

Initial investigation in to N737SY

I received a phone call around 5:30pm on Wednesday July 16th from Flightline line service personnel stating that there was unknown damage to 737SY, and would like me to look at the aircraft prior to further rental. They sent me a few cell phone photos of the damage they were describing. After viewing the photos, I instructed the line service to leave the aircraft on the tie down, and not to move the aircraft until I had a chance to look at on Thursday morning.

On Thursday July 17th I came in to look at the aircraft. Upon approaching, I could see that the nose gear of the aircraft was pitched forward at an unusual angle. The rudder on the aircraft was flapping in the breeze as if the interconnect springs were disconnected. Under the aircraft I could see that the lower nose landing gear mount had been ripped from the fuselage and there were two noticeable indentations in the belly of the aircraft behind the main landing gear to suggest a very hard landing. I removed the top cowlings to find that most all of the mounting hardware holding the nose landing gear strut assembly in place with exception to the top two bolts and rivets had pulled out of the firewall. The only thing that seemed to be holding the strut from collapsing fully forward on to the engine was the lower engine cowlings and steering rods. The steering rods had been stretched to their maximum. There was no evidence of a prop strike or further damage.

We spoke to the last few pilots to fly the aircraft. The flight before the last one a pilot and three others flew to Sikeston, MO and back for dinner. He never saw any damage to the aircraft during preflight, and stated that his 2 landings were both normal with no problems. The final flight was an Instructor, and a private pilot who was receiving a rental checkout to rent the aircraft. They didn't recall seeing the damage during preflight either, and stated that their 3 required take off and landings for the checkout were soft and nothing unusual. They didn't notice anything unusual about the handling of the aircraft. The damage was found by the following renter on his preflight inspection. He then reported it to Flightline personnel who in turn reported it to me.

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