

Adam M. Gerhardt
Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
Office of Aviation Safety, Eastern Region

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Subject: NTSB# ERA23FA256

Contact: David W. Harris (Mechanic, Seller of Airplane)

Mr. Harris was contacted via telephone by the NTSB Investigator-in-Charge for the investigation involving N611VG. Also present for the call was Mr. Mitch Mitchell with the FAA. He was informed that the purpose of the call was for the NTSB safety accident investigation and the fact-finding process. He was informed that the call was not being recorded, and a summary record of conversation would be produced for the report.

The investigator informed him the conversation was not confidential. Mr. Harris reported that he would like to provide information to the investigation and that he did not want a lawyer present for the call. The following record is a summary of the conversation.

- Mr. Harris reported that he worked with another individual who would purchase airplanes and sell them.
- He found the accident airplane in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The prior owner to his knowledge used the airplane for transportation from the United States to Venezuela. The airplane was purchased, registered with the FAA, and several inspections were completed on the airplane prior to the sale to Mr. and Mrs Rumpel (the owners of the airplane at the time of the accident).
- Mr. Harris reported that he and the accident pilot (Mr. Jeff Hefner) were friends. Mr. Harris recalled that the accident pilot called him to inquire about the CE-560 accident airplane and a purchase. According to Mr. Harris, the accident pilot told him that his boss (Mr. Rumpel) was "sick of paying two pilot salaries" and perhaps the CE-560 (N611VG) would be a good fit given it can be flown single-pilot. Mr. Harris reported that Mr. Rumpel at that time owned an airplane that required two pilots.

- According to Mr. Harris, the accident pilot and Mr. Rumpel conducted pre-buy inspections of the airplane. It was his recollection the airplane was purchased in Daytona Beach, Florida.
- According to Mr. Harris, if you intend to sell an airplane, you want to do a phase 1-4 inspection on the airplane. (Note: It was not clear if this was accomplished on the accident airplane.)
- Mr. Harris reported that it was his understanding an avionics upgrade was performed around the time of the sale to Mr. Rumpel and that the upgrade was a condition as part of the sale.
- According to Mr. Harris, the airplane flew about 30 hours in the two months Mr. Rumpel owned it.
- Mr. Harris reported that he sat right seat as co-pilot with the accident pilot at some point between the sale of the aircraft and the accident date. According to Mr. Harris, he showed the accident pilot how to operate the new Garmin units and that the accident pilot was having trouble using the new avionics. The trouble was related to programming flight plans and loading approaches, as examples.
- According to Mr. Harris, on the day of the accident he had been in contact with the accident pilot. The plan the accident pilot told Mr. Harris, was that he planned to fly to Islip, New York with the three passengers, and following that flight, he would fly to Daytona Beach, Florida to take care of a few repairs with him (Mr. Harris). Following the flight to Daytona Beach, they both planned to drive back to Melbourne, Florida.
- The repairs involved O-rings leaking at multiple wing ports and a right fuel gauge that was "one line off." There was also a plan to paint the new registration number on the airplane.
- According to Mr. Harris, those were the only items wrong with the airplane that he was informed of by the accident pilot and that he had knowledge of.
- According to Mr. Harris, the accident pilot flew all over the place with the owner. They had flown multiple flights together in this airplane since the purchase.
- According to Mr. Harris, the accident pilot the day before the accident told him everything was great with the airplane. According to Mr. Harris, the accident pilot stated about the airplane, "I love it."
- According to Mr. Harris, the accident pilot told him the pressurization system was "excellent" and the air conditioning was working great.
- According to Mr. Harris, this airplane came from Venezuela and the FAA had in the past de-certified many service centers in Venezuela.
- According to Mr. Harris, the "DAR" or "PMI" at the FAA could not accept the RVSM certification or the avionics pitot static tests on the accident airplane that

were done out of country, so a shop in Stuart, Florida performed a certification of the systems so that the FAA could accept the tests.

- According to Mr. Harris, the airplane had a 10,000 ft cabin alert. He stated if the plane lost pressurization and the airplane continued to climb, lights would have been "glowing."
- According to Mr. Harris, from the left seat the cabin altitude select is near your left hand.
- According to Mr. Harris, there is a master warning light in front of the pilot, just above the HSI and an annunciator panel. There is one light that shows, "10,000 ft CABIN" and it would flash a master warning with this condition. He reported that if you didn't stop the climb, the airplane would eventually drop the masks in the passenger compartment. He cannot recall if it had an audible alarm associated with the master warning.
- According to Mr. Harris, the accident pilot was very experienced. He had been a corporate pilot for many years, in addition to being airline pilot. He previously flew a Citation 501SP.
- According to Mr. Harris, the airplane had a CVR because it would have been required due to 6 seat requirements in Venezuela.
- According to Mr. Harris, the accident airplane owner bought the airplane with the sole purchase to eliminate the need for two pilots.
- According to Mr. Harris, the accident pilot completed a single-pilot signoff in April of 2023 with an examiner. This was something the accident pilot told him.
- According to Mr. Harris, the accident pilot had about 10-15 years of experience with that type of pressurization system installed on the accident airplane.
- According to Mr. Harris, the accident pilot would have been well aware of how the system worked and the associated cockpit annunciations.
- Mr. Harris reported that he flew for a law firm owned by Dan Newlin. Mr. Newlin had a Citation 560 Ultra aircraft according to Mr. Harris.
- Mr. Harris reported that as he aged, he informed Mr. Newlin that he was going to retire. There was a search for a replacement pilot and the accident pilot had applied. According to Mr. Harris, Mr. Hefner was the best applicant, and he was hired by Mr. Newlin.
- According to Mr. Harris, he agreed to stay on and help train Mr. Hefner for an additional 3 months on how to operate in the corporate environment in the Citation 560 Ultra.
- According to Mr. Harris, a 560 Ultra and the accident airplane are very similar.
- Mr. Harris stated that "something happened" recently between the accident pilot and Mr. Newlin. This was his opinion.
- According to Mr. Harris, at some point in the last 6 weeks (preceding the accident date), the accident pilot went from being the chief pilot to only a relief pilot and the Director of Maintenance.

- According to Mr. Harris, there were maintenance issues with wing delamination of some of the law firm aircraft that Mr. Heffner was managing, and a lawsuit may have been pending.
- According to Mr. Harris, Mr. Newlin asked Mr. Hefner in the past few weeks to go to a heart institute. Mr. Harris said that Mr. Hefner was asked to go see Dr. Bellow who was a cardiologist. Mr. Newlin wanted Mr. Hefner to submit to a full heart ultrasound and a heart stress test.
- According to Mr. Harris, Mr. Newlin sent him to the doctor as well when he worked for him. Mr. Harris reported that ultimately, Mr. Hefner did not go to the cardiologist and the other pilots that worked for Mr. Newlin also said they would not go to the cardiologist.
- According to Mr. Harris, he had lunch with Mr. Hefner Saturday before the accident day. Mr. Hefner was working on the Citation on Saturday as well. The type of maintenance being performed was not described by Mr. Harris.
- According to Mr. Harris, Saturday during lunch, Mr. Hefner told him that he had skin cancer.
- According to Mr. Harris, the accident airplane had no on-board Wi-Fi or satellite phones onboard where the passengers would have been able to communicate to the ground.
- According to Mr. Harris, he provided his personal opinion repeatedly that the accident was due to a pilot incapacitation event.

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