

**Docket No. SA-520**

**Exhibit No. 2-N**

**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD**

**Washington, D. C.**

Witness and interview statements

(15 Pages)

Printed by: <Maintenance Control>  
Title: 963

Monday, January 31, 1900 7:35:15 PM  
Page 1 of 1

*Alaska Airlines*

Unsent Message

From: Scott Willot

Subject: 963

To: scott hm

Cc:

ACFT 963 ENROUTE FROM PVR TO SFOAS F261. AT 16:00 DISPATCHER MIKE AMEND TRANSFERED A RADIO COMMUNICATION FROM ACFT. THE CAPT INDICATED THAT HIS CRUISE AND PRIMARY TRIM SYS WERE INOP. HE HAD INDICATED THAT AT CRUISE THE AUTOPILOT TRIM FAIL LT HAD ILLUM AND THAT HE DISCONNECTED THE AUTOPILOT TO RETRIM USING ALTERNATE TRIM. THE CAPT THEN INDICATED THAT HE HAD ALREADY ATTEMPTED TO RESET THE CIRCUIT BREAKERS FROM ALT TRIM SYS C/B'S LOCATED AT D9, D10, & D11. CAPT ALSO INDICATED THAT HE HAD ALREADY GONE THRU THE QRH PROCEDURES WITH NO HELP TO FAILED SYSTEM. CAPT HAD ALSO INDICATED THAT HE HAD CHECKED THE C/B'S FOR THE PRIMARY LONGITUDINAL LONG TRIIM LOCATED AT G22 AND G23.

I CONCURRED TO THE CREWS PROCESS OF THE QRH AND MY REVIEW OF THE ACFT LAMM DIAGRAMS. THE CAPT HAD PREVIOUSLY REQUESTED F261 DIVERT TO LAX RATHER THAN ITS INTENDED SFO DUE TO SFO WX. THE CAPT INDICATED THAT HE WOULD PREFER LAX DUE TO DRY RUNWAY AND LESS GUSTING WINDS. I HAD ASKED THE CAPT IF THE ADDED FUEL WOULD HINDER OR ASSIST HIS INTENDED LANDING AT LAX. THE CAPT BELIEVED THAT ALTHOUGH HEAVIER IT WOULD BE BETTER OVERALL. DFC CONCURRED TO THIS REQUEST AND THE CAPT THEN CONTINUED TO PROVIDE FLT INFO AT PRESENT. 300KTS .814 MACH STAB TRIM STUCK AT -1/3 UNIT NOSE DOWN AND WOULD BE ARR V LAX AT 16:30 WITH 12000 LBS OF FUEL REMAINING.

AT 16:40 DISPATCH ADVISED THE ACFT WAS OVER-DUE AND INITIATED COMMUNICATIONS TO LAX TO SEE IF ACFT WAS AT STATION.

16:45 DISPATCH CONFIRMED THE FLT WAS LOST NW OF LAX DURING APPROACH.

DISPATCH AND MAINT CTRL DID NOT HAVE ANY CONTACT WITH ACFT AFTER THE INITIAL 16:00 RADIO CALL.

SEAMC/ S.WILLOTT

*Scott Willot*  
[Redacted Signature]



James M. Williams III  
[REDACTED]  
Gig Harbor, WA 98335  
[REDACTED]

February 1, 2000

Captain Bill Wolf  
Chairman Accident Investigation Committee  
Alaska Airlines, Inc.  
VIA FACSIMILE (805) 643-2509

RE: Alaska Airlines Flight # 261

Dear Captain Wolf:

I was the First Officer on Alaska Airlines Flight # 483 on 31 January 2000. While parked at the gate in Los Angeles I overheard parts of the conversation between the crew of Alaska Flight # 261 and maintenance/operations in Los Angeles. The following is what I recall of the conversation to the best of my knowledge.

I first heard the crew discussing diverting the flight from San Francisco to Los Angeles due to a high approach speed requirement and the wind velocity and direction at both airports. The crew reported their approach speed to be approximately 180 KIAS and wanted to ascertain the winds in both San Francisco and Los Angeles. I also heard a discussion of gross weights and trim settings that were being relayed to dispatch.

The crew reported to maintenance in Los Angeles that they had a problem with their horizontal stabilizer but I did not hear the exact nature of the problem. The crew did report that when they attempted to move the stabilizer that an electrical load was being applied but that nothing was moving. At this point I didn't know if they were talking about the stabilizer itself or the trim system. Maintenance in Los Angeles recommended that they try the suitcase handles and the pickle switches simultaneously to see if they could break the motor free. The crew responded a few minutes later that they had tried this and that the trim had runaway full nose down. The crew commented that they were in a real "pickle" and did maintenance have any circuit breakers that they could try next. Maintenance replied that they would get back to them.

I did not hear any more conversation from that point on until our flight was airborne and I heard operations trying to call Flight #261. At no point did I get a sense of urgency from either the crew or from maintenance.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED SIGNATURE]  
James M. Williams III  
Alaska Airlines Arctic # 23052

ATTN: DAVE IVEY, NTSB

**Accident Investigation**  
**Alaska Flight 261**  
**Statement by Juan D. Rangel**  
**Captain, Alaska Airlines**

On arrival into LAX I heard a conversation with Alaska 261 and Maintenance Control and Dispatch. The company representative was questioning Capt. Thompson's decision to divert into LAX versus continuing to SFO. Capt. Thompson was adamant in stating that he thought LAX a better option due to weather and runway length. The conversation continued and the company representative still was unhappy with the decision but started working the problem with the stabilizer trim.

Capt. Thompson also asked the company representative about having someone in the instructor corps getting on the phone to help with the problem. He also stated that they had followed the checklist and were out of ideas on what to do and what circuit breakers to pull. He stated that he felt it was a stabilizer brake problem since he could see a power spike when he tried to use the primary longitudinal trim and the suitcase handles. He also stated they had tried the alternate trim switches.

The pilot also stated that he was going to configure the aircraft for landing and see if he could keep it under control. I presumed that meant he was going to start configuring in the air and do a controllability check.

After block-in I heard the crew speaking with LAX maintenance. The mechanic suggested that he run the trim full nose down to possibly get the brake to unlock. The crew stated that that made it worse and they did not want the situation to worsen. The mechanic stated "Well, it's okay with me if you try it." I then left the aircraft to go to operations to see if anything else was going on. I heard no further conversations with the aircraft, but did see a very distraught mechanic speaking to one of the operations agents outside of the operations area as I was leaving to go to my aircraft to fly home.

In my opinion it is sad to hear a company representative, especially Maintenance, be more concerned with getting the aircraft to the original destination and therefore keep it on the company schedule versus aiding the crew in solving a critical situation. It was a coercive attempt more concerned with aircraft positioning then providing essential information to crew at a crucial moment.

Juan Rangel  


**Supplemental Statement  
Flight 261  
Capt Juan D. Rangel  
Alaska Airlines**

In addition to my prior written statement, I would like to submit additional information included in my verbal interview and an additional interpretation of my original impressions.

The crew asked LAX operations to figure out a landing C.G. based on their fuel status, their original takeoff weight, and C.G. at takeoff. This means they had made the transition in their minds from a possible "runaway" trim condition to a "jammed" stabilizer condition and they planned to configure the aircraft for landing.

The fact that they were asking Maintenance control for help from an instructor is evidence that they had done all the appropriate checklists and were now using proper CRM skills to look for additional information from a different source.

When the crew asked about "hidden" circuit breakers and stated they were experiencing power "spikes" I thought that meant they had pulled the trim breakers as the checklist suggests and then tried the trim switches and were getting power deflections when they used the respective switch that had the circuit breakers pulled.

Another possibility exists: They were experiencing "power spikes" with *all* the trim circuit breakers pulled and therefore they were looking for circuit breakers not mentioned in the checklist to figure out why there was power being applied to that trim motor when all power should have been removed.

Juan D. Rangel  
MD-80 Captain  
Alaska Airlines

ATTN: DAVE IVEY,  
NTSB

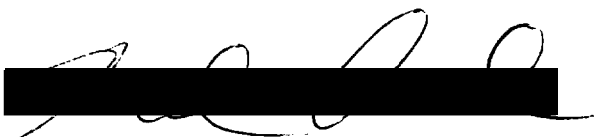


# Alaska Airlines

1/31/2000

AS Flight 261 called approximately 1600 Local and told me the A/C had lost primary and secondary trim. I acknowledged the transmission and the captain indicated he would like to divert to LAX due better weather. The captain also indicated he would like to redo his weight and balance to get a C.G. for a high speed landing. I sent the call over to Scott Willott at Maintenance Control. The captain and Scott discussed circuit breakers to check. The circuit breakers' checked O.K. Scott and myself discussed with the captain going to SFO, and gave them the weather. After receiving the WX report, the captain still felt he wanted to go to LAX because he favored the winds. I then advised him to deal with LAX Operations with his C.G. adjustments. The captain confirmed he would do so. I then relayed to him if he had any problems to call me back. The captain confirmed this, and told me he was going to fly around awhile to lower the fuel before he landed, and this would also allow him to check out the stability of the A/C.

That would be my last conversation.

  
Michael Amend

BOX 68900 SEATTLE, WA 98168-0900/206-433-3200

FACTUAL REPORT

Attachment 2-N-5

DCA00MA02



The following three pages of notes were provided to the NTSB during the interview of Mr. Chris Zupsic on February 2, 2000. He was the pilot of Twin Commander N50DE and was a witness to the descent of the accident airplane. He compiled notes on what he remembered regarding the accident on January 31, 2000.

WHAT I REMEMBER

1/3/00

I left SNA - heading to SBA -  
PAST CSX (CATALINA) - given direct  
HABIT - probably on the 295 initial off CATALINA

AT 10,000' was when ~~it~~ ~~was~~  
1:00 AT 18,000. MD-80 (ALASKA)  
SAW PLANE flying straight and  
level. ATC informed another  
commercial Alaska.

No noticed turn - then start  
bank to left - quickly - maybe  
within 10 - ~~15~~ seconds - clearly  
out of control - NO Aural warning  
flight.



Plane ~~rolled~~ once, maybe twice --  
Then a big drop - inverted -  
Appeared to (must have been) be  
moving off slowly -

After the big inverted loop -  
straight in - like a dart -  
just disappeared into the  
water -

I was at 10,000 - given  
instructions to descend -  
First 7K, I think, then 3K  
was told to stop at 5K

But was already at 4,000 - (3)

level time -

circled -

Saw nothing - survivors were -  
on water -

I instructed C-152 that appeared  
↳ flying @ 5000

(later to check North (really  
west) - might just have been  
white caps.

2/3/00

We picked up aircraft 963 in SEA for flight 158 to SFO and PRR.

Both flights were normal and uneventful with the aircraft and all systems operating normally.

Additional information is in the transcript of my interview with the NTSB.

~~Signature~~



3 FEB 08

I, Elmer A. Smith, reiterate here that everything that was communicated to the NTSB during the debrief this morning is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. There were no indications of any sort of flight control malfunctions on our two legs that we flew aircraft 943. Both legs were totally uneventful and additional details may be found in the transcript of that debriefing.

~~Elmer A. Smith~~

Elmer A. Smith

F/O MD-90 Alaska Airlines



**Accident Investigation**  
**Alaska Flight 261**  
**Witness Statement of Robert Powers**  
**First Officer, Alaska Airlines**

January 31, 2000 2330 PST

On January 31, 2000 I was the First Officer on Alaska Airlines Flight 211 from SEA to LAX. Captain Juan Rangel was the pilot flying. At approximately 1545 PST, we were preparing for our descent into LAX. I left the ATC frequency to make the necessary company calls and heard an exchange between a flight that was having some sort of mechanical problem and, I assume, Maintenance Control. While I waited for a break in the transmissions I heard the two parties discuss circuit breakers (I believe some of the breakers in the "D" row) that may have an effect on their situation and stabilizer trim settings (I do not remember what specific settings were discussed). The pilot identified the flight as 261, but I did not know if it was the Captain or the First Officer speaking. He also said that they were going to proceed as if they were going to continue to SFO, but he wanted to see if they could still keep it airborne in a configuration (I assumed he meant landing configuration), and that they would really try to land at LAX. I stopped listening while I performed my Descent and Approach Checklist duties and then returned to listen to the frequency once they were completed. I next heard a Pilot from Alaska 261 tell Maintenance that he could get the nose to trim down, but not up. The Maintenance person (I believe he was now talking to LAX Maintenance because of the difference in the clarity of the transmissions) said that maybe he should try to run the trim all the way and see if it will come back. The Pilot said he did not want to do that because they would really be in trouble if they couldn't get it back (nose up). The Maintenance person said that it was his decision (the Pilot's), but that it was OK with him if he did it. At this time we were handed off to talk to SOCAL Approach and I discontinued listening to the exchange between Flight 261 and Maintenance until after our landing. Upon reaching our gate in LAX, Captain Rangel continued to monitor the exchange with Flight 261 while I completed my post flight duties.

February 2, 2000 2230 PST

In addition, during my trip today I discovered that I had flown aircraft N963AS on January 30, 2000. I was flying Flight 227 SEA-SEA with Captain Stephanie Wallach. We deadheaded down on Flight 226, also aircraft N963AS. Captain Wallach made the takeoff, and just North of EHF VOR, she transferred control to me and I subsequently landed the aircraft at approximately 1830 PST. I do not recall experiencing any anomalies with the aircraft during any portion of our flight. The aircraft appeared to function normally in all aspects. I found no problems or discrepancies during my interior and exterior preflight checks.

Robert M. Powers  
Alaska Airlines  
MD-80 First Officer  
[REDACTED]

While sitting between flights in Burbank I heard one side of the conversation with what I assume to be the accident aircraft,

The first transmission that caught my attention was in regards to a jammed stab,

The flight crew noticed (not verified) "we've tried that several times, do you know of any hidden circuit breakers or something else we can try?"

After a pause there followed a discussion of stab trim devices on the MD - I am not familiar with the MD and did not follow everything discussed (I'm also hearing only one side of the conversation.)

The flight crew then replied "Okay, we tried that and now we are really in a pickle, the stabs now <sup>fully</sup> full nose down. We are in a much worse situation, and I'm afraid to try anything else, now."

This was the last transmission that I heard and the time was around 0010 - 0030. The last transmission did not sound as clear (background noise) and the speaker was noticeably stressed.

Jim Willner 737-400 FO SEA  
Flight 566-567 on ground in BUR.  
[REDACTED]

FOR JUAN RANGEL ALPA MEC  
FROM JIM RITCHIE  
RM 475  
[REDACTED]

ATTN: Dave- Greg NISS

I was asked by Alaska Alid to pass this statement on to you. I am an Alaska 73-407 F.O.I. I heard the exchange between Filt. 281 and SSA MW 08111.

With the audio tape that you have in your possession, I don't believe this to be any information that you don't already have, but I am passing it on to help out in any way.

Jonathon Willner  
[REDACTED]

1 31 2000

While on a turnaround between flights at Burbank airport I heard the accident flight discussing their problem with what I assume to be Seattle Maintenance control. I could only hear the flight crew side, as the maintenance responses were being transmitted from the LAX RCO.

I initially started listening to the transmissions when I heard the crew mention a jammed stabilizer. This caught my attention and I listened to the remainder of the transmissions.

Please note that although I wrote this down shortly after hearing of the accident, due to the vagrants of memory, I do not make any claim that these are the exact words used.

The flightcrew radioed, "We've tried that several times, do you know of any hidden circuit breakers or something else we can try?"

After a pause there followed a discussion of the MD80 trim systems. I am not trained on the MD, and have never flown it, so I did not understand MD terminology as discussed by the flight crew.

The last message I heard from the flight crew was "Okay, we tried that and now we really are in a pickle. The stab has now runaway full nose down, and I'm afraid to try anything else."

I wish I had more information to give, but this is all I can remember.

Jonathon Willner  
737-400 FO SEA  
[REDACTED]

