

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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AIR METHODS CORPORATION
LIFENET HELICOPTER ACCIDENT
AUGUST 26, 2011
NEAR MOSBY, MISSOURI

Docket No.: CEN11FA599

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Interview of: PETER PELAYIC

Via Telephone

Thursday,
November 10, 2011

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MALCOM BRENNER, Ph.D.
Senior Human Performance Investigator

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1 I N T E R V I E W

2 MR. BRENNER: -- phone as well. Jim Silliman is the
3 Investigator-in-Charge, and Maryam Allahyar is also a human
4 performance investigator. And I understand that you're being
5 represented by Mr. Wright (ph.) at your request, with your
6 support; is that correct?

7 MR. PELAYIC: That's correct.

8 MR. BRENNER: And our procedure has been, and we've
9 cleared this with Mr. Wright, to tape record the interview and
10 then use a transcript and provide a copy to your representative.

11 Is it okay if we tape record the interview?

12 MR. PELAYIC: That's no problem.

13 MR. BRENNER: Okay. One second.

14 INTERVIEW OF PETER PELAYIC

15 BY MR. BRENNER:

16 Q. Mr. Pelayic, could you please tell me your background?
17 How many hours do you have as a pilot?

18 A. Total time?

19 Q. Yeah, total.

20 A. Oh, golly. Just shy of 4,000 hours total time.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. But I wouldn't be able -- I'd have to look back on my
23 logbook to --

24 Q. Sure. Just a rough idea of it. And about how many
25 hours in A-Star?

1 A. A little over 200. Once again, I wouldn't be able to
2 give you an exact figure. With B2 and B3 model.

3 Q. Okay. You know, I'm a little bit out of order here and
4 I apologize for it. Let me just tell you -- are you familiar with
5 the NTSB and why we're doing the investigation?

6 A. Yes, I am.

7 Q. Okay. I'm very sorry for the occasion of it, and our
8 purpose is just to find out what happened and make recommendations
9 to prevent it from happening. So, we're working with the
10 industry. We very much appreciate your being available for us.

11 What's your date of hire with Air Methods?

12 A. Oh, I think it was February 7th, is my actual date of
13 hire, of this year, 2011.

14 Q. Okay. And how long were you stationed in St. Joe's?

15 A. I got done with my initial training -- oh, I couldn't
16 give you an exact date -- end of April, May time frame, and then I
17 went and started doing relief work in St. Joe right away. And I
18 was in St. Joe May, June, July, up until the crash.

19 Q. And just a quick overview. What's your background in
20 aviation?

21 A. Aviation in general or specifically commercial aviation?

22 Q. No, aviation in general. How'd you get started?

23 A. I started out as a jet engine mechanic in the Marine
24 Corps from 1979 to 1983.

25 Q. Great.

1 A. I worked on fixed-wing aircraft. I got out of the
2 Marine Corps in '83, and moved to Colorado. Went to flight school
3 in Greeley, Colorado in the spring of 1989; got my commercial
4 helicopter -- rotorcraft helicopter in December of '89; got my CFI
5 in the spring of '91; went into law enforcement in 1993; put
6 together an aviation unit for the Summit County Sheriff's
7 Department with DOD, OH-58C Model, in 1996-97; went on to purchase
8 an aircraft of my own, a used Bell 47, in 2002; ran a small Part
9 91 business for a couple years; and then in 2002 to 2006 time
10 frame, started flying tours in South Dakota up at Crazy Horse and
11 Mt. Rushmore; then went on to subsequently work on a couple
12 contracts with the Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services in
13 predation control in Oklahoma on a contract for a Part 135
14 operator. I was a single pilot 135 for him. I was also a single
15 pilot 135 for the operator in South Dakota for several different
16 occasions over several years.

17 Went to work for EagleMed LLC out of Wichita in -- I've
18 got to get my dates correct -- would have been '09 -- '10. I'm
19 going to have to back up a little bit. We're here -- I left them
20 January of 2011, so I was with them in the spring of 2010. So I
21 worked for them just shy of a year. I went to work for them, I
22 think it was January of 2010, and left in February of 2011, so I
23 was just right at a year with them.

24 And then I've been working for Air Methods since
25 February of this year.

1 Q. How do you like the medical side of the industry?

2 A. It's a bit slower than I had anticipated, but it's good.
3 I enjoy the crews. The aircraft are well maintained. The
4 professionalism that the crews and the mechanics and everyone
5 demonstrates has been nice, but it's a bit slower than I would've
6 anticipated.

7 Q. How slow is it?

8 A. Oh, I mean, I'm just talking in terms of, you know,
9 actually flying --

10 Q. I see.

11 A. -- compared with some other portions of the industry.

12 Q. I see.

13 A. I went from flying 6 hours a day, when I was doing the
14 game contract, every day for 5 days a week to, you know, not quite
15 that.

16 Q. At St. Joe's what was -- over those months what would be
17 a typical flying that you're doing? How much?

18 A. Well, I'm trying to think back. I don't think I did
19 more than -- you know, I wouldn't be able to give you exact
20 figures. I probably wouldn't -- I can't tell you without
21 reviewing my record. It wasn't as much as I thought it was going
22 to be, but I can't remember to tell you the truth.

23 Q. Okay. I understand you were on duty and handed off the
24 aircraft to the accident pilot. Is that right?

25 A. That's correct. I was the night pilot that night. I

1 finished at -- 0630 that morning was the shift change.

2 Q. Um-hum. Can you tell me about the shift change and any
3 observations from that?

4 A. Sure. As per the base-prescribed shift change, there's
5 a list of things that you cover: status of the aircraft; fuel
6 status; any gripes that may have come up that were handled or
7 anything that you need to pass on to the oncoming pilot to look at
8 or to bring up to the mechanic when he comes in; the level of the
9 locks. And typically we'll tell them who their oncoming crew is,
10 too. A lot of times we'll know that. Not all the time, but a lot
11 of times. It just helps them to have a heads-up, you know, when
12 they figure out their weight and balance

13 Because the med crews switched out a little bit
14 differently than we do. They switched out a little bit -- I think
15 about a half hour after we switched out.

16 Q. What time did Mr. Freudenberg arrive?

17 A. Oh, golly. I can't tell you exactly. I don't remember.

18 Q. How much overlap did you have with him?

19 A. Typically we have a good half hour. Yeah. I mean, you
20 know, he may have gotten there at 06. I just don't know. But
21 typically we'll have a good, you know, 20 minutes. Everyone that
22 I ever switched out with, we always had a good 20-minute overlap.

23 Q. And any personal observations from them?

24 A. I don't understand.

25 Q. Well, what was his mood like?

1 A. Oh gosh, I don't know. I mean, I really wouldn't be
2 able to talk about his mood. I couldn't recall that --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- specifically.

5 Q. How alert did he seem?

6 A. Oh, very alert. Yeah, we talked about -- obviously, I
7 briefed him on the duty aircraft, 101-Lima-November, the status of
8 the aircraft, the fuel load, the locks, and I don't believe there
9 was anything to bring up that morning on 101-Lima-November. And I
10 briefed him on 352-Lima-November, the fact that it was parked out
11 on the ramp and that we were done with the training and that it
12 needed to be configured that morning when Kevin came in. And then
13 I told him -- I did bring up specifically the fact that it was low
14 on fuel and it needed fuel when he got around to doing it.

15 Q. How did you know that?

16 A. Because it had been passed on to me from Jay Watson.

17 Q. How low on fuel was it?

18 A. You know, I can't recall specifically. I just know that
19 during the evening I had refueled them once before. It may have
20 even been twice; I can't remember specifically. But I had
21 refueled. I helped them refuel, him and Andy Worley, on one of
22 their flights. They had a couple flights together that evening,
23 you know, 25th, 26th. They were trying to finish training up, so.

24 But I don't remember exactly how much it was low. I
25 don't even know if it was specifically said to me how much it was

1 low. I couldn't tell.

2 Q. Do you remember what time about the refuelings were?

3 A. Well, typically when a pilot comes back at that base
4 from a reposition, a ferry, a fuel, whatever, or a patient flight,
5 whatever, they would go ahead and refuel right away. That was the
6 typical thing with the duty aircraft. So, you know, obviously,
7 the duty aircraft was in a ready status, so there was no reason
8 for him to mess with that one.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. And until 101 -- or until 352-Lima-November was
11 reconfigured, there wouldn't have been any rush to go out and put
12 fuel on it right away anyway.

13 Q. Did Mr. Freudenberg have any questions?

14 A. Not that I can recall. I don't remember him asking
15 anything in specific as far as -- as far as what?

16 Q. Oh, just your briefing or any other issues that were
17 involved in either aircraft?

18 A. No, no. I don't recall -- not that he didn't have any.
19 I just don't recall any questions.

20 Q. Sure. And you said he seemed alert. How could you tell
21 that?

22 A. Well, we had a conversation. I mean, we talked about
23 the status of the aircraft and, you know, small talk. Obviously
24 you just -- whatever comes up when you're just shifting out after
25 you've briefed on the aircraft. But I don't recall what we talked

1 about.

2 Q. And you said that -- was it the instructor or the
3 student had mentioned to you that they were low on fuel. What did
4 they say? When did that happen?

5 A. Jay Watson, the CCE --

6 Q. Yes, uh-huh.

7 A. -- told me that when he came back in that morning. And
8 I believe it was somewhere around the 4 or 0430 time frame. I
9 don't remember specifically.

10 Q. Sure.

11 A. I was up, you know. I was up and awake and I was doing
12 my duties. But he just said it was low on fuel and it would need
13 to be refueled before it went into service.

14 Q. Okay. And then do you remember what did you say to
15 Mr. Freudenberg about that?

16 A. Yeah. I just told him that the aircraft was, you know,
17 sitting out on the ramp. It was not parked back in our spot or
18 typically right where we would put it in front of the hangar, just
19 because it's a busy area. It's a crowded facility. There's
20 operators that go in and out of that area --

21 Q. Sure.

22 A. -- operators. So we left it out on the ramp.

23 The pilots between the hours of, say, I think it was
24 usually, typically about 6 or 7 at night until around 7 in the
25 morning the following day, the night pilot would typically fuel

1 himself. But during the day, the fixed-based operator usually
2 fuels for us. He keeps an eye on us and he'll run over and fuel
3 us up.

4 Q. What would the procedures be, then -- okay. What's the
5 -- 352-Lima-November came out of reconfiguring. What are the
6 procedures to either refuel or check the fuel? What would you do?
7 What would you expect?

8 A. Well, once the aircraft was configured in the medical
9 configuration, then obviously after the pilot had his crew
10 manifest, he'd go ahead and figure his weight and balance and then
11 -- then go ahead and fuel at that time to bring it as close to,
12 you know, an operational fuel load as possible, considering weight
13 and balance.

14 Q. Is that a checklist item on the manifest?

15 A. Oh, yeah. Yeah. I mean, your preflight on just about
16 any aircraft is going to -- part of it is going to be your fuel
17 status.

18 Q. And do you have to leave a record of that? Do you sign
19 that and leave it or is there any -- it's just for your use, or
20 how does that work?

21 A. As far as the preflight?

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. Well, on our DSL, the DSL that you sign every morning is
24 basically saying that you have preflighted the aircraft and it is
25 mission ready, so --

1 Q. Who checks the DSL?

2 A. You mean after the pilot signs it or --

3 Q. Yeah. Yeah, after it's signed.

4 A. Yeah. I mean, obviously, you know, every pilot that's
5 on duty that day. So, you know, if I'm the night pilot getting
6 off, I would have generated a new DSL at 000 the night before, and
7 then I'll go ahead and put my name and certificate number and I'll
8 sign on the bottom of it. And then when the oncoming pilot comes
9 in, that's one of the first things they do is they'll go through,
10 they'll check weather; they'll get the pass-on from the off-going
11 pilot and check the logbook, make sure there's nothing that they
12 are going to -- that -- especially if they've been off for a while
13 they'll typically check the logbook. And then, you know, you sign
14 the DSL saying that the aircraft has been inspected after you've
15 done a preflight.

16 Q. So, for example, if the pilot that you're relieving, the
17 earlier pilot had failed to sign, you would see that; is that
18 correct?

19 A. You should. There's always opportunity for someone to
20 missing something, but yeah, you should see that.

21 Q. Have you ever seen that happen?

22 A. When I've been the day pilot coming on? No, I've never
23 seen that.

24 Q. Or the night pilot, anytime you came on?

25 A. Sure. There's been a couple times when, you know, as a

1 night pilot you might see that someone didn't sign the duty log,
2 or the DSL, you know, coming on that day, but not very often. I
3 might've seen it once or twice, but that's all that I can recall.

4 Q. Sure. And then when you're called for a mission, now
5 you go out to the aircraft. Would you check fuel during that
6 process as well?

7 A. Well, so you've already done your preflight -- long
8 before you ever accept the mission, you've already done the
9 preflight, you've inspected the aircraft and, you know. Then you
10 sign your DSL saying the aircraft is ready to go, and typically at
11 that point in time you've already checked your fuel load.
12 Obviously when you get in the aircraft and you apply the battery
13 power, you know, your scan of the gauges is going to show you once
14 again to reaffirm what you saw earlier on your fuel load.

15 Q. Good. How reliable is the fuel gauge?

16 A. Oh, you don't rely on fuel gauges. You know, you go on
17 what you know for pass-on or whatever. I mean, a lot of times if
18 you go and, say, I put 40 gallons of fuel on, you know, you can --
19 and it just depends on who you shift out with, but some guys even
20 include that in their pass-on when they do the pass-on at shift
21 change. You know, they might tell you how much fuel they put on.

22 Q. How much do you normally --

23 A. Not specifically every time, but that's something that
24 you can do.

25 Q. At St. Joe's what's the normal -- when you finish a

1 mission, what do you usually fuel it to?

2 A. Seventy percent.

3 Q. Seventy percent? And does everybody at the base do
4 that?

5 A. Typically. That's -- you know, during the -- and, of
6 course, that's going to depend on the atmospheric day, whether
7 it's very hot. You know, they may even put less fuel on depending
8 on the configuration of the day and the crew and the makeup of the
9 crew.

10 Q. I see. How much contact did you have before that time
11 with Mr. Freudenberg?

12 A. You mean the previous day, or --

13 Q. Well, all the time you were at St. Joe's. I mean, did
14 you know him socially or ever socialize with him or --

15 A. No. No, he -- I didn't know -- of course, I'm a relief
16 pilot, so I just go in and out of bases at different locations.
17 That's my job.

18 Q. Oh, I see. So, you're not actually based at St. Joe's?

19 A. No. I'm the area relief pilot in Colorado for the
20 3C/5C Region.

21 Q. Oh, okay.

22 A. That's my job.

23 Q. Wow. Have you had any personal contact with him before
24 that?

25 A. No. That was the first I had met James was when I

1 worked at St. Joe.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And I understand he used to work there, but then he
4 transferred to Rapid City.

5 Q. That's right. And had you ever flown with him? I guess
6 not if you didn't have a contact.

7 A. Well, I flew with him at a couple of different times at
8 St. Joe. I mean, we had been opposite on hitches a couple
9 different times.

10 Q. Tell me about that. When's the last time you flew with
11 him?

12 A. You know, I can't recall, to tell you the truth. I
13 really don't remember. I mean, obviously we just shift out. I've
14 never specifically flown with him, but --

15 Q. Oh, never actually been in the aircraft? Okay.

16 A. No.

17 Q. I misunderstood. Now, do you do a risk assessment
18 before a flight?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And tell me about the risk assessment?

21 A. Well, the risk assessment that was in use at the base
22 there, obviously you come in when you do your weather; briefing;
23 and then you also brief the crew. You come up with any
24 deficiencies that might be brought up during your briefing with
25 the crew: how is everybody feeling; is anybody having concerns;

1 what's the weather like right now; what's the forecast weather?
2 And then you -- off the matrix, then you go ahead and base your
3 risk assessment, your initial risk assessment for the day off the
4 matrix that they have.

5 When you call into dispatch, you tell them, you know,
6 this is Pete Pelayic; I'm the duty pilot for the day. I'm a risk
7 Bravo. You know, weather is severe/clear, we're good to go all
8 day, or you can say the weather is marginal VFR, we'll go call to
9 call, or -- whatever you're going to tell them in your briefing.

10 Q. I see. So you report that to the flight follower. What
11 do you use that for? Suppose you're -- what's the highest level
12 of risk?

13 A. What is the highest level in terms of --

14 Q. Well, Bravo, how --

15 A. -- favorable?

16 Q. Yeah. You mentioned Bravo. Let's say you're at a high
17 risk level. What difference does it make?

18 A. Well, I really don't have the matrix in front of me, but
19 obviously you're going to -- you know, if you want to be -- I
20 can't really answer your question without having the matrix in
21 front of me.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I didn't memorize it. I go by --

24 Q. Sure. Oh, sure. But I just --

25 A. I'm a relief pilot. I go into areas -- obviously right

1 there, you're already going to have an added risk in that I'm a
2 relief pilot. I'm not always at a base, so.

3 Q. Is that one of the factors on the list?

4 A. Yes, it is.

5 Q. How about time with the company, is that a factor?

6 A. I can't recall. Without having the matrix in front of
7 me, obviously I wouldn't be able to tell you.

8 Q. And I guess my question was in general. Okay, once
9 you've done the risk assessment and you get a number that you can
10 pass on, how do you use that? Is that for you to use or does the
11 company use it? If the risk is high, what happens?

12 A. No, it's the -- that's for the use by the PIC in the
13 decision-making process whether or not to accept the flight.

14 Q. I see. Why do you report it to the flight follower?

15 A. Well, we initially report it so they have a pretty good
16 understanding of what -- as they get calls during the day or
17 during the shift, whatever you want to call it, you know, they
18 have a pretty good idea whether or not they can go ahead and call
19 us immediately with a page or if they have to call us and say can
20 you check weather in this particular location. So, it gives them
21 a heads-up. It's just another tool for them to use to assist us.
22 When they get calls for request for service, then, you know, they
23 can say hey, look, I've got a call and so-and-so, but I understand
24 earlier you told me that there might be some weather moving in,
25 can you check weather?

1 Q. Great. By the way, a lot of stuff you're telling me is
2 real helpful for us. I know it may seem routine to you. And if
3 I'm being a little -- if I seem a little harsh in my questioning,
4 it's because I realize you're from the Marine Corps and you can
5 handle this stuff, so --

6 A. This is not hardly what you'd call severe questioning,
7 so don't worry about that.

8 Q. Oh, okay, good. All right, well -- well, yeah, if I get
9 out of hand, you know, let me know or let your representative know
10 and let's -- okay. Here's some more questions for you, then,
11 since you're doing so well.

12 How is the availability of Jet A fuel in the St. Joe's
13 area?

14 A. In St. Joe specifically or in the area?

15 Q. In the area.

16 A. I haven't had any problem finding Jet A in the area from
17 the flights that I made.

18 Q. Okay. If you have an operational question or a problem,
19 either in terms of launching or once you're on a trip, who do you
20 contact?

21 A. An operational question?

22 Q. Yeah. Should you take the flight due to --

23 A. Can you be more specific?

24 Q. Well, let's say it's a weather issue and should you take
25 the flight or not. Can you consult with anyone or --

1 A. Well, you know, obviously the pilot-in-command is the
2 one the decision. You know, they pay me to make those decisions.
3 So, no, I don't typically call someone if it's a weather-related
4 issue. I either accept the flight or I don't.

5 Now, you can confer with the crew and say, look, this is
6 the situation: We're at -- you know, this is the ceiling and
7 visibility for the next 4-hour period of time; you know, when we
8 can look at a window, we're going to take this flight. It's well
9 within our minimums, but it's marginal; it's within 200 feet of
10 our minimums or whatever. What do you guys feel about it; how do
11 you feel?

12 And, you know, obviously, "three to go, one to say no",
13 that still applies with anything, whether it's weather or if
14 someone comes up and says they don't feel right or whatever. It
15 doesn't matter. But typically if it's a weather issue, you know,
16 the pilot-in-command is the one that has sole authority, so --

17 Q. Well, what about the lead pilot? Did you ever call the
18 lead pilot?

19 A. Did I?

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. No.

22 Q. Are there occasions where you would?

23 A. For maybe administrative stuff, you know, things that
24 are specific to that base that they may do different than
25 somewhere else. You know, I've been at several bases over the

1 last year and everybody does their administrative stuff just a
2 little bit differently, where they put things and --

3 Q. Sure.

4 A. -- and, you know, some of them keep separate little logs
5 on how they do their trips and that kind of thing just for their
6 own interior, you know, glorification, edification of numbers,
7 whatever, I don't know.

8 Q. Makes sense.

9 A. But no, I wouldn't call the lead pilot for something
10 like that.

11 Q. What about the operational control center?

12 A. I have had opportunity to call them when I've ferried
13 aircraft from time to time so that they are aware that I'm making
14 a long cross-county flight and I'll be in and out of contact with
15 the com center wherever I happen to be.

16 Q. I see.

17 A. But I have had occasion to call them, yes. Or if I
18 couldn't get into the computer system or whatever, they'd help me
19 log in and generate a flight release.

20 Q. Have you ever heard from them on -- without you starting
21 the thing?

22 A. I'm sorry. I didn't understand.

23 Q. Have you ever had any contact from them that wasn't
24 initiated by you?

25 A. No. Well, I can't recall specifically. Let me think

1 for a minute.

2 You know, there's been a couple times when they've
3 called me when I've been doing maintenance runs or a couple
4 flights where I've done maintenance flights and I had gotten a
5 release, a local flight release, and they didn't have -- they
6 weren't aware of it. They thought the aircraft was still down for
7 maintenance. I've done maintenance flights and they go, you know,
8 hey, what's up? So I've talked to them a couple times about that,
9 yeah.

10 Q. Have you ever landed at an airport with a patient to
11 refuel?

12 A. I have not specifically, no.

13 Q. Have you ever heard of it happening?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Tell me about it.

16 A. A specific incident or --

17 Q. Yeah. Please.

18 A. Years ago I remember, I recall a pilot that I knew that
19 worked for an EMS operator that told me that one time he was -- he
20 ran into some adverse weather, and in order to get around it he
21 was going to have to go ahead and land, which he did. He put fuel
22 on and they went on their merry way and went to where they were
23 going.

24 Q. At Air Methods, what does the safety office do?

25 A. Well, I guess I can't speak specifically about the

1 safety office. Can you be more specific?

2 Q. Have you had any contact with them or heard -- well,
3 okay, yeah, ASAP reports, for example. Ever use that?

4 A. I have done an AIDMOR. I haven't done an ASAP, but I've
5 done an AIDMOR once, about a --

6 Q. What's an AIDMOR?

7 A. That's if you run into a situation where it's out of the
8 norm. You know, if you had to divert for weather or if you
9 diverted for whatever reason, you know, or if something out of the
10 norm, you can go ahead and do an AIDMOR, and what that does is it
11 alerts people to something that may have been different that what
12 you normally would do and why you did it, the explanation for it.
13 If you run into un-forecast weather and have to turn around, you
14 know, 10 miles from a scene or whatever, then you can articulate
15 why you did that and what it was that you ran into.

16 Q. What's the advantage of doing that?

17 A. It just highlights things. You know, if it -- it shows
18 that you did due diligence, you did your preflights, you did your
19 weather check and you thought you were good to go, but then on
20 initiating the flight, getting out there you realize that things
21 were not as they were forecast or things are not as they were
22 presented in the METARs or the area forecast, then you go, shoot,
23 we can't continue this flight; let's turn around, and you do.

24 Q. Okay, good. I think you've gone through my questions
25 here. I'd like to turn it over to Jim Silliman, who's the

1 investigator-in-charge, a former Marine also, by the way.

2 MR. PELAYIC: Semper fi. Hey, happy birthday.

3 BY MR. SILLIMAN:

4 Q. Yeah, absolutely. Semper fi. Yeah, maybe we'll talk
5 about that after we get the tape recorder off here.

6 But I do have a couple questions for you. You said your
7 initial training, you started that back, I guess, in January or
8 February of 2011; is that correct?

9 A. Yeah. I would've been -- I think I went to Englewood, I
10 want to say, February 7th. I can't recall exactly.

11 Q. Okay. And how many flights do you think you received as
12 part of your initial training? It doesn't have to be --

13 A. I mean, you did 5 hours of NVG training, so I did that
14 with Jay Watson. He did my NVG training and check ride. And then
15 I flew with a couple different CCEs in the initial training
16 syllabus for the S350, both the B3 and the B2. You know, Dale
17 Hanley and a couple of other fellows that I flew with.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And CCEs, and Jay Watson obviously was another one of
20 them.

21 Q. And during your -- I guess the CCEs that you did there,
22 that would've been in a normally configured aircraft, or you
23 weren't doing NVGs at that time. Did --

24 A. Yeah. They take the medical interior out and they
25 install dual controls in the other seat obviously.

1 Q. Yeah. And when you're doing that training, did you do
2 auto-rotations?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And did you do autorotations in the B2 and in the B3?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Did the flight characteristics during the autorotations
7 present any problems to you?

8 A. No.

9 Q. I would guess you've probably done lots of autorotations
10 you had been a CFI at one time?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. So, autorotations were fairly routine for you?

13 A. Well, I never worked full-time as a CFI, but throughout
14 my training wherever I've gone I've done more than just a handful
15 of them.

16 Q. Okay. Could you describe the differences in the
17 autorotation technique between a B2 and a B3? I mean, how to set
18 up for the autorotation, I mean, concerning the power lever and --
19 that's the thing I'm trying to get at.

20 A. Well, you know, obviously you've got two different
21 aircraft that are set up with throttle parts that are in different
22 locations, number one.

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. Typically. Now, there are B3's out there that do have
25 the throttle quadrant on the floor. But, you know, you'd have to

1 -- it's aircraft-specific. Not every aircraft is set up the same
2 way.

3 Q. Let me ask you this. In the B3, you can go to flight
4 idle because you have the twist grip throttle; is that correct?

5 A. You can. That is correct.

6 Q. Does Air Methods, do they roll off the twist grip to the
7 flight idle during their autorotations or do they just leave it at
8 full throttle?

9 A. No. The training regimen here is -- in both the B2 and
10 B3, as far as my recollection goes, is that you leave it in the
11 flight gate.

12 Q. Oh, okay. So they don't -- even on the B3 they don't
13 roll it down to flight idle during autorotations?

14 A. Not that I can recall.

15 Q. Okay. So when --

16 A. -- I did any throttle manipulation was in the B3 with
17 the 2B1. You can actually do -- or 2B, I'm sorry. You can
18 actually do throttle manipulation -- say, if you have a failure
19 governor, they do an exercise where you go ahead on the ground and
20 you isolate the governor switch and then you can actually
21 manipulate the throttle, but we only do that in a hover.

22 Q. Okay. Not at -- you don't do autorotations at
23 altitude --

24 A. With retarding the throttle? No.

25 Q. Yeah, okay. So what's it like just to do an

1 autorotation with just leaving it at full throttle and, you know,
2 just reducing the collective to -- lowering the collective all the
3 way to initiate the autorotation? Does that --

4 A. Straightforward, yeah.

5 Q. Straightforward?

6 A. You know, obviously you look for your forward air speed.
7 You know, obviously, you usually enter most of these autorotations
8 at 90 knots or greater, and then as soon as you bring the
9 collective full down, and then establish the -- you know, your
10 60-, 65-knot -- 60- to 70-knot air speed for your descent, the
11 biggest thing there is just with -- since you didn't reduce
12 throttle is you got to watch your RPM on your NR.

13 Q. Does that seem a realistic training for autorotations to
14 you? I mean, is that -- you know, just your opinion, and I know
15 it's your opinion, but does that feel realistic?

16 A. You know, I think any autorotation that involves power
17 recovery is going to be less realistic than a, you know, a full-
18 down auto where you don't have power.

19 Q. Sure.

20 A. And so, I mean, there's nobody -- you know, as my CFI
21 training, nobody does full-down autos -- I shouldn't say nobody.
22 Very few people do full-down autos in their training --

23 Q. Right.

24 A. -- just because the risk of damage to the aircraft is
25 greater than the benefit of teaching full-down auto.

1 Q. Sure. How about in the initiation of the autorotation,
2 does it seem -- I guess that's the thing I'm trying to focus in a
3 little bit more on is, does it seem realistic in the initiation of
4 the auto since you don't go to flight idle?

5 A. Oh, yeah. I think it does, because you just -- you
6 know, obviously you get that initial onset of the nose moving one
7 way or the other, and if you don't apply pedal and you also -- you
8 know, you get that rapid descent which is going to be what you're
9 going to get in real life.

10 Q. Okay. I just want to ask you some questions about the
11 night vision goggle training. Had you flown with night vision
12 goggles before your job with Air Methods?

13 A. Yes, at EagleMed.

14 Q. And how much training with NVGs did you get at EagleMed?

15 A. The same. We did 5 hours of initial training in the
16 check ride.

17 Q. After you got your 5 hours at EagleMed, did you use the
18 night vision goggles routinely when you're flying at night, then?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And what's your level of comfort flying with night
21 vision goggles now that you've done it for about a year and a half
22 or 2 years?

23 A. I feel very comfortable.

24 Q. Would you -- if somebody were you ask you, you know,
25 should EMS pilots be flying with night vision goggles, what's your

1 answer to that?

2 A. Well, I think every environment is going to be
3 environment-specific, every location, obviously. If you're out in
4 the middle of the prairie in South Dakota or Kansas or anywhere
5 else where there's very low lighting, I think NVG comes in very
6 well. Especially if you have some nighttime illumination, they
7 really help out. If you're over metro Denver, they are less
8 effective. Or less needed, let's put it that way --

9 Q. Sure.

10 A. -- less necessary.

11 Q. But when you need them, you like to have them available?

12 A. Absolutely.

13 Q. Okay. And your training at -- the 5 hours that you
14 received at Air Methods, did it -- was it very similar to what
15 training you received at EagleMed?

16 A. Yes, it was.

17 Q. And since flying with Air Methods, do you routinely fly
18 with night vision goggles now?

19 A. Yes, I do.

20 Q. And you've had no problems flying with the night vision
21 goggles?

22 A. I have not experienced any problems, no.

23 Q. Okay. How about the crew, the medical crew on board?
24 Have they been proper -- you know, have they been trained to fly
25 with night vision goggles as well?

1 A. Yes. I mean, now obviously you're talking about a lot
2 of people. It depends on where you go, and then whether or not
3 you've got new crew members. They need to go through the initial
4 ground school, and then I think it calls for them to go up and do
5 either three takeoffs and landings or an hour, I can't remember
6 which, but they're required to go up and fly with you and
7 experience the goggles. And then they get signed off or do
8 whatever their paperwork is that they do. I'm not aware of what
9 they do.

10 Q. Okay. And the crew when they've had their night vision
11 goggles on, have they -- are they pretty comfortable with night
12 vision goggles from what you've been able to tell, just --

13 A. Yes. As a whole, I think everyone that I've flown with
14 feels comfortable with goggles.

15 Q. Okay. Kind of a different subject now, crew resource
16 management, CRM. When you brief your crew, your medical crew
17 about the flight in the morning, what kind of topics would you
18 cover when they first come on board at 7:00 in the morning or 7:00
19 at night when they -- no, I guess they stay there all night; at
20 least at St. Joe's they did for 24 hours.

21 A. Yes --

22 Q. But what kind of stuff would you brief with your crew?

23 A. Now, other bases, they're just working 12 and 12.

24 Q. Okay. Well, what kind of things would you typically
25 brief with your crew, you know, once you come on duty?

1 A. Yeah. We had a specific crew briefing that we would do
2 and it covered every topic that -- it started out with the
3 aircraft status, and then you'd move into the weather status, and
4 then you've move into if there's any PRs scheduled for that day,
5 training that was scheduled for that day, maintenance that was
6 scheduled, you'd brief them on that. And then obviously of there
7 was anything that was of concern with the aircraft, you'd talk
8 about that.

9 Q. All right. And you said aircraft status; would that
10 include fuel load, that type of thing?

11 A. Sure. Yeah, it would.

12 Q. If the thing -- you know, like if things don't go
13 according to plan, do you brief that to the crew either in flight
14 or when you're sitting on a helicopter pad someplace?

15 A. Sure. Yes.

16 Q. Once the crew gets on board and they have the patient on
17 board, is there much -- do you converse with the crew at all or
18 are they just focused on the patient and you're not going to, you
19 know --

20 A. That's very specific to each patient. I mean, and
21 whether or not it's an inter-hospital transfer or inter-facility
22 transfer, a scene flight.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. That's very specific to the patient. A lot of times,
25 you know, if they're intubated, you know, they're on paralytics,

1 they're ventilated and, you know, there's no conversation that's
2 going to take place. If they're a stable patient, then yeah, you
3 can talk about where you're headed --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- if you haven't talked about it already beforehand or
6 if you haven't been notified, or if there's a change in where
7 you're going to go. Or if it's a scene flight, obviously scene
8 flights are all very specific to each incident.

9 Q. Okay. And generally speaking, do you feel you have
10 pretty good crew resource management, pretty good communication
11 with the flight crew in the back?

12 A. Me specifically, or --

13 Q. Yeah, you specifically, and anything in general about
14 that?

15 A. Yeah, I feel very comfortable with all the crews I've
16 flown with. They're all very professional and I feel very
17 comfortable in their ability to perform their duties in the
18 aircraft.

19 Q. And do you feel that the crew resource management
20 training that you receive, both you and the flight crew, is
21 adequate and --

22 A. Yes, I do.

23 Q. Okay. You mentioned AIDMOR. Could you spell -- is that
24 just A-I-D-MORE [sic], or is there --

25 A. Yeah, I think so. I can't remember, to tell you the

1 truth.

2 Q. Okay. AIDMOR, okay.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. And then the OCC. Let's see. So it doesn't sound like
5 you have a lot of communication on a routine basis with OCC. Is
6 that a correct characterization?

7 A. Yes, it is.

8 Q. So if you are going to convey information about the
9 flight, it sounds like you're going to be talking only -- mainly
10 to the EMS dispatcher out of AIRCOM in Omaha, it sounds like?

11 A. That's correct.

12 Q. And whether you're working in Colorado -- I guess you've
13 gone to all these different bases and stuff, but it's the same
14 dispatch, or EMS dispatch located in Omaha, I guess?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Oh, really? Who else would you be speaking to?

17 A. Well, Flight For Life specifically has their own com
18 center in Denver.

19 Q. Oh, so they're not part of the Omaha operation, then?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Oh, okay. And that's out of -- is that controlled right
22 out of Englewood there?

23 A. That's correct. No, no, no. No, no. Flight For Life
24 is dispatched out of St. Anthony's Hospital. They've got their
25 own com center and com specialists right there.

1 Q. Oh, okay. So that's a helicopter -- or that's a
2 hospital operation, then, not --

3 A. Yes, it is.

4 Q. Oh, I see, okay. So it's a different kind of -- that's
5 a hospital-based operation?

6 A. Yes, it is.

7 Q. Okay. Thanks for clarifying that.

8 A. I have spoken with com -- the com center out of Omaha
9 from several locations. I fly out of Rapid City, so I talk to
10 them out of Rapid City. I've talked to them out of St. Joe. And
11 I've spoken with Omaha Air Com when I've done ferry flights a
12 couple times.

13 Q. Okay. Now, you talked about administrative differences
14 at the bases and so forth, but as far as the basic flight duties
15 and maintenance forms and sign-off forms, have they been
16 standardized across the bases?

17 A. Yes, they're all the same.

18 Q. And --

19 A. Maybe I used the wrong terminology. I shouldn't have
20 said administrative as it applies to the company. Just
21 housekeeping type stuff at each base.

22 Q. Okay. That's helpful.

23 MR. SILLIMAN: Well, I can't think of anything else to
24 ask at this point. Malcolm?

25 MR. BRENNER: Okay, thanks. This is Maryam Allahyar.

1 MR. PELAYIC: Hello?

2 BY MS. ALLAHYAR:

3 Q. Hi. This is Maryam. I only have a couple questions. I
4 think everything has been covered pretty much. And this may be
5 something that I may have missed, so just to make sure that I
6 cover it.

7 You mentioned that there are times, like for instance
8 this one, where it was mentioned to the pilot actually that the
9 aircraft was low on fuel when it was handed over to him. What's
10 the standard procedure at that point? What does the receiving
11 pilot do once, you know, they get the aircraft? You said that,
12 you know, they did their weight and balance and then figure out
13 the fuel. But at that point once they receive the airplane -- or
14 the aircraft, I'm sorry, the helicopter in this case, and it's low
15 in fuel, what's the standard procedure?

16 A. Well, you're talking about two aircraft that were in two
17 totally different configurations.

18 Q. Right.

19 A. So if it was the duty aircraft -- 101-Lima-November was
20 the duty aircraft.

21 Q. Correct.

22 A. Typically I would not hand that aircraft over needing
23 fuel. It would be ready to go as soon as he got there.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So that would not normally be how things would go for

1 the duty aircraft. That's not to say that doesn't happen, but
2 specifically at this location at this date on that time with 101-
3 Lima-November, it was ready to go in a duty configuration.

4 Now, 352 was the training aircraft. There was no
5 specificity for that aircraft at that time. So, there wouldn't
6 have been any action taken.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. It was not the duty aircraft.

9 Q. Oh, okay. So, it wasn't. And I guess once it's turned
10 over to the receiving pilot, it's at their discretion as to what
11 they're going to do?

12 A. Well, once again, it wasn't the duty aircraft, so until
13 -- I mean, that could -- that aircraft could've sat there for 2
14 days, it wouldn't have mattered.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. It was not the duty aircraft; 101-Lima-November was, and
17 that was the aircraft that was configured to go to work.

18 Q. Okay. Now, the other question that I have is you
19 mentioned that you don't rely on the fuel gauge, and clearly, you
20 know, everyone goes through a more methodical way of, you know,
21 figuring --

22 A. That's just a --

23 Q. -- the fuel which is much better. But how come you
24 don't rely on the fuel gauge?

25 A. That's a generic way of saying that typically, in any

1 kind of aviation operation, doesn't matter where you are, when you
2 get in an aircraft as the pilot, you've already confirmed either
3 visually, whether you've looked in the tank and you can see the
4 fuel or you specifically put fuel in it or you watched a fueler
5 come over and put X amount of gallons in it. You know, you always
6 look at every fuel gauge with a little bit of guarded optimism.

7 Q. Right. Okay.

8 A. All right? That's now how you -- that's not how any
9 pilot anywhere gauges fuel. If all of a sudden you look down and
10 that fuel gauge says 0 and you know you just put 100 gallons in
11 it, well, I know I've got 100 gallons in it.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. All right.

14 Q. If you -- so those fail, not necessarily being out of
15 fuel, right.

16 A. So, I mean, you use everything that you have available
17 to you, not just the gauge itself, but your own personal knowledge
18 about whether or not you put fuel in it, whether or not the
19 gentleman in front of you put fuel in it, or whether or not the
20 fueler put fuel in it. You go off your personal information about
21 how much fuel is in there. And if you're not sure, go put some
22 fuel in it.

23 Q. Okay. Well, I only had those two questions. Thank you.

24 A. You bet.

25 MR. SILLIMAN: I'm going to turn off the recorder unless

1 you have other questions, Malcolm, and then I have a --

2 MR. BRENNER: I actually do. If you don't mind?

3 MR. SILLIMAN: Okay. All right.

4 MR. BRENNER: Are you doing okay?

5 MR. SILLIMAN: Yep.

6 MR. BRENNER: Okay.

7 BY MR. BRENNER:

8 Q. Tell me a little about the company. How would you
9 characterize the pay?

10 A. The pay is commensurate with the industry.

11 Q. How would you characterize morale among the pilots?

12 A. Oh, I really wouldn't be able to say that. I mean, I'm
13 happy in my job, so I pretty much just pay attention to what my
14 business is.

15 Q. Okay. How are their schedules?

16 A. My schedule is good. I don't have any problems with my
17 schedule.

18 Q. How's the training?

19 A. Training is good. Yeah, it's first rate. I would say
20 it ranks right up there.

21 Q. And the equipment?

22 A. Yeah. Equipment, once again, it's well maintained.
23 It's in good shape. Overall, I think it's -- you know, it's very
24 good equipment.

25 Q. How's the financial condition of the company?

1 A. Man, I wouldn't have any idea.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. I should go on the NASDAQ and check that, but I don't
4 have any --

5 Q. How's relations between the company and the union, pilot
6 union?

7 A. You know, I'm just not aware. I really don't follow
8 that too much. I know they're trying to negotiate stuff, but I
9 just don't know.

10 Q. What's special about this company?

11 A. Well, the biggest thing -- I came -- you mean for me or
12 in general?

13 Q. Yeah, either way.

14 A. The reason I came, obviously came back to Air Methods,
15 or tried to come to Air Methods is because I'm from Colorado and
16 that was my opportunity to come back home.

17 Q. I see. How does it compare with EagleMed as a company?

18 A. Oh, very comparative, yeah. Very comparative. It's,
19 you know -- obviously, like I said, the machinery is well
20 maintained and the aircraft.

21 Q. Has the company had any previous accidents?

22 A. What company?

23 Q. Air Methods.

24 A. I'm sure they have, and I've heard of a couple, but I
25 don't know -- I don't have firsthand knowledge of any accident.

1 Q. Any contact between the chief executive officer and the
2 other employees, line employees?

3 A. For me?

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. Have I had any contact with the chief executive officer?

6 Q. Yeah, in any way at all. Yeah. Do you ever hear from
7 him, anything? (Indiscernible) himself?

8 A. (Laughing.) I speak with the assistant chief pilot, Joe
9 Lemma from time to time. I've had opportunity to see him at
10 different bases because I do go around quite a bit, so I've had
11 opportunity to see him. I see my area aviation manager,
12 Randy Vandenhul, quite often. Other area -- or PAMs, program area
13 managers, you know, I have contact with people that are affiliated
14 with programs that I fly for.

15 Q. How often do you see FAA inspectors?

16 A. Oh, golly. Since I've been with Air Methods?

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. I'm trying to think. I know we ran into one out there
19 in St. Joe, but I can't recall specifically how many times he --
20 me personally, I've only run into him once.

21 Q. When did you run into him at St. Joe's?

22 A. I can't recall the date. It was last summer.

23 Q. What was he doing?

24 A. Well, just doing a site visit. Yeah.

25 Q. Oh, okay. Great.

1 A. Yeah. But I -- once again, I couldn't recall the date
2 or who it was or anything else.

3 Q. Is there anything else we haven't asked you that might
4 be helpful for the investigation?

5 A. No. I think you guys have covered it pretty good.

6 Q. Well, you've been very, very helpful and it's been a
7 pleasure to talk with you. We really appreciate your help.

8 MR. BRENNER: Does anybody else have -- Mr. Silliman,
9 Jim Silliman, anything else?

10 MR. SILLIMAN: No. But I'm going to turn off the
11 recorder and that I just have a couple questions, just
12 administrative questions.

13 MR. BRENNER: Sure.

14 MR. SILLIMAN: Okay. I'm going to turn off the recorder
15 here, then.

16 MR. BRENNER: Okay.

17 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: AIR METHODS CORPORATION
 LIFENET HELICOPTER CRASH
 AUGUST 26, 2011
 NEAR MOSBY, MISSOURI
 Interview of Peter Pelayic

DOCKET NUMBER: CEN11FA599

PLACE: Via Telephone

DATE: November 10, 2011

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording.

Joseph M. Parent
Transcriber