

Evidence Title: Interview - Mikael Chaguaceda 11-2308-009494

Detective McGlynn 33870: I am Detective McGlynn with the Broward County Sheriff's Office, my CCN 33870. This is gonna be a sworn interview with Mikael Chaguaceda, who is a Broward Sheriff's Office employee.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Yes, sir.

Detective McGlynn 33870: What is your CCN?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: 18531

Detective McGlynn 33870: 18531. The interview is taken for case number 11-2308-009494. Also here is Michael's Union rep. Richard Seeb. Correct?

Union Rep Richard Seeb: Yes.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay. Alright. Um, Michael, this is a sworn, recorded interview. Okay. Um, you know what perjury is?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Uh...If I....

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay. If you lie under oath.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Okay.

Detective McGlynn 33870: It's... it's...okay. Uh, just can I have you raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: So help me God, yes.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay. For the record, uh, Michael did raise his right hand. Alright. So what time did you start work today? What was your shift?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: We start shift at 8 in the morning. I arrived to work at 7:20 in the morning, uh, just routine day. Uh, my Captain Terryson Jackson, who was on the aircraft with me, arrived just shortly after me. Uh, began our day as we always do, uh, check in our equipment, is how we started off. Signing off the narcotic drugs, uh, once we sign off our narcotic drugs, and we get report from the off going shift, we make our way to the hangar where we do our inside, uh, checkout for the helicopter and we de-con and wipe down the helicopter. Um, we were probably checking in, out the hel- aircraft for probably only three minutes before we received a call from the City of North Lauderdale, uh, for a trauma patient. So, we had to stop our, uh, just routine cleaning and, uh, respond to the call.

Detective McGlynn 33870: That was, I'm sorry, North Lauderdale?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: City of North Lauderdale requested us for trauma transport. Uh, as far as that's concerned, uh, obviously the routine clean, cleanliness and sanitary stuff just stopped. We got our equipment, got in the helicopter, uh, do our 360 of the helicopter, which means that we just walk around and make sure there's no physical obvious damages or anything that's off. Everything's, you know, tidy. So, we walk around the aircraft, we only do that once, we get in the aircraft. Routine start up, routine communication inside the helicopter, everything is going well. Uh, I'm on, I'm talking on the radio. I advise that we are en route, we're airborne on the way to the call. Uh, probably only a minute, uh, in the air. Once we already departed Pompano Air Park, we were probably just maybe not even two miles West of the airport, when we hear a strange sound, like a popping sound, and then, uh, that's when we realized, or the pilot realized that we got a check engine light. So we had a chip light come on. Uh, he did not know what the chip light was for. It was a very strange noise, aircraft was acting very strange as well. Uh, shortly after that, then we hear once we, we, we start to make our way to head back East, he calls the tower to say what's going on, he declares an emergency and we're heading, uh, East now, uh, towards the direction of the hangar. And that's when we hear that loud pop sound. And....

Detective McGlynn 33870: So, was it one or two pops?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: It was two.

Detective McGlynn 33870: So the first one...

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: From what I remember....

Detective McGlynn 33870:which made you guys turn around?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Correct. From what I remember, it was a light one, like a strange noise. And then that's when the light came on, and then we started smelling smoke. And then once we started facing the direction East and the tower was called for, uh, emergency clearance, um, that's when we hear probably right when we're over. We already passed 95. We're already on the East side of I-95, we hear the large pop. Um, I mean I'm sure you guys are gonna hear the black box recordings, but you know, I, uh, we both said we gotta land this helicopter, now. I kept stating that we should be landing at the football field, that it's parallel to I-95, it's clear as day. Um, a lot of things were going on. Uh, when you're just a couple hundred feet off the ground and you have no sense of direction, you know, you don't even know what's going on. So, it's, it's very easy to just say, oh, this could have been done. This could have been...

Detective McGlynn 33870: Can't imagine.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: However, um, once that second pop happened, uh, what was told to me, 'cause I can't look back, is that the tail, the rotor or the actual tail boom came off the helicopter, which caused us to what they call auto rotate. Um, before it started to auto rotate, it was smoking the cabin and visible smoke coming out of the engine. Uh, because we are able to kind of look back at the aircraft and see, plus it smells like smoke and there's smoke in the cabin. I sit in the back of the aircraft, uh, so the engine's directly above me and it has dual exhaust. So, no matter where you're at, you're close to the exhaust. Um, we're telling him again, keep land, uh, land here now. And then before, probably the last time I ever said it was that tail rotor or tail boom broke off. We auto rotated, which meant that we just kept spinning. We had no sense of direction. Everything's going everywhere. Uh, I don't know what we hit. It's not that I lost consciousness. You just don't have sense of direction. So, you don't know what you hit. So obviously we, we, we crashed and when we crashed, um, the fire was right next to my arm. Uh, we have a flight suit that's made out of Nomex, so it's a fire retardant. So, I, I would say that was part of the reason why I'm here right now. I'm not burned. Um, once we crashed, uh, like I said, I didn't lose consciousness. Thank God I was alive. Uh, I tried to egress out. There was smoke everywhere. I couldn't even see my hands. So, I know the door's obviously to my right. Um, the door wouldn't open so I kicked and punched the window. The window came off. Then I was able to manhandle the door. I had to jump off the aircraft 'cause the aircraft was lopsided to the left. Meaning that if I sit on the right, it's inclined upward. So again, the fire is right by me. I'm feeling it, I'm seeing it. It's right next to me. I was able to jump out. I didn't know what I was jumping out to. I didn't know if I was in a high-rise a house, ground. I jumped off the aircraft, I broke my ribs. So I was in so much pain I couldn't get out. I had to drag myself out. I dragged myself out, uh, on top of the roof. I could tell just 'cause I take that street every day to work or every shift to work. I know I landed like on a quadplex that I drive by all the time. So I drag myself to the opposite corner. When I drag myself to the opposite corner, that's when I hear the first explosion. And then the pilot, uh, ended up getting right next to me. And then a second explosion happens. A bystander has a ladder. He asked if you need assistance. I'm like, if you could just throw the ladder on the roof, I'll climb down. And I don't know how I climbed down with this ribs. Uh, I climbed down and that's the whole story in a nutshell.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay. Um, who all was in the helicopter?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Captain...

Detective McGlynn 33870: So....

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Captain Terryson Jackson was sitting in the front left.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Captain?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Terryson, Terry-son.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Terry-son.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: And then Jackson, common spelling.

Detective McGlynn 33870: And he is...

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: He's the rightful Captain.

Detective McGlynn 33870: ...the Captain.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: He's a captain <inaudible>....

Detective McGlynn 33870: So his role in a helicopter? I'm not familiar with this, so.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Um, we, we share roles. It's a matter of where we want to sit. I could've sat in front, he could have sat in the back.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay. So there's two seats in the front?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Correct. There's a...

Union Rep Richard Seeb: There's a, there's a co-pilot...

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: ...pilot, co-pilot seat, and then there's two seats in the back. I face forward in the back, there's another seat next to me that faces aft.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Mm-hmm.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: So back, and there's the pilot that's in front of me. Our pilot flies in the right, our co-pilot, even though we do not have a co-pilot, uh, our officer, so Lieutenant or Captain will ride in the front, usually. It doesn't have to be that way, we alternate, but he knows I'd like to sit in the back. He sits in the front, he handles more navigation.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: I handle more communications.

Detective McGlynn 33870: So Captain...

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: His CCN?

Detective McGlynn 33870: Jackson would be navigation?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: He is...

Detective McGlynn 33870: Thats his...

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531:navigator...

Detective McGlynn 33870: Navigator.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: ...and talks to the info channel, which is who keeps tabs on us in the air. So every time we take off, we always notify our info channel that we're taking off. How many souls on board, fuel, our risk assessment, uh, what our nature of the call is.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Mm-hmm.

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Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: And, uh, F-2 time checks, which means that they check on us every 15 minutes. So that's what he does or anybody does up front, as well as mapping and navigation and flir camera.

Detective McGlynn 33870: So he was sitting on the left seat? Oh, I'm sorry...

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Front left.

Union Rep Richard Seeb: Am I allowed to say anything?

Detective McGlynn 33870: Yeah.

Union Rep Richard Seeb: Just to clarify...

Detective McGlynn 33870: You're here.

Union Rep Richard Seeb: the pilot that flies the helicopter, he's the helicopter pilot. The Captain, is a Fire Rescue Captain.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: A Fire rescue....

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay. So the...

Union Rep Richard Seeb: Right.

Detective McGlynn 33870:the pilot is not a firefighter? He is strictly an Air....

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: He's a, he's a pilot EMT, he's not a firefighter....

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: ...whatsoever. He, he's, our driver....

Detective McGlynn 33870: So do they get hired just to fly the pi-?

Union Rep Richard Seeb: Yes, they do.

Detective McGlynn 33870: So you can be... as a firefighter, could you in turn...

Union Rep Richard Seeb: No.

Detective McGlynn 33870: ...wanna be a pilot later or no?

Union Rep Richard Seeb: No.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: No, you would have to get like 3000 hours and go through...

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: you know...

Union Rep Richard Seeb: So the Captain by name is a Captain Fire Rescue Captain.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Like a lieutenant...

Union Rep Richard Seeb: Not, a Captain of the aircraft.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: ... like you have a Sergeant..

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Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: and all that. He's the rank of a Captain.

Union Rep Richard Seeb: So we have a rank of officer, and one Firefighter/Paramedic on there.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay, so Captain Jackson who is a BSO firefighter?

Union Rep Richard Seeb: Yes.

Detective McGlynn 33870: He is sitting in the left seat?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Depending on how you look at the, if you're sitting in the aircraft, he's sitting to the left. If you're facing...

Detective McGlynn 33870: Like a driver...

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: ...towards the aircraft...

Detective McGlynn 33870: ... that would be the driver's seat?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Correct.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay. So he's the left, then you have the pilot?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: On the right side, which would be our passenger seat of a car.

Detective McGlynn 33870: On right. And....

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Then I sit behind.

Detective McGlynn 33870: ...what's his name?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Uh, Daron Roche.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Daron Roche, okay.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: D-A-R-O-N, Roche, R-O-C-H-E.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Alright.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Um, Terryson's CCN is 16515.

Detective McGlynn 33870: 16515, okay. Um, have you worked with this crew before?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: I...

Detective McGlynn 33870: Is this your....?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: He's been my captain for over a year now.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Jackson has?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Jackson has been my Captain for 13 months.

Detective McGlynn 33870: And what about with Daron Roche? Is he your...?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: He has been the pilot ever since I got on air rescue three years ago.

Detective McGlynn 33870: So every air....

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Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: We have five pilots currently, they alternate.

Detective McGlynn 33870: And he's been on your shift?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: He did, but he was a Chief Pilot, meaning that he was working days up till four months ago, then he went back on the line as a line pilot and he works a seven day off, seven day off schedule.

Union Rep Richard Seeb: Clarification... Firefighters work 24 hour shifts.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Mm-hmm.

Union Rep Richard Seeb: And the pilots work 12 hour shifts. So you're,

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Yeah.

Union Rep Richard Seeb: ... in a 24 hour period...

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay.

Union Rep Richard Seeb:you have two separate pilots.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Correct.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Gotcha.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: So he's a day pilot and a night pilot will come in after, then he'll have a week off of work, and then the following week he'll come in at, on nights. He'll come in at 8:00 PM.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: The same pilot would be 8:00 PM. That's their rotational schedule. So I've worked with him over the course of three years.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Alright. The crew that you took over from at 8:00 AM?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Correct.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Did they have any air rescues last night? Did they have...

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: They had a bunch of calls, they didn't have any transports. They flew though.

Detective McGlynn 33870: They flew?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: They had, they had no issues. They did not transport a patient from what they was told to me, but they flew to the scene of a call and in turn were not needed and they didn't have any lights or, or anything weird.

Detective McGlynn 33870: But no transports? Um, okay. And when the first <sigh> light came on, you heard the first pop, um, the pilot, he was like, okay, let's go back. So he starts going back to Pompano Airport right? That's where, cause in...

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Not instantly, but yeah, like it wasn't an instant, like you're, what you're saying is you gotta check engine light, make a quick left and head back East...

Detective McGlynn 33870: Correct.

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Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: It wasn't like that. It was more along the lines, he had to clear tower, ask for emergency traffic and, and try..

Detective McGlynn 33870: But at that point aren't you already turning back anyway? Like...

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: He's making a slight left, but it's not a car you make it quick...

Detective McGlynn 33870: Yeah.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: ...you know? You have to make sure there's no, remember we're we just left an airfield.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Yeah.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: So they're Cessna planes constantly coming in and out, so we have to look left and right, like a four-way stop sign.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Oh yeah.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: You know, so it's not just ...Okay, we're good. Like you have to look left and right as you're talking to tower, so...

Detective McGlynn 33870: And then you suggested that you just land in right at the football field off of...?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: 100%. When you guys pull the recordings, you listen to both of us, not the pilot.

Detective McGlynn 33870: The Captain?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: You'll hear us both speaking.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: And you'll hear the full details of what we were saying in, in that aircraft.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay. Um, anything I didn't ask you? Um, you're obviously gonna be interviewed by other, you know, the aero, AA and all that.

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Yeah.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Um, anything I didn't ask you that you feel is important?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: No.

Detective McGlynn 33870: That I should know?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: I believe I told you everything. I was able to remember the vast majority of everything.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Alright. Everything you told me is the truth to the best of your knowledge?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Absolutely.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay. Nobody forced you or coerced you to be here?

Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Absolutely not.

Detective McGlynn 33870: To provide this statement?

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Mikael Chaguaceda 18531: Nope.

Detective McGlynn 33870: Okay. And just for the record, the, this interview did occur inside of Broward North in the emergency room. That's gonna conclude the interview. It is, 11:25.