

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of:

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

THE EXPLOSION OF APARTMENT
BUILDING 8701 OF FLOWER BRANCH
APARTMENTS IN SILVER SPRING,
MARYLAND ON AUGUST 10, 2016

Accident No.: DCA16FP003

* * * * *

Interview of: PATRICK FRANCISQUE

National Transportation Safety
Board Headquarters
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.
Washington, D.C.

Tuesday,
November 15, 2016

APPEARANCES:

RAVI CHHATRE, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

KALU KELLY EMEABA, Pipeline Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

RACHAEL GUNARATNAM, Hazmat Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

LT. WILLIAM OLIN, Fire Explosive Investigator
Montgomery County, Maryland

STEPHEN PRICE, Assistant Vice President for System
Operations
Washington Gas Light Company

DOUGLAS STAEBLER, Senior Vice President of Utility
Operations
Washington Gas

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Patrick Francisque:		
By Mr. Chhatre		6
By Mr. Emeaba		21
By Mr. Staebler		23
By Ms. Gunaratnam		34
By Mr. Chhatre		34
By Mr. Staebler		35
By Unidentified Speaker		38

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. CHHATRE: -- November 15, 2016. We are currently at the
3 NTSB headquarters, located at 490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.,
4 Washington, D.C. We are meeting regarding the investigation of
5 explosion of building 8701 Flower Branch Apartments, Silver
6 Spring, Maryland, that occurred on August 10, 2016.

7 My name is Ravi Chhatre. I'm with National Transportation
8 Safety Board, located in Washington, D.C., and I'm Investigator in
9 Charge of this accident. The NTSB investigation number for this
10 accident is DCA16FP003.

11 I would like to start by notifying everyone present in this
12 room that we are recording this interview and we may transcribe it
13 at a later date. Transcripts will be provided directly to the
14 interviewee for review and identifying any typographical errors.
15 The transcripts may be posted in NTSB's public docket.

16 Also, I'd like to inform Mr. Patrick Francisque --

17 MR. FRANCISQUE: Francisque.

18 MR. CHHATRE: Franscisque.

19 MR. FRANCISQUE: That's a French name, but American
20 (indiscernible) easy to say Francisque.

21 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. I'd like inform Mr. Patrick Francisque
22 that you are permitted to have one other person present with you
23 during the interview. This is a person of your choice: your
24 supervisor, friend, family member or, if you choose, no one at
25 all.

1 Please state for the record your full name, spelling of your
2 name, organization you work for, your title, business contact
3 information such as mailing address, and whom you have chosen to
4 be present with you during your interview.

5 MR. FRANCISQUE: My name is Patrick Francisque. Patrick,
6 P-a-t-r-i-c-k, Francisque, F-r-a-n-c-i-s-q-u-e.

7 MR. CHHATRE: And whom you have chosen to be with you?

8 MR. FRANCISQUE: Well, I'm alone.

9 MR. CHHATRE: Okay, no one. Okay.

10 MR. FRANCISQUE: Maybe I should have taken a lawyer or
11 something like that?

12 MR. CHHATRE: It's up to you, but --

13 MR. FRANCISQUE: Oh, to tell you quite frankly, I may be
14 interested in a lawyer because I might sue those people from the
15 place because my car was damaged in it. But apart from that --

16 MR. CHHATRE: So you have no issue talking to us without a
17 lawyer?

18 MR. FRANCISQUE: I have no issue talking to you, especially
19 if you do the work that you say you do, which is to make sure that
20 basically accidents are understood and do not happen again.

21 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. All right.

22 Now I would like to go around the room and have each person
23 introduce themselves. Please state your name, spelling of your
24 name, your title, and the organization that you represent, and
25 your business contact information. I'll start from my left, but

1 before I do that, we need your contact information, your mailing
2 address.

3 MR. FRANCISQUE: Okay. My mailing address is [REDACTED]
4 [REDACTED].

5 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Starting from my left?

6 LT. OLIN: Lieutenant William Olin, fire explosive
7 investigator from Montgomery County, Maryland. Phone number is
8 [REDACTED]. Email: William, [REDACTED],
9 [REDACTED].

10 MS. GUNARATNAM: Rachael Gunaratnam, R-a-c-h-a-e-l, G-u-n-a-
11 r-a-t-n-a-m. Hazmat investigator, NTSB.

12 MR. PRICE: Stephen Price, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, Price, P-r-i-c-e.
13 I'm assistant vice president for system operations at Washington
14 Gas Light Company. My telephone number [REDACTED]. Email:
15 [REDACTED]

16 MR. STAEBLER: Douglas Staebler, D-o-u-g-l-a-s, Staebler,
17 S-t-a-e-b-l-e-r. Washington Gas. Phone number is [REDACTED].
18 Email: [REDACTED].

19 MR. EMEABA: I am Kalu Kelly Emeaba, K-a-l-u, K-e-l-l-y, last
20 name E-m-e-a-b-a. I'm an NTSB investigator.

21 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. Thank you.

22 INTERVIEW OF PATRICK FRANCISQUE

23 BY MR. CHHATRE:

24 Q. So Mr. Francisque, please tell us what happened on the day of
25 the accident, which is August 10th.

1 A. Yes. August 10th, I was in my car that day. It was about --
2 it was approaching midnight. I had been out because that day was
3 a certain number of thing I have to have done. And I had parked
4 my car in front of the building, because not living in the block
5 of apartment, I could not leave my car overnight inside the inside
6 parking of the place. They would have towed the car.

7 So basically my sister-in-law, who lives in an apartment in
8 the block of apartments, told me to put my car on the street
9 because since she had a car herself and basically there is a kind
10 of -- she has a kind of card, but she didn't have it for a guest.
11 So she told me that if I left the car, the car probably would be
12 towed, because it had happened to a whole bunch of people. And
13 basically she told me to park on the street. And I park on that
14 particular space because that was the nearest from her apartment.

15 Usually there is a lot of people who park on that street.
16 It's always full of cars, you know. And I was really lucky to
17 have found it. I considered myself at the time to be lucky for
18 having found it because usually, especially when you come in the
19 evening, there is a lot of people who park their car for the night
20 and you are unable to find space near the block sometimes. There
21 are other times when I come and had to go maybe 1 block or
22 sometimes 2 block away to park the car. So I was very happy and
23 basically I arranged, you know, to make sure that I was able to
24 find that space again.

25 Q. So which street you park? Do you know?

1 A. I was parked on Arliss.

2 Q. Arliss. Okay. And was that in front of the building that
3 exploded, or --

4 A. That was in front of the building but it was not in front of
5 the apartment that (indiscernible). I was about -- there were
6 about two or three cars that were in front of the apartment and I
7 was -- basically I was parking behind, I was parking behind the
8 third car from the car -- or from the place, from the car that was
9 in front of the building that blew up. I think it was a taxi was
10 parked over there.

11 Okay. So I arrive at -- it was about 11:00. I stayed in the
12 car for a little while. I must tell you that, as I told you, my
13 sister-in-law lives over there. She has trouble with my brother,
14 who is her husband. Sometimes they have arguments, and I didn't
15 want to either witness it or I didn't want to get into it,
16 basically. So what I did, I went to the car. I sat in the car
17 and basically I would wait until they were almost going to bed to
18 return. So that -- by that point, whatever argument they were
19 having, they are already finished doing it. No one would pick me
20 as a witness or try to say where or what do you think of this or
21 that, (indiscernible) why are these not good and --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. You know, so that's what I did. That's why I was in my car
24 at that time.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. The explosion, I thought that the explosion took place after
2 midnight, but in fact it took place before midnight, you know.

3 So I was in the car. I listen a little bit to the radio and
4 I was kind of -- I had to go to work the next day because I had
5 found a job in the Washington area. I did not (indiscernible) I
6 work as an interpreter. I do two languages. I do French and I do
7 Asian Creole. And there was a conference pertaining to Haiti and
8 I had been taken by a company to basically do the interpreting for
9 the conference. And I was supposed to go the next morning at
10 8:00. You know, it was a conference that was a -- it was a
11 medical confidante that was organized by the Institute of Biology
12 and Micro -- the one that take care of -- it was a part of the NIH
13 basically.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. And I was supposed to do the interpretation over there.

16 So I was there, and that's one of the reason also I was in
17 the car because, you know, all those kind of thing, you have to be
18 suited up in those things. And basically I had given my suit to
19 laundry, and I'm going to pick it up. And it was in the car and
20 basically, when I was going to go to bed to the apartment, I was
21 going to take it with me.

22 So I was in the apartment, and basically everything looked
23 normal out on the street. You know, the atmosphere in the
24 neighborhood, there is a lot of Hispanics who live in the area and
25 a lot of them live in those apartments. But there's always a lot

1 of people, because seemingly one of the things that they do, there
2 are several people who lives in the apartment. They kind of --
3 you know, if your apartment is -- has been rented seemingly by
4 six, seven or eight, while under the name of one person, but
5 basically six or seven person might be paying. And they are able
6 to get into the apartment. You know, sometimes what they do,
7 those who work at night, they are in the apartment during the day.
8 Those who work in the day, you know, they are in the apartment at
9 night.

10 Q. So do you --

11 A. So that's a little bit the way, seemingly, things were.

12 Q. So do you remember what time you went to your car?

13 A. Well, as I told you, I came back with the car probably around
14 11:30.

15 Q. 11:30, okay.

16 A. Since generally my sister-in-law went to bed around midnight,
17 so I was waiting for her to more or less go to bed because her
18 husband, meaning my brother, often when she had an argument with
19 my brother, she would kind of take it on me.

20 Q. So do you walk from the apartment to your car?

21 A. Yes. You walk from the apartment to the car.

22 Q. And do you --

23 A. You know, but I've not yet returned to the apartment. I was
24 waiting for it to be about midnight. My brother had given me a
25 key. So I would wait when they went to bed and I would go to the

1 apartment. That way I was not into any argument. Because often
2 my sister-in-law say, well, you always taking for your brother,
3 da, da, da, da.

4 Q. So what is the apartment number, the building number where
5 your --

6 A. The number of the building where she live is 8652.

7 Q. 8652.

8 A. And she lives in apartment 12.

9 Q. Okay. Okay.

10 A. That building being the third building from the one which
11 exploded when you go down.

12 Q. Okay. On Arliss Street?

13 A. No, not on Arliss. When you go on Piney Branch.

14 Q. Okay. Piney Branch.

15 LT. OLIN: Piney -- 8652 Piney Branch.

16 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

17 MR. FRANCISQUE: Yeah.

18 BY MR. CHHATRE:

19 Q. So 8652 Piney Branch. That's what I was asking. Okay.

20 So when you came from your home or wherever, you parked
21 directly at that car location or you went to the apartment and you
22 walked back?

23 A. Well, no, what I do -- what I did, as I told you, generally
24 there are a lot of people who park in the area and it's some --
25 it's very difficult. I'm not sure exactly why I was able to find

1 parking that -- because a lot of people want to park, you know, in
2 front of the building because they just get out of their building
3 and they get into the car. So I was able to find that parking
4 space, you know. And I was in the parking space because, as I
5 told you, the conference had already begun.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. I arrived for the beginning of that. During the day I spent
8 the whole day working, so I left the car because I didn't go with
9 the car; I used Metro. You know, because I need parking downtown.
10 Basically the conference was taking place, as I told you, at the
11 NIH. It was taking place also at the Voice of America because it
12 was USIA that organized.

13 Q. So when you're in your car --

14 A. There were a whole bunch of (indiscernible) and things like
15 that.

16 Q. Did you smell any gas odor when you are sitting in the car?

17 A. No. I'll tell you from me, no. There was no gas -- you
18 know, I know the smell of gas. There was not.

19 Q. No. Were your windows down in the car or the windows were
20 up?

21 A. My windows were up because I'm very careful when I'm in
22 Washington. You know, sometimes people -- how can I say that --
23 there are people sometimes -- especially in that neighborhood,
24 there are people sometimes, I don't know exactly, they are drunk
25 or on whatever.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. You know, one day I was attacked in my car because one of
3 them -- well, not in that particular neighborhood. You know, but
4 I was in my car. There was a guy who was on the front of the
5 seat. I was not sure where I was going and I want him to ask the
6 direction to the person. When I asked the person for direction,
7 the person told me can you give me \$1. And when I got to give the
8 \$1 to the person, the person pulled a knife on me. Luckily for me
9 I had a car that had automatic windows. And since I'm very -- how
10 could I say that -- wary, I had not pulled the thing completely
11 down. I pulled it only just enough to give him. And that was --
12 thanks to that, that I -- so basically when I'm in Washington,
13 generally my windows are always up.

14 Q. So how could you smell the gas if the windows are up?

15 A. I didn't. I told you I didn't smell gas.

16 Q. Okay. Right.

17 A. And I had been to the car several times because the
18 conference lasted 1 week.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. You know, I never smelled gas in the area.

21 Q. In that area. Okay.

22 So what happened after the building exploded?

23 A. Well, as I told you, I was basically doing my things and
24 basically suddenly there was a white flash. There was a white
25 flash, and I know that's going to seem to you kind of bizarre, I

1 saw a little, a little shock wave coming. You know, the shock
2 wave came at me, basically blew up all the windows that were on
3 the right side of the car and it also -- the shock wave also kind
4 of -- the side of the door basically, I had to kind of -- it was
5 pulled in by the shock wave. I realized that after the fact. But
6 as I told you, I saw the shock -- the flash and I saw the shock
7 wave coming at me.

8 And basically my first impression was, wow. You know, it's
9 kind of -- it's like, you know, time becomes suddenly slow and my
10 -- I'll tell you frankly I said, oh, here too? Because remember
11 there was -- had been a whole bunch of things that happened in
12 France and then (indiscernible). And I said over here too? So,
13 and basically came up.

14 The window blew up. Luckily for me, as I told you, when I
15 saw the shock wave coming, I was kind of -- I did not really try
16 to get down, you know, because the shock wave was coming sideways
17 to the car. It wasn't coming straight. As I told you, I was not
18 in front of the building. It came kind of sideways and it blew
19 out the windows that were on the right side the car. It did not
20 blow the windshield, you know.

21 So basically I find myself, there was a whole bunch of piece
22 of glass and things like that. But I was not wounded by it. The
23 only place where I was wounded, I had near my right ear. But
24 something small sitting here, a piece of glass.

25 Q. Did your car windows shatter?

1 A. The one on the right side. The front and back window on the
2 right side door.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. As I told you, the windshield did not.

5 Q. Okay. And what did you do then? What happened after that?

6 A. I have to tell you, frankly that it came out, without
7 absolutely no -- you know, it's like you are one moment
8 everything's okay, the other moment all hell broke loose. I was
9 kind of, wow.

10 You know, I think I stayed in the car kind of wondering
11 whether I was dreaming or what happened, you know. In fact, I
12 went out of the car and I returned; I sit back in the car. I
13 think I must have done that at least twice, you know. Because I
14 was looking at the thing. I return in the car. I said, well, but
15 I am not bleeding. I am not seeing the thing. And I went out and
16 I look at it again. You know, and I must have done it at least
17 twice.

18 Well, evidently at that point -- no, before I did that, there
19 was standing near a woman and a man who were in the building.
20 Because at some point I saw a Hispanic woman and a Hispanic man,
21 they pass -- as I told you, the window had blown up and was open.
22 And the woman said, can you help us? The guy had -- the guy was
23 bleeding.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. She wasn't, but the guy was bleeding. His head was bleeding.

1 She said, can you help me? I think I may have tried to call the
2 police, but I'm not sure. As I told you, it's a little bit
3 confused. I think I tried to call the police and then I hung up.
4 And I was looking at it, because basically, as I told you, there
5 was a flash, there was the shock wave. The apartment that was on
6 top of the apartment that blew up, basically it went down on the
7 building. Basically it's a building that has, I think, two or
8 three -- two or three --

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Floors.

10 MR. FRANCISQUE: Floor. You know, the floor that was on top
11 of where -- I must tell you that the explosion came from the
12 apartment that was on the first floor. There were two apartments
13 on top of it that basically went down on it.

14 BY MR. CHHATRE:

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And there was a lot of flame. As I told you, I saw the flame
17 were white, but as they began attacking with their materials, it
18 became kind of yellow, red, you know, a little bit of everything.

19 So as I told you, I saw that couple. I think they were --
20 they must have been in the building, you know. They went -- they
21 passed going toward Piney Branch. And as I told you, the woman
22 said, can you help us? So I look at that.

23 At that point, as I told you, I had to go to work 8:00. So
24 what I did, I took my suit that was in the car and basically I
25 took also my -- I had a computer and I had also a kind of -- the

1 computer was in a kind of pack, you know, those backpacks you can
2 put your stuff in, you know. And I took all those and basically I
3 went to the apartment where my brother was.

4 Basically I came inside. They told me they were not
5 sleeping. They said you are not -- are you back? And I said,
6 there has been an explosion next door; did you hear what happened?
7 And they said, no, we didn't. In the apartment they didn't know
8 that the thing had blown. They had not heard the noise.

9 Q. Oh, they did not. Okay.

10 A. So when I told them that, my brother was in bed basically, he
11 got dressed and he went out to see. The woman also, seemingly,
12 got dressed, but she did it after him because the two of us, we
13 went outside.

14 I said, but, look, that thing has blown up and the building
15 is basically flame, you know. And he looked. He said, oops, you
16 know. At some point his wife came also and at that point -- it
17 was at that point that there were firemen who began -- the police,
18 I must say the police was very quick. They came quickly. Because
19 the explosion, after maybe 1 minute, at most, 1 or 2 minutes, they
20 were beginning to get call and you could hear, you know, the noise
21 of their sirens. You know, so they came quickly.

22 Now everyone was kind of -- the people of the building, I
23 didn't pay any attention to it because, as I told you, me, I went
24 to do that, I put my suit and all my things that I would need for
25 the next day there. I drop them, and basically we went out to see

1 what was going on. And the police came and basically the fire
2 brigade came also. And they were beginning to clear up. They
3 begun basically to cordon off the area.

4 And at some point they came to the building -- the building
5 that was next to the building that blew up, seemingly, was also in
6 flames. But not like the other one, but basically there were
7 pieces and flames that were going, and it was threatening
8 basically to get the building that was behind it.

9 So basically the firemen get ready to (indiscernible). They
10 began cordon off, and at some point they came to the building that
11 we were living. They said everyone has to leave.

12 Q. So they --

13 A. Even though the third building had nothing. But they said
14 they are (indiscernible). We don't know exactly what's going on,
15 everyone has to go out. So basically they evacuated that building
16 that was 8652.

17 Q. Okay. So --

18 A. So they cordon off, they cordon off the building. They
19 cordon off -- in fact, they cordon off all three building.
20 Because they had everyone evacuate, basically they could not
21 return to the building. It was only maybe 2 or 3 hours later
22 basically they said that the building where we were living, people
23 could return. It was about 3:00, 3:30 in the morning by the time
24 they said that.

25 But in the meantime, those who were supposed to get the fire

1 out had to get the fire out. Those who were in charge of
2 security, they took care of security. You know, the police, they
3 work together, basically the police and the fire brigade.

4 Q. So do you know what happened to the couple who came to ask
5 you for your help? Do you know where they went?

6 A. Not really. I am not sure what happened to them. As I told
7 you, after I -- as I told you, at first I was kind of, you know,
8 what? What happened exactly? You know, after that when I began
9 to take care of my own affairs, at that point, as I told you, the
10 fire brigade and the police, they did their work very good. So I
11 suspect that people who had been wounded were taken care of quite
12 quickly. Because the police came very quickly. The fire brigade
13 came, they came quickly, within minutes.

14 Q. So what happened after that? After you were asked to
15 evacuate --

16 A. We were asked to evacuate. Basically everyone stayed out,
17 you know. My sister-in-law almost was regretting that she got
18 dressed to see -- I think she said, I should have stayed in my
19 apartment and lock it. But at that point -- so we stayed about 3
20 hours going on. The fire was fierce. It really burned the
21 building almost, I would not say to the ground, but it was a hell
22 of a fire.

23 Q. Okay. Well, I guess -- anything else you want to add? Did
24 your --

25 A. Well, at this time, as I told you, there was no talk about

1 gas. But after that, I heard they think -- they're saying the
2 gas. But, for example, my sister-in-law who lives in the
3 apartment had never heard of talk about gas, smelling gas or
4 things like that.

5 Q. Okay. Did your brother or sister-in-law say anything that
6 they smelled gas in the area at the time, or --

7 A. He neither. He neither. Because I must tell you, but he
8 does not live in that one. His wife live in the apartment.
9 Because they do not see eye to eye, that they are --

10 Q. Right, right.

11 A. -- kind of things, he has bought a house in Maryland that is
12 not far from where I live in West Virginia. You know, he bought a
13 house in a place called Sandy Hook. When the woman is too much
14 trouble for him, he goes over there, you know. When he works in
15 Washington he is at the apartment because since he is the one
16 paying the apartment, you know. As I told you, there are from
17 time to time things, but I'm not going to tell into private
18 things.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. And as I told you, when I go there, I try not to get into it.

21 Q. Okay. But they didn't say anything about -- your sister-in-
22 law didn't say anything about a gas smell or --

23 A. No. Neither of them ever talk. Because I go from time to
24 time over there.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. As I told you, I go sometimes for -- because I have work in
2 Washington, and I also go there sometime to see my nephew.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Because she and my brother have a son, you see -- I go
5 (indiscernible) because when they are having arguments, I consider
6 it's not too good for him. So often what I do when I go over
7 there, I take the kid; we go have dinner or, you know, we go to
8 the movies, you know, those kind of things. So they want to have
9 the argument, have the argument between yourself, not in front of
10 the kid.

11 MR. CHHATRE: Okay. That's all I have.

12 Kelly?

13 BY MR. EMEABA:

14 Q. Well, I don't have much to ask you, but just one -- just one
15 question. Relative to your position on Arliss, which you say you
16 parked in front of the house, if -- I don't know if you can
17 actually draw -- I mean, look at the diagram we have up there and
18 be able to, if you can recall it, where your actual position
19 was?

20 A. Well, the building has three parts sitting here. They are
21 the left part, middle part, right part.

22 Q. Yes.

23 A. The one that blew up is the middle one.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Okay? My car was almost to the corner of Piney Branch.

1 Q. Okay. Are you able to identify from -- please.

2 A. My car was about here. This is the building that exploded.
3 And I told you it's three block.

4 Q. Yes.

5 A. You know, there was the right part, the left part -- I think
6 that was -- that one, it is in three parts. Okay. The building
7 that explode was that one, the one that blew up. Me, I was a
8 little bit over here. I was next to the building, but I was not
9 next to the apartment that blew up. That's why I told you the
10 shock wave came a little bit sideways.

11 Q. So are you able to place your vehicle where you think you
12 (indiscernible)?

13 A. My vehicle was about here. There were, I think, at least two
14 -- there was a taxi that was parked in front of, in front of the
15 unit that blew up.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Okay. There was another car. There was space for another
18 car but the car wasn't there (indiscernible). There was my car
19 over there.

20 Q. Okay. Okay.

21 A. So basically I was supposed to be the third car. Yeah, that
22 one.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. The other (indiscernible).

25 Q. So when in the car, if you can recollect, sitting in your

1 car, were you back-in the building or were you facing the
2 building?

3 A. No, because the head -- the front of the car was over there.
4 The back of the car was over there. The back of the car was
5 toward Piney Branch. The front of the car was toward basically
6 the street (indiscernible) on the street. So basically I was
7 sitting in it and I told you I saw the shock wave. Basically the
8 apartment blew up, as I told you, there was a white flash.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Basically. And there was a shock wave. The shock wave came
11 at me. It blew up the windows over there. The windshield was
12 not -- and also the -- as I told you, all that side basically the
13 shock wave kind of put it in.

14 MR. EMEABA: Okay. Thank you. That's just the question I
15 have for you. Thank you.

16 MR. FRANCISQUE: You're welcome, sir.

17 MR. STAEBLER: So --

18 MR. EMEABA: Please --

19 MR. STAEBLER: Doug Staebler, Washington Gas.

20 BY MR. STAEBLER:

21 Q. So just, where -- how did you get to your car that last time?
22 Did you come from 8652?

23 A. Basically I came in the car and I stayed in the car.

24 Q. Okay. So you were -- how long were you in the car?

25 A. About 15, 20 minutes.

1 Q. Fifteen, 20 minutes.

2 A. I arrive about at 11:30.

3 Q. So you parked at that time or --

4 A. I found the car at that time and I sat in the car.

5 Q. And you sat.

6 A. I was waiting for those people who were in the apartment
7 (indiscernible) because, as I told you, they regularly had
8 arguments.

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. And I didn't want to get into it.

11 Q. Okay. And while you were there did you see other people
12 coming in and out of the building at all or out of the apartment
13 building next --

14 A. Well, seemingly there are people who came out, but basically
15 I was in the car. I was listening to the radio and I was thinking
16 about my own things because, as I told you, the next day I had a
17 job to do. So basically I was at the time what I was going to
18 have to do --

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. -- and I didn't pay attention to it really.

21 Q. Pay attention, okay.

22 A. From what I was told by ATF and (indiscernible) they're aware
23 of people who came out while I was in the car.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. But to tell you, for me, I was not really following who was

1 doing what or that they were. Because in that time, me, I was
2 waiting basically for them to go to bed so that I can return into
3 the apartment and not get into it, because the next morning I had
4 to go to be at work by 8:00, which means that I had to leave
5 Silver Spring about 6:30, 7:00 in the morning since I was not
6 taking my car.

7 Q. Right. Okay. And just -- so you saw the white flash of the
8 explosion in the middle apartment.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And what --

11 A. And the immediately the other apartment fell down on it
12 immediately.

13 Q. Fell down. Okay. And you didn't -- okay, so -- and you
14 didn't see the fire or the explosion in the other apartments, just
15 -- it just seemed like --

16 A. No. It was that apartment basically, the one that was on the
17 ground floor.

18 Q. Okay. Ground floor apartment?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. And then describe -- excuse me -- what happened after
21 the explosion, what you saw. Was there a fire immediately? Was
22 there --

23 A. There was a fire, as I've already told you, but at first the
24 fire was white. And then after that, it begin kind of yellow. It
25 begin to give some reddish things, you know. But initially it was

1 white flame.

2 Q. And was it a big flame, a small flame? Where was the flame,
3 do you remember?

4 A. The flame was in the apartment. There were white flame all
5 over the apartment.

6 Q. Okay. In the apartment that exploded? That was where the
7 fire was?

8 A. Yeah, the apartment that exploded, and as I told you, the
9 explosion was a big explosion because the floor that was on top of
10 it collapsed.

11 Q. Okay. And was the first floor still there or it's just the
12 second --

13 A. All two apartments -- I think there were three floor.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. The two floor that were on top of the apartment collapsed on
16 it.

17 Q. And was -- but the first one was still intact, the first
18 floor -- or that collapsed also?

19 A. Well, I'm not sure if there was an apartment behind it. But
20 basically, as I told you, the two top floor fell on -- inside the
21 apartment that had exploded.

22 Q. Okay. And so there was just a fire at that time. Because I
23 saw footage where there's a big fire at some point, but that's --

24 A. Well, yes, as I told you, when it begun it was a white flame.
25 But when it begun, basically because there was, there was a whole

1 bunch of material in there, at some point it became yellow; it
2 become red. At some point there were a little bit of smoke you
3 see, but not that much.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. You know, and as I told you, I was there at the beginning of
6 the fire. By the time the fire was, I had gone to my brother,
7 then basically we came and kind of look. But we didn't -- we
8 could not approach near the building because the police did a very
9 good job. They cordon off --

10 Q. Cordoned off.

11 A. -- the whole thing.

12 Q. Right. And how about as far as people getting out of the
13 building, rescue, did you notice people coming out? I mean --

14 A. Well, the one that I -- as I told you, the one I'm sure came
15 down from that was the woman and the man.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. Those two were coming out from the building, and the guy was
18 wounded. Something had either fell on his head or something
19 because there was -- there were blood coming out of it. You know,
20 he could still talk. He could still walk. But as I told you, the
21 woman was with him. She was the one who told me, can you help us?

22 And I think at that time I may have called the police on my
23 cell phone, you know. But finally I called them and at some point
24 I told myself, what am I doing? I cannot do anything for them.
25 So the police is going to come anyway, so I hung up. Besides we

1 were beginning already to hear sirens and things like that. As I
2 said, they did arrive -- they responded quick. I want to emphasis
3 on that.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Within about 1 minute, there were police. There were fire
6 people. There were a whole bunch of people. And as it went on,
7 there were more and more of them. But the first one arrive within
8 1 or 2 minutes.

9 Q. Um-hum. Okay. But you said, so -- that you were able to see
10 a white flame in that first --

11 A. The initial explosion was white flame.

12 Q. Right. And then in that apartment, which then says that
13 apartment was still --

14 A. Basically it came out from the apartment.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. There was a white flame came up from the apartment with the
17 shock wave.

18 Q. Yeah. And then what happened? Was there a fire right after
19 that or was there --

20 A. Oh, after that, the fire continued. Basically, I told you,
21 at first it was white. And then after that, it begun getting
22 yellow, reddish, you know, and all kinds of color.

23 Q. And how about the size of the fire? Was the fire contained
24 in the first floor apartment? Is that where you saw the fire at
25 first and then --

1 A. No, it -- basically the white flame blew out of the
2 apartment.

3 Q. Right. And then after both -- well, after that flame blew
4 out of the apartment, what did you see? What fire was there?

5 A. As I told you, the fire continued. It was -- there were
6 white flames.

7 Q. Inside the apartment?

8 A. In the apartment.

9 Q. Okay. And so the apartment was still intact? You could see
10 the apartment still?

11 A. No. The apartment, as I told you, the two other floor
12 basically collapsed on it.

13 Q. And, and but --

14 A. But the flames continue. Basically they were --

15 Q. Coming out of that collapse?

16 A. Yes, exactly.

17 Q. Okay. And how about -- and just 87-0- -- the other building
18 next to it, was that building intact or did it --

19 A. The one was behind it basically. You see when you go in
20 there was another one over here.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. And there was a third one. There is -- I think there about
23 four building in the block of apartments, four or five, I think.

24 Q. But, see, the 8703 attached to the -- was that building
25 damaged by the explosion, do you remember? This -- so, right, so

1 this building exploded.

2 A. Um-hum. Um-hum.

3 Q. Was there anything happening with this building at all? Did
4 you -- was this --

5 A. I don't think it got on fire, but they cordoned off -- they
6 cordoned it off also. Basically they cordoned off three building:
7 this one, that one, and the one that was behind it.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. That one was on fire because of sitting near the flame and
10 all the material that were flaming up basically were going on this
11 side. And at some point, seemingly, there was a little fire on
12 it. Because the police and the firemen, they had everyone
13 evacuate the place, you know. And they also cordon that one more
14 for security because that one didn't have anything. But to be
15 more secure and make sure that nothing happen, they also cordon in
16 that.

17 Q. And so those other buildings the top floors collapsed
18 immediately with the explosion, is that --

19 A. No, that's when the floor collapse, at the time of the
20 explosion.

21 Q. Yeah, just --

22 A. Basically all the apartment that were on top of the apartment
23 that blew up, they collapsed on it.

24 Q. Okay. And then when you got out of your car, right, so you
25 grab your stuff and you walked back --

1 A. Yeah. I grabbed my stuff and I went over there because they
2 had not yet cordoned it off.

3 Q. Okay. And did you --

4 A. When I had to return, because I had left some things in the
5 car, basically I wasn't able to access the car for nearly 7 or 8
6 days. The police had cordoned off everything and basically I
7 think it was the next Monday or Tuesday that I was able.

8 Q. To get back, yeah.

9 A. To get back. They called me to tell me there a whole bunch
10 of car that are inside. If that's your car, come and identify it
11 and --

12 Q. I remember the car.

13 A. At the time they also asked a whole bunch of question. You
14 can take their files also.

15 Q. And when you -- walking back, did you smell gas at that
16 point? Anything? No? Hear anything?

17 A. No.

18 Q. No.

19 A. I must tell you, for me, I did not.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Me personally, my first impression that it was maybe an
22 explosion, maybe a bomb or something. That's what -- I didn't say
23 that, but that's what I was -- especially because I follow, you
24 know, (indiscernible). There has been a whole bunch of things.
25 Me, my first thought when I said, here too? You know.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Well, evidently they said that a lot of people said that they
3 smell gas and things like that, but I'm not sure. As I told you,
4 I don't live there. I was there for the weekend. I was there for
5 about a week because the conference had began on Monday. You
6 know, and I think the explosion took place on Tuesday.

7 Q. Okay. And so -- but when you're parked, when you're parked
8 there, were there other people outside? Did you -- I know you
9 said you didn't pay much attention, but were --

10 A. Well, I didn't -- usually, I thought that there usually be
11 because I'm having -- you know, the place, as I told you, I come
12 quite regularly. You know, there is always a whole bunch of
13 people who are walking. Because I've explained to you basically
14 the way they --

15 Q. Right, use the apartment.

16 A. You know, I consider it almost for like a timeshare. You see
17 there are some people that go to work in the morning, you know,
18 they are in at night. Those who work at night, you know, they are
19 in, in the morning.

20 Because they did it in Maryland, they do not give
21 (indiscernible) for that. But I know that in Virginia they do, at
22 some point they used to -- they had talked about it in the news.
23 What they would do, they would check when someone had rented an
24 apartment that there was only one family. But they don't do that
25 in Maryland.

1 Q. Okay. Yeah, I heard -- because I heard a report that in the
2 corner of 8703 there was, you know, some air conditioning units
3 and there were two individuals sitting there --

4 A. No, there was, there was -- there was an air conditioning,
5 yes, next to the apartment.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. But they said there were -- I guess there were two people
9 sitting out here. Did you notice these two people sitting out
10 there at all?

11 A. Not me.

12 Q. No. Okay. And then, I guess, right, there are sidewalks
13 here too. Is there -- right, there's people walking down --

14 A. There were not really -- well, I guess I didn't pay
15 attention. As I told you, sometimes they are. Because I suspect
16 that there are some people who rent the apartment. As I told you,
17 those we see during the day, you know, they kind of walk around.

18 Q. Right.

19 A. Sometimes I've seen some of them. Because I'm someone who
20 generally sleep very late. Often when I go to -- how do you call
21 that; how do you call that, they sell food at the -- the
22 supermarket that's over there, Giant.

23 Q. Yeah, Giant. Yeah.

24 A. You know, generally the Giant is open and typically when I
25 need something, I go to Giant. And sometimes when I go over

1 there, I see people kind of walking, you know. So they -- I know
2 that they do that. There are some people, you know, they -- as I
3 told you, they are timeshare. One basically has the time
4 (indiscernible) person, they simply go around. I see people
5 walking around, mainly men. You know, not children but adults.

6 MR. STAEBLER: Okay.

7 MR. CHHATRE: Rachael?

8 BY MS. GUNARATNAM:

9 Q. So after you heard the explosion, did you hear another
10 explosion after it?

11 A. No. There was only one explosion and a fire.

12 Q. And what kind of car do you have?

13 A. I have a Saturn.

14 Q. What color is it?

15 A. Green, forest green. It's a four-door.

16 MS. GUNARATNAM: That's all.

17 BY MR. CHHATRE:

18 Q. Can you put an "X" where your car is?

19 A. Here. I was not far from the -- I was not far from the curb,
20 you know.

21 Q. And when you are waiting in the car for, you said, about an
22 hour, you are sitting in the car?

23 A. No. Maybe half an hour.

24 Q. Half an hour, okay.

25 A. I arrived about 11:30. I suspect that's why I found -- as I

1 told you, during the day I don't go to work with it, but when I
2 return home sometimes I take the car and I go do an errand. And
3 when I return from the errands, the parking space was there.

4 Q. So do you see any people walking on the street or in front of
5 the building?

6 A. Well, as I told you, there might have been, but basically I
7 was not really --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- thinking who was, you know, or --

10 Q. But do you see the street with too many people or you only --

11 A. No, about three there, what it was.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. There were about three, you know. Because I seen people kind
14 of going up and down, you know, but --

15 Q. No, that day. Not other days. That day did you see --

16 A. Not that day.

17 Q. Not -- yeah, other days doesn't matter. That day you --
18 okay.

19 MR. CHHATRE: All right. I have no more questions.

20 Kelly?

21 MR. EMEABA: I'm done.

22 MR. CHHATRE: Okay.

23 BY MR. STAEBLER:

24 Q. Yeah, just -- so when you got out of your car --

25 MR. CHHATRE: Identify.

1 MR. STAEBLER: Oh, Doug Staebler.

2 BY MR. STAEBLER:

3 Q. When you got out of your car, had the building already
4 collapsed, right? It collapsed immediately?

5 A. I told you it collapsed immediately --

6 Q. Immediately, boom.

7 A. -- during the explosion.

8 Q. Yeah. Okay.

9 A. Basically the explosion, the collapse, and all the rest
10 collapse on.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. You know, that's why it was -- it was a big explosion. It
13 was a big explosion because basically two (indiscernible)
14 collapsed the rest of the building. I think the one have about, I
15 think, three floor.

16 Q. Three floors, yeah.

17 A. In the building. You know, the two floor that were on top of
18 the thing collapsed immediately on it.

19 Q. I know there was -- so I guess there was debris all over the
20 street, your car?

21 A. It's kind of low. Curiously it collapse inside. You know,
22 it collapsed inside.

23 Q. Just dropped down.

24 A. It didn't collapse outside.

25 Q. And the flame -- as I understand it, I think there's four

1 apartments a floor, I think, correct? Because like -- yeah, my
2 understanding would be -- I guess, I'll just -- it was kind of --
3 it's kind of divided up like this. So you -- this apartment
4 exploded. But it seems like you saw the flash more towards the
5 middle of it, not over here, right?

6 A. It dropped inside here, but not -- you know, there was a door
7 that was over there.

8 Q. Yep.

9 A. Okay. The apartment was on the -- on this side of the door
10 basically that was in the apartment basically that there was the
11 explosion in. As I told you, it was a white flame.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. And basically the apartment that were on top of it basically
14 collapse inside it.

15 Q. Right. And collapsed down to where the first floor apartment
16 collapsed to?

17 A. Yes. But you didn't see the -- on the side, because there's
18 a slope, and I think that there's an apartment that is supposed to
19 be underneath the one that's on the first floor on Arliss Street,
20 you know.

21 Well, they say that the explosion took place in the one that
22 had -- that was at (indiscernible). I don't know. You will have
23 to do your work. But apparently the thing was in the apartment
24 that was on the first floor on Arliss.

25 Q. Yes.

1 MR. CHHATRE: Any questions for you?

2 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

3 Q. I just wanted -- I guess my drawing is sort of -- I only put
4 on the front door. This is the common door that would have gone
5 into these.

6 A. Exactly.

7 Q. Each apartment also has --

8 A. That's what I assume, there were three --

9 Q. Three doors. So --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. -- each -- the front apartments here each had a door, an
12 entry door on the front. So this is the common entrance with the
13 stairwell that goes into the --

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. And then the two apartments --

16 A. Exactly.

17 Q. -- would have had -- there would have been an entry door on
18 the front there. So --

19 A. Yeah, that -- yeah. That one was, as you said, the one where
20 there was a staircase and another staircase, but they are, you
21 know --

22 Q. And you mentioned you talked to the ATF, they interviewed you
23 about --

24 A. Yes. When I came to pick up my car, we had an interview that
25 lasted at least 1 hour and a half, because they ask you a lot of

1 questions. You know, I'm sure that you will be able to get their
2 (indiscernible) whatever they did. They also have --

3 Q. And how long --

4 A. They also have a movie. But because seemingly -- I did not
5 realize it at the time, but as I told you, the police arrive there
6 quickly. There was a police car, seemingly the police car was
7 behind my car and they had --

8 Q. A video, yeah.

9 A. -- a video of it. At the time I did not realize it. As I
10 told you, I was kind of in shock. I did not realize that the car
11 was behind my car, you see. But they get quickly.

12 Q. And how long was that after -- when did you get your car
13 back? How long after the incident?

14 A. It took at least 8 days. Because I got the car -- I think
15 the explosion took place on Tuesday. I think I got my car the
16 next Tuesday.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. It was at that point that they decided it was not a crime
19 scene anymore and they said everyone who had cars come and get.

20 MR. CHHATRE: Okay, if not -- off the record.

21 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: THE EXPLOSION OF APARTMENT
BUILDING 8701 OF FLOWER BRANCH
APARTMENTS IN SILVER SPRING,
MARYLAND ON AUGUST 10, 2016
Telephone Interview of Patrick Francisque

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA16FP003

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: November 15, 2016

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

Kay Maurer
Transcriber