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Office of Aviation Safety - Eastern Region

Date: February 13, 2023
Subject: ERA23LA111
Contact: Steven R. Morgan
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In an email, Steven Morgan stated the following:

- On January 10th, N5841W with Flight Instructor Josh Watts and Student Pilot Todd Krasner was operating the aircraft for a training event. Using Runway 19 for departure N5841W took off and turned left crosswind for a left downwind to runway 19. At 1400 MSL and approximately 2500 east and abeam the end of runway 19. Both Josh Watts and Todd Krasner heard an unfamiliar grinding noise of no more than 3 seconds. Looking at the engine gauges with no engine performance lost they continued and decided to land. Upon shutting the engine down Barry Gee Owner of First Team Pilot Training and N5841W was there and a visual inspection of the aircraft was performed. They visually saw damage to the back of the propeller and top and bottom of the right hand cowl. There was no visible bird parts or blood. They believed a UAS impact was a plausible outcome of the damage to the aircraft.
- On January 12th, Rusty Bliss Fayette Co airport manager contacted Memphis FSDO to report the UAS incident. Barry Gee owner of N5841W called Phil Dixon Memphis FSDO Program FAST Team Manager and reported the incident. At that time Barry Gee informed Phil Dixon the aircraft top cowl and propeller was removed. The propeller was sent to a

mechanic for inspection. The inspection revealed a 3 inch gash of 1-2 MM deep on the back of propeller extending to the trailing edge.

- January 18th 2023, contacted Barry Gee and spoke with him about this incident and he informed that the aircraft had an oil change on January 9th performed by A&P Joseph Blake Walton. Asked him if he was missing any tools and he confirmed he had all his tools.
- January 19th, received statement from Josh Watts and in his words, "he heard a momentary metal to metal sound and he looked at the engine gauges and saw no engine performance loss so he elected to do a precautionary landing."
- January 27th, received statement from Todd Krasner and in his words. "I took off, made my first bank to the left, got to altitude and around the time we were abeam to the numbers we heard a sudden metal to metal sound. It only lasted a couple seconds but alarmed me enough to make a landing and a full stop and inspect the aircraft."
- With the lack of the Drone parts in the aircraft and the Flight Instructor and Student pilot said they did not see a UAS. Closing this report out as unsubstantiated for the lack of evidence of a UAS midair.