

Andrew (Andy) Anderson

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Cell [REDACTED]

Statement for FAA Investigator, Michael Baker

Helicopter Incident 05.19.2018

Stoneburg, Tx

On 05.19.18 our mission was helicopter depredation in Clay and Montague counties. The gunners were veterans participating in a veteran's event hosted by Longhorn and Hog Birds Aviation. I was supporting the event as I have access to the land to hunt and provided the lodging. Longhorn Aviation provided the helicopter and Hog Birds Aviation provided the pilot, I served as navigator during flights.

Our typical flight is one (1) hour in duration, with enough fuel on board to support the one-hour flight with two gunners (one on each side) pilot and navigator. Four (4) total persons. Average fuel load was 200lbs. The gunners are equipped with AR15 rifles using a single point sling. The magazines are stowed away in a bag centered in the rear of the back-cabin area, on the floor, latched in place with a large carabiner to a hard point on the fire wall. The passengers, seated on the floor wear a full safety harness to encompass the legs, waist and shoulder with a D ring in the front center of the chest. A heavy strength lanyard with a double safety latch is used to clip into a hard point of the helicopter floor. The other end is clipped into the front D ring of the gunner. The safety latch works in a manner that if one side or the other is independently depressed it will not open. However, if both the top and bottom of the latch are squeezed together at the same time, the latch can be removed quickly by the gunner by him or herself. When both gunners are seated, harnessed in and secured by the lanyards, the lanyards will form an X between the two gunners.

The first flight of the day departed the landing zone (LZ) in Sunset Texas, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] at about 0758 hours. Prior to departure, the cyclic and foot pedals were removed on the left at my request. We flew an area of land encompassing about fifteen thousand acres, with about a six (6) minute ferry time to and from the LZ. During the hunt we varied in altitude from about 20 to 300 feet. Several wild hogs and coyotes were taken at this time without incident. We returned to the LZ at about 0900 hours. The helicopter was operating normally.

At about 0915 hours I, Andy Anderson was riding front left seat navigating, Brad Dean was the pilot front right seat. Back right seat, behind pilot was passenger, John Hosea. Back left seat behind myself was passenger, Nicholas Williams. Both back seat passengers were harnessed and secured as previously described. Communications were functioning and verified prior to take off. Helicopter was operating normally.

Both myself and the pilot were secured with the aircrafts shoulder and lap belt safety system. Prior the lift, Brad verified instruments and aircraft was operating as normal by stating and then verifying "three in the green, secure back, secure right, secure left, comms check, how do you hear me back right, how you hear me back left, you got me front left, roger, prepare for lift". The wind was out of the south, light and variable at that time. (there is a large American flag near the LZ to give some indication as to wind speed and direction) We lifted a few feet, hovered for a second or two, then departed in a southeasterly direction. The helicopter was operating normally.

During the climb to cruising altitude, Brad asked the back passengers if they wanted a "Vietnam" style ride or nice and easy. One of the passengers (not sure who) stated bring on Saigon. Brad confirmed stating Roger. We climbed to an altitude of about 500 feet as we turned north to the area of Stoneburg. The helicopter was operating normal, no issues or concerns were noted.

We arrived on the land we were hunting within about 10 minutes after departure. The area was small in size, about 300 acres with a large creek system running down the middle, wheat fields and scattered trees on either side of the creek. We made a fast decent to about 25-30 feet, flying fast and low, just a few feet from the ground to the north fence line of the property. We climbed to about 80 feet as we turned left into the wind and settled over the creek. We began hunting the property taking several wild hogs. Brad was flying fast and low catching up to single pigs at times. The flight consisted of hard banking and tight turns typically associated with combat maneuvers. Brad commonly referred to a particular maneuver as "return to target". No issues with the helicopter having power or function during this time.

After about 45 minutes of flight time, we had covered the entire property taking about 25-30 wild hogs. With not much time left, and nothing left to hunt, I decided to return to the LZ. I called for the gunners to make their weapons safe. During this process, the gunner removes the magazine and fires the last round in the chamber ensuring the weapon is unloaded and safe during flight.

We were near in the middle of the property headed south into the wind and climbing. We were leveling out; the helicopter was operating as expected. We were about 100-125 feet in altitude when right side gunner called out seeing a coyote. Brad made a sudden tight right turn rolling the aircraft on its right side and entered a steep descent downwind. We crossed the road and dropped into the middle of a wheat field. Brad pulled up hard as I felt some ground effect as he began climbing. We were going really fast as we approached the tree line. Realizing we were closing in on the tree line fast and still below the trees, I glanced over at Brad. He was pulling up on the collective (elbow was sticking out) and had the collective pulled as far back as I had ever seen. There was some oscillation right to left, but it felt normal and what I was used to experiencing.

We were coming up, but not fast enough. When it was obvious we were not going to make it, I said "oh, [REDACTED]" and thought here we go. I was focused on the tree we were headed right for. The impact was hard, jolting me forward. The next few seconds was filled with violent slamming back and forth, tree branches entering the cabin, then retracting, then entering again. We came to a sudden and abrupt stop. It ended nearly as fast as it began.

The air was filled with dust, the front glass was gone and all I could see was tree limbs and such, my headset had been knocked off my head. The engine was still running, screaming very loud and the smell of Jet A began to fill the air. I felt my bottom lip, left side as if it had been ripped off, but it was just fat. I realized I was suspended by the seat belt system, looked down at Brad and saw that he was not moving. I reached down and pulled the emergency fuel shut off knob up. I switched the main power switch off and not being sure I got it, I kept switching a few more switches off until I could hear the engine winding down, the instrument cluster went off and alarms went quiet.

I could then hear Nick and John moaning and groaning in pain, screaming for help. I knew they were at least conscious and alive. Brad was still not moving. I placed my right foot on the instrument panel, pushed myself up and released the buckle. I lowered myself down to reach Brad, he was not moving and I could not feel a carotid artery or see him breathing. I believed he was deceased. I then tried to reach the fire extinguisher, but Brad was laying on it. I couldn't reach it. I looked up seeing tree branches covering my door. Not sure if we were in a tree or on the ground I went up through the tree branches covering my door. Once I got my head up I could see we were on the ground.

I jumped down and came around the belly side of the aircraft, looked over into the passenger compartment to see Nick balled up and face down on top of John. John released Nicks lanyard as I grabbed Nick by the back of harness and hoisted him up. Nick rolled over giving me his right hand. I helped Nick get on his feet and standing to

the side of John. John and Nick were then able to catch their breath and were communicating their conditions to me.

I leaned over to John to check for any serious bleeding and did the same for Nick. I then heard Brad groaning and trying to call out.

I went around to the front of the helicopter and through the front windshield to reach Brad. Not seeing any major bleeding, seeing him breathing and asking how the guys were, I told him I was going to have to go for help. I advised Brad the engine and battery were off. Brad then started reaching to the switches as if to confirm they were off. I began looking for my phone, and only found Brad's. I exited the aircraft and went back around to the belly side of the helicopter to tell Nick and John I was going for help. Nick acknowledged and I turned to navigate my way out of the woods.

I went through the creek, and as I came up the side of the bank, a cottonmouth came at me, I jumped his opposite direction, went up the bank and over a large tree that was down. As I climbed over the tree, I observed a copperhead and avoided him.

I reached a clearing and had to run about a half mile or more to get cell service. I placed the 911 call reporting the crash and gave our location. I then began checking myself for injuries. Not finding anything serious, I looked around to gain location of where the helicopter entered the tree line.

I walked down the roadway about another half mile or more before I located where the helicopter entered the trees. I waited there until the first volunteer firefighter arrived and led him to the crash. I then returned to the helicopter to continue rendering aid and assuring Brad, Nick and John help was on the way.

Emergency and law enforcement arrived, I waited on the side until Nick and Brad were extracted. I was then transported by ambulance to Nocona hospital for treatment.