

ERA24FA217

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Group Chairman's Factual Report - Attachment 8

Interview Transcripts

April 16, 2026

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024

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Accident No.: ERA24FA217

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Interview of: CRIS ALLYN, Air Traffic Controller
Federal Aviation Administration

Nashville, Tennessee

Tuesday,
May 21, 2024

APPEARANCES:

SARAH LEWIS, Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BETTY KOSCHIG, Senior Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

CRYSTAL GENNARO, Traffic Manager
Federal Aviation Administration

AMY HUSCHKA, Air Safety Investigator
National Air Traffic Controllers Association

JEREMY LEE, NATCA Facility Representative
Representative for Mr. Allyn

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:23 a.m.)

MS. LEWIS: Okay, the time now is 10:23 a.m. Central time.
Please state your name.

MR. ALLYN: Cris Allyn.

MS. LEWIS: Can you spell out your name?

MR. ALLYN: C-r-i-s A-l-l-y-n.

MS. LEWIS: Perfect. As part of the process, like we did talk about a little bit off line, I'll be recording the interview and then I'll have the transcription made. The transcription will become part of the factual docket, but the audio will not be part of the docket. If you choose to have a copy of the transcript, we can send it to you, and if you don't, that's completely fine, too. And you do not have any questions about that portion?

MR. ALLYN: Correct.

MS. LEWIS: Okay, perfect. As I said before, my name is Sarah Lewis, I'm an air traffic control investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board, and the NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with determining the probable cause of aviation accidents and incidents and promoting transportation safety. The purpose of this investigation is safety, we're here to gather facts, determine probable cause, and prevent reoccurrence. Our role is not to assign fault, blame, or liability. And this interview is just part of the fact-finding phase of this investigation. As part of

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1 the regulations, you're welcome to have one representative of your
2 choice to attend and I see that you have a representative, is this
3 person sitting next to you the person you would like to be your
4 representative?

5 MR. ALLYN: Yes.

6 MS. LEWIS: Okay. Would you please state your name?

7 MR. LEE: I'm Jeremy Lee.

8 MS. LEWIS: Okay. And could you please spell your name?

9 MR. LEE: J-e-r-e-m-y L-e-e.

10 MS. LEWIS: Thank you. The reason for this interview today
11 is to discuss the accident that occurred on May 15th, 2024,
12 regarding November 4-7 Whiskey Tango. We will be asking a variety
13 of questions, so if at any time you have any questions, please
14 feel free to ask. As you probably already know, sometimes I
15 ramble a little bit and you're like what the heck is she asking
16 me, just say, "Sarah, can you please let me hear that in a
17 different way?"

18 MR. LEE: Okay.

19 MS. LEWIS: I'll be more than happy to clarify a question for
20 you. Please answer the questions to the best of your
21 recollection. If you don't remember, then "I don't remember" is a
22 perfectly fine and acceptable answer, you just don't know, that's
23 fine. If you don't understand a question, ask to have it repeated
24 or explained. If at any time you wish to take a break or you want
25 to consult with Jeremy, please let us know, we're more than happy

1 to just pause, you can ask some questions in the room, you can go
2 outside the room. If you need to go to the restroom or get
3 something to eat, that's fine, just let us know. Okay. And like
4 I said before, the way it will work today is I'll start asking
5 questions and then we'll go around the room. That's the basic
6 structure of our interviews. Do you have any questions?

7 MR. ALLYN: No.

8 MS. LEWIS: Okay. Let's get started. Give me one moment.

9 (Pause.)

10 INTERVIEW OF CRIS ALLYN

11 BY MS. LEWIS:

12 Q. What is your age?

13 A. Thirty-four.

14 Q. What are your operating initials?

15 A. CA.

16 Q. And what is your title or position?

17 A. Air traffic or CPC --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- or ATCS.

20 Q. Are you a trainer?

21 A. I am not a OJTI, no.

22 Q. Okay, perfect. Do you have any military or pre-FAA air
23 traffic control experience?

24 A. No.

25 Q. Do you hold any collateral duties or have you been on any

1 recent details that would take you out of the operation?

2 A. No.

3 Q. So tell us how you became interested in being an air traffic
4 controller.

5 A. Saw it online one day.

6 Q. Yeah?

7 A. Yeah, 2014, saw it online and they happened to be having an
8 off-the-street bid in two weeks and so --

9 Q. Wow.

10 A. -- I applied and went from there.

11 Q. Yeah. Did you get -- once you got applied, did it go quickly
12 for you or was there like --

13 A. I think, from when I applied to actually going to OKC, it was
14 about a year.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So decently fast.

17 Q. Yeah, that's not too bad.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. Yeah, sometimes we get stuck in a hiring freeze and then it
20 takes forever.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Yeah. Well, that's awesome. Have you ever been, like, fired
23 or terminated, suspended or asked to resign from any ATC position?

24 A. No.

25 Q. How would you describe your overall health? And in terms of

1 excellent, good, fair, poor.

2 A. Like currently, in the past, what do you mean?

3 Q. Sure, currently.

4 A. Currently?

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. What were the categories again?

7 Q. So excellent, good, fair, poor.

8 A. Good.

9 Q. All right. No, that's good. Okay. And do you have a

10 medical?

11 A. Currently?

12 Q. Current medical for the FAA.

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay, that's fine. Do you have to wear corrective lenses?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Okay. Let's see. Do you remember if there was any drug or

17 alcohol screening performed after this event?

18 A. Yes, there was.

19 Q. Okay, perfect. And then how long after? Like a couple --

20 A. That happened, I think, Wednesday and I got drug tested

21 yesterday, Monday.

22 Q. Okay, all right. Any changes in your health during the last

23 year, good, bad, indifferent?

24 A. In the last year, no.

25 Q. Okay. How about changes in your personal life during the

1 past year? It could be you got married, had a child.

2 A. No.

3 Q. Won the lottery.

4 A. I wish.

5 Q. Yeah. Okay. So yeah, so you didn't win the lottery in the
6 last year, any other financial situations that changed
7 significantly in the last year or so?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Perfect.

10 A. Moving up to a Level 10 raise, but that's about it.

11 Q. Oh, yeah, congratulations. I hear you guys are getting
12 pretty busy.

13 A. It is, yeah.

14 Q. Yeah, wow. Well, congratulations.

15 A. Thank you.

16 Q. That'll help, right?

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. Okay, so let's think about like maybe three days-ish before
19 the day of the accident, okay? So we're going to ask, I'm going
20 to ask you like what's your typical sleep schedule. Okay, so
21 thinking about -- so what, it was three days, so it was Wednesday,
22 so that would be -- let's see. What are your days off or your
23 RDOs or your RDO?

24 A. Tuesday/Wednesday.

25 Q. Tuesday/Wednesday. Okay.

1 A. No, Wednesday/Thursday.

2 Q. Wednesday/Thursday. Okay, so this was an overtime shift for
3 you?

4 A. It was.

5 Q. Okay. Okay, so Wednesday/Thursday, perfect. And then let's
6 think about -- let's see, Tuesday, Monday -- okay, so -- so
7 Tuesday was your Friday, let's just do maybe one or two days
8 before. So thinking of the day before the accident, okay, do you
9 remember what shift you worked? It was a Tuesday.

10 A. It would've been a 5:30 a.m.

11 Q. Five thirty, okay. Do you remember when you went to bed the
12 night before?

13 A. I don't remember.

14 Q. That's fine. What time do you think -- was it like a normal
15 day, you came to work and then what did you do, like, after you
16 left work?

17 A. On Tuesday?

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. Probably went home.

20 Q. Um-hum.

21 A. Took a quick nap until the wife got off work and ate dinner.

22 Q. Perfect. Do you remember what time you went to bed that
23 night?

24 A. I do not.

25 Q. Okay, that's fine. Okay. Did you file an ATSAP report

1 regarding this event?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Perfect. Do you know, was any action taken or recommended by
4 the ERC as of this time?

5 A. I do not know if they have gotten back to me yet.

6 Q. Okay, that's fine, that's fine. Have you been -- other than
7 today, from over across the street or across the hall, excuse me,
8 have you been interviewed by this -- about this event prior to
9 now?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay. Have you had the opportunity to review the replay of
12 the event?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. When did you review the replay?

15 A. Yesterday.

16 Q. Okay. Was a relief briefing conducted when you took the
17 position? When you came in to take that position that hour or
18 however long you were on, were you given a relief briefing?

19 A. I believe, yes.

20 Q. On a scale from 1 to 5, okay, 5 being the heaviest, how would
21 you classify the traffic volume at the time of the event?

22 A. Maybe a 3.

23 Q. Okay. Is that a normal volume for that time of the day?

24 A. I believe kind of like the lunchtime, like low vol.

25 Q. Um-hum. Okay. Okay, now let's think about complexity. On

1 the same scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the most complex, how would you
2 classify the traffic complexity at the time of the event?

3 A. I'd probably say a 3, still, I think we did a runway change
4 probably -- I don't remember how long, 10, 15 minutes beforehand,
5 but besides that maybe like 3.

6 Q. Okay. And that was -- was that normal for the time of day,
7 the complexity?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Perfect. Were there any distractions occurring at the time
10 of the event or leading up to the time of the event? A fire drill
11 or somebody coming in and --

12 A. No.

13 Q. No, okay. Do you recall the weather conditions or current
14 advisories leading up to and at the time of the event? So, for
15 example, was -- yeah, so do you remember anything about the
16 weather at the time?

17 A. Yes, because I saw the replay yesterday.

18 Q. Okay, that's fine. Just in general.

19 A. There was some more of like broader, high Level 2, I believe,
20 on the east side, maybe in the final box and then Level 1 that
21 would come and go on the west side.

22 Q. Okay, perfect. Did you receive a pre-duty weather briefing?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Anything that stood out to you or anything that you can
25 recall from that day that was different than maybe a typical day?

1 A. Not that I can recall.

2 Q. Do you feel that the pre-duty weather briefing is valuable to
3 you guys, in its present condition?

4 A. Yes and no. I mean, sometimes I think people watch it very
5 quickly, especially like a perfect weather day, but you at least
6 have to watch it.

7 Q. Um-hum.

8 A. But I think the best experience is being inside the TRACON
9 and seeing it.

10 Q. Sure. Do you feel it's made more towards different
11 facilities rather than your own?

12 A. No, I don't think so.

13 Q. Okay. To give you a little background, sometimes the -- a
14 facility will have to watch an area, for example, Oklahoma City,
15 it was all about the Dallas metro complex and it really wasn't
16 that helpful to us to understand that, so that's kind of what
17 we're wondering, to see how that works for you guys here. So did
18 you have a cellular phone or a cellular personal electronic device
19 with you at the time of the event?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Had you requested a relief or assistance at or leading up to
22 the time of the event?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Did you notify your supervisor about the event?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And then when did you notify your supervisor?

2 A. I believe I yelled when I saw the triple Xs, I believe.

3 Q. Um-hum. Okay, perfect. Thank you. Okay, so to the best of
4 your ability, could you please step me through the event, like
5 when you -- from when you came in to work that day and how long
6 were you at work, what shift did you work and stuff like that?

7 A. So it was my overtime shift, my sixth day, I got there at
8 5:30.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. I got off at 1:30, so I think it happened at 12:00, it's been
11 my 47-hour, my 48-hour work week, so I was almost done. And then
12 what else did you say about it?

13 Q. Just tell me about what happened that day, leading up to and
14 then take me through the event, as best as you can remember.

15 A. I don't remember much before.

16 Q. Okay, that's fine.

17 A. Like, what positions and stuff.

18 Q. Then you can start wherever you want.

19 A. So after the event, I remember being -- well, just especially
20 because I listened to the tape, I was on the line with the center
21 when they checked on, and then they checked on asking for higher.
22 I remember saying "say again" because I didn't hear the call sign,
23 who it was, they requested nine. I called Memphis and got control
24 to climb up to 9,000. I believe earlier I gave mutual deviations
25 for that aircraft, mutual deviations. So once he's climbed up to

1 9,000, the aircraft makes a turn to the north. Since I had three
2 coming in from the southwest and were landing northbound, he was
3 going to be right in the arrival corridor. Since he made that
4 turn to the north, I gave him a 3-60 heading just so I knew what
5 heading he was on, then I can get divergence quicker.

6 Q. Um-hum.

7 A. And then they kept fluctuating between like 94 and 95, I told
8 the aircraft maintain 9,000. And then once I realized that I'm
9 going to have divergence for all the aircraft, I asked them if
10 they could go on course, they said they could go on course, I told
11 them to turn right on course. And then from there besides --

12 Q. Yeah, yeah.

13 A. -- all the construction.

14 Q. Yeah. Well, it's a little bit distracting.

15 A. So I turned them right on course and then after I turned them
16 on course, I told them to make sure he's at 9,000 again because I
17 think he stated 95. I did something, I believe, at John Tune
18 looking for a clearance and then that's when I went back to my
19 scan down there and I noticed him southbound with some Xs and
20 tried to reach out to him.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. That's all.

23 Q. Can you remember how long it took to get you relieved off of
24 the scope?

25 A. Longer than I hoped. To me it felt like 20, 30 minutes, I

1 don't know exactly, I never checked, but it felt like I was on
2 there for a while afterwards.

3 Q. We have the recording up to a certain point and I was able to
4 listen to it and you got pretty busy after that, too, in my
5 opinion.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. But I think it was at least 20-something minutes and then the
8 recording turned off, so I didn't even hear someone come and get
9 you. So is that normal, do you feel that's normal? I don't know
10 how many, you know, things happened, but when someone says hey, I
11 need to get off of here, would they normally be able to get you
12 off pretty soon?

13 A. Yeah, if I need to use the restroom, I say hey --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. -- to someone, you know, to take the position. They're
16 normally pretty quick. Yeah.

17 Q. How do you feel about not -- did you ask them specifically if
18 -- did you ask for relief after this happened?

19 A. No, I kind of assumed someone was coming in.

20 Q. Um-hum.

21 A. So I didn't ask, I just kind of assumed that eventually
22 somebody had to be coming in for me, so --

23 Q. Yeah. How did that -- looking back on it, how did that make
24 you feel, like, what were you thinking at the time?

25 A. I mean, I think the supervisor came back, came to me and

1 asked me, he was like how are you doing. I think I gave him a
2 quick okay, because I'm still talking to quite a few airplanes.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. But I was ready for a break.

5 Q. Yeah, I bet. After that, did you have to stay in the
6 facility for a while?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Yeah. And you finally got to go home and -- okay. So let's
9 talk a little bit about training. So, you know, I think I forgot
10 to ask you, so let's go back a little bit, it's a couple questions
11 that I forgot to ask you. Tell me a little bit -- so was this
12 your first FAA facility after Oklahoma City?

13 A. My second.

14 Q. Second. Okay, where did you go first?

15 A. Pensacola Tower.

16 Q. Oh. Did you like it there?

17 A. I did, yeah.

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. Yeah, I was loving the beach life and --

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. -- that was fun.

22 Q. Well, it's funny because at the time I was married to my --
23 unfortunately, my -- I unfortunately got divorced, but I had a
24 husband who was in the Navy, flying in Pensacola --

25 A. Um-hum.

1 Q. -- and so I did my interview to get this job in Pensacola and
2 they were like --

3 A. Okay.

4 Q. -- are you sure you don't want to stay here and oh, no, no,
5 I'm going to go to the Washington, D.C. area, I got -- you know, I
6 know people there, yeah, New York TRACON.

7 A. Okay.

8 Q. That didn't work out for me very well. So I'm glad to hear
9 you had a great experience in Pensacola.

10 A. Yeah, I liked it.

11 Q. So that's good. Okay. Well, thank you, because I had
12 forgotten to ask you that. So the reason why I'm asking that is
13 -- so how was the training program here, how did you -- when you
14 first got to the facility, what did you do?

15 A. I mean, that was seven years ago.

16 Q. Uh-huh.

17 A. I think it's changed since I got here but, you know, I think
18 when I got here there was a quick ground school, just kind of
19 learning the SOP, LOA. Once I got done with ground, I believe I
20 had to go -- during the middle of training, they started making
21 everyone go to Memphis for TSS for local.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Once I got done with that, I went to Oklahoma City for RTF
24 and TSEW, so I think I came back here and did a few sims and then
25 just did on-the-job training.

1 Q. Cool. And that's pretty much what happens now, too, you
2 think, or how does it -- is it -- there's a lot of change or --

3 A. I don't follow it too much, but I think it's different now
4 where they have, you know, a regular class and then I think they
5 have to go to TSS and for ground, I don't know if you can help me,
6 but --

7 Q. Yeah, okay.

8 A. -- I think there might be TSS or ground, TSS before you can
9 go to local now, but I think there's a lot more, just simulations
10 and --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- stuff like that now.

13 Q. Where's the TSS located?

14 A. Memphis.

15 Q. Okay. Oh, okay. So do you guys get to -- so do you feel
16 like if you wanted to go over there for whatever reason, that the
17 facility's open to that or how does that work for scheduling? I
18 mean, it's a little complicated question but, for example, say
19 hey, I really want to have a little extra help with such and such,
20 could you -- do you feel comfortable asking for that?

21 A. Yeah. I think it would be different if I was still in my
22 training, ask for more training and stuff like that.

23 Q. Sure. Yeah, now it's a little different.

24 A. But I think if you wanted to run a sim on the -- the radar
25 lab, I think they'd let me, but --

1 Q. Yeah. Now, is that -- radar sim, is that located here in the
2 building?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. That's cool. Okay, cool. Okay. Do you remember having any
5 specific, like, refresher training on weather, anything in the
6 last year or so?

7 A. I think during one of the refresher briefings there was a
8 quick thing like about Miami or something, but that's all I
9 remember.

10 Q. When you're -- so thinking about when you're working traffic
11 in the TRACON and weather's coming in and -- do you ever make
12 reference to like the ITWS, are you able to see the ITWS from
13 where you're sitting or is it something that -- do you guys, as
14 controllers, use that tool in the TRACON or is it more of a
15 supervisory thing here?

16 A. I think it's more of a supervisory thing. If I'm at the
17 tower, I mean, I look at it more in the tower --

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. -- than when in the TRACON.

20 Q. So thinking about the event itself, did you know why the
21 aircraft was deviating when the center called you about it?

22 A. I do not know.

23 Q. Okay. When altitude started to fluctuate like it did and you
24 were asking him to maintain 9,000, what did you think about at
25 that time? Like, why he was doing it or --

1 A. I just thought, I was like wondering why he's going above
2 nine, but when I listened to the tape, in my mind, I asked him do
3 you want to climb to 11 because I saw him above nine, but once I
4 reviewed the tape, I actually said do you want to climb to nine,
5 but in my mind I meant 11.

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. So I heard that yesterday. But no, I didn't really think
8 why, I just asked him to descend to nine, I gave him nine.

9 Q. Yeah, sure. So thinking about over-flight, so you kind of --
10 you explained a little bit about your thinking about putting him
11 on a 3-60 heading for divergence and stuff like that. Typically,
12 given the configuration and the traffic coming in and the flow, do
13 you guys usually let the over-flights go on course or do you
14 vector them habitually certain ways or anything because of the
15 traffic coming into Nashville?

16 A. I mean, I try to keep them on course as much as I can, but if
17 the traffic dictates I need to do something else with them, I'll
18 vector him off his on course.

19 MS. LEWIS: Okay. I think I'm going to hand it over to Amy.

20 MS. HUSCHKA: I'm taking notes.

21 MS. LEWIS: Yeah, all right.

22 BY MS. HUSCHKA:

23 Q. So you talked about when you saw the altitude fluctuation,
24 you then talked to one of your satellite airport aircraft, so
25 you'd kind of gone and you went back to him and you were seeing

1 Xs. Did you ever see that little area of weather pop up down
2 there by the aircraft? I know you watched it, so you obviously
3 saw that there was one at one point, it was a very short --

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. -- time, so --

6 A. I don't recall if I remember seeing it.

7 Q. Okay, that happens. You talked about a little bit about that
8 satellite break not being there, like they don't have -- you
9 don't have the relief valve for that satellite, underneath you, is
10 that something that can become like -- not like that incident, but
11 under normal circumstances does that become a little overwhelming
12 on that sector, sometimes? I know it was kind of a normal level
13 you were talking about in complexity, but --

14 A. Can you repeat the first part of it?

15 Q. Yeah, so because you don't have a relief valve for your
16 satellite on the west side --

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. -- you have the east side satellite --

19 A. Okay, yeah.

20 Q. -- right, but not a west side one, so do you feel like that
21 position can get a little overwhelming at times, outside of this
22 incident?

23 A. Yes. They don't have -- at John Tune they don't have a FIDO,
24 they don't have the same equipment like Smyrna does, so you have
25 to call for all the clearances, they call you for every single

1 release, so it can -- they can -- and most of the times we don't
2 have a coordinator open, especially just for the west side, it's
3 not open very much, if at all, so they're constantly calling.
4 Like a Sunday afternoon, I mean, we'll probably have 12 to 15
5 clearances ready for them and they'll just call you, hey, we're
6 looking for release on this and then for all the inbounds, we have
7 to call them for that, also.

8 Q. Okay. So you feel like the satellite kind of takes over that
9 position when you're working under normal circumstances, that can
10 kind of draw more attention than everything else?

11 A. It can. Occasionally when we have arrival open, that kind of
12 takes away, you know, half the airplanes for that side and an
13 arrival wasn't open at that time. But yeah, a satellite can
14 definitely, you know, take over that area.

15 Q. Okay. So that brings up my next question, is you were
16 working arrival at that point in time, so you had the runway
17 changed.

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. Were you responsible for the entirety of the runway change
20 and you were coordinating with tower, the center with everything
21 else or was that another?

22 A. The supervisor would've coordinated everything with the tower
23 who's the last to land, who's the last to depart, and I called the
24 two sectors on the west side.

25 Q. Okay. So you just take care of the center --

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. -- airspace and stuff like that?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. And then do you have any kind of runway checklist that you
5 deal with when you do changes or is that sort of the supervisor
6 takes care of that?

7 A. On the -- like, on the west side I don't have a checklist, I
8 think there's checklists in the tower and the supervisors have a
9 lot more responsibility for that.

10 Q. Okay. So you pretty much work the airplanes into the airport
11 then and the supervisor takes care of most of it?

12 A. Yeah.

13 MS. HUSCHKA: Perfect. I think those are the majority of the
14 questions I have for right now.

15 MS. LEWIS: Thanks, Amy.

16 Betty. Or actually, Paul.

17 BY MR. SUFFERN:

18 Q. Yeah, so thanks, Cris, and we'll shift a little bit off the
19 air traffic and a little bit more to weather things. Yeah, I just
20 appreciate you coming in and giving us your experience.

21 Obviously, none of us are here in the Nashville area, so your
22 expertise is greatly appreciated. I know when Sarah asked the
23 question, you mentioned the pre-duty weather briefing, there was
24 nothing really that stood out. Is there anything that you can
25 recall, just -- obviously, you came in at 5:30, is there anything

1 that you recall just about how the weather was rolling that day
2 that really stood out to you at all?

3 A. Not that I recall.

4 Q. Okay. Do you recall receiving any PIREPs from anybody,
5 either from planes coming off or either from your east side or
6 anything like that on the accident day?

7 A. I do not recall anyone giving a PIREP. I know I had -- I
8 believe it was a Cirrus that was going from the south to the north
9 at 9,000 and he was probably about 10 to 15 miles north of the
10 Bonanza and he didn't give any negative reports at nine.

11 Q. Do you recall, you know, any time else before the accident
12 or, I guess, in the 20 minutes after the accident, anybody else
13 needing to deviate for weather or they -- did they -- any other
14 pilots telling you anything?

15 A. Not that I recall. The 20 minutes after were kind of -- kind
16 of a blur.

17 Q. Yeah, I can imagine. Absolutely. On the accident day or
18 from any other sources, do you recall what the cloud bases were
19 that day or cloud tops, anything like that?

20 A. Just kind of reviewing the tapes yesterday, I think the bases
21 were like 2200 or something like that, but I don't recall the tops
22 would have been.

23 Q. So I know here in Nashville you all work a lot of --
24 commercial carriers coming in and things like that, coming into
25 traffic, as far as single operator, you know, and those larger

1 carriers have dispatch, lots of other resources that they have in
2 the cockpit, let alone having two pilots in there. Do you have
3 any expectation as far as what resources a smaller aircraft, like
4 a general aviation coming through, the Cirrus, you know, something
5 like that, as far as what they have in the cockpit that's
6 available to them?

7 A. Did you say do I have any expectations of what they have?

8 Q. Yeah, as far as weather, like, you know -- you know, you
9 obviously have some, you have resources there, your scope there,
10 but do you expect, you know, a pilot to have like an electronic
11 flight bag, you know, or some kind of resources there in the
12 cockpit to help them stay updated on things?

13 A. I would probably expect the aircraft to have something and if
14 they don't, to ask me or something like that.

15 Q. Okay. So your expectation is if they don't have weather
16 resources or other resources, that they'll reach out to you and
17 get the service that way.

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. Okay. So when -- I think Sarah already asked this question,
20 or maybe Amy did, as far as the accident aircraft requesting
21 higher from 7,000, do you -- do you -- did you think of any reason
22 why they would want higher, you know, as far as, you know, they're
23 moving across your airspace or anything like that?

24 A. At the time I didn't think about why. I knew they were
25 deviating and they requested nine, but I didn't really think to

1 ask why and then they never asked to go higher than nine or a
2 different altitude after that.

3 Q. Okay. Just in general, not for the accident or anything like
4 that, what kind of weather resources do you have while you're
5 sitting there at the scope to help, help you perform your duties?

6 A. I mean, we have the weather on the radar, the one through
7 six, the ITWS is behind us. That's all I can think of right now.

8 Q. Okay. And have you been through -- obviously, you've been
9 here seven years, do you recall any challenging weather scenarios,
10 not necessarily this event, but challenging weather scenario where
11 you had equipment issues, maybe the ASOS, you know, wasn't showing
12 something like that or, you know, your situation display, like,
13 wasn't showing something, can you recall?

14 A. Yeah, I think, I mean right now, I think -- I don't know the
15 specifics, but I think like the Level 6 weather sometimes has
16 issues, the weather's -- the low-level wind shear is out pretty
17 often, I do know that.

18 Q. Just in general, maybe even the day of the accident, have you
19 seen lots of planes deviate for weather that you're not seeing on
20 your scope?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Can you recall what kind of weather days those were? Is that
23 mainly from like March to October when it's more bubbly outside or
24 is that more November to January when it's cold and dreary?

25 A. I can't put a date on it, sorry.

1 Q. And what's the process you all have here for reporting a
2 PIREP, if you were to receive something from a pilot, like, how
3 does that work here in Nashville?

4 A. I think it kind of depends on the controller and how busy I
5 am. Like if it's for me, if it's a base and tops and the
6 supervisor isn't doing anything and I'm not that busy, I'll just
7 yell back and say bases and tops are this. If I'm kind of busy
8 and there's like an icing report and they're kind of busy, I'll
9 write it down on the form.

10 Q. Okay. And then you just hand that to them when they're
11 available?

12 A. Yeah. Yeah, I'll just -- I'll be like can I have one or
13 depending on where they're at, I'll just put it on the desk.

14 Q. Okay. And then I think the last one I got for right now is,
15 have you ever had a weather scenario where you were just getting
16 slammed with weather and kind of over-tasked, working the traffic
17 at the same time, do you recall a scenario like that? Kind of
18 describe it.

19 A. I don't know about like specifics, but thunderstorms come in
20 all the time, or pop-up thunderstorms, and aircraft are deviating
21 and you have to get deviations with the center, but I don't know,
22 I can't say like a specific time, it happens quite often.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Especially spring-ish, I'd probably say, I think.

25 MR. SUFFERN: Okay. Thanks, Cris, that's really helpful

1 information. That's all I've got for right now.

2 MS. LEWIS: Okay. Crystal.

3 MS. GENNARO: Sure.

4 BY MS. GENNARO:

5 Q. So my questions might jump around a little bit because I was
6 taking notes as everybody was asking theirs. So can you recall
7 any time during your refresher, your initial training here and you
8 received training on aircraft deviating, emergencies, or downed
9 aircraft?

10 A. I definitely remember like a refresher training, I don't know
11 -- remember which one it was, but I remember one of the refresher
12 trainings talked about emergencies. I don't recall which one it
13 was, though.

14 Q. Specifically, downed aircraft, have you ever had training on
15 that?

16 A. I don't know if like specific on the downed, but I think like
17 being the in-charge person, I think I got training on here's the
18 red binder and go through this checklist.

19 Q. Okay, all right. And then I know this is outside of your
20 realm at that point and you obviously do not have an in-charge,
21 but in your opinion, was the room staffed appropriately, all the
22 sectors open that should've been open?

23 A. I believe so. The traffic wasn't too busy. A lot of the
24 times during the day we'll have arrival open, but I don't know if
25 -- if it was a hundred percent warranted to have the arrival open,

1 but all the other positions, I think, were staffed.

2 Q. Okay. And then what hour of your shift did this occur on?

3 A. The seventh. Right --

4 Q. So you'd been here for quite some time.

5 A. Yeah, so I was -- I think it happened at 12:00 and I get off
6 at 1:30.

7 Q. Okay. And how long did you stay in position?

8 A. I don't recall.

9 Q. That's okay. And then lastly, I just have before, during or
10 after, were there any glaring deviations from standard operation
11 procedures that you can recall?

12 A. By the aircraft or --

13 Q. No, I'm sorry, like in the room, was there anything outside
14 of the norm going on in the room or with the equipment?

15 A. Not that I can recall.

16 MS. GENNARO: Okay. That's all I have.

17 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

18 Betty.

19 MS. KOSCHIG: Yeah.

20 BY MS. KOSCHIG:

21 Q. Hello, again.

22 A. Hello.

23 Q. So actually I want to ping a little bit off of what Crystal
24 was saying, so you were on your last session, your last session.
25 Do you recall how many sessions you had that day?

1 A. Not without looking it up, no.

2 Q. So you also work in the tower?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Do you do like switch, I mean like that day would you have
5 worked up in the tower some and then down in the TRACON or how
6 does that normally work?

7 A. Once your break is over, you just go into the TRACON and the
8 supervisor says he's been on the longest, get him off position.

9 Q. But were you working tower that day at all, as well, or --

10 A. I mean, some days you'll have an all-tower day, some days
11 you'll have an all-radar day or sometimes you'll kind of go back
12 and forth. You know, if there's training going on, you might go
13 from one position to the tower, just because that's where they're
14 training.

15 Q. Do you feel you like you do have currency on each, both in
16 the tower and radar?

17 A. Some weeks, yes. I mean, I feel like sometimes you'll be --
18 there's so many people just training in the tower, so it would be
19 like oh, I got three straight days in the radar room.

20 Q. Oh.

21 A. But I think overall for the month, I think it's pretty good.

22 Q. Oh, okay. So you said you work overtime, do you work
23 overtime a lot?

24 A. I am -- since, I think, January, I've been scheduled overtime
25 every week.

1 Q. Okay. So you're on the call list, though, right?

2 A. What's that?

3 Q. You're on the call list?

4 A. No, I'm on the no list.

5 Q. Oh, you're on the no list.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Oh, okay.

8 A. But I prefer -- I prefer not to be here every week, but I've
9 been scheduled overtime every week since January.

10 Q. Oh, okay. That's great. So on that day, how do you know
11 what the complexity was of the traffic that you were working?
12 From a 1 to 5 scale.

13 A. A 3, I'd say.

14 Q. Three, okay. Was there something else going on, was like
15 there -- was -- were you doing a runway change or anything else
16 going on in the airspace that would have complicated or made the
17 complexity?

18 A. There was a runway change. We went, I think, from south to
19 north probably within five or ten minutes of me talking to the
20 aircraft, I think.

21 Q. And how does that add complexity to what you're doing, what
22 are some of the things you have to do?

23 A. You have to call -- well, actually, during the time when that
24 aircraft checked on, I was calling each sector, the Bowling Green
25 and the Graham sector, to tell them we're north, you have to call

1 each sector to let them know. We're supposed to call Campbell,
2 and I don't know -- Campbell's line is broke, so you have to
3 either use a recorded line or use a phone in the back, it doesn't
4 work on the ETVS to call them to tell if you have to tell them
5 we're north and then just remind each aircraft that they're going
6 north instead of south because they just changed it.

7 Q. So actually talking a little bit about what Paul was talking
8 about, seeing anything out there as far as weather, do you see
9 other -- are there anomalies sometimes where a pilot's reporting
10 something that you are not seeing on your display, like reporting,
11 yeah --

12 A. Yeah, there's a lot of times where aircraft are on like the
13 arrival, so you assume there are going to the certain fixes, but
14 they'll say we need 10 to 15 left or something for something
15 that's not on our scope. It looks clear for us, but they're
16 saying they need to deviate.

17 Q. Is it in any certain area or is it in --

18 A. I think it's everywhere on the scope.

19 Q. Everywhere, okay.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. That's interesting to know. And the last thing is what --
22 when this happened, and I know that, you know -- I hate to think
23 about that, but when it happened, what did you think happened? I
24 mean, the thing is you got the Xs, I mean, what were your first
25 thoughts, what were you thinking you needed to do?

1 A. I mean, I first reached out to him when I saw him go
2 southbound, I said hey, I noticed you're going southbound, I don't
3 know what I said, and then I saw the triple Xs and I don't really
4 -- I don't know what I was thinking, I'm like oh, what happened,
5 I'm not sure, I just saw the triple Xs and they're kind of making
6 a little circle.

7 Q. So you tried reaching out to him several times?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. And did you try to get other aircraft to reach out to him?

10 A. Yes, I did get a Southwest to try to relay, I asked the
11 center if they went back to him and there was nothing.

12 MS. KOSCHIG: All right. That's all I have right now, thank
13 you.

14 MS. LEWIS: Okay, thanks, Betty.

15 BY MS. LEWIS:

16 Q. Like Crystal said, now I'm going to go jump a little bit
17 around. For the pre-duty weather briefing, when you're coming in
18 at 5:30 in the morning, do you remember, in general, in general,
19 is it still for the night before or is it -- has it switched over
20 to like the upcoming day?

21 A. I believe it is for the night before, so our requirement, I
22 believe, is if you have the 5:30 shift it's just to make sure you
23 watch it before your second rotation.

24 Q. Oh, okay.

25 A. Because I don't believe it's fresh at 5:30.

1 Q. That's actually a really good habit, I hadn't heard of that
2 before, it's awesome. So we already talked about the overtime, so
3 are there -- is being scheduled six-day workweeks, is that overall
4 in the facility or just certain days off or is it just pretty much
5 everybody?

6 A. Pretty much everyone, yes, no lists, everyone -- I believe if
7 you have a day off on like Monday or Friday they try not to
8 schedule you overtime, but besides that --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- you get scheduled six days.

11 Q. Overall, how does that -- how does that make you feel to have
12 to consistently come in six-day workweeks? Tell me a little bit
13 about that, how does that affect you?

14 A. Day shifts, I mean, I don't want to be here six days a week,
15 it's tiring. Especially since we're busy, one extra day, of
16 getting beat up -- but some of the day shifts I'm okay with, my
17 wife's at work, it's a Wednesday, I don't prefer to work a night
18 shift, you know, when we're a -- shift away from my wife. But I
19 don't think anyone likes it.

20 Q. Right.

21 A. Being here all the time.

22 Q. Yeah. How's the morale when it comes to fatigue over time,
23 stuff like that?

24 A. I think the facility, maybe at first, you know, the first few
25 months it was not good, but okay. I think now, as the weather is

1 probably getting a little better, we don't always want to be here
2 six days a week, you know, we want other things to do. So I think
3 the morale is probably pretty low right now, that's what I would
4 say.

5 Q. Yeah, that would be very understandable. So kind of on the
6 staffing situation that we were kind of talking about a little
7 bit, so do you know, are you understaffed, are you --

8 A. Yes, we are understaffed.

9 Q. Okay. How does that affect you? Other than overtime, what
10 other things happen when -- do you typically start the shift with
11 enough people?

12 A. No, I think -- I think they agreed to start the number with
13 12 --

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. -- per shift, day and night. I don't know if -- I don't know
16 if we've ever seen 12.

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. Maybe with supervisors and trainees and stuff, maybe we get
19 to 12, but with certified controllers, I don't think I've ever
20 seen 12.

21 Q. Okay. How does that affect you working a position when
22 you're short-staffed? Tell me about what happens when you don't
23 have the people there.

24 A. Like sometimes in the tower, pretty much the first position
25 you don't open is clearance, so if you're working ground control,

1 you're working ground and clearance combined. So a lot of times
2 the aircraft won't listen to the ATIS, so they'll be calling on
3 clearance/delivery frequencies, you got two people in your ear, so
4 you're like oh, I need to taxi these people, but you got someone
5 in your ear with the wrong frequency. And then in the TRACON,
6 just not being able to have all the positions open, combining,
7 like not having final open, just having arrival work the arrivals
8 in and on the final boxes and stuff like that, it's just combining
9 positions.

10 Q. You had said something about a facility called Campbell, what
11 is Campbell?

12 A. Campbell approach.

13 Q. Campbell approach.

14 A. It's military to the northwest.

15 Q. Fort Campbell?

16 A. Fort Campbell, yeah.

17 Q. Okay. And I'm jumping around again, are you CIC qualified?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Do you know the term or phrase "buildups"?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. What is a buildup to you?

22 A. When clouds are coming together and getting bigger, I guess.

23 Q. Okay. Do you normally -- how does that affect your flow of
24 traffic?

25 A. I guess it depends on where it is and if an aircraft needs to

1 deviate from it.

2 Q. How would you know if one is there?

3 A. If the aircraft tells us.

4 Q. Okay. Can you see buildups on your scope?

5 A. Not that I know of, no.

6 MS. LEWIS: Okay. I think that's all I have right now.

7 Paul.

8 BY MR. SUFFERN:

9 Q. I got two left. Almost done, Cris.

10 A. All right.

11 Q. So if a pilot is on an IFR flight plan, do you assume that
12 they're comfortable flying in IMC?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And my last and favorite question, if you had won the lottery
15 but you decided to donate some of that money to your fellow air
16 traffic controllers for weather equipment or resources, because
17 you're such a generous person, what's a weather tool out there
18 that you wish you had that could help you do your job better?

19 A. Do you have any examples? Like --

20 Q. Yeah, I mean anything for precipitation, wind, you know, any
21 kind of weather tool that you think you would like to have,
22 something that sees buildups, I don't know, you know, all kinds of
23 things.

24 A. We'll go with that one, so we can see buildups better so we
25 know they won't deviate more.

1 MR. SUFFERN: A very generous person.

2 MS. LEWIS: Yes, very.

3 MR. SUFFERN: Thank you, Cris.

4 MS. LEWIS: Amy?

5 BY MS. HUSCHKA:

6 Q. I just have one other question. Oh, I have two, I wanted to
7 clarify the Fort Campbell question, you said you have to contact
8 them, too, on a runway change, did you that day and how, because
9 you said there was a couple options to do it.

10 Q. I believe a supervisor would've had to do that. On the ETVS
11 we each have a shout line, but it's broke, it's been broke for a
12 while, so we have it pre-coordinated on the phone in the back and
13 I believe you can call out on the ETVS, but only if you have time
14 to.

15 Q. You didn't do it on that day, you didn't take care of Fort
16 Campbell on that day.

17 A. I don't believe I did, no.

18 Q. And then my other question is about PIREPs. So when you get
19 and receive a PIREP, like there are multiple positions in the
20 room, is there a way that those are brought together, like, can
21 you look at what arrival is getting or can you look at what the
22 departure -- or whether another sector on the other side of the
23 room is getting PIREPs, or do you --

24 A. Yeah. Normally, the supervisor will put it into the NIDS.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And there's a little spot --

2 (Crosstalk)

3 BY MS. HUSCHKA:

4 Q. -- the NIDS for it?

5 A. Um-hum.

6 MS. HUSCHKA: Okay.

7 MS. LEWIS: Okay, thank you.

8 Crystal.

9 MS. GENNARO: I have no more questions.

10 MR. ALLYN: All right.

11 MS. LEWIS: Thanks.

12 Betty.

13 BY MS. KOSCHIG:

14 Q. I don't know if I'm going to steal your question, but I'll
15 ask this, is there anything you thought we were going to ask you
16 that we haven't asked you? Sorry.

17 MS. LEWIS: That's okay, steal my thunder.

18 MS. KOSCHIG: Sorry.

19 MS. LEWIS: It's Betty's favorite question, so it belongs to
20 her.

21 MR. ALLYN: No. I mean, I was, I've been pretty nervous, so
22 I really --

23 MS. LEWIS: Yeah.

24 MR. ALLYN: -- couldn't think of any questions or -- but --

25 MS. KOSCHIG: Yeah.

1 MS. HUSCHKA: We didn't bite too hard, did we?

2 MR. ALLYN: No, not too bad.

3 MS. LEWIS: It wasn't as painful as you thought, maybe.

4 MR. ALLYN: Yeah.

5 MS. HUSCHKA: I did see a few smiles by the end so that was
6 good.

7 MR. ALLYN: Yeah, that's good.

8 MS. LEWIS: Yeah. It's a relief.

9 MR. ALLYN: Yeah.

10 MS. LEWIS: Well, does anyone have any "gee whiz" questions
11 or --

12 (No response.)

13 MS. LEWIS: No questions. Do you have any questions for us?

14 MR. ALLYN: No, nothing, I think.

15 MS. LEWIS: Okay.

16 MR. ALLYN: That I can think of.

17 MS. LEWIS: If you think of any or whatever, let us know.

18 Other than that, I will say that the interview has been concluded
19 at 11:15 a.m.

20 (Whereupon, at 11:15 a.m., the interview concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024
Interview of Cris Allyn

ACCIDENT NO.: ERA24FA217

PLACE: Nashville, Tennessee

DATE: May 22, 2024

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



David A. Martini
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024

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Interview of: ANTHONY FORCUM, Operations Supervisor
Federal Aviation Administration

Nashville, Tennessee

Tuesday,
May 21, 2024

APPEARANCES:

SARAH LEWIS, Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BETTY KOSCHIG, Senior Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

CRYSTAL GENNARO
Federal Aviation Administration

AMY HUSCHKA, Air Safety Investigator
National Air Traffic Controllers Association

JONATHAN BRINGEWATT, Esq.
Federal Aviation Administration
Representative for Mr. Forcum

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:58 a.m.)

MS. LEWIS: Okay, wonderful. Okay, I'm going to say the interview has started at 11:58 a.m. Please state your name.

MR. FORCUM: Anthony Forcum.

MS. LEWIS: Okay, could you please spell out your name?

MR. FORCUM: A-n-t-h-o-n-y. Last name, Forcum, F-o-r-c-u-m.

MS. LEWIS: Perfect, thank you. Some of the things that we've talked about offline I have to say again, just for the record. As part of the process, I'll be recording the interview and then I'll have a transcription made, the transcription will become part of the factual report, but the audio will not be part of the public docket. I'll send to you a copy of the transcript for your review and it could be a couple of months before we get it back to you, but we will definitely get it back to you. Do you have any questions specifically about that portion?

MR. FORCUM: No, I do not.

MS. LEWIS: Okay, wonderful. Again, my name is Sarah Lewis and I'm an air traffic investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board. The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress to investigate all civil aviation accidents and incidents, and promoting transportation safety in general. As we talked about a little bit before, we're part of a bigger investigation on this accident underneath an investigator-in-charge and purpose for this investigation is safety, we're here

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1 to gather facts, determine probable cause and prevent
2 reoccurrence, we don't want this to happen to you guys here again.
3 And our role is not to assign fault or blame or liability, and
4 this interview is strictly part of the fact-finding phase of the
5 investigation. As part of the regulations, you are welcome to
6 have one representative of your choice to attend and I see you
7 have a person sitting next to you, is this the person you would
8 like to have as your representative?

9 MR. FORCUM: Yes.

10 MS. LEWIS: Thank you. Could you please state your name?

11 MR. BRINGEWATT: Jonathan Bringewatt.

12 MS. LEWIS: Okay, thank you. Can you please spell your name?

13 MR. BRINGEWATT: J-o-n-a-t-h-a-n B-r-i-n-g-e-w-a-t-t.

14 MS. LEWIS: Thank you so much.

15 So before we get into anything else, I'd like to just go
16 around the table and just state who's in the room for the record
17 and I'll begin with Paul.

18 MR. SUFFERN: Paul Suffern, meteorologist with the NTSB.

19 MS. LEWIS: Okay.

20 MS. GENNARO: Crystal Gennaro, Memphis Tower, Air Traffic
21 Manager.

22 MS. KOSCHIG: Betty Koschig, NTSB.

23 MS. HUSCHKA: Amy Huschka, NATCA.

24 MS. LEWIS: Perfect, thank you.

25 The reason for this interview today is to discuss the

1 accident that occurred on May 15th of 2024 involving November 4-7
2 Whiskey Tango. We're going to be asking a variety of questions so
3 if at any time you have any questions, please feel free to ask us.
4 Please answer all the questions to the best of your recollection,
5 if you don't remember something, then "I don't remember" is fine,
6 if you don't know something, "I don't know" is a perfectly
7 acceptable answer. If you do not understand a question, just ask
8 for it to be repeated or rephrase it in a different way so that
9 you understand it.

10 MR. FORCUM: Okay.

11 MS. LEWIS: If at any time you wish to take a break or you
12 want to consult with your representative, you can, just say hey, I
13 need a few minutes or if you need to consult here, that's
14 completely fine, if you want to consult out in the hallway,
15 completely acceptable and fine, just let us know and we'll just
16 take a little break. Do you have any more questions right now?

17 MR. FORCUM: No, I do not.

18 MS. LEWIS: Okay, thanks. So as we talked about before,
19 we're going to go around in kind of like a jumping across the
20 table sort of way and not necessarily a round robin, but we're all
21 going to ask a series of questions and then probably ask another
22 round and then be done. But you might see us, like we said
23 before, typing notes, these notes are just to help us jog our
24 memory and we will destroy them at the end, this will not be part
25 of any sort of docket or anything like that. That's the basic

1 structure of our interviews, do you have any questions now?

2 MR. FORCUM: No.

3 MS. LEWIS: Okay, very good. Let's get started, okay.

4 INTERVIEW OF ANTHONY FORCUM

5 BY MS. LEWIS:

6 Q. What is your age?

7 A. Forty.

8 Q. What are you operating initials?

9 A. Tango Kilo.

10 Q. Okay, what's your title or your position here?

11 A. Operations supervisor.

12 Q. Perfect. Do you have any military or pre-FAA ATC work
13 experience?

14 A. I do, I was a combat controller in the U.S. Air Force, I had
15 to go to air traffic control school as one of my many schools I
16 had to go to. I did not acquire a CTO, but I did conductor of
17 traffic operations under runways and helos and --

18 Q. Wow, that's impressive.

19 A. So that's what led me to be able to get into this job after
20 the Air Force.

21 Q. Well, thank you for doing that. That's an amazing, amazing
22 job. What years did you do that?

23 A. Two thousand-two to 2006.

24 Q. Awesome. What about -- so after -- in 2006, what led you to
25 come to the FAA?

1 A. When I went through air traffic control school and, you know,
2 talking to aircraft that I did in my job at the time, yeah, I
3 enjoyed it, it was a cool school, you know, it was awesome.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. So when I got out, if I had worked at an actual tower, you
6 know, on an Air Force base, then I probably would have knew how to
7 actually get into ATC. So I got out and, you know, it took me
8 some time to figure out how to get hired, you know, just doing --

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. -- my research, so then once I figured it out, I went after
11 every avenue I could to get hired.

12 Q. That's awesome. When did you get hired?

13 A. February 2009.

14 Q. Okay. And did you go to the academy?

15 A. Yes, I did.

16 Q. Okay. Do you remember what time frame you were at the
17 academy?

18 A. Well, February -- yeah, February 2009, went for tower --

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. -- so I think that was three months.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Went back to the facility and then about, I'd say January of
23 2010, I would've went to RTF.

24 Q. Okay. What facility did you go to?

25 A. That was Dayton, Ohio, when it was an up/down facility.

1 Q. Okay. And then after Dayton, what did you do?
2 A. I transferred to Phoenix TRACON as a controller.
3 Q. Okay. Do you remember the dates or --
4 A. Two thousand -- summer of 2011 to December of 2014.
5 Q. Okay. And as a controller?
6 A. As a controller, yeah.
7 Q. Okay. And then what happened?
8 A. Then I transferred to Anchorage Tower, Alaska, as a
9 controller and I was there from, I guess, December of 2014 to
10 September of 2017.
11 Q. And then where did you go?
12 A. Then from there, I went to Deer Valley Tower in Arizona north
13 of Phoenix as an operations supervisor.
14 Q. Okay. How long did you stay there?
15 A. I was there 2017, September, to September of 2019.
16 Q. Perfect. And then where did you go?
17 A. Then from there I went to Memphis TRACON as an operations
18 supervisor and I was there from 2019 to June of '23.
19 Q. Cool. So you've been here since then?
20 A. Yeah. So I got here June of last year, '23, and then I think
21 I certified here around January time frame.
22 Q. Okay.
23 A. And I did certify in everything here.
24 Q. Uh-huh. So that's great. Do you hold -- so besides being
25 the operational supervisor, do you hold collateral duties here?

1 A. As far as?

2 Q. Like anything like -- maybe like training manager or LSC
3 or --

4 A. Local safety council --

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. -- as of last week.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. So that just started, so we just had one meeting, didn't get
9 into any topics, it was just more of a "hey, we're the local
10 safety council now, we need to take this class" and then --

11 Q. Yeah. When did that happen, what day did that --

12 A. I don't recall, it was sometime last week.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. I don't -- no, it was on Friday.

15 Q. Friday, cool. That's cool. Do you know how many members are
16 on the LSC?

17 A. There are four NATCA members and then myself.

18 Q. Oh, okay. That's great. Have you been -- are there any
19 other collateral duties that you do, are you assigned to do
20 certain things?

21 A. No.

22 Q. It sounds like you have like an OM and everything here, so --

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. -- you might not have to do, like, the --

25 A. Yeah, I don't have, really, any extra duties here. Previous

1 facilities, I did, in a lot of them, definitely at Deer Valley
2 tower, I had a lot, but --

3 Q. Yeah, I bet.

4 A. Yeah, I don't have anything extra, I've done local safety
5 council as of last week.

6 Q. Have you been on any recent details that might take you out
7 of the building?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Okay. Okay, so we kind of got into the -- your part of your
10 aviation background, you were telling us that your parents were
11 Air Force or --

12 A. My dad was, pretty much my whole family was Air Force, my dad
13 was Air Force just a little over 30 years and my uncle, he's Air
14 Force and Coast Guard and Navy.

15 Q. Wow.

16 A. Uncle, Marines. So --

17 Q. So that's kind of what got you into aviation and --

18 A. Yes, I grew up around, you know, fighter bases, you know, my
19 whole life, so --

20 Q. Yeah. That's pretty cool, very cool. Have you ever been
21 fired, terminated, suspended or asked to resign any ATC position?

22 A. No.

23 Q. How would you describe your overall health in terms of
24 excellent, good, fair, poor?

25 A. I'd say good.

1 Q. On the day of the accident, did you have a medical, an
2 aviation medical?

3 A. No.

4 Q. No.

5 A. No, clarify that question to me.

6 Q. So like as an air traffic controller in order to -- you have
7 to pass an aviation medical clearance --

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. -- like a second class or --

10 A. Okay, so yes, I had a medical clearance that was active at
11 that time.

12 Q. Okay, very good.

13 A. And still current.

14 Q. Very good. Do you have any restrictions on it, like do you
15 need to wear glasses or anything like that?

16 A. I don't think so.

17 Q. Okay. That's fine. Let's see, was drug and alcohol -- drug
18 or alcohol screening performed following this event?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Okay. Any changes in your health in the last year, good, bad
21 or indifferent?

22 A. High blood pressure, but that's been taken care of.

23 Q. Any changes in your personal life, any good, bad,
24 indifferent, get married, have kids, win the lottery?

25 A. I wish.

1 Q. All right.

2 A. My personal life is good, home life is good, couldn't ask for
3 anything better.

4 Q. Very good. Okay. So thinking back on the day of the
5 accident, do you remember, what are your days off, your -- or your
6 one day off, maybe?

7 A. I'm off Friday/Saturdays.

8 Q. Okay. And are you scheduled overtime?

9 A. Pretty much every other week or every third week I have an
10 overtime shift.

11 Q. Okay. And it didn't really matter if either Friday or
12 Saturday --

13 A. It's usually always Fridays.

14 Q. Always Friday, okay. So let's see, this was a Wednesday, so
15 this would be a normal workday for you, what would you normally
16 work on a Wednesday?

17 A. I would've had a 5:30 shift.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. I would've come in at 5:30.

20 Q. Okay. Do you remember the -- like, the Tuesday before, do
21 you remember like what your normal sleep schedule would be, when
22 you would go to bed that night, maybe?

23 A. I usually go to bed -- if I have to get up at 5:30, I'm
24 usually going to bed around 9:30.

25 Q. Okay. And then the day of the -- and nothing else, nothing

1 else -- nothing else is different that you -- your sleep was okay
2 and your daily activities, all that was --

3 A. Yeah, sleep was good.

4 Q. Okay. Did you file an ATSAP report regarding this event?

5 A. No, I did not.

6 Q. Okay. Other than across the hall today, have you been
7 interviewed about this event before?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Have you had an opportunity to review the replay?

10 A. I have not watched the replay.

11 Q. Okay. Do you want to review the replay?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay. Let's see. Was a relief briefing conducted when you
14 took your position?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the heaviest, how would you
17 classify the volume of traffic on that day on that specific time?

18 A. At that specific time?

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. One being lowest?

21 Q. Yes. And then 5 being the heaviest.

22 A. I'd say a 1 at the time of the event.

23 Q. Okay. Thinking back on that day, immediately before or
24 immediately after, do you remember any changes in the -- of the
25 volume?

1 A. Yes, prior to the event, I'd say 5.

2 Q. Okay. And what about after?

3 A. That I can't answer to because I was only in the operation
4 for maybe 30 more minutes and another supervisor came in.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. So I don't know how the traffic was after that. Immediately
7 after the incident, traffic still stayed low at the time, you
8 know, a 1. There was a little traffic at that time.

9 Q. Okay, okay. Now, same scale, but let's think about
10 complexity, 1 being the lowest, 5 being the most complex, how do
11 you feel about the complexity at the time of the event?

12 A. Two.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And, you know, I can clarify that to you, as far as -- I'm
15 saying a 2 and not for the departure radar west position, but
16 departure radar east, you know, if I recall correctly, they had a
17 little bit more going on, I know to the very northeast there was
18 some weather, so deviations would've been happening in that
19 sector, but that would be it.

20 Q. And then just before, when you said the volume was heaviest,
21 how would you classify that complexity?

22 A. The complexity, when the volume was heavy for this facility,
23 I'm going to say a 5, it was -- it was busy, it was complex, there
24 was a lot going on, I mean, I -- when I -- I can explain that
25 whole situation.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. I mean, it's no secret, you know, we're short-staffed here
3 and -- really short-staffed and those two hours prior to that
4 event, you know, it was busy, I was doing a lot of coordinating, I
5 was helping the departure radar west controller out, you know, a
6 lot, calling John Tune Tower, because John Tune Tower doesn't have
7 a FIDO or STARS, so we're calling John Tune Tower for clearances,
8 departure radar west controller was really busy at the time.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. John Tune called me and let me know they had nine arrivals or
11 departures at the runway, so I started coordinating, getting
12 departures, and help that controller to get them --

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. -- you know, out. And, you know, the east side, I mean, was
15 just as busy with arrivals going into Smyrna and so I was all over
16 the TRACON --

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. -- for those, probably for about three hours.

19 Q. Yeah, it can be pretty exhausting.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Yeah. On a particular day do they have multiple supervisors?

22 A. We --

23 Q. How many supervisors do you have?

24 A. We have four that are certified.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And one's a temporary supervisor, so four that are certified,
2 we have two that are in training.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And they're kind of partial, one of those that's in training,
5 he can be -- he's done with the tower, so he can be, you know,
6 supervisor position in the tower. Do we have enough supervisors
7 to provide sufficient overlap? No. We do have some overlap on
8 certain days, I can't recall the days, it depends if the
9 supervisor's on annual leave, you know, or not, but for this
10 facility, one supervisor in the tower and the TRACON, yeah, we
11 don't have near enough supervisors to ever really accomplish that
12 for more than a few hours a day.

13 Q. How many are -- do you recall how many are authorized to
14 have?

15 A. Six.

16 Q. Uh-huh.

17 A. Rumor I heard would be that you would come in, you know,
18 upgrade a facility, that you'd get a seventh one, but still, far
19 short of what is actually needed.

20 Q. Right, that makes sense. Going back to the time of the event
21 or leading up to, were there any distractions occurring at or
22 leading up to the time of the event?

23 A. What do you mean by distractions?

24 Q. It could be anything like the phone rang and it took your
25 attention away because a controller needed some leave or it could

1 be hey, the fire alarm just rang, any kind of unusual
2 distractions.

3 A. Okay. So I wouldn't necessarily call them distractions other
4 than it's just part of my job duties while I'm there. So prior to
5 the event, a little traffic happened, I was able to close down the
6 arrival sector so that way I could get breaks rotating so when the
7 next wave of traffic shows up I can open up as many positions as I
8 can because you have to really manipulate that system here to have
9 the available employees so you could open up those positions.

10 So just prior to the event, I coordinated a runway change to
11 go to a north operation and the best I recall at the time the
12 event actually happened, I already put in the rate, I was on the
13 phone with a crane operator to let him know he could put the crane
14 up because we switched north and if we're south on instrument
15 approaches, they're not allowed to have the crane up. Any other
16 -- I think at that time, too, the departure west controller,
17 because I know I heard the John Tune line, as well, so I'm sure he
18 was coordinating with John Tune at that point.

19 Q. Yeah. Do you recall weather conditions or current advisories
20 leading up to or at the time of the event?

21 A. Yeah, so that day -- really, that day weather was not an
22 issue. We had lower ceilings, don't recall what they were, but I
23 know we were running instrument approaches all day, so ceilings
24 had to be low. But as far as weather being an issue, I mean, we
25 had so many aircraft in and out of that airspace and, you know,

1 there were no complaints, there was no deviations up until, you
2 know, later on they made a path, I mentioned northeast, because
3 some spots of weather showed up, but that whole west side of the
4 airspace, south side of the airspace, there was no depicted
5 weather at all and there's no complaints by any pilot. So as far
6 as I was concerned, there was smooth conditions out there and just
7 low ceiling.

8 Q. Do you remember if you received a pre-duty weather briefing?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Do you remember anything on that day that would've stood out
11 to you or anything?

12 A. No, because my honest opinion is that pre-duty --

13 (Knocking on door.)

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Excuse me, I'm looking for Andy.

15 (Crosstalk)

16 MR. FORCUM: My honest opinion of the pre-duty weather
17 briefing, it does not pertain to the terminal environment, it is
18 not valuable, worthy information for me to do my job.

19 MS. LEWIS: Right.

20 MR. FORCUM: I think it paints a broader picture of, you
21 know, the en route and it probably benefits them because they're
22 looking, you know, miles down the road where we're looking at 35
23 miles, so it doesn't encompass a good picture of what's going on
24 at Nashville airport. Do I watch it every morning? Yes, it's a
25 requirement and I do.

1 MS. LEWIS: Right.

2 MR. FORCUM: And then I get into the operation and then
3 that's when I look at the scope to see if there's weather
4 depicted. I pull up the TAF to see what the forecast is going to
5 be hourly as far as winds, is there going to be a possible runway
6 change later, are we going to have low ceilings all day, so when I
7 get into the operation, then I really get up to speed as far as
8 what to expect for that day and that briefing is not going to do
9 that for me.

10 BY MS. LEWIS:

11 Q. Do you feel at this point in time that because of some of the
12 things you just described, that they have become ineffective here?

13 A. Like that weather briefing?

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. I think it's ineffective at every facility I've worked at.

16 Q. Thanks. Yeah. If you were able to wave the wand and fix it,
17 what do you think would be helpful if they could include in some
18 sort of pre-duty weather briefing for -- for example, the terminal
19 environment here?

20 A. It would have to be site specific, so there would have to be,
21 you know, an individual who puts that together, but they --
22 they're just focusing on Nashville and right outside of it, you
23 know, just a zoomed-in shot of what's going on in the area
24 immediately to us, you know, something that's happening way far
25 away isn't going to impact the operation here.

1 Q. That can be a little bit of a double-edged sword, too,
2 because if you get used to it being a whole bunch of nothing and
3 then that one day there's actually something that could be
4 beneficial in there that you may not even notice anymore because
5 you're kind of going through the routine, kind of seeing that in
6 other facilities, too. Did you have a cellular phone or a
7 cellular PD at the time of the -- at the time of the event?

8 A. No, I did not.

9 Q. Had you requested a relief or assistance at or leading up to
10 the time of the event?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Okay. Did you notify your supervisor, which would be the
13 operations manager?

14 A. Operations manager.

15 Q. About the event.

16 A. Yes, I did. I mean, I can explain my actions from --

17 Q. Yes, please.

18 A. So I was on the phone and as soon as I got off the phone, C-A
19 called out to me and said hey, this aircraft just -- it's showing
20 triple Xs and now it's coasting. So I walk over, I go right over
21 there and I said okay, you tried them on the radio, had everyone
22 else reach out on their frequency just in case, hit them up on
23 guard, which -- while they're doing that, I ran over to a spare
24 scope and got the lat/longs, wrote down the lat/longs, BNA, radial
25 distance and called police dispatch right away and gave them the

1 information for a possible aircraft crash. As soon as I got done
2 with that call, then that's when I called my operations manager to
3 advise him what's going on. As soon as I got off the phone with
4 the operations manager, I called our -- Cathleen North, our
5 support specialist, to come in and help me run the checklist so I
6 could (1) keep the rotation going, keep an eye on the operation,
7 and there's going to be more than one phone call that's going to
8 be going on at that time, so she came in and started running the
9 checklist, then we continued at that point.

10 Q. Was she already here in the building?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Oh, that's awesome.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Okay. So you were able to get immediate help.

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. I could imagine that being overwhelming.

17 A. Yes. To me, everything moved very quickly.

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. You know, this was a late evening shift and I'm running the
20 checklist on my own --

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. -- you know, yeah, I've been, you know, a lot busier for
23 sure.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. And still, even when she's on the phone making calls, the

1 other phone lines are ringing, you know, because that's when
2 Williamson, I think it's Williamson County sheriff department
3 called not too long later and updated me that they did find the
4 crash site and that it is a confirmed crash.

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. Then I was able to pass that information to Cathleen North
7 and then, you know, she passed that along to everyone else who
8 needed to know.

9 Q. Thank you for explaining that to us. Do you remember while
10 all that was happening, do you remember when you were able to get
11 C-A off of position?

12 A. So when -- it wasn't too -- it wasn't -- I don't remember the
13 exact time, but I know it wasn't that long after the fact. When
14 it first happened, (1) we didn't know the aircraft crashed yet
15 because anomalies happen with radar, I've seen it before, and so
16 the first thing after -- yeah, I already called, did everything I
17 was doing, I went up to him, I'm like hey, are you okay and he's
18 like yes, I'm okay, I'm doing good, I'm like all right.

19 So then as soon as Cathleen gets in there, she's running the
20 checklist, the next controller that walked in -- because I didn't
21 even get -- it couldn't have been much time because I didn't even
22 have time to like look at the CruArt to see who I could call back,
23 the next person who walked in, I was like get departure radar west
24 and I got him off position.

25 Q. So you were talking to us about the weather in the area that

1 day and you said you -- there wasn't anything that you could
2 recall over in the -- you recalled a whole bunch of stuff in the
3 northeast --

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. -- but not necessarily in the southwest, and you said other
6 than that airplane, no one else had said anything about deviating
7 or anything --

8 A. No, not that I recall.

9 Q. -- that you can recall?

10 A. I mean, it was -- you know, for hours we were in -- we were
11 busy there, we had no -- there was no arrival planes, there was no
12 aircraft deviating left or right because then if that starts
13 happening, you know, that's going to, you know, make it even more
14 complex, but yeah, there was no weather depicted.

15 Now, I will say at this facility, for whatever reason,
16 there's something wrong with our weather display, I don't know
17 what it is, I see it in the log, you know, every morning, but I
18 have noticed many times we've had aircraft, the last couple weeks
19 I've had aircraft that will say hey, we need to deviate left or
20 right for weather and there's no weather there for -- that we see.

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. So then we -- you know, we -- you know, I've called the
23 controller and asked him hey, what are they seeing, I mean, so
24 whether it's buildup or it looks like a rain cloud or, you know,
25 to try and get an idea of what they're deviating around, but

1 there's a lot of times here that they're wanting to go away from
2 something that's not depicted. I haven't really had that happen
3 really anywhere else.

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. So like if there's even a buildup, usually something is kind
6 of depicted and we see it, so this is -- that's new for here, for
7 -- I don't know what the issue is with it, but --

8 MS. LEWIS: Paul, do you want to ask some questions about
9 weather?

10 MR. SUFFERN: Sure, yeah.

11 BY MR. SUFFERN:

12 Q. I'll jump in on what you mentioned there and just follow up,
13 you mentioned written down in the logs, what do you mean by
14 written down in the logs as far as --

15 A. So if we have equipment outages, they get logged on our
16 dash-10, air traffic log, and so it's just a carryover item that's
17 on there every day, meaning it's never been fixed, so it still
18 stays in the log until the equipment gets fixed. Now, that's been
19 written on there, prior to my arrival here at Nashville.

20 Q. So it's still on the logs, to your knowledge, today?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. Do you recall any PIREPs from anybody on the day of
23 the accident or around the accident time --

24 A. So I know we were getting PIREPs because conditions called
25 for it, for when we really have to get PIREPs, even if they're

1 good conditions, you still get PIREPs, so the pilot, you know,
2 gives you some more of the information. So PIREPs were gotten
3 throughout that day and they were all the same, they were all just
4 base and tops reports, there was nothing, you know, outstanding,
5 different, there was no turbulence, there was no icing or --
6 they're just base and tops, so that's all it kept doing was there
7 were base and tops and there was no other working information.

8 Q. Do you recall what the tops reports were?

9 A. No, I don't recall.

10 Q. And you're current and qualified here in the TRACON working
11 positions and stuff like that?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. So what kind of -- I know you guys work a ton of traffic in
14 and out of the airport, 121 guys, you know, there's two pilots in
15 the cockpit, things like that, so they have resources at least,
16 you know, between both of them, obviously, and maybe even like a
17 dispatch or something like that.

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. What would be your expectation for a smaller plane to have as
20 far as resources when they're flying around?

21 A. Well, a small plane, I know they're going to have a lot less
22 resources than, you know, obviously, a commercial pilot or
23 anything like that. So I know, you know, from friends who fly,
24 too, you know, they do -- you know, they'll do their pre-duty
25 weather briefing, too, for their flight, en route flight, but then

1 they do rely on, you know, ATC for weather guidance and -- a
2 hundred percent, so what they have on board is definitely
3 amendable.

4 Q. So you would expect that if a pilot has a question about the
5 weather or what they're seeing, you know, out the front of their
6 windscreen and whatever they're seeing, either on their display or
7 on their electronic flight guidance or --

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. -- not correlating, they would reach out to you to ask
10 questions for more support.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. So you would expect a pilot to do that for you.

13 A. Yes. And if we see something we're, by all means, going to,
14 you know, issue the weather and give them a -- you know, give them
15 a suggested heading, hey, you know, you want to vector around
16 it --

17 Q. Okay. What kind of -- from a SUP position, what kind of
18 weather resources do you have to help you do your business?

19 A. I mean, well -- so weather resources, I have -- I forget what
20 it's called, but basically, it's just the TAF-generated forecast,
21 so -- and I like the hourly one to see what the ceilings are going
22 to be, visibility, wind shifts, and then behind me there's the
23 ITWS, which a lot of times -- you know, if we have a good storm
24 coming through, I tend to definitely look at that every once in a
25 while to see as far as gust fronts and such, kind of anticipating,

1 you know, runway change or anticipating if we're going to have to
2 shut down the airport and so that way I can coordinate, you know,
3 with TMU to -- hey, we may possibly be going into holding, this
4 one looks like the weather cell's going to be over, you know, the
5 airport. And then you have winds aloft on the ITWS, as well,
6 which is very beneficial for, you know, final and even arrival for
7 final setting up, you know, what the winds are doing as far as how
8 fast they're going to be pushing aircraft. And so yeah, those
9 would be my main sources I go to, you know, for weather.

10 Q. You mentioned, in your description there, the ITWS is behind
11 me, would you -- I mean, you made a gesture, would you like to
12 have it in a different position?

13 A. There's a lot of things I'd like.

14 MS. LEWIS: Here's your opportunity.

15 MR. FORCUM: So I've been about this since, you know, I
16 arrived here in the middle of June, that's when I started, you
17 know, working out on the floor, but the ITWS is behind you, so my
18 focus -- you've been in there, you see where the desk is at. So,
19 you know, being behind you, yeah, I'm faced this way most of the
20 time, so if something popped up, you know, usually it -- you know,
21 catches your eye and maybe you'll look at something versus if it's
22 behind you and you're paying attention to a controller and you're
23 on the phone or you're looking at the CruArt to juggle that.

24 And then another, to me, huge downside, and this is the first
25 facility I've been to that doesn't have this, is I don't have any

1 type of radar display at the desk, so everywhere I've been, they
2 have a display. So what happens, in the past, you know, if I'm on
3 the phone or I'm looking at the CruArt or definitely on the phone,
4 I'm still staring at a scope, I know what's going on. What
5 happens here is I leave the desk, walk down, go find an available
6 scope, I sit down, I take about a minute to get the picture of
7 what's going on, then the phone rings. So then I get up, walk
8 back to the desk, answer the phone, then I go back, take another
9 minute and then maybe on there for five minutes and a controller
10 comes through the door looking for assignment.

11 So there are many times in there that my overall knowledge of
12 what is going on ceases to exist at times. Because of that, I'm
13 not completely, you know, clued in with what's going on until I
14 get time to actually sit over there and watch it without any type
15 of distraction as to where, when I worked at other facilities I
16 could still be at the desk, assign controller position, and still
17 be staring at a radar scope to see if I notice anything.

18 And I like to be able to do that because, you know, I'm
19 looking at altitudes or anything that may be off that a controller
20 may miss or here I do a lot more duties, too, we don't have a TMU
21 unit, but I was never TMU on my own, but at Phoenix TRACON we did
22 a lot of TMU duties as controllers as far as balancing the runway.
23 So I'm doing a lot of that here to help with that to where, you
24 know, we don't have a TMU unit to take that responsibility away
25 from me.

1 Q. I forgot -- I think I don't think it's been asked yet, do you
2 recall the last weather training refresher training that you guys
3 got and what's it about?

4 A. I don't recall exactly, I know definitely this year we've had
5 one or two. I know we had a recent PIREP one, I believe, and then
6 I know there's a hazardous weather one, I don't recall exactly
7 when they were, but they're definitely, you know, this year. And
8 that's just, you know, refresh your memory on, you know, when you
9 get PIREPs, solicit PIREPs, pass them along, for the most part.

10 Q. So do you get that in e-mail, is it a CBI, is it in person,
11 is it just crew, as you rotate the crew? If you can recall.

12 A. Those ones, I don't recall which -- one of them had to be a
13 verbal briefing because I conducted a verbal briefing in here for
14 -- on team briefs whenever we have the opportunity to get those
15 done. Sometimes, you know, staff will give those briefings. So
16 one, I think the hazardous weather one, that one was a verbal
17 briefing, to the best of my knowledge, and the PIREP one might
18 just have been a -- like a "read and initial."

19 Q. Okay. From your point of view, how does the -- being a SUP
20 and things, how does the PIREP process work for you and where do
21 you get involved in that?

22 A. So the -- the controller will fill out a PIREP form or
23 they'll just holler it to me and if I need more information, then
24 I'll go over to them, like hey, you know, where exactly they are,
25 the type of aircraft, sometimes I have to get more information.

1 So then I get a piece of paper or they tell me and I write it down
2 and then I go put it in the AISR and then I will put it on the
3 NIDS display, as well, so the controller can look at their screen,
4 there's a recent base and tops report in case the pilots ask for
5 tops or bases or if there's icing in the area, so those get put on
6 there so we can reference them and then once they get older, I
7 delete those and put newer ones in.

8 Q. So for example -- so somebody, a departure east got a PIREP,
9 you enter it in, whether somebody's sitting at west and didn't
10 hear it or they just come in there and a little relief briefing,
11 they'll still see it on the NIDS --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. -- when they come in (indiscernible).

14 A. Yeah.

15 MR. SUFFERN: That's all the questions I got right now.

16 MR. FORCUM: Okay.

17 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

18 Crystal?

19 BY MS. GENNARO:

20 Q. So my questions are going to be jumping around because I'm
21 basing them on the questions for the answers you've already
22 provided.

23 A. Okay.

24 Q. I know you said staffing is not ideal.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Extremely short-staffed. That day, was that the case?

2 A. Yes. So when I was running around that TRACON like -- just
3 all over the TRACON, yeah, I needed a departure west handoff or a
4 radar associate and -- for that sector alone and then a hundred
5 percent, I definitely needed a coordinator for the departure east
6 sector, as well, which did not have those resources, so I was
7 doing it all. I was coordinating for east, answering lines, and
8 doing all the coordination for departure west. So yeah, I mean,
9 definitely needed that.

10 Q. Okay. You just kind of answered my next question, but I'm
11 going to ask it anyhow, just to make sure I get the right thing
12 here. The scopes and/or configuration during that time, from what
13 you said, was not ideal, is that correct?

14 A. Mainly just not having coordinators, that was --

15 Q. So that's what was missing, coordinators?

16 A. I'm trying to think.

17 Q. How would you set it up, like in the --

18 A. So for that day, so I know for sure I needed, you know, two
19 coordinators, I know I needed that, and that was not an option
20 because I didn't have the staffing for it. I don't remember quite
21 the configuration, but I know I would've wanted two coordinators,
22 departure west, departure east, arrival open, and the satellite.
23 I don't recall if satellite east was open or not. I feel like it
24 was, but you know, I don't remember, I didn't pull it up to look
25 at it to refresh my memory, but that's what I would've wanted

1 open, and the satellite radar west, if that position existed here.

2 Q. Okay. Do you have a wireless headset?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Were you able to monitor that day?

5 A. Yeah, I was monitoring all day long. Up until when I was
6 doing the runway coordination, so when I was doing the runway
7 coordination, I un-keyed monitoring because then I'm, you know,
8 calling the tower to coordinate and then the crane operator, so
9 during that time period I'm not monitoring an active position.

10 Q. Did the runway change go smoothly?

11 A. Yeah, the runway change went good.

12 Q. Okay. And then what kind of training do the controllers
13 receive on aircraft in distress or weather?

14 A. That would be -- let me think. Maybe refresher training, any
15 type of refresher training that the FAA puts out and to go over
16 it. Do I recall when the last one was? No, I do not.

17 Q. That was my next question.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. And I actually have one more, what would you say the
20 experience level of the air traffic controller who was working,
21 what would you say their experience level was?

22 A. I can't make a comment on that because he -- I don't work
23 around him a whole lot, he's on the other side of the watch from
24 me, so the only time I will see him is if his overtime shift lines
25 up with what shift I'm on.

1 MS. GENNARO: Okay. That's all I had.

2 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

3 Betty?

4 BY MS. KOSCHIG:

5 Q. I think I have one curiosity question because everybody else
6 has asked all of the other ones. When you do a runway change, how
7 does that come down, is it the command center, do you guys work
8 with the command center or you just got -- since you're not part
9 of a metroplex,
10 so --

11 A. No, it's --

12 Q. -- how does this --

13 A. It's just between us, so between the TRACON and the tower and
14 anyone, I mean, the tower, a CIC or a SUP up there called down,
15 like hey, we need a runway change or I can initiate it from the
16 TRACON, which that day I initiated it because I -- you know, I'd
17 already looked at the forecast so I knew that the winds were going
18 to be switching out to the northwest and so I gradually started
19 seeing it go that way, then we had a little traffic, it was a
20 perfect opportunity to make a smooth runway transition happen.

21 So I just coordinate with the CIC or a supervisor in the
22 tower and hey, you know, when are you able to switch, you know,
23 this will be my last arrival, they'll let me know the last
24 departure and then reference that and we'll make the switch
25 happen.

1 Q. Does John Tune, do they kind of switch, as well, or does
2 it -- it depends or --

3 A. A lot of times they do, so John Tune will usually match our
4 flow.

5 Q. I was just curious, not being part of a metroplex, how that
6 works at this level. Thank you.

7 A. But I know a lot of changes are in the works here --

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. -- which needed to happen, you know, yesterday.

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. But process, I look forward to when it gets there, yeah.

12 MS. KOSCHIG: Yeah.

13 MS. LEWIS: Okay, Betty.

14 Amy.

15 BY MS. HUSCHKA:

16 Q. I just have a couple questions. So you talked about the
17 number of supervisors that you have.

18 A. Um-hum.

19 Q. Do you -- I guess it's kind of a two-part question, number
20 one, do you use much CIC coverage for that during the day --

21 A. We use a lot --

22 Q. -- outside of mid-shifts and things like that?

23 A. We use a lot of CIC coverage in the tower.

24 Q. In the tower.

25 A. So primarily, if there's just one SUP here, they're going to

1 be in the TRACON.

2 Q. And then do you recall if there was an OS or a CIC in the
3 tower at the time of the incident?

4 A. The time of the event, it was a CIC and I'd say roughly five
5 minutes after the event a supervisor was sent up there.

6 Q. Okay. And just to catch up on my notes a little bit, you
7 said you asked for assistance from --

8 A. It was Cathleen North, support specialist.

9 Q. Support specialist, okay, that's what I was -- I didn't get
10 her position on there, so I have it. And my other question is --
11 so PIREPs, you talk about that's, I mean, added on to a good
12 number of duties that you guys have as the supervisor without a
13 data person or a TMU person kind of in the room, but are you also
14 then responsible for ensuring that you get a PIREP throughout the
15 hour, like do you have an hourly current PIREP in the system?

16 A. Yeah, I would say that's my responsibility to ensure that
17 happens, that we at least hit our minimum and that if there's any
18 other good PIREPs, I mean, if we're getting good PIREPs as far as
19 icing and, you know, not so good conditions out there, we put
20 every single one in that, that we get. But if it's been a day
21 like it was that day and there's been no adverse ride reports, no
22 icing and it's just bases and tops, then typically we just do a
23 base and top report and put that in there.

24 Q. And do you have a way of -- do you just yell to the room I
25 need a PIREP, do you have (indiscernible) put those into your IDS?

1 A. No. So just any method, I mean, I could say -- yeah, I could
2 holler out hey, I need a PIREP or I could go to a specific
3 controller, hey, next departure give me a PIREP. I'll call up to
4 the tower sometimes and say hey, your next departure tell them to
5 pass base/tops reports to a departure controller.

6 MS. HUSCHKA: That's all I have.

7 MS. LEWIS: Okay, cool. Thanks, Amy.

8 BY MS. LEWIS:

9 Q. I have a couple questions and it has to do with some of the
10 workload, so some of the workload, I noticed, we mentioned John
11 Tune being busy.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And prior to the incident you had like nine departures to do
14 clearances for and et cetera, and I noticed that in the replay
15 that we did here, he had to go back and give them clearances at
16 least once, if not twice, there was a couple inbounds, there was
17 at least one inbound and they needed a couple departures both
18 before and after --

19 A. Um-hum.

20 Q. -- the incident. So my questions are going to be about the
21 relationship there with that tower. Do you remember how new the
22 John Tune Federal Contract Tower is, by chance?

23 A. Do I know how new it is?

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Is it pretty new?

2 A. Yeah, it's fairly new, I don't know the exact date, but maybe
3 a little over a year. Definitely over a year because I've been
4 here almost a year, so --

5 Q. Okay. Okay, perfect. So what are some of the distractions,
6 even if you want to repeat some of the stuff I may have said or
7 you had said earlier, what are some of the distractions that tower
8 can cause to the controller over there on the west side?

9 A. Having to read clearances to John Tune, so you know, they got
10 a bay full of strips over here, they need clearances, so if a
11 controller's head is down, you know, reading the strip to them.
12 And then -- so that's one of them. You can have six inbounds at
13 John Tune and you got to call all those inbounds in and sometimes
14 you'll have to change that sequence, so then you're calling back
15 again, hey, I'm in the sequence, this is going to be the order of
16 the aircraft now. And then, of course, also, you know, verbal,
17 you know, releases, you know, off the airport.

18 So some towers, you know, the method's fine, you know,
19 they're slow enough, they're not going to be overly demanding, but
20 this tower is too busy to where it is a huge increase in the
21 workload and it's constant and I mean, they'll just keep calling
22 too --

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. And, you know, the departure radar west controller, you know,
25 will ignore them if they need to and, you know, they'll just keep

1 calling so then I eventually pick up and then, you know, on that
2 day, I forget who I talked to from John Tune but, you know, she
3 was very nice and understanding, so I don't know if it was the
4 manager up there or not, I don't know for sure --

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. -- but, you know, she told me what was going on, I'm like
7 okay, let me work with you, give me your first three and then --
8 so I go to the departure west controller and I'm like I got these
9 three, I'm going to do a runway heading 240, 290, deal with that,
10 you look, I'm looking at it, it looks good, he was like yeah, so I
11 did those three then I called back, I'm like okay, who are your
12 next three, all right, I'll give you a call back when I'm ready
13 and then I get those three. And so, I mean, that was my focus for
14 well over an hour.

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. Yeah, John Tune Tower, I know it's newer, you know, but yeah,
17 they're too busy to not have that kind of equipment that Smyrna
18 Tower has, for sure.

19 Q. So that's the perfect transition into the next question, what
20 kind of equipment -- what type of equipment do you think would be
21 important for them to have so that your workload may decrease
22 here?

23 A. To me, the basic stuff I thought every kind of busier tower
24 had, so have FDIO, you know, to get clearances, so that removes us
25 from the situation completely.

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. If they had the STARS.

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. Now you have an appropriate LOA to where you don't call
5 inbounds because they will see it and then even releases, how
6 Smyrna -- it's just automated, it flashes in front of you and you
7 hit two buttons and you release them. Something like that one
8 will speed up the process for John Tune, their frustration would
9 -- or their frustration, pilots' frustration trying to fly out of
10 the airport at times would -- a lot of that would, you know, go
11 away and then the controller wouldn't be focused on it.

12 And that's why I -- you know, my main purpose there is
13 operational oversight, but a lot of the supervisors, you know,
14 tend to help out because that controller needs to be paying
15 attention to the airplanes on the scope, they don't need to be
16 reading clearances that constantly, you know, some here and there,
17 IFR pop up, you know, it's just part of it, but --

18 Q. Um-hum. Sure. So you were saying that sometimes it gets --
19 can be frustrating for pilots and controllers when that sort of
20 situation happens.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. How is the relationship between your controllers here and the
23 controllers over there?

24 A. I don't really know, I mean, it seems that it's fine. I
25 think there's one individual over there, I don't know his initials

1 or name, that he's a little more -- I don't know the right word
2 for this, but he's more antsy about it or, you know, demanding
3 where the other ones seem very -- they understand that we're busy.

4 Q. Yeah. So when that one controller is there, it causes a
5 little bit of added stress or workload to your controllers?

6 A. Yes, I'd say yes.

7 Q. I think that's pretty much all I was going to hit on for
8 that, I appreciate you talking to me about that. I guess the last
9 question about that would be do you guys have meetings with John
10 Tune airport like, almost like managerial meetings or whatever
11 that you guys can talk about needs of them, needs of you?

12 A. I never have. Since I've been here, I -- I don't know if the
13 operations manager has, I know the operations manager will reach
14 out and talk to a manager at John Tune tower if needed, but is
15 there any type of -- you know, every so often get together and
16 let's talk about a few things, I haven't seen that yet.

17 Q. Sorry, I lost the question. Would that be something that --
18 so I heard, with the overall briefing of the facility and some of
19 the things we were talking about on our tour, that there are --
20 there is a consideration or there is a position that is in the
21 works for you guys to have that's almost like a satellite position
22 to your radar for that airport or --

23 A. Oh, for -- so like, yeah, a satellite position for the west
24 side that would --

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. -- accomplish John Tune --

2 Q. Uh-huh.

3 A. -- I don't know if that's still in the works or not, I know
4 it has been talked about. I do not know if the -- I haven't heard
5 about it for several months, so I don't know if it's still in the
6 talks or not to get that position created and the frequency
7 assigned for it. I know everyone knows that it's needed, upper
8 management knows this, the district is definitely aware of it,
9 it's just getting it to -- make it, you know, happen, but also
10 know they're doing the airspace redesign, as well, which I would
11 hope, you know, would encompass that, as well, give satellites
12 more airspace, you know, to get more into like how a bigger
13 airport flows traffic, which is a transition they need, too, the
14 airspace needs to be modified to the --

15 Q. Would that be something that maybe could be brought up for
16 the LSC?

17 A. It will definitely be brought up with the LSC. And I know
18 one of the members on the LSC, as well, as part of the
19 interactions they're supposed to, I think, have an airspace
20 meeting today but it got postponed for obvious reasons.

21 MS. LEWIS: Right. I think I'm finished with my questions.

22 Does anybody have any -- do you have follow-up, Paul?

23 MR. SUFFERN: Yes. Just a couple questions here.

24 BY MR. SUFFERN:

25 Q. Yeah, so just going back to your overall workload, not

1 necessarily on the day of the accident, but as a SUP have you been
2 working in the environment there at the TRACON, have you been
3 over-tasked because there's just been so much weather around and,
4 you know, as far as controllers, whether it's east or west, just
5 having to slow or stop things down since you've been here?

6 A. I'm not quite sure where you're trying to go with that
7 question.

8 Q. Has the airspace ever been so full of weather, thunderstorms,
9 a blizzard --

10 A. That we had to shut down?

11 Q. Yeah, you had to --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Just too much, can't do anything with the airspace because --

14 A. Yeah, there's -- yeah, that definitely happened since I've
15 been here on my watch where enough weather's coming through to
16 where I need to coordinate with TMU and putting them in holding or
17 hold certain fixes, keep bringing some airplanes in depending on
18 where the weather's at until the airport can't -- it's not safe to
19 land anymore. Yeah, I've definitely been part of that.

20 Q. Okay. And that's convective weather here and --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. If a pilot's on an IFR flight plan, do you assume that
23 they're comfortable flying the clouds, flying in IMC?

24 A. I don't assume anything. Because yeah, I don't know how long
25 they've been, you know, flying for.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. So everyone's level of experience is different just like
3 everyone's level of experience as a controller is different, so
4 how many airframes have they been on, how long they've been
5 flying, what kind of conditions have they flown in, those are all
6 questions you don't know the answers to so you have to treat
7 everyone the best you can, help them the best you can even if
8 they've been doing it for a long time.

9 Q. So if someone's saying they were going to request to deviate
10 left or right but you don't see anything on your scope, are you
11 going to reach back out to them and say hey, why are you
12 deviating, because maybe you got three in trail?

13 A. Oh, a hundred percent and that happened not too long ago, I
14 mean, since this event that we're all here for today, I mean,
15 that's happened where aircraft is deviating, so I go to the
16 controller, I'm like hey, ask them what's going on, like why are
17 you deviating, what do you see, so we can paint the picture for
18 the other aircraft that are following to see.

19 Q. And to tag onto Sarah's question about did anything change in
20 the last year and she always brings up the lottery, if you won the
21 lottery but you were very generous to your other air traffic
22 controllers here, while you're off, retired, and having a good
23 time, you have enough in the lottery to give some money to your
24 air traffic control facility and they need weather equipment, what
25 is a weather equipment tool or something that you would help

1 provide to them to help do their job better or you would want to
2 help do your job better?

3 A. Well, probably because I don't know what better tools are out
4 there for me, that's a hard question to answer because I don't
5 know what equipment or capabilities are out there that are
6 superior, if they are, which I'm sure there are some out there, so
7 if -- yeah, if there's something better out there, yeah, I'd love
8 to see it. But as far as just helping me, I mean, I could go back
9 to, you know, the pre-weather duty briefing just to have something
10 that really is site specific to Nashville and the immediate
11 surrounding area of what's happening, what possibly can happen to
12 really prepare myself before I step into that TRACON versus
13 something that doesn't supply me that information.

14 MR. SUFFERN: That's all I got.

15 MS. LEWIS: Thanks, Paul.

16 Crystal?

17 MS. GENNARO: No more questions.

18 MS. LEWIS: Betty?

19 (No audible response.)

20 MS. LEWIS: Amy?

21 BY MS. HUSCHKA:

22 Q. I have two that are kind of tangent on questions and you may
23 or may not know the answer to the first one.

24 A. Okay.

25 Q. So your radar, do you have fusion?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Single port (ph.)? You have fusion.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. And is that like -- there's no alarm or anything on
5 the -- with your circular radar being out there, I was kind of
6 looking up what you have in here.

7 A. Um-hum.

8 Q. But the circular radar is out for the weather stuff? You
9 don't have any alarms in there or anything like with the fusion
10 portion of it?

11 A. No, not that I'm aware of and usually the red stands out
12 because I'm thinking, you know, radar site's out, so I have not
13 noticed anything like that.

14 Q. Okay. And then totally unassociated with the first one, for
15 the local safety council, you just started it up?

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. Do you guys, have you established like a drop box or a
18 location to get input from other individuals?

19 A. No, not yet.

20 Q. Not yet, okay. Just curious. If you had someplace --

21 A. I think there used to be, I'd have to go look, but I think
22 there used to be a box in the hallway by the TRACON door for like
23 a suggestion-type box. I don't know if it was put there for like
24 -- to get to management or, you know, to provide them feedback or
25 if it was the local safety council did that and passed, that I do

1 not know.

2 Q. Yeah, it's just nice for Joe controller doesn't see anybody
3 at the local safety council --

4 A. Yeah, you want to --

5 (Crosstalk)

6 MR. FORCUM: Yeah, you want to be able to hear from everyone,
7 it takes everyone's input in and us, as a team in here, prioritize
8 what we should address, look at, see if we could make something
9 better, more efficient.

10 MS. HUSCHKA: No more questions, thank you.

11 BY MS. LEWIS:

12 Q. Do you know if the local safety council has scoping documents
13 yet or is it that new?

14 A. It's that new.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. I know I take my class next week --

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. -- and I know we do have another meeting like June 21st, so
19 hopefully we'll get something done with that. And then, I mean,
20 everything is dependent on staffing here, too, so we may get
21 rushed, you know, because if we -- our meeting's scheduled that
22 day and then, you know, let's say there is weather or the traffic
23 volume is really busy so we need available bodies because that
24 hundred percent comes first, so that could dictate whether our
25 meeting lasts an hour and a half or 45 minutes. So hopefully that

1 doesn't happen too often and we can get productive meetings done
 2 to actually accomplish --
 3 Q. Was there anything here that you thought we would ask that we
 4 didn't ask you?
 5 A. No, I think -- yeah, I didn't think about it a whole lot, but
 6 I think you asked everything kind of that I thought was going to
 7 be asked, for the most part.
 8 Q. Do you have questions for us?
 9 A. No.
 10 Q. Would you like to leave?
 11 (Laughter.)
 12 MR. FORCUM: To go home, yeah.
 13 MS. LEWIS: Okay, well, then if everybody is good to go, then
 14 I'll say that the interview has concluded at 12:59.
 15 (Whereupon, at 12:59 p.m., the interview concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024
Interview of Anthony Forcum

ACCIDENT NO.: ERA24FA217

PLACE: Nashville, Tennessee

DATE: May 21, 2024

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Karen D. Martini.

Karen D. Martini
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of:

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FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024

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Accident No.: ERA24FA217

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Interview of: BRADLEY POWERS, Air Traffic Control Specialist
Federal Aviation Administration

Nashville, Tennessee

Tuesday,
May 21, 2024

APPEARANCES:

SARAH LEWIS, Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BETTY KOSCHIG, Senior Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

CRYSTAL GENNARO
Federal Aviation Administration

AMY HUSCHKA, Air Safety Investigator
National Air Traffic Controllers Association

JEREMY LEE, NATCA Facility Representative
Representative for Mr. Powers

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I N T E R V I E W

(1:25 p.m.)

MS. LEWIS: Okay, I'm going to say the time of the recording is 1:25 p.m., and please state your name.

MR. POWERS: Brad Powers.

MS. LEWIS: Thank you. Could you please spell your name?

MR. POWERS: B-r-a-d P-o-w-e-r-s.

MS. LEWIS: Thank you. As I said, some of this stuff we're going to have to repeat a little bit. As part of the process, I'll be recording the interview and I will have a transcription made. That transcription will become part of the factual report, but the audio will not be part of the public docket. I will send you a copy of the transcript for your review and it should be a month or two before we can have it back to you, but you will get it back. Do you have any questions?

MR. POWERS: No.

MS. LEWIS: Okay. Again, thank you for coming in and speaking to us today. My name is Sarah Lewis, I'm an air traffic control investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board. The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with determining the probable cause of aviation accidents and incidents and promoting transportation safety in general. The purpose of this investigation is safety, to gather facts, determine probable cause, and prevent reoccurrence, most importantly. Our role is not to assign fault, blame, or

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1 liability. The interview is a part of -- this interview is part
2 of the fact-finding phase of this investigation. And as part of
3 the regulations, you're welcome to have one representative of your
4 choice to attend, and I see you have someone sitting next to you
5 today, is this the person you would like to have as your
6 representative?

7 MR. POWERS: Yes.

8 MS. LEWIS: Thank you. Please state your name.

9 MR. LEE: I'm Jeremy Lee.

10 MS. LEWIS: Thank you. And we have the spelling of your name
11 from --

12 MR. LEE: Yes.

13 MS. LEWIS: -- earlier. The reason for this interview today
14 is to discuss the accident that occurred on May 15th, 2024,
15 regarding November 4-7 Whiskey Tango. I know that we really want
16 to pick your brain about the LSC, so that's what is mostly going
17 to be going on today.

18 We'll be asking a variety of questions, so if at any time you
19 have any questions, please feel free to ask us. Please answer all
20 the questions to the best of your ability. If you do not recall,
21 "I do not recall" is fine. If you don't know, "I do not know" is
22 an acceptable answer. If you don't understand a question, ask us
23 to repeat it or to rephrase it and we will explain it for you. If
24 at any time you wish to take a break or you want to consult with
25 your representative, you can. You can talk amongst yourselves in

1 here or you can go out in the hall and talk. The only thing we
2 kind of ask is that he doesn't answer the questions for you, but
3 feel free to speak with him. Do you have any questions so far?

4 MR. POWERS: No.

5 MS. LEWIS: Okay, okay. And the things -- the way the things
6 will work today is that I'll start out asking questions, then
7 we'll go around the room to the group members and they'll have
8 opportunities to ask questions. Again, you may see us typing or
9 writing notes and the notes are just to jog our memories and --
10 that we want to ask you and they will be destroyed. The basic
11 structure, that's the basic structure of our interviews. Any
12 questions?

13 MR. POWERS: No.

14 MS. LEWIS: Okay, let's get started.

15 INTERVIEW OF BRADLEY POWERS

16 BY MS. LEWIS:

17 Q. Okay. What is your age?

18 A. Forty-three.

19 Q. What are your operating initials?

20 A. Bravo Papa.

21 Q. What is your title or position?

22 A. Air traffic control specialist.

23 Q. Okay. Do you also carry a CIC or OJTI?

24 A. Both.

25 Q. Both, okay. Any other things I didn't ask about, those

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1 little titles or anything?

2 A. Professional standards.

3 Q. Okay. Yeah, anything else?

4 A. Not that I can think of.

5 Q. Yeah, professional standards can be a big task, so that's
6 good you're doing that for them. Do you have any military or pre-
7 FAA ATC work experience?

8 A. No.

9 Q. What about your FAA experience?

10 A. I was in Nashville 2009 to 2017, Denver TRACON 2017 to '21
11 and now '21 until currently, back at Nashville.

12 Q. Very cool. So we already talked about collateral duties or,
13 you know, professional standards and OJTI. Have you been on any
14 recent details that would take you outside the building?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay, tell me about it.

17 A. An airspace and procedures trip to Atlanta TRACON, tower, and
18 center to discuss new procedures and get ideas. I've been to
19 Memphis for tower training for OJTI and recurrent training in
20 Memphis.

21 Q. Are you a recurrent training cadre?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Wow. Yeah, so there's another one that you can put on there.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Wow. Wow, you are like a jack of all trades. I'm sure they

1 appreciate that. So tell me, how did you become interested in
2 aviation?

3 A. My parents were both air traffic controllers.

4 Q. Were they really?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Where did they work?

7 A. Pre-1981 was Memphis Center and Memphis Tower, my mom was at
8 the tower and my dad was at the center. Then they moved to
9 Albuquerque in '79 and I was born in Albuquerque and then PATCO
10 happened.

11 Q. Right, got you. Yeah, that's really cool.

12 A. But then my dad was at Memphis.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. He had his job back in '96 and retired --

15 Q. Oh, yeah.

16 A. -- in 2010.

17 Q. Very cool. Yeah, I worked with a couple rehires up in New
18 York when I was up there, so many moons ago. So how did you get
19 -- how did you -- so you applied for air traffic or did you go to
20 a CTI school, how did you --

21 A. I applied off the street.

22 Q. Awesome. How long did that process take you?

23 A. I think I applied four times and then finally got hired,
24 so --

25 Q. Yeah, determination.

1 A. -- 15 years to the day.

2 Q. Yay. Well, congratulations on the --

3 A. Thank you.

4 Q. -- anniversary, that's awesome.

5 A. Thanks.

6 Q. Well, we probably already know the question, but we have to

7 ask anyways, have you ever been fired, terminated, suspended, or

8 asked to resign any ATC position?

9 A. No.

10 Q. How would you describe your overall health in terms of

11 excellent, good, fair, poor?

12 A. Good.

13 Q. Do you have a current medical?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Do you have any limitations?

16 A. Yes. Asthma and vision.

17 Q. Glasses?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Corrective lenses? Okay. Do you know if drug or alcohol

20 screening was performed following this event?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Any changes in your health this last year, good, bad, or

23 indifferent?

24 A. Not that I can think of.

25 Q. Any changes in your personal life during the last year, got

1 married, had a kid?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Okay. Any changes in your financial situation during the
4 last year, you won the lottery or anything cool like that?

5 A. We got a raise.

6 Q. Yeah, we heard about that already, good job, congratulations,
7 you guys deserve it. That's great. Okay, so we're going to skip
8 some of the other questions because I don't really think they're
9 that relevant. Were you in the control operation during the time
10 of this event?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Okay. So no ATSAP report because there was no involvement at
13 all. Okay, very good. Have you been interviewed about this event
14 before now, besides across the hallway?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Okay. Let's see, so we're going to skip a whole bunch of
17 that stuff. Let's see. Let's talk a little bit about your
18 opinion, your opinion on the pre-duty weather briefing, pros/cons.

19 A. It's convenient because it's right by your sign-in and
20 sometimes it's not always up to date, but I know they can't put
21 one out every hour.

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. So I'm indifferent, really. I don't know.

24 Q. Do you feel it's relevant for here?

25 A. Sometimes, but it's usually -- the last one I can think of

1 they had high-level winds over Little Rock and that doesn't apply
2 to us, so --

3 Q. Right. Anything you wish you could see changed on that, that
4 would be perhaps more relevant to a terminal facility like this
5 one?

6 A. I don't know how you would implement that, though. I mean, I
7 can't think of an example, but I don't know how you would
8 implement it for just us.

9 Q. Yeah. That is the question of the day, across the NAS.
10 Let's see. Okay, so we're really here to pick your brain about
11 the LSC, so we kind of wanted just -- how about we just start with
12 like an overall synopsis of it, like we understand that you guys
13 had a meeting to kind of kick it back up again --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- last Friday, tell me about how it was prior to last
16 Friday.

17 A. I wasn't involved in it personally, so I didn't get to see
18 how the meetings work, but --

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. -- they -- I don't know how many changes came from it,
21 personally --

22 Q. Uh-huh.

23 A. -- that I'm aware of.

24 Q. So would it be fair to say you don't feel it was very
25 effective in the past or you just don't have enough information or

1 experience?

2 A. I don't have enough information.

3 Q. Um-hum. So tell me about the LSC now, in its current state,
4 tell me about Friday and how is it working out.

5 A. Well, it was just kind of a kickoff to get the people
6 together and they said they want to meet twice a month and come up
7 with different -- try and come up with solutions to our in-house
8 problems that we can control and fix.

9 Q. Um-hum. Can you give me a couple of examples of some of the
10 things you're thinking about talking about?

11 A. Satellite arrivals, independent of the Nashville arrivals.
12 Different ideas for our short-side arrivals and the altitude we
13 turn downwind at.

14 Q. Um-hum. Okay. And so tell me, how is your LSC compromised,
15 like, how many -- not necessarily names, but tell me, like,
16 there's a support specialist or who's on it?

17 A. There's four controllers and one supervisor.

18 Q. Okay, very good. And have you made a scoping document yet?

19 A. I don't know.

20 Q. Okay. Let's see, what else? So tell me about some of the
21 challenges you see here at Nashville, specifically with the fact
22 that your traffic is increasing. So what are some of the safety
23 challenges you can see with that increase?

24 A. Definitely the increased volume and airplanes per controller
25 and with the staffing being what it is, it's just going up and up

1 and up, so -- and if people don't have other experience other than
2 here, I could see how it could be tough to adjust.

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. So --

5 Q. Sure.

6 A. -- you have to take that into account.

7 Q. Yeah. What are some mitigations that you can -- or have you
8 guys discussed any mitigations on things like that where --
9 obviously, starting up the LSC would be a mitigation.

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. Anything else you can think of, just for the volume increase
12 and stuff like that?

13 A. It feels like a flow program would help us, but I don't know
14 the steps to get that and -- because I don't know, we see runway
15 construction edicts for the other side of the country and -- like
16 why can't we get one, we have a runway closed.

17 Q. Right. So they're talking about going to Level 10 or you
18 already are?

19 A. We are.

20 Q. You already are a 10?

21 A. Yes, ma'am.

22 Q. So would that, would a TMU be a reasonable thing?

23 A. Absolutely, absolutely.

24 MS. LEWIS: Okay. It would be interesting to take a look
25 into that, even as the LSC --

1 MR. POWERS: Yes.

2 MS. LEWIS: -- it might be something --

3 MR. POWERS: Yeah.

4 MS. LEWIS: -- "It's already (indiscernible), Sarah." I'm
5 going to pass it along to Paul.

6 BY MR. SUFFERN:

7 Q. Yeah, so switching a gear a little bit to weather, were you
8 in the facility last Wednesday, on the day of the accident?

9 A. I came in at 2:30.

10 Q. Two thirty, okay. Well, just do you recall when you came in,
11 the weather conditions when you came in or anything?

12 A. I don't recall.

13 Q. You don't recall. As far as the weather resources that you
14 use, and what are some of the ones that you use that you find
15 helpful to work traffic?

16 A. I definitely use the big monitors up on the side that depict
17 the weather, more than just my scope, to help see where the
18 weather's trending to, and definitely use the PIREPs and
19 everything else to try and judge, you know, such as unusual winds
20 or precipitation, things like that.

21 Q. Do you ever get -- in your experience, do you ever get
22 deviations around -- or requests from pilots for deviations around
23 things you don't see on your scope?

24 A. Yes, all the time.

25 Q. How does that -- since you worked in Denver, how does that

1 compare to Denver, do you --

2 A. Well, there's more volume out there and they kind of -- it
3 would slow departures down and we had thunderstorm season out
4 there that builds over the Rockies and move east every day, so we
5 just kind of shut down gates as the weather moved across and then
6 keep going.

7 Q. But as far as, you know, when pilots say they're deviating
8 around things in Denver --

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. -- would you see those on your scope, the precipitation --

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. -- and then here, you don't --

13 A. It's not every day, it's just occasionally they'll ask for a
14 deviation around a buildup and we can't see clouds, obviously.

15 Q. Yeah. So as a controller, what do you -- what do you see as
16 a hazard with a buildup, what would you --

17 A. Well, it's unstable air for sure, so I know they don't want
18 to fly through it, so just trying to give them what they want and
19 as long as it's not conflicting with other traffic.

20 Q. Okay. Are there any particular areas within the airspace
21 that you work where you see more issues of not seeing, you know,
22 like when you're working traffic out of the northwest corner or
23 northeast corner and, you know, it's a thunderstorm day or a
24 shower day and more people are asking --

25 A. Not one particular area, it's just kind of universal --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. -- the way the weather is in middle Tennessee.

3 Q. Do you recall your last refresher or recurrent weather
4 training you guys had here at the facility and what it was on?

5 A. I don't recall.

6 Q. You know, for you, when you're working traffic, if a pilot or
7 a plane is on an IFR flight plan, do you assume that they're
8 comfortable flying in the clouds in IMC?

9 A. Every pilot is different, so I can't assume one way or
10 another. If they ask for something I try and give it to them, but
11 sometimes they have to fly through the clouds due to traffic or
12 not storms, but just clouds, so --

13 Q. Yeah, that's all I've got. Well, I have, like, one. Are
14 there any weather considerations that you can think of off the top
15 of your head for the LSC, kind of that you -- obviously, you just
16 had your kickoff, so you just hand-shaked and said hi to
17 everybody. But are there any ideas for the LSC, weather-wise,
18 that you personally are thinking about bringing up to the rest of
19 the group or --

20 A. I think, with the way it was in Denver you had to pin down
21 deviations to a certain degree instead of well, there's less
22 traffic here, you say deviate right as necessary, but here we tie
23 them down or advise if you need further left or, I don't know,
24 it's -- it's a personal thing, but just talking, get it more
25 standardized for everybody.

1 MR. SUFFERN: Now that's the last question.

2 MR. POWERS: Okay.

3 MS. LEWIS: Thank you. Crystal.

4 BY MS. GENNARO:

5 Q. So really, you guys are just now starting up a new local
6 safety --

7 A. Yes, ma'am.

8 Q. -- council, we understand that you have increasing traffic --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- low staffing, everything considered, if you guys got
11 together and said wow, if we could just get this one thing fixed,
12 these other things may fall in line, what would that one thing be?

13 A. Can I say staffing?

14 Q. You can say staffing.

15 A. It would probably be staffing first.

16 MS. GENNARO: Okay. That was the only question I had.

17 MR. POWERS: Okay.

18 BY MS. LEWIS:

19 Q. Can you elaborate a little bit on that, like what are the
20 staffing concerns that you see?

21 A. Not being able to split off every position and if we get an
22 inbound rush or it's a beautiful day and everybody that has an
23 airplane decides to go flying, things like that.

24 MS. LEWIS: Okay. Thanks, Crystal. Great.

25 Betty.

1 MS. KOSCHIG: I don't have any.

2 MS. LEWIS: Okay, Amy.

3 BY MS. HUSCHKA:

4 Q. Well, I guess the local safety -- and again, we're all aware
5 it just started, have you ever been a part of one before?

6 A. No, ma'am.

7 Q. This is your first time?

8 A. Yes, ma'am.

9 Q. Okay. So the process, you guys are all -- you are attending
10 the class, as well, for the local safety?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. And that's two weeks, that's the one you were talking
13 about earlier?

14 A. Oh, no, no, no. I'm sorry, that's for training in the tower
15 for local controllers.

16 Q. Oh.

17 A. Yes, ma'am.

18 Q. And you are attending classes --

19 A. No, ma'am, sorry about that.

20 Q. Okay. So I guess more recommendations, I mean just like
21 checking in with other people, do you know anybody from the
22 facilities that do it or things like that that's informational,
23 not asking about --

24 A. Yes, ma'am.

25 Q. -- what they do, trying not to set yourself up for failure

1 with your staffing.

2 A. Right.

3 Q. Meeting twice a week is awesome at the beginning when you're
4 setting up your --

5 A. Right.

6 Q. -- documents.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Try not to set it to an unreasonable point where you break it
9 automatically and nobody cares.

10 A. Right.

11 Q. You know, those kind of things.

12 A. Yes, ma'am.

13 Q. Being careful that you use it, this is something that you
14 will use and be able to keep up with.

15 A. Yes, ma'am.

16 Q. But as far as local safety and your facility, so TMU we
17 talked about, you don't have a data controller, either, in your
18 TRACON, you do --

19 A. We have the position, but --

20 Q. It's not used?

21 A. It is occasionally, but we just can't always -- we're busy
22 with the ones flying, so --

23 Q. Is it often data and handoff if you had another controller?

24 A. We have both.

25 Q. You have both.

1 A. We have both, a handoff for west and a handoff for east and
2 then coordinators and CI-1 and CI-2 downstairs, which are
3 associated positions for coordinating in between the west and the
4 east side.

5 Q. Okay. They just rarely do the data position (indiscernible)?

6 A. Oh, when we're able to, we do it, but I wish we could have
7 the people to split it off more often.

8 MS. HUSCHKA: I don't have any more right now.

9 BY MS. KOSCHIG:

10 Q. So I'm going to ask you probably some wild card questions.

11 A. Okay.

12 Q. So as a local safety guy, do you have access to ATSAPs?

13 A. I'm getting that, I don't currently.

14 Q. Okay. Do you know if anybody filed an ATSAP on this one?

15 A. I don't know.

16 Q. Okay. Did you talk to the -- to Cris about the incident?

17 A. No, ma'am.

18 Q. Would you normally, as a local safety person?

19 A. It depends on -- I don't know what happened, I wasn't there,
20 so I don't want to speculate, but I don't know, I think
21 controllers talk to each other anyways, but I get the -- the
22 safety council needs to be in on it more about what we can do to
23 correct things, if anything was done wrong.

24 Q. Can you -- sorry, I just keep asking these kinds of
25 questions. So John Tune down there, it's pretty new, right, last

1 year, too?

2 A. Yes, ma'am. The tower, yes.

3 Q. So do you know if they have a local safety?

4 A. I have no idea.

5 Q. And do you think it would be good to reach out to them just
6 as a -- just because you're the big dog up --

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. -- here in Nashville?

9 A. I think so.

10 MS. KOSCHIG: Yeah, because it sounds like you could probably
11 get some good information --

12 MR. POWERS: Yeah.

13 MS. KOSCHIG: -- with what's going on. I guess that's it.

14 BY MS. LEWIS:

15 Q. Okay. Then it's back to me again. So kind of piggybacking
16 on Amy's thing, we see a lot in general where the LSC will start
17 strong but you don't have a lot of support in the building, for
18 whatever reason, and it kind of fizzles out. So my question is do
19 you know if there has been any talk whatsoever about trying to
20 facilitate the local safety council and back it up with overtime
21 or credit or something where you guys -- because there's a lot,
22 there's four controllers and one SUP and I'm pretty sure, I may be
23 mistaken, but since you don't have another supervisory person,
24 that you have to have a certain amount of people --

25 A. Right.

1 Q. -- present. Have you had any talks with management about
2 hey, you know, in order to keep this going, we're going to need to
3 have some kind of robust plan to back us up?

4 A. They had mentioned we could use overtime for the meeting,
5 since we're all kind of different days off, but no specifics.

6 Q. Okay. But that's a start.

7 A. Yes, ma'am.

8 Q. I think that's kind of the point that we might be hoping to
9 make, is like it's a great thing and it's one of the best things,
10 I think, a facility could honestly have and a lot of the times
11 it's not supported --

12 A. Right.

13 Q. -- for whatever reason, you know, I mean legitimate reasons,
14 but it's really important, so kudos to you guys for doing that,
15 it's really awesome. Okay, back to the TRACON, where you were
16 talking about how data could be staffed, but don't necessarily
17 staff it. Thinking outside the box with the issues you may be
18 experiencing with John Tune --

19 A. Um-hum.

20 Q. -- being so busy, could it or would it be feasible to take
21 that responsibility of the clearance being read and coordinating
22 the releases and take it off of the west controller and maybe put
23 it on that data position? And I know that the SUP is already kind
24 of doing that --

25 A. Um-hum.

1 Q. -- and I know sometimes a SUP will also have data, like it's
2 combined with data, but if you take that frequency and you turn it
3 off at the west side and you put it on the data position, would
4 that be something feasible to think about in this facility, where
5 you're taking that away for right now, or you're trying to make a
6 satellite?

7 A. I think that's the intention, is we're trying to create a
8 satellite west, but the process for that, I don't know how long
9 it's going to take or --

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. But I think the easiest solution would be a FIDO over there.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. So it would eliminate half the phones calls immediately.

14 Q. Um-hum. What about -- and I mean -- we were talking about
15 this a little earlier that, you know, do you think there's a
16 possibility one day of John Tune being so busy that they make it
17 some sort of FAA tower instead of a contract tower, do you see
18 that kind of increase in their traffic?

19 A. Possibly. I mean, yeah, I could see that. I just don't know
20 the numbers for what they do, so --

21 Q. Sure. Would it be something to consider -- and I know that
22 there's a lot of politics and there's a lot of -- way beyond us,
23 people involved here, but working with the FAA and John Tune and
24 at least maybe possibly, if you can't make them a Delta --

25 A. Um-hum.

1 Q. -- because it's not going to be -- but there are contract
2 towers out there that are Deltas. What if -- you know, would that
3 be helpful to try to get them a Delta with a DBRITE and a FIDO?

4 A. I think it would. It just depends on how the airspace is, if
5 we're getting a class Bravo, the cutouts for that and
6 everything --

7 Q. Sure, sure.

8 A. -- because again, Denver, Centennial is a class Delta
9 airspace right underneath our class Bravo airspace.

10 Q. Because I know, you know, perhaps with proper procedures you
11 could even get to the point where there's automatic releases --

12 A. Yes, ma'am.

13 Q. -- and that would alleviate a lot of the workload off the
14 controllers.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. So okay, that's just my kind of two cents of kind of like
17 planting the little seeds that maybe the LSC could work on that.

18 A. Yeah. I know we would like to be able to split up the
19 positions to help out, but --

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. -- sometimes you just --

22 Q. Of course. Yeah, you can't squeeze water out of a rock.

23 A. No.

24 MS. LEWIS: Yeah. Paul?

25 MR. SUFFERN: No questions.

1 MS. LEWIS: Crystal?
2 MS. GENNARO: No follow-up.
3 MS. LEWIS: Amy?
4 MS. HUSCHKA: No, I'm good.
5 MS. LEWIS: Betty?
6 MS. KOSCHIG: Oh me?
7 MS. LEWIS: Do you ask your question, your special question?
8 MS. KOSCHIG: No, I'll let you.
9 MS. LEWIS: Okay, all right.
10 BY MS. LEWIS:
11 Q. Betty's special question is --
12 A. Okay.
13 Q. -- was there anything that we didn't ask you that you thought
14 we might ask you?
15 A. Not that I can think of --
16 Q. Okay.
17 A. -- since I wasn't here for the event, so --
18 Q. Sure, sure. Anything you want to ask us?
19 A. Nothing I can think of.
20 MS. LEWIS: Okay.
21 MS. KOSCHIG: He didn't ask his magic question.
22 MS. LEWIS: Oh, yeah, you didn't ask your magic question.
23 MR. SUFFERN: I was distracted by your --
24 MS. LEWIS: My rock comment? Yes it was a good one.
25 MR. SUFFERN: Yes.

1 BY MR. SUFFERN:

2 Q. Yeah. So my question is, if there's any weather tool that
3 could help you do your job better, if you had infinite money, you
4 won the lottery and you gave some of the money to the facility
5 because you're generous, the kind person that you are, what
6 weather tool, have anything?

7 A. I don't know specifically, but I know Denver had two ASR-11
8 radars and we only have an ASR-9, so we could see more things and
9 get a better idea of how to -- where to put airplanes. So I don't
10 know, just improve the -- I don't know anything specifically.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. No.

13 MS. LEWIS: That's great. Any more "what ifs," "gotchas"?
14 Anything?

15 (No response.)

16 MS. LEWIS: Gotchas. Okay, then I will say that the
17 interview is now concluded at 1:53 p.m.

18 (Whereupon, at 1:53 p.m., the interview concluded.)
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This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024
Interview of Bradley Powers

ACCIDENT NO.: ERA24FA217

PLACE: Nashville, Tennessee

DATE: May 21, 2024

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of David A. Martini.

David A. Martini
Transcriber

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024

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Accident No.: ERA24FA217

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Interview of: TIM HARPER, Acting Air Traffic Manager
Federal Aviation Administration

Nashville, Tennessee

Wednesday,
May 22, 2024

APPEARANCES:

SARAH LEWIS, Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BETTY KOSCHIG, Senior Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

CRYSTAL GENNARO
Federal Aviation Administration

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National Air Traffic Controllers Association

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Representative for Mr. Harper

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I N T E R V I E W

(8:18 a.m.)

MS. LEWIS: Okay, the time now is 8:18 Central and thank you for taking the time to come and talk with us. Can you please state your name?

MR. HARPER: Tim Harper.

MS. LEWIS: Okay, could you please spell that for us?

MR. HARPER: T-i-m H-a-r-p-e-r.

MS. LEWIS: Thank you. And as part of the process, I'll be recording the interview and I'll have the transcription made. The transcription will become part of the factual docket, but the audio will not be placed in the docket. I will send you a copy of the transcript for your review and it could be a couple months before you get that. Do you have any questions about that?

MR. HARPER: I do not.

MS. LEWIS: Okay, perfect. Again, for the record, my name is Sarah Lewis, I'm an air traffic control investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board. The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with determining the probable cause of aviation accidents and incidents, and promoting transportation safety. And the purpose of this investigation is safety, to gather facts, determine probable cause, and prevent reoccurrence. Our role is not to assign fault, blame, or liability. And this interview is a part of a fact-finding phase of this investigation. And as part of the regulations, you're

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1 welcome to have one representative of your choice to attend and I
2 see you have a gentleman sitting next to you, is this the person
3 you would like to have as your representative?

4 MR. HARPER: Yes.

5 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

6 And could you please state your name?

7 MS. BRINGEWATT: Jonathan Bringewatt.

8 MS. LEWIS: Thank you. Do you mind spelling that again,
9 please?

10 MS. BRINGEWATT: J-o-n-a-t-h-a-n B-r-i-n-g-e-w-a-t-t.

11 MS. LEWIS: Thank you so much.

12 And the reason for this interview today is to discuss the
13 accident that occurred on May 15th, 2024 regarding November 4-7
14 Whiskey Tango. And as we mentioned before, we'll be asking a
15 variety of questions so if any time you have any questions, please
16 feel free to ask. Please answer the questions to the best of your
17 recollection. If you don't know an answer, "I don't know" is a
18 perfectly acceptable answer.

19 If you don't understand a question, please ask us to repeat
20 it or rephrase it so that you can understand it better. If at any
21 time you wish to take a break or you want to consult with your
22 representative, you can do that, just let us know. You can
23 consult here or if you'd like to step out, you can step out and
24 consult. And then I'm going to start asking some questions, we're
25 going to go around the room and again, you might see us taking

1 notes and these notes are just to jog our memory on things we want
2 to ask you and they will be destroyed. That's the basic structure
3 of the interview, do you have any questions?

4 MR. HARPER: No questions.

5 MS. LEWIS: Okay. At first we're just going to ask a couple
6 of just little, like -- almost like administrative type questions.

7 INTERVIEW OF TIM HARPER

8 BY MS. LEWIS:

9 Q. At the time of the accident, what was your age?

10 A. Thirty -- oh, my gosh, 40.

11 Q. Forty. Thank you.

12 A. I just walked into that, 40. I am 40.

13 Q. Yeah, we can understand. Do you have operating initials?

14 A. TJ, Tango Juliet.

15 Q. Perfect. And what's your title or position at the time of
16 the --

17 A. I was air traffic manager.

18 Q. Okay, very good. Do you have any military or pre-FAA ATC
19 work experience?

20 A. No military. I did college at Riddle, went into the CTI
21 program, then I've done -- I was at Central Florida TRACON and
22 Orlando before it was split, certified on both, stayed at F11,
23 then in 2012 transferred up to Atlanta. I was in Atlanta Tower as
24 a controller, got into an OS ranks in 2017, then I went to
25 headquarters as an ETR in 2021, transferred to the field in the

1 middle of '21 and I was in the field through '22 into May of '23,
2 came here in '23 of May for air traffic manager. Eighteen years
3 in the agency.

4 Q. Wow, that's great. Thank you for sharing all that, that's
5 really, really awesome. Other than -- okay, so tell us a little
6 bit, so you -- do you -- as ATM, were you on -- I know you were on
7 a detail to come here, how long was that detail?

8 A. One year.

9 Q. Okay. And when was that detail over?

10 A. May 18th, Saturday --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- is when I ended.

13 Q. Right. Okay, let's see. Some questions we have to ask.
14 Have you been -- ever been fired, terminated, suspended, or asked
15 to resign any ATC position?

16 A. I have been suspended.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I was suspended in, I want to say 2019.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I think that's the year. Two-day suspension.

21 Q. Okay, thank you. And let's see, some of these things aren't
22 really relevant, so I'm just skipping ahead here. Were you able
23 to see a replay of the event?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Okay. Were you able to see the STARS maintenance scope?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay, very good. Let's see. Okay, I think that's kind of
3 really all that we need for that and so I think we really want to
4 talk about mostly, the STARS maintenance replay and what we saw on
5 the STARS maintenance replay. And we know that you have like a
6 carryover item regarding the weather, the Level 6 issues, seeing
7 the weather on that, on that radar, are you familiar with that
8 carryover?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay, can you please explain what that means and take me
11 through the whole -- what happened there?

12 A. There's three on there now, there was two when I got here in
13 May, the linear versus circular and then a Level 6. Immediately,
14 I wanted to find out what was going on with the linear because
15 it's been on there for -- I don't know, prior to May of '23, how
16 long it's been on there, I just knew that it was -- and I
17 inherited it and I continued to see it on the logs, though the two
18 tech ops -- radar technician is the one I went to first and there
19 was a part for the linear versus circular one that they were
20 waiting on for months, they said it was back ordered, so that was
21 a continual check-in of where that was at. Then the part did
22 arrive into 2024, I want to say in February or January, January or
23 February is when the part came.

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. The staffing word will come up even in their department, but

1 -- of when to get this thing done and they would assure that the
2 product that we would see on the scopes were not differentiated if
3 it was in linear versus circular.

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. So some of the language that they would explain to me of if
6 it's going to inhibit anything that the controller's going to do
7 in reference to determinations was minimal. So I would keep
8 pushing on when this was going to get done. I do not know the
9 closure of that, I don't know where that process went. After -- I
10 would say going into March, that conversation, I just left it, I
11 don't know where it was, good, bad, or ugly, that's where -- I
12 knew the part was on site and we needed to find out when they were
13 going to be able to go there and install.

14 The Level 6 one, there was a disconnect, I think, with the
15 tech ops specialists, the manager, and what needed to get done in
16 order to get that closed out. I don't think they quite understood
17 that it was a simple -- or what was -- it turned out to be a
18 simple fix, it sounds like, of just going and actually turning it
19 on, but they've done so much work there, when they turn things
20 off, I don't think it was all put back on again. But --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- those conversations were just hey, we need to get this
23 done and I don't know how the translation of get this done and
24 clean it up or close it out or find out what is broken --

25 Q. Um-hum.

1 A. -- came up. My question to tech ops was if there is Level 6
2 weather, will we see it. The answer was no, so that's when I
3 started pursuing that we needed to get this improved. The
4 circular versus linear, I felt like, was a higher priority because
5 it was an actual part. This one, they needed to do the diagnosis,
6 they didn't know the time, the time turned in to the staffing and
7 then, the drift of that.

8 Q. Okay. So as of today, is -- what is still left to be done?

9 A. Circular versus linear still needs to be fixed.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. I saw an e-mail on the way in here that, supposedly, earlier
12 in May, they had found out that it was just a simple push of a
13 button for Level 6 at the ASR site, so that's supposedly fixed,
14 but it never went through the AOCC process to close the ticket
15 out.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And then the ASR weather into maintenance is still out.

18 Q. Okay. So ASR, you said weather to maintenance?

19 A. Weather -- well, it's at the -- line is that ASR weather is
20 intermittent, that is --

21 Q. Intermittent.

22 A. Yeah, that is still out, logged out. Linear and circular are
23 still logged out.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And then tending (ph.) to the log still out, AOCC needs to

1 close it out, reference the Level 6 functionality.

2 Q. Okay. So if I am understanding you correctly, basically,
3 there needs to be the communication between the facility and AOCC
4 to verify what has been done, what still needs to be done, and
5 what -- yeah.

6 A. And then a follow-up with local tech ops or a timeline.

7 Q. Local, okay.

8 A. Yes.

9 MS. LEWIS: Okay. I think I'm going to pass it.

10 Paul, is it --

11 BY MR. SUFFERN:

12 Q. Yeah. So just to follow up with what Sarah was saying about
13 the intermittent weather, can you describe that situation more,
14 kind of like, I guess, controllers, are they seeing something and
15 then all of a sudden it disappears, like, what is that?

16 A. That was -- so it was not a report from the controllers, it
17 was a -- we had notified that this was occurring and then tech ops
18 is the one that notified us, so we logged it out, so the
19 controllers -- no one from the workforce would call up and say
20 hey, this weather was just dropping off or coming in or out, it
21 was -- before, it was I don't think they knew or didn't know any
22 of the impact, it was more of just we're getting informed another
23 functionality is occurring and they're trying to diagnose it along
24 other items. So I was the one that was identifying it through the
25 process of minutes or through checklists, what was out, what could

1 happen, and then with the replay, that's when I put the two and
2 two together. Until that point there was no internal discussion
3 in the building about that being out, it was just logged out and
4 status normal, no one discussed it, even from the SUP, OM, just a
5 -- and I started putting the two and two together because we'd not
6 seen anything up to that point, we'd not had any severe weather
7 that had stationed on site for a while.

8 Q. So have you -- outside of the logs, anything like that, I
9 guess, just walking through the halls and hearing from other supes
10 or other controllers, have you heard discussions since your time
11 being here of "all these planes are deviated but we're not seeing
12 anything --

13 A. No.

14 Q. -- on the scopes," you hadn't heard any --

15 A. None.

16 Q. -- reports? What, you know, as ATM, what kind of weather
17 resources would you expect controllers and supes here in the
18 building to be able to use to help perform their job, things like
19 that?

20 A. Expect is the question. So expect would, we get our
21 pre-weather duty briefing, which is provided by the center, of
22 what's going to be coming airspace-wise, sometimes it's more high
23 level with flight levels but that initially first, we have the
24 ITWS in both operations so they can use that as a technique to
25 look at bringing their scan or ask their supe or a fellow

1 controller to see if they see something else, but then just have
2 everything depicted on their scope. So if there's more than Level
3 1, they're going to have all those up there. We also depict the
4 weather on our big TSD display so they can kind of just see a
5 broader picture for forecasting. So those are the expectations of
6 how they're using all that information to make the best judgment
7 call at the time.

8 Q. Are there things, equipment, weather resources, that you're
9 hearing controllers would like or to help them do their job better
10 that are not available or things like that?

11 A. So, yes. One weather system that I saw for the first time
12 when we went on an off-site at Atlanta was at CoSPA. I mentioned
13 to you, when we were viewing it but it was -- we watched that unit
14 in Atlanta TRACON use that specific tool as the determination
15 factor over ITWS because it was more trustworthy and reliable,
16 that was new for me.

17 So we immediately -- now we're trying to bring that into the
18 operation of just the quality of the content. The controllers,
19 not necessarily, have asked for more resources, but it's been the
20 oversight, so if there's going to be a controller in charge or a
21 supervisor, both in the tower and the TRACON, there's limited
22 resources for them to keep an eye on everything to include
23 weather; in the TRACON it's to their back, in the tower it's to
24 their back if they're looking out, watching the operation in the
25 field, so the challenge is there's not a lot of resources for them

1 to see quickly on their scan to get a good awareness of what's
2 coming. Even though we have, in the tower, especially the weather
3 alert radio way in the back of the tower cab so if things -- when
4 we put our minds around the weather aspects, there's always an
5 area of improvement of are they in the right spots to provide the
6 necessity for the determination awareness to make the right
7 judgment call.

8 Q. So is there a plan to maybe reorient those to where they
9 would be more helpful for them?

10 A. Yes. That started with -- so SAI is a new surveillance
11 awareness initiative that's coming to our building, implementation
12 and installation is going to be happening at the beginning of
13 June, to go live end of June. With that, the new technologies
14 coming in, especially screens, we have to figure out, landscape-
15 wise, on what -- those conversations brought up what is working
16 and what is not working.

17 So we brought the workforce, to include management, the
18 supervisors, and to find out where do we need more technology,
19 more screens, more tools, and that's where we can get more -- we
20 got the feedback of we need to be able to put this in front of our
21 eyes rather than turn away because now we're going to turn our
22 backs to the operation, put more things, even just a radar copy or
23 a SLAVE display in front for the TRACON, those are the discussions
24 that happened as most recent as two weeks ago, trying to find out
25 locations of -- if we're going to move one thing, what else is

1 going to be put in, yeah.

2 Q. So it sounds like somebody's coming in, in June, is there a
3 plan, maybe, for the facility to revisit these things, like at
4 least once a year, like hey, this one's working, this one's not
5 working, or would that -- something you'd see that, like, the
6 local safety council would take up, you know, kind of on a semi-
7 review basis or something like that, just to make sure things are
8 working or --

9 A. With the discussion of CoSPA and now with this recent event,
10 I would expect to see (indiscernible) always really good, of just
11 an initial -- to get a feedback pulse check on the workforce, but
12 a continual check on aging equipment and the spots it needs to be
13 in for determination, is it working, is it -- needs to be working,
14 is it actually being viewed, are we turning something off or are
15 we not looking at what's actually being depicted. So I think yes,
16 it needs to be -- the local safety council's input has been
17 revised and reenergized, which I think that there's going to be a
18 lot more energy into making it better, safer, more productive.
19 Yeah.

20 Q. Switching gears a little bit, were you here on the day of the
21 event?

22 A. I was, yes, working.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. I was not on site during the event, I was with the OM, the
25 FacRep, we were out to lunch, strategizing for the future. We

1 were out of the building, I think, 37 minutes and then we got the
2 phone call 13 minutes after the event and came right back in.

3 Q. Since you guys were out and about, I mean, you probably saw
4 the general -- maybe it's just a blur, but if you recall, you
5 know, what you'd seen outside, do you recall the weather that day,
6 anything like that?

7 A. We were -- because as soon as it happened, we walked right
8 outside. It was not overcast, it was not -- I mean, it was a
9 sporadic clouds, normal day. It was a caution to us of what -- it
10 would not have caught us by surprise if we walked out, like oh,
11 man, we're in the middle of a thunderstorm event or something. So
12 no, a normal sunny day. I mean, we were all wearing sunglasses,
13 so it was -- yeah, nothing caught us off guard in reference to
14 weather.

15 MS. SUFFERN: I think that's all the questions I have for
16 right now.

17 MR. HARPER: Okay.

18 MS. SUFFERN: Thank you.

19 MS. LEWIS: Okay, thanks.

20 BY MS. LEWIS:

21 Q. I wanted to just quickly follow-up with something that you
22 mentioned to Paul. With the reconfiguration of all the equipment
23 that's coming in, we all noticed that there was not a SLAVE
24 display in the TRACON at the SUP's desk and it was noted to us,
25 you know, that there was a lot of disconnect with being able to

1 stay engaged into the operation because of the fact they have to
2 go to another scope, then walk back to the desk, and so it's good
3 that you guys also mentioned that because I think it probably is
4 pretty important for safety --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- to have that there. The other one real quick, before --
7 because it's related, is will you be able to work with whomever
8 comes into the facility after you leave to kind of follow up and
9 give them some heads up of hey, these are the things we were
10 working on?

11 A. Yes. I'm doing a full-on handoff; as soon as someone is
12 established, they'll get --

13 Q. Is there a timeline for that?

14 A. I can't answer that, I don't know.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Don't know that answer.

17 MS. LEWIS: Great. Okay. Well, thank you. Thank you for
18 letting me butt in there.

19 Crystal.

20 BY MS. GENNARO:

21 Q. So when it first happened, were there any deviations from the
22 norm that was alarming to you?

23 A. When the event happened?

24 Q. Your initial investigation, yeah. Did you find anything that
25 was alarming?

1 A. Alarming for -- when we did that review, that SRT prep
2 before, is when we were able to still watch the Falcon. There
3 was concerns and I kind of pointed out, when we watched the
4 replay, of a lack of communication on both sides, why was there
5 such a drastic turn prior to us putting them on a heading, why was
6 the aircraft climbing when they came over on level flight. So
7 those concerns of -- I always took interest in asking those
8 questions to get a better picture of what is out there so I can
9 provide a better service.

10 It was concerning when we saw the -- I think it was 58
11 seconds of on-and-off of that one cell. So those type of things
12 immediately -- and then that's when we did a deep dive of what's
13 in AISR, I exposed some things, so -- it was just eye-opening that
14 day of there was a lot of gaps.

15 Q. And then based on those findings, I know you're on your way
16 out, but has the facility taken any immediate actions to say let's
17 fix this now, if so, what? --

18 A. So no immediate.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So as of Friday when I walked out, there's nothing immediate.
21 I requested to see what -- we had a PIREP CAP that ended in 2022,
22 I have all the data on that to find out how do we implement it,
23 did it work, I want to get some feedback for the workforce, and
24 then I tried to find out what is already in place that we were
25 failing with and there's a lot that we incorporated from that CAP

1 into a current state that still was not happening. So I know
2 we're not at the mitigation question yet, but there's thoughts I
3 have of things that we can do better with, with the business of
4 the operation, making the main thing still the main thing,
5 prioritizing things like PIREPs.

6 MS. GENNARO: That's all I had.

7 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

8 BY MS. KOSCHIG:

9 Q. Yeah, speaking of mitigation, have you put anything in place
10 that will help the controllers when they come across these
11 anomalies, as to say the deviations without any weather out there,
12 have you talked to the workforce on -- you set a plan or anything.

13 A. I mean, as of up until Wednesday there was no discussion of
14 it. From Wednesday to Friday, especially, Jeremy and I would have
15 conversations that he first thought that -- because he watched it
16 that night and he worked the mid that night, so he was the first
17 one to watch it with Jacob and he said I could've classified that
18 as anomalous propagations and I would never had known and that
19 word falls around of is it real, is it not real so no, not looked
20 at, addressing it, or even documenting it.

21 There's other aspects in the field that we are starting to
22 document just for recordkeeping and I think that we -- especially
23 with the log, if we start seeing more weather drop off or come on,
24 we should put that in writing.

25 Q. Right. You know, we are finding that this is happening not

1 just in -- on this area of this display, but --

2 A. Right.

3 Q. -- in different areas, that there's been these deviations and
4 controllers didn't know why and they didn't ask, which -- you
5 know, I guess I could see, but -- and then again, not -- I mean,
6 if an airplane's deviating, there should be a reason they're doing
7 it. So, I mean, one of the supes mentioned that he could
8 probably, you know, start getting feedback or talking with the
9 controllers about if they're deviating, ask them why.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. And I think, you know, that might be something that would at
12 least help them to understand maybe there is weather out there.
13 But I think, you know, maybe look at something in that area just
14 in the event that there is weather, it would help pilots behind
15 them, getting a PIREP or something.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Just a suggestion there. Also -- oh, the local safety
18 council, great, I'm glad that's being reenergized and I am -- as
19 the local safety council rep is here, especially with John Tune
20 really popping up in the business of making sure -- that would be
21 great to get in contact with them and have a good working
22 relationship. I don't even know if they've got an LSC there or
23 not, but it seems very -- a complex situation you've got going on
24 with them, especially now that you're a 10, so many huge changes
25 here.

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. So do you know if you're going to get a TMU here or what's
3 the -- what are some of the expectations of how this facility is
4 going to change staffing wise and, you know, how many staff you're
5 going to get in different positions?

6 A. The TMU question is the new building that's supposed to be --
7 I guess IOC turned on was -- they have a '29 date, potentially,
8 for us for a new building, that has a TMU unit in it. From now
9 until then there's discussions of is there going to be repurposing
10 of the TMU unit in the Memphis district, are they going to be
11 repurposing services but not relocation; that need has been
12 exposed, we just don't know how to meet that quite yet.

13 There's been discussions of sending supervisors and maybe a
14 few of the controllers out to a TMC class to get the skill set to
15 come back and then do internal training just so we can all work on
16 that mindset. So those have just been discussions of next steps
17 of how to preplan for TMU.

18 Staffing in reference to growth, so we identified that we
19 don't have the positions to provide services safely, so we've --
20 that staff study is already out, so that's already up at AJT-2 and
21 3 right now of -- up in the tower cab, we have the TRACON adding
22 more positions to adequately safely separate aircraft frequency
23 congestion will go down and they can provide a better service.
24 Even the challenge we have now, though, is our allotted number and
25 even the DCO, when he was here three weeks ago, identified that

1 it's below what we need to survive or provide adequate services.
2 So out of the 39 we currently have, there was 29, then it was 28.
3 We have one on long-term medical, so in reality we have 27 active,
4 and you can't keep a position open long enough and still meet
5 contractual obligations to keep everything at bay, reference to
6 safety aspects. So there's a point where we have to make a risk-
7 based decision of when and what position do I close, how long, and
8 when do I reopen it back up, and navigating both operations still,
9 it's a challenge.

10 So we've asked, Jeremy and I did those two forms we were
11 requested to do, we did CRWG rebuttal to go back up to Congress
12 and go through that venue, we're asking for 63 and provided all
13 the justifications of what that looks like. Then we also did --
14 due to our Level 10 increase, there's a form that's pushed but
15 it's a collaborative form that goes right to the director's
16 office, that has been filled out and submitted, as well, to same
17 number of 63 but then asking for whatever they can, initially, to
18 get us to at least staffing restraints of a new Level 10 compared
19 to a Level 9.

20 No number has been thrown to us of what that will look like,
21 of an increase, but we have -- those two are out there and it's
22 been -- I mean, every upper leadership that's been in here
23 understands that there's an issue of what we're doing with not
24 being able to -- I mean, the "making it work" comment is -- can
25 only go so far.

1 Q. Hopefully, that -- speaking with ERT Team you'll be able to,
2 you know, give them some -- some of this, what's going on here so
3 that they can hopefully help move this forward. I know some -- I
4 hate that you had to be in this situation, but a lot of times it
5 does help that now the spotlight's here --

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. -- and getting things you need, especially with this weather
8 situation not being painted on the -- on the displays, that's very
9 concerning, so --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And is -- do you know, I was thinking about this earlier,
12 but weather products that they have at the -- in the TRACON, do
13 you know if they ever did any comparison of what they were seeing,
14 like on -- you know, on their -- what the supes had on displays
15 compared to what they were seeing on the scope?

16 A. I don't think so. I don't -- I can find out. I don't know
17 what they were doing or not. I know that during any -- the three
18 that are up, ITWS, the TSD, and then what's on the radar scopes,
19 those are always depicted.

20 MS. KOSCHIG: Yeah, it seems like it was -- it's happening
21 for so long, it just wasn't obvious. Okay, what else do I have?
22 That's it for right now, thank you.

23 MS. LEWIS: Thanks, Betty.

24 Amy.

25 BY MS. HUSCHKA:

1 Q. I have a couple. So the TSD feed, is that radar feed that
2 comes up or what comes out, what is the TSD weather feeding from?

3 A. That's a great question. I can find out.

4 Q. I'm just curious of what side of things were falling on, but
5 this is more of the -- more information or less information side.
6 Have you heard anything from Wednesday on, kind of like just
7 supervisors, controllers in general, kind of like pose like a "did
8 that make sense now" kind of thing, like where they -- things were
9 happening to them before that they now are like oh, is it -- the
10 weather hasn't been -- like, I guess that thing happened in April
11 kind of makes a little more sense now because that other thing
12 makes a little more sense now.

13 A. I have not heard those comments. I don't know if they're
14 happening or not. I have not heard them since I've -- from
15 Wednesday until Friday I have not heard those, no.

16 Q. And then my last -- it's more of a statement, I guess, than a
17 question. So maybe with -- you're again stepping out, so it may
18 not be anything in your purview, but with now we had one incident
19 and maybe checking on whether there's these positive maybe some
20 weather in the area today to kind of verify what the weather is
21 showing versus what's out there, has there been any thought to
22 issuing some kind of NOTAM or something, weather unreliable for
23 Nashville or something out there, so that we have some buy-in from
24 the other side to say hey, look, we're going to do the best we
25 can, but right now don't depend solely on us kind of thing or

1 something to help us --

2 A. Before I would entertain that, I would -- I'll use the word,
3 I want to hold tech ops accountable and they've not been held
4 accountable --

5 Q. Yeah, um-hum.

6 A. -- for over a year. So I would like them to publicly find
7 out and to tell me a timeline, tell the agency a timeline, and
8 their plan to get the equipment that's essential back up and
9 running. Once that timeline, then a NOTAM will be -- for this
10 time frame, but -- an un-ended (ph.) NOTAM that says flying to
11 Nashville, I don't like the liability of that.

12 Q. I don't like that, either, I just -- like, just thinking of
13 something in the immediate that can be done to help everybody, I
14 guess, to be on the same page kind of thing.

15 A. Yes. But yes, the --

16 Q. But -- yeah, there's obviously more --

17 A. But yes -- the messaging of it does need to be put out. I
18 just -- if the ones -- before messaging goes out publicly, I need
19 to have answers of the why behind it and then some end in sight.

20 MS. HUSCHKA: Yeah. That and I'm, obviously, am not on the
21 political side of things. That makes sense. I think that's
22 everything I had.

23 MS. LEWIS: Okay, thank you. Amy, I appreciate that.

24 Yeah, I think -- I think, basically you summarized it, the
25 way, I think, it needs to be going, happening going forward, is

1 there is a potential significant issue here with the way the
2 weather is depicted on the scopes and it's almost like a very
3 urgent situation.

4 MR. HARPER: Um-hum.

5 MS. LEWIS: So I know we're going to be following up on it
6 and I encourage you guys to put this on the top of the priority
7 list, especially with weather coming in even today.

8 MR. HARPER: Um-hum.

9 MS. LEWIS: It would be great if we could compare today
10 before we leave.

11 MR. HARPER: Okay.

12 MS. LEWIS: The scope, just to help you guys out, too. Going
13 forward in all your endeavors, please keep in mind it's critical
14 to have that STARS maintenance replay saved because we would not
15 have known this issue --

16 MR. HARPER: Yeah.

17 MS. LEWIS: -- and the unfortunate situation that occurred
18 brought this awareness here, so we appreciate you guys going the
19 extra mile to make sure to get the east side, as well, so that we
20 can compare, so I appreciate that.

21 Paul, do you have any follow-ups?

22 MS. SUFFERN: I do not. Thank you, appreciate it.

23 MS. LEWIS: Crystal?

24 MS. GENNARO: No.

25 MS. LEWIS: Betty?

1 MS. KOSCHIG: Uh-um.

2 MS. LEWIS: Amy?

3 (No audible response.)

4 MS. LEWIS: Okay, thank you.

5 BY MS. LEWIS:

6 Q. Were there any questions that you expected us to ask you that
7 we didn't ask you?

8 A. I Expected. I didn't know what to expect so no, there's
9 nothing expected-wise. I was ready for everything. I appreciate
10 when there's a gap in service and that's what I'll just use in a
11 general term. Since the moment I was in here, we have to peel
12 back and find out the why because the public deserves it, so
13 sometimes those conversations or discoveries are tough, but the
14 facility has benefited from all of the peeling back, so they're
15 ready.

16 So I'm very confident that Nashville will be in a better
17 place because of this event and because of what we found. I've
18 not seen that in my career as much, sometimes there's some
19 friction, but because (indiscernible) for a year, I've challenged
20 the status quo.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. They're very comfortable with if it's not right, how do we
23 make it right, so -- I'm encouraged to see what comes out of this
24 for --

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. -- them, it's going to be good for them on the horizon.

2 MS. LEWIS: We're encouraged, too, that, you know, you are
3 moving on somewhere else and you'll take that knowledge to the
4 next facility in the next district and whatnot, so I appreciate
5 that very much. Do you have any questions for us?

6 MR. HARPER: I guess if I had a question -- I'm going to put
7 it in the tech ops realm.

8 MS. LEWIS: Um-hum.

9 MR. HARPER: In my tenure, the amount of equipment that fails
10 at this facility, on the field or internally, is mind-blowing and
11 then -- and I'll just go into -- when I showed up, the air traffic
12 side of the house had -- I call it the staffing lens, everything
13 was viewed through staffing, so things weren't getting done and
14 the easy default was staffing. We have changed the perspective,
15 narrative and messaging of that, of how to still accomplish the
16 mission and be aware of our staffing constraints.

17 Tech ops has not adopted that policy, so the challenge that
18 I've had navigating conversations with the workforce, the public,
19 the airport authority, is why is there an entity that's still --
20 there's a delay within -- I talk about the timeliness, I always
21 ask for timelines.

22 I just need to know, is it going to be a month, is it going
23 to be two months, how long am I going to have no ILS, how long am
24 I going to -- and the tech that you witnessed with the STARS is
25 the tech and I understand there's constraints, but the weight that

1 we have, air traffic, are from safety for the flying public. They
2 carry the same weight, I don't think they see it or feel it as
3 often. And then we get hindered because of a service we can't
4 provide because of the technology or the equipment malfunctioning.
5 So, as the NTSB, I don't know where that weight of that
6 conversation -- we talk about ORM a lot, when they take things
7 out, but we don't talk a lot about the importance of when they
8 bring it back in, if it was not a planned outage, and then the
9 impact of that to the NAS. So that's just a challenge of bigger
10 than today, bigger than our event, but this airport specifically
11 is an aging airport, we're trying to figure out how to sustain
12 this building for six years, but the equipment piece sometimes
13 gets put -- until it breaks, we don't talk about it.

14 And it's just been a concern, it's not a new thing in the
15 building for me to talk like this, but it's a very big concern.
16 The workforce knows it, too. Something, when it does break, it
17 hinders, but we've not seen something to the impact of weather
18 until recently.

19 MS. LEWIS: Thank you, that's extremely helpful to us going
20 forward, so thank you very much.

21 MS. KOSCHIG: It's good that it's being brought out, you
22 know, we're finding it now and so that hopefully something will
23 get done with this soon.

24 MR. HARPER: Yes.

25 MS. KOSCHIG: Hope we get those answers really soon.

1 MS. LEWIS: Yeah.

2 MS. KOSCHIG: I know we will be following up.

3 MR. HARPER: One other thing I just -- it's not really NTSB,
4 but it's an awareness piece.

5 MS. LEWIS: Um-hum.

6 MR. HARPER: The political and then the budget piece, air
7 traffic budget and tech ops budget is very different. For some
8 reason I feel like they always need -- there are limitations on
9 tech ops and that's what I was asking about when I first heard
10 about linear and circular, (a) it was on back order, I understand
11 that, but then even just the purchasing of certain things or when
12 they can get equipment in, for our equipment, when I ask for and
13 I've put the CWP, which is a collaborative work plan, to request a
14 -- I'll call it the SLAVE monitor, there's a technical term for
15 it, that's \$80,000 for one and immediately I asked for two, one
16 for the tower because we don't have one at ground control, it's a
17 whole other safety event, and then one in the TRACON.

18 And because of that price tag there's a barrier for it until
19 that threshold of need comes up, so just the challenge of it,
20 that's -- it's not that it's not just been talked about, I mean, I
21 put the work in to send it out and the funding piece of why do you
22 need this, the justifications are there, but there's just
23 challenges of just full exposure, that -- everything I saw, I put
24 out to the parties that be.

25 So program management is very, very aware of -- and they've

1 asked to beef it up, so maybe we'll put three in there and then
2 you get three for the price of two or there's only so much I can
3 do because this is what the need is, so just challenges, that's
4 why make it worth, there are things that I have attempted to do to
5 bring safety to the forefront, especially for the oversight
6 people. That's the only thing, when you asked about that, that I
7 thought of.

8 MS. KOSCHIG: Um-hum.

9 MR. HARPER: I don't want to call it resistance, I don't know
10 if that's the right word for it, there is hoops that, as an air
11 traffic manager, I don't -- that messaging is very tough to say, I
12 cannot get this equipment in the building for external reasons.

13 MS. LEWIS: Right, right.

14 MR. HARPER: So I think that's all I have now.

15 MS. LEWIS: Yeah. I think we were discussing that last night
16 about how it used to be if you -- if something broke, the piece
17 was on a shelf and over the last 20 years it has not happened that
18 way.

19 MR. HARPER: Right.

20 MS. LEWIS: And -- yeah That's -- now we're seeing issues
21 because we aren't prepared to fix things, so -- okay, anybody
22 else, last "gee whiz" things?

23 (No response.)

24 MS. LEWIS: Okay. I neglected to make sure that we got all
25 of our names on record, so excuse me for that, but I'm just going

1 to go around.

2 Paul.

3 MR. SUFFERN: Paul Suffern, NTSB, Meteorology.

4 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

5 MS. GENNARO: Crystal Gennaro, Memphis Tower, Air Traffic
6 Manager.

7 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

8 MS. KOSCHIG: Betty Koschig, NTSB.

9 MS. HUSCHKA: Amy Huschka, NATCA.

10 MS. LEWIS: Thank you. I thank you for that, you guys.

11 I'll say that the interview was ended at 8:59 a.m. Thank
12 you, guys.

13 (Whereupon, at 8:59 a.m., the interview concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024
Interview of Tim Harper

ACCIDENT NO.: ERA24FA217

PLACE: Nashville, Tennessee

DATE: May 22, 2024

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024

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Interview of: JOHN EDOFF, Area 6 R14/R42 Radar Controller
Federal Aviation Administration

Memphis, Tennessee

Thursday,
May 23, 2024

APPEARANCES:

SARAH LEWIS, Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BETTY KOSCHIG, Senior Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

CRYSTAL GENNARO
Federal Aviation Administration

AMY HUSCHKA, Air Safety Investigator
National Air Traffic Controllers Association

FREDERICK STEELE, Facility Representative
National Air Traffic Controllers Association
Representative for Mr. Edoff

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:25 a.m.)

MS. LEWIS: Okay, the time now is 9:25 a.m. Would you please state your name?

MR. EDOFF: John Edoff.

MS. LEWIS: Thank you. Could you please spell out your name?

MR. EDOFF: J-o-h-n E-d-o-f-f.

MS. LEWIS: Thank you. As part of the process, I'll be recording the interview and then I will have a transcription made. The transcription will be a part of the factual report, but the audio will not be part of the docket. I'll send you a copy of the transcript for your review and it should be about a month or two before we can get that out to you. Do you have any questions about that?

MR. EDOFF: No.

MS. LEWIS: Thank you. My name is Sarah Lewis and I am an air traffic control investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board. The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress to investigate every civil aircraft accident and incident, and other modes of transportation of a significant situation. And what we do is we're trying to find a probable cause of the aviation accidents and incidents and promote transportation safety. The purpose of the investigation is safety, to gather facts, determine probable cause, and prevent reoccurrence. Our role is not to assign fault, blame, or

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1 liability, and this interview is part of the fact-finding phase of
2 the investigation. As part of the regulations, you're welcome to
3 have one representative of your choice and I see that you have
4 someone here with you today, is this person the person that you
5 would like to represent you?

6 MR. EDOFF: Yes.

7 MS. LEWIS: Okay, perfect. Could you please state your name
8 and spell it for the record?

9 MR. STEELE: Frederick Steele, F-r-e-d-e-r-i-c-k S-t-e-e-l-e.

10 MS. LEWIS: Thank you very much.

11 And the reason for this interview today is to discuss the
12 accident that occurred on May 15th, 2024 regarding 4-7 Whiskey
13 Tango. We're going to be asking a variety of questions, so at any
14 time you have any questions for us, please ask them. Please
15 answer all the questions to the best of your ability and if you
16 don't recall an answer, then "I don't recall" is perfectly fine,
17 and if you don't know, then "I don't know" is a perfectly
18 acceptable answer.

19 If you don't understand a question, please ask to have it
20 repeated or rephrased. If at any time you want to take a break or
21 you would like to consult with your representative, you can, just
22 let us know, you can talk amongst yourselves here or you can step
23 outside. The only thing we ask is that you don't answer the
24 questions for him. The way that things will work today is kind of
25 how we said, we're just going to do a round robin type of a

1 situation and we'll be taking notes, these notes will be destroyed
2 before we leave. That's the basic structure, do you have any
3 questions for us?

4 MR. EDOFF: No.

5 MS. LEWIS: Okay.

6 INTERVIEW OF JOHN EDOFF

7 BY MS. LEWIS:

8 Q. Let's see. What is -- what is your age at the time of
9 accident so last week?

10 A. Fifty-three.

11 Q. What year did you start out with the FAA?

12 A. Two thousand one, January.

13 Q. Okay. Do you have any prior FAA or military, like, non-FAA
14 or a military background?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Okay. So when you got to -- when you were hired, you said
17 you came out of the -- can you explain to me your school and then
18 your career at the FAA, where did you go, what facilities?

19 A. I went through the MARC program in -- there was some distance
20 stuff that you did online, went to Minneapolis, Eden Prairie, for
21 about three months, went through the program there, then I went
22 back home, I lived in Utah at the time, and it was basically, you
23 waited for a call. With the MARC program you got to choose, not
24 necessarily a facility of your choice, but you got to choose your
25 -- the region that you wanted, it was like a one, two, three thing

1 and most people were placed in the region that they wanted. So I
2 went home for a little bit and they somehow got my region wrong, I
3 got a call from Kansas City, that I was going to Kansas City
4 Center for a while, then I got into the right region and I was
5 told that I was going to go to Jacksonville, which was my dream
6 position, and all of a sudden he calls a week later and says the
7 left hand wasn't talking to the right hand, they're opening a new
8 area, Memphis, that's where we need you. So he gave me, might've
9 been five days, six days or something to basically report and I
10 reported on Martin Luther King day here at the Memphis Center in
11 2001.

12 Q. So your whole career, pretty much, has been --

13 A. Right where I am.

14 Q. -- right here. So you are the expert here.

15 A. Well --

16 Q. Compared to -- yeah.

17 A. I've done a lot of training, I mean, for years, you know,
18 several years that's all I was doing was just training and
19 training and training, so a lot of the people out there have my
20 influence in one way or another.

21 Q. That's awesome. That's just wonderful. Do you have any
22 additional aeronautical ratings?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Do you have any significant occurrences, suspension, or
25 anything in the last three years?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Let's see. Did you have a current medical at the time of the
3 accident?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. What was -- what are your RDOs?

6 A. Saturdays and Sundays.

7 Q. Okay. And the week of the accident, were you on -- did you
8 work any overtime that week?

9 A. I don't believe so.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. My son graduated in Starkville that Friday and Saturday, so I
12 -- the weekend before, actually, I had a weekend off, so --

13 Q. That's a miracle, right?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Yeah. Do you guys -- how is your overtime here, do you --
16 are you scheduled?

17 A. Frequent.

18 Q. Yeah. Scheduled overtime?

19 A. Yes. Very frequently.

20 Q. Do you have any collateral duties in the facility with the
21 union?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. Any recent details or temporary assignments?

24 A. No.

25 Q. Do you wear corrective lenses?

1 A. Not regularly. I have in my box down there, I have some near
2 sight, you know, things that I'll wear on occasion for near sight
3 vision, but I don't have glasses that I wear regularly.

4 Q. Did you have an opportunity to review the -- your portion of
5 speaking with the aircraft or anything?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay, great. So at the time of the -- at the time that you
8 worked the aircraft, how would you describe the complexity of the
9 traffic at that time, compared to like on a normal, normal day?

10 A. I'd say it was on the -- probably the lighter side.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I think I started that session with the D side, then they
13 went to lunch and then they came back towards the end of the
14 session, about when the incident happened, and over all, I'd say
15 it was light, that there wasn't a lot of complexity to it, no
16 significant weather, it was very -- very much a simple, easy
17 session.

18 Q. So the volume would also, in your opinion, be what level?

19 A. Light.

20 Q. Okay. And were there any unusual distractions at the time of
21 the incident?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Let's see. So could you describe -- could you describe --
24 how does -- what was the -- what shift were you working that day?

25 A. It was a 6:30 to 2:30 shift.

1 Q. Okay, so would it be reasonable to say it was about halfway
2 towards the end of your shift when this happened, maybe?

3 A. It was probably closer to the beginning, but --

4 Q. Oh, okay.

5 A. -- I think it -- yeah, it actually was the second half
6 because I came in at 6:30 and I think that it was right around
7 11:45, 12 o'clock, so yeah, second half.

8 Q. So tell me a little bit about working --

9 (Noise interference.)

10 BY MS. LEWIS:

11 Q. -- that traffic, that scenario or that traffic that day, walk
12 me through your -- your participation, I'm sorry, with the -- with
13 the unit.

14 A. I've said it a few times to everybody I've talked to, but --

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. -- it was very uneventful, it was very routine, very -- when
17 I found out that I was actually part, you know, that I talked to
18 the aircraft, I had no -- it wasn't memorable enough to actually
19 remember that aircraft until I watched the playback, you know, and
20 it was a routine -- it was very routine, I mean, there was nothing
21 about it. There was no significant weather in the area that there
22 wasn't deviations. I was completely shocked when I heard that,
23 you know, something happened to this thing shortly after it left
24 our airspace because it was entirely an everyday overflow.

25 Q. Do you remember -- so you were saying that you don't remember

1 any other real deviations that day, that time period?

2 A. That day there was some deviations.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. If you look at it, you know, there was some weather that went
5 through the Nashville area earlier in the day and earlier in the
6 day that there was some issues, you know. I think it was that day
7 that Nashville actually might've shut the airport down for, you
8 know, a short period of time, so earlier in the day there was some
9 weather that went through that area, but it had already moved off
10 to the east by that time.

11 Q. So if you can recall when you did speak to the aircraft and
12 they asked for deviations, tell me about what your -- what your
13 thought process was when they asked for deviations.

14 A. In one way it was a little unusual, but it was also very
15 normal. That particular area, I wasn't born and raised here or
16 anything but, you know, just from experience and stuff, that area,
17 there's kind of to the west of there, there's like the Pickwick
18 Dam, there's a lot of scenery, essentially, through there.

19 The Tennessee River kind of winds through there. There's,
20 you know, a lot to see, you know, so one thought was, you know, he
21 asked for -- the way he said it, also, it was like we request a
22 brief deviation or a slight deviation, something to that effect,
23 you know, and I'm looking around and I didn't see any -- anything
24 that he should be really wanting to deviate around, so in that
25 instance it was a little bit, you know, weird. But, you know,

1 considering where he was at, I've seen, you know, all the time,
2 either, you know, maybe a pilot, general aviation, they might see,
3 you know, a cloud out there, a big white puffy cloud, you know,
4 they might want to, you know, go around it. Some people out
5 there, they want to follow the river or they want to -- you know,
6 they have a cabin, you know, in the woods somewhere, they want to,
7 you know, overfly their cabin, you know, and --

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. -- wave their wings or something, so it wasn't unusual in
10 that sense, you know. And then the next thing was, you know,
11 maybe my training kicking in, I cleared him to deviate 20 degrees
12 left or right, you know, direct to Louisville when able, so we've
13 always -- we have recurrent training all the time and everything
14 and I've seen it, actually, in my career, people -- you know, if
15 you actually see the weather, a lot of people make assumptions,
16 you know, well, he wants to deviate left, so you're clear to
17 deviate left and they think he might go, you know, 10 or 20
18 degrees left and all of a sudden he's turning 90 degrees into some
19 traffic or something. So --

20 Q. Right.

21 A. -- my thought process is well, he wants to see something, I
22 don't want him to go do donuts out there, you know, over his
23 little cabin or something, so I -- I'll accommodate his request
24 and -- but I'll also tell him, you know, deviation up to 20
25 degrees left or right so he's not doing anything radical, you

1 know, and direct to Louisville when he can.

2 Q. Yeah. What about altitude changes, do some of your
3 over-flights -- tell me about over-flights and the request for
4 altitude changes.

5 A. It happens all the time, you know, like people want more
6 favorable winds, they want to try and improve their gas mileage,
7 you know, it's very frequent.

8 MS. LEWIS: Thank you. I think I'm going to pass it along to
9 Paul.

10 MR. SUFFERN: Thanks, Sarah.

11 MS. LEWIS: You're welcome.

12 BY MR. SUFFERN:

13 Q. Yeah, so just digging in a little bit to -- just -- I mean,
14 since you've been here, it looks like 23 years or so, I'm sure you
15 have lots of experience, did anything really stand out from the --
16 as far as the pre-duty weather briefing that day, as far as
17 weather?

18 A. Pre-duty weather briefing, yeah, I mean, the fact that there
19 was some weather going through, you know, that -- you always start
20 thinking, you know, well, it might be busy today, you know,
21 because Nashville, the Nashville airport, it seems like every week
22 that thing is getting busier and busier, you know, so you have
23 weather around there, it is a significant factor, so -- but as I
24 said, you know, it was earlier in the day and it moved through and
25 it wasn't a factor later on.

1 Q. Okay. As far as the pre-duty weather briefing here in
2 Memphis, how do you find -- do you find that valuable for you, as
3 a controller, or do you wish there were things that they could
4 tweak on that or how do you find that?

5 A. I don't think it's the most valuable thing that we have in
6 the building by any means or anything. I'm probably one of the
7 rare cases, I actually find some use in it, you know, it gives you
8 kind of a general idea of what might be affecting you and stuff,
9 you know, then they have a lot of turbulence reports and stuff, I
10 haven't found those really to be entirely accurate and stuff, but
11 just getting a basic snapshot of, you know, what -- what to
12 expect, it has its use.

13 Q. So it sounds like from the pre-duty weather briefing and your
14 shifts earlier in the day, that the weather was more active
15 earlier in the day for your airspace and then during the time of
16 the event it had calmed down, at least a little bit, weather-wise
17 and is that kind of what you were expecting or just expecting it
18 to kind of be a weather day based on how things were going?

19 A. That's probably what I was expecting, I mean, you -- you
20 can't make, you know, firm things, you never know when something's
21 going to build up behind something else, you know, so you don't --
22 you don't make plans based on it or anything, but that was kind of
23 the expectation, that -- you know, that there was, you know, that
24 one area of weather kind of going through and then, you know, that
25 there wasn't a lot behind it, you know, that was going to affect

1 the shift, so --

2 Q. And as far as weather tools and things like that, that you
3 use as a controller here in Memphis, what do you find most
4 valuable as far as kind of weather resources and such?

5 A. The WARP radar on -- you know, the WARP weather radar on the
6 scope, so that's probably the most valuable thing.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. It has its limits, but it's -- it's valuable.

9 Q. How often do you find that, you know, planes deviating either
10 left or right of course or altitude changes but you're not seeing
11 anything necessarily on the scope and they're saying that they're
12 deviating for weather, kind of something like that?

13 A. Probably pretty frequently, I mean, I think that that might
14 be one of the limitations of our weather display, you know,
15 there's a lot -- especially if you're working the high sectors and
16 the ultra-high sectors and stuff, sometimes you actually pull up
17 the -- or I pull up the lower stratus to see the weather down
18 there to try to figure out what, you know, people are actually
19 deviating around because, you know, with the altitude filters and
20 stuff, up high it's really showing nothing, you know, these people
21 are asking to deviate so, you know, all of a sudden you pull up
22 the low stratum and you get a better idea, okay, you know, this is
23 why they're deviating. And there's also -- it works the other
24 way, also, there's sometime errant weather, you know, there's --
25 all of a sudden areas will just blow up and it will look like, you

1 know, suddenly a hurricane's there or something and, you know,
2 it's like what's going on here and, you know, it will disappear a
3 few minutes later, you know. But it was a mid-shift a week or two
4 ago, all of a sudden something had popped up, you know, kind of
5 over Mussel Shoals, Alabama just out of nowhere, you know, and I
6 asked a couple of aircraft, hey, I'm depicting this at your 11
7 o'clock, do you see anything out there, you know, "oh, no, it's
8 absolutely clear out here," so there's -- it's a very useful
9 thing, it's better to have it than not have it, of course, but
10 it's not a hundred percent, so --

11 Q. As far as the weather briefing or just you working the
12 traffic earlier in the day, do you recall getting any reports of
13 cloud bases and cloud tops and kind of what those were running
14 that day, do you recall anything?

15 A. I don't recall, no.

16 Q. When you're working, you know, I guess smaller aviation,
17 general aviation aircraft and doing, you know, kind of these
18 over-flights through your airspace, what kind of weather
19 information do you think that they have available to them in the
20 cockpit? Is there any kind of information or resources that you
21 have available, kind of, to know what they have in the cockpit or
22 do they ever discuss that with you or --

23 A. I've had discussions with people, I know it, it ranges from
24 their eyeballs, you know, what they see out the window, some
25 people have, I think they call it like XM something weather,

1 there's a big variance. Probably, you know, from nothing to the
2 greatest thing and everything in between.

3 Q. And so if a pilot is needing some kind of weather help, you
4 would assume that they would reach out to you, as a controller, if
5 they need you to hey, I'm seeing this on such and such here in my
6 cockpit, what are you seeing as far as on the air traffic side on
7 your scope, you would assume that kind of a pilot would reach out
8 to you for additional weather if they needed that?

9 A. To some extent, yeah, I mean, we're trained, if we're
10 depicting weather, if we see something out there they don't have
11 to say anything, you know, we're trained to, you know, be telling
12 them about it. If they do say -- like, in the case of the Whiskey
13 Tango, you know, if he's saying, you know, hey, we see something
14 off our nose or we see some clouds building up or whatever, you
15 know, we'd like a deviation or something, that would put you more
16 on alert where you're trying to figure out, you know, what it is
17 he's seeing, you know, and maybe provide, you know, a little
18 extra. In this case, it was just a very -- well, we like, you
19 know, a brief deviation but with no mention of seeing any kind of
20 weather or anything like that. So it all depends on each
21 circumstance, you know, as to what they need and what you see.

22 Q. I know we didn't take a tour yet of the facility, but I'm
23 assuming Memphis, you all have those situation display, TSDs or
24 whatever they're called, at the end of the sector, do you have
25 those here as far as like the big TV screens that show --

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. -- weather?

3 A. We have a lot of TV screens.

4 Q. Okay, okay. What do they -- in your particular sector, I'm
5 sure they're agreed upon in different sectors, what does yours
6 typically run as far as up on the TV? I'm sure it's some kind of
7 moving graphics and stuff.

8 A. Well, we were kind of talking about this yesterday, Sector 14
9 is well into our area and to see the weather display, you look
10 over, it's like right above your left shoulder, pretty much over
11 here, and that big screen, it has a toggle between a far-range
12 view and a closer-in view.

13 But we used to have the secondary weather display over the
14 desk on the other side and they've changed it to this -- this new
15 thing that, in my opinion, this is just my opinion here, is kind
16 of useless, it's like nobody seems to understand it, it has a
17 bunch of red or yellow exclamation points on it, it has different
18 things that -- somebody, when they started it, they said that this
19 had -- somewhere in Chicago or something had increased something
20 by 40 percent or 50 percent or something, but I don't think
21 anybody really -- there's not much value in it, in my opinion.

22 Q. So could you describe that a little bit more as far as -- it
23 sounds like there's some kind of stoplight on the screen, what is
24 the stoplight for, is it a stoplight for weather, is it a
25 stoplight for, you know, when you --

1 A. It's for disseminating PIREPs, but there's a system to it,
2 obviously, you know, I'm saying green is good and red is probably
3 bad, yellow is in the middle, we're going with the stop sign here
4 or the stoplight thing here and stuff, you know, but there's one
5 column for one kind of weather, another column for another kind of
6 weather.

7 And when we first got it, I was CIC and we were actually,
8 I'll say playing around with it, not in the thing that we were
9 playing around, but we were experimenting with it, I'm going to
10 say that, and we put in a PIREP to see, you know, if it changed
11 something to green or something and there didn't seem to be much
12 of a correlation as to what we did and it's just a confusing
13 system, I don't really understand it and I don't think anybody in
14 the area completely, you know, understands the value of that
15 little screen that they put in.

16 Q. So would it be fair to say that you all didn't get any
17 training? Was there any training and building or discussions on
18 how to use this, why to use this?

19 A. We had a standup briefing on it, you know, like a 20-minute
20 or a 15-minute briefing on it or something. Maybe I'm just too
21 old, but you know, it wasn't the most helpful thing and when they
22 first put it in, there is a supervisor in the east area, Adam
23 Andres, and he seemed to -- he was the one installing some of the
24 computers and stuff for us, so I assumed he knew what he was
25 doing, so I was asking him some questions on it. The original

1 thing that they put in had one format and then about a month ago
2 or so, I think there was an update or something, is that correct?

3 MR. STEELE: Yeah, so this is -- it's called a PIDS (ph.)
4 display and we -- to give you a little history about it, in
5 Memphis Center, we had -- someone locally made this for us and we
6 have the screen. When you do the tour, you'll see a screen when
7 you come into the operation and that person did the coding and
8 whatnot, but they left, I'm not sure if they retired or what and
9 then the agency liked the idea, I don't know if they took it from
10 us or if it was from another facility and they created this new
11 PIDS display and that's where the history is about it, if that
12 makes sense.

13 MS. LEWIS: Um-hum.

14 MR. SUFFERN: Thank you.

15 BY MR. SUFFERN:

16 Q. Just a couple more for this time. How often -- or have you
17 all received any recurrent or refresher weather training in the
18 last six months or so?

19 A. Yeah, we have.

20 Q. Okay. And is that a CBI, is that in person, is that -- how's
21 that?

22 A. We have controller refresher, I think it's -- is it twice a
23 year, probably, or two or three -- it seems like it's about every
24 two months or so, but it's probably only a couple times a year and
25 part of it is CBI or ELMS or whatever the case may be, and I think

1 it's twice a year we usually come up here and we have actually a
2 briefing, they highlight, you know, four or five items and usually
3 at least one of them is some kind of a weather item, you know,
4 that they're trying to concentrate on.

5 Q. Okay. And so in the last six months, I'm assuming that --
6 someone asked a question that you all have probably convective
7 season weather training either through CBI or up here, in person,
8 as far as -- now we're getting into thunderstorm season, these are
9 some things --

10 MR. EDOFF: Have we had a spring weather thing yet?

11 MR. STEELE: I don't know for sure. I know we've -- we
12 always try to get ahead of those before the season, we always try
13 to do them early on, so I'm not sure if we did this like in
14 January or February, I'd have to go find that information.

15 MR. SUFFERN: Okay, thank you.

16 MR. EDOFF: But when thunderstorm season comes around, we
17 usually have some -- some form of refresher.

18 BY MR. SUFFERN:

19 Q. Last one for right now, do you ever have any situations where
20 the -- specifically, the weather tools or weather equipment that
21 you are using have issues, like there's an outage and/or if
22 there's an outage and the display that gives you, you know,
23 situational awareness of weather or, you know, a PIREP form or
24 things like that?

25 A. I think I kind of already hit on it, you know, there's been

1 times, you know, where the thing goes haywire, you know, all of a
2 sudden there's stuff all over the place, there's, you know,
3 incorrect weather data on there and usually it fixes itself after
4 a certain amount of time, there are certain -- I'm not real sure
5 about the altitude stratus, whether it picks up enough, you know,
6 in the higher stratus, you know, that's actually a factor, and
7 what I said about, you know, just random areas popping up out of
8 nowhere, you know, and you actually get confirmation that there's
9 absolutely nothing out there.

10 Q. And is there a particular time of day, a particular sector
11 you're working when this happens or could it just be --

12 A. Maybe it's just my imagination, but I would think it's more
13 kind of on the overnight shifts, the mid-shifts. Would you say
14 that?

15 MR. STEELE: Um-hum.

16 MR. EDOFF: Maybe they're doing maintenance on it or
17 something, I don't know, but it seems to be more on the midnight
18 shifts, these random -- random things kind of, you know, pop up.

19 MR. SUFFERN: Thank you, John, that's all I have right now.

20 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

21 And Crystal.

22 BY MS. GENNARO:

23 Q. So the question I have, I know you said in your opinion, the
24 PIREP display, do we want to call it PIREP display, the new
25 equipment that was put in, that it may not be beneficial, was

1 there weather data there prior to the PIREP TV being there?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Yes. And then, again, I understand it's your opinion, has
4 anyone -- in talking with your peers, is it your opinion that they
5 may feel the same way?

6 A. It's entirely my opinion, but I don't know of anybody who
7 thinks that new system is of any use.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. It's almost a static screen, it's just -- if you look at it
10 when you're down there, it's a bunch of exclamation points, most
11 of which are red a lot of times and some of which are yellow, some
12 which are green, and I don't know of anybody who uses it as a tool
13 for themselves.

14 Q. Okay. And then as new equipment technology, you know, it
15 happens, right, we're always advancing, as it enters the building,
16 do you feel that you're being properly briefed and trained on
17 these additions to the operation?

18 A. I would say for the most part. That particular screen, like
19 I said, it was a 15- or 20-minute standup thing, you know, I --
20 and they kind of told us that there was great value in this thing,
21 that it turned, what was it, Chicago Center around or somebody,
22 they were having, you know -- that particular screen. I don't
23 think we got a whole lot of training on it, but other than that, I
24 think they do a pretty good job.

25 MS. GENNARO: Okay. That's all I have.

1 MS. LEWIS: Betty. Thanks.

2 BY MS. KOSCHIG:

3 Q. Sorry if I ask simple questions, but I just don't like to
4 make any assumptions, so what areas are you certified in?

5 A. I'm in Area 6, so we have four low sectors and two high
6 sectors and an ultra high sector.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And I'm a CIC.

9 Q. Oh, okay, you're a CIC, great.

10 A. And an OJT.

11 Q. OJTI. Do you do any other collateral stuff, like are you
12 part of the local safety council or anything like that?

13 A. No, I'm not.

14 Q. Okay. So you said you worked a lot of overtime, are you on
15 the call list?

16 A. Not anymore.

17 Q. Do you still work overtime?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. So how much overtime do you work every month?

20 A. It suddenly slowed down a little bit, but for a while there,
21 I think this year, to date, I went on the no-call list, so they
22 took my hours down but I've worked probably a hundred and 40-some
23 odd hours this year.

24 Q. Wow, okay.

25 A. Hundred and 30-some odd hours.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. Somewhere in that range. So it's considerable.

3 Q. Yeah, that is. Yeah. Do the staffing, the number, do you
4 know -- well, this is your opinion, is it due to the number of
5 controllers here or is it because you've got a lot of CPCs that
6 are doing training and what -- how come, do you think?

7 A. Part of it used to be training, they suddenly decided, I
8 guess, recently, that they weren't going to give us overtime for
9 training anymore.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. We've got a lot of D side trainees and stuff like that. I
12 think the biggest part of it right now is just, we have one crew
13 in our area that just kind of disintegrated, I mean, there's -- we
14 have multiple people out on medical, we have -- there's somebody
15 who bids in our area every year and then he goes off to Kuwait or
16 somewhere in the Middle East with the Guard, you know, so we --
17 there's a lot of walking wounded in the area and our crew, I think
18 it's Crew 1, you know, for a while there I think we had like one
19 person, you know, who was routinely working, you know, just doing
20 different things.

21 Q. And what did you say, what days did you say your RDOs are?

22 A. Saturday and Sunday.

23 Q. Great ones. And it's good because this weekend is supposed
24 to be super busy, I hear.

25 A. Well, I just went to that new crew last year and I was

1 excited to see what it would be like and I don't think I have a
2 Saturday and Sunday -- with the exception of, you know, my time
3 off, you know, there's probably like maybe four or five weekends
4 or something that I actually had Saturday and Sunday off.

5 Q. Yeah. So what hours, what day hours -- do you work the same
6 hours every day, how does -- what hours, shifts, do you usually --

7 A. First shift is generally 2:20 to 10:20.

8 Q. Um-hum.

9 A. Second is 13:20 to 21:20.

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. Then we had the turnaround day, 6:30 to 2:30 and I come in
12 the fourth day for -- like 5:45 or 6 o'clock and then I have a mid
13 on the -- Thursday night to Friday morning.

14 Q. Oh, okay. Cool. So when you work, do they give you enough
15 time, enough break times, how are your sessions running, usually,
16 like is it an hour on, hour off or how does -- the norm. I know
17 it's going to vary.

18 A. It varies very much. I don't think that's a factor, I think
19 we get sufficient breaks.

20 Q. Oh, good. That's probably the best answer to that.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Also, let's see, do you have a water -- a water -- a weather
23 coordinator here at the -- at the -- I guess at the TMU?

24 A. Apparently, we do.

25 Q. Do they come and bring information? What is your, I guess,

1 the relationship with the -- with the areas, do they come to the
2 areas or do you ever see them or you have to go see them, if you
3 wanted to, as a regular controller, not as -- you know, a
4 supervisor's a whole different thing, so --

5 A. All I can give you is my perspective on that.

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. I didn't know that we had a special person in TMU for that
8 but apparently, we do. Most centers, I guess, don't actively
9 staff that, including this one. I just learned that in the last
10 interview or something there, so I would say a TMU weather
11 coordinator, I know nothing about that.

12 Q. Yeah. A lot of times, they'll just bolt it into the same
13 title, so yeah. Oh, yeah, just a curiosity question, you know,
14 we're looking at the scopes that got the little, the new little
15 speaker thing where the green, where you're -- when you're
16 talking, tell us a little bit about that because that's -- how
17 long has that been going on because I've seen that in
18 Jacksonville, too, so I was kind of curious of, you know, it's
19 supposed to be coming everywhere, so just -- I'm just curious
20 about that one, what's --

21 A. The green?

22 Q. It's like a green --

23 MR. STEELE: The Wi-Fi symbol.

24 MS. KOSCHIG: The Wi-Fi speaker symbol logo.

25 MR. STEELE: We call it the Wi-Fi symbol.

1 BY MS. KOSCHIG:

2 Q. Yeah, okay, it does look like a pretty cool speaker, so what
3 is --

4 A. It's just a method to indicate whether you're in
5 communication with the aircraft or not. It started, time flies
6 by, so it seems like maybe three years or four years ago,
7 somewhere in that range, they brought that in and I think it's
8 mandatory now, they made -- so I personally like it.

9 Q. Yeah, it looks -- yeah, it seems like a pretty good thing,
10 not everybody's used it, so it's pretty neat, yeah, I like that.
11 I was just curious about that one.

12 A. Yeah.

13 MS. KOSCHIG: That's all I've got.

14 MS. LEWIS: Thank you, Betty.

15 Amy.

16 BY MS. HUSCHKA:

17 Q. I have a couple questions for you, so the first one is -- so
18 we saw the controller change between the time that you worked the
19 aircraft and the time that he entered Nashville airspace,
20 essentially, do you -- so he was still in your airspace when you
21 briefed the controller, do you recall at all, did you just tell
22 him -- you'd given away deviations in either direction or do you
23 remember exactly or -- I don't mean exactly, but approximately or
24 -- what your brief would've been about that aircraft?

25 Q. I don't recall, specifically. It seems that I switched him

1 to Nashville approach, so -- but there was a briefing going on and
2 I would've briefed, you know, what the aircraft was doing as part
3 of the relief briefing and I think as the relief briefing was
4 taking place, somewhere along the way, the D side was in there
5 coordinating with -- before the handoff took place, he coordinated
6 the deviations and I think Nashville called to get control for
7 higher, so somewhere along there, it may have been verbal, you
8 know, the D side might've, as we were giving a relief briefing,
9 said hey, I gave them control for higher on him, so I don't
10 remember the exact sequence, you know, per second or anything, but
11 -- but that's kind of what I recall.

12 Q. Okay. So I'm kind of showing my TRACON side here, so I
13 apologize for that, but when you hand off an aircraft -- I mean,
14 pretty much Nashville took radar and you handed him off fairly
15 quickly. From what we could tell there was a lot of sync, but you
16 handed him off fairly quickly when they took radar on him, so when
17 that happens -- and I also saw you don't use the Wi-Fi symbols,
18 which is not required, but what does it look like to you, when
19 you've gotten rid of an airplane or when you like --

20 A. We should use the Wi-Fi, so we had a D side --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- but we normally do use --

23 Q. It just didn't show up on the replay, that's all I'm aware
24 of.

25 A. The D sides are very good about it, usually, so as far as I

1 know, we did use the Wi-Fi --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- symbols and if they have the handoff, you know, if I don't
4 have any traffic or any concerns, you know, I'll switch, not a
5 hundred miles out or anything, but you know, the trend -- go ahead
6 and let them talk to them. And in that particular case, I think
7 is -- as I was switching him, I think he was requesting higher and
8 at that point in time, you know, my thinking was well, we also
9 have

10 -- he was fairly, fairly close to one of the inbound gates for
11 Nashville approach and as part of that inbound route, the jets,
12 just after leaving our airspace, they're actually in a descent,
13 they couldn't go down to 9,000.

14 So the aircraft didn't -- the training that I've received,
15 you know, if you're talking, you know, in the high stratum,
16 whatever, if an aircraft is sitting there and they're saying hey,
17 we're getting beat up here, you know, we've got moderate
18 turbulence, we need higher or whatever, then you certainly -- you
19 climb that aircraft, you do whatever.

20 You do the coordination, you don't switch -- this guy did not
21 indicate any -- any kind of reason, any kind of distress, any
22 urgency, he just requested higher. So at that point in time my
23 thinking is well, he's headed towards -- you know, I think they
24 had just swapped over to landing north, you know, so my thinking
25 is, you know, Nashville has the handoff on him and they've got

1 these inbounds coming that they're going to be trying to vector
2 around him so, you know, the best thing that I can do is go ahead
3 and let them talk to him, they can assess his needs, they can
4 assess their needs and they can make a better decision on it.

5 Q. And I apologize, my question was not meant to be accusatory
6 at all, I was actually looking for what it looks like to you once
7 you've handed, like what that data tag looks like to you. I
8 apologize --

9 A. There's an R on there, it will blink at whoever and then when
10 they take the handoff it will stop the flashing and there will be
11 a little "r" on there and it will indicate who has the handoff.

12 Q. It doesn't lighten up or anything for you, it doesn't --

13 MR. STEELE: No, so --

14 MS. HUSCHKA: It looks the same as all your other data tags,
15 it's just got the little "r" in front of it.

16 MR. STEELE: Just a little "r" in front of it.

17 MS. HUSCHKA: Okay.

18 MR. STEELE: And then when we switch them over to another,
19 you know, facility or another sector, that's when we manually take
20 that Wi-Fi signal and we turn it off, to let us know that we did
21 switch that aircraft.

22 BY MS. HUSCHKA:

23 Q. Okay. So obviously, the reason I'm asking, and if you were
24 no longer working the position but you had given them 20 degrees
25 deviation and he actually, at one point, took a little bit of

1 liberty and went above that or around that, so I was just curious
2 what you guys still see with an airplane when they're on the
3 scopes and if that would've kind of triggered something.

4 A. I think by the time -- I'm guessing, maybe that's when some
5 type of distress happened or whatever, but I think he was in the
6 approach's airspace by that time because I saw the replay and he,
7 like, made a radical approach, said he was, you know, heading
8 southbound and stuff like that, so I think by that time I was at
9 lunch and he was in Nashville approach's airspace.

10 So again, you know, I try to, for safety reasons, you know, I
11 try to lock them down, I give them up to 20 left or right, you
12 know, that's the way I've been taught, you know. If he needs more
13 than that, if he's deviating around something that I don't know
14 of, you know, if he has to deviate more, I'll give him anything he
15 needs, you know, if you need to go 40, go ahead and go 40, you
16 know, but at that point in time I'm tying him down, so by the time
17 he made those radical turns up there, I think he was well into
18 approach's airspace.

19 Q. Thank you. So I'm going to go off just a little bit of
20 course, PIREPs for you guys, and I don't recall whether we were
21 required at that time or not, I apologize, I should've looked into
22 that first, but kind of what did that look like for you? I know,
23 again, I'm showing my TRACON side, I apologize for that, I know
24 you guys can enter PIREPs directly into the ERAM or directly into
25 your display, correct?

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. And then if you're looking for PIREPs from around your area,
3 can you also pull that up on your display, can you pull up like
4 other peoples' PIREPs or is that just your own?

5 A. Anything that's coming to your sector, you can pull up.
6 There's a little tab on the top there and I'm not sure how they
7 train it, do it in training anymore, but I've always been told to
8 keep PIREPs for at least two hours. So anything that's coming to
9 my sector for the past two hours, there's a tab on top of our
10 screen and I can click on there and I can see any PIREPs that come
11 to that individual sector.

12 Q. And then when you -- the relieving controller comes in, do
13 your PIREPs, like area PIREPs or ones you've put into that area,
14 do they stay there for the next controller?

15 A. They stay there.

16 Q. They stay there, so that an area -- but just is like a
17 display box, basically.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And do you have to ask for that to come up or can you see the
20 PIREPs?

21 A. You have to click a button.

22 Q. Click.

23 A. We have a console over here that has all of the flight plans
24 on it and stuff, there's tabs on the top of it and then there's
25 one tab for NOTAM, NOTAMS and one for -- is it NOTAMS and GIS

1 (ph.)? So you're able to actually pull up, you know, the
2 pertinent PIREPs.

3 MS. HUSCHKA: Okay. That's all I have, thank you.

4 MS. LEWIS: Okay. Thank you very much.

5 BY MS. LEWIS:

6 Q. Talking still about your workstation, is there anything, any
7 kind of information that you wish that you had easy access to that
8 you don't have kind of at your workstation?

9 A. Better weather.

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. Years ago when we had a crash in one of our sectors, it was
12 actually in one of our sectors and the person working it, you
13 know, he -- they actually -- you guys came in, NTSB came in and
14 they brought this computer and it had this super WARP radar,
15 whatever, and I have no idea what they called it, it was like this
16 amazing thing and you looked at what they had where the airplane
17 crashed versus what we have and it was night and day, I mean,
18 their -- it might not be practical, you know, I hear it's very
19 expensive and stuff to put, you know, the good stuff on our scopes
20 and stuff, but with all the monitors and all the other junk that
21 we have in there, I mean, it would seem like, you know, that there
22 would be something where you could pop, you know, something on one
23 of your side displays there and actually see a good, you know,
24 Doppler weather display.

25 Q. Right. That would make sense to me, too. Can you talk to me

1 about your personal experience with the schedule, the overtime,
2 the fatigue portion of that, do you feel fatigued sometimes
3 because of the overtime schedule or any other reasons?

4 A. The constant, you know, overtime is tiresome at times but I
5 wouldn't say overall but generally, I feel fatigued. I'm aware,
6 you know, I'm 53 years old now, I'm getting older and stuff, you
7 know, so I -- when it's available, you know, on my second day I'm
8 supposed to work until 9:20, I put in for, you know, earlier
9 shifts and such, so that's my way of myself, you know -- and I'm
10 not stupid, you know, back at -- these young kids and stuff, they
11 -- I don't know if they do it anymore, but they work until 10:00
12 and they go out, you know, and do this and that, you know, they're
13 up until 2:00 and they have to get up at 6:00 the next morning or
14 something, I'm smart enough to know that I can't do that anymore.

15 So, you know, I get an earlier shift and if I can, you know,
16 I go home and I'm in bed at 9:15, 9:30, you know, if I have to get
17 up at 5:15 in the morning, I want my sleep, so you know -- and
18 overall I think I've been pretty successful at that, I don't come
19 in here feeling like oh, you know, completely tired. Of course,
20 there's days, you know, you might not sleep, you know, perfectly
21 and stuff, a quick turnaround or whatever, but overall I think
22 I've managed it fairly well.

23 Q. This may show my age, I remember going to Ft. Worth Center
24 for cadre, recurrent training type thing, and they had a weather
25 unit there and they kind of had -- as far as I remember, they had

1 kind of a standup briefing every day where they kind of bring
2 people before you had your -- before you got into your sector and
3 you signed on -- you know, like you sat down, you would go there
4 and you would kind of get a weather briefing and then you'd kind
5 of move on and it was kind of -- and there were other things in
6 the standup briefing. In your experience, did you ever (1)
7 experience anything like that in your career or (2) do you think
8 that that would be beneficial?

9 A. I've experienced it as a CIC, twice a day they have a
10 standup.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. It's not for individual controllers, you know, everybody --
13 they have a representative from each area, normally the
14 supervisor, and they have the suit-and-ties up there, Fred
15 probably gets to go to them --

16 (Laughter.)

17 MR. EDOFF: -- whenever he's here, you know, and they have a
18 briefing, you know, they have the weather service brief, they have
19 -- and sure, there's -- there's some validity to that, I mean,
20 it's not a bad idea.

21 MS. LEWIS: Thank you, I think that's all I have for right
22 now.

23 Paul?

24 BY MR. SUFFERN:

25 Q. Just one more question. If a pilot's on an IFR flight plan,

1 do you assume that they're comfortable flying in the clouds?

2 A. I don't want to assume anything. Many years I've seen --
3 I've seen a lot of scary things, so I -- there's some pilots, I
4 don't think they're comfortable flying in the clears.

5 MR. SUFFERN: Understood. That's all I got.

6 MS. LEWIS: Crystal?

7 MS. GENNARO: I have nothing more.

8 MR. EDOFF: And I'll add on that note, this particular pilot,
9 Whisky Tango, I did not get any -- any inclination, in my
10 airspace, that he was uncomfortable. It was casual, he didn't
11 seem to have any kind of concerns, it was one of the most boring
12 flights that you can imagine going through.

13 MS. LEWIS: Yeah, yeah. Thank you.

14 Crystal?

15 MS. GENNARO: No, no other questions.

16 MS. LEWIS: Betty?

17 BY MS. KOSCHIG:

18 Q. Another type of curiosity question, have you noticed an
19 increase in traffic going into Nashville?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Did you know they were upgraded to a 10?

22 A. I know they're at a stage of growing up, I don't know, I
23 heard that they wanted -- they wanted a lot of things, I've heard
24 that they want to expand their airspace, you know, we can see a
25 lot of their growing pains kind of working with Nashville right

1 now, they open an arrival sector, you know, almost daily now and,
2 you know, us trying to coordinate with them. We have letters of
3 agreement with other facilities and stuff, you know, where we can
4 coordinate with one person and they're responsible for
5 intra-facility coordination, you know, you call over there
6 sometimes and if it's borderline arrival and departure, you know,
7 it's hard for us to, you know, get to the right person sometimes
8 and they seem to have issues talking to each other over there
9 about things, so there's some growing pains and yeah, Nashville,
10 it gets crazy at times.

11 Q. Yeah. Yeah, we've noticed the pickup in traffic. Do you get
12 a lot, do you know -- well, Nashville is going to be working them,
13 but do you get a lot going into John Tune, asking --

14 A. Yeah, John Tune, Smyrna, they have three or four satellites
15 that we get.

16 Q. Yeah. Yeah, they're picking up in traffic, for sure. They
17 are growing up.

18 A. Yeah, it's -- when I first started, I think Nashville had a
19 hub there and they had just disbanded that when I started and
20 Nashville -- Memphis used to be our bigger thing, you know.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. Now, other than the mids, you know, Memphis is pretty quiet
23 and stuff, but Nashville, at times, you know, we started to split
24 that sector off a lot of times, it used to be combined, you know,
25 with the Holly Springs sector, but just the sheer volume now, it's

1 -- every day, every week, it just seems to be more and more and
2 more, so --

3 Q. Yeah. Yeah. They're working on stuff, so hopefully it will
4 -- it will get done faster.

5 A. Yeah.

6 MS. KOSCHIG: All right, thanks, just curious.

7 MS. LEWIS: Amy?

8 MS. HUSCHKA: I have nothing else.

9 BY MS. LEWIS:

10 Q. Was there anything that you thought we would ask you that we
11 didn't ask you?

12 A. We'll be safe and say no.

13 (Laughter.)

14 MS. LEWIS: Okay, very good.

15 MR. EDOFF: I'm seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

16 MS. LEWIS: Yeah. Yeah, that's good. That's good. Just for
17 the record, I want to make sure that I put on the record that the
18 ATC work group consisted of Sarah Lewis, ATC working group chair;
19 Betty Koschig, NTSB, ATC investigator; Paul Suffern, NTSB,
20 meteorologist; Crystal Gennaro, FAA SME out of Memphis air traffic
21 control tower; and Amy Huschka, NATCA ASI out of Minneapolis.

22 And with that, I will conclude the interview at 10:21 a.m.
23 and thank you very much.

24 (Whereupon, at 10:21 a.m., the interview concluded.)

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024
Interview of John Edoff

ACCIDENT NO.: ERA24FA217

PLACE: Memphis, Tennessee

DATE: May 23, 2024

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber

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Balt. & Annap. 410-974-0947

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024

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Accident No.: ERA24FA217

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Interview of: PATRICK BOWLES, Operations Supervisor
Federal Aviation Administration

Memphis, Tennessee

Thursday,
May 23, 2024

APPEARANCES:

SARAH LEWIS, Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BETTY KOSCHIG, Senior Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

CRYSTAL GENNARO
Federal Aviation Administration

AMY HUSCHKA, Air Safety Investigator
National Air Traffic Controllers Association

JONATHAN BRINGEWATT, Esq.
Federal Aviation Administration
Representative for Mr. Bowles

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:03 p.m.)

MS. LEWIS: Okay, thank you. The time now is 12:03 p.m.
Would you please state your name?

MR. BOWLES: Patrick Bowles.

MS. LEWIS: Thank you. Could you please spell your name?

MR. BOWLES: It's B-o-w-l-e-s.

MS. LEWIS: Thank you. As part of the process, I will be recording the interview and then I'll have a transcription made. That transcription will become part of the factual report, but the audio will not go into the public docket. I will send you a copy of the transcript for your review and it should be about a month or so before I can have it back to you. Do you have any questions about that?

MR. BOWLES: I have no questions at this time.

MS. LEWIS: Okay. Again, my name is Sarah Lewis, I am an air traffic control investigator at the National Transportation Safety Board. The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress to investigate every civil accident/incident, to help with determining the probable cause and promoting transportation safety. Here with me today are two of my colleagues from the NTSB and I have two subject matter experts. I will let them state their names for the record.

Betty.

MS. KOSCHIG: Betty Koschig, NTSB.

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1 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

2 MR. SUFFERN: Paul Suffern, NTSB.

3 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

4 MS. GENNARO: Crystal Gennaro, FAA.

5 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

6 MS. HUSCHKA: And Amy Huschka, NATCA.

7 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

8 The purpose of this investigation is safety, to gather facts
9 and determine probable cause and prevent reoccurrence. Our role
10 is not to assign fault, blame, or liability, and this interview is
11 part of the fact-finding phase of the investigation. As part of
12 the regulations, you're welcome to have one representative of your
13 choice and I see that you have someone here with you today, is
14 this the person that you'd like to represent you?

15 MR. BOWLES: Yes.

16 MS. LEWIS: Thank you. Could you please state your name for
17 the record?

18 MR. BRINGEWATT: Jonathan Bringewatt.

19 MS. LEWIS: Thank you. And we have the spelling from before,
20 so thank you very much.

21 The reason for this interview today is to discuss the
22 accident that occurred on May 15th, 2024 regarding November 4-7
23 Whiskey Tango. We're going to be asking a variety of questions,
24 so at any time you have any questions, please feel free to ask us.
25 Please answer the questions to the best of your recollection. If

1 you do not know an answer to a question, "I don't know" is
2 perfectly acceptable; you don't recall, "I don't recall" is
3 perfectly fine. If at any time you wish to take a break or you
4 want to consult with your representative, please let us know,
5 you're more than welcome to consult here, you can consult in the
6 hallway, either one is fine, just let us know. Do you have any
7 questions so far?

8 MR. BOWLES: No questions.

9 MS. LEWIS: Okay, perfect. Again, the way things will work
10 today is I'll start out asking some questions, then we'll go
11 around the room and each group member will have an opportunity to
12 ask some questions. Again, you may see some of us typing or
13 writing notes and these notes are just to help us jog our memory
14 and -- of things we want to ask you and then they will be
15 destroyed after we're done here on site. That's the basic
16 structure of the interviews, do you have any questions?

17 MR. BOWLES: No questions.

18 MS. LEWIS: Okay, perfect. Then let's get started.

19 INTERVIEW OF PATRICK BOWLES

20 BY MS. LEWIS:

21 Q. What was your age at the time of the incident?

22 A. Forty years old.

23 Q. Okay. What were your -- what are your operating initials?

24 A. Bravo Golf.

25 Q. Okay. What is your title/position here?

1 A. Operations Supervisor.

2 Q. Perfect. And do you have any military or pre-FAA ATC work
3 experience?

4 A. Yes. Began controlling in the military in 2002 and --
5 through 2011 and my FAA career began in 2014 until present.

6 Q. Perfect, what branch?

7 A. Marine Corps.

8 Q. Oh, that's exciting. Thank you for serving, appreciate that.
9 Tell me about your FAA facility experience.

10 A. Just Memphis Center the entire time. I was a controller up
11 until January of last year, took a temporary detail for six months
12 and I've been an operations SUP ever since.

13 Q. How did you transition from the military to the FAA?

14 A. It was during a government shutdown, so I went to college for
15 a couple years and then when the -- an offer letter came, I was
16 happy to come here.

17 Q. Super cool. What college did you get to go to?

18 A. I went to Kentucky University.

19 Q. Okay. That's great. Do you hold any collateral duties here
20 at the facility?

21 A. Yes. AED, I guess point of contact for the building. I'm on
22 the internal compliance team. And then recently I've been
23 assigned the NTI representative for our area and the schedule
24 scheduler for the area, which I haven't started duties yet.

25 Q. Okay. And the AED, those are defibrillators?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Perfect. And have you been on any recent details that take
3 you out of the building?

4 A. It's been several months.

5 Q. Yeah, sure.

6 A. Just courses. I think the last one was probably FMC in
7 Tampa.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Managers course, basically.

10 Q. Managers course.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Um-hum. Very good. So I understand you were in the Marine
13 Corps, tell me, how did you get bitten by the aviation bug?

14 A. I didn't actually know what air traffic control was when I
15 signed up for the Marine Corps, but --

16 Q. Uh-huh.

17 A. -- I looked into it and --

18 Q. Uh-huh.

19 A. -- it was good, I got a bunch of experiences controlling in
20 the tower environment in San Diego, several countries overseas,
21 South Carolina, a couple states in between, so it was a great
22 experience for me.

23 Q. It sounds like it might be a natural transition just to try
24 to do that --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- afterwards. That's great. Have you ever been fired,
2 terminated, suspended or asked to resign any ATC position?

3 A. No.

4 Q. How would you describe your overall health?

5 A. I'd say very healthy.

6 Q. Very good. Do you have a current medical?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Do you have -- are you required to use corrective lenses?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay. Was there drug or alcohol screening performed
11 following this event for anyone?

12 A. No, not that I'm aware.

13 Q. Okay. Let's see. Did you file an ATSAP report regarding
14 this event?

15 A. I did not.

16 Q. Okay. Other than today, across the hall, have you been
17 interviewed about this event before now?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Let's see. Did you have an opportunity to review the replay
20 of the event?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Very good. And you were present at the time of the event?

23 A. I was on break, but --

24 Q. You were on break.

25 A. -- I was in the building.

1 Q. Okay, very good. Let's see. So were you -- are you familiar
2 -- I understand you were on break at the exact time, the exact
3 time of the incident, were you familiar with the type of traffic
4 volume or complexity around the time of the event?

5 A. When I left, it was normal operating conditions, normal
6 volume, normal complexity, nothing special needed.

7 Q. Okay. What are your days off?

8 A. Currently, Friday/Saturday, with my normal overtime being on
9 Saturday.

10 Q. Is it usual that you're scheduled overtime or called in
11 overtime?

12 A. Scheduled overtime.

13 Q. Scheduled overtime. Have you been scheduled overtime most of
14 the weeks per the year?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Going back to the day of the incident or the accident, do you
17 recall what the weather conditions were at the time?

18 A. I don't recall. I know what I've seen when I went back and
19 looked at the tapes --

20 Q. Sure.

21 A. -- but I don't really recall.

22 Q. Okay, that's perfectly fine. Let's see. Did you receive a
23 pre-duty weather briefing?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Talk to me about the pre-duty weather briefing a little bit

1 in terms of is the pre-duty weather briefing tailored for this
2 facility?

3 A. Yes. So we have a pre-duty weather briefing that's outside
4 the control room, controllers are required to get the weather
5 briefing.

6 Q. Um-hum.

7 A. We have a sign-in sheet that they can come in and sign or I
8 can ask them hey, did you receive your weather briefing, in which
9 case I'll sign them if they have received it. And then we do a
10 daily standup around 7:15 for the day shift and then one at,
11 again, for the afternoon shift where we also discuss weather and
12 how it may impact the operations.

13 Q. Okay. We're on that topic right now about the standup and
14 that was something I wanted to ask you about, so -- so what type
15 of things are in the standup briefing, you said weather, but can
16 you elaborate a little bit?

17 A. Yes. We talk about, I guess, the weather conditions for
18 Nashville, for Memphis, the main airports for our hubs, Atlanta,
19 DFW, Houston, O'Hare, any type for them. For plays, traffic
20 management initiatives, what's going to be rerouted, what plays
21 are in effect, how it's going to affect each individual area
22 volume-wise.

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. And then there's the three-day forecast. For the evening
25 one, they'll give us a brief and then also they'll reconvene later

1 in the afternoon, about 6:00 p.m., are we going to have to do
2 anything for the mid, are we going to have hold people over, are
3 we going to have to get a special TMI -- or TMU traffic management
4 initiative, one for the mid personnel, as well.

5 Q. Do you feel that they are helpful?

6 A. Oh, yes.

7 Q. Who normally goes to those briefings?

8 A. Normally, there's one representative from every area. If a
9 supervisor is available, they will be there, if not, there's a CIC
10 that will step in for them.

11 Q. Okay. If the supervisor's not there, is it -- how does the
12 -- and perhaps you can help me understand and maybe each area is
13 different, but for your area, is that Area 6?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. So for Area 6, if you weren't there that day, how does that
16 coverage work with the CIC?

17 A. I think normally, they try to backfill with another
18 supervisor if they know when a SUP is not going to be there. If
19 it's not able and the CIC covers, they'll do the same thing,
20 they'll do the same standup, they'll take the same notes --

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. -- and then as far as I know, they would just brief the area
23 like I would.

24 Q. Um-hum, okay. Two questions there. Is it the same CIC for
25 the whole shift or do they kind of take breaks and kind of rotate

1 through the positions?

2 A. There's a CIC assigned to the shift --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- and they can take breaks just like a normal controller

5 would.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. If they want to sit there all day, they can and --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- if they want to pass it off, they're more than welcome to.

10 Q. Okay. So when there is a supervisor scheduled for that shift

11 and you want to take a break, is there also a controller assigned

12 that shift or no, you just find who was on break to --

13 A. Find a replacement, yes.

14 Q. Okay, very good. Let's think. There was another question I

15 wanted to ask but I'll come back to it later when I have a moment

16 there. Did you have a cellular phone or a cellular PD with you at

17 the time of the event?

18 A. I believe so.

19 Q. Okay. Just like in the room or --

20 A. Just probably in my pocket.

21 Q. Okay. Do you usually keep that off or --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Yeah. Had you -- okay, well, here you kind of -- you already

24 kind of answered this question, had you requested a relief or

25 assistance right before the event? You were on break.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. When did you find out about the event?

3 A. I had a suspicion afterwards, as soon as I walked back in,
4 someone from the OM desk, I believe it was another supervisor,
5 came down and asked for the strip --

6 Q. Um-hum.

7 A. -- on that aircraft and that was it.

8 MS. LEWIS: Right. Let's think. I think that I will pass it
9 to Paul and Paul may have some weather questions for you.

10 MR. BOWLES: Okay.

11 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

12 MR. SUFFERN: Thanks, Sarah.

13 BY MR. SUFFERN:

14 Q. Yeah, so -- just so I understand, so I know you were on break
15 when the accident happened, could you tell me approximately, like,
16 what times you were -- were you a SUP there when, you know, the
17 individual controller was controlling this aircraft through the
18 airspace?

19 A. Yes, I believe so. Just going back and looking at the logs,
20 it looked like I went on break 16 minutes prior to the estimated
21 time of the accident and I was back five minutes later, so right
22 in that time they were doing the investigating, yes, the initial
23 phases of investigating it.

24 Q. And so, you know, as far as general weather that day, do you
25 recall the types of conditions as you're --

1 A. I don't recall. I do remember, looking back, now that I've
2 seen the tapes, what that would have depicted.

3 Q. And so nothing really, that you can recall, nothing really
4 stood out about the weather that day for your area or anything
5 like that?

6 A. No, nothing stood out.

7 Q. So do you recall any cloud bases or tops reports in your area
8 that day?

9 A. I do not.

10 Q. I guess we'll move more into how things generally work, I
11 guess, in Area 6, right?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. When the controllers need to be soliciting PIREPs in your
14 area, how do you make sure that they're soliciting PIREPs, what do
15 you do?

16 A. We have a couple ways, we have a new implemented PIREP board,
17 which has information, which sectors need PIREPs, what were, what
18 you can expect as far as turbulence or icing or anything and then
19 normally, we discuss that standup again, hey, we're going to need
20 PIREPs and the SUP's will pass it forward, you know, get PIREPs.

21 Q. Okay. So if controllers need to be soliciting PIREPs, do you
22 walk down there and like tap him on the shoulder, like hey, give
23 me a PIREP in this hour or do you expect them to look at the
24 display screen as part of their scan or how do you --

25 A. Yeah, they're pretty good about getting it themselves and if

1 anything, they'll be like can you come down here and put in a
2 PIREP for me, in which case I'm happy to help with that so they
3 can stay focused on the operation.

4 Q. And so walk me through how you -- how you enter a PIREP.

5 A. Just recently, just a few minutes ago.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Hey, Patrick, can you put in a PIREP for me, sure, moderate
8 turbulence, flight level 3-5-0 reported by this aircraft, its type
9 and its position. So I entered it in and I sent it to weather and
10 they'll disseminate it through the building.

11 Q. Okay. So entering it, and then you're entering it on NIDS,
12 ERIDS, what --

13 A. ERIDS, yes.

14 Q. -- system and that goes to Flight Data for them to enter it
15 or --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- once it goes out you don't --

18 A. I believe it goes to Flight Data and weather and they send it
19 out to the building.

20 Q. Okay. And so if PIREPs were coming in that were applicable
21 to Area 6, that were taken by maybe another sector or somewhere
22 else, you would receive them probably through Flight Data or
23 through weather --

24 A. Yes. They'll show up as a notification in our EDST, in which
25 case the controller would click on it and read it and broadcast it

1 on their frequencies.

2 Q. Okay. So there's no -- as far as your position as a SUP, are
3 you aware of the PIREPs in your area, do you have like a situation
4 board where the PIREPs come in and things like that?

5 A. We do have a board that will show, when needed -- and I guess
6 I could tell, too, if weather hasn't been read, it will show a
7 yellow (ph.) notification behind the controller, yes.

8 Q. Okay, all right. You're kind of out of the loop of the
9 process of -- or needing to be in the loop because the PIREPs are
10 going directly to where they need to go to in those sectors.

11 A. Right.

12 Q. As far as weather resources, for you as a SUP, what weather
13 resources do you use while you're working a shift?

14 A. I guess if I really need anything, there's some occasions
15 where I've gone to the weather personnel and asked them questions,
16 especially on the mid, they're very valuable.

17 Q. But as far as like tools and things like that, I think when
18 we walked out there, you have the SUP desk, are there particular
19 weather resources that you put up on the -- I don't know which
20 computer was your computer that you're working at, but are there
21 tools and things like that that you can put -- or you look at
22 there to give you more awareness for --

23 A. We have that -- I don't know if you noticed it on the back
24 wall, there's that big board that flashed through several screens
25 of weather and how it's impacting ZME airspace, I use that, and

1 then as I'm looking at the controller scopes, I'm seeing what
2 they're seeing, but nothing really special outside of that.

3 Q. And so the screen down at the end of the sector there, that
4 big TV, do you have control of that or is that something that the
5 TMU has control of or --

6 A. Yes. Normally, weather puts that out, I can access it if I
7 need it, but I don't mess with it.

8 Q. Okay. As far as your airspace, working as SUP there, are
9 there ever any times, were there weather equipment outages,
10 whether it's, you know, more precip, you know, I guess the PIREP
11 function's not working, are there any other, you know, equipment
12 struggles that you seem to have or things that show errors as far
13 as the weather is concerned, that you see?

14 A. We've had our winds aloft readout not be accurate a few
15 times, but I can't really think of major weather avenues.

16 Q. Okay. As far as the winds aloft, is that a particular point
17 in time, like mid-shifts, day shifts, random, different points in
18 the year?

19 A. Random day or evening shifts and --

20 Q. Okay. Do you recall the last recurrent or refresher weather
21 training that you have had and do supervisors get that training,
22 just like a regular controller?

23 A. Yeah, supervisors do get it just like a regular controller.
24 I do recall one, I don't know when it was, maybe within the last
25 year or two, for sure, we had a big weather one. I can't remember

1 the exact dates.

2 Q. Okay. For the standup, I was reading through documents here
3 for ZME and it sounds like there's a standup for safety training,
4 I don't know if it's a CBI or a crew brief or something, could you
5 kind of step me through what the standup for safety, kind of how
6 that works here?

7 A. Yeah, there's a standup for safety that we receive via Team
8 and controllers can check that individually and sign off for it
9 and I personally print it off and during individual team briefs,
10 the crews I'm responsible for rebriefing for the month of May.

11 Q. Okay, so you'll individually, verbally, as you all are in a
12 group standing in a room or something like that --

13 A. Talk about key items, you know, with (indiscernible).

14 MR. SUFFERN: Okay. I think that's all the questions I have
15 for right now. Thanks, Patrick.

16 MR. BOWLES: Okay, thank you.

17 MS. LEWIS: Thank you so much, Paul.

18 Betty?

19 MS. KOSCHIG: Oh, okay.

20 BY MS. KOSCHIG:

21 Q. Hi, again. Okay, so a couple of questions. Are you
22 certified or qualified on everything in Area 6?

23 A. Not anymore.

24 Q. Okay. But you used to be?

25 A. I used to be, yes.

1 Q. Okay, good. That's good. Yeah, it's because I want to ask
2 you some observation-type questions. Have you noticed any
3 changes, since I know Nashville is not your airspace, but you're
4 in their airspace going that way, any changes in pilots asking for
5 deviations or the way, if you've noticed, maybe Nashville
6 vectoring them towards weather that you're thinking maybe that's
7 not -- you know, why are they doing that, any questionable things
8 going on?

9 A. I've questioned Nashville a few times, but not weather
10 related, no. Not with turning people into weather.

11 Q. Okay, okay. Just curious about, you know, if there was some
12 odd deviations. Do you get a lot of deviations in that area
13 and --

14 A. Memphis just -- Memphis ZME, in general, we deal with a lot
15 of weather, especially in the summer season and very common for
16 deviations.

17 Q. Okay. Yeah, like for instance, on this one, you saw the
18 replay --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Do you have any -- do you know why that pilot might've been
21 asking for a deviation?

22 A. No. We weren't depicting anything from our ERAM
23 (indiscernible). Yeah, there was nothing that seemed suspicious
24 or even -- yeah, I'm not sure why he would request that.

25 Q. Okay. Let's see. So going back to -- so after you got the

1 notification that the accident occurred, I mean, what was your
2 responsibilities, what did you do, what happened after all that?

3 A. I didn't even find out until -- the accident actually
4 happened until several days later.

5 Q. Oh, okay.

6 A. I don't recall my actions.

7 Q. Okay, there was -- yeah.

8 A. Yeah.

9 MS. KOSCHIG: Yeah, several days later is going to -- yeah.
10 I can't think of anything else. Thanks.

11 MS. LEWIS: Thanks, Betty.

12 Crystal.

13 MS. GENNARO: Yeah.

14 BY MS. GENNARO:

15 Q. So what hour of your shift were you in?

16 A. It was -- and correct me if I'm wrong on the time, it was
17 around noon, so six, about six hours into my shift.

18 Q. Six hours in, okay.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. And then these are not going to be in any sort of order --

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. -- because I just make notes of what everybody says.

23 Training, it often occurs during crew briefings, so are you able
24 to regularly meet with your crews?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. You are.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. But yes, I'm not -- that's a weird pause, I'm sorry.
4 And then how many OS's per area are you allotted and how many do
5 you have?

6 A. We're probably allotted, I would say seven per area, we are
7 currently at four.

8 MS. GENNARO: Okay. And everything else, the questions, I
9 have actually erased because you guys have hit them, so that's all
10 I have right now.

11 MS. LEWIS: Thanks so very much.

12 Amy.

13 BY MS. HUSCHKA:

14 Q. All right, I'm going to kind of circle back to the PIREPs
15 thing just to get it clear in my brain because I'm a TRACON
16 controller and I apologize for that, but -- so -- I don't
17 apologize for being a TRACON controller but --

18 (Laughter.)

19 BY MS. HUSCHKA:

20 Q. I just want to clarify that. So for the PIREPs, so each
21 person enters PIREPs into their own work display and then that
22 PIREP goes into a collection so anybody in that room can pull up
23 the PIREPs for that room or like -- is it area restricted or is it
24 for the -- for the whole center?

25 A. I'm not sure if it goes to every single sector, I would

1 imagine it goes through at least all the affected sectors around
2 it. I don't know exactly if it goes to everybody.

3 Q. Okay, so within your Area 6, everybody, all your eight scopes
4 or whatever you have on either side, everybody can access
5 everybody else's PIREPs?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. So when they all go in there, do you have a way to
8 access them?

9 A. I could go to an empty scope and pull up all the PIREPs and
10 see what --

11 Q. You don't have your own display or anything that you can
12 access them with, just the supervisors?

13 A. I don't think so.

14 Q. Okay, so who -- I guess that's the board that's above your
15 SUP's desk that shows the PIREPs and things like that, there was
16 like -- when we were in there, there was two that said they
17 currently have PIREPs for turbulence.

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. Who made those checkmarks in there? Does that just
20 automatically happen?

21 A. I think, as far as I know, it automatically happens once you
22 meet that requirement.

23 Q. Okay. And then when it times out, it just automatically goes
24 away?

25 A. I would have to guess so.

1 Q. Okay. Okay, I'm just wondering, like, when you're hourly and
2 needing one, do you check on that or like how do you verify?

3 A. You know, I'm not sure how the accuracy works with the
4 timing, too, because I know on some instances it's showing we need
5 one, we've met the requirement, and then it's still showing us as
6 having need of one.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. So maybe just there's a delay of five, ten minutes before it
9 actually checks out.

10 Q. Um-hum. So you don't actually have any -- or maybe not have
11 a way, but you don't usually ask for PIREPs or look into that
12 unless that board tells you that you require a PIREP, is that
13 correct? I mean, I'm not trying to --

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. -- catch you in anything, that's usually your technique.

16 A. Yeah. Or just any other, you know, situation like hey, we
17 have multiple people going to this airport, we need a PIREP there
18 or we've had turbulence in a certain area, can we keep getting
19 reports from that area, kind of just keep it updated.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. But our board wouldn't tell me, just --

22 Q. Right, of that part.

23 A. Right.

24 Q. Like an hourly, like say it's forecasted or some weird thing
25 like that, that's what the board kind of -- you depend on the

1 board to look up and say hey, we need one more PIREP?

2 A. Yes, yes.

3 MS. HUSCHKA: Okay. I think that's it.

4 MS. LEWIS: Thanks. Thanks, Amy, I appreciate it.

5 BY MS. LEWIS:

6 Q. I have a question about -- and obviously you weren't there
7 during this exact thing, this exact sequence of events, but you
8 were talking a little bit about it's very common for aircraft to
9 deviate. Do you find that people ask the aircraft why they're
10 deviating and if so, what situations do you find that happening
11 in?

12 A. I would say it's probably very rare to ask somebody why
13 they're deviating. Because it does happen so often, it probably
14 wouldn't be efficient to ask everyone why they're deviating or why
15 for every request, I guess.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. Some instances, I mean, if you just have plenty of time, are
18 you seeing something that I'm not or --

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. -- are you missing clouds.

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. I wouldn't really think of another reason, maybe.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. But I would say it's not common practice to ask why.

25 Q. Okay. And do you guys find that, you know, the general

1 aviation aircraft deviate more than the airliners or how -- what's
2 your experience with that?

3 A. In the low altitudes they probably do deviate more. Yeah, I
4 would probably say that they both deviate their fair share.

5 MS. LEWIS: Paul, I'm going to pass it to you.

6 BY MR. SUFFERN:

7 Q. Yeah, just one last question or two, two. If a pilot's on an
8 IFR flight plan, especially a general aviation one, do you assume
9 they're comfortable flying in the clouds?

10 A. I wouldn't want to assume anything.

11 Q. And then if I put you in charge and you won the lottery, you
12 retire, but in your retirement you gave some money to the air
13 traffic facility because you're generous --

14 A. Okay, yeah.

15 Q. -- and to upgrade them for a new weather tool or something
16 like that to help all your fellow controllers, is there any
17 weather tools or things like that, that you wish that you had?

18 A. Weather tool. I actually kind of like how the weather, our
19 readout is for center environment, I think it applies pretty well
20 for center environment, it's not overly in-depth because we
21 wouldn't be able to because we cover so much airspace. No, not
22 weather. I could definitely use help with frequencies and
23 staffing issues.

24 MR. SUFFERN: Thanks, that's all I got.

25 MS. LEWIS: Crystal?

1 MS. GENNARO: I have nothing. Nothing more.

2 MS. LEWIS: Betty?

3 BY MS. KOSCHIG:

4 Q. I'm going to ask you an odd question. So why do you think we
5 are actually here at the center to ask questions about this
6 aircraft incident, the crash in your airspace?

7 A. Just to get as much information as possible. I would imagine
8 you're going to ask Nashville, you're going to ask us, you're
9 probably going to talk about the airplane, aircraft manufacturer,
10 just we're another drop in the bucket, if you will, gathering
11 information.

12 MS. KOSCHIG: Yeah. Yeah, it's just -- I'm always curious
13 why, you know, especially if something didn't happen in the
14 airspace, yeah, because it is, we're trying to get the puzzle, all
15 the pieces in. Yeah, you guys can give a good piece of the
16 puzzle, so yeah. Great, thanks. That's it.

17 MS. LEWIS: Amy?

18 MS. HUSCHKA: I'm good, thank you.

19 BY MS. LEWIS:

20 Q. Is there anything that you expected us to ask you that we
21 didn't ask you about?

22 A. No. I had no expectations. Really, I didn't know what I was
23 going to do.

24 Q. Yeah, very good. Okay, are you ready to get out of here?

25 A. Yeah, I think so.

1 (Laughter.)

2 MS. LEWIS: I would think so, too, yeah, you're like "woo."

3 Okay, again, I'll say that the interview concluded at 12:33 p.m.

4 Thank you.

5 (Whereupon, at 12:33 p.m., the interview concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024
Interview of Patrick Bowles

ACCIDENT NO.: ERA24FA217

PLACE: Memphis, Tennessee

DATE: May 23, 2024

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of:

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FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024

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Accident No.: ERA24FA217

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Interview of: DAVID (GARY) JOHNSON, Traffic Management
Coordinator
Federal Aviation Administration

Memphis, Tennessee

Thursday,
May 23, 2024

APPEARANCES:

SARAH LEWIS, Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BETTY KOSCHIG, Senior Air Traffic Control Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

CRYSTAL GENNARO, Traffic Manager
Federal Aviation Administration

AMY HUSCHKA, Air Safety Investigator
National Air Traffic Controllers Association

FREDERICK STEELE, Facility Representative
National Air Traffic Controllers Association
Representative for Mr. Johnson

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I N T E R V I E W

(1:11 p.m.)

MS. LEWIS: We had a little technical difficulty there, so -- yeah. Okay. The time now is 1:11 p.m. Can you please state your name?

MR. JOHNSON: Official name is David Johnson, Jr. but I go by Gary, so everybody calls me Gary.

MS. LEWIS: Okay, thank you. Is it okay if we call you Gary?

MR. JOHNSON: Of course.

MS. LEWIS: Okay, thanks, you can call me Sarah. Can you spell out your -- can you spell out your name?

MR. JOHNSON: The official?

MS. LEWIS: Yeah, sure.

MR. JOHNSON: D-a-v-i-d J-o-h-n-s-o-n and then I'm a junior, J-r.

MS. LEWIS: Thank you. As I said before, as part of the process I'll be recording the interview and I'll have a transcription made. The transcription will become part of the factual docket, but the audio will not. I will send you a copy of the transcript for your review and it should be ready in about a month or so. And do you have any questions about that?

MR. JOHNSON: No.

MS. LEWIS: Okay. Again, my name is Sarah Lewis, I'm an air traffic control investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board. The NTSB is charged by -- is an independent federal

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1 agency charged by Congress to investigate all civil aviation
2 accidents and incidents, and to help determine the probable cause
3 and promote transportation safety. Here with me today are two
4 colleagues from the NTSB and two subject matter experts, and I
5 will let them state their name for the record and we'll just go
6 around in a circle.

7 MR. SUFFERN: Paul Suffern, NTSB, meteorology.

8 MS. GENNARO: Crystal Gennaro, FAA.

9 MS. KOSCHIG: Betty Koschig, ATC, NTSB.

10 MS. HUSCHKA: Amy Huschka, NATCA.

11 MS. LEWIS: Thank you, guys.

12 The purpose of investigation is safety, to gather facts and
13 determine a probable cause and prevent reoccurrence. Our role is
14 not to assign fault, blame, or liability. This interview is part
15 of the fact-finding phase of this investigation. As part of the
16 regulations you're welcome to have a representative of your choice
17 and I see you have someone in the room with you today, is this the
18 representative that you would like to have?

19 MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

20 MS. LEWIS: Okay. And would you please state your name?

21 MR. STEELE: Frederick Steele, F-r-e-d-e-r-i-c-k S-t-e-e-l-e.

22 MS. LEWIS: Thank you so much.

23 The reason for the interview today is to discuss the accident
24 that occurred on May 15th of 2024 regarding 4-7 Whiskey Tango.
25 We'll be asking a variety of questions so if at any time you have

1 any questions, please stop us and feel free to ask. Please answer
2 all the questions to your best of your recollection. If you do
3 not know an answer to a question, "I don't know" is perfectly
4 acceptable. If you don't recall, "I don't recall" is perfectly
5 acceptable. If you don't understand a question, ask to have it
6 repeated or explained. If at any time you wish to take a break or
7 want to consult with your representative, let us know, you can ask
8 questions here or you can step outside, whatever is most
9 comfortable for you. Do you have any questions so far?

10 MR. JOHNSON: No.

11 MS. LEWIS: Okay. Again, the way things will work is I'll
12 start out asking some questions and we'll go around the room and
13 everyone will ask a couple questions. Again, if you see us
14 writing notes, it's just to help us jog our memory on things we
15 want to ask you and we'll destroy them after the on-scene portion
16 of the investigation. And that is the basic structure of our
17 interviews. Do you have any questions?

18 MR. JOHNSON: No questions.

19 MS. LEWIS: Okay.

20 INTERVIEW OF DAVID (GARY) JOHNSON, JR.

21 BY MS. LEWIS:

22 Q. So what was your age last week on the 15th?

23 A. Fifty-six.

24 Q. Thank you. What are your operating initials?

25 A. Golf Juliet.

1 Q. Perfect. What's your title or position here?

2 A. TMC, Traffic Management Coordinator.

3 Q. Perfect, thank you. Do you have any military or pre-FAA ATC
4 work experience?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay. So tell me about your FAA -- your FAA experience, so
7 how did you -- how did you decide to get into air traffic and tell
8 me the process of how you did that.

9 A. It all started back in probably late 1988, my father is a
10 pilot --

11 Q. Um-hum.

12 A. -- not professional, just a general aviation pilot. I always
13 -- for as long back as I can remember, I've flown in an airplane
14 from, you know, Cessna 150s to -- you know, he currently has a
15 Cherokee 140, he still flies. I got my pilot's license, I don't
16 keep it current, but -- so I've been around aviation my whole
17 life.

18 I used to travel with him because he's a traveling salesman,
19 at the time -- he's retired -- throughout Mississippi and even
20 part of -- just the Memphis area and I used to carry a scanner
21 with me and I always was interested in aviation, would listen to
22 air traffic. I didn't know anything, I was kind of ignorant,
23 like, you know, as people can be about what an en route center is,
24 they think -- you know, everybody, air traffic is a tower, you
25 work at the tower.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. And I thought the same thing. I'd, you know, tune in to like
3 Jackson, Mississippi frequencies and things like that and so, you
4 know, I was always interested in listening to air traffic. So he
5 used to get -- he still does -- a flying magazine and so this is
6 back in the late '80s, they were still trying to recover from the
7 firings, you know, that Reagan did. They had like an ad in there,
8 interested in aviation, you know, for air traffic -- I mean,
9 interested in air traffic, I forget how it was worded.

10 Q. Yeah, sure.

11 A. Anyway, I filled that information out, sent it in, they sent
12 something back and went to like an interview down in Meridian,
13 Mississippi and then went to a physical in Jackson and then they
14 gave me a date to go to Oklahoma City and so it all happened
15 really quick, I was -- back then they called it the fast track.

16 Q. Oh, yeah.

17 A. Went up to Oklahoma City and passed Oklahoma City at the
18 time, so now we're talking July of 1989. I was -- so at that
19 point, they -- we could choose, you know, you could do en route or
20 you could do terminal. They only picked regions so, you know,
21 southern region, en route, terminal, and I saw for en route, you
22 know, you start out -- they had a GS scale back then, you know,
23 you made the most money at en route, GS-14s. Terminals, you could
24 only start, I think, at like a -- what they would call Level 3 or
25 something now, but you had to work your way up, so I said I'm just

1 -- you know, I'm in the job for, you know, for pay. So I ended up
2 coming to Memphis Center, this was in October of '89 when I passed
3 Oklahoma City, and then from October of '89, I've been at Memphis
4 Center my whole career.

5 Q. Wow.

6 A. I've been in two different areas, as a controller, and then I
7 did some time as a frontline manager/supervisor, then I went back
8 as a controller again in a different area and then I came up to
9 traffic management, which I'm doing now, currently, TMC, and I've
10 been doing that for almost 15 years, for a long time, since like
11 2008, I want to think, '09, maybe, but yeah, like 15 years I've
12 been in traffic management the whole time ever since. And then
13 I'm two months away from retirement.

14 Q. Wow, wow.

15 A. That's my career in a nutshell.

16 Q. Yeah. Do you have any big plans for retirement, are you
17 going to stay here?

18 A. Probably stay here. My wife is from this area, her family's
19 here, her parents, they're like 80 years old. We've always
20 flirted with the idea of moving, going to east Tennessee, she's
21 got a friend that lives in Chattanooga, but the closer it got to
22 me actually retiring and the more she was like I don't want to
23 leave my dad.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. You know, because parents, when they get to 80, you know,

1 they're not going anywhere, they live in the same house they've
2 lived in for a long time, so I'm here for a while.

3 Q. Yeah, yeah.

4 A. Plus we have a 24-year-old, we got to figure out what she's
5 going to do with her life --

6 Q. Right.

7 (Crosstalk)

8 MS. LEWIS: You have got a lot of things going on here.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, the future's -- yeah.

10 MS. LEWIS: Yeah.

11 MR. JOHNSON: I don't know what it holds yet, so we're here.

12 BY MS. LEWIS:

13 Q. When you traveled around with your dad when he was a
14 salesman, did you travel in an airplane or was it more car when
15 you were with him?

16 A. Car, it's all cars.

17 Q. So you got to listen to a lot of different transmissions when
18 you were travelling around --

19 (Crosstalk)

20 MR. JOHNSON: But I just -- I always -- yeah, I always -- you
21 know, you could scan and see, and plus he had airplane charts, you
22 know, so you could look and see what the frequencies were for, you
23 know, like towers at -- yeah, I think maybe Biloxi had a tower,
24 you know, of course, you know, Jackson and yeah, well, you just
25 listen. Sometimes you would just scan, you can just let it scan,

1 you know --

2 MS. LEWIS: Yeah.

3 MR. JOHNSON: You could scan around, but anyways. So I was
4 always interested in aviation and it led to this job.

5 MS. LEWIS: That's really, like, a really special memory,
6 too.

7 MR. JOHNSON: It is, you know, my dad appreciated it and he
8 kind of still does, you know, he always seems to brag, yeah, my
9 son is an air traffic controller, you know, any time we're --

10 MS. LEWIS: Yeah.

11 MR. JOHNSON: -- at different things with his group. You
12 know, I've had maps printed and taken them down or they ask me
13 questions sometimes when I'm down there, you know, they'll do --
14 they have like these, you know, monthly suppers and things --

15 MS. LEWIS: Yeah.

16 MR. JOHNSON: -- for, you know, their groups and
17 unofficially, you know, I might --

18 MS. LEWIS: Yeah.

19 MR. JOHNSON: -- go down there to eat with them and they'd be
20 asking questions about different things, so --

21 MS. LEWIS: It's a good outreach, informal, you know.

22 MR. JOHNSON: An informal --

23 MS. LEWIS: Yeah.

24 MR. JOHNSON: -- connection to an airplane.

25 BY MS. LEWIS:

1 Q. It's important, you know, it is. It really is important,
2 that's exciting. In the TMU unit, are you certified on all the --
3 all positions?

4 A. Of course.

5 Q. Tell me about what positions they have in TMU.

6 A. TMU technically has seven positions --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- plus your CIC desk, which every area has.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. TMU works CIC, as well.

11 Q. Um-hum.

12 A. But we have seven, so they're -- they get rolled into roughly
13 two, maybe three positions, depending on the time of day. So you
14 have -- we call them an EC1 and an EC2, there's a scope for those,
15 your En Route Coordinator 1, En Route Coordinator 2. There's an
16 NC, which is your national coordinator, that's like your severe
17 routes and stuff position and it has an actual scope.

18 Then there's the Memphis, they split Memphis up into an AC
19 arrivals and a DC departure position. That one has a scope. Then
20 you have -- so how many did I give you, one, two, three, four,
21 five -- and then you have that weather coordinator position and
22 then you have a military position. Military, weather coordinator,
23 they are never split from anything else, they're always rolled
24 into something else.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. When you work EC1, you're technically the military because
2 the military position desk or whatever, with -- they call it, we
3 call it SAMS, I think, from the user side they call it the MADE
4 (ph.) system, but it's where, you know, a lot of your restricted
5 areas, some of your MOA's, things like that, that need NOTAMs,
6 comes in on that system and it's right there next to your EC1.
7 And so those are kind of combined up and you're certified on
8 everything to do it all, so you'll kind of do that combined up.
9 EC2 is a different position and when you're on that position, you
10 know, your Memphis -- your AC and your DC from Memphis gets kind
11 of rolled into that, you glance over at your Memphis scope and see
12 what's going on over there, but it's just kind of rolled into that
13 EC1 at the same time.

14 And then you have that severe weather, that NC position, that
15 is -- can -- so that can be pushed into either, with the EC1
16 person or the EC2 person, depending -- you pick up -- so EC1 and
17 EC2, you know, you're -- we're always watching Atlanta, Charlotte,
18 DFW, Houston all the time, but Memphis Center is close enough to
19 Chicago, close enough to Denver, close enough to other airports
20 that a lot of times our facilities around us will ask us to move
21 some airplanes or some miles-in-trails, some traffic management
22 initiative to help them with their traffic. And that NC position,
23 you know, if we're doing miles-in-trail or different routes -- or
24 something for Chicago, will either get taken, you know, by EC1 or
25 EC2, you know, whoever can -- you know, doesn't have the work --

1 has the free workload, free enough time or whatever to also take
2 on that.

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. If we're all busy, if Atlanta's doing a lot of work and
5 Houston and a lot of focus that EC1 is doing, DFW has got some
6 routes and different things going on, then we have another scope
7 and we can split that NC position off and we can do Chicago or any
8 trans-con routes that go from, you know, East Coast to West Coast,
9 they call them trans-cons, we can split that position off and, you
10 know, we can have three TMCs working while you have your
11 supervisor going, as well.

12 So those are basic positions, but the military and the
13 weather coordinator, those don't get split. And the only time
14 that Memphis gets split is during the FedEx arrival push, Monday
15 through Friday, FedEx is coming in between, you know, 10:00 to
16 12:30, no, probably about 9:30 to 12:30, something like that, at
17 night.

18 And so we're watching them and taking care of any gate
19 balancing or whatever, miles-in-trail, whatever initiatives we
20 need to take we do that separately over here, but that only gets
21 split up during the later evenings. And at that point, you know,
22 usually your EC1 or EC2, something like that, is closed down and
23 you're focused kind of on that because everything else has died
24 off and your focus can be on Memphis. I don't know if you have
25 any questions about that, but the military, you know, we'll do a

1 little military at night, but -- because every evening these other
2 facilities are -- you know, these restricted areas and stuff, they
3 will put in their request for the military usage or whatever for
4 the next day and we'll go in, in TMU, and we'll sit at that
5 position but while we're sitting there, you know, we could still
6 be doing other things. TMU, you know, is usually multitasking,
7 you know, we're not just doing one thing at a time. When you're
8 sitting there focused and you're doing the military it's because
9 now you have time because, you know, maybe Atlanta and everything
10 has all died off, the traffic's died off, there's nothing drawing
11 our attention to that, so now we can focus on just doing this
12 military, pull everything down in the logs, send it all to the
13 areas and stuff for the next day, that kind of thing.

14 Q. Thank you, that was very helpful to us.

15 A. And then, of course, your CIC position, which oversees it
16 all --

17 Q. Uh-huh.

18 A. -- and, you know, in the CIC position, you know, the
19 supervisor is generally there, but they're always tasked for doing
20 other things, like you've probably heard in the areas --

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. -- you know, the controllers are doing the CIC position --

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. -- the control position, a lot. And it's the same thing with
25 TMU, when you're doing that, you know, not only you're overseeing

1 listening to whatever TMIs, traffic management issues, may be
2 going on as far as routes, as far as severe weather, they might be
3 going on as far as miles-in-trail and different things and
4 negotiating stuff, but you're also watching the NAS monitor,
5 you're making sure you have all the sectors are all listed on
6 here, every 15-minute time block, the number of aircraft that are
7 either active or going -- or not active yet but, you know, are
8 scheduled to go into that sector during that time.

9 There's numbers that they call it red, when it goes to a
10 certain number, a sector can say they can take, you know, 17
11 flights, you know, during a certain time period. When it goes
12 over that during that 15-minute period, you know, they call it
13 going red, you know, TMU's responsibility is also to alleviate how
14 busy a sector is and everything, too, so the CIC position is doing
15 all that --

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. -- at the same time, too.

18 Q. Wow. Do you guys get up and go toward the sectors? How do
19 you get some of that information relayed to you and you relay it
20 to them?

21 A. Are you talking about the sectors, like controller sectors?

22 Q. Yeah, how does that work?

23 A. Oh. We have phones, so --

24 Q. Okay. So you call on the phones or the landlines?

25 A. No, we call the -- so each supervisor desk has a TMU phone,

1 it's a cordless phone --

2 Q. Oh.

3 A. -- and they also have a landline phone, I guess they call
4 them landlines now, but they also have another phone. So our
5 first priority is when we want to call about anything as far as
6 anything relatable to a sector or anything relatable to an area or
7 anything, we know what sector, we know which area they're in and
8 we'll call on the phone --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- and we'll call the supervisor, we don't -- you know, we're
11 told number one, rule number one, you know, don't call the sector
12 and talk to the controller because they're busy separating
13 airplanes --

14 Q. Got you.

15 A. -- right, we don't want to -- so we call the supervisor, we
16 talk to the supervisor and tell them what we need, then it's up to
17 the supervisor to go and relay that information in a timely
18 manner, if they can. You know, if they're busy, you know, then
19 it's subject to them. They'll tell us -- they're supposed to, it
20 doesn't always work -- but they're supposed to tell us if they
21 can't implement whatever it is we're asking due to -- whether it's
22 due to the weather, the airplane won't take it or the controller
23 is too busy to get to it or --

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. -- for whatever reason, they will tell us and then we'll do

1 what we need to do with that information, which we do it by phone
2 call. Or sometimes, you know, occasionally we'll walk down
3 there --

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. -- but by doing that, you're leaving your position --

6 Q. Sure.

7 A. -- you know what I'm saying?

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. So it's done by phone.

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. A lot of times a supervisor will walk around and come and
12 talk to us face to face, point some things out --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- and tell us. You know, so it's kind of -- it's a two-way
15 thing.

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. They usually will walk around to talk to us, where we're
18 usually calling to talk to them.

19 Q. Okay. That makes sense, okay. So you were talking a little
20 bit about the weather coordinator position that is not normally
21 standalone.

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. So tell me, like, what is the definition of that position
24 that's obviously connected to, you know, whatever it's combined up
25 with, but what is that aspect of TMU, what is that?

1 A. So in my knowledge, that -- so when I first came, because
2 I've been up there a long time, when I first came into TMU, we had
3 to train on the weather coordinator position. Now it's kind of
4 rolled into everything because automation and different -- the
5 rules have changed now. But what it used to be is TMU used to be
6 responsible for PIREPs, any time the CWSU unit was not there,
7 whether they went home at 9 o'clock or for whatever reason, if
8 they weren't there, PIREPs came to TMU.

9 TMU was certified, we got checked out on going around to
10 the CWSU unit, getting on their computer, pushing a shortcut that
11 would bring up the format for a PIREP and then we would enter in
12 the format information in the correct -- the airplane or whatever,
13 the PIREP information in the correct format and then just have
14 that disseminated out, that was like part of our job at the time,
15 which --

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. -- is not the case anymore. Now PIREPs go to Flight Data,
18 the urgent PIREPs. They used to go to, you know, CWSU people or
19 Flight Data, I'm not sure where it goes now. TMU is out of the
20 PIREP market. So now, I guess, I mean, you would call it
21 familiarization with, you know, SIGMETs and the fronts being on a
22 -- you know, looking at the CoSPAs, knowing what -- knowing what
23 it means and how to pull it up, we can, you know, go to
24 aviation.gov and, you know, /zme and pull up the weather and see
25 the different -- the different, I don't know, CoSPAs, what, you

1 know, weather, whatever it is that's going on, I guess, you know,
2 to be able to pull that information up. I think the definition
3 for it, you know, for what it is for TMU has -- you know, has kind
4 of changed, you know --

5 Q. Sure.

6 A. -- from when I first came in to what it is now, it's
7 different. You know, I don't know exactly --

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. -- what you're looking for in that answer.

10 Q. Yeah, no, that's perfect. So will you -- so let me do a
11 couple more housekeeping things and then I really want to pick
12 your brain about a couple more things. What are your days off,
13 your RDOs?

14 A. Friday and Saturdays.

15 Q. Okay. Are you normally scheduled overtime?

16 A. This time of year, I would say yes.

17 Q. Yeah. Did you work the day of the --

18 A. I did.

19 Q. -- accident? Okay. What shift were you working?

20 A. A day shift.

21 Q. Day shift. So approximately like 6:30 --

22 A. Five. No -- so TMU starts their shifts at 5:00 a.m. --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- and then depending on what day it is, Monday through

25 Fridays our shifts start at 5:00 a.m., end at 12:00 because of the

1 flex time, but technically, we start at 5:00 a.m. and we end at
2 1:00 a.m., you know, because of the FedEx push, FedEx is coming
3 until approximately 1:00 a.m. There's some flexibility in there
4 but I'm sort of speaking in general.

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. But every day, Monday through Sunday, through Sunday starts
7 at 5:00 a.m. Monday through Friday ends at 1:00 a.m., Saturday
8 and Sunday, they end at 10:00 p.m. because there is no FedEx push,
9 so they're just here for general traffic flows at that point --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- on Saturday and Sundays.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. We kind of police ourselves, we can hold ourselves over if we
14 need to, we stay until the work needs to be done.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And we make that call ourselves because generally speaking,
17 you know, we don't -- the OM is there, technically, the operation
18 manager is in charge because the supervisors in TMU, they don't --
19 they'll work like a 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., maybe a 2:00 p.m. to
20 10:00 p.m. or sometimes 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and if they need to
21 stay until 10:00 or 11:00, they might. But generally speaking,
22 you know, the TMC is working from, you know, the FedEx push, from
23 that 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. until that 1:00 a.m. or -- you know, so
24 they make the decision, or the OM, technically, can make that
25 decision to carry, but then if you say hey, I need to stay over

1 because I'm still watching these, you know, this FedEx and because
2 we had this ground delay problem, these ground stops, everything
3 slowed down, they won't be coming in until probably 2:00 in the
4 morning, I'm going to stay open and they'll go yes, sure. You
5 know --

6 Q. Sure.

7 A. -- they're not going to deny --

8 Q. Right.

9 A. -- what we want, so --

10 Q. Right. So on that day --

11 A. But that day, I had a 5:00 to 1:00.

12 Q. Five to one. So yeah, so this happened, which was, well,
13 right about the time you're going to go, when you were going to go
14 home.

15 A. That's right.

16 Q. Yeah. Do you ever -- so on that day, so do you remember any
17 weather coming in to the area or was it affecting you guys?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Yeah. Can you describe a little bit?

20 A. I can't remember the exact specifics of everything --

21 Q. Sure.

22 A. -- but I know that that day we were doing -- we had some TMI
23 initiatives, traffic management initiatives that was affecting --
24 because -- so Charlotte, for instance, you know, we're watching
25 Charlotte all the time, we feed a lot of arrivals over Nashville

1 going into Charlotte and over Atlanta, Vulcan (ph.), like Atlanta
2 going over Charlotte, we have two feeds to Atlanta Center for
3 Charlotte arrivals and they had a play-out that day that because
4 of storms and things like that, that were just kind of north of
5 Nashville and extended kind of into Indy Center and stuff and, you
6 know, some of the stuff maybe south of Nashville, because that's
7 the thing about thunderstorms is a lot of times it's not solid,
8 you know, it's pop-up, spotty. But anyway, we were routing
9 airplanes kind of down around through Atlanta and then going in
10 from that arrival through Atlanta --

11 Q. Um-hum.

12 A. -- not using the one over in Nashville at the time.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. But I know Nashville was -- so they were IMC, so that's
15 another -- you know, we've got tools, one of them is called like a
16 flight schedule monitor, we can see the aircraft that are
17 scheduled to come in to an airport, you know, we're just watching
18 our pacing airports, like Nashville is one of our -- and so
19 Nashville and Memphis will give us their runways and give us their
20 weather conditions. I know at the time Nashville, they reported
21 like an IMC condition, single runway, whatever rate they had, but
22 I remember we had to look at the FSM, look at the rate and then,
23 you know -- and that's part of TMU's job, too, is not to overfeed
24 the airport and so we had some miles-in-trail and different things
25 out, you know, feeding for the arrivals into Nashville for the

1 Nashville airport, that's really the only thing we're looking at.
2 But, I mean, that area was -- as far as Nashville itself and the
3 TRACON, you know, all the gates were working, the Nashville TRACON
4 wasn't impacted enough that, you know, we and TMU were doing it,
5 we just put out miles-in-trail to slow everything down because,
6 you know, they had some meteorological conditions, they call it,
7 you know, they lowered their runway down to, I think, a 29 rate,
8 which is pretty low. Once they -- because generally, I don't know
9 why Nashville is on a single runway a lot but, you know, they can
10 go anywhere from like a 43, 39, down to a 29, anything in between,
11 you know, Nashville's runway is --

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. I don't know. It's kind of unpredictable, what Nashville
14 puts out, so I do remember it being low, I do remember having to
15 put out, you know, some miles-in-trail and stuff, but I don't
16 remember having to move anybody, you know. All the gates were
17 going with some minor deviations, which happens, you know, you all
18 are here today, I mean, we had --

19 Q. Right.

20 A. -- a lot of weather and thunderstorms and stuff this morning
21 and different things going on, it was the same at Memphis, you
22 know, we had to move some airplanes around --

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. -- do some different gates, the gate files in Memphis kept
25 working the whole time, you know, they went to a single runway for

1 the weather and different things and then the weather moves off
2 and you got clear skies and --

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. -- you know, it's just a part of summer.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. And I remember, you know, just kind of generally, the same
7 thing. I don't remember, we never -- Nashville never did lose
8 their airport or anything like that, so we never did have to hold
9 or do anything for Nashville.

10 Q. I just have one more question and I'm going to pass it. So
11 do you feel, in your opinion, that what -- the weather conditions
12 depicted on the controller scopes, does it relatively match what
13 you're seeing with all your radar -- or your weather tools up at
14 TMU?

15 A. So you're talking about their scopes --

16 Q. Yes.

17 A. -- and you're talking about whatever the weather -- what is
18 it called on our strips anymore?

19 MR. STEELE: WARP?

20 MR. JOHNSON: Is it just the WARP?

21 MR. JOHNSON: So that is not -- that is -- I don't know.
22 See, I'm speaking for the engineers --

23 MS. LEWIS: Okay.

24 MR. JOHNSON: -- but I don't think it was ever designed to be
25 something -- and I remember when I was a controller, and I haven't

1 worked traffic in like 10 years so I'm not a subject matter expert
2 on this anymore, but it's not -- it's designed to give you good
3 general information on the scopes, it's just lines, there's no
4 cells, there's no -- it isn't kind of still like that, there's
5 just blotchy areas or whatever, you are not allowed -- you can
6 generalize, "I see weather, there's weather at your" -- you can
7 call positions for it, but you can't -- in an en-route
8 environment, they're not going to assign a heading to somebody to
9 go around weather, they're going to give a generalization.

10 They have the big screens up on TV, which is a better
11 depiction, look at that, match that to your scopes and then give a
12 general idea, you know, to pilots and let them make the decisions,
13 do they need to go left, do they need to go right or what they
14 need to do to get away from the weather is kind of up to the
15 pilots, not -- en-route environment, not necessarily the
16 controllers, so the -- you know.

17 And the scopes lag behind, you know, that's the thing about
18 weather, too, even on our weather stuff, you know, the products
19 that we have are old, so to speak, I don't know how minutes I used
20 to -- I had this information, seven minutes, maybe, but there is
21 some time frame for that weather information, you know, it's not
22 -- it's not as current --

23 MS. LEWIS: Sure.

24 MR. JOHNSON: -- as it -- I don't know if it ever can be, I'm
25 not sure that it was designed to be that specific on the en route

1 because, you know, the en-route radar is a slower spin, it's a
2 slower product. So anyway, I'm not the engineer, so I'm not sure
3 it's the design, necessarily, but --

4 MS. LEWIS: Well, I appreciate that.

5 MR. JOHNSON: -- I don't think it matches up perfectly, no.

6 MS. LEWIS: I appreciate that.

7 MR. JOHNSON: And we in TMU, we're not looking at the
8 weather, really, on the ERAM scopes, particularly. We're looking
9 at different weather products --

10 MS. LEWIS: Right.

11 MR. JOHNSON: -- that are on our TSDs, they're called.

12 MS. LEWIS: Uh-huh.

13 MR. JOHNSON: Or we have an ITWS. If we're talking about
14 like Nashville and Memphis, we can see real time on our ITWS --

15 MS. LEWIS: Uh-huh.

16 MR. JOHNSON: -- when it's coming through.

17 MS. LEWIS: Yeah.

18 MR. JOHNSON: But as far as the ERAM and the scopes, you
19 know, no, it's not the same.

20 MS. LEWIS: Thank you. Thank you for that. I'm going to
21 pass it to Paul.

22 BY MR. SUFFERN:

23 Q. Yeah. Thanks, Gary, the descriptions you've given to Sarah
24 and the group were --

25 A. Probably not using the right terminology.

1 Q. No, you're great. You're great. You mentioned briefly in
2 your background about the weather coordinator position, how it's
3 changed over the years, and you've been at that position 15 years,
4 so I'm assuming there have been people that have come through the
5 TMU, have been trained as other individual TMU folks or CICs on
6 that position, is there any training on how to have the function
7 of the weather coordinator position?

8 A. I would say, in my recollection, there is no specific list of
9 things that have to be checked off to be checked out on a weather
10 coordinator. Weather gets rolled into everything we do. TMU is
11 all about -- we're not all about -- the only time we're about
12 low-level stuff is if it's really slowing an arrival rate down to
13 an airport, icing conditions, things like that, you know, if it's
14 affecting the airport, is it affecting the arrivals, departures of
15 a larger -- you know, the pace in the airports.

16 We're focused mainly on the thunderstorms, the higher
17 altitude stuff, all the deviations around different things and
18 that goes with -- from training from day one is "what's the
19 weather doing."

20 So that weather coordinator position is a part of every
21 position in TMU, it's like -- it's like a limb of your body, I
22 mean, you don't get checked out on any position without also kind
23 of being checked out on the weather coordinator position. It
24 might be a listed position that we are getting time on and
25 working, we're marking weather coordinator, but we're working that

1 because it's a part of -- when I'm training on -- training
2 somebody on the EC2 position, you know, I could say four hours of
3 training well two hours, we could mark that as weather coordinator
4 and two hours of EC1 because it's all rolled into the same basket,
5 I mean, TMU is all about traffic, the flows of traffic, and what
6 the weather is doing, what the deviations are doing or is it
7 slowing stuff down at an airport, you know, it's all rolled into
8 the same -- into the same basket of everything, it's a part --
9 it's a part of every position, except maybe the military. The
10 military is a position on its own, everything else, weather
11 coordinator is rolled in with it and is a part of every position
12 of it.

13 Q. Okay. That's helpful. As far as going to real live traffic
14 and things like that, like for instance, today we had weather
15 somewhere in your airspace and you have that position at TMU, are
16 you giving a heads up to -- I'll just pick an area, Area 3, hey,
17 you got weather coming in, in 15 minutes, is that part of your
18 responsibility, as far as TMU, calling the SUP down there and
19 letting him know hey, we got a line of weather coming through in
20 15 minutes or --

21 A. No.

22 Q. That's not part your position?

23 A. Uh-uh.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Not to a specific area like that.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. The supervisor and everybody, they have -- they have the same
3 information and weather products that we have, they're seeing the
4 same screens, they've got TSD, whether they use it or they can ask
5 us exactly what they're looking at, they have the same tools and
6 so, you know, they're responsible for, I guess their area,
7 necessarily, and to communicate with us how that weather may be
8 impacting their area for us to help them out versus, you know, us
9 necessarily helping them because we're looking at -- you know,
10 we're not looking at all the traffic that is in the area at that
11 time and all of the weather that might be impacting that area,
12 necessarily, at the time because that area, they run across --
13 that area of weather might run across three different areas.

14 And so we're looking at the overall picture of how this comes
15 in three different areas and how many airplanes in general are
16 going through there and how it affects, you know, the overall flow
17 in that vicinity to make sure somebody doesn't get -- one area,
18 one sector doesn't get too busy, we're doing the overall flow of
19 things. But as far as, you know, them saying okay, I'm fixing to
20 get hit by storms, you know, they need to be aware of it
21 themselves, you know, they've got responsibility, too.

22 Q. Okay. As far as weather tools that help you do your job the
23 best there in TMU, do you have any favorite tools that are most
24 helpful for you?

25 A. I mean, one of the -- favorite tools, really, is CWSU, your

1 -- you know, your department. We are -- TMU is -- I mean, we're
2 located right there with the OM desk, with the meteorology desk
3 and then us on purpose, you know, we're on a first name basis with
4 them and they're -- you know, except for the new people, but they
5 get to be on a first name basis with everybody in TMU because it's
6 our responsibility to ask questions, "I see there's weather and
7 what it's doing, what is it going to do, it looks like it's
8 building here, how is it affecting these routes or how is it
9 affecting this airport, how" -- "what is your prediction for
10 this," you get that information, that knowledge, from them and
11 then it's their responsibility, too, that if I'm busy doing other
12 stuff to come to me and tell me hey, I see a growing area of
13 weather that's right here and what it's doing, so I would call
14 that and then they have the CoSPA or whatever's kind of playing
15 right here to point some things out to us, but that's probably our
16 number one tool.

17 Q. Okay. Do you have any challenges in TMU with any weather
18 equipment or weather tools that you have that may break or are
19 less reliable or things like that, that --

20 A. Any tool breaks, right? Reliability. But in general
21 speaking, I can't just think of something that man, I wish this
22 thing would work because it's always broke, if that's the
23 question. No, I mean everything is, you know, fairly reliable, we
24 can look at it, weather is very unpredictable, we can get a
25 general idea, it changes.

1 Some things, you know, you do and it's tactical stuff because
2 you know an hour from now it's going to be different. CWSU
3 personnel will tell us one thing and they may say yeah, it looks
4 like this and the model's doing this, but I think this is going to
5 happen, maybe they're right, maybe it happens in a different time
6 frame, you know, it's just -- it's unpredictable, but I mean, the
7 product we've had -- I mean, it's -- that's all I know and it's
8 -- you know, it works, you know, worked for, I guess, what it's
9 supposed to do for a number of years.

10 Q. Just going back briefly to the PIREP thing, you mentioned
11 that the weather coordinator used to type in the PIREPs or used to
12 go to CWSU when they were closed, related to PIREPs there. As far
13 as areas that, you know, it's below 5,000 and 5 or the weather
14 conditions determine that they should solicit PIREPs, who -- is it
15 TMU's function to go down and make sure that areas are getting
16 PIREPs, is it kind of we have this new screen now and it's like --
17 you know, it's a stop light and so if you're red, it's the
18 supervisor's job to see that it's red and make sure that the
19 controllers are getting PIREPs?

20 A. So you're speaking out of my realm.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. It's not TMU's responsibility, in any event, I don't know, I
23 don't know who makes that stuff red, I don't know who's in charge
24 of that screen, that's all handled outside of TMU, we don't
25 solicit PIREPs. CWSU will ask the areas, maybe, the OM may ask

1 the areas we need solicitation, they have standup, you know, and
2 stuff, they'll tell the supervisors you need to solicit PIREPs
3 from these certain areas, so TMU's not doing that part of it.
4 Now, we appreciate the -- the PIREPs do print out, I know that
5 might be a question that's coming up, might be getting ahead of
6 myself, TMU does see PIREPs, they do print, we look at them.

7 We'll glance at them, we don't keep them, we don't do
8 anything with those regular PIREPs, it gives us a general idea,
9 maybe there's chop in this area, there's low ceilings in a certain
10 area, but generally, we're getting that from -- the CWSU people
11 are telling us hey, there's a lot of chop in this block of
12 airspace or there's -- you know, we're kind of getting that close,
13 so some of the PIREPs, general PIREPs, are just kind of like an
14 overview, we don't read through them all.

15 When it comes from urgent PIREP, yes, we take the urgent
16 PIREP, we read it, we put it on our supervisor's or the CIC desk,
17 we're looking at that urgent PIREP. If we get more than one and
18 it's kind of in the ultra-highs and it's for an area or whatever,
19 you know, we might call the command center, we might say hey,
20 we're getting several urgent PIREPs for severe chop here, I need
21 to tactically move some airplanes around this area, I mean, we get
22 involved when it gets urgent. And sometimes when there's a lot of
23 PIREPs, even if they're not urgent, if we know that there is
24 moderate chop, even, let's say, in a certain area of airspace,
25 it's on the back end of a storm or leading up to something, you

1 know, we can go ahead and use that information to say we need to
2 move some airplanes around, we have justification for it. Command
3 center, a lot of times when you're moving more than one or two
4 airplanes, they won't -- okay, I need to move these six, "Well,
5 why?" They want justification, you know, PIREPs help that.

6 Q. That makes sense, yeah. And then I think just one more
7 question I had and going back to the day of the event, you know,
8 how were you notified about the accident and --

9 A. Well, the -- so any accidents, because this was the day of
10 one event, but I think there's more than one accident during that
11 week, is -- so we can hear -- so we hear -- so Flight Data is
12 right there, too. The OM is here, they do ALNOTs for things,
13 Flight Data is -- they send the ALNOTs out, they got something,
14 when they send an ALNOT out it makes this sound, you know, it
15 sounds like a siren or something when they do an ALNOT.

16 The RCC, for some reason, has TMU's telephone number, so the
17 RCC will call and they'll say hey, this is reference ALNOT and
18 they'll have a number and I'll say stand by because we're not any
19 part of that, we'll just tell the OM hey, RCC's on here with your
20 ALNOT. And so we're hearing it secondhand kind of thing, you
21 know, we're not direct from the OM saying hey, we got this thing
22 going on, you know, that's not in our realm, we're just
23 overhearing what's going on and what's happened or they've lost an
24 airplane or this, that and the other, but it's not any direct
25 connection to TMU, it's just because we happen to be up there in

1 earshot.

2 MR. SUFFERN: Thanks, Gary, that's all I have for right now.

3 MS. LEWIS: Okay. Crystal?

4 BY MS. GENNARO:

5 Q. I have a couple. Do the OS's ever go to TMU to ask you about
6 weather?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. They do.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. What about the CWSU, do they also feel comfortable
11 approaching them?

12 A. Yes, we're first name basis, they come talk to us, we come
13 talk to them, they give us information, sometimes it's, you know
14 -- sometimes it's more than we need, maybe it's a little outside
15 of ZME's airspace, I think their -- I'm not sure what their rules
16 are but maybe, you know, there's some parameter if it's within a
17 hundred miles of ZME, maybe they report something.

18 But yeah, they -- we rely on them to come and tell us
19 anything significant, any changes in the weather and anything
20 significant. And then we can -- we'll go around and talk to them
21 all the time and they'll pull up their weather products, of
22 course, they have a lot more in-depth, a lot more -- visualization
23 is better, you know, than we have and so if we have a real -- a
24 real question about some weather, what it's doing and what it's
25 impacting and how long it's going to be impacting, we will walk

1 around there, we'll speak with them and they'll show us different,
2 this is what this model is doing, this is what this model is doing
3 and, you know, we do all that on a regular basis.

4 Q. And what tools are they using?

5 A. I don't know what the name of it is.

6 Q. Okay. That's okay.

7 A. Maybe -- you know, maybe he knows. But they have different,
8 different tools. They have different screens that do -- they're
9 showing me different things.

10 MS. GENNARO: That's all I have.

11 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

12 Betty?

13 MS. KOSCHIG: Yikes.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Yikes?

15 (Laughter.)

16 BY MS. KOSCHIG:

17 Q. I've got some questions about like the flow with command
18 center.

19 A. Okay.

20 Q. So are you on those calls every day?

21 A. If the command center wants to make the center to be on those
22 calls, of course.

23 Q. Yeah. Okay, so you're not necessarily, though, every day it
24 doesn't --

25 A. What calls are we speaking of, specifically?

1 Q. You know, like the morning calls and the afternoon calls
2 where they have --

3 A. The SPOES (ph.) or whatever they call it, every two hours?

4 Q. Yeah, yeah.

5 A. Yeah, Memphis center's always on those calls.

6 Q. So do you -- and okay, so that --

7 A. Always on those calls, yes.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And we give input if we need to or they'll ask us questions
10 on those calls if we need to.

11 Q. Okay. Does that have any impact on, like, for Nashville area
12 as far as their -- the configuration? Well, I would say does ZME
13 have any impact on how Nashville configures their airport?

14 A. That's their airport, they tell us --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. -- what they want and what they're doing and what they need.

17 Q. Okay, that's great. I'm just making sure.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. And also, how is your relationship with Nashville, working-
20 wise?

21 A. I mean, it's -- it's good.

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. Nashville is in a transition phase --

24 Q. Right.

25 A. -- so there sometime is some feelings that get rubbed, I

1 guess, when you're in a transition phase and you're trying to do
2 things different and it's been going on for, I don't know how
3 long, a year or two, I don't know.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. You all might know, but there is a time period where, you
6 know, Nashville got a change, they're changing the way they
7 operate, as far as I know, they're adding and expanding their
8 runways, they're doing different things to try to up their game,
9 so to speak, I'm not sure of, you know, the right term for that,
10 but -- because I've heard rumor, I haven't necessarily seen it,
11 but they're supposed to get more flights, more Southwest, you
12 know, there's supposed to be an increase in Nashville.

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. And so they're in a transition and they do things different
15 than Memphis than we're used to, so sometimes we'll have to
16 question Nashville about the runways or why they're doing this
17 rate. If I have things, we'll question them, but the decision in
18 what they're doing, of course, it's their airport and it's up to
19 them.

20 You know, if I question something like, you know, I can see
21 the weather and I see the weather's moved off now, you're still
22 showing very low IMC and you're still showing this rate, you know,
23 is there any chance you can increase your rate, has that weather
24 moved off on -- you know. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, let me -- I think
25 I -- yeah, we can increase that, we can do -- sometimes, you know,

1 that communication is going on, but it's up to them whatever they
2 want to do, say no, yes, or whatever they need, you know, it's up
3 to them, it's their airport. Just like Memphis, you know, it's
4 their airport, they're going to tell us what they need and when
5 the FedEx push comes, they're going to tell us what they want and
6 what they're doing and -- or they need to switch runways or switch
7 things, it may -- you know, we may not like it, but it's their
8 airport and we got to adjust our feed and what we're doing to
9 them, so is that your question?

10 Q. Yeah, that's -- yeah. That is exactly what I just wanted to
11 know, how that worked and so we can get it from both ends to see
12 how --

13 A. Yeah, our relationship --

14 Q. -- because I know there's a lot of changes going on.

15 A. Well, you spoke with them, you know, so --

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. -- I'm curious how they think and you probably can't answer
18 that question, how they think their relationship is with Memphis.

19 (Laughter.)

20 MR. JOHNSON: But, you know. It's like having two ball
21 teams, right, you know, you're -- I don't know if where you're
22 from, necessarily, but you know, you could be a Mississippi State
23 fan and an Ole Miss fan, you know, and --

24 MS. KOSCHIG: Oh, yeah.

25 MR. JOHNSON: -- and making -- you know. And this facility's

1 -- and areas can even be like that, Area 2 is -- yeah. So I mean,
2 there's always that, but we're working together, we're all
3 professionals and we all have a job to do and we all want to do
4 our job and we want to do it safely, we want to do it efficiently.
5 You know, sometimes if I'm calling Nashville and I'm saying hey,
6 you know, can you up the rate or whatever it's because I want --
7 I'm trying to help them be efficient, too, and from my opinion and
8 my standpoint, I've got to ask questions and they can do the same
9 for me.

10 They can say -- and they did, they did it this morning, you
11 know, they put out a restriction or whatever, they're asking for
12 like 15 in trail over a certain fix, they had some weather, they
13 wanted to slow things down on that side and, you know, you take it
14 and we do what we can for them, you know, and you make -- you
15 know. People are people but, you know, you're in here to do the
16 job together and I think our relationship with them is as well as
17 it is with any other facility, there's nothing, nothing
18 different --

19 (Crosstalk)

20 MS. KOSCHIG: Nashville didn't say anything bad about you
21 guys.

22 (Laughter.)

23 MR. JOHNSON: You know, several of their controllers and
24 supervisors are from Memphis --

25 MS. KOSCHIG: Yeah.

1 MS. LEWIS: Yeah.

2 MR. JOHNSON: -- they were right here in Memphis Center, they
3 went to Nashville, several of them are, so --

4 MS. KOSCHIG: It does seem like a good working relationship,
5 actually.

6 MR. JOHNSON: It is.

7 MS. KOSCHIG: Just curious.

8 MS. LEWIS: Thanks, Betty.

9 Amy?

10 MS. HUSCHKA: Actually, I had one question and he worked his
11 way through it already.

12 MR. JOHNSON: I must be speaking too much.

13 MS. KOSCHIG: No.

14 MS. GENNARO: No.

15 MS. LEWIS: Very, very helpful, yeah. We appreciate it. I
16 don't have anything right now.

17 Paul?

18 MR. SUFFERN: I had more questions but he answered what I
19 had, so thanks.

20 MS. LEWIS: Crystal?

21 MS. GENNARO: No more.

22 MS. LEWIS: Betty?

23 MS. KOSCHIG: No more. Okay.

24 BY MS. LEWIS:

25 Q. Are there any questions that you thought we would ask you

1 that we didn't ask you?

2 A. No. I knew it would be weather related, mainly, and --

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. -- I just want to assure you all that yeah, I mean, we're
5 doing what we can --

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. -- and the weather is so dynamic and everything and --

8 Q. Do you have any questions for us?

9 A. No.

10 Q. No?

11 A. I don't know what I would ask you.

12 Q. Are you ready to get out of here?

13 (Laughter.)

14 MR. JOHNSON: I get paid until I --

15 MS. LEWIS: Yeah.

16 (Laughter.)

17 (Crosstalk)

18 MS. LEWIS: Well, it's exactly 2 o'clock and it's probably a
19 good time to say the interview is stopped at 2 o'clock.

20 (Whereupon, at 2:00 p.m., the interview concluded.)

21

22

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL PLANE CRASH NEAR FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE ON MAY 15, 2024
Interview of David (Gary) Johnson

ACCIDENT NO.: ERA24FA217

PLACE: Memphis, Tennessee

DATE: May 23, 2024

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber