

K & S Helicopters, Inc. d/b/a Paradise Helicopters
Kalo, HI
June 8, 2022
ANC22FA041

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

WASHINGTON, D.C.

SURVIVAL FACTORS SPECIALIST'S FACTUAL REPORT

ATTACHMENT 1

Excerpt of Pilot Interview Transcript

Pages 20

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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BELL 407 HELICOPTER N402SH *

ACCIDENT NEAR KALEA, HAWAII *

Accident No.: ANC22FA041

ON JUNE 8, 2022 *

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Interview of: TIM HUNTER, Captain
Paradise Helicopters

Friday,
August 19, 2022

APPEARANCES:

AARON SAUER, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

AMANDA TAYLOR, Survival Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Tim Hunter:

By Mr. Sauer

5

By Ms. Taylor

16

I N T E R V I E W

(1628)

1
2
3 MR. SAUER: Well, we will go ahead and get started, Tim.
4 Again, thank you for taking the time to sit with myself, again,
5 I'm Aaron Sauer NTSB. I am considered the investigator in charge
6 of the accident and leading up a very large team of folks,
7 actually.

8 There's a number of individuals that are behind the scenes
9 that are not only in Hawaii but are working behind the scenes on a
10 lot of this information that we've discovered and gathered so far
11 with the help of (indiscernible) that at the end of this if you
12 don't mind, too, I'd be happy to answer any questions you have,
13 we'll give you that opportunity once Amanda kind of wraps up here.
14 But, again, glad you're okay, sitting there.

15 I know you had a -- some extensive injuries and recovery,
16 rehabilitation, but glad to see you sitting there on that couch.
17 So, it's (indiscernible) and it's the five passengers. I don't
18 know the situation where they're at with their recovery, maybe
19 Amanda knows that I don't have an update unfortunately on their
20 conditions. We have standing communication -- we have an office
21 called transportation disaster assistance, TDA for short. They're
22 a group out of our headquarters in Washington and they coordinate
23 and work with the families. Amanda has been doing a little of
24 that, too, just from the survivability factors of the portion of
25 the investigation that she handles. But unfortunately, I don't

1 know the status or an update on the passenger conditions. You may
2 know, but I don't know.

3 So, we've -- from the start of being notified of the accident
4 the NTSB we go through a number of different items that we
5 request. Paradise Helicopters is considered a party to our
6 investigation. Between Cal and Lauren and Kerry and Al and Kalei,
7 I know you were doing some things behind the scenes, Matt -- just
8 a number of your Paradise team. Obviously with the situation they
9 were more than exceptional in tracking down information and
10 gathering information that we were throwing numerous requests at
11 them for. So, we appreciate the efforts on behalf of paradise, in
12 how that -- the accident has impacted their operations and then
13 also coordinating all of our requests for the investigations, so
14 Cleo, we appreciate that too, please pass that on to your folks as
15 well.

16 Tim, one of the things that you completed I believe through
17 maybe your initial legal counsel was our NTSB accident form.

18 MR. HUNTER: Yes, sir.

19 INTERVIEW OF TIM HUNTER

20 BY MR. SAUER:

21 Q. So, a lot of the information, you know, background
22 information, your background and things of that nature, ratings,
23 all of that, I really don't need to get into that with you on
24 this, you know, type of interview. I've got a lot of the
25 information already. I guess a little bit about your background

1 as far as air-tour ops and Hawaii, operating in the islands out
2 there, I mean just give a little summary of your experience in
3 air-tours and specifically I guess the 407 as well.

4 A. So, starting off with flying Hawaii, my first job was
5 probably about eight years ago, I believe, with Jurassic
6 Helicopters. It was a new company that worked on Maui, we were
7 flying a part 91 operation and it was an A-star, one of the
8 (indiscernible) and I worked out of Kauai there and then I was
9 flying off of the roof of the Hyatt over on the Hyatt on the west
10 side and just doing (indiscernible) kind of tours and back to the
11 airport for fuel. That was my first doing tours in Hawaii.
12 Shortly after that I got picked up by Sunshine Helicopters. Still
13 flying the A-star and the EC130, and I probably did I'd say, I'd
14 have to look, three or four thousand hours of flight time and with
15 a lot of it here on the big island. I know for a fact at least
16 bout 2500 hours here on the big island. Maybe, you know, 1500 on
17 Maui, you know, probably just under 1,000 or so on Kauai, and
18 Moloka'i, and Lanai at the same time. So, that was all basically
19 an airbus of (indiscernible) helicopters.

20 I got some time -- my first flights in a long range were in
21 flight school. I got a, you know -- I'm sorry, a jet ranger. I
22 got about ten hours in my flight school in my commercial training.
23 After that about the first (indiscernible) was going to be an L4.
24 I got a couple hundred hours flying for a ranch out in Montana.

25 And then I want to say May of 2019 I started up with a

1 company in California and it was my first time in a 407. It was a
2 utility company that I worked there for about two years just prior
3 to coming to Paradise and maybe I'd have to get, you know, roughly
4 1,500 to 1,600 hours, you know, (indiscernible) in the past two
5 years and another couple hundred hours in a couple different long
6 ranges that they have. That was my most recent job just prior
7 coming to Paradise was in California working all over California
8 doing utility work.

9 Q. Great, and you came to Paradise just shortly before the
10 accident happened; is that correct?

11 A. Yes, sir. May 16th, I started with Paradise. My last day
12 with Sacramento -- the company out in California was May 12th.

13 Q. Okay. All right. As far as then -- I'm sure you went some
14 in-doc stuff with Paradise obviously and their operations and
15 standard things -- items there. Why don't we just go right into
16 the day of the accident from what you can best recall. I don't
17 know where you're at memory wise with everything. But please be
18 as detailed as you can. You know, maybe starting from waking up,
19 if you recall when you woke up that day and we'll kind of just go
20 from that point forward to.

21 A. Okay. You know, I'll give you the best that I can recall
22 that day. You know, I had an ops flight you know, on the
23 schedule, and also three tours on that schedule and I believe I
24 got up about quarter to 6:00 a.m. that morning. You know, kind of
25 my normal, you know, some coffee and a little bit of breakfast and

1 that and came into work, knew I had an ops flight so I came in
2 earlier so I could spend a lot more time walking around the
3 machine.

4 They had just swapped out an engine on that machine. So, I'm
5 like, hey man, met with the mechanics, and you know, just give it
6 an extra thorough, you know, complete pre-flight walkaround and
7 actually walked around it again a few times just to double check
8 and look at everything. I was okay on it. You know, signed off,
9 well, looked -- obviously I (indiscernible) did all that. I went
10 through all my ops, I went through the weather. I made sure
11 everything was up to date on it in the maintenance log. And you
12 know, went out, signed my book after it was done. Let ops here
13 know that I was going to go on my ops flight and the mechanic went
14 with me.

15 We flew for approximately about 20 minutes, everything was
16 normal. We came back in and did probably another extremely well
17 pre-flight, just, you know, after flight post-flight looking over
18 everything to make sure everything was okay. We did a power check
19 while we were up in the air also that came back successful. At
20 that point there, you know, I started my first of the other three
21 tours.

22 The first two tours were both over an hour and a half long.
23 I don't recall exactly how long, but they were, you know, an hour
24 and 40 minutes or two hours long. Not one problem, and after the
25 first tour flight I did get (indiscernible) I did open up all the

1 calls on the machine again and kind of just gave it a good once
2 over again after the first tour. After the second one, I had a
3 little bit a break and then I talked with Matt, our chief pilot,
4 because it my first time doing what they call a sunset tour, so it
5 gets a little tricky coming around the (indiscernible) side. So,
6 we elected to kind of do it the reverse way around so I didn't
7 have to worry about coming through a little bit of clouds or
8 weather that can come around on the south side of the island.

9 Everything was good, you know, I talked to the passengers
10 that were onboard. You know, every time I do a flight I talk to
11 my passengers, you know, I go over a quick safety briefing.
12 (Indiscernible) here gives a, you know, a complete briefing but I
13 just make sure that we show pictures of a helicopter. How to get
14 in and how to get out, just to, you know, same thing we do on
15 every flight, and you know, got clearance and took off to the
16 south.

17 Everything was nice and honky dory the first, ten to 15
18 minutes. Flying we were not too far from the south point and
19 pretty much straight level flight from what I recall. You know,
20 about 1300 feet AGL (ph.) probably 120 to 130 knots. Abdominal
21 power settings I believe it was about 70 to 75 percent torque if I
22 remember on there. I don't remember the MTT (ph.) but it was
23 probably like 670, 660ish.

24 Those are just, I'm going off what it typically is at those
25 settings and that -- and then like I said I'm talking and just

1 this -- I heard this -- I felt and heard like a whoosh, and not
2 like a loud woosh, not a pressure change, but -- and at the same
3 time I got pushed pretty far forward into the machine and then you
4 know, I realized that we were yawing really hard to the right
5 uncommanded. I looked inside. I did not have any indication on
6 my panel, there was no horn, there was no nothing in my headset.
7 No light on the panel.

8 So, I stopped looking inside and I start looking outside and
9 trying to get kind of a reference of where I was at that point. I
10 know that I could see blue, I could see the ground, and I knew
11 that I was spinning.

12 So, I made two mayday calls I believe I said, you know,
13 shocker 23 (ph.) I'm about six and a half miles from here, you
14 know, two mayday calls to that extent. And then I'm telling my
15 passengers for a hard landing. And the next things I remember one
16 of the passengers that was in the back telling me he had to get me
17 out of the helicopter. I asked if everybody else was out, and he
18 told me everybody else was out, and I was pretty excited about
19 everything. I was pretty, you know, with everybody else, and he's
20 like yeah, and I'm like is there a fire anywhere? And he was
21 like, no we got the fire extinguisher. We got the first aid kit.
22 And he's like we got to get you out.

23 And I remember looking, I was kind of up in the air a
24 little bit, holding by my seatbelt, and looking at my arm and my
25 arm was bent pretty bad. I could tell it was broken and I was

1 like I don't think I can get out on my own, and the passenger. I
2 don't remember his name, but he left and he came back and he made
3 a tourniquet out of one of the blade tie-downs, and tied my arm up
4 and then he helped me. He prevented me from hitting the rock, he
5 let me land on his back when he unhooked me, and then he helped me
6 get away from the machine and then, you know, I remember sitting
7 there for a little bit and then I remember the paramedics coming
8 and they had to put me on the stretcher and it, you know, in and
9 out. You know, I remember little bits of that, about getting
10 (indiscernible) the machine and then the rescue helicopter going
11 to Kona. I remember being in Kona off and on and then I remember
12 the flight to Hawaii.

13 I remembered everything I told you right up until the
14 crash and that's exactly, you know, I remember that in the
15 hospital in Kona, you know, hours after the accident. I don't
16 remember anything more to this day. It's still it's just, right
17 to that point, that's all that I know. In my head, as I was
18 making the may-day calls, the only thing that I recall is just
19 remember in my head saying, straight and level Tim, straight and
20 level. That's all I remember my thoughts where, get it straight
21 and level. I was fighting to get things straight and level and
22 trying to figure out what was going on. I had no idea what had
23 actually happened. I, you know, it happened so fast.

24 Q. Let's -- that's quite a bit of information you can recall,
25 Tim. So, I mean that's -- when you -- you said you were just

1 cruising along there at 1,300 about 120, 130 knots just talking,
2 probably doing your normal tour talk if you will with -- you felt
3 or heard a woosh, and at that point you said you kind of pushed it
4 to -- you pushed -- you felt like you were pushed forward I guess
5 would be a way of saying it. And then the aircraft started to
6 yaw?

7 A. It was already starting to yaw.

8 Q. Already yawing.

9 A. That's what was pushing me forward I believe was the -- I
10 can't tell you why. It's just -- I went forward --

11 Q. Sure.

12 A. And at the same time, I could tell that, I don't know if we
13 were descending or climbing, I just know at that time I was
14 spinning to the right and it pushed me forward.

15 Q. Okay. I couldn't recall if you said you're yawing or
16 spinning left or right. And noted nothing on the panel, looking
17 outside to reference yourself and it just, like you said, keep her
18 straight and level, continued to spin it, you recall spinning all
19 the way to the ground then?

20 A. I do not. I do not. When I was making the mayday calls, I
21 know it -- the controls were very, very, very hard to control. It
22 wasn't as difficult as the hydraulics were out, but they were very
23 hard, the collective and the cyclic and the pedals did nothing.
24 You know, I mean, I -- now I kind of understand why, but I do
25 remember that I, you know, that I had that, that I couldn't get

1 control of it with anything that I had to the -- you know, at that
2 point. You know, I was trying to figure out what had happened.

3 Q. All right. That's, and again, a lot of this is very similar
4 to what you, Tim indicated to your narrative to the
5 (indiscernible) that you submitted to us and I appreciate that. I
6 just want to -- I do have a couple questions on behalf of our
7 meteorologist. The NTSB as you know, is unfortunately done a few
8 investigations with air-tour accidents over the years and some
9 involving encounters with unexpected weather, things of that
10 nature. As far as -- can you just talk us through what you do
11 weather-wise for briefings you receive, when you prepare yourself
12 for the day or the flight, or what do you access? How do you
13 access it? Just talk me through a little bit of your weather
14 approach to your planning.

15 A. So, typically we go on to the (indiscernible) that come on
16 and get, you know, and pull up the weather briefing and get a
17 briefing for that day for that group for the areas that I'm going
18 to fly. I had gotten another one of those after doing my
19 (indiscernible) talked about, just weather-wise coming around it
20 was my first doing a sunset tour and you know, it's just -- so we
21 typically do that in the morning, and you before each flight we
22 get, you know, weather reports on, through, you know, DUATS or
23 through PIREPs or you know, just talking to the other pilots and
24 also myself, you know, if it's somewhere I've just been just
25 recently.

1 Q. Okay. Is that equipment there is that there in the main
2 office area where you --

3 A. My laptop, yes sir, my laptop's in the pilot room. You know,
4 I also have my phone so I can also pull up the weather briefings
5 on my phone, or also, you know, other, you know, I use ForeFlight
6 also, but typically we get a briefer is what we get.

7 Q. Okay, and you do use ForeFlight, that was another question I
8 had is --

9 A. I use For -- I personally use ForeFlight also as an aid on
10 to, on top of, you know, getting a briefing.

11 Q. Okay. Do you remember if he used ForeFlight that particular
12 day or not?

13 A. For the weather, yes, I do.

14 Q. Okay. How about --

15 A. Sorry, you kind of stopped there. I answered yes so, I said
16 I used, ForeFlight before but I didn't hear what you said after
17 that.

18 Q. No, I was just starting with another comment. Are you
19 familiar with the FAA weather cams?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Do you use those as part of your check?

22 A. I can use those also. We have a lot of cams here on the big
23 island that we could use at, you know, I use those also, you know,
24 we have to have quite a set of -- there's an aviation page here
25 that they've got quite a few, I think the cameras that you can get

1 on the big island you can use as aids, so I do have that, so I can
2 kind of see what I'm expected to go into at that time.

3 Q. Okay. Okay, that covers what my weather investigator was
4 kind of looking for. ForeFlight, we did -- Tim, typically in an
5 accident with a lot of pilots now a days using ForeFlight and
6 having that the subscription to that service, we work with
7 ForeFlight and try to access archived data. Some of it's
8 archived, some of it's not and I believe I may come back to you.
9 I don't know if weather -- not that we have a weather issue in
10 this accident at all. But, for their past research and work
11 they've done he may -- if it would be -- if you would grant us
12 permission and maybe provide us access to your ForeFlight account
13 if he so chooses, and that's something I could follow-up with you
14 on. I'll let him know what you shared with our -- with this --

15 A. I'll have to ask about that. I share a ForeFlight
16 subscription with my girlfriend who's in flight school. So, it's
17 not my subscription.

18 Q. Fair enough.

19 A. I have it on my phone. She has a google phone, so she
20 doesn't use our (indiscernible) she uses our iPad, but I use it on
21 my phone.

22 Q. Okay, okay, and I don't think you'll have to go that route
23 with it. But I know we received some of the information from
24 ForeFlight and it was pretty limited and unless we get access into
25 the users account where we can get a little bit more archived

1 data. But I'll let him know what you were able to recall and
2 share and I think we'll be in good shape there.

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 MR. SAUER: So, Amanda, I don't have anything else for Tim as
5 far as the flight itself and a little bit of his background on
6 flying air tours and 407s, I'll turn it over to you.

7 BY MS. TAYLOR:

8 Q. Sounds good. You actually answered a good chunk of what I
9 was already going to ask so I appreciate that. So, I just have
10 two that are sticking out to me right now. So, typically, how do
11 you all load passengers? When you take them out to the aircraft
12 and everything.

13 A. So, the ground crew and the pilot, myself, you know at this
14 point we all go out together. The machine is not running. They
15 have a walkway that they, you know, walk on. IT's just a painted
16 walkway I should say, and we walk them out to the helicopter and
17 at that point, you know, we haven't been a group, the ground crew
18 will usually go from the manifest and the weight and balance, you
19 know, and then start boarding the passengers and that point,
20 getting them out and you know, there was life jackets that they've
21 already got on and seatbelts and headsets. You know, I kind of
22 watch maybe the first two or three passengers get in, then I
23 start, I walk around the machine one more time and then I come
24 around to the pilot's side and then I start getting in, getting
25 buckled in and start doing things and so they're not in a hot

1 machine for too long.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. That's typical boarding. Mostly I would say 80 to 90 percent
4 is the ground crew loading them. You know, I watch a little bit
5 and then I get in, and before, you know, before I start the ground
6 crew gives me an okay to start, that all the passengers are on
7 board and they're clear, you know, and that the area is clear
8 around (indiscernible) for boarding it's generally done by the
9 ground crew.

10 Q. Okay, and that's who does the final check on like all the
11 restraints and everything? Make sure people are wearing stuff
12 correctly?

13 A. Well, before I take off, I make sure I have a radio check and
14 ask everybody, hey is your seatbelt on, is it tight? Is it
15 secure? Is it comfortable? And you know, does -- I ask is your
16 door shut. You know? I mean they might know if it's latched all
17 the way but at least they tell me their door is shut. So, the
18 final one is me asking them, you know, are you in, and that, so I
19 take it that the ground crew is, you know, properly put them in.
20 They're okay with telling me they're okay, they're (indiscernible)
21 in and you know, and sometimes I'll be like hey, we can see some
22 light through the door and I'm like, you know, I might ask my
23 ground crew to look, and the door is shut, it's just the normal
24 little gap that you might have. So, I always ask to make sure
25 people are comfortable. That's my personal, you know, step that I

1 do.

2 Q. Okay, and then what injuries do you have? I know it's
3 extensive, but.

4 A. Well, I broke 18 bones. So, I have a spiral fracture of my
5 right humerus, the right arm. I have a broken sacrum. I have 13
6 broken ribs and two -- my L2 and my L3 were fractured and then the
7 disc below it is herniated. And then multiple cuts and
8 lacerations and you know, some stitches and a black eye and some
9 other things, lacerations and that all around. The majority of it
10 was the broken bones.

11 Q. Sorry just making some notes. Okay, and I think I've got all
12 your information. If for some reason, we need to pull the medical
13 records -- but based on that -- sometimes we have to pull the
14 records if we we're worried about how a restraint system acted but
15 given the impact conditions, I don't anticipate needing to do
16 that. I think that the information you just gave me is probably
17 going to be plenty. So, you're looking pretty good for 18 broken
18 bones might I just say. Those are pretty wicked.

19 A. Thank you, thank you. Yeah, the ribs and the back it's been
20 tough, but I've had really good care, both hospitals, the Queens
21 Hospital the rehab and I've gone through physical therapy,
22 occupational therapy right now, they're building my back and my
23 tolerance to walking and sitting right now and just dealing with
24 all the aches and pains with what I sustained.

25 Q. Are you anticipating flying again?

1 A. I sure am.

2 Q. Good deal, well I should --

3 A. With Paradise, I want to add. With Paradise.

4 Q. I flew with them, I hopped in with Matt and hung out with
5 your helicopter for about eight and a half hours one day, so.

6 A. Yeah, you know, I've seen some pictures of the area and stuff
7 and everybody -- and the others guys that have been out there like
8 Matt, that are just like, you still don't -- to see it from a big
9 picture it's just very fortunate that, you know, that we didn't
10 hit hard, that we didn't -- you know, nothing caught fire and that
11 there was a place there that we didn't keep rolling or something
12 like that. Or whatever happened on the ground. But whatever it
13 is a lot of miracles lined up that day.

14 Q. Yes. The fact that there was a relatively nice flat spot
15 within walking distance I think just to get from where the
16 aircraft was to the tail boom took 30 minutes and it wasn't that
17 far of a walk, but just because of the terrain, having it just --
18 you did a really good job of describing everything that you
19 remember up to it. So, I think I don't actually have any more
20 questions. Do you know if he had any issues getting your seatbelt
21 unbuckled when he was getting you out of the aircraft that you can
22 remember?

23 A. I do not. He -- from what I recall, he undid it, and then
24 like I said I probably fell about ten inches or, I don't know, not
25 that far, onto him, he put himself in between the rocks for me.

1 That fellow was -- can't believe the kindness that he gave me and
2 that he had been through and his sister was there, you know,
3 injured and he put himself in between those sharp rocks so when I
4 -- when he undid me that that's how it happened.

5 Q. I appreciate that you answered, very detailed for -- given --
6 do you have any idea if you could guesstimate how long your gap in
7 memory is?

8 A. I don't know.

9 Q. Fair enough.

10 A. I remember pieces, you know, I don't know what it was from
11 in-flight to when he was helping me out. I don't, you know,
12 because I was -- there was just so much going on I don't honestly
13 know.

14 Q. Fair enough. All right. Mr. Sauer, that's all I've got.
15 You did a really good job of describing everything, so.

16 A. Okay.

17 MR. SAUER: You know, after your questions there Amanda it
18 didn't generate anything more for me on my end. I guess what I'd
19 like to do, Tim, is like I said at the start here is offer up an
20 opportunity for you to ask us any questions on anything that, you
21 know, I hope I can answer just about everything you ask. But if
22 -- you know, shoot away if you will and I'll give you an update of
23 where we're at.