



NTSB MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

WITNESS SUMMARIES

Adam Gerhardt
Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
Eastern Region, Office of Aviation Safety (ERA)
National Transportation Safety Board

Date: 12/9/2021

Person Contacted: Adam and Robin Spitler (Husband and Wife; Witnesses)

NTSB Accident Number: ERA22FA083

Narrative:

Adam and Robin Spitler were contacted via telephone and reported the following details pertaining to the accident circumstances:

- They were located at the departure airport in the parking lot.
- Adam is a professional pilot.
- They were dropping off a family member at the airport. While in the parking lot, Adam heard a piston engine airplane taking off, and Robin visually observed the takeoff.
- They reported it was about 9:20PM
- They reported that it sounded like it was climbing "steeply". Adam added that it sounded like it was departing at a high angle of attack, or like a Vx climb takeoff.
- Robin said, "it sounded like the jump plane" and she thought, "why was the jump plane flying" on a cloudy night.
- They both reported that the engine was loud and sounded normal. It departed from runway 14.
- Robin observed the airplane lights on during the takeoff.
- They reported that they believed N258MG departed shortly after the accident airplane took off.

#END#



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Date: 12/9/2021
Person Contacted: Tim Robinson (Witness and Private Pilot)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA22FA083

Narrative:

Tim Robinson was contacted via telephone and reported the following details pertaining to the accident circumstances:

- He resides at [REDACTED], near the observed flight track as identified by Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) flight track data.
- He was sitting in his house, with the TV on, and he heard an airplane flyover. He is accustomed to airplanes flying overhead due to the close proximity to the departure airport.
- He stated this airplane that he heard was “unusually low” and the engine “sounded fine.” He added that it sounded like the airplane was headed to the south and the sound dissipated.
- He immediately picked up his iPad and saw that the METAR at TBR was reporting 600 ft overcast. The weather was “IFR” per the METAR.
- A few minutes later he heard an airplane again. It sounded as if “the engine was screaming” and that the “throttle was through the panel.” He then reported that the noise stopped shortly after the airplane flew nearby his house.

#END#



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Date: 12/9/2021
Person Contacted: Leigh Whitaker (Witness near accident site)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA22FA083

Narrative:

Leigh Whitaker was contacted via telephone and reported the following details pertaining to the accident circumstances:

- She resides at [REDACTED] Statesboro, GA, which was near the Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) flight track.
- She reported that her house is next door neighbors to the accident site property owner.
- She was sitting next to her windows in the kitchen, and she heard an airplane at exactly 9:24PM. She recalls the exact time because she looked up at her kitchen clock and that is what it said.
- She audibly made the sound that she recalled hearing. When spelled it was approximated to the following - “rarrwww thud”.
- She stated it “sounded as if the airplane was coming down.”
- She reported the sound of the engine was continuous all the way to the point she heard the “thud.” After this thud, there were no further sounds.
- She stepped outside and it was quiet, it was not raining, nor was it windy. She reported that it had been cloudy all day and that she did not see any fog or mist.

#END#



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Date: 12/13/2021
Person Contacted: Elizabeth Shafer (Eyewitness near accident site)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA22FA083

Narrative:

Elizabeth Shafer was contacted via telephone and reported the following details pertaining to the accident circumstances:

- She was located at [REDACTED] in the driveway outside.
- She first noticed the noise of the engine. It sounded like a "crop duster." The sound of the airplane got louder and there was a fast decent. The engine sounded of a "blatty" sound, perhaps like an engine without an exhaust. The engine was running until impact.
- She reported that the airplane came into her view with a left to right movement across the sky. It had the appearance to be flying in a "curved" manor.
- When she first saw the airplane, it was not glowing, and she could not recall seeing lights on the airplane. She could see the right side of the airplane as it flew by. She clarified "you could see the side of the plane."
- She then reported that once it was flying away from her, it was in a "curved" descent and then a "rapid descent".
- When the airplane was flying away from her, she could see something like a "sparkler glow", and this is when she tried to take a video, however, her phone took a picture (she provided this photo, and it is located below).
- She did not see flames emanating from the airplane, but rather something like a "sparkler."
- She said that when the airplane descended out of view there was no explosion or loud noise, but rather the engine noise stopped and then it was quiet. She then heard the sound of sirens a few minutes later. She could see an orange glow emanating from the accident area field; however, her view was obstructed to directly observe the field.
- She added that there was "some sort of glow" from the airplane after it was flying away from her position and clarified that it "wasn't like the airplane was engulfed in flames" and initially she did not see this glow when the airplane initially came into view.
- She added that all of this occurred "in a matter of seconds".



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- She reported that she had an Android phone and the time stamp on her phone for the photo showed 9:25 PM local. She said her phone stated the photos exposure was $\frac{1}{4}$ of a second, there was no flash, and it was 4.2MM.



Figure 1: Cell phone photo provided by the witness



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Figure 2: Zoomed in view of the photo provided.

#END#



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Date: 12/14/2021
Person Contacted: Bobby John Melton (Eyewitness near accident site)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA22FA083

Narrative:

Mr. Melton was interviewed at his house on the night of the accident by the Bulloch County Sheriff's Office. He was located at [REDACTED] in the driveway outside. The following record is a summary of conversation he had with the officer as recorded via the Body Camera:

Mr. Melton reported that a small plane flew over near his house and it was descending. He said you could tell the plane was "in trouble." He could see a light on the airplane and then it abruptly "went down." He motioned with his hands a downward motion and he further described that you could see the light just go down toward the field. He said that the plane flew over so low, he could see the bottom of the plane and could see "lights on the bottom." When the airplane disappeared behind the tree line, there was no explosion, but you could see fire from the field after the impact. When asked specifically if he recalled if the airplane was on fire in the air, he stated "No. It was not." He later stated, "what I told ya'll was true."

He provided the additional details to the NTSB investigator-in-charge on December 17, 2021 via telephone:

He was standing out in the driveway talking with friends. The airplane was low, and he could see a red light on the belly of the plane. There was a row of trees in the distance that the airplane cleared, but then it "nosed dived" into the ground. There was a ball of fire, but there was no explosion nor was there a loud noise. He could see the glow of fire after the airplane disappeared behind the trees.

It was a small plane, like a crop duster. It was so low it almost hit trees near his property.

He saw the photo that his friend took of the airplane in-flight. He did not recall seeing any sort of fire from the airplane. He could see the bottom of the airplane and its lights,



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however, he did not see fire or smoke coming from the airplane, nor anything trailing the airplane.

#END#