

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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HELICOPTER CRASH SOUTH OF THE *

BARREN ISLANDS NEAR KODIAK, * Accident No.: ANC21LA020

ALASKA, ON MARCH 2, 2021 *

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Interview of: CHRIS TIMPANO, Pilot
Kodiak Helicopters

Via telephone

APPEARANCES:

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National Transportation Safety Board

ERIC SWENSON, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

DAVID LONGAN, Aviation Safety Inspector
Federal Aviation Administration

BREWSTER JAMIESON, Representative
(On behalf of Mr. Timpano)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Chris Timpano:		
By Dr. Wilson		7
By Mr. Swenson		29
By Mr. Longan		30
By Dr. Wilson		30

I N T E R V I E W

DR. WILSON: So I've started the recording. Chris, just so you know, the NTSB -- a lot of people haven't participated in our investigations before, interviews that we conduct. This is a -- this is something that's routine for us. I understand it's not routine for you, but we want to talk to you because you're familiar with Andy, you're familiar with the accident helicopter, and we think that you will have some information that will be beneficial to our investigation.

As I mentioned, we do have the FAA on the phone. Just like the NTSB, we're here from the safety side, so is the FAA. We don't have any enforcement authority. What our role is, is from the safety aspect to understand -- try to understand what happened in the accident and prevent something like this from happening again.

If we ask you a question that you don't know the answer to, I don't know is perfectly fine. If you need to get back to us on an answer, that is also okay. We don't want you to guess if -- we're not looking for that. So just let us know what you know.

We will each take turns asking question. I'll lead the interview, and then when I'm done with my questioning, I'll have Eric ask any remaining questions that he has, and then David. And then after that, I'll check to see if anybody has any additional follow-up questions. But we'll take turns asking questions so that we're not interrupting each other and interrupting your train

1 of thought as you're answering questions.

2 MR. TIMPANO: Okay.

3 DR. WILSON: Okay. And as I mentioned, we'll be recording
4 this and doing a transcript after this interview, which will
5 become a part of our public docket.

6 You are entitled to have one representative with you during
7 this interview. Is there somebody that you would like to have on
8 this call?

9 MR. TIMPANO: No. I think I'm all right. Just Brewster
10 being here.

11 DR. WILSON: Okay. So Brewster will be your representative
12 for the interview, correct?

13 MR. TIMPANO: He's not representing me.

14 Feel free to jump in here, Brewster.

15 He's not representing me. He's just kind of here along with
16 it to make sure legal --

17 MR. JAMIESON: Right, right --

18 (Simultaneous speaking.)

19 MR. TIMPANO: (Indiscernible).

20 DR. WILSON: So --

21 MR. JAMIESON: Correct. So it's not a formal retention, but
22 it is -- he's asked me to be with him. I volunteered to be with
23 him and just to listen in. And I will be doing the same with Amy
24 Belisle when it's her turn.

25 DR. WILSON: Okay.

1 MR. JAMIESON: But I do represent her.

2 DR. WILSON: Okay. Yes. And representative from our
3 standpoint, from the NTSB, not necessarily from the legal
4 perspective, but it's somebody that you wish to have on the phone
5 with you.

6 MR. TIMPANO: Okay. Other than that, no. Just myself.

7 DR. WILSON: Okay. All right. Any questions before we get
8 started?

9 MR. TIMPANO: No.

10 DR. WILSON: Okay. As I mentioned, I'm Katherine Wilson.
11 I'm a human performance investigator with the NTSB.

12 Eric.

13 MR. SWENSON: My name is Eric Swenson. I'm an accident
14 investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board.

15 DR. WILSON: David.

16 MR. LONGAN: My name is David Longan. I'm the aviation
17 safety inspector assigned to the Juneau Flight Standards Office.

18 DR. WILSON: Okay. Great.

19 And, Chris, if you could state for us your full name, please.

20 MR. TIMPANO: Yes. Chris Timpano, and I was the, the pilot
21 for Kodiak Helicopters.

22 DR. WILSON: And then Brewster.

23 MR. JAMIESON: Yes. My name is Brewster Jamieson, first name
24 B-r-e-w-s-t-e-r, last name J-a-m-i-e-s-o-n, on behalf of the
25 witness.

1 INTERVIEW OF CHRIS TIMPANO

2 BY DR. WILSON:

3 Q. So I know that we, Chris, we've got your statement or your
4 record of conversation that you had with Clint Johnson after the
5 accident. I'd appreciate it, though, if you could walk us through
6 again the events that occurred on March 2nd, or if you need to
7 start back farther, maybe when you found out that Andy was looking
8 to take this flight.

9 A. Yeah, not a problem. So I was operating under 135 flights
10 that Tuesday morning out in Butte-Palmer, and I got in records
11 from -- or excuse me, messages from Andy and Amy stating that they
12 needed the helicopter back that afternoon, but I don't believe
13 they were aware that I had flights earlier that morning. I had to
14 leave the helicopter in Palmer a couple days prior just because I
15 couldn't get it back to Anchorage due to weather. So we have a
16 cottage property out there that we -- we have a helipad, and they
17 let us use it to operate out of.

18 So I conducted just a routine tour at about 11 a.m. and told
19 them that I could probably have the helicopter back no earlier
20 than 2 p.m. just with doing the tour and then fueling up the
21 aircraft and everything. That's probably when it -- they were
22 asking for it by one. So I conducted the tour. Everything went
23 as normal. I flew back to Merrill Field in Anchorage to Crowley
24 Fuel off of Taxiway November. I had to shut down there and wait
25 about 30 minutes because the Crowley fuel truck was fueling the

1 tanks at the time. And once he left, I just popped back over and
2 filled up the aircraft 100 percent fuel, Jet A, and then dropped
3 -- just popped back over to the other side of the fuel where our
4 hangar is on the west side.

5 And as I was shutting down, Andy kind of pulled up into the
6 hangar complex (indiscernible) and kind of pretty much just
7 planning to do kind of a hand-off deal. Didn't have much
8 interaction with him at all, maybe about just 30 seconds of
9 conversation. Just him saying thanks, thanks so much for making
10 this work, sorry it was such short notice, he really appreciated
11 it, that kind of thing. And, again, kind of emphasized that he
12 needed to get down and see Claire. And I had my hands full at
13 that point with just gear from the flight.

14 And I walked him back to the hangar, and by the time I kind
15 of walked back out, he was already in the aircraft getting ready
16 to go. And I stood there and watched as he departed, just to make
17 sure nothing looked funky, as I do anytime anybody takes off. And
18 he, yeah, he just took off southbound, and that's the last time I
19 made any contact with him. Then I just continued to flight track
20 him on Spidertracks throughout the -- his flight down there, just
21 periodically.

22 And -- you want me to go ahead and do the whole scenario with
23 the tracking as well?

24 Q. Sure. That would be great.

25 A. Okay. No problem. So I was tracking him down, also just

1 kind of checked the weather as well to confirm that the weather
2 was going to be good crossing the water from the south and the
3 mainland to Kodiak, as I've done that flight many times, and it
4 can be pretty, pretty brutal. But, according to the webcam,
5 nothing looked too unusual and -- other than the winds were a
6 little gusty, as they typically are in that area, especially
7 around the Barren Islands.

8 And then, at 1:39 -- or excuse me, 3:39 p.m., Spidertracks
9 stopped reporting his location. I didn't notice probably till
10 shortly after four. I wasn't consistently watching; I was just
11 kind of periodically checking it. And at that point -- sometimes
12 Spidertracks can kind of glitch out, pop back in, or got shut off
13 or something unplugged, so I was just kind of, at that point,
14 starting to look more into it.

15 And then, at about -- with the weather conditions and where
16 he was when he lost, he should have arrived at the Kodiak Airport,
17 if he was flying to the main airport, shortly after -- between 4
18 and 4:30. And then, when 4:30 hit and Spidertracks didn't come
19 back on, I called Amy -- or texted Amy, excuse me, to ask if she
20 had found out if he had made it or not. She had not heard
21 anything from him. And then, at that point, I called -- or excuse
22 me, I texted Natasha shortly after asking if Andy had made it to
23 the house there, and she had said that she wasn't aware that he
24 was coming.

25 And then, at that point, I was calling the tower to see if

1 they had made contact with Andy. They had not. And, at this
2 point, Amy had already been talking with, I believe, like the Air
3 Force or Coast Guard or whoever initiated kind of the Search and
4 Rescue. And then they started calling me, asking me for all the
5 GPS coordinates, the Spidertracks info, you know, the general
6 questions about the aircraft, fuel, passengers, safety equipment,
7 et cetera.

8 And then we had -- I had Mike Pfeifer (ph.), one of the guys
9 he works with down there, good friend of his, pop over to the
10 State Airport. Because he has, I believe, two pads he owns on the
11 State Airport, and you don't have to get in contact with the
12 Kodiak tower to go land there, so I thought maybe he just zipped
13 in there. And, upon people driving by to check, no one saw his
14 helicopter there. And then, I called Natasha again a little after
15 to confirm that he was not there.

16 And then, at this point, the Search and Rescue was out
17 looking for him at that last known location, about two miles south
18 of Barren Islands there. And that's about all I got unless you
19 have any further questions or details you need.

20 Q. Thank you. That was very helpful. I do have some follow-up
21 questions for you. Claire is Andy's daughter?

22 A. That is correct. Okay, hold on just one second. I'm sorry.
23 I'm transitioning from a vehicle inside. I don't want to lose you
24 here.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. All right. Can you hear me okay still?

2 Q. Yes.

3 A. Okay, perfect.

4 Q. And --

5 A. And yes, Claire is his youngest daughter.

6 Q. Okay. And who is Natasha?

7 A. Natasha is the mother of all three of his kids.

8 Q. Okay. And was he just going to visit Claire or were his
9 other children there as well?

10 A. Claire was the only one there at this time. I believe the
11 other two were elsewhere down in the lower 48.

12 Q. Okay. You mentioned a hangar. Was the helicopter typically
13 kept in a hangar?

14 A. Yes. It was -- other than a couple rare occasions where I
15 wasn't able to fly back from the Palmer-Butte area to Anchorage
16 due to weather, we would keep it out there, but I believe that
17 only happened twice this entire winter. Other than that, it was
18 in the hangar all the time.

19 Q. Okay. And the fuel. What company services the fuel or does
20 the fuel at the airport?

21 A. That's Crowley. Crowley. There's a couple Crowley ports.
22 That one is the one off of Taxiway November.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. I'm not sure if he was filling Jet A or Avgas fuel. I'm not
25 sure if that would make any difference or not. Kind of could stir

1 up dirt and particles.

2 Q. Sure. So walk me through the process of when you request
3 fuel. How do you contact them? What happens when they show up at
4 the helicopter?

5 A. So --

6 Q. Is the (indiscernible) --

7 A. So, normally, we have a, we have a fuel truck that's got a
8 small 100-gallon tank in the back, and I call Shoreside Petroleum
9 out there in Anchorage to come fill that truck whenever I need it
10 filled up. But, in this particular instance, I had been pretty
11 busy with 135 flights, and that 100 gallons doesn't last very
12 long. And so the fuel truck was empty, and I wasn't able to fill
13 up in our own hangar before Andy needed the ship. So I used
14 Crowley Fuel there, or Palmer Airport, I fill up at a fuel spot
15 there sometimes. And it's all self-serve fuel, so I have to shut
16 down, get out, go to a little kiosk, swipe the credit card, and I
17 actually pull the grounding strap and the fuel hose, and I fill it
18 up myself.

19 Q. Okay. And is there a way to check for contamination with
20 where you are getting the fuel from or you just, you just get the
21 fuel?

22 A. They do not, I believe, and I don't know this, but it was --
23 under my impression that it's the responsibility of the fuelers to
24 kind of do daily checks there -- or the company that owns the fuel
25 pumps.

1 Q. Okay. How about with the helicopter? Is checking fuel part
2 of the preflight?

3 A. It is, yes.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. I do -- I have a little fuel container, a little aviation
6 fuel container that I take a sample off the left side of the
7 helicopter, little drain tube, off the sump before every flight.

8 Q. Okay. Do you know if that -- did you do that or did you see
9 Andy do that after the tank was fueled?

10 A. I don't -- it wasn't -- I did not do it after the tank was
11 filled, and I did not see Andy do it either. But, again, I was, I
12 wasn't in the hangar when he kind of started doing the aircraft
13 stuff, so I didn't see --

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. -- him do anything.

16 Q. Okay. What about weight and balance? Was that something
17 that would typically be done prior to when Andy is taking the
18 aircraft? Would he do that?

19 A. No, not particularly. I do it just quite often with
20 passengers and like that. But, with this particular aircraft, the
21 66, the manual states that as long as -- even with full tanks, as
22 long as you have a minimum pilot weight of 160 pounds flying solo
23 in the front seat, that you're within weight and balance limits,
24 as long as the cargo compartment, you know, isn't loaded up with a
25 couple hundred pounds of gear, which it was not.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. So under that, that scenario, which we both have flown
3 multiple times, it's known that we were within weight and balance.

4 Q. Okay. I know you said you weren't in the hangar, but just to
5 clarify, so you did not see him preflight the aircraft?

6 A. I did not, no.

7 Q. Okay. Is that something that he typically does? Have you
8 seen him do it before?

9 A. I have seen him do it before too. Typically not, you know,
10 after I've been flying it kind of deal. Typically, we do one
11 solid preflight in the mornings, which I usually handle, and it's
12 typically probably about 20 to 30 minutes. And then, throughout
13 the day, if we have shutdowns, startup periods, different jobs,
14 et cetera, it's more of just a kind of a, a quick look around,
15 checking all the oil levels and that kind of thing.

16 Q. Okay. You mentioned that you were checking him on
17 Spidertracks. Is this something that you normally did when he was
18 flying?

19 A. This actually, I believe, was the only time he's flown with
20 it by himself since we've had it. We were doing other flight
21 tracking prior. We had just gotten Spidertracks, I want to say --
22 I could give you an exact date if you need it, but I think around
23 the October timeframe we got it installed into the aircraft. We
24 got the Spider X installed. And so this was the first time he's
25 flown the aircraft since we had the Spidertracks installed.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. But it is something he would -- you know, he used regularly
3 to kind of track my whereabouts.

4 Q. Okay. So the Spidertracks, you got in October, and you said
5 Andy hadn't flown the helicopter -- you mentioned something about
6 flying it by himself, but then also not flying it, so I just want
7 to make sure that I understand. Since Spidertracks was installed
8 in October, he had not flown the helicopter?

9 A. He had not, no.

10 Q. Okay. What -- for the Spidertracks app, what is the
11 recording rate of that?

12 A. It does every --

13 (Simultaneous speaking.)

14 MR. TIMPANO: It does every 15 seconds, unless it registers
15 an anomaly. For example, a steep heading change or bank will kind
16 of register an anomaly, and it can do -- at that point, I believe
17 it does it up to every two seconds. So it creates a very, very
18 fluid tracking line.

19 BY DR. WILSON:

20 Q. And did you notice anything like that with Spidertracks as
21 you were tracking it?

22 A. I did not, no. When he got kind of down by the Kenai area --
23 Kenai area to Homer area, you could see he kind of did a few like
24 deviations, heading changes here and there, maybe to, I don't
25 know, avoid weather. I'm not entirely sure. But, as far as when

1 the Spidertracks cut off, it didn't look like anything abnormal.
2 Definitely looked like he was using autopilot, and then it kind of
3 just disappeared.

4 Q. Okay. Does Spidertracks -- when, you know, when a signal is
5 lost, does it change from, I don't know, a green to a yellow to a
6 red, or is there any indication that something is wrong besides
7 just the increased reporting rate?

8 A. No. I have noticed it on my -- there's about two occasions I
9 noticed that the Spidertracks module in the helicopter itself
10 light went from a green to a yellow, and going back and looking at
11 them, that's where it kind of cut out and cut back in kind of
12 deal. But no, no kind of enunciation and nothing on the
13 application part of it to say anything like that from -- at least
14 from my knowledge.

15 Q. Okay. About how long should the flight have taken?

16 A. That flight can take anywhere from an hour and 50 minutes to
17 about 2 hours 40 minutes, just depending on avoiding weather or
18 what the winds are going across the water. In this particular
19 scenario, it sounded like he had a pretty strong tailwind going
20 across the water, so I would kind of say, with his deviations up
21 north, it should have took about 2 hours and 15 minutes, would be
22 just kind of a rough guess.

23 Q. Okay. Had he flown this route before?

24 A. Yes, many times.

25 Q. Okay. And you mentioned that the weather cam looked okay.

1 What weather cam were you looking at?

2 A. I believe the north -- further most north is Ouzinkie on
3 Kodiak -- I could be wrong there -- and that one points
4 northbound. And I don't know the name of the furthest south one
5 just south of Homer there, and check that one south. Those are
6 the two best ones that kind of give you a picture of what the
7 weather is doing across that open water.

8 Q. Okay. And you thought the weather looked okay from the
9 weather cam?

10 A. Yeah, it didn't look like anything abnormal. I believe the
11 ceilings were around 1,500 that day, too, and other than just the
12 stronger winds, it didn't look very too (verbatim) weather. It
13 doesn't complete -- it doesn't give you the whole view across the
14 whole water, but just from what I could see both directions, it
15 seemed generally okay.

16 Q. Okay. Do you know if he checked the weather before leaving?

17 A. He could be. He didn't mention anything to me, and I didn't
18 see him. But he had every, every apps on his phone to do so that
19 I seem to (audio skip).

20 Q. Okay. And that would be typically how you'd see him check
21 the weather was an app on his phone?

22 A. Correct, yeah. There's lots of different apps that we would
23 use. He actually taught me of a couple as well, specifically for
24 going over that area of water as well.

25 Q. Okay. Do you recall what those apps were?

1 A. The main one he liked to use was Windy.

2 Q. W-i-n-d-y or --

3 A. Yeah, exactly. And then, beyond that, using the webcams or
4 just other general aviation apps.

5 Q. Okay. For a flight like this, would he file a flight plan?

6 A. I've never, again, personally seen him file one. That's not
7 to say he hasn't though. I just don't, I don't know.

8 Q. Okay. All right. As you were watching him on Spidertracks,
9 the path that he was taking, was that a flight path that you would
10 have expected him to take?

11 A. Yeah. Like I said, except for kind of two little, it seems
12 like, deviations up between the Kenai and Homer there -- which the
13 terrain does rise and lower and big lifts of water, so it is a
14 bunch of different kind of weather patterns all throughout that
15 area, so he could have been just kind of going around certain,
16 certain weather. But, other than that, the general path down
17 south, nothing seemed abnormal.

18 Q. Okay. Where did he typically stay when he would go to
19 Kodiak?

20 A. I actually do not have an answer to that question. I do --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- he always goes down there. I know he knows pretty much
23 everybody on that island, but I'm not specific on to where he
24 would always stay. We were never actually down there at the same
25 time.

1 Q. Okay. Do you know how long he was planning to stay down
2 there?

3 A. It didn't sound like much more than overnight to me. But,
4 again, I didn't get a, I didn't get a solid answer.

5 Q. Okay. Did he have any baggage with him that you saw?

6 A. No, I did not. He -- like I said, he was in the car actually
7 when I was walking my gear into the hangar, and then, when I came
8 back out, he was already in the helicopter. I didn't notice a bag
9 in the front seat or anything, but he typically would put stuff in
10 the back anyways.

11 Q. Okay. And was his -- was Amy just dropping him off? Is that
12 why she was there with him?

13 A. Yeah, she was driving her car, and he was in the passenger.

14 Q. Okay. Did Andy typically wear glasses or contacts that
15 you're aware of when flying?

16 A. Yes, he wore glasses.

17 Q. Glasses. Okay. Did you see him wearing them that day?

18 A. He takes them on and off as he kind of needs them, so he
19 always had -- he had them in his hand, I believe, when he was
20 getting out of -- or when he was in the car with Amy. But I
21 didn't notice them on or off when he took off.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Because I was a little, little further away.

24 Q. Sure. You mentioned, when you were talking to Clint Johnson,
25 that he seemed a bit distracted. Can you explain that a little

1 bit more? What did you, what did you notice?

2 A. So I, like I said, it was probably only about a 30, kind of
3 30-second conversation with him. He just seemed to be talking
4 kind of fast, a little flustered. He just seemed very, like, all
5 right, I need to, I need to get going, as he was hoping to get the
6 ship already an hour earlier. You know, and kind of with all of
7 the other events surrounding him in that time period, I would
8 imagine that he'd be a little flustered, but nothing super, super
9 out of the ordinary. Didn't really say anything to ring any bells
10 or anything like that.

11 Q. Okay. Are you aware of any medications he might have taken,
12 or did he seem like he might have been on anything that was
13 altering his cognitive ability or physical ability?

14 A. No, not from what I gathered.

15 Q. Okay. How long have you known him?

16 A. I started in September of 2019.

17 Q. Started where?

18 A. I was officially hired on October 1 of 2019.

19 Q. Okay. With Kodiak Helicopters? Or --

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Kodiak, yeah.

23 Q. Okay. So you were hired on as a pilot?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Were there any other pilots at the time?

1 A. No. Just himself. 135 certificate, so I was the pilot on
2 that, and he just flew it occasionally for personal use.

3 Q. So I just want to make sure that I'm clear. He owned the
4 helicopter as well as Kodiak Helicopters?

5 A. That's correct, yes.

6 Q. Okay. Do you know if he was instrument rated?

7 A. I don't. No, I don't.

8 Q. Okay. Had you flown with him before?

9 A. I had flown with him multiple times. In those cases, it was
10 always me flying.

11 Q. Okay. When you were flying with him, did he ever say
12 anything, give any guidance on how you were flying, offer any
13 advice or anything like that?

14 A. He did, yeah. Most of the times that I flew with him, it was
15 kind of taking him back and forth from Kodiak Island, and so he
16 would -- he had done that trip numerous, numerous times, and so he
17 would kind of give me tips and pointers at certain altitudes or
18 things to watch around the Barren Islands or give me general names
19 of landscape around or areas or reporting points, things like
20 that.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. How to get in and out of Kodiak Island.

23 Q. And you mentioned that you were never down -- when I had
24 asked if you knew where he was staying, you mentioned that you
25 were never down there at the same time. Did that -- does that

1 mean that you never stayed the night, overnight when he was down
2 there?

3 A. Yeah. Sorry, I'll clarify. We never really stayed the night
4 down there together. It was always typically down and back.

5 Q. Okay. So you would fly him down for the day, stay there, and
6 then fly back in the same day?

7 A. Correct. Yeah, we -- it was -- a couple of times, we had
8 like a job down there, and he needed to go down for work anyways,
9 so I'd drop him off at the airport. He would kind of go do his
10 work while I did whatever the job was, and then fly back in the
11 same afternoon.

12 Q. Okay. When you were flying this helicopter, did you ever
13 experience any emergencies or non-normal situations?

14 A. Not a one.

15 Q. Did Andy ever mention him flying the helicopter and
16 experiencing an emergency or non-normal?

17 A. No. He -- this was a pretty, pretty pristine aircraft, and
18 he kind of knew it.

19 Q. Okay. How many hours do you have total time and then also in
20 this helicopter?

21 A. Total time, I'm -- total, I'm at probably right around 1,100
22 right now. This helicopter alone, about -- I'd say about 130,
23 right around there.

24 Q. Okay. And is all your time in helicopters? Do you have any
25 fixed-wing experience?

1 A. All in helicopters.

2 Q. Okay. What did you do before working for Kodiak?

3 A. I was a tour pilot with Alpha Aviation there in Anchorage,
4 and then I also was a flight instructor and also a student at
5 Southern Utah University before.

6 Q. Okay. Do you know if he flew any other aircraft or did he
7 only fly this helicopter?

8 A. I know he has an extensive flight history in both fixed-wing
9 and rotorcraft, but as far as recent flying, I believe this is the
10 only helicopter he's been flying. I know he has -- I believe he
11 has friends that have airplanes and stuff like that, but they
12 would go out, but I don't know any, any extensive details on that.

13 Q. Okay. Did he ever fly -- I think you answered this, but I
14 just want to clarify. Did he ever fly passengers for -- as a part
15 of the Part 135 operation?

16 A. No, he did not, no. Because I'm the only person on that
17 certificate.

18 Q. Okay. Did you ever have any concerns flying the helicopter?

19 A. No, not a one. This is actually the nicest helicopter I've
20 ever flown in.

21 Q. Okay. Did he ever mention any concerns that he had about it?

22 A. No. There was the -- I would say the only slight issue with
23 it, which was well within limits per the maintenance manual, was
24 there -- according to Alpine Aviation, who does our maintenance,
25 we had them check out a leak on the right side of oil coming out

1 of a vent, and they said that it was from the N1 heel of the
2 engine had a leak, which is apparently pretty common with the
3 66 model of aircraft, and it had a limit of, I believe, a quart of
4 oil can leak out of there every four flight hours, and I wouldn't
5 say that it was even leaking about a teaspoon every two flight
6 hours. It was well within its limits. And at the 130 hours I've
7 flown that aircraft, I've never -- the oil level has never even
8 got down to a point where I needed to add any, so it wasn't losing
9 anything at any high rate.

10 Q. Okay. Was there any written agreement that you're aware of,
11 of how much notice he would give when he wanted to use the
12 helicopter?

13 A. I do not know.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I don't know. Sorry. No. Because we kind of -- he didn't
16 really have a -- he had the business certificate, didn't really
17 have an operation. He hired me. I spent that first winter of '19
18 and '20 kind of building up partners and kind of an idea what to
19 do, kind of starting to get a fluid motion of how everything was
20 going to operate. And then, of course, March 2020, COVID hit, and
21 it kind of just ruined everything for starting in a helicopter
22 business, and we didn't -- I didn't fly but maybe, maybe 15, 20
23 total hours the whole summer due to that. And then we spent this
24 last winter kind of finally getting everything back in shape
25 again, ready to roll for this year, and we'd just now finally

1 started kind of getting busy again. And we were currently working
2 on that type of arrangements and agreements, but nothing was set
3 in place yet.

4 Q. Okay. And besides yourself and Andy, did anyone else fly the
5 helicopter?

6 A. No. Other than just check airmen that would be in there with
7 me as instructors to do my 135 flight reviews.

8 Q. Okay. And you said typically the Part 135 operations you did
9 would be tours?

10 A. Yeah. Mostly tours, a few charters, and then a couple state
11 jobs working with like the Coast Guard guys down there in Kodiak,
12 maintaining towers, as well as surveying like for the rocket
13 launch down there on Kodiak Island.

14 Q. Okay. And you said it was Alpine Maintenance that did the
15 maintenance work?

16 A. Correct. Yeah. Alpine Aviation, I believe, is their --

17 Q. Oh, Alpine Aviation.

18 A. It's their maintenance department. They're part of Alpine
19 Air Alaska.

20 Q. Okay. And have they done the maintenance for the entire time
21 that you've been with the company?

22 A. They have, yes.

23 Q. Okay. Do you recall the last time that maintenance was
24 performed on the helicopter?

25 A. April, I want to say -- first week of April last year, we got

1 our annual and 100-hour done, and it was just about (audio drop)
2 back in.

3 Q. Okay. And the maintenance logbook, was that kept on the
4 helicopter, kept in the hangar?

5 A. I currently possess them in the hangar.

6 Q. Okay. And, in terms of Andy's logbook, do you -- pilot
7 logbook, do you know if he typically had that on him when he was
8 flying, or any records kept at the company?

9 A. I do not have any, any known whereabouts of what he kept with
10 all of those logbooks and stuff, no.

11 Q. Okay. Ever feel any pressure from Andy to take a flight that
12 maybe you didn't feel comfortable taking?

13 A. I mean, no. Not even a -- in a single incident, no. He was
14 very, very different than a lot of the other operators in that he
15 really did not push for me to do anything if I felt that it was
16 unsafe. He really never even stuck his nose in it. If I said it
17 was unsafe, he just kind of took my word for it and went with it.

18 Q. Okay. I know you mentioned that he hadn't flown the
19 helicopter since October, but prior to that, how often would you
20 say that he was flying the helicopter?

21 A. Just a few times a year.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. It sounded like he was -- he's a little -- he's a busy man.
24 He didn't really have as much time to do it as much as he had
25 liked.

1 Q. As someone who is familiar with this helicopter, any concerns
2 about him taking the helicopter given that it'd been several
3 months since he'd flown?

4 A. I'm sorry. You cut out on that first bit.

5 Q. Oh, I'm asking if there was -- if you had any concerns about
6 him taking the helicopter given that he hadn't flown since
7 October?

8 A. No, not in particular, especially since there wasn't any
9 crazy weather or anything going on, like he's flown a substantial
10 amount of years of his life -- I don't know the exact number -- so
11 he has a vast amount of experience.

12 Q. Okay. Did you know of any risk taking behaviors that he took
13 in the helicopter? (Indiscernible) --

14 A. Not that I know.

15 Q. Okay. Do you know when he bought the helicopter?

16 A. I believe he bought this one early on in 2019. I could be
17 wrong. It might be '18. He had already had it when I got hired
18 on.

19 Q. Okay. And does this helicopter just have single flight
20 controls?

21 A. It does have dual flight controls, but the dual flight
22 controls were removed, and they're in our hangar.

23 Q. Okay. And you fly from the left seat or the right seat?

24 A. The right seat.

25 Q. Right seat, okay. Is it an instrument capable aircraft?

1 A. It is fully capable on a training aspect, but it is not --
2 per the manufacturer, it is not IFR capable.

3 Q. Okay. Does this light (verbatim) have either a fuel filter
4 light or a fuel filter bypass light?

5 A. It does, yes.

6 Q. Okay. Have you ever seen that come on when you're flying?

7 A. No, never.

8 Q. Okay. Was the helicopter equipped with any emergency
9 equipment for a water landing?

10 A. We did have equipment for a water landing, I'm just not
11 entirely sure what he may or may not have brought with him.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And, as far as other equipment, just the general kind of gear
14 required per 135 in Alaska, and as well as a little bit -- we had
15 about a 25-pound bag back in the storage compartment of safety
16 equipment.

17 Q. Okay. You mentioned a strong tailwind. How did this
18 helicopter operate in windy conditions?

19 A. Being that it is light, it does get thrown around quite a bit
20 more than, you know, a bigger helicopter. As far as tail rotor
21 responsiveness, Robinson is by far the best tail rotor out of any
22 helicopter made. So, as far as kind of to be able to control a
23 whipping tailwind, it does have a good tail rotor, but him being
24 solo and by then burning quite a bit of fuel, helicopter was
25 probably pretty light, and it can kind of throw you around quite a

1 bit.

2 Q. Okay.

3 DR. WILSON: All right, Chris, I think I've exhausted most of
4 my questions at this time. How are you doing? Are you doing
5 okay?

6 MR. TIMPANO: Yeah, I'm doing just fine.

7 DR. WILSON: Okay. All right. Then I will pass it off to
8 Eric to see if he has any additional questions for you.

9 MR. TIMPANO: Okay.

10 DR. WILSON: Eric.

11 BY MR. SWENSON:

12 Q. Hi, Chris. I only have --

13 A. Hi, Eric.

14 Q. I have a quick question here. Do you have any idea of how
15 much weight may have been on board the helicopter during the
16 flight?

17 A. When I left it, depending on whatever he may or may not have
18 put in there, probably about 45, 50 pounds in the storage
19 compartment, and then nothing but maybe 5 pounds max under each
20 seat of just like random cleaning supplies, extra oil and stuff
21 like that.

22 Q. Okay. Only one other one. Did he ever wear a flight helmet
23 that you know of?

24 A. No, he does not have a flight helmet.

25 MR. SWENSON: Okay. Nothing further from me. Thank you.

1 DR. WILSON: All right. Thanks, Eric.

2 David.

3 MR. LONGAN: Yeah, I just, I have one question.

4 BY MR. LONGAN:

5 Q. Going back to the fueling of the aircraft. You said that you
6 flew to Merrill Field, and you landed at Crowley, and the truck
7 was filling up the self-serve tanks. So when they were finished
8 with that, did you fuel the aircraft from the self-service tanks
9 or did you fuel it from the truck?

10 A. The self-service tanks.

11 Q. Okay. And how long after it had been -- those tanks had been
12 filled did -- was it before you fueled up?

13 A. Probably about 10 to, 10 to 12 minutes.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I'm unsure if he was filling Avgas or Jet A though.

16 Q. Yeah. No, that's fine. I just -- you had mentioned that. I
17 thought, yeah, maybe we should kind of look at those.

18 MR. LONGAN: Okay. That's all I have.

19 DR. WILSON: Okay. Thanks.

20 BY DR. WILSON:

21 Q. Chris, that reminded me of a couple of questions. How much
22 fuel did you put in the tank? I know you said you topped it off,
23 but do you recall?

24 A. Yeah, 100 percent, so there -- he would have had about 72
25 gallons onboard.

1 Q. But, in terms of how much you put in there, was it close to
2 empty when you fueled it, or you only put in 10 gallons?

3 A. No, I put in -- it was about half full, so about 36. I asked
4 him if he -- because he was kind of on a time constraint, I asked
5 if he wanted to take it at half and fill up in Homer, which we
6 have done before, or if he wanted me to wait the 30 or so extra
7 minutes for the guy to finish filling the tanks and leave him with
8 a full tank, and he chose to have it topped off.

9 Q. Okay. And can you -- on this -- in this helicopter, could --
10 how much fuel would you estimate would be used from Anchorage down
11 to Kodiak?

12 A. Again, kind of just depending on the weather conditions, but
13 on a calm day, it would -- let's do some math here -- if you've
14 got two hours, it would probably be around 20, 20 gallons or so
15 left on a calm day.

16 Q. Okay. Did this helicopter have (indiscernible) unit or any
17 on board recording devices?

18 A. On board recording, no.

19 Q. Okay.

20 DR. WILSON: Eric, any additional questions that you've got?

21 MR. SWENSON: Not at this time. Thank you.

22 DR. WILSON: David?

23 MR. LONGAN: No additional questions. One follow-up thing
24 for you, we obtained a fuel receipt for the fueling that was 36.5
25 gallons.

1 DR. WILSON: Oh, okay. Perfect. Thank you.

2 MR. LONGAN: And that's all I have.

3 DR. WILSON: Okay.

4 Okay, Chris, anything that you would like to add that we
5 didn't ask you about? Anything you think might help us with the
6 investigation?

7 MR. TIMPANO: Think here for a minute. I don't think so, but
8 just make sure. Yeah, nothing that I can think of off the top of
9 my head right now, no.

10 DR. WILSON: Okay. Well, you have Eric's contact
11 information, so if you think of anything, you know, in the next
12 six months or so even, that's typically -- you know, we're working
13 on these investigations up to a year. If you think of anything,
14 definitely make sure that you pass that along to Eric, and we'll
15 get it included with our, with our other data that we've
16 collected.

17 MR. TIMPANO: Okay.

18 DR. WILSON: All right. So do you have any questions for us
19 before we let you get back to your day?

20 MR. TIMPANO: No, other than I just -- you know, is there
21 anything else needed of me other than, obviously, to provide any
22 information if it comes up here or -- I know, David, I got your
23 email request for the maintenance records, and I will have that to
24 you later today.

25 MR. LONGAN: Okay. That would be great. Thank you.

1 DR. WILSON: All right, great. Well, thank you, Chris. We
2 really do appreciate you taking the time to talk to us and go
3 through these details. I am sorry for the loss of Andy, and I
4 know that, like I said, this is a routine interview for us, but
5 it's not always routine for those that we're talking to, so we
6 really do appreciate you taking the time to give us this
7 information and help us with the investigation.

8 MR. TIMPANO: No problem at all.

9 (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: HELICOPTER CRASH SOUTH OF THE
 BARREN ISLANDS NEAR KODIAK,
 ALASKA, ON MARCH 2, 2021
 Interview of Chris Timpano

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC21LA020

PLACE: Via telephone

DATE:

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.



Katherine Motley
Transcriber