



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Elliott Simpson
Aviation Accident Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: December 29, 2016
Person Contacted: Mr. Devynn Perez
NTSB Accident Number: WPR17LA043

Narrative:

During a telephone conversation on December 31, 2016, Mr. Devynn Perez stated the following. (Interview time 1145 - He had taken pain medication at 0400 the morning of this interview, which was prescribed by his doctor for pain relief due to the injury incurred during the accident.)

The initial plan for the flight was to take his friends Kevin Pellon and Michael Bonasoro out for a pleasure flight. Michael was a student pilot, and had previously undergone flight instruction with Mr. Perez at Revolution Aviation.

Mr. Perez arranged to rent the helicopter from Hangar 21 Helicopters, and met the group at Fullerton Airport. Upon arrival a third passenger, William Francis requested that he join the flight. Mr Francis was a friend of Kevin and Michael, and Mr. Perez had never met him before. Mr. Francis wanted to bring photographic and video equipment, and the group decided to fly to Mount Baldy and land to accomplish this.

Mr. Perez performed a weight and balance check using an iPad application, and based on the results he filled the main fuel tank to half of its capacity, and the auxiliary tank to one quarter. He requested that everyone minimize their carry-on items. Mr. Francis carried on camera equipment and a drone, which was in a lightweight Styrofoam case. Mr. Perez stated that the helicopter was well within its weight and balance limitations. He conferred with Rob Sims, the owner of Hangar 21 Helicopters, who confirmed that the fuel load would be adequate for a flight to Mt Baldy, which he estimated would be take 20 minutes.

The departure and flight were uneventful, and he approached the peak of Mount Baldy from the south with the intention of performing an orbit to survey the landing site. He estimated the wind to be about 5 knots out of the south as he approached, so he intended to land from the

north utilizing the headwind. During the orbit, he could see hikers at the intended landing spot, and as he surveyed the area the helicopter's low rotor RPM warning horn sounded. He lowered the collective, and the warning stopped. He then checked the manifold pressure, which was between 18 and 19 inches of mercury, and decided that he had enough power available to proceed. He continued with a low pass over a ridge, to signal his intent to the hikers that he wished to land at their location.

He returned to the landing site, and in order to avoid the hikers, he positioned the helicopter to land now in the opposite direction towards from the south. He could feel a tailwind as they approached within about 200 ft of the landing site, and the low RPM horn sounded again. He lowered the collective, but the helicopter rapidly descended towards the mountain face in front of them. He warned everyone that they were about to crash, and just before colliding with the ground, he applied full left foot pedal in an effort to land sideways rather than nose-down. After impact, everyone was able to exit unimpeded, and he set the transponder to 7700, and turned the fuel valve to the "off" position.

The passengers called 911, and a short time later the Sheriff's helicopter arrived. He observed the helicopter approach initially from the south, and predicted that they too would encounter difficulties and not be able to land safely in that direction. The Sheriff's helicopter then appeared to break off the approach, and orbit back in from the north, where it landed in the original direction that he intended.

Mr. Perez stated that there were no mechanical defects attributing to the accident, and that he should have known that the approach from the south towards the rising terrain gave him no options to "fly out" of the situation should a problem arise.

He stated that began flying helicopters in January 2014, and had a total flight experience in helicopters of just under 500 hours, 300 of which took place in the R44 while at Upper Limit Aviation in Salt Lake City. He reported that he was comfortable flying in mountainous terrain, having gained experience in such conditions while at Upper Limit.

He weighs 145 pounds, and at the time of the interview, he did not have the exact weights of the passengers at hand.