

## **Attachment 2**

to Operational Factors / Human Performance Group Chairman's Factual Report - Addendum 1

**DCA00MA005**

## ATTACHMENT 2 - INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

This attachment contains summaries of interviews conducted with members of the 101<sup>st</sup> Air Refueling Wing of the Maine Air National Guard who had flown with Michael Kling.

### INTERVIEW SUMMARY

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**Name:** James T. Trudel, Assistant Director of Operations  
**Represented by:** (No Representation)  
**Interviewed by:** Kenneth Egge, Evan Byrne  
**Date:** August 21, 2000  
**Time:** 0800 EDT  
**Location:** (Via Telephone)

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Lt. Col. James Trudel is functionally the Assistant Director of Operations for the 101<sup>st</sup> Air Refueling Wing of the Maine Air National Guard in Bangor. He is also a combat crew instructor pilot and the operations support flight commander. He has been with the 101<sup>st</sup> for 34 years and 10 months. He has about 4,800 hours total flight time and has flown F-101 and KC-135 (A and E models) aircraft in the 101<sup>st</sup>.

Trudel said Michael Kling joined the 101<sup>st</sup> in the early 1980's. He said Kling had been an E-3 pilot before coming to the unit. He said one reason Kling joined the unit was that he had gone to pilot training with another pilot who had previously joined the unit and had recommended it. Trudel said that in preparation for the interview he searched for Kling's records but could not find them. He said the records had either been dropped from the system or Kling had taken them when he left the unit.

Trudel described Kling as a calm, quiet, and laid-back individual who was deeply religious. He said Kling never had a bad word to say about anybody. He said he was very professional in his flying, took it seriously, and would be well rested for flights. He said Kling enjoyed flying a lot. He said Kling was a non-drinker.

Trudel flew with Kling about once every 4-6 weeks. He said the unit never had firm or fixed crews so you would fly with whoever was available. Trudel said Kling was an instructor pilot for the 101<sup>st</sup> and dual qualified. He said this meant that when he flew with Kling the seat occupied could vary depending on what the mission or training event required. He said they would fly standard missions involving refueling profiles, navigation legs, cross-country missions, and handle aircraft transitions (takeoffs and landings). Trudel described Kling as a thorough mission planner who was always ahead of the airplane. He said the 101<sup>st</sup> used Kling as a systems instructor and also an instructor who covered the fundamentals of the KC-135 for the new pilots joining the unit. He said before joining the 101<sup>st</sup> Kling had been a safety officer. He said that Kling was not a high altitude chamber instructor to the best of his knowledge and added that it

would have been an unlikely assignment because the chambers are run by specialists in the USAF.

Trudel said the unit required that pilots receive refresher training in the chamber once every 3 years. He said the training consisted of 4 hours of classroom instruction followed by a chamber ride. He said the chamber ride consisted of prebreathing followed by a brief up and down to clear the ears. He said they then took the chamber up to 25,000 feet for a rapid decompression. He said they would have an opportunity to identify their symptoms of hypoxia. Trudel said this training has not changed since the time that Kling was in the unit.

Trudel said that he did not recall specifics of any commendations that Kling received in the unit but thought that he would have received some like achievement medals. He said the unit did not see any combat during the period of time that Kling was a member. Trudel said that he could not identify any areas in which Kling's piloting could have been improved other than minor variations in technique - which is not at all unusual in a ANG unit.

Trudel said that Kling's crew coordination was better than many other members of the unit because it was evident that he had experience in a multi-crew aircraft (in contrast to those who joined the unit and had fighter experience).

Trudel said that Kling did not experience any accidents or incidents while in the 101<sup>st</sup>. He said Kling would have likely had his share of airborne emergencies like an engine shutdown, oil pressure problems, hydraulic problems. He said Kling experiencing a depressurization problem in the KC-135 would have been unlikely. Trudel described the KC-135 as a very stable aircraft in terms of its pressurization system and he was not aware of an event in the 101<sup>st</sup> or even air-force-wide where the airplane has gone through a rapid decompression.

Trudel said that Kling came into the unit as an instructor pilot in a weapons system. He was selected for an instructor pilot for the 101<sup>st</sup> by a training review panel. The panel typically consists of the operations group commander, safety officer, wing commander, and the instructor pilots. The panel reviews the candidate's performance history. Members of the panel have also flown with the candidate and so they also discuss the candidate's flying style. Trudel said that if a person's skills warrant selection, a pilot has about an 80 percent chance of becoming an instructor pilot but it may not occur in the ANG unit as early as it would during active duty. He said one reason for this is that in the ANG you stay in the unit for a long time. He said there are pilots who go through their entire career without being selected to become instructor pilots.

Trudel said Kling left the 101<sup>st</sup> to invest money and fly for a company in Florida that was going to rent aircraft. He said the company went broke.

Trudel said that the altitude chamber training that is given in the Air Force is

extremely good and thorough. He said that in his opinion after getting that kind of training the chances of not recognizing an insidious cabin depressurization problem is fairly remote. He said the automatic response is there – like getting in a car and putting on a seat belt. He said the symptoms and responses are conditioned and trained. He said he doubted seriously that the training ever leaves you. He said that everyone in the 101<sup>st</sup> was very surprised to hear about the accident.

## INTERVIEW SUMMARY

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**Name:** Mark Relford, Chief of Plans<sup>2</sup>  
**Represented by:** (No Representation)  
**Interviewed by:** Evan Byrne  
**Date:** August 31, 2000  
**Time:** 1310 EDT  
**Location:** (Via Telephone)

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Lt. Col. Mark Relford is the Chief of Plans for the 101<sup>st</sup> Air Refueling Wing of the Maine Air National Guard in Bangor. He has held that position for one year and has been with the 101<sup>st</sup> Air Refueling Wing for 12 years and has served previously (for about 4 years) as the unit's Chief of Safety and as a standards/evaluation pilot. He has about 3,500 hours total flying time.

Relford met Michael Kling during USAF pilot training at Laughlin AFB in Texas. He said that Kling was one or two classes ahead of him and they lived in the dorms together. Following pilot training, they were assigned to different units; Kling went to fly tankers in Michigan.

Relford said his first opportunity to fly with Kling came with Kling's arrival at the 101<sup>st</sup>. He said Kling was living in the local area at the time. He doesn't recall how often they flew together but said they would have flown standard training missions together, with each serving as commander at one time or another. Relford felt that Kling was one of the best pilots in the unit. He said that Kling had exceptional leadership qualities and natural aviator skills. He said Kling was always thinking ahead of the airplane and knew people's duties well; he had excellent CRM skills. Relford said that Kling knew what he was doing and if he had stayed with the unit and accepted a full-time position he would have done quite well in the 101<sup>st</sup>.

Relford said that he thought Kling left the unit because his wife was not happy with the Maine climate, having been originally from Oklahoma. Further, they wanted to pursue missionary work in Florida and the Caribbean. Relford did not keep in close touch with Kling after Kling left the unit but did occasionally speak with him on the telephone. He heard that Kling had opened a furniture resale shop and was doing other odd jobs in Florida. At one point Kling called him once when he was selling vitamins. He said that Kling was a religious person, concerned about people, and was known to treat people with a lot of respect.

Relford said that Kling would have earned the standard USAF commendations that personnel receive after leaving each duty station. He said that he was not aware of any reprimands, accidents, or incidents that Kling was involved with in the USAF or

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<sup>2</sup> On August 31, 2000, Mark Relford was provided (via email) a copy of this interview summary for his review and comment. On September 5, 2000, Relford replied via email to Evan Byrne with the statement, "Well said."

ANG. He said it was possible but unlikely that Kling had experienced a depressurization event while flying tankers in the ANG. Relford said the reason was that the KC-135 is a good aircraft insofar as depressurization is concerned. He said that the biggest cause of depressurization, or lack of pressurization, is the operator doing an improper preflight and failing to configure the system. He said in the KC-135, a light will come on just to the right of the co-pilot at 12,000±1000 feet cabin altitude. He said that the KC-135 has no cabin altitude horn. He said that based on his experience in the unit, the rate of occurrence of a pressurization problem is probably once every couple of years. He said that it may be a slow pressurization problem due to an outflow valve problem or problem with inflow from the air-cycle machine. He said that he has worn an oxygen mask when doing post-maintenance functional check-flights in the aircraft and has probably only had to put his mask on once for a pressurization problem in all his years of active duty.

Relford said that the altitude chamber training requirements were standard in the unit; any USAF aircrew member is required every three years to go through it. He said several years ago they started making that requirement less stringent. He said the course is one day of academic training and a chamber ride on the next day. During the chamber ride, air crewmembers have the opportunity to learn to recognize their own symptoms of hypoxia during a slow ascent without oxygen. He said that if Kling was in the unit for more than 3 years he would have had to attend this training; and at the very least he would have had to have been current (i.e., having received the training within the last three years) in his old unit before joining the Maine ANG or they would have sent him to receive the physiological training.

Relford said that during drill training weekends in the unit they perform systems training in groups. He said at least once a year they address the pressurization system and cover various failure scenarios in addition to talking about incidents involving the system.

Relford said that in his opinion there was nothing in Kling's training or background that was in question. Relford stated that he would think that with Kling's experience he would recognize some of the obvious hypoxic symptoms and get on oxygen.

## INTERVIEW SUMMARY

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**Name:** Douglas Damon, Operations Commander<sup>3</sup>  
John D'Errico, Operations Officer  
**Represented by:** (No Representation)  
**Interviewed by:** Evan Byrne  
**Date:** September 8, 2000  
**Time:** 1055 EDT  
**Location:** (Via Telephone)

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Colonel Douglas Damon and Lieutenant Colonel John D'Errico were jointly interviewed via telephone concerning Michael Kling. Both knew and had flown with Kling in the 101<sup>st</sup> Air Refueling Wing of the Maine Air National Guard in Bangor.

Colonel Douglas Damon is the Operations Commander for the 101<sup>st</sup> Air Refueling Wing. He has held that position for two years and has been with the 101<sup>st</sup> Air Refueling Wing since 1974. He is an instructor/evaluator navigator and has held various positions in the unit including Chief of Operations. He is also the commander of the Northeast Tanker Task Force. He has about 5,000 hours of military flying time and about 2,000 hours civilian flight time.

Lieutenant Colonel John D'Errico is the Operations Officer for the 101<sup>st</sup> Air Refueling Wing. He has held that position since 1997 and has 22 years in the Air National Guard. He previously held the position of Chief of Scheduling in the unit. D'Errico has about 7,000 hours military flying time and about 2,000 hours civilian flight time.

Damon said that Kling transferred into the unit in the early 1980's from an E-3 (AWACS) unit. He started in the unit as a co-pilot and transitioned into the left seat as aircraft commander, became an instructor pilot and eventually an instructor/evaluator. Damon said that Kling had demonstrated competency in the KC-135 to transition that rapidly. He said that Kling was in the unit through Desert Shield & Desert Storm. Kling was not a full time employee of the unit; however, Damon said that Kling was totally available for flying and earned his living working every day at the ANG. Damon said that he flew with Kling a little less than once a month. D'Errico said he flew with Kling about two or three times a month. The flights consisted of various training and operational missions.

D'Errico said that Kling was very competent in the airplane. His strengths were his ability as an instructor pilot, systems knowledge, aircraft handling, and his

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<sup>3</sup> On September 11, 2000, Douglas Damon was provided (via email) a copy of this interview summary for his review and comment and forwarded to John D'Errico for the same. On September 12, 2000, Damon replied via email to Evan Byrne with the statement. "I have talked to John D'Errico and we are both agreeable to your draft. We thank you for the opportunity to make input."

knowledge of the regulations was flawless. D'Errico said that as aircraft commander, Kling micro-managed a bit, i.e., he tended to do everyone's job for them. Damon clarified this and stated that Kling tended to tell a co-pilot who may be in the learning environment more than you should. He said that this was just a variation in technique that was overcome in time. Damon added that Kling was a competent professional. Both Damon and D'Errico said they enjoyed flying with Kling. They said that Kling never had to be prompted concerning when to do things in the airplane or during the mission. Damon said that Kling was always on-time, conscientious, and precise.

Damon said that Kling was a quiet guy who was family-oriented. He said Kling was religious and had high integrity. He said Kling was a positive individual who was a good mentor and good listener, both necessary traits to be an aircraft commander.

D'Errico said that it was routine when they were flying training missions to practice emergency procedures. Damon said when he was acting as Supervisor of Flying for the unit, he recalled one time that Kling successfully completed a mission under low-minimum conditions, landing on speed, on the centerline and on the numbers.

Damon said that Kling had served as Supervisor of Flying during his time in the unit. Damon said that this position acts as the approving authority for flight operations in the Director of Operations's absence. He said the Director of Operations puts special trust in individuals selected for this position. Damon said that Kling was also selected to be an instructor pilot/evaluator. He said the unit puts its sharpest and best into those positions.

They said physiological training at the time Kling was in the unit was required every three years (it has just changed to 5 years). This training consists of some classroom work on physiology before the chamber ride. During the chamber ride the individual learns to recognize hypoxic symptoms and also experiences a rapid decompression.

They said that after leaving the 101<sup>st</sup>, Kling went to Florida and was involved in a ministry that flew food to Haiti. They said it was a normal progression for him to leave the 101<sup>st</sup>. They had limited full-time slots available and pilots typically flew there for a while building up time before moving on to other things. They said he also had family in Florida.

D'Errico said that when they heard that Kling was the captain on the accident flight, the entire unit was shocked because he was the last guy they would have expected to be involved in an accident. Damon said that he felt it had to have been something catastrophic because of Kling's innate knowledge; he could handle things. He said if you recognize the hypoxic symptoms, which is why you go through the training, the first action is "mask on – 100 percent." He said that it takes time to recognize if there is no fog in the profile. He said that they practice decompressions in the simulator once a year and try to get their responses to the event down by rote.