

DOCKET NO. SA-516

APPENDIX Y

**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC**

**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT
NYANG COL. CHARLES STUEVE
JANUARY 30, 1997
(29 pages)**

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BEFORE THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20594

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IN THE MATTER OF TWA FLIGHT :
800; INTERVIEW OF: :
COL. CHARLES STUEVE. :
- - - - - X

TAPE TRANSCRIPTION

The above entitled matter came on for interview pursuant to notice before NORM WIEMEYER, NTSB Official, at the Naval Weapons Reserve Plant, Calverton, New York, on January 31, 1997.

1 APPEARANCES:

2

3 NORM WIEMEYER

4 NTSB Official

5

6 LOU BURNS

7 Air Line Pilots Association

8

9 KEVIN DARCY

10 Boeing Corporation

11

12 BARRY MILLER

13 Trans World Airlines

14

15 TOM TODINO

16 Federal Aviation Administration

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I N D E X

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WITNESS:

COL. CHARLES STUEVE/Commander, New York Air National
Guard.

(No exhibits were presented or accepted into evidence
at or as a result of this interview.)

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. WIEMEYER: This is an interview with Col.
3 Chuck Stueve, of the New York Air National Guard, and
4 it's being conducted on January 31st, 1997 at the
5 Calverton facility of the United States Navy.

6 And I'd like to have the group members please
7 introduce themselves and give their affiliation. New
8 York Air National Guard. My name is Norm Wiemeyer with
9 the National Transportation Safety Board.

10 MR. BURNS: Hi, Lou Burns with ALPA.

11 MR. MILLER: I'm Barry Miller with TWA.

12 MR. DARCY: Kevin Darcy, with Boeing.

13 MR. TODINO: Tom Todino, FAA.

14 MR. WIEMEYER: And I am Norm Wiemeyer with
15 the National Transportation Safety Board.

16 Chuck, I'd like you to start of if you'd give
17 us your full name and spell your last name.

18 COL. STUEVE: Okay. My name is Charles
19 Stueve. The last name is spelled S-T-U-E-V-E.

20 MR. WIEMEYER: Oh. On the night that TWA was
21 lost, what was your exposure to that accident?

22 COL. STUEVE: Well, I was at home at the time
23 the actual aircraft went down. And I was sitting at
24 home and I thought I heard a muffled explosion. Now,
25 I -- I wouldn't call it an explosion. I thought it was

1 a -- at the time a sonic boom. And the thing that went
2 off in my head was, okay, there's another incident I'm
3 going to have to check out tomorrow with neighbors
4 complaining about it.

5 But I got a little uneasy the more I thought
6 about it, and I called my Guard base to see if all the
7 airplanes were okay. And they asked me to come on out.
8 The Supervisor of Flying, who is normally out there
9 who's watching when the helicopters and 130s fly had
10 gotten on one of the airplanes to help search, since
11 they knew an airplane had gone down, and they needed me
12 to come in. And at that point I went into the command
13 post and helped direct our Guard operations toward the
14 search effort.

15 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. What is your normal job
16 with the Guard?

17 COL. STUEVE: My normal job is I'm a HC-130
18 pilot and flight examiner. Been flying the 130 for
19 about 24 years now.

20 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. And what's your
21 civilian occupation?

22 COL. STUEVE: I'm a FAA inspector with the
23 New York FSDO [phonetic sp.] in Garden City, New York.

24 MR. WIEMEYER: What -- are you in operations?
25 Or?

1 COL. STUEVE: I'm an operations inspector.

2 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. You said you were at
3 home when you heard a muffled boom?

4 COL. STUEVE: Yeah. It was, like, a sonic
5 boom with windows rattling slightly. And the only
6 reason I remarked on it was because quite often come
7 into the office the next day and someone will have
8 complained about the Concorde, or something like that,
9 causing a boom.

10 However, it dawned on me the Concorde
11 wouldn't have flying -- probably flying that time of
12 day. And so, I called my Guard -- I knew we had flying
13 out there at the Guard base. So, I called up just to
14 make sure that nothing funny had happened with one of
15 our planes.

16 MR. WIEMEYER: Where were you located from
17 where TWA 800 --

18 COL. STUEVE: My house --

19 MR. WIEMEYER: -- went down?

20 COL. STUEVE: -- I'd say, in a direct line,
21 is about -- probably about 12 to 14 nautical miles
22 away, almost in a straight line between where the site
23 was and where the Hampton VOR is. You know, a little
24 bit to the north of the line.

25 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. When we're done here

1 I'm going to dig out a map and have you, kind of, give
2 us an idea of where you --

3 COL. STUEVE: Okay.

4 MR. WIEMEYER: -- where you were.

5 Could you give us an idea of the magnitude of
6 what you heard? How loud was it?

7 COL. STUEVE: Not very loud at all, just a
8 low rumble to rumble the windows. Just very slightly.
9 But it was something characteristic of the Concorde
10 trying to make a -- maybe coming into too fast on a
11 decent out over the water.

12 And I -- what seems very minor to me could be
13 major to some of the other people on the island. So,
14 I'm always kind of sensitive to it when I heard.

15 MR. WIEMEYER: Now, are you fairly confident
16 from the time when -- and everything that this was
17 probably TWA 800?

18 COL. STUEVE: In retrospect, yes. Although I
19 can't accurate fix, you know, the time to the exact
20 moment that -- that TWA went down.

21 I went out -- as I said, I -- it -- I sat
22 there for a few minutes and something told me to call
23 the base. And I called the base, and I immediately
24 went out to help out.

25 MR. WIEMEYER: How far were you from the base

1 where you are located?

2 COL. STUEVE: I live about six miles from the
3 base, as far as driving --

4 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay.

5 COL. STUEVE: -- distance.

6 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. If you'd just share
7 what you went through when you got out to the base, and
8 what transpired?

9 COL. STUEVE: Okay. The -- the rescue
10 situation had already started to develop. We had a 130
11 and we had one helicopter out on the scene. We were
12 checking to see if there were more crews available to
13 come in. We saw this was going to be an all-night
14 thing.

15 There was also Coast Guard on-scene. And
16 also I could hear the beginnings of -- since I was
17 monitoring the frequency -- of police helicopters; at
18 least one was out there already, with more coming.

19 It seemed to be a bit chaotic, but that's
20 fairly normal for initial rescue attempts -- and
21 something like this.

22 It was for the much -- pretty much dark by
23 the time I got to the base. I think sunset was maybe a
24 few a moments after the TWA supposedly crashed. And I
25 was there at the base I think approximately 35 minutes,

1 or so, after it turns out that TWA went off the radar
2 screen. So, approximately somewhere in that time
3 frame.

4 The initial thing was that I alerted the FAA
5 comm center. I wasn't quite sure if everybody knew how
6 serious this was; but the reports from the crews coming
7 in to me they were already seeing multiple bodies in
8 the water, so we knew this was not a small airplane
9 that went down. And they were describing a large patch
10 of water on fire.

11 So, I alerted the comm center and asked them
12 if they had an airplanes missing. At that point they
13 told me TWA 800, a 747, had disappeared off the radar
14 screens some time earlier. Now, they had already been
15 launching their own search or -- whatever -- effort
16 they go into on something like this. And at that point
17 I tell them, well, we definitely know where it's at,
18 and I gave them some initial coordinates over the phone
19 at that point that the helicopter had phoned in.

20 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. The -- when did you
21 become aware that you were dealing with a large
22 aircraft? On -- at what point in this, and what
23 alerted you to that?

24 COL. STUEVE: Probably only about 10 minutes
25 after I got there. The 130 was radioing in that --

1 that he was seeing 20 to 30 bodies popping up amongst
2 some wreckage. The helicopter was also seeing some.

3 At this point they were working away with
4 their infra-red equipment -- at least the helicopter
5 has infra-red equipment. And he was looking over the
6 area where bodies were popping up away from the flaming
7 area to see if any -- he could pick up a heat signature
8 up from any of the bodies that they saw.

9 MR. WIEMEYER: The -- could you -- in the
10 command center out at the Guard base, could you monitor
11 the radios?

12 COL. STUEVE: Yes. I -- I was monitoring --
13 we have our own frequency that we talk plane-to-plane
14 and ground-to-plane on. And I was also at times
15 monitoring the Coast Guard frequency as workload
16 permitted.

17 MR. WIEMEYER: During that time do you recall
18 overhearing a Navy aircraft call in, or talk with the
19 C-130?

20 COL. STUEVE: I vaguely remember the -- that
21 there was a Navy aircraft out of there -- out there.
22 But I don't know the exact time or how long he was on-
23 scene. I have the impression that he wasn't there too
24 long, you know, before he left.

25 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. When the crews came

1 back in, then, did you speak with them?

2 COL. STUEVE: Yes, I did. The helicopter
3 crew came in first. The Coast Guard was concerned that
4 since they were blacked out using their infra-red gear
5 and their night vision goggles that they were a hazard
6 to the growing number of other aircraft out of there.

7 I tried to convince them that was -- if there
8 were anybody to be alive from this crash scene that we
9 had the best chance of picking them up with that gear,
10 however they were more concerned about the increasing
11 hazard of other airplanes out there. So, I called the
12 helicopter back in, since Coast Guard has overall
13 authority in that case; and we told them to bring the
14 helicopter in.

15 The 130 was still flying out there but it --
16 dropping flares. And then the Coast Guard at some
17 point asked him to stop dropping flares; I guess they
18 thought, once again, it was going to -- it was a
19 possible problem with the other airplanes searching out
20 there. So I recalled the 130 to come in.

21 And at that point when the crews came in I
22 debriefed first the -- the 130 crew -- excuse me -- the
23 helicopter crew, and then the 130 crew. And I will say
24 that I did not talk to each member of each crew. As
25 far as the helicopter crew goes, I talked very -- very

1 briefly with all three of them, and I talked to three
2 members, including both pilots, and the engineer, and I
3 believe the load master off the 130 crew.

4 MR. WIEMEYER: Did you interview anybody else
5 that was involved from a visual standpoint?

6 COL. STUEVE: No, I was just keeping it to
7 our members of our own Guard unit. There was one other
8 person and that was Craig Johnson. Now, he was
9 actually the first one -- well, let me take that back.
10 He was actually the first one who witnessed the -- what
11 I considered a valid witness of the TWA possibly
12 falling out of the sky.

13 He happened to be inside the unit when I
14 arrived there. And he told me he saw some things. And
15 prior to even the 130 and helicopter crews coming in, I
16 talked to Craig first.

17 MR. WIEMEYER: What did he have to say to
18 you?

19 COL. STUEVE: Craig mentioned that he was out
20 of the P-pit, which is a drop zone on the field at
21 Kabresky [phonetic sp.] Air Base. It's north of the
22 runway complex, but only a few hundred yards -- hundred
23 yards away from Runway 33.

24 Now, he was expecting the 130 to come back in
25 for some drops or he -- either that, or they had just

1 concluded some drops. And he happened to be out there
2 facing to the south-south/west. And he described to me
3 what he saw, a -- a red flare, or an engine on fire --
4 is the way he described it -- falling out of the sky at
5 angle. And he watched this until it blew up -- burst
6 into flames. And he watched it after it burst into
7 flames until it went below the treeline on the horizon,
8 and he couldn't see it anymore.

9 I asked Craig what angle he estimated it at
10 -- and I made some hand signs of this angle, that
11 angle. I believe I -- well, I have it written down. I
12 believe he indicated an angle of about 50 degrees, is
13 what he saw this red engine -- as he calls it --
14 falling out of the sky. And as he watched it fall, he
15 saw it burst into flames.

16 MR. WIEMEYER: Did he give you any account of
17 how -- from when he first saw it how much of a decent
18 it made before the big fireball?

19 COL. STUEVE: I would -- I -- I say -- I
20 asked him about how long he watched it fall, and he
21 said, five to eight seconds." You know, it was a
22 rough -- if -- you know, it's a very -- kind of a rough
23 estimate. But I -- I tried to -- have him close his
24 eyes and watch how he -- how -- count the whatever time
25 he thought maybe it was that he saw this -- had a

1 mental image of it falling. And he thought five to
2 eight seconds before it burst into flames.

3 MR. WIEMEYER: And he didn't mention an
4 altitude for the --

5 COL. STUEVE: No. No.

6 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. Was there anything else
7 that came out of the discussions with the other crew
8 members that you'd consider noteworthy?

9 COL. STUEVE: Well, primarily I was just
10 concerned that we accurately plotted where this initial
11 debris was coming up, because the carts can shift;
12 certain debris will float away. I was especially
13 concerned about bodies floating away during the time,
14 since the Coast Guard was concentrating its area -- its
15 search around in the area of the flaming debris that
16 was popping up and coming up in one area, but the
17 helicopter and 130 saw a large amount of bodies with
18 some fuselage sections at -- i.e., they saw windows --
19 window sections mixed in with the bodies.

20 They saw them about a mile away -- or, three-
21 quarters of a mile away popping up. And it became
22 obvious to me that there was probably another section
23 of the aircraft that had broke off at some point, or
24 separated at some juncture, and had fallen into the
25 water at that point. So, I tried to get accurate

1 coordinates of where certain of these sitings were, and
2 I passed them along to the comm center.

3 MR. WIEMEYER: When you saw popping up, they
4 were coming to the surface from --

5 COL. STUEVE: Yes. They -- the helicopter
6 said they actually saw a number of bodies as -- as they
7 were -- as they were still floating to the surface --
8 apparently floating to the surface. You know, as they
9 were coming around they were counting; that they were
10 seeing more and more. I think that at one point they
11 gave me a number in the 20s -- they -- in the low 20s
12 of one area of bodies.

13 And the 130 was I know concerned -- the crew
14 on the 130 was concerned that these bodies were going
15 to float away before anybody picked them up. But I
16 think by that time they were some -- they were getting
17 some boats over there. But initially they couldn't
18 generate any Coast Guard interest on coming over there
19 and retrieving the bodies that they were seeing --
20 'cause it was a distance away from the -- from the oil
21 slick, if you will, that was burning.

22 MR. WIEMEYER: Did any of the people that
23 interviewed indicate that they saw streaks or anything
24 that might be associated with a missile?

25 (Pause)

1 COL. STUEVE: I'm trying to recall. I do
2 know -- I -- or, I have a vague recollection that Fritz
3 Meyer mentioned something that first night about a red
4 streak, or seeing a streak in the sky. But nothing
5 about a missile -- definitely nothing from the ground
6 coming up to the air. Is -- something more streaking
7 in the air-to-air thing.

8 The other pilot, Chris Baur, did not mention
9 anything at that point. However, Chris is a little bit
10 more taciturn, and his background is in customs. And I
11 don't think Chris is one to go spill out his immediate
12 thoughts on something -- or putting, if you will,
13 motives or possibilities to those things. He's the
14 kind of guy who will digest what he -- what he sees.

15 I will say this. The coast -- the hell --
16 the position that the helicopter was in -- I, myself --
17 and this is just my own personal opinion -- I'm -- I'm
18 a little skeptical that -- that they saw anything prior
19 to the burst of flames, if you will, from TWA. And
20 I -- I put that because there's a lot of airplanes that
21 constantly fly Calverton near -- is the arrival
22 pattern, coming over Calverton at 10,000 feet. And
23 I -- I see 747s all the time flying at -- at 10,000
24 feet and they're about the -- as big as my thumbnail,
25 or so, as -- at that -- sit -- standing on the ground

1 and looking at them at approximately the same distance.

2 I find it extraordinarily hard to believe
3 that a helicopter who's preparing to land or
4 maneuvering around in the runways there at a low
5 altitude has their eyes fixed on some little silver
6 aircraft flying through the air enough to notice that
7 -- and then enough to notice that there's red --
8 there's streaks in the air. So, I think -- my personal
9 opinion is that nobody was really making very much
10 mention of this.

11 I -- I think Fritz Meyer made an oblique
12 reference to seeing a -- a flare or streak, you know,
13 in the area. But definitely nothing that would
14 indicate a -- a ground-air missile. I fired a national
15 ground-air missile -- a Soviet SA-7 -- at -- in the Air
16 Force for some -- for some tests on the infra-red
17 capability of that missile versus the C-130.

18 And it was quite dramatic. The -- the plume
19 of white smoke. I don't think anybody could mistake
20 watching an SA-7, or some sort of shoulder-fired
21 missile coming off from a surface, you know, in -- up
22 toward an aircraft. It's -- it makes a very
23 distinctive plume of smoke for quite a ways.

24 That's my own opinion. I will say one other
25 thing. And it's -- probably has no bearing on

1 anything, possibly, but the -- the sun was at a little
2 bit of an oblique angle at that point. And that's what
3 I attributed even Craig seeing a red engine, or a red
4 flare -- as he described it. It seems to me they were
5 probably picking up some of the last rays of the sun, a
6 little bit, and that may explain some of this stuff.
7 But, no one was really jumping up and down that night
8 and saying, oh, it was a missile that shot them down.
9 We saw this. We saw that.

10 Everybody was very somber. Everybody was
11 very excited about going out there and trying to help
12 locate survivors, was really the main thrust of what
13 people were telling me at that point. And they were
14 mainly describing the disaster scene.

15 MR. WIEMEYER: At what point in time
16 following all this did you hear -- start to hear
17 stories about possible missiles?

18 COL. STUEVE: Well, I would say it's -- it's
19 kind of hard to put my -- my finger on it. But I would
20 say it -- it started maybe a week or so later.

21 Now, I don't spend every day at that Guard
22 unit. I -- I stayed that whole night 'til about 4:00
23 the next afternoon, and then somebody relieved me. And
24 I came up a couple nights in succession after that,
25 once again in the command post. I'm basically

1 liaisoning with the FBI out there, and trying to help
2 them coordinate a few things along with the Coast
3 Guard.

4 So, the next time I really started hearing
5 something about it was probably at the next drill. And
6 the -- and that was just, you know, some kind of
7 rumors, I think, just coming from one source. And --
8 but I really remember them coming really much later.
9 You know, I me -- have a vague impression that maybe
10 something was said the -- within the next few weeks.

11 But I -- during the last few months it's
12 really been strong, or I been -- been hearing these
13 sorts of things kicking around. And, of course, then
14 there's been other things on the television about it.

15 MR. WIEMEYER: Were you -- did you have a
16 formal interview with the FBI?

17 COL. STUEVE: No. No, I did not.

18 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. That's all the
19 questions that I have right now. I'd like each one of
20 you to say your name when you start asking any
21 questions you have so the stenographer can get it down.

22 And, Lou, I'll start with you. But you're
23 going to have to either move closer or talk louder.

24 MR. BURNS: Okay. Lou Burns, ALPA.

25 Steve, the discreet frequency that the Guard

1 uses for communications between their aircraft, is that
2 taped at all? Do you have --

3 COL. STUEVE: No.

4 MR. BURNS: -- a tape?

5 COL. STUEVE: No. No, it's not. It's not
6 taped. It's a UHF frequency. And, no, we don't
7 maintain any tapes or any -- even any -- I maintained a
8 log book as best I could that night. But there were so
9 many things coming back and forth, I was -- I don't
10 know how -- how much information -- specific
11 information that -- I was more or less trying to record
12 very generalized things -- specific things, maybe like
13 coordinates, and times of arrivals and landings. But I
14 wasn't able to record, you know, too many specifics
15 just due to I was the only one in there at the time,
16 and there was a lot of information coming through.

17 But there is a logbook and that still could
18 be found, you know, on the base that night.

19 MR. BURNS: The -- this Craig Johnson, who
20 you talked to?

21 COL. STUEVE: Yes.

22 MR. BURNS: Who is he?

23 COL. STUEVE: Craig Johnson is a para-rescue
24 man. He's one of the guys who jumps out of our
25 airplanes. He's very highly trained. They go to Navy

1 SEAL school. They go to Special Forces school. And,
2 plus, they receive a lot of extensive medical training.

3 They're the -- kind of the Air Force version
4 of Special Forces, if you will. And they're specially
5 trained in search and rescue. So, their -- primarily
6 their job is jump out of helicopters and 130s behind
7 enemy lines and bringing people out -- bring downed
8 airmen out of the bad situation.

9 MR. BURNS: That's all I have. Thank you.

10 MR. MILLER: Barry Miller, TWA. I have a
11 question.

12 Did -- when the helicopters -- or, did you --
13 anybody report to you that night of noticing any boats
14 in the vicinity, of any size? When they were talking
15 about the survivors, did they notice any vessels down
16 there? That -- were no mention of them.

17 COL. STUEVE: I know for a fact that two of
18 our guys in the Guard went out in their boats.

19 Now, is that the time of the crash, you mean?

20 MR. MILLER: Yeah. I mean --

21 COL. STUEVE: Oh, okay.

22 MR. MILLER: -- yeah, from the helicopter or
23 the C-130 crews. Did they observe when they were
24 seeing all this stuff within a couple miles, did they
25 observe any vessels, or make mention of any vessels?

1 COL. STUEVE: No, I don't recall.

2 MR. MILLER: Okay. You?

3 MR. DARCY: Kevin Darcy. The C-130 and the
4 helicopter, were they in the air at the time of the
5 accident? Or did they respond after the accident was
6 reported?

7 COL. STUEVE: No, the C-130 was in the air at
8 the time. In fact, he had just done something which
9 caused controversy later on. He was dropping flares
10 out in an area probably about 20 miles away from the
11 crash.

12 It's an area -- it's the 130 to 185 degree
13 radial off south -- off the Hampton VOR. We have an
14 area from nine to 14 miles offshore where we do water
15 work, including dropping flares and smokes and sea dyes
16 in the water. And he was doing that at -- at time.

17 It was just starting to get dark, so he had
18 -- he had dropped a few flares. We try not to do it
19 too late at night any more 'cause everybody up and down
20 the coast starts calling up the police and saying, hey,
21 the -- we're under attack from aliens --

22 MR. DARCY: Uh-huh.

23 COL. STUEVE: -- or something.

24 So -- but he was airborne at the time. And
25 the helicopter was airborne at the time. I believe he

1 was at the end of Runway 2-4 from what -- what they
2 told me. And they were either maneuvering to land or
3 come in and drop off a person, I think, and pick up
4 another crew member.

5 MR. DARCY: Okay. So, how far -- I'm --
6 since I'm not familiar --

7 COL. STUEVE: Yeah.

8 MR. DARCY: -- with the locations and things,
9 how far was the C-130, then, from the accident site?
10 Or if --

11 COL. STUEVE: Well, the 130, in a straight-
12 line distance he would've been approximately offshore
13 lateral -- you know, south of the shore. Approximately
14 the same distance, or maybe a little farther out than
15 the TWA went down at. And the -- and maybe spaced 20
16 miles due east, let's say --

17 MR. DARCY: Okay.

18 COL. STUEVE: -- of -- of that position.

19 The helicopter I think roughly is about 12
20 miles, as the crow flies, from where -- maybe 10 miles,
21 11 miles from the -- from where TWA went down at.

22 MR. DARCY: Okay. Just a couple more
23 questions.

24 The C-130 then -- 'cause I haven't seen any
25 of the witness reports from that -- did the pilot --

1 did those people see the sequence --

2 COL. STUEVE: They saw --

3 MR. DARCY: -- did they --

4 COL. STUEVE: They saw --

5 MR. DARCY: -- sequence on that?

6 COL. STUEVE: -- the sequence of the flash --
7 of the -- the explosion, if you will, or the fireball,
8 as they described it.

9 MR. DARCY: Okay.

10 COL. STUEVE: And that got their attention.
11 And they watched -- in fact, I believe it was one of
12 the C-130 pilots watched -- they saw the fireball. And
13 they saw as it fell it break into two pieces. And hit
14 the water and send up a black plume of smoke.

15 They also said the smoke was corkscrew --
16 maybe doing a corkscrew effect, which, you know, I -- I
17 made an inference that, you know, possibly they were
18 seeing the wing/body area coming down together, you
19 know, falling like a leaf sort of effect. I believe
20 I -- I believe I put that in my written report. I'm
21 not quite sure about that.

22 But that was the main gist of the description
23 that the 130 pilots gave me what they saw. But I --
24 their attention was drawn to it by the explosion.

25 MR. DARCY: Okay. And then the final

1 question is I think you -- I can't remember the
2 gentleman's name. But you said the guy who jumps out
3 of the --

4 COL. STUEVE: Yeah.

5 MR. DARCY: -- the airplane --

6 COL. STUEVE: Craig Johnson.

7 MR. DARCY: -- Craig Johnson, yeah. I think
8 you were referring to him when you said that he
9 witnessed it. And the question there is did he say if
10 the -- if the thing was already descending -- well, in
11 a descent when he saw the flash? Or saw the --

12 COL. STUEVE: Yeah. He -- the way he
13 described it to me he saw, once again, a -- like a red
14 flare, or a red engine -- or an engine on fire, is --

15 MR. DARCY: Okay.

16 COL. STUEVE: -- what he said -- falling out
17 of the sky. And it -- we figured out that he was
18 looking at something heading toward the ground at about
19 50, 55 degrees; something like that. I recorded, once
20 again, in that -- in that statement over there. I
21 didn't review it, so I don't know exactly what angle we
22 came up with.

23 And as he watched it fall, which he estimated
24 he watched for five to eight seconds, he saw it burst
25 into flames.

1 MR. DARCY: Okay. But it was already
2 falling -- the --

3 COL. STUEVE: It was already falling. It
4 was --

5 MR. DARCY: Okay.

6 COL. STUEVE: Yeah. It was on a trajectory
7 of heading downward.

8 MR. DARCY: Thank you. That's all I got.

9 MR. TODINO: Yeah, I just have --

10 COL. STUEVE: Yeah.

11 MR. TODINO: -- one question. Tom Todino,
12 FAA.

13 Did the pilots tell you at approximately what
14 altitude, first of all, the helicopter was in when he
15 saw it? And what altitude the C-130 was in when he saw
16 the fireball?

17 COL. STUEVE: Yeah. The helicopter wasn't
18 more than -- than a few hundred -- hundred feet in
19 altitude. The 130, I believe, for dropping flares
20 would've been about 3,500 or 4,000 feet. And I believe
21 -- although I don't think I recorded this at the time
22 -- the 130 pilot said that, you know, it basically blew
23 up at their -- that they saw the fireball at about --
24 at or about their same altitude.

25 So, he would've been about, I think, 3,500 to

1 4,000. That's the normal altitude we drop flares out.
2 No more, thank you.

3 MR. WIEMEYER: I've got one follow-up, Chuck.

4 COL. STUEVE: Uh-huh.

5 MR. WIEMEYER: This is Norm Wiemeyer of the
6 Safety Board. Since the time that this has taken have
7 you talked with anyone who heard anything similar to
8 what you heard --

9 COL. STUEVE: No. In -- in fact, I've given
10 that some thought. And I -- I'm wondering whether even
11 just didn't imagine it. It's -- you know -- you know,
12 it's so far after the fact. I -- I have -- can't
13 recall anybody who said they heard an explosion.

14 In fact, I even asked Craig Johnson that.
15 And I believe I noted in the report that he did not
16 hear an explosion, and he was watching when this thing
17 burst into flames. And -- so I found that kind of odd,
18 and I was wondering if I just maybe wasn't hearing some
19 other anomaly, or just -- or even got something
20 confused from one day to the other when I finally put
21 this down on paper.

22 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. I think that's it.

23 MR. DARCY: One -- one more question. Kevin
24 Darcy, again.

25 But tell -- can you explain again why you

1 decided to call the base?

2 COL. STUEVE: Well, that -- yeah, I guess
3 that -- that is a good question. There was something I
4 just -- you know, I heard the helicopter fly over. I
5 heard the 130, you know, buzz around. There seemed
6 there was some air activity out there, and something
7 just triggered me to call the base.

8 You know, I just was -- you know, I'm one of
9 the -- you know, I'm the office officer out there.

10 MR. DARCY: Uh-huh.

11 COL. STUEVE: You know, so if something just
12 doesn't feel right, I'll -- I'll make a call to make
13 sure everything's going okay. That's my job to -- even
14 though I'm a part-timer out there --

15 MR. DARCY: Yeah.

16 COL. STUEVE: -- just to kind of monitor
17 what's going on. And since I live close, it's
18 something I do occasionally.

19 MR. DARCY: So, you heard some -- in addition
20 to the boom you heard some other --

21 COL. STUEVE: Right.

22 MR. DARCY: -- air traffic --

23 COL. STUEVE: Right.

24 MR. DARCY: -- activity that --

25 COL. STUEVE: And that could've been other --

1 even a police helicopter, or something, going on at --

2 MR. DARCY: Uh-huh.

3 COL. STUEVE: -- that -- by that time -- by
4 that time frame.

5 MR. DARCY: Okay. Thank you.

6 MR. WIEMEYER: Anybody else have any
7 questions?

8 (No response.)

9 MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. We'll shut this thing
10 down.

11 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded [no
12 time noted.] .)

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