



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Mitchell Gallo
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Central Region

Date: January 17, 2014
Person Contacted: Art Hartley
NTSB Accident Number: CEN14FA110

Narrative:

Art Hartley stated during a telephone conversation that he worked for Royal Air Freight, Inc. about four years ago as a Learjet captain. He currently is employed elsewhere as a pilot. He said that training at Royal Air Freight, Inc. was “always a little loose.” Training consisted of flying with the chief pilot and flying “regular routes.” They did not provide training in single –engine or emergency situations. He did not know how much training was provided to pilots of propeller airplanes. Royal Air Freight, Inc. preferred to conduct all training in-house. Mr. Hartley said that he believes that pilots should receive training from outside a company because the company has a vested interest and there is a bias.

Mr. Hartley said that Royal Air Freight “liberally” used the “freight delay loophole” to avoid pilots accumulating duty time, which would allow them to stay on duty. If freight was not ready, then the pilots would stay on duty and would have “frequently” exceeded duty time without the freight delay loophole. The loophole was “expressed” by the company as legal. He said that he would “draw lines in the sand” if he disagreed with the company, but other pilots needed a job and would follow what the company told them.

Mr. Harley said it was the pilot’s responsibility to complete flight related paperwork, but the chief pilot would make corrections to that paperwork. Royal Air Freight, Inc. had a filing cabinet with binders upstairs that would have pilot records. He said Royal Air Freight, Inc. had an archaic charting system and no computerized system.

Mr. Hartley said that flight assignments would come from Royal Air Freight, Inc. dispatch. If there were disagreements between a pilot and dispatch, then the chief pilot would “generally fall on the side of dispatch,” which was unlike “every other company” where the chief pilot would

side with the pilot and not dispatch. Rory, who was the lead dispatcher, made “pretty good bonuses.” He said Rory was a “wizard” at coming up with flights and made a lot of money for the company. He said Rory was a “mover and shaker” with coming up with flights.

Mr. Hartley said Royal Air Freight, Inc. would receive flights from FedEx overflow trips, trips from Ameristar, and trips that were called in directly to the company. He said that trips were assigned only in order of who was next to take a trip.

Mr. Hartley said that Kirt Kostich was the son of Royal Air Freight, Inc.’s founder, who was his father. Mr. Kirt Kostich was considered the director. He said that Mr. Kirt Kostich was “absentee” and takes a “very hands off approach” and turns over the company’s management to Ron Binie. Mr. Hartley said that Kirt Kostich enjoyed an occasional flight. Mr. Binie manages the day to day operations of the company. Kirt Kostich took ownership of the company after the Detroit Flight Standards District Office told Kirt Kostich’s father to either close or find a new owner.

Mr. Hartley said that he was not “handheld” in his flying by Royal Air Freight, Inc. because he already had experience. He did not recall Mr. Binie telling pilots not to fly because of weather. Mr. Hartley said there was a “huge rush” once called in to fly a flight to plan the flight and obtain weather because pilots had about 40 minutes to obtain that information, which was “not a long time.”

Mr. Hartley said pilots were paid by the mile in addition to a base salary. There was no monetary incentive to fly faster. The only reason to a pilot would complete flight faster was to get off duty.

Mr. Hartley said that he dealt more with Falcon 20 flight crew and never interacted with the Cessna 310, Cessna 412, or Bandit pilots.

Mr. Hartley said the Rory’s mood would “fluctuate daily” and Rory viewed pilots as a “necessary cog” in the process. He said Rory was “not compassionate” to pilots that were sick. He did not believe that Rory had a pilot background, only dispatch experience. Mr. Hartley said that John Vallence used to work for Royal Air Freight, Inc. as a dispatcher and had pilot experience. Mr. Vallence left Royal Air Freight, Inc. about 3-4 years ago.

Mr. Hartley said that Royal Air Freight, Inc. had “a habit of finding guys with black marks,” because those pilots will have a difficult time in finding employment elsewhere. He said that pilots will also stay where they make “decent” money. He said Royal Air Freight, Inc. was “hesitant” about promoting pilots. A pilot of a propeller driven airplane “really doesn’t go anywhere.” He said flying at Royal Air Freight, Inc. to gain flight experience in order to move onto another job does not occur. Most of the pilot’s at Royal Air Freight, Inc. do not have any plans to work elsewhere. He said the Falcon 20 airplane is a “dinosaur” and not many flight departments fly them and therefore many of the Falcon 20 pilots have nowhere to go.

Mr. Hartley said that he did not see any benefit in training a Cessna 310 pilot using a Learjet. He said there are plenty of pilots that could be used to fly as a copilot in the Learjet. He said there “is no business” to put a new hire for a Cessna 310 in a jet.

Mr. Hartley provided his email.

Mitchell Gallo
Air Safety Investigator