



Witness Statements

ERA14FA010



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Stephen Stein
Investigative Assistant
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Aviation Safety - Eastern Region

NTSB Accident Number: ERA14FA010
Aircraft Registration & Make/Model: N353HW; Eurocopter AS 350 B3
Accident Location: Somerville, TN
Accident Date: October 22, 2013

Note: The following interviews were provided to the Investigator –In-Charge (IIC) by Stephen Stein, NTSB, who documented the interviews.

Interview Summary

Larry Cook
Witness to Accident

Interview date/time: October 23, 2013; 1530 CDT
The Teague Store, Highway 64 and Teague Store Road

Interviewers were Buttner, Hemann, Larimore, and Stein.

Mr. Cook usually arrives at The Teague Store at 0500 CDT as part of a frequent social gathering. On the morning of the accident flight a little after 0600 he heard something fly overheard. It appeared low, but not out the ordinary. Mr. Cook's background in aviation consists of 37 years flying helicopters, airplanes, and as military police. He flew for Hospital wing until he got medically grounded in 1993. During his flights with Hospital Wing he would frequently follow highway 64 coming to Somerville. He did not see the helicopter, but he did hear it fly either directly overheard or very close by. There were several guys sitting with him and he knows one other guy heard the helicopter. At the time the ground was still wet as it had recently stopped raining around 0500. According to Mr. Cook the visibility appeared good at the ground level. No fog. Witness reported that the aircraft he heard was an Astar. The witness was asked what made

him think the helicopter was an Astar. He responded that he was familiar with the aircraft after previously having flown them and he knew it must have been "Wing" [Hospital Wing]. It was pitch dark with no visible moon out at the time. He also could not see any overcast at all because it was dark. Mr. Cook also explained that the ambient noise in The Teague Store is pretty loud. Rotorblade noise is vibration plus noise and I can pretty much hear it. Indicated that he was triggered by the noise from memory.



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Interview Summary

Carol Johnson
Witness to Accident

Interview date/time: October 23, 2013; 1315 CDT
[REDACTED] Oakland, TN

Interviewed by Stein.

The witness stated that she has lived in her home for 8 years and commonly hears much helicopter and airplane activity over or in the vicinity of her home. On the morning of the accident she was in her living room. She heard a helicopter noise that was different than what she previously experienced. The noise was loud, low and syncopated lasting 30-40 seconds. When asked how much light was outside she replied that it was not full dark and that light had just started to break.



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Interview Summary

Charles Pardue
Witness to Accident

Interview date/time: October 23, 2013; 1450 CDT
Home of Charles Pardue

Interviewers were Buttner, Hemann, Larimore, and Stein.

Mr. Pardue worked for the Memphis Fire Department for 38 years as a paramedic and then EMS chief of the fire department. During his years in the fire department stated that he had previously called “the Wing” [Hospital Wing] for medical aid to the injured and is familiar with what the helicopters sound like. Mr. Pardue has lived at his current address since 1992, is currently retired, but restores and sells cars as a hobby. On the morning of the accident Mr. Pardue was in his bedroom when he heard a “terrible noise” from a helicopter. The helicopter was loud. He described the helicopter as sounding low to the ground; like it was just over the treetops. The witness did not see the helicopter and couldn’t tell what way it was going or coming. Mr. Pardue also added that helicopters frequently fly in proximity of his home all the time going to “Bolivar or Somerville at about 1000 feet.” According to the witness, this one wasn’t near that and had a

terrible noise. Prior to this event he had never heard a helicopter make the noises this helicopter was making. The noise lasted for 4-5 seconds and sounded like a medium growl and not high pitched. To Mr. Pardue, the noise sounded like a gearbox with bad bearings that was growling. This helicopter didn't sound like any of the helicopters he had called in before when he worked for the fire department. Mr. Pardue stated the sound resembled an 18 wheeler coming down the street. Mr. Pardue indicated that he had not heard from anyone else in the community who may have been witness to the helicopter.



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Interview Summary

James Qualls
Witness to Accident

Interview date/time: October 23, 2013; 1600 CDT
[REDACTED] Oakland, TN

Interviewers were Buttner and Stein.

I wake up early each morning and get the paper. He also indicated that he is likely the only person on this street except the person across the street who has driveway lights that are on all night. After reading the paper walked in kitchen and started to hear a helicopter. This occurred around 0600. He has a routine in the morning and remembers it being close to 0600. The helicopter came right over the house. The helicopter seemed to hover for a little bit. He went to his bathroom and the aircraft still seemed to be hovering over the house. Mr. Qualls thought something was not right. At that time Mr. Qualls was preparing to go outside and look, but the helicopter had moved on. The witness is a retired food salesman and is now a driver for a senior citizen. He usually departs his home around 0630 to get to the customer's house by 0700. He first learned that someone had died in a helicopter crash after taking the person he drives to

Mcdonalds where two friends, including the fire chief, Rudy, came in and explained that there had been an accident. The noise of the helicopter seemed to have a gravelly noise in it. He also noted that Rudy the fire chief was a personal friend of the helicopter pilot. Helicopters that usually come by close to the highway more North. Very rarely even come over my house on their way back. It had rained and asphalt had some water on it but not much. No fog or cloud layers that were visible. Seemed like he had stopped and was looking for a place to land. Mr. Qualls is a retired food salesman who know drives an old person for a living. Knew what a helicopter sounds like from hearing them fly nearby previously. To him they normally sound like a whomp whomp whomp, but like this gravelly sound. Mr. Qualls also estimated the aircraft altitude at about 700 feet.



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Interview Summary

Michelle Simpson
Witness to Accident

Interview date/time: October 23, 2013; 1530 CDT
[REDACTED] Somerville, TN

Interviewed by Stein.

The noise she heard was between 0600 and 0615 on the day of the accident. She is use to aircraft flying over her house, close to highway 64. On the morning of the accident she heard a helicopter pass over her house; nothing abnormal about the volume or type of sound heard. The sound then decreased until it became quiet and then grew loud. Mrs. Simpson indicated that she had perceived the increase in volume as a sign that the helicopter would be landing nearby.

Witness Interviews

Janice Proctor, [REDACTED], Somerville, TN, [REDACTED]
Mrs. Proctor was working at the Teague Store located at 12940 US Highway 64, Somerville, TN 38068 when she took a break at about 6:00 am. She went out the back of the store at about 2 or 3 minutes after 6:00 am. About a minute or so later she heard a helicopter fly over heading from west to east. She stated that it was before 6:05 am when it flew over. The helicopter flew almost directly over the store. She saw the red flashing light on the helicopter. She said that the helicopter sounded normal but it seemed lower than other helicopters when they fly over the store. She stated that if it was daylight outside she thought it would be low enough to read the writing on the side of it. She thought maybe it would be a little higher than the height of a water tower. She described the weather as dark, overcast but good visibility and no fog. She left home to go to work at around 3:10 am. It was raining lightly when she left home. It was not raining at the time the helicopter flew over.

Charlie and Linda Matheny, [REDACTED], Somerville, TN, [REDACTED]
Charlie came home from delivering papers at a few minutes before 6:00 am. He was getting ready to go in his bedroom when he heard a helicopter. He thought a helicopter was coming to land at the hospital. The helicopter sounded very close and like it was going to land. He did not see it and nothing sounded out of the ordinary. He estimated that the total duration of time that he heard the helicopter was less than two minutes. Linda also heard the helicopter and did not have any additional information to add.