings Finance, LLC  
**Address:** [REDACTED] Birmingham, AL [REDACTED]  
**Phone:** [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
**Date:** 6/27/2014, 2:30 pm  
**Description:** Follow-up on questions regarding thrust reverser deployment, N793BG

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I contacted Mr. Siegel to request clarification regarding the discussion we had on June 19, 2014 about the deployment of the thrust reversers on N793BG. While walking away from the aircraft wreckage at the accident site, Mr. Siegel had commented to me that it might be possible to inadvertently deploy a thrust reverser if you "snatched the throttle back really quickly." He said "of course you would have to be below, like 140, for that to work." Our conversation was interrupted at that time.

I contacted Mr. Siegel on June 26, 2014 and asked him to clarify our discussion regarding the thrust reversers. Mr. Siegel stated that what he meant was "you would have to snatch the throttle back so hard that you would lift the piggy back stow out of its detent. The thrust reverser will only come out if you lift the piggy back handle out of the detent and then that's when the thrust lever is in idle.

Mr. Siegel then stated that if the thrust reversers are out, then the aircraft speed has to be below 140 or else the ram air will keep them open.

He then stated he noticed that the right thrust reverser was "obviously not open when it hit the ground or else it would have ripped the door off. Those doors extend way out beyond the engine cowling. There were no marks on the doors themselves that make them look like they were open when they hit the ground. It seems like if the doors were open, then they would have ripped when they hit the ground. What's strange is that there was a piece of cabin debris in the thrust reverser. I can't imagine how that got in there." He also stated that the right thrust reverser doors were not fully deployed at the wreckage but were only half way open. Normally they would be much farther out if they were fully deployed.

Mr. Siegel then explained that the thrust reversers are electrically controlled and hydraulically actuated. There are accumulators so that if you lose hydraulic pressure, you have one deployment and one stow cycle. There is a micro switch in the throttle which is activated by two toggles under throttle. You would arm the thrust reversers with these toggles for takeoff and before landing. When it is armed, there are two blue lights on the panel. A red light means the TR is unsafe. In a normal takeoff with the thrust reversers armed, when you abort the takeoff, you would bring the throttle to idle and then lift the piggy backs up and over the detent and deploy the thrust reversers. Now if you have an inadvertent thrust reverser deployment with the throttle out of idle, there is a cable that runs from the throttle through a fuel control computer to the thrust reverser. If the thrust reverser door comes open with the throttle beyond idle, it will sense this and jerk the throttle back to idle. That is a very basic description of the system.

Mr. Siegel said that he had a copy of the flight manual, checklists and all sorts of information on the airplane. He would be glad to give any of it to me for the investigation. I told him that I would be interested in getting it and someone would contact him next week to pick up.

Nina A. McBride [REDACTED]  
Aviation Safety Inspector, OPS ASO-FSDO-09, AL/NW Florida FSDO