



# NTSB INTERVIEW RECORD

**Adam Gerhardt**  
**Air Safety Investigator**  
**General Aviation Accident Investigation Division, AS-20**

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**Date: 12/19/2016**  
**Person Contacted: Black Backiewicz (Flight Follower, Key Lime Air)**  
**NTSB Accident Number: ERA17FA066**

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The following is a record of interview between Adam Gerhardt, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Air Safety Investigator, and Black Backiewicz, a Flight Follower employed by Key Lime Air. Mr. Backiewicz was on-duty the night of the accident. Brian Kilburn, Key Lime Air technical programs manager attended the teleconference as well as Mr. Arthur Mosley, who was legal representation for Mr. Backiewicz.

## **RECORD OF INTERVIEW:**

Mr. Backiewicz was asked if he was ok with the NTSB recording the interview, and he stated "yes sir."

Mr. Backiewicz stated he was a "Flight Follower" with Key Lime Air and started in July of 2016.

Mr. Backiewicz stated that he does not hold a Federal Aviation Administration dispatcher certification license.

Mr. Backiewicz was on-duty the night of the accident and he was ready for Mr. Lance McCaw (accident pilot) to check-in with him before the flight. He stated that he was also ready to track Key Lime Air 308 with their company software. He did not state that he was "assigned" to Key Lime Air 308.

Mr. Backiewicz stated that Mr. McCaw "checked-in" with him via telephone before the accident and he could not recall whether or not this check-in was on-time. Mr. Backiewicz was asked to explain what was discussed during that telephone conversation.

Mr. Backiewicz stated that it was a "short conversation." He stated that Mr. McCaw told him that "everything is good down here," he told him that he was "at the airport," and that the packages were ready to get loaded up or were already loaded up in the airplane.



## NTSB INTERVIEW RECORD

Mr. Backiewicz stated that when he “scrolled over” to his “Flight Explorer,” which is his flight tracking/ planning software, he noticed “significant weather down there.” Mr. Backiewicz stated that he told Mr. McCaw, “are you going to be able to make it into Albany, everything look good on that? What’s going on with that, that way I can inform UPS [United Parcel Service].”

Mr. Backiewicz stated that Mr. McCaw responded that, “right now I’m holding on the ground.” Mr. Backiewicz further stated that Mr. McCaw specified that the storms were “extreme” and stated that the storms had “tornado activity” within them. Mr. Backiewicz stated that he responded with, “oh, are you actually going to do the flight and make it to Albany, or should I be getting ready to inform UPS?” Mr. Backiewicz stated that Mr. McCaw responded that, “I’m holding right now, but I will be taking off from Panama City in a little bit.” Mr. Backiewicz believed Mr. McCaw then stated that the flight would take off in roughly an hour. Mr. Backiewicz stated that the conversation ended with him telling Mr. McCaw, “ok, just let us know.”

Mr. Backiewicz stated that to his best recollection, he did not talk with Mr. McCaw again, but his co-worker Jonathan Struhs did speak with Mr. McCaw later at some point in the night.

Mr. Backiewicz stated that he spoke with someone from UPS multiple times the night of the accident. Mr. Backiewicz stated that he was initially contacted by a UPS representative and three times during the night he spoke with this same person. He could not remember the UPS representative’s name.

Mr. Backiewicz was asked about the first conversation with UPS. He stated that the UPS representative asked “whether or not Lance (Mr. McCaw) was going to be able to make it to Albany.” Mr. Backiewicz stated that at some point in the night, he was pretty sure it was from Jonathan Struhs, that he was told that Mr. McCaw was going to go and attempt to get into Albany. He stated that usually what that means is that the pilots will try to shoot the approach and then if they can’t make it in, they will go missed to a different destination. Mr. Backiewicz further stated that he was informed by someone that Mr. McCaw was going to try to get into Albany and if he couldn’t get into Albany he was going to go missed and change his destination to Tallahassee, Florida.

Mr. Backiewicz was asked about the second conversation with the UPS representative. Mr. Backiewicz stated that they asked whether or not he was going to make it Albany, because their UPS employees in Albany had not seen the aircraft yet.

Mr. Backiewicz was asked if Key Lime Air 308 had an exact time to be expected into Albany. Mr. Backiewicz stated that he could not remember the exact time, but there is a time listed in their company schedules/ computer system. Mr. Backiewicz stated that the time was not followed because “he did not leave anywhere near his routine scheduled departure time.”



## NTSB INTERVIEW RECORD

Mr. Backiewicz was asked about the third conversation with the UPS representative. Mr. Backiewicz stated that he told the UPS representative that he wasn't sure what was going on (with Key Lime Air 308). He stated that he told UPS that their flight tracker showed the flight was supposed to go to Albany and that the destination had changed to Tallahassee. Mr. Backiewicz stated that he called Tallahassee tower to figure out what was going on.

Mr. Backiewicz was asked about his duties, in general, as a flight follower as he "watches over" Key Lime cargo flights. Mr. Backiewicz stated that he monitors the flights and mans a telephone in case the pilots need anything or need to report a maintenance issue or UPS issue. In addition, Mr. Backiewicz stated around 8:00PM to 10:00PM mountain time he waits for pilots to "snap a picture through their phone" to send in a "log page" so he can input times that get reported to UPS. He stated some email the log page.

Mr. Backiewicz stated that he can monitor Key Lime Air flights and evaluate the weather with the "Flight Explorer" tool. Mr. Backiewicz explained that Flight Explorer is his primary source for weather, it has functions such as "RADAR, TAFs, and METARS." He further stated that Flight Explorer is his number one tool for weather.

Mr. Backiewicz was asked if he completed a Flight Risk Assessment Tool (FRAT) for Key Lime Air 308. Mr. Backiewicz stated that he did not complete a FRAT for the flight and added that "at no point in my initial training or when I started did anyone, or any of my coworkers, or any of my bosses, or anyone in the company, tell me that we were responsible for doing FRATs for any cargo flight at all."

Mr. Backiewicz was asked if the FRAT was something he accomplished for passenger flights. Mr. Backiewicz stated that he does complete FRATs for passenger flights and that he was aware of the requirement to complete the FRAT for passenger flights.

Mr. Backiewicz was asked if he had ever competed a FRAT that was not a "GO" FRAT. He stated that he knows "for sure" he has never gotten a "RED – NO GO" result and he may have gotten one or two "YELLOW – CONSULT" FRATs in his experience.

Mr. Backiewicz was asked if he had the power to stop or cancel a Key Lime Air Cargo flight. He stated he does not.

Mr. Backiewicz confirmed that he and Jonathan Stuhs were the only "Flight Followers" on-duty the night of the accident.

Mr. Backiewicz was asked whether or not he has a supervisor that he reports to in-person while on duty. Mr. Backiewicz stated that he technically has two supervisors, the number one resource and direct supervisor is Linda Perdue. The second individual is David Carrizo (Director of



## NTSB INTERVIEW RECORD

Operations). Mr. Backiewicz stated that his direct line supervisor was not physically at the Dispatch office the night of the accident. He stated that his shift is usually from 2:00PM to 10:00PM mountain time and she usually leaves between 5:00PM to 7:00PM mountain time. Mr. Backiewicz stated that he does have her contact information and has authority to call her if the need should arise.

Mr. Backiewicz was asked if he had ever called his direct line supervisor (with respect to his flight follower duties) after she had left the office, and he said, "yes, many times." Mr. Backiewicz stated that he could not recall talking to his direct line supervisor or the Director of Operations about Key Lime 308 (preaccident).

Mr. Backiewicz stated that postaccident he called David Carrizo.

Mr. Backiewicz stated that the Key Lime Air FRAT is now being complete by dispatch for Key Lime Air Cargo flights.

Mr. Backiewicz was again asked to clarify what Mr. McCaw stated, via telephone, about the weather information. Mr. Backiewicz stated that he did not know where Mr. McCaw obtained his weather information. Mr. Backiewicz stated that he looked at his Flight Explorer tool and observed "outlays" all over and Convective Sigmet boxes all over the Key Lime Air 308 route of flight. He said after looking over that, he asked Mr. McCaw, "Hey, the weather looks bad." Mr. McCaw in reply stated, "yeah, a lot of rainfall and tornado activity."

Mr. Backiewicz was asked what his duties would be if a Key Lime Air Cargo flight were to be canceled. Mr. Backiewicz stated that the number one priority is to inform UPS that the cargo will not be making it to the destination. He said if it's something "serious, such as the accident," then he would contact his supervisors. Mr. Backiewicz also stated that he may send out an "Operations Employee Report," which is completed via the company website.

Mr. Backiewicz also stated that each night towards the end of his shift he contacts UPS to "discuss whether or not flights made their destination and whether or not packages made service and whichever destination did not make service." Mr. Backiewicz stated that each night he submits an "End of the Night – Operations Employee Report." The document is submitted to the company website.

Mr. Backiewicz was asked how many flights he "oversees" in a night shift. He stated that he is unsure of the exact number of flights, but usually one flight follower is responsible for monitoring all the cargo flights and producing the reports. Mr. Backiewicz confirmed he was assigned to monitor the cargo side of the operations the night of the accident.



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**Date: 12/19/2016**  
**Person Contacted: Jonathan Struhs (Flight Follower, Key Lime Air)**  
**NTSB Accident Number: ERA17FA066**

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The following is a record of interview between Adam Gerhardt, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Air Safety Investigator, and Jonathan Struhs. Jonathan Struhs was a flight follower with Key Lime Air and was on duty the night of the accident. Mr. Arthur Mosley was legal representation for Mr. Struhs and was also on the teleconference.

## RECORD OF INTERVIEW

Mr. Struhs was asked if he was ok with the NTSB recording the interview, and Mr. Struhs stated "yes."

Mr. Struhs stated that he held the position of "Flight Follower" at Key Lime Air and was hired on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. Mr. Struhs reported that he held "no licenses" when asked if he held a Federal Aviation Administration dispatcher certification.

Mr. Struhs was asked if he had talked to the accident pilot (Mr. Lance McCaw) on the day of the accident. Mr. Struhs reported that he spoke with the pilot "a while after from when he was supposed to have departed." Mr. Struhs stated that the accident pilot, Mr. McCaw, was "holding because of the weather" at the departure airport.

Mr. Struhs stated that the client, United Parcel Service (UPS), had called his office (Key Lime Dispatch) to ask whether or not Key Lime 308 was going to depart.

Mr. Struhs subsequently called Mr. McCaw to find out "if he was planning on going." Mr. McCaw told Mr. Struhs, "yeah, I'm going to get going here in just a few minutes." Mr. McCaw further stated on the phone call, "I see some clear weather that I think I can fly towards the northeast, toward Albany." Mr. McCaw continued, "If I can't get up to Albany, then I will just turn south and use Tallahassee as my alternate." Mr. Struhs then stated that he told Mr. McCaw, "Ok, I will let UPS know you are getting ready to get going then." Mr. Struhs concluded to his best recollection that this content was the entire conversation he had with Mr. McCaw before the flight.



## NTSB INTERVIEW RECORD

Mr. Struhs stated that it was routine for UPS to call Key Lime Air Dispatch and ask for an update if on any occasion flights were holding or were delayed. Subsequently, Key Lime Air Flight Followers would call the pilot for an update. That was what happened for the accident flight.

Mr. Struhs was asked if Key Lime Air 308 was expected into Albany, GA at a specified time. Mr. Struhs stated, "yes," and to his understanding, UPS personnel coordinates the pick-up and meets the flight when they arrive for unloading. Mr. Struhs further stated that there is "a scheduled time" for the unloading, then if the flight is delayed, UPS calls Key Lime Air dispatch so that they know how to adjust their schedule. Mr. Struhs stated that there is a specific time that Key Lime Air would consider the flight to be "on-time." He stated that he does not know if that is a "hard deadline" or a "goal." Mr. Struhs stated, "we have on paper a certain time he is trying to get there every night." Mr. Struhs could not recall what exact time was expected for Key Lime 308 to arrive into Albany.

Mr. Struhs stated that in Key Lime Air Dispatch, they use a tool called "Flight Explorer" on their computers. He said a flight follower has the ability to identify Key Lime Air flights they want to "watch."

Mr. Struhs reported that he was not assigned to Key Lime 308 the night of the accident. Mr. Struhs explained that he and another flight follower on-duty "divide up the duties each night" and Key Lime 308 was not one of his duties that night. Mr. Struhs stated that Brett Backiewicz was "handling the cargo side of the operation for the evening." Mr. Struhs stated that when UPS called in to ask about the status of Key Lime 308, he (Mr. Struhs) answered the phone and was asked by UPS if he could get an update on the flights status. Mr. Struhs stated that he could not recall what Mr. Backiewicz was doing at that time. Mr. Struhs explained that, "since there is only two of us in the room, if one can help the other out..." Subsequently, Mr. Struhs decided to call Mr. McCaw to get an update. This conversation was the one previously discussed.

Mr. Struhs confirmed, to the best of his knowledge, he was one of two Key Lime Air "Flight Followers" working the night of the accident.

Mr. Struhs was asked about the Key Lime Air "Flight Risk Assessment Tool (FRAT)." Mr. Struhs stated the Dispatch office in Centennial only handles the FRATs for passenger flights. As long as he has worked at Key Lime Air, we only completed FRATs for passenger flights.

Mr. Struhs reported, postaccident, the Dispatch office was completing FRATs for cargo Key Lime Air Flights.

Mr. Struhs was asked if had the capability to stop or cancel a Key Lime Air flight. He stated he does not have the ability to make the decision to stop or cancel a flight, but he has the ability to





## NTSB INTERVIEW RECORD

inform the pilot if another department, for example maintenance, calls and says the airplane is not airworthy, then he can relay that message to the pilot.

Mr. Struhs was asked if he had ever received a result other than a “GO” rating on the FRAT. Mr. Struhs stated that he could not recall a time.

Mr. Struhs stated that with the Key Lime Air Cargo pilots, the means of communication is with the pilot’s cell phone.

Mr. Struhs was asked if there was anything in particular that he would have to do if a Key Lime Air Cargo flight was cancelled. He stated that with regularity, the Cargo Captains would call in, and for whatever reason, they wouldn’t be able to make the trip, and subsequently, the flight followers would call UPS to inform them that the flight would not be making it in.

Mr. Struhs explained that there is a Key Lime Air “Ops Report,” which is an internal report that is produced at the end of their shift each night. The “Ops Report” lists any flights that did not get to where they were intended to go. He said that when the flight follower calls UPS to let them know a particular flight will not be arriving, they will usually just say thanks for letting us know.

Mr. Struhs was asked now that they are completing the FRATs for cargo flights, do they have to evaluate the weather for every cargo flight? Mr. Struhs stated “yes.” He further stated that FRATs require flight followers to evaluate the weather at the departure airport and arrival airport. There is nothing on the FRAT that asks a flight follower to evaluate the en-route weather.

Mr. Struhs was asked again if it was correct that he had never received a FRAT with a rating other than “GO.” Mr. Struhs explained that he is usually informed by the Captain, “that he is not going” by the time he would complete the FRAT himself. This again was for passenger flight Captains, because they were not completing FRATs for cargo flights. In the example that a passenger Captain says he will not be completing the flight, then a FRAT may not even be completed, because the flight will be terminated regardless of the FRAT. In other words, dispatch may not complete a FRAT because they already know the flight is not going to take place.

In Summary, Mr. Struhs was asked about the call between UPS and Key Lime Air Dispatch. Mr. Struhs agreed with the summary that UPS called Key Lime Air Dispatch to ascertain whether or not Key Lime 308 would be departing. Subsequently, Mr. Struhs in dispatch called Mr. McCaw and Mr. McCaw explained that he was holding for weather, but he saw a clear weather corridor to the northeast. Mr. McCaw further told Mr. Struhs that his alternate airport would be Tallahassee.



## NTSB INTERVIEW RECORD

Mr. Struhs said he could not recall if he called UPS to relay the message that Mr. McCaw would be departing for Albany. Mr. Struhs stated that he wasn't sure if he or Brett Backiewicz was the one that called UPS back to inform them of the status of Key Lime Air 308.