

On 6/26/2019, Senior Special Agent Dennis Tracy of the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division was the pilot in command (PIC) a McDonnell Douglas MD-500E helicopter with tail number N500SC in the area of Summerville Airport (KDYB). The co-pilot of the helicopter was Bob Brickley. The winds at KDYB were from 030 at 8 knots. Upon landing at Summerville Airport on the taxiway parallel to Runway 6, S/A Tracy taxied to the grass area in between the ramp and the taxiway and landed on a slight co-pilot side high slope (placing the co-pilot side on the upper side of the slope). The co-pilot exited the aircraft and helped a law enforcement officer exit from the co-pilot rear seat. The co-pilot advised S/A Tracy that he was going to check with the FBO (Fixed Base Operation) in reference to getting a fuel truck to come out to the helicopter. During some point, without the knowledge of S/A Tracy, the co-pilot "chocked" the pedals, meaning making the pedals struck in a neutral state. At the time, S/A Tracy remained in the pilot seat, seat-belted and secured, with his helmet on and chin strap attached. At no point was S/A Tracy planning on exiting the helicopter. A few minutes later, the co-pilot returned and put his helmet on to speak with S/A Tracy. The co-pilot advised S/A Tracy over the intercom that the FBO's truck was inoperative and told S/A Tracy to hover over to the gas pumps to fuel. During this interaction, the co-pilot utilized the "push to talk" foot pedals on the co-pilot floorboard. After confirming what pump was the appropriate fuel, S/A Tracy disconnected co-pilots communications cord at his request and handed him his helmet. (At this point, since the pilot cannot reach the "chocked" pedals, it would be customary for the co-pilot to "un-chock" the pedals. Since this was not done and S/A Tracy never saw them done originally, S/A Tracy was still unaware the pedals were "chocked".) The co-pilot walked from the helicopter toward the fueling area. When the co-pilot was half way over to the fuel pumps and in a safe location, S/A Tracy began to take-off from the slope. Due to there being a slope to the co-pilot side, S/A Tracy applied slight right cyclic input and right pedal ("chocked" pedals will still allow for right pedal input). Once the helicopter broke the ground, it began a right spin. At first, S/A Tracy believed this may have been a gust of wind from the left front quarter pushing the nose right. As the helicopter spun past 90 degrees S/A Tracy realized he was unable to put any left pedal input. S/A Tracy looked at his feet to look for any possible obstructions or even a shoelace causing the issue. The helicopter continued to spin to the right at an increasing speed at a height of 5-7 feet above ground level. After two or three rotations, S/A Tracy observed the co-pilot pedals had been "chocked" and at this point the helicopter was rotating at a very rapid rate. S/A Tracy made the decision to attempt to get the helicopter on the ground by rolling the throttle to idle and lowering the collective all the way. The next events were a blur to S/A Tracy but the helicopter struck the ground and rolled enough in one direction to destroy all the main rotor blades on contact with the ground. S/A Tracy could observe grass outside the pilot side door opening and felt the helicopter would come to rest on its side. The helicopter somewhat righted itself before coming to rest on its tail end with the nose in the air. When the motion stopped, S/A Tracy felt wetness on his neck which he determined to be blood. His helmet was no longer on his head. Someone approached the helicopter and said there was a small fire. S/A Tracy leaned up and detached the fire extinguisher and handed it outside. S/A Tracy turned off key to the helicopter. In this state, along with the condition of the helicopter, S/A Tracy did not pull the fuel cutoff. S/A Tracy then exited the helicopter and was eventually turned over to EMS on scene. Injuries listed at the hospital included closed head injury, laceration of right ear, multiple abrasions on head, left elbow contusion and abrasions, left knee contusions, and muscle pains. (the following morning S/A Tracy experienced significant bruising and strain on his upper and lower back).

