



Michael J. Hodges
Aviation Accident Investigator / Investigator-In-Charge
Office of Aviation Safety, Central Regional Office

Date: May 17, 2024

Subject: CEN24FA167

The NTSB investigator-in-charge (IIC) spoke on the telephone with Susan Herr regarding N829SH (Vertical Aviation Technologies, Hummingbird 260L helicopter) on April 29, 2024, in Spring Branch, Texas. Susan is the wife of the accident pilot, Richard Herr. Susan and Richard have been married for 26 years and live in Spring Branch, Texas. Susan can be reached at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

The purpose of the accident flight was for a charity golf ball drop at the River Crossing Club in Spring Branch, Texas. The golf ball drop was supposed to occur around 1530 local time. The golf ball drop was originally supposed to occur sometime in the morning of April 29, 2024, but it was pushed back to later in the day due to the presence of fog in the area.

On the day of the accident, April 29, 2024, Richard was just performing the golf ball drop that day. From April 26, 2024, to April 28, 2024, Richard was doing errands with family members around the house and in the local area.

Richard had built the helicopter, and he would also perform maintenance work on it. The helicopter was named "Mistress." The helicopter was based at the Kestrel Airpark (1T7), in Spring Branch, Texas. Richard shared hangar space with a friend. Richard had recently built a hangar on his property to house the helicopter, and the plan was to station the helicopter on his property in the future.

Richard retired from the U.S. Air Force in December 2004, where he flew the Sikorsky MH-53 series helicopters. Richard had accumulated over 5,000 flight hours in the Sikorsky MH-53 series helicopters. Richard served in training roles in the U.S. Air Force. Richard also retired in February 2020 from being a building inspector.

Richard did not report any previous issues or concerns with the helicopter. Richard did not report any previous issues or concerns with flying.

Richard did not use any drugs (legal or illegal), and he did not consume alcohol or tobacco. Richard did not have any major stress events in his life prior to the accident. Richard did not have any issues with fatigue or any major medical issues. Richard was a "straight arrow" and lived an active lifestyle.

Richard's family has not found the recent helicopter maintenance records from 2018 until the time of the accident, nor have they found Richard's pilot logbook. If those records are found, they will let the NTSB know.

Nothing Follows



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Office of Aviation Safety, Central Regional Office

Date: May 7, 2024

Subject: CEN24FA167

The NTSB investigator-in-charge (IIC) spoke on the telephone with Phillip Hall, regarding N829SH (Vertical Aviation Technologies, Hummingbird 260L helicopter) on April 29, 2024, in Spring Branch, Texas.

Phillip is an attorney for the River Crossing Club (a private golf club), in Spring Branch, Texas.

Phillip is based in Boerne, Texas, and he can be reached at [REDACTED].

The charity golf ball drop that N829SH was involved with was for the Greater New Braunfels Home Builder's Association. Philip does not know any specific details about the golf ball drop such as the times, altitudes, and routes of flight. The golf ball drop was supposed to take place on the driving range at the River Crossing Club.

Phillip suggested that Manny Maldonado from the Greater New Braunfels Home Builder's Association be contacted, as he might have more information about the specifics with the golf ball drop. Manny can be reached at [REDACTED]. The NTSB IIC attempted to contact Manny with no response.

Nothing Follows

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Office of Aviation Safety, Central Regional Office

Date: Various Dates

Subject: CEN24FA167

The NTSB investigator-in-charge (IIC) spoke on the telephone with various witnesses about the accident on April 29, 2024, in Spring Branch, Texas, with N829SH (Vertical Aviation Technologies, Hummingbird 260L helicopter).

1. Tim Krantz. The NTSB IIC spoke with Tim on May 10, 2024. Tim can be contacted at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Tim does not have an aviation background. Tim visually observed and heard the helicopter from his home on April 29, 2024, about 1511 local time.

Tim lives at [REDACTED] Spring Branch, Texas, 78070.

Tim heard and observed the helicopter in flight, from his house, for about five seconds total. The helicopter appeared to be flying in about a 45-degree angle, downward. Tim estimated the helicopter to be about 125 ft above ground level he viewed it. He heard the engine produce a bad sputtering noise while in flight. The helicopter then flew behind trees, and he heard a loud bang noise. He did not observe any smoke or fire emit from the helicopter while in flight. He did not observe any parts or pieces emit from the helicopter while in flight. He did not observe any birds near the helicopter in flight.

2. Rob Abbott. The NTSB IIC spoke with Rob on May 10, 2024. Rob can be contacted at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Rob does not have an aviation background. Rob visually observed and heard the helicopter from his home on April 29, 2024, about 1511 local time.

Rob lives at [REDACTED] Spring Branch, Texas, 78070.

Rob and his wife Ruth heard and observed the helicopter in flight, from their house, for about 15 to 20 seconds total. The helicopter appeared to be in straight and level flight and there were no erratic movements of the helicopter. Rob estimated the helicopter to be about 1,000 ft above ground level when he viewed it. He observed the helicopter flying without hearing any abnormal engine noises, and as the helicopter flew over their driveway, he then heard sputtering and spitting noises from the engine. The noise sounded like firecrackers going off. The helicopter flew behind trees, and then he heard a loud bang noise. He did not observe any smoke or fire emit from the helicopter while in flight. He did not observe any parts or pieces emit from the helicopter while in flight. He did not observe any birds near the helicopter in flight.

3. Trey Howard. The NTSB IIC spoke with Trey on May 10, 2024. Trey can be contacted at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Trey is an airframe and powerplant mechanic and is a safety director for an airplane and helicopter air ambulance company. Trey visually observed and heard the helicopter from his home on April 29, 2024, about 1511 local time.

Trey lives at [REDACTED] Spring Branch, Texas, 78070.

Trey heard and observed the helicopter in flight, from his house, for about 20 seconds total. The helicopter was in straight and level flight between 800 to 1,000 ft above ground level, and then as the helicopter flew behind the trees, the tail section of the helicopter started to turn toward the ground, and he then heard a loud bang noise. While the helicopter was in flight, Trey initially heard the engine noise decrease, the engine noise increased, and the engine then began producing a stuttering noise. The stuttering noise seemed perhaps like the engine was cutting in and out of operation. He did not observe any smoke or fire emit from the helicopter while in flight. He did not observe any parts or pieces emit from the helicopter while in flight. He did not observe any birds near the helicopter in flight.

4. David Courtney. The NTSB IIC spoke with David on May 10, 2024. Dave can be contacted at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. David is an airframe and powerplant mechanic and is retired. David visually observed and heard the helicopter from his friend's house at [REDACTED] Spring Branch, Texas, 78070, on April 29, 2024, about 1511 local time.

David lives at [REDACTED] San Antonio, Texas, 78260.

David heard and observed the helicopter in flight, from his friend's house, for about 20 to 30 seconds total. The helicopter was in straight and level flight between 400 to 500 ft above ground level and flew over a hill area and some trees. There were no erratic movements with the helicopter. As the helicopter flew over the hill area and trees, he heard the engine emit a popping or backfiring noise twice and there was no further engine noise he heard after that. After hearing the popping or backfiring noise, he then heard a loud bang noise, which he surmised was the helicopter impacting terrain. He did not observe any smoke or fire emit from the helicopter while in flight. He did not observe any parts or pieces emit from the helicopter while in flight. He did not observe any birds near the helicopter in flight.

Nothing Follows



Michael J. Hodges
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Office of Aviation Safety, Central Regional Office

Date: May 10, 2024

Subject: CEN24FA167

The NTSB investigator-in-charge (IIC) spoke on the telephone with Doug Hooker, regarding N829SH (Vertical Aviation Technologies, Hummingbird 260L helicopter) on April 29, 2024, in Spring Branch, Texas.

Doug is a commercial pilot (airplane), flight instructor, and an experimental aircraft builder and repairman (airplane).

Doug lives in Spring Branch, Texas, and he can be reached at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Doug was performing flight instruction on April 28, 2024, at the Kestrel Airpark (1T7), in Spring Branch, Texas. About 1500 local time, Doug was in a Cessna 172 series airplane, and he was taxiing to runway 12. During the taxi, he observed N829SH in a low hover, over the runway. Doug spoke with the pilot of N829SH, Richard Herr, on the airport common traffic advisory frequency (CTAF). Doug said to Richard, something along the lines, in a joking manner of, you got that thing flying. Richard responded to Doug that he has been having trouble with the helicopter, in that the helicopter has been wanting to takeoff in a nose-high profile. Richard reported to Doug, that he didn't know why the helicopter was operating like that. There was no further conversation between Doug and Richard that day.

Doug did not have any communication with Richard on the day of the accident.

Nothing Follows



Michael J. Hodges
Aviation Accident Investigator / Investigator-In-Charge
Office of Aviation Safety, Central Regional Office

Date: January 2, 2025

Subject: CEN24FA167

The NTSB investigator-in-charge (IIC) spoke on the telephone with Cleon Watts, regarding N829SH (Vertical Aviation Technologies, Hummingbird 260L helicopter) on April 29, 2024, in Spring Branch, Texas.

Cleon took possession of the wreckage from Susan Herr in Texas. Cleon is a long-term friend of Richard Herr. Cleon transported the wreckage to his property in Pennsylvania. Cleon built and flies his own Vertical Aviation Technologies 300LS Hummingbird helicopter.

Cleon examined the wreckage of N829SH. He examined the engine, the centrifugal clutch, the sprag clutch, the transmission, the main rotor assembly, and the tail rotor assembly. Cleon did not find any mechanical issues during his examination work.

Nothing Follows