

Ralph E. Hicks
Senior Air Safety Investigator
AS-ERA

Date: 11/22/2022

Subject: ERA23FA070, Witness Statement (From Voicemail)

The following is a summary of a witness statement provided by Mr. David Bristol, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Charlotte, NC. He called in to the NTSB ROC.

He reported that he had just seen the News 3 helicopter circle above his house and crash on I-77. The helicopter was doing "wide sweeps" above his house. He recognized it as a Robinson R44. His home is at [REDACTED] in Charlotte.

He was standing on his deck, watching the helicopter. He likes to watch aircraft since he is a student pilot himself. During one of the helicopter's passes, he heard something strange with the rotors. He heard a pitch change in the rotors, the sound of the pitch went "way down." He thought that it was perhaps a change in angle of attack of the rotor blades. Definitely a sound pitch decrease. A lowering of the frequency of the sound.

A few seconds later, maybe 10 seconds later, the helicopter was facing away from me, the tail was toward me and the nose was away from me. The helicopter made a quick pitch change to the left, like the pilot quickly moved the cyclic to the left. Then, the helicopter made a second pitch change to the left, this time more severe. He thought that it was "pretty extreme." Greater than 45° left roll. The helicopter then went behind some trees and there was an abrupt loss of altitude. This was followed by the sound of the impact with the ground.



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Date: 11/23/2022

Subject: ERA23FA070, Witness Statement, James Humphries
[REDACTED]

The following witness statement was forwarded (in [blue](#)) by the NTSB ROC (www.eyewitnessreport@ntsb.gov):

I was watching the report from the helicopter the day that Rachel the other weather person was in the helicopter with the pilot. It was a day or two before the accident. I was a helicopter mechanic in the military many years ago and I noticed that it looked like the helicopter was vibrating in excess of what I had noticed in other reports I had watched from the news copter. There may have been something wrong with the aircraft at that time. It concerned me so much I seriously considered calling someone but then I felt like it was probably just foolish knowing that these were professionals and surely they would have noticed if something was that not right with the helicopter. After hearing of the crash I was sorry that I did not call. I thought this may help with the investigation into the crash.



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Date: 11/23/2022

Subject: ERA23FA070, Witness Statement, Joe Moreno
([REDACTED])

The following witness statement was forwarded (in blue) by the NTSB ROC
(www.eyewitnessreport@ntsb.gov):

Hi I was less than a mile away. I watched the helicopter hover in the same spot for a brief time then did 3 big circles. After the third circle it fell very fast to the ground. I was at work at [REDACTED]



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Date: 11/23/2022

Subject: ERA23FA070, Witness Statement, Jimmy Sanchez

The following witness statement was forwarded (in [blue](#)) by the NTSB ROC (www.eyewitnessreport@ntsb.gov):

[Good evening.](#)

[My name is Jimmy Sanchez. I was coming out from my citizenship ceremony at the USCIS field office building at 201 Regency Executive Park Dr Charlotte, NC 28217. I noticed the chopper turning a couple of times at a high speed... in the second or third turn the chopper turned sideways 90 degrees and then rapidly decent ... Please give me a call at \[REDACTED\].](#)

Dec.7, 2022

To: NTSB

Fr: Joseph F. Scallan

[REDACTED]
Huntersville, NC 28078

[REDACTED] (m)

Subj: Witness statement/Helo crash 11/22/22, Clt., NC

At noon on Nov 22, I witnessed what I believe was the first part of the WBTV helo crash. I along with my wife and daughter were waiting outside of 201 Regency Executive Park Drive, US Imm. & Nat Office, as my son in law Jimmy Sanchez emerged having just received his US citizenship award.

As I stood there I noted the Sky 3 helo in the area north along the border of the Executive Park buildings and I-77 and all seemed normal. I thought initially that they might be filming the emerging graduates as the actual ceremony was restricted due to Covid precautions & staffing. To my disbelief as the chopper came closer, it hovered then ascended vertically, NOSE UP very quickly -as if attempting a barrel roll maneuver. This I know is not a normal attitude for a helo. All I saw was the underside landing skids, as it seemed to claw upward for altitude. I heard NO engine noise, just the swish of the rotor beating the air. This snapshot is fixed in my mind. The vehicle then seemed to stall and fall, drifting north, out and away- tail first toward the southbound I-77 lanes below. At this juncture the helicopter disappeared below my line of sight... I expected to hear an explosion or the crash itself- but nothing - just silence.

From news reports I understand that eyewitnesses in vehicles saw the helo cross over the southbound lanes, just before the pilot managed to crash land on the shoulder area. Ironically the major damage seems to be on the canopy (front bubble) as the tail rotor looked intact. My observations are predicated on my active duty Navy experience flying DASH drone helicopters, not much smaller than Sky 3. To me the pilot demonstrated consummate professionalism and skill as it appears that he successfully regained "collective" for a controlled crash. His sacrifice spared many lives. My heart aches for them both and they are in my prayers.



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Date: 11/27/2022

Subject: ERA23FA070, Witness Statement, Talmadge Slaydon
([REDACTED])

The following witness statement was forwarded (in [blue](#)) by the NTSB ROC
(www.eyewitnessreport@ntsb.gov):

On Tuesday (11/22/2022), my son was departing work when he heard rifle fire, approximately 9 shots. Afterward he heard but did not see the helicopter crash.

Talmadge Slaydon
[REDACTED]

Ralph E. Hicks
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Date: 11/23/2022

Subject: ERA23FA070, Witness Statement, Mario Washington
([REDACTED])

The following witness statement was forwarded (in [blue](#)) by the NTSB ROC
(www.eyewitnessreport@ntsb.gov):

Good evening,
I witnessed this event from beginning to end and wanted to tell you what I saw in case it will help you with the crash investigation. I will be as brief as possible. Since I've worked in the media for many years, I'm used to watching what helicopters are doing. So I watch them a lot when I'm traveling. I've had several friends work in helicopters reporting on different events over the years. I witnessed this event as I was driving into the office this morning. After crossing into North Carolina on I-77, I noticed a helicopter behaving oddly from what I'm used to seeing. Typically, a police helicopter gives the hallmark of looking for someone in a specific area. Rescue helicopters are usually headed to wherever they're trying to get to without any strange maneuvers and TV helicopters are usually in a bit of a stationary spot in the air shooting traffic or following a chase. This helicopter was behaving erratically maneuvering in multiple circles as if it was experiencing some sort of distress. As if the pilot was losing control over it. Traffic was relatively normal but we were moving at a slower pace than the speed limit giving me more time to keep an eye on it. It left from over the interstate crossing from the northbound lanes to the southbound lanes over some trees and then I saw it come back near the southbound lanes. From there, it appeared that something was wrong with the propeller as if it had detached and I'm certain that the pilot was looking for a safe place to put it down despite not having much control over it. I'm not 100% certain about the propeller because this could be a product of my adrenaline and concern about my own safety when I was certain it was going to come down. It came down quickly as I was in the middle lane northbound. It was about 2 car lengths in front of my position when it hit to my left. I

began to brake for a moment as it was coming down. My estimate is that it was coming down at approximately 50 mph. I never heard a sound. I didn't hear a distressed engine or the crash. Possibly because of my music and possibly because of the lightweight material used in that type of helicopter. I immediately called my wife who then encouraged me to call 911. This occurred at around 11:56 and I called my wife at around 11:58 and 911 at 11:59. The operator informed me that they had received multiple calls, asked me a few questions and took down my phone number in case I would be needed further. The event has given me great distress. I didn't know the deceased personally but I know lots of their colleagues and I wanted to make sure I gave you guys any info that might help you get to the bottom of how these men lost their lives. If you need anything further, please feel free to reach me on either of the numbers in my signature. The easiest way to reach me is my mobile number, [REDACTED].

Thank you.