

U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION

Department of Homeland Security



To Mr. Brian Rayner of NTSB,

On 8/27/2015 I was working the midnight shift at the Houlton port of entry. When I arrived on shift I was notified by my Supervisor Christopher Brewer that we were expecting a plane at 0100 hours arriving from Labrador, Newfoundland Canada with a French Citizen as the sole occupant. He also informed me that the plane would be a commercial entry. We left the port of entry and went to the airport at approximately 1240 hours to wait for the plane. After waiting for a few minutes Supervisor Brewer checked Flightaware.com and it appeared the plane was still a great distance away. So he decided to go back to the port of entry and come back later.

At approximately 0140 hours Supervisor Brewer came back out into the Houlton lobby and stated the plane was getting closer so we went to the airport again. We arrived at approximately 0148 hours and sat in the car discussing how bad the fog was. I mentioned how I was surprised a plane was landing due to how bad the fog and misty haze was. At approximately 0155 hours Supervisor Brewer checked flightaware.com once again and it appeared as though the plane was real close to making a landing. We both got out of the vehicle and stood in front of the vehicle. At that point Supervisor Brewer mentioned that he could hear the plane. When he said this I could hear it as well. This was at approximately 0157 hours. The engines sounded like a normal airplane getting ready for a landing. I don't recall any sputtering, backfiring and etc. It literally sounded like the plane was at the end of the runway getting ready to land. Within a matter of seconds after hearing the plane flying with engines running I heard a loud bang that I would explain as sounding like something hitting a building really hard at a high rate of speed. I assumed it was the plane. At the same time we heard this large "bang" the sound of engines from the airplane was gone. I also noticed that the runway lights had never been turned on. I looked at my Supervisor Mr. Brewer and said I think that plane just crashed and he said I think you're right. It sounded as though the plane hit at the very end of the runway possibly in the trees or at the end of the runway in a field. I really thought we might find the plane because it sounded that close. At this point Supervisor Brewer got in the Government Vehicle and I followed. We proceeded to drive towards with Supervisor Brewer driving towards the runway and I said do you want me to call 911 via cell phone? He said call the state police. So I called 911 which routes through to the state police. This call was made at approximately 0200 hours. I reported the incident to them. I also suggested to Mr. Brewer that we not drive out on the runway just in case for some reason that wasn't a plane crash we heard and also due to the possibility that another plane may need to land. I then suggested to Supervisor we call Border Patrol at approximately 1405 hours and alert them that a foreign aircraft had possibly crashed near our airport. I contacted Border Patrol as well via cell phone. We waited along the taxi way

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and drove around the taxi way trying to spot the plane until Houlton Police Department and Fire Department arrived at approximately 1412 hours and then we all went out on the runway and tried to find the plane. It was so foggy that we mistook a strobe at the end of the runway for the plane. Visibility was extremely poor. We saw nothing at the end of the runway but I thought I smelled something. In reality it was probably nothing. At approximately 0220 all first responders had arrived and I suggested to Supervisor Brewer that he call the Port Director and he did. During the 30 to 40 minutes before I was brought back to the port of entry a command center was basically being established for the search of the aircraft. At approximately 0300 hours I was brought back to the port of entry by Supervisor Brewer to resume my regular duties at the Houlton Port of entry. At this point I was no longer involved in the search at the airport. Two personal friends of mine who are Border Patrol Agents were actively searching the woods near the end of the runway which I would guess started at approximately 1430 hours and these two individuals searched all night and stayed in contact with me at the port in relation to where I thought the plane was. One of these officers was actually the individual whom ended up spotting it on the ground in the morning.

These are my recollections of this incident to the best of my knowledge during a very high stress incident that occurred for myself and my Supervisor. Exact times may not be exactly accurate. We reacted the best we could have at the time of the incident. If you have any further questions please feel free to contact me. Exact times may not be exactly accurate.

Patrick Michaud, CBPO
US Customs and Border Protection
Houlton, Me.

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