



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Eastern Region – Ashburn, Virginia

Record of Conversation

Who: F/O Rolland Silva

When: February 14, 2019

RE: ERA19LA096

In a telephone conversation, First Officer (FO) Silva stated that he was hired by Conquest Air Cargo in September 22, 2017 and became an FO on June 16, 2018. All training was done in-house and in the airplane. Mr. Silva said he had flown with Captain Hopkins “a decent” amount of times and liked him a lot. He described Captain Hopkins as a very knowledgeable and a genuine person. FO Silva said that Captain Hopkins seemed normal on the day of the accident and noticed nothing unusual about his behavior. He just said that he seemed “a bit rushed” when returning to OPF but wasn’t sure why.

FO Silva that the he and Captain Hopkins both performed a pre-flight inspection of the airplane prior to departing OPF. All the required paperwork was reviewed and signed, and there was about 900 gallons of fuel on board (450 g per wing). The engine starts, taxi, engine-run ups and takeoff were all normal. Captain Hopkins was flying the airplane. FO Silva stated:

400 ft call: Captain called for flaps up, and power to 48”, 2,600 RPM and 80i water, auto-throttles off. All checks good.

800 ft call: power 38”, 2,400 RPM, climb power

7,000 ft: level off, cruise power 30”, 2,000 RPM. FO Silva stated that when he moved the panel-mounted toggle propeller control switch, the RPM stuck at 2,400 RPM. He was able to physically move the toggle switch, but there was not movement on the gauge.

FO Silva said he pulled the QRH to see if there was any guidance on how to handle this situation and there was no reference. So, he pulled up the aircraft manual on his iPad, and it said to re-set the propeller control circuit breaker. He re-set the circuit breaker, and nothing changed. Captain Hopkins had the power equalized on each engine and they continued to Nassau and made an uneventful landing. After landing the cargo was unloaded. Captain Hopkins asked FO Silva to text maintenance control at OPF, but the text never went thru. Captain Hopkins told FO Silva not to worry about it and if they could not get the prop control to re-set during the engine run-up on the ground they would have to stay there and wait for maintenance.

Before departing Nassau, both pilots did another preflight and determined they had enough fuel for the flight. FO Silva said the airplane burned about 100 gallons per hour per engine.

Both engines started fine and both propellers were cycled. Both propeller control switches were tested and both functioned (high/low tone heard, and movement was observed on the gauges). Since the prop controls were working, they elected to depart. FO Silva was at the controls. The flight was normal until they reached 4,000 ft when the left engine propeller control “stuck” again at 2,400 RPM. Captain Hopkins tried to adjust the switch himself and the RPM got bumped up to 2,700 RPM and stuck. He was unable to move it back down. Captain Hopkins took control of the airplane and asked FO Silva to try and reset the circuit breaker, which he did, but to no avail. Captain Hopkins reduced power and try to stabilize both engines:

RH Engine: 30”, 2000 RPM

LH Engine: UNK, about 2,400 RPM (but still above max chart)

FO Silva told Captain Hopkins they should turn back, but Captain Hopkins said that he had experienced this before, and they only had to keep the power reduced on the left engine. They cancelled their IFR flight plan and leveled off at 4,500 ft. The flight was normal (all engine gauges and fuel flow were good), until they passed Bimini and Captain Hopkins had already started the descent to 1,500 ft. FO Silva said he could not remember what altitude they were at, but the right engine backfired and began to surge. He looked out and saw puffs of white smoke coming from the back of the engine. The low-fuel-pressure light came on and the fuel gauge began to fluctuate. Captain Hopkins turned on the fuel boost pump and put the mixture control full forward, but nothing changed. They pulled the checklist and Captain Hopkins feathered the engine and shut it down. FO Silva stated that Captain Hopkins did not complete the full engine shut down checklist in case they needed to re-start the engine. FO Silva said that within 10 seconds to 2 minutes of the Right engine shutting down, the Left engine began to do the same thing. Captain Hopkins said he would fly the airplane and told FO Silva to handle the emergency, all while the airplane was descending. FO Silva said he was trying ever thing he could to re-start the right engine but was unable. The airplane was now too low, and he asked Captain Hopkins what to do. Captain Hopkins said to declare a “May Day” and brace for impact. Captain Hopkins was looking outside the airplane and was trying to land on the back side of the swells while still flying in on westerly direction toward shore. FO Silva said the airplane was descending too fast and right before impact grabbed the control column and pulled back real hard. The airplane hit the water violently and FO Silva said he remembered hitting his head hard on the dashboard. When he looked up the water line was level was above the windshield. FO Silva said he unbuckled his 4-point seatbelt assembly and grabbed the Captain Hopkin’s arm. Captain Hopkins was slumped over on the controls and unresponsive. FO Silva said he knew he needed to get out of the sinking airplane because the water was already up to his waist. He grabbed the life raft and kicked on the cockpit door several times before it opened. He grabbed the life raft, got to the tail section of the airplane which had torn off from impact, inflated the life raft, jumped in and exited the tail of the airplane. FO Silva saw a small airplane flying overhead and shot off one

flare. He then saw another airplane circling overhead followed shortly by the USCG rescue helicopter.

FO Silva also said that just prior to impact he recalled looking at the main fuel switches and noted that the guard was down. The left tank was set to the LEFT engine and the right tank was set to the RIGHT engine.

When asked what he thought caused the dual engine failures, FO Silva said he was not sure. He suggested that maybe the captain had reset a fuel switch when he wasn't looking. He admitted that it was not normal for both engines to shut down so closely together.