

WITNESS INTERVIEW N21480
DIEDREICH VONLEHE [REDACTED]
MARCH 28, 2023

Mr. Vonlehe was launching a boat at the Sol Legare Boat Ramp on James Island when he saw a burgundy and white small airplane flying low headed north up the Stono River. It caught his attention because it was flying low. A little while later he heard a high-pitched whining noise and he looked up in the direction of the noise and saw the impact. He did not see the plane but just the impact and saw mud fly up in the air. After the impact he heard several chopping sounds, he thinks that was the noise of the prop chewing up the marsh and the mud. He described the sound of the engine as what he had heard from old WWII movies with the dive-bombers engines whining at a high pitch. He does not know if the plane crashed was the one he saw flying low earlier. (Note: the accident aircraft was dark green and white and per the ADSB track never flew north along the Stono River. Was not the same aircraft.) He realized a plane had crashed so they jumped in the boat to head over to the site to see if they could render aid to the occupants. He beached the boat at the edge of the marsh and made his way over to the aircraft. He said it took him a while because the mud was deep and thick. Once he got close, he realized there was nothing he could do for the occupants. He noticed fuel in the water and the smell of fuel. He made his way back to the boat and when first responders arrived, pointed them in the direction of the accident site. He stated there was another gentleman at the boat ramp who he heard witnessed the plane go down. He does not know him but a friend does. He is going to find out the name and phone number of the gentleman and call me back with the information.

When asked about the weather around the time of the accident, he stated it was overcast almost as if it was going to rain. The weather was to the point that they were questioning themselves if they should go out on the water.

Interview conducted by ASI Lewis via telephone.

WITNESS INTERVIEW N21480
ROMONE ZEPEDO [REDACTED]
MARCH 29, 2023

Mr. Zepedo does yard work for Mr. and Mrs. Savage. He does not speak English. Xavier Coronel, an Aviation Safety Technician with the CAE FSDO interpreted the interview. Mr. Zepedo was putting down sod grass in the yard between the house and the marsh when the sound of an airplane engine got his attention. He stated he looked up and saw the plane come straight down, nose first into the marsh. It lasted 8-10 seconds maybe, very fast. He saw the mud fly up. He stated the engine sounded like it was popping. He said the weather was overcast with low clouds. He described the clouds as the ones you see when it rains. He went looking for a boat to see if he could help and saw other boats headed that way. He did not have a phone and could not call anyone to help.

Interview conducted by ASI Lewis and AST Coronel via telephone.