

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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SIKORSKY S76B HELICOPTER N72EX

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CRASH NEAR CALABASAS, CALIFORNIA,

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ON JANUARY 26, 2020

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Interview of: ALEC CAPITANO, Pilot

Island Express Helicopters

Island Express Helicopters
Long Beach, CaliforniaFriday,
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APPEARANCES:

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:16 a.m.)

DR. SILVA: On the record at 0916.

DR. SEVILLIAN: Good morning, Alec. My name is Dajuan Sevillian. I'm a human performance investigator with the NTSB. We appreciate you being here today to speak with us.

Just to let you know, the mission of the NTSB is to go through safety investigation process and then we come up with recommendations to help support the industry. That's our main goal and that's why we're here. You're here because you are an expert and we want to hear from you. We want your contribution in helping us understand the process and procedures.

We will have a two-round interview where we'll go around the table and we'll have folks ask questions. Everything that we talk about today is going to part of a public docket here in the future.

Just to let you know, we have NTSB investigators. We also have the FAA. FAA is here not from the enforcement side, but from the safety side. We also have company representatives. And speaking of representative, you're allowed one representative of your choosing. Who would you like to represent you today?

MR. CAPITANO: This gentleman right here.

DR. SEVILLIAN: Please state his name for the record.

MR. CAPITANO: Don Swaim.

DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. And with that being said, I'd like to

1 go around the room and have folks introduce themselves.

2 MR. SALAZAR: Alec, Fabian Salazar, NTSB operations.

3 DR. SILVA: Go ahead.

4 MR. RIGSBY: Matt Rigsby, FAA Office of Investigation. Just
5 to reiterate the fact I have no regulatory authority, so --

6 MR. CAPITANO: Okay.

7 DR. SILVA: Sathya Silva, I'm human performance at the NTSB.

8 MR. DALTON: And then of course me. I'm representing the
9 company --

10 MR. CAPITANO: Okay.

11 MR. DALTON: -- of the experience of the aircraft.

12 DR. SEVILLIAN: All right. Any other questions before we get
13 started?

14 MR. CAPITANO: No.

15 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay.

16 INTERVIEW OF ALEC CAPITANO

17 BY DR. SEVILLIAN:

18 Q. So, for the record, could you please state your first and
19 last name with spelling?

20 A. Alec Capitano, A-l-e-c, C-a-p-i-t-a-n-o.

21 Q. And what's your position and title?

22 A. I'm a line pilot at IEX Helicopters.

23 Q. Can you explain your roles and responsibilities with the
24 company?

25 A. My roles and responsibilities are to operate the aircraft

1 under a Part 135 certificate.

2 Q. Can you give us a brief biographical sketch of your aviation
3 background?

4 A. Yeah. So, I received private instrument commercial and
5 certified flight instructor, certified instrument instructor. I
6 worked for various companies in the western United States.

7 Q. Do you have any experience flying the -- what helicopter
8 experience do you have?

9 A. Airbus products and a few Bell products.

10 Q. Okay. Which Airbus products do you have?

11 A. The AS350, AS355, EC-130. That's it.

12 Q. Any S-76 experience?

13 A. No.

14 Q. All right. About how many, approximation, hours do you have
15 total time?

16 A. 3,000.

17 Q. So you mentioned earlier being a pilot, and when you're --
18 before you go to, you know, fly somewhere, what do you -- do you
19 fill out any sort of -- is there a process that you go through
20 before you take an aircraft out before flying?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. What process do you typically go through?

23 A. I will, before I fly, I check the weather and I submit a
24 flight risk analysis with our SMS system.

25 Q. Okay. So can you help me understand the flight risk

1 analysis, how that -- what's the process? How do you fill that
2 out?

3 A. It's online, and it's a series of questions that you check
4 the box and it'll give you a score depending on -- it'll give you
5 a score depending on what you select, and then it'll total that
6 and you're either under or over a certain number in that risk
7 guide that needs to be mitigated or you're okay to go.

8 Q. So, in your experience, have you ever had to mitigate a risk?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay. When you're filling out this form, is there certain
11 criteria on the form that you are focused on when you fill it out?

12 A. Yes. There's multiple different categories.

13 Q. Do most pilots here at the company fill these forms out
14 before they leave for a flight?

15 A. To the best of my knowledge. But I don't -- only know for
16 myself.

17 Q. Okay. So you explained a little bit about a safety process,
18 the flight risk assessment tool, and you also named safety
19 management systems. If you have a safety hazard or something that
20 you need to communicate, who do you communicate with regarding
21 that?

22 A. First, would be our chief pilot, and if he's not available,
23 then our director of operations or safety manager.

24 Q. Okay. And have you ever had a need to go speak with them in
25 any situation?

1 A. I don't believe so.

2 Q. Is there any sort of -- what does the company do as far as
3 working with the pilots and communicating safety-related issues?
4 Is there any sort of program that the company has on how to
5 communicate?

6 A. We have monthly safety meetings.

7 Q. Okay. And do you attend those safety meetings?

8 A. I have before via phone call.

9 Q. Help me understand what's covered in those safety meetings.

10 A. We speak -- multiple factors or multiple aspects from the
11 company, so ground operation side as well as flight operation
12 side.

13 Q. On the flight operation side, what's generally the
14 discussion?

15 A. It varies every meeting.

16 Q. Can you give an example from the last meeting?

17 A. I believe in our last meeting one of the aspects that we
18 spoke about, if I remember correctly, was two passengers in our --
19 so in the AStar, flying with two passengers in the front seat over
20 to the island.

21 Q. And what was the issue with that?

22 A. Just ensuring that we didn't have any bags up front with
23 them. So no purses or straps or anything like that.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So making sure that everybody was on board.

1 Q. And so, after that meeting, how is that information, for that
2 example, disseminated to pilots?

3 A. Our meetings are transposed, written down, and then we sign
4 them, acknowledging that we've read them.

5 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. All right. That's all the questions I
6 have for right now.

7 Fabian.

8 BY MR. SALAZAR:

9 Q. One of the things that we didn't mention on the in-briefing
10 was, as we get into the interview, if there's a time that you need
11 to take a break or would like to take a break --

12 A. Okay.

13 Q. -- just let us know.

14 All right. And we'll go from there. Sticking with the
15 flight history, do you fly the AStar for Island Express?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay. Those missions that you fly, describe for us your
18 missions in the AStar.

19 A. My mission in the AStar is primarily island flights.

20 Q. Okay. You don't do the offshore support?

21 A. Yes, I do.

22 Q. Okay. But primarily the island.

23 A. But primarily the island flights.

24 Q. And that's the charter flights. Weather for those flights,
25 do you recall what your weather minimums are or where you can go

1 to get them?

2 A. I would have to reference our GOM.

3 Q. Okay. All right. When you're planning your mission and
4 you're checking weather, what are the tools that you use to get
5 your weather?

6 A. I use two sources: aviationweather.gov and ForeFlight.

7 Q. Okay. When you guys are conducting your safety meetings, do
8 you recall having any safety meetings that covered IIMC,
9 inadvertent instrument meteorological --

10 A. I don't recall.

11 Q. And do you recall any that may have covered anything with
12 controlled flight into terrain avoidance?

13 A. I don't recall.

14 Q. Okay. Let's talk about your history with Island Express.
15 How many years have you been with the company?

16 A. Only -- I believe I was brought on in May or June of last
17 year.

18 Q. Okay. And you took your training flight -- well, let's start
19 over. When you hired on, what were some of the ground training or
20 ground school tasks that you underwent prior to getting into the
21 aircraft to go fly?

22 A. To the best of my knowledge, I believe we covered everything
23 from systems to routes to weather.

24 Q. Okay. Once you were completed with the ground school and
25 then you got into the aircraft, did you go through a series of

1 training flights prior to the chief pilot signing you off to go
2 fly?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. Can you tell us some of the things that you covered
5 during some of those flights?

6 A. Yeah. We covered maneuvers, both normal as well as emergency
7 procedures.

8 Q. Okay. Did you do autorotations to test down autorotations?

9 A. No.

10 Q. No. Power recovery?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. Who did you take these check rides with?

13 A. Check rides or training flights?

14 Q. Training flights and the check rides. Start with the check
15 rides.

16 A. My training flights with Ara and then my subsequent check
17 ride was with Garret.

18 Q. Okay. On your training flights with Ara, tell us a little
19 bit about Ara in the cockpit.

20 A. Professional, calm, knowledgeable. Ara has some good
21 characteristics.

22 Q. Okay. Very good. As you were doing your training, did you
23 ever do any maneuvers that he considered unsat?

24 A. Not to my knowledge.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. I don't believe so.

2 Q. Okay. So if you did something that could use maybe just a
3 little bit of polishing up, say that's a good autorotation, let's
4 try a -- did he go through any type of additional training with
5 you to help you improve your skills?

6 A. We didn't do any additional training but we definitely
7 practiced maneuvers more than once, if that's what you're asking.

8 Q. Okay. Then you took your check ride in the aircraft with
9 Garret?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. Tell us a little bit about Garret.

12 A. Garret, same thing; very professional. We covered every
13 maneuver and it was treated to the same level of any other check
14 ride that I've taken.

15 Q. Okay. Were any of the maneuvers on that check ride unsat?

16 A. I do not believe so.

17 Q. Okay. Then you were signed off and you started flying with
18 the company --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- as far as the mission flights?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. Getting into weather on the mission flights. What's
23 the lowest you can go down, let's say, unlimited visibility?
24 What's the lowest altitude you can fly at on these charter flights
25 to Catalina?

1 A. To Catalina, I believe it is 300 feet with unlimited
2 visibility.

3 Q. Have you found yourself in the scenario where you've made the
4 flight at 300 feet?

5 A. Never 300.

6 Q. Okay. Have you set personal limits for yourself?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. What are your personal limits?

9 A. 500 and 3 to the island.

10 Q. Okay. On any of your flights with Ara or actually any
11 conversations with Ara, has he ever -- have you ever swapped war
12 stories and talked about, you know, the old "there I was"?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Has he ever told you about any of the challenges that he has
15 to face flying VIP flights?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Has he ever talked at all about the charter flights with the
18 VIPs that he flies?

19 A. Sure. Yes.

20 Q. What can you share with us? What type of things would he
21 tell you in general terms? I'm not looking for a specific
22 example.

23 A. He enjoyed what he did and he took a lot of pride in who flew
24 and how he -- yeah, I think he took a lot of pride in his job.

25 Q. Okay. Did he ever tell you about a flight that he took where

1 he had to stay out later than he would have liked?

2 A. Nothing specific that I recall.

3 Q. Did you hear about a flight that he had to take -- it was a
4 charter flight, he had to take a VIP out and stayed out late, got
5 low on fuel and ended up having to descend to a cloud layer to get
6 back?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Any unusual circumstances ever with Ara that struck you as
9 odd, whether it be flying or just talking in the hangar?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay. On a given week when you're flying, how often would
12 you say you interact with the director of operations and the chief
13 pilot?

14 A. Often.

15 Q. Okay. And during those interactions, is it purely business
16 related and related to the flights or were you guys personal
17 friends?

18 A. Yes.

19 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. That's all the questions I have at this
20 time.

21 DR. SEVILLIAN: Thank you, Fabian.

22 Let's go to Matthew.

23 BY MR. RIGSBY:

24 Q. Okay. Alec, you mentioned that part of your training
25 included autorotation training.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Do you recall what altitude you entered the auto at for power
3 recovery?

4 A. I don't recall. Between 500 and 1,000 at the airport.

5 Q. Okay. How would you describe -- do you ever take flights
6 across the basin?

7 A. (No audible response.)

8 Q. How would you describe the air traffic complexity as a pilot?
9 You know, interacting with air traffic.

10 A. It can be challenging if you're unfamiliar.

11 Q. Any issues with air traffic ever on your flights?

12 A. I have not.

13 Q. Okay. How about interaction with the principal operations
14 inspector for the company? Have you ever interacted with the FAA
15 principal operations inspector?

16 A. Not while I've worked with Island Express.

17 Q. Okay. Okay. As part of your initial training, do you get --
18 and I may have missed; I was writing, so I may have missed, but do
19 you get any IIMC recovery training?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. You do. What's the company -- is there a standard process,
22 you know, for IIMC recovery?

23 A. I've only been through one check ride here.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So I don't know if there's a standard. I know what -- but we

1 did it.

2 Q. Okay. But what would you do if you -- inadvertent IMC,
3 what's your -- you know, we talked about your personal --

4 A. Yeah. Depends where I am.

5 Q. Okay. That's fine. Understandable. Multiple ways you can
6 deal with a --

7 A. Yeah. Depends where I am.

8 Q. What about CFIT training? Like for a CFIT, CFIT avoidance
9 training.

10 A. Yes. I believe that we covered it.

11 Q. Okay. Was that in your initial or --

12 A. In my initial, yeah.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. I haven't done recurrent --

15 Q. Haven't done recurrent here. Okay.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Have you turned flights down for your own personal minimums?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. Have you been counseled or anything after doing that?

20 A. No.

21 MR. RIGSBY: I think that's it. Thank you.

22 DR. SEVILLIAN: Thanks Matt. Sathya.

23 DR. SILVA: No questions at this time.

24 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. Garret.

25 MR. DALTON: Yeah. I just have one or two.

1 BY MR. DALTON:

2 Q. Going back to the safety meetings. I know you're probably
3 put on the spot to recall exactly what might have been discussed
4 in the last one. And can you recall if we ever discussed anything
5 like (indiscernible) like man a downed helicopter or anything like
6 that?

7 A. I don't recall.

8 Q. Okay. That's fine.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. And I know Fabian kind of touched on this with the IIMC
11 training and the ground training. Do you recall if that was
12 covered on CTS?

13 A. I believe it was.

14 Q. Okay. And then you mentioned -- somebody asked if you've
15 ever turned down a flight and you said yes. Did you feel that the
16 company supported your decision?

17 A. Yes.

18 MR. DALTON: That's all I have.

19 DR. SEVILLIAN: Thank you.

20 Okay. So, that concludes our first round. We're going to go
21 through one more round. I'll start.

22 BY DR. SEVILLIAN:

23 Q. How would you describe the safety culture here at Island
24 Express?

25 A. Strong and supportive.

1 Q. And when you say strong and supportive, could you elaborate
2 on that?

3 A. I personally have not felt questions for the decisions I've
4 made. So --

5 Q. And those decisions, when you say decisions, what are you
6 referring to?

7 A. A variety of factors. So it could be turning down a flight,
8 turning away a passenger.

9 Q. Can you walk me through the process on how you would turn
10 down a flight if you need to?

11 A. I would raise my concern, provide the facts for the flight.
12 I mean, any concern, right. It doesn't have to be weather. I
13 could raise my concern for a passenger. Provide the facts, and
14 then I would be fully supported by the company in whatever
15 decision I made.

16 Q. All right. So, we talked earlier about the flight risk
17 analysis --

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. -- and that you fill out. Are there any other tools that you
20 use as part of the safety management system here at the company?

21 A. No. I believe the flight risk analysis is the primary tool
22 that we use.

23 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. And that's the questions that I have
24 for right now.

25 Fabian.

1 BY MR. SALAZAR:

2 Q. Do you guys in the course of the year, do you guys do any
3 instrument flights or even with foggles, simulated instrument
4 flying for training or personal development?

5 A. Yes. I flew approaches on my check ride.

6 Q. Okay. During your check ride, how did you get to that point
7 where you were flying an instrument approach? So backing up maybe
8 15, 20, 30 minutes, was it a surprise or how did you transition to
9 an instrument approach?

10 A. No. It was separate. We did inadvertent, you know,
11 recognition and recovery. And then as I still had the foggles on,
12 I set up for the approach.

13 Q. Okay. All right. So let's -- now let's back up just a
14 little bit from there. Here's your scenario: Flat terrain for
15 100 miles. Okay, there's nothing out -- no towers, no hazards.
16 Okay. There's -- the instructor hands you a set of foggles and he
17 says you're inadvertent IMC. What are the things that you are
18 going to do at that point?

19 A. It's flat for 100 miles? Maintain my heading and altitude
20 and get on with the controller.

21 Q. Thank you. Finish this sentence for me or this phrase:
22 Aviate, navigate --

23 A. Communicate.

24 Q. All right. Couple more questions. Let me see what I got.
25 This may sound redundant but I'm going to ask it this way. Have

1 you ever felt pressure from the company to complete the mission
2 despite weather being close to the minimum?

3 A. No.

4 MR. SALAZAR: That's it. Thank you.

5 DR. SEVILLIAN: Thank you, Fabian.

6 Matt.

7 BY MR. RIGSBY:

8 Q. Just a couple more. Were you flying this past Saturday or
9 Sunday?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. How would you describe the weather both days?

12 A. For my route, I don't recall exactly what the weather was
13 from Long Beach, but I'm confident that it was at least marginal
14 VFR because I did not get special out of here either day.

15 Q. Okay. And your route, what is that?

16 A. This was for island flights.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. So, Long Beach to Queensway; Queensway to the island.

19 Q. Okay. Have you ever actually had a true engine failure where
20 you had to do an autorotation?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Your experience before this, before the AStar, did you learn
23 -- what type of aircraft did you learn to fly in?

24 A. The Robinsons.

25 Q. Robinson. Okay. So you're good at power management then.

1 MR. RIGSBY: Okay. I don't have anything else.

2 DR. SEVILLIAN: Thanks, Matt.

3 Sathya.

4 BY DR. SILVA:

5 Q. So, along the lines of your background, when did you start to
6 fly?

7 A. 2010.

8 Q. Okay. So you mentioned that -- so did you do all your
9 ratings and then start to fly professionally?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. So can you walk us through who you worked for and what kind
12 of operation?

13 A. Sure. So I got my ratings, license and ratings. Went to
14 Embry-Riddle. I came back from Embry-Riddle. Graduated Long
15 Beach. Went to -- was a flight instructor. From flight
16 instructor, I went to an operator in the Grand Canyon. From an
17 operator in the Grand Canyon, I went to an operator in Los Angeles
18 and flew two different types of missions. So I flew news,
19 electronic news gathering, as well as HA air medical flights. And
20 from that operator, I came to Island Express Helicopters.

21 Q. In May, you said?

22 A. I believe so.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. It was some time in the early summer of last year.

25 Q. Okay. Were all of these Part 135 flights or operations?

1 A. I believe so.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Beside from flight instructing.

4 Q. In your previous jobs, did you have to do any sim training?
5 Nobody gave you any sim training?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Have you had to do any inadvertent IMC training for any of
8 those previous positions?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. What did those training flights look like?

11 A. They varied.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Depending on who I was -- what operator I was flying with,
14 but they all had the same idea.

15 Q. Which is what?

16 A. So you went inadvertent and we had to recover.

17 Q. So regarding the training here, can you kind of walk me
18 through what your scenario looked like? You were flying around
19 VMC and then what happened?

20 A. It's hard to remember exactly how he performed the maneuver,
21 but it was along the lines of inadvertent -- you become
22 disorientated whether -- I don't remember if I had my eyes closed
23 or if I looked down or -- some sort of loss of visual reference.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And then from there, we -- positive exchange of flight

1 controls and a recovery.

2 Q. So would you describe what you did as unusual attitude
3 recovery or did you actually have to get yourself out of IMC
4 again?

5 A. We were never in IMC.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. Yeah. So I don't think we have to characterize it as unusual
8 attitude because the attitude doesn't have to be unusual.

9 Q. Okay. So to follow up on Fabian's question with the 100
10 miles and flat terrain, flat terrain for 100 miles. The other
11 scenario, because you mentioned that your recovery would change
12 depending on where you are. So let's say that you were in a
13 valley. How would you respond to an inadvertent encounter there?

14 A. Well, I would -- depends what aircraft I'm in, too. So
15 there's a lot of different factors, I think, in how I'd react.
16 But I would initiate a climb if I was in a valley.

17 Q. Okay. What would change with the aircraft?

18 A. The equipment on board? With regards to equipment on board?

19 Q. What kind of equipment? Yeah.

20 A. If it had autopilot. So if I'm in an AStar or if I'm in a
21 different aircraft. And then if I had, you know, somebody else
22 with me or not.

23 Q. Okay. Do you typically fly with another pilot?

24 A. I have in the past.

25 Q. With this operator?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Okay. How often do you use the autopilot?

3 A. For the aircraft that I fly here, I don't have autopilot.

4 Q. You don't have it. Okay. Okay. So given the scenario you

5 would have here, which is no autopilot, no extra pilot --

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. -- so what would your response be for that?

8 A. I would initiate a climb.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Maintain a level -- well, a level attitude in a climb and

11 then get on with appropriate approach or departure control or

12 center control or somebody.

13 Q. Okay. Does the company have any guidance on your recovery or

14 suggested recovery for an inadvertent IMC?

15 A. I'd have to check our GOM.

16 Q. Okay. That's fine. Are you IFR current right now?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Do you remember the last time you were?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Okay. So you mentioned you do some approaches within your

21 training, whether it's the training or the check ride. We talked

22 about inadvertent IMC and we talked about approaches. Is there

23 anything else you do in terms of IFR training?

24 A. I believe so.

25 Q. Do you recall what those are?

1 A. In terms of what approaches we fly?

2 Q. Or yeah. So types of approaches, how long are you simulated
3 IMC?

4 A. So on my -- to the best of my knowledge, from what I
5 remember, on my training flights and check ride here we flew three
6 different types of approaches: VOR, IOS, and GPS.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And the best that I remember is we -- I spent time under the
9 hood because we set up and we were held, so -- those approaches
10 were back to back. So it was a decent amount of time.

11 Q. Okay. And you were under the hood the whole time?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay. So you were hired here for the AStar?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. Was there any expectation to move into the Sikorsky?

18 A. Not that I'm aware of.

19 Q. Okay. Does the company have a safety reporting system that
20 you know of?

21 A. I believe so.

22 Q. Have you had to use it before?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Do you know what it looks like? How you would use it?

25 A. I do.

1 Q. Can you describe that for me?

2 A. Yes. I believe it's just a form on PRISM set up similar to
3 our risk assessment that allows you to report any sort of behavior
4 that you see.

5 Q. Do you know if that is anonymous or can be anonymous?

6 A. I believe it can be.

7 Q. In these safety meetings, do you recall if there were any
8 topics related to inadvertent IMC or low weather in particular?

9 A. I'm sure there were but I don't remember a specific.

10 Q. Okay. You mentioned your personal minimums going over to the
11 island was 503. Do you have different minimums over land?
12 Different missions?

13 A. Sure.

14 Q. What would that --

15 A. Depends where I'm going.

16 Q. Okay. Can you walk me through what kind of decision making
17 are you doing in terms of those limits?

18 A. Checking the weather, obstacle avoidance, and then a big
19 factor here as a 135 operator is noise consideration.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. So we operate in a very sensitive area.

22 Q. So how would those minimums change?

23 A. They'd increase over land.

24 Q. Can you give me order of magnitude or are you talking --

25 A. I don't have a specific.

1 Q. -- 2,000? Or are you talking a couple extra hundred feet?

2 A. It could be 2,000 depending on where I'm going. I don't have
3 a specific hard line.

4 Q. Okay. You mentioned that you've turned down flights for
5 weather. How often does that happen?

6 A. Not often.

7 Q. So, in the time that you've been here since May, how many
8 times would you say approximately?

9 A. Maybe four times.

10 Q. Okay. Have you ever had to turn around in flight or abort,
11 terminate a flight after you've taken off?

12 A. No. No.

13 Q. Do you feel like you could if you needed to?

14 A. Sure. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. So you mentioned that you felt supported by management
16 in your decisions to cancel a flight. Which management are you
17 referring to there? Who are you coordinating with?

18 A. Three individuals: chief pilot, director of operations, and
19 safety manager.

20 Q. Okay. And all three of them, would you agree, are
21 supportive?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Okay. How often would you say that you have to request
24 Special VFR?

25 A. Out of Long Beach?

1 Q. In general, whether it's out of Long Beach, into your
2 destination or transitioning.

3 A. Rarely.

4 Q. Okay. So, in the time you've been here, how many times
5 approximately?

6 A. Approximately, I don't know. Three, maybe.

7 Q. Okay. Is there any special consideration that you have to
8 take when doing that or if you know that the weather is below VFR
9 minimums; any extra precautions or paperwork or anything along
10 those lines?

11 A. Internally or with the control tower?

12 Q. Yes. Within the company. Any extra risk management?

13 A. Well, it falls into our SMS.

14 Q. Okay. Can you explain that? What does that mean?

15 A. I'd have to see a blank one, but there's a check box there
16 that says weather is below VFR, I believe.

17 Q. For the flight risk assessment?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. Let's see. Talk to me about cloud clearances. You've
20 got some minimum altitudes you have to maintain. So what are the
21 cloud clearance requirements around here?

22 A. I'd have to reference 91.155 I believe is the VFR weather
23 minimums.

24 Q. Okay. So --

25 A. So, it changes for airspace.

1 Q. Right. So, let's say you're under controlled and you've got
2 that 300 feet flight, do you find yourself close to those clouds
3 or do you have some buffer between you?

4 A. I don't fly at 300 feet.

5 Q. Or sorry. You said your minimums were 500 over water, over
6 to Catalina. Do you remember, in the cases that you've had the
7 low weather, that you have been flying that low?

8 A. I don't remember.

9 Q. Let's see. So you mentioned that the company has a strong
10 safety culture. If there was anything you could change about your
11 job, what would it be?

12 A. My job at Island Express?

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. What would it be?

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. My schedule.

17 Q. Okay. Can you expand on that?

18 A. Yeah. I'd like a regular 4-on/3-off schedule with 3
19 consecutive days off in a row.

20 Q. So, what does your schedule look like now?

21 A. It varies month to month.

22 Q. Okay. So what's challenging about it? Can you give us some
23 examples?

24 A. Just planning stuff outside of work.

25 Q. So I'm just trying to get a feel for a typical day. So, if

1 you're flying island flights, what does that look like? Is that a
2 full day for you?

3 A. It can be in the summer. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. So what's challenging? Kind of unpredictability?

5 A. Now I'll back up.

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. My schedule's predictable. I know what I'm doing on a day-
8 to-day basis. The days I work are unpredictable. So I know in
9 advance, well in advance what days I'm working for the month.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. But I don't ever have 3 days off in a row, consecutive.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So it makes it very difficult to plan things outside of work
14 with my family.

15 Q. Okay. I see. So you mentioned that you personally have not
16 felt any pressure for turning down flights. Do you know of others
17 who have felt pressure?

18 A. Not that I'm aware of.

19 Q. How would you describe the morale amongst the pilot group?

20 A. I believe it's good. I don't talk to many people here.

21 Q. Yeah. So who do you report to?

22 A. The chief pilot.

23 Q. How is that interaction?

24 A. It was good.

25 Q. So what kinds of things did you discuss? How often did you

1 see him?

2 A. Work related?

3 Q. Yeah, let's split that up. So work related, yeah.

4 A. I saw him often.

5 Q. Is that every day you're out here or --

6 A. Almost. Yeah.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. A fair amount. And I was well informed with what was going

9 on. I guess, a good way to put it.

10 Q. Within the company or with your -- can you describe that?

11 A. Yeah. With my flights.

12 Q. And he would be the one providing you that information?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. Have you ever flown with him outside of training?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. What were those circumstances?

17 A. I don't recall where we went, but I believe it was just a

18 charter flight.

19 Q. Okay. Was that something he just said hop along or what led

20 to that?

21 A. Yes. Yeah, exactly. I was standby here.

22 Q. Okay. What were Ara's strengths as a pilot?

23 A. I can't speak for him. I don't --

24 Q. So in the experience that you've had flying with him or a

25 flight instructor, in that sense? You've had some experience --

1 A. I'm not an examiner or DP or anything so I don't have any
2 critique.

3 Q. Okay. Have you encountered any challenges working with Ara?

4 A. I mean, no. He was in charge of the schedule, so that was
5 the one thing I would change. But no, I haven't had any issues.

6 Q. Did you discuss the schedule with him?

7 A. Yeah. Yes.

8 Q. To voice your concern?

9 A. I have. Yes.

10 Q. How was that? How did those conversations go?

11 A. Well, he did the best he could to accommodate.

12 Q. Did you feel like there were results after your
13 conversations?

14 A. Yeah. Yes.

15 Q. Do you have a feel for how comfortable Ara was in weather
16 that was apparent on the --

17 A. I do not.

18 Q. Okay. Let's see. So we understand it's your last day today.

19 A. Yesterday.

20 Q. Yesterday. Well, thank you for coming in. What's your plan
21 for the future?

22 A. I'm undecided. I may go up to another operator in the
23 valley, one of my previous employers, or I may stray from
24 aviation.

25 DR. SILVA: Okay. All right. That's all the questions I

1 have. Thank you.

2 DR. SEVILLIAN: Thanks, Sathya.

3 Let's go here.

4 BY MR. DALTON:

5 Q. Just one or two. I'll try to keep this brief. Sathya asked
6 about, I believe it was Sathya, ask about safety reporting within
7 the company. And do we have a hazard report?

8 A. We do.

9 Q. Have you ever used a hazard report?

10 A. I don't remember.

11 Q. And have you ever filled out a hazard report for air
12 conditioning not working?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. What was the result of that hazard report?

15 A. It was resolved.

16 Q. Would you say in a timely manner?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Quickly.

20 Q. Have you ever called in sick?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And how was the company's response?

23 A. Feel better.

24 Q. Come back when you feel better?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. Have you ever felt sick when you were doing your duty
2 in the middle of the day?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And how was that resolved?

5 A. Sent home in an appropriate manner.

6 Q. Appropriate manner.

7 A. Yeah. Appropriate manner. Yes, not sent home away, but take
8 the rest of the day off and we'll have somebody cover you.

9 Q. So they didn't expect you to continue flying?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay. And then Sathya was asking about cloud clearances.
12 And just a couple of questions to try hopefully clarify. If
13 you're flying from Queensway to the island, what class space are
14 you in?

15 A. Based on my alt, Echo.

16 Q. So if you're at 500 feet are you still --

17 A. Or Gulf. Uncontrolled, so clear of clouds.

18 Q. Okay. So clear of clouds?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. And then let's see. We talked about the schedule or
21 you talked about the schedule and your challenges with the
22 schedule. So, when Ara's working on the schedule and you knew you
23 had a family occasion that you wanted to attend and you brought it
24 up to Ara, for example, has there ever been an example like that
25 where you wanted a specific day off and you asked him?

1 A. Yes. And --

2 Q. And he worked with you?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. One other thing. You mentioned that -- Sathya asked you
5 reported to the chief pilot and you made a statement that you were
6 well informed. Can you expand a little bit on that? What did you
7 mean by well informed? Was it in relation to your flight duties?

8 A. As far as how often I saw him?

9 Q. No. You mentioned that your interaction with Ara and then
10 you just made a statement that you felt well informed.

11 A. Yeah. I can expand. So if I showed up or when I showed up
12 to work, he had already looked at the schedule and he kind of --
13 it was easy to see that he knew what was going on for the day. So
14 he could tell me that I had -- you know, you've got these flights
15 in the morning and a lunch and these flights in the afternoon. It
16 was very -- he was overseeing everything that I was doing.

17 Q. Okay. And then if -- have you ever had a flight where you
18 were going somewhere unusual, somewhere that you'd never been
19 before --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- like on a charter? And then did you feel supported by
22 your chief pilot as regards to (indiscernible) the flight?

23 A. Yes.

24 MR. DALTON: Okay. That's all I got.

25 DR. SEVILLIAN: Thanks, Garret. Appreciate it.

1 I have one more question before we --

2 MR. CAPITANO: Okay.

3 BY DR. SEVILLIAN:

4 Q. So, you were, earlier you were speaking about your
5 interaction with Ara while you were working at Island Express.
6 Did you ever have any interaction with him outside of work?

7 A. I've had breakfast with him once, I believe.

8 Q. Okay. And outside of work, do you ever discuss how things
9 are going at work?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay. And how was the interaction outside of work?

12 A. It was good. Yeah.

13 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. All right.

14 Anybody have any other?

15 MR. SALAZAR: I have two follow-ups.

16 DR. SEVILLIAN: Yes. Go ahead, Fabian.

17 MR. SALAZAR: All right.

18 BY MR. SALAZAR:

19 Q. Alec, two questions. The first one, who else is on team
20 Capitano?

21 A. I believe there are seven of us right now.

22 Q. Family fun?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Cool. Pretty impressive. Your departure from IEX.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. If all things considered, if you made an additional \$20 an
2 hour, would you stick around?

3 A. Here? Possibly. But I mean, it's not all --

4 Q. Is it not all money related?

5 A. No.

6 Q. There are other factors?

7 A. Sure.

8 Q. Do you mind sharing what they are?

9 A. Family and schedule.

10 MR. SALAZAR: All right. Thank you very much.

11 DR. SEVILLIAN: Thank you, Fabian.

12 MR. RIGBSY: Yeah. I just -- I have a couple.

13 BY MR. RIGBSY:

14 Q. You mentioned that you used ForeFlight. Is that a -- do you
15 have an iPad; do you use your phone? Is it a company provided
16 iPad?

17 A. We have an iPad that we can use. I don't use an iPad when
18 I'm flying.

19 Q. Okay. Do you have paper charts in the aircraft?

20 A. We do. Yeah.

21 Q. Do you get any training on like spacial disorientation or
22 anything like that as far as where the charts are stored and that
23 type of thing?

24 A. Yes. I believe so.

25 Q. Okay. Do you recall it?

1 A. I don't.

2 MR. RIGSBY: Okay. That's all.

3 BY DR. SEVILLIAN:

4 Q. Okay. You do get training on spacial disorientation?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. How often is that training?

7 A. I don't recall. I haven't done any recurrent with the
8 company, so --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. I would imagine that it would be included in my annual
11 training check ride as well as our online CTS.

12 Q. Okay. Can you tell me what CTS stands for?

13 A. I can guess. I don't -- I can look it up. I don't know
14 exactly, but --

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Where are the charts, your
16 paper charts stored in the aircraft?

17 MR. CAPITANO: In the AStar, just to my right.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: To your right.

19 MR. CAPITANO: Next to the fire extinguisher.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's it. Sorry.

21 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. Thank you. Garret?

22 All right. So, that concludes our interview. Is there any
23 questions that we should have asked you that we didn't?

24 MR. CAPITANO: I don't believe so. I know that this will be
25 transposed, correct?

1 DR. SEVILLIAN: Yeah.

2 MR. CAPITANO: Is it possible to receive a copy of the --

3 DR. SEVILLIAN: It will be a part of the public docket.

4 MR. SWAIM: It'll be online.

5 MR. CAPITANO: Okay.

6 MR. SWAIM: You'll be able to see it.

7 MR. CAPITANO: Okay.

8 DR. SEVILLIAN: Yeah. Once the public documents out.

9 Is there anyone else you think we should speak with?

10 MR. CAPITANO: I don't believe so.

11 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. We really appreciate you coming in.

12 MR. CAPITANO: Thank you.

13 DR. SEVILLIAN: Thank you.

14 Off the record.

15 DR. SILVA: Off the record at 10:10.

16 (Whereupon, at 10:10 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

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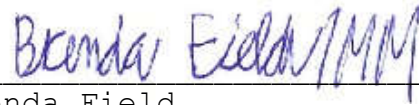
IN THE MATTER OF: SIKORSKY S76B HELICOPTER N72EX
 CRASH NEAR CALABASAS, CALIFORNIA,
 ON JANUARY 26, 2020
 Interview of Alec Capitano

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA20MA059

PLACE: Long Beach, California

DATE: January 31, 2020

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.



Brenda Field
Transcriber