

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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JANUARY 10, 2014

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CESSNA 310R, N3829G,

* Docket No.: CEN14FA110

ROYAL AIR FLIGHT 907

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PONTIAC, MICHIGAN

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Interview of: RORY TARP

Waterford Police Department
 5150 Civic Center Drive
 Waterford, Michigan

Wednesday,
 March 12, 2014

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MITCHELL GALLO
 Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

MITCHELL GALLO, Accident Investigator
Office of Aviation Safety
National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

E. BARRY ROGERS, Aviation Safety Inspector
Air Carrier - Operations
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
East Michigan Flight Standards District Office
Belleville, Michigan

BARTHOLEMEW ANGLE, Aviation Safety Inspector
General Aviation - Operations
Federal Aviation Administration
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Belleville, Michigan

DEAN G. GREENBLATT, ESQ.
Dean G. Greenblatt, PLC
(Representative on behalf of Mr. Tarp)

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:17 p.m.)

MR. GALLO: Okay, why don't we start. Well, thank you for joining us, Rory. I just want to start out with a couple of questions, but before I do I just want to ask if -- during these interviews you could have a representative with you. It could be anybody you choose. It's solely up to you. And I was just wondering if this is who you want --

MR. TARP: Yes.

MR. GALLO: -- for a representative? Okay.

INTERVIEW OF RORY TARP

BY MR. GALLO:

Q. Why don't we start off with what is your current position and how long have you been employed with Royal Air?

A. I've been employed with Royal Air for about 30 years, total, and right now I'm the dispatch manager.

Q. And as the dispatch manager, what are your duties?

A. Basically alerting crews, doing quotes, allowing freight movements and so on so forth.

Q. And did you work elsewhere as a dispatcher before coming to Royal Air?

A. No.

Q. So how did you learn to obtain quotes and do everything that you do?

A. It was a process of watching previous dispatchers when I

1 was doing other duties at Royal Air.

2 Q. And are you compensated in any way for getting
3 additional flights in, or --

4 A. No.

5 Q. It's a straight salary?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Did you talk to Mr. Andy Demos when he was interviewed
8 for the company?

9 A. No.

10 Q. When was the last time you talked to him?

11 A. The day of the crash.

12 Q. And can you go back and -- do you know what time you
13 first talked to him and the last time you talked to him and what
14 was discussed?

15 A. I don't know the exact times, but it was probably late
16 morning, you know, when they would have gotten done changing the
17 starter on the aircraft, to inform me that the aircraft was
18 dispatchable and that he was dispatchable. And then we were
19 unable to find trips for him that day, and then my last
20 conversation was with him was, you know, it's okay for you to come
21 on home, kind of conversation.

22 Q. So if there was a trip you would have sent him on that
23 trip, then?

24 A. Yes. Yes, he was full green and the aircraft was
25 repaired and ready to go.

1 Q. And were you aware that he had a vacation planned the
2 following day?

3 A. The following day was a Saturday, I think, so, you know,
4 typically I would assume they were always off on Saturday.

5 Q. So you assumed he was going to be off Saturday; is that
6 correct?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. So if he had a flight that came up, would that flight --
9 was that solely to be -- was it planned to be completed only on
10 that -- on the day of the accident or could it have gone over to
11 Saturday?

12 A. It would have been that day.

13 Q. When you talked to Mr. Demos on the 9th, did he express
14 any frustration to you that he was down there for 2 days?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Did he talk to anybody else within the company aside
17 from you?

18 A. Not that I'm aware of.

19 Q. Can you go over how you assign flights to different
20 pilots and different aircraft? How does that function?

21 A. Relative to being at Royal or on the road?

22 Q. Well, I don't -- what do you mean by on the road?

23 A. Well, I consider it he was on the road. He was, you
24 know, in a different location.

25 Q. On both. So somehow you get a bid that comes in, so how

1 does that bid get assigned an airplane and a crew?

2 A. If a customer decides to go with a trip that we have
3 quoted, we are -- our men are on a rotation, so the next crew on
4 rotation would be assigned the charter, you know, granted within
5 their flight and duty requirements. You know, that's documented
6 on boards as you have seen. And basically aircraft that are good
7 to go in the green department, we assign one, and we have to call
8 the crews in and then they proceed with the trip.

9 Q. And so when a bid comes in, is that bid for a specific
10 airplane, and then you find a crew for that airplane? Or when
11 does the decision get made on which airplane? Because some
12 aircraft just can't carry the volume or the weight.

13 A. Right. Well, the customer informs us of the pieces and
14 weight, and we determine for them what aircraft it will go into,
15 speed wise and size wise. For example, small freight might go in
16 a 310 or it might go in a Lear.

17 Q. Now if an airplane is going out on a training flight, do
18 you get notified of that training flight?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And who notifies you that it's going to be a training
21 flight?

22 A. The chief pilot.

23 Q. Is it always the chief pilot?

24 A. Yeah, because if he was doing the training flight with
25 somebody, yes, he would notify me.

1 Q. Was there a flight that Mr. Demos was called in for on
2 or around New Year's Eve that he ended up canceling?

3 A. I don't remember. I was off that whole week.

4 Q. Who was working then?

5 A. I don't know which day or what times for dispatch.

6 Q. So you weren't there on New Year's Eve, then?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Was that a scheduled day off?

9 A. Um-hum, for me.

10 Q. And what are your hours, then?

11 A. I work 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., weekly.

12 Q. How about the weekends also?

13 A. Weekends I do not work.

14 Q. And aside from the bids and assigning flights and the
15 crews, do you track the flights, you follow where they're going?

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. And what does that process involve?

18 MR. GREENBLATT: You have to audibly say yes or no, so
19 we can get the record straight.

20 MR. TARP: Sorry, yes.

21 It would involve knowing flight times from where we're
22 going to and coming from, and basically between checking the
23 weather or the crews checking weather and contacting us so we have
24 some idea of what's going on with weather; kind of weather is
25 multi-variable. And if we need to track the flight, they are

1 always filed unless we're maybe perhaps going to here in Lansing
2 or something, they might go VFR, but they're trackable.

3 BY MR. GALLO:

4 Q. So do you get their flight plans or what information do
5 you get from the crew?

6 A. Basically I get their departure times.

7 Q. And they call you on a cell phone to tell you that,
8 or --

9 A. Depends where they're at. It could be a cell phone. It
10 could be phone from -- you know, a land-based phone.

11 Q. And do you ever have communications with the crew in
12 flight in any way?

13 A. Rarely.

14 Q. Can they call you using a cell phone?

15 A. No. Cell phones don't work up in the air that I'm aware
16 of.

17 Q. All right. Were you aware of any higher approach
18 minimums for Mr. Demos?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And what did you know about it?

21 A. We were told to try and to make sure he can come and go,
22 you know, if possible, from like 400 and 1 mile.

23 Q. But would you also actively check the weather to make
24 sure he's following that?

25 A. Where we're going to a destination, you know, as much as

1 you can check previous, yeah.

2 Q. Have you done that with other pilots?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And who would those be?

5 A. Most new pilots, we watch their minimums for a little
6 while until they get some time with the company.

7 Q. Do you have any recent pilots that that's been done to?

8 A. Not that I can remember.

9 Q. Do you remember the last time that was done?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Do you have an estimate?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Greater than a year ago?

14 A. No, I don't think so.

15 MR. GREENBLATT: Do you mean other than Andy?

16 BY MR. GALLO:

17 Q. Yeah, any other pilots.

18 A. Yeah, I can't remember the last time. There were, I'm
19 sure, but I can't remember when.

20 Q. What was -- how do you contact pilots for flights?

21 A. We call them.

22 Q. And then how much time do they have to come in?

23 A. Oh, an hour or so. Sometimes more, depending on where
24 they're at.

25 Q. And how many occasions have you had, roughly, calling

1 Mr. Demos to come in?

2 A. He was relatively new with the company. Probably five
3 or six, I'm guessing.

4 Q. And so where does he first show up to work? If he gets
5 called in by you for a -- to do a flight, where would he show up?

6 A. Right to the facility.

7 Q. And did you ever have any interactions with him? I
8 mean, what's discussed when he comes in?

9 A. Well, he has to check in with us to get the aircraft log
10 and his trip sheet.

11 Q. Does he discuss the weather with you at all, or how does
12 that --

13 A. Yes, um-hum.

14 Q. So does a flight crew or any pilot tell you that they
15 can complete the flight? When do you find out that you could --
16 the flight could go or when it can't go?

17 A. I don't understand.

18 Q. If you call a pilot to come in and do a flight --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- the pilot comes in and he checks the weather, he may
21 say I can't do this flight because of whatever circumstance. Is
22 that decision made when they come in or is it before?

23 A. If he checks weather on a computer at home or from
24 talking to flight service before he gets there, they will call us
25 and let us know.

1 Q. Okay. How are you -- how do you update information
2 regarding vacations? Where does that information come from?

3 A. It comes from -- the crews will give information to the
4 chief pilot, and then it will be put on a board as far as when
5 they're off.

6 MR. GALLO: That's all the questions that I have.

7 BY MR. ROGERS:

8 Q. Okay. Rory, this is Barry.

9 A. Yes, Barry.

10 Q. You were working the day of the crash?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. What time did you go home that day?

13 A. I left that day between 4:30 and 5.

14 Q. Okay, so you were not working during the time period of
15 his flight up from Atlanta?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Okay. Was there someone else working that --

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. -- time period?

20 A. Yes. There is somebody always there.

21 Q. And do you know who that person was?

22 A. That was Jim Kuhn.

23 Q. Jim Kuhn?

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. Okay. So you had talked to Rory [sic] during the normal

1 day. You said you do like 7 to 5, so --

2 A. Um-hum.

3 Q. The airplane had had a mechanical interruption of some
4 sort?

5 A. Yes, the previous day there was a starter that didn't
6 work.

7 Q. Okay, so once the airplane became green you talked to
8 Andy?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And was there -- what was the discussion about?

11 A. As I had mentioned, basically that he was green, the
12 aircraft was green and he was dispatchable if we could find a
13 flight.

14 Q. Was there any mention of if we don't get a trip for you,
15 we'll probably bring you home or anything like that? I'm trying
16 to figure out when a decision was to let him come back to Pontiac.

17 A. That's always -- not always -- but that is the case on
18 Fridays for sure, is if there's no trips, the crews come home.

19 Q. Was there a mention on the time frame that he could
20 anticipate that?

21 A. No specific time.

22 Q. So up until the time you left had a decision been made
23 for him to come home?

24 A. He was en route when I left.

25 Q. Okay. Who was in the office with you at that time?

1 A. Donna would have been there.

2 Q. Well, anybody from upper management?

3 A. I can't remember who was there that day.

4 Q. Okay, so you were the one that told him he could come
5 back to Pontiac?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And do you remember what the weather forecasts were at
8 roughly that time?

9 A. Yes. We talked about it and the weather was supposed to
10 be above 400 feet the rest of the evening. It was supposed to be
11 windy and chance of rain showers, but there was no mention of the
12 real bad foggy weather.

13 Q. Okay. And at 5 p.m., I take it, you transferred control
14 of your functions to this other gentlemen?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. And his name again?

17 A. Jim Kuhn.

18 Q. Jim, okay. Was there any discussion between you and Jim
19 about Andy coming home and the fact that he had a higher than
20 standard landing minimums or anything?

21 A. We discussed him coming home, and the minimums are --
22 you know, everybody knows.

23 Q. Can you explain that a little bit more? Everybody knows
24 what?

25 A. He has higher minimums.

1 Q. Oh, okay. So if the weather had deteriorated while you
2 were holding watch, is there anything you would have done as far
3 as apprising Andy of the deteriorating weather?

4 A. It depends on the weather. What's the definition of
5 deteriorating weather?

6 Q. Well, I assume that you left at 5 so you weren't there
7 during the time period that he shot the approach. But if you had
8 been there, would you have tried to do something to intervene with
9 his trying to make it into Pontiac?

10 A. During the approach? No, that wouldn't be good to try
11 and disturb somebody on an approach.

12 Q. Well, the weather came down -- it was like, you know, a
13 good hour before it dropped below the 400 and 1. What I'm trying
14 to find out is there something in place to -- you put in a safety
15 net. How do you activate it if -- you know, in other words you
16 have the 400 and 1. I'm assuming that if you're watching over
17 this person or any of your pilots out there, that if it hits that
18 criteria you would react to that and try to do something to, you
19 know, prevent it from -- from them getting into trouble. I'm just
20 wondering if there's -- you know, what the safety net is; how do
21 you activate it; do you activate it?

22 MR. GREENBLATT: Are you talking about before the
23 airplane is dispatched or after it's already in the air?

24 BY MR. ROGERS:

25 Q. After it's, you know, in the air, but prior to shooting

1 the approach.

2 A. En route it's -- when they're close --

3 Q. Right.

4 A. -- it's a pilot responsibility.

5 Q. Responsibility to do what?

6 A. To know what the weather conditions are.

7 Q. Okay. Do they call you guys in range or anything like
8 that?

9 A. They have the potential to.

10 Q. And if they have the potential to call you in range and
11 it's a situation where the weather is below the 400 and 1, for
12 whatever reason, what is your expectation? What are you supposed
13 to do if it went below this? How do you activate the safety net?

14 A. If he didn't think that the approach was safe to shoot
15 in, then we would recommend going somewhere else.

16 Q. Okay, so up until the time you left, how was the weather
17 trend doing that late?

18 A. It was good.

19 Q. And surrounding weather?

20 A. And the winds were blowing, so you wouldn't even expect
21 really fog to roll in because it was windy.

22 Q. And you had other alternate weather available for -- I
23 mean, did you check other places to see how they were holding up,
24 too, or --

25 A. I did not.

1 Q. Did not.

2 A. There was no reason to.

3 MR. ROGERS: Okay. That's pretty much my train of
4 thought at the moment.

5 BY MR. GALLO:

6 Q. I have a couple more questions. As far as your
7 assigning of flights, how many pilots and how many part-time
8 pilots are you working with?

9 A. Total, I think we have 40 or so.

10 Q. And you look -- as far as there's a green-colored code,
11 what other codes -- is there a yellow and red code, also, to
12 signify status of crew or aircraft?

13 A. No, they're green or they're not green. It's a yes or
14 no.

15 Q. And then the duty time information, where do you get
16 that from?

17 A. That's -- you were in my dispatch office. On the
18 boards, it's all displayed on the board for their last trip,
19 flight times.

20 Q. But who puts that -- who puts the raw information up
21 there? Where are you getting the raw information?

22 A. The raw information comes from the crews.

23 Q. So when they come back from a trip, they'll fill it --
24 fill in the board?

25 A. Yeah, they'll fill out a sheet that gets transferred to

1 the board.

2 Q. During the month of December, were there any other
3 pilots being trained?

4 A. I don't remember.

5 Q. You mentioned Donna was in the office. What is Donna's
6 position?

7 A. She handles the secretarial work.

8 Q. When Mr. Demos was called in on a flight, how much time
9 did you spend talking to him?

10 A. Could be 5 minutes, could be 10 minutes. Variable.

11 Q. Did he seem impulsive to you, or what was his
12 personality like?

13 A. No.

14 Q. What did he sound like when you talked to him on the
15 phone on the 9th?

16 A. He seemed fine.

17 MR. GALLO: That's all the questions I have.

18 MR. ANGLE: Can I ask some questions?

19 MR. GALLO: Go ahead.

20 BY MR. ANGLE:

21 Q. Mr. Tarp, I have just some questions clarifying the
22 position at Royal Air, as dispatch.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Can a flight depart without interaction with your
25 department?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Okay, so they have to talk to you or your counterpart in
3 dispatch?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. The dispatch department of Royal Air -- are you FAA
6 certificated dispatchers?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Okay. Is there a -- do you prepare a flight release for
9 the departing trips? Let me rephrase that.

10 A. Yeah, define that.

11 Q. What do you give the crews? Do you give them a trip
12 sheet? Do you -- what do you provide them when they depart?

13 A. It is a trip sheet that shows their departure place,
14 their arrival place, and their -- you know, if they're picking up
15 one place and dropping freight off another, it shows that place.
16 It shows flight times and the pieces and weight of the cargo.

17 Q. Okay. If during the trip the plan changes, do they have
18 to clear that or vet that through the Royal Air dispatch office?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. If en route the pilot determines that the weather
21 is below what he would need to execute an approach, is there
22 interaction with your office or is that kind of post -- in other
23 words, he's coming to Pontiac, Pontiac's weather deteriorates, the
24 pilot determines he's going to go elsewhere. Is that an after the
25 fact or do you have -- do you step in and have interaction with

1 the crew at that point?

2 A. It can be both.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. If it's something that's determined when you're -- if
5 the weather goes bad as you're making your approach or something
6 like that, you know, they're trained to focus on what they're
7 doing --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- and, you know, let us know afterwards instead of
10 trying to distract themselves trying to get ahold of us. Now, en
11 route it is easy for them to call center and have center to get us
12 a message.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. You know, midway through route when you're cruising.

15 Q. Is that typical?

16 A. It happens.

17 Q. It does happen?

18 A. It's not typical; it's rare, but it can happen.

19 Q. Okay. Do you know what the source of the weather data
20 that the pilots use at Royal Air; what the source of the weather
21 is?

22 A. WSI computers or their interaction with the flight
23 programs.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Or flight service, I should say.

1 Q. Are the Royal Air pilots, are they permitted to file
2 flight plans using a computer service or a vendor service, or are
3 they required to use FAA flight -- Lockheed Martin flight service?

4 A. I don't know. They file their own flight plans and --

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. -- usually by -- through flight service.

7 Q. Okay. So the pilots file their own flight plans. Do
8 the pilots get their own weather briefings?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. So you don't provide that to them?

11 A. No.

12 Q. They have that information?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. But it's discussed with you as to--

15 A. Yes, if there are potential issues.

16 Q. -- logistically if a trip can proceed?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. Do the pilots ever -- are the pilots ever in a
19 situation where, wherever they're at for whatever reason they
20 cannot obtain weather, do they ever rely on the Royal Air dispatch
21 department to get weather?

22 A. We can get weather.

23 Q. Okay, and how would you obtain that weather to pass
24 along to the flight crews?

25 A. It would be through the same means, flight service, WSI.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Basically it would be, you know, surface conditions and
3 so forth.

4 Q. Okay. Just a couple other questions.

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. The facility at Royal Air, do pilots -- are there pilot
7 quarters at the facility that the pilots can obtain rest? Is
8 there an apartment or something like that?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. Was Mr. Demos, did he -- had he accomplished rest
11 at those quarters or did he have his own residence? In other
12 words, was he at your facility --

13 A. No.

14 Q. -- prior to the accident?

15 A. No, he had his own residence.

16 MR. ANGLE: Okay, that's all I have.

17 MR. ROGERS: Could I have a question?

18 BY MR. ROGERS:

19 Q. So the day that Andy came home, he interacted with you
20 prior to leaving Georgia?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Do you remember what was discussed at that point in
23 time?

24 A. Vaguely, that the weather was going to be reasonable
25 and, you know, that there was no en route conditions that was

1 going to be detrimental.

2 Q. Did you know what route he had filed, altitudes --

3 A. No.

4 Q. -- how much fuel he had on board, any way of
5 determining, you know, the conditions that he set himself up with
6 for the flight?

7 A. No, the pilots determine their fuel loads.

8 Q. So you didn't have any idea of what, how much fuel was
9 on the airplane when it left Atlanta?

10 A. Specifically, no.

11 Q. Okay. Do you know if Andy called in range on that
12 night?

13 A. I do not know. I don't know.

14 Q. It was after you had left?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. Were there other flights that you had -- I think
17 the term released that afternoon that were coming back to Pontiac
18 besides Andy?

19 A. I don't remember. There were other flights. I don't
20 remember, you know, their disposition of all of them.

21 MR. ROGERS: Okay. I think that's all I have.

22 BY MR. GALLO:

23 Q. When a pilot is being sent on a trip and they come into
24 dispatch, do the pilots provide you with any paperwork such as
25 weather information they pulled up or weight and balance or flight

1 plans?

2 A. No flight plans, no weight, and no weather. If there's
3 an issue they will discuss it with us. They don't leave a sheet
4 of paper, no.

5 Q. On the day of the accident, did any of the flight crew
6 who came into Pontiac, did you talk to any other Royal Air pilots
7 on the day of the accident that had flown in?

8 A. I'm sure -- if there were other trips. I'm sure I
9 talked to them. I don't remember specifically which ones.

10 Q. Do you remember what some of the conversations were?

11 A. No.

12 MR. GALLO: That's all the questions I have.

13 MR. ROGERS: I have one more question, I think.

14 BY MR. ROGERS:

15 Q. How did you become aware of the accident?

16 A. Kirt had called me shortly afterwards.

17 Q. And did you come back to the office or anything, or
18 just --

19 A. I did not.

20 Q. And when Kirt advised you that there had been a crash,
21 what did you advise -- what did you say to him? Anything of --

22 A. Well, obviously I was shocked and alarmed.

23 Q. Right. Did he ask you if you had had any contact with
24 him earlier in the day or anything like that?

25 A. He knows that I did. We didn't discuss it at that point

1 in time.

2 MR. ROGERS: Okay. That's it for me.

3 MR. GALLO: Is there anything else you'd like to mention
4 that we haven't discussed?

5 MR. TARP: No. Just a horrible thing.

6 MR. GALLO: Well, thank you. I guess we're done.

7 (Whereupon, at 12:48 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: JANUARY 10, 2014
 CESSNA 310R, N3829G,
 ROYAL AIR FLIGHT 907
 PONTIAC, MICHIGAN
 Interview of Rory Tarp

DOCKET NUMBER: CEN14FA110

PLACE: Waterford, Michigan

DATE: March 12, 2014

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording accomplished at the interview.

Kristen Shankleton
Official Reporter

Marianne Kirk
Transcriber