

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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AIRBUS EC130 HELICOPTER CRASH

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NEAR HALLORAN SPRINGS,

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Accident No.: CEN24MA111

CALIFORNIA ON FEBRUARY 9, 2024

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Interview of: STEPHEN CIRIGLIANO, Principle Operations Inspector
Federal Aviation Administration

Los Angeles,
California

APPEARANCES:

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:08 a.m.)

DR. WILSON: So we're on the record at 9:08 a.m. Pacific Standard Time. As you know, we're investigating the Orbic Air accident that occurred on February 9th of this year near Halloran Springs, California. We are talking to you because you're the POI, and so you can offer us some insights into that side of the operation. I'm Katherine Wilson. I'm a human performance investigator with the NTSB. I'll have everybody --

MR. CIRIGLIANO: Thank you.

DR. WILSON: -- in the room introduce themselves for the record, then we'll go through just some of the normal introductions.

MR. SALAZAR: Fabian Salazar. I am the operations group chairman for the accident.

MR. GERLACH: David Gerlach with the FAA's IIC. I am on the Ops group for Fabian.

MS. BANASZAK: Katie Banaszak, AGC-300.

DR. WILSON: You can go ahead and introduce yourself.

MR. CIRIGLIANO: Steve Cirigliano, Van Nuys FSDO, POI for Orbic Helicopter -- Orbic Air. Of course, we do have Orbic Helicopters.

DR. WILSON: And Katie is here representing you today.

MR. CIRIGLIANO: Yes.

DR. WILSON: Okay. Would you like to introduce yourself?

1 MS OAKS: Mary Alice Oaks (ph.), professional aviation safety
2 specialist.

3 DR. WILSON: Okay. So as you know, we're here strictly from
4 the safety side. We're trying to figure out what happened so we
5 can prevent something like this from happening again. What we'd
6 like to do is record the interview, if that's something that
7 you're okay with. We'll end up creating a transcript of the
8 conversation we have today, and it will become a part of our
9 public docket.

10 MR. CIRIGLIANO: Of course.

11 MS. BANASZAK: And we do ask to be able to review that before
12 it becomes part of the (indiscernible).

13 DR. WILSON: The transcript?

14 MS. BANASZAK: Mm-hmm.

15 DR. WILSON: We'll share that. We work under the party
16 system, that's why Dave is here. We do have a representative also
17 from Orbic Air, but he wasn't able to join us today. If we ask
18 you a question that you don't understand, please just ask us to
19 clarify, or if you don't know the answer to a question, I don't
20 know, or I'll get back to you is also okay. Before we start, do
21 you have any questions for us?

22 MR. CIRIGLIANO: Nope.

23 DR. WILSON: Okay. And if you need to take a break at any
24 time --

25 MR. CIRIGLIANO: Sure.

1 DR. WILSON: -- also just let us know. All right. So we'll
2 get started.

3 INTERVIEW OF STEPHEN CIRIGLIANO

4 BY DR. WILSON:

5 Q. If you could provide us an overview of your background and
6 how you got to working at the FAA.

7 A. Sure. Let's see. Started flying with my uncle back in the
8 days. He was a DP out of Slate Hill, New York. And after that,
9 joined the police department, New York City, and was in narcotics
10 for probably about 10, 11 years in (indiscernible) division, a
11 bunch of other smaller units. And then went to the air unit where
12 I flew there for the last eight years, and then retired there.

13 While I was there, I was doing sightseeing, part-time stuff,
14 Hampton runs, New Jersey run. I mean just flying with a couple of
15 different companies. Came out here, retired. Flew for Air
16 Methods up north in northern California for over a year, and then
17 I got the call to come to Van Nuys FSDO

18 Q. And what positions have you held at the FAA?

19 A. The FAA was -- I was ASI, we're always ASIs. But I was an
20 assistant to a POI, and then I became a POI.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Principle operations inspector.

23 Q. And when did you become a POI?

24 A. Wow. Took really long. Used to have a lot of people. Let's
25 see, that was probably -- so I joined the agency in August of

1 2006, so I'm thinking six years later, so 2012.

2 Q. And how long have you been the POI for Orbic Air?

3 A. Probably just about a year and a half. They were assigned to
4 different inspectors here. And what happened was we had one of
5 our inspectors make GS-14, so I just -- my manager decided to take
6 all helicopter operators away from everyone else, since I was
7 doing most of the check rides anyway, and to give them all to me.
8 So I picked up Orbic Air. But I was doing their check rides
9 probably six months to a year before that.

10 Q. So as a POI, what are your duties and responsibilities?

11 A. Wow. Well, we do a lot here. So my duties and
12 responsibilities. I have oversight for my air carriers and
13 operators. I have seventeen 135 operators. I have nine 133
14 operators, and eight 137 operators. So I manage all of them, and
15 we do -- besides from just my regular duties of overseeing them, I
16 actually do FSIRP requests. So basically traveling to -- up and
17 down northern California for other operators that don't have
18 helicopter inspectors with oversight. Accident investigations.
19 We do a lot of waiver manuals for -- we have a lot of motion
20 picture and television filming between Van Nuys, and LAX is
21 probably the heaviest into filming. We have congested area lift
22 plans that we have to do. But our main goal here is for safety,
23 and that's literally -- I mean what we do here is just, you know,
24 there's a whole list, investigations. Yeah. But I'm drawing a
25 blank. So it's like --

1 Q. Sounds like you're pretty busy.

2 A. Yeah. We're very busy and very on demand. At one time we
3 probably had 10 Ops inspectors, and now we're down to four or
4 five.

5 Q. Do you have an assistant POI?

6 A. I do not at this time.

7 Q. So how do you manage all of that?

8 A. It's hard, but I do manage. I mean it's just -- so we have
9 another -- a new hire two years now on the job. He was a
10 helicopter guy. He came from one of the local helicopter
11 children's hospital. So we've been -- I've been training him as
12 has some of the other OJT instructors. So he has been -- he is
13 not officially my assistant, but he does help out in some of the
14 helicopter flights. Since these are all OJT level 3, he does go
15 out and do flights for me, and he does help with some of the
16 investigations, some of -- we get a lot of hotline complaints, a
17 lot of noise complaints. It's just, you know, people don't like
18 helicopters.

19 Q. When you became a POI, was there some kind of training you
20 went through?

21 A. Yeah. So I was actually -- I was going to say groomed, but
22 my OJT was from another former -- Dale House was my -- he was a
23 helicopter guy, Vietnam pilot. He went on to take over the Air
24 Methods FAA certificate. So he trained me along with three other
25 inspectors that were here, and, you know, went out in the field

1 pretty much every day. Did a lot of paperwork. Made sure
2 everything was, you know, done properly as per the FAA guidance,
3 89 -- well, back then it was like the 8400 and the 8600 I remember
4 I think that's right, but, you know, through the 8900 guidance,
5 it's just -- yeah. So I was trained pretty well.

6 Q. What --

7 A. But you're -- but, again, you're never prepared for something
8 that just pops up one day and you're like, wow. And so I'm always
9 looking and learning into, you know, off the top of my head, and
10 verbatim I don't know every regulation. I mean some of these guys
11 are really good. But --

12 Q. Backing up a little bit, what certificates and ratings do you
13 hold?

14 A. So I hold ATP multiengine, ATP helicopter, and CFII fixed
15 wing and helicopter.

16 Q. About how much total time do you have?

17 A. Give or take, probably like 8,500.

18 Q. How much of that is rotorcraft?

19 A. Probably most of it. Probably about 7,500.

20 Q. Anytime in the EC130?

21 A. EC130, probably about 400 hours because I used to
22 sightseeing, Liberty Helicopters, Manhattan. So we used to
23 alternate. When I was in the air unit, it was always a rotating.
24 So you had maybe Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday off, and then you came
25 back and you had Monday, Tuesday off, then you had Tuesday,

1 Wednesday. So every time there was an opening for Liberty
2 Helicopters or another tour, if I was bored, they'd, you know, I'd
3 sign up for it and do the flights. But, yeah, just, you know,
4 four or five hours a day flying around Manhattan gets a little
5 crazy.

6 Q. So going back to Orbic Air, what are your overall impressions
7 of that operator?

8 A. So Orbic Air I guess started off, I remember back in the days
9 with -- so it was -- there was Orbic Helicopters, which is still
10 in Camarillo, and that was owned by Ken Obi. And then David Child
11 took over or took the name Orbic. I guess they agreed on a name,
12 and he became Orbic Air. And David Child was out of Van Nuys, and
13 he used to do sightseeing. He had a waiver for sightseeing tours.
14 And then he expanded, put a couple of jet rangers on there. And
15 there was some issues with David back in the day because he was
16 traveling outside his 25 statute miles doing sightseeing tours.
17 He was ending up in the, you know, the Queen Mary which is just a
18 little further than 25. So we had a talk with him, and I think
19 gave him a warning notice on that back in the day. And then
20 everything else was fine with that.

21 And then eventually David, I believe, sold the company in
22 2019 if I'm correct, to Brady Bowers. And I don't know if -- I
23 don't know. I think Steve is a partner, too. Steve Cranswick.
24 So he sold it to them, and then I didn't have them, but I did some
25 check rides with them. And I believe some of the other inspectors

1 had them, and they were doing pretty well, but they were looking
2 to expand pretty fast. And they had the one -- then they did the
3 133 certificate. So I did their 133 and 137 certificate. So I
4 watched their chief pilot fly as per, you know, the 8900 guidance,
5 and knowledge and skills test. We did that.

6 And they received their 133 and their 137 certificates, and
7 then immediately started adding UH-60 Blackhawks. They were
8 buying them from the military, gutting them pretty much, and just
9 rebuilding them. And then making them -- not like an S-70
10 Firehawk, but they were making them capable of doing waterdrops.
11 And they were sending them to Australia because I believe Steve is
12 from New Zealand or Australia. And then they added, you know,
13 they still had the R44s because they were still doing their
14 sightseeing work, doing that. That was their bread and butter I
15 believe.

16 And then they added an AS50-B3, and then they added the B4.
17 And they were trying to do other work. And then eventually, they
18 asked for helicopter air ambulance OpSpec A061, and we gave them
19 that. And they just submitted their end of the year report for
20 the air ambulance to the board I guess whatever oversees for the
21 FAA. And they only did probably last year maybe like 10 flights,
22 10 organ flights, harvest flights. But they were trying to get
23 into that. But otherwise, their paperwork was in really good
24 order. I mean the training was good. I mean I had
25 (indiscernible) couple of their pilots. They were thorough.

1 Didn't see red flags.

2 Q. Who do you primarily interact with over there?

3 A. Steve Gould, the director of operations.

4 Q. How often would you say you interact with him?

5 A. I don't know. Probably a couple times a week. You're
6 asking, you know, he's always talking about what he wants to do,
7 what the company wanted to do. More like 133, they just got
8 another Blackhawk. They wanted that on their, you know, their 133
9 certificate and the 137 certificate. They just got -- they just
10 removed a K-MAX helicopter that I guess they didn't need anymore.
11 But, yeah, we talk a lot. He was looking for -- he was always
12 picking my brain about different things that he would like. I was
13 like maybe not now.

14 Q. So more often than not, it's Steve contacting you versus
15 you --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- reaching out to them?

18 A. So, yeah, the chief pilot was Brian Petsmaker -- what's --

19 MR. SALAZAR: Petschauer.

20 MR. CIRIGLIANO: Petschauer.

21 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah.

22 MR. CIRIGLIANO: So he was -- I know him from Helinet. So he
23 was originally the chief pilot for Helinet, and then I guess
24 decided to go to REACH Air Ambulance. So he left Helinet to go
25 REACH which is right next door to Orbic. And then from there, I

1 guess, he had some conversation with maybe Brady and Steve and
2 decided to, you know, take the position of the chief pilot there.
3 So vetted him on that, talked to him about that. And then, yeah,
4 I didn't see any reason why not.

5 BY DR. WILSON:

6 Q. Well, I'm curious about that. I was -- I mean how do you
7 think that -- excuse me. How do you think that goes with him
8 having his time split doing different things? I mean how do
9 you --

10 A. So we talked about that at length.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. I mean I talked to him about it at length about that because
13 I asked him, I said is he giving up his REACH ambulance position,
14 because I know that's why he left, and he said, well, no, he'll
15 still there. He goes, but we're right next door to each other.
16 And I said, well, what about operational control because he can
17 dispatch. That's like you -- I said Steve Gould, Brady, and the
18 chief pilot can dispatch. How would he dispatch if you're not
19 available, if Brady's not available, so how does that work? And
20 he basically said that he would be available. I said, well, if
21 all -- you three are on a flight, then we just don't do the flight
22 because we just can't do it if we can't dispatch it. He goes, but
23 he has the seven days, seven days off, and he's -- and they don't
24 fly much. So talked it over with my frontline and we agreed that
25 there was nothing we could really do to stop him not to be the

1 chief pilot. He met all the qualifications. He was already the
2 chief pilot at Helinet, and he did a really good job. So I just
3 made them know that, you know, it's just dispatching that, you
4 know, is very important. And someone has to dispatch or you just
5 can't take the flight.

6 Q. So skipping some of the questions that I have just based on
7 what you just said, I'd love to hear more of your thoughts on the
8 operational control side of things, and what do you -- what is the
9 expectation that you would have for Brady having operational
10 control for a flight? What would that entail?

11 A. You know, I'm not so much into the, you know, the dispatch
12 because I know Steve Gould does most of the dispatching, and I
13 think we had this conversation probably a while ago when I first
14 had the operation. But it was mostly just Brady was more on the
15 managing of the funds because -- since he's the owner and he was
16 just doing that. He was the president of the company, but most of
17 the time Steve and Brian would be doing all the other dispatching.

18 Q. Well, for this flight, it was Brady. So --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. -- is there a concern over that?

21 A. I didn't think there was a concern. I mean, you know, he's
22 there all the time. It's just like he's -- it's not like he's on
23 the road constantly and he's getting a phone call, like, yeah,
24 yeah, just dispatch it. I mean it's his company. He wants his
25 company to do well. I really think he cares about his company.

1 So I didn't really think there was any issue with Brady being part
2 of one of the dispatch persons, just my thought. I mean --

3 Q. Right. How did you hear about the accident?

4 A. On email notification at 11:40 saying that they have lost
5 contact with one of their aircraft, and they think that it's
6 either an accident or an incident.

7 Q. Okay. And what did you do?

8 A. Well, I was off. So I actually opened my computer on
9 Saturday and that message was there, and I saw the message. And I
10 called Steve, and he said, yeah, the helicopter crashed and then
11 by then a few people had emailed me saying that there was a
12 helicopter crash up in Riverside FSDO.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. So.

15 Q. As the POI, like I'm asking, was there any like
16 responsibilities that you have or things you need to do when an
17 operator that you oversee has an accident?

18 A. Not -- if it's in our district, yes. But since it was out of
19 our district, usually whoever has the accident duty out of
20 district, they handle the accident, and then they'll notify me if
21 they need anything. If they needed, you know, some records or
22 something to meet the requirements, you know, for the 23 form, so
23 -- and he had contacted me probably a couple days later just
24 seeing if I needed anything and I asked him if he needed anything,
25 and then I think our maintenance PMI had given them some

1 information, and that was about it. That was the last I heard
2 from that except for after I talked to, you know, Steve about the
3 accident, you know, and then we figured out that -- yeah, it was
4 probably weather.

5 Q. Have you gone over to Orbic Air since the accident, or done
6 any extra surveillance?

7 A. I have not. No. But I do have seven inspections to do
8 there, so I had plans, we had a date second week of March to go
9 there and do our data collection tools or DCTs.

10 Q. Is that still scheduled, or is that being pushed back?

11 A. It's going to be pushed back. I think it's -- yeah. I don't
12 think we should, you know, do it right now. We'll try to push it
13 back. Some of them I could probably do. I could probably go
14 there. But we talked -- I talked to my frontline about it, we'll
15 just push some of them back to next quarter.

16 Q. And -- excuse me. These were just routine --

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. -- inspections that you had to do. How often do you do the
19 inspections?

20 A. It all depends. In SAS, so they pop up probably -- we have
21 four quarters, probably every other quarter there'll be something
22 that needs to be looked at as per the DCT. But I usually pop in,
23 you know, probably once a month in Burbank, more at Camarillo,
24 they have a facility in Camarillo, so most of the time I'm flying
25 out of Camarillo. They have a big hanger there and I'll stop in

1 and, you know, the pilots are there, some of the pilots are there
2 and, you know, we'll talk about things. If I need something right
3 away, I'll ask Steve to send that to me in an email so I can see
4 it right away.

5 Q. When you do these pop-ins, is it -- do you give them a heads
6 up, or you just --

7 A. No.

8 Q. -- pop in?

9 A. Just pop in.

10 Q. Okay. And you said that you communicate with the PMI. Any
11 concerns that the PMI has over the maintenance side of things?

12 A. I can't speak for Pat, but he did have some concerns --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- on a couple of things.

15 Q. Anything you can share, or we should reach out to him?

16 A. Off the top of my head, there was some -- there might have
17 been -- on the R44 side, there was probably a maintenance facility
18 at Oxnard that he wasn't too comfortable with, and he had warned
19 them about using this particular person before. And I guess they
20 assured him that they were -- he wasn't being used. But I guess
21 Pat found out they were being used, so he kind of laid into them
22 about that. But, you know, I think that's -- there might have
23 been a few other things that Pat had some concerns about.

24 Q. Did you know either of the pilots?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Or flew with them that you recall?

2 A. No.

3 Q. When you would go and do some of the check rides there at
4 Orbic, no concerns?

5 A. No. But most of the flights -- there were a few flights out
6 of Burbank, but most of the flights were out of Camarillo.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. That's their facility. So they would actually -- I would try
9 to coordinate everything together, make it a full day. So if I
10 was doing a check ride in Camarillo, you know, for one of my other
11 operators like Orbic Helicopters, then I would say, hey, is it a
12 big deal to bring the helicopter to Camarillo, and then we can sit
13 in the office, you know, go over everything and do it there
14 because they have an office. And since -- so it would make my
15 time to go back and forth, back and forth and waste time. So,
16 yeah, they would just -- I would coordinate most of everything
17 into like a full day of just, you know, getting flights done and
18 doing, you know, groundwork and stuff.

19 Q. The rides, were they in the EC130 or the R44?

20 A. R44, I'm not qualified in the R44. So we have -- I would
21 have to get -- they went outside with my permission, they went to
22 Riverside, it has an R44 --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- pilot there, Roy Peters, an inspector, and he would do
25 their flights for them in the R44. But the EC130, I think I gave

1 the original check ride because when they first got the
2 helicopter, no one was qualified in it. So we had to do, you
3 know, a PIC flight in it first to make someone qualified, and then
4 to make that person, you know, a flight instructor so he can
5 actually give some 135 flight time to everyone else, otherwise
6 it'll be just a 91 flight, it doesn't count. So I oversee that.
7 And then we would do -- they would make them a check pilot later
8 on, you know, and that's what I would observe the check pilot
9 conduct the flights to the other pilots.

10 Q. When you did your either the check rides or the observations,
11 did you observe IIMC training?

12 A. Yes. So it's goggle work, did a bunch of -- they would do
13 some goggle work and then do, you know, a situation awareness.
14 They would do -- and that was pretty much it. I mean we'd shoot
15 an approach with the foggles, and then, you know, when you put
16 your head down and move the helicopter around, I don't know what
17 that really does, but it's part of the check list. But, yeah. I
18 mean I saw it.

19 Q. Anything -- I mean did it seem okay?

20 A. It seemed perfect actually.

21 Q. Okay. So, you know, putting your pilot hat on, what would
22 you expect a pilot to do if he or she got into IMC conditions
23 inadvertently?

24 A. Speaking for myself, I probably wouldn't get into IMC
25 conditions. I mean I would always -- I mean you have the risk

1 assessment, that should be done right before the flight. And you
2 should have every means possible to try to find out if that route
3 has any weather. I mean there's Caltrans cameras, I mean
4 whatever, if you can't figure out the weather and you still want
5 to launch, and you think it's going to be fine, I don't think you
6 should go barreling in at 150, you know, miles an hour into
7 unknown -- I mean if anyone's ever done that flight, you know,
8 which I have not in a helicopter, it's dark. Especially at night,
9 it's dark. I mean it's pitch black. And you get -- and you throw
10 weather into it, it's even worse.

11 So, yeah, I flew air ambulance up north and the weather was
12 pretty horrible out there, too. And, you know, there was never
13 ending pressure from Air Methods to say, hey, you have to take
14 this flight, you got to do this flight. But we all knew our
15 limitations. Even though I'm, you know, double I, I mean am I
16 current? I mean, no. I mean I just, you know? Would I need to
17 go refresh myself? Of course. I mean I think I can do okay, but
18 who knows? I mean everyone -- this guy was their flight -- he was
19 their instrument instructor. Yeah. Who knows? But I mean --
20 yeah, so, you know?

21 Q. One of the things that kept coming up yesterday when we were
22 doing interviews is that pilots, if they inadvertently get into
23 IMC, may panic, and so wanting to reinforce in training pilots not
24 panicking. So, obviously, we want to avoid IMC, but --

25 A. Of course.

1 Q. -- now you found yourself in it, what would you, if you were
2 sitting, you know, observing, what would you expect this pilot to
3 do?

4 A. Climb, call, and confess. I mean you just basically just,
5 you know, or if you are at a reasonable speed, maybe 50 or 60
6 knots and you know that you can actually make a 180 and get out of
7 it without hitting anything on the side, a ridge, powerlines, or
8 anything, I mean that's these guys just barreling into it. I
9 don't understand it. I mean as a pilot, I mean -- but it happens
10 all the time, you know? Just I don't understand it. I think they
11 were just behind the curve, and they were just trying to get
12 there, and you know, and these guys are trying to pick up speed.
13 But yeah, I mean I don't know. It's tragic.

14 Q. They used the term safety pilot to describe, so to speak, the
15 second pilot that was on board. And said that this person was an
16 extra set of eyes. Had you heard them use that term before? Were
17 you familiar, aware that they were kind of having this safety
18 pilot on some of their flights?

19 A. No.

20 Q. What do you think of something like that?

21 A. Yeah. I mean when I heard there was six people deceased, I
22 thought it was five and a pilot, but then they said there was
23 another pilot. And then that's when I talked to Steve about it,
24 and he says, our GOM prohibits us from flying over the mountains
25 at night, you know? So what we do is we put a safety pilot on

1 board, and, you know, for night or whenever they thought they
2 needed it. And I said, what does a safety pilot do? I mean
3 what's his job? And I said, what's his background? Well, he's 22
4 years old and he flies R44s. I mean is he familiar with the
5 EC130? I mean -- but -- yeah, it was new to me when I found out.
6 I didn't know they had a safety pilot.

7 Q. When you, you know, popped into the operation, do you ever
8 hear any concerns from pilots about Orbic Air?

9 A. No. No one ever grabbed me aside and said, hey, can I talk
10 to you about this, or I never received -- usually you'll receive a
11 hotline complaint or something if there's anyone that's -- has any
12 issues, they know the procedures because I let them know, you
13 know, in some operations. I mean some of my operations is just,
14 you know, and I would consider Orbic one of them are pretty rock
15 solid. I have a couple of jet operators on the other hand, you
16 know, get a few hotline complaints on them over like, you know,
17 hours worked. And just basically that's it, just pilot times for
18 one of my operators. But, yeah, there were no concerns whatsoever
19 as far as I knew. I mean everyone seemed to be really happy --
20 from the people that I met and flew with, but they're always
21 hiring new people, you know, and so they don't send me a list,
22 hey, we just hired somebody, you know? And, you know, helicopter
23 pilots are in short demand, so everyone's, you know, shucking and
24 jiving to get a good helicopter pilot. And they move on, they
25 pull in -- they build up time, you know, in a turbine aircraft,

1 and then they'll go to another operator and they'll get a longline
2 experience. And then they want to do longline. They want to do
3 firefighting. You know, they want to do, you know, Edison work
4 because that's where they have more money. But, yeah. No, I knew
5 that, you know, two or three pilots there and that was it.

6 Q. Do you think -- speaking of money, do you think there's
7 pressure for these pilots to take a flight? You know, it's Super
8 Bowl weekend, we got some high-profile clientele coming in.

9 A. Good question.

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. I don't know what their finances look like. I mean I know
12 they're doing, I think, pretty well on the 133 side. But again,
13 you know, I don't know. I'm sure there's always maybe a little
14 pressure based on what I used to deal with, you know, years ago.
15 I mean everyone wants to do the big flight because, you know,
16 there might be tips, you know, and they might be given a little
17 money. But if we all worked off that, I'd be poor right now
18 because just when you think someone's going to tip --

19 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah.

20 MR. CIRIGLIANO: -- you know, they get out of the helicopter
21 and so like in the pouring rain I'm, you know, like put my hand
22 out, and they're like -- and they jump in their limo and leave,
23 like okay.

24 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah.

25 MR. CIRIGLIANO: So, yeah. But, you know, I don't know how

1 they get paid there. I don't know what they get paid there. So I
2 know some of my operators, the pilots will tell you how much
3 they're getting paid. But I don't know anything about Orbic
4 getting paid.

5 BY DR. WILSON:

6 Q. Okay. Either observation flights or check rides, how often
7 do you do that with Orbic Air?

8 A. Well, the check pilot is every 24 months.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So I'll see the check pilot and do a check every 24 months in
11 each helicopter they have except for the R44 naturally. So they
12 have the AS350B3, and then they have the B4, the 130B4. And then
13 I would see Steve or -- no, not David. Brian, and I think they
14 have one more check pilot, last name --

15 Q. Immler?

16 A. Immler. Yeah.

17 Q. Anton.

18 A. Yeah. So I'd see them every year. But we kind of frown upon
19 them giving each other check rides, so sometimes I might not see
20 them.

21 Q. Well, have you said that to them?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. And did they do it anyway?

24 A. It's kind of in the guidance. It says that they shouldn't
25 be -- a check pilot should not be -- should not check another

1 check pilot or a flight instructor. I don't think it's happened.
2 I think if I look back on my 8410s, I think they want to do --
3 once they had asked me because I wasn't available that particular
4 week. They weren't available that particular week, or the
5 helicopter was going into maintenance or something. But I think
6 we worked it out where that I did the check.

7 DR. WILSON: Okay. Probably going to have a few more
8 questions, but I'm going to turn it over to Fabian for a minute.
9 Do you need a break or anything?

10 MR. CIRIGLIANO: No.

11 DR. WILSON: Okay.

12 MR. CIRIGLIANO: Anyone need a break? You good?

13 MS. BANASZAK: I could use (indiscernible).

14 DR. WILSON: Okay. We're going to pause and go off the
15 record at 9:45.

16 (Off the record at 9:45 a.m.)

17 (On the record at 9:49 a.m.)

18 DR. WILSON: Okay. We're back on the record at 9:49.
19 Fabian.

20 BY MR. SALAZAR:

21 Q. You go by Steve, right?

22 A. Sure.

23 Q. All right, Steve. Last year's annual inspections for Orbic
24 Air, did you do your inspections or your visits for your -- what
25 is it? DTS?

- 1 A. DCTs?
- 2 Q. Yes. DCT.
- 3 A. Data collection. Data collection tools. Yes.
- 4 Q. Did you get -- have any negative findings?
- 5 A. I did not.
- 6 Q. Okay. Have you ever received public complaints from -- about
- 7 the company for any reasons?
- 8 A. No.
- 9 Q. Katherine --
- 10 A. I know -- sorry. I know there was some instances back in
- 11 2018 or 2013 back in the days. I think there was an accident,
- 12 which was -- I think David Gibbs flew into the side of a hill
- 13 during a motion picture filming. That was Orbic Helicopters --
- 14 that was Orbic Air's helicopter. They had leased it or rented to
- 15 him for that show. But it always pops up that Orbic Air had a
- 16 crash, but they --
- 17 Q. And this was before Brady and Steve purchased --
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. -- the company?
- 20 A. That was -- yeah, that was way -- 2013 --
- 21 Q. Okay.
- 22 A. -- I think.
- 23 Q. Okay.
- 24 A. That he killed himself.
- 25 Q. Katherine started -- or asked you a few questions about the

1 safety pilot, and it's not a program, but for -- just discussion,
2 we were calling it a safety pilot program. The safety pilot was
3 rated in the EC130, and he was an employee of the 135 certificate
4 holder, but he wasn't a PIC in the EC135. So with this young man
5 in the aircraft, would he be in compliance with 135.115(a), which
6 I believe is the manipulation of flight controls?

7 MS. BANASZAK: So if we're looking at some sort of
8 regulation, I'd like him to have that in front of him if we're
9 going to talk about the regulation.

10 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. Can we do that because I certainly want
11 to be accurate with the reference as well?

12 MS. BANASZAK: Sure. Give me the regulation again.

13 MR. SALAZAR: 135.115(a)

14 MR. CIRIGLIANO: So I guess you would have better knowledge
15 than me about the safety pilot if he was checked out -- he wasn't
16 checked out -- was he checked out in the 130?

17 BY MR. SALAZAR:

18 Q. Yes.

19 A. He was? Okay.

20 Q. Yes.

21 A. You are correct.

22 Q. So if I came to you as the director of operations and asked
23 you what are your thoughts because I'd like to put a safety pilot
24 in this aircraft. He's not going to touch the flight controls.
25 The only time he'd even entertain that is if in the event of an

1 emergency, but he will be sitting at a seat with access to flight
2 controls, that center seat of the EC130. And he can do minor
3 things such as changing a radio frequency or looking up the next
4 frequency, you know, some tasks like that. Would you have any
5 issues with that?

6 A. I would. I would want him to be an actual EC130 pilot. Take
7 an 84 -- have an 8410 on file with him. I mean I don't know what
8 a safety pilot, I mean I don't -- it's just eyes and ears? I mean
9 I don't know. What's he going to say? If he does see something,
10 what, is he going to grab the controls and (indiscernible), you
11 know?

12 Q. Right.

13 A. It has to be a positive, three-way, you know, and it has to
14 be CRM, you know, cockpit resource management, has to be a
15 positive, you know, control, you know, I have the controls, you
16 have the controls, I have the controls. You know, he can't
17 just -- a bird, you know?

18 Q. Right.

19 A. That's just -- no. I wouldn't have let them do it.

20 Q. Okay. All right. Do you know of any prohibition in their
21 OpSpecs that would prevent them from installing a second fully
22 qualified pilot?

23 A. Off the top of my head, no.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Is there one?

1 Q. I don't know. You know, I know -- I've reviewed their
2 OpSpec, and at the time I wasn't aware of the in-depth need to dig
3 into the safety pilot concept.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. So I wasn't looking for -- in that laundry list of things
6 that they operate or cannot do.

7 A. I think there is. I mean unless it's a two -- a
8 helicopter -- unless it's certified as a two-man crew, I mean I
9 know for a fact back in the day, I mean off Orbic for a second,
10 that one of my operators wanted to fly a 412 with two pilots
11 because their insurance required them to fly with two pilots. But
12 the forestry that would hire -- that was hiring them did not want
13 a second pilot because of liability, God forbid if something did
14 happen, there was a crash or something happened, then there would
15 be two fatalities instead of one, so they never got that contract
16 because they wouldn't allow them to fly with it. But, you know, I
17 mean unless a helicopter requires a crew, yeah, most helicopters
18 are just one.

19 Q. Yeah. And Orbic had mentioned that there are certain needs
20 for this safety pilot. An example they gave us was the nighttime
21 conditions, going through that high desert area with low lights.
22 Another being customer needs. So did Steve ever talk to you --
23 the director of operations ever talk to you about a need for a
24 second pilot when there was a customer request for a second pilot?

25 A. Not off the top of my head, no. I know some high profile,

1 you know, athletes or, you know, businessmen require two pilots or
2 two engines as per their insurance policies. That's a given fact.

3 Q. Yeah, Kobe Bryant.

4 A. Kobe had one. You know, Helinet flew him forever, you know,
5 and then he decided to fly in the, you know, with the --

6 Q. Island Express.

7 A. -- Island Express. Yeah. We were all there.

8 Q. I was there.

9 A. I was there with you.

10 Q. Getting into the leadership, the management of Orbic Air, did
11 you ever in your visits with them detect an air of detachment, an
12 example being operations not talking to maintenance, maintenance
13 not talking to operations at a level that would give you any
14 concern?

15 A. No, not whatso -- I mean I think they had a really good
16 relationship because Steve, again, I don't know his position,
17 somebody said he was part owner. Steve and Brady are, you know,
18 talk all the time. Actually when I was there a couple times, they
19 were talking about maintenance issues and ordering parts and, you
20 know, they needed different parts. So I didn't see any of that
21 from the time I was there or out in Camarillo, or --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- in Burbank. I never saw any of that.

24 Q. And it's our understanding that Steve the maintenance --
25 director of maintenance is a part-time owner --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. -- of the company. And let's hone into those who have
3 operational control. Did you ever suspect or detect any air of
4 detachment from the missions from the guys who have operational
5 control of the flights?

6 A. No. Steve Gould is always there. I mean if he goes on
7 vacation, he'll let me know that he's not available. And that if
8 I need anything to talk to Brian, or if I need something. I've
9 really never talked to Brady because he's, you know, usually the
10 owners you don't really -- you'll see them there walking around,
11 hey, hello, goodbye. But never really sit down with them because
12 they're just, you know, they're doing their own thing, or they're
13 doing, you know, their money thing. So, yeah.

14 Q. That being said, he also had the duty of flight follower on
15 the accident flight.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. With that being said, would you say -- would you say at all a
18 concern with that gentleman who's got all of these upper-level
19 tasks of bringing in revenue and paying bills, and that type of
20 thing, the next minute being the flight follower for a flight?

21 A. It was late at night. I mean I, you know, I guess if he had
22 that much responsibility, if he felt that he couldn't really do
23 it, he should have probably delegated it to someone else. But I
24 don't know how busy he really was at that time. I mean I could
25 see if he had, you know, four flights out that day and he was, you

1 know, monitoring GPS signal, you know, monitor -- because I've
2 gone to some of my operators, as soon as you walk in, you have big
3 screens and there are their flights. Air Methods was the same
4 way. I mean when I was working out of the main base, I mean they
5 actually ran a whole, you know, CALSTAR and they ran PHI and you
6 could just see that big --

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. -- screen with all these dots and everything, and everyone's
9 watching them, you know?

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. But they had the one helicopter, so.

12 Q. Okay. Sticking with operations.

13 A. Okay.

14 Q. When you picked up Orbic Air, I would assume they already had
15 a GOM accepted or -- that when you picked up the program, did you
16 have to start all over or did you just review their latest?

17 A. It was a revision.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. There was a revision. When I picked them up, and I go back
20 into my SAS, there is an activity for a GOM revision, I think 11.
21 Don't know off the top of my head what the revision was about. I
22 can find out. But there was a revision that I did --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- to the GOM.

25 Q. All right. And when you did your last inspections, did you

1 find their facilities met the standard for like training rooms and
2 the things that they're supposed to have on hand?

3 A. Yes. I mean, like I said, sometimes we did the training out
4 in Camarillo also. So they have, you know, an office there, too.
5 And, yeah, everything --

6 Q. No --

7 A. -- met my satisfactory, yeah.

8 Q. Okay. Sorry to interrupt.

9 A. Oh, no. That's okay.

10 Q. Getting into the IIMC avoidance, unusual altitude recoveries,
11 and then the IIMC recoveries, you had mentioned that it was
12 perfect. Did you ever have a chance to talk to anybody at Orbic
13 Air about the Calabasas accident and the significance of it, and
14 the importance of maybe discussing that accident with their
15 pilots?

16 A. Steve Gould and Ara were like best friends.

17 Q. Is that so?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. Is that so?

20 A. They were best friends. Then I flew later on with Island
21 because they -- we had a lot of new helicopter inspectors that
22 were hired, not my office though, but by LAX and Long Beach, and I
23 trained them. You know, I would take them out with me as OJT, and
24 do check pilot observations, and do the 293 oral, you know, 293(b)
25 check and the 299 line check. I'd bring them out with me and do

1 level 2s and 3s with some of those guys, and, yeah, Gary Dalton
2 (ph.) was their chief pilot or DO at the time.

3 Q. He was the DO?

4 A. Yeah. And, you know, Steve and Gary knew each other really
5 well, too. And they were just, you know, they made it a point to
6 include a lot of that training, you know, in whatever missteps
7 that Ara did.

8 Q. Yeah. I hope so.

9 A. We always hope so. I mean we --

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. You know, enough is enough already. I mean just --

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. I don't -- I mean, you know, it's -- you talk about -- we
14 talk about it in the office all the time about it, and it's just,
15 you know, you look at it and say, you know, how is -- I mean we
16 talk about it and then we're like, you know, like that's never
17 going to happen to me, it's never going to happen to me, and then
18 all of a sudden, you know, and then here you are in the same
19 situation. Say, I could do it, no worries. Like seriously? I
20 mean, you know, did you not learn anything?

21 Q. Yeah. Yeah.

22 A. Did you not read the NTSB report? I mean.

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. You know, it sucks.

25 Q. I have to ask this because the timing is right. I was told

1 that there was a second incident not too long ago where an S76 was
2 taxied into a hanger. Was that reported to you guys?

3 A. For who?

4 Q. Or to the FAA? From Island Express.

5 A. That's Long Beach.

6 Q. Okay. But did you -- in your capacity as the man that you
7 are in the FAA, did you hear anything about it?

8 A. No. I heard -- I know it's -- oh, my gosh. About a year ago
9 we had an incident out here on the ramp with the Santa Barbara
10 Sheriff's Department hitting their 212, meaning blades with a
11 parked aircraft, but that was about the only thing in regards
12 to --

13 Q. After the interview, let's talk. I may have some information
14 to share with you.

15 A. Sure.

16 Q. Okay. Back to this accident. We talked about that. I've
17 got one last item to bring up. Did Steve, the director of
18 operations, has he ever talked to you about a need to come up with
19 a formalized program for implementing EFBs in the cockpit?

20 A. We talked about it. I gave him all the guidance. I told him
21 what he needed. I told him to set up a conference room and he
22 needs someone to actually teach it. And then if everything went
23 well, we could give him a six month, you know, like give him A061
24 and he'll have to log everything that he needs as per the
25 guidance. And then we'll go from there. But it came up and never

1 to come up again.

2 Q. Did he share with you a desire or a need to allow his pilots
3 to use a personal iPad in the cockpit?

4 A. He mentioned that he was looking at that OpSpec. And again,
5 I guess -- I sent him guidance. I sent him some -- one of the
6 forms I believe on how to start the program and what he needed.
7 And then he had to log, you know, everything in -- every time
8 there's an Apple upgrade, IOS, whatever it is, he would have to
9 log any deficiencies, just keep that as a log. But I never heard
10 anything back on that.

11 Q. Yeah. Okay. Did he ever talk to you about how to get in
12 control of pilots who were just want to do their own thing despite
13 their best intentions to -- of management's best intentions to
14 keep them under control? Anything like that?

15 A. That'd be scary.

16 Q. Isn't it?

17 A. I think that person should be fired. But, yeah, I mean, no,
18 not that I know of.

19 Q. Okay. That's all I have. Thanks.

20 A. Doing their own thing?

21 Q. Well, if somebody -- say somebody in operation control or
22 somebody in management telling them one thing and then turning
23 right around and doing the exact opposite.

24 A. That's never come up, but that is pretty scary.

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. Depending on, I mean -- I'd like to know that. Put the
2 hammer to that one.

3 MR. SALAZAR: Kat.

4 DR. WILSON: Dave?

5 BY MR. GERLACH:

6 Q. Really just I just want to have you clarify something with
7 respect to 135.15(a). I think I heard you say that the safety
8 pilot would not be able to manipulate the controls in accordance
9 with the regulations because he wasn't qualified in the aircraft.
10 Is that --

11 A. Was that the guidance that we --

12 Q. That --

13 A. -- it said no one -- (indiscernible) my FAR rep is here. No
14 pilot in command may allow any person to manipulate the flight
15 controls of an aircraft during flight conducted under this part,
16 nor may any person manipulate the controls during such flight
17 unless that person is a pilot employed by the certificate holder.

18 Q. Right.

19 A. Right? And qualified in the aircraft. So I guess somehow or
20 another if he is qualified in the aircraft and he is a member
21 of -- employed, he can manipulate the controls, and then, B, goes
22 on to say an authorized safety representative, the administrator.
23 That would be me, right? An authorized safety representative of
24 the administrator. Okay. So, sorry.

25 Q. So did we clarify that, that safety pilot is qualified to

1 manipulate the controls or not qualified?

2 A. It all depends. I guess I said he wouldn't be, but as long
3 as he is qualified in the aircraft.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So qualified means to me that he has a check ride under him.

6 Q. And what -- let me ask a follow-up question if you don't
7 mind. The gentleman is employed with a Part 135 certificate
8 holder as a PIC in the R44. He is rated in the EC130, but he's
9 not a PIC.

10 A. I guess what does the word qualified mean? That's the
11 definition of what is qualified. I mean do they give him a
12 complete check, meaning some sort of, you know, walk around and
13 took him out for four or five hours and qualified him?

14 Q. Could he be a PIC in the helicopter and take a 135 on demand
15 charter flight?

16 A. Could he be a PIC in the aircraft? As long as someone gave
17 him a PIC check, a 293(b) check.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. If he trained, if he has a training records that shows that
20 he took the necessary groundwork and flight, whatever hours that
21 could be, you know, I think it's four hours -- three to five hours
22 depending, and then someone -- a check pilot gave him the 293(b)
23 check, he could possibly be the PIC of an aircraft.

24 Q. He could. But on that flight, he couldn't be the PIC.

25 A. No, not unless he had a check ride.

1 Q. Right. So then he wouldn't be qualified to manipulate the
2 controls?

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. That's a leading question. Correct. Okay.

5 A. I mean again, it's qualified. So --

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. Did he take a check? I mean I don't know. You had his -- I
8 mean did you see anything (indiscernible) that he was -- took some
9 sort of check?

10 MR. SALAZAR: I've got his -- I can look right now while
11 we're having our discussion.

12 BY MR. GERLACH:

13 Q. And you talked a little bit about the electronic flight bag
14 documentation you gave the certificate holder. Did they talk to
15 you at all about using the iPad? Did they talk to you about using
16 ForeFlight in the aircraft?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Did you ever observe them using the iPad or ForeFlight in the
19 cockpit when you did check rides?

20 A. I don't remember it ever being there. No.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Because they would have it mounted. Usually they'd mount it
23 on the sides. Most of my operators mount it. They never use it
24 on their knee because we know what happened --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- on the chinook crash with the iPad stuck in the pedals.

2 Q. Right. What would you expect the pilots to do when doing
3 their risk assessment?

4 A. I would expect them to be diligent in checking the weather,
5 which is the most important thing. But I would also -- to be
6 honest, I mean a lot of times you see the risk assessments, and,
7 you know, let's say eight hours of sleep and -- but most of the
8 risk assessments I believe and -- need to be some sort of --
9 what's the word I'm looking for? They should be pretty much one.
10 I mean that's as far as I'm concerned. I mean I know each one is
11 different. Each flight, but I think they have to be diligent in
12 checking all the boxes, making sure the weather -- if the weather
13 is a problem, there's many different ways to get the weather in or
14 out. And to make sure that, you know, they're not flying into
15 something that's going to hurt them.

16 Q. Would it be acceptable to do a risk assessment two weeks
17 prior to your flight?

18 A. No.

19 Q. When would you expect them to do a risk assessment?

20 A. Anywhere from -- I would say 30 minutes to an hour before
21 your flight.

22 Q. Okay. And why would you expect it to be that period?

23 A. Because everything -- there's so many changes within two
24 weeks. I mean how you're feeling, if you took medicine I mean, or
25 if you, you know, there's so many things on the risk assessment

1 that adds up. Sleep deprivation. I mean -- but the whole thing
2 is you're in or out. I mean that's the main thing. So, yeah, you
3 need to have that done 30 minutes, a half hour max. I mean hour
4 max.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Because the weather changes.

7 Q. Does the company have their own MELs for their aircraft?

8 A. Not for the B -- not for the EC130.

9 Q. Had they applied for an MEL?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. In the absence of an MEL, what would they -- what would they
12 use?

13 A. The MMEL.

14 Q. Okay. If there's something broken on the helicopter, and I
15 realize you don't have the MMEL in front of you, what is the
16 likelihood that they would be able to fly it if something was
17 broken on it?

18 A. Zill. None.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. It's grounded.

21 MR. GERLACH: Okay. That's all the questions I have.

22 MR. SALAZAR: To close the conversation, looking at Blake's
23 flight training records, there's nothing in his records on any
24 flight in an EC130.

25 MR. GERLACH:

1 Q. So given that he hadn't had the 293(b), he would not be
2 qualified or qualified --

3 A. He would not be qualified.

4 Q. -- to manipulate the control.

5 A. He would not be qualified.

6 BY DR. WILSON:

7 Q. Just to follow up on Dave's questioning about an aircraft
8 being grounded, thinking about operational control, who would be
9 responsible for saying that an aircraft is unworthy or unairworthy
10 to fly?

11 A. Well, one, the director of maintenance, and two, the pilot
12 should know. I mean all pilots should know whether there's MEL or
13 an MMEL. I mean -- or whether they're working off the MMEL if
14 there was no MEL available. I mean they should -- we've always
15 known that. I mean that's -- where I flew, I mean we had pretty
16 good maintenance. But it was in the works. I mean -- they did
17 submit, but, yeah, the helicopter was grounded.

18 MR. GERLACH: (Indiscernible).

19 DR. WILSON: Did you talk -- go ahead.

20 MR. GERLACH: I was going to say, could I follow that
21 question?

22 DR. WILSON: Sure.

23 BY MR. GERLACH:

24 Q. On the maintenance side of the house, if a mechanic sees that
25 there's a mechanical problem with the helicopter, what would you

1 expect a mechanic working for a company to do?

2 A. Notify, I guess -- write it up, first of all, you know, in
3 the maintenance log. And then notify, you know, the -- Steve
4 Gould, DO, and the owner. Notify them that something's broken on
5 the helicopter, and, you know, they need to get it fixed, and I
6 guess, you know, depending on how much the part is, I mean I don't
7 know how most departments work if something is a lot of money, I
8 guess they have to get it an okay for it, or if they really need
9 it. So I don't know how that procedure on their part works for
10 maintenance-wise

11 Q. You would expect a logbook entry --

12 A. Of course.

13 Q. -- when a mechanic notices there's something that's --
14 there's a discrepancy or a mechanical problem?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. That would be immediate, or you could give it a few days?

17 A. Immediate.

18 Q. Immediate.

19 A. Especially if it's something you need to fly, that's what the
20 FAA implemented years ago for the radar altimeter.

21 Q. Okay.

22 BY DR. WILSON:

23 Q. (Indiscernible). Sorry. I'm trying to formulate a question,
24 and --

25 MR. SALAZAR: Let me ask one real quick question, Steve. Can

1 I -- that okay, Kat?

2 DR. WILSON: Yep.

3 BY MR. SALAZAR:

4 Q. Does their OpSpec allow their AS350 to do charter flights?

5 A. Yes, as part of their 135.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. But they also have a standalone Part 91 sightseeing. And I
8 believe the A-Star is also on their 91 LOA for sightseeing SSR.

9 MR. SALAZAR: Thank you.

10 BY DR. WILSON:

11 Q. Have you reviewed or seen the PRISM SMS program that they
12 have implemented?

13 A. A while ago. Most of the operators have that or they have --
14 what's the other one? Blank.

15 MR. SALAZAR: Gyronimo? That's what they started using.
16 Then they transitioned to Prism.

17 MR. CIRIGLIANO: Prism.

18 DR. WILSON: That was the --

19 MR. CIRIGLIANO: I didn't know them during Gyronimo.

20 DR. WILSON: -- risk assessment, right? Not for the --

21 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah.

22 DR. WILSON: -- SMS?

23 MR. SALAZAR: Right. Right. I think when they went to the
24 SMS, they adopted the PRISM system because it's a complete
25 package.

1 BY DR. WILSON:

2 Q. I'm not very familiar with the PRISM SMS. Do you have
3 thoughts on it? Is it adequate?

4 A. I saw it -- I mean I saw it once or twice before with them,
5 and I saw it when they first had it. But it's been a while, I
6 guess a year -- over a year since I've seen it again. But some of
7 my operators have gone to it. I guess there used to be an
8 older -- but I can't think of the name that I used to have to do.
9 But I guess a lot of people have gone to the PRISM because I've
10 seen most of my operators have that. That's part of their
11 training, I guess every quarter.

12 Q. As a part of the PRISM, one of the steps I guess that they
13 can do is do self-evaluations. Do they share the results of those
14 self-evaluations with you?

15 A. I have not seen one, no.

16 Q. Have they talked to you at all about implementing any sort of
17 fatigue risk management program?

18 A. No. That I can remember.

19 Q. We had learned that this flight, the pilots, had they arrived
20 in Boulder City, were planning to fly back that evening. And
21 being a 91 flight, they wouldn't have been required to a risk
22 assessment, so the concern being a long day and pilots flying back
23 late at night, and what that can do from a fatigue level.

24 a. Yeah, I was thinking about that.

25 DR. WILSON: I don't think I have any more questions.

1 Fabian.

2 MR. SALAZAR: I'm good. Thank you.

3 DR. WILSON: Dave?

4 BY MR. GERLACH:

5 Q. When you are observing a check ride and they're demonstrating
6 the inadvertent IMC, what's a pass or fail for you? What things
7 do you expect a pilot to do when all of a sudden, he's presented
8 with an IMC event?

9 A. We're talking about me observing?

10 Q. Uh-huh.

11 A. Me upfront with a pilot, or the check pilot?

12 Q. Either way. You're in the helicopter. It's either being
13 demonstrated by someone being checked, or you're watching a check
14 airman checking another pilot. What things are you expecting the
15 pilot that's manipulating the controls to do when he's been
16 presented with an inadvertent IMC encounter?

17 A. It all depends.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Because some of my operators, when they do the inadvertent
20 IMC, and when we go to Texas and do our ABC, every three months, I
21 just got back, it all depends how comfortable the pilot is --
22 well, let's talk about a check pilot, right? So there's the check
23 pilot and the pilot's being checked. I've seen some crazy stuff
24 where the guy just basically just pulls back, goes forward, left
25 or right, and then says recover.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Right? And that's like, okay, maybe that's a little too much
3 there, buddy, because, you know, I'm in the back and if I'm not
4 feeling comfortable, I'm like, ooh, coming out of my seat, maybe
5 it's a little too much. And then I've seen people just basically
6 say, okay, you fly, right, and I'll tell you to go left, I'll tell
7 you to go right because there's so many different ways of doing
8 it, you go left and you go right, okay? Now down. Okay.
9 Recover, you know? That's, you know? But --

10 Q. And the recovery is the pilot just does something, and then
11 it's done?

12 A. Absolutely. Level the wings. So it's basically just pitch,
13 full power.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. You know? So it's basically if you're looking -- if you're
16 in a turn, you know, so it's basically, you know, stop the turn --

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. -- level, you know, the nose on the horizon, and apply power.

19 Q. And this is all under the googles?

20 A. The googles --

21 Q. Right?

22 A. Or sometimes they tell them to -- well, yeah, the googles
23 could be one part. If it's part of the -- they put the googles on
24 first, and then they'll do their -- you know, they'll do their VOR
25 approach or whatever. Or they'll just say, you know, close your

1 eyes, put your head down. And then they'll mess everything up, I
2 recover. And then you're like, oh, okay. Pitch, full power.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. You know? So there's many different ways to do it.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. There's no one set way. There's nothing in the guidance or
7 anything that says how you do it.

8 Q. Yeah. And the recovery, what's acceptable? I think you
9 said --

10 A. Pitch, full power. I mean within a couple of seconds
11 recovering and getting your speed back.

12 Q. Okay. And does that mean level the wings --

13 A. Yep.

14 Q. -- on a particular heading, and set air speed?

15 A. If you're really going hard, there'll be no set heading that
16 you're giving someone because you really don't -- you'll see the
17 thing spinning, you know, your -- or it could be directional gyro
18 would be here or your horizon. But as long as it's within a split
19 second.

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. If you can recover, you get your air speed back.

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. That's kind of a pass.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. You know, if you -- now if you recover and you don't, then

1 you're like oh, you know, that's a fail.

2 Q. Okay. Do they need to do anything to pass, just getting the
3 aircraft under control?

4 A. They need to get -- they need to get airspeed. You know,
5 that's part of -- as long as they level the wings --

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. -- and, you know, stop the turn or the arrest, or pitch up,
8 you know, gradually bringing in your collective. But as a check
9 pilot, let's just say someone was a little slow, they have the
10 discretion of allowing them to do it again, where I tell them.

11 Q. Okay. In real life, let's say it's an Orbic Air pilot enters
12 IMC, what are your expectations of that pilot?

13 A. No autopilot, is to climb. I mean try to get out of it, or
14 again, as I said before, speed. You know, speed kills. So I mean
15 if you're doing 140 miles an hour and you're low level and you hit
16 something, I mean I'm --

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. It just -- you got to try to climb, try to get out of that
19 patch. Or if you're slow enough, you could bring it back on
20 its -- just bring it back on its tail, you know, and then just
21 pedal turn and fly out of it. But I mean it's really hard when
22 you're going really fast.

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. It's real -- I mean almost impossible.

25 MR. GERLACH: Okay. I don't have any more questions. Thank

1 you.

2 DR. WILSON: All right. We asked you a lot of questions. Is
3 there anything we didn't ask you about that you think we should
4 have?

5 MR. CIRIGLIANO: Not that I could think of?

6 DR. WILSON: Anything else? Any other relevant information
7 that could help our investigation?

8 MR. CIRIGLIANO: No. Do you recommend anything that I could
9 have done differently?

10 MR. SALAZAR: Steve, you got a giant workload.

11 MR. CIRIGLIANO: It's hard. We're in demand.

12 MR. SALAZAR: Yeah.

13 MR. CIRIGLIANO: It's just really -- we can't find anyone
14 from the Ops side. You know, we get a lot of people for the
15 maintenance, and we get a lot of avionics guys, and we get more
16 pilots that are actually real pilots that won't come in as pilots,
17 but they'll come in as avionics, you know? But, you know, we're
18 just looking to try to advert -- avoid something like this, and I
19 mean you practice, and you talk to everyone, it's just crazy. And
20 the person you just talked to just did it, you know, it's just --
21 doesn't make any sense. Like just doesn't, you know? So it
22 sucks. But, you know, we try our hardest, try to go out as much
23 as we could. And, you know, more simulator time, no, I'm just
24 kidding.

25 MR. SALAZAR: There you go, more simulator time.

1 MR. CIRIGLIANO: Buy a simulator, so. No, I think that's it.

2 DR. WILSON: Then we'll go off the record at 10:29. Thanks,
3 Steve.

4 (Whereupon, at 10:29 a.m., the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: AIRBUS EC130 HELICOPTER CRASH
 NEAR HALLORAN SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA
 ON FEBRUARY 9, 2024
 Interview of Stephen Cirigliano

ACCIDENT NO.: CEN24MA111

PLACE: Los Angeles, California

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.


Jami McNear
Transcriber