



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Aviation Accident Investigator
Central Region

Date: September 5, 2012
Person Contacted: Paul Wood – Hopper Pilot
NTSB Accident Number: CEN12LA602

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation, Mr. Wood stated that Mr. Smith attended a reception on the night before the accident and probably was in bed by 2330. Mr. Smith had a full breakfast and a bottle of water prior to the accident flight. For airshows, the Hoppers typically flew in a 4 aircraft routine; however, one of the airplanes was down for maintenance. They would perform a 3 aircraft routine, which included the same maneuvers as the 4 aircraft routine. On the day of the accident flight, the weather ceiling was overcast and they were going to perform a “low show” due to the low ceiling. During the accident routine, Mr. Wood was the lead pilot, Mr. Glenn Smith was in the left wing position, and Mr. David Mills was in the right wing position. While at 1,000 feet above ground level, the 3 aircraft Hopper team crossed over the crowd from behind and was headed in a westerly direction. The lead pilot extended and the #2 and #3 aircraft positioned for the crossover break maneuver. The #3 pilot always calls for the break once the airplanes are in position. Mr. Wood stated everyone was flying great and everyone seemed to be doing well. After the #3 pilot called for the break, Mr. Wood initiated a shallow climb and turn. He then observed the #3 airplane and an explosion. Mr. Wood told Mr. Mills to land and then he proceeded to overfly the accident site and provide information to air traffic control.

Mr. Wood then described what he observed from one of the witness videos that he viewed after the accident. He stated that it appeared that Mr. Smith’s nose dropped about 20 degrees during the 90 degree turn, and the engine was at full power. The turn may have resulted in approximately 6 Gs. He cannot explain what occurred to cause Mr. Smith’s airplane to crash other than maybe G-Loc or a loss of sight/vision. Mr. Wood stated there were no mechanical issues with Mr. Smith’s airplane. Mr. Smith had practiced the routine 5 to 6 times the day before with the other Hopper pilots. The crossover break maneuver was performed by Mr. Smith numerous times in the past and Mr. Wood never knew of any issues in previous flights. Mr. Wood said the Hoppers did not wear G suits during their performance.