

To: FAA & NTSB

From: Andrew L. Gordon

3/12/2024

Statement

On the afternoon of 3/7/2024, at approximately 3 p.m., Aviation Adventures staff at Stafford Regional Airport called me and told me that a renter pilot was having gear trouble after trying to land at Tangier Airport.

I got the pilot's phone number, texted him at 3:21, and asked him to contact us immediately. He subsequently tried to call me several times while en route back to Stafford, but the service was spotty, and the calls kept dropping. I told him to fly the plane, stay calm, and let me know when he was back near Stafford.

Eventually, at 3:59, I received a text from him, and at approximately 4:20, I could also communicate consistently via handheld radio at KRMN airport. The pilot said he tried to land at Tangier and "felt the right gear give way." I asked him what the conditions were at Tangier. He stated that it was a "pretty good direct crosswind." (The aircraft owner later established that it was approximately 15kt, 90 degree cross wind conditions at Tangier at the time the pilot attempted landing.) He said that when he attempted landing, he felt the right side drop or give way and that he then pushed full power, took back off, and flew back to Stafford with the landing gear partially extended and stuck.

I asked him how much fuel he had, and he said he had two or more hours remaining. I told him that's great; we have time to try a few things to try to get the gear down. I also told him it would be helpful to do a few low passes so we could get an eye on the condition of the gear. At this point, both Fire Rescue, EMS, and the police had arrived at Stafford Airport in significant numbers due to the pilot having declared an emergency back near Tangier.

After setting up for the first low pass, I had binoculars and observed that the right main gear was stuck at an approximately 45-degree angle, partially extended. The left main gear was more fully extended, and the nose gear was also partially extended.

I asked him what the condition of the gear system was at that point, and he stated that the selector switch was in the neutral position and the gear motor circuit breaker had popped out. I asked him to move the gear selector into the down position and to try and close the circuit breaker. He did so and did another low pass. The condition of the gear was unchanged, and the circuit breaker had popped back out. I then asked him to pull the manual gear handle that would disconnect the drive motor from the gear system. (This would typically allow all three

landing gears to free swing down to a fully extended position in an undamaged gear system that had only suffered a motor or electrical failure.) He pulled the manual gear extension handle and confirmed that the drive motor was disconnected from the gear mechanism. He completed another low pass. Again, the position of the landing gear remained the same. I finally asked him to try to move the manual extension handle, which he stated was up and forward in the gear down position, close to the forward vertical panel. He noted that the manual extension handle was stuck and would not move, and after yet another low pass, I again observed no change in the landing gear position.

During this time, I coordinated with the fire and EMS services and the police. After speaking with all parties, the pilot was asked to fly the pattern until approximately 10 gallons of fuel remained in the aircraft to minimize the risk of a post-landing fire. The airport manager and I also informed him a few times that Quantico had crash facilities and better crash equipment than Stafford, and he was asked if he wanted to land there. He stated that he was at Stafford, was familiar and comfortable with the airport, and had chosen to land there.

I told him to fly the plane, take a standard approach, and land a bit longer to give himself plenty of room. I told him to expect the plane to pull to one side when he touched and to be prepared to use the rudder and brakes to compensate and slow the aircraft.

I advised him to get out as soon as the plane came to rest, along with his passenger.

The aircraft landed on runway 15 at Stafford Regional Airport, and I witnessed the touchdown and subsequent events from the approximate midfield point in front of the T hangar building closest to the FBO.

The positions of each of the landing gear was unchanged from the previous low passes. LH mostly extended, RH at 45 deg partially extended and nose partially extended.

When the aircraft touched down, all three landing gear were forced up until the belly of the aircraft contacted the runway. The aircraft then slid slightly to the left before resting on the left side of runway 15. Both occupants immediately exited the plane as fire and EMS arrived at the immediate vicinity of the aircraft. The pilot stated that he applied the left rudder on the touchdown to counteract the collapsed gear.

My team and I assisted the crane and recovery crew in removing the aircraft from the runway. When the aircraft was hoisted, the landing gear was mainly retracted into their respective gear wells. The plane was set down on aircraft wing jacks and secured with a tail weight. We managed to extend the right main gear out of the gear well, dropping it down to the deployed position. At this point, I observed that the RH push/pull rod was severely bent and that the rod end link had separated from the rod approximately 1" from the attach bolt on the gear strut side. When the gear was pushed by hand back up toward the retracted position, it swung freely and the rod end and end link broken ends aligned at the approximate 45 degree position that the gear was stuck at before the landing. The left main gear push/pull rod was also severely

bent but was still attached at both ends and required some effort to force down into the extended position. The nose landing gear was able to be fully extended into the down position by hand as well with some force applied.

The aircraft gear was secured in the down position with safety straps to prevent collapse. It was then hoisted and carried back to the ramp at Stafford on a flatbed trailer. The crane then hoisted it and set it down in a tiedown spot on the ramp.

This account is to the best of my recollection and reflects my observations and understanding of the pilot's statements to me and others.

Signed:

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature.

Andrew L. Gordon

Date: 3/12/2024