

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE  
OF SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR  
GALLIANO, LOUISIANA ON  
ON DECEMBER 29, 2022

\* Accident No.: CEN23FA071

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: TRENT SULLIVAN, Lead Operator, West Delta 106  
Island Operating Company

via Microsoft Teams

Thursday,  
January 5, 2023

APPEARANCES:

WAYNE MASON, Operation System Manager  
Walter Oil and Gas

TROY BUSH, Chief Pilot  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company

JASON MELANCON, Director of Operations  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company

TASHA LOUVIERE, Director of Safety  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company

FABIAN SALAZAR, Operations Inspector  
National Transportation Safety Board

ERIC FONTENOT  
Island Operating Company

LANCET LONG, HSCE Manager  
Island Operating Company

NATHAN BRADLEY, Accident Investigator, New Orleans  
Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

RODNEY BATISTE, Office of Internal Investigation  
Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

MIKE HANSON, Regional Aviation Safety Manager  
Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

KEN BINDER, Walter Production Department  
Walter Oil and Gas

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Trent Sullivan:	
By Mr. Mason	6
By Mr. Bush	11
By Mr. Bradley	22
By Mr. Hanson	22
By Mr. Arnaud	23
By Mr. Mason	30
By Mr. Bush	31
By Mr. Melancon	34
By Mr. Batiste	34
By Mr. Hanson	36
By Mr. Arnaud	37

I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. MASON: Okay. Well, let's go ahead, then, and get  
3 started. First, Trent, I would like to thank you for making the  
4 time to be here today. I know you've been through the ringer over  
5 this last week, and I think I speak for the group, we really  
6 appreciate the professionalism which you've carried out your  
7 duties under such difficult circumstances, so thank you very much  
8 for that, for your professionalism and for being here today. So,  
9 the first thing I'd like to do is do introductions around the  
10 board, so I'd like to start with RLC.

11 MR. BUSH: My name is Troy Bush. I'm the chief pilot for  
12 RLC. To my right is Jason Melancon, the director of operations  
13 for RLC. Just off camera is Tasha Louviere, director of safety.  
14 And then, Fabian Salazar, also, with the NTSB, will be sitting in.

15 MR. MASON: Great. Thank you. And if you get a chance  
16 afterwards, Troy, could you please send an email to the group with  
17 just the name of the title for the NTSB investigator? I'm sorry.  
18 I missed your name.

19 MR. BUSH: It's Fabian Salazar. He's the operations  
20 inspector for the NTSB.

21 MR. MASON: Okay. Yeah, if you could just send an email out  
22 with that information, that'd be great.

23 MR. BUSH: Yes, sir.

24 MR. MASON: So, thank you. Either of you want to introduce  
25 yourself to the group to new members?

1 MR. FONTENOT: Sure. This is Eric Fontenot with Island  
2 Operating over sims and special projects.

3 MR. LONG: And I am Lancet Long (ph.), HSCE manager for  
4 Island.

5 MR. SULLIVAN: Trent Sullivan, lead operator, 106.

6 MR. MASON: Thank you, Trent. BSEE, do you want to introduce  
7 yourselves?

8 MR. BRADLEY: Good morning. Nathan Bradley, BSEE, accident  
9 investigator, New Orleans District.

10 MR. MASON: And, Rodney Batiste (ph.).

11 MR. BATISTE: Rodney Batiste, Office of Internal  
12 Investigation.

13 MR. HANSON: Okay. Mike Hanson, BSEE, aviation safety  
14 manager.

15 MR. MASON: Okay, Ken?

16 MR. BINDER: Good morning, guys. Ken Binder, Walter  
17 Production Department in Houston.

18 MR. MASON: And finally, my name is Wayne Mason. I'm the  
19 operation systems manager, sims manager, for Walter Oil and Gas.  
20 Are there any questions at this point for me? If not, I'm going  
21 to ask Mr. Sullivan to -- I'm going to ask him a few leading  
22 questions; and then, I'm going to ask him to go through the events  
23 of Thursday up through the time that he departed. And then, once  
24 he's been able to recount what he saw and did over that period of  
25 time, then we'll start asking questions.

## 1 INTERVIEW OF TRENT SULLIVAN

2 BY MR. MURPHY:

3 Q. So, Trent, I'm going to ask you a few questions. Some of  
4 these will sound redundant or maybe even silly, but I just want to  
5 get them on the record. So, clearly, you're employed by Island  
6 Operating Company?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. And how long have you been employed by them?

9 A. Around 20 years.

10 Q. Twenty years or so? Okay.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. And what is your present position?

13 A. Lead operator.

14 Q. Lead operator for West Delta 106?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Okay. Any previous positions with the employer?

17 A. Well, I started working with Island when I was a -- CRB  
18 operator, and I worked my way up to lead.

19 Q. Okay. And how long have you been working on West Delta 106?

20 A. A little over five years.

21 Q. Okay. And what is your normal work schedule at West Delta?

22 A. 14/14.

23 Q. Okay. And so, Thursday was the first day of what was planned  
24 to be a 14-day hitch; is that correct?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay. And what are your normal activities at West Delta when  
2 you're working?

3 A. (Indiscernible) platforms, make sure everything is flowing  
4 right, make sure the airplane's in top-notch condition, and --

5 Q. Okay, thank you. One last question. What is your normal  
6 crew that you work with? Who do you typically work with?

7 A. Kendall Arnaud, Travis Jenkins, and John Amell.

8 Q. Okay. All right. Thank you very much for that background  
9 information. Trent, can you, starting from the time you left RLC  
10 in the helicopter and landed, and can you describe what you  
11 witnessed and observed that day and what you did that day? Just  
12 start from the beginning. And if, at some point, we need to take  
13 a break for a few minutes, just let us know. That's fine. And  
14 then, we'll pick up when you're ready. So --

15 A. We left for heliport -- 106. Didn't have no trouble, you  
16 know. Of course, I -- take a nap on the way out and woke up right  
17 before we landed. Everything looked good. Came downstairs, shook  
18 everybody's hand, talked to them a minute or two. Then, went  
19 upstairs (indiscernible). We sat down at the table, and signed  
20 the PSA, and talked about what happened -- well, we just sat down,  
21 and I think (indiscernible). We started talking. You hear the  
22 helicopter -- picking up just like a normal takeoff.

23 And then, there's a big boom -- back down here on the deck.  
24 (Indiscernible) the door because everything was hitting -- door  
25 open, and they take

1 two steps. I was at the handrail. The helicopter just hit the  
2 water -- just coming up. The skid of the helicopter was knocked  
3 off of the helicopter before it hit the water (indiscernible) the  
4 helicopter about 20, 25 feet away from the helicopter, and the  
5 float was inflated. Travis goes to plus 10. Van took off to  
6 (indiscernible). Kendall was on the handrail -- John on the phone  
7 calling the Coast Guard and everybody.

8 Q. Hey, Trent, can you speak a little more slowly for us?

9 A. Travis went to plus 10. (Indiscernible) came out here --  
10 boat landed. Van ran -- watching the helicopter. Kendall and I  
11 was watching the helicopter from the top deck. And they had John  
12 on the phone getting the Coast Guard and letting everybody know  
13 we'd had an accident. And the helicopter started looping. I seen  
14 -- it wasn't like a minute or two, seen where nobody's coming out  
15 -- get Travis back up here on the top deck. And it wasn't like a  
16 minute, and they was up there where I was.

17 We got -- went to the helicopter. There was a bunch of wires  
18 and -- hanging off the helicopter. It probably took three or four  
19 minutes (indiscernible) to get to the helicopter. But some time  
20 done went by. It wasn't over -- around five minutes. We got to  
21 the helicopter, and Van was -- hold up. One of them said, hold  
22 up. We seen all the (indiscernible), and cables, and stuff from  
23 the helicopter. (Indiscernible). Said we was too late. But he  
24 said, if you get any closer, we're going to get tangled up in all  
25 that debris. And (indiscernible) in the water to get them out at



1 that time.

2 Then, we went back to the (indiscernible) back to the  
3 platform, went through (indiscernible). And at that time, I  
4 started taking some more pictures, and (indiscernible). Island's  
5 the only one I talked to. They told me that a boat was enroute.  
6 Then, I started talking to the Coast Guard. Coast Guard called  
7 back. He told me he was sending a helicopter and a boat. We had  
8 the (indiscernible) roughly five minutes before the Coast Guard,  
9 and they started doing their search. And I was radioing the Coast  
10 Guard, talking to them on the radio. I was outside on the top  
11 deck in the boat. And the Coast Guard had the boat picking up  
12 debris and looking for the helicopter. They got their bags out of  
13 the water. Helicopter (indiscernible) grab a rotary on top of the  
14 helicopter. Talon (ph.), I guess you call it. I don't know the  
15 proper name for it. And they kept searching.

16 Probably, about 2 to 3 o'clock, (indiscernible). They were  
17 going to see if we could get that -- float before they lost their  
18 air and sunk. So, we got the Coast Guard, and they gave us -- the  
19 boat to get hooked onto the float, bring it back to the platform.  
20 (Indiscernible) basket. They went down, put their strap around  
21 the float, or -- picked it up, and put it on the boat.  
22 (Indiscernible). Sent it down. The helicopter debris in that  
23 basket. The picked the basket up, set (indiscernible) back down,  
24 you know, put the bags (indiscernible) in the basket, and I got on  
25 the basket and went back up, and I took some more pictures of them

1 on the top (indiscernible). And we --

2 By then, the Coast Guard, it was getting late -- boat to come  
3 search for the helicopter, so (indiscernible) the boat being on  
4 there. (Indiscernible) the helicopter and divers went in, located  
5 the helicopter, and they put the basket down, put the chopper in  
6 it, picked it up, put it on the boat. We got on another boat --

7 Q. And what time did you arrive back at the dock?

8 A. Roughly, 5 o'clock that morning. That was on Sunday or  
9 Monday. I can't remember what day it was.

10 Q. It would have been --

11 A. -- the night before the helicopter (indiscernible) like eight  
12 hours after that, we got back --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- 5 o'clock the next, following morning.

15 Q. Okay. Thank you very much for going through that. Anything  
16 that you can recall that you missed or left out before we start  
17 the questions?

18 A. No, sir.

19 MR. MASON: Okay. Thank you, Trent. Troy, do you want to go  
20 ahead and start with your questions from RLC?

21 MR. BUSH: Yes, sir. Trent, this is Troy Bush, the chief  
22 pilot for RLC. First of all, I want to say that to say I'm sorry  
23 in this situation, that don't feed the bulldog, as my grandmother  
24 would say. So, I want to assure you, and Island, and everybody  
25 involved that RLC is very diligently investigating this and making

1 the changes so that we don't have these conversations again. So,  
2 I do want to assure you that we're doing everything we possibly  
3 can as an organization in every department so that you don't have  
4 to go through this again, or any other customer has to go through  
5 this again.

6 BY MR. BUSH:

7 Q. Certainly don't want to add to the trauma that you've already  
8 gone through, but I do need to ask you a couple of questions just  
9 about the orientation of the --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. -- helicopter as you approached out there. I was actually in  
12 the helicopter that was circling before the Coast Guard got there.  
13 I may have been talking to you on Marine 18, I believe it was.

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Yes, sir. That -- you and I were visiting back and forth  
16 while we were on station there. Now, as we got up there, think to  
17 your platform. I want to ask you a couple of questions just so  
18 everybody's on the same page. From what I could tell, the crane  
19 gantry and boom are on the west side of your platform, and the  
20 helideck is on the southeast corner of your helideck; is that  
21 correct?

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. Okay. So, when you guys, when you came around, and the winds  
24 were out of the southeast -- you may not know this, but the winds  
25 were out of the southeast about 17 knots. So, when you guys came

1 around to land, what seat were you sitting in?

2 A. In the left back.

3 Q. Left back --

4 A. Yeah, right in front of the cargo zone.

5 Q. Okay, left back seat. So, the -- so, if you can tell me how  
6 you approached the platform, what you saw out your window as you  
7 made your approach to the helideck and the platform itself?

8 A. We came in (indiscernible) tip of the crane boom, and --  
9 north-northwest point.

10 Q. Yes, sir.

11 A. The northwest corner was --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- was up.

14 Q. Did he fly over that deck, or did he come around the crane  
15 gantry to the south side and come in, or did he fly directly to  
16 the helideck over the platform?

17 A. He made a loop around the platform before he made his way in  
18 (indiscernible) to land.

19 Q. Okay. Perfect. So --

20 A. -- the best way to come in, you know.

21 Q. Okay. So, he came around the south side -- the west side to  
22 the south side shooting his approach to the east. So, the  
23 platform would have been right outside your window, is that  
24 correct, as he's making his approach?

25 A. Yeah. And --

- 1 Q. Okay.
- 2 A. -- they circled around the platform. I guess, then, it  
3 looked like the wind came. (Indiscernible) looking at the  
4 windsock.
- 5 Q. Yes, sir.
- 6 A. -- on top of the crane.
- 7 Q. Yes, sir. Okay. And so --
- 8 A. And --
- 9 Q. Go ahead.
- 10 A. And then, that's when -- after he made his complete loop  
11 around the platform, then he made an approach to land.
- 12 Q. Okay. Now, when he made his approach to land, he was still  
13 facing east? The platform was still out your window? Is that  
14 correct?
- 15 A. No. He came over the crane boom.
- 16 Q. Okay. So, he circled back around again, came over the crane  
17 boom, but still --
- 18 A. Yeah.
- 19 Q. -- landed east?
- 20 A. Yeah.
- 21 Q. Okay. Okay. And then, when he got over the helideck, did he  
22 reposition the helicopter at all once he --
- 23 A. No.
- 24 Q. -- got over it?
- 25 A. When he got over the heliport, he started coming back, made a

1 little bit of a bubble, but it wasn't real bad, you know, coming  
2 down. And he just set it down.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. When he set it down, (indiscernible), and he never  
5 repositioned the helicopter or nothing, because he set down  
6 perfect on the heliport.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- sitting (indiscernible), it was perfect for us.

9 Q. Okay. So, was the -- think about the nose and the tail. Was  
10 the nose of the aircraft, was it pointed towards the southeast  
11 corner of that helideck, or was it more --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. -- towards the middle of the -- or more easterly?

14 A. It was over by the flare boom --

15 Q. Right.

16 (Crosstalk)

17 Q. Okay. That'd be the southeast corner. So, that would put  
18 his tail back towards the northwest corner of the helideck,  
19 correct?

20 A. (No audible response.)

21 Q. Okay. And do you -- when you went and got your bags out of  
22 the baggage compartment, do you remember looking down and seeing  
23 the position of the skids and where they were on the helideck?

24 Did that --

25 A. No.

- 1 Q. -- catch your eye, by chance?
- 2 A. Like I said, he set down centered. The tail rotor was over  
3 the skirting a little bit --
- 4 Q. Okay.
- 5 A. -- not much. But he pretty well set dead center of the  
6 teleport.
- 7 Q. Of the circle. O Yes, sir.
- 8 A. And I got out, got my bags, and I had to walk around the  
9 front of the helicopter to come back up the other side  
10 (indiscernible) route to go down off the heliport.
- 11 Q. Okay. Did you happen to look over and see, just by chance,  
12 how far the skids were? Did you happen to notice how far the  
13 skids were from the stairwell entrance? Was it close? Was it  
14 far? Was it turned away from the stairwell entrance?
- 15 A. It was turned away, you know, at an angle.
- 16 Q. Yes, sir. Okay.
- 17 A. But we had plenty of room. It was probably about 8 feet or  
18 so all the way around the helicopter on both sides.
- 19 Q. Okay. All right.
- 20 A. -- they were centered.
- 21 Q. Okay.
- 22 A. Yep.
- 23 Q. And anything -- like you said, there was a little bit of a  
24 wobble when he was setting down, but basically, he was a normal  
25 set-down? He rolled into idle, told you guys were good to go or

1 gave you a thumbs-up; is that correct?

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And the helicopter (indiscernible) until the people went back  
5 up to get on, and they got on, (indiscernible) helicopter. I know  
6 he didn't move the helicopter (indiscernible) never heard that  
7 helicopter reel back up --

8 Q. Yes, sir. Just so that we make sure that we're talking about  
9 the same orientation, and I don't want anybody to think that I was  
10 leading you, can you real quick just draw a helideck? It can be  
11 as -- using your best elementary school stick figures. And show  
12 which way the helicopter nose was pointing on the helideck that  
13 you draw? Okay, sir?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #1: The stairwell.

15 BY MR. BUSH:

16 Q. And also, draw the stairwell entrance and where the tail  
17 rotor was, and also include the flare boom if you can.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #2: Eric? Say, Eric, would you guys  
19 have like a Dry Erase Board that you can bring in your conference  
20 room from one of the other offices?

21 MR. FONTENOT: Well, our back wall is actually a Dry-Erase  
22 Board.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #2: Okay. You might have to tip the  
24 camera up, but that might be --

25 MR. MASON: -- the drawing --



1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #2: Your camera is a long way from that  
2 wall. We'll give it a shot. Thanks.

3 MR. MASON: If we could do that, but also, the NTSB has  
4 informed me they would like that drawing admitted into evidence.  
5 So, if he can recreate whatever he draws on the white board also  
6 onto the piece of paper, that would be beneficial.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #2: Wayne, can you all see the wall?

8 MR. MASON: No.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #3: No. We can see up to about Trent's  
10 shoulders. Nothing above it. There you go. It's -- I don't know  
11 if you can -- it has a zoom feature or not.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #2: That, I don't know. Let me -- can  
13 you give me one sec?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #4: Is that my computer --

15 MR. MASON: Yeah.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #4: -- that keeps dinging?

17 MR. MASON: Right-click that and see if it'll allow you to  
18 close it.

19 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: -- in the call, huh?

20 MR. MASON: Yeah.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #4: Okay, good.

22 MR. MASON: Yeah.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #3: Can you all see it?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #5: No, sir.

25 MR. MASON: No, sir, not really.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #3: No? Okay. -- we can zoom it in.

2 MR. MASON: Yeah, okay.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #3: (Indiscernible).

4 MR. MASON: Okay.

5 (Crosstalk)

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #2: -- the camera where they can see

7 it --

8 MR. MASON: I think the easiest thing to do would be to go  
9 ahead and do the drawing on the paper. You could hold that up to  
10 the camera, and then it can be admitted as evidence, scanned, and  
11 then admitted as evidence. I think it'd be easier to work with.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #6: Yeah.

13 MR. BUSH: Do you have questions to ask?

14 MR. HANSON: Not really.

15 MR. BUSH: Tasha, do you have anything you want to ask?

16 MS. LOUVIERE: (No audible response.)

17 MR. BUSH: Okay.

18 MR. SULLIVAN: (Indiscernible)?

19 MR. BUSH: Yeah, you'll probably have to -- north, south,  
20 east, west, if you know them.

21 MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah.

22 MR. MASON: All right. This is Wayne Mason. Do you have a  
23 drawing, an engineered drawing, of the deck?

24 MR. BUSH: I have a photograph here with me. I believe you  
25 did send the engineered drawings in my email somewhere, but I do

1 have the photograph that we showed yesterday's interviews.

2 MR. MASON: Okay.

3 MR. BUSH: And I can send you --

4 MR. MASON: Yeah, would --

5 MR. BUSH: I can email you a depiction with some overlays,  
6 some directional overlays, that we --

7 MR. MASON: Yeah, I've got an engineered drawing I'll send  
8 you after this meeting.

9 MR. BUSH: Okay, thank you.

10 MR. MASON: Here you go. Ken's --

11 MR. ARNAUD: Yeah.

12 MR. MASON: -- Ken's holding it --

13 MR. BUSH: Yeah.

14 MR. MASON: -- up there.

15 MR. BUSH: Okay.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #3: Yeah. I'm going to send this  
17 drawing to Eric Fontenot. And, Eric, maybe you can print out this  
18 one page to show location of the crane and the helideck in the --  
19 that should be in the southeast corner.

20 MR. BUSH: Correct. That's our --

21 MR. FONTENOT: Okay.

22 MR. BUSH: -- understanding, as well, yes, sir. Trent --

23 MR. FONTENOT: Okay, yeah.

24 MR. BUSH: -- hold that up a little bit closer to the camera?

25 MR. SULLIVAN: Can you all see it?

1 MR. BUSH: Okay. There you go.

2 MR. SULLIVAN: The helicopter tail rotary. Right there's  
3 your digress route (ph.). Come down off the heliport. But I see  
4 flare boom. The nose of the helicopter was facing right here. We  
5 got out, walked around, got our bags out, walked around, walked  
6 right there, and went down.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #1: And that orientation is?

8 BY MR. BUSH:

9 Q. And that orientation of that nose, as we discussed before, is  
10 southeast, correct?

11 A. Yeah, southeast --

12 Q. Southeast.

13 A. -- in the north (indiscernible) should have been northwest  
14 and southeast --

15 Q. Correct.

16 (Crosstalk)

17 Q. Right. Very good, sir. Thank you very much. That's  
18 perfect. That's exactly what we needed, and that's what we had  
19 surmised, so thank you, sir.

20 A. -- if this is being admitted in as an exhibit, do you want me  
21 to make those corrections on the directions and initial it?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #1: Yes.

23 MR. BUSH: Yes, please. If you could line, single line  
24 though, put the correct direction of it, and his initials, please.  
25 (Indiscernible) he's corrected them, if you can see there. Okay.

1 MR. SULLIVAN: Very good. Thank you.

2 MR. BUSH: So, thank you very much, guys. That'll work.

3 Jason, do you have anything you want to ask at this time?

4 MR. MELANCON: (Indiscernible).

5 MR. BUSH: Wayne, that's all we have at this time. We'll --  
6 if we have anything else, we'll do it in redirect.

7 MR. MASON: Okay. Thank you. Appreciate that, Troy.  
8 Island, do you have any questions you'd like to ask?

9 MR. FONTENOT: Troy pretty much hit on everything that we  
10 were going to ask, so we're going to pass for now and let BSEE ask  
11 any questions, but we may have a follow-up.

12 MR. MASON: Okay. Great. Rodney or Nathan, do you want to  
13 go ahead and ask your questions, please?

14 MR. BATISTE: Rodney. I don't have any questions. If Nathan  
15 or Michael do, then they can ask.

16 MR. BRADLEY: Hi. This is Nathan.

17 BY MR. BRADLEY:

18 Q. So, as far as the platform, take away the noise from the  
19 helicopter above. Was there any abnormal sounds from the platform  
20 that you heard of or noticed upon arrival?

21 A. Everything was running smooth. We wasn't having no trouble.

22 Q. And no issues past from the group before?

23 A. No, sir.

24 Q. Thank you.

25 A. -- earlier in the hitch, but that's due to the cold weather.

1 (Indiscernible) on this platform -- back out 348 --

2 MR. FONTENOT: Thank you.

3 MR. HANSON: Hey. Mike Hanson with BSEE.

4 BY MR. HANSON:

5 Q. Just for clarification, you mentioned a big boom. I think  
6 you said you weren't sure if that was the helicopter hitting the  
7 deck or possibly something before the helicopter hitting the deck;  
8 is that accurate?

9 A. No. The boom was the helicopter hitting on the deck; and  
10 then, we saw it hit another plane. It's like you drop a big old  
11 plate of steel on the platform, just pow, where the helicopter  
12 came down and hit. And then, (indiscernible) and everything  
13 flinging debris every which way --

14 MR. HANSON: Okay, thank you. That's all I've got.

15 (Background conversation)

16 MR. MASON: Okay. Ken, do you want to go ahead and ask  
17 questions for Walter Oil and Gas? If you're on mute?

18 MR. ARNAUD: All right. Good morning. Thank you. I'll get  
19 that squared away.

20 BY MR. ARNAUD:

21 Q. Trent, appreciate your time here this morning. Tell you  
22 what. I've heard about how you guys responded, you and your crew  
23 responded, and it was first class. And it's unfortunate, the  
24 outcome, but you guys couldn't have done better. Some of my  
25 questioning may be a little bit repetitious, so if you could just

1 bear with us on that. I want to talk a little bit about the crew  
2 change procedure. Trent, I know -- what is -- as far as the  
3 handover between you and the outbound PIC, David? Was that done  
4 by telephone prior to the departure from Galliano?

5 A. The -- before crew change, we always call each other  
6 (indiscernible) takes for us to discuss everything, and then we  
7 start shooting the bull. But they go over everything  
8 (indiscernible). Then, whenever we get to the platform, we have  
9 relief notes printed up. In this case, one of us forgot what the  
10 other one said. Plus, if anything happened in the last 15 hours  
11 since I talked to them, (indiscernible) give me a rundown on that  
12 verbally, and they have it written down. But that morning, it  
13 wasn't there. (Indiscernible) just like I told you yesterday, we  
14 didn't have no trouble or nothing. Last night, everything  
15 (indiscernible), man.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. It's like talking, and nothing (indiscernible). I'm talking  
18 about -- give them a call. Hopefully, we all --

19 Q. Right. Was the field foreman, Mike Hawley (ph.), on your  
20 handover (indiscernible) day before, on Wednesday?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Okay. Sometimes, he is, I understand, but not always.

23 A. Yeah. Mike looked at the heliport (indiscernible) when all  
24 this happened, and we got a safety meeting and everything. Mike  
25 (indiscernible) safety meeting with us. But no, he wasn't on --

1 Q. Okay. Well, that's a good system there. So, what you  
2 learned, then, from David was that you were producing as normal.  
3 There was no upsets. You did have some about a week ago during  
4 that freeze that came through around Christmastime. And so, it  
5 was pretty much a standard operating span of time.

6 A. Correct. Everything was operating normal. No trouble with  
7 the platform.

8 Q. Okay. All right. So, was the platform venting the day  
9 before or the day of?

10 A. No, sir. Matter of fact, that day when I found the morning  
11 report, I may be off a number or two on it, (indiscernible). So,  
12 basically, nothing --

13 Q. Right.

14 A. (Indiscernible).

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. (Indiscernible).

17 Q. Okay. And could you reconfirm the position of the crane  
18 in --

19 A. It was in the cradle. The crane was in the cradle  
20 (indiscernible). The tip of the crane's due north, I believe, and  
21 the platform (indiscernible) northwest, like.

22 Q. Excuse -- I'll try and put that up, but there's a fairly good  
23 photograph of West Delta showing the position of the crane  
24 relative to the helideck and the living quarters.

25 A. Yeah, that crane's up in the air on that picture.



1 Q. Yes, sir, but it was in the cradle when you arrived?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Okay. All right. I just wanted to give everybody else that  
4 road map, there, Trent. All right, thank you. Were there any  
5 vessels within the 500-meter zone around the platform on landing?

6 A. No, sir.

7 Q. Okay. All right. All right. Well, now, kind of -- can you  
8 describe the green deck system that you guys practice on West  
9 Delta, the --

10 A. We use the helicopter (indiscernible) 10 to 15 minutes out,  
11 let us know he's in the area, coming through; and we tell him, you  
12 call back a time out. Only time we was on the helicopter  
13 (indiscernible) platform, and we don't have no training activity  
14 going on and stuff, (indiscernible), we'll give them a green deck.

15 Q. Okay. Very good. Trent, a lot of times, because it's based  
16 on the platforms, when you're coming in from days off, and you  
17 come down, and you relieve the compound crew, a lot of times,  
18 you'll see their bags. I don't know what the method is on West  
19 Delta, but typically, they're at the base of the stairs so the  
20 guys that are ready to go home grab their bag and go home. Would  
21 you say that was true that day when you arrived on West Delta?

22 Q. Yes, sir. They --

23 A. All right.

24 Q. -- on their shoulders and (indiscernible). And Tim was  
25 carrying his bag --

1 A. Okay. And how much weight in cargo do you think that  
2 consisted of?

3 Q. -- this is just a guess. This is just an opinion. It's less  
4 than 100 pounds, I would guess, you know.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. I don't know what them boys had in their bags, you know.

7 Q. Yeah, that's true. But one thing that we know -- what it  
8 typical, because we don't -- the crew  
9 is -- there's not many changes with the crew, you leave a lot of  
10 your gear there so you don't have to tote it back and forth. It's  
11 there when you come back in two weeks' time.

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. So that that gives you the ability to go light, basically.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. If it was 100 pounds, then, you know --

16 A. -- 100 pounds, I'm guessing, because like, I go offshore, my  
17 bag's like 30 pounds going, and it's 20 coming back, because I  
18 take all my (indiscernible) stuff like that, you know, and they're  
19 always a little lighter coming in.

20 Q. Okay. All right. And that's very typical. So, just to  
21 confirm, you were saying that you and your crew went down, exited  
22 down the helideck stairs, went into the galley, the office, and  
23 did a handshake with the outbound crew; and they went up, and you  
24 guys went through the JSAs and started to get ready for your two-  
25 week hitch?

1 A. Yeah. Robby and Tim (indiscernible) sitting outside my  
2 office door underneath the heliport with their bags, and they just  
3 stayed inside the office, and I stepped inside (indiscernible)  
4 talking over the helicopter. But we didn't talk two, three  
5 minutes, and they headed on up to the helicopter --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- you know, Tim and Robby may have went up a couple minutes  
8 before. I don't know. I wasn't outside with them two.

9 Q. Okay. Very good. I understand. Were you injured during  
10 your time there at West Delta?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Was anybody in your crew injured?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Okay. And that's -- we're so glad of that. All right. Do  
15 you know if the platform following the incident, when you were in  
16 the recovery and the realization mode that there was an accident  
17 and that we had the helicopter and four men in the water, did you  
18 opt to shut in the platform, or did you decide to keep it afloat?

19 A. Mike Hawley called and told me to set the platform in. You  
20 know, I (indiscernible), and I stood up, please go tell the guys  
21 we need it shut in. And I thought about it. I said, hey,  
22 (indiscernible), so, I said, but if we shut it in, we're going to  
23 be fighting to keep fuel (indiscernible) run the generator. I  
24 said, it's up to you all. If you all feel comfortable, I'll bring  
25 in the platform and let it run until we have trouble. If we start

1 having trouble, (indiscernible). They said, heck, yeah, that  
2 makes it a lot easier on us. So, we made the call to keep the  
3 platform running.

4 And I called Hawley back and asked him (indiscernible). And  
5 he said, yeah. And I said, well, tell them we're going to keep  
6 the platform running, because it's a lot less work and aggravation  
7 on us. Once the platform's running good, we don't want to shut  
8 it. And he got approved (indiscernible). Time we get the  
9 generator hooked up and going, it probably wasn't, just roughly  
10 guessing, four or five hours until the boat called wanting to come  
11 in within 500 meter, and we shut in, too.

12 Q. All right. And I believe I know you were -- I think, back in  
13 the first round of questions, you were trying to recall what day  
14 you went home, but I believe that the generator was there and with  
15 the electrician, hooked up, Sunday right after 12 o'clock, is what  
16 I understand, and -- which was good timing, because the boat  
17 wanted to come in (indiscernible) in the area, so you all shut  
18 down at that time. You were still there when the genset was being  
19 offloaded and the electrician was hooking it up?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 MR. ARNAUD: All right. That's what I thought. Okay. All  
22 right. All right. Good deal. Okay. I don't have other  
23 questions, Wayne, but I think it'd be very helpful to do a second  
24 round real quick to see if there's any lagging issues.

25 MR. MASON: Yep --

1 BY MR. MASON:

2 Q. Trent, I've got two quick questions for you. One, do you  
3 recall seeing any, you know, birds, or bird nests, or anything  
4 like that around the platform?

5 A. No, sir.

6 Q. No? And my other question is, who contacted the Coast Guard  
7 initially?

8 A. I think that's going to be Gary Tucker (ph.). I ain't for  
9 sure on that, because John Amell, my sims clerk, was doing all the  
10 phone calls.'

11 Q. Okay. And you -- once the Coast Guard started making  
12 communication with the platform, you had primary communication  
13 with them?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 MR. MASON: Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. And I neglected  
16 earlier to give the gentlemen from the National Transportation  
17 Safety Board an opportunity to ask some questions, so I'd like to  
18 give you an opportunity first; and then, we'll do a quick second  
19 round of any follow-ups. So, sir, go ahead.

20 MR. SALAZAR: I have no questions, thank you.

21 MR. MASON: You said, no questions?

22 MR. SALAZAR: That's correct, sir, thank you.

23 MR. MASON: Okay, great. So, let me go around the board one  
24 more time. Troy, does RLC have any other questions?

25 MR. BUSH: Yes, sir, just one more. Before that, just as a

1 point of clarification, because it has been asked a couple of  
2 times, when I talked to Van Johnson at 0824 that morning, and he  
3 informed me that the aircraft had gone overboard, I contacted RLC  
4 operation supervisor, notified him, as well, and told him to  
5 contact the Coast Guard, that I was going to be taking an aircraft  
6 and proceeding directly to West Delta 106. So, I'm sure multiple  
7 calls to the Coast Guard were made, but one was placed by RLC at  
8 around 0824 to 0825 that morning.

9 MR. MASON: All right. Thank you for that clarification.

10 MR. BUSH: Yes, sir.

11 BY MR. BUSH:

12 Q. Trent, I apologize for having you relive something or talk  
13 again about something that you've already answered one time, but  
14 since there were no eyewitnesses, and timing is going to be  
15 critical in trying to ascertain exactly what happened -- and I  
16 know that all this is playing in the back of your head. I was a  
17 lead pilot for many years. I used to go down, and I know handoffs  
18 can be -- you're visiting, you're talking about things on the  
19 platforms, and I know that a lot of stuff was going on in the  
20 background. But if you could, think back to when you are noticing  
21 the helicopter is spooling up. And if you can, just one more  
22 time, talk to me about what happened from there to when you heard  
23 the bang or the clang of what you now know is the helicopter going  
24 overboard. If you can give me that sequence of events in order  
25 and any time span, if it was instantaneous, if it was a 1,001,

1 whatever you think it may be that may help us in helping ascertain  
2 what happened, just that portion again, if you would.

3 A. He started revving up on the helicopter. Just, I'm guessing,  
4 30, 45 seconds, maybe a minute, they stayed revved up.

5 (Indiscernible) RPMs like it normally do. And you can hear it,  
6 you know. You've used a helicopter. You can tell the different  
7 sounds (indiscernible) picking up. And the helicopter started  
8 picking up -- it wasn't 20 seconds, probably wasn't 10 feet off  
9 (indiscernible). And then, it came back down, slam.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. (Indiscernible).

12 Q. So --

13 (Crosstalk)

14 A. -- takeoff. I've done -- 20 years, you know. Far as just  
15 listening to the helicopter rev up, ever how long it takes for him  
16 to get to his RPMs he's satisfied with. And then, he started --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- you know, that he got off --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. But I can't tell you an exact time on neither one as far as  
21 revving up, but it was a normal takeoff, because he reeled up just  
22 like all the helicopters does (indiscernible). Then, he started  
23 picking up.

24 Q. Yes, sir. Very good. You did talk about a bang. Was that  
25 bang, was that -- do you believe, to the best of your

1 recollection, is that -- was that bang, and what you now know is  
2 the helicopter going overboard, was that simultaneous, or did you  
3 hear a bang, and then a noise of what you now know is the  
4 helicopter going overboard?

5 A. We heard, bang, like I said, like you just dropped something  
6 big on the deck. As soon as that happened, we started hearing  
7 stuff hitting the building --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- which, I'm sure, rotor blades and stuff.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- which is, I'm sure, (indiscernible) dropped back down hard  
12 and straightened the skids. (Indiscernible) came down on the  
13 skids, and the helicopter maybe tilted one way or the other. I  
14 wasn't outside to see it, but that's my belief. I believe the  
15 helicopter (indiscernible) hit, then turned, and the blades  
16 caught; and then, everything else happened.

17 MR. BUSH: Right, yeah. I appreciate that. I can't know  
18 exactly when you and I have flown together, and I'm sure we have  
19 in the many years we've both been out here. We both know what  
20 that sounds like. And I do appreciate you taking the time to  
21 think about that and give the best accurate statement that you  
22 could. Thank you so much, Trent. That's all --

23 MR. SULLIVAN: Thank you, sir.

24 MR. BUSH: -- I have, Wayne --

25 MR. MELANCON: I have one.



1 MR. BUSH: Oh, sorry.

2 MR. MASON: Thank you, Troy.

3 MR. BUSH: Jason Melancon has one, our director of  
4 operations.

5 BY MR. MELANCON:

6 Q. Hey, good morning, Trent. Jason Melancon, director of ops.  
7 My condolences, man. This is tough. I know it. We appreciate  
8 everything you all have done and all the information you all have  
9 provided. It's going to go a long way to help us figure out what  
10 happened here. The only thing I want to ask is about the safety  
11 briefings prior to departure from Galliano, and if you all  
12 reviewed that the day of, or did you have the (indiscernible) from  
13 previous safety briefing video?

14 A. We did go over previous video.

15 MR. MELANCON: Okay. Excellent. That was really the only  
16 thing I wanted to clarify and make sure everybody was current and  
17 up to speed and got a good briefing.

18 MR. MASON: Yes, sir.

19 MR. BATISTE: And, Wayne, the NTSB had more question if  
20 Trent's okay with it.

21 MR. MASON: Yep. Go ahead.

22 BY MR. BATISTE:

23 Q. Hey, Trent. In regards to the sound of the engine winding  
24 up, before you heard the loud noise, the bang, did you hear any  
25 changes in the ending noise?

1 A. No, sir, just normal sound with the dialing up there and when  
2 he started spooling up. Everything sounded normal.

3 Q. And it's -- I don't want to put words in your mouth, but from  
4 the time that it spooled up and sounded normal to the time that  
5 you heard that loud noise, did that noise change, that engine  
6 noise change at all?

7 A. Not that I --

8 Q. Could you say that one more time, Trent? You cut out.

9 A. No, sir.

10 Q. Thank you.

11 A. As I recall, the engine noise did not change until --

12 Q. But -- and --

13 A. -- and best that I can remember, the noise did not change.

14 Q. Thank you, sir. But as you stated before, you did believe,  
15 from your experience flying offshore, that you do believe the  
16 helicopter was in the process of lifting off the helideck; is that  
17 correct?

18 A. Yes, sir. He done lifted up.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. He (indiscernible) off the deck --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- picked up and hovered for a few minutes -- or, not a few  
23 minutes, but a little while, (indiscernible) hit the helideck.

24 Q. Yes, sir.

25 A. I think, in that process is when it all took place.

1 MR. BATISTE: Okay. All right.

2 MR. HANSON: -- let me just ask a qualifier.

3 BY MR. HANSON:

4 Q. Trent, you've been out on those rigs. I've been out there  
5 one time, okay? I flew helicopters for 20 years, but I've only  
6 been out on the rigs one time. But in your experience in hearing  
7 the helicopters as they come in, and land, and drop off people,  
8 and as they take off, you're pretty confident that you can hear  
9 the helicopter land and spool up, and then actually lift off the  
10 deck?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Thank you.

13 A. -- is directly over the heliport.

14 MR. HANSON: Yes, sir. Thank you.

15 MR. BATISTE: That's it for RLC, Wayne.

16 MR. MASON: All right. Thank you very much. Island, any  
17 follow-up questions?

18 MR. FONTENOT: No, sir.

19 MR. MASON: No? BSEE, any follow-up questions from your  
20 group?

21 MR. BRADLEY: I have nothing.

22 MR. MASON: Rodney?

23 MR. No questions from me.

24 MR. MASON: Okay. Ken, any follow-up questions from Walter  
25 Oil and Gas?

1 MR. ARNAUD: I do.

2 BY MR. ARNAUD:

3 Q. Trent, just one thing, if you could help me work through.  
4 So, you've been on West Delta for five years, but with Island for  
5 20. And let's just go to the five years. Is the use of  
6 Island 4-5 a normal method to do crew change?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. And you don't alternate between it and boats? It's your  
9 transportation back home and to work?

10 A. Yes, sir. The only time we did not use 4-4 or 4-5 is after  
11 the hurricane. We had to fly 6-0 out of --

12 Q. Okay. After the last hurricane?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 MR. ARNAUD: Right. Because of damage on Galliano. So, I  
15 just wanted to clarify for the group. So, we use this term of  
16 Island 45.

17 BY MR. ARNAUD:

18 Q. But is it your understanding that it has been the same bird  
19 for the last five years, or that they alternate birds out in order  
20 to do mechanical work to them and timely scheduled maintenance, an  
21 that we use the term Island 4-5, but it could be -- many birds  
22 could fit that description; is that your understanding?

23 A. I was just thinking it was the same bird, but we always fly  
24 407, you know, or you may swap a bird out, because they all look  
25 the same on the inside and outside, and --

1 Q. Right.

2 (Crosstalk)

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- a 4-5 or a 4-4 numbers on it, you know?

5 Q. Yeah. And it's not something that you would need to know,  
6 because what we do is, we go off a designator of Island 4-4 or 4-5  
7 in this case. We don't look for a tail number. We identify it as  
8 Island 4-5. And the RLC may have and probably have swapped that  
9 out in order to conduct maintenance on the bird you were last  
10 using; would that be a correct statement?

11 A. Yeah. They may have. I don't know. I can't tell you if  
12 they did or didn't, because I don't look at no tail number.

13 MR. ARNAUD: Right. That's my point there. We just  
14 designated in general Island 4-5. Walter One with the S-76 is the  
15 same. I don't know if it's the same bird or not, but I know, with  
16 Walter One, it takes us where we need to go. So --

17 MR. SULLIVAN: Right.

18 MR. ARNAUD: -- I just wanted to clarify that. Wayne, I'm  
19 good. Thank you.

20 MR. MASON: Okay. Are there any further questions? If not,  
21 Trent, once again, I really appreciate your leadership and  
22 professionalism over this last week. I know it's been damn  
23 difficult. But thank you for being here today and answer these  
24 questions, and, well, hope you can have a good day.

25 For everybody else, we'll meet again here at 12:30 for the

1 next interview. So, thank you, gentlemen, very much, and  
2 appreciate it.

3 MR. BUSH: Thank you, Trent.

4 MR. FONTENOT: Thank you, sir.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #7: Would everybody be open to  
6 12 o'clock instead of 12:30?

7 MR. MELANCON: --yes.

8 MR. BUSH: RLC's good with that.

9 MR. MASON: Yeah, BSEE, you guys good with that?

10 MR. BATISTE: I can do it --

11 MR. MASON: You know what? I don't see any problems from our  
12 end.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #7: Okay, good. Well, now, the next  
14 interviewee will be calling in on the call-in number.

15 MR. MASON: Okay. So, I'll send off an updated invite for  
16 12 o'clock instead of 12:30. We'll all meet this way; and then,  
17 the interviewee, Mr. (indiscernible), will dial in, so we won't  
18 see him on camera, so -- all right?

19 MR. BATISTE: Okay.

20 MR. MASON: All right. Thank you, gentlemen.

21 MR. SULLIVAN: Have a good --

22 MR. MASON: Thank you, Trent.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #8: Thank you, Trent.

24 MR. SULLIVAN: Thank you.

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE OF  
SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR GALLIANO,  
LOUISIANA ON DECEMBER 29, 2022  
Interview of Trent Sullivan

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN23FA071

PLACE: via Microsoft Teams

DATE: January 5, 2023

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.



Lisa Sevarino  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of:

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\*

FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE  
OF SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR  
GALLIANO, LOUISIANA ON  
ON DECEMBER 29, 2022

\* Accident No.: CEN23FA071

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: JOHN AMELL, Sims Clerk  
Island Operating Company

via Microsoft Teams

Thursday,  
January 5, 2023



APPEARANCES:

WAYNE MASON, Operation System Manager  
Walter Oil and Gas

MIKE HANSON, Regional Aviation Safety Manager  
Bessie

NATE BRADLEY, Accident Investigator  
Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

KEN BINDER, Walter Production Department  
Walter Oil and Gas

TROY BUSH, Chief Pilot  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company

BRIAN SKELTON, Check Airman Instructor  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company

ERIC FONTENOT  
Island Operating Company

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of John Amell:	
By Mr. Mason	5
By Mr. Skelton	15
By Mr. Bush	17
By Mr. Binder	22
By Mr. Fontenot	25

I N T E R V I E W

(10:00 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. HANSON: Mike Hanson (ph.), Bessie, regional aviation  
4 safety manager.

5 MR. BRADLEY: Nate Bradley, accident investigator,  
6 (indiscernible) district.

7 MR. MASON: Great. Thanks, gentlemen. Ken, do you want to  
8 introduce yourself?

9 MR. BINDER: Good morning. Good morning, John. This is  
10 Ken Binder (ph.) with Water Oil and Gas in Houston in Walter  
11 Production Department (ph.).

12 MR. MASON: And, John, finally, I'm Wayne Mason at Walter Oil  
13 and Gas. I'm the systems manager, operation systems manager and  
14 the sims (ph.) manager, so -- and I'll be hosting the call today.  
15 What I want to do, John, is, I want to ask you a few background  
16 questions. Some of them may seem a little silly, but I want to  
17 get that background information. And then, I'm going to ask you  
18 to tell your story of what you experienced and witnessed, starting  
19 when you left RLC on Thursday morning of last week until the time  
20 you departed the facility, okay?

21 MR. AMELL: Yes, sir.

## INTERVIEW OF JOHN AMELL

22  
23 BY MR. MASON:

24 Q. Okay. Just to confirm, you are an employee of Island  
25 Operating Company, right?

- 1 A. Yes, sir.
- 2 Q. Okay, and how long have you been employed by them?
- 3 A. Twenty-five years.
- 4 Q. Twenty-five years?
- 5 A. Yes, sir.
- 6 Q. Okay. And what is your present position?
- 7 A. Sims clerk.
- 8 Q. Sims clerk? Okay.
- 9 A. Yes, sir.
- 10 Q. Any previous positions with the -- with Island Operating?
- 11 A. Yes, sir. I worked as a lead operator for (indiscernible)
- 12 301 for a good while.
- 13 Q. Okay. You passed 301. When you say a good while, how long
- 14 would that be, do you think?
- 15 A. Twenty years.
- 16 Q. Twenty years. Okay. All right. And how long have you been
- 17 working at West Delta 106?
- 18 A. Two years.
- 19 Q. Two years? Okay. And what is your normal work schedule on
- 20 West Delta?
- 21 A. Fourteen and 14.
- 22 Q. Okay, and Thursday morning was to be the first day of the
- 23 14-day hitch, right?
- 24 A. Yes, sir.
- 25 Q. Okay. And what are your normal work activities when you're

1 on hitch working at West Delta?

2 A. Keeping up the sims paperwork, keeping up with the production  
3 paperwork, (indiscernible) back on the deck a little bit whenever  
4 they need some help. That's about it.

5 Q. Okay. And prior to last Thursday, when was the last time you  
6 worked at West Delta?

7 A. Fourteen days before that.

8 Q. Okay. So, there was nothing unusual in the time you were  
9 scheduled?

10 A. No, sir, nothing unusual.

11 Q. Okay, great. Thank you for entertaining those questions.  
12 What I'm going to ask you to do now, John, is just recount last  
13 Thursday from the time you got on the helicopter at RLC, landed,  
14 what you saw and experienced, up until the time that you departed  
15 the platform. And then, what I'm going to do once you've told  
16 your story, we're going to have the interviewers go through and  
17 ask you a series of questions, and clarifications, and that kind  
18 of stuff. We'll do two rounds of that, and then that'll be it,  
19 okay?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Okay. So, go ahead and tell us about last Thursday.

22 A. It was just a regular crew change. I flew out of Galliano.  
23 I was on the helicopter sitting on the starboard side behind the  
24 pilot facing forward, Kendall was up front. Trent was in the back  
25 on the left-hand side, and Travis (ph.) was in the jump seat

1 facing me. I had the headphones on, and Kendall and the pilot  
2 were talking back and forth. I was just listening in. I don't  
3 think I said anything. Anyway, we -- uneventful flight. Came in  
4 and landed.

5 And we all got out the left side of the helicopter, grabbed  
6 our bags, and went down the stairs, and shook hands with  
7 everybody, and just a regular two- or three-minute handoff. And  
8 went inside the -- 106 living quarters downstairs. They have an  
9 upstairs sleeper and a downstairs office galley built in. Went in  
10 there. Van Johnson (ph.) was there sitting at the galley table  
11 working on his computer. And everybody was in the galley office  
12 area. And we were just doing (indiscernible). And it wasn't but  
13 a couple minutes later that the helicopter went to take off, and  
14 there was a loud bang, crashing noises. Of course, we all knew  
15 what that was, so we ran outside, and the helicopter was upside  
16 down.

17 Q. Hey, John, you're doing great. Any time you need to take a  
18 break for a few minutes, just let us know, okay? There's no --

19 A. The helicopter was upside down, and Trent said, go make a  
20 phone call. Call it in. So, I ran inside, and Dan's phone was --  
21 he was already trying to call Gary Shepherd (ph.). And then, he  
22 gave me his phone. Our phones -- I don't know if I was pushing  
23 the buttons wrong, so I was nervous. I don't know. But anyway,  
24 Gary Shepherd called on Dan's phone, and I told Gary what  
25 happened. And then, then I talked to -- and then, somebody from

1 Roadcraft called back in. And in the meantime, I was running out  
2 on the deck, and before I had got back out on the deck the first  
3 time, Trent, Travis, and --

4 Q. It's okay, John. Just take a deep breath and take the time  
5 you need. Take a nice, deep breath. We know this is difficult.

6 A. Anyway, they all sat on the life raft. They was already gone  
7 by the time I made it back out on the deck. And they were over  
8 there by where, I guess, the last place they had saw the fuselage  
9 floating upside down. And then, they rode over towards the  
10 floats, which were separated by, I don't know, a couple of hundred  
11 yards, it seemed like. And I asked Kendall, did they get anybody?  
12 He said, no. And then, they just came back, and we picked them up  
13 at the davit, and we were all in shock.

14 Q. Yeah. John, did you operate the davit?

15 A. I tried to see if Kendall was hitting the up button, and  
16 there was a little problem with the davit. It's not set up to  
17 retrieve. You have to rest the lines or something. And, of  
18 course, we was all free now. I can tell you that.

19 Q. Right. Okay. And so, you got the safety capsule back up to  
20 the deck and into the stored position; and then, what happened?  
21 Then, what did you do?

22 A. Well, I got that it was (indiscernible). Walking around the  
23 shop, looking over the side; and then, because another boat showed  
24 up, I can't remember -- there were several boats there, but the  
25 first boat showed up, and the Coast Guard helicopter showed up,

1 and the Coast Guard -- it wasn't a cutter. It was a rigid  
2 inflatable. And they was all circling around, and we were just  
3 talking about it in the galley and out on the deck, and there was  
4 just pieces of the helicopter everywhere. So, we were just in  
5 shock, talking about it among ourselves, and that's about it.

6 Q. So, John, when you were back in the galley, what did you and  
7 the other crew talk about? Do you remember?

8 A. Talked about David's wife. She was pregnant. And talking  
9 about how long I knew Robby (ph.).

10 Q. Okay. Did you talk at all about what you thought happened?

11 A. We did know that something similar to that happened two weeks  
12 before that, on, I guess it was the 15th, and we were just freaked  
13 out about that, because it happened --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. -- two weeks before, and it happened again.

16 Q. Yeah. Okay. And so, after the Coast Guard departed, what  
17 were you all doing?

18 A. Well, everyone was just all shellshocked. We didn't -- just  
19 sort of grouped up in the galley; and then, we split up a little  
20 bit, and go look over the handrail, and there were no -- we were  
21 just shellshocked.

22 Q. Yeah. Well, that's normal, and that's understandable, John.  
23 Is there anything else that you can recall that you might have  
24 missed?

25 A. I don't really remember anything being out of the ordinary as



1 far as the flight or the pilot. Evidently, he had crew changed us  
2 a couple of times, according to Kendall. I didn't really -- you  
3 know, the first day out, I'm already nervous in helicopters, so I  
4 didn't really realize that he had flown us before, but Kendal said  
5 he's flown us before. And I remember him saying he was living in  
6 Brazil, I believe, and -- but as far as anything being out of the  
7 ordinary, no, sir, I did not notice anything out of the ordinary.

8 MR. MASON: Great. Well, John, thank you for recounting all  
9 that. I know how difficult it is. So, I'm going to ask -- we're  
10 going to start asking you some questions, and some clarifications,  
11 and that type of thing. Again, John, if you need to take a break  
12 for a few minutes, just let us know. It's not a problem at all.  
13 Or, you know, take a deep breath and just answer the questions the  
14 best you can. And we're going to start with RLC and have them ask  
15 questions that they have. So --

16 MR. AMELL: Yeah, good.

17 MR. MASON: -- Troy, want to go ahead and start?

18 MR. BUSH: John, this is Troy Bush, the chief pilot for RLC.  
19 And apology. An incident of this magnitude almost seems a little  
20 trivial. Saying I'm sorry and 25 cents will get you a cup of  
21 coffee, as my grandmother used to say. So, what I do want to tell  
22 you is that everybody in this room, along with the NTSB, is driven  
23 to find out what happened on this incident so that we can avoid  
24 having this conversation again. I do understand your nervousness  
25 in being in a helicopter. I've been doing this 37 years. The

1 majority of it has been in the Gulf. And I know what you guys go  
2 through. I do. I was a lead pilot for many years and  
3 (indiscernible) many great relationships. So, I want you to know  
4 what I do understand what you're going through, and I don't want  
5 to add to that trauma or that distress, but I do want to ask you  
6 just a couple of questions so that it can help us, hopefully  
7 figure out, what happened, since there were no eyewitnesses, okay?

8 MR. AMELL: Yes, sir.

9 MR. MASON: All right.

10 BY MR. MASON:

11 Q. That morning, when you left -- when you were at the Galliano  
12 Heliport (ph.). did you happen to watch the safety video, or did  
13 you -- do you still have an active safety video card in your  
14 possession?

15 A. I have an active card.

16 Q. Okay, great. Perfect. And you've seen the new video with  
17 the new animation, and it talks about the New Life PFDs that we  
18 have, the swivlets (ph.)? Do you remember that?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. Okay, perfect, perfect. So, you're in the aircraft, and  
21 you're flying out and were getting ready to approach your  
22 platform. Think back to your platform. Just for orientation  
23 purposes, the crane pedestal, and boom are located on the west  
24 side of your platform, correct?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. And the, the helideck is located over on the southeast corner  
2 of your platform, correct?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Okay. That morning, the weather report was, winds are out of  
5 the east southeast at about 17 miles an hour. Do you remember --  
6 and I know you were sitting in the back right seat facing forward  
7 in the back of the aircraft. Do you remember, when you approached  
8 the platform, what the pilot did as far as, once he got close  
9 up -- I don't want to lead you on with any possibilities, so if  
10 you can just remember back to when you got close to the platform,  
11 what did the pilot do before landing?

12 A. The way I recall it is, he kind of came in and had to kind of  
13 slide to the left to come ion over the tip of the boom into the --  
14 at the heliport; and then, he had to reposition, because the  
15 stairs are at the southwest corner of the L4, I want to call it.

16 Q. Yes, sir.

17 A. So, we came in, and he acted kind of spinned [sic] it around  
18 a little bit so that we could access the stairs --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- away from the boom.

21 Q. Okay. Prior to making the approach over to the helideck, did  
22 he circle around the crane from the west to the south, and then  
23 come back around to the north and land in the east, or did he just  
24 come straight in and go off the tip of the crane boom to the  
25 helideck?

1 A. I don't remember him circling. He just --

2 Q. Okay. Just when he got there, So, when he got there, over  
3 the helideck, then went to set the aircraft down, do you  
4 remember -- and you may have to think about when you get outside  
5 the aircraft. Do you remember where the noise of the aircraft was  
6 positioned on the helideck?

7 A. It was facing back -- like, I got out. I climbed out the  
8 left-hand side so I didn't have to walk around in front of the  
9 helicopter. We all grabbed our bags out of the back. Then, I was  
10 walking towards the stairs, which, I'm, like I'm saying towards  
11 the southwest corner, and I remember, I turned to the right and  
12 (indiscernible) Texas headlock (ph.). And so, I guess he was  
13 facing back, not straight, not perfectly perpendicular with the  
14 heliport. Kind of cocked a little to the -- like, the nose was  
15 cocked a little bit to the north.

16 Q. Okay, to the --

17 (Crosstalk)

18 Q. Would it be -- and do you think that would be to the north,  
19 or would it be in the middle, or would it be southeast?

20 A. -- no, no. He was facing to the west, but it wasn't straight  
21 east-west. He was -- you know, the front of the helicopter was  
22 cocked a little --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- to give us a bigger gap to get to the stairs, so he  
25 wasn't -- the way I remember, he was not -- I don't know. The

1 front of the helicopter was turned away from the stairs to the  
2 right. He was facing forward. The pilot had turned to his right,  
3 pulled the front of the helicopter away from the stairs a little  
4 bit.

5 Q. Right.

6 A. Does that make any sense?

7 Q. Yes, sir. I was just going to ask you a different way, if  
8 the helicopter was facing the crane or the opposite of the crane.

9 A. Facing the crane.

10 Q. So, the nose of the helicopter was facing the crane?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Okay. So, if the nose of the helicopter's facing the crane,  
13 when you got your bags out, you would have walked straight from  
14 the baggage compartment to the stairs; is that correct?

15 A. Yes, sir. When I said it's facing the crane, it's facing the  
16 pedestal of the crane at the southwest corner, and the tip of the  
17 boom is at the northwest corner, and he was cocked a little bit on  
18 the heliport. He wasn't -- the front of the helicopter was angled  
19 more towards the tip of the boom to open up the area for us to get  
20 to the stairs.

21 Q. Okay. So, the nose of the helicopter was pointed towards the  
22 tip of the crane boom?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Okay. So, when you got your bags out of the baggage  
25 compartment, you were able to walk straight from the baggage

1 compartment to the stairs without going around the front of the  
2 aircraft; is that correct?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 MR. MASON: Okay. All right. Does anybody else have any  
5 questions? Okay.

6 MR. SKELTON: Brian.

7 BY MR. SKELTON:

8 Q. John, could you do me a favor? I know that we're not on  
9 video. Is there any way that you could take a piece of paper and  
10 draw the helideck; and draw the crane, how it's oriented in  
11 relation to the helideck; and then, draw the helicopter sitting on  
12 the helideck?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. Okay. And then, take a look at that, and make sure that you  
15 denote on the helideck where the stairs are and where the crane  
16 boom -- I mean, the flare boom is?

17 A. The flare boom?

18 Q. Well, I'd like for you to depict -- when you draw your  
19 helideck, think about where your flare boom is, your stairs are,  
20 and then the crane boom, all in relation to the --

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. And then, which way the helicopter was oriented if you think  
23 back to that.

24 A. Here. Let me get a piece of paper.

25 Q. Okay. I know these directions can be a little confusing.

1 You know, pilots seem them one way. And you've been out there  
2 100 times. You probably don't even think about directions anymore  
3 except when it's a cold north wind, probably.

4 A. -- it's not going to be to scale.

5 Q. That's fine.

6 (Crosstalk)

7 Q. I actually want you to just take a look at it just to make  
8 sure that your recollection is what you remember it as, and I  
9 think maybe if you draw it out, just to make sure that we're both  
10 talking about the same orientation of what you remember.

11 A. I got you.

12 Q. And whenever you're finished with that, just let me know, and  
13 we'll take a look at it together the best we can over not being  
14 able to see it.

15 A. Yeah. I've got it drawn out the way I recall.

16 Q. Okay. John, if I give you a phone number, could you take a  
17 picture of that and text it to me?

18 A. I sure can.

19 Q. Okay. Let me know when you're ready to write my phone number  
20 down.

21 A. Yeah, I'm ready right now.

22 Q. Okay. It's [REDACTED].

23 A. Got you. I don't think I can do it right now without hanging  
24 up.

25 Q. That's fine.

1 MR. SKELTON: Okay. That's fine, sir. We'll take a look at  
2 it whenever you get a chance to send it to us.

3 MR. AMELL: Yeah, I don't --

4 MR. MASON: Okay.

5 MR. AMELL: -- I don't want to hang up the phone while I'm --

6 MR. MASON: No.

7 MR. AMELL: -- talking to you.

8 MR. MASON: No, sir, you're fine. We'll take a look at it;  
9 and then, if we need to visit more about it, we'll get with Lane  
10 (ph.) and see what we can do. Does anyone else for RLC have any  
11 questions at this time?

12 MR. BUSH: (Indiscernible).

13 BY MR. BUSH:

14 Q. When you were down below, and I know a lot of these noises  
15 were in the back of your mind as you're talking. I've been on  
16 many crew changes myself down below and had the helicopter come  
17 and go. To the best of your recollection, if you can think about  
18 what you heard when you got below and you started to hear the  
19 aircraft spool back up, can you go through that for me?

20 A. I don't really recall anything about the pull-up part. You  
21 know, like you're saying, where I was sitting, where I sit all the  
22 time, is just about underneath the heliport, and they take off,  
23 and they land, and you're not really -- I didn't hear anything out  
24 of the ordinary that I would notice about the spool-up of the  
25 helicopter. I know that it picked up the RPMs to leave, and I



1 didn't notice anything out of the ordinary until I started hearing  
2 bang, crash, bam, you know, so --

3 Q. And that bang, you think that -- what do you think that bang  
4 was? Was it before you'd realized what is now the helicopter  
5 going overboard, or do you think that happened simultaneously, or  
6 what do you think that might be?

7 A. Well, my heliport skirting, you know, when it was happening,  
8 I mean, you could tell it was hitting the building. It was loud  
9 enough and you could feel the building shuttering, and it's really  
10 two separate buildings. There's a downstairs building with the  
11 office and the galley, and the upstairs sleeper, but they're  
12 sitting right on top of each other. They just seem connected.  
13 And you could feel that -- it sounded like it landed on top of the  
14 building.

15 Q. Yes, sir.

16 A. But looking at it, it didn't look like it hit the bop. It  
17 looked like the rotors hit the top of the building. The rotors  
18 never hit the top of the building and beside the building.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. But I don't remember anything out of the ordinary. When it  
21 spooled up, all I remember was, you know, it's (indiscernible)  
22 Bay. I've been flying over it for 40 years. It's all the same,  
23 you know. And then, it all went to hell.

24 Q. Yes, sir.

25 A. Boom, crash.

1 MR. BUSH: I can only imagine. That must have been pretty  
2 sickening. All right, John, thank you so much. Wayne, that's all  
3 for RLC at this time.

4 MR. MASON: Okay. Thank you, Troy.. All right. Would you  
5 want to go ahead and ask your questions, please?

6 MR. FONTENOT: Yeah. This is Eric Fontenot (ph.) with Island  
7 -- ask John anything. Troy, whenever you receive that picture,  
8 can you send that to the group, please?

9 MR. BUSH: Yes, yes. Yes, sir, I sure will.

10 ERIC: Okay.

11 MR. AMELL: -- number I can sent it to them to, but whatever  
12 works for you all.

13 MR. FONTENOT: No, that's probably good, John. You can send  
14 it to that number, and they'll disseminate it to the rest of us.

15 BY MR. FONTENOT:

16 Q. John, you mentioned that whenever you all landed, everybody  
17 had got out of the left side of the helicopter. You may have  
18 said, but I didn't catch it, what was you all's reason, what was  
19 your reason for that?

20 A. It just saves you a couple of steps going around the front of  
21 the helicopter, and sometimes, they have the helicopter scooted so  
22 far forward that it's hard to get around. I don't remember it  
23 being that far forward. It's just easier. The baggage  
24 compartment's on the left-hand side, so Frank went out that door,  
25 and Kendall went out the front door on the left-hand side, then

1 Travis went out the left-hand door, and then I followed him out  
2 last out the left-hand door. So, it's not --

3 (Loud background conversation)

4 A. Just trying to save a couple of steps in not trying to go  
5 around the front of the helicopter.

6 Q. Okay. Yeah, that makes perfect sense. So, once everybody  
7 retrieves their bags, their cargo, am I correct that you said,  
8 then, you all proceeded to the stairway because it was already on  
9 that side, or did you all have to walk around the front of the  
10 helicopter to get to the stairways?

11 A. No, sir -- the stairs over on the left-hand side of the  
12 helicopter.

13 Q. Okay. And you said that whenever the pilot came in and  
14 landed, he had to reposition. And I just want you to think about  
15 this as a clock, okay? So, when he landed, his nose would have  
16 been at 12 o'clock regardless of, you know, direction. When he  
17 repositioned, did he reposition to the 1 to 2 o'clock, or to the  
18 11 to 10 o'clock?

19 A. Now, you got me confused, there, (indiscernible). Someone  
20 said earlier the wheel was coming out of the east/southeast or  
21 something like that, and he came in into the wind, of course, and  
22 landed on the helicopter. And then, spun it almost -- I'm not  
23 going to say 180 degrees, but almost halfway back around.

24 Q. Okay. So, when he landed, did he reposition going to the  
25 direction to the right or to the left? If you remember?

1 A. To the right. The way I remember it, to the right. It's  
2 just -- if he went the other way, he would have had to go more  
3 than 180 degrees. He would have had to -- yeah, he turned it  
4 right.

5 Q. Okay. Let's see. I'm just going over a few notes, here.  
6 So, whenever you all were flying out, you were facing forward  
7 behind the pilot. Do you remember the sun being a factor  
8 traveling southeast at, you know, 8:20 in the morning?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay. It was a clear day, bright sun?

11 A. It was pretty clear, yes, sir, yes, sir.

12 MR. FONTENOT: Okay. Have you got anything?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #1: No.

14 MR. FONTENOT: No? Okay. That's it for Island for now.

15 Thank you, John.

16 MR. MASON: Okay. Thank you, Eric. Bessie, would you like  
17 to ask questions?

18 MR. HANSON: I'm Mike Hanson for Bessie. I don't have any  
19 questions at this time, thanks.

20 MR. MASON: Okay.

21 (Crosstalk)

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #3: No questions for me, thank you.

23 MR. MASON: Okay. Ken, do you want to go ahead and ask some  
24 questions for Walter Oil and Gas?

25 MR. BINDER: Okay. Hey, thank you, Wayne.

1 BY MR. BINDER:

2 Q. Morning, John. Hey, this is Ken Binder. I really appreciate  
3 your time this morning. This is going to help quite a bit. I  
4 just wanted to ask you a couple of questions about platform  
5 operation and a little bit about normal crew change out there, or  
6 the crew change on Thursday. I know you had just landed, but can  
7 you speak to what was going on on the platform when the helicopter  
8 landed?

9 A. It was pretty much straightforward, normal operations. You  
10 know, we went downstairs and only talked for a minute about  
11 relief, and I talked to Tim, who is my relief as sims clerk on  
12 (indiscernible) hitch, and just commented on how fast the code was  
13 the previous hitch, and -- but as far as anything out of the  
14 ordinary, I do not remember anything out of the ordinary, and the  
15 platform, you know, -- normal until we shut it in a few days later  
16 when a generator was hooked up.

17 Q. And that's -- so, the platform was producing -- when you  
18 landed on crew change day, do you know if it was venting when you  
19 were in the air?

20 A. No, sir. It was -- not as far as I know. It was --

21 Q. Okay. All right. I think you might have said earlier, and I  
22 wasn't clear, the position of the crane, can you tell us about the  
23 crane, where it was oriented, and tell us a bit about the crane?

24 A. Yes, sir. The crane was boom down in the cradle in storage  
25 position, I guess you'd call it, and the -- it's on the west side

1 of the platform running from the southwest to the northwest side  
2 of the platform --

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. -- on the west-northwest corner.

5 Q. But you were saying that it was in its boom rest and inactive  
6 when doing crew changes would be normal?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. All right. I know you were just coming there, but did you  
9 notice any vessels within our 500-meter zone?

10 A. Oh, I didn't notice any boats, or helicopters, or anything.

11 Q. Okay, thanks. So, a lot of times, when you do crew changes  
12 offshore, the guys that are heading home, their bags are at the  
13 base of the stairs typically. You kind of get an idea, you know,  
14 who's on tower there when you come on, because you see their bags  
15 first thing. Do you know -- can you talk about the baggage-moving  
16 process that would have happened on Thursday?

17 A. It was just typical, normal-operation crew change. I didn't  
18 notice anything out of the ordinary. As you said, there's  
19 usually, you step out the office door, and there's water tanks  
20 right there, and usually, that's where people put their bags,  
21 right there, so it's out of the walkway. And when it's close to  
22 the foot of the stairs, they're (indiscernible). I didn't count  
23 them or even notice them, but there was two or three bags. And I  
24 can't even remember if they were sitting there or if they already  
25 had the on their shoulder, because, you know, usually, if it's

1 crew change, we live there. We're not carrying a whole bunch --  
2 we're not service hands, so we're usually not carrying a bunch of  
3 stuff back and forth.

4 Q. Right. It was described that you keep a lot of your work  
5 gear there so you don't have to tote it back and forth and it's  
6 there when you need it. That was --

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. -- the case on Thursday. Okay. Yep. Okay. Understood,  
9 there. John, on your time out there, what -- excuse me. When  
10 you -- after the incident during your four or five days, do you  
11 know if anybody was injured on West Delta from the accident on?  
12 Were there any injuries other than the four men lost?

13 A. Not that I'm aware of. Not that --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. -- I'm aware of.

16 MR. BINDER: Okay. All right. Okay, John, I don't want to  
17 belabor it, but that's going to wrap with the questions that we  
18 have -- that I have right now.

19 MR. AMELL: Yes, sir.

20 MR. MASON: Okay. Thank you, Ken. I don't have any  
21 additional questions, so I'm going to go around the board again,  
22 see if anybody has follow-up questions, and we'll start with RLC.

23 MR. BUSH: No, sir, RLC has no more questions. Thank you  
24 again, John.

25 MR. AMELL: Yes, sir --

1 MR. SKELTON: Thank you.

2 MR. BUSH: Thank you, sir.

3 (Crosstalk)

4 MR. MASON: Okay. Island, any additional questions?

5 MR. FONTENOT: Island has one question, and it may have been  
6 asked, and I missed it, but --

7 BY MR. FONTENOT:

8 Q. John, do you remember any bird activity around the facility  
9 that morning?

10 A. I do not.

11 Q. Seagulls, or pelicans, or anything?

12 A. I do not. I didn't see any or notice any.

13 MR. FONTENOT: Okay. That's it from Island, Wayne. thank  
14 you.

15 MR. MASON: Okay, thank you. Bessie, any follow-up questions  
16 from your end?

17 MR. HANSON: This is Mike Hanson. I'm good. Thank you.  
18 Mike Hanson has no questions, no.

19 MR. MASON: Okay. So, if there are no questions, then --  
20 Ken, any additional questions?

21 MR. ARNAUD: Wayne, no. Thank you, though.

22 MR. MASON: Okay. I also don't have any. John, again, I  
23 really appreciate you taking the time to call in today and let us  
24 ask these questions and kind of give your story. I know it's very  
25 difficult to recount all this, but I can tell you that your



1 actions in response last Thursday and since then has been nothing  
2 less than professional. And as a representative of Walter Oil and  
3 Gas, I want you to know how much we appreciate your level of  
4 professionalism in the years that you've worked on our contract.  
5 So, with that, do you have any questions for the group, John?

6 MR. AMELL: No, sir. If you all have got any more questions,  
7 just get in touch with me.

8 MR. MASON: Okay. Will do. Okay. Well, this, then,  
9 concludes this interview. Again, thank you to everybody for  
10 making the time. Our next scheduled interview is at 2:30 Central  
11 Standard Time through this Teams meeting. So, with that, have a  
12 good day.

13 MR. AMELL: Thank you.

14 MR. SKELTON: Thank you, John.

15 MR. AMELL: Thank you.

16 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

17 MR. HANSON: Well, hell.

18 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: -- too? Did he go with his  
19 aunt? Because he didn't --

20 MR. SKELTON: Van was at his computer in the (indiscernible).  
21 So, the --

22 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

23 MR. SKELTON: Yeah. The guys that gave us the stories, did  
24 they say anything about walking in front of the aircraft to go to  
25 get their bags?

1 MR. BRADLEY: We walked -- the question was, did you walk  
2 around the front of the aircraft to go to the stairs?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #5: Trent said yes.

4 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah.

5 MR. MURPHY: So, everything that Trent told us supports that  
6 it was --

7 MR. BRADLEY: Correct.

8 MR. MASON: -- this way?

9 MR. BRADLEY: Correct. And I just sent you his drawing.

10 MR. MASON: And this is John?

11 MR. BRADLEY: This is John.

12 MR. MASON: John told us he landed this way, and then did a  
13 peddle turn, but the baggage compartment --

14 MR. BRADLEY: Well, that's --

15 MR. MASON: -- so they could get it, and everything that he  
16 said fit as far as his recollection. Whether it's correct or not,  
17 it's fitting in his brain.

18 MR. BRADLEY: Correct.

19 MR. MASON: But the other testimony that you got fits, as  
20 well? Is it also --

21 MR. BRADLEY: Correct.

22 MR. MASON: Okay. So, I would like to hear from the other  
23 guys saying what door they got out of, and they got out of the  
24 left door, they got their bags, and walked around the nose of the  
25 aircraft, and walked to the stairs, and did anybody get out of the

1 right door and have to go all the way around, and then all the way  
2 around back?

3 MR. HANSON: Because, you know, witness testimony is, they're  
4 not always accurate, so somebody's wrong. I don't know how they  
5 could both be right. It'd be -- and I don't know how we're going  
6 to say who's right or who's wrong, because we're dealing with  
7 people who're dealing with trauma. He believes everything that he  
8 said. He's -- even if he's wrong. If we -- if your crew has to  
9 land into the wind, and he's in that scenario, do you -- does RLC  
10 advocate the do a peddle turn to put the baggage compartment  
11 closer to the stairs?

12 MR. MURPHY: The only adjustment that we would expect him to  
13 have made is if the wind (indiscernible) more easterly than  
14 southeasterly, he would have made a right slide peddle turn to  
15 480, just like that is, to give the stairs more clearance from  
16 the --

17 MR. HANSON: I'm with you.

18 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah. If the wind would have been in such a  
19 direction -- logically, he would have either turned with the tail  
20 over here or the tail over this way. And I could see that if the  
21 wind was out this way, he repositioned this way, and then  
22 everybody got out, baggage compartment -- to get to the baggage  
23 compartment, but maybe -- who's next?

24 MR. MASON: So, let's see who's going to be the --

25 MR. BRADLEY: The tiebreaker?

1 MR. MASON: Yeah, who's going to be the tiebreaker; and then,  
2 let's go back to the one person who --

3 (Crosstalk)

4 MR. MASON: Let's go back to the odd man out and let a little  
5 bit of time there to go by. Let's sort of get the -- and just  
6 give him an opportunity to recall it correctly or --

7 MR. BRADLEY: John's emotional state is much more --

8 MR. MASON: Fragile.

9 MR. BRADLEY: -- fragile than Trent's. We'll see how Kendall  
10 does. I don't know what Kendall's -- I don't know what Kendall  
11 does, but he's got to be a D operator.

12 MR. MASON: Yeah, that's a clerk.

13 MR. BRADLEY: Right. Yeah. John was a clerk, and so --

14 MR. HANSON: Yeah, let's see, who was the guy that you guys  
15 talked to that we have the first testimony that said he landed to  
16 the southeast? Who was that?

17 MR. BRADLEY: Ben Johnson (ph.).

18 MR. HANSON: It was Ben.

19 MR. BRADLEY: There's a deep, what they call a deep sea well  
20 out there, and those are on various platforms, and they --

21 MR. HANSON: This one has the --

22 MR. BRADLEY: This has one. So, he was out there taking care  
23 of that one.

24 MR. HANSON: Okay. So, deep seawall, is that S-E-A or deep  
25 Charlie well?

1 MR. BRADLEY: Deep sea, S-E-A.

2 MR. HANSON: As in deep water --

3 MR. BRADLEY: Deep sea --

4 MR. HANSON: -- deep sea?

5 MR. BRADLEY: -- deep water, correct.

6 MR. HANSON: And it's -- okay, so, it's like a wellhead under  
7 water? Is that what we're talking about?

8 MR. BRADLEY: Um-hum.

9 MR. HANSON: All right. Because Dusty (ph.) told me about  
10 it, that this platform had a deep sea well. Is that subsea tie-  
11 in, or --

12 MR. BRADLEY: Subsea, yeah. I don't know if it's a tie-in or  
13 actual well, but Van was there. I mean, videos are big producers,  
14 and that's why they want to make sure they flow.

15 MR. HANSON: Yep. It sucks that the most useful part of what  
16 we're interested in is the part that's confusing right now.

17 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah. There's a discrepancy.

18 MR. HANSON: Yeah. But that's how these damn things go. But  
19 there's, you know -- it is what it is.

20 MR. MASON: Man, he's got it facing the crane in the  
21 northwest corner.

22 MR. HANSON: (Indiscernible).

23 MR. BRADLEY: Oh, did you send it to me?

24 (Crosstalk)

25 MR. MASON: I sent you the one from this morning. I sent you

1 Trent's. I'll send you this one now.

2 MR. HANSON: You're sending it to [REDACTED]?

3 MR. MASON: Whatever I -- you didn't receive it?

4 MR. HANSON: Huh-uh.

5 MR. MASON: I have [REDACTED] - --

6 MR. HANSON: Oh.

7 MR. MASON: -- [REDACTED]

8 MR. HANSON: Oh. I gave you my personal phone. Sorry about  
9 that. Let's transition to my work phone. Let me know when you're  
10 ready to copy.

11 MR. MASON: Stand by.

12 MR. HANSON: It's -- there's really no difference. I don't  
13 care. But -- but I didn't get that one, either. Give it some  
14 time.

15 MR. MASON: Which one would you prefer me to use?

16 MR. HANSON: The [REDACTED], the work number.

17 MR. MASON: Okay. Sending. -- woops. I didn't mean to do  
18 that.

19 MR. HANSON: All right. Here we go.

20 MR. MASON: All right --

21 MR. HANSON: This is from John, right?

22 MR. MASON: Is that the one with the nose in the corner?

23 MR. HANSON: Um-hum, facing the --

24 MR. MASON: Facing the crane?

25 MR. HANSON: Um-hum. All right. You ready for my number?

1 MR. MASON: Let me text (indiscernible) real quick.

2 MR. HANSON: You've got it.

3 MR. MASON: (Indiscernible).

4 MR. HANSON: Yeah, he's got -- that.

5 MR. MASON: Yeah, on 180 from that first one.

6 MR. HANSON: Say again?

7 MR. MASON: 180 out from the first one.

8 MR. HANSON: Yeah. But he said he landed into the wind and  
9 did -- he said repositioned, but he was doing a peddle turn to put  
10 the baggage compartment towards the stairs. That's important.

11 MR. MASON: Yeah. That'll make a lot of difference.

12 MR. HANSON: So, what's the (indiscernible) want the guys  
13 come out to --

14 MR. MASON: 34B.

15 MR. HANSON: 34B?

16 MR. MASON: Um-hum.

17 MR. BRADLEY: (Indiscernible).

18 MR. HANSON: What's that?

19 MR. BRADLEY: Are we logged out?

20 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Yeah.

21 MR. HANSON: I saw you. I didn't say a word until you  
22 clicked leave. Somebody saying we're still logged in?

23 MR. BRADLEY: Good Lord.

24 MR. MASON: All right. Your number again, please?

25 MR. HANSON: [REDACTED].

1 MR. MASON: [REDACTED]?

2 MR. HANSON: Uh-huh. Well, I sure hope John --

3 MR. MASON: Did you receive both those drawings or not? I  
4 sent you an email, I forwarded you an email, then I sent you  
5 John's drawing.

6 MR. HANSON: I'll tell you what sucks is having the exact  
7 same phone.

8 MR. MASON: And that supports everything he says, that  
9 drawing.

10 MR. HANSON: Yeah. I'll tell you this: If he's confused,  
11 he's very accurate in his confusion.

12 MR. MASON: Agreed. But man, that is just, I mean, that  
13 is -- downwind, 17 knots, but --

14 MR. HANSON: So, we were just talking about 3 or 4  
15 (indiscernible) skid height when you bring up the aircraft and  
16 over? That's what you're looking for?

17 MR. MASON: Yes, sir. Then, you do a hover check, which is  
18 next to your (indiscernible)? Sure.

19 MR. HANSON: When do (indiscernible) say the lateral off the  
20 deck?

21 MR. MASON: Never. There's -- if you can't sustain a 3-foot  
22 hover, set back down and take off some weight. There's no reason  
23 to go on. Now, you can take off at a 45 if you're trying to avoid  
24 an object in front of you.

25 MR. HANSON: I think our guy yesterday was trying to avoid



1 that flare boom.

2 MR. MASON: Okay.

3 MR. HANSON: And it wasn't -- it was more of a 45, not at the  
4 90-degree lateral.

5 MR. MASON: Yeah.

6 MR. HANSON: The -- pedals, they're in the aircraft, but are  
7 they detached? Or, the left seat?

8 (Crosstalk)

9 MR. HANSON: I'm sorry, the left seat?

10 MR. MASON: (Indiscernible)?

11 MR. BRADLEY: Correct. They're on the -- they're detached.

12 MR. HANSON: Yeah. So, they're detached, so I could -- all I  
13 wanted.

14 MR. MASON: They're locked in place, too.

15 MR. HANSON: They're locked in place?

16 MR. MASON: Yes.

17 MR. BRADLEY: That control, too, is not going connected.

18 MR. HANSON: Okay.

19 MR. MASON: Okay.

20 MR. BRADLEY: Or is it?

21 MR. MASON: It's not.

22 MR. HANSON: And there's just no -- it's just easier to go  
23 that way than to remove the pedals entirely?

24 MR. MASON: Correct.

25 MR. HANSON: CG issues?

1 MR. MASON: There's just a provision for it, so there's --

2 MR. HANSON: Yeah. That's --

3 MR. MASON: -- no reason --

4 MR. HANSON: -- the way it's done.

5 MR. MASON: Yeah.

6 MR. HANSON: That's the way it's done.

7 MR. MASON: Right. Otherwise, it's a pedestal footrest and,  
8 you know, that's another expense, you have to purchase one.

9 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

10 MR. MASON: And, like I said, (indiscernible) has a provision  
11 for locking them out, so might as well --

12 MR. HANSON: And then, we can't use it to put -- in for  
13 training.

14 MR. MASON: Yeah.

15 MR. HANSON: Okay. So, I got the drawing, the engineer  
16 drawing of the -- so, [REDACTED]?

17 MR. MASON: Look below that, and you'll see the, you'll see  
18 Trent's drawing, as well --

19 MR. HANSON: Oh, okay.

20 MR. MASON: -- in the email before that. And, yeah, I just  
21 sent it straight to you.

22 MR. HANSON: Let's see. Do you know Robert Duma (ph.)?

23 MR. MASON: Do you have a complete string, or just that one  
24 email?

25 MR. HANSON: Just the one email. Oh, there it goes. This

1 isn't from you guys. This is an entirely different thing.

2 MR. MASON: (Indiscernible).

3 MR. HANSON: Yeah, I'm getting --

4 MR. MASON: Let's try this. See if I got it to you.

5 MR. HANSON: Yeah. I don't understand how we stay connected.  
6 I was deliberately quiet until I saw you click lead.

7 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Yeah. And then, I -- but I'll  
8 make, when you totally close on or I totally close on --

9 MR. HANSON: I think it just came through, yeah. Yep, I got  
10 it.

11 MR. MASON: Okay.

12 MR. HANSON: Now, this -- is this the whiteboard drawing?

13 MR. MASON: That --

14 MR. HANSON: He signed it.

15 MR. MASON: Correct.

16 MR. HANSON: Very good. And, you know, this is one of those  
17 scenarios where you don't want to use -- you can't use rank, you  
18 know. Trent's probably squared away, so we'll probably, we'll  
19 listen to him. That ain't right.

20 MR. MASON: No. But I didn't lead him into that. I asked  
21 him to tell me what he did when he got there.

22 MR. HANSON: Yep. Yeah, I was paying attention to it all,  
23 and it was all squared away. And he was, you know, very accurate,  
24 and Trent sounded very accurate, as well. So, getting back to  
25 operations and how you train your pilots to approach, going to

1 land (indiscernible). And if the tail rotor is not an issue,  
2 you're just going to leave the aircraft right there. You're going  
3 to leave it up and running. You don't have to shut down for the  
4 guys to get out to grab their baggage. Avoid the tail rotor, go  
5 to the stairwell, and depart the helideck. What's the pilot's  
6 guidance on departing from the helideck? Nobody on the helideck,  
7 and --

8 MR. MASON: Correct.

9 MR. HANSON: Yeah?

10 MR. MASON: Yeah, he -- let's say that there wasn't anybody  
11 coming back after you get back on. The last person down, the  
12 pilot's watching him, and he's looking (indiscernible) that  
13 passenger check all latches and doors as he's walking around the  
14 aircraft. And he's looking at the helideck. There's nothing out  
15 of the ordinary. Guy gives the pilot a thumbs up. The pilot's  
16 looking at him. He gives him one back.

17 MR. HANSON: Let's rewind a little bit.

18 MR. MASON: (Indiscernible).

19 MR. HANSON: Is that the most experienced guy that gives him  
20 that thumbs up, or is it just --

21 MR. MASON: No, it's --

22 MR. HANSON: -- the last guy?

23 MR. MASON: -- the last guy.

24 MR. HANSON: Just the last guy? Pilot picks up, does a 3-,  
25 4-foot skid height hover, does a power check, three people,

1 100 pounds of bags. And I'll tell you this, the two bags that  
2 were recovered, one weighed about maybe 10 pounds. It was a CPAP  
3 machine. The other one was personal gear that didn't weigh  
4 anything more than 10 pounds. So, nowhere near 100 pounds. So,  
5 three pilots -- correction, three passengers, three bags of  
6 probably 30 pounds, sea level on a cool day, and 17  
7 (indiscernible). I don't expect power's going to be an issue.

8 MR. MASON: No. I'm looking at about 800 pounds of available  
9 payload just on average.

10 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

11 MR. MASON: That's after all bags and --

12 MR. HANSON: Yeah. He's almost though ETL, anyway.

13 MR. MASON: Yeah. Oh, he's (indiscernible) 17s. ETL --

14 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

15 (Crosstalk)

16 MR. HANSON: Yeah. Yesterday, we were two BOB (ph.), so 250  
17 less, and, I mean, there was no issues whatsoever. I looked. He  
18 wasn't anywhere near the yellow.

19 MR. MASON: Hm.

20 MR. HANSON: Now, if he landed downwind at that weight, it's  
21 still not anywhere close to being (indiscernible), so if he did  
22 turn 180 degrees with a 17 knot tailwind, the 407s a bear in  
23 20-knot tailwind.

24 MR. MASON: Yeah, because it's got boosted pedals. It's  
25 going to be --

1 MR. HANSON: With that one, it's not going to be an easy  
2 peddle turn --

3 MR. MASON: No.

4 MR. HANSON: -- no. Absolutely not. But that is so far out  
5 of pilot logic and training that if that is accurate, then they've  
6 got several problems -- or, add that to the list of problems.

7 MR. MASON: Yeah. If that is accurate, that's -- because  
8 now, I'm looking at -- if that is accurate, now, you're looking at  
9 maybe belt E (ph.) --

10 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

11 MR. MASON: -- with a 17 knot tailwind, and you start  
12 wallowing back there, getting --

13 MR. HANSON: I got myself into this position. Now, I've got  
14 to get myself out of it.

15 MR. MASON: And if you panic and stab left or right --

16 MR. HANSON: And it --

17 MR. MASON: -- yeah.

18 MR. HANSON: -- swaps ends on you.

19 MR. MASON: Right.

20 MR. HANSON: Yeah, yeah. And you try to get yourself out of  
21 it by reducing your power --

22 MR. MASON: Now, you're --

23 MR. HANSON: You know, and I hate to say this, but it's too  
24 soon to be talking about recommendations or suggestions, you know?  
25 But that (indiscernible), we need that thing so freaking bad.

1 It's there for these type of scenarios, and obviously, other  
2 scenarios. But one of the benefits of having it on board is so we  
3 can sit down and go, okay, let's see what happened from the  
4 pilot's perspective. We could -- it's like an open-book test.  
5 But here we are, and the (indiscernible) down in the Gulf  
6 somewhere. I just wish they were mounted a little bit more  
7 securely.

8 MR. MASON: How about even a separate retaining strap?

9 MR. HANSON: I was going to bring that up. For the cost of a  
10 piece of thin braided steel or a separate hard drive on somewhere  
11 more --

12 MR. MASON: That's what (indiscernible) so. They mount it  
13 low, then you put a lens up there --

14 MR. HANSON: Is that so? Well, I'll tell you this, they're  
15 an open-book test. Like, I did the (indiscernible) 109 that  
16 crashed on the rooftop of the Los Angeles Hospital, and that  
17 (indiscernible) stayed intact, and I saw it. I told that pilot,  
18 you didn't do anything wrong, and I could say it with confidence,  
19 because I saw everything he did. He did make a panic. You know,  
20 he popped (indiscernible) just a little bit, but he corrected  
21 himself, and the rotating controls assembly and tiller came  
22 undone.

23 MR. MASON: In Dallas, one of the Legacy (indiscernible)  
24 Dallas CareFlight, when they went to 109s, their rooftop -- one of  
25 their facilities is a hospital rooftop. First 30 days they had

1 it, they rolled one off on the parking garage below. He was in  
2 idle. He went to pull pitch and take off, and it got to rolling.  
3 (Indiscernible) parking garage.

4 MR. HANSON: -- wheels?

5 MR. MASON: -- wheels.

6 MR. HANSON: Wheels are great, you know, on their course.  
7 Yeah, rolling takeoffs are a wonder. Roll on landings. So, how  
8 many S-76s do you guys have?

9 MR. MASON: Two. One --

10 (Crosstalk)

11 MR. HANSON: -- and 407s?

12 MR. MASON: Twenty-four, I believe.

13 MR. HANSON: And you're still operating (indiscernible),  
14 right?

15 MR. MASON: We just have the one (indiscernible) for  
16 training.

17 MR. HANSON: That's what they start out in for training?

18 MR. MASON: Actually, it's a float ship. We actually operate  
19 a (indiscernible) float ship.

20 MR. HANSON: So --

21 MR. MASON: Or inflatable floats.

22 MR. HANSON: -- walk me through that. You use training to  
23 (indiscernible) in the winter?

24 MR. MASON: Um-hum.

25 MR. HANSON: (Indiscernible).



1 MR. MASON: Yep.

2 MR. HANSON: How cool is that?

3 MR. MASON: Very. If you'd like to try it sometime, we can  
4 make that happen.

5 MR. HANSON: I'll tell you this, I would kill to do that.

6 MR. MASON: Yeah?

7 MR. HANSON: Yeah, they don't have to -- well, it's  
8 (indiscernible) now, but --

9 MR. MASON: Yeah. (indiscernible) like to do it, give me a  
10 call and say, hey, is the float ship up?

11 MR. HANSON: I (indiscernible) myself into central view to be  
12 able to -- central region to be able to sell the NTSB on that, you  
13 know, (indiscernible). You can just show up.

14 MR. MASON: Yeah.

15 MR. HANSON: Well, I'll tell you what --

16 MR. MASON: On a social visit --

17 MR. HANSON: Yeah, on a social visit. It doesn't even have  
18 to be NTSB-related.

19 MR. MASON: There you go. Our (indiscernible) came out of  
20 the Army, Apache pilot, and didn't have any -- no 135 time, no  
21 offshore time. So, he came down here, and they put  
22 (indiscernible) took him offshore.

23 MR. HANSON: Nice, nice.

24 MR. MASON: -- some approaches.

25 MR. HANSON: Okay. So, this -- we're getting -- when we

1 (indiscernible) had that question. When you're setting up the  
2 approach for the platform, what do you advocate? Walk me through,  
3 this is the approach angle I want you to use.

4 MR. MASON: Okay. We consider, first of all, (indiscernible)  
5 for cranes and stairs. We're going to set up our approach first  
6 (indiscernible) in the wind, and we do that after we do a recon of  
7 the platform, see if there's anything going on. Then, we're  
8 looking for obstacles, Cranes (indiscernible). We worry about the  
9 stairs once we get over the helideck. We don't worry about those  
10 yet, because we're (indiscernible) at the aiming circle. You'll  
11 find the pattern background no less than 50 feet, no less than 60  
12 knots (indiscernible) established on file. Once you establish on  
13 file, you reduce it to a 300 foot per minute descent, and you can  
14 start backing your speed off to maintain your sight picture.

15 MR. HANSON: Okay. What's that sight picture? Do you want  
16 me to keep the pad in sight?

17 MR. MASON: Yes. It differs depending on your sitting  
18 height, okay? Mine's a little bit lower, because I'm a little bit  
19 taller, so -- and then, once you -- and you're -- it's a -- it  
20 shouldn't require a power change, okay? You should be set up  
21 in -- once you start up that 300 foot per minute stint, that you  
22 ride it all the way down. Terminate over the aiming circle at  
23 3- to 5-foot hover. Now, you're looking for your stingers, and  
24 you position your tail accordingly.

25 MR. HANSON: Okay. Hm. Steep approach versus shallow?

1 MR. MASON: Steep approach, correct, so you have an escape  
2 route. Because you get low and slow, especially in a 407. Lower  
3 (indiscernible) rotor system.

4 MR. HANSON: You don't -- yeah.

5 MR. MASON: You've got nothing.

6 MR. HANSON: Yeah. At least, by the time you realize it and  
7 react, you've already lost your RPM, and you're going --

8 MR. MASON: At least, if you're in a steep approach,  
9 (indiscernible), okay, when you flare a four seven or just S turns  
10 and a flare or an auto --

11 MR. HANSON: Auto?

12 MR. MASON: -- man, you spool that thing right back up --

13 MR. HANSON: Is that so?

14 MR. MASON: So, yeah.

15 MR. HANSON: So, when you do your autos with a turn, you've  
16 got to be really on the (indiscernible) fast to --

17 MR. MASON: You can't overspeed it.

18 MR. HANSON: -- keep from overspeeding it, yes, sir.

19 MR. MASON: Yeah, it's not like a 206, where you set it and  
20 forget it, you know?

21 MR. HANSON: Smoke a cigarette, decide what you want --

22 MR. MASON: -- your coffee.

23 MR. BRADLEY: It's like --

24 MR. HANSON: Yeah, we've got to get to the bottom of this,  
25 and to the best of our ability, determine what was the likely

1 approach in.

2 MR. MASON: The only other approach that even I would  
3 consider, depending on the winds, just because of my level of  
4 experience, but I would even come in -- the winds are east-  
5 southeast at 17. I would maybe come in here like this and slip it  
6 in just like that. So, you're still keeping aircraft  
7 (indiscernible). The only reason I don't advocate coming over the  
8 deck, like one witness says, if an agent quits, now, you're going  
9 to get obstructions.

10 MR. HANSON: Yeah, hep.

11 MR. MASON: So, you either want to come around, and now,  
12 you've got this flare moving to contend with, and you keep it  
13 steep and set it down right under the wind. Come in here, slip it  
14 in as much as -- you know, once you're committed, you can't get  
15 over the --

16 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

17 MR. MASON: -- or the other one, like I said --

18 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

19 MR. MASON: -- about that one, too. That, with a 17 knot  
20 tailwind, that would be such a handful, they would say, he can  
21 (indiscernible) he couldn't get it down.

22 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

23 MR. MASON: I mean, I --

24 MR. HANSON: Both their guys said it was normal.

25 MR. MASON: Normal, and it's not going to be normal --

1 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah.

2 MR. MASON: -- in a 17-knot tailwind.

3 MR. HANSON: Yeah. Yeah, when you make your approach, and  
4 then do your peddle turn-around --

5 MR. MASON: Yeah. Because that's got -- you know, that  
6 horizontal stabilizer, it's got winglets on it. It's going to  
7 catch air.

8 MR. HANSON: It's a barn door.

9 MR. MASON: Yeah.

10 MR. HANSON: Got your vertical find and --

11 MR. MASON: Yeah, and your vertical find.

12 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

13 MR. BRADLEY: That's close to --

14 MR. MASON: Yeah.

15 MR. HANSON: So, you say (indiscernible) got hydraulic boost?

16 MR. MASON: Um-hum. Bell (ph.) thought that was going to be  
17 the answer that every BMS operator would want, so -- and then,  
18 they wanted to put an autopilot in it, so he boosted the peddles,  
19 and it's like trying to hold (indiscernible) drink a Dr. Pepper --

20 MR. HANSON: Yeah, yeah, it's --

21 MR. MASON: It's -- yeah. It gets real ugly if you're not on  
22 top of it.

23 MR. HANSON: I tried to get myself out to a -- well, a friend  
24 of mine flies EMS, and he flies a 407. I tried to get out to it  
25 prior to, but it just didn't happen. I wasn't hoping, but I was

1 counting on it taking a little bit longer to find the wreckage, so  
2 I'd had it all set up. Now, it'll be after the fact.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #6: (Indiscernible)?

4 MR. HANSON: Yes, sir. Thank you. This is the last 407 that  
5 I did. That guy had a (indiscernible). They were --

6 (Crosstalk)

7 MR. HANSON: -- doing training. So, that's actually at their  
8 training academy in California.

9 MR. MASON: Yeah?

10 MR. HANSON: And he was being evaluated. The evaluator was  
11 outside watching this happen. He had an engine failure.

12 MR. MASON: Was there anybody on the line?

13 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Oh.

14 MR. HANSON: Are you going to get (indiscernible)? What?

15 MR. MASON: What?

16 MR. HANSON: If you've got --

17 (Crosstalk)

18 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: -- picture.

19 MR. HANSON: -- propane, you're going to get killed.

20 MR. MASON: How high up was he?

21 MR. HANSON: Not too high. I think it was 5, 4 of 5 feet.

22 MR. MASON: Oh, okay. Yeah.

23 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

24 MR. MASON: So, he's not volunteering for that duty anymore.

25 MR. HANSON: No, no. I think he's done, yeah. So, I like

1 that picture so much, I replaced my dog with it.

2 MR. BRADLEY: -- it was outlined.

3 MR. HANSON: -- yep.

4 MR. BRADLEY: (Indiscernible)?

5 MR. HANSON: So, at this academy, is the, whatever  
6 California's big electrical company is, it's all the stuff you  
7 need to train on everything there.

8 MR. MASON: Yeah.

9 MR. HANSON: It's --

10 MR. MASON: Oh, they're the ones --

11 MR. HANSON: I don't think he passed his check ride.

12 MR. MASON: They're the ones that are involved in all those  
13 lawsuits because they didn't trim their waterways.

14 MR. HANSON: Probably.

15 MR. MASON: Yeah, those ones that started --

16 MR. HANSON: Right.

17 MR. MASON: -- the company years ago, they traced all those  
18 wildfires back to them.

19 MR. HANSON: Is that so?

20 MR. MASON: Um-hum.

21 MR. HANSON: Now, that's a job. You've seen that rig, right?

22 MR. MASON: That's impressive.

23 MR. HANSON: The bandsaw -- or, the big rotating saw that  
24 they have that they trim the trees with?

25 MR. BRADLEY: I almost got to do that.

1 MR. HANSON: Yeah? I'd do it for a little while. There's  
2 other guys who (indiscernible) fire.

3 MR. BRADLEY: -- do that for a little.

4 MR. HANSON: Did you?

5 MR. BRADLEY: We did that and a ping pong ball --

6 MR. MASON: Yeah?

7 MR. BRADLEY: -- with (indiscernible) injector, and --

8 MR. HANSON: What's that set on?

9 MR. BRADLEY: -- box.

10 MR. HANSON: Okay.

11 MR. BRADLEY: Set up in a helicopter, in the back seat, and  
12 they would inject that material in that ping pong ball, and they  
13 would inject it on the side, and there was like a delay time  
14 fuse --

15 MR. HANSON: Yeah?

16 MR. BRADLEY: -- get to the ground, and it would just ignite.  
17 And you'd go along there and just drop your little ping pong  
18 balls, and it would light a line of fire.

19 MR. MASON: How cool is that?

20 MR. BRADLEY: For a controlled burn. I had them up  
21 (indiscernible) fire one day.

22 MR. HANSON: -- there out of South Carolina. And -- let's  
23 see. What were the circumstances? The Blackhawks went past, an  
24 SIP was flying. He lowered (indiscernible), and he settled into  
25 the trees. And so, you're watching the whole thing on the



1 (indiscernible) imagery, And you see the trees come up, and you  
2 hear the front seat, or the tank commander, telling you, up, up,  
3 up, up, up, and he starts getting tree parts flying up and right,  
4 and he went straight down. And the craziest thing, he went  
5 straight down, so kind of scratch your head, go, now, wait a  
6 minute, he's clearly chewing up trees, and he managed to maintain  
7 peddle trim that well? Come on, now. Came to find out one of the  
8 trees went up in between the tail rotor assembly and the vertical  
9 fin and trapped that -- it couldn't go either way. And three of  
10 the four (indiscernible) like a fork. Looked just like that.

11 And another tree he hit fell, fell through the rotor system,  
12 and landed on the left wing, and added about 1,000 pounds to that  
13 aircraft, and that helped bring him in. Oh, yeah. It was -- and  
14 the craziest thing, with all these trees around it, the blades  
15 were ground down to the nubs, and the stainless steel hitting  
16 edges of all four blades were wrapped around the masses like  
17 spaghetti. And up on one tree -- so, the front of the aircraft is  
18 like this. There's a tree right here sticking straight up, and  
19 about, oh, about 7 feet up above the ground was this piece of the  
20 aircraft wedged into the tree. So, like, I need to see that  
21 piece, as trivial as it is.

22 So, we get -- we had a ladder. We climbed up, pulled it out,  
23 and I knew exactly what it was. It was a little piece of aluminum  
24 about yay big that goes in front of the hinges for the front door.  
25 And it's a wire deflector so the cable won't knock out the hinges

1 and out goes your door, right? So, I'm like, well, that's crazy.  
2 In order for that to be impaled onto that tree, that aircraft's  
3 attitude would have to be like this. That doesn't make any sense  
4 whatsoever. And I said, and if that were the case, then blade  
5 marks would be all on this dirt right here.

6 So, looking at the tree, it came crystal clear that one part  
7 of that tree is like something hit it, maybe an APC, because it's  
8 out on the range. And that tree was badly damaged; and then, it  
9 started to repair itself, right? The bark started to grow around  
10 it. And then, we put it all together. The blades were hitting  
11 that tree, and it fell over right where it was damaged, and it  
12 pressed itself onto that cabin and got that piece impaled on it.  
13 When the blades became nothing, the tree actually popped itself  
14 straight back up. Isn't that something? Wow. Crazy things  
15 happen in these --

16 MR. MASON: The next interview's at 2:30. I'm going to go to  
17 my office so I can email this picture to the group --

18 MR. BRADLEY: Do you want to do it, then, for now, 2:30?

19 MR. HANSON: Yeah, let's do that. Can we --

20 MR. MASON: Sure.

21 MR. HANSON: -- with you?

22 MR. MASON: Sure.

23 MR. HANSON: That way, we can interview you, and --

24 MR. MASON: Can I -- give me five minutes so I can email  
25 this --

1 (Crosstalk)

2 MR. MASON: -- email this to the group. Did you want to go  
3 get your Starbuck --

4 MR. HANSON: Nah, no.

5 MR. MASON: It's right there.

6 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: There's one right --

7 MR. HANSON: Yeah, no, I'll pass.

8 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: -- or, if you --

9 MR. HANSON: No.

10 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: -- give me your order, I'll go  
11 grab it.

12 MR. HANSON: Don't do that --

13 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: I really will.

14 MR. MASON: You saw that look. He wants you --

15 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Give me your --

16 MR. MASON: -- to go get it.

17 (Crosstalk)

18 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Give me your order. I'll go  
19 get it. Hey, I'll --

20 MR. HANSON: (Indiscernible).

21 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: -- give you one, too.

22 MR. HANSON: Okay.

23 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Let's do yours.

24 MR. MASON: I'll be right back.

25 MR. HANSON: Grande flat white decaf. Thank you. Now, the

1 embarrassing part is I have no cash.

2 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: That's no problem.

3 MR. BRADLEY: That's going to work out in our favor.

4 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: I (indiscernible) to you  
5 earlier, and I hate when I have to work into that one, because it  
6 usually knocks me out.

7 MR. BRADLEY: Is that so?

8 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: But I'm to the point that I  
9 have (indiscernible), so I don't mind going to get your coffee.

10 MR. BRADLEY: Well, thank you very much.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #7: -- want to.

12 MR. HANSON: Pardon me? Yeah.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #7: (Indiscernible).

14 MR. HANSON: Yeah. All right.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #7: That's fine. You all do --

16 MR. HANSON: That's --

17 MR. BRADLEY: I just want to make sure all the answers match.

18 MR. HANSON: Yeah. Well, (indiscernible). How's your other  
19 investigation going? Is it -- I mean, are you guys pretty much at  
20 the trailing edge of it and --

21 MR. BRADLEY: I wouldn't say we're at the trailing edge --

22 MR. HANSON: Okay.

23 MR. BRADLEY: -- but that one's a little more -- since we had  
24 witnesses, we had the pilot's statement, we're a whole lot further  
25 along with understanding it that we're 90 percent confident it was

1 dynamic rollover. How he got in a dynamic rollover is --

2 (Crosstalk)

3 MR. BRADLEY: -- remains to be understood, but --

4 MR. HANSON: But at least you got the pilot to talk to,  
5 right?

6 MR. BRADLEY: Exactly.

7 MR. HANSON: Is he being open and forthright?

8 MR. BRADLEY: Yes.

9 MR. HANSON: Good.

10 MR. BRADLEY: He actually said that when he picked up and  
11 then over, he drifted, he got distracted, had a gust of wind while  
12 he was distracted, and he actually drifted backwards. And then,  
13 the next thing he knew, he was hooked and rolling. But --

14 MR. HANSON: This was on the platform, as well?

15 MR. BRADLEY: Um-hum, same 24-foot heliport. There's that  
16 same (indiscernible) you probably took. It's about that tall.  
17 Got a little --

18 MR. HANSON: Is it a brass globe around it?

19 MR. BRADLEY: Brass globe around it, same exact light.  
20 Hooked the right rear seat of his.

21 MR. HANSON: And his is a 206?

22 MR. BRADLEY: His was a 206.

23 MR. HANSON: okay.

24 MR. BRADLEY: And there's a little scuff mark about that high  
25 up on the light, like this tall. About three-quarters up on the

1 light, there's a little scuff mark on it.

2 MR. HANSON: Well, I'll tell you, there's no scuff mark on  
3 the light that I took. There is -- the brass globe is bent over.  
4 And the blue lamp inside -- or, the blue globe inside was  
5 shattered. But the frame, the protector of the globe is bent.

6 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah. I mean, we -- I just don't understand  
7 the lack of airmanship that it takes to --

8 MR. HANSON: To drift that much?

9 MR. BRADLEY: -- to drift that much.

10 MR. HANSON: And that low? You know, you've got --

11 MR. BRADLEY: Yes.

12 (Crosstalk)

13 MR. BRADLEY: Right. You're supposed to get 35 foot of --

14 MR. HANSON: You're not going to --

15 (Crosstalk)

16 MR. HANSON: -- hit anything at 3 to 5 foot. And now, I will  
17 tell you this, you've got to, you have to look at all the facts.  
18 There's not a whole lot of reference out there. I mean, that  
19 pad's so small, all your --

20 MR. BRADLEY: It depends on which way you're facing.

21 MR. HANSON: That's all.

22 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah. Well, true, true. If he was facing  
23 towards that crane pedestal, you've got lots of reference.

24 MR. HANSON: Hell, yeah, you do.

25 MR. BRADLEY: Now, if you're facing up that way, and all

1 you've got it --

2 (Crosstalk)

3 MR. HANSON: -- you've got nothing.

4 MR. BRADLEY: You've got a little less.

5 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

6 MR. BRADLEY: You know, we teach them, you have to look out  
7 on horizon, obviously, but you also have to keep --

8 MR. HANSON: Yeah, yeah.

9 MR. BRADLEY: -- what's right here on a 24-foot deck in your  
10 peripheral --

11 MR. HANSON: Absolutely.

12 MR. BRADLEY: -- for reference.

13 MR. HANSON: Yeah, yeah. Because you can't stay focused in  
14 on that little area, or you're going to lose something that you  
15 need --

16 MR. BRADLEY: Right.

17 MR. HANSON: -- out -- you know, you've got to train yourself  
18 to look in and out, look in and out.

19 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah.

20 MR. HANSON: You know, I didn't realize how important that,  
21 the circle, what do you call it? The aim point, the aim circle?

22 MR. MASON: Aiming circle.

23 MR. HANSON: Aiming circle? I mean, that's reference right  
24 there.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #7: Some of them are different.

1 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #7: This one has the white deck with  
3 the black circle. Some of them have a solid whatever color circle  
4 painted in the middle like outside --

5 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #7: -- with a border around that. But  
7 the majority, a lot of the platforms out there have some type of  
8 aiming circle.

9 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #7: Some of them, over time, have --

11 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #7: -- deteriorated, and you can't even  
13 see them. They're all just covered with seagull shit, and you  
14 can't see them. But that is --

15 MR. HANSON: Is there any type of program to keep birds off  
16 of platforms?

17 MR. BINDER: They've tried everything under the sun over --

18 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

19 (Crosstalk)

20 MR. HANSON: Birds are birds, aren't they?

21 MR. BINDER: Birds are birds. They put an isle wall there,  
22 the isle statue --

23 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

24 MR. BINDER: -- with the (indiscernible), and it works for,  
25 you know --



1 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

2 MR. BINDER: -- but them seagulls, they -- they're  
3 consistent.

4 MR. MASON: So, in a given years' time, how many bird strikes  
5 do you guys deal with? Some? A lot?

6 MR. BINDER: Some.

7 MR. MASON: Okay.

8 MR. BINDER: Actually, pretty few out there.

9 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Can I get you something?

10 MR. BINDER: No, I'm good.

11 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: You sure?

12 MR. BINDER: Well, you can, but not from Starbucks. Bloody  
13 Mary. Yeah. We actually -- as it pertains to on the  
14 (indiscernible) bird strikes, it's actually fairly uncommon.

15 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

16 MR. BINDER: They're --

17 MR. HANSON: Enroute's probably one of them?

18 MR. BINDER: Enroute along the beach. You know --

19 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

20 MR. BINDER: -- for some reason, you know, you run over  
21 (indiscernible) airspeed. On the platform, in 20 years, I've hit  
22 two, and both of them were in the same hitch.

23 MR. HANSON: Really?

24 MR. BINDER: And that's the only two I've ever hit offshore.  
25 Both of them in '76.

1 MR. HANSON: Did they go through the acrylic?

2 MR. BINDER: No, they just hit the --

3 MR. HANSON: Okay.

4 MR. BINDER: They're trying to fly --

5 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

6 MR. BINDER: -- out, or --

7 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

8 MR. BINDER: -- in, or whatever.

9 MR. HANSON: Any of you guys ever hit a pelican?

10 MR. BINDER: That's a big bird.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #7: Yes. We hit one in flight.

12 Cruising airspeed, hit one. Went through the wind screen.

13 Luckily, it was on the copilot's side, and nobody was sitting

14 there. Through the headrest, and impacted into the back seat back

15 there.

16 MR. SKELTON: I had a white pelican go over the right wing of

17 the King Air going into Salt Lake City. So, the (indiscernible)

18 gathering of white pelicans. They love it. They live on the

19 Great Salt Lake, and every day, they fly to Utah Lake and feed,

20 and then they go back (indiscernible). That's what they do now.

21 And that thing, never saw it. I was in the right side.

22 (Indiscernible) was in the left seat. And we both saw it at the

23 same time as it went across the wing. That's the only time we saw

24 it. And I only had enough time to do that.

25 MR. BINDER: Right.

1 MR. SKELTON: It was already gone over the wing.

2 MR. BINDER: Wow.

3 MR. SKELTON: Man, I'm glad we didn't touch that thing,  
4 because those birds are big --

5 MR. BINDER: Yeah.

6 MR. SKELTON: -- and that would have done some damage.

7 MR. BINDER: Yeah, they (indiscernible) aircraft for- --

8 MR. SKELTON: Oh, yeah.

9 MR. BINDER: -- ever, and it still --

10 MR. SKELTON: -- yeah, something about bird guts, man, they  
11 stink.

12 MR. BINDER: Yes, indeed. It's -- like I said, all this shit  
13 is --

14 MR. SKELTON: Well, here's a question for you. Walter,  
15 (indiscernible) customers, and they own those rigs. How many  
16 other customers do you have that own oil rigs that you service?

17 MR. BINDER: Five or six.

18 MR. SKELTON: Really? So, in total, how many platforms do  
19 you guys go out to?

20 MR. BINDER: Oh, good Lord.

21 MR. SKELTON: Twenty or more?

22 MR. BINDER: Oh, hundreds.

23 MR. SKELTON: Easy?

24 MR. BINDER: Hundreds, and --

25 MR. SKELTON: Serious?

1 MR. BINDER: Oh, yeah. I'll bet, if you add them all up, it  
2 would --

3 MR. SKELTON: Because you're going from south (indiscernible)  
4 all the way that way. You're not just this one sector, like --

5 MR. BINDER: Oh, no.

6 MR. SKELTON: -- sector six.

7 MR. BINDER: Yeah. No, it's from the south -- well, north --

8 MR. SKELTON: Up here.

9 MR. BINDER: Up there (indiscernible) City Canyon. We do a  
10 little bit in that water, Grand Canyon. A little bit of Walker  
11 Ridge, (indiscernible). We don't do a whole lot out here. This  
12 has kind of dried up over the years. But probably 90 percent of  
13 the work that we do anymore is in this region.

14 MR. SKELTON: Okay.

15 MR. BINDER: We still have, obviously, work all the way  
16 through here --

17 MR. SKELTON: Yeah.

18 MR. BINDER: -- platform --

19 MR. SKELTON: Yeah.

20 MR. BINDER: -- stuff like this. This platform's not very  
21 far off the --

22 MR. SKELTON: Yeah, 106, because it's, what, 20 miles out?

23 MR. MASON: That was the --

24 MR. BINDER: It's 20 some odd miles from Venice (ph.).

25 Here's 105. I don't see 106. I don't see 106 right now.

1 MR. MASON: Okay.

2 MR. BINDER: So, it's not that far from the mouth of the  
3 river, but the --

4 MR. MASON: Yeah, --

5 MR. BINDER: Yeah. From here to here, it's --

6 MR. SKELTON: Yeah. And the red -- Venice, and Galliano, and  
7 Mutton Cove, those are your bases?

8 MR. BINDER: Yes, sir, Venice, Galliano, Mutton Cove. We had  
9 that Sabin (ph.), and then Rockport down there in Texas.

10 MR. SKELTON: Yep.

11 MR. BINDER: And one in California.

12 MR. HANSON: Now, see, there's Texas City right there.

13 That's where I was raised.

14 MR. SKELTON: (Indiscernible).

15 MR. HANSON: Oh, yeah.

16 MR. SKELTON: -- plants.

17 MR. HANSON: There's still a lot of refinery. I mean,  
18 there's refineries up and down the coast. I'm just used to it  
19 being, you know, from what I saw there.

20 MR. SKELTON: (Indiscernible).

21 MR. BRADLEY: How many of these do you do a year?

22 MR. HANSON: Helicopter crashes, or --

23 MR. BRADLEY: Just aviation in general.

24 MR. HANSON: Oh. Good God.

25 MR. BRADLEY: Crashes.

1 MR. HANSON: Well, I'll tell you what. That was my biggest  
2 mistake in getting this job. I didn't realize how many accidents  
3 I would be investigating in a year's time. Twenty-five or 30,  
4 about, a year. But not all of -- all of those, we average about  
5 five, worst case seven, fatal accidents, but that's pretty  
6 individual. So, there's 50 of us. So, that's the number of --

7 MR. SKELTON: Still --

8 MR. HANSON: That is a shitload. And they take forever. I  
9 mean, prepare yourself, but we'll be a while on this, but the  
10 report's going to be a good report, you know. You know, Todd's a  
11 squared-away guy, so I don't think it's -- I can't speak for him,  
12 but it is not unusual for a case to go over a year.

13 MR. BRADLEY: Oh, yeah. We -- when we had the fatality with  
14 the guy that -- with the incapacitation in January 14, we worked  
15 with Mitch Gallo --

16 MR. BINDER: Yeah.

17 MR. BRADLEY: -- and that was eight, 10 months before we got  
18 to see the video, and the report of accident just came out --

19 MR. BINDER: Yeah.

20 MR. BRADLEY: -- a month ago --

21 MR. SKELTON: Did that -- that happened in --

22 MR. BRADLEY: Yes. We actually recovered that one.

23 MR. BINDER: Yeah?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER #8: -- tell him how you -- what you  
25 recovered. This is --

1 MR. MASON: Where you found the SDM card (ph.)?

2 MR. BRADLEY: No. We found everything but the SDM card. So,  
3 that entire accident scene was in the area of this room.

4 MR. BINDER: Really?

5 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah, the marsh, vertically. So, we get out  
6 there, and it's just a hole. The only thing sticking up was a  
7 vertical fin and (indiscernible) sticking out on mud. It's out in  
8 the middle of the marsh. I did -- was out there digging out.

9 MR. HANSON: Wow.

10 MR. BRADLEY: About 14, 16 feet is where we found the  
11 (indiscernible) from minute one, but everything was so covered in  
12 mud, it was hard to tell what was where. So, got it all taped up,  
13 brought the TW (indiscernible). And the next day, he's washing  
14 and rinsing. He sends me a little picture. He says, is this what  
15 you're looking for? I go, oh, man, yeah, that's --

16 MR. HANSON: That's what I'm looking for.

17 MR. BRADLEY: -- that's (indiscernible) I'm looking for. So,  
18 obviously, that little SD card was missing, but we had the hard  
19 drive. Sent it to --

20 (Crosstalk)

21 MR. HANSON: -- yeah.

22 MR. BRADLEY: And they were able to get video footage off of  
23 it, which is amazing in itself, because we got -- he left  
24 Morgan City area -- well, it's not even --

25 MR. SKELTON: Patterson.

1 MR. HANSON: Okay, I see Morgan City, yeah.

2 MR. BRADLEY: He left Patterson. He was going out here  
3 somewhere. He had stopped in Venice to drop somebody off. He was  
4 passing over Galliano to get back to Patterson. So, we got about  
5 five, 10 minutes' worth of video from the time he took off in  
6 Patterson, and the video cut. We had a couple of minutes of video  
7 of him landing on a platform offshore, and it cut again. And  
8 then, it picked back up as he was passing over the airport in  
9 Galliano. So, we actually had the footage from the time he passed  
10 over Galliano to four seconds before impact.

11 MR. MASON: Wow.

12 MR. BRADLEY: Without that, we'd be --

13 MR. HANSON: Now, we're talking incapacitation. Do they  
14 think he fell asleep? Did he have a heart attack?

15 MR. BRADLEY: It wasn't a heart attack scenario, because  
16 there was no onset indications of a problem.

17 MR. HANSON: Okay.

18 MR. BRADLEY: It was just like somebody turned off his light  
19 switch.

20 MR. HANSON: Yeah. Is that -- so, head dropped; and then,  
21 the aircraft came out of the sky?

22 MR. BRADLEY: He was flying along, and he's -- there was  
23 traffic coming out of (indiscernible). He looks back down, and  
24 his head comes up. And I don't remember if he was talking on the  
25 radio or messing with the Cyclick (ph.), but then, all of a



1 sudden, his head just --

2 MR. HANSON: Is that so?

3 MR. BRADLEY: -- falls back, and you see both of his hands  
4 just kind of let go of the Cyclick and --

5 (Crosstalk)

6 MR. HANSON: -- the Cyclick?

7 MR. BRADLEY: -- you could see him relax.

8 MR. HANSON: Yeah?

9 MR. BRADLEY: And the aircraft starts a roll; and then,  
10 actually, in almost does a complete barrel roll as it --

11 (Crosstalk)

12 MR. BRADLEY: -- goes down. And it cut off four seconds  
13 before impact --

14 MR. HANSON: Well --

15 (Crosstalk)

16 MR. BRADLEY: -- getting him out, but --

17 MR. HANSON: I'll tell you what -- yeah. Our recorders' lab,  
18 they operate on an interesting set of rules, because if you have  
19 no reason to see that video, you're not going to see it.

20 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah.

21 MR. HANSON: You know? And even us investigators, we have to  
22 write in a request to see it. Because what they'll do is, they'll  
23 get -- they've got like a short list of people who are authorized  
24 to, they call it, audition the video, and if you're not on that  
25 list, and you're not, you have to give them justification as to

1 why you need to watch the video. And even with this Agusta 109 on  
2 the roof of the Kent Hospital, (indiscernible), and they told me  
3 how it was going to go, and I was like, oh, wait a minute. I'm  
4 not included on that. No, you're not. I don't understand that.

5 MR. SKELTON: -- until they make --

6 MR. HANSON: Yeah, exactly.

7 MR. SKELTON: -- a decision, then --

8 MR. HANSON: Yeah.

9 MR. SKELTON: -- you don't get to watch it.

10 MR. HANSON: Well, we're going to tell you what we see, is  
11 exactly their answer when I ask them exactly that question. And I  
12 said, okay, so, obviously, we're missing something here. Oh,  
13 well, you can put in a request, and if your request is justified,  
14 you can audition the video. And I was like, okay. And then, I  
15 found out that if I needed to, if I needed to, I could bring a  
16 subject matter expert with me. So, I told them, I said, well, I'm  
17 not bringing in the -- well, I've not checked out any Agusta 109.  
18 I need their check airman to come with me so he can tell me what  
19 I'm seeing. You know, I don't know that cockpit. So, I was able  
20 to bring in a check airman, and we both got to watch. But even  
21 then, so, you know, here I am.

22 MR. BRADLEY: Leave your paper behind.

23 MR. HANSON: Hell, yeah. So, I leave there, I'm like, okay,  
24 so, what do I have? You know.

25 MR. BRADLEY: (Indiscernible).

1 MR. HANSON: Exactly. That sucked. And the good news was  
2 there wasn't anything on the video that I needed for the case,  
3 because it was --

4 MR. BRADLEY: Yeah. Anything --

5 MR. MASON: Van did not see a helicopter --

6 MR. HANSON: Nothing?

7 MR. MASON: He was going off of what Trent had told him.

8 MR. BRADLEY: -- everything else?

9 MR. MASON: Yeah.

10 MR. BRADLEY: (Indiscernible)?

11 MR. MASON: You know something I don't know?

12 MR. HANSON: Nothing. No, no --

13 MR. BINDER: No, he just --

14 MR. HANSON: He does that shit all the time.

15 MR. BINDER: Yeah?

16 MR. HANSON: He'll look at me. He's like your mom. They  
17 already know the [REDACTED] answer (indiscernible). Anything you  
18 want to tell me? Are we --

19 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)  
20  
21  
22  
23  
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25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE OF  
SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR GALLIANO,  
LOUISIANA ON DECEMBER 29, 2022  
Interview of John Amell

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN23FA071

PLACE: via Microsoft Teams

DATE: January 5, 2023

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area. To the right of the redaction, a small portion of a white rectangular box is visible, containing a horizontal line.

Lisa D. Sevarino  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE  
OF SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR  
GALLIANO, LOUISIANA ON  
ON DECEMBER 29, 2022

\* Accident No.: CEN23FA071

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: KENDALL ARNAUD, Operator  
Island Operating Company

via Microsoft Teams

Thursday,  
January 5, 2023

APPEARANCES:

FABIAN SALAZAR, Air Safety Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

TROY BUSH, Chief Pilot  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

JASON MELANCON, Director of Operations  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

WAYNE MASON, SEMS Manager  
Walter Oil & Gas

KENNETH MEYER, Production  
Walter Oil & Gas

MICHAEL HANSON, Aviation Safety Manager  
Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE)

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Kendall Arnaud:	
By Mr. Bush	4
By Mr. Melancon	9
By Mr. Bush	11
By Mr. Meyer	13
By Mr. Mason	17
By Mr. Bush	17

I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. BUSH: I'm going to ask you a couple questions. There  
3 weren't any eyewitnesses to the actual event since we weren't  
4 there. I don't want to add to the trauma or the stress that I  
5 know you're going through, brother, but I do need to ask you a  
6 couple of questions so that we can try to paint a picture of what  
7 took place out there.

8 To start with --

9 MR. ARNAUD: Yeah, just to give you a heads up, I'm trying to  
10 listen as best I can, but it sounds like you're -- like I'm  
11 getting an echo from you. I don't know -- I'm kind of -- I'm  
12 having a hard time hearing you.

13 MR. BUSH: Okay. We'll turn down our volume just a little  
14 bit. Maybe that'll help. Let me know at any time you need me to  
15 stop or say something again.

16 MR. ARNAUD: Yes, sir.

17 MR. BUSH: Okay.

## INTERVIEW OF KENDALL ARNAUD

18  
19 BY MR. BUSH:

20 Q. You were sitting up front in the left front seat, as you  
21 stated before. Do you remember where Trent, John, and Travis were  
22 sitting?

23 A. Yes, sir. I was -- I'm the front left. Trent was sitting on  
24 my side in the back. Mr. John was sitting directly on the side of  
25 Trent to the right. And Trent -- I'm sorry -- Travis was sitting



1 in between Mr. John and the pilot in the seat facing the rear of  
2 the helicopter.

3 Q. Seat facing backwards. Okay. Thank you very much. That  
4 helps out a lot.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Who was that?

6 MR. BUSH: That was Travis.

7 BY MR. BUSH:

8 Q. Thanks, Kendall. That helps out a lot.

9 Now I don't know if you have a piece of paper and a pen or  
10 pencil there in front of you. We've found that those kind of  
11 helps out because we want to ask you about your platform out  
12 there, West Delta 106, and sometimes drawing it out helps  
13 recollections. Or you may -- if you don't, we'll work through it.  
14 But thinking about --

15 A. No, I have a paper.

16 Q. Okay. All right. If you could, we'd like to -- just for you  
17 to make a sketch, and then I'm actually going to give you a phone  
18 number to have you text it to me after we get finished. But if  
19 you could draw out the helideck and then the crane in relation to  
20 the helideck, where the gantry was and where the boom was.

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. Where the stairs are on the helideck and where the flare boom  
23 is on the helideck. Once you get that all sketched out and after  
24 you look at that, to the best of your recollection, if you can  
25 then draw, and it doesn't have to be a work of art, the

1 helicopter, how it was oriented on the helideck after it landed.

2 A. Okay. I can do that.

3 Q. Okay. I'll give you a couple of minutes to work on that and  
4 then when you're finished, I'd like to ask you a couple of  
5 questions about what you're looking at.

6 A. Okay.

7 Q. Okay. Just take your time.

8 A. I'll be drawing it the best I can. I'm no artist.

9 Q. Hey, I hear you, brother. That's -- I have no creative side  
10 to me either.

11 A. Okay.

12 Q. No rush. No rush at all though.

13 A. Okay.

14 Q. Okay. I'm going to talk about -- I'm going to describe a  
15 picture of the helideck or actually the platform that we're  
16 looking at, and maybe that'll help you and I, even though we can't  
17 see -- you can't see my picture and I can't see your drawing,  
18 maybe that'll help us make to sure that we're both oriented the  
19 same way, okay?

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. So if we're looking at the platform -- I'm looking at a  
22 picture. It looks like to me that the crane gantry and the boom  
23 are located on the west side of the platform. Is that correct?

24 A. Well -- yeah, I've always thought that was like north,  
25 northwest.

1 Q. Northwest? Okay.

2 A. I mean, it's on the crane house side.

3 Q. Okay. Northwest side. And then on the -- on that more  
4 northern side you've got boats against the rail, but then the  
5 helideck is going to be over on the east or southeast corner of  
6 the platform. Is that what your drawing depicts?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Okay. And then underneath that southeast corner as well  
9 you've got the living quarters and the galley buildings, the elder  
10 buildings underneath that helideck?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Okay. Up on top, and then there's another elder building  
13 going across shooting off to the north side of that helideck. I  
14 don't know if you remember that or even drew it. Maybe you can  
15 recollect it.

16 On the helideck, do you have the stairs drawn or where the  
17 stairs would be on the helideck?

18 A. Yes, sir. The stairs is, if you're on the helideck, I have  
19 it -- well, like I said, the whole direction of -- I have it on  
20 the -- it's hard to explain -- the, I guess you would go north --

21 Q. That's fine.

22 A. -- side?

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. Like closest towards the crane house.

25 Q. Yeah. More towards the crane side, over there in that

1 corner?

2 A. Yes, sir. Towards the -- it's on the crane side all the way  
3 to the -- I guess, depending on which way you're looking at it, if  
4 I'm sitting in the helicopter, the way the helicopter was facing,  
5 it would be on the right side.

6 Q. Okay. All right. Very good. So now we look at the  
7 helicopter and how it's oriented on the helideck. Can you tell me  
8 is the helicopter facing the crane or facing away from the crane?

9 A. It's facing away from the crane.

10 Q. Facing away from the crane. Is the helicopter nose in the  
11 corner opposite of the corner where the stairs are? Over to  
12 the -- over by the flare boom?

13 A. Yeah. It's facing -- it was more, it was more like -- it's  
14 facing the opposite side of the crane, but it's more in the  
15 middle-ish of the two corners.

16 Q. Okay. Perfect. Perfect. All right. And you were sitting  
17 up left front with the pilot. So when you got out of the aircraft  
18 after he rolled it to idle, tell me -- walk me through, if you had  
19 to describe it, how you went and got your bags and then what you  
20 did to get downstairs.

21 A. Okay. I got out, took my life vest off, everything, buckled  
22 it up. Went -- just walked to the compartment that's on the same  
23 side of the helicopter. I grabbed my bag, walked around the front  
24 of the helicopter. Got on the side of the helicopter, and the  
25 staircase right there that's facing towards the crane, just walked

1 down the stairs.

2 Q. Okay. Now if you -- so I'm going to pause you right there  
3 before you go down to the stairs. You're facing the crane, so if  
4 you were to look to your right, that's where you would have seen  
5 the tail boom, the tail rotor, over to your right, correct?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Okay. Perfect. Kendall, I'm going to give you a phone  
8 number. If you wouldn't mind, just write down, and if you  
9 wouldn't -- whenever we get finished, if you wouldn't mind just  
10 taking a picture of your drawing and text it to me? And then I'm  
11 going to email it to everybody on the call, okay?

12 A. Okay. Sounds good.

13 Q. Okay. My phone number is [REDACTED]. And I also want you  
14 to keep that number in your phone. If you ever need anything --  
15 if you need to talk about this, don't want talk about this or if  
16 you want to talk about anything that's going on with RLC, I hope  
17 that you'll use that phone number, okay?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. All right. Thank you, Kendell.

20 MR. BUSH: Does anybody else --

21 MR. MELANCON: Yes, sir.

22 MR. BUSH: Kendell, Jason Melancon, our director of  
23 operations, would like to ask you a question or two.

24 MR. ARNAUD: Yes, sir.

25 BY MR. MELANCON:

1 Q. Hey, good afternoon, Kendell. Man, my condolences for all  
2 this. I know you all good friends and it's all tough on all of  
3 us. Like Troy said, we're here to help, here to figure this out  
4 so we can go forward in a positive direction.

5 My question is have you ever flown with this pilot before, by  
6 chance?

7 A. Yes, sir. I believe this was our third time maybe, maybe  
8 fourth time, flying with him.

9 Q. Okay. Best of your recollection, how was his airmanship and  
10 his pilot skills and techniques?

11 A. The first time I flew with him, I mean, we -- I like to get  
12 to know my pilot. I ask him, you know, I ask him all kind of  
13 questions just -- it eases my mind some. But he seemed like -- I  
14 mean, you could tell he'd flown before. He didn't seem nervous.  
15 He didn't seem jittery. I mean, I don't, I don't have any -- I  
16 didn't have any issues with him beforehand.

17 Q. Okay. No problems taking off, no rough landings, no out of  
18 the ordinary stuff?

19 A. No, not at all. The only thing I would mention is that I  
20 would notice like when he's flying and if he's looking down at his  
21 radar, you could tell if he's a little -- they following that  
22 line, a little off course, he would try to reposition himself and  
23 it kind of felt like a sudden jerk instead of an ease into it.  
24 But, I mean, that's really -- that didn't bother me, but that's  
25 just something I noticed.

1 Q. Okay. A sudden jerk in, like in flight from Point A to Point  
2 B?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Okay. All right. That's good to know.

5 MR. MELANCON: That was really the only question I think I  
6 had. I'll (indiscernible) --

7 MR. BUSH: Kendall, one more if you don't mind. This is Troy  
8 Bush again.

9 BY MR. BUSH:

10 Q. Just -- I'm looking at my notes here, and we've asked all of  
11 the folks this. Again, we know that you were down below in the  
12 galley or in the living quarters and -- but we all know what these  
13 helicopters sound like when they spool up and they lift off and  
14 when they depart.

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. You had mentioned that he had spooled up and you -- so let's  
17 take it from there. Why don't you tell me again -- and again, I'm  
18 sorry for making you go through this one more time. But what I'm  
19 looking for here is, if you can, what you heard, what you thought  
20 it was, and the timing in between what you're about to describe,  
21 if it was instantaneous, simultaneous, a second or two, whatever  
22 you want to describe to me is whatever that timeframe might be.  
23 Okay?

24 A. Yes, sir. I mean, it happened all so fast. We was, I mean,  
25 we're in the quarters talking and, I mean, you -- we're right

1 underneath the heliport so you can hear it spool up for takeoff.  
2 And we heard him spool up and we -- you can just tell that  
3 difference in sound from the heliport, helipad, to when it lifts  
4 off. And we -- you can hear that difference in sound. And we  
5 heard it drop back down, and then that's when we heard the noise  
6 change to like a, I guess you could say like a winding noise. And  
7 that's when that (indiscernible) start to hit the living quarters.  
8 And that was within -- man, from when we hit the -- when we got  
9 into the quarters, maybe 5 minutes.

10 Q. Okay. When it lifted and you thought, because of your many  
11 times, just like all of us, that he's lifting off, did you hear a  
12 bang or anything at that point before you --

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. Was that bang associated with, you believe, the impact  
15 or did it happen before the impact?

16 A. I believe that the boom that we heard was him coming back  
17 down onto the heliport.

18 Q. Okay. All right.

19 A. That's what I think.

20 MR. BUSH: Okay. Anybody else?

21 All right, Kendell. Thank you so much for answering our  
22 questions.

23 Wayne, that's all we have at this time.

24 MR. MASON: Okay. Thank you.

25 Mr. Salazar with NTSB, do you want to ask your questions now



1 or would you prefer to wait till last?

2 MR. SALAZAR: I don't have any questions of him, sir.

3 MR. MASON: Okay. Great. Thank you.

4 Island, do you want to ask your questions?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We're going to pass over to BSEE right  
6 now. We may have a couple of follow-up questions after going  
7 through our notes.

8 MR. MASON: Okay. Great.

9 BSEE, do you want to go ahead and ask your questions, please?

10 MR. HANSON: This is Mike Hanson, aviation safety with BSEE.  
11 I don't have any questions.

12 MR. MASON: Okay.

13 RODNEY: This is Rodney (indiscernible). I do not also have  
14 questions at the moment.

15 MR. MASON: Nathan, any questions?

16 MR. HANSON: Nathan Bradley? Yeah, he's unable to answer his  
17 Zoom.

18 MR. MASON: Okay. Ken, would you like to go ahead and ask  
19 some questions for Walter, please?

20 MR. MEYER: I do. Thank you.

21 BY MR. MEYER:

22 Q. Hi, Kendell. Ken Meyer (indiscernible). We really do  
23 appreciate you coming in today. It's been rough and, like Wayne  
24 said, we absolutely admire the professionalism of the crew. It's  
25 amazing, it's amazing. But, you know, just had a few basic

1 questions. I'm going to focus more on the operations of the  
2 platform. That's kind of the vein that my questions will be in.

3 Do you know if the -- excuse me; I'm sorry, guys. Do you  
4 know if the platform was shut in or producing when the bird  
5 landed?

6 A. We was flowing. We was producing.

7 Q. You were flowing? Okay. You may have not noted at the time,  
8 but after being there for several days, can you speak to how the  
9 operation was going? Was it problematic, as it can be sometimes,  
10 or was it pretty steady?

11 A. It was pretty steady from the time we got there to the time  
12 we left, thank God. There was no issues. There was normal  
13 flowing operations the whole time.

14 Q. Do you know, on the morning when Island 45 came in, were we  
15 venting at that time?

16 A. No, sir, we wasn't. When we arrived in the front, that --  
17 I've known other helicopters that have that issue. But that's the  
18 first thing I look at coming in, is to see if anything's coming  
19 out the flare boom, and I'm pretty positive to say that there  
20 wasn't -- it wasn't flaring at all.

21 Q. Right. So just for the others in the group there. So when  
22 you say flaring, we don't flare out a flame, but we do vent. Even  
23 though we use kind of like an old style or old time term of  
24 flaring, it's really venting without a flame, right?

25 A. Yes, sir. I apologize. I'm --

1 Q. No, no, no.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. No, no.

4 A. We was -- there was no venting, no venting at all.

5 Q. All right. And did you notice the position of the crane  
6 that's over on the west side?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. What was it?

9 A. The crane was in the cradle. It was down.

10 Q. She was in the cradle? Okay. All right. Did you notice if  
11 there were any vessels within the 500-meter zone of the platform?

12 A. No, there were -- I didn't notice any that were near us.

13 Q. All right. All right. Did you say -- you did say that you  
14 were up in the front left pilot or passenger seat. Did you have  
15 headphones on and able to communicate with the pilot on the way  
16 out?

17 A. Yes, sir. I wore headphones and we was talking, having  
18 normal conversation.

19 Q. Okay. So can you explain how you all handled the  
20 conversation for a green deck for a landing that morning?

21 A. Yes. He actually called David, I want to say it was exactly,  
22 it was exactly 18 minutes out.

23 Q. He called 18 minutes out. Okay.

24 A. And David answered the radio and gave him a green deck to  
25 come on in. And when we got closer, I don't remember if he called

1 again. To be honest with you, I'm not sure if he called again,  
2 but he did call and talk to David and got the green deck coming in  
3 18 minutes out.

4 Q. Eighteen minutes out. Okay. Good. That's helpful. All  
5 right. And so you landed, you guys grabbed your gear and went  
6 downstairs, and you were saying that you just had a handshake and  
7 have a good days off for the guys that were leaving. Did you  
8 notice the cargo that they had with them ready to load?

9 A. It looked like typical crew change bags. Once again, one had  
10 a, I want to say, like a backpack, crew bag type backpack, and one  
11 or two duffle bags. Nothing out of the ordinary, just normal crew  
12 change baggage.

13 Q. Okay. All right. And this flight was Galliano to West Delta  
14 and back. There was no stops along the way?

15 A. No, sir.

16 Q. Okay. All right. During your time on West Delta here after  
17 the incident, were you injured in any way?

18 A. No, sir, no injury.

19 Q. Do you know if anybody else was injured other than, of  
20 course, the four or five people that we lost?

21 A. No, sir. I don't believe anybody was hurt in any way.

22 Q. Well, that's the grace of God there. Okay.

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 MR. MEYER: All right. Well, I -- Wayne, I think I'll hold  
25 for right now. Okay?

1 MR. MASON: Okay. Kendell, I've got one additional question.

2 BY MR. MASON:

3 Q. Do you recall at the time you landed seeing any birds or  
4 nests or anything like that around? Pelicans or seagulls or  
5 anything like that?

6 A. No, sir. I don't recall at all. I don't remember seeing  
7 any.

8 MR. MASON: Okay. Great. Thank you very much.

9 So we're going to circle back around for follow-up questions.

10 RLC, would you like to start with follow-up questions?

11 MR. BUSH: Yeah, Wayne.

12 BY MR. BUSH:

13 Q. Kendall, do you remember the carry-on baggage that you saw,  
14 were they small duffel bags, backpacks, about the size of a  
15 backpack?

16 A. If I'm not mistaken, I want to say one of them -- one bag was  
17 a school bag type backpack.

18 Q. Yes, sir.

19 A. One of the ones you put like a -- you strap on both  
20 shoulders. And I'm almost positive that the other two were about  
21 medium size duffel bags that you throw over your shoulder and  
22 carry up.

23 Q. Yes, sir. All right. Sounds good.

24 MR. BUSH: That's all I had, Kendall. Thanks again for your  
25 time.

1 Wayne, RLC has no more questions.

2 MR. MASON: Okay. Great.

3 Mr. Salazar?

4 MR. SALAZAR: No, sir. I have no questions.

5 MR. MASON: Okay. BSEE, any follow-up questions?

6 MR. HANSON: No follow-up questions.

7 MR. MASON: Okay. Ken, any follow-up questions?

8 MR. MEYER: Thanks, Wayne, but no, I do not have any.

9 Thanks.

10 MR. MASON: Okay. So, Kendall, we'll go ahead and we'll  
11 conclude this interview. Once again, Kendall, thank you so much  
12 for taking the time to come in today and for the professionalism  
13 you've shown from the incident last Thursday and all the way  
14 through this week. And I know you were a great performer even  
15 before that, but last week, in particular, I really appreciate  
16 your professionalism and your willingness to work through the  
17 questions to help us discover what happened that day. So --

18 Do you have any questions for the group, Kendall?

19 MR. ARNAUD: No, sir. I don't have anything.

20 MR. MASON: Okay. All right. Well, I wish everybody to have  
21 a good day and --

22 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

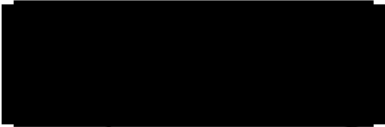
IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE OF  
SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR GALLIANO,  
LOUISIANA ON DECEMBER 29, 2022  
Interview of Kendall Arnaud

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN23FA071

PLACE: via Microsoft Teams

DATE: January 5, 2023

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kay Maurer  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE  
OF SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR  
GALLIANO, LOUISIANA ON  
ON DECEMBER 29, 2022

\* Accident No.: CEN23FA071

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: RUSSELL BEGNAUD, Pilot  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC  
Headquarters  
Broussard, Louisiana

Friday,  
January 6, 2023



APPEARANCES:

FABIAN SALAZAR, Air Safety Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

TROY BUSH, Chief Pilot  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Russell Begnaud:	
By Mr. Salazar	4
By Mr. Bush	6
By Mr. Salazar	7

I N T E R V I E W

INTERVIEW OF RUSSELL BEGNAUD

BY MR. SALAZAR:

Q. So to start with, sir, would you mind telling me your name and then spelling it out?

A. Russell Begnaud, R-u-s-s-e-l-l, B-e-g-n-a-u-d.

Q. Okay. And who are you employed by?

A. RLC.

Q. Okay. What do you do for RLC?

A. I'm a company pilot, also a company check airman and instructor.

Q. What aircraft do you -- are you rated in?

A. The 206 and the 407.

Q. Okay. And so you're an instructor and a check airman in those aircraft?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Very good. How long have you been employed with RLC?

A. Twelve years.

Q. Twelve years. Impressive. Tell me -- if you don't mind, let's go back to the beginning of your student pilot days and walk me through, Rusty, your experience.

A. All right. Well, did flight training at what was Vortex Academy down in Iberia. And that eventually got bought by Bristow Academy and I instructed there after I got my certificate. And then, 2010, I wound up getting hired here and been working here

1 ever since.

2 Q. Very good. Very good. Are you the head of the training  
3 department?

4 A. No, sir.

5 Q. Who would that be?

6 MR. BEGNAUD: Troy --

7 MR. BUSH: Oh, that's -- the director of training, both Rusty  
8 and Brian, who was here before, are both co-assistant directors of  
9 training.

10 MR. SALAZAR: Okay, there you go. Okay, there you go.

11 BY MR. SALAZAR:

12 Q. Tell me a little bit in general terms about the training  
13 program. So explain to me what a new hire pilot goes through when  
14 he gets employed by RLC.

15 A. Everything required by the training manual. They get there  
16 on day 1 and take care of all the HR stuff and then, day 2, we  
17 start doing ground training. And before they show up, they've  
18 already done computer-based training, and we start covering all  
19 the subject areas of this list that's in here.

20 Q. Okay. And you bring up the training manual. That training  
21 manual, has it been reviewed and approved by the FAA?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. All right.

24 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah, that's one thing I need to look at.

25 Electronic copies would be good as well.

1 MR. BUSH: I'll get that to you.

2 MR. SALAZAR: All righty.

3 BY MR. SALAZAR:

4 Q. So they go through CBT, they go through ground training, they  
5 go through flight training --

6 A. Well, we do -- well, we do flight one.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And after we do flight one, then we continue training, and  
9 then usually day 3 or 4, we do simulator training. So we go  
10 through all of the normal and emergency procedures in the  
11 simulator.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And limitations, covering that kind of thing. Then we get to  
14 the actual lesson content.

15 BY MR. BUSH:

16 Q. On that flight one, when does that occur and what do we hope  
17 to glean from that?

18 A. On flight one we are making sure that you have a good  
19 starting point for the candidate and that they can fly the  
20 aircraft.

21 Q. And when does that occur, flight one?

22 A. Usually the second day that they're here. The first day is  
23 HR and the second day they fly the aircraft.

24 Q. So we determine if they're going to be recommended to  
25 continue training on the second day before we ever start doing

1 anything else based upon flight one; is that correct?

2 A. Yes, second to third day, as soon as we can get -- before we  
3 even get all the ground --

4 MR. BUSH: Yes.

5 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. So you got a guy who essentially fails  
6 his first flight, his first flight is -- he has a potential of  
7 being let go at that point?

8 MR. BUSH: Um-hum.

9 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. Okay. Now you --

10 BY MR. BUSH:

11 Q. And on that flight one, what are we looking for? Because  
12 most of these folks don't normally have any 407 time, so what are  
13 we rating them on or grading them on, on flight number one?

14 A. You're grading them on their decision-making skills and their  
15 ability to control the aircraft safely. They don't know all the  
16 systems at that point, but they still should have a basis of  
17 control touch and what everything does and be able to operate the  
18 thing to a rudimentary level; maybe not know exactly all the  
19 limitations and procedures, but they have to have a good starting  
20 point.

21 BY MR. SALAZAR:

22 Q. You're looking for somebody who's got the basic understanding  
23 of the aircraft and, like you said, aeronautical decision  
24 making --

25 A. Right. We want to teach them the aircraft, not flight one,

1 how to fly an aircraft.

2 MR. BUSH: Yeah. Exactly. We want to teach them how to fly  
3 our way but not how to fly a helicopter.

4 MR. BEGNAUD: Right.

5 MR. SALAZAR: There you go. There you go.

6 MR. BUSH: Yeah.

7 BY MR. SALAZAR:

8 Q. So let's transition just for a moment to our accident pilot.  
9 Okay. What can you tell me you recall about this gentleman?

10 A. Well, I remember coming in on hitch and he was almost  
11 completed training, so I think he went out and did his solo and  
12 came back in. I did a floatship flight with him over to Lake  
13 Peigneur maybe the following day -- I'd have to look and see what  
14 day it was -- and he controlled the aircraft well. He was able to  
15 do a forced landing to the water safely, fine. No issues with  
16 him.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And after that, gave him a check ride and there was no  
19 issues.

20 Q. I went through all of the grade slips with -- was it Brian?

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. The first gentleman? And there were no unsats. So he  
23 seems -- flying-wise he seemed to cut the mustard.

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. Okay. Can you share with me a little bit of his aeronautical

1 decision making and a little bit of his -- not so much his hand  
2 flying skills, but his knowledge of aviation?

3 A. Well, his knowledge of the general turbine aircraft was  
4 better than some because he had previous turbine experience, so  
5 when you asked him questions, you could tell that he actually  
6 correlated the answer. It wasn't just a rote, yeah, this is the  
7 number. You could ask him a system-based question and get there.

8 Q. He was already at that correlation --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- stage in learning?

11 A. Yeah, he did fine.

12 Q. I asked this question of Brian, too. In all the years that  
13 you've worked here and all the candidates that you trained and the  
14 ones that have been retained and the ones that were let go, think  
15 about the worst guy that you had -- I don't need a name -- and  
16 think about the best guy that you had out of all those people that  
17 you've trained for RLC. Was he either one of those guys?

18 A. No, sir. He was better than most, I guess, if you want a  
19 grading scale, you know.

20 Q. So you would say he was a little bit above average?

21 A. Yeah. Yeah, for his ability to control the aircraft and his  
22 knowledge of it and of the systems. You could tell he had been  
23 studying. So -- he was good.

24 Q. Do you ever have one of those conversations when you're just  
25 talking with your peers and your coworkers about, you know, who's



1 going to have the next accident? You ever get in one of those  
2 conversations?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Okay. All right. So getting back to our accident pilot, I  
5 imagine, but I'm going to ask you the question, was it a surprise  
6 when you heard about the accident?

7 A. Yes. Definitely.

8 Q. How did you come about hearing about the accident?

9 A. A text message that we may have one that landed in the water  
10 today.

11 Q. Do you remember who sent you that text message?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay. What did you do when you found out it was Derek?

14 A. I didn't find out for several days exactly who it was.

15 Q. Is that so?

16 A. Yeah. And then somebody said who it was. I was off hitch,  
17 so I didn't want to inject myself into the situation there.

18 Q. That's a good decision actually. So you were off hitch, so  
19 you were -- it was time off and --

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. Okay. Very good. So it took a few days, you found out about  
22 it. All righty. Just hold on for just one second. I want to  
23 make sure I've covered all the items.

24 Walk me through how you train candidates on approaching a  
25 platform -- flying the approach to the platform and landing to the

1 platform.

2 A. Okay. While we're en route, we should already be at one of  
3 the HSAC altitudes for the Gulf of Mexico.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And approaching 5 miles out, let's say we're 2750 feet and  
6 we're getting close to the platform, that's when I'm going to  
7 start a slow rate descent coming down from altitude. That way I  
8 have 4 miles or so to -- nice, easy, steady descent rate to get  
9 down to 500 foot, thereabout, by the time you get to the location.

10 And then you approach the platform close enough to be able to  
11 identify it, to be able to look for hazards on the approaching  
12 side. Then you circle the platform. You're also looking at wind  
13 conditions and you've already got a green deck, you know, 20  
14 minutes out. And making sure that you don't have any obstructions  
15 that's going to modify how you make this approach. The crane is  
16 sitting in its cradle, there's no marks on the helideck, all  
17 the -- anything that would stop you from making a landing.

18 And then you would enter, after you passed over the platform,  
19 enter the downwind. You're at about 500 foot and you've already  
20 started the descent now. You don't want to circle the platform at  
21 100 knots. You want to get somebody -- slow down, we can actually  
22 see what's going on. And so you're 70 to 80 knots and trying to  
23 see what you can see entering downwind and turning to base.

24 And when you're going from base to final, you're making a  
25 slow descent but you don't want to be below 300 feet, so you'd

1 want to, you know, pull closer to 4-. As you turn to line up on  
2 final, you definitely want to be on final on your approach angle  
3 somewhere around 55 knots when you get to about 300 feet. And  
4 you've already identified the platform, you've looked for the  
5 hazards on your approach here. You might've had to make 270  
6 degrees around to come back into the wind. It just depends the  
7 wind azimuth of the day. You have to see all four sides. You  
8 have to look for any hazards. You've already had to call for a  
9 green deck, and now you're setting up on final.

10       You already should know where the wind is when you're en  
11 route so you know which way to line up. You're looking at the  
12 waves, you're looking at the lines in the water. Hopefully you  
13 have a windsock. If you don't, well, you're comparing your  
14 airspeed to groundspeed where you're on final. And all this is  
15 done farther up in the approach and you're setting yourself up on  
16 final.

17       And you want to stay ahead of the aircraft, where you're not  
18 having to flare at the bottom. You know, you want the aircraft --  
19 looking at the far end, you want to actually pull the aircraft  
20 over the helideck, you know?

21 Q.    Um-hum.

22 A.    You don't want to be behind, I'm trying to say.

23       While you're farther up on the approach and making sure that  
24 your rate of descent is less than 300 feet, you're comparing your  
25 airspeed to groundspeed to make sure that you're -- you know, you

1 haven't made a mistake with the winds, especially on the light and  
2 calm days. And then you come down 3 to 5 foot hover right over  
3 the center of the helideck. And then you've already identified  
4 where the stairwell is, so at that point you would turn to clear  
5 your tail at least more than 45 degrees away from the stairwell  
6 and then you would set the aircraft down in the aiming circle.

7 Q. Okay. The passengers that you brought out there have  
8 disembarked, the passengers that you're taking home are getting in  
9 the aircraft, they're in the aircraft, they're secure, the baggage  
10 door is secure, it's time to take off. Walk me through a normal  
11 takeoff and departure from a platform.

12 A. So the passengers have already disembarked with all their  
13 gear --

14 Q. Yeah, (indiscernible), bags are in --

15 A. -- they've already come back up and given you the manifest  
16 and ready go?

17 Q. -- they're all strapped in. There's no trick to this. I  
18 really just want to know what it takes to depart from the  
19 helideck.

20 A. Well, you're going to make sure the customers have been  
21 briefed and they're ready to go. You're going to talk to the  
22 people with a headset and the ones that don't have a headset, you  
23 get a thumbs up from them. And now that they're all ready to go,  
24 we're definitely going to follow the checklist so we don't forget  
25 anything.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And I'm going to file a plan with the company and make sure  
3 you hear the readback is correct and clear. You know, you follow  
4 the checklist all the way up through, you know, you're ready to  
5 pick it up.

6 Q. Let's hold off right there because this is good stuff. The  
7 flight plan that you're going to file, so I'm Broussard and I may  
8 give the reply back, but let's say you've got three people on  
9 board, you've got 2 hours worth of fuel, and you're bringing them  
10 back to Broussard.

11 MR. BUSH: I can talk for Broussard, if you like.

12 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah. Give me -- give him the flight plan and  
13 go walk through the whole thing. Because I just want to hear the  
14 bird (indiscernible) --

15 MR. BUSH: I'll be (indiscernible).

16 MR. BEGNAUD: All right. We'll use Vermillion 52.  
17 Broussard, 673 plan.

18 MR. BUSH: 673, Broussard. Your plan?

19 MR. BEGNAUD: 673, off at 22 for Broussard at 05 with four --  
20 You said I had three people?

21 MR. SALAZAR: Um-hum.

22 MR. BEGNAUD: -- with four and a 2.5. And you wouldn't have  
23 to give them your name or anything because you're already out  
24 there with them.

25 MR. BUSH: 673 on Vermillion 52, 22 for Broussard, 05 with

1 four and 2.5.

2 BY MR. SALAZAR:

3 Q. Okay. And that is a flight plan?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Got it. And the importance of that is, is, you know, other  
6 operators not offshore, when they file a flight plan, they're, you  
7 know, they're doing paperwork and actually doing something very  
8 similar to a VFR flight plan that you would call up, and this is  
9 unique so I'm just trying to capture that. So, again, there's no  
10 trick questions here. I'm just learning, trying to learn as an  
11 investigator what the normal procedures that are occurring daily  
12 with all the RLC pilots and everybody else that's out there, and  
13 so just to help us get to the facts. So when I write up a  
14 paragraph on flight plan, it's going to read a little bit  
15 different than other flight plan paragraphs I've written in the  
16 past because it's unique to what you guys are doing. Okay.

17 So now let's talk about the actual departure, and now it's  
18 more of a helicopter pilot talking to a helicopter pilot. You  
19 know, how do I -- what am I going to do to safely depart from this  
20 helipad?

21 A. All right. You follow the checklist all the way up to 100  
22 percent. Stow the checklist so you can see better. And make sure  
23 everybody's ready to go, doors are closed, seatbelts are on. And  
24 then you clear the aircraft, left, center and right, make sure  
25 nobody's walking around, came up the stairwell or anything. And

1 pre-pickup checks, you're going to look at your -- watch your  
2 caution warning panel, your pressure and temperature gauges, make  
3 sure all the indications are normal before you pull pitch.

4 Then you're going start to pull pitch and you're checking the  
5 aircraft is responding accordingly and it's in CG, controls are  
6 functioning as they should before you pick it up off the deck.  
7 And then as it's slowly starting to come up, you're steering your  
8 cyclic, preventing any drift, coming up 3- to 5-foot hover.

9 At that point you can still look around, make sure it's all  
10 clear, turn the nose of the aircraft into the wind if you had to  
11 turn out of the wind because of the stairwell. And then you do  
12 your performance checks at that point, 10, 5 and 1. You have to  
13 have 5 percent torque lift, you have to have 10 degrees left on  
14 your MGT, and you have to 1 left on the NG. And you've visually  
15 looked at that to make sure that you're within parameters to make  
16 a takeoff.

17 Let's back, back up. Before you even went and picked it up,  
18 you follow the checklist and it tells you to make sure you're in a  
19 flight detent. That way you get a whole load, you know? It'll  
20 actually function as it should. And so you've verified all of  
21 that and now you're in a hover and panel's looking normal and air  
22 still clear, and pull just enough collective to establish a  
23 positive rate of climb. And at that point you're sitting in the  
24 middle of the helideck here and you're into the wind, you've  
25 established positive rate of climb. You were at 3 feet. Now

1 you've climbed 3 to 5 feet, no more than 10 feet vertically. You  
2 give it 1 second. All you're doing is make sure that the turbine  
3 holds the power change. Because I'm making a decision right here.

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. It held it or it didn't. If it didn't hold it, I'm going  
6 right back down. If it did anything I don't like, I don't -- even  
7 don't know what's going on, I'm going right back down. But if I'm  
8 at 3 feet and I allow it to climb for about 1 second, in that time  
9 I've made a decision, it held the load, now we're committing to  
10 the forward motion of takeoff.

11 Q. Accelerate thought ETL and away you go?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Yeah. It sounds like a rather benign maneuver if you're  
14 doing it by the steps. You're clearing the aircraft, you got 100  
15 percent NR, bring the aircraft up to a 3 to 5 foot hover and do  
16 your power check, making sure everything is normal. You bring in  
17 power, not a lot of power, but you just bring in power. If  
18 everything is normal, you make a normal takeoff.

19 A. Um-hum.

20 Q. Okay. Change to the scenario: Everything is exactly the  
21 same, there is no trick question, but now you have a left  
22 quartering wind. Okay. So just walk me through the steps that  
23 you would take to -- because you're going to take off, but now  
24 you've got a left quartering wind.

25 MR. BUSH: Left quartering tailwind?



1 MR. SALAZAR: Yes, sir. Left quartering tailwind.

2 BY MR. SALAZAR:

3 Q. So the only thing I've changed is the direction of the wind.  
4 So now you -- once you bring the aircraft up to a 3 to 5 foot  
5 hover, you've got to make a heading adjustment.

6 A. Oh, okay. So you -- everything's stabilized and then you  
7 would put that torque -- I mean, you would clear the area and make  
8 sure that there's no obstructions that would prevent you from  
9 turning that way. And those platforms that would usually got some  
10 kind of a NOTAM that tells you, hey, you don't have clearance on  
11 the aiming circle, because I should be in the aiming circle and  
12 should be able to turn. So if I'm clear, then I just turn into  
13 the wind. Preferably, if everything good, using the left peddle,  
14 if possible. Is that what you're looking for?

15 Q. Exactly what I'm looking for. Yeah, like I said, there's no  
16 trick questions. And we're talking helicopter pilot to helicopter  
17 pilot. So just know, for me, never having landed to a helipad out  
18 in the Gulf, I'm just looking for the obvious. Like I said,  
19 there's no trick questions. Because it sounds simple enough when  
20 we're talking, you know, helicopter pilot to helicopter pilot.

21 If I'm in a 3- to 5-foot hover and I'm in the middle of that  
22 turning circle and it's not known that there's an obstruction, it  
23 sounds to me like I should be able to make a left heli turn or  
24 right heli turn if there's no winds to the heading I need to take  
25 off. And if you're at 3- to 5-foot hover with these helipads out

1 here and there's no NOTAM obstruction, I should be safe to turn.

2 A. But you also look at that before you get in the aircraft or  
3 when you're on final.

4 Q. Sure. Sure.

5 A. I mean, you're --

6 Q. Do you teach guys to do a walkaround?

7 A. Yes. Probably two. You know, one looking high and one  
8 looking low, you know?

9 Q. Yeah. Just trying -- I'll tell you, I'm just trying to  
10 figure out what happened, you know, and I would imagine -- I can't  
11 put words in your mouth, but I would imagine it was a shock to you  
12 when you got word of the accident.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. And then, as I understand it, on December 15th there was an  
15 accident. This one dealt with dynamic rollover. Were you -- you  
16 were employed when that happened. That was the beginning of the  
17 month.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. Let's transition to that accident, okay? Let's get away from  
20 this one. That one was a little bit more cut and dry. It sounds  
21 like pretty much everybody knows what happened, the pilot was able  
22 to be interviewed so he was able to say some things. What type of  
23 actions did the company take after that accident happened? Were  
24 there any changes made to policy, programs, or anything?

25 A. Well, there was a reemphasizing of policies that were already

1 there.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. I mean, just a review. There was a memo that was put out on  
4 how to safely pick up a helicopter to a hover and it referenced  
5 right out of the rotorcraft flying handbook and what -- applying  
6 it to our application.

7 Q. Okay. But nothing -- there was nothing new that needed to be  
8 changed, was there? Was it just a reemphasis of the things that  
9 were already there?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Okay. Did flight training, the department that you belong  
12 to, did you guys highlight anything during your training to help  
13 guys understand the importance of maintaining a stable hover,  
14 things of that nature?

15 A. Yeah. We definitely discussed that and discussed what it  
16 seemed like -- I mean, I wasn't part of the investigation team,  
17 but what they've told us had happened. And we reviewed proper  
18 pick-up and set-down techniques. We actually didn't have a whole  
19 of training occur between the two. It was just a couple weeks.

20 Q. Okay. I was under the understanding that a safety meeting  
21 was had. Did you attend a safety meeting that discussed that  
22 accident? Do you recall that?

23 A. Well, I met with Troy in his office and we made that memo --

24 Q. Okay. Okay.

25 A. -- of how to safely pick up an aircraft to hover.

1 Q. All right. Did we cover all those topics in the conversation  
2 that you and I had that was covered in that memo? And I don't  
3 know. Again, there are no trick questions here.

4 A. The memo was basically how to pick an aircraft up to a hover  
5 and don't let it slide.

6 Q. Okay. It doesn't require a whole of lot detail and basically  
7 you said what needs to be said, pick up the aircraft and don't  
8 drift.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. All right. All right. Well, this accident, we're still way  
11 too early in the game to figure out -- you know, to say we know  
12 what happened. So it's not right for us to try to draw  
13 comparisons with that accident to this one, but I am curious to  
14 know what occurred after the accident to help --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. -- preventing it from happening again.

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. Did you guys do anything else as far as changes?

19 A. Well, we reviewed what was in the training manual and the  
20 maneuvers guide and made sure that -- just a refresher, that, hey,  
21 this is -- we need to focus on this because obviously something  
22 happened, you know.

23 Q. Okay. Got it.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. All right. Well, while Troy's out, let me ask you this. I

1 know you guys work for Troy. How is to work with?

2 A. He's a good guy.

3 Q. Okay. Does he know his job?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. A squared-away guy?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. He seems to be by the limited time that I've had with him. A  
8 very engaged -- he seems to be very engaged. It's been good  
9 working with him. I hate the circumstances that --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. -- that brought us together, but --

12 So now is a good opportunity to ask you this. Is there any  
13 question I have not asked you or is there anything that you'd like  
14 to discuss while Troy is out of the room --

15 A. No.

16 Q. -- just you and I?

17 A. No.

18 Q. All right.

19 A. I'm really hoping that you can shed light on what extenuating  
20 circumstances caused this. I just -- I can't imagine how this  
21 happened, you know.

22 Q. Well, I will tell you this. We're in the factual data  
23 gathering stage. I mean, all we're doing right now is gathering  
24 information, just like the stuff that you shared with me. And,  
25 you know, we've gone out the site. I've been out to the platform.

1 I looked all around, gathered up a bunch of evidence and pieces  
2 and parts and brought them back to shore, watched one of the line  
3 pilots that you trained, that you guys trained. I was impressed.  
4 Did a good job, a real personable guy. Safely landed to the pad.  
5 Safely took off from the pad. I didn't want to bug him because,  
6 you know, you know how it goes if you're the pilot and you're  
7 flying out somebody who's doing an investigation.

8 A. It's distracting.

9 Q. It's absolutely distracting. So I try to keep -- I tried to  
10 keep the conversation at a minimum, took a few photographs. I got  
11 a smile out of him, but left him to do his job. Helped him when I  
12 could just calling out traffic and such. But seemed like a  
13 squared-away professional guy, and I suspect he's an indicator of  
14 the entire group of people that you've trained, you know. Never  
15 got the pleasure to meet Derek, but we're committed to finding out  
16 those things, what happened and why it happened, and what  
17 suggestions or recommendations we can make to keep it from  
18 happening again. That's the assurance I can give you.

19 You got any questions of me?

20 A. No, sir.

21 MR. SALAZAR: All right. Well, let's call an end to the  
22 interview.

23 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)  
24  
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE OF  
SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR GALLIANO,  
LOUISIANA ON DECEMBER 29, 2022  
Interview of Russell Begnaud

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN23FA071

PLACE: Broussard, Louisiana

DATE: January 6, 2023

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kay Maurer  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of:

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FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE  
OF SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR  
GALLIANO, LOUISIANA ON  
ON DECEMBER 29, 2022

\* Accident No.: CEN23FA071

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: TROY BUSH, Chief Pilot  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC  
Headquarters  
Broussard, Louisiana

Thursday,  
January 5, 2023



APPEARANCES:

FABIAN SALAZAR, Air Safety Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Troy Bush:

By Mr. Salazar

5

I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. SALAZAR: All right. My name is Fabian Salazar. I'm an  
3 air safety investigator for the NTSB. I'm the operations group  
4 chairman for the accident dealing with November-595-Romeo-Lima?

5 MR. BUSH: Correct.

6 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. The NTSB is focused heavily on safety.  
7 We make recommendations and suggestions to improve the overall  
8 safety of aviation. I'm talking to you because you're the expert  
9 and I need to get the information that you have to help us with  
10 the investigation. Typically we have other party members. You're  
11 a party member, so we're going to interview you first so that you  
12 can be present at other interviews if you'd like.

13 MR. BUSH: Okay.

14 MR. SALAZAR: Okay? You're also authorized to have one  
15 individual with you. Would you like to have somebody with you  
16 while we go through this interview?

17 MR. BUSH: No, sir.

18 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. All righty. Do you mind if I record  
19 this interview?

20 MR. BUSH: That's fine.

21 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. The reason I'm going to record it is  
22 I'll send the transcript out so that it can be written up -- I'll  
23 send the recording out so that it can be transcribed.

24 MR. BUSH: Okay.

25 MR. SALAZAR: All righty. The transcription will be part of

1 the public docket.

2 We talked about having a representative; you chose not to.  
3 That is fine.

4 As we go through these questions just answer them to the best  
5 of your ability. If you don't know the answer to it, "I don't  
6 know" is a perfectly acceptable answer.

7 MR. BUSH: Okay.

8 MR. SALAZAR: Okay.

9 INTERVIEW OF TROY BUSH

10 BY MR. SALAZAR:

11 Q. Let's start with your full name and spell it, please.

12 A. Full name is Troy Dwane Bush. That's T-r-o-y, D-w-a-n-e,  
13 B-u-s-h.

14 Q. And who are you employed by?

15 A. RLC, LLC, helicopter company.

16 Q. Okay. And what is your duty?

17 A. I am the chief pilot for RLC.

18 Q. Okay. As a chief pilot, your duties are outlined in the  
19 General Operations Manual, and if you don't mind, let's start  
20 there. And if you would just read the first bullet, duty  
21 assigned, and just give me a quick response on how you do that.

22 A. Okay. From the RLC General Operations Manual, 1.5.2, Chief  
23 Pilot: The person assigned to this portion -- or this position,  
24 must meet the regulatory qualifications required of a chief pilot  
25 outlined in 14 CFR 119.69, .71, and (1) The chief pilot reports to

1 the director of operations and will assume the duties of the  
2 director of operations in his absence. In the absence of the  
3 chief pilot, the operations supervisor or his designee shall  
4 assume his duties.

5 What that states is our director of operations, Jason  
6 Melancon, in his absence or at his request I will act as the  
7 director of operations along with being chief pilot usually for  
8 enhanced operational control. Sometimes we are not in the same  
9 building or the same location due to duty requirements and/or  
10 personal leave that he may have and so, in that case, his  
11 responsibilities as the director of operations will fall to me.

12 Q. Have you ever done that?

13 A. As the -- I wouldn't say that I've acted as the director of  
14 operations solely. We have probably coexisted as that during the  
15 several hurricane evacuations that we've had simply because we've  
16 been in opposite -- or locations that were not in the same place.

17 Q. Okay. All righty.

18 A. Okay?

19 Q. What's our next one?

20 A. (2) Perform the duties of flight captain when required.

21 I am current in all of our aircraft. I do need to take my  
22 293, 299, and 297 in the S-76, but we operate S-76, Bell 407, and  
23 Bell 206 aircraft.

24 Q. Okay. So you're 206, you're 206L's and your 407s, are those  
25 daytime/nighttime VFR only?

1 A. Those are day VFR only, and our S-76 are IFR and daytime  
2 only.

3 Q. Okay. So you'll do a 293 and a 297 check in those?

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Or 299.

7 Q. 299, right.

8 A. Correct.

9 Q. So when you get into the S-76, that's where you take a 297?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. Okay. All righty.

12 A. (3) Establishes, supervise, and maintains procedures for  
13 appropriate control of FAA-required records pertinent to flight  
14 crew members.

15 Along with the operations scheduler -- along with the  
16 operations scheduler and the training captains, we maintain the  
17 pilots' training jackets, their medical certificates and reporting  
18 of such, and make sure that all their qualifications are met.

19 Q. Okay. Where are those records kept?

20 A. The training jackets are kept in a secure vault in the  
21 training building here at RLC.

22 Q. Okay. Documents that you are responsible for, is the GOM one  
23 of them?

24 A. I, along with other members of the senior management team,  
25 correct.

1 Q. Okay. What other documents are you responsible for?

2 A. Training manual that we have, and that would be the ones that  
3 I'm directly responsible for on a management level.

4 Q. All right.

5 A. Um-hum. (4) Assures flight crew members adhere to and  
6 maintain the highest standards of conduct, performance, and  
7 competency; has the authority for direct liaison with the FAA and  
8 other agencies in operational and training matters.

9 I'm in close contact with our primary operations inspector  
10 with the FAA, Mr. David Lewis. Prior to that was Mr. Tom Capello.  
11 On a day-to-day basis, I monitor the pilots both personally and  
12 through the lead pilots at each base and make sure that anything  
13 that needs to be addressed as far as performance or regulatory  
14 issues that occur, I take full responsibility for those.

15 Q. Okay. How many lead pilots do you have?

16 A. Each base has a lead pilot, so Venice, Galliano, Mouton Cove,  
17 Sabine Pass, Texas, and Rockport, Texas.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Each of those have a lead pilot.

20 Q. How often do you talk to these guys?

21 A. Talk to everybody probably at least every other day. I have  
22 standing meetings, phone-in meetings, every Monday.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Staff meetings.

25 Q. Okay. Do you use Teams these days?

1 A. Right now we're just using a phone-in conference call, so --  
2 just because it's easier and quicker.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. But then I've been -- Galliano, which is our largest base, I  
5 would say that I'm in contact with them every day.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. All right. And Galliano is where our accident pilot operated  
9 out of, correct?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. And who's our lead pilot there?

12 A. We have two lead pilots. Mr. Angelo Novelli was the lead  
13 pilot on hitch.

14 Q. Angelo Novelli?

15 A. Angelo Novelli. And his opposite is Mr. Billy Byrd, B-y-r-d.

16 Q. Okay. So Mr. Byrd is not going to be instrumental in our  
17 investigation.

18 A. Correct. He was off.

19 Q. Okay. When the time is right, we're going to want to get in  
20 line to talk to Mr. Novelli.

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. All right. Excellent.

23 A. (5) Is responsible for pilot training and pilot  
24 recordkeeping. Again, that goes hand in hand with number 4.

25 Q. Yeah.



1 A. Yeah. (6) Directs publication management activities  
2 including reviews, editing, copy preparation, authentication,  
3 reproduction and distribution of publications.

4 Again, anything that's distributed as far as ops memos, ops  
5 bulletins, ensuring that our pubs -- we're still using paper pubs.  
6 We're in the process of getting EFB approved, but in the meantime,  
7 making sure that everything that we must have, the pilots must  
8 have in order to fly legally is up to date.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Will make pilot assignments, ensuring pilots are properly  
11 certified, current, and qualified for their proposed flight.

12 I'll work hand in hand with the operations scheduler with  
13 that. I personally assign pilots to their contracts based upon  
14 their qualifications. Sometimes customers requests play a factor  
15 into that. And then make sure also that the pilot, their 293s,  
16 299s, and/or 297s are current along with their medical  
17 certificates.

18 Q. So the customer requests, do the customers sometimes say,  
19 hey, I want this pilot --

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. Really?

22 A. Yeah. Pilots, we're all different. Seven billion  
23 individuals in this world, we're all different. Some people are  
24 going to get along better or maybe not get along as well.

25 Q. Okay. And through word of mouth and the personalities, the

1 companies will say, hey, I want this guy?

2 Q. Right. They'll give me a call. Most of our customers have  
3 my cell number. I've either flown for them or they -- or I've met  
4 them personally. And they'll call me and say, Troy, we really  
5 like this guy, we want to make sure we keep him.

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. Or the opposite could be --

8 Q. Going to bring that up.

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. Yeah. Was our accident pilot preferred or not preferred by  
11 anybody?

12 A. Indifferent. Nobody had actually requested him or asked him  
13 to be taken off of a contract either.

14 Q. Okay. All right.

15 A. (8) Ensuring adequate and correct flight publications other  
16 materials are available for each aircraft. We talked about that  
17 with the charts and pubs.

18 (9) Is responsible for scheduling pilots and flights and  
19 establishes personal duty hours.

20 Those are included here in the General Operations Manual. We  
21 have a 14-hour duty day. We make sure that they don't exceed in a  
22 single shift -- or the single pilot shifts that they exceed 8  
23 hours in the saddle or the crewed aircraft are 10. And then we  
24 make sure that everybody's down prior to downtime so that they can  
25 get the proper crew rest.

1 Q. Um-hum. Okay.

2 A. (10) Prepares and maintains proficiency records, flight  
3 schedules, reports, and correspondence pertaining to aircraft  
4 operations and activities.

5 Again, this is maintained through myself and the operations  
6 scheduler through whatever the pilots need to do to maintain their  
7 proficiency, currency, and then we will make sure that the  
8 customers' schedules are up to date and there is a pilot assigned  
9 to them for dispatch.

10 Q. Okay. Let's talk about this for just a second. If a guy  
11 needs a check ride, is that check ride administered -- is it just  
12 him and a check airman going out in an aircraft; it's not part of  
13 the line flying?

14 A. No, sir. It's just in an aircraft. We don't do any training  
15 on a 135 scenario.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. So he'd be brought here for generally 4 days. The small ship  
18 pilots, 206, 407 pilots, are brought here for generally 4 days of  
19 recurrent training.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And then the 76 pilots will stay in Galliano where the 76  
22 training captains are.

23 Q. And the S-76 pilots do simulator training as well?

24 A. Correct. And we do FTD training in the 206, 407.

25 Q. Okay. All right. So they have an FTD?

- 1 A. Yes, sir.
- 2 Q. Just a non-motion laptop type of --
- 3 A. FlightSafety. It's a non-motion simulator, full cockpit FTD.
- 4 Q. Okay. All righty. Where's FlightSafety at?
- 5 A. It's here in Lafayette, just about 15 minutes from here.
- 6 Q. Okay. All right. I'm sure they've got an S-76 simulator
- 7 there as well?
- 8 A. They do.
- 9 Q. Yeah. I would imagine for the amount of 76s around here.
- 10 A. Right.
- 11 Q. I imagine that thing is 24/7.
- 12 A. It just about is. Yeah.
- 13 Q. Yeah. Are there others?
- 14 A. Other companies?
- 15 Q. Any other simulator -- other S-76 simulators in this area?
- 16 A. No, sir. Not that we're aware of.
- 17 Q. Okay.
- 18 A. Yeah.
- 19 Q. Is there more than one?
- 20 A. More than one simulator? No, sir.
- 21 Q. You got to be kidding.
- 22 A. No. It's a C++. Luckily it's a C++, which is what -- we fly
- 23 the A model series and --
- 24 Q. Yeah, I saw it.
- 25 A. -- the C++ series. But we have more C++ contracts, so we

1 have actually made that our primary trainer in the 76 program and  
2 then do a 76 A model differences training.

3 Q. Okay. All right.

4 A. That way we can do more in the simulator.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. Because they don't have an A model simulator.

7 Q. Okay. All right. What's next?

8 A. (11) Maintains current aircraft checklist.

9 That's pretty self-explanatory. Any changes that are made,  
10 we send off to the FAA for approval. We do occasionally have  
11 changes if we think a certain flow works better or we identify a  
12 problem, send it to the FAA. Once that's approved, we incorporate  
13 that into the checklist which are mounted on the right side of the  
14 glare shield in front of the pilot.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. I saw that. It's actually mounted on the aircraft.

18 A. Correct.

19 Q. He flips it up, goes through it, flips it back.

20 A. Correct. (12) Responsible for and shall supervise the  
21 operational control functions listed in 1.6 and 1.9 of this  
22 manual.

23 Whenever we do have enhanced operational control, as the  
24 tiers progress, they become more and more my responsibility and/or  
25 the director of operations responsibility.

1 Q. And the weather conditions deteriorate --

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. -- you guys play a more active role in conducting operational  
4 control?

5 A. Correct. Releases become more restrictive and they must go  
6 through myself. Zero to 1, the pilot can self-dispatch; Levels 2  
7 require either an operations supervisor or myself; Levels 3  
8 require director of operations or greater.

9 Q. Is it solely weather that sets those into place?

10 A. Generally I would say so. Anywhere from fog to frontal  
11 passage to hurricanes.

12 Q. Hurricanes. You have --

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. You have squall lines and things of that nature.

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. So as the weather gets worse, the management becomes more  
17 instrumental in the decision making as to whether that flight  
18 should happen or not?

19 A. Right. We have criteria --

20 Q. Or terminated?

21 A. Correct. We have criteria that classifies it by the EOC  
22 level. And it's actually twofold. It's also for the safety of  
23 the pilot and their passengers, but also to take that  
24 responsibility off of the pilot so they don't receive pressure  
25 from a customer. Because he can really say I'm under EOC Level 2,

1 I must get a release and I can't get one. So then the customer is  
2 no longer berating the pilot --

3 Q. Yeah. Yeah.

4 A. -- I want to go, I want to go. Sorry, sir, we can't go; it's  
5 out of my hands.

6 Q. Yeah. So on any given day, does a pilot have that  
7 opportunity to be approached by anybody other than the passengers?  
8 Like say Island or -- well, Island, is there that opportunity for  
9 Island to actually reach out to the pilot himself?

10 A. Well, his operators. You know, his passengers, they can.

11 Q. Yeah, the passengers themselves?

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. Trying to put pressure on him to go?

14 A. They can, yeah.

15 Q. Got it. Got it.

16 A. Okay. And that is the end of the duties on 1.5.2, Chief  
17 Pilot.

18 Q. All right. So in your workday, are you a 14-day on/14-day  
19 off kind of guy or are you --

20 A. No, sir.

21 Q. -- a salaried employee?

22 A. I'm a salaried employee supposedly on a 5 and 2 schedule. I  
23 haven't gotten any of those 2's yet, so I'm waiting.

24 Q. One day they'll come in a big giant lump.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. During the course of the month does RLC give you the  
2 opportunity to conduct your duties as they are outlined in the  
3 GOM?

4 A. Every day.

5 Q. Yeah?

6 A. Every day.

7 Q. Okay. So you don't feel yourself under any pressure to --  
8 you got more work than there is time?

9 A. No. But we are a company that operates -- we have a single  
10 chief pilot position. We have close to a 100 pilots, around  
11 there, so it's a full-time job. And I take a more active role.  
12 I've been doing this 37 years and, just like yourself, you had  
13 chief pilots that you loved and you've had chief pilots that  
14 weren't --

15 Q. Sure.

16 A. -- worth the air that they consumed. And so I always said if  
17 I was ever in a position to be beneficial or active in a pilot's  
18 life, I would want them to have the best experience possible. So  
19 I probably give more of myself to the pilots than is mandated. I  
20 can tell you I probably -- that's true, but it's all kept in  
21 check.

22 Q. Okay. As far as your qualifications and ratings, let's go  
23 over those one more time.

24 A. I am CF II and ATP rated. I've got 17,000-plus hours, rated  
25 in several aircraft. No type ratings in helicopters. Everything



1 under 12.5. I'm also a fixed-wing pilot, commercial multi-engine.

2 Q. Okay. Excellent. CF II, do you give -- are you a check  
3 airman?

4 A. I am not a check airman.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. I'm not a check airman.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I do, I do take -- I do teach some of the ground on a case  
9 basis. I do ride along on check rides, and I do participate -- we  
10 have a program called mentor training. Once a pilot is finished  
11 with the classroom and flight portion, once they are signed off on  
12 their 135 check ride, then they go through a 7-day mentor training  
13 program that we have now that actually shows them how to take that  
14 experience onto the line and use it real work, practical ways. So  
15 we teach them how to take what they were taught and apply it.

16 Q. Very good. Are you involved at all with the hiring and  
17 firing of pilots in the organization?

18 A. 100 percent.

19 Q. Yeah?

20 A. I do all of it. I do all of the interviews. I do all of the  
21 terminations.

22 Q. Okay. Do you -- how does RLC advertise for pilots?

23 A. Actually I -- we do advertise, but I do not take pilots off  
24 the street. Everybody has to be recommended.

25 Q. Is that so?

- 1 A. Yeah.
- 2 Q. And they submit a resume?
- 3 A. They'll -- somebody will call me up, hey, Troy, I know this  
4 guy, I've flown with him, I'm recommending him for interview.
- 5 Q. Okay.
- 6 A. So then I will contact -- they'll have him send me a resume  
7 or I'll contact him and they'll send me a resume. If they meet  
8 our minimum requirements, which are 1,000 hours PIC helicopter,  
9 100 hours night, I believe it's 25 cross-country, and then 25  
10 night cross-country, and an instrument ticket.
- 11 Q. Okay.
- 12 A. Then we start the interview process.
- 13 Q. An instrument ticket even if they're going to fly the daytime  
14 VFR?
- 15 A. Correct. They still have to have an instrument ticket.
- 16 Q. Okay. When they are hired on, is there a hierarchy? When  
17 they come on board, do they start off in a 206 and they work their  
18 way up to the S-76, or do they -- can somebody hire on directly  
19 and go in the S-76?
- 20 A. Not -- no.
- 21 Q. They don't?
- 22 A. Not directly, no. We use that -- the S-76 is the pinnacle  
23 here at RLC. It is used as a reward, if you will. You stay here  
24 long enough, you're going to get in the 76 program. It is a  
25 substantial raise. So the 407 has become our initial training

1 because the majority of our small ship contracts are 407s. So you  
2 go through initial training in the 407, then you receive a 206  
3 transition. You're in that for -- right now it's averaging  
4 anywhere from 12 to 18 months, sometimes 24 months, and then  
5 you're recommended or you -- once your seniority comes up, if we  
6 are going to have an S-76 class -- everyone's hired with the same  
7 qualifications, so then once your seniority comes up, I take a  
8 look at you to see who it is. And then from that point, I do an  
9 interview process regarding your merit. I get recommendations  
10 from people that have flown with you. Your lead pilot is -- is  
11 Fabian a good guy? If not, then we have a discussion because  
12 we're a nonunion company. So I tell them, like I said, everyone's  
13 hired with the same qualifications, which in seniority you're now  
14 being considered, but you have to have earned that by being a good  
15 person, a good coworker, a good pilot.

16 Q. Okay. All right. And then for those who fall on the other  
17 side of the fence as far as discipline and not sticking around,  
18 you're involved in the firing process as well?

19 A. 100 percent.

20 Q. Okay. And not looking at anybody by name, but have you had  
21 the need to let some people go in the recent past?

22 A. I have.

23 Q. You have?

24 A. I have.

25 Q. Has it been for flying performances or for the alcohol abuse

1 or drug abuse --

2 A. Some have been some procedural issues. Here recently we've  
3 had some zero tolerance on procedural issues because of latest  
4 incidents. The one that is most memorable, and I actually use it  
5 when I talk to people, we had a gentleman here that without a  
6 doubt was probably -- his control touch was in the top five of all  
7 pilots I've ever witnessed, a phenomenal pilot, but he was a  
8 raving lunatic out of the cockpit. Seriously.

9 Q. No, I've met a few.

10 A. Yeah. And I actually called him and I said, we just can't  
11 have you here, you're actually scaring people in the crew houses.  
12 I'm sorry, we just got to let you go.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. And he responded with, but my customers love me and I'm a  
15 great pilot. I said, yes, you are, but you are a raving lunatic.

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. So -- I tell people all the time, especially in the interview  
18 process, I am not looking for pilots. I can't stand pilots.

19 Q. Yeah, you mentioned that. Yeah.

20 A. I want good people that happen to have a helicopter license.

21 Q. And you can use those kind of guys.

22 A. Yep.

23 Q. All right. So we got the hiring process done, firing process  
24 done. Now let's talk about -- you say you've done this for 35  
25 years?

1 A. I've been a pilot for 37 years.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. I've been a chief pilot for 3 years.

4 Q. What I'm curious about is the latest generation of helicopter  
5 pilots that are coming through the door. When I started out in  
6 '86, the Robinson was hardly on the map.

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. And, you know, now it's gone to -- you know as well as I do,  
9 every airport's got a Robinson that somebody's training in.

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. So the people that you're getting recommended, in the past  
12 would you say there were more military versus civilian taught  
13 versus the present? Is it still the same? What are your thoughts  
14 on that?

15 A. Initially it was military. You and I both were trained by  
16 military trainers. That's who was out there. Then those guys,  
17 the military guys, the Vietnam era guys, have slowly but surely  
18 aged themselves out of the market. But we still had folks that were  
19 still trained in that same mindset. Even the military guys that  
20 weren't Vietnam era, but were rigid -- they would come out and  
21 they would train civilians as well once they got out, and that was  
22 a certain class. Well, now some of those guys have either stayed  
23 in or gotten out of aviation or, as we talked before, gone fixed  
24 wing.

25 Q. Um-hum.

1 A. So now the vast majority, I would say at least 90 percent of  
2 our applicants, are civilian pilots that have nothing but Robbie  
3 time, Robinson time.

4 Q. Are you hiring pilots where this is the first time -- this is  
5 their first turbine engine job?

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. Okay. Have you seen any type of trends, good or bad, with  
8 that?

9 A. As in any pilot, you do see some trends. There are some guys  
10 that are just naturals. So we have several pilots here -- I've  
11 made the comment when I've done their mentor training that they're  
12 wasting my time because I can't teach you a thing.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. They just have a phenomenal approach control touch. And  
15 their ability to monitor a turbine engine, which is basically what  
16 it is, is amazing. They just -- you know, like a duck to water,  
17 they're good to go. But you're going to get good and bad --

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. -- in both backgrounds, honestly. And I wanted to be a  
20 career aviator in the Army, but some of my worst airmen to come  
21 through had been Blackhawk guys, Chinook guys, that had flown  
22 nothing but twin engine, copiloted crewed aircraft --

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. -- autopilot systems or at least a sat system. Now they're  
25 having to fly in controlled airspace, navigate, single pilot --

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. -- and do it all, and it's overload. It's rough for them.

3 Q. Yeah, a big paradigm shift for them.

4 A. It is.

5 Q. Okay. All right. So that takes us to our accident pilot.

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. All right. So with all of these things that we know you do,  
8 talk to me about your accident -- the accident pilot and how he  
9 was referred to you, how the interview went, just all the way  
10 through his training.

11 A. Can I pause to give you has resume? I don't have it in front  
12 of me.

13 Q. Absolutely.

14 A. Okay. Let me get that.

15 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. Let's take a break --

16 MR. BUSH: Okay.

17 MR. SALAZAR: -- and then we'll come back.

18 (Off the record)

19 (On the record)

20 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. We're back talking with Troy Bush, chief  
21 pilot, RLC, LLC, and we're talking about the accident pilot's  
22 resume.

23 BY MR. SALAZAR:

24 Q. And you were saying, sir?

25 A. I was saying his total time was up there. He did actually

1 come from our HR recruiting side, which is JazzHR; pilots can go  
2 on and upload their resume. Occasionally I'll go through there to  
3 see if we miss somebody that didn't happen to know someone that  
4 worked here. Derek was from -- at the time he was working at a  
5 job in Damascus, Pennsylvania, but he's from Brazil, so he  
6 probably didn't know anybody here at RLC.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. But if you'll notice, his rotorcraft total time was 1512, his  
9 PIC was 1188. That PIC time is what we needed. But normally our  
10 pilots have a little bit less than that total time, so that's what  
11 stuck out in my mind.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Along with his 171 hours in Bell 206, which I liked because  
14 that's a modulated start, along with he has 38 hours in S-64 and  
15 221 in an S-60.

16 Q. Yeah, pretty impressive, huh?

17 A. Yeah, for a young man.

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. That's some good quality time.

20 Q. Yeah. Okay. So pilot qualifications: FAA commercial pilot,  
21 certified flight instructor and instrument instructor. It seems  
22 like that unmanned aircraft system certificate is getting real,  
23 real popular, isn't it?

24 A. Um-hum. It is.

25 Q. Okay. Second class, commercial pilot rotorcraft turbine



1 certificates Brazil. Okay, that's ANAC?

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. Okay, private education. All right. Hawkeye helicopters,  
4 Timberline helicopters, helicopter transport, Precision Aviation,  
5 and then Hillsboro.

6 A. Yeah. I like that. So he's not just out there punching  
7 holes in the sky like a flight instructor would be.

8 Q. Yeah. Yeah. He's doing different things; isn't he?

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. Okay. So he had some impressive items on his resume.

11 A. That set him apart from the majority of pilots that we get.

12 Q. Okay. And how did his interview go?

13 A. It went fine. He's a very personable young man, quiet. Of  
14 course, I would consider myself to be gregarious and he was quiet,  
15 professional, you know, just your average 20-something/early 30s-  
16 something person.

17 Q. Okay. Good. Offered him the job, he took the job, started  
18 his flight training. How did the ground training go and the  
19 flight training?

20 A. Everything went fine, no -- I've got his records. I don't  
21 have his records right in front of me. I can pull those. But I  
22 don't believe there was any unsats. Like I said, just a quiet,  
23 you know, personable person, but not gregarious.

24 Q. Okay. Good deal. I will be wanting to look at all of his  
25 training records, both the ground and the flight records.

- 1 A. Certainly.
- 2 Q. Okay. And he goes off at noon. Now did you fly with him at  
3 all?
- 4 A. I did not.
- 5 Q. I didn't expect you would, but I have to ask the question.
- 6 A. Correct.
- 7 Q. We'll talk to the guys that did the training with him, so  
8 we'll find out how he did. No issues with his check rides that  
9 you're aware of?
- 10 A. Not that I'm aware of.
- 11 Q. Okay. So he passes his checks, goes out on the line. Are  
12 there initial operating flights that he goes on?
- 13 A. Yeah, mentor training. Yes, sir.
- 14 Q. Okay, the mentor training program?
- 15 A. Correct.
- 16 Q. Okay.
- 17 A. Yeah.
- 18 Q. No -- nothing that --
- 19 A. Nothing that was reported us. No, sir.
- 20 Q. Okay. So that takes him out to the line. How long had he  
21 flown with RLC as a line pilot?
- 22 A. I believe 3 months.
- 23 Q. Three months?
- 24 A. I believe he went on the line in September.
- 25 Q. Okay. And then comes the day of the accident. How were you

1 made aware of the accident?

2 A. I was actually in Galliano on an unrelated item. We go there  
3 all the time. It's our larger base.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. We go and we visit. And I just happened to be on the flight  
6 line that morning and my phone rang. And it was actually one of  
7 the Island operators, Van Johnson, whom we interviewed. And he  
8 reported that Island 44 was in the water. It was a very frantic  
9 call. Hey, Troy, this is Van; Island 44 is in the water. What?  
10 So I immediately hung up, called Island flight following. I said,  
11 Island 44 is reported in the water, what do you show? They said,  
12 we don't show Island 44 in the water; we show everything fine. I  
13 said, well, I'm getting reports that Island 44 is in the water off  
14 of West Delta 106. I said, I'm getting in an aircraft and going  
15 because I don't believe that would have been any sort of prank  
16 phone call or unreliable information.

17 Q. Right. Yeah. Because you know Van Johnson?

18 A. I do know Van Johnson, used to be his pilot when I was a line  
19 pilot. Come to find out he had reported, in his excitement and  
20 trauma had reported the wrong contract. It was actually Island  
21 45. And so when I had the flight followers look at 44, which was  
22 fine, I should have had them looking at 45.

23 Q. Yeah. Yeah. So how were you able to resolve that with them?  
24 Just while you were flying out there?

25 A. While I was flying. I had them get on the horn and I said --

1 I called back in to RLC flight following. I said, please contact  
2 Van Johnson and find out are we talking -- which aircraft we're  
3 talking about. I'm heading -- it's an aircraft regardless, but  
4 let's find out who we're talking about.

5 Q. And did you hop into a 407, a similar aircraft?

6 A. I did. I did.

7 Q. Okay. Were you just by yourself or did you have anybody with  
8 you?

9 A. I actually had another pilot with me, one of our newer pilots  
10 that was there to mentor train that day. He and I were going to  
11 go on a MOC flight. His -- the line pilot that was slated to be a  
12 mentor pilot for him had to go do something that was weight  
13 restricted, so he was going to wait, we were going to put him on  
14 the next day. So he was out just observing what he could observe,  
15 and I said, let's get in the aircraft, let's go, because we're  
16 going to need a set of eyes out there, we have an aircraft in the  
17 water.

18 Q. Okay. Did your time out there -- did you land on the rig  
19 yourself or --

20 A. We did not. We -- as we were approaching the aircraft, the  
21 aircraft -- West Delta 106 is 56 miles from Galliano. So as we  
22 approached the aircraft from the north, the wind was out of the  
23 south, we spotted the gear, skid gear in the water with the floats  
24 inflated. So that was about 200 yards, at least, north of the  
25 platform. So we immediately went to that and started an orbit

1 looking for survivors. At that point we did not know that the  
2 fuselage had separated. Not until after orbiting, and I was in  
3 the left side of the aircraft, did I think -- I said, I don't see  
4 the water washing over the belly of the aircraft, I don't think  
5 the fuselage is there. So then we started widening our search,  
6 our orbits were ever widening out from the skid gear. Unbeknownst  
7 to us, the fuselage was probably next to the platform.

8 Q. Yeah. Let's talk about that skid gear for just a moment and  
9 the float system. Is there any type of automatic inflation  
10 activation on that float system?

11 A. No, sir.

12 Q. So the only way for it to be inflated is?

13 A. The only way for it be inflated is a bicycle brake handle, if  
14 you will, located on the aircraft, a manual inflation, that pilot  
15 must pull. Or, after talking to maintenance, if that cable is  
16 stretched during an impact, it will go ahead and inflate.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Yeah. But that's not by design. That just happens to be  
19 something happens when an aircraft is in an accident.

20 Q. Getting back to the bicycle grip that the pilot -- that's the  
21 item on the cyclic?

22 A. Correct. Just forward of the cyclic handle.

23 Q. Okay. For training purposes, how is that -- how is the pilot  
24 trained to use that handle?

25 A. For training purposes in a simulator, which it is in a

1 simulator, we practice pulling that in autorotations.

2 Q. Okay. At what point during the autorotation do you pull it?

3 A. In the flare.

4 Q. During the flare? So you're close to the bottom?

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. And in the 407, where do you flare?

7 A. We're going to flare at 50 feet.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Okay.

10 Q. So you flare, activate the --

11 A. Right.

12 Q. -- the floats and then touch down and cushion and --

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Because we don't want the possibility of inflating them too  
16 soon and ripping them off with relative wind or it slowing us down  
17 and having us come out the sky too soon.

18 Q. Certainly. Certainly. But there is a possibility that the  
19 floats can be inflated by the stretching of the cable --

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. -- in a sequence?

22 A. Correct. And the pilot may very well have pulled it. It is  
23 my understanding, and I'll have to get this clarified through  
24 maintenance, that there is a shear pin in there that requires a  
25 certain poundage. I'm not sure -- if that is correct, I need to

1 find out the condition of that shear pin.

2 Q. Yeah. Well, airworthiness is going to get that for us.

3 A. Right.

4 Q. But we know through talking with you what -- how a pilot is  
5 trained to use it.

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. We know a little bit more now that an accident sequence  
8 through the stretching of the cable could activate it. But some  
9 way or another, the floats were activated, the landing gear  
10 separated from the fuselage, and that's what you found and that's  
11 what you orbited around?

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. Okay. So how long were you out and what other activities  
14 were you able to accomplish when you were out?

15 A. We stayed on station till we were becoming fuel critical in  
16 order to get back with our reserve. We were on station a little  
17 over an hour.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And the Coast Guard had arrived. We were on station about 20  
20 minutes before the Coast Guard got there. We were in contact with  
21 the platform and they were telling us what they saw, and so we  
22 were ever widening our orbit and going places. At the time,  
23 either I didn't hear or misheard that they thought that the  
24 fuselage was next to the platform. And then finally through  
25 (indiscernible) I said, are you telling me that you know the

1 fuselage has separated from the skid gear? And they said yes.  
2 And that's when we started going around the platform trying to  
3 find out what it was.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. Where we thought it might be either drifted or what have you.

6 Q. How far away did the skids drift from the platform?

7 A. A couple hundred yards.

8 Q. Is that so?

9 A. Yes, sir. North side.

10 Q. Okay. And then at some point somebody secured them and  
11 recovered them back?

12 A. While we were there, a crew boat from an adjoining platform  
13 or a nearby platform came over and I got on Marine 18 -- it was  
14 either Marine 18 or Marine 16. Marine 16 is distress. He might  
15 have been on Marine 18, but I did contact him and ask him to  
16 secure those and pick up anything that his crew could get ahold  
17 of.

18 Q. Okay. So let's talk about notification for just a little  
19 bit. Let's talk about the notification as it's designed. Do you  
20 guys -- you guys -- does RLC have a pre-accident plan?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. Something --

23 A. Emergency action plan.

24 Q. It's called an emergency action plan?

25 A. Correct.



1 Q. What does the emergency action plan say about activities  
2 following the notification of an accident?

3 A. Well, we try to establish contact with the pilot. Once we  
4 get confirmation or we cannot raise the pilot, then we notify the  
5 Coast Guard.

6 Q. Okay. And you just tell the Coast Guard the obvious, you've  
7 got an aircraft suspected down?

8 A. Correct. Last known location, souls on board based upon the  
9 flight plan, anything pertinent that they may ask.

10 Q. Yeah, I don't know if I included that in my request for  
11 documents, but I'd like to see that emergency action plan. Okay.

12 A. Okay.

13 Q. Does the chief pilot have any duties in that emergency action  
14 plan?

15 A. If I had been here, I would be up in the operations  
16 supervisor's office helping coordinate that or taking information.  
17 (Indiscernible) like a command center.

18 Q. Okay. And it's physically here?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. In this building?

21 A. Our flight following department is -- not in this building.  
22 It's actually in our hangar.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Which is attached to the other building.

25 Q. Just -- okay. All right. Yeah, the next building over and

1 then the hangar's attached to that?

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. Today, if possible, I'd like to do get that walk-through --

4 A. Sure.

5 Q. -- and have a look at that. Okay. So you got to a point  
6 where you needed to go back so that you could land with fuel  
7 reserve. Once you went back, what activities did you do?

8 A. Jason Melancon had been at the base and myself. He had  
9 departed. I had the flight -- I had the operations supervisor  
10 patch me through to him on the sat phone. I was giving him  
11 regular updates while I was on station. I notified him that we  
12 were bingo fuel and needed to head on back. And I said, what do  
13 you want me to do? Do you want me to refuel and take you back out  
14 here or what do you want to do? Basically, I simply handed  
15 command over to him now and he then took on that role. He said,  
16 no, let's stand by since Coast Guard is on station.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And find out what we're going to -- because we didn't want to  
19 complicate the efforts.

20 Q. Sure.

21 A. And so we just wanted to stay out of their way if there  
22 wasn't anything we could constructively do.

23 Q. Okay. Now I was made aware of the accident after the fact.  
24 So the accident occurred December 29th?

25 A. I would have to verify that. I don't remember exactly.

- 1 Q. Okay. Okay. Yeah.
- 2 A. Maybe 28th?
- 3 Q. Well, December 28th -- I'll tell you what, let's do this.
- 4 This is important because I don't have the exact --
- 5 A. I can tell you, I can tell you real quick if I look at a
- 6 calendar.
- 7 Q. Okay. Going to the calendar, December 28th is a Thursday,
- 8 December 29th is a Friday.
- 9 A. It would have been December 29th.
- 10 Q. Okay.
- 11 A. Thursday, the first day on hitch.
- 12 Q. Okay. Was it a Thursday? Because that's the 28th.
- 13 A. I'm looking December 2022, Thursday the 29th.
- 14 Q. Oh. Oh, there it is.
- 15 A. Yeah.
- 16 Q. Yeah, December '22, which is a Thursday.
- 17 A. Um-hum.
- 18 Q. All right. So the aircraft was recovered on what day? What
- 19 I'm trying to do is go through the chronology of it happened on
- 20 day 1 and what happened on day 2. I understand weather was bad?
- 21 A. Correct. I would -- honestly, I would have to get with Jason
- 22 for a precise date. It's all -- it's running together.
- 23 Q. Okay. Okay. Well, we're talking Jason. When we're done,
- 24 between you and Jason and I, let's have that chronology --
- 25 A. Okay.

1 Q. -- of events occurred, because I don't know what they are and  
2 that's some important stuff I need to know.

3 A. Okay.

4 Q. All right. Very good. So you notified the Coast Guard. Did  
5 you notify law enforcement or anybody else according to the EAP?

6 A. No, sir. I don't believe so. No, we just -- at that point  
7 we are just talking to the Coast Guard in hopes of recovering  
8 or rescuing.

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. Then once we got back in, we notified all -- you know, the  
11 FAA, local authorities, everything was going on.

12 Q. Okay. And that comes to the day that they recovered the  
13 aircraft, bringing in the coroner, and then I believe NTSB arrived  
14 the following day when the aircraft was actually brought on scene.

15 A. Correct. They located the aircraft and got it on board.  
16 They traveled throughout the night and then got back into the Port  
17 of Fourchon somewhere around 4 or 5 a.m., I believe.

18 Q. Do you know who did the actual recovery?

19 A. I do not know the name of the vessel. Jason will, yeah.

20 Q. Okay. Jason's got that information?

21 A. Yes, sir. He was on board.

22 Q. He's instrumental in all of that?

23 A. He was actually on board that vessel.

24 Q. Oh, really?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. All righty. And did you and Jason both go to the  
2 dockside when the aircraft came in?

3 A. Correct. Myself, Tasha Louviere, Dru Milke, our CEO, we were  
4 all there.

5 Q. Okay. All right. Let me see if there's anything else we  
6 want to go through. There's one bit of information -- we talked  
7 about his resume, hiring, training, time on the line. I don't  
8 know, it'll come to me. So let me just leave it with this. There  
9 may be some other questions that I have.

10 A. Sure.

11 Q. There is one area that I thought we needed to dig in just a  
12 little bit deeper, so just note that we may come --

13 A. Certainly.

14 Q. So let's go ahead and stop the recording.

15 A. Okay.

16 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

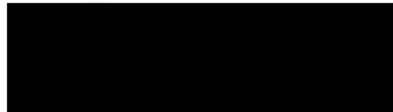
IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE OF  
SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR GALLIANO,  
LOUISIANA ON DECEMBER 29, 2022  
Interview of Troy Bush

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN23FA071

PLACE: Broussard, Louisiana

DATE: January 5, 2023

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kay Maurer  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of:

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FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE  
OF SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR  
GALLIANO, LOUISIANA ON  
ON DECEMBER 29, 2022

\* Accident No.: CEN23FA071

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: MICHAEL TRAVIS JENKINS, Operator  
Island Operating Company

via Microsoft Teams

Friday,  
January 6, 2023

APPEARANCES:

FABIAN SALAZAR, Air Safety Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

TROY BUSH, Chief Pilot  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

TASHA LOUVIERE, Director of Safety  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

WAYNE MASON, SEMS Manager  
Walter Oil & Gas

KENNETH MEYER, Production  
Walter Oil & Gas

ERIC FONTENOT, SEMS, Special Projects Manager  
Island Operating Company

LANCE LeBLANC, Director of Safety  
Island Operating Company

MICHAEL HANSON, Aviation Safety Manager  
Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE)

NATHAN BRADLEY, Accident Investigator  
BSEE



I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Michael Travis Jenkins:	
By Mr. Mason	6
By Mr. Bush	11
By Mr. Mason	17
By Mr. Salazar	21
By Mr. Fontenot	22
By Mr. Meyer	23
By Mr. Mason	27
By Mr. Meyer	29
By Mr. Bush	30
By Mr. Mason	31
By Mr. Bush	33

I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. SALAZAR: That was Michael Travis --

3 MS. LOUVIERE: Jenkins.

4 MR. SALAZAR: Jenkins?

5 MS. LOUVIERE: You can go ahead and get started, Wayne.

6 MR. MASON: Okay. I'm going to do that then.

7 First, Travis, I'd like to say thank you very much for making  
8 the time to come in this morning and let us pick your brain and  
9 get a record of what you observed and witnessed and did last  
10 Thursday. I can tell you, from everything we've seen, your level  
11 of professionalism, particularly last Thursday, and since then has  
12 just been outstanding. We really appreciate and recognize that,  
13 particularly under such difficult circumstances, and so I want to  
14 thank you very much for that.

15 So what we're going to do is, I'm going to -- we're going to  
16 go around the horn and do some introductions so that you know  
17 who's asking questions for you. For those of us that are being --  
18 that are conducting the interview, I would ask that you turn on  
19 your cameras if you have a camera so that Travis may see who's  
20 talking to him.

21 And then once we do the introductions, Travis, I'm going to  
22 ask you a few background questions. Some of them will seem a  
23 little bit silly or redundant, but I'll ask it just for the  
24 record. And then I'm going to ask you to recount last Thursday  
25 from the time you left RLC -- got in the helicopter, left RLC,

1 until the time you departed the platform, I think it was a couple  
2 days later. Okay. Just kind of what you did, what you saw.  
3 Obviously we're going to focus on the time around the accident.  
4 And then -- we're going to go through a couple rounds of  
5 questioning. It'll actually go pretty quick. So passing it  
6 around, everyone will have an opportunity for follow-up questions  
7 and then we'll close out after, okay?

8 If at any point you feel like you'd like to take a break,  
9 just let us know, or Eric or Lance will let us know, and we'll  
10 just take a few minute break and let you get ready to jump back  
11 in. Okay? Is that all right?

12 MR. JENKINS: Yes, sir.

13 MR. MASON: Any questions for us before we start?

14 MR. JENKINS: No, sir.

15 MR. MASON: Okay. Then I'll just go into introductions and  
16 let's start with RLC, please.

17 MR. BUSH: Good morning. This is Troy Bush, the chief pilot  
18 with RLC. Also in the room is Tasha Louviere, our director of  
19 safety, and the NTSB investigator, Fabian Salazar.

20 MR. MASON: All right. Thank you, Troy.

21 Island, do you want to introduce yourselves?

22 MR. FONTENOT: Yeah. We have Eric Fontenot with Island  
23 Operating, SEMS and special projects manager, and we have Lance  
24 LeBlanc with Island, safety director.

25 MR. MASON: All right. Thank you, Eric.

1 BSEE?

2 MR. HANSON: You've got Mike Hanson again, BSEE, aviation  
3 safety manager, and Bradley -- Nathan Bradley, aviation  
4 investigator.

5 MR. MASON: Okay. Is Rodney going to join us, do you know?

6 MR. HANSON: No. Rodney will be unable to join us today.

7 MR. MASON: Okay. Great. Thank you.

8 Ken, do you want to introduce yourself, please?

9 MR. MEYER: Good morning. Ken Meyer, production department  
10 with Walter Oil in the Houston office.

11 MR. MASON: And my name, Wayne Mason. I'm with Walter Oil &  
12 Gas out of the Houston office. I'm the SEMS manager and -- I'm  
13 SEMS manager for Walter Oil & Gas. So --

14 Any questions so far from you, Travis?

15 MR. JENKINS: No, sir.

16 MR. MASON: Just for the group again -- I can't remember -- I  
17 don't recall who was on the call when I said it. Travis's full  
18 name is Michael Travis Jenkins. He goes by Travis, so we'll be  
19 calling him Travis during the interview.

20 INTERVIEW OF MICHAEL TRAVIS JENKINS

21 BY MR. MASON:

22 Q. So let me ask you a few background questions, Travis. You  
23 are an employee of Island Operating Company?

24 A. Yes, I am.

25 Q. Okay. How long have you been employed by Island?

1 A. Right at 4 years. I want to say in January (indiscernible) I  
2 am right at 4 years.

3 Q. Say that again.

4 A. Right at 4 years.

5 Q. Four years. Okay. Great. Thank you. And what is your  
6 present position, Travis?

7 A. I am an (indiscernible) operator.

8 Q. An operator? Okay.

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Have you had previous positions with Island?

11 A. No, sir.

12 Q. No? Great. And how long have you been working at West Delta  
13 106?

14 A. Probably almost 1½ years, and before I was at Main Pass 301  
15 for Walter.

16 Q. Main Pass 301 before that?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. And what is your normal work schedule at West Delta?

19 A. I work a 14 and 14 rotation.

20 Q. Okay. And last Thursday was to be the first day of your --  
21 of a 14-day hitch; is that correct?

22 A. That is correct.

23 Q. Okay. And was there anything unusual about the scheduling of  
24 you heading out to West Delta last Thursday? Anything unusual  
25 about the schedule?

1 A. No, sir. There was nothing unusual.

2 Q. Okay. And when was the last time you worked at West Delta  
3 prior to last Thursday?

4 A. Two weeks prior.

5 Q. Great. Okay. Thank you very much for that. That's the --  
6 those are the background questions we've got.

7 What we'd like you to do now, Travis, is just recount your --  
8 you know, last Thursday from the time you left Galliano to the  
9 time you then departed a couple days later, departed West Delta a  
10 couples later. And again, I'll remind -- and Eric and Lance will  
11 do it as well -- if you need to take a break or something like  
12 that, just let us know. It's no big deal. Okay? I know this is  
13 difficult to go through in detail. So with that, I'll let you go  
14 ahead and start, please.

15 A. From the helicopter or at RLC?

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When you left Galliano till you came  
17 in on the boat.

18 MR. JENKINS: Okay.

19 We, I mean, got everything loaded up in the helicopter, had  
20 called the (indiscernible) station, Station 6, and got loaded up.  
21 Cleared the airways and took off. Took off to West Delta 106.  
22 And, I don't know, I remember roughly a 35-minute flight, I want  
23 to say. It was calm, sunny, the day of the accident. The weather  
24 was good anyway.

25 Got there. Upon approach, we circled the platform, came

1 around the crane, and at that point -- I mean, it wasn't, wasn't  
2 out of the ordinary, but he like kind of -- well, I guess, any  
3 pilot, but kind of reorientating ourself to get ready to land.  
4 And the helicopter, I don't know, it wasn't bad because there was  
5 no strong winds or nothing like that, but it kind of shifted a  
6 little to the side as he was making his approach.

7         We landed, everything went fine. Got out of the helicopter  
8 on the passenger side. I was the third passenger in the back, so  
9 I was up against the pilot seat with my back to the pilot. Got  
10 out on the luggage door compartment side. I didn't get out the  
11 normal side. Got my bags. Walked around the front of the  
12 helicopter down to the staircase, and the crew was waiting at the  
13 bottom of the office, right outside the office underneath the  
14 heliport.

15         Made relief, told them -- they told us a few little things  
16 that was going on that day and them just bringing back the  
17 platform online and having to fight the freezes and whatnot. And  
18 soon after that, I mean, it might have been 2 to 3, 4 minutes, we  
19 was talking, just saying, hey, this is what's going on, we watched  
20 them make their way up the stairs and we went inside the office  
21 and started going over the JSAs for the day and sign the JSAs and  
22 talking to Van Johnson. He was there, remember (indiscernible) he  
23 was there, but he said he got there a couple days before. And  
24 started talking with him and going over the safety meeting and  
25 signing JSAs and talking about various things.

1           It was maybe 4 minutes, 4, 5 minutes at the most, I would  
2 say. I'm not too sure about the minute-wise, but it wasn't long.  
3 And it seemed that everything be normal, and heard the helicopter  
4 where it increased its rpms like he was going to take off or pick  
5 up, and then after that, it wasn't -- I don't know how high up,  
6 but it wasn't -- maybe it wasn't a couple minutes -- I'm not  
7 saying it was in the air a couple minutes, but from the time we  
8 went in to him picking up, heard all kind of ruckus and then the  
9 helicopter got slammed down. I don't know where it got slammed  
10 down, but we know at least once it was on top of the living  
11 quarters.

12           And as soon as that happened, then all the ruckus and  
13 everything, first thing that we thought was the helicopter's going  
14 down. So me and -- we run out the office door, which is directly  
15 underneath the heliport. And at that point we pretty much -- the  
16 helicopter was just hitting, like as soon as -- I mean, it's three  
17 steps out the door, pretty much seen it hit the water like right  
18 at the water and was already in the water as soon as we seen it.

19           So at that point Mr. John ran inside and started -- attempted  
20 to make phone calls to people, and me, Kendall, and Van was at the  
21 handrail waiting to see if anybody would come up. But at that  
22 point -- I mean, it might have been 30 seconds or so, we had three  
23 of us on the handrail. I had run down to the production deck,  
24 grabbed a life ring that was -- it was stationed right by the two  
25 life rafts on the production deck. Waited a little while longer,



1 might have been 30 seconds to a minute, just to see if anybody was  
2 going to come up. And at that point the helicopter, the rafts was  
3 ripped off. There wasn't (indiscernible) --

4 (Connection with Mr. Jenkins lost)

5 (Discussion between Mr. Salazar, Mr. Bush, and Ms. Louviere  
6 while trying to reconnect)

7 MR. MASON: Troy, can you hear us?

8 MR. BUSH: We are back with you now, Wayne. Sorry about  
9 that. We lost connection briefly.

10 MR. MASON: Yeah, that's okay. What was the last part that  
11 you heard Travis describe?

12 MR. BUSH: Actually, if he wouldn't mind, this will satisfy  
13 our question, if he can just go back from where he was when they  
14 circled the platform and made their approach to the helideck? If  
15 he could just go over that one more time, we'd be good to go.

16 MR. JENKINS: He missed a lot then.

17 Like from my orientation in the helicopter or as we were  
18 approaching?

19 BY MR. BUSH:

20 Q. Your -- yes, sir. I believe you were sitting facing aft  
21 behind the pilot. And we heard you were -- you circled the  
22 platform and coming back in for landing. If you could start from  
23 there, we'd be fine.

24 A. Yes, sir. I was with my back to the pilot facing Mr. John  
25 who was sitting across from me, so that is aft. And kind of --

1 well, yeah, we circled the platform and I do believe came in from  
2 around the base of the crane pedestal from in that direction. And  
3 as he -- he was kind of readjusting -- not readjusting; what's it  
4 called -- redirecting, I guess, from when he was coming around  
5 that platform where he situated himself to -- (tone) --

6 Q. Sorry about that. Please continue.

7 A. It wasn't bad because it was really, really a beautiful day  
8 and, I don't know, I think the wind at that time once we got in  
9 was maybe like 15 miles an hour. It wasn't bad. And as he was  
10 reorientate himself to land and come around the platform, it  
11 wasn't nothing more than ordinary. It was just a little, slight  
12 little shake from side to side just when we turned.

13 And then we came in and landed and we was facing south,  
14 southeasterly. The tail rotor was on the -- facing towards the  
15 crane, but it was further from the stairways that (indiscernible)  
16 up and came a little bit over the stairway, so it was southeast  
17 facing -- the tail rotor was northwest, I want to say. Yeah.  
18 That's opposite, yeah.

19 And then we -- I got out, got out of the helicopter.  
20 (Indiscernible) the passenger side door as always, because I was  
21 (indiscernible) walking all the way around helicopter just to get  
22 the bags and walk back, you know, do that. Got off, got our  
23 luggage out, walked around the front of the helicopter nose, and  
24 then we went down the stairs and talked with the guys that were  
25 standing outside waiting to go home. Talked to them for a couple

1 minutes just to find out what's going on. They had been having  
2 these slight problems with the platform with the freezing and  
3 whatnot, so they were just getting back online.

4 And made our relief and then we went inside and started  
5 signing our JSAs and going over the JSAs for the day and our daily  
6 operations and see what we needed to do and all that. And it  
7 might have been 2 or 3, 4 minutes --

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The other guys would've come and  
9 loaded baggage.

10 MR. JENKINS: Right. And did that. Heard the helicopter's  
11 rpms increase as going to take off. And it wasn't long -- I can't  
12 be sure because none of us -- we was all inside. But once the  
13 rpms increased, it sounded as though he picked up a little bit and  
14 picked up, but it wasn't long and he, you know, just came straight  
15 down and all kind of ruckus and noise and a banging and --

16 That happened, and as soon as we heard all of the noise and  
17 felt the building shake, first thing we all thought was the  
18 helicopter's crashing. And where the door of the office is, right  
19 underneath the helicopter -- the helipad, it was maybe two or  
20 three steps and we was outside at the handrail. And we didn't see  
21 any of it. But when -- at the time we got to the handrail, which  
22 is literally 7 feet out the door, the helicopter had just hit the  
23 water.

24 And at that point, Mr. John had turned -- had run in, run  
25 back inside the building and he started attempting to make phone

1 calls -- made his phone calls. He -- I think he had stayed  
2 inside. Me, Kendell, and Van Johnson was on the handrail watching  
3 to see if anybody would come up at that time. And as soon as that  
4 happened, the helicopter was upside down and the life boats wasn't  
5 on it. But right underneath is, it was just -- there was a lot of  
6 blood in the water right at that, right at that time.

7 And at that point we was waiting on survivors to see if  
8 anybody popped up. I'd say 30 seconds, maybe, went by and then I  
9 proceeded to run down the stairs to the production deck and I went  
10 and grabbed a life ring, waited right there a little while as  
11 it -- the helicopter -- I mean, the current was getting pretty --  
12 the current was moving. It wasn't ridiculously fast as some days,  
13 but it was moving, and the helicopter started going to the west  
14 side of the platform.

15 And at that point we were still waiting, watching to see if  
16 anybody popped up. And I took off next to the (indiscernible)  
17 deck, which is a sump, sump deck. There's a life jacket box right  
18 there. I grabbed one and started going down the stairs with the  
19 life ring and my life jacket, and putting on my life jacket. And  
20 ran all the way down to the plus-10. And at that point, by the  
21 time I got all the way down to the plus-10, still waiting,  
22 watching, the helicopter was probably 30, 40 feet away from the  
23 platform at that time. So I was just waiting, contemplating  
24 jumping in, but it was kind of too far with the -- I'd it was too  
25 far due to the fast, but it's never too far. But waited on that,

1 then at that point Trent started hollering.

2 Me -- so at that point, I ran -- I left the life boat at the  
3 bottom of the platform -- not the life boat, the life ring on the  
4 plus-10 rail and went back up. We -- me, Van Johnson, and Trent  
5 then jumped in the life capsule. We deployed it, got into the  
6 water, and then we attempt -- we started to, started to try to  
7 chase it. It was a little difficult. I can't even  
8 (indiscernible), I don't exactly know exactly how big the wind  
9 was.

10 (Simultaneous conversations)

11 MR. JENKINS: It was almost like -- we were making progress  
12 but, you know, we were just tossing and spinning so we was having  
13 to overcorrect and overcorrect, and by the time we caught up to  
14 it, I want to say it might have been 100 yards, 150 yards, I'm  
15 assuming -- I mean, my (indiscernible) judging that far, but I'd  
16 say at least 100 yards from the platform to the north, northwest  
17 corner of the platform.

18 But at that point you could (indiscernible), and I'd say that  
19 was maybe 30, 35 minutes by the time we ended up catching up to  
20 it. And we was -- me and Trent and Van was -- kept -- we was  
21 having a debate and I wanted to jump in the water regardless and  
22 then they was on -- at that point they had (indiscernible). It  
23 was -- because, and we -- and I'd say we got within 10 yards of it  
24 and there was a lot of stuff, debris. At that point a lot of  
25 strings and stuff hanging out. I don't know. But as far as that

1 life capsule, I mean, it's got a little, you know, maybe a little  
2 lever arm or I don't know what you call it, to steer with it.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Rudder.

4 MR. JENKINS: So we really had no (indiscernible) anyway,  
5 because all we was doing was mostly just spinning. So we -- at  
6 that point they didn't want to let me get into the water to just  
7 check, and like I said, it's already been 30 minutes, 35 minutes,  
8 and (indiscernible) anyway. I mean, this all happened so fast.

9 And at that point, like I told -- when we was talking about  
10 it, me and Trent, and I was like, the only thing I do remember the  
11 one time that I looked at my watch was as we was deploying the  
12 life capsule, and that was at 8:38, is the only time I remember  
13 looking at my watch, and that was it.

14 And so that's, in reverse. But going back then forward, we  
15 probably stayed within seeing distance of the helicopter, I don't  
16 know, a good 10, 20 minutes just in distance. But just  
17 (indiscernible) they had a boat already on the way. I don't  
18 remember the name of the boat. But once it got, I don't know, a  
19 couple hundred yards out, I think, from it, then it was pretty --  
20 we felt helpless at that point. And they decided then at that  
21 point -- I think the Coast Guard, we heard calls over the radio  
22 that they were a good ways out and they were on the way. And an  
23 RLC helicopter was there before the Coast Guard circling the site  
24 for a good while before the Coast Guard showed up.

25 And then headed back to the platform. We reattached the life

1 capsule, got it synced up, and then I think Trent went back in and  
2 tried to start making phone calls and returning phone calls while  
3 we stood again watching over the handrail. We pretty much seen,  
4 was able to -- I mean, we was higher in the water, but was able to  
5 see the helicopter almost the entire time until the Coast Guard  
6 got there. But I don't know what happened there.

7 And then after all that, they called off the search and boats  
8 started gathering all the debris and -- at that time, I mean,  
9 nothing more we can do being on the platform, but just thinking  
10 about it and seeing. But at that time we were still flowing so we  
11 still had stuff to see about and it's, I don't know,  
12 (indiscernible) phone calls to Trent. And I think that -- I  
13 mean, I don't know if there's any more that I can go over.  
14 Everybody was pretty much stuck on the platform at that point. So  
15 still flowing, still had to see about everything and deal with  
16 stuff and (indiscernible) --

17 MR. MASON: So, Travis -- is somebody else talking  
18 (indiscernible)? It sounds like there's a little bit of feedback.

19 But Travis -- can you hear me okay?

20 MR. JENKINS: Yes, sir.

21 MR. MASON: Okay.

22 BY MR. MASON:

23 Q. So once you got back to the platform and there wasn't much  
24 else to do, then you looked after basically the production  
25 operation?

1 A. Yes, sir. We were still flowing, so still got that to see  
2 about. So just tried to go out kind of -- I don't know who made,  
3 I don't know who made the phone call, but at first they wanted to  
4 shut in as soon as this had happened. But at that time we didn't  
5 have a spare generator. Both our gas -- generators are gas, so we  
6 couldn't -- able to the shut in. So it was decided to keep  
7 flowing while we were dealing with all this. So it's a handful,  
8 but do what we had to do.

9 Q. Okay. And when did you -- when was the decision made to  
10 depart the platform and tell me about that.

11 A. For us, I mean, I really regardless -- I'm not saying  
12 regardless, but we all wanted to leave right away, but we had more  
13 to -- they had asked us pretty much that day if we wanted to  
14 leave, but after us discussing it and everything, we just -- I  
15 think Van left that day. They put him on a boat and I think -- I  
16 don't remember, I think it was a (indiscernible). I don't know.  
17 They put -- we put him on a boat and he left.

18 But we decided, since they hadn't been found, we was just  
19 thinking that we just wanted to see them get out of the water  
20 before we left. So we decided just to stay flowing and I think  
21 that ran up the chain for Walter and Mike Holley and -- so I think  
22 they said that was okay as well. But they definitely put it up  
23 for us as to whether we wanted to leave. And so we decided to  
24 stay flowing. And, I mean, it did help because we had -- we kind  
25 of had, you know, things to do and it wasn't the only thing on our



1 mind, so --

2 We decided to stay flowing and stayed flowing until they  
3 pulled them out the water. And that was, I want to say, 5 days.  
4 It was maybe Thursday morning, I think, they got some -- I don't  
5 remember. But they ended up pulling them out -- I don't remember  
6 what day. I know somebody has the date, but they ended up pulling  
7 them out the water. Once they got them all secured and  
8 everything, I want to say, like 9, 9:30 that night on whichever  
9 day it is. And then they had discussions about transferring it  
10 onto another boat that was staying around the platform for us  
11 since the heliport was out of service temporarily.

12 So they -- something happened with the -- yeah, they said the  
13 seas were rough, so they decided to leave the helicopter on the  
14 dive boat and they went in, as far as we know. But at that point  
15 they had pretty much -- we decided to -- I think it was that day  
16 at noon, once they found it, I do believe, once they actually  
17 located the helicopter, we shut in the platform as soon as they  
18 did that, I think. And at that point, since they told us they  
19 were going to pull it out at 9, 9:30ish, they would be ready to  
20 pull out the helicopter, I think Walter -- Walter's office then  
21 started seeing about -- I think they started (indiscernible) when  
22 they sent a speedboat -- I think, it was a (indiscernible), same  
23 boat they had left on, and got a couple guys just to come sit on  
24 the platform and be with them. And I think we left -- they got  
25 there at 1 o'clock that morning and we made the change, told them

1 a couple things about the diesel and the generator that we swapped  
2 and we got the generator on, shut in the platform, flagged  
3 everything, and we -- they loaded us on the boat and all of us  
4 stayed pretty much -- we was out behind the boat, but we pretty  
5 much followed the boat with the helicopter on it. And Mr. Mike  
6 met us at the port and drove us around to the heliport.

7 Q. Travis, you've done a tremendous job and tremendous detail in  
8 recounting that day and the days after. Thank you very, very much  
9 for that. If you're ready to continue, we'll go ahead and start  
10 with the questions if you're ready?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 MR. MASON: Okay. So RLC, we'll start with you to ask your  
13 questions.

14 MR. BUSH: Travis, this is Troy Bush, the chief pilot with  
15 RLC again. I know it's difficult to keep reliving this during  
16 these meetings and especially when you're sitting at home probably  
17 with your family or just by yourself, and for that I am sorry. I  
18 want to assure you that I know that saying we're sorry for the  
19 accident holds very little weight, if any, but we are here --  
20 everybody at this table, everybody at this company is committed to  
21 finding out what happened that afternoon so that we do not have to  
22 have this conversation again with anybody else.

23 I agree with Wayne, your detailed description of everything  
24 that happened that day tells us everything that we need to know.  
25 So at this time, RLC doesn't have any questions, but I do believe

1 the NTSB may have one.

2 BY MR. SALAZAR:

3 Q. Travis, I just have one question. Who were the three  
4 individuals that were in the capsule?

5 A. It was me myself, Trent Sullivan, which is the PIC, and Van  
6 Johnson. I think he's a subsea guy or a (indiscernible) guy,  
7 whatever he does, maybe, or is he a subsea guy?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think he's a subsea guy.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's a subsea guy.

10 MR. JENKINS: He's a subsea guy. We had one subsea well on  
11 our platform. And then Mr. John Amell and Kendall Arnaud stayed  
12 on the platform watching the water just in case. And we had  
13 radios at that time, so they was able to keep us in the loop of  
14 anything in the (indiscernible). But it was me, Van, and Trent  
15 that was in the capsule.

16 BY MR. SALAZAR:

17 Q. Okay. Thank you. I do want to compliment you on your recall  
18 and your detail. You're very helpful.

19 With regards to time, you had mentioned that you deployed  
20 a -- got into the life capsule around 0838; is that correct?

21 A. Yes, sir. For some reason, I mean, I didn't -- I can't even  
22 tell you exactly when we got in, on the platform at an exact time,  
23 but we -- I mean, we had a long time to think and talk, and on the  
24 platform we was talking and the one thing I do remember telling  
25 him is specifically -- I mean, there's a few specific things I do

1 remember, but specifically the only time that I managed to look at  
2 my watch was at 8:38, and we was getting in the capsule.

3 Q. All right. I've got -- and I hate to ask this, but to the  
4 best of your recollection, how far back would you say that ruckus  
5 was when you heard all that noise? Take your time and give that  
6 some thought. That's really the last question I have and I  
7 appreciate you being here.

8 A. All right. Yes, sir. I'd say 7 to 10 minutes maybe.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Seven to 10 minutes.

11 Q. Thank you very much.

12 MR. SALAZAR: That's all I have, sir.

13 MR. MASON: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Salazar. Thank you, Troy.

14 MR. BUSH: Yes, sir.

15 MR. MASON: Island, do you want to ask any questions you  
16 have?

17 BY MR. FONTENOT:

18 Q. I just had one question, and you may have said it, Travis,  
19 and I may have been writing something down. Once you guys landed  
20 on the heliport, did the pilot have to reposition the helicopter  
21 at all, or where he landed is that the position that he stayed in?

22 A. No, sir, that is the position that he stayed at as far as my  
23 recollection. Because when we came around the platform, he had to  
24 recorrect, I guess, as far as that to land, in the air. And  
25 that's all I -- my recollection is he did that and landed. He

1 didn't pick up and have to reorientate himself to the platform or  
2 into the wind or anything like that.

3 Q. Okay. Thank you.

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 MR. FONTENOT: Lance, did you have anything?

6 MR. LeBLANC: Island is good.

7 MR. MASON: Okay. Thank you, Eric.

8 BSEE, do you have any questions you'd like to ask?

9 MR. HANSON: Mike Hanson has no questions. Thank you.

10 MR. BRADLEY: Nathan Bradley. No questions. Thank you.

11 MR. MASON: Okay. Thank you.

12 Ken, would you like to ask the questions, please, from  
13 Walter? Ken, you're on mute.

14 BY MR. MEYER:

15 Q. Travis, good morning. We really appreciate you coming in  
16 today. This information is going to help quite a bit. I wanted  
17 to ask you a few things, see about what was going on on the  
18 platform when you guys landed, between the time you guys landed  
19 and when the bird took off there. Do you recall what position the  
20 crane was in when you came in to land?

21 A. Yes, sir. The crane was in the cradle, which is on the west  
22 side of the platform.

23 Q. The west side cradle on the northwest corner, I believe.

24 Okay. All right. Do you recall seeing any boats in the area  
25 inside the 500-meter zone, a supply boat, a mermaid, or something

1 like that?

2 A. No, I do not. But like as soon as -- I don't know if a  
3 mayday -- because I didn't -- I wasn't inside the building or  
4 anything with the radio active. After the initial noise and  
5 ruckus and everything going on, I didn't go back in the building  
6 until hours later. But as far as a mayday or anything, I don't  
7 know about if that was called, but I know Mr. John was inside with  
8 the phone and the radios. And it didn't take a long, but it was  
9 a -- if there was -- like at that point we didn't see any boats,  
10 but it didn't -- I can't really put a time on it, but it wasn't --  
11 I mean, a time, maybe an hour maybe, as far as a boat getting  
12 somewhere close to the platform or to the site of the helicopter  
13 and all that. But maybe an hour.

14 But from that time afterwards, once I got back on the  
15 platform, then I was able to see a boat -- I mean, I think the  
16 platform's to our west, maybe 3 miles from us, which is a boat  
17 that was, I guess it was in the area. I don't know how  
18 specifically that works when a tragedy happens, but there was one  
19 way in the distance headed towards us, so -- but as far as  
20 noticing if there was one in the area, I didn't see any until I  
21 seen that boat and it was on the way. So I don't know how that  
22 specifically works.

23 Q. Right. There was a boat in the area and just -- they were  
24 just lending aid, you know, to a distress call. He was just going  
25 by, I believe.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. All right. Do you recall that the platform was producing or  
3 was it shut in when you landed?

4 A. No, we were producing. We was flowing.

5 Q. Okay. Do you know if you were venting?

6 A. Not at that time. We didn't see any, but I know we do vent,  
7 but it's -- I mean, that's (indiscernible) of every day. I mean,  
8 I couldn't tell you exactly. We do have some venting, but at that  
9 time we didn't see any. And we, I mean, make relief right outside  
10 there, because the flare boom --

11 Q. Right.

12 A. -- is out --

13 Q. Okay. Thanks. You were saying -- I want to step back to ask  
14 you inside the bird on the flight in, were you on the headphones?  
15 You were not tied in to the headphones?

16 A. No, sir. I was not.

17 Q. Okay. So I think, if I heard you correctly, Travis, you were  
18 sitting directly behind the pilot facing backwards?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. Okay. Can you tell me the other two positions of the guys?

21 A. Mr. John Amell is directly in front of me facing forward on  
22 the pilot side.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. And Trent sits on the passenger side in the back of -- over  
25 on the seat, and Kendall sits -- he always sits in the front with

1 the pilot. He's a nervous wreck.

2 Q. Kendall was, well, not -- shoulder to shoulder with the  
3 pilot?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Okay. So you had the one seat behind Kendall and Trent  
6 empty. Okay. I just wanted to clarify that. I appreciate that.  
7 Yes?

8 A. I had to move the pilot's book sack to get into my seat, and  
9 we strapped it and seat-belted it into the other passenger seat  
10 right behind the passenger. So --

11 Q. Okay. Thank you. All right. When you came down the stairs  
12 and met the three fellows that were going on days off, typically I  
13 would think that their cargo, their bags, luggage, is in that  
14 vicinity. Did you happen to see that and could you comment on the  
15 cargo that was loaded onto the bird before it took off?

16 A. Well, we made relief. You know, it's right  
17 (indiscernible) -- it's right there underneath the heliport. So  
18 no matter what, we pretty much always have our bags right there  
19 waiting if we make relief inside or if we just stand around right  
20 there beneath the heliport and talk. But from my recollection,  
21 they all had backpacks. And I did not see David's blue iron bag  
22 that's like kind of like a workgroup bag. But we did get it  
23 recovered.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Once they did that. But that's the only luggage that I



1 remember them loading up with.

2 Q. But would you say that the cargo luggage was actually normal  
3 for a crew change as far as quantity and weight?

4 A. As far as weight, I couldn't tell you that. I mean, it  
5 looked like -- I wouldn't say anything overloaded just from  
6 looking at the backpacks. I mean, we keep a lot of our stuff on  
7 the platform in our locked locker so we don't have to --

8 Q. Right.

9 A. -- carry a whole lot of baggage. But I wouldn't say it's any  
10 more than normal. It might be maybe 15, 20 -- 20 pounds per bag  
11 maybe. I mean, I couldn't --

12 Q. All right. That's good. I was wondering, you know, with all  
13 of the commotion and the debris and launching the Whittaker life  
14 sustaining capsule, were you injured at any point during this?

15 A. Injured? No, sir.

16 Q. Good. That's excellent. Okay. All right.

17 MR. MEYER: Well, Wayne, I think that covers the questions  
18 that I have.

19 Travis, thank you very much.

20 MR. MASON: I just got one question.

21 BY MR. MASON:

22 Q. Travis, do you recall seeing birds or bird nests or anything  
23 like that last week on the platform?

24 A. As far as birds, I would say no. But after the fact, like  
25 afterwards, I mean, I've been on a couple platforms just there,

1 but they always seem to have a lot of birds like around the  
2 heliport and the flare boom. They like to perch out on that. But  
3 the only time I remember seeing them is the big pelicans was down  
4 on the plus-10 after, like after I had gone down there. There  
5 might have been one or two, but as far as being on the -- we  
6 rarely, I mean, I rarely see any, and I've been on this platform  
7 for the last 3½ years. But as far as around the heliport, I don't  
8 see that many on this platform ever. But I don't recall that day  
9 there being any birds or anything around the heliport or the flare  
10 boom.

11 Q. Okay. Great. Thank you.

12 MR. MASON: That's all the questions I've got. We're going  
13 to go back around for follow-up questions. And if there -- once  
14 we're done with the follow-up questions, Travis, we'll go ahead  
15 and close the interview, okay?

16 MR. JENKINS: Okay.

17 MR. MASON: So start with RLC and NTSB, any follow-up  
18 questions from your side?

19 MR. BUSH: Hi, Wayne. Just one second, please. We're going  
20 to place you right back on mute and consult everybody around the  
21 table, if you'll indulge us just for minute?

22 (Pause)

23 MR. BUSH: Wayne, we're back with you now. Thank you so  
24 much. We had another NTSB investigator join us. We were just  
25 making sure he didn't have anything else he would like to ask of

1 Travis.

2 Travis, thank you again for a very detailed recounting of the  
3 events. And again, we're all working together to make sure we  
4 don't have to do this again. Thank you, sir.

5 MR. MASON: Thank you, Troy.

6 Eric, do you have questions from Island?

7 (End of audio recording 1)

8 (Begin audio recording 2)

9 BY MR. MEYER:

10 Q. -- the office. Do you know if the helicopter landed right  
11 side up or upside down? Did it land right side up and then invert  
12 or did it land upside down, top to the water?

13 A. Like, I mean, what I had said earlier, as soon as I -- it  
14 pretty much, right as it hit the water, right, I mean, we have  
15 only a few steps out, but --

16 Q. Right.

17 A. It was pretty much upside down at that -- like I'm not even  
18 going to say, we didn't see it roll over. When it fell, it just  
19 fell straight down upside down. I mean, we didn't see the -- we  
20 did not see the fall. Like what we seen, it was pretty much right  
21 as it hit the water. I mean, I guess you can kind of call that  
22 seeing it, but I wouldn't say we seen the whole fall of it. It  
23 was like at the water as soon as we seen it, because the handrail  
24 is 7 feet outside the office door. So I ain't going to say it  
25 rolled over because I'm not going to speculate, but from what we

1 seen, it was upside down as soon as it hit the water.

2       Because, I mean, we speculated a lot just the 5 days we was  
3 there. You know, we had production things to do because we stayed  
4 flowing. But just staring at it and saying, oh, what is this;  
5 what is that; what do you think happened to this? And if we  
6 looked -- like when we look at it -- we looked at it a lot, a lot,  
7 and thought about every kind of scenario you can possibly think of  
8 and just kind of -- I don't know, it's a lot.

9 Q. It is a lot to process. Sorry that you guys had to go  
10 through that. I'm glad you guys were out there. Okay.

11       Well, Travis, again, I appreciate your time here today.

12       MR. BUSH: Wayne, Troy Bush again. We do have one follow-up  
13 following -- because something Ken just was able to discover. If  
14 you don't mind?

15       MR. MASON: Yeah, please go ahead.

16       BY MR. BUSH:

17 Q. Travis, that's the first report that we've gotten of anybody  
18 actually seeing the helicopter or the fuselage as it's impacting  
19 or entering the water. Do you remember if the skid gear was still  
20 attached and, if so, were the floats inflated at that time?

21 A. The -- like as I soon as we seen it, where -- what I'm saying  
22 is that I'm -- you know, I think it was me and Van that were  
23 pretty much the first ones out the door. But as far as me seeing  
24 it, the helicopter skid was in the water but it was not attached.  
25 You know what I mean? Like a fan hit's -- I'm not saying I seen

1 the whole fall of the helicopter because we didn't. And I'm not  
2 even going to try to make that whole story up or whole what it is  
3 or we made that. But the initial -- like, I mean, you can't even  
4 say how fast it fell, but it's like when I went outside and there  
5 it was in -- right at the water. Like from my point of view,  
6 there was no skid on the helicopter when it was hitting the water.

7 Q. Okay, Travis. Thank you very much.

8 MR. MASON: Travis, this is Wayne Mason again. I've got a  
9 follow-up question as well.

10 BY MR. MASON:

11 Q. When you went out the door after the impact, what was the  
12 sequence of your crew that went out the door? Were you first?

13 A. I want to say I was second and Van was first. Van was the  
14 first one out.

15 Q. Okay. Who followed you out; do you remember?

16 A. I want to say it was Trent, but I may not be sure.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. And after Trent?

20 A. I don't --

21 Q. You have no idea?

22 A. The only two left was Mr. John and Kendall, so I couldn't  
23 tell you that.

24 Q. Yeah. Okay. No, that's wonderful.

25 MR. MASON: Okay. Any other follow-up questions from the

1 group? If not, John -- I mean, Travis, anything else that you  
2 would like to add that you think might have missed or would be  
3 helpful?

4 MR. JENKINS: I mean, not that -- I mean, I'm sure it ain't  
5 nothing -- I mean, it's all relevant, but can I ask these guys,  
6 you know, is there an investigation team out there yet?

7 BY MR. MASON:

8 Q. Sorry. Ask that again?

9 A. An investigation team, did they happen to be able to get out  
10 there yet?

11 Q. Yes, they have.

12 A. Okay. And I mean, I -- we was just, like we was just talking  
13 about you all wondering if the skid was on it. I mean, like I  
14 said, we speculated a lot because we had nothing but time and  
15 worried about the production and whatnot, but no matter where we  
16 walked on the platform there was pieces of helicopter.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. So we speculated a lot, but just wondering if they made a  
19 decision and it seemed -- like, yeah, because he asked about it,  
20 the helicopter and skid was together in the water. We don't ever  
21 remember seeing that and nor will I ever say it was together, but  
22 there's a spot on the production deck where the propeller blade --  
23 and I'm sure they picked it up or -- if they did or if it's still  
24 there, but on that handrail where the blade was over, and if you  
25 look at the skid from the helicopter, on the front of it it's on

1 its -- it's mangled up and there is an impact point in the grating  
2 right behind the handrails. Like we speculated a lot that that's  
3 where the helicopter pretty much probably came off of the  
4 building. Because we do know it hit the top of our living  
5 quarters from just whatever happened. And then it came off we --  
6 because once again it's speculating because we didn't see none of  
7 that -- it came off the living quarters and pretty much probably  
8 took a nosedive. And there's a spot that matches up with the  
9 skids, in our point of view, that it hung up -- it went straight  
10 down into the grating and the skid was then behind the handrail  
11 and the helicopter was dangling over the handrail over the water.  
12 But we suppose that's what ripped it off the helicopter at that  
13 point and the helicopter -- and what, as we've seen, ended up for  
14 it to be upside down from -- because the rotor is the heavier part  
15 and it's already facing down, from what we speculate.

16 Q. All right, Travis, (indiscernible). Thank you very much.

17 A. Since we were talking about it.

18 MR. MASON: Are all the questions in from RLC or NTSB? I saw  
19 your hand was up.

20 MR. BUSH: Yes, Wayne. Troy Bush again.

21 BY MR. BUSH:

22 Q. Travis, real quick, we're talking about the skids. I assume  
23 you matched up those markings when the skids were back on West  
24 Delta 106; is that correct?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay. Do you remember were they upright or were they still  
2 upside down?

3 A. They were -- like you talking about on the platform?

4 Q. When they recovered them and set them on the platform, did  
5 they set them on the bottom of the skids where the bags were on  
6 top of the skids and the curved crossmember, crossbeams on top?

7 A. No, sir. We -- it was actually we set them upside down.

8 Q. Okay. Upside down. So --

9 A. So --

10 Q. Are you familiar with skid gear? What I'd like to do, what  
11 I'm leading to, is which skid, which side you compared those marks  
12 to? So are familiar enough with the skid gear to know which would  
13 be the front and which would be the back of a skid set?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So the front skids are the one that is kind of turned up, if  
17 I'm correct?

18 Q. There's a slight turn-up and then the back skids have a piece  
19 about 2½ feet long that angle up just a little bit. Would you  
20 agree?

21 A. Yeah, the (indiscernible) --

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. I know that you got the little, the handle on each side, the  
24 passenger and the pilot side, to pop the floats.

25 Q. Right.



1 A. Yeah, we did notice that. Because we looked at it and we was  
2 like it had to hang up on something. And if you look at it, like  
3 if you really look at it all, the wiring off the little buttons  
4 that push to (indiscernible), and I guess that's what deploys the  
5 floats that were deployed.

6 Q. Correct.

7 A. If you look at the cable part, the cable, it's wrapped in  
8 black, like some black silicon, I guess?

9 Q. Yes, sir.

10 A. Part of it is ripped out of there, so you can see it caught  
11 up on something and it pulled the wire.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Deployed before. Because we were talking like, so it was  
14 something at that point because it was deployed -- the airbags  
15 were deployed, but we were thinking it was before they were -- at  
16 that point where it was teetering, again, at some point right  
17 there it caught up on something or it was caught up -- hanging up  
18 on something else before it was in the water.

19 Q. Okay. So what I want you to visualize if you can -- I know  
20 those skids are sitting upside on the deck there on 106. If they  
21 were flipped right side up and you were standing in the middle of  
22 them facing what you believe is the front part of the skid, was it  
23 the left skid or the right skid that you believe was marked up?

24 A. Honestly, I can't -- I couldn't tell you that.

25 Q. Okay. Yeah, I know that's a -- that's some mental gymnastics

1 there, but --

2 A. I don't remember which one it is, but one of those legs it  
3 definitely got significant damage to it.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Because we was kind of confused as to like what did it hit  
6 and what happened because, yeah, they straight, but one one of  
7 them is bent like at an angle one way --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- and go all the way to the other end of the same skid, it's  
10 bent the opposite way as the front.

11 Q. Yes, sir. Is that the skid that has the markings on it or is  
12 the other skid?

13 A. I don't know. I'm not going to -- ain't going to try to make  
14 something up.

15 Q. All right. Just give me your opinion. We have the skids and  
16 we'll look at that, but we just -- you brought up an interesting  
17 point that you thought it might have gotten hung up there and you  
18 compared those markings and we were just curious at this point.

19 Thank you, Travis.

20 A. Correct.

21 MR. BUSH: That's it, Wayne.

22 MR. MASON: Okay. Does anybody else have follow-up  
23 questions? Michael?

24 MR. HANSON: Yeah, from BSEE.

25 Hey, and thank you, Mr. Travis. I'm glad you're here. And,

1 you know, asking if investigators got out there, we got stuck in  
2 weather, so -- but as soon as BSEE investigators could get out  
3 there, and the NTSB -- they got there the same day as us -- you  
4 know, we got out there. We did notice the bent railing. We did  
5 notice white paint possibly from the skids on the railing. We did  
6 notice the impact possibly in the grate, and we did notice the  
7 skid. So just so you know, we got photos of all that stuff and we  
8 got it well in hand. I appreciate you and I just want to alleve  
9 [sic] your fears that maybe we might have missed something. So I  
10 just wanted to let you know that. Okay?

11 MR. JENKINS: Yes, sir.

12 MR. HANSON: Thank you.

13 MR. MASON: Okay. If there are no other questions, then,  
14 Travis, once again, I want to just reemphasize how exceptional the  
15 professionalism that you and the rest of your crew showed that day  
16 in the immediate aftermath of the incident, is really a testament  
17 to your characters and just to the level of professionalism that  
18 you and the Island folks bring to Walter's platforms, so thank you  
19 for that. Sorry you have to go through all this, but I really  
20 appreciate you taking the time and the effort this morning and the  
21 mental difficulty this morning to recount everything. So for  
22 that, I thank you very much.

23 MR. JENKINS: Yes, sir.

24 MR. MASON: And so, for the rest of the group, this concludes  
25 the five scheduled interviews.

1 Yes, sir?

2 MR. JENKINS: I want to ask -- I mean, I know it was a hectic  
3 day and, like I said, I'm just wondering as far as anything -- I'm  
4 sure everybody's got their pen and papers out, but from me in the  
5 like saying the time, the only time I remember looking at my watch  
6 was on the way down in the life capsule. I'm just curious -- I  
7 mean, it's a lot for us to take in with all of the -- everything  
8 that's going on at that time, but can anybody tell me, you know,  
9 if there is any discrepancies in our times as far as us four in  
10 our interviews? I mean, I'm just asking.

11 MR. SALAZAR: We're not -- this is Fabian from the NTSB,  
12 Travis. We're not noting anything unusual with the times that  
13 we've been given. And we appreciate you bringing out that 0838  
14 when you checked your watch before you got into the capsule.  
15 That's helping us out.

16 MR. JENKINS: Yes, sir.

17 MR. MASON: Okay. With that, gentlemen, thank you all very  
18 much and, again, thank you, Travis. And you all have a good day.  
19 Thank you.

20 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)  
21  
22  
23  
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25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

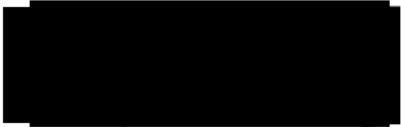
IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE OF  
SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR GALLIANO,  
LOUISIANA ON DECEMBER 29, 2022  
Interview of Michael Travis Jenkins

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN23FA071

PLACE: via Microsoft Teams

DATE: January 6, 2023

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kay Maurer  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE  
OF SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR  
GALLIANO, LOUISIANA ON  
ON DECEMBER 29, 2022

\* Accident No.: CEN23FA071

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: TASHA LOUVIERE, Director of Safety  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC  
Headquarters  
Broussard, Louisiana

Friday,  
January 6, 2023

APPEARANCES:

FABIAN SALAZAR, Air Safety Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Tasha Louviere:

By Mr. Salazar

5



I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. SALAZAR: Good morning, Tasha. My name's Fabian Salazar.  
3 I'm an air safety investigator for the NTSB. I appreciate your  
4 willingness to be here to speak with me. I'm going through this  
5 interview because you're the subject matter expert in RLC's safety  
6 program. Okay. There's information that you have that I'd like  
7 to have for the investigation and this interview will be able to  
8 get that information to me.

9 MS. LOUVIERE: Okay.

10 MR. SALAZAR: With your permission, I'm going to record it so  
11 that I can send the recording out to be transcribed, and then that  
12 transcription will be part of the public docket.

13 MS. LOUVIERE: Okay.

14 MR. SALAZAR: Okay? Normally we would invite the party  
15 members. Troy Bush is a party member. He's in a meeting right  
16 now, so we're just going to go ahead and get started and he can  
17 come in after we've got going with the questions.

18 You do have the right to have someone present. It could be  
19 anybody: an attorney, your mom, your best friend. Is there  
20 somebody that you would like to be here with you during this  
21 interview?

22 MS. LOUVIERE: No, sir.

23 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. And at that, if it's okay with you,  
24 let's go ahead and get started.

25 INTERVIEW OF TASHA LOUVIERE

FREE STATE REPORTING, INC.  
Court Reporting Transcription  
D.C. Area 301-261-1902  
Balt. & Annap. 410-974-0947

1 BY MR. SALAZAR:

2 Q. Would you start by telling me your full name and spelling it  
3 out, please?

4 A. Okay. Tasha, T-a-s-h-a. My last name is Louviere, L-o-u-v  
5 as in Victor-i-e-r-e.

6 Q. And what do you do?

7 A. I'm the director of safety here at RLC.

8 Q. Okay. How long have you been employed with RLC?

9 A. Two years.

10 Q. Okay. Tell us a little bit about your duties and  
11 responsibilities.

12 A. Okay. So I manage the safety management system, all of our  
13 emergency response plan, training employees on safety-related  
14 issues, overseeing and initiating internal audits. I deal with  
15 all of our external audits as well. We do biweekly safety  
16 bulletins and meetings. And then investigating any incidents and  
17 accidents within the company.

18 Q. Okay. Does the employer give you ample time to do all of  
19 these duties and responsibilities?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. You mentioned SMS, safety management system?

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. Okay. Tell me a little bit about the SMS program that RLC  
24 has.

25 A. Okay. So our SMS program has a safety policy, the

1 accountability and the authority, the designation of the  
2 personnel. It has our emergency response information in there,  
3 the risk management side of it, safety assurance and safety  
4 promotion.

5 Q. Okay. Excellent. The first thing you brought up, was  
6 that -- what was the very first thing you brought up on the SMS?

7 A. The accountability. Safety policy.

8 Q. The policy. Is that policy written by the CEO?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay. I'd like to see a copy of that when you can.

11 A. Okay. Yeah, I'll add that to the items.

12 Q. Okay. And you mentioned the emergency response plan, we'll  
13 get to that, and the audits, both internal and external. Let's  
14 talk about the internal audits.

15 A. Okay.

16 Q. Do you do those?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. Do you follow a checklist?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. Okay. I'd like to see that checklist when you can.

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. And how often do you do those internal audits?

23 A. Annually.

24 Q. Okay. During your audits, if you find something that is --  
25 I'll just call it a red flag, okay, that you see something that is

1 unsafe, walk me through the steps that you take to correct that  
2 discovery.

3 A. Okay. So any findings on audit, if it's something simple  
4 that can be corrected immediately, it's corrected on the spot. If  
5 it's something that would be a major concern, obviously a stop  
6 work would be done and the issue would be addressed, along with  
7 passing that information along to all facilities to make sure that  
8 anything happening there is not being duplicated at the other  
9 facilities.

10 Q. Okay. Do you document that finding on any document?

11 A. Yes, that would be documented. It would be entered into the  
12 log of the items that were observed during the audit.

13 Q. Okay. Okay. Do you assign someone to make that correction?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. And do you use -- do you give them a sense on when it should  
16 be corrected?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. Do you have meetings with leadership after these  
19 audits to go over the findings?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. All righty. How often do you have those type of meetings?

22 A. Those findings -- when we do them, those findings are shared  
23 with the senior management team and then the management at all of  
24 the bases. So any time an audit is done, we would send those out.  
25 And if there are items that are remaining open, we would meet

1 again to see about making sure those items are wrapped up.

2 Q. Okay. Did you mention safety bulletins? Do you manage the  
3 safety bulletins?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Does each one of the stations --

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. -- do they have a safety bulletin board that's --

8 A. Yes, sir. It goes --

9 Q. -- dedicated to safety?

10 A. Yes, sir. It goes to all of the facilities, and they all  
11 have to have a meeting, log their meeting, and send that  
12 information back to us.

13 Q. Okay. Do you have a point of contact at each one of these  
14 stations that you send that information to or do you go out there  
15 physically yourself?

16 A. It goes to every location. It goes to every employee at  
17 every location, and then the lead pilot at that location or lead  
18 mechanic, depending on which group you're meeting with, would  
19 conduct those meetings.

20 Q. Okay. Okay. I probably should have brought this up earlier,  
21 but tell me where you got your safety training.

22 A. Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

23 Q. Okay. All right. Very cool. Very cool. It sounds like  
24 you're very well versed in the aviation safety, but you're not a  
25 rated aviator yourself, are you?

1 A. No, sir.

2 Q. Okay. Has that ever become a problem?

3 A. No, sir, it has not.

4 Q. You never had any kind of challenge from any of the pilots  
5 coming to you telling you what you don't understand because you're  
6 not a pilot?

7 A. No, sir.

8 Q. Good. Glad to hear that. Safety training, tell me a little  
9 bit about the safety training that RLC has.

10 A. Okay. So they would receive their basic OSHA-type training,  
11 and then obviously the flight training is incorporated -- the  
12 flight safety is incorporated all throughout their flight training  
13 as they come in.

14 Q. Okay. Do you have a monthly safety training program?

15 A. We have the annual safety training program, and then  
16 everything that goes out on the bulletins is recorded as well.

17 Q. Okay. While we're on the subject of safety training, and so  
18 that we can get it out of the way, we know that RLC had an  
19 accident December 15th of 2022.

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. And based off of that accident, a safety meeting was  
22 conducted. As we were told, it was held by the director of  
23 operations and it encompassed all or almost all of the pilots.  
24 Can you tell me a little bit about that meeting, what was covered  
25 and details of that?

1 A. Okay. So the meeting would have been held at the bases with  
2 the pilots and some of the topics covered were weather, double IMC  
3 weather, making sure you are 100 percent any time you start the  
4 aircraft up. Before you pull pitch, if you're not 100 percent, do  
5 not do it. We need them 100 percent focused on what they're  
6 doing.

7       Anyone that was shaken by the incident, they were given the  
8 opportunity, which they know they always have -- we try to  
9 reiterate that with them as much as possible -- that if they're  
10 not 100 percent, if that is heavy on their minds, we would rather  
11 them not report for duty. There are no consequences for that.  
12 They can stay in the quarters until they're ready. Or if they  
13 feel they need to go for the rest of their hitch, they would be  
14 released. And there are no consequences to them for doing that.

15 Q. All right. During that meeting that occurred after the  
16 December 15th accident, was the topic of dynamic rollover brought  
17 up?

18 A. Yes, it was.

19 Q. Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

20 A. Paying attention to when they lift obviously, making sure  
21 there are no drifts, what causes dynamic rollover, all of that  
22 would have been touched on during that meeting.

23 Q. Okay. Okay. Were you present at that meeting?

24 A. Yes. I believe I was present in the Galliano facility.

25 Q. Okay. Okay. And I understand that accident, on the day of

1 the accident that the director of operations was at Galliano, and

2 I -- were you there as well, giving a safety class that day?

3 A. On the date of the 29th of December?

4 Q. Yeah. Yeah, going forward to the accident on the 29th.

5 A. I was not present at the time of the accident. I arrived at  
6 the facility later.

7 Q. Oh, okay.

8 A. After the accident occurred.

9 MR. SALAZAR: Let's take a break for a second.

10 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE OF  
SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR GALLIANO,  
LOUISIANA ON DECEMBER 29, 2022  
Interview of Tasha Louviere

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN23FA071

PLACE: Broussard, Louisiana

DATE: January 6, 2023

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kay Maurer  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE  
OF SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR  
GALLIANO, LOUISIANA ON  
ON DECEMBER 29, 2022

\* Accident No.: CEN23FA071

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: JASON MELANCON, Director of Operations  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC  
Headquarters  
Broussard, Louisiana

Thursday,  
January 5, 2023

APPEARANCES:

FABIAN SALAZAR, Air Safety Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

TROY BUSH, Chief Pilot  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Jason Melancon:

By Mr. Salazar

4

I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. SALAZAR: All right. So we'll go ahead and get started.  
3 Sir, my name is Fabian Salazar. I'm an air safety  
4 investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board  
5 investigating the accident. We appreciate you being here to talk  
6 about the event and share with us the factual data that you have.  
7 The NTSB is focused on safety and making recommendations or  
8 suggestions to improve safety in the industry and for the  
9 operation. We're talking to you because you're the expert in your  
10 field and you have information that we can use for the  
11 investigation.

12 We use a party member system. Troy is our party member so  
13 he's present. He's going to be part of the interview process. If  
14 he has questions, he'll ask them exactly like we just went  
15 through, no different. We'll even try the two rounds of  
16 questions.

## INTERVIEW OF JASON MELANCON

17  
18 BY MR. SALAZAR:

19 Q. So to begin with, would you state your name and your -- spell  
20 it out, please, and then your position.

21 A. My name is Jason Melancon, spelled M-e-l-a-n-c-o-n, the  
22 director of operations for RLC helicopter.

23 Q. All righty. And the GOM has got your duty assignments listed  
24 out. Would you mind going through those and give me a little  
25 blurb about each one, please?

1 A. Director of operations is responsible, in here, to the chief  
2 executive officer. That position has been eliminated and actually  
3 it's to the -- what, CEO, chief executive officer. Yeah, COO,  
4 previously. And in my absence, the chief pilot takes over all  
5 duties and responsibilities. Regulatory qualified as a 119 guy,  
6 both of us.

7 Number 1 says be responsible for and shall supervise  
8 operational control functions listed in 1.6 and 1.9 of this  
9 manual, which just basically means I'm in charge of everything as  
10 it pertains to operational control functions in this manual, make  
11 sure they're enforced and edited as needed. It says I can  
12 represent the company to government agencies, which we do and have  
13 done, as well as be a liaison. I am authorized to initiate,  
14 amend, and sign for operational specifications and the operating  
15 certificate, again, all being 119.

16 Supervises and ensure compliance with Department of  
17 Transportation rules regarding registrations, insurance form  
18 (indiscernible) Office of Secretary of Transportation forms.  
19 Pretty self-explanatory. Anything that comes through, I can and  
20 have the authority to sign as it pertains to 119 and the  
21 organization.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Supervises flight operations to the extent necessary to  
24 ensure compliance with the operation specifications and company  
25 policy. Pretty self-explanatory. I'm ultimately responsible for

1 everything in the op specs and the ops manual.

2 Designs and initiates operational policies and procedures.

3 Again, anything that needs to be ultimately enforced, executed, or  
4 changed, I'm ultimately responsible for.

5 Directs the execution of policies; ensures company personnel  
6 and equipment standards are followed. Pretty self-explanatory.

7 Initiates operational revisions to the company operations and  
8 training manuals. If, again, if anything needs to be changed, to  
9 include the training manual, I have the authority to initiate that  
10 change. I also have the authority to delegate.

11 Q. Was that to Troy?

12 A. (Laughs) Where was I?

13 Q. Nine.

14 A. Number 9? Reviews required records and reports to noncompany  
15 agencies to ensure prompt reporting and filing and follow up.  
16 That falls to the NTSB and the FAA, any government agency that has  
17 any oversight on us.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Supervises the addition or releasing of aircraft on the  
20 aircraft list and operation specifications. I usually delegate  
21 that to our chief inspector, Curt Hudson, but we work closely  
22 together and ensure that everything is current in all the  
23 operation specifications list.

24 Q. Now, in the GOM, I saw that there was an excerpt from the op  
25 spec and it had aircraft listed but it didn't have registrations.

1 The actual op spec, which I haven't reviewed yet, does your op  
2 specs have the actual aircraft by registration number in the op  
3 spec?

4 A. In the long op specs, yes.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. But in the op specs selection that it's in the ops manual is  
7 not that specific. But in the long draft of the op specs it is  
8 listed.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Obviously, I have the authority to hire and terminate company  
11 operational personnel. The operational duties assigned to me:  
12 ultimately responsible for the day-to-day conduct of flight  
13 operations; safe and efficient operation of aircraft owned or  
14 operated by this company; acting as a liaison between the company  
15 and FAA in matters pertaining to flight operations and training.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. That's self-explanatory.

18 Directing and assisting flight operations personnel in  
19 matters pertinent to their respective duties. Yeah, directing --  
20 as a director of operations, it's more than oversight. Most of  
21 the day-to-day directing comes from either the chief pilot or  
22 operations supervisor, but ultimately I'm responsible for the  
23 directives that we issue.

24 Establishing policies and procedures for the direction,  
25 motivation, and evaluation of flight operations personnel and



1 ultimately responsible for employee relations as appropriate.  
2 Again, I'm responsible for all the policies, everything we put  
3 out, all the evaluations, to ensure safe operation of all Part 135  
4 operations, all through me.

5 Evaluate company training programs. Ensuring that I'm  
6 intimately familiar with all of the training processes that the  
7 training captain and the chief pilot and myself initiate and carry  
8 out falls in my purview.

9 The coordination required to maintain the highest level of  
10 the company's operational capabilities. That's the coordination  
11 between operations and maintenance, business development,  
12 training, all the way down to dispatching the ground support at a  
13 base level ultimately falls under my purview.

14 Q. Now the director of maintenance, he answers to the CEO as  
15 well, correct?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. All right.

18 A. Our org chart is CEO, next below him is the ops -- director  
19 of ops, director of maintenance, safety manager, and there's a  
20 (indiscernible), if I'm not mistaken.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Number 7 was directing operations in such a manner that  
23 maximizes on-time performance of the flight schedule as it is  
24 realized -- as is realized. Basically I'm responsible to ensure  
25 that flights are on time and, if not, why. Day-to-day operations,

1 if somebody's not --

2 Q. How does that information flow up to you?

3 A. It's usually on one of several different ways. The ops  
4 supervisor sends out a daily task of who's assigned to what  
5 aircraft. As far as what time aircrafts take off or do not take  
6 off, it only flows to me if there's a problem.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. So if the general day-to-day operation, if there's a delay,  
9 we get an AOG delay or a pilot delay notification via email, it  
10 flows up to me if there is a delay.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. That's a (indiscernible).

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. Where was I? The principal manager --

15 Q. Eight.

16 A. I'm sorry?

17 Q. Number 8.

18 A. Number 8, the principal manager in matters involving the  
19 coordination between flight operations, maintenance, in order to  
20 ensure the reliability of scheduled coordination. Again, dealing  
21 with maintenance, director of maintenance will verify maintenance,  
22 and the chief pilot, myself, and director of operations coordinate  
23 intimately to ensure what aircraft's going to be assigned to what  
24 job, what pilot's going to be assigned to what aircraft and what  
25 job, and make sure all of that flows together seamlessly, if

1 possible, to ensure customer satisfaction and safety.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Have primary responsibility for maintenance and revision of  
4 company operations and training manuals. Is that a repeat? I  
5 think that's a --

6 Q. No, for the maintenance. I think revisions of the training  
7 manuals, that's the first time we saw training manuals.

8 A. Okay. Again, ultimately responsible for revisions and the  
9 contents that are in, all the way down to the training manuals.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Number 10, ensuring prompt reporting, filing, and follow-up  
12 actions on accident reports to the appropriate FAA agencies. So  
13 ultimately making sure you're notified, 10-day form comes out,  
14 everything gets to you all. I can delegate it, of course, but  
15 ultimately I'm responsible.

16 Q. You're going to have the responsibility for it then.

17 All right. With those duties and responsibilities, does the  
18 CEO give you the time in your workdays to get those done?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. No conflicts of interest there as far as the amount of  
21 work that you have versus the time that you have?

22 A. No. No. There's always time in the day to do the job.

23 Q. Got it. Got it. Who works for you? Who are the people that  
24 you supervise?

25 A. I supervise the chief pilot, the ops supervisor, lead pilots,

1 line pilots, base managers, lead -- did I say lead pilots?

2 Q. Um-hum.

3 A. Ground support and dispatchers, as well as training, all the  
4 training, and also I'm ultimately in charge of fuel deployment as  
5 well here.

6 Q. Okay. As far as the hiring and firing of pilots, do you have  
7 any part of that?

8 A. Yes. I've delegated a lot of that to the chief pilot to take  
9 over the role of hiring, coordinating hiring, training, and  
10 ultimately terminating pilots with recommendations, because we  
11 communicate constantly in this organization as to how folks are  
12 doing throughout that process from the day that they're hired to  
13 the day they get transitioned and check rides and whether or not  
14 they -- if they have any problems, we talk and decide. You know,  
15 I give my input on hiring/firing in that scenario.

16 Q. So is it a scenario where you make a suggestion as far as the  
17 hiring process, I've got candidates A through C, and you make that  
18 decision based off of his recommendation?

19 A. He ultimately makes the decision on what guys come in here,  
20 unless there's a specific individual in that process that I've had  
21 previous experience with that we don't want back in the  
22 organization. So I've basically given him and the training  
23 captains the latitude to hire at will, obviously with some  
24 specific guidelines involved, but -- you know, they have to have  
25 so many hours and go through a checklist of what we will check as

1 an organization. But we communicate throughout the process of  
2 here's who we're going to hire, here's their experience level,  
3 here's how they're doing in training; they're taking a check ride,  
4 here's the job I'm going to put them on, here is the customer  
5 we're going to have him working with. So it's a pretty close  
6 relationship on how to get from Point A to Point B.

7 Q. Okay. So with regard to our accident pilot, during this  
8 entire process, from the time that he had applied to the time of  
9 the accident, did he come up on your -- to your attention or did  
10 he come to your attention in any way, positive --

11 A. Positive or negative, he was never on the radar.

12 Q. Okay. All righty. So getting to the accident, the day of  
13 the accident, how were you notified of the accident?

14 A. Chief pilot, Troy Bush, actually called me and notified me.  
15 I was -- we had just done a safety meeting in Galliano at 5:30  
16 with the entire crew, to include Derek. We did that safety  
17 meeting, I hung around there in Galliano for -- till probably 8  
18 o'clock. I left Galliano base to get a bite to eat for breakfast,  
19 and before I got 3 miles down the road, got the phone call from  
20 the chief pilot that we had an aircraft in the water with  
21 personnel on board. I turned around, went back to the base,  
22 started gathering information, notified the Coast Guard. Chief  
23 pilot took an aircraft with another pilot and launched to go --  
24 was able to assist in visually maintaining reference on what was  
25 there at the time.

1 Q. Okay. And just continue on with the day. I'm interested in  
2 all the activities that you took.

3 A. So after the initial notification, obviously we had to, you  
4 know, find out how many people were on board, where it was at.  
5 Chief pilot was dispatched and we found out pretty quickly it was  
6 West Delta 106 because the platform had actually called their  
7 people who called us obviously quickly. Coast Guard was launched.  
8 It took them a couple hours, if I'm not mistaken, to get on scene.

9 MR. BUSH: Yeah. I was on station quite a while before they  
10 got there. I was almost bingo fuel before they actually got  
11 there.

12 MR. SALAZAR: And they showed up with a boat and a  
13 helicopter?

14 MR. BUSH: They had the crew boat from the adjoining platform  
15 in the field and at that time it was just a helicopter. Their  
16 cutter hadn't got there yet.

17 MR. SALAZAR: Okay.

18 MR. BUSH: Yeah.

19 MR. MELANCON: So once we got everybody on scene -- I don't  
20 remember if you told me that the aircraft was upside down and sank  
21 or had it sank before you got there?

22 MR. BUSH: I got patched through via sat phone --

23 MR. SALAZAR: Right.

24 MR. BUSH: -- to Jason several times. I said we're over the  
25 skid gear, floats are deployed, life rafts are deployed but

1 deflated, I don't think the fuselage is attached to the skid gear.  
2 We dropped down and got low enough where we could see safely  
3 that -- I didn't see the belly in the aircraft, and that's when we  
4 started conversing with West Delta 106 personnel, and they were  
5 saying yes, the fuselage broke away. And that's when we moved our  
6 search to the platform itself.

7 BY MR. SALAZAR:

8 Q. Okay. And so you're still at Galliano while this is going  
9 on?

10 A. I'm still in Galliano, myself and Ray Smith, who is the  
11 Walter representative that happened to be there.

12 Q. Oh, Ray was there as well?

13 A. Ray was in Galliano. Correct.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. And Tasha was with me during the safety meeting. So the  
16 three of us commandeered an office and we start coordinating  
17 boats, assets, how we're going to get what accomplished and who  
18 was going to be doing what.

19 There was a frontal -- front coming. This all happened on  
20 Thursday morning, 9 o'clock. There was a front that was coming  
21 that night, late Thursday night, so none of the boats that we were  
22 in contact with wanted to go out at that time.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Now, again, we had already had confirmation that the fuselage  
25 had sank and they were fairly confident that nobody had gotten out

1 of the aircraft, which is unfortunate. But it was pretty factual  
2 by all accounts from everybody on the platform because they had  
3 launched the --

4 Q. The capsule?

5 A. -- the capsule to go look. They looked for several minutes  
6 before the fuselage actually sank, and they did not see anybody.  
7 The fly boat that was local in the area did not see anybody on the  
8 surface. So we were coordinating the boats to get everybody where  
9 they needed to be with the right people, the right equipment, to  
10 go do a subsurface search for the wreckage and the folks on board.  
11 That took almost all day Friday to get all of that accomplished.

12 We actually left the dock Saturday morning after the front  
13 passed. The pinger equipment that we had, had to be mounted to  
14 the side of the boat. It was a dipping style, not a tow-behind  
15 style, so the only way to mount the pinger to the boat was on a  
16 aluminum bracket, flat bracket, and the boat didn't have anything  
17 flat enough and far enough away from the boat to mount the pinger  
18 to. So we ended up having to get a welder on New Year's, whatever  
19 day that was, to come out and weld us a bracket on the boat to be  
20 able to use the equipment. That took another several hours to get  
21 accomplished. I think we actually left the dock at 9 -- between 9  
22 and 10 Saturday morning. I think it was Saturday morning.

23 It took us about 4½, 5 hours to get on location out to West  
24 Delta 106. Once we arrived on location, because of the eyewitness  
25 accounts of the drifting of the aircraft and direction, the



1 collective decision was made to go ahead and start a grid search  
2 to the northwest of the platform. I'll have to get the full  
3 class, data class drawing.

4 Q. So let me interrupt right there. Was the -- when the  
5 aircraft was visible after it was in the water, was it on this  
6 side?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And a decision was made to start looking -- setting up a grid  
9 in that direction. Would that be because of the currents?

10 A. Yes, because of the currents in that area.

11 Q. All right.

12 A. Yeah, because everybody was under the understanding that the  
13 currents will run in a northwesterly direction from where the  
14 aircraft went in the water. And I don't remember if the aircraft  
15 went this way or this way. I don't --

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. There's a couple -- I think the last picture they have of it  
18 is here and I think they assumed it went that way.

19 Q. Okay. Now without getting into the super details of the  
20 search, the aircraft was located -- what day was the aircraft  
21 located? New Year's was on Sunday, wasn't it?

22 MR. BUSH: Yes.

23 MR. MELANCON: The aircraft was located, if I'm not mistaken,  
24 Monday morning, early.

25 MR. SALAZAR: Sounds about right.

1 MR. BUSH: One or 2 a.m., I believe it was, when you sent a  
2 text.

3 MR. MELANCON: Yeah. We had done all of the A and B search  
4 patterns. We were just about done with that with no luck with the  
5 pinger or the sonar. So it was decided because a dive boat was  
6 coming out and the dive boat was going to set up in this area,  
7 that on a survey boat -- again, they had a 500-meter ring around  
8 the platform that they didn't want us in initially.

9 BY MR. SALAZAR:

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. So all of the searches were 500 meters and out. We decided  
12 we were going to get inside that 500 meter and do some grid  
13 searches as well as pinger searches inside that 500-meter ring.

14 The first stop we made -- we'll have to look at the chart,  
15 but the first stop we made right at the 500-meter ring, we got a  
16 ping. So the guy that was in charge of the sonar end of the boat,  
17 the tracking of the boat, he was asleep from the previous hitch,  
18 so we made two more stops around the platform to confirm that  
19 we're still getting a pinger hit and both of those times we were.  
20 So we woke him up and we commenced to making pinger sweeps around  
21 the platform. It was determined that a ping was within that 500-  
22 meter ring. It took us till the next morning, that -- I think it  
23 was the next morning, to determine exactly the azimuth box that it  
24 was located in.

25 Once we got a good ping inside that 500-meter ring -- the

1 pinger was not tow-able, it was a dip only, so we couldn't run  
2 with the pinger on and deploy. We had to pull it up and do a  
3 sonar scan. We got a good sonar hit 100-and-some feet off the  
4 platform. That was designated as Target 1. Once we got that  
5 done, we went to do another search extending that grid pattern out  
6 a little bit and ended up finding another target of the correct  
7 size, width and length and height, about 700 feet from the  
8 platform basically in the same orientation, which was -- after we  
9 got the pinger set up better, that's where the azimuth of the  
10 pinger coordinates kind of zeroed on the second target first. But  
11 the dive boat had already basically set up on the first one, so we  
12 let them dive down in the first and then we didn't find a whole  
13 lot other than a couple of odds and ends at the first location. I  
14 don't remember exactly what they found on the first one, but it  
15 wasn't anything significant.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. So they moved -- I was still on the other vessel, survey  
18 vessel, when the dive boat repositioned. He didn't actually -- he  
19 didn't pull up anchor, because they had four anchors there. So he  
20 slid over, they deployed the divers again. Within a few minutes  
21 the radio traffic between dive comm and the boat, they had put  
22 their hands on the fuselage. At that time they basically ceased  
23 and desisted, pulled the divers back up out of the water and they  
24 put myself, Gary Tucker, and Shane, who was a Walter  
25 representative, from the survey vessel onto the dive vessel.

1 Q. The dive vessel.

2 A. Once we arrived on the dive vessel, we took a real quick  
3 cursory look of what the initial look was of the aircraft. It was  
4 definitely our aircraft.

5 Q. So you were watching a monitor at this point?

6 A. Yes. Yes. All of the divers have a cam on the helmet so  
7 it -- they had that. We looked at that real quick. They were  
8 having some problems downloading it on a satellite computer so I  
9 said I'm not worried about that. We'll get the divers on scene,  
10 we'll make them walk around, show it to me real time right now,  
11 and let's make a plan to secure it, take a look at everything, and  
12 then try to salvage it.

13 Q. Right.

14 A. We had a relatively narrow window because there was some  
15 weather moving in Monday night -- supposed to be some weather  
16 moving in Monday night and the seas were forecast to get up over  
17 10 foot, so we were moving as fast as we safely could with what we  
18 had. They went down on the -- I guess that would be the third  
19 dive of the first team. Took a look around. Three -- the three  
20 passengers were all still secured in the aircraft fairly well with  
21 their seatbelts on, which was good. The pilot, however, was not  
22 really well secured inside the aircraft. I don't know how deep  
23 you want to get into this right now.

24 Q. It doesn't have to be that detailed.

25 A. Okay. So we ended up extracting the pilot out of the

1 aircraft subsurface, put him in a basket, got him on the surface  
2 on the boat. A shift change between divers. They went back down,  
3 secured the helicopter better. We tried to pick it up from the  
4 bottom and we were going to put it in a basket. That didn't work  
5 out because it was starting to get rough, so we ended up turning  
6 the helicopter over, back where the head was on top, lifted the  
7 aircraft at that time with the three passengers inside and secured  
8 them on the back deck. And the only thing left down there was the  
9 tail boom, and we picked the tail boom up, brought it to the  
10 surface and collected it, all of that stuff. I guess that was  
11 late Monday night.

12 Q. Okay. Got the aircraft recovered and then we showed up?

13 A. Right.

14 Q. Right. Taking a break from those, let's talk about the  
15 emergency action plan.

16 A. Um-hum.

17 MR. SALAZAR: Troy, is that what it's --

18 MR. BUSH: I'm sure the (indiscernible). I can get a copy of  
19 that for us.

20 BY MR. SALAZAR:

21 Q. Yeah. I haven't looked at it yet, so I'm curious. The  
22 actions that you took and the actions that you took, are any of  
23 that detailed in that emergency action plan or were you guys  
24 responding to the emergency as it happened?

25 A. We're responding to the emergency as it happened, not -- the

1 emergency response plan does not get down in the weeds that far as  
2 far as --

3 Q. I wouldn't expect it to.

4 A. -- recovering aircraft off the bottom.

5 Q. Yeah. Yeah.

6 MR. BUSH: But we're going to get the call that an aircraft  
7 just went in, it's 56 miles from us.

8 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah. So with regards to notification, you  
9 know, contacted the Coast Guard and the appropriate authorities,  
10 are those items spelled out?

11 MR. BUSH: Correct. And I told the operations supervisor to  
12 do that.

13 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. And those were occurring as you guys  
14 were responding to this event in real time?

15 MR. BUSH: Correct.

16 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. All right. Do you have anything that  
17 you'd like to ask?

18 MR. BUSH: No, sir.

19 MR. SALAZAR: All right. So let's do this. I'm going to  
20 call the interview at an end, and I'd like to fall back and start  
21 filling in the blanks in some of the information that -- on those  
22 actions that you took.

23 MR. BUSH: Okay.

24 MR. SALAZAR: All right?

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

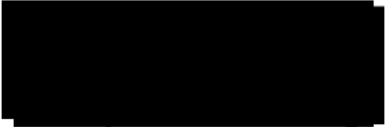
IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE OF  
SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR GALLIANO,  
LOUISIANA ON DECEMBER 29, 2022  
Interview of Jason Melancon

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN23FA071

PLACE: Broussard, Louisiana

DATE: January 5, 2023

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kay Maurer  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of:

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FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE  
OF SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR  
GALLIANO, LOUISIANA ON  
ON DECEMBER 29, 2022

\* Accident No.: CEN23FA071

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: DAVID MILLER, Operations Supervisor  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

via telephone

Friday,  
January 6, 2023



APPEARANCES:

FABIAN SALAZAR, Air Safety Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

TROY BUSH, Chief Pilot  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of David Miller:	
By Mr. Salazar	4
By Mr. Bush	7
By Mr. Salazar	10
By Mr. Bush	13
By Mr. Salazar	20

I N T E R V I E W

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MR. MILLER: Hello.

MR. BUSH: Hey, buddy.

MR. MILLER: Hey.

MR. BUSH: Hey, I've got you on speakerphone. I'm here with NTSB investigator Fabian Salazar. This is Dave Miller.

MR. SALAZAR: Dave, how you doing, sir?

MR. MILLER: Good. How are you doing?

MR. SALAZAR: I'm doing okay. Hey, I hope you don't mind, I'm going to record this with your permission. Would that be okay?

MR. MILLER: That would -- yes.

MR. SALAZAR: Okay. The reason I'd like record it is so that I can send the transcription out -- or, correction, the recording out to be transcribed, and then that transcription will be part of our public docket.

MR. MILLER: Okay.

MR. SALAZAR: All right? Now I'm an air safety investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board and I'm the operations group chairman for Todd Fox, who is the investigator in charge. And as the operations group chairman, my job is to do an investigation of the entire operation system for RLC, okay?

MR. MILLER: Okay.

INTERVIEW OF DAVID MILLER

BY MR. SALAZAR:

FREE STATE REPORTING, INC.  
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D.C. Area 301-261-1902  
Balt. & Annap. 410-974-0947

1 Q. And so what I'd like to do to start this off, would you mind  
2 telling me your name and then spelling it out, sir?

3 A. My name's David Miller, D-a-v-i-d, M-i-l-l-e-r.

4 Q. And who are you employed by?

5 A. I'm employed by RLC, LLC.

6 Q. And what is your duty title, sir?

7 A. Operations supervisor.

8 Q. Okay. Would you mind giving me just a quick rundown on what  
9 the duties and responsibilities are of the operations supervisor,  
10 and it's okay that you don't have the GOM with the itemized  
11 listing. I'd just like to know what you do.

12 MR. BUSH: Would you like me to read it and then he can  
13 respond?

14 MR. SALAZAR: Would that be okay, Dave?

15 MR. MILLER: That would be fine.

16 MR. SALAZAR: Okay.

17 MR. BUSH: Dave, I'm going to run and grab my hard copy real  
18 quick. Give me a couple minutes. You guys can just chitchat  
19 unofficially if you want to, and I'll be right back.

20 MR. SALAZAR: Okay.

21 BY MR. SALAZAR:

22 Q. Yeah, I -- Troy gave me an initial tour of RLC's facilities  
23 and I actually got to see your office there yesterday. And I'd  
24 have to say I'm pretty impressed with the whole layout here. It's  
25 a nice operation.

1 A. Yeah. We try to improve it as we go along, as any company  
2 does.

3 Q. Very cool. Very cool. And I understand today's your day  
4 off, so I appreciate you taking the time to talk to us. What city  
5 do you live in?

6 A. I live in Cutoff, Louisiana.

7 Q. Okay. And that's a couple hours away, huh?

8 A. It's about 2½ to 3 hours, depending on how you drive.

9 Q. Is it --

10 A. It's south of 90.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. In between Lockport and Fourchon.

13 Q. Okay. Well, after we hang up, I'll have Troy point it out to  
14 me. I've gone -- I lived in Galveston for my first 20 years of my  
15 life, so I'm familiar with --

16 A. Okay. We like Galveston. We used to vacation there every  
17 once in a while.

18 Q. Oh, yeah? Go out to East Beach or to Crystal Lake?

19 A. Not to the lake so much, just to the beach and --

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. -- and the little boardwalk.

22 Q. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Yeah, the Strand and such?

23 A. Yeah. We used to ride our bicycle. Because it's a nice wide  
24 sidewalk, we could ride our bicycles and we'd ride up and down.

25 Q. Yeah, and you always have that, you always have that threat

1 of falling off the side of the seawall.

2 (Laughter)

3 Yeah, we do the same thing. I moved to Salt Lake City years  
4 and years ago, got into a National Guard unit out there and they  
5 sent me to flight school and I spent 20 years flying helicopters  
6 for the Utah National Guard.

7 A. Oh, okay.

8 Q. Yeah. So every year I take my family down to Galveston and  
9 we go hit the Strand and, just like you, go down the sidewalk or  
10 the, you know, the seawall and just enjoy the day.

11 A. Yeah, it's -- did you ever take the tour of all the old homes  
12 that were in the area?

13 Q. Yeah, as a matter of fact. And then after Hurricane Ike, we  
14 took a tour of the old homes and the trees that died from all the  
15 saltwater and then the local artists carved them into different  
16 wooden statues.

17 A. Oh, that's awesome. I didn't -- I hadn't been down there  
18 since then.

19 Q. All right. So Troy came back, and let's -- he's going to  
20 open up the GOM and -- and again, this is just for me to get an  
21 understanding of what you do.

22 MR. BUSH: I'm getting my steps in, that's for sure.

23 All right, Dave, can you hear me okay?

24 MR. MILLER: Yes.

25 BY MR. BUSH:

1 Q. All right. I'm going to read from RLC General Operations  
2 Manual, Revision 5, 1.5.4, Operations Supervisor Job Description.  
3 The operations supervisor is directly responsible to the chief  
4 pilot. He is responsible for managing the day-to-day aircraft  
5 flight schedule and his specific duties and responsibilities and  
6 authority are as follows: Number 1, Coordinates daily aircraft  
7 availability and aircraft maintenance status with the aircraft  
8 maintenance department and completes the daily customer assignment  
9 sheet.

10 Can you elaborate on that, Dave, just to give your own  
11 personal blurb about that point?

12 A. We take all of the status sheets from each of the bases and  
13 we use those to determine what aircraft are up, what aircraft are  
14 AOG, what personnel have called in sick, and we use that to build  
15 our customer assignment sheet, which is the sheet that we -- the  
16 living document that we work on throughout the day to update  
17 aircraft availability and pilot availability.

18 Q. Number 2, Coordinates emergency situations to ensure safe  
19 operations and initiating notification procedures to the proper  
20 authorities and department heads.

21 Dave?

22 A. And that's just making sure that the senior management team  
23 is in the loop on everything that happens.

24 Q. Number 3, Determines the most economic and efficient way of  
25 servicing the customer in the event of a flight cancellation or

1 delay.

2 A. And then that we just, we try to cover all of the flight  
3 requests, whether it be the current contracts or the specials, and  
4 try to make sure that if their aircraft is not serviceable, that  
5 we find one that is serviceable and get the contract serviced.

6 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. What -- you mentioned a special,  
7 contract and special. What's a special?

8 MR. MILLER: A special is a noncontracted request. It's  
9 usually from our current customers, where they will have a  
10 specific request where their aircraft is not able to accommodate  
11 them, and so they call for an aircraft that we provide kind of in  
12 addition to what they have to support. We also have other  
13 companies call in requesting support to go to -- just for an  
14 example, RigNet will call and ask for -- or Tavnet (ph.) will call  
15 and ask for aircraft support to take their technicians out to a  
16 platform. And usually in those cases, we fly out with the  
17 technician, we wait -- our aircraft waits with them on standby,  
18 and then when they're finished with whatever service they're  
19 performing, we return them back to the base.

20 MR. SALAZAR: That makes sense. As opposed to somebody who's  
21 on 14 and 14, you drop them off and pick up the other guy.

22 MR. BUSH: Right. It's equivalent to a charter.

23 MR. SALAZAR: Um-hum.

24 MR. BUSH: Yeah.

25 MR. SALAZAR: Well, it's an (indiscernible) --



1 MR. MILLER: We'll do crew changes. We'll also do services  
2 where they'll go out and service components or platforms for  
3 whatever the request was for their job.

4 MR. SALAZAR: That makes sense. Okay. I understand. Thank  
5 you.

6 BY MR. BUSH:

7 Q. Number 4, Communicates flight irregularities to affected  
8 departments.

9 A. And that's whenever we have an AOG aircraft, for whatever  
10 reason, we send out an AOG report and let the other departments  
11 know what the aircraft issue is and what the -- if mechanics are  
12 needed or if mechanics are available, and then we update that as  
13 progress is made on it.

14 Q. Maintains awareness of all conditions and considerations in  
15 coordinating decisions.

16 A. That's pretty broad. We just -- we maintain -- all day long,  
17 that's what we do, we maintain communications with all the bases  
18 for aircraft availability and pilot availability, we maintain  
19 awareness of the weather conditions and impending weather, we  
20 issue the EOC, which is the -- the EOC update for fuel and closed  
21 platforms.

22 BY MR. SALAZAR:

23 Q. Okay. So let me ask you this. Are EOC changes, they're not  
24 predicated by time, are they? Or are they predicated by event?

25 A. They're predicated by current conditions; i.e., if there's

1 thunderstorms coming through, we will update with a timeline with  
2 a time that that current condition is causing the change to the  
3 EOC.

4 Q. Okay. Are you required to have any type of special weather  
5 training to make those calls?

6 A. We have our pilot training. We -- I have military training,  
7 so I went through a lot of weather courses, and the conditions are  
8 spelled out on the enhanced operational control sheet.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. All the conditions are listed there, so --

11 Q. So let me put it to you this way. Is it difficult to make  
12 those changes, as far as difficult in understanding the current  
13 weather, to make those changes?

14 A. Is it difficult?

15 Q. Correct.

16 A. I mean, sometimes. Forecasts are tricky. I know you as an  
17 aviator, you know that forecasts are that, they're just -- they're  
18 a forecast. And we look at more current conditions for the EOC  
19 rather than the forecast. We look at the forecast to see if we're  
20 going to have to update the EOC throughout the day, but we issue  
21 the EOC for current conditions.

22 Q. I got it. So if you've got a -- let me give a scenario  
23 because I'm just -- I'm getting a real appreciation for your job,  
24 and I saw how the Gulf is sectioned into six columns. If you've  
25 got a line of thunderstorms moving from the west to the east and

1 they're entering that first column -- I realize this is kind of a  
2 difficult question to ask, but how would you change that EOC and  
3 what actions do you take once that EOC is changed?

4 A. We determine where the thunderstorms are and determine -- in  
5 my case, if it's entered Sector 1, then that sector goes to a  
6 Level 2. And as the thunderstorms move from sector to sector, as  
7 it's approaching that sector, that sector will go upgrade to a  
8 Level 2 from a level whatever, if it was a 0 or 1 --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- based on the timeline. And we also look at where the  
11 aircraft is going to be impacted and we let flight following know  
12 to contact to those aircraft and let them know of the impending  
13 weather.

14 Q. Okay. So if I've got a thunderstorm that's, say, basically  
15 is about a 2-mile diameter storm, does that entire sector get  
16 changed to the next level up?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. If it's just a 2 -- it depends on how it impacts the entire  
20 sector.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Because you don't want to restrict the flying for the people  
23 up in Mouton Cove if High Island has a 2-mile thunderstorm.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. That would make no sense.

1 Q. Yeah. That's giving me the information. I'm looking at High  
2 Island right now. It's a rather big area, and if those little  
3 squares are 3 square miles each, that's a big area. And if you've  
4 got even a -- you know, one of those squares that is taken up by a  
5 thunderstorm or even, you know, three or four, that entire sector  
6 is not going to be affected.

7 MR. BUSH: Correct.

8 MR. SALAZAR: Okay.

9 BY MR. BUSH:

10 Q. And on that, Dave, can sectors be upgraded and downgraded in  
11 EOCs independently?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And can they be --

14 A. We do that all day long.

15 Q. Can they be upgraded and downgraded shallow and deep? And  
16 can one sector be upgraded and downgraded shallow and deep?

17 A. We don't have a specific program for shallow and deep. When  
18 they developed those sectors, they thought about dividing them  
19 into shallow and deep, but they realized it was getting too  
20 complicated, and that's why they left it at just sectors that  
21 included the beach all the way out to the deep sector. They  
22 didn't want to increase the amount of confusion when you're trying  
23 to transmit the information, and so they kept it as simple as they  
24 could to notify people that there was impending weather.

25 Q. Could Sabine be -- could Sabine base and shallow Sabine be a

1 Level 2 and High Island be a Level 1?

2 A. No. The whole sector will be a Level 2, and the whole sector  
3 will require a release to go fly based on -- if the weather is  
4 significant enough to affect more than -- or the majority of that  
5 sector, the entire sector is going to be affected.

6 Q. But say a pilot is Level 2 at Sabine but he's out deep High  
7 Island, which is many, many miles away, 100-and-some miles away,  
8 and the weather's --

9 A. He has to call for a release for each sector. But if it  
10 doesn't look like that weather is going to impact him, we have a  
11 less intense release for him so he doesn't have to -- he still has  
12 to request a release but it's not as formalized as it is if the  
13 weather is actually in that area. Does that make sense?

14 Q. If he's going to make several flights out there, can he get a  
15 blanket release?

16 A. I don't give blanket releases to the small ships. I only  
17 give those to the 76s on IFR.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. That's me. And I -- the only reason I give them to the 76  
20 IFR is because they are under radar control with ATC. And so it  
21 enhances their safety to not have to request a release for  
22 everything that they do along with all of the other IFR things  
23 that they're doing.

24 Q. Okay.

25 MR. SALAZAR: All right. I fully understand that. Thank you

1 very much.

2 BY MR. BUSH:

3 Q. Number 6, performs duty as PIC if and when required.

4 MR. SALAZAR: Are you still up on flight status?

5 MR. MILLER: I am not currently on flight status, but when I  
6 am on flight status, then we maintain our currency.

7 MR. SALAZAR: Okay.

8 MR. BUSH: We don't currently ask him to. Dave's not  
9 interested in working over much and we've only got two of them  
10 that can do it. So if we --

11 MR. SALAZAR: Have to keep him in the seat.

12 MR. BUSH: If we have to pull Dave out of the office to go  
13 fly, we're --

14 MR. SALAZAR: Something's going on.

15 MR. BUSH: Something's going on, yeah.

16 MR. SALAZAR: Got it. Okay.

17 MR. BUSH: We need to hire more people or not take on  
18 contracts. Okay?

19 MR. MILLER: Yeah.

20 BY MR. BUSH:

21 Q. Number 7, prepares lost time reports.

22 A. That is a job description that needs to be changed because we  
23 don't really do that anymore. That has gone -- I believe that's  
24 gone to the sales department. I'm not sure who takes care of  
25 that.

1 Q. Yeah. I believe John does that, too.

2 Number 8, prepares daily weather reports for RLC customers.

3 A. And that's the EOC, enhanced operational control, sheet that  
4 we send out that goes to all the customers.

5 Q. Responsible for certain payroll summaries.

6 A. The pilot summaries? We --

7 Q. Payroll summaries.

8 A. We do that -- normally Macy (ph.) takes care of it, but if  
9 Macy's not there, then we do the payroll summary. It's handled by  
10 operations and Macy takes care of that.

11 Q. Reports delays to customers.

12 A. And that's the AOG that is sent out. The AOG email goes to  
13 the customer to report that their aircraft is AOG and that there  
14 may be a delay. If it's a weather delay, then that's handled by a  
15 different email. We just do an email to the customer that tells  
16 them that the aircraft are delayed due to weather. But most of  
17 the time they know because they're on the beach, they're right  
18 there with the aircraft, and if it's fogged in at the beach they  
19 know they're not going anywhere.

20 Q. Okay. Acts as a liaison between pilots and customers.

21 A. There are instances where a customer will request a pilot to  
22 fly when the weather isn't conducive to flying, and if the pilot  
23 calls me and says he feels like a customer is giving him some  
24 push -- which hasn't happened in a long time, by the way; the  
25 customers have been very safety oriented. But in the past, we had

1 customers that would push pilots to go fly when it probably wasn't  
2 conducive to go fly, and if that -- that scenario doesn't happen  
3 anymore, not as -- not like it used to.

4 MR. SALAZAR: Back in the day when it used to happen, we're  
5 talking about the passengers in the helicopter trying to pressure  
6 the pilot to get them out to the jobsite?

7 MR. BUSH: Right. Or calling operations and saying why  
8 hasn't my aircraft departed yet?

9 MR. SALAZAR: Yep, yep.

10 MR. MILLER: Yeah, those kinds of things. And that's where  
11 we do, as a liaison, we let them know that the weather isn't  
12 conducive to flying and that they'll be a lot more happy if  
13 they're on the ground.

14 MR. SALAZAR: So if this scenario does rear its ugly head  
15 again, does the pilot call the lead pilot or do they go straight  
16 to you?

17 MR. MILLER: You're breaking up really bad.

18 MR. SALAZAR: Ask him that, Troy.

19 MR. BUSH: If that call were to come in or if a customer were  
20 to attempt to pressure a pilot to fly in weather, does the pilot  
21 contact his lead or does he contact you?

22 MR. MILLER: Normally they'll go through the chain of command  
23 and go to the lead pilot, but there are times when the lead  
24 pilot's not available. He's either flying or -- if he's offshore,  
25 then they come through us to get the liaison.



1 MR. BUSH: Okay.

2 MR. SALAZAR: Okay.

3 BY MR. BUSH:

4 Q. Processes monthly expense reports.

5 A. That's where we take all of the expense reports that are  
6 submitted by the pilots, we check them for accuracy, and then turn  
7 them into finance.

8 Q. Coordinates with customers --

9 MR. SALAZAR: Let's rewind for just a second.

10 MR. BUSH: Okay.

11 MR. SALAZAR: How is a pilot going to incur an expense?

12 MR. MILLER: You're breaking up really bad. I --

13 MR. BUSH: The question was how -- what expenses would a  
14 pilot incur?

15 MR. MILLER: There are several things that right now they're  
16 paid a per diem and they're paid an offshore stipend, an offshore  
17 bonus. If they stay offshore they get offshore pay and if they're  
18 at work they get paid a per diem. And also, if they have expenses  
19 like, for instance, a sink in their apartment breaks and they  
20 can't just leave it, they have to go get the handle for the  
21 faucet, well, if they purchase that, they just keep the receipt,  
22 put it on their expense report and send it in. Also, we reimburse  
23 pilots for their travel and we just check those for accuracy.

24 MR. SALAZAR: Got it. Thank you.

25 BY MR. BUSH:

1 Q. Coordinates with customers for the manning of ad hoc  
2 unplanned flights.

3 A. That's what we were discussing earlier, the specials, and  
4 that's the ad hoc flights.

5 MR. SALAZAR: Got it.

6 BY MR. BUSH:

7 Q. Authorized to exercise operational control under CFR 135.77.

8 A. That's the -- we're authorized to act in the director of  
9 operations and chief pilot's stead to give releases for  
10 operations.

11 Q. Maintains the revisions receipt forms and master tracking  
12 log. We've actually delegated that to our ops scheduler, another  
13 person (indiscernible) --

14 A. Yeah, that's what I was going to say. That's moved to the  
15 ops scheduler.

16 MR. BUSH: We give Dave enough to do.

17 BY MR. BUSH:

18 Q. Performs additional duties as assigned by the director of  
19 operations and chief pilot.

20 A. Anything they ask, it's my job to do it.

21 MR. SALAZAR: Well said.

22 MR. MILLER: Well, within reason.

23 MR. SALAZAR: Right.

24 MR. BUSH: Yeah.

25 BY MR. BUSH:

1 Q. And finally, maintain a current list of pilot qualifications  
2 and flight time.

3 A. That's also been handled by Macy. She handles the pilot  
4 matrix and she tracks all of the pilot qualifications, their  
5 medicals, and any communication between training and operations.

6 BY MR. SALAZAR:

7 Q. All right. Well, I think -- am I still coming in broken?

8 A. Yeah, it's -- I can hear -- like when you start talking it  
9 comes in pretty clear, but then it's like it stops and then it  
10 catches every other word.

11 Q. All right. Well, I'll continue to try. Maybe I'll send my  
12 request through Troy.

13 On the day of the accident did you have any interaction with  
14 the accident pilot?

15 A. No, not personally.

16 Q. Nothing relating to your duties or --

17 A. The weather was not -- it didn't require any kind of release.

18 Q. And the mission wasn't a special mission?

19 A. No. It was a regular day-to-day operation.

20 Q. Okay. So on the day of the accident there was no interaction  
21 whatsoever between you and the accident pilot?

22 A. No, sir.

23 Q. All righty. Well, I appreciate your time and do you have any  
24 questions of me, sir?

25 A. Not at this time.

1 Q. All righty. If you do, Troy can get ahold of me, all right?

2 A. Okay.

3 MR. BUSH: Dave, did you tell me earlier that you did have  
4 your timeline notes with you?

5 MR. MILLER: I do.

6 MR. BUSH: Do you want to talk to him about that now?

7 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah, now.

8 BY MR. SALAZAR:

9 Q. Talk to me, talk to me about these timeline notes.

10 A. Okay. Just when any kind of incident happens, we start a  
11 timeline. We just start basically writing down time and  
12 conversations that we have.

13 Q. Got it.

14 A. And as -- keep it as complete as we can. Like in this case,  
15 at 8:25 Troy called to let me know. He said Island 44 was  
16 reported in the water at West Delta 106, which I went in and  
17 checked with flight following. They found that it was actually  
18 Island 45. And I asked how many people were reported on board.  
19 They said five people reported on board.

20 I went back in my office. I called the Coast Guard to report  
21 that an aircraft was in the water, gave them the coordinates and  
22 the current number, that five POB were on board. And then I  
23 called Jason at 8:43 to make sure that he was in the loop.

24 8:47, called West Delta 106, spoke with John Atwell. He  
25 reported that there were no witnesses and that the rotor may have

1 hit the helideck.

2 At 8:52 it was reported that Troy was in 667 with an ETA on  
3 site of 9:20.

4 At 9:10, the Coast Guard called to inform us that the boat  
5 had been launched, ETA was 10:40, and they would call back with an  
6 ETA on the aircraft.

7 At 9:28, Coast Guard called, Jason Owens, to confirm POB, and  
8 I let him know that it was actually four POB, one pilot and three  
9 passengers.

10 At 9:33, John Gilley called to inform that Gary Tucker told  
11 him that there was an Island boat en route, the *Zachary Taylor*,  
12 and the ETA was 10:10.

13 At 9:44, Coast Guard called -- last name was Shelby.  
14 Aircraft ETA was 0955. Then I told flight following to inform  
15 667, Troy, that the Coast Guard was inbound.

16 At 9:45, Jason called and I think we had a lengthy  
17 discussion. I didn't write down everything, but we were talking  
18 about the possibility of boats, dive boats, and whether we wanted  
19 to initiate those calls.

20 And at 9:50, Jamie Roth (ph.) called, and I don't know what I  
21 wrote. I mean, I wrote down that IOC 45 -- Island 45 aircraft to  
22 go to the platform, but I didn't elaborate on that so I'm not sure  
23 what I wrote there.

24 At 10:05, Jason Melancon called and said find a boat and  
25 divers. So I initiated calls to D&D Divers, spoke with David.

1 They only had one diver and he was only rated to go to 30 or 40  
2 feet. He recommended Phoenix. So at that point I had to research  
3 West Delta 106 to see how deep the water was there so I could --  
4 any other boat companies, I'd have that information. Found out  
5 that West Delta 106 was in 252 feet of water. Called Guy with  
6 Gulf Offshore Logistics, and requested a boat and told him the  
7 situation.

8 At 10:42, he called back and said that they had a boat in  
9 Fourchon that could tie up to the platform, no live dive. It was  
10 about 4½ hours for that boat to get to West Delta 106.

11 After that, I called Phoenix. I was able to find Phoenix's  
12 phone number, called Phoenix, spoke with Debbie. She transferred  
13 me to a John Ray. He said that we would need a boat with DP2 and  
14 ADS, and that as far as he knew, it was about a week out before we  
15 could get one. I asked him if they had ROV capabilities. He said  
16 no, that all their boats with ROV were on the East Coast.

17 Guy called me back. I did not write the time down. He said  
18 that they had a boat with a 20-ton crane that was available  
19 tonight for 35K and it came with divers and they were ready to go,  
20 ready to launch whenever we gave him the word. Somewhere shortly  
21 after that, I got the word that Walter Oil & Gas was handling the  
22 boat and we were no longer required to find a boat.

23 11:19, Coast Guard, Kevin Keith, called. He was looking for  
24 point of contact for notifying next of kin. I transferred him to  
25 Edie with the phone -- or called Edie with the phone number. And

1 then shortly after that, Petty Officer -- I did not write down the  
2 time -- Petty Officer Goutro (ph.) called from the (indiscernible)  
3 Marine Safety and again I called Edie to transfer that  
4 information.

5 And that's where the timeline kind of gets -- it ends because  
6 other people were handling the operation and I went back to our  
7 normal operation because it was all being handled by Coast Guard  
8 and senior management.

9 Q. All right. Well, Dave, I don't know if anybody else has  
10 thanked you, but thank you for keeping that detailed timeline.  
11 Now I'd like to ask you how I can get a copy of it?

12 A. Yeah, I'm -- was trying to email it. Tasha asked for it  
13 earlier. I was trying to email it. I was looking for her email.  
14 So I will get it emailed to the ops supervisor and have him  
15 distribute it, and send a copy to Troy.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. So you should have it in a moment.

18 Q. Much appreciate it. And let's get back to the very  
19 beginning. Let me put on my badly needed prescription eyewear.  
20 At 8:25, Troy called you and said -- and we understand that it was  
21 incorrect at the time -- Island 44 was in the water. That was  
22 8:25?

23 A. That was at 0825.

24 Q. All right.

25 A. He received that call from -- I believe he got that from the

1 lead operator for Island 44.

2 MR. BUSH: When -- yes. When I was notified that there was a  
3 boat in the water, because somebody from Island had called the  
4 Galliano base, I immediately picked up the phone and called Van  
5 Johnson because I knew he was on duty.

6 MR. MILLER: Van Johnson. That's who it was.

7 MR. BUSH: Right. So as soon as I got off -- now that was  
8 around 8:24. And as soon as I got off the phone with him, I  
9 called you.

10 MR. MILLER: Right.

11 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. So our accident happened before 8:24  
12 because of the events, and then somebody had to call Galliano.

13 MR. BUSH: Correct.

14 MR. SALAZAR: And Galliano had to call you.

15 MR. BUSH: Around 8:19 is what I've been -- what I've heard a  
16 couple times.

17 MR. SALAZAR: Well, let's talk about that after we're done.

18 Okay, Dave, is there anything else that you may have that's  
19 pertinent to the accident that I did not ask you about?

20 MR. MILLER: Not that I know of at the moment.

21 MR. SALAZAR: All righty.

22 MR. MILLER: If you have any other questions, don't hesitate  
23 to call.

24 MR. SALAZAR: I will do that. And if I do that, I'll do that  
25 by contacting Troy so that he can be in the loop. Troy is a party



1 member to the accident and he's helping us gather information.

2 MR. MILLER: Okay.

3 MR. SALAZAR: Your interview is very helpful, but at this  
4 time let's go ahead and call the interview complete. And once  
5 again, thanks for your time.

6 MR. MILLER: No problem.

7 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

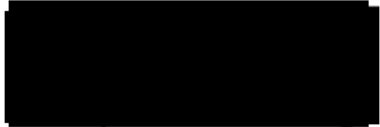
IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE OF  
SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR GALLIANO,  
LOUISIANA ON DECEMBER 29, 2022  
Interview of David Miller

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN23FA071

PLACE: via telephone

DATE: January 6, 2023

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kay Maurer  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of:

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FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE  
OF SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR  
GALLIANO, LOUISIANA ON  
ON DECEMBER 29, 2022

\* Accident No.: CEN23FA071

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: ANGELO NOVELLI, Lead Pilot  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

via telephone

Friday,  
January 6, 2023

APPEARANCES:

FABIAN SALAZAR, Air Safety Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

TROY BUSH, Chief Pilot  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Angelo Novelli:

By Mr. Salazar

5

I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 MR. BUSH: In the room is myself and NTSB operational  
3 inspector Fabian Salazar.

4 MR. NOVELLI: Okay.

5 MR. SALAZAR: Angelo, this is Fabian. How you doing, sir?

6 MR. NOVELLI: Good. How are you?

7 MR. SALAZAR: Hey, I'm doing good. I appreciate you making  
8 yourself available for a quick interview.

9 MR. NOVELLI: All right.

10 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah. And another thing I'd like to pass on to  
11 you is condolences. I understand you worked directly with Derek,  
12 so, you know, we understand your loss, sir.

13 MR. NOVELLI: Yes. You never want to see anybody get hurt.

14 MR. SALAZAR: No. No. So, much appreciate it, and I'll --  
15 this shouldn't take very long. I'm the operations group chairman  
16 for this accident. I'm working for the investigator in charge, so  
17 my job is to look into all facets of the operations. And I've got  
18 Troy Bush here as a party member, so he's actually assisting in  
19 the investigation and he's doing things, just like now,  
20 introducing me to the important people who know just a little bit  
21 about the events prior to the accident, and I'd appreciate it if  
22 you'd share with me.

23 So let me just tell you, you are -- you have a right to have  
24 anybody present, like an attorney or, you know, best friend, mom,  
25 or anybody. Is there anybody that you would like to have before I

1 ask you any questions?

2 MR. NOVELLI: No.

3 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. Excellent.

4 INTERVIEW OF ANGELO NOVELLI

5 BY MR. SALAZAR:

6 Q. So if you don't mind, let me just ask you, would you just  
7 mind telling me your interactions with the, with -- oh, one thing  
8 I do need to bring up is we talked about -- you said it was okay  
9 if I record, right?

10 A. That's fine. Yeah.

11 Q. Okay. Okay. The reason I'm going to record is so I can send  
12 the recording to have it transcribed, and then the transcription  
13 will be very accurate and that'll be put in the public docket.

14 A. Okay.

15 Q. All right. So if you don't mind, just tell me what  
16 interactions you had with the pilot on the day of the accident.

17 A. Normal interactions in the morning. I show up at 5 o'clock,  
18 and Derek is a 407 pilot, they show up at 5:30.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I get information for our briefing in the morning, our EOC  
21 level, uptime/downtime, fuel, offshore conditions, any MOCs that  
22 have to be on the aircrafts, any information with NOTAMs, weather,  
23 all of the information for my morning briefing. When all the  
24 pilots show up, including Derek that day, I interact with them,  
25 ask them how they're feeling, if they're 100 percent. I help them

1 with their logbooks in the helicopters. We double check all the  
2 numbers to make sure everything is, maintenance-wise, is proper.  
3 And at that point, you know, after the briefing, everybody goes  
4 and gathers their things, communicates with their customers, looks  
5 at weather and NOTAMs themselves, and then they go out and do  
6 their preflight inspection.

7 Q. Okay. Let me ask a few questions about that. When you  
8 prepared your information for your brief, did you -- do you have  
9 like some sort of notes that you took to give the brief?

10 A. I don't save those notes, if you wanted to have the notes for  
11 that day. Yeah.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. I don't save them.

14 Q. All right. Do you recall what some of the items were that  
15 you briefed?

16 A. Well, it would have been the EOC level, uptime/downtime, wind  
17 conditions and visibility, anything that has to do with the  
18 weather.

19 Q. Okay. Do you recall what the EOC level was?

20 A. I do not recall that, but it -- we would have that in our  
21 back-logged emails maybe.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I'll have to look that up for you.

24 MR. BUSH: We have -- Angelo, we have a record for it. I can  
25 pull it for him. It was 1 or less. It was either 1 or 0.



1 MR. SALAZAR: Okay.

2 MR. NOVELLI: The weather was Level 1 for sure because there  
3 was -- the wind was -- I do believe it was about 10 knots, if  
4 I'm -- I'm not 100 percent sure about this.

5 BY MR. SALAZAR:

6 Q. Yeah, that's fine. That's fine. What about when you  
7 communicated with Derek, did he reply -- or what did he reply to  
8 you when you checked on him?

9 A. He was doing great. You know, we -- I always have a little  
10 playful banter with everybody. We're -- we are a tight family.  
11 We have an open dialogue between me and the pilots. It was just  
12 all jovial, very happy.

13 MR. BUSH: Angelo, you and I were -- if you remember, you and  
14 I were having coffee in your office that morning, correct?

15 MR. NOVELLI: Yeah.

16 MR. BUSH: Did Derek step in and -- it was the first day of  
17 the hitch. Did he step in and say hi to anybody, say hi to us?

18 MR. NOVELLI: I don't remember that, but I do remember joking  
19 around with him outside of the office.

20 MR. BUSH: Right.

21 MR. NOVELLI: Yeah.

22 MR. BUSH: If you -- I happen to remember. I didn't want to  
23 lead you. But yes, he did step in and shook everybody's hand and  
24 he seemed to be in normal, normal -- like I said, I describe Derek  
25 as personable but not gregarious by any means.

1 MR. NOVELLI: Yeah.

2 MR. BUSH: And I believe he stuck in and shook everybody's  
3 hand and said, you know, hi or whatever it may be. But seemed  
4 normal.

5 MR. NOVELLI: Yeah. I'm sure he shook hands with you guys.  
6 I was probably busy on the computer --

7 MR. BUSH: Right.

8 MR. NOVELLI: -- while --

9 BY MR. SALAZAR:

10 Q. Okay. 595-Romeo-Lima, do you recall any issues with the  
11 aircraft?

12 A. No. No.

13 Q. No as in issues or no as in you don't recall?

14 A. There was no issues with that aircraft that day.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Yeah. They're not released if we have any problems with  
17 them.

18 Q. Ah, got it. Okay. But there was no need for any MOCs on it?

19 A. Not that I recall.

20 Q. Okay. You mentioned that the pilot will communicate with his  
21 customers. Does he talk to the lead guy of the group that he's  
22 flying out or is it -- are you talking he talks to Island  
23 Operations? Who does he coordinate with?

24 A. Most likely if -- I do believe it was Van Johnson. He is the  
25 lead on their contract.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Yeah. And he would have -- either it was him or anybody else  
3 that was involved with his flights for that day. It's numerous  
4 people.

5 Q. Okay. So let me ask you this. I've never flown down in the  
6 Gulf. I did go out to West Delta 106, but that was my first  
7 flight ever out in the Gulf. Does -- would Derek -- is West Delta  
8 106 his platform or is that just a platform that he got that day?

9 A. That would be a platform that's on his contract. There's  
10 numerous platforms to visit.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. So let me put it to you this way. In 14 days when it's time  
14 for that crew change and Derek's on -- he's on call, for lack of a  
15 better word, would you assign him that pickup?

16 A. No. I do not assign those flights.

17 Q. Is that operations --

18 MR. BUSH: No. That's his -- his customer does. For 14 days  
19 the pilot is directed by the customer. So he -- so for 14 days,  
20 he's going to go here --

21 MR. SALAZAR: The customer's going to send him to any one of  
22 the platforms?

23 MR. BUSH: Anywhere he needs to. I can provide you with the  
24 job sheet for that, for Island 45.

25 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah. That's -- yeah.

1 MR. BUSH: And in that job sheet you'll see, you know, tens  
2 of platforms that Derek can go to any one, all, some of those  
3 platforms.

4 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. So let me put it to you guys this way.  
5 Is there a chance that another one of Angelo's pilots would go to  
6 West Delta 106?

7 MR. BUSH: There could be a chance because there's other  
8 Island contracts operating in that area. And remember, there can  
9 be workers for several different companies on a single platform.  
10 There can be electricians for one company, there can be pipeline  
11 people for another company, all of those. BSEE can go. There can  
12 be several companies and several different helicopter operators  
13 that can actually land on West Delta 106.

14 MR. SALAZAR: Okay, that's the answer to the question.

15 MR. BUSH: Right.

16 MR. SALAZAR: The pilot is not committed to a certain limited  
17 number of platforms?

18 MR. BUSH: Usually it's within his job sheet.

19 MR. SALAZAR: Sure.

20 MR. BUSH: Yeah.

21 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. The job sheet?

22 MR. BUSH: The job sheet, because that's what that customer,  
23 Island 45, has said we want a pilot and an aircraft to service  
24 predominantly these platforms. Now that aircraft and that pilot,  
25 for lack of a better word, are at the whim of Island. If for some

1 reason they need that pilot to go somewhere else that may be on  
2 somebody else's job sheet, they most certainly can do that.

3 MR. SALAZAR: They can do that?

4 MR. BUSH: Correct.

5 MR. SALAZAR: They can do that?

6 MR. BUSH: Correct.

7 MR. SALAZAR: So at no point is a pilot going to go fly up to  
8 a platform and say, hey, what are you doing on my platform? It's  
9 just --

10 MR. BUSH: No.

11 MR. SALAZAR: -- the way it goes. Okay. Okay.

12 MR. BUSH: Yeah.

13 BY MR. SALAZAR:

14 Q. So getting back to you, Angelo, I understand fully. Tell me  
15 a little bit about your job as the lead pilot. What are some of  
16 your duties and responsibilities?

17 A. My duties are to assess the weather, discuss that with ops.  
18 We come up with a plan to make sure everything is safe for these  
19 flights. If, let's say, ops has a Level 2, I will assist with ops  
20 and determine if an area is safe to go to, if it's within the  
21 company minimums for these pilots to go out. I'll help him with  
22 that, you know, hold the pilots back on a Level 2 area. I assist  
23 with everything here as far as if the pilots need help getting  
24 their cargo loaded, their fuel in their helicopters, anything that  
25 they need, I will assist that, and generally make sure that they

1 are operating within the parameters of the ops manual.

2 Q. Got it. Got it. How often do you fly?

3 A. Oh, it's not very often, you know, a couple times -- usually  
4 I'll work over when I get to fly. Yeah.

5 MR. BUSH: We try to keep -- Galliano's our largest base. We  
6 absolutely want to keep Angelo and his opposite in the office, on  
7 the ground as much as we can. It's a huge base.

8 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah.

9 MR. BUSH: On those rare occasions when we do, he's a last  
10 ditch effort to cover a contract.

11 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. So when we're talking Galliano, that's  
12 the place where I went out and I met with Rick?

13 MR. BUSH: Correct.

14 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. So that's where he's physically located?

15 MR. BUSH: Correct. And he's responsible -- he along with  
16 the base manager are responsible for ground support, moving of  
17 customers, assigning pilots, making sure all of his pilots are  
18 good to go for that day. He's being modest of all of his duties.  
19 He's a den mother over there.

20 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah.

21 MR. BUSH: And so he really -- and he takes all of these  
22 pilots in and is hands on in every aspect of their job performance  
23 from the moment they arrive at 0530 until they go back to the  
24 housing that day.

25 MR. SALAZAR: Okay.

1 MR. BUSH: Yeah, he's privy to everything they're doing and  
2 making sure that they're doing it correctly.

3 MR. SALAZAR: That brings up an interesting topic. You guys  
4 have housing for the pilots because they're on for 14 days.

5 MR. BUSH: Correct.

6 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. And then where is that located in  
7 relationship to the RLC building that I went to?

8 MR. BUSH: It's just a few hundred yards away. It's across  
9 the road and -- yeah, it's a, probably a 3 or 4 minute walk or a 1  
10 minute drive.

11 MR. SALAZAR: Okay.

12 MR. BUSH: Yeah.

13 MR. SALAZAR: Okay.

14 BY MR. SALAZAR:

15 Q. Hey, well, I want to tip my hat to -- was it Justin that flew  
16 me out to the rig?

17 A. Yeah, Justin Tamashiro.

18 Q. Hey, squared-away guy. I want to make sure you know that. I  
19 had a -- it was a pleasure flying with him. I tried to stay out  
20 of his business. I didn't ask him too many questions on the way  
21 out, but then when we got -- coming back in, I couldn't help but  
22 talk pilot to pilot to him. But he's real professional, so -- a  
23 good guy.

24 A. Yeah. He is a great guy. We have -- everybody here are  
25 great pilots.

1 Q. I'm glad to hear that, glad to hear that. And sorry we're  
2 having to talk under these circumstances.

3 So let me ask you this. Is there something that I didn't ask  
4 you that you'd like to tell me about Derek or about 407s or about  
5 Galliano that you'd like to pass on to me for the investigation?

6 A. You know, there's nothing out of the ordinary. You know,  
7 Derek was a -- he's just a great guy.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. Really is. I'm sorry.

10 Q. Did you have -- no, I'm sorry to have to go through this and  
11 drag you through it. Take as much time as you need. But were  
12 there any issues that you had with Derek at all?

13 A. Negative.

14 Q. All right.

15 A. He was not a problem employee at all. He was very excited  
16 about his job.

17 (Pause)

18 Q. Yeah, get back with me when you can, man. Take your time.

19 MR. SALAZAR: Well, Angelo, I'll tell you this. That's  
20 pretty much all I have for you, sir. So let me let you get back  
21 to work, and I appreciate your time. Okay?

22 MR. NOVELLI: All right. Thank you.

23 MR. SALAZAR: All right. Take care, sir.

24 MR. BUSH: Thanks, Angelo. Bye.

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE OF  
SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR GALLIANO,  
LOUISIANA ON DECEMBER 29, 2022  
Interview of Angelo Novelli

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN23FA071

PLACE: via telephone

DATE: January 6, 2023

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kay Maurer  
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of:

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FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE  
OF SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR  
GALLIANO, LOUISIANA ON  
ON DECEMBER 29, 2022

\* Accident No.: CEN23FA071

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: BRIAN AUGUST SKELTON, Check Airman Instructor  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC  
Headquarters  
Broussard, Louisiana

Friday,  
January 6, 2023

APPEARANCES:

FABIAN SALAZAR, Air Safety Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

TROY BUSH, Chief Pilot  
Rotorcraft Leasing Company, LLC

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Brian August Skelton:

By Mr. Salazar

6

I N T E R V I E W

(10:00 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. SALAZAR: Let's start out by letting me read to you  
4 basically a script to help you understand what's going on; and  
5 then, we'll get into it.

6 MR. SKELTON: Sure.

7 MS. SALAZAR: Okay? So, we met yesterday, but my name's  
8 Fabian Salazar, an air safety investigator for the NTSB. I am the  
9 operations group chairman for Todd Fox. He is the investigator in  
10 charge. So, my focus is going to be on operations, okay? And  
11 that's why I'm talking to you today. You're the subject matter  
12 expert on all this stuff in operations for flight training, so I'm  
13 trying to pull that information out from you so that I can use it  
14 in the investigation to help us understand what happened, why it  
15 happened, and what recommendations we can make so that it doesn't  
16 happen again. That's all we're about. We're --

17 MR. SKELTON: Sure.

18 MR. SALAZAR: -- nonregulatory. That's the FAA's area.  
19 We're safety, okay? Troy is here because he is a party member to  
20 the investigation; that is, he's a party member to the NTSB, and  
21 with that, he's -- he may have a question or two. But --

22 MR. SKELTON: Okay.

23 MR. SALAZAR: -- but know this, you have the right to have  
24 anybody with you to help represent you. It could be an attorney,  
25 your mom, your brother, whoever. You also have the right to

1 exclude anybody from the investigation. So, would you like to  
2 have somebody here with you?

3 MR. SKELTON: Even if I did, short notice, it wouldn't  
4 happen, but I'm comfortable with this.

5 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. Are you comfortable with everybody  
6 that's in the room?

7 MR. SKELTON: I believe so, yes, sir.

8 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. So, if there's ever a point where you  
9 feel like you want to talk just you and I, just let me know.

10 MR. SKELTON: Sure.

11 MR. SALAZAR: If there's ever a time where you need to take a  
12 break, just let me know, okay? Because we agreed upon, it is  
13 going to be recorded so that recording can be transcribed, and  
14 that transcription will be part of the public docket. Okay, at  
15 any time you want to take a break, let me know. If there's a  
16 question I ask, and you don't know the answer to it, I don't know  
17 is just fine, okay?

18 MR. SKELTON: Yes, sir.

19 MR. SALAZAR: It's an acceptable answer. We talked about  
20 having a representative, okay? And you know me, you know Troy,  
21 and Troy, and --

22 MR. SKELTON: (Indiscernible)?

23 MR. BUSH: Are we on the record here?

24 MR. SALAZAR: We are, yes.

25 MR. BUSH: I won't be part of the recording -- or, part of

1 the interview, because I'm going to be flying out to the station,  
2 so --

3 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. So, feel free to stick around and leave  
4 when you have to leave.

5 MR. BUSH: I'll (indiscernible).

6 MR. SALAZAR: There you go. Okay.

7 INTERVIEW OF BRIAN AUGUST SKELTON

8 BY MR. SALAZAR:

9 Q. So, to get started, please tell me your full name and spell  
10 it out.

11 A. My name is Brian August Skelton, B-R-I-A-N, A-U-G-U-S-T,  
12 S-K-E-L-T-O-N.

13 Q. Okay. And who are you employed by?

14 A. Rotorcraft Leasing Company.

15 Q. And your duty assignment?

16 A. I'm a check airman instructor for the company.

17 Q. Okay. What are you rated in?

18 A. I'm rated in 206 and 407 series aircraft.

19 Q. Okay. How long have you been employed?

20 A. Let's see. Eleven, 12 years here.

21 Q. Okay, with RLC?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Okay. So, just start out when you started your flying, and  
24 just give me a rundown on your experience.

25 A. Okay. Let's see. I started flight training 2005. You know,

1 the standard progression from there, you know, student pilot,  
2 instructor pilot. I went to a company called Hummingbird  
3 Aviation. It was my first real job. That was 2008/9 timeframe.  
4 I was with them until they went out of business. I went to  
5 Helicopter Services in Houston about six months. They went out of  
6 business. And I've been here ever since.

7 Q. Okay. Did you start out as a line pilot?

8 A. Yes, sir, I did.

9 Q. Okay. The aircraft that you -- helicopters that you've flown  
10 from the smallest air base?

11 A. From the smallest, let's see, the R-22, R-44, 206B, 206L  
12 series, 407, and a little bit of (indiscernible); and then, a  
13 little bit of time in the 76. Not enough to really count that one  
14 up.

15 Q. Okay. Are there no A-Stars out in the Gulf?

16 A. Well, this is with Helicopter Services (indiscernible).

17 Q. But generally speaking --

18 (Crosstalk)

19 MR. BUSH: Yeah.

20 BY MR. SALAZAR:

21 Q. Okay. All right. And you are a flight instructor for RLC,  
22 check airman for RLC, in --

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. For what aircraft?

25 A. We're 206/407 series.



1 Q. Okay. Getting into the accident pilot, did you train him, or  
2 was he --

3 A. We had a few flights. I was around for a little bit of it.

4 Q. Did you do any --

5 A. I think I flew in to --

6 Q. -- ground school training?

7 A. I honestly can't remember if I was at work at that time or  
8 not. Probably so.

9 Q. Okay, okay. Anything in ground school standout?

10 A. To be honest with you, nothing about it stands out to me  
11 other than he seemed like a reasonably competent guy, fairly  
12 intelligent guy. But as far as his flying, nothing jumped out at  
13 me as being amiss.

14 Q. And from what I understand, he came in with some 206 time,  
15 and some S-60 time, and a little bit of S-64 time. So, did he  
16 progress any faster or slower than anybody else?

17 A. I honestly don't recall. I think he was doing just fine in  
18 everything we did with him.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Like I said, nothing really jumps out. If I remember them,  
21 it's usually because they did have a problem, and I really don't  
22 remember anything about his training that was off in any way.

23 Q. Okay. Did you do any type of maneuvers, validations, or any  
24 check rides with him?

25 A. We did some early -- I think one of the first flights he did

1 was, with me, was a maneuvers flight, and I didn't do any of the  
2 checking, really, none of his check rides.

3 Q. Okay. Let's do this. Let's back up a little bit, and just  
4 talking in general terms, and we're not talking about the accident  
5 pilot anymore. When a brand new hire comes in, walk me through  
6 the training phases that they go through.

7 A. Sure. So, the first day they're here on side, they have a  
8 better part of a day of in dock with our human resources reps; and  
9 then, if there's time in the day, at the end of the day, I'll give  
10 them a little tour of the facilities. And then, it's the next day  
11 they'll start ground, and the ground usually rolls four and a half  
12 to five days. We try to get all the ground before we go flying if  
13 possible.

14 Q. Okay. Let's go through the tasks that are part of the ground  
15 training.

16 A. Sure. Okay. So, we have numerous subject matter areas we go  
17 through, everything from just basic stuff, air space, regs, spend  
18 a lot of time in our operations manual and, of course, flight  
19 manual, systems, that sort of thing, flight planning. It's quite  
20 intensive.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. It's basically probably lumping 35, 40 hours' worth of  
23 ground.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Is there a test administered at the end of that training?

2 A. Yes, sir, there is.

3 Q. And do we have his flight records with us?

4 A. Do we have --

5 Q. (Indiscernible)?

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. Did he have any issues with that evaluation?

8 A. I don't think he did. Let's see. I could pull his check  
9 ride form up. You know, everything was set on the ground,  
10 according to his records. His check ride, he had no  
11 unsatisfactory remarks.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. (Indiscernible).

14 Q. All right. So, getting back into general speaking, what's  
15 the next phase?

16 A. We usually start flying, and we try and fly everybody one  
17 time a day, no more than that. Depending on weather, you know,  
18 different things, we may not get around to flying every day, but  
19 we don't let them go more than, you know, one day off. We try and  
20 keep them in the seat, keep the flying as continuous as possible.  
21 But the first couple of flights are maneuvers, or patterns flight  
22 maneuvers; then, we move into the off-shore phase of it. We'll  
23 start talking about platform identification, wind identification  
24 techniques, obstacles, you know, standard approach and take-off  
25 profiles, that sort of thing. And when they have all that down,

1 we start moving into a little bit more advanced stuff, like failed  
2 equipment, failed GPS. Every flight offshore we do  
3 (indiscernible) work with them. We do control and let-down  
4 procedures and (indiscernible), that sort of thing.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. That's it.

7 Q. Well, you bring up a lot of stuff, some interesting things.  
8 Let's get into evaluating a helipad.

9 A. Sure.

10 Q. Okay? What do you teach them when they approach a pad, then  
11 (indiscernible)?

12 A. Sure. So, the first thing we're going to do, we're going to  
13 fly over anything we're landing on. We've got a policy, we want  
14 to see all four sides of the platform, in addition to the top of  
15 it. So, when we're flying over the top, obviously, by that point,  
16 we've identified our wind direction. We confirm it when we get  
17 there with bird activity, that sort of thing. We're looking for a  
18 stairwell location, skirting. Is the skirting in good shape? Is  
19 any missing? That sort of thing. Do we have any other  
20 obstructions, flare booms, any venting of flare booms? That sort  
21 of thing. And once we determine that it's suitable to land on,  
22 then we set up an organized traffic pattern, and then set up for  
23 approach from there.

24 Q. Okay. Do you guys use any moniker or an acronym to go  
25 through of all that stuff that --

1 A. You know --

2 Q. -- you look at?

3 A. With airplanes, there's plenty of good acronyms, and I  
4 haven't found one, really, for me personally, that I like for  
5 helicopters. It's just basic, you have to just evaluate the area.  
6 Every one of them's a little bit different. So, if you really had  
7 an acronym, I'm afraid that may (indiscernible) in some way, you  
8 know. So, each case is its own unique (indiscernible).

9 Q. Okay. Well, when we flew out to West Delta 106, the windsock  
10 wasn't in great shape. It was still there, and there was still  
11 enough to get a decent wind indication on the -- but what do you  
12 teach your guys is the windsock is clearly (indiscernible), or  
13 broken, or missing?

14 A. What you'll find with the windsocks offshore is, more often  
15 than not, they are tattered or basically (indiscernible). Some  
16 places, they're good. If it's a manned platform, they're pretty  
17 good about keeping them in good shape. But the wind direction  
18 identification starts well before you even get there, and it  
19 starts with your briefing in the morning --

20 Q. Sure.

21 A. -- on the prevailing winds. Enroute, we're looking for  
22 markings on the water or in the marsh and that sort of thing.  
23 Some of the lee side marsh may have some slick water before it  
24 starts getting ripples on it. So, that can start giving you a  
25 little bit of an idea. Excuse me. I've got a little --

1 Q. (Indiscernible). Remember, you can take a break any time you  
2 want.

3 A. But I was talking about birds a minute ago, birds facing into  
4 the wind, but I'll help you narrow it down a little bit.  
5 Pelicans, we teach them, disregard anything a pelican's going to  
6 give you, because they'll take it all downwind and eventually  
7 maybe turn into the wind. But a seagull, however, they'll pretty  
8 much always face into the wind and turn into -- or, take off into  
9 the wind.

10 Q. Very interesting.

11 A. Things like a rope hanging down from a platform  
12 (indiscernible) most of the platform is what's called a plus 10,  
13 and they have a rope there, because people have to swing off a  
14 boat to get onto it, you know. So, the rope can be drifting  
15 downwind. Just different things like that.

16 Q. A lot of indications that --

17 A. There --

18 Q. -- you're trained to look at.

19 A. There are many indications, even with very light wind, you  
20 know, a knot or two, or a couple of knots, you ought to be able to  
21 zero in on it pretty well.

22 Q. And these are some of the things that are taught to the  
23 pilots?

24 A. We teach -- every flight, we're commenting on that.

25 MR. BUSH: But a windsock is usually the last thing you'll

1 use --

2 MR. SKELTON: Yeah, a windsock --

3 MR. BUSH: -- because it could be erroneous.

4 MR. SKELTON: Honestly, the windsock is -- yeah, it just  
5 confirms what you should already know going into it. We also, we  
6 compare airspeed with our GPS indication on the ground speed.  
7 That doesn't give you the whole picture, but it can help --

8 MR. SALAZAR: Absolutely.

9 MR. SKELTON: -- you know, to whittle it down to, you know,  
10 within 180 of it.

11 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah, this the hard part of my job, when I have  
12 to keep quiet and -- because when we flew in the Army there were  
13 just kind of things we were trying to look for, as well. But, you  
14 know, I'm just trying to pull the information my way, as --

15 MR. SKELTON: Sure.

16 MR. SALAZAR: -- as opposed to swapping stories.

17 BY MR. SALAZAR:

18 Q. Okay. So, you're doing your training, so approaching to land  
19 to the helideck, walk me through the training topics that you  
20 cover for approaching to land a helideck.

21 A. Okay. So, we have Imperio system in our helicopters that'll  
22 basically give a report if we turn (indiscernible) below 300, that  
23 sort of thing, if our centrifuges are too high, that sort of  
24 thing. So, we teach them to fly in such a way they're going to  
25 avoid (indiscernible) power, and be into the wind, and be able to

1 land on a platform, and the last, you know, couple of helicopter  
2 (indiscernible) want to come in with a flat disc. We don't want  
3 to D cell (ph.) at the bottom, you know. So, we set our approach  
4 for (indiscernible) to where they begin about, you know, 3 to 500  
5 feet, typically, on our approach in, at about 60 knots. Once  
6 we're on approach, I teach them, you know, pretty much to  
7 disregard the airspeed, that sort of thing. You know, to keep  
8 your eyes outside. It's a rate of closure angle of descent type  
9 thing, you know. Air point guys are real hung up on numbers, and  
10 it really doesn't work real well for a VFR aircraft, you know --  
11 or, helicopter, I should say.

12 So, the approach is -- I mean, every approach angle, there's  
13 no one-size-fits-all approach angle. It all depends on gross  
14 weight, wind, that sort of thing. But a baseline approach to a  
15 platform, they're always going to be on the steeper side.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. So, we teach that. And the big thing is to come in, like I  
18 said, a flat disc that last, you know, 150, 200 feet. We want to  
19 bring the tail down to D cell, then we terminate to a 3- to 5-foot  
20 hover.

21 Q. Okay. And from there, you let down?

22 A. Once we -- we shoot to the center of the platform, terminate  
23 at 3- to 5-foot hover, any maneuvering over the platform is done  
24 no more than 3 feet; and then, once we determine where we're going  
25 to land, if we have to land on a side, say if it's a 60-foot



1 platform, then we'll get into position once we've cleared the  
2 area.

3 Q. Okay. Now, I've been out of the game for a while, and the  
4 other day, when we landed to the platform, that was my first time  
5 to land to a 24 by 24 foot platform, and I didn't have a whole lot  
6 of reference. So, what is it that helps the new pilot determine  
7 that he's at 3- to 5-foot, 3- to 4-foot hover?

8 A. 3- to 5-foot hover.

9 Q. 3- to 5-foot hover --

10 A. That's what we do.

11 Q. -- flies over the pad? He's just looking (indiscernible)  
12 level and looking at --

13 A. Well, it's a combination of it. I mean, your eyes are  
14 outside. You don't want to stare right through the Chin Bubbles,  
15 particularly if it's a single-bond platform and it's moving with  
16 the sea state, you know. They can rock back and forth 16,  
17 18 inches, you know, you'll start chasing it. So, you don't want  
18 to steer directly at the platform to -- I mean, you're  
19 obviously -- your eyes are darting down at it as you're landing  
20 the aircraft to reference it. So, it's just, we don't want to  
21 fixate on it, just --

22 Q. There you go. So, you're teaching them to look around and --

23 A. Sure.

24 Q. -- and not fixating?

25 A. Correct.

1 Q. All rightie. How about maneuvering over the helipad itself?  
2 For whatever reason, he's going to land into the wind, but its  
3 tail rotor is close to the stairwell, so we know he's going to  
4 have to do some sort of maneuvering.

5 A. Sure.

6 Q. What do you cover there?

7 A. Okay. So, step one is to get recon, knowing what you have  
8 around you. You know, do you have any obstructions to deal with?  
9 If you don't have any objections, and you don't have any odd wind  
10 limits, it's not that big of a deal, you know. But like I said,  
11 everything (indiscernible) the center of the pad. Stay at 3 feet.  
12 We won't do any maneuvering below 3 feet. And then, we move from  
13 there once we know the area's clear. Once they get -- say if they  
14 have to land cross-cabin to the left, or to the right, for that  
15 matter, you know, what we don't want them doing is looking out,  
16 again, fixating, or even worse, cross-cabin, looking through that  
17 little fish-eye mirror. That's good for determining the distance.  
18 But when we decide how we're going to sit down, usually pick  
19 something out in front of the aircraft, like some of the  
20 corrugation and skirting, we use that as a reference.

21 Q. You bring up a good point. That little mirror. What's its  
22 function?

23 A. Well, it's function is to make sure that, if you're doing hot  
24 loading offshore, is to make sure nobody's still standing out by  
25 the, you know, the baggage area (indiscernible). So, it's to

1 clear personnel, I'd say, its primary function is, but we use it,  
2 as well, as a just situational awareness, say, if we're landing  
3 cross-cabin like that.

4 Q. Okay. Okay, very good. There was one more thing on the  
5 new -- oh, yeah. The circle that's painted on the helipad, aiming  
6 circle?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Okay. So, if the aircraft has landed, and the aircraft is in  
9 the aiming circle, and the pilot is at a 3-5-foot hover, and winds  
10 are not a factor, nor is power, can he do a 360-degree pedal turn  
11 and be free of obstacles?

12 A. Most --

13 Q. Is that (indiscernible)?

14 A. I can't answer that with a yes or no. Most platforms are a  
15 little bit different.

16 Q. Let me put it to you this way: Are there platforms out  
17 there, and we know West Delta 106 is not one of them, but are  
18 there platforms out there where you could like -- where it's  
19 possible to actually contact an obstruction even though you're in  
20 that aiming circle?

21 A. I can't think of one off the top of my head. I can't say yes  
22 or no to that.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. I couldn't answer --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- one way or the other.

2 Q. So, is it more literally just a target to aim for to get you  
3 to the --

4 A. No, that's --

5 Q. -- pads, as opposed to a safety area?

6 A. Well, it's probably a little bit of both, but let me tell you  
7 how we teach it.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. We tell you to bring the (indiscernible) out to a platform,  
10 and I usually go to one that I know is clear. A lot of these  
11 platforms we use are -- for training are kind of shallow, within  
12 20 or 30 miles, and usually, there's a lot of bird activity, which  
13 means you have a hard time reading some of the platform's  
14 markings. So, we try and go to one that has a nice, clear area on  
15 it, at least until they get initiated. Of course --

16 Q. Right.

17 A. -- I need to see the ones that are covered in --

18 Q. Sure.

19 A. -- bird matter, you know. (Indiscernible) how to use that,  
20 too. But what I'll do -- everybody's sight picture's going to be  
21 a little bit different due to height variation. What I do is, I  
22 land on it, and I -- my sight picture is when my toes are  
23 basically on the center of that green center mass of the  
24 helicopters, you know, right in the middle of that circle. Okay.  
25 So, I'll put it to where I know it's correct; and then, I'll get

1 them to note their sight picture on it --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- so they can have that frame of reference.

4 Q. Well, let's get back to the approach, and you -- and I  
5 understand what you're saying. No size fits all. There's  
6 justification for a shallow approach, justification for a steep  
7 approach. But the sight picture, do you train the pilots to keep  
8 the helipad --

9 MR. SALAZAR: Yes?

10 MR. BUSH: Can I pause here for just one second?

11 MR. SALAZAR: Time out, yeah.

12 MR. BUSH: Okay. I need to take time in the aircraft; and  
13 then, I need to run to my office and address something.

14 MR. SALAZAR: We'll call a time out, and --

15 MR. BUSH: Okay.

16 MR. SALAZAR: -- we'll wait until you get back.

17 MR. BUSH: I may be a few minutes.

18 MR. SALAZAR: All right.

19 (Crosstalk)

20 (Off the record.)

21 (On the record.)

22 MR. SALAZAR: Okay, so, we're recording again.

23 BY MR. SALAZAR:

24 Q. And go ahead and state your name again.

25 A. My name is Brian August Skelton.

1 Q. Okay, and your position?

2 A. I am an instructor/check airman for Rotorcraft Leasing  
3 Company.

4 Q. Okay. We talked a little bit about auto rotations just in  
5 passing, but when you get to the point where it's training auto  
6 rotation, just go over with me real quick the profiles that you go  
7 through auto rotations with the --

8 (Crosstalk)

9 Q. -- new hires.

10 A. So, we have to -- basic protocol is, we do, normally do those  
11 flights. They're -- in the 407, they're all power recovery. So,  
12 we usually start 700 feet. We do them from cruise profile, or  
13 cruise power setting, because, I mean, 95 percent of their time,  
14 enroute's going to be from a cruise power setting. So, we want to  
15 get them -- get (indiscernible) memory in there for just how much  
16 right pedal a 407 takes, for instance. I don't know if you're  
17 familiar with it, but it's completely never around within a 206 --

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. -- entry on it. They don't glide very well, you know. So,  
20 we have a profile, we teach them how to get a nice entry, maintain  
21 altitude. We don't want to enter, and then going right down slow.  
22 In other words, I want to try to maintain altitude, and then --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- and load the rotor up, try and --

25 Q. All right, yes.

1 A. -- maintain RPM and basically delay the descent a little bit.  
2 We still would have our cruise air -- or, our descent airspeed  
3 profile (indiscernible) about 60 knots for a little 409 on the  
4 glide.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. And we do our power recovery to terminate at least 5 foot or  
7 so.

8 Q. Okay. All right.

9 A. Yeah, we -- well, that's (indiscernible). We also do 180s,  
10 as well. We do them from 5 and 700 feet. And then, outside of  
11 that, we do the float ship flight, as well.

12 Q. Okay. Now, it was the float ship flight, which is a 206,  
13 that's on floats, and you were doing touch-downs to water then?

14 A. That is correct.

15 Q. Are you guys touching down in a freshwater lake or actually  
16 out in the salt water?

17 A. We have a number of approved areas, of which, really, only  
18 two are accessible to us from here just due to the distance. So,  
19 we either use Acadiana's sea lane, which are, you know, a five-  
20 minute flight from here in a D model. We use Lake Peigneur, which  
21 is, again, about four or five minutes. Now, that's kind of a  
22 brackish leak. We go to that when the winds are suitable. It's  
23 hard to use on the weekend because of boats, and kids, and jet  
24 skis, that sort of thing, so we prefer to go out there and hit the  
25 open water, you know, because you don't have any peripheral cues

1 in the way you look at the sea lane. But if we can't go there,  
2 we'll go to the sea lane in Acadiana and run the maneuvers there.

3 Q. Okay. You say a sea lane?

4 A. The sea lane -- or, seaway.

5 Q. Okay, okay.

6 A. So --

7 Q. Very good. Are you -- this is just for me. Do you guys have  
8 difficulties when the water's glassy-smooth, or --

9 A. Absolutely, we do.

10 Q. I bet.

11 A. That's a big roger on that. That's another reason they  
12 exclude Lake Peigneur.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Glassy water, overcast, things that'll affect your depth  
15 perception. You normally have glassy water one or two days a year  
16 offshore --

17 (Crosstalk)

18 A. -- so -- and plus, offshore is never going to be as quiet as  
19 it is in --

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. -- you know, but it's the best we can do going to rough  
22 water. Well, there's an 18-inch wave limit on a float ship,  
23 anyway, so that big --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- going off in open water.



1 Q. Okay.

2 MR. SALAZAR: What do we have here, sir? Oh, perfect.

3 MR. BUSH: Oh, perfect.

4 MR. MELANCON: It's for (indiscernible).

5 MR. SKELTON: Excellent.

6 MR. MELANCON: the elevation. This is --

7 MR. SKELTON: Okay.

8 MR. MELANCON: -- mudline. And then, this is to the deck;  
9 and then, it gives you a (indiscernible) 8-foot elevation. I  
10 think that says the type of HeliForce.

11 MR. SKELTON: Excellent. Thank you, sir.

12 MR. MELANCON: That'll get you what you need to know. I am  
13 going to run to the field to do some face-to-face stuff. I won't  
14 be back unless you need me.

15 MR. SALAZAR: I will not.

16 MR. MELANCON: I do have some emails stuff that we're going  
17 to put altogether, to include this electronically.

18 MR. SALAZAR: Thank you.

19 MR. MELANCON: And we'll get all that to you first part of  
20 next week.

21 MR. SALAZAR: All right, Jason. I'm sure we're going to  
22 continue communicating via the phone, maybe Teams. Appreciate all  
23 your assistance. It's been --

24 MR. MELANCON: Absolutely.

25 MR. SALAZAR: -- extremely helpful. And we'll just stay in

1 contact.

2 MR. MELANCON: Nice meeting you. Look forward to it. If  
3 there's anything else you all need, don't hesitate to call, or  
4 email, or text, whatever, and we'll try to get you everything that  
5 you need. We are working on the (indiscernible) camera recovery  
6 thing. There's some stuff going on in the background. As soon as  
7 I get a yes/no answer, I'll let you all know.

8 MR. SALAZAR: All right. And just like Todd said, it's a  
9 crucial piece of evidence if we can go that extra mile to get it.

10 MR. MELANCON: Yeah, I'll see. You know, the problem is,  
11 they just want to know what cost is going to be involved so we  
12 can --

13 MR. SALAZAR: Of course.

14 MR. MELANCON: -- factor that into --

15 MR. SALAZAR: Exactly.

16 MR. MELANCON: -- the insurance.

17 MR. SALAZAR: Thank you, sir.

18 MR. MELANCON: Absolutely. You all have a good one.

19 MR. SALAZAR: 'Bye, Jason.

20 MR. MELANCON: Thanks for helping.

21 BY MR. SALAZAR:

22 Q. All right. So, let's do this. Let's transition back to the  
23 accident pilot in the flight. I know you had said that nothing  
24 stuck out. Let's review the grade slips, and just go with me,  
25 what your saying in the grade slips as far as any comments or if

1 there's a go/no-go evaluation on it.

2 A. Sure. So, before we get into this, I'm not sure exactly  
3 what's in it. I haven't really looked over it that much.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. But when you see an unset (indiscernible) on a flight one,  
6 that carries a little bit different weight than it would later on  
7 in the --

8 Q. Sure.

9 A. -- journey, you know?

10 Q. That makes sense.

11 A. So, just starting at the top, here, looking at the flight  
12 training device, or simulator, the simulator is, it's not a full-  
13 motion. It's a fixed base with a parabolic screen. And the  
14 machine itself is really not set up as well as it can be, so, in  
15 other words, it don't fly like a real helicopter.

16 Q. Sure.

17 A. It's a video game.

18 Q. Sure.

19 A. So, we -- it's a great procedural trainer. We run through  
20 all the EPs with it, but we don't judge anybody on their ability  
21 to control it, because it doesn't control like anything used.

22 Q. (Indiscernible).

23 A. Correct. So, usually, everyone usually gets through that  
24 pretty well, you know, because right before the simulator flight,  
25 we taught them our ground school, that all the systems have been

1 covered. We've done all that ground, we've gone over the EPs, and  
2 then we give them -- usually end the day on that. That way, they  
3 have it fresh on their mind. They go home, and they study it that  
4 night.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. And then, they'll have the sim period in the morning. And  
7 any deficiencies that are found in the sim period, that's a  
8 wonderful time to stop and correct it.

9 Q. Excellent. Yep.

10 A. So, so, that's it. I don't see anything notable on that --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- particular training, so -- okay. So, flight one,  
13 September 13, I was the instructor on that one. And you'll notice  
14 on here there's our grading system here usually on a flight one.  
15 And the way we do it is, they have to see a standard before  
16 they're expected to perform to it --

17 Q. Sure.

18 A. So, we will demonstrate the maneuver, and then allow them to  
19 basically mimic what they just saw us do. So, when you see a D/S  
20 right there, that's saying that I demonstrated it and that he  
21 performed it satisfactorily.

22 Q. Got it.

23 A. So, there are no off remarks on this one. Everything looks  
24 satisfactory. We reviewed logbook FSO procedures. The only note  
25 I have on there was his bank angles were initially steep, but were

1 corrected by the end of the lesson, which is common. If you've  
2 got guys, and they're flying tours, that sort of thing --

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. -- they're in a rush to fly a circle and get back on the  
5 ground, so that's not uncommon, you know.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. So, we teach everybody. The way I tell them is, it ought to  
8 be the most boring flight ever. You know, they ought to be  
9 surprised when they get there, and --

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. -- that's the end of it. If they fall asleep on me, great.  
12 I'm doing a good job.

13 Q. Perfect, yeah.

14 A. Even some of the maneuvers, for instance, like, we were  
15 teaching them board and take-off, we don't call it a quick stop.  
16 I try and avoid that language. It's a board and take-off.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And where we do that, say, on take-off, we have like an  
19 engine chip light or something like that, and we have the room to  
20 D cell and stay on the flightline. I want to do that as gingerly  
21 as possible so I'm not raising any red flags. So, if they're  
22 playing on their phone or whatever, I want to basically get a  
23 dynamic maneuver or --

24 Q. I understand.

25 A. -- a ride out of it. I'm trying to hide the fact that we've

- 1 got a problem from them --
- 2 Q. Sure, yeah.
- 3 A. -- so it doesn't alarm them.
- 4 Q. Yeah, so you don't alert the -- alarm the customers in the  
5 back.
- 6 A. That is correct. So, everything looked good there.
- 7 Q. Okay.
- 8 A. Moving on to flight two. Chris Tuttle (ph.) was the  
9 instructor that was -- nothing jumps out at me. Let me read the  
10 comments real quick. No unset remarks on here, is my --
- 11 Q. There you go.
- 12 A. -- my point.
- 13 Q. Okay.
- 14 A. By the way, flight two is also a pattern flight.
- 15 Q. Okay.
- 16 A. Let's see. Initiated fadeck (ph.) manual procedures on  
17 downwind, which is, usually, how we introduce them to it us a  
18 cruise power setting, and again, that's 95 percent of their time's  
19 in cruise --
- 20 Q. Yeah, yeah.
- 21 A. -- so we hit that heavy. And usually, they get this several  
22 times in training, you know, if we've got them. I don't like  
23 doing it over the water, but once we cross the beach, I may  
24 simulate fadeck failure by hitting a fadeck --
- 25 Q. Okay.

- 1 A. -- test warn; and then, we, you know --
- 2 Q. And they go through the emergency procedure for a failed  
3 fadeck?
- 4 A. Yeah.
- 5 Q. Okay.
- 6 A. So, anyway, everything looks good there. So, you completed  
7 (indiscernible) power and simulated engine failure training, so  
8 everything looks good. Okay. Flight three was with me, and this,  
9 I believe, is the first offshore flight we went to -- from Brusor  
10 (ph.) Luton Cove Vermilion 56, Vermilion 67, and back to Brusor.  
11 That's a typical first flight, what I like to do. I don't like  
12 spending a lot of time bouncing platform to platform, because this  
13 first flight, we're trying to make sure all the bread and butter  
14 stuff looks right, all the pick-ups, set-downs, and approach,  
15 take-off, (indiscernible) if we're worried about navigating and  
16 going to the first platform. You know, like I was telling you  
17 earlier, we're hitting the, all the landed indication stuff, and  
18 (indiscernible) requirements, and all that, and I like to do it.  
19 Once all that's done, we work on approaches. I don't like  
20 bouncing all over --
- 21 Q. Right.
- 22 A. -- from there. There's --
- 23 Q. Yeah.
- 24 A. -- plenty of time for that in a later lesson.
- 25 Q. Sure. You're using up a lot of time and fuel going from --

1 A. Sure, sure.

2 Q. -- here to there.

3 A. So, on the notes here, what I wrote was, review platform, and  
4 wind direction identification techniques, practice parking within  
5 3 feet of the platform edge, so a note on that to be compliant  
6 with the (indiscernible) landing matrix we use, or is industry  
7 standard, anyway, for the Gulf. It has, it's a little matrix that  
8 tells you that you're going to have room to park two aircraft,  
9 depending on the type of aircraft.

10 Q. Yeah, I've seen that matrix, actually. It's a list of  
11 aircraft on the column; and then, you go across, and there's a  
12 list of aircraft on the roads, and it tells you how much feet you  
13 have to have difference, yeah.

14 A. That's correct.

15 Q. So, it'll tell you what size platform you have to have.

16 A. Yep.

17 MR. BUSH: Yep.

18 BY MR. SALAZAR:

19 Q. I think that's in you all's GLM, is --

20 A. It is.

21 Q. -- where I saw it.

22 A. It is. And to be compliant with that chart, it requires the  
23 parked aircraft to be within 3 feet of the edge --

24 Q. 3 feet of the edge.

25 A. -- but no closer. So, if you're 6 feet from the edge, then



1 you have to basically have the charts --

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. -- nullified, so you don't want to be too far away from it.

4 Q. Right, right.

5 A. Okay. So, let's see, we -- outside of that, we performed the  
6 control letdown procedure, so (indiscernible). And we use the  
7 coastline. Like, if you have the fuel, and the coastline's the  
8 closest thing to get to, I like doing that, because if you  
9 parallel the coast, as you let down, the white sand on the  
10 coastline will give you some visual contract between the water and  
11 the marsh to help you transition visually sooner. So, I usually  
12 do that every offshore flight, we'll do that one. We also do  
13 control let-downs to an airport, set up an ODS (ph.), you know,  
14 that sort of thing.

15 Q. Okay. So, for a control letdown, what's your (indiscernible)  
16 speed?

17 A. Okay. So, on the control letdown, we teach it right now, the  
18 office manual, and what it has you doing is, you're going to an  
19 area known to be clear of obstructions. And from there, once we  
20 get over our known clear area, the maneuver really begins at about  
21 500 feet, and 40 to 60 knots on the airspeed, and about 200 foot  
22 per minute rate of descent. So, it's nice, gentle, painfully  
23 slow. You don't want to rush anything. Well, you know --

24 Q. Yeah.

25 (Crosstalk)

- 1 Q. Yeah.
- 2 A. -- getting in a rush I and C is recipe for --
- 3 Q. Oh, yeah.
- 4 A. -- disaster. We don't want to make any right turns if we can  
5 help you, because you're too tempted to rubberneck and try and,  
6 you know, regain visually, you know. So, what we'll do is, I'll  
7 have them -- usually, the first time I do this, I won't make them  
8 wear the hood or anything like that. I want them to see what it  
9 looks like. I'll usually demonstrate the first one, and so, that  
10 way, they just see, you know, without, you know, trying to  
11 interpret instruments. After that, I have them do it, and I'll  
12 let them take it down pretty low. I'll take the controls from  
13 them at the end, and I'll hold whatever profile they give me and  
14 have them flip the hood up. That way, they can see what they're  
15 dealing with, you know. If you do it right, it's nice and  
16 controlled, and the lower you go, the more you want to slow down,  
17 but we emphasize, do not lose translational lift --
- 18 Q. Yeah.
- 19 A. -- because if you do any, you've got --
- 20 Q. Yeah.
- 21 A. -- issues to deal with.
- 22 Q. Yeah, yeah. You certainly do.
- 23 A. Yeah.
- 24 Q. Without a doubt. Okay. So, in the interest of saving time,  
25 let's go through the rest of the grade slips, but --

- 1 A. Sure.
- 2 Q. -- let's see if -- let's just go and stop at an unusual --
- 3 A. All right.
- 4 Q. Or, an unset is what I'm looking for.
- 5 A. Okay. So, everything through flight three looked good.
- 6 Flight four, flight four is (indiscernible) three times. This was
- 7 another offshore flight. We incorporated a base visit to Galeano
- 8 (ph.). We have some --
- 9 Q. Okay.
- 10 A. -- arrival and departure procedures, and we make sure
- 11 everybody's, you know, aware of them and they're comfortable with
- 12 it.
- 13 Q. Okay.
- 14 A. We run through some equipment stuff, set foam checks;
- 15 performed cross-cabin approaches, simulating obstacle avoidance,
- 16 that sort of thing. Radio -- the -- see. Radio calls are
- 17 improving, but further study format is recommended (indiscernible)
- 18 flight four to --
- 19 Q. Yeah, yeah. Using the format out of the GOM?
- 20 A. Yes, sir.
- 21 Q. Yeah.
- 22 A. Yeah. So, we -- it's pretty easy just reading it, but once
- 23 you put flying, and navigating, and everything in, and, you
- 24 know --
- 25 Q. Yeah, it's a language you --

1 A. Yep.

2 Q. -- have to learn.

3 A. To be honest with you, it's one of the things most people,  
4 they end up snagging on the communications more than anything,  
5 typically, you know, because we're --

6 Q. Interesting.

7 A. -- we're very specific about the format. We want to keep  
8 all, any unnecessary verbiage out of it, so -- so, everything  
9 looked good there. Flight five, Chris Tuttle. Nothing unusual,  
10 no unsets. See. (Indiscernible) 189. That's typical for a  
11 flight five.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Flight six, again, Chris Tuttle. Nothing unset. Looks like  
14 he did (indiscernible) usual attitude stuff. Flight six is when  
15 we usually do our maintenance operational check procedures, make  
16 sure they know how to do an auto RPM check, power assurance check,  
17 that sort of thing. That was --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- accomplished on this flight. Again, nothing. No  
20 unsatisfactory remarks.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Chris Tuttle flight seven. Same thing. No unsatisfactory  
23 remarks. Flight eight, Russell Begnaud. This was -- flight  
24 eight's a solo. Unremarkable. Yeah.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Okay. This says, flight four. That's out of the 206. We  
2 put the float ship into the 206 transition (indiscernible). It's  
3 not part of the 407. It's not required, but that's just how we  
4 record it. And it looks like Russell Begnaud. It is float ship  
5 flight. Again, unremarkable on the remarks. Everything looked  
6 good.

7 Q. Okay. And those are all the grade slips?

8 A. Those are all the grade slips.

9 Q. All right.

10 A. On his testing, on his (indiscernible) Star, just at a  
11 glance, predominantly 100s. He had a few 95 here, 85 there.

12 Q. Is there a minimum standard?

13 A. Minimum of 80 to pass.

14 Q. Eighty to pass?

15 A. Yeah. On his test, 407 flight manual exam, he missed four.

16 Q. I see that.

17 A. That's average.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Looks like he missed four on his initial exam out of the  
20 78 questions about med. That's average.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. All -- any wrong answers we have, we correct to 100 percent  
23 and make sure, you know, they don't -- and like we're squared and  
24 we know what the right answer is before we move on.

25 Q. Okay.

- 1 A. So, that's that.
- 2 Q. All rightie. What else do we have in this packet, there?
- 3 A. Okay. So, the bulk of it is training records. Let me put  
4 this back in here --
- 5 Q. Okay.
- 6 A. -- real quick.
- 7 Q. So, think for a minute on since you've been employed with  
8 RLC. We don't need names, but just think for a minute, one of the  
9 worst guys that you flew with. And then, think for a minute, one  
10 of the best guys that you flew with. These are students that came  
11 through. Was he either one of those guys?
- 12 A. No, sir. He -- well, when I say, no, sir, when you said,  
13 who's the worst, I'm thinking of -- of course, you said no names,  
14 but he never made it through training, so I --
- 15 Q. Yeah, well --
- 16 A. -- was thinking of that, yeah --
- 17 Q. Okay.
- 18 A. -- when I said that. He was -- if he were really  
19 outstanding, I would remember him; if he were bad, I would  
20 remember him.
- 21 Q. Yeah.
- 22 A. So, he was average to above average, at least.
- 23 Q. And he -- how many, or, employees do you guys train in a  
24 year's time?
- 25 A. It varies based on contract needs, but we have periods of

1 hiring less activity, but no, it's probably 40 or so --

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. -- if I just had to guess --

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. -- I'd say probably 40 or --

6 Q. Yeah. And with your own life's commitments and, you know,

7 your job being what it is, I would imagine, if he was in a crowd

8 of 10 people you could -- could you pick him out of a crowd of

9 10 people?

10 A. Yeah, I could. Well, I'll see -- I'm good with faces.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. It might, it may --

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. -- take me a minute --

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. -- to remember his name, you know.

17 Q. But flying skills, he was just a solid average aviator?

18 A. Absolutely.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. Yeah. Like I said, what I do remember about him, and he's --

21 I consider him to be a little bit above average (indiscernible).

22 Talking politics and religion's probably not the best thing at

23 work, but I know he's from Brazil, and what all is going on down

24 there. I had to ask him about it and he was open to talk about

25 those things, you know.

1 Q. Cool.

2 A. A pretty interesting guy.

3 Q. Oh, all right, all right. Well, let me just think for a  
4 moment. We've talked about you, your experience, your time with  
5 RLC. We've talked about the training program that you're a part  
6 of. Who do you work for? Who's your boss?

7 A. Troy Bush is my immediate boss. The --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- training staff reports directly to Chief Ott (ph.).

10 Q. Okay. And how is Troy to work for?

11 A. Oh, he's great to work for.

12 Q. Yeah?

13 A. He's a real easygoing guy.

14 Q. Okay. When he has to be the bad guy for discipline or  
15 whatever it is, can he be that person?

16 A. I think so.

17 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. All right. So, we got into discussions  
18 about the pilot, his training, his flying in the times that you  
19 flew with him. And I believe we are at the end of our interview,  
20 so let's go ahead and stop the tape right now.

21 MR. SKELTON: Sure.

22 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

23

24

25



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL HELICOPTER CRASH OFFSHORE OF  
SOUTHWEST PASS CHANNEL NEAR GALLIANO,  
LOUISIANA ON DECEMBER 29, 2022  
Interview of Brian August Skelton

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN23FA071

PLACE: Broussard, Louisiana

DATE: January 6, 2023

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.



Lisa D. Sevarino  
Transcriber

**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

WAYNE: RLC can you hear me?

WAYNE: Eric, can you hear me ok? okay

ERIC: We got ya loud and clear Wayne, I see they are muted. Uh

WAYNE: Yeah, I see they are muted. We are also waiting on BSSE.

ERIC: Right. They are having issues for some reason. They said they can't hear. Uh, let's see. Hold on one sec.

WAYNE: Who's that? RLC?

WAYNE: Michael Hansen, thanks for joining us.

MICHAEL: Thank you.

WAYNE: Is Rodney there with you?

MICHAEL: No, I'm teleworking today. So, uh. I'm not sure Rodney's situation as far as that goes but he's the one that told me about it.

WAYNE: Yeah, he said he was going to be attending.

MICHAEL: Yeah, he told me he would be attending as well, I expect he will be on the call.

WAYNE: Great.

MICHAEL: Understand the rules, turn the camera on if you are talking, got it.

WAYNE: Yeah, we got a couple of folks without cameras.

MICHAEL: Oh, ok. This is just my computer camera so, is what it is.

WAYNE: That works fine. I just, with respect to Mr. Johnson, its nice for him to be able to see who is talking to him.

MICHAEL: Yeah, absolutely. Nobody is accusing him of anything but hey, ya know, I know how it feels. You know. So. It's good. Umm. So everybody here right now, I mean I am I the only BSSE person here I'm thinking.

WAYNE: No, well, you and Rodney was going to be on and RLC is having technical difficulties. As soon as we get them on, then well we will get ready to start.

RLC: We are on now, thank you. RLC is on.

WAYNE: From RLC we've got Troy and Tasha?

RLC: Correct. Plus the chief pilot (inaudible)

WAYNE: Ok great, and Tasha is there with you?

**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

TASHA: Yes, sir I am, I'm on the other side of the desk.

WAYNE: ok great, we will wait about another minute for Rodney from BSSE.

MICHAEL: You can just say Bessie – that's what we say.

WAYNE: Ok then uh, we will get started.

WAYNE: I'm going to go ahead and start recording this interview. both through TEAMS, we have some digital voice recorders as well.

Recording is announced and begins (3:10)

SILENCE UNTIL (4:00)

WAYNE: Ok Michael you will just need to take notes I guess for Rodney and he can join us when he gets on.

MICHAEL: Ok

WAYNE: I would like for us to go ahead and get started. I don't know how long this is going to take but if we last more than 90 minutes, we will take a 10 minute break if anybody needs it and then we will go on from there. I would like to thank everybody for making the call today, making this time at 2:00. If this format ends up working well I would like to use the same format for the additional interviews we will be doing with the other witnesses. With that, Van I appreciate you being here I know that you and the guys from RLC and Island have been through the ringer this last few days and I appreciate the professionalism and your willingness to be here and just kinda open up about what you witnessed that day.

I'm gonna open up, any questions from anybody first? If not, I'm going to open up with a few just background questions that will seem a little bit redundant, but I will ask those and then we will start, we will ask Mr. Johnson to go through what he saw, what he witnessed that day from the time of the incident until he departed the platform the following morning. And then we will do the round of questioning, we will start with RLC who will ask the first set of questions followed by Island, BSSE and then Walter will follow up. Any questions about any of that?

MICHAEL: No questions there but Wayne, could we do some introductions?

WAYNE: Ah, yes good idea. You wanna start Michael?

MICHAEL: Sure, I am Mike Hanson. I work for BSSE, I'm the Regional, which is the Gulf Region. The Regional Aviation Safety Manager. So, my being here is really to see if there is anything that I can find that might prevent anything like this from happening in the future. That's kinda my thing, the FAA also talks to me so, just so everybody's aware that's my job, that's what I do.

WAYNE: Great, thank you. Troy and Tasha – do you want to introduce yourselves?

TROY: I'm Troy Bush, the Chief Pilot for RLC along with Ms. Tasha Olivier, our Director of Safety.

WAYNE: ok, Ken do you want to introduce yourself to the group.

**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

KEN: This is Ken Biner the Production Manager at Walter Oil, in the in the Houston Office.

WAYNE: Great. Thanks Ken. Eric and Lance?

ERIC: This is Eric Fontenot with Island Operating; SEMS Manager of Special Projects. Lance LeBlanc, HSE Manager for Island and of course we have, Mr. Van Johnson.

WAYNE: Right. My name is Wayne Mason, I'm with Walter Oil and Gas, on the SEMS Coordinator and will be leading the investigation from Walter. With that I appreciate everybody being here.

**7:13 – Interview begins**

WAYNE: Van, can you desc, well let me ask you a couple of questions. One, you are obviously employed at Island Operating, how long have you been an employee there?

VAN: A little over 10 years.

WAYNE: 10 years. And what is your present position?

VAN: Subsea Specialist.

WAYNE: and have you had other positions with Island?

VAN: No sir.

WAYNE: no others (writing) – How long have you been working on going or been going to West Delta 106?

VAN: For about 8 years on and off. That's not my location I stay on, I take on all the subsea wells throughout the Gulf.

WAYNE: Are you sometimes described as a subsea rover?

VAN: Yes sir

WAYNE: and what is your normal work schedule at West Delta 106?

VAN: just, as needed.

WALTER: As needed. So there is no set or routine schedule for you?

VAN: No sir

WALTER: so when you go to West Delta 106, what are your normal work activities?

VAN: depends what they are having an issue with, if they just need me to trouble-shoot something for them I'll do that – if they may be short-handed, I'm there to help with that

**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

WAYNE: and who typically do you work with when you are there (WD106), I know that is an odd question as well,..whoever the crew is?

VAN: Yes sir

WAYNE: prior to last Thursday, when was the last time you were at West Delta 106? Do you recall?

VANN: I guess about a year ago.

WAYNE: Ok, great. Those are all the background questions I have for you. Troy or Tasha would you like to go ahead and start your questions?

**9:39 – RLC Interview begins**

TROY: Sure. Hey Van. You and I were flying together and I was your loop pilot, your contract pilot I know you used to insist on or you used to like to sit up front with the pilot. Is that where you were sitting the other morning when you flew out from West Delta 106?

VAN: Yes sir.

Troy: from the seat. Do you know which direction Derek landed on the platform? Which direction the aircraft was facing?

VAN: I think that is Southwest

Troy: He was facing Southwest. So his nose was facing towards the stairwell or, the opposite corner?

VAN. No sir. If he would have looked out his window, that would have been on the right, so his nose was at a 90 degree it was on the next corner, if you got out of the passenger side, anybody getting out of the passenger side would have had to walk around the nose to get to the stairs.

Troy: That is actually the Southeast corner.

VAN: Southeast.

Troy: I don't know if you can see this picture – I can bring it in further.

VAN: Yes sir

TROY: So the nose of the aircraft was in this corner right here?

VAN: Yes sir, that is correct.

TROY: That is the Southeast corner. Ok that is great. Because, the winds were at 15 to 17 knots out of the east and so he would have needed to turn his tail to the north to clear those stairs.

KEN: Before we go any farther, just to let everybody know, Van was not on the helicopter when it landed, Van was already at West Delta 106.

**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

TROY: Oh. We were under the impression that he was on the helicopter.

KEN: No, that is why I wanted to let everybody know that right now. I didn't know if y'all were under the impression that he was part of the crew that came out that day, he was not, he was already on the facility.

TROY: Ok. Well that negates pretty much 99% of my questions. Ok, thank you or clarifying that. I guess the only question I have is, Van, you heard the helicopter lift off and you were inside the quarters, the galley, the living quarters?

VAN: In the galley which is below the quarters.

TROY: The galley below the quarters so that is on the west side of the helideck? Correct? I'm going to show you this picture again one more time, let me know if you can see it clearly; this would be living quarters and this is the galley here. Is that correct?

VAN: Yes sir

TROY: That's the west side. So and were you able to hear distinctly the helicopter spool up and lift off or were you busy doing "\*\*\*\*\*" notes?

VAN: I was there, still welcoming the crew that did arrive. It sounded like they lifted UP and started to pitch but, like always you know how they sit there for a couple of seconds I'm sure they are centering cycle, they are checking their gauges before they leave off like they always do and I never noticed them trying to start clear the deck, I don't think he got to that point yet, to where he was ready.

TROY: So, it was just that constant sound. I know, you and I have flown together many, many hours when that helicopter is at 100%, getting ready to lift or actually has lifted to a hover. Just that constant sound of readiness? But nothing more, no climbing or fading away or anything like that, like a normal take-off?

VAN: No Sir

TROY: That fact that Van was not on the aircraft gentlemen, that's all the questions that we have that are pertinent to his statement.

WAYNE: Ok. Great. Thank you. I just realized that one of the things I was going to ask Mr. Johnson to do was to describe the day that morning up until the time that he left. Then I jumped ahead of that and so, Van, could you back track a little bit and from Thursday morning the time the incoming crew arrived until they departed, could you describe everything you saw and witnessed?

**14:09 Van Johnson statement of the events**

VAN: Well, it was about 8:30 when the helicopter got there, it was a normal crew change until the incident. One crew came down, everybody kinda shook hands. It only took a couple of minutes, after they passed on a couple notes, the other crew went up. So you had 4 come up and 3 leaving. As we were in the galley, still shaking hands, you did hear the helicopter go to 100% and sounded like he pulled pitch to start hovering, that only lasted a couple seconds and I don't believe he was at the point to where he was

**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

ready to try to start departing yet. Like I said, seconds, and then all of the sudden you started hearing all of the noise and it was evident it was blades hitting, we didn't know what it was, the building we were in has no windows or anything, so we were just standing there waiting, and as soon as the noise had cleared, we all ran out through the office door which is at the end of the living quarters, which is directly under the heliport and when you take a right it's like 6 foot away from the handrails, that is when we seen the helicopter was going over. The helicopter was upside down. Let me ask y'all, am I supposed to be giving specifics, do I need to be detailed about this of what I saw?

WAYNE: Yes, be as specific as you can Van.

VAN: We did see blood in the water. It was right away, this was not over time. I mean, as soon as we ran out the building, we saw it - it was blood all around the helicopter on both sides. The skid was already ripped from the bottom of the helicopter, so you seen the helicopter upside down and it was already starting to spread apart. We assume because of the waves was pushing the floats one way and the under current was dragging the helicopter another way. As soon as we seen it, I hollered out to Kendall and Trent to keep an eye on the helicopter and watch for survivors. I grabbed Mr. John Amell and we ran inside to start making phone calls. Mr. John got ahold of Mr. Gary Tucker with Island, and the first person I called was Rotorcraft in Galliano so they could start making their phone calls. That was 30 seconds, I mean that was a quick info change and then out the door I went to go help some more. Trent was already climbing inside of the Whitaker which is the survival capsule, and he is hollering for me and Travis to come help so we jump in the Whitaker and we start going down. At this point the helicopter has already been drug to the side of the platform and is moving away. What we thought was calm seas, from looking up at that angle, we thought we would be fine, but after we got in the water with the capsule we realized it was fairly rough. We still decided to see what we could go save, it took us probably 10 minutes I guess maybe 15 minutes to make it to the aircraft. We got within about 20 yards, that's as close as we could get due to the debris, and we were scared we would get caught up and maybe even drug down ourselves. I did have my life vest on, since we realized we couldn't get close enough, there is a rope, I guess this is like a 1" rope inside the capsule, and I was going to hold on to the rope and try to swim to the helicopter and see if I could save anybody and then they could pull me back with the rope. When I went to jump, Trent grabbed me, and just, I didn't realize at the time, I guess I wasn't thinking about it, the capsule had been steadily spinning, they are not easily controllable. So I wasn't able to go, thank God he noticed it because I guess I didn't.

KEN: I'm sorry, which capsule, the capsule to the aircraft or the escape capsule?

VAN: The escape capsule. The Whitaker.

KEN: Ok, thank you.

VAN: After sitting out there about 5 minutes, maybe 10 minutes at the most, we realized we couldn't do anything, so we made our way back, so we latched up and Kendall had pulled us up, back to where the Whitaker belongs. At this point we just keep an eye on the capsized helicopter, we were writing down info as we could. We did notice Island 60, which Island 60 was the first on the scene if I remember correctly. He came out of Venice, he was circling over, then the harboring, the next-door neighbor

**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

platform, they allowed their crew boat to come by, they were only able to get so close but they stayed there monitoring as well. I guess about 45 minutes after, everything had started, the Coast Guard arrived, but when the Coast Guard arrived, they couldn't find it [helicopter]. So, I think about 10 maybe 15 minutes before is when it must have actually finally sunk, because the crew boat was keeping an eye on it [helicopter] for us.

WAYNE: Are you alright Van?

TROY: Hold on one second Ken. I've got

VAN: I'm alright. Can we take 10?

WAYNE Yeah, let's take 10. Yeah. Go ahead. Let's take 10 minutes.

BREAK @ 21:43

RESUME: @22:39

KEN: Ok, Van says he thinks he's ready again.

WAYNE: Ok. Mike, Troy, Tasha; you all ready?

TASHA: Yes, we are here. Troy stepped out for one second he will be right back.

WAYNE: Ok, we will wait for him to get back. Van, you are doing a great job. I know this is difficult.

VAN: Thank you.

KEN: Wayne, whenever everybody comes back I notice that some new callers joined the meeting. Can we just, get the names of those who joined and who they are with?

WAYNE: Yes.

NATHAN: Hey, this is Nathan Bradley from BSSE.

RODNEY: Hey, this is Rodney Dang. Sorry about that, I couldn't get my TEAMS to work so I called in to my phone, but I finally got my TEAMS to work. Also with BSSE.

WAYNE: So Troy, while you were out we had two other Gentlemen join us from BSSE join us; Nathan Bradley and Rodney Dang. Both from BSSE are on the call now as well. So Van, are you ready to go?

VAN: Yes.

WAYNE: Do you want to pick up where you left off?

KEN: Do you remember where you left off, I know you talked about the other helicopter circling; the crew boat came on the scene.



**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

ERIC: I think the last thing was Coast Guard. Coast Guard arrived and you said they lost sight of the...

VAN: Oh yeah. The Coast Guard helicopter arrived, but when they arrived they didn't see the helicopter. Obviously it must have sunk a few minutes before they got there. They did start running a grid. They were never able to find it. I mean, that's really about all. Whenever we did get back on the platform we did start taking pictures of everything we could find, thinking of different angles to take pictures from. We had to fill out our incident reports. Things of that nature.

WAYNE: Ok. Van, do you recall who contacted the Coast Guard?

VAN: No sir.

WAYNE: Can you take us through the rest of the time there until the following morning when you departed the facility?

VAN: Actually, I left it was about 3:30 that evening. They had sent a crew boat and told me to get off the platform.

WAYNE: Who told you to get off the platform.

VAN: Chad Schuff had sent a boat over and told me to go in.

KEN: What was the name of the boat?

VAN: The Mr. Mervyn

KEN: The Mr. Mervyn. Thank you.

WAYNE: Great. Do you have more?

VAN: Yes sir. Just before I did depart that was when we were doing all the paperwork, making phone calls, that when we was taking the pictures. That's about it.

WAYNE: Ok. Thank you sir. Troy and Tasha in light of the statement and the information that Van has just provided that was not available before you started asking your questions, do you have additional questions you would like to ask?

TROY: No, no questions at this time from me.

TASHA: I don't have any additional questions.

WAYNE: Ok. Great. Island, Eric and Lance, do you want to go ahead with your questions?

ERIC: The only question I have, Van you said that once y'all heard the noise – the loud noise, sounds like blades hitting – all of you ran out of the galley door – and you said you saw a helicopter going over; are you talking about you actually saw the helicopter going over before it hit the water or, once it had made it to the water?

VAN: No. Once it had already made it to the water.

**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

ERIC: Ok. That's all I have.

LANCE: To clarify, you didn't see the actual descent of the aircraft then?

VAN: Just in the water.

LANCE: Ok. I don't have anything else.

WAYNE: Ok. If Island's got no further questions, BSSE, would you like to ask your questions?

BSSE: (RODNEY) Mr. Johnson, I have one question I guess. From the time you left the galley to go look at everything, could you describe any damages you seen to the helideck, along with the living quarters, if you seen any.

VAN: Yes sir. There, as far as on the heliport there are some scratches on the red paint that's right there by the stairwell going down. There's 2 to 3 sections of heliport skirting that's damaged, one is just pushed downward, that is the skirting directly above the quarters, and then that one little section where you can stand before going down the stairs, that one's beat up, look like by rotor blades, I don't know if it's main rotor blades or tail rotor, its ate up pretty good. As far as the quarters, which sits on top of the galley office, blades did hit it on the top but also a couple times on the side, as it was going down. As far as the next deck down. You have a solar panel that's damaged, you have a handrail. I'm assuming that the blade that is sitting there on that desk is what done that – that's only an assumption. Besides that, I mean just throughout the top deck and even the production deck under that deck, there's fiberglass, there's windows, there's just things scattered all over the place.

BSSE (RODNEY): Thank you for that.

VAN: Yes sir

WAYNE: Any other questions from BSSE?

BSSE (RODNEY): None from me – Mike, or Nathan do you guys have any?

BSSE (MIKE HANSON): Umm, yeah, from here. Let me get my camera. Hey, from Mike Hanson – were there, did you see any scratches along the surface of the helideck itself?

VAN: No, sir. Not that I noticed.

BSSE (MIKE HANSON): Ok.

VAN: Just the ones, like I said, on the corner where all the skirting is damaged on the red paint. I do have pictures of that, if you didn't see it.

BSSE (MIKE HANSON): No, I haven't seen it yet. I mean I have seen from underneath, I haven't seen from above. We are still trying to get out there.

WAYNE: Ok. Any other questions then from BSSE?

BSSE (NATHAN BRADLEY): This is Nathan Bradley, can you hear me ok?

## **Witness Statement for Van Johnson West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

WAYNE: Yeah, we hear you.

BSSE (NATHAN BRADLEY): Ok, thank you. Just to clarify, there were no issues with the compressor or shutdown or anything at the platform during the time?

VAN: No sir.

BSSE (NATHAN BRADLEY): Thank you that's all I had.

WAYNE: Ken, do you want to ask questions from Walter Oil and Gas?

KEN: Everybody, this is Ken Biner with Walter Production. I'm just going to group my questions into just kinda of a two big groups, one is prior to and then the actual event on Thursday morning. So, as you were describing to the group, you are what we call a subsea rover and you go to just any platform where we have a need for some assistance. Can you just talk just a little a bit about when you arrived, how you arrived all that stuff, on West Delta. And what your role there, why you were sent, what your role there was for this visit. Cause you said you hadn't been there for a year but you had been there many times before.

VAN: I did arrive on Island 44, 3 days prior. Island 44 is my normal helicopter that I transport with. I was over there to help them unload the subsea well, they were having a hydrate issues in their gas-lift line, so I went over to give assistance with that, and we actually already got the well back flowing. I just stayed around a little bit longer because I hadn't seen these guys in over a year so I wanted to sit there talk to them, ask some questions about the subsea well before I departed.

KEN: That's true that you joined the crew that was on duty, when you, the crew that we lost in Thursday's accident, they were a man short I understand, one gentleman was on a brief personal medical?

VAN: Yes sir, I don't know if he was just sick or what but, yes sir, they were one man short.

KEN: Ok. Alright, and that is why you came out to assist and to bring the subsea to help unload and get back-up the production rate the subsea well.

VAN: Yes sir.

KEN: So, in just general terms, not already specific, but in your time there, you said you arrived 3 days before on Island 44, 3 days before the Thursday morning event, was there anything on the platform that was new to you, out of ordinary, non-standard, in the way the platform was operated or producing, different procedure, that vein of questioning.

VAN: No sir, everything was normal. They weren't having any issues of any sort, I mean it was running smooth. Just the well was just had a hydrate in the gas-lift line so, I don't think they normally mess with the subsea well so, since Jack Schultz was no longer there, he just wanted me to come over to make sure he was doing everything correctly and when I got there he already was doing everything correctly.

KEN: He – was the PIC, which is David Scarsborough?

VAN: Scarborough. Yes

**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

KEN: While you were there, were we shut-in or producing.

VAN: Yes sir. Y'all were producing the platform, all of the dry tree wells, just the subsea well wasn't producing due to no gas-lift going to the well.

KEN: Right. And, that was due to, over the Christmas Holiday, there was a deep freeze that came in to the Gulf and a lot of platforms froze up and that was an after effect of that. Ok, So everything was pretty much standard for that platform you were there to help out and there were no upsets while you were there. How long were you planning on staying there?

VAN: Actually, I planned on, I was gonna get on Island 45 when it landed and then I just thought about staying around a little bit longer to talk to Trent and them.

KEN: Glad you did. Ok. Alright. So kind moving to the day of. I think you have already told us this, and if so I apologize. You were there when Island 45 landed and I think you said you were downstairs in the office or the galley?

VAN: Well the Office and Galley's the same building, but yes sir.

KEN: So did you see the bird come in?

VAN: No sir.

KEN: Did you hear it come in?

VAN: Yes sir.

KEN: Do you know if the pilot called for a Green Deck?

VAN: Yes sir.

KEN: He did?

VAN: Yes sir.

KEN: Can you describe that real quickly, how that procedure takes place on West Delta?

VAN: Its like all the other locations. We go, on their way out they try to call within 20; they are not always able to actually get a 20 minute out call due to mostly radio comms but, if they are able to get 20 minutes, they give a 20 minute call out to the platform, the platform will request a five minute call out, then they will call back when they are 5 minutes out, that's when they usually give em the Green Deck.

KEN: Do you know if in the procedure there that the Green Deck involves anybody going up to the helideck and just taking a look at it?

VAN: Do you mean before landing?

KEN: Yes sir.

**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

VAN: No sir. I mean there was nothing going on. There was no wireline going on, there's no rig onboard, they were not dumping chemicals.

KEN: There was no reason, there was no construction, no visitors, other than yourself. You are not quite a visitor, there was nothing abnormal going on, it was as routine as it can be on a platform?

VAN: Yes sir.

KEN: Do you know the position of the crane when the Island 45 came in?

VAN: Yes sir. It was in the cradle.

KEN: Ok. I'm going to ask a dumb question – there's only one boom rest, one boom cradle onboard.

VAN: Yes sir.

KEN: Ok. So it was in the cradle. Were you venting at the time?

VAN: No sir.

KEN: Thank you. I was curious too. When 45 landed, did you communicate with the pilot in any way?

VAN: No sir.

KEN: Do you know if the pilot exited the aircraft? Such as to refuel, clean the window, make any adjustments?

VAN: No sir.

KEN: I'm sorry, you are saying he did not, or you are not aware of it?

VAN: Well I mean, he never shut down and they never get off the helicopter if the helicopter is still running so I'm assume he never got out.

KEN: Ok. He never shut down. That would indicate, yes I agree, that he did not do any checking of the bird that there was no reason to. Ok. Alright. Do you know if West Delta has a problem with bird traffic on their helideck?

VAN: No, I don't know if any were up there. I do know there were some in the area.

KEN: Ok. Alright. Are you able to make any statements on where people, we had the pilot and 3 Island fellows leave on the 45, do you happen to know where they were situated, where they were seated?

VAN: No sir.

KEN: Probably because you were not able to see them take off, you were inside. Ok. Alright. Very good.

VAN: David was the lead, so I assume David was up front. As far as Mr. Tim and Robbie, I'm not exactly certain.

**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

KEN: Yeah. That's kinda what I assumed as well, it's typical for the PIC to sit up front left and that might have been the case here. I'm sorry to ask this, you had stated earlier, that as soon as you guys looked, you saw the helicopter go pass the window of the lower deck and you saw it in the water, the water was tinged with blood. Was there any blood on this helideck on the platform draining or anywhere.

VAN: The only place we had noticed any blood was on the bracing of the solar panel, which is on the handrail of the production deck.

KEN: Right. Which is one deck down, you are saying, from the helideck.

VAN: Yes sir.

KEN: Thanks. Wayne I think, from our list of questions, I think overall Van's done a great job of giving us answers, to put it together a little bit here. Van, I wanted to clarify one thing that you said earlier, you heard Island 45 throttle up and hover for a bit, and then directly after that, there were, if I heard you correctly, you said there was sounds of various impact of things hitting against the side of the buildings, which you took to be debris from the blades and such. Was there any first indication first noise, a bang or boom, or when everything started, all the others that were subsequent to that.

VAN: No sir.

KEN: So the first thing you heard was impacts, multiple impacts, is that what you are saying?

VAN: Yes sir.

KEN: Ok. Thank you for clarifying that, I just wasn't sure.

KEN: The crew boat that was in the area, was that the motor vessel Zach Taylor?

VAN: I'm not exactly certain. I just know, I think it was a green boat, it was a crew boat from the next door production platform.

KEN: Ok. I will look that up.

VAN: Trent, was mostly dealing with that.

KEN: Did you incur any injuries during your time on West Delta?

VAN: No sir.

KEN: Thank you. The platform did not shut in after the incident on Thursday morning. Do you know that to be a correct statement?

VAN: That is correct, it did not shut in.

KEN: Do you know what the thinking was there? Is that something that you had a discussion with the incoming PIC, Trent?

VAN: I'm sorry, say it again?

**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

VAN: I'm just wondering if you were involved in any discussions about shutting in or not shutting in the Platform with the incoming PIC, Trent Sullivan.

VAN: After the incident, you are saying?

KEN: Yes, after Thursday's incident.

VAN: Yes sir. We were ya know, asking if they should they shut in and go in that day.

KEN: I was thinking more in the response to losing the bird over the side. There is no right or wrong answer here. I was just wondering if you had an opportunity to talk with Trent about shutting in or not shutting in.

VAN: No sir.

KEN. Ok, well great. Well Van, I'm glad to see you sitting there. Appreciate all your help in this. You guys really behaved professionally, I would want you on my rescue team, you guys did great.

VAN: Thank you.

WAYNE: Hey Van, this is Wayne Mason, I've got just a couple of questions. During your time at West Delta, this last hitch, did you ever - you obviously landed on the helideck, did you ever go back up to the helideck, did you notice any damage with the lights or anything like that up there?

VAN: We did notice one light bulb was busted the protective cover, I guess is what you would call it, wasn't damaged. The bulb on the inside was blown, the blue covering was blown, not the actual bulb itself.

WAYNE: Right. Was that prior to the accident or after?

VAN: After the accident.

WAYNE: Did you notice anything like that before the accident? Or, did you have an opportunity to go up the deck and look?

VAN: Are you saying before the accident?

WAYNE: Yeah. Ya know, you landed there several days before hand, and I don't if you would have had another chance to go up to the helideck for some reason and if you did..

VAN: No sir, but I mean everything was fine. I mean if you are asking if anything was protruding above the heliport, or was anything damaged, no sir, everything was, I guess you would say compliant. Is that the word I am looking for.

WAYNE: Ok. That answers my question. Appreciate it. Walter doesn't have any additional questions. I'm going to go around the horn and see if there are any follow up questions and if not then we will conclude. I will start again with RLC, do you have any follow-up questions you would like to ask Mr. Johnson?

TROY: Van, in regards to that light, what was its position and where was it located in relation to the stairwell or the entry to the stairwell, for the stairs?

**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

VAN: If you were standing in front the stairs like you were about to go down, it would be off to the left. So, it was actually behind the helicopter.

TROY: Ok. Would you say it was mid helideck, more towards one end or the other?

VAN: Mid.

TROY: Mid. So the west side I think is what you are saying. On the west side of the helideck.

VAN: I guess, I'm not certain.

TROY: Alright. Perfect. That's the only question I had. Again, I too am very thankful that we are having this conversation with you Van.

VAN: Thank you.

WAYNE: Thank you. Island Operating, any additional questions from you all?

LANCE: No sir.

WAYNE: BSSE, any additional questions from you?

NATHAN: Nothing else from BSSE, thank you Mr. Van.

VAN: Yes sir. Thank you.

WAYNE: Thank you. Ken, any additional questions from you?

KEN: Wayne, there is one. Van, what's typical for the crew that's going in, going home, is they are obviously anxious to go, they have their bags lined up, there's always a place out of the way, where its easy access to the boarding the helicopter, bringing their bags up, putting them the cargo and going on and strapping in. I know you didn't see the Island 45 take-off, do you have a feel for the cargo that was loaded.

VAN: Just like a regular back-pack. These guys here stay there, so each one of them might have had maybe 30 pounds in their bags max. There is no need for the big bags like drilling-hand have.

KEN: Right. Which wouldn't fit into the storage hold of that model of 407; so if I heard it correctly, we had 3 people going out and they probably had 30 - 35 pounds in a back-pack with them.

VAN: Yes sir. Three, hand

KEN: Was there any cargo on the Island 45. I don't know if it was going in or going somewhere next to pick up others. Was there any other cargo than the 3 personal daypacks that the crew loaded.

VAN: No sir. It was just 4 men coming out and 3 men going in just with their bags. They were not going to another location, West Delta 106 is a 30-minute out and 30-minute back. So a 1-hour turnaround.

KEN: So it was not overloaded by any means. Thank you very much for clarifying that.



**Witness Statement for Van Johnson  
West Delta 106 Platform Incident**

WAYNE: Ok, if there are no additional questions, Van I want to thank you for your professionalism and being able to recount what went on Thursday, just thank you and God bless you. For the rest of us this interview has been recorded both through the TEAMS app which has the picture of course and then also we have audio recording as well, we will make those available to you as needed through Chad Elias, our Legal Counsel. If there are no questions for me, I appreciate everybody's time and I would like feedback on the way this went in terms of the organization that I sent out before, if this works I would like to use this same format going forward. If there are no further questions, thank you everybody and have a great day.

**Interview END AT 54:01**

Fabian Salazar  
Air Safety Investigator  
Western Pacific Region

**Date:** November 1, 2023

**Subject:** CEN23FA071 / Record of Conversation

**Contact:** Brian Skelton, Director of Training/RLC LLC

In an interview with Mr. Skelton, he explained what a trained pilot would do when he was ready for a takeoff, assuming the engine is at fly (100%) and the before takeoff check was completed. He stated, the pilot would start applying power until the helicopter is light on the skids. "You would then bias the weight on the heels [of the skids] because that is what the 407 is going to do. Its going to lead toes first. When asked if he meant the nose is going to lift first, he agreed. He further added that "it was not a single move, it is, get it light, get it balanced, find your equilibrium, and then its up from there, straight up."

When asked to explain what the pilots receive, during training, about understanding and preventing dynamic rollover, he stated that if you do the pickup in a multiple stage, and "slow into it" then drift shouldn't be a factor. He gave an example of wind and pedal input. He stated that pausing when you are on the heels give you the opportunity to null out those effects, and that the next little bit of power application is nice and easy. He indicated that the end state of the multi-stage process was no drift when the helicopter comes off the deck.

He stated that "the next step is a pure vertical ascent to a minimum 3-foot skid height and then we stop, glance at the gauges again, then either take off from there or reposition." He stated that other things the pilot would look at would be power, making sure that no pressures have dropped, etc. He reiterated that nothing was done at one continuous movement.

When asked to clarify that there is never a takeoff from the helipad without stopping to a 3-foot hover, he indicated that they do not do that, and that would be a showstopper. He further stated that it would get you moved out of training

immediately. If they see that and it persists, then that is a brick wall as far as advancing your training.

He indicated that the 24 ft by 24 ft helidecks are the smallest that they land to. With regards to the 24 ft by 24 ft helidecks, he stated that "everything is done from the center of the deck." He said that there would be no point in moving to the edge of the deck. He stated that from the approach, everything is shot to the center of the platform, and the mast is positioned so that it is as centered as much as possible. The approach is stopped at a 3-foot hover and the helicopter is then brought straight down.

When asked about the aiming circle and if it is present on all the helidecks out in the Gulf of Mexico, he stated that it should be there but sometimes they are not visible because of bird droppings, which could make it look entirely white. He stated that for the first 30 miles everything is covered in bird droppings, so there is no requirement for the aiming circle to be visible [to land.] When asked about training techniques, he stated that he shows the pilot a landing then has them open the door to check where their heels of the skids are. They have the pilot open the door, look around and get oriented. He said that it is part of the training process because a lot of the pilots come from flying different aircraft and this gets them used to a 407.

When asked how he knows when he is at the center of the aiming circle, when it is visible, he stated that it is a sight picture thing that is trained, He stated that everything is demonstrated on flight one. He sets the sight picture for the pilot by setting the helicopter down so that his feet are "touching the circle." From there the pilot gets his own reference. When asked to clarify, he stated it looks like his feet are covering up the ring [circle]. He stated that other pilots may be taller than he is so their sight picture may be different, but they develop their sight picture by referencing his.

When asked about reviewing Appareo videos, he stated that, because of the accident he looks at the videos quite a bit.

When asked about changes made because of the accident, he stated that there had been a lot. He stated that starting at the training manual level, there is now a more expanded discussion on dynamic rollover avoidance, and video monitoring, During the first six months he is watching a minimum of two videos per hitch. Once they get through six months, and another check ride, he watches one per hitch. After they go through one year they are monitored quarterly. He stated that they are also doing randoms where he picks a serial number and watches it without knowing who the pilot is. He stated that deficiencies are rare now because everyone knows that cameras are in place.

He explained that the mentor program had been improved, and he reviewed the new process along with new forms that go along with it. When asked about the mentor grade slips for the accident pilot not being in the documents turned over to the investigation, he indicated that the grade slips were not used at that time. He said that at the time the accident pilot was going through the program the mentor program assigned a pilot who was on the contract to fly with him. He didn't recall the time that the pilot was on the mentor program and recalled that it was probably a week.

He explained that the mentor program is now monitored very closely. He stated that now the mentor pilot is not just a line pilot but a captain who has been trained, has time with the company and has the company's trust. The mentor captains are put through a program that is basically an extension of the training house. He said that the mentor captains are not flight instructors, nor do they have helicopters with dual controls. They are sitting in the left seat and helping the pilot merge in with the customer.

On day one the new pilot is in the left seat and the mentor captain is flying. The new pilot watches and learns. He said that during training, new pilots get a bunch of theory but when they get out in the field, they start putting it all together.

On day two, they fly while the mentor captain works the radios. The new pilot is just getting used to flying. He stated that it progresses for the next days until the mentor captain is sitting there like a knot on a log.

Every day the mentor captain fills out a grade slip on the new pilot. The grade slips are then sent to the Director of Training and the Chief Pilot, Jerrod Carter gets it as well. On the seventh day there is a committee that votes on allowing the new pilot to fly the contracts. He stated that by the time the pilot gets to the vote, he has been through training, the mentor program, and he's flown with one or two mentor captains. The final step is the Director of Training, and the Chief Pilot discuss whether they are going to keep the new pilot in the mentor program or approve him for customer flights.

The DoT produced the Mentor Captain Training Captain Records binder and stated that it had been improved because of the accident. He said that it is not an FAA required document. The document stated that the mentor captain must be employed for a year with one winter's experience in the Gulf of Mexico. Instructors in the RLC department are automatically qualified. The other requirements are basically they must hold currency. If a mentor captain is not an instructor, the training department goes through the fundamentals of instruction with him.

It was explained that before the pilot undergoes the mentor training, he has passed the Part 135 check ride but if deficiencies are noted from the mentor captain, it is reported to the DoT. At the end of the mentor program, there are one of two entries that must be placed on the grade slip. Recommended for continuance, or not recommended for continuance.

The interview transitioned to new hire selection. The DoT indicated that maturity is what he is looking for primarily. During the flight portion he is looking for how adaptable they are to flying a different helicopter. He indicated that this information would tell him how trainable they are and about how long it will take to train them. He indicated that the pilots do interact with the customers, and he is looking for the kind of guy who can withstand [customer] pressure.

When asked about the records for the accident pilot's last two hitches, they were not available, and it was assumed that all the accident pilot's records were quarantined.

Fabian Salazar  
Air Safety Investigator  
Western Pacific Region

**Date:** November 2, 2023

**Subject:** CEN23FA071 / Record of Conversation

**Contact:** Michael Travis Jenkins / Employee / Island Operating

In an interview with Mr. Jenkins, the IIC explained the reason for the NTSB's return to WD-106, was to gather additional data.

When asked what seat he was in and to detail the events about the time that he was getting out of the helicopter to get his bags, he indicated that he was sitting behind the pilot with his back to the pilot. He was the last one out of the helicopter, and he got out on the opposite side [left side]. He got his bag and walked around the helicopter and went down the stairs. Mr. Jenkins discussed the events of the accident.

When asked if he noticed anything unusual with the helicopter about the time that he was getting his bags, he indicated that he did not. He indicated that they do look at the helicopter every time they get out and get in, and that if you're walking that way you will notice if it is on the side of the platform.

When asked about the position of the exemplar helicopter after it was relocated aft of the aiming circle, he stated that he did not recall it being that far back, "not at all". He added that "normally when you land and you walk around the nose of it, you maybe have two to three feet to spare, in front to walk around."

When asked if, on any given day, if a helicopter was parked like that, would he notice it, he stated "yeah. I would." He indicated that every time you land you go to the back, and you do notice how close you are to the edge of a heliport. He added that you definitely notice it because you have to walk around the open baggage door.

Fabian Salazar  
Air Safety Investigator  
Western Pacific Region

**Date:** November 1, 2023

**Subject:** CEN23FA071 / Record of Conversation

**Contact:** John Amell / Employee / Island Operating

In an interview with Mr. Amell, the operations group chairman explained why the NTSB was back at WD-106, to gather additional data.

When asked to describe everything he could remember about the landing and getting out to retrieve his bags, he indicated that it was a year ago and he remembered the helicopter was facing the other direction. He indicated that that there was confusion and stated that he had been flying [in] helicopters for 40 years and it's not like your taking notes, and the shock of what happened. He said that he did remember getting out of the helicopter, getting his bag, and leaving. He remembered he looked at the pilot and gave him a head nod, and the pilot nodding back at him. He said that there was nothing out of the ordinary flying out. He stated that he had heard the pilot had flown them out before, but he flies in the back, so he did not recognize him.

When asked, if during the time that he was getting his bag, did he make any observations about the helicopter he indicated that he did not. He added that when they were up on the deck moving the helicopter, he did not remember it being that far back, but it could have been that far back, as it was a year ago. He recalled that, "Yau'll asked me a week after it happened, what happened [during the first interview] and I believe that everybody said it was facing this way and I said it was facing that way." He explained that he was half asleep, it was a 300-mile drive from Pensacola in the middle of the night, then you nod off on the flight, then wake up.

Mr. Amell assisted in the relocation of the exemplar helicopter aft of the center of the aiming circle. When asked what his observations of that move were, he stated that he

noticed that the skid was hanging off the back of the heliport and he did not remember that.

When asked if a helicopter was sitting that far back, would he notice it, he indicated that he didn't think that he would notice it because they are the pilots, and you get in and trust them.



Fabian Salazar  
Air Safety Investigator  
Western Pacific Region

**Date:** November 1, 2023

**Subject:** CEN23FA071 / Record of Conversation

**Contact:** Kendall Arnaud / Production Operator / Island Operating

In an interview with Mr. Arnaud, he indicated that he stated everything that he witnessed on the first interview and that he had not recalled anything else that needed to be shared. The interviewer explained the purpose of why the NTSB was back at WD-106, to gather more data.

When asked about getting his bags on the day of the accident he stated that it was a normal day, he got out of the helicopter, buckled up the life jacket, went to the baggage compartment, got our bags and got down [the stairwell]. When asked, when he got the bags, did he see anything unusual with the helicopter, he stated "no sir not at all."

Mr. Arnaud observed the exemplar helicopter after it had been moved aft of the center of the aiming circle. When asked about how it looked, he indicated that the only thing he noticed was that it [the accident helicopter] wasn't as far back. He said that they had plenty of room from the baggage compartment to the edge of the helideck. He estimated that it was a couple of feet more. He said that he remembered it being further up. When asked how he would remember that he indicated that he keeps an eye down and he noticed the space between the skirt. He indicated that on the day of the accident, when he was grabbing his bag, nothing seemed out of normal. When asked if the [exemplar] helicopter, pushed back, looked normal, he indicated that it looked too far back, and it did not look like that on the day of the accident. When asked if he was pretty sure about that, he stated that he was 100% positive.