



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Office of Aviation Safety
Washington, D.C. 20594

Sept 30, 2017

sUAS Pilot Interview

DCA17IA202AB

A. ACCIDENT

Location: Staten Island, NY
Date: September 21, 2017
Operators: US Army/Vyacheslav Tantashov
Time: 1920 EDT
Aircraft: R28007 UH-60/Unregistered DJI Phantom 4

B. Participants

Bill English – NTSB Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)
Washington DC 20594

Ed Kostakis
DJI US
632 Broadway, NY, NY

Dennis Brown
Teterboro FSDO
Federal Aviation Administration

C. SUMMARY

On September 21, 2017, about 7:20 pm Eastern daylight time, the pilot of R28007, callsign CAVM087 (Caveman 87) a US Army UH-60 helicopter, reported a collision with a small drone east of Midland Beach, Staten Island, New York. The helicopter sustained damage to its main rotor blade, window frame, and transmission deck. The US Army recovered a small piece of debris identified as a motor and arm of a DJI Phantom 4 small UAS. The remainder of the drone is presumed destroyed and lost in the water. There were no injuries aboard the helicopter.

D. DETAILS OF THE INTERVIEW

1.0 Initial preparation

Manufacturing records related to the recovered piece of drone were attached to the interviewees DJI account. On the afternoon of Thursday, September 28, the IIC contacted the interviewee at his place of employment to determine if the identification was correct. The interviewee stated that he did own a Phantom 4, and that he lost it while flying near the Verrazano Bridge “about a week ago.” He was surprised to hear about the collision, he was not aware of it from flying or from news reports. Arrangements were made for the investigative team to meet at his place of employment the following day for an interview and copy of flight data logs.

2.0 Interview Summary

Interviewee: Vyacheslav Tantashov – Drone pilot

Represented by: Michael Petrychenko

Date: Sept 29, 2017

Location: Interviewees place of employment [redacted as irrelevant to investigation]

Time: 1100 EDT

Present: English, Kostakis, Brown

The investigative group met Mr. Tantashov at his place of employment. He selected Mr. Petrychenko as his representative, and also to assist with translation as Mr. Tantashov’s English was limited. The group introduced themselves and advised of the NTSB investigative process. Mr. Tantashov provided his Samsung tablet for inspection of flight logs. Mr. Petrychenko and Mr. Tantashov asked for a description of what happened, and the IIC briefed them on the known facts to date.

During the interview, Mr. Tantashov stated the following:

He had been flying for about 2 years, and flies for fun and recreation only. He has no other type of RC aircraft experience, just DJI drones, and is not a manned aircraft pilot. He does not have an FAA RPIC Part 107 certificate. He said he had a lot of flying time, and at least 50 hours were evident in the flight logs. He had previously owned a Phantom 3 which “bricked” during a firmware update. He replaced it with the incident aircraft. A few days after the incident, he replaced the incident aircraft, purchasing a Phantom 4 Pro.

Was intending to fly “over the ocean,” which he often does, he said he had flown in the area “hundreds of times.” He took off from the Brooklyn side of the bay, near the Verrazano Bridge. He pointed out the home point in the flight log and said that it was accurate. The collision occurred about 2.5 miles southwest of the home point.

Was in flight for about 5 minutes when he lost signal. He did not attach any significance to flying beyond line of sight, he would just reference the map on his tablet. He was flying at 90 meters (appx 300 feet). He waited about 30 minutes for it to come home, it never did, he figured it failed and crashed into the water. He used the DJI GO4 app map view to reference. He tried pushing the RTH button.

He used no other apps, he had heard of B4Ufly but never used it. No other apps were evident on his tablet. He allowed Mr. Kostakis to examine the logs, and pointed out the collision flight. He stated that it accurately depicted his flight that evening. He allowed the team to copy his data log, and Mr. Kostakis synchronized it to DJI servers for later examination. The tablet did not have a cellular data capability, only wifi.

He said he knows of the max altitude and distance settings and “sometimes” uses them.

He is familiar with the area and said he has flown there many times before.

When asked about the airspace in the area he knew he had to stay away from airports, and that there was Class B airspace nearby, and he relied on the GO4 app for airspace avoidance. When asked about Temporary Flight Restrictions, he said he did not know, he would rely on the app, and it was good to go on the evening of the collision. He was not familiar with the United Nations or the Presidential TFRs.

He said he did not see or hear the Blackhawk helicopters, but said that helicopters fly in the area all the time.

The weather was very clear, but the light conditions were dark. He did not attach any significance to flying at night, he has done it before and when asked if he attaches any lights to the Phantom, he said “no, it already has four lights.”

He said he registered as a hobbyist when that rule was in effect, but did not have the card printout with him.

When asked how he learned about procedures and rules for drone flying he said he relied on the DJI app tutorials. He said he had looked at the FAA website when he registered, but that was all.

When asked if he had anything else to add, he said that he was below 400 feet so thought everything should be ok, he was surprised that a helicopter could be at 300 feet.

The interview notes were read back to Mr. Tantashov and Mr. Petrychenko for concurrence.

The interview ended at 1150 EDT.