

**Factual Report – Attachment 13**  
**Previous Flight Witness Statements**

**OPERATIONAL FACTORS**

WPR19MA177

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### 1.0 Witness: Jonathan House

**From:** Jonathan House [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 5, 2019 2:40 PM  
**To:** Lawrence David [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Simpson Elliott [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: NTSB Accident Investigation (WPR19MA177) - Mokuleia, Hawaii King Air Parachute Flight Accident

Hi David,

Yes, I'm happy to answer questions related to the accident in Oahu. I seem to remember that I had spoken to you and your team directly a few days after the incident, so if you happen to see a disagreement between what I said then and my responses here, I'd put more weight on the earlier discussion. If that wasn't you, I can check back in my text messages from that time to see who I had spoken to.

My replies are below, in **blue**:

Questions:

1. Did you receive a thorough drop zone briefing about the operation before you boarded the airplane? Please describe.

Yes, there was a drop zone briefing conducted with my group when we arrived at the drop zone. Having conducted many DZ briefings for new experienced jumpers, I would describe the briefing as adequate. Note - part of the detail of the briefing was filled in by one of our party, who had experience jumping at that airport.

2. Did you receive a safety briefing prior to boarding the airplane, and did it include a briefing on the use of the seat belts? Please describe.

No, there was not a specific safety briefing. Other than the one tandem passenger with our group we have all jumped out of that model of aircraft multiple times and as a result did not require a detailed briefing. I assume that the tandem passenger received a safety briefing from her TI, but I did not directly observe that.

3. Did the pilot provide any briefing after boarding the airplane? Please describe.

No, and it would have been uncommon if that would have happened. Typically there is no general intercom on those planes, and our own safety gear (helmets) would have made it difficult to hear anything coming from the pilot. It is common knowledge in the skydiving community that skydivers are responsible for understanding the aircraft they are jumping from and any safety procedures associated with that aircraft.

4. Do you recall if all the passengers were wearing their seat belts?

I assume so. As experienced jumpers we are all very familiar with safety procedures, including the use of seat belts. We all know that seat belt use is mandatory for takeoff and up to at least a certain altitude above the ground. That altitude can vary based on which drop zone you are jumping at, so we would typically look for posted instructions to that effect in the plane. At this time I don't recall if there was a posted altitude in that aircraft. As I have a "Coach" rating with the USPA I have developed a habit of confirming that other jumpers near me are wearing their restraints for takeoff and then removing them at the appropriate altitude.

5. Do you recall how the seat belts were attached to the airplane? Were multiple seat belts attached to the same anchor point on the airplane?

I honestly do not recall the details. Typically in jump planes the seats are simple benches, and the seat belts are attached directly to the floor. If the seat belts had been attached differently, I would have noted that detail. I don't recall if there was more than one seat belt attached to the same anchor point.

6. Do you recall anything unusual about the airplane, OPC personnel, or the pilot? Please describe.

Nothing out of the ordinary in advance of our jump. Keep in mind that the plane was only in our vicinity at boarding time, so we did not have much opportunity for casual observation. Nothing unusual about OPC personnel. I did not have any direct observation of the pilot - I was in one of the rear-most seats on the plane, so there wasn't much opportunity for observation.

7. Please describe your observations of the other jumpers on the airplane (i.e. were they tandems, solos, how did they appear, etc.)

There were three jumpers on the plane that I had met for the first time right around the time we boarded the plane. Two solo jumpers and the TI that jumped with the passenger from our group. For this group I had a chance to observe the two solo jumpers, who seemed to be alert, and focused on their jump plan for their individual jumps. They both practiced their safety procedures as we are trained to do, so I assumed that they were competent and not impaired in any way. For the rest of the solo jumpers, they were all part of my group and I have deep familiarity with their training and attitude. All were in good spirits, and not impaired in any way.

8. Please describe the takeoff (normal, aggressive, high pitch or bank, etc.), flight to altitude, and jump experience.

I had described this in some detail in my interview a few days after the accident - so I would defer to that record if there's a difference between what I'm saying here and what I said then. I did note that the takeoff was not typical for the King Air planes that I had previously jumped on - the takeoff seemed more aggressive than usual (faster and stayed in ground effect longer) and when we reached somewhere around 200 feet or so there was an abrupt leveling off before the plane turned left and continued climbing out. At the time I attributed it to the fact that the SOP was to quickly turn left so that the plane didn't intersect the skydiver landing area at the end of the runway, but my recollection was that the leveling out and the bank were more aggressive (or possibly under controlled) than they needed to be.

9. Did you have any concerns about the operation? (if so, what were they, and did you voice those concerns to OPC and what was their response?)

I have not spoken to anyone at OPC since the accident. I have plenty of concerns now after witnessing the event, and subsequent information I've gathered, but as I'm not even sure if they are still in business at this time I didn't see anything useful to share given the fact that they were already suffering due to the loss of their friends and their business operation.

10. Any other observations you would like to share?

As I said in my interview, I was an eye witness to the crash and the 3-5 seconds of flight prior to the crash. I'm happy to go over my observations at that time if necessary, but I would point back to my original comments as more accurate than what I would relate now due to time passing and

the mind's tendency to change what you think you've observed around a traumatic event. I believe that you also have some video footage from one of my party regarding the aircraft itself, taken from his GoPro as he was exiting the plane.

The last observation I would share is formed from conversations with friends who have experience piloting King Airs for skydiving operations. They described a condition called an "accelerated stall" to me. I am not a pilot, but I do have an above average understanding of concepts like angle of attack, stall speed, etc. Based on their description of how this condition could manifest on a King Air, I am under the assumption at this time that this was the likely cause of the accident. What I observed over the last few seconds of flight before the accident seemed very consistent with an uncontrollable left bank caused by an accelerated stall.

## 2.0 Witness: Stephen Hatzistefanidis

**From:** Stephen [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 5, 2019 5:47 PM  
**To:** Lawrence David [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] Simpson Elliott [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: NTSB Accident Investigation (WPR19MA177) - Mokuleia, Hawaii King Air Parachute Flight Accident

Hi David, I have to admit I kind of freaked out when I saw this as I'm a pilot too and own an aircraft and thought it was involved in an accident for some reason. I was in fact there and I saw and felt the fireball from the explosion. I'll put my answers below yours below:

Questions:

1. Did you receive a thorough drop zone briefing about the operation before you boarded the airplane? Please describe.  
Yes we did. And as a matter of fact, we probably would have been on that fateful load but the staff was taking their time with tandems already there before us giving them a thorough briefing and double / triple checking harnesses and having them watch the safety video. Our briefing was thorough as any other dropzone; but as licensed skydivers we already know the bulk of it so there's much less questions than the tandems. They told us about landing areas, airport rules and hazards, main and alternate landing areas. How to load plane etc.
2. Did you receive a safety briefing prior to boarding the airplane, and did it include a briefing on the use of the seat belts? Please describe.  
Yes during the dropzone briefing, the pilot was on the ground and told us about seatbelt style and on till 1500 feet. We discussed exit order etc.  
As a matter of fact I mistakenly called it a Queen Air as it's the short body king air and pilot jumped in and thoroughly described aspects and differences between the mistake I made and what it was.

3. Did the pilot provide any briefing after boarding the airplane? Please describe.  
Not really. Just about operating the door. He checked to make sure we were all seated and seatbelted and no loose objects and door was closed.

4. Do you recall if all the passengers were wearing their seat belts?  
Yes they all were. Pilot and other instructor on board checked too.

5. Do you recall how the seat belts were attached to the airplane? Were multiple seat belts attached to the same anchor point on the airplane?  
I believe it was one seatbelt per anchor point as typically found on skydive planes. They seemed like standard skydive seatbelts.

6. Do you recall anything unusual about the airplane, OPC personnel, or the pilot?  
Please describe.  
Not really. They were all really nice and thorough. They gathered us together to do the briefing once. Half of our group had already jumped there before but asked us to all listen to the briefing even if we've jumped there before.

7. Please describe your observations of the other jumpers on the airplane (i.e. were they tandems, solos, how did they appear, etc.)  
The plane was mostly our group of fun jumpers that planned on going in a formation together. There were a couple other people on the plane doing a 2 way together. They were later on the fateful load. I recall the one of the 2 hadn't jumped in years and did his recurrency jump with an instructor earlier that day so he could do that jump. I recall his friend talking over the jump with him and the maneuvers they'd do as well as exit order etc.

8. Please describe the takeoff (normal, aggressive, high pitch or bank, etc.), flight to altitude, and jump experience.  
Takeoff was a little spicy for my liking but for the most part in control. He definitely banked it a little hard on a high rate turn at a seemingly low altitude. I believe it's an unspoken practice at that airport that the pilots begin the left turn when reaching the end of the runway as not to overfly the field. I personally would have climbed a little higher if I was piloting before turning left over the fence. I don't have a fixed wing rating so I can't comment too much on this. Let's just leave it as spicy.  
I did not see what happened when the plane crashed. What caught my attention was a loud different pitched engine sound. I was packing my parachute under their covered patio facing the landing area so my view of the sky was obstructed. I only saw it coming almost completely straight down and explode. Honestly i thought it was another plane because it seemed like they had departed almost 5 mins prior.

9. Did you have any concerns about the operation? (if so, what were they, and did you voice those concerns to OPC and what was their response?)  
No, seemed like a normal operation.

10. Any other observations you would like to share?

Not really. If you have any further questions. Please let me know. I happened to have my phone in my hands and snapped a picture while running over to see if we could help.



### 3.0 Witness: Kynan Welsch

**From:** Kynan Welsh [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 6, 2019 9:19 AM  
**To:** Lawrence David [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: NTSB Accident Investigation (WPR19MA177) - Mokuleia, Hawaii King Air Parachute Flight Accident

Hey David

I'd be happy to share my experience. I'm a skydiver with 295 jumps and I'm a commercial helicopter pilot in New York.

Questions:

1. Did you receive a thorough drop zone briefing about the operation before you boarded the airplane? Please describe.

Yes, most of our group of skydivers were jumping in Hawaii for the first time, and after they reviewed our credentials we received a thorough briefing of safety and procedures of the landing area, hazards, the ocean, the mountains, winds, and alternate emergency landing areas at the polo field to the east. I was very pleased with their briefing as it was my first visit to this airport.

2. Did you receive a safety briefing prior to boarding the airplane, and did it include a briefing on the use of the seat belts? Please describe.

Yes and we were instructed to keep seatbelts fastened until 1500 ft AGL.

3. Did the pilot provide any briefing after boarding the airplane? Please describe.

I can't remember.

4. Do you recall if all the passengers were wearing their seat belts?

Yes, everyone kept their seatbelts until 1500 ft when we all removed them in unison as usual

5. Do you recall how the seat belts were attached to the airplane? Were multiple seat belts attached to the same anchor point on the airplane?

I believe they were a single strap webbing with latch buckle attached to the lower corners of the plane that we fastened around the webbing of our skydive harness.

6. Do you recall anything unusual about the airplane, OPC personnel, or the pilot? Please describe.

No

7. Please describe your observations of the other jumpers on the airplane (i.e. were they tandems, solos, how did they appear, etc.)

We had almost the whole plane for our large group to ourselves, one tandem included, but shared our trip to altitude with two other friendly funjumpers who were very friendly and I believe were working on recurrency/certification.

8. Please describe the takeoff (normal, aggressive, high pitch or bank, etc.), flight to altitude, and jump experience.

I'm not familiar with a normal king air takeoff. I think we banked gently after takeoff towards the ocean and leveled, my guess is to avoid flying over the houses. Pitch did not seem unusual. It was a very controlled flight to altitude.

9. Did you have any concerns about the operation? (if so, what were they, and did you voice those concerns to OPC and what was their response?)

No

10. Any other observations you would like to share?

It was an excellent dropzone operation. I'm really upset to have witnessed this accident. In one moment we had just finished one of the most beautiful skydives in my life, and from the parachute packing mat I saw the object I'd realize was a plane, our plane, inclined toward the ground and erupt in fire at impact.

I hope that the other affected family and friends continue to celebrate their lives.



- Kynan Welsh

#### 4.0 Witness: Don Jean

**From:** Don Jean [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 7, 2019 9:37 AM  
**To:** Lawrence David [REDACTED] >  
**Cc:** Simpson Elliott [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: NTSB Accident Investigation (WPR19MA177) - Mokuleia, Hawaii King Air Parachute Flight Accident

Hi David,

I'd be happy to comply and help to the best of my knowledge. Here are the answers to your questions, though some I'm really unsure of. Sorry for the all caps, but I wanted my answers to stand out.

1. Did you receive a thorough drop zone briefing about the operation before you boarded the airplane? Please describe. YES
2. Did you receive a safety briefing prior to boarding the airplane, and did it include a briefing on the use of the seat belts? Please describe. YES ON THE SAFETY BRIEFING, BUT NO ON THE SEATBELTS. A FELLOW SKYDIVER HELPED ME WITH THAT SINCE I HAVE NEVER USED THOSE TYPES OF BELTS BETORE.
3. Did the pilot provide any briefing after boarding the airplane? Please describe. THE CRASH HAPPENED SO QUICKLY AFTER WE LANDED, SO I DON'T THINK THERE WAS ENOUGH TIME FOR A BRIEFING.
4. Do you recall if all the passengers were wearing their seat belts? YES THEY WERE
5. Do you recall how the seat belts were attached to the airplane? Were multiple seat belts attached to the same anchor point on the airplane? HONESTLY I'M NOT SURE.
6. Do you recall anything unusual about the airplane, OPC personnel, or the pilot? Please describe. I DON'T RECALL ANYTHING UNUSUAL, EVERYTHING SEEMED NORMAL.

7. Please describe your observations of the other jumpers on the airplane (i.e. were they tandems, solos, how did they appear, etc.) EVERYONE SEEMED EXCITED AND READY FOR A BEAUTIFUL JUMP. ALL MY FRIENDS ARE EXPERIENCED JUMPERS, SO THEY WERE RELAXED.

8. Please describe the takeoff (normal, aggressive, high pitch or bank, etc.), flight to altitude, and jump experience. SO I'M NOT AN AIRCRAFT EXPERT, **BUT** A FEW OF MY FRIENDS ARE FAMILIAR WITH PLANES AND THEY DID MENTIONED HE DID A LOW AGGRESSIVE TURN. I AM NOT EXPERIENCED IN THIS, SO I DIDN'T REALLY NOTICE. I FIGURED IT WAS NORMAL. BUT FROM WHAT THEY TOLD ME, IT WASN'T

9. Did you have any concerns about the operation? (if so, what were they, and did you voice those concerns to OPC and what was their response?) I DID NOT HAVE ANY CONCERNS. EVERYONE WAS FRIENDLY AND THE BRIEFING WAS DETAILED BEFORE BOARDING.

10. Any other observations you would like to share? NOT RELATED TO THE ACTUAL SKYDIVE. WHAT A HORRIBLE THING TO WITNESS.

I hope this helps some. Feel free to reach out should you have any other questions.

Best,

Don Jean

**From:** Don Jean [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 7, 2019 4:45 PM  
**To:** Lawrence David [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: NTSB Accident Investigation (WPR19MA177) - Mokuleia, Hawaii King Air Parachute Flight Accident

You're very welcome. Anything I can do to help.

So the seatbelt didn't go around your waist, it went around your leg and through your leg strap. I've never seen that before, but being that they knew how it worked made me think there are other planes that work that way? Honestly I haven't only been on a 2 or 3 different types of planes, so this was totally new to me.

Sorry I can't be more of assistance in that area. I know others on the plane will probably have a better answer to that, as they have hundreds of jumps.

On Nov 7, 2019, at 9:32 AM, Lawrence David <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Don,

Thank you so much for your responses, they are really helpful. One quick follow-up: for question 2 you said a fellow skydiver helped you with the seatbelts since you hadn't used those types of belts before. What types of belts did the airplane have, and what was unusual about them?

Appreciate all your assistance!

David