

ATTACHMENT 2

Witness Statements (4)

DCA12MA020 Human Performance Specialist's Factual Report

Witness Statement Ops Check Flight Pilot

On Wednesday December 7th, 2011 the day started out with a scheduled Maintenance Operational Flight Check (MOC) on helicopter N37SH. The helicopter was fresh out of a 100hr inspection which included an engine change and replacement of two hydraulic servos. The preflight inspection revealed that the belt tension for the hydraulic pump required tightening. Beyond this nothing else major was found on preflight. The aircraft was looked over once again prior to flight and departed shortly after the 7am flights to conduct the MOC. The engine installed on N37SH was a lease engine and was in service prior to installation on N37SH so the MOC was conducted as standard with all 100hr inspections. All temperatures and pressures were within parameters, hydraulic checks felt normal and the engine passed its power check. The entire MOC was 0.2 on the hobbs meter. The helicopter was looked over once again after the MOC to find any obvious oil leakage in and around the aircraft. N37SH was flown again on a 9:45am picnic tour to the Grand Canyon which included a landing and shut down at the bottom of the Canyon. During this flight of about 1.4 on the hobbs meter, the aircraft performed normal and nothing out of the ordinary was noted. Landon Nield was scheduled in the N37SH for a 1:30pm picnic tour so upon return to Las Vegas I removed my flight equipment and followed normal turnover procedures for the next flight.

I returned that day for a 2:45pm sunset picnic tour. I was flying N452SH to the Canyon when I heard Landon Nield back to Las Vegas from his 1:30pm picnic tour. He was making radio calls as required at certain land marks stating his position, altitude and direction. He sounded normal.

Returning from the sunset tour I was in trail of Chuck Robbins in N399SH. In front of Chuck was Logan Greenert in N708SH. Moments before reaching the reporting point "North of the Narrows" a brief scream of distress was noticed on the Lake Mead CTAF 120.65. It sounded like a scream from the pilot and not that of passengers in the background. It also sounded like the scream of a male. The time was approximately 4:30pm and the sun was set. The sky to the West was still lit from the sun and dark to the East. During my descent from 4,500ft msl to 3,000ft msl and between reporting points "North of the Narrows" and "North of Calville Bay" a significant amount of black smoke was coming out of The River Mountains area. I asked Chuck to switch to our discreet company frequency where I asked him if he noticed the smoke. Chuck said he was just about to mention something about it. We both determined that the location and intensity of the fire was not a good sign considering it was along the helicopter route and over non-populated area. We proceeded past Calville Bay to join the Calville Arrival at 3,000ft msl. Chuck and I were both in EC130's with dual communication radios so monitoring two frequencies was made easy. Chuck and I called into base to find out if all aircraft were accounted for. Base reported back that Landon was out on a twilight tour so Chuck and I tried reaching N357SH by it's call sign "Landmark 57" on Lake Mead CTAF 120.65. There was no response. Chuck decided to investigate the fire diverted off route toward the smoke. Meanwhile, I contacted Las Vegas tower to proceed on the Calville Arrival. Observing from the normal route the smoke appeared to lean to the North slightly which indicated light winds from the South. Chuck communicated with me on the second comm radio on company frequency and said, "It doesn't look good."

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While over the crash scene, Chuck advised me to have someone send Metro Police Department to investigate. I then contacted our base and asked to have Metro sent out. I continued on with the Arrival to finish the tour as normal.

Later that evening Tony Ferrari diverted from a charter flight to confirm it was N37SH that had gone down.

The above statement is by Andre Vargas
Hired: 02/05/10 Line Captain
Cellular Number [REDACTED]



Witness Statement
Other Sundance Tour Pilot

On the evening of Wednesday, December 7, 2011, at about 1645 PM, I, Charles Robbins, Sundance Helicopter Pilot, was returning from a Sunset Tour in aircraft #N399SH. This aircraft has 2 radio capabilities. On the North end of the Narrows, I recall hearing a very short scream on frequency 120.65. Descending out of the Narrows, at about 4500 feet, I noticed brown smoke coming from the River Mountain area. I was the second to last aircraft returning from the Sunset Tours. I then made a call to Base on frequency 130.75 to see if all Landmark aircraft had reported in yet. I was told that aircraft # N37SH was on a Twilight Tour. I then returned to frequency 120.65 to attempt to contact LM57. There was no answer, so I then switched to frequency 122.72 and again there was no answer for LM57. The visibility was unrestricted and the winds were at approximately 5 Knots. I decided to fly directly to the smoke to investigate what was burning. Upon arrival I made contact with Las Vegas Tower on frequency 123.82 to see if there was an ELT going off. Tower advised me that there was no ELT sounding off. I then made 4 or 5 orbits around the fire. It appeared to be a downed aircraft. The terrain was visible and I was able to make out the aircraft wreckage on the ground. The fire was about the size of ½ of a football field (50yards), in a deep ravine and was burning "upslope". Again visibility was unrestricted. I asked Las Vegas Tower to see if Metro Aviation was in the area. They told me no and I then returned to Base.

As a retired Chief Warrant Officer 3, my experience includes 15 1/2 years as a military pilot and 9 1/2 years as an enlisted soldier. Upon retirement, I had accumulated 4500 hours in the UH-1H "Hueys". Since retiring from the military I have been flying in the Grand Canyon since March of 1998. Therefore, my flying hours in helicopters is approximately 16,374 cumulative.

My contact information is as follows:

Cell # [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Charles A. Robbins

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
SUPPLEMENTAL INCIDENT RECORD**

FORM 10-34

Incident Number: **LAKE11-2578**

Type: **Death Investigation**

Summary: Telephone interview of Tim Becerra

Involved Person: Tim Becerra
 [Redacted]
 [Redacted]
 Cell # [Redacted]
 Employed by Southern Nevada Water Authority (Security Guard)
 Works [Redacted]

Telephone interview on Thursday December 8, 2011 at 09:58 hours:

Statements made by Tim Becerra:

- "I was on the west side of our property (Alfred Merritt Smith Water Treatment Plant) checking that the pumping plants and gates were locked."
- "I heard a helicopter flying which was not unusual because there are helicopters flying overhead all the time."
- "I next heard the helicopter which I think was the same helicopter racing the engine."
- He also further described what he heard as "the pilot was gunning its engine and the engine screaming redlining."
- He next stated that he heard "a muffled thud."
- "I knew something had happened."
- "I backed up far enough to see."
- "I saw a black plume of smoke coming up."
- "It looked like it was near the west side access road near our regulating tanks."
- "As soon as I saw it where it was I asked our security center to call the National Park Service. I made this call via the radio."
- "I then drove up the west side road (that's what we call it) for almost two miles (end of the road)."
- "I got out of my vehicle and started to walk towards the smoke. I went down a hill and up a hill and quickly realized that it was another mile and a half or too far to walk to. I stopped and returned to my vehicle."
- "I then talked to park dispatch on my cell phone. I think the dispatcher was Renee."
- "I heard the crash but I did not see it because it was obscured by some hills."
- "I could smell burning fuel."
- "I could not see flames but I did see dark black smoke."
- "I kept giving the dispatcher directions until Ranger Sauer arrived with me which I marked the time at 16:00 hours."
- **The time of the crash was 16:38 hours (December 7, 2011). I made a note of it.**
- "I feel bad for those people."

End of Interview at 10:10 hours.

Reporting Officer's Name Special Agent Mike Blandford	ID # [Redacted]	Supervisor's Name SSA Paul Crawford	ID # [Redacted]
Reporting Officer's Signature [Signature]	Date 12-08-2011	Supervisor's Signature [Signature]	Date

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
SUPPLEMENTAL INCIDENT RECORD**

FORM

Incident Number: **LAKE2011-2578**

Type: **Death Investigation**

SUMMARY: Telephone interview of: Ron Terfaj

Involved Person: Ron Terfaj

[Redacted]

Cell # [Redacted]

Employed by Southern Nevada Water Authority (Water Treatment Facility Main Mechanic)

Works [Redacted]

Telephone interview on Thursday December 8, 2011 at 09:40 hours:

Statements made by Ron Terfaj:

- "On my way home from work." (Alfred Merritt Smith Water Treatment Plant located near Boulder Nevada)
- "All I saw was smoke – black smoke – no flames. It was maybe four or five miles out to the west fi road (Lakeshore Road)."
- The sun was starting to go down – "there was plenty of light out at that time."
- "I never saw a helicopter."
- "It was a little bit after 4:30 pm (Wednesday December 7, 2011)."
- "I called 911 and I was transferred from the Las Vegas Metro Police to the Clark County Fire Depa They told me that they were going to call the National Park Service."
- "That's all I know."

End of Interview at 09:53 hours.

Reporting Officer's Name Special Agent Mike Blandford	ID # [Redacted]	Supervisor's Name SSA Paul Crawford	ID #
Reporting Officer's Signature [Signature]	Date 12-08-2011	Supervisor's Signature	Date