

Papillon Airways, Inc.  
Peach Springs, AZ  
February 10, 2018  
WPR18MA087

**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

ATTACHMENT 3

INTERVIEWS AND STATEMENTS

23 Pages

Mr. Les Tarkowski  
Mohave County SAR Coordinator  
May 2, 2018  
Via telephone 1415  
Present: Jason Fedok (NTSB)  
Representative: Declined

He worked full time with Mr. Joey McEuen as SAR coordinators for the Mohave County Sheriff's Office (MCSO). They both started out with the sheriff's office as patrol deputies. He had been serving in the role of SAR coordinator for 3.5 years and McEuen for about 1 year. Mohave County was the 5<sup>th</sup> largest county in the United States by total area. The department averaged 2 missions per week which generally consisted of lost hikers, rolled ATVs, etc. in remote regions. Assets available to the SAR coordinators for their mission included the dispatch of Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) air rescue helicopters (call sign Ranger) that have bases in Phoenix, Kingman, Flagstaff, and Tucson.<sup>1</sup> The county also had volunteer-based swift water and rope rescue teams of approximately 140 people that were divided into four different geographic regions. Additionally, they had utility task vehicles (UTVs) that could be used for searches but there were no horse or K9 units in the county.

On the day of the accident he received a phone call from MCSO dispatch about 1810 and was told that there was a helicopter accident near 1G4.<sup>2</sup> He assumed it was on the tarmac and asked if their assistance was requested and was told that it was not. A few minutes later was received a phone call from Mr. McEuen who told him that he had received information for some of his contacts that a helicopter was in the canyon near 1G4. Based on this information he made the decision to activate the rope rescue team for the Kingman region which consisted of 10 volunteers. He had them make their way to 1G4 as soon as possible and also responded himself.

When he arrived Mr. McEuen was already there with some of the rope team. Fire Chief Rudy Barboa had assumed the role of incident commander in one of the airport hangars. There were no communications from the canyon but some helicopters<sup>3</sup> were coming back up and providing information on what was needed. The helicopters were used to transport the members of the rope team back down into the canyon as quickly as possible, two people at a time. He recalled that Luis Vega was the first member to go down. The helicopters dropped the team members off at the Quartermaster landing zone and it was a 20-30 minute hike from there to the accident site. When the helicopters returned to the airport a "runner" was used to get information from the pilot and then return to the incident command post which had moved into a conference room. The team members were equipped with 5w or 8w radios but there were no repeaters in the canyon and it was not possible to communicate directly. Similarly, the incident command post did not have direct radio communication with the helicopter pilots.

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<sup>1</sup> He stated that DPS typically kept at least one helicopter available in both the northern and southern parts of the state.

<sup>2</sup> He was not certain of the source where MCSO received their information but speculated that it may have been from 911 calls, as they were often transferred there.

<sup>3</sup> He reported that two helicopters operated by Classic Air Medical and later two DPS helicopters responded to the scene.

He recalled that one victim (passenger #4) was hoisted by a Blackhawk helicopter out of Nellis AFB and taken directly to UMC. He believed the other 2 victims (including the pilot) were flown to UMC by air medical helicopters. One victim (passenger #3) was brought to the airport by a DPS Ranger helicopter and was transferred to another medical helicopter for the flight to UMC in Las Vegas. The rescuers in the canyon cleared a landing zone about 100-200 yards upriver from the crash site by moving rocks out of the way. That was where the Ranger and Classic helicopters landed to pick up the victims. The decision was made for the Ranger helicopter to transfer their patient to another helicopter at the airport in an effort to keep that asset near the accident site. It was felt that those pilots were more experienced with the terrain and conditions and were “bolder” and “could take more risks with landing.”

Because they had no communications with the pilots, the operational control of helicopter activities in the canyon was not managed from the incident command post. He described the situation as “extremely confusing” and that they received conflicting information about whether some victims had passed away and whether there were more victims. They initially received a wrong count of the number of stranded Papillion passengers and he did not realize until the next morning that there were Papillion passengers still in the canyon.

Overall he assessed the search and rescue as “effective.” EMS arrived on scene and stabilized the patients but there was not an immediate extraction plan. Communication was the biggest problem. The county’s emergency management team did have portable repeaters, but they did not arrive on scene until 0400. Hualapai Nation Police Department Detective Felker contacted a Marine SAR unit in Yuma who referred them to Nellis Air Force Base. He called the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center to request assets from Nellis and ended up speaking with a Major, Captain, and a Master Sergeant. He provided information to them for a long time and they kept asking the same questions about how many people were alive. He said the response was not as timely as he would have liked but believed that Nellis was likely not a “ready station” and that they may have had difficulty rounding up crews. He indicated that there was a lot of “red tape” but that they finally called back with two Blackhawks helicopters after being told the patients would not survive the night.

When they arrived, one Blackhawk hoisted a patient while the other declined to retrieve the fatally injured passengers. Neither helicopter would transport rescuers out of the canyon. DPS came the next day and retrieved the fatally injured victims and the stranded Papillion who stayed overnight. He believed that there were originally 18 stranded passengers in the canyon and he thought that 7 stayed overnight, sheltering inside helicopters with temperatures in the 30s.

Mr. Joey McEuen  
Mohave County SAR Coordinator  
May 2, 2018  
Via telephone 1515  
Present: Jason Fedok (NTSB)  
Representative: Declined

Mr. McEuen had been assigned to SAR for about 1.5 years. Prior to that he had been employed by MCSO as a detention officer and patrol officer. He received notification of the accident while at his home in Kingman, AZ through MCSO dispatch. He called Hualapai EMS and told them he was responding from Kingman. He found out that the accident was in the canyon and rope crews were needed.

He arrived at 1G4 and was given a briefing. Hualapai Fire/EMS personnel had already been taken to the accident site by Papillion helicopters. Helicopters were shuttling passengers up to the airport and taking emergency personnel back down into the canyon. He spent most of the time running between the helicopters and command post to relay information because communication was difficult. There was occasional broken cell service into the canyon.

After the injured were rescued, he stated it was not clear who remained in the canyon. Some of the Papillion passengers became “victims” when they had to spend the night inside helicopters in the canyon because they lost helicopter support due to pilot fatigue issues. The next day he responded into the canyon on the DPS Ranger helicopter to assist with the recovery of the fatally injured passengers.

Mr. Luis Vega  
Mohave County Sheriff's Office  
Volunteer Rope Team  
June 6, 2018  
Via telephone 1445  
Present: Jason Fedok (NTSB)  
Representative: Declined

In general, when 9-1-1 calls came into MCSO dispatch, the call was handled as either a SAR or a medical call. If it was a SAR call the MCSO coordinators would notify the appropriate volunteer teams. He had been a member of the MCSO volunteer rope team for 20 years. The team tried to have monthly training sessions but, at a minimum, trained quarterly. They utilized both equipment owned by the county and personally owned gear. There were four units in different locations throughout the state and they averaged two major rope missions per year. Example missions included lost and injured hikers and well as Alzheimer's patients who had walked away from their homes.

He received a notification about this accident about 1820 from Hualapai Nation dispatch. He had a long drive to 1G4 and arrived about 2020. He received a quick briefing from incident commander Barboa in the hangar. They knew other tourists were trapped down there and his main concern was that his team had the correct equipment. A Classic helicopter had just landed after ferrying trapped tourist from the canyon. He boarded the helicopter with HNPd officer Randy Hammontree and was dropped off at the Quartermaster landing zone near the picnic tables. It was dark by the time of their arrival. He and officer Hammontree then hiked about 20 minutes down into a ravine to reach the accident site. He was tasked with devising a plan to evacuate the injured occupants. Initially he was going to do a "rope up" to the plateau but then a Classic pilot named Owen Park stated over the radio (national SAR frequency) that he thought he could land in the ravine if the rope team could clear some of the larger rocks from a flat area "upwash" of the accident site, which they did. Mr. Vega described the location as a "flat gravel bar" and said he helped roll several large rocks off the edge of the bar. He believed Mr. Park had identified the site while he was attempting to drop off other members of the rope team closer to the accident site rather than at the picnic tables. (He was not able to land and eventually dropped them off at the picnic tables.)

Mr. Vega was an EMT but was not tasked with doing anything with the patients. The firefighters had "stations" set up for each of the victims and were tending to them. They packaged the pilot, who had a bad leg injury, on a backboard and had to walk him approximately 120 yards to the extraction location. The Classic helicopter was able to come down and land on its skids and they loaded the pilot into it. The second patient to be lifted was a female. She was loaded into a DPS Ranger helicopter. He believed the third patient was also a female. The fourth patient was a male who was hoisted out by a Blackhawk helicopter. He was the furthest down the canyon after some of the firefighters who were on scene made an aborted effort to attempt to get some of the passengers closer to the river where there might be more access for helicopter or boat rescue. That patient was becoming combative and going in and out of consciousness but made it about 60 yards toward the river and was eventually hoisted from that spot. He stated that a crewmember from the Blackhawk rappelled down and helped package the male into a basket prior to the hoist. After that

Blackhawk departed with a patient a second Blackhawk hovered so low he could not even stand up. A crew member rappelled out and asked if there were other victims. When he was told there were not, he stated they were going to depart. Mr. Vega asked if they could assist with removing the rope team or their equipment but was told that they could not – they were only there for the injured.

There were still 3 fatally injured occupants inside the helicopter but, without a need for rescue, he hiked back to the picnic tables. There was an DPS officer named Edgar there who was keeping people away from the pads as helicopters were landing. There were still three Papillion helicopters still on scene as well as several tourists. He had learned that tourists from the wedding party were the first ones to reach the accident site and provided aid to the passengers as best they could prior to the arrival of firefighter/paramedics from Hualapai. Eventually only 5 members of the rope team remained on scene with some of the tourists. The rope team members huddled around the picnic table while the stranded tourists sat in the helicopters overnight. Even though he had cold weather clothing he was chilled because he was wet with sweat from exertion. There was no reliable communication with anyone outside the canyon. One person's cell phone had intermittent connection and they were told that no one was going to retrieve them that evening and he said that was fine.

When asked if there were any delays that affected patient transport, he stated that there was “no time spent waiting for helicopters.” It took a while to package the patients on backboards and then there was a considerable walk over technical terrain to reach the location where helicopters were landing. The helicopters stayed “hot” after landing and while they were loading the patients. By the time they walked back to the other patients, packaged them and got back to the landing zone, another helicopter was either waiting or arrived shortly thereafter. He said the rescue was as timely as it could have been given the conditions they were facing on the ground. Had the helicopters not landed in the ravine the only other option would have been “steep angle raising” up to the plateau with a system of ropes, pulleys, and baskets. Ultimately, the helicopter option was much faster.

Ms. Stacy Lawson  
Flight Nurse  
Classic Air Medical (Classic 09 – Fort Mohave, AZ)  
July 3, 2018  
Via telephone 1445  
Present: Jason Fedok (NTSB)  
Representative: Declined

Ms. Lawson was employed at Classic Air's Fort Mohave, AZ base and the helicopter (Classic 09) was located at the Valley View Medical Center. The crew, consisting of pilot John-Ross Doyel, medic Kristin Speer and her, was placed on "static standby" for a tour helicopter crash in the Grand Canyon by their dispatch center in Woods Cross, Utah. They were notified that other air medical crews were on scene. They proceeded to the helicopter and were later launched. They responded to Grand Canyon West airport (1G4) and she recalled that the ATC controller was very busy when they arrived. They were given a location to land and she and Ms. Steer exited the helicopter to obtain information. The pilot kept the helicopter running. They were given a situation assessment by someone from the Hualapai Nation Police Department and told that there were supplies (blankets and water) that were ready for transport. Classic 02 (a helicopter from Kanab, UT) was already at the Quartermaster landing zone and Mr. Doyel had been in communication with that pilot, Mr. Owen Park. They loaded the supplies and flew into the canyon to Quartermaster. They landed and she noted there were numerous other helicopters present. She recalled 2 or 3 Papillion helicopters, Classic 02, and two other medical helicopters. They shut down the helicopter and met with a uniformed Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) officer named "Ed." He seemed like he was "in the know" and had assumed the role of incident commander at the landing site. She believed that there were already two medical helicopter crews who had hiked to the crash site so they decided to keep their crew together so they could eventually transport the most critical patient.

There were numerous Papillion tourists present. Most were dressed lightly in shorts and tank tops. Some were wearing no shirts because they had given them to the injured occupants after they had responded to the accident site. She gave them some of the blankets and water and the pilots made a joint decision that they should shuttle the uninjured tourists from the landing zone back to 1G4. She attempted to have them sign a release form via tablet or cell phone but could not get an adequate signal so they wrote their names, next of kin information, and phone numbers on a piece of paper. Mr. Doyel and Ms. Steer then began shuttling patients up to 1G4 in Classic 09 two at a time while she stayed at the landing zone with the other helicopter crews. On their return trips they brought back more food and drinks. On one return trip they brought members of a rope crew down.

It was dark and getting cold. There was limited radio communication (via DPS officer "Ed") with those in the ravine but she learned they were running out of IV fluids and medication. After speaking with the Classic Air Medical administrator on duty, Sherri took some of her supplies and medications down to the injured passengers in the ravine with the rope crew. A short time later, the pilots were discussing the "temperatures, winds, and confined spaces" and made a joint decision to attempt to evacuate the injured passengers from the ravine. Earlier in the evening (prior to her arrival) Mr. Park had brought Classic 02 to a low hover to an area near the accident site and

dropped off supplies and thought he could land there. Mr. Park told the rope crew members that he could likely land at that location if they could move some of the larger rocks.

Ranger took off and flew “overwatch” to observe where and how Mr. Park would approach and land in the ravine. Mr. Park took off, landed in the ravine and picked up the first (most critical) patient, who was the pilot. He flew the pilot back to the landing zone and he was transferred to Classic 09. Classic 09 made a quick stop at 1G4 for fuel and then transported the pilot to University Medical Center in Las Vegas.





# HUALAPAI NATION POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Voluntary Statement-Continuation

DR#: 180210-18

[redacted] of Royal Australian Airforce, 6 Squadron

At approx 1630h, a group of people started screaming at the landing zone of the tour. I turned & saw a billow of black smoke rising from a ravine. A group of us ran down to the scene. As we approached the tour pilots started yelling at us to stay away & return to the table/landing zone. Because the pilots were so far away, they couldn't see the crash nor the survivors. As we climbed over the next rise, I could see down into the ravine, where a lady was screaming. I called back to the pilots to tell them there were survivors several times. They continued to try & call us back. I looked further down into the ravine & could see 3 people. I think [redacted] & [redacted] was in her undies crying/screaming for her husband covered in blood. [redacted] was naked, burnt badly & sitting down calmly. [redacted] was clothed, bleeding & burnt on her forearms & lower legs. LAC [redacted] of the RAAF, brought over Medical packs one at a time. I administered first aid the best I could with the limited amount of bandages/anti-septic spray that was available. As more 1st Aid Supplies arrived, we were able to start supplying our clothing to the injured. The helicopter wreckage was approx 50 meters uphill. It was on fire & the tail was sticking up out of the ground mostly intact. Before it was dark we received word that boats & helicopters were at the bottom of the ravine & we would have to walk out if we were going to get rescued. With [redacted] & [redacted] who could barely walk, we carried them down approx 100m. A scout [redacted] went ahead, he noted 2 ft. drops that we would have to overcome. The escape route was abandoned & we made the injured as comfortable as we could over the next 3-4 hours. As time progressed the pain that [redacted] & [redacted] were in became increasingly worse... they were suffering horribly. A nurse on the scene made the call to evacuate all non-emergency personnel as it was dark & most of us were wearing ~~shorts~~ no shirts. Whilst administering first aid there was several loud bangs from the wreckage. Also as we 1st ran over there was also loud bangs from the wreckage.

I declare, under penalty of Sections 6.221 and 6.222 of the Hualapai Tribal Law and Order Code, that the above written statements are true and correct.

SIGNATURE: [redacted]

DATE: 10 Feb 18

WITNESS: OFC. B. Denke P-1805

DATE: 2/10/18



# HUALAPAI NATION POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Voluntary Statement-Continuation

DR#: ~~180~~ 180210-18

went to Grand Canyon & our helicopter had just landed. As we were landing I had seen another helicopter coming behind us but with the way it was flying I lost visual. A few seconds later I looked out window (back seat drivers side) & everyone was running. We got out of the helicopter & you could see black smoke from the helicopter burning. While we were standing could see a lady on the floor of the copter it crashed in & could here someone screaming intermittently. There were some explosions. There was a black preacher & two younger men who said they had seen it.

Some of the other pilots/passengers went down - and some came up wanting under a first aid kits, I am a veterinarian so I looked down in case I could help.

There was still a fire burning from the wreckage. The pilot was laying close to one of the walls of the copter they crashed in - he had bad burns on most of his body. There was nobody that was laying on another rock 30 feet away (I'm not great at judging distances) - another passenger who is a doctor said her legs were broke.

When more help came it was decide to help move the two ambulatory passengers down the cañon towards the river. I was one of the people that walked down with them. When we got to a place where there was a ~~small~~ drop off & we couldn't continue I went back to crash site with that info & what they said it would take to continue forward. After that I stayed by the pilot and helped get things from the medical bag.



I declare, under penalty of Sections 6.221 and 6.222 of the Hualapai Tribal Law and Order Code, that the above written statements are true and correct.

SIGNATURE

DATE:

2/10/16

WITNESS: OFC. Bryson Denke

DATE:



# HUALAPAI NATION POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Voluntary Statement-Continuation

DR#: \_\_\_\_\_

[REDACTED], 10 Feb 2018, [REDACTED]

I had just landed to the picnic area. As I was starting up the other helo's coming inbound, I noticed one slowing down over a dry creek bed. The helo <sup>made</sup> appeared to be hovering for a second, then made a total 360 then another 180 but not quite horizontal. A few seconds later the helo dropped vertically and disappeared behind the hills. At that time that I knew something was wrong, I started running to the crash site. I got up on a ridge our way down the hill to crash site. The helicopter On the way down, I heard at least 3 small explosions. Once I got a visual on the crash site, I saw a woman in her 20s, fragments of yellow, her husband's name [REDACTED]. The helo was severely burnt, and I saw my 15 left side. The tilt rotor had detached from the main frame. To my left, I saw the pilot with 2 open fractures to his left leg and arm. The body screaming was burnt so well and the people from London were already in shock. We treated the best we could with the first aid kit we had. A few first responders came in and took over. I waited for several hours until asked to leave.

I will deposit a V on my way home 12th, you may reach me at [REDACTED] until then.

I declare, under penalty of Sections 6.221 and 6.222 of the Hualapai Tribal Law and Order Code, that the above written statements are true and correct.

SIGNATURE: [REDACTED]

DATE: 10 Feb 2018

WITNESS: [REDACTED]

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



# HUALAPAI NATION POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Voluntary Statement-Continuation

DR#: 180210-18

10/2/18



Taking photo and heard commotion behind.

- on approach saw flames & smoke

- went down - 3 injured ~~on who~~ ~~I went down~~

- did not see plane ~~dropping~~ falling only post impact



I declare, under penalty of Sections 6.221 and 6.222 of the Hualapai Tribal Law and Order Code, that the above written statements are true and correct.

SIGNATURE: [Redacted]

DATE: 10-02-18

WITNESS: Off. Bryan Denke P-1805

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



# HUALAPAI NATION POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Voluntary Statement-Continuation

DR#: 180210-18

At the time of the crash I spoke to 3 people that  
saw the crash. There was 2 photographers and a preacher.  
The two photographers stated that they were in such shock  
they could not get any photos, but they saw the entire incident.  
The preacher also saw the entire incident. I had signal  
on my cell phone and the pastor asked if he could call  
his wife to let her know that he was ok.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I declare, under penalty of Sections 6.221 and 6.222 of the Hualapai Tribal Law and Order Code, that the above written statements are true and correct.

SIGNATURE: [REDACTED]

DATE: 2/10/18

WITNESS: OFC. B. Drake P-1805

DATE: 2/10/18



# HUALAPAI NATION POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Voluntary Statement-Continuation

DR#: 180210-18

[REDACTED]  
10 FEB 18

2140

Helicopter approached landing platform before ~~about~~ spinning 2 full rotations before disappearing visually beneath the cliff face, before crashing.

Ran towards the crash, tail of the helicopter was separated from main fuselage. Fuselage was on fire.

I declare, under penalty of Sections 6.221 and 6.222 of the Hualapai Tribal Law and Order Code, that the above written statements are true and correct.

SIGNATURE: [REDACTED]

DATE: 10 FEB 18

WITNESS: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

UNCLASSIFIED

INVESTIGATION-IN-CONFIDENCE

**Interview with [REDACTED] conducted by Wing Commander Ianto Smith at 0800 13 February 2018 at Residence Inn Marriott, Hughes Centre, Las Vegas.**

Had been at the landing zone (LZ) for about five minutes. Heard screams, turned around and saw people running. Saw black smoke from behind the ridge. Started running toward the site and was amongst the first to arrive. On way over heard 2-3 explosions. 7-800m, 10 minutes travel over the ridge.

Wreckage on fire, looked pretty destroyed, tail intact with paint still on it.

Some more bangs and pops, but nothing as loud as before. The wreckage was burning pretty bad and burned for the rest of the time first responders were there.

One of the female survivors said she couldn't get her seatbelt off. She just kept asking what happened.

It took 90 minutes to 2 hours for rescuers to arrive.

The weather at the time was clear. Gusts of wind. Felt the gusts in the helicopter on the way in, they were noticeable. In the canyon it got a bit hairy, not scared but 'whoa'.

The wind increased that night.

Photos of the LZ up to 1618. No helicopters in them.

INVESTIGATION-IN-CONFIDENCE

UNCLASSIFIED

## INVESTIGATION-IN-CONFIDENCE

Interview with [REDACTED] conducted by Wing Commander Ianto Smith at 1530 22 February 2018 at NAS Fallon. (Interview 2)

When [REDACTED] arrived there were two Papillion aircrew already at the scene. Doesn't think they helped any of the survivors out of the helicopter and thinks they had only just got there also. The Papillion aircrew told [REDACTED] to go away, but it was obvious they couldn't deal with the situation. [REDACTED] asked them if they knew first aid, didn't get an answer. One of the aircrew left the scene and that was the last [REDACTED] remembers seeing of him. [REDACTED]'s focus switched to the three survivors and has no idea what the Papillion staff did from this point.

[REDACTED] – she was out of the wreckage and hysterical. In bra and underwear, bleeding from forearms and from feet. [REDACTED] thinks she may have removed her clothes herself because of burning – but this is an assumption. Skin was red, mainly arms and lower limbs. Tried to calm her down, she was bleeding quite badly from the left forearm. Treated this first and then the right forearm with antiseptic spray and bandages. [REDACTED] was hysterical about partner; "Where is he?", "Why aren't you getting him out?"

[REDACTED] – says she had trouble getting seat belt off and out of helicopter. [REDACTED] assumes she got herself out. Part of her hair was burnt, giving her a 'buzz cut', can't recall which side of head. [REDACTED] had cuts to hands and ankles. [REDACTED] treated these with antiseptic spray and bandages.

[REDACTED] talked about home. She was quite upset but not hysterical. Annoyed that they were in the canyon for so long. When moved back up toward the crash site and separated from [REDACTED], she could hear [REDACTED] screaming and wanted to know what was going on [REDACTED] passed a message from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] – he was already sitting down. Said he couldn't see, had one contact lens hanging out of eye and burnt. He was naked with singed black hair balls on head. Fully burnt all over. Bleeding from the hands and forearms. Minor cuts, [REDACTED] doesn't know what caused the cuts. [REDACTED]'s skin was blistering.

[REDACTED] was eerily calm. Couldn't see, so [REDACTED] was asking to be told what was going on. Wanted to know what was going to happen. Started to experience more pain as time went by. Air Force members talked to him about warm things to help take mind off the cold. [REDACTED]'s said his mouth was really dry and kept asking for water. Said he really needed to do a [REDACTED] told him to hold on. Couldn't respond to [REDACTED] message once separated. [REDACTED] did crack a couple of jokes throughout, when first got painkillers he cracked a couple more.

[REDACTED] – [REDACTED] didn't see [REDACTED].

#### Medical process

[REDACTED] sent [REDACTED] for first aid kit. Seemed like one minute later he was back with one. Only contained one triangular bandage. Put water (from bottles) onto [REDACTED]'s hands. At some point a second first aid kit arrived that had some antiseptic sprays. [REDACTED] was doing first aid on his own. Needed more supplies, as more first aid kits arrived [REDACTED] removed triangle bandages and replaced them with proper

INVESTIGATION-IN-CONFIDENCE



## INVESTIGATION-IN-CONFIDENCE

bandages. [REDACTED] was not relieved as the first aider until EMTs arrived after dark. [REDACTED] only needed water, bandages and antiseptic spray as this was the limit of his skills. Before the spray arrived there were some antiseptic wipes in each first aid kit which [REDACTED] used to clean wounds.

There were three first aid kits [REDACTED] remembers. First one hardly had anything in it. One triangle bandage and some wipes. Second one had more bandages, wipes and some antiseptic spray. Third one was bigger and had enough bandages to use.

EMTs arrived with two boxes of medical supplies. Possibly 2 hours after the crash. [REDACTED] got word that the only way to get out was via the river. [REDACTED] couldn't really walk, needed [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] either side of him for support. [REDACTED] could walk herself. Couldn't get to river due to drop off. [REDACTED] asked for a stretcher. Stretcher arrived, possibly 8pm. Put [REDACTED] on the stretcher, covered her in a blanket and carried her back up toward the crash site. The thought going around was that [REDACTED] was possibly going to die and so EMT wanted to move [REDACTED] away. EMTs gave pain killers through an injection in the knee. Screams during the application, only seemed to give pain relief for about 15-20 minutes.

When they moved [REDACTED] down toward the river he seemed to get eyesight back. But as it got dark he couldn't see anymore. [REDACTED] used a flashlight in front of [REDACTED]'s eyes, but [REDACTED] said he couldn't see it. The Air Force members started to give [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] clothes. [REDACTED] was OK to put clothes on, but couldn't on [REDACTED] due to burns. [REDACTED] had a burnt bottom so he sat on [REDACTED]'s pants laid on the ground. EMTs arrived with thick blankets.

UNCLASSIFIED

INVESTIGATION-IN-CONFIDENCE

**Interview with [REDACTED] conducted by Wing Commander Ianto Smith at 1400L 12 February 2018 at Nellis AFB.**

Had been in the landing zone for five minutes, had back to the incident. Did not hear anything at all prior to screams from the victims. Turned around and saw black smoke and fire. The site was about 500m away. Made way toward the crash site and heard 5-7 popping sounds on the way. Started to see parts of the wreckage 30m away from the fuselage site. The aircraft tail boom was intact. The fuselage was destroyed by fire, could not even tell the orientation.

When applying first aid to female survivor, [REDACTED], she stated that she couldn't get her seat belt off and couldn't get out.

It took 45 minutes for assistance to arrive in the form of 2 x firefighters and 1 x EMT.

Weather at the time was clear with the wind strong and gusty.

INVESTIGATION-IN-CONFIDENCE

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

INVESTIGATION-IN-CONFIDENCE

**Interview with [REDACTED] conducted by Wing Commander Ianto Smith at 0920L 13 February 2018 at Residence Inn Marriott, Hughes Centre, Las Vegas.**

At approximately 1630 (Arizona time) saw incident helicopter coming in on approach. It was doing the same S manoeuvre from over the river to line up with the landing zone that their helicopter had just done. During the turn the helicopter started spinning, not sure which way, but did two full rotations before going out of view behind the ridgeline. Before the spin the helicopter was level and approaching the point it would start its descent. The first spin was level then it appeared the pilot lost control and it accelerated downward. Spin rate was constant. Couldn't hear any engine or other noise due to the helicopters running at the landing zone. At the time it went out of view it was approximately 3 degrees pitch down. Did hear a faint pop over the other noise which assumed was the impact.

The crash site was about 400m away, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] ran straight to the site. They would be there in 10-12 minutes. [REDACTED] waited at landing zone until saw survivors, grabbed a first aid kit and made way to crash site. Was at crash site about 20 minutes after the crash. Once there saw that the rotor was snapped off, the tail and fuselage were both pointing up hill. The fuselage was on fire, the tail was intact. There was a constant popping sound for about 30 minutes from the fire.

Spent the rest of the time ferrying supplies from LZ to crash site (water, lighting, IV).

Has photos from the LZ before the incident, none of the incident helicopter, last one taken at 1614.

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Interview with [REDACTED] conducted by Wing Commander Ianto Smith at 0845 13 February 2018 at Residence Inn Marriott, Hughes Centre, Las Vegas.

Was on the other side of the tourist viewing area. Heard shouts and yelling from the other side and started running. Saw black smoke which recognised as aircraft fire from the Growler accident two weeks prior. Grabbed a fire extinguisher from the four located in the centre of the tourist area. Dropped the fire extinguisher when saw how far it was and the terrain. Helicopter in the next ravine over, 6-700m away. Only had partial view of the fire itself, black smoke indicated it was intense.

Looked for the rest of own group. Saw [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] on way over to site. Could hear pops which associated with aircraft fire. Pappillon pilots were saying to go back to tables. Asked female pilot about first aid kits, grabbed one from the back of a helicopter and sprinted toward site. As they approached the crash site, another pilot told them to go back, responded that had a first aid kit, was told that he didn't care. Ignored direction, gave the first aid kit to [REDACTED] who instructed [REDACTED] to get water. Went back to LZ to get water.

On arrival back at the site, [REDACTED] was applying first aid to the three passengers together. Pilot was separated due to immobile with leg injury. Survivors didn't know what happened, just in shock and kept asking what happened. It took a long time for EMS to arrive, felt like an hour. The group was split with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] going toward the river. Gave clothes to victims to cover burns.

Wind direction at the LZ was variable. Wouldn't say strong but windy. Before the flight all pilots said it was going to be sporty because of the wind. On way to canyon, pilot noted turbulence in normal places.

Has photos of LZ (one with helicopter in it but not the incident helicopter at 1616 Arizona time, attached).

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**Interview with [REDACTED] conducted by Wing Commander Ianto Smith at 1500 22 February 2018 at NAS Fallon. (Interview 2)**

[REDACTED] – [REDACTED] had general conversation with [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] had no idea what happened. [REDACTED] was staring ahead in shock. [REDACTED] had burns to his whole body – clothes were burnt off, he was naked. Limbs looked OK with no sign of broken bones. Had problems with vision, was wearing contact lenses and one had fallen out.

[REDACTED] – She was aware her friend was still in the wreckage. [REDACTED] knew she had been in a crash. At first [REDACTED] was quiet in shock and wasn't talking. After about 20 minutes started talking and saying she was cold. Her lower arms were burnt, her ankles were burnt, but her limbs looked OK. [REDACTED] said she had discomfort in the midriff sitting. Soon after EMTs arrived they said she had broken ribs.

[REDACTED] was very mobile. [REDACTED] needed help from 2 people to walk, [REDACTED] just needed one person to help.

First aid kits came from the back of the helicopters. [REDACTED] used at least three. Two small ones and one larger one. They contained some bandages and Betadine swabs, but these were useless. There were some bandages that were used and [REDACTED] wanted antiseptic spray.

[REDACTED] carried down an esky (drink cooler) filled with water.

EMTs brought their own kits. When the first professional responders arrived, possibly firefighters, they wanted to administer painkillers but were told not to. Not sure who by but the idea was that they didn't want to do anything until the paramedics arrived. They also might not have even had the medication.

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Interview with [REDACTED] conducted by Wing Commander Ianto Smith at 0820 13 February 2018 at Residence Inn Marriott, Hughes Centre, Las Vegas.

Was on 1545 flight out of Boulder City. Pilot warned before departure it would be a bit windy. There were some pretty big gusts over the Lake Mead area, but approach to the Landing Zone (LZ) seemed pretty smooth.

Was on ground for 5-6 minutes prior to crash. Two other helicopters landed in the time between them and the incident helicopter. Was facing the other way and did not hear any noise. Noticed people at the landing zone running the other way and then saw black smoke. There was the LZ, a ravine, a ridge and then another ravine. The smoke was coming from the second ravine. Started running to the site with [REDACTED] and two civilian males (one ex-marine). 2-3 Pappillon pilots yelled at them to come back. Was scared and torn, but knew had to get to the site when heard screams. 2 pilots caught up with the group and a third was with them when they got to the site. The seven of them were the first on the scene.

On arrival saw three people with the helicopter off to the left. The tail section had separated and was facing the other way, perched on a rock. Couldn't tell which way the fuselage was facing, but it looked to be 180 degrees out. The fuselage was burning like a fuel fire, black smoke, very hot, big fireball. Tail wasn't burning. Small parts were strewn down the hill. Honey combed metal and red body sections of the aircraft. Couldn't tell if there was another impact area. Wreckage seemed to be centralised within a 10m radius.

[REDACTED], the pilot, didn't make it far from the wreckage.

EMS landed 40-45 later, then plus the 30 minutes to get to the site. Assisted EMS with drips and painkillers for [REDACTED]. Recollection is vague, but recalls a conversation with [REDACTED] along the lines of; tried to give it power to get out of it, but it was too late. [REDACTED] was with [REDACTED], trying to calm her down.

There were no communications with the LZ, so ran a message to LZ of a list of supplies to radio back with. At start of ferries it was for water and first aid kits. Smashed open locked first aid box (no one had combination for lock) at LZ to get access to two stretchers, one metal one and one backpack one. People started to bring down what they could. A female vet and female anaesthetist arrived. The anaesthetist was awesome, instructed people how to treat burns including washing off chemicals with water. Gave proper medical advice.

At some stage a decision was made to move [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to the river. They didn't send a scout and found they could only get ¾ of the way there before encountering a big drop.

Frustrated that the survivors wouldn't be airlifted. Quite a while before the Blackhawk plan came about. It seemed to be planning in isolation, Plan A until it didn't work and then switch to Plan B. thought could have had multiple parallel plans in effect.

Has photos from LZ, none of incident helicopter. Last photo at 1618 Arizona time, incident not even a minute after that.

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## INVESTIGATION-IN-CONFIDENCE

Interview with [REDACTED] conducted by Wing Commander Ianto Smith at 1600 22 February 2018 at NAS Fallon. (Interview 2)

[REDACTED] – Pilot. [REDACTED] was receiving first aid from the EMT by the time [REDACTED] saw him. [REDACTED] was behind some rocks from the other survivors. [REDACTED]'s left leg had already been braced. On [REDACTED]'s right foot he had only half a shoe as half had been burnt off, could see his toes. Scott didn't appear as burnt as the others. [REDACTED] wasn't talking to anyone about the accident. One other pilot asked him a question and he replied along the lines that he tried to apply power but it was too late. [REDACTED] seemed angry in general. When [REDACTED] told him he was doing well (for some encouragement) [REDACTED]'s response was 'how the [REDACTED] do you know.' [REDACTED] also gave some angry responses to the paramedic questions.

[REDACTED] – was inconsolable. Screaming in pain and wanted partner out of helicopter [REDACTED] was in shock, singed hair, lacerations and burns down most of her body. Clothes were off, skin hanging off and just in bra and underwear. [REDACTED] was moving around and screaming, [REDACTED] tried to calm her down.

[REDACTED] – calm and quiet. [REDACTED] was burnt from head to toe. All clothes had been burnt off and he was naked. [REDACTED] had no hair or eyebrows left. [REDACTED] wanted to cover him up with clothes. Medical trained first responder said [REDACTED]'s burns needed to be washed. [REDACTED]'s skin that wasn't burnt appeared yellow. There were concerns about chemical burning so washed off wounds.

[REDACTED] – was in pain. Scorched hair, some blood, but appeared her injuries were internal. [REDACTED] said she was in pain, but [REDACTED] didn't recall where. [REDACTED] was not as burnt as [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] doesn't know where the first aid kits came from. They were stocked for normal household injuries. There was a lack of bandages, maybe one or two per kit. There was nothing for burns, seemed like a lot of Stingoes and sprays. Thought there may have been a better first aid kit in the stretcher locker at the LZ, broke lock to get to it but it only had two stretchers. Larger first aid kit arrived, 1x2ft box.

There was only one basket to winch the survivors out. Needed more. The EMTs had IV and painkillers. Sufficient equipment and supplies to deal with it.

Don't know who's decision it was to send [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] down to the river. A scout or more solid plan would have helped prevent this from occurring. Seemed illogical to [REDACTED] to walk the survivors given their injuries. Response of the evacuation seemed slow. Appeared more focused on getting the EMTs to the scene rather than getting the survivors out. Plans seemed to be one after the other with no concurrent planning.

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Wind on the ground was very gusty, sustained, but gusts a lot stronger. Wind got stronger at night, surprised they were flown out at 2220-2230.

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