

RECORD OF ☐ VISIT ☐ CONFERENCE OR ☒ TELEPHONE CALL		TIME 11:00 EDT	DATE 09/21/23								
NAME (S) OF PERSON (S) CONTACTED OR IN CONFERENCE AND LOCATION			ROUTING								
PIC (N454AB)- Ahmed Ashat, Mustafa Dandashly (Atty representing PIC), Fernanda Flores (Atty's Office) Inspector James Foster (Ops) & myself.			<table border="1"> <tr> <td>SYMBOL</td> <td>INITIALS</td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </table>	SYMBOL	INITIALS						
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SUBJECT											
PIC Interview for Accident Aircraft N454AB (HWO)											
DIGEST											
See page 2											
CONCLUSION, ACTION TAKEN, OR REQUIRED											
DATE 09/21/2023	TITLE ASI Michael H. Torrent	SIGNATURE  MICHAEL HENRY TORRENT									

A video conference call was held on 9/21/23 at approximately 1100 EDT. The purpose of this call was to interview PIC Ahmed Ashat who was the PIC of accident aircraft N454AB.

Mr. Ashat was interviewed by me, the FAA IIC for the accident. Opening up the interview, Mr. Ashat stated he has about 1200 total time in airplanes of which approximately 800 of those are banner tow hours. Mr. Ashat stated that Aerial Banners North (ABN) is the second banner tow company he has been employed by and he had been there approximately 1 year at the time of the accident. He stated that he feels he has good experience banner towing and in tail wheel aircraft. He stated he has flown other tailwheel aircraft such as Cessna 140, Stearman and Piper Cubs.

When asked about the aircraft at ABN, Mr. Ashat stated some aircraft didn't fly as nice as others. Some had difficulty climbing and performing. He brought up N430AB, the ABN accident that occurred 8 days prior to this accident. He stated that aircraft did not want to fly and most pilots did not want to use it for their flights. He also stated that in the days after that accident, most of ABN's pilots resigned except for him, "John" and "Daniel". He stated personal reasons for staying, mostly citing an upcoming airline interview which required him to reach 1500 hours to qualify for.

Mr. Ashat was asked about the morning of the flight. Mr. Ashat stated it was a good morning, weather was good, preflight check of the aircraft was ok and he proceeded out for take off and set up in the ABN banner box area. He described his procedure for pick up. He stated he normally come in a little "high and nice" for safety, he stated he does this based on experience in these operations. He stated he likes to come in at approximately 95 to 100 MPH then climb pick and climb at approximately 55 to 60 mph to not snap the tow rope or hook mechanism. He said in this profile, rudder application is required on climb. He described the banner box boundaries which was consistent with information FAA previously gathered. Mr. Ashat went on to discuss the moments prior to the accident, he stated that the banner pick up was changed on him, so he lined up on the new lane. On the attempt prior to the accident, Mr. Ashat stated he missed and on climb out he had some rudder applied which was normal. He noted on climb after the miss pick, he felt the rudder snap or let go and the aircraft immediately made a 90 degree left turn, he stated he had little time to react and could only push the nose down. He recalls calling over the company frequency and advising his rudder snapped. He stated he did not recall too much, it all happened in a matter of seconds.

Mr. Ashat was asked to discuss the aircraft at ABN. Mr. Ashat stated that it was common to find issues with and swap aircraft because of it. He stated Company policy was changed and required pilots to show up 2 hours prior to their flight to account for this and the additional time to prepare another aircraft.

Mr. Ashat was asked what type of issues were found on the aircraft or what he was referring to. He stated common findings were engine not starting, radio failures, flat tires, flight controls loose particularly with the ailerons. He went on to mention the operation there was "not secure and cheapo".

Mr. Ashat was asked about the banners they tow. He said they vary in size such as the "Club LIV" which is big and flies a little differently, higher stall speed and slower to react to climb or controls. The day of the accident he was scheduled to pick up a normal sized banner.

At this point, Mr Ashat went back to discuss the aircraft and operation. He went back to N430AB, he said that aircraft stalled at a higher speed than others and it was carrying a large banner the day it had the accident. He mentioned an event which occurred 10 days prior to that accident where the aircraft didn't climb, a banner was dropped and aircraft returned to the field. When he asked what they found wrong with it, mechanic "Jackson" stated nothing was wrong with the aircraft. He also again said he hated flying N430AB. Mr. Ashat went on to state the most of the people working on those airplanes did not have A&P certificates and were "not qualified" to do that work there. -----end-----