



National Transportation Safety Board

Memorandum

Date: October 13, 2009

Name: Mr. Sanil Gopinath – First Officer – Quest Diagnostics

Subject: ERA09LA469 – Beech 58, N167TB, Teterboro, NJ

Mr. Gopinath was the First Officer in the accident airplane. He was interviewed by telephone, and the following is a summary of the interview. Mr. Gopinath originally provided a taped interview to Federal Aviation Administration inspectors at the hospital, shortly after the accident. Because of his injuries, and because the Safety Board did not respond to the crash site, he was not immediately available for interview by Safety Board investigators

According to Mr. Gopinath, he was originally hired at Quest Diagnostics as a "contract" or "part-time" employee with the potential for full-time employment principally because he was a native of India, and the company was exploring the possibility of expanding its operations to India. The chairman of Quest Diagnostics at the time was also from India, so they shared a common background, culture, and language with potential customers in India. The management team in the Quest flight department felt that Mr. Gopinath's background and knowledge of aviation was an opportune fit. According to Mr. Gopinath, "Albert [Murer] hired me to be the junior guy under him in India."

Mr. Gopinath stated that he functioned as a copilot in the Beech 58 to learn the business, the routes, and to build proficiency in the airplane. He said that Quest used this program to audition potential captains for permanent hire. Mr. Gopinath stated that he flew about 350-400 hours between December 2008 and August 2009, but was never upgraded to Captain or hired full-time.

Mr. Gopinath explained that he lived in Baltimore, Maryland, and would drive to the Quest base in Reading, Pennsylvania (2.5 to 2.75 hours) and then fly until 1 am. Then, depending on how fatigued he was, he would either stay and spend the night, or drive back to Baltimore.

On the night of the accident, Mr. Gopinath had departed in a different airplane on a different route, when the airplane had to be returned to Reading with a maintenance issue. Mr. George Maddox was on the schedule for "only" 3.5 hours so Mr. Gopinath asked to go along. He had not been on this particular route or in this region for "3-4 months" and wanted the experience.



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According to Mr. Gopinath, the airplane approached TEB in VFR conditions on a "nice night" on an extended left base for landing on Runway 1. Mr. Maddox, the captain, pointed out several visual checkpoints, talked about noise abatement, and placed special emphasis on "the Meadowlands [Giant's Stadium]." Mr. Gopinath said he advised the captain that he "had better slow down...I brought the power down, I made a left turn, and George freaks out, 'What have you done? You've lost both your engines!'" Mr. Maddox repeated himself "four times."

Mr. Gopinath described "dive-bombing" for the runway, discussing whether to notify ATC, attempting engine restarts, and fighting on the flight controls with Mr. Maddox. At no time did he describe calling for a before-landing checklist, exchanging call-and-response items with the captain, or configuring the airplane for landing.

When asked about his formal training in the Beech 58, Mr. Gopinath said he had none. He added that the company sent pilots to SimCom for aircraft training and when he asked about a class date for himself, the response was always, "Very soon, very soon." When Mr. Gopinath was asked about Crew Resource Management (CRM) training he replied, "CRM is zero at Quest. When I asked Nick Pagerly (Safety Officer) about CRM he said, 'We don't need that here; it's not required.'"

Brian C. Rayner
Senior Air Safety Investigator