

Interviewee: Douglas Patridge, American Airlines 757 First Officer
Representative: Ray Duke
Date / Time: September 11, 2018 / 0900 CDT
Location: via telephone
Present: David Lawrence, Bill Bramble– NTSB; Robert Hendrickson – FAA; Randy Davenport, APA; Mike Boynton – American Airlines

During the interview, First Officer Patridge stated the following:

His name was Douglas Raymond Partridge, and he was 48 years old. His title at American Airlines was First Officer [FO] on the Boeing 757/767. His roles and responsibilities generally included being assigned the FB [First Officer position B – International Relief Officer] position, and was qualified to sit as FO on international flights. He also was responsible for relieving the captain during his breaks. For the accident flight, he was the FB and sitting in the jumpseat during the event.

His background included attending Daniel Webster College where he got his aviation degree. He was a CFI [certified flight instructor], flew for a Part 135 operator, American Eagle, and eventually accepted a flow through to American Airlines in July 2014. He was initially assigned on the 757/767 with a Miami, Florida base, and bid for a New York base while still in training, and had spent the past 4 years based with American airlines in New York.

He held an ATP [airline transport pilot] certificate with type ratings on the Saab-340, ATR-42 and ATR-72, and the B-757/767. He also held a CFI certificate and a First Class medical certificate with no limitations. He estimated his total flight time at 13,700 hours, with 900 hours in the 757/767. His base at the time of the accident was New York, which included co-bases of LGA, JFK and EWR.

When asked if he had flown with the captain or FO before the accident trip, he said he had not flown with the FO before, and may have flown with the captain previously, but could not remember.

When asked if he had been given a drug or alcohol screening after the accident, he said no, and did not know why. He said he was expecting to be screened, and hung out by the airplane for an hour and a half until the captain told him he could go home. He had never been fired, terminated or asked to resign from any employment. When asked if he had ever failed a check ride before, he said yes, and that he had failed his initial instrument check ride back in 1993 or 1994, and had failed his initial check ride on the ATR when he flew for American Eagle in 2002.

When asked to describe the accident sequence, he said up to that point, everything seemed normal. He had taken the first break on the flight, and when he came back up to the cockpit, captain went to the back, and then the FO took his break. They had a slight reroute on their oceanic clearance, and everything on the flight was normal. They had occasional moderate turbulence during the flight, but nothing that required a change in altitude. When the captain took his break, he sat in the captain's seat. When the captain returned there had been no changes. The FB took a short break and returned to relieve the FO. The FO then took his break, and he [FB] sat in the FO's seat. While he sat in the FO's seat, they had to deviate around a little weather near Bangor, which required them to deviate east of course

About 25 minutes prior to landing at JFK the FO returned to the cockpit from his break. The FB then took a bathroom break. When he returned to the cockpit, he did not ask for or expect a briefing about the status of the airplane since the captain and FO were in position for the landing. He cleaned up the jumpseat, got strapped in, and put his headset on. The captain briefed the approach into JFK as he [FB] was looking at his iPad. He said he did not have much to do at that point. He looked up and saw the airspeed, which looked to be around 200 knots and he tried to figure out why it was so low. He saw 250 kias in the SPD window on the Mode Control Panel. He realized at that slow of airspeed they approached a stall, and he quickly said "speed" three times with

increasing loudness. They were getting dangerously low on airspeed, and the captain was startled and did not see it immediately that the thrust levers were back. The speed was still decreasing, and he was worried about a stall. He announced “push it over” to lower the angle of attack. The captain disconnected the autopilot and autothrottles, went forward on the yolk, and manually increased thrust. The airspeed went up, and about a minute later they got a call from the cabin. The pilots were flying the airplane, so he took the call and was told the flight attendants had been standing up in the back and that there were injuries. He reported that to the captain, and the FO started to call the cabin but he [FB] said he would handle it. He called the ramp tower to have an ambulance and paramedics meet the aircraft at the gate. He then called the number one purser since ramp had asked for the injured flight attendants name. He then talked to the number 1 flight attendant to assess the injuries, and then called the ramp to advise they would need an ambulance.

They landed and taxied to the gate where paramedics met the flight along with the port authority, who asked them for a brief statement. They also contacted the union representative. They blocked in about 1315, stayed there for about one to one and a half hours before the captain told them to leave. The captain completed the paperwork and they cleared customs before getting a call from American Airlines.

The captain was the pilot flying [PF], and they were conducting the Parch 3 arrival into JFK. He did not recall if there were any deferred maintenance items in the aircraft logbook, but said there was nothing in the logbook that effected their situation. He further said there were no maintenance problems with the aircraft on the inbound leg, and when they arrived at the airplane in EDI, the airplane was ready for them.

When asked if there were any aural or visual annunciations or warnings before, during, or after the event, he said none that he could recall. There was a bump during the event as the captain initiated the recovery, but that could have been the autothrottles and autopilot being disconnected.

When asked to describe the weather at the time of the event, he said that it was good weather, VFR [visual flight rules] and there was no turbulence. The wind at JFK was less than 10 knots. He did not recall if there was a tailwind at the time of the event since after the event, he was busy talking to the flight attendants. He said arrivals into JFK had been using runway 22 all morning long.

They were level at 12,000 feet [mean sea level] at the time of the event, and were not conducting any vectoring or maneuvering. Soon after the event, they received a clearance to descend to 7,000 feet. When asked if he recalled what the indicated airspeed was just prior to the event, he said when he looked up he saw it was around 200 knots and decreasing, and got as low as 190, but could have gone lower. It got real busy during the event, and he noticed that the thrust levers were back, and not up where he would expect them to be. He said that the autothrottles seemed like they were not engaged. The airplane configuration was clean, and there were no flaps extended.

He said the FO took last cabin break, and the FO returned to the cockpit about 25 minutes before arrival. The autopilot and flight directors were on when they were level at 12,000 feet. He remembered there was some discussion about the altimeter setting, and that the FO had said his was at 12,150 feet and the captain's was at 12,000 feet, but he may have those reversed. He recalled that the FO said they were in VNAV [vertical navigation], but that may have been after the event.

since he did not see what they were in prior to the event. He believed they were navigating in LNAV [lateral navigation] mode.

When asked if the autothrottles were on, he said they appeared to be selected on, but the speed window was showing 250 knots but they [throttles] were not responding to that speed. He said the FMA [flight mode annunciator] was located on the top of the ADI [attitude directional indicator] displays. When asked if they were using the FMC [flight mode computer] selected autothrust modes, or using the thrust management inputs from the MCP [mode control panel], he said he was not sure. He did not recall what reference mode the autothrust was in prior to the event. He said the airplane had a fast/slow indication on the ADI which would show the “eyebrows” as the airplane got close to a stall, but did not recall seeing those.

He said that during the recovery, the captain used thrust to recover, and brought the thrust up, but did not believe it reached the firewall limit. He did not recall seeing THR HOLD mode annunciated on the FMA from where he was sitting, and was not sure if the captain had disconnected the autothrottles other than the captain had used thrust during the recovery.

When asked what pitch the airplane got to, he said he was not exactly sure since he was fixated on the airspeed.

He also did not notice if the stabilizer trim was operating prior to the event since there was no reason to believe it was not operating, but there was no aural indication that the stabilizer was not operating. He said the stick shaker never fired during the event or recovery.

When asked how much pitch change occurred during the recovery, he said the captain initially pitched down, then back up, and then pitched down when they started their descent to 7,000 feet. He did not know if there was limited control of the pitch after the thrust was applied during the recovery, but the thrust seemed to work when it was recovered. They reset autothrottle switch, turned it off and then back on again.

He said there was no warning, aural or visual, to warn them about the speed reduction. There was also no transfer of controls during the event, and did not recall any callouts being made.

He said they did not declare an emergency, and ATC was not advised of their situation. When asked why not, he said because there was not any altitude deviation following the event. When asked if dispatch had been notified, he said he was not sure if the captain had contacted dispatch, but they had not contacted dispatch while they were in the air.

When asked if he had ever experienced anything similar to the accident event in an airplane, he said no.

When asked to describe his interaction with the other crewmembers, he said it was fine, and that the captain and FO were easy to get along with. The captain was briefing the approach, that was when he [FB] noticed the speed decay. The captain was still the PF during his approach brief. He said their workload went from light to very heavy when the event occurred, and prior to that

everything seemed normal then got real busy after the event. To his knowledge, there was no tension between the pilots prior to the event.

When asked if he had received any training, ground or simulator, to prepare him for this type of encounter, he said yes, they practiced stalls and approach to stalls in training, and that was his concern when he saw the airspeed; that it was headed to a critical speed, he wanted to stop that. He had not yet received Extended Envelope Training [EET]. He had trained on upset recovery, and the last time that occurred was about 9 months ago. He said they received stall training during the recurrent training sessions, and considered it excellent training since he always came out with much more knowledge with all that training.

On the day of the accident, they flew just the one leg from EDI to JFK, with a 0700 am (GMT?) departure [scheduled departure time was 1002 local EDI time]. Their duty time started an hour before departure. He woke up that morning at 0700 local time for an 0800 van departure time. The night before he had gone to bed about 0015 local time. At home, he would typically try to get 7 hours of sleep. Trips to Europe would get split up. When they arrived into EDI, he got to bed about 0800 local time and slept until 1500 local time. He then went back to bed about 0015 local time.

His activities the day before the event included going to the hotel gym for 25 minutes, a run and walk a trip to a botanical garden, watching some rugby, and then back to the hotel about 1715 local time. He got dinner at 1815 local time then got back to the hotel about 2130 where spoke to his wife.

For Tuesday morning, on days he did not fly, he would stay up a little later, so for Monday night he went to sleep about 2330. He stayed in bed Tuesday morning until about 0830, had breakfast, went to gym, ate, made some sandwiches for a trip, left home at 1400 and arrived into operations about 1700.

He said his quality of sleep was excellent. At home it was fine, and on the Monday before, he got his kids off to school, hung around the house and slept well. In EDI he got right to bed Wednesday morning. He had gotten to bed about 0015 local EDI time, and said he had excellent sleep for a Europe trip.

He considered his overall state of health as excellent, did not take any prescription or nonprescription drugs. He not had any changes to his state health, financial situation other than making more money, which was good, and no changes to his personal life, either good or bad, in the past year, and considered himself very happy.

He had not been involved in any past incidents or accidents other than flying a Saab for Express Airlines that was struck by lightning, but that was not an issue. He had never been disciplined as a pilot.

He was not aware of any distractions in the cockpit prior to the event, but he had just recently returned to the cockpit from a bathroom break when he noticed the speed and notified the crew. He did not believe there was any problems with the visibility or layout of the displays or controls in the cockpit.

When asked if, while in descent mode, if the airspeed flashed amber or red as the speed came down, he said he did not recall, and he did not recall seeing the yellow “hook” on the airspeed indicator.¹

When asked if the recovery included an initial push down followed by the nose coming back up, he said he believed so, but that may have been due to the autopilot being disconnected.

¹ According to the American Airlines B-757 Volume II, minimum maneuvering speed is indicated by an amber hook from the Minimum Maneuvering Speed down to stick shaker activation speed (minimum speed).

When asked to clarify that, at time returned he from restroom break, the aircraft had been cleared at 12,000, he said yes, that was the clearance. He did not ask for a briefing since his return did not mean a crew change like that which would be done for a crew briefing.

When asked if they received a lower altitude from ATC after the event, he said that ATC happened to call them to descend to 7,000 feet for the approach, but he did not recall an altitude deviation. He did not know if at the time of the event they were on a heading out of Calverton [CCC], which was about the location of the event.

When asked if it was American Airlines policy for the PF to brief the approach, he said yes, and they were to transfer controls during that process.

When asked where the flight attendants were during the event, he said they were in the back of the airplane and was told they went airborne during the event. When asked if the pitch up he mentioned was in response to the thrust, he said it must have been, but he did not feel it that much.

When asked if he had any questions, he said no. When asked if there was anything a crew could do in hindsight if they found themselves in a similar situation, he said he thought he should have been more specific with his terminology, like saying airspeed is low, at the time. There some time to process what he was seeing as the speed degraded.

When asked if he had anything further to add to assist the investigation, he said no.

Interview concluded at 1023.