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DIGEST (CONT)

stated that the other passenger, Tom Pruitt, did speak with Mr. Merritt. According to Mr. Ostendorf, Mr. Pruitt asked Mr. Merritt if he got his AHRS fixed. Mr. Merritt said no, and Mr. Pruitt recommended that he shouldn't fly until it was fixed. According to Mr. Ostendorf, the engine ran perfectly and there were no flight control issues at all during the flight from FAY to INT. Mr. Merritt spoke with them about night currency, inquiring with them if they were night current. Mr. Ostendorf stated that he knew from speaking with other people that the Aspen was not fixed prior to flight. Powell Avionics later confirmed this.

Mr. Ostendorf called me back on Saturday 6-29 to discuss the accident more. He stated that he and Mr. Pruitt went over the flight in their minds and recalled no unusual engine or control issues. There was nothing at all wrong (during their 6-24 flight to INT) except the AHRS Fail amber light, but that Mr. Merritt was "really, really fixated on it." Mr. Ostendorf stated that he and Mr. Pruitt tried to get Mr. Merritt to ignore the light, but they had difficulty getting him to do so. Mr. Ostendorf stated that the attitude and heading indicators appeared to be working fine, but were possibly unreliable due to the AHRS Fail.

RECORD OF ☐ VISIT ☐ CONFERENCE OR ☒ TELEPHONE CALL		TIME 1:15 PM	DATE 06/28/2019												
NAME(S) OF PERSON(S) CONTACTED OR IN CONFERENCE AND LOCATION Tom Pruitt, [REDACTED]		ROUTING <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 50%; padding: 2px;">SYMBOL</th> <th style="width: 50%; padding: 2px;">INITIALS</th> </tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td><td></td></tr> </table>		SYMBOL	INITIALS										
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DIGEST I traveled to Fayetteville, NC on 6-28-19 to investigate a fatal aircraft accident involving N664AR and pilot William Melvin Merritt. Below is one of the interviews conducted.															
Mr. Pruitt flew with Mr. Merritt on Monday 6-24 from FAY to INT, which was the last time they flew together. He concurred with everything stated about that flight by Mr. Ostendorf. After that flight, Mr. Pruitt and Mr. Merritt spoke approximately twice during the week prior to the accident. They spoke for about 20-30 minutes around 5 or 6pm on the night of the accident. Mr. Merritt stated that his AHRS Fail light had still not been fixed. Mr. Merritt didn't say that he was going to fly, but asked Mr. Pruitt if he was night current, which he was not. Mr. Pruitt did not know if Mr. Merritt had flown since Monday 6-24.															
Mr. Pruitt stated that he never saw Mr. Merritt get gas on 6-24, but it's possible he did in INT once he dropped off Mr. Pruitt and Mr. Ostendorf. Mr. Pruitt believes they had plenty of gas for the flight on 6-24, over 100 gallons.															
CONCLUSION, ACTION TAKEN, OR REQUIRED															
DATE 06/28/2018	TITLE Clinton Festa, ASI	SIGNATURE 													

RECORD OF ☐ VISIT ☐ CONFERENCE OR ☒ TELEPHONE CALL		TIME 1:30 PM	DATE 06/28/2019
NAME(S) OF PERSON(S) CONTACTED OR IN CONFERENCE AND LOCATION Norman Powell of Powell Avionics, [REDACTED]		ROUTING	
		SYMBOL	INITIALS
SUBJECT N664AR fatal aircraft accident near FAY on 6-27-19			
DIGEST			
I traveled to Fayetteville, NC on 6-28-19 to investigate a fatal aircraft accident involving N664AR and pilot William Melvin Merritt. Below is one of the interviews conducted.			
I spoke with Mr. Norman Powell from Powell Avionics, who stated that around 5:45pm the night of the accident, Mr. Merritt was checking on the status of the airplane. Mr. Powell either answered from personal knowledge or checked with his employees to verify the following responses.			
The avionics shop told him that they still had to contact Aspen for further instructions. They told him that with an amber AHRS Fail light, he wouldn't be able to engage his autopilot, but that would be the only flight issue. I asked them to confirm this, and they did, stating, "The only thing that would not work is the autopilot," and that the attitude and heading should still work. I confirmed that the indication was an amber "AHRS Fail" light. The pilot spoke with the installer around 5:30-6:00pm that night, the installer said the only issue would be the autopilot not engaging, and "that was it for the conversation." They stated that the pilot wasn't upset, agitated, or anything like that.			
CONCLUSION, ACTION TAKEN, OR REQUIRED			
DATE 06/28/2018	TITLE Clinton Festa, ASI	SIGNATURE [REDACTED]	

RECORD OF ☒ VISIT ☐ CONFERENCE OR ☐ TELEPHONE CALL		TIME 1:45 PM	DATE 06/28/2019										
NAME(S) OF PERSON(S) CONTACTED OR IN CONFERENCE AND LOCATION James Merritt, [REDACTED]		ROUTING <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 50%; padding: 2px;">SYMBOL</th> <th style="width: 50%; padding: 2px;">INITIALS</th> </tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td><td></td></tr> </table>		SYMBOL	INITIALS								
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James Merritt is the brother of William Merritt, who died in this aircraft accident. James said that on 6-22, the Saturday prior to the accident, the two of them left from FAY and landed in Claxton, GA. There they fully fueled the aircraft, then returned to FAY. That was the last time James flew with William, and the aircraft flew perfectly with no mechanical issues according to James. James is not a pilot, but has flown with William on frequent occasions. William owned the company Industrial Power Inc. James said he left the store at about 4pm on the day of the accident, and said he was going to the airport, but didn't say he was going to fly like he usually does when he's going to fly. James said that the airplane had its left fuel bladder tank replaced (he wasn't sure exactly) around six weeks ago.													
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RECORD OF ☐ VISIT ☐ CONFERENCE OR ☒ TELEPHONE CALL		TIME 3:00 PM	DATE 06/28/2019
NAME (S) OF PERSON (S) CONTACTED OR IN CONFERENCE AND LOCATION Todd Lyden, [REDACTED]		ROUTING	
		SYMBOL	INITIALS
SUBJECT N664AR fatal aircraft accident near FAY on 6-27-19			
DIGEST I traveled to Fayetteville, NC on 6-28-19 to investigate a fatal aircraft accident involving N664AR and pilot William Melvin Merritt. Below is one of the interviews conducted.			
Mr. Lyden was an eye witness to the accident. He was walking his dogs, out at about 10:30pm. The airplane appeared to be coming right toward their neighborhood and in a very sharp right hand turn. The engines were very loud. He says he heard a "sputtering sound." The aircraft veered "very very sharply" before the crash, but it was difficult to tell in the dark which part of the aircraft he was looking at. He didn't see any fire or hear the impact, but remembers the lights on the aircraft were very bright. Just before the crash, the aircraft appeared to be in a very steep descent, about at a 45 degree angle. It rolled prior to impact but he couldn't tell which way.			
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