



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: December 28, 2017
Person Contacted: James Tatkovsky
NTSB Accident Number: ERA16LA330

Narrative:

Mr. Tatkovsky contacted NTSB by phone on December 9, 2016, at 0945 EST. He called from [REDACTED]

He indicated that his helicopter was equipped with 2 cable and 2 springs for the collective flight control system, and both are connected and not failed, though the springs are stretched. He noted that the spring gaps are longer than the picture of exemplar springs provided to him by e-mail on December 7, 2016, at 1734 EST.

He was called again the same day at 1015 EST.

At the beginning of the call, he was advised that the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents, and NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual. He was also informed that the purpose of an NTSB investigation is for safety only, and any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation; he agreed to the interview without representation.

He indicated that he does not have a rotorcraft rating on his pilot certificate. He has never taken a flight review in the helicopter, and he also does not have a current medical. His last medical was on November 30, 2009. But he indicated there was no medical issue that caused the accident, adding that he is in perfect health. He had 154 hours in the helicopter, and in 2016 had only hovered. The accident date was his first day to fly.

He indicated the last condition inspection of the helicopter occurred on May 27, 2015. He indicated that he has a concrete strip at his barn. His helicopter was equipped with 2 seats.

On the day of the accident, the helicopter had on-board 28 gallons of low-lead fuel (full).

While in the left seat, he was hovering around his pasture before transition to flight. He noted there were no problems with the flight controls while maneuvering.

While flying towards trees climbing between 30-35 mph at 27 inches manifold pressure, and accelerating, the helicopter stopped accelerating and then went up vertically. He moved the cyclic control forward to accelerate, but there was no response. He indicated the wind was calm, there was no in-flight fire, and the fuel tanks ruptured on impact.

His injuries included a [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The digest was reviewed with him during the phone call.



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Date: December 28, 2017
Person Contacted: James Tatkovsky
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Narrative:

Mr. Tatkovsky was contacted by phone on December 15, 2016, at 1636 EST. He was called at [REDACTED]

He indicated that after the helicopter began a vertical ascent, he applied forward cyclic control input but there was no normal response. He later questioned whether he had encountered vortex ring state. He indicated that during the takeoff he held collective to maintain the climb.

The digest was reviewed with him during the phone call.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
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Eastern Region

Date: December 28, 2017
Person Contacted: Bobby Baker
NTSB Accident Number: ERA16LA330

Narrative:

Mr. Baker was contacted by phone on January 4, 2017, at 1108 EST. He was called at [REDACTED]

He indicated that they have a maintenance manual but no parts manual. He indicated that if one of the main rotor blades impacts the ground, the transmission struts will break. There are 4 transmission struts on the helicopter. The struts on the front are short, while the struts on the rear are longer.

He indicated that he had performed maintenance to the helicopter due to the tail rotor getting stuck into bushes by the pilot-in-command.

The digest was reviewed with him during the phone call.



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Timothy W. Monville
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Date: December 28, 2017
Person Contacted: James Tatkovsky
NTSB Accident Number: ERA16LA330

Narrative:

Mr. Tatkovsky was contacted by phone on January 4, 2017, at 1301 EST. He was called at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

We discussed what transmission struts are fractured and broken. We also discussed the flight controls. He will check the flight controls and get back with me. He also indicated he would check the transmission struts, will make a diagram with measurements and annotate whether they are "bent" or "straight." He would get to this either today or tomorrow.

The digest was reviewed with him during the phone call.



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Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: December 28, 2017
Person Contacted: James Tatkovsky
NTSB Accident Number: ERA16LA330

Narrative:

Mr. Tatkovsky was contacted by phone on January 5, 2017, at 1505 EST. He was called at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

He indicated that between 2009 and 2013, he only flew about 26 hours, while between 2013 and 2016, he flew the helicopter less than 20 hours.

He indicated that he checked the flight controls and the rods were connected at the rotor head (upper/lower), swashplate, and the swash driver were connected. He indicated that the forward transmission struts were 18 inches in length while the aft struts were 21 inches in length.

He provided the following for each of the struts:

Left Forward – Connected to the mast and frame. The strut was broken in the center with no appreciable bend.

Right Forward – Connected to the mast and frame. Was broke near the mast connection and was also bent at about a 45°angle in the center

Left Rear – Connected to the mast and not connected to the frame. Was bent near the center.

Right Rear – Was broke away from the mast, but was connected to the frame.

The digest was reviewed with him during the phone call.



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Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: December 28, 2017
Person Contacted: James Tatkovsky
NTSB Accident Number: ERA16LA330

Narrative:

Mr. Tatkovsky contacted NTSB by phone on January 11, 2017, at 0950 EST. He called from [REDACTED]

He indicated that he questioned the structural changes to his helicopter for transmission and the cyclic.

With respect to the accident flight, he indicated that he flew to a nearby pasture and performed about 10 minutes of hovering in ground effect with no issues noted. He then did turns, and moved the helicopter to a "U" and entered a hover in ground effect at 5 ft above ground level. He applied full power (27 inches manifold pressure), and with the main rotor in the green arc, with no wind, he began accelerating. When between 25 and 30 mph, approaching trees, he looked outside the helicopter. He was above the trees that were ahead, then the airspeed bled off. He did not recall pulling collective, but was very slow above the trees. He moved the cyclic control to accelerate but nothing happened. He does not recall hearing any horns, but he was wearing a headset. He did not note any power setting change, and nothing occurred. The helicopter stopped, and he had no control. The helicopter descended uncontrolled.

He reiterated that the ascent while above the trees was faster than normal. He later questioned vortex ring state. He also questioned the helicopter company removing structural supports due to repairs due to a tail rotor strike in 2009. The then repairs consisted of removing the transmission, and installing a new one but it could not be balanced. A new rotor head was installed, and then the assembly could be balanced. He then operated the helicopter and during a 4th flight, he noticed a shaking. He landed and secured the helicopter and found 1 transmission strut bent. He had a welder fix the strut. He then took the helicopter to Bobby, who had the repaired strut replaced. During that time they noticed the mast strut attach was damaged.

The following timeline was provided based on his Pilot/Aircraft Logbook Review review:

2004 – Helicopter received certification and began flying. He reported no issues with the helicopter between 2004 and 2009, when he experienced a tail rotor strike.

5/24/2009 – Flew .8 hour. Aircraft total time 110.1.

Tail rotor strike between 5/24/2009 and 8/17/2009 – Not logged

8/17/2009 – Invoices 2009027 and 2009028 from CHR International, Inc., detailing work to the tail rotor and 2 steel pitch control tubes. This work relates to a tail rotor strike which the pilot did not document occurring in his pilot log or the work performed in the maintenance log.

8/29/2009 - Flew .4 hour. Aircraft total time 110.5 hours

7/21/2013 – Flew .2 hour. Aircraft total time 138.1

10/14-10/19/2013 – Invoices 2013110, 2013112, and 2013113 from CHR International, Inc., detailing work to the main rotor mast and transmission. Included main rotor track and balance

5/7/2014 – Found right rear transmission strut bent. No record of repair

8/1/2015 – Flew .4 hour. Aircraft total time 150.4 hours

8/10/2015 – Flew .5 hour. Aircraft total time 150.9 hours

8/23/2015 – Flew .4 hour. Aircraft total time 151.3 hours

9/10/2015 - Flew .4 hour. Aircraft total time 151.7 hours

9/18/2015 – Invoice 7008491 from CHR International, Inc., detailing removal of transmission, and fabrication of new transmission struts. While lifting off from dolly the helicopter experienced a “violent shake”.

9/25/2015 - Flew .5 hour. Aircraft total time 152.2 hours

10/12/2015 - Flew .6 hour. Aircraft total time 152.8 hours

10/27/2015 - Flew .5 hour. Aircraft total time 153.3 hours

11/10/2015 - Flew .4 hour. Aircraft total time 153.7 hours

11/19/2015 - Flew .5 hour. Aircraft total time 154.2 hours

8/25/2016 - Flew .3 hour. Aircraft total time 154.5 hours

9/12/2016 (Last Entry) - Flew .4 hour. Aircraft total time 154.9 hours. Practiced hovering and pedal turns

9/27/2016 – Accident Flight.

There was no entry for any condition inspection entry since the helicopter was built in 2004.

The digest was reviewed with him during the phone call.