



INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Elliott Simpson
Aviation Accident Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Interview Date: November 7, 2019
Person Contacted: Patrick Garcia
NTSB Accident Number: WPR19MA177

Narrative:

Present for Interview:

Elliott Simpson NTSB
Mr. Michael Dworkin (Representation)

During a telephone conversation, Mr. Garcia stated the following:

Typically parachute jumpers each use a single seat belt. For Tandem jumpers, while each jumper is required to have their own belt, it is not unusual for the tandem instructor (TI) to share the same belt with their student. As a pilot and skydiver, he has often caught TI's sharing a single seatbelt with their student, and insists that they use a belt each. Typically, a TI sits in a forward seat (copilot seat when available) and attaches themselves to their student through the lower harness straps. The pair then secure themselves to the airframe through a single belt, and once at altitude the TI secures the student at all parachute harness points.

It is standard practice to never re-buckle a seatbelt after use, as the loop could inadvertently snare or restrict a jumper as they maneuvered around a cabin.

With regard to general seatbelt use, although mandatory, often, depending on the "drop zone culture", some operations may not be strict about belt use as others.

The airplane was equipped when it left his facility with 15 total seatbelts. One of which was the pilot's seatbelt.

The front left seat (pilot seat), indicated in red, was equipped with a 4-point harness, composed of a latching lap buckle, and slat type shoulder harness.

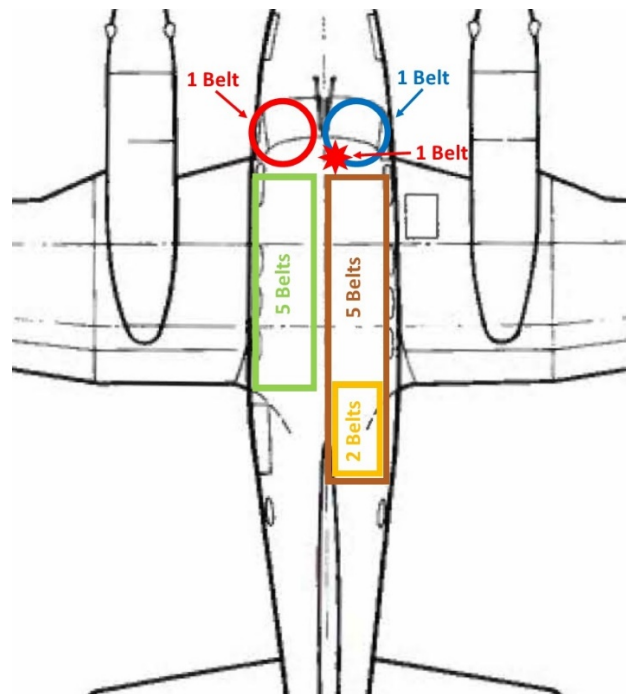
The front right seat (copilot seat), indicated in blue, had been installed facing aft, and was equipped with a single latching lap buckle, of the same style as the pilot's seat, but without the shoulder harness. The

seat was facing aft when he purchased the airplane, and was in the same configuration when the airplane was transported to OPC. Typically, tandem flight instructors utilize this seat, with their students on the bench seat just aft and adjacent. In his experience, utilizing the copilot seat for jumper transportation was imperative for weight and balance reasons.

The left bench seat, indicated in green, extended from the rear of the pilot seat through to the forward end of the main cabin door, and was equipped with 5 buckling seatbelts mounted to the seat rails floor of the airframe, on the window side. One of the belts was longer than the others, and extended just short of the door so that it would not hang out of the door after the jumpers had exited.

The right bench seat, indicated in brown, extended from the back side of the pilot seat through to the aft end of the main cabin door, was equipped with 7 buckling seatbelts mounted to the seat rails on the floor of the airframe, on the window side. Two of the seven belts were located in the aft of the bench, indicated in yellow.

A 15th jumper belt was secured to an eyebolt on the copilot belt left seat rail (indicated by the red star). The eyebolt was also used as a seat rail restriction device, preventing the seat from moving beyond its travel limits. This seatbelt was used to secure jumpers who sat on the floor in the center wing spar section. He could not be sure if this belt was installed at the time of the accident, as OPC did not have enough jumper volume to require a 15th jumper, he believes 14 total occupancy was their capacity (1 pilot, 13 jumpers), but that they often did not achieve that load rate. A center-mounted "pedestal" seat was available for this 15th position, but it was not sent with the airplane to OPC.





INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Elliott Simpson
Aviation Accident Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Interview Date: November 12, 2019
Person Contacted: George Rivera
NTSB Accident Number: WPR19MA177

Narrative:

Present for Interview:

Elliott Simpson NTSB

During a telephone conversation, Mr. Rivera stated the following:

N256TA was equipped with a total of 14 seat belts. These included the pilot and copilot (right seat) lap belts, and twelve jumper belts associated with the bench seats. After an FAA inspector determined the jumper belts needed to be replaced, twelve new jumper seat belts were shipped to OPC by Mr. Garcia. They arrived a few days following the accident.

He was not aware of any belt attached to the copilot seat rail that would have been configured for a central seating location, and stated that if he had seen it, he would have removed it because he did not want anyone sitting on the floor.

The copilot seat is always used by the first tandem instructor (TI), and TI's are usually the first to board. He did not witness the loading of the accident airplane, but the typical order would have been to have the first two TI's and their students on the right bench and copilot seat respectively, with the third TI on the left bench. Fun jumpers to follow, with the camera operators always at the back.

The camera operators are always at the back because they coordinate and call the jump zone, and need to be near a door. Additionally, they need to get good footage of the load on takeoff and during the flight, and this requires positioning themselves at the back and facing forward.

He reiterated that even if the fun jumpers boarded the airplane last, the camera operators would have swapped locations to still be last. There is a financial incentive for them to get great footage, which they sell to the students, and camera operators by nature are very competitive with each other.

With regard to seatbelts, everybody is instructed to wear one, and both the TI's and their students are belted independently. He stated that he has performed over 18,000 tandem jumps, and he never attaches himself to the student until he is approaching the jump altitude. He is always secured to the airframe separately from his student, and this was the protocol used and briefed prior to flight. In his experience, he does not want to be hooked to a passenger should something go wrong, as it would impede his ability to react, maneuver, or escape. He has heard of occasions when camera operators have been unrestrained, due to their desire to maneuver around the cabin to get good footage.

He was not at OPC at the time of the accident, having gone home about 90 minutes prior. He surmised that it was possible that with the "boss" not there, the pilot may have elected to perform more aggressive takeoff maneuvers in an effort to show off.