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Office of Aviation Safety, Eastern Region

Date: March 14, 2024, March 20, 2024, March 21, 2024

Subject: NTSB# ERA24FA136

Contact: Chris Sharpe (Director of Operations (DO), Skyjet Elite)

The individual noted above provided the following information via telephone conversation. The below contents are a summary of what was reported:

MARCH 14, 2024

Mr. Sharpe reported that the passengers on-board the accident flight were headed to a conference in the Hot Springs, Virginia area. One of the passengers (Mr. Diez) was the owner of the airplane and was the CEO of Skyjet Elite. Mr. Sharpe stated, "it was his plane."

The flight departed Fort Lauderdale (FLL) and the destination was always Hot Springs (Ingalls Field, HSP). He did not know why some media reports suggested the flight had to divert to HSP, given it was the destination.

The accident airplane was on SkyJet Elite's Part 135 certificate. He said it was on their DO85. However, he believed that operational control for the accident flight fell to the owner of the airplane who was onboard the flight (Mr. Diez).

After the flight landed at HSP, the flight crew were scheduled to continue to Teterboro, New Jersey (TEB Airport). Mr. Sharpe believed that this flight would be a Part 91 repositioning flight in which operational control would return to SkyJet Elite.

Mr. Sharpe did not believe that there were any scheduled flights after the flight crew arrived at TEB. He explained that they may have been positioning the airplane at TEB with the hopes of picking up an on-demand charter at some point.

Mr. Sharpe stated that the pilot in command (PIC) was also SkyJet Elite's Chief Pilot. The second-in-command (SIC) was also employed by SkyJet Elite as a co-pilot.

Mr. Sharpe reported that the SIC had completed all proficiency checks to act as SIC, and that he had paper copies of the 135 checkrides.

Mr. Sharpe reported that he himself started working for Skyjet Elite in October 2023. He recalled that both pilots had already been hired before he started in October.

Mr. Sharpe reported that SkyJet Elite treats Part 91 repositioning flights the same as Part 135 flights. However, again, it was his understanding that this was an owner flight in which operational control would not fall to Skyjet Elite.

Mr. Sharpe reported that the PIC and SIC had flown together before on the accident airplane, however, he was unsure of the exact total time.

He recalled that the left or right thrust reverser was MEL'd. That was the only discrepancy with the airplane to his knowledge.

This NTSB investigator thanked Mr. Sharpe for his time and explained that several documents will need to be provided to the investigation and that request was made via email.

MARCH 20, 2024

Mr. Sharpe recalled that the PIC was employed full-time with SkyJet Elite ever since he became the DO, which was in October 2023.

Mr. Sharpe confirmed that the PIC and SIC never flew any Part 135 flights with the PA31.

Mr. Sharpe reported that he saw paperwork that existed with SkyJet Elite, dated in the June 2023 timeframe for a PRIA/ PRD request for the PIC. He was unsure of why a PRIA was requested for the June 2023 timeframe given the pilot had already worked for the company since 2022. He believed it was possible the operator was going to start Part 135 charter operations with the PA31, which ultimately never materialized. He did not work for SkyJet Elite at this time and is not sure why the PRIA was made by the former DO.

Mr. Sharpe explained that a service "NATA" was used to process the June 2023 PRIA. Mr. Sharpe reported that after this request was made, NATA sent back multiple

responses to SkyJet, informing them of an error on Part I of the form. The Part I was the location of where the airman would be expected to list the previous air carrier employers name and address. Mr. Sharpe reported it appeared that multiple notices to SkyJet Elite from NATA were not responded to, and the PRIA was not fulfilled due to the error on the form by the PIC. The last email notifying SkyJet Elite of the error was on August 20, 2023.

Mr. Sharpe reported that "AZTEC AIRWAYS" was listed as a past employer by the PIC. He also said the form listed "REVA" as a company in which the PIC had participated in a formal DOT Drug Testing program. The PIC listed on the form that he had never tested positive for drugs on a DOT test.

Mr. Sharpe reported that sometime in December 2023 or January 2024, once SkyJet Elite decided to send the PIC to Flight Safety for Astra G-100 training, he said he needed to complete a background check and fingerprints on the PIC because he "didn't have anything" for him in the SkyJet files. At this time, there was no PRIA/ PRD requested because the PIC was already an employee at SkyJet Elite.

Mr. Sharpe reported that on January 5, 2024, a background check and fingerprints were completed for the PIC.

Mr. Sharpe reported that he did not recall REVA fulfilling a PRIA/ PRD request nor was there a request made to REVA during his tenure as DO. He was not aware that the pilot had flown for REVA in 2023.

Mr. Sharpe explained that he did not know if the PIC held a flying position at REVA, or was a Director of Operations or other non-flying position, for example.

Mr. Sharpe reported that it was his knowledge that the PIC was hired onto SkyJet Elite in November 2022 to be the Chief Pilot. He was hired by the CEO, who was fatally injured in the accident. Mr. Sharpe further explained that the PA31 aircraft were routinely unavailable for flight due to maintenance reasons. Mr. Sharpe explained that he believed the SkyJet CEO asked the PIC to stay on with SkyJet Elite as Chief Pilot and he would pay him a small fee to stay on as Chief Pilot, despite the PA31 aircraft not being used on the certificate. Further, the SkyJet CEO, according to Mr. Sharpe, understood that the PIC would fly elsewhere professionally.

Mr. Sharpe believed that in the fall of 2023, the PIC left REVA to come back and fly the PA31, which again never materialized due to maintenance issues. Which then later led to his assignment to fly the Astra/ G-100 as PIC.

Mr. Sharpe reported that the dispatch process was completed through an App. He said he was not aware of anyone that would have spoken to the flight crew the day of the accident. He said if someone did speak with the crew, it would have been unusual and that he likely would have been made aware of the anomaly. Further, given that the CEO/owner was onboard, he believed he definitely would have been made aware of some sort of anomaly or notable discussion about the accident flight during preflight/dispatch.

Mr. Sharpe was asked if there were any complaints or safety concerns brought forward about either pilot. He said he was not aware of any.

Mr. Sharpe reported that a few days prior to the accident, all company pilots and personnel had a staff meeting. Mr. Sharpe explained that every pilot was asked to come forward to him, if they had any concerns about the safety at SkyJet Elite. He added that he provided his personal cell, and told the pilots they could text him privately outside of the meeting if they had any concerns. He said no pilot reached out to him, at the meeting or via call or text.

Mr. Sharpe reported that at the date of the accident, SkyJet Elite had four G-100/ Astra aircraft, one Citation, and one Learjet. They had a total of 9 pilots. Mr. Sharpe reported that they had ceased all flying since the accident, and he does not know when or if flying will resume at SkyJet Elite.

Mr. Sharpe reported that the PIC never resigned at any point during his employment with SkyJet Elite. He was not aware of any paperwork of such circumstances. Mr. Sharpe explained that "NATA" was a service used for fingerprints, drug testing, and a background check showing where they were employed.

Mr. Sharpe was informed that the NTSB investigation needs to see what PRIA/ PRD records were obtained for the PIC, and when the records were requested and reviewed/ obtained. Mr. Sharpe explained that he believes paper records may have existed and the former DO of SkyJet may have the records.

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