



MEMORANDUM for RECORD

Millicent Hill
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: November 23, 2020
Person Contacted: Joseph Patterson, FAA inspector; Bob Possumato, FAA inspector; Seth Butner, Airbus investigator

This investigator interviewed Mr. Patterson and Mr. Butner by telephone, and he stated the following:

- They interviewed the pilot and examined the helicopter. Postaccident examination of the engine revealed no evidence of any preimpact mechanical malfunctions or failures that would have precluded normal operation.
- The pilot stated he did not use a checklist and conducted the startup procedure from memory only.
- When asked why he continued the takeoff with a known issue, the stuck petal, he said he “wasn’t afraid of a stuck petal.”

Mr. Patterson provided the following written statement:

“11/23/20 – Inspector Patterson traveled to N81 arriving at 14:00 in support of Airbus Helicopters, Accident investigations manager, Mr. Seth Butner for the purpose of continued investigation into the causation of the accident of N712CA. Inspector Bob Possumato also arrived at approximately 14:30. Mr. Butner arrived at Catalyst Aviation’s hangar approximately at 14:45. Mr. Butner proceeded to conduct a detailed visual inspection of the aircraft flight controls system, drivetrain, airframe structure, pilot’s/co-pilot’s cockpit indication and electrical control switch installations for correct function under battery electrical power. Mr. Butner also conducted an informal interview with accident pilot Mr. Gerard Palmer to better understand the details leading up to the accident as well as the accident sequence and post-accident events. Mr. Butner was unable to isolate a definitive mechanical, hydraulic, or electrical deficiency that would support Mr. Palmer’s claim that the tail rotor pedals became unmovable (stuck pedal) as he was adding collective control input on 11/14/20. Mr. Butner, Inspector Possumato, and Inspector Patterson then conducted a conference call with Ms. Millicent Hill, NTSB Investigator, to relay the findings of Mr. Butner’s investigation. This concludes the events of the investigation with Mr. Butner and all parties departed the Catalyst hangar at approximately 17:30.”