

Date: October 19, 2023

To: Todd Fox, Air Safety Investigator-Central Region

From:  Erik R Grosf, Chief, Special Operations Div MD-5

Subject: FBI Phone call-closeout

On October 18th, 2023, I conducted a close out phone call with Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Agent Andrew Black who is assigned to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Dallas Field Office as a Task Force Officer (TFO).

TFO Black was requested to assist me (the designated NTSB/FBI Liaison) on behalf of Air Safety Investigator (ASI) Fox with obtaining the identifies of 2 Polish nationals who were operating a hydrogen balloon that crashed in Crandall, Texas, on October 9th, 2023.

TFO Black was able to obtain passport and entry data into the United States for the NTSB, as both victims had their Polish passports burned in the crash.

At the NTSB's request, TFO Black joined two Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Inspectors from the North Texas Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) during the interview of the pilot-in-command (Zapart) at the Parkland Hospital in Dallas, Texas.

The following issues were discussed in my conversation with TFO Black on October 18th, 2023, regarding his observations during the FAA interview at the hospital.

- Pilot stated he begun a planned descent prior to the crash.
- During the descent he heard gun fire (automatic and semi-automatic), although he did not see any projectiles strike his balloon nor did he see any tracer rounds.
- When the pilot heard the gun fire, he decided to land as soon as possible. The pilot did see the power substation as it was lighted but did not see the powerlines to the substation which were in his path until those last few moments prior to the crash.
- Pilot wanted to return to Poland as quickly as possible due to a family emergency involving one of his sons.

- From the FBI's standpoint there was no criminal activity or attempt to shoot the balloon down.
- No further investigative action would be conducted by the FBI as this was clearly an aviation accident.