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Contact: Lt. Chris Rogers, Baton Rouge Police Department

According to Lt. Rogers, he started with BRPD in 2010, and the air support unit (ASU) in 2012. The air support unit currently (after the accident) has 4 pilots who also may serve as tactical flight officers (TFO). Any pilot must have successfully completed the departments TFO training before moving to a pilot position. The accident helicopter, a Robinson R44, was purchased under a grant. The R44 was the main helicopter for the department/unit, and an acquired surplus Bell helicopter was used as a secondary, daytime helicopter.

The ASU had two nighttime shifts, either 4pm - 4am, or 5pm - 5am, each pilot/TFO group could decide between those hours. The ASU conforms to the FAA standards for flight and duty rest requirements (no duty requirements for Part 91 operations). The ASU quarters contains a couch should the staff need to rest - BRPD policy typically does not allow rest periods while on shift.

Lt. Rogers is considered as the ASU commander and the accident pilot, Sgt. Poirrier, was transitioning to the commander role pending Lt. Rogers possible retirement. Due to that transition, Sgt. Poirrier was not recently acting as PIC, but conducting flight as the TFO while on duty, which he enjoyed more than the flying. Within the last 2 months, Lt. Rogers acquired a volunteer flight instructor to provide any department flight training needs. At the time of the accident, the flight instructor completed one familiarization flight and no training flights with the ASU pilots. The ASU safety officer was Lt. Rogers and no recent safety issues were noted within the ASU. A department pilot was designated as the maintenance officer. The helicopter was typically maintained by MAK Heli-Services, located at BTR. The helicopter underwent an overhaul by MAK Heli-Services from October 2022 to January 2023, to include upgraded avionics.

On Saturday, March 25th (accident date – March 26th), the accident pilot and the accident TFO participated in a local public relations event from 0900-1600. The accident pilot flew the helicopter to the event and back to the ASU base at BTR. The accident TFO met the pilot at the event via his ASU vehicle. Both the pilot and TFO then began their normal evening work shift, scheduled from 1600-0400. Both officers had the evening Friday, March 24th, shift off work.

On the evening shift prior to the accident flight, the pilot and TFO completed two local flights. Lt. Rogers assumed these were patrol flights, but he was not sure. The ASU crews could complete patrol flights when they felt necessary and had the authority to do so.

Lt. Rogers said that the ASU is not currently an active member of the Airborne Public Safety Association, formally known as the Airborne Law Enforcement Association.

Per the ASU standard operating procedures (SOPs), the weather minimums are listed for 3 different types of missions – routine, priority, and emergency. Based on the accident mission of providing support for a high-speed pursuit, Lt. Rogers would have classified that mission as priority. The type of mission designation is at the PIC's discretion.

For weather planning prior to any flight, Lt. Rogers would check "AirWX" app, installed on his cell phone, check local news media weather reports, and check the BTR ATIS report. He was not sure on what the other pilots would check for weather sources, but he thought his other pilots basically did the same weather checks. Unit weather minimums were in line with the FAA's Part 91 definition; however, the minimums could also be at the pilot's discretion. For any night mission, it was not a habit to go below the programs weather minimums. Anytime after the midnight hour, if the weather turned to instrument flight rules conditions, the on-staff crew would typically go home for the remainder of their shift.

Lt. Rogers described his inadvertent instrument meteorological conditions procedure as the following – bank, pitch, power, climb, and talk. Lt. Rogers does not ever recall flying into the clouds during his tenure at BRPD. During the recent helicopter overhaul, he had the helicopter upgraded to a Garmin GTN 750 to assist the pilot with traffic avoidance and weather. The ASU goal was to have all pilots instrument rated, and each commercially rated pilot to have a minimum of 10 hours of simulated instrument training. Any department instrument training was conducted typically over water with the use of foggles to simulate instrument conditions. The ASU did not have any formal instrument training program.

Lt. Rogers stated the ASU had night vision goggles (NVG), however, there was no standard or formal program, and the devices were rarely used, if at all. A formal

program was something the ASU was considering developing. The accident helicopter was not equipped with any NVG modifications.

Lt. Rogers stated that the BRPD ASU operates under Part 91, for flight and maintenance operations. He does not recall anytime they have operated as a public aircraft operation, and they do not have any documentation on file indicating they are a public aircraft operation.