

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL CRASH OF AIR AMERICA PLANE
N21WW OFF THE COAST OF PINONES,
EAST OF SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO,
ON JUNE 3, 2017

Accident No.: ERA17FA195

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Interview of: JOSE DIAZ

Federal Aviation Administration
Flight Standards District Office
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Tuesday,
June 6, 2017

APPEARANCES:

ROBERT GRETZ, Senior Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

LUIS TITO FELICIANO, President
Air America

HECTOR RIVERA
Air America

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Jose Diaz:

By Mr. Gretz

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:10 p.m.)

MR. GRETZ: Okay. It's June 6th, about noon, about 12:10 p.m., and we're at the FAA FSDO in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

We're talking with Mr. Jose Cato about the airplane accident on June -- on Saturday, June 3rd. And you have two representatives with you here today.

And what are your full names?

MR. FELICIANO: My name is Luis Feliciano. I am president of Air America.

MR. GRETZ: Okay.

MR. RIVERA: And I'm Hector Rivera.

MR. GRETZ: Okay.

MR. RIVERA: I work marketing and --

MR. GRETZ: Rivera, for Air America?

MR. RIVERA: Yeah.

INTERVIEW OF JOSE DIAZ

BY MR. GRETZ:

Q. Okay. And, Jose, what's your full name?

A. It's Jose Juan Diaz Cato.

Q. Jose Juan Diaz Cato. And your date of birth?

A. [REDACTED] 1994.

Q. Okay. And I need to email you a NTSB form. Do you have a good address?

A. Yes, [REDACTED]

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. [REDACTED]

3 Q. At -- how do you spell that?

4 A. Outlook.

5 Q. Oh, Outlook. Outlook.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. So "s" like Sam, [REDACTED].

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. And do you have a good cell number in case I need to
10 get ahold of you?

11 A. 787 --

12 Q. 787.

13 A. -- [REDACTED] --

14 Q. [REDACTED].

15 A. -- [REDACTED].

16 Q. [REDACTED]. And what I'll do is -- I'm just going to ask you some
17 basic background questions and then we'll -- I'll just have you
18 tell me what happened.

19 When did you get hired with Air America?

20 A. November/December -- it was December 2016.

21 Q. Okay. And approximately -- not then, but now, approximately
22 how much total time do you have, total hours?

23 A. Between 12- to 1300.

24 Q. Okay. And of the 12- to 1300, approximately how many
25 multiengine hours?

1 A. About close to 200.

2 Q. 200. And of the 200, how many are in -- and I know it is
3 approximate -- how many in the Aztec?

4 A. I might say -- I really don't know, but -- I have no idea.

5 Q. Okay. Would most of them be in -- of the 200 hours, would
6 most be in a Seneca or what are the majority of hours in?

7 A. We've got the Seminole and the Islander.

8 Q. Seminole and the Islander. Now other than the Seminole and
9 the Islander, have you flown any other multiengine airplanes?

10 A. No.

11 Q. No. Okay. Seminole and Islander. And approximately how
12 many hours in the Seminole?

13 A. 100.

14 Q. Okay. And approximately how many hours in the Islander?

15 A. 100 plus.

16 Q. Okay. And when did you get qualified on the Aztec about?

17 A. Two weeks ago.

18 Q. Okay. Two weeks on the Aztec, and I'm just trying to get a
19 ballpark number. Would you have more or less than 10 hours in the
20 Aztec, or --

21 A. I got more than 10. I would like -- I don't have a number.
22 I would say some 20, 30 hours maybe.

23 Q. Okay. That's fine. Just an estimate is fine. Twenty, 30
24 hours. And then the -- we saw a fuel receipt for the accident, I
25 think that was 31 gallons. Was that a top-off?

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. So the airplane was completely fueled. Okay. And just in
3 your own words, just tell me what happened.

4 A. Well, I got a, I got a statement. I don't know if you're
5 going to --

6 Q. Oh, I didn't -- no, I haven't seen the statement yet, but you
7 can summarize it for me if you want to tell me.

8 A. So basically what happened that day, after I was done with
9 all my checks and everything, I start up the airplane. I went to
10 the runway, got the clearance for takeoff. Once we were in the
11 takeoff row, the 85 knots, I rotate, the airplane started
12 climbing. So I put the gear up and I notify that the airplane
13 wasn't going above 85 knots.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. So --

16 Q. Okay. Start --

17 A. So once I rotated and I put the gear up and I noticed that
18 it's not able to either get altitude initially and it was just
19 staying at between 85 to 90 knots.

20 Q. Eighty-five to 90.

21 A. So once I started looking at what's going on, I go and check
22 that the mags are on, that the fuel pumps are on, the rudders, the
23 rpm, make sure it's everything forward. I got the gear up, and I
24 like take a look at the engine instruments, everything looks in
25 the green arc.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And after that, I see that the tachometer, that the rpms on
3 the left side, they're starting to decrease. So at that point,
4 the airplane is starting yaw to the left side, and at that point,
5 I start just flying to the left, just trying to see if I can make
6 it back to the airport. At one point the tower, it's trying to
7 get ahold of me, and on the whole rush of just trying to figure
8 out what's going on, fly the airplane to a safe place, and they
9 told me to contact departure. So I told them that I wasn't able
10 because I was going down. And after that, I say something or if
11 they say something to me, I don't remember it.

12 And at that point the airplane is just going down a pretty
13 fast rate. So I'm at the shoreline next to the airport and I
14 remember seeing all the like buildings and places that people are
15 eating, and I saw the people, and I thought to myself if I crash
16 over there, I'm going to kill more people. So what I look forward
17 and I see a reef over here and there's another reef over here, and
18 I saw boats, saw people on the beach. So I thought to myself, if
19 I try to make it beyond the reef, I might still kill people. If I
20 hit the reef, I will kill myself. And the only option that I had
21 at that time was just trying to get a path of water, just water.

22 So I saw on the whole rush, I see the reef and I see like a
23 really dark shadow of water. So knew there it -- that on there
24 was going to be deeper. So at that point, with no altitude, no
25 airspeed to play with, I just bank it to the right and just --

1 when it was about to hit the ground, I mean the water, I just get
2 the yoke back and just try to hold it to get a smooth, a smoother
3 landing on the water. And after that, I don't remember --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- how I, how I got out, if somebody got me out. I don't
6 know anything after the crash.

7 What I remember is just not really explosion. I feel like a
8 heat all over my body and I saw like a really bright light. And
9 when I got conscious again, what I remember is just being floating
10 on the water with the fire. So I got burned, and I dive again
11 into the water. It's like I reached out second time and I got
12 burned one more time. So without getting any chance to get air, I
13 started diving, start swimming away from the fire.

14 Third time that I'm up on the surface, I start hearing people
15 real far away screaming. I can hear the fire burning the
16 airplane, and I started looking for my passengers because I had
17 two girls and an adult. So I see the guy and I see the little
18 girl. When I find out that somebody's missing, I try to go back
19 to the airplane. So I start swimming, but halfway going to the
20 airplane, I wasn't able to get any -- I didn't have enough air. I
21 didn't have enough force just to reach the airplane. So I started
22 swimming back to the surface, and the only way that I was able to
23 go back, otherwise, just drinking the water. And after that, I
24 started floating and a guy came over on a board and he was the one
25 that helped me out to go to the people and they got me out of the

1 water.

2 Q. Okay. And I know it happened fast. Do you remember -- so
3 you said all the gauges in the cockpit looked green, but the left
4 engine rpm looked less. And again, I know it happened fast. Do
5 you remember how much less or what was it about?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I know that the last time that I saw, the left rpms still in
9 the green arc.

10 Q. The left rpm was still in the green arc but it was less
11 than --

12 A. It was less than the right rpm.

13 Q. -- the right rpm. Okay. Okay. And other than the left rpm
14 being lower than the right, were there any other mechanical
15 anomalies or anything with the airplane?

16 A. Uh-uh.

17 Q. No? All right. And again I know you may not remember. Was
18 the adult -- the passengers, was the adult male seated next to
19 you?

20 A. Yeah, the male was sitting next to me.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And the two girls was behind me.

23 Q. Okay. And do you remember which -- the adult female behind
24 who and --

25 A. Uh-uh.

1 Q. Okay. And the -- I know you said the fuel was a top-off, and
2 I know it's an estimate to do a weight and balance. Did you
3 estimate how much they weighed, the passengers?

4 A. I don't remember right now about the weights.

5 Q. Okay. The -- I think they each had four bags?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Or they each had -- four bags total?

8 A. Small bags. It was on the backside of the airplane.

9 Q. The carry-ons?

10 A. Uh-huh.

11 Q. Were they in the back seat or in the cargo area?

12 A. In the cargo area.

13 Q. Cargo area, okay. Four carry-ons. Okay. But I think we
14 have the weight and balance from the company, or -- okay. Carry-
15 ons. And what's your weight approximate?

16 A. 200, 220.

17 Q. 220, okay.

18 Is there anything I forgot to ask or -- I can't think of
19 anything else. I appreciate you coming in. I know it's been hard
20 on you and obviously we're, you know, we're working today in the
21 hangar. If we find anything with the left engine, I'll definitely
22 let you guys know, but -- all right. I'll turn it off.

23 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

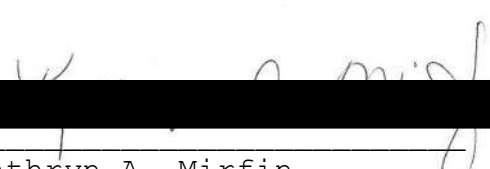

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL CRASH OF AIR AMERICA PLANE
N21WW OFF THE COAST OF PINONES,
EAST OF SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO,
ON JUNE 3, 2017
Interview of Jose Juan Diaz Cato

ACCIDENT NO.: ERA17FA195

PLACE: San Juan, Puerto Rico

DATE: June 6, 2017

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber