



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

**Office of Aviation Safety
Western Pacific Region**

PCSD OPERATIONS INFORMATION

**NTSB Accident: WPR11GA115
Accident Date: January 31, 2011**

Interview Date: February 2, 2011

A. ACCIDENT

Location: Marana, AZ
Date: January 31, 2011
Aircraft: McDonnell Douglas 369FF, N530RL, Serial # 0602FF
NTSB IIC: Michael Huhn

B. INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Michael Huhn (NTSB)
Ken Fenning (FAA)
John Hobby (MDHI)
Ted Hartenstein (PCSD)

Sgt Rick Pearson, Chad Davis, Robert Kimmins (PCSD Tactical Air Support Unit)

C. DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION

- Tactical Air Support Unit (TASU)
- Pearson: Air Unit Supervisor, 11 years at PCSD /position, fixed and rotary wing pilot (mission qualified only in fixed wing)
- TASU under TSU, headed by Kimmins
- Pilots
 - 6 total including Pearson and Leonberger
 - 2 rotary-wing mission qual'd: Davis, Leonberger
 - 4 fixed wing mission qual'd
 - Chad Davis was primary N530RL pilot
- Tactical Flight Deputies (TFDs)
 - 2 total

D. TASU MISSION

- Primary - Patrol support
 - 6-8 hrs /night flying activity
 - Fixed wing/Helio Couriers
- Secondary
 - Prisoner Transport; conducted in C-210 (N778PC) and C-310 (N3694G)
- Survey Platform; typically Helios
- Helicopter added to fleet under Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI)
 - UASI: Border Crimes (human, drug & vehicle traffic), SWAT Missions
 - Not fully employed in UASI missions to date
 - Primary utilization to date is training

- Qualification/Proficiency (Flight, Mission, Equipment)
- PCSD coming up the learning curve (in integrating the helicopter into fleet and unit)
- Davis estimated ~25 UASI missions flown, Pearson & Kimmins estimated a "handful" (5-10)
- Group estimated utilization split 50% missions, 50% training to date

E. FLIGHT & DUTY SCHEDULES

- Pilots typically set up for 4-6 month rotations (night/day schedule-wise)
- Crew = pilot + TFD (tactical field deputy, a non-pilot/non flying position as equipment operator)
- Typically 2 night crews per schedule period
 - Regularly scheduled flights 7 days/week
 - Sun-Mon, M-T, W-Th:
 - 1 crew scheduled
 - Fly 2 sorties/night, 2.5 - 3 hrs per sortie
 - Typically stay at FBO for interval (also for fuel)
 - Th-F, F-S, S-Su
 - 2 crews scheduled
 - Crews alternate flights/break periods
 - Crew A: arrive 1700, fly 1730-1930 & 2230 to 0030
 - Crew B: arrive 1930 fly 2000 - 2200 & 0100 - 0330
- Day flights
 - Typical duty schedule 0730/0800 to approx 1600 M-F
 - No regularly scheduled flights
 - Primarily Courier and other fixed wings as needed
 - Pilots on call
 - Pilots paid, but lower rate to be on call
 - 2 weeks on, 2 weeks off
 - Report within 1 hour when on call
- Flight Time/ Duty Time
 - No hard limits
 - Max recommended flight time 6 - 8 hours
 - Max recommended duty time 14 hours
- TASU annual stand down
 - 2 x per year
 - 2 days/1 night each

F. HELICOPTER PILOTS

- The pilot who was initially hired to fly helicopter was ex-military; he did not "work out" and was released (no longer in the employ of PCSD)
- Chad Davis was with PCSD when the helicopter was acquired
- Accident pilot came into organization about November 2008
 - He had no prior MD530 time
 - He flew Hueys in Vietnam
 - He flew 20 years (1978 - 1998) for Arizona Dept of Public Safety (DPS, "Arizona State Police")
 - Flew Bell 206 and possibly 407
 - He flew for Maricopa County Sheriff 1998- 2008. Reportedly Bell 407, OH 58
 - Contact Sgt Chris Shivers 602 525 600
 - Stuart Anderson (of MCS, M: 520 891 2278) told PCSD that he recommended Ax pilot for hire
 - Typical Ax Pilot's Missions (flown to date)
 - Tactical Insertions (airports & desert; no mountains)
 - Slope landings, pinnacle landings
 - Hover practice
 - Reportedly had "long line" and "bambi bucket" experience, but PCSD did not conduct those types of operations
- PCSD used a Mesa PD pilot (David Mellinger) to provide instruction/critique/supervision, etc to PCSD re helicopter operation
- Also used FAA Rotorcraft Flying Handbook and flight instructors for training

G. PROGRAM/DEPARTMENT/FLIGHT ITEMS

- No formal risk assessments are mandated, suggested or conducted for individual missions or flights
- Once annually, PCSD conducts risk assessment (David Parker, Risk Management Officer for Sheriff's Office; employee of Pima County). No flight-specific RA- just OSHA-type items
- Mission/flight risk assessments are left to the individual pilots
 - Managers stated that they will not second guess pilots' decisions not to fly
- Rick Pearson has final say as to whether any flight can go
 - Typically, explicit approval not required since many flights are "standing"
 - His signature is required for extradition flights (outside of Pima County)
- If flights are exo-Pima County, Robert Kimmins must explicitly approve
 - Typically done verbally
- Some standing pre-coordination with ATC
 - Only for operations within Tucson Tracon's area
 - Helio ATC call signs "Survey 1 and Survey 2"
 - Helicopter call sign "Survey 3"
 - Helicopter had standing transponder code of 0464
- Helicopter was operated VFR only

- Most flights communicate w ATC for duration
- Operational/Weather minima
 - FAR 91.103 is guidance
 - Pilots must evaluate if flight winds are either
 - Reported to be constant above 30 kts
 - If more than a 15 kt spread b/t wind and gust

H. ACCIDENT FLIGHT

- Pearson received email request from Larry Sayers (individual responsible for PCWIN - Pima County Wireless Integrated Network)
 - Asking to use N530RL for a site survey (for a communications tower) on Waterman Peak
 - Pearson instructed acc pilot to coordinate with Sayers re his needs
 - Pearson also informed acc pilot that he should use the opportunity as a practice/training flight
 - Accident pilot reportedly flew N530RL to reconnoiter- details TBD at this time
 - TASU believed flight to be a "transportation flight" to take personnel to the peak
 - Accident pilot did reconnoiter site, but day, time, details not known
- Bill Kinkade watched takeoff

I. ACCIDENT NOTIFICATION

- Rick Pearson was not in the office at the time of the accident
- Passenger Nettleton called 911 on his cell phone (first)
- Passenger Paul Panzica called 911 second
- Comm center called Pearson at 1127 and notified that "Survey 3 has gone down"
- PC released 911 call from Nettleton on their website "pima sheriff.org"
- US Army Apache helicopter was first on scene; Comm center likely called US Army because deputy (B.A. Cross) realized that Army was close by and able to respond quickly
- PJs - USAF 943rd Rescue Group (WAS 305th) (Air Force reserve) stationed at Davis Monthan
- 1st Deputy on scene was Deputy West (elevation 3546)
- Helicopter types on scene: DPS Bell-407; Tucson PD- Bell 206; USAF- UH 60