

Docket No. SA-531

Exhibit No. 2-N

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Washington, D.C.

Operations Group Chairman
Interview Summary – Director, Crewmember and Dispatcher
Training
Darrell Mitchell

(48Pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

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Investigation of: *
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CRASH OF CONTINENTAL CONNECTION *
FLIGHT 3407, OPERATED BY *
COLGAN AIR, INC. * Docket No.: DCA-09-MA-027
FEBRUARY 12, 2009, 2217 EST *
CLARENCE, NEW YORK *
*
* * * * *

Interview of: DARRELL MITCHELL

NTSB, Conference Room C
429 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.
Washington, D.C.

Wednesday
March 11, 2009

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: ROGER COX

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I N T E R V I E W

(2:20 p.m.)

INTERVIEW OF DARRELL MITCHELL

BY MR. COX:

Q. Okay. We get started by doing some basic identification. We start it off -- get your name, Darrell Mitchell.

A. Correct.

Q. And we spelling it correctly. May I have your age, please?

A. Fifty-two.

Q. And your title and/or position at Colgan?

A. Title is Director, Crew Member and Dispatcher Training.

Q. And how long have you had that position?

A. April 2005.

Q. And when were you employed at Colgan first?

A. First, February 1st, 2001.

Q. So what did you do prior to this current position?

A. Prior to Colgan?

Q. No, prior to your --

A. Oh, I was the -- prior to the director position, I was the manager of pilot training.

Q. Okay. And was that your first position at Colgan or --

A. No.

Q. Before that then?

1 A. Prior to the manager was --

2 Q. Yes.

3 A. It would probably clearer if I just started where I
4 started.

5 Q. Why don't you do that.

6 A. 9/11 got in the middle.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I was hired as the program manager for the Beech 1900
9 program in February of 2005.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Continued with that. 9/11 happened and by the time I
12 drove home to Arizona my job was eliminated.

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. So I went on a layoff for several months and then
15 brought back into the company, at the instructor level --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. -- and did that for a short period of time and then was
18 made the manager of pilot training.

19 Q. I understand.

20 A. Then on to director. So --

21 Q. I understand.

22 A. -- it kind of went up, down, up.

23 Q. I understand.

24 A. Okay.

25 Q. Prior to your first employment with Colgan, can you tell

1 me what you were doing?

2 A. My title was the Senior Director of Operations, FAR
3 equivalent of chief pilot --

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. -- for Trans International Express out of JFK.

6 Q. Um-hum. What kind of operation was that?

7 A. That was a 121 supplemental and scheduled.

8 Q. What kind of airplanes?

9 A. Those were Shorts 360-300s.

10 Q. And how long did you do that, sir?

11 A. Let's see, November '99 until January 2001.

12 Q. And then prior to that?

13 A. Prior to that I was working for FlightSafety out of
14 La Guardia.

15 Q. So I anticipate that you're a certified pilot?

16 A. Yes, I am.

17 Q. Could you tell me your certificates?

18 A. I have an ATP rating.

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. And I have type ratings, a Beech 300, Beech 1900,
21 Saab 340 and Shorts 3 Series, SD3. I'm not typed in the Dash 8s,
22 so --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- you'll know that up front.

25 Q. Do you have a line seniority number?

1 A. No, I do not.

2 Q. And just for the record, your total flying time,
3 roughly.

4 A. Eight thousand hours.

5 Q. Okay. Can you tell me what your duties are as the
6 Director of Crew Member and Dispatcher Training?

7 A. My position is I am responsible for the training of
8 pilots, flight attendants and dispatchers, which encompasses the
9 training programs, the personnel that perform the training, the
10 course ware, the program content, liaison to the FAA for all of
11 the above, and also any time personnel are involved in a training
12 cycle of any type, they are my responsibility administrative-wise.

13 Mostly, my job is an administrative position but with a
14 lot of oversight in a lot of areas. Also, you know, I have
15 support personnel, too, administrative, type's records. They'll
16 type some things. So I have to -- I take care of that part of it
17 also. Also, being a director, I have a budgetary responsibility
18 also, accounts payable, accounts -- that type of thing, buildings,
19 simulator contracts.

20 Q. Okay. To whom do you report?

21 A. I report to the Vice President of Operations,
22 Harry Mitchel.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. One L.

25 Q. That's where the one L comes from. And do you have any

1 people who are direct reports to you?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. How many?

4 A. Edward Garrett is my manager of crew member and
5 dispatcher training, and I have Karen Chapman as manager of
6 in-flight training. I also have, let's see, five ladies that
7 report to me, that are in my records and my travel and scheduling
8 group for training.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. And of course, they have people below them, instructors,
11 check airmen.

12 Q. And idea of roughly how many pilots you put through
13 training every year?

14 A. Oh.

15 Q. Training events?

16 A. Well, if it was a non-growth year -- last year we put
17 over 200 pilots through training and we exceeded that also with
18 flight attendants.

19 Q. That's quite a bit.

20 A. That's not the recurrence which occur all the time.

21 Q. That's just --

22 A. That's new stuff, growth, upgrade --

23 Q. That's growth.

24 A. -- transition.

25 Q. Um-hum. Do you keep statistics on -- of all those

1 training events of the success rate or the failure rate?

2 A. Yeah, we keep pass/fail records, you know, running
3 monthly, by class, yes.

4 Q. Could you give me the success rate? Or let's make it
5 the failure rate for last year, overall.

6 A. Last year, overall, was less than five percent. It was
7 like 4.8, I believe. The year before was not quite that many,
8 but --

9 Q. For pilots, do you keep track of the failure items or
10 the categories of areas where pilots have specific failure
11 problems?

12 A. If any pilot has an unsatisfactory --

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. -- that is kept in our electronic records, the areas
15 that they were deficient upon, yes.

16 Q. So what I meant was, was there some category that stood
17 out as commonly taking place a lot, you know, engine-out landings
18 or some category like that, or is it just across the board?

19 A. We have looked at that and we don't have any glaring
20 item --

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. -- to focus on like that, no.

23 Q. Do you keep track of your new hire failure rate, that
24 is, their actual -- the numbers of who just don't get through the
25 program at all, do you keep track of that?

1 A. Yes, we do. That, by the way, is lumped in the 4.8.

2 Q. Okay. So could you differentiate, I mean, if I ask
3 you --

4 A. Not sitting here. I'd have to get to the spreadsheets
5 on the computer and --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- be able to pull them out now.

8 Q. Would it be directly different than this 4.8 percent, do
9 you think?

10 A. I don't want to say a number that I'm not positive on
11 that would be --

12 Q. Okay, all right that's fine, that's fine.

13 A. -- correct.

14 Q. I'll give you a chance to tell me what you know.

15 A. I know that's the total.

16 Q. Okay, that's good. Do you make the decision about the
17 course content? I mean, are you the final authority as to what
18 goes into the various syllabuses and training courses?

19 A. I am the final authority on it, yeah.

20 Q. Yeah. Well, one of the issues that we've been trying to
21 pursue is the issue of some of the, I think, additional or
22 ancillary material that sometimes gets shown, and in one
23 particular case we're particular interested in a NASA video that
24 had to do with regional airline or aircraft icing and tail stall
25 phenomenon.

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. What we'd like to know is were you instrumental in
3 having that established as part of the recurrent training program?

4 A. That video DVD has been in existence at this company
5 prior to my ever coming here.

6 Q. Uh-huh.

7 A. It was on the shelf.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. That is an old video.

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. So that was here before I got here.

12 Q. I understand that. As each year comes along and you
13 reconsider what's to be put into the recurrent training, what was
14 the thinking about having that in there and retaining that in
15 there, was that considered to be retained for a particular reason
16 or --

17 A. That particular video is the icing -- I believe the
18 title is Icing For Corporate and Regional Pilots, I believe. It's
19 a general video about icing conditions. Actually, it even has
20 some things about jets in there and such. But I feel that that's
21 a relevant video because it exposes people to some good visual of
22 icing, what it looks like, how it, you know, accretes on the
23 different surfaces, that type of thing, and it's a great refresher
24 for people to see the icing and how that forms.

25 Q. Okay. There is some portion of that video that does

1 refer to tail stall recovery --

2 A. Right.

3 Q. -- procedure. Can you tell me if that's relevant to
4 your fleet?

5 A. I don't believe that's relevant to our fleet. And in
6 that video -- and I have seen it --

7 Q. Um-hum.

8 A. -- it doesn't specify any aircraft, either, on that.

9 Q. Right.

10 A. It's just to say this is something that can happen on, I
11 guess, any aircraft, because any aircraft in ice is going to get
12 ice on the tail, also. But is there a specific tool to train
13 someone for that? No, that's not relevant, that I know of, to our
14 fleet.

15 Q. Did you ever consider incorporating that into any of the
16 other training that you might do or is that just --

17 A. As in?

18 Q. Or is it intended to only be stand-alone but never be
19 incorporated into the --

20 A. It's like information, it's just general information.
21 It's a general video. It's not targeting any specific aircraft.
22 It's a this is ice, this is what ice can do, what it looks like.

23 Q. Okay. Going back well beyond the time that you came to
24 the company, any idea of who instituted the video to begin with?

25 A. I'd be guessing. Possibly my predecessor. I don't

1 know.

2 Q. We have some training records. This is an example of a
3 training document. What I'm interested in is a document like this
4 the only record that you keep of a pilot's training record and
5 proficiency record?

6 A. Yeah. What you're holding there is a printout of what's
7 on the computer, on the crew qual. system, yes.

8 Q. The crew qual.

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. Okay. When a pilot goes through some training, let's
11 say he does a simulator session, his simulator instructor keeps
12 track of what he's doing, you know, he has certain maneuvers he
13 has to accomplish on day two.

14 A. Um-hum.

15 Q. And presumably, he gets graded on that --

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. -- at least to some extent, you know, these maneuvers
18 were accomplished.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. What happens to that record?

21 A. Once they've satisfactorily completed the complete
22 course, everything's done, records are entered, and once they're
23 transferred electronic, they're destroyed, as per our manual.

24 Q. And what would be the reason for destroying those
25 records?

1 A. No necessity to have the paper when you have it
2 transferred on, that they've completed the --

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. -- required training. That's in our approved training
5 manual.

6 Q. Well, I understand it's approved, sure. Just from a
7 managerial standpoint, you know, wondering if there would benefit
8 to being able to look back at a prior checkride or a prior series
9 of training events and get a fuller picture of what took place
10 there, if you had a full record that was retained. Any advantage
11 to that?

12 A. I don't see an advantage of keeping an archive, you're
13 talking about, of --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. -- old things. If they've passed, they've obviously met
16 all our standards and requirements. There's not an issue with
17 them then.

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. They passed.

20 Q. Okay. So if you have a pilot who has, you know, either
21 unsat, a failure, maybe some issue in training that maybe took
22 some additional effort and some work, would there be a reason to
23 hold onto records for somebody like that?

24 A. Okay, yeah, that's the antithesis of that. Yes, if they
25 are having difficulty in training, if they have an unsat, that's

1 information we do gather, that is, we do keep that, that way we
2 can understand what areas are the problems. Do we retrain? Do we
3 terminate, possibly?

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. It depends on the individual, what the situation is.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Most definitely we keep --

8 Q. So then you'd have training records of somebody that had
9 some level of deficient requirements?

10 A. If they were terminated, most definitely that's kept in
11 the records.

12 Q. Okay. But if he's a current employee --

13 A. Um-hum.

14 Q. -- do you have some criteria you use to decide whether
15 you're going to hold onto, maybe, his training record from --

16 A. No. If he's a current employee, those records, if the
17 person is retained, that he is --

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. -- being corrected of whatever deficiency --

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. -- we still have records on crew qual., of the unsat --

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. -- the areas it was in. If they pass, they're retained
24 with the company. Then those records are gone. They're destroyed
25 then.

1 Q. Okay, I see. And when you say you know what it was for
2 -- and that's in crew qual.?

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. I'm looking at this particular record and I've got a
5 couple of unsats but I don't have any reason and so far haven't
6 been able to necessarily determine the reason for why that unsat
7 took place.

8 A. Let me see which record version you have.

9 Q. Okay, here's one, for instance. We've got an unsat on a
10 proficiency training here and that took place in '06.

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. Now, would there be a way for you to --

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. -- go into crew qual. and say, okay, what were the
15 actual events?

16 A. You need to actually click on another box --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- that would say notes.

19 Q. Notes.

20 A. And then it would appear below that, with the specific
21 maneuvers in question.

22 Q. Very good, very good. Can you do that? All right.
23 Having to deal with a lot of training events, a lot of people
24 coming through and the usual, you know, highs and lows in the Bell
25 Curve and all of that, do you have -- are you familiar with any

1 policy that the company might have regarding successive failures
2 and whether or not that might be considered a reason to terminate
3 somebody?

4 A. Successive in?

5 Q. Well, maybe I should say multiple rather than
6 successive. Multiple. Let's say you've got a crew member that's
7 had maybe, you know, a couple of training proficiencies and now
8 he's got an unsat. Is there some sort of criterion that the
9 company uses to review that person's record and determine whether,
10 you know, they're going to be a successful employee or not?

11 A. In our pilot policy handbook we have a section in
12 training that talks about difficulties in training, I believe is
13 the actual heading. And if a person's having difficulty in
14 training and fails a proficiency check, we would give them
15 additional training, and should they not pass, then we would
16 terminate. That's on recurrent-type stuff or upgrades or
17 transitions.

18 Q. Current?

19 A. A current employee.

20 Q. Is there any actual stated policy for what's acceptable
21 to Colgan, in terms of proficiency issues or problems or unsats --

22 A. Other than what I've just stated, no.

23 Q. There's no automatic, like two and you're out or
24 anything like that?

25 A. It's not spelled out that way, no.

1 Q. Not done that way. So let's just -- I'm going to guess
2 this has come up from time to time. You've got a guy that's kind
3 of -- you know, had a couple of marginal performances and somebody
4 from the company has to kind of get together and decide, what are
5 we going to do? Who are the people that get together and do that?

6 A. What position is this, new hire recurrent --

7 Q. I'm just talking about just name me a pilot and say he
8 busted a PC.

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. Okay. And I don't want to be too hypothetical, because
11 I want to give you the opportunity to be able to tell me how you
12 do it. But a guy busted a PC. The guy comes in and says, I don't
13 know if he's going to be really satisfactory here or not. Who are
14 the individuals in the company that would come together to kind of
15 review the record and determine what should be done?

16 A. If it's a PC, then that's referred to the Director of
17 Flight Standards.

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. And then he would confer with me, if he wants to have
20 additional training to be done on this individual, what areas it
21 would need to be.

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. Then I'd, you know, maybe assign another instructor.
24 Maybe it's -- well, that's another issue. I would have an
25 instructor assigned to do whatever the area is and then we'd

1 reschedule, if that's what they desire. Of course, if he doesn't
2 pass the second time, then it's termination.

3 Q. Okay, the second time is termination?

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. Okay. But you're the guy that would confer with the
6 Director of Flight Standards in that case?

7 A. For the training portion of it, yes.

8 Q. Yeah, yeah, he would come to you and say --

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. -- hey, we need to figure out a plan to train this guy,
11 and you'd be the guy to kind of --

12 A. Unless he's on vacation.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Then we would cover --

15 Q. There's all -- out there.

16 A. Sure.

17 Q. But you're the director, so --

18 A. Right.

19 Q. -- that's primarily your function, right? Did you ever
20 have any occasion to confer with the Director of Flight Standards
21 about Captain Renslow, in terms of any retraining that he might've
22 needed?

23 A. He had some unsats in his past, I know that, obviously,
24 from his record, as being pulled in that and as others in the
25 company have.

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. And I don't specifically remember any occasions of him
3 specifically.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So I just know it because of the paper.

6 Q. I understand. So this paper, the most recent event of
7 that type would've been in October of '07 and you were director of
8 training then, right?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Yeah. So presumably any retraining that he would've
11 taken would've probably have come through --

12 A. Somehow I would've probably touched that, yes.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. It doesn't stand out.

15 Q. It doesn't?

16 A. No.

17 Q. You don't remember what it was about or anything like
18 that?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Okay. Do you get involved in pilot selection?

21 A. Years ago.

22 Q. Years ago?

23 A. Yeah, years ago.

24 Q. Not now, huh?

25 A. No, it's been too busy since then. I think '05 was the

1 last time I was involved in that.

2 Q. Right.

3 A. The Houston push.

4 Q. So you've not flown the Q, huh? You're not typed on
5 the --

6 A. I'm not typed on it, no.

7 Q. Uh-huh. From your standpoint as the director of
8 training, are there any training proficiency issues that have
9 consistently come up as you've introduced the airplane or you see
10 it maybe a little -- a certain area would be more challenging for
11 your crews than others?

12 A. Yes. Well, the aircraft was obviously new to everyone
13 in our company --

14 Q. Right.

15 A. -- which is why we had our experts at FlightSafety
16 helping us.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. We've had cycles of things, learning the aircraft,
19 airspeed exceedance issues once the aircraft was out on line,
20 which we worked that back through training and came up with some
21 -- like in the flight training, some exposure to that exceedance
22 so they understand how it gets there and recognition. Let's see,
23 what else did we have issues with at first? Of course, FMS
24 programming was new to everyone, which led me to start beefing up
25 some more of that in the training, too.

1 Q. Have you got one of those little FMS simulator gizmos?

2 A. Actually, yeah, it's in the classroom, everybody can
3 learn now and you know, it's a very nice piece --

4 Q. It's nice if you can have something like that.

5 A. -- of course ware, I'll tell you.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. It actually flies.

8 Q. Do you have a CPT, a little cockpit procedures trainer
9 somewhere?

10 A. We ourselves only have a paper-type in our facility.

11 Q. Do you have that at Manassas?

12 A. Yeah, it's in the classroom.

13 Q. Okay. So when a guy's going to check out on the Q, he
14 takes ground school at Manassas, has the CPT there and then what,
15 goes to St. Louis?

16 A. They go to -- well, yeah, St. Louis now.

17 Q. They go to St. Louis now?

18 A. Yeah, now it's dedicated at St. Louis.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And they have also out there now a GFS ground flight
21 simulator. It's a touch screen type of the aircraft and we use
22 that prior to going into the sim now. The recent addition to that
23 is an excellent, excellent learning tool.

24 Q. What is it for, is it for preflights or is for doing the
25 flow patterns?

1 A. It's for flow patterns, checklists, it's for practicing
2 the system operation, abnormal emergency procedures, emergency
3 procedures. A very nice piece of equipment. An excellent
4 learning tool.

5 Q. And does that belong to Colgan?

6 A. No, that belongs to FlightSafety. That resides in
7 St. Louis.

8 Q. In St. Louis. And how many simulator -- actual
9 simulator units do you use typically?

10 A. Well, we have the ability to use any of the Q400s in the
11 United States. I have those approved. But our focus is in
12 St. Louis because of the location --

13 Q. Sure.

14 A. -- plus FlightSafety has agreed to give us the first
15 rights on that particular sim, for scheduling.

16 Q. I see. Do you have the one sim that you have access to
17 there?

18 A. Say that again?

19 Q. Is it one simulator?

20 A. In St. Louis?

21 Q. Uh-huh.

22 A. It's one Q simulator, yeah.

23 Q. It's one Q simulator.

24 A. Yeah, it is. I believe that's the newest one, too,
25 unless they came up with one I don't know about.

1 Q. So as backups you have what, Seattle and Toronto?

2 A. Yeah, Seattle would be my next choice and then Toronto
3 would be the last choice.

4 Q. So would they have one in Seattle?

5 A. Seattle has two.

6 Q. Two. So one, two, three.

7 A. There's three in the U.S. and one in Toronto, Canada.

8 Q. So you've got a universe of four you could work with if
9 you had to?

10 A. Oh yeah, yeah.

11 Q. Are they all essentially the same?

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. Basically work the same?

14 A. From the pilot's standpoint, yeah. They're all Level D
15 simulators --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. -- full-motion visual.

18 Q. Darrell, I'm going to flame out a little bit early on
19 you right now. I'm going to give Evan a chance to speak to you,
20 and we'll go around the room.

21 A. Sure.

22 BY MR. BYRNE:

23 Q. Darrell, as far as the different simulators, you said
24 they're about -- they're the same from a pilot's standpoint. What
25 about from the instructor's standpoint?

1 A. Well, I shouldn't say an instructor's. They have
2 hydraulic motion and then there's also electric motion, which,
3 once you're in the simulator, you can't really tell -- I think and
4 my pilots have said that it's a smoother-feeling operation. But
5 the visuals on the newer one, I think, are purportedly better
6 looking than the first ones.

7 Q. Okay. You were the manager of pilot training and then
8 became the director of -- or director --

9 A. Um-hum.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Crew member, dispatcher.

11 BY MR. BYRNE:

12 Q. Crew member, dispatcher training. Thanks. And --

13 A. It's just changed.

14 Q. -- was that just a title change with the reorganization,
15 or were you moving into a different slot?

16 A. I was moving into another position. It was higher. It
17 was an upward move, yes.

18 Q. Okay. And what happened to the previous director?

19 A. At that time the director of training was -- we were in
20 expansion at that point. They needed to institute a Director of
21 Flight Standards. So the present Director of Flight Standards was
22 actually over the training at that time, so he moved to standards
23 and I moved up into training, director of training.

24 Q. Okay. As far as Captain Renslow, did you know him
25 personally?

1 A. I probably know the largest part of the pilots just be
2 hi, how are you? They come through the center. I'm a very open
3 guy with -- you know, I want to interact with everyone and I
4 probably had conversations. I remember his face, but I don't --
5 you know, he's one of 400-and-something pilots and 400-and-
6 something flight attendants, so I don't know him that well at all.
7 Just, when I saw his picture, I was like, oh, I know him. I've
8 seen him in my center. I have said hi or talked outside, with a
9 cup of coffee, about the weather or whatever, but nothing
10 specific, no. He came through training.

11 Q. What was his reputation?

12 A. I don't know if he had a reputation, because he doesn't
13 come to mind as somebody that I remember him as.

14 Q. And your knowledge of his unsat events, was that before
15 or after the accident?

16 A. After the accident, when I pulled up his records, I saw
17 that, yeah, okay, this guy had some in his background.

18 Q. And what were the reasons for those unsats?

19 A. I don't remember today. I got to pull the records to
20 tell you. I didn't memorize it.

21 Q. Okay. What about First Officer Shaw?

22 A. I may or may not have even met her. I don't know. It
23 was a very busy time then, new hire coming through. I believe she
24 was a January person, so she would've had her training for the
25 most part up in Toronto, with FlightSafety.

1 Q. And you mentioned the pilot policy handbook.

2 A. Um-hum.

3 Q. Is that what it's called?

4 A. I believe that's the correct title.

5 Q. And I guess, who has that?

6 A. That's an HR-produced document.

7 Q. Given to all pilots?

8 A. Yeah, it's for the pilots. It's their pay, how they get
9 paid and days off or that type of thing.

10 Q. Okay. And to clarify as far as the training record that
11 Roger was showing you.

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. The reason for the unsat is on the computer screen.
14 There's an extra box or another entry that says --

15 A. Notes.

16 Q. -- notes.

17 A. Yeah, and it would print. It's just, you know, those
18 particular areas, yes.

19 Q. Okay. Going back to the use of the videos that show or
20 discuss tail plane icing in the winter operations, anti-ice, deice
21 course. We heard from Mr. Yarid yesterday, that he assesses the
22 class, the composition, who's in it, their experience level, and
23 makes a decision of whether to show the video or not. And my
24 question to you is, do you know that's -- on in your department?

25 A. If that's recurrent, yeah. If it's recurrent, yeah,

1 because recurrent is a flexible item. And if it's initial, they
2 will see the video.

3 Q. And I guess, from the concept of producing a
4 standardized product, how do those variations in recurrent allow
5 you as director of training to assure that you've got a
6 standardized product, once that pilot leaves the schoolhouse, if
7 some have seen a video and some have not?

8 A. They all have seen it in initial, and as far as
9 recurrent, we're not -- it's not necessary to rehash the same
10 thing that they should've already been flying in. That video,
11 along with several other videos, we need to get a baseline of
12 information to the people so they're aware of the weather,
13 obviously. That's akin to the Jeppesen video series for approach
14 flights. We wouldn't show that again in recurrent. Now that we
15 knew that they know how to read a Jeppesen, there's no sense in
16 going through all of those over and over again, because they do it
17 every day.

18 MR. JAQUES: Can we go off the record for a minute?

19 (Off the record.)

20 (On the record.)

21 BY MR. BYRNE:

22 Q. Darrell, as far as the training manual, were you
23 involved in its development?

24 A. The current training manual was in place when I took the
25 position.

1 Q. And I guess, when I go through that manual -- and the
2 versions that I've looked at are Version 30 and Version 29, the
3 manuals that cover our first officer--

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. -- and our captain. One of the things I see is that
6 sterile cockpit is mentioned multiple times in the syllabus or the
7 curriculum for flight attendant training, but it's not mentioned
8 under pilot training. Why is that?

9 A. We mention it more to flight attendants because they're
10 not from our industry to begin with, most of them, so they need to
11 understand not to be interrupting the cockpit during critical
12 phases of flight. Pilots are trained on critical phases of flight
13 in the basic indoctrination portion of training.

14 Q. And is that where sterile cockpit is discussed?

15 A. Yes, in indoctrination.

16 Q. And is it also discussed -- during the indoctrination
17 training, is it discussed as a separate topic?

18 A. Now we're getting into drilling down finer, that gets
19 down into my instructors and their course were in their hands.

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. I know it's a topic. Just the detail, I can't tell you
22 that just sitting here.

23 Q. Okay. As far as recurrent training, we were told
24 yesterday that the recurrent training slides for indoc have been
25 modified after the accident, or within the last two weeks, to

1 contain a separate slide that wasn't -- that did not exist before,
2 about sterile cockpit. Were you involved in that process?

3 A. That particular slide was enhanced along with other
4 items in different areas, too. It wasn't just that one slide.
5 After the accident and various meetings of the department heads,
6 my boss, the VP of ops, in talking with several of us, said, I
7 want to make sure that we're on -- everyone is on task, doing
8 their jobs, following procedure, following policy, a litany of
9 different things. I picked up on-task and following policy. I
10 went back and told my manager, Ed, I said, let's make sure we
11 enhance these items. Sterile cockpit is one I want enhanced.

12 Q. Okay. Did you review those slides?

13 A. Oh, I saw them, yeah.

14 Q. You mentioned that you have budgetary responsibilities?

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. Characterize, over the last two years, what your
17 budget's been doing. Is it increasing, decreasing, staying the
18 same?

19 A. Well, with the expansion, it obviously went up. And
20 then this year, with no expansion, it's far less.

21 Q. Are there any elements or things you've asked for that
22 you have not gotten?

23 A. No, we've got the trainer I wanted, the program to run
24 in a classroom, and we're moving through the year and we have some
25 things in capex in waiting, we'll be getting shortly.

1 Q. When was the last external audit performed on your
2 department?

3 A. Are we talking financial, operations --

4 Q. Operational.

5 A. Operational. I can't remember who that was. I can't
6 remember what the date was. I know we have those and I just -- I
7 don't remember what the date was on that, I'm sorry.

8 Q. What about FAA feedback directly to you about training?

9 A. The FAA is constantly giving us information back. You
10 know, they use that SAI procedure. That's all the time. We're
11 always going back and forth with information. That's constant
12 surveillance. They're in our classrooms, they're out to the sim,
13 they're watching on the line. They go through my manual and they
14 come up with ideas, questions, et cetera. That's constant, that's
15 ongoing.

16 Q. And when you mentioned they, who are the individuals?

17 A. FAA. Well, our POI, his people that work for him.

18 Q. The instructors that work for you, how often are they
19 required to ride the jump seat?

20 A. The full-time simulator instructors are annually riding
21 out in the jump seat.

22 Q. For how long?

23 A. They are out for a minimum of two hours.

24 Q. And what about the ground school instructors?

25 A. The ground school instructors are not required to go

1 ride the jump seat, but they do go out. There's no documentation
2 of it. It's just good for them to get out and assist them.

3 Q. Are you involved in the instructor selection process?

4 A. Yeah, I am.

5 Q. What is the process?

6 A. Well, if there's openings to be filled, individuals
7 approach us and they'll send myself or my manager. Do you have an
8 opening? And we'll ask for a cover letter, a resume, why would
9 you want to be an instructor, why you think you would be good for
10 this? And then we would -- I would get with the chief pilot and
11 the Director of Flight Standards, look at their training record,
12 look at their personnel record, query systems control, you know,
13 anyone that may have some information. Is this individual a, you
14 know, safe pilot? Do they follow procedure? Do they show up for
15 work every day. You know, items like that. The training record.
16 Do they have a good, clean training record or do they have
17 difficulties, that type of thing.

18 Q. How much turnover is there in simulator instructors?

19 A. Very little. They are there for a while now, yeah.

20 Q. Have you terminated a simulator instructor?

21 A. No.

22 Q. A ground school instructor?

23 A. No.

24 Q. And would you characterize your ground school
25 instructors in Manassas as -- are they professional instructors or

1 pilot instructors?

2 A. They're pilot instructors, but they're not -- let me
3 retract that. No, they are professional instructors. Andy Nagle
4 and Ed Yarid are my full-time people and they are professional
5 instructors. Yes, they are pilots too, though, but they're not
6 line pilots.

7 Q. Okay, they don't hold the line, though?

8 A. They do not hold the line, no.

9 Q. And are they -- I guess, why aren't they typed on the
10 Q400?

11 A. Andy eventually will be, but right now he doesn't have
12 the time to send him off to that class.

13 Q. Okay. So it is planned to get him typed. What about
14 Ed?

15 A. I don't plan on typing Ed and it has nothing to do with
16 the company. It's personal for him, his future. And I don't want
17 to go into that. That's his personal issues. He doesn't want to
18 be typed and I know why and it has nothing to do with this
19 company.

20 Q. Okay. Does not being typed in the airplane -- how does
21 not being typed in the airplane affect their ability at present to
22 provide the ground training on the Q400 systems?

23 A. Ed does not do Q400 systems training.

24 Q. And how does it not -- currently, with Andy, how does it
25 affect his ability?

1 A. With Ed not being typed?

2 Q. No, Andy.

3 A. Oh, Andy's -- going on all the information I hear on
4 Andy's training that he gives, it's excellent. Andy has a very,
5 very quality professional background in aviation. He was trained
6 by FlightSafety and his quality training is very good.

7 Q. How often do you sit in on ground school?

8 A. I have no regular schedule on it. If I have some free
9 time and a class is going on, I'll spend some time sitting in the
10 back of the classroom listening.

11 Q. What sort of training is provided to upgrading captains
12 at Colgan, regarding making the transition from the right seat to
13 the left seat, the change in roles?

14 A. Well, of course, they go through the upgrade training
15 systems, et cetera, et cetera. Colgan, I put into place, in 2005,
16 a captain management day and that is a course to help the captain
17 transition from being the right seat to the left seat. It focuses
18 more on your duties as a captain, your interaction with all the
19 different departments. It's a little more of the CRM in your
20 daily work. Let's see, interaction, departments. A little more
21 emphasis on situational awareness, because now you're the captain
22 and you have to watch this person, et cetera. It's an enhancement
23 to the standard duties of, okay, these are your duties. We spend
24 time with them more specifically for being a captain.

25 Q. How long is that course?

1 A. It's an eight-hour day.

2 Q. And it's been delivered since you took over in 2005?

3 A. Yes, I believe it was like in the fall of 2005 that we
4 started that.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Summer or fall, somewhere in there.

7 Q. Has it changed since it was put on line?

8 A. Oh, it gets better. Yeah, we refine it. As all things,
9 as we get better with things, we learn and we do it differently or
10 better.

11 Q. What kind of feedback do you get from new captains
12 regarding how well it prepares them for their role in terms of
13 leadership?

14 A. I don't get a whole lot of feedback that's bad. I
15 haven't had anything bad about it. I've had some pilots say, you
16 know, thanks for letting us spend this extra day. We appreciate
17 this time. I've had good feedback, what feedback, you know, I get
18 from it, yes.

19 MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Darrell. That's all I have.

20 MR. COX: Well, we'll go around and give our party
21 members an opportunity to talk to you, if anybody's got any
22 questions, and we'll start with Gene.

23 BY MR. CONWAY:

24 Q. Darrell, I just would have some questions about
25 curriculum and the like, specifically the curriculum. At first,

1 when you started your training with FlightSafety, initially, that
2 -- whose curriculum was that at that point?

3 A. When we first started?

4 Q. Yeah. From legalistic point of view, was it -- you
5 know, Colgan curriculum or was it FlightSafety curriculum? How
6 did you address that?

7 A. Are you asking me how did I put it together to get the
8 approval?

9 Q. Well, who owned the curriculum? You know, whose name
10 was on the curriculum from day one?

11 A. Colgan. That's Colgan's curriculum.

12 Q. Okay, from day one it was Colgan's curriculum?

13 A. The pilots were trained under the FAA-approved Colgan
14 curriculum.

15 Q. That's what I wanted to hear.

16 A. Okay, that's --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- what it was.

19 Q. So that's what it was from day one, despite the fact
20 that it may have taken place in Toronto and despite the fact that
21 it may have been a FlightSafety delivery?

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. So at that point in time, when it really started, did
24 the FlightSafety instructors have to adapt to anything that was
25 new or different from what they were doing, or was it, for all

1 intents and purposes, the same as what they were teaching under
2 the FlightSafety name?

3 A. Well, FlightSafety, as you know, they're a very
4 recognized company and they were our experts on this aircraft. So
5 yeah, their curriculum was our core curriculum adapted to Colgan.
6 We had to have Colgan-specific things, obviously, because it's to
7 our airline. FlightSafety teaches the aircraft. They teach what
8 is out of the AOM, what's out of the AFM. We also had -- or I had
9 FlightSafety increase a few things for us, too, to improve the
10 program, to tailor it more to us to be aircraft-specific, company-
11 specific. But it is our program and their instructors were taught
12 what is different with Colgan, from there, what they were used to
13 teaching. So they had to learn the Colgan-specific items.

14 Q. And who taught them the Colgan-specific items?

15 A. Our flight standards director.

16 Q. And did they have to be taught those specific items in
17 order to teach the -- and be approved by somebody in Colgan,
18 before they could do that --

19 A. Right.

20 Q. -- on their own? And who was that?

21 A. Yes, they all had to be approved. Initially, to get the
22 program started, the records were coming to me, you know, the
23 completion and then, of course, it's put into the qualification
24 system to verify that everybody was legal to operate for us and
25 train.

1 Q. What about, then, the checkrides that occurred at the
2 end of the training, which were basically type rides in each --

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. -- of the cases initially, would that be true? And
5 sometimes maybe ATPs as well?

6 A. Yeah. In the beginning we utilized FlightSafety
7 training center evaluators approved by our POI to give the Colgan
8 checkrides and to give, of course, licenses as required.

9 Q. When a FlightSafety instructor is approved by your POI
10 to do the Colgan checkride, is there a name for that instructor
11 that's different than FlightSafety instructor?

12 A. The contract check airmen.

13 Q. Okay. And that is POI-approved?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. So he carries that responsibility?

16 A. Right.

17 Q. Can you, for the record, enlighten us as to why or how a
18 FlightSafety check airman gets to write -- to do an ATP or a type
19 rating, in that that does require authority above and beyond what,
20 let's say, that normally rests at the APD level, which you did not
21 have at that time?

22 A. Correct. For them to become -- they're called training
23 center evaluators. They actually have to have an FAA
24 authorization to do type ratings, to do an ATP. That's an FAA-
25 authorized certificate. They need that first before they can

1 touch our people. Then what we do is we add in these are the
2 Colgan-specific items or forms or call-outs or checklists.

3 Q. I understand. Now, there came a time, did there not,
4 when the cadre of Colgan-qualified people grew, where you had your
5 own seniority list, check airmen, and your own seniority list,
6 APDs, is that -- did that time occur? Did that come to pass?

7 A. Oh yeah, that took several months. We had to make sure
8 of the plane first.

9 Q. And is that the way it is now with respect to the
10 qualifications and the relationship to Colgan, for those that do
11 training for Colgan?

12 A. We only use Colgan at this time, yeah. We've weaned our
13 self off of assistance.

14 Q. Now Captain Renslow. Do you know whether the instructor
15 -- correction, the person that gave him his type ride was a Colgan
16 seniority list person or a FlightSafety --

17 A. That was Colgan.

18 Q. -- contract? Okay.

19 A. That was a Colgan pilot.

20 Q. So that would've been an APD --

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. -- would that be true?

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Okay. And who was that?

25 A. I believe that was Tim.

1 Q. Okay. All right, thank you for that clarification. Is
2 the core curriculum that you're using for the Q400 largely changed
3 from what you had a year -- what you had initially, or are the
4 differences smaller, simply so that it's tailored to Colgan?

5 A. I would say, for the most part it is still the same,
6 because the airplane is still the airplane, in as far as things
7 like you will operate this system, you'll operate that system. I
8 mean, all aircraft are basically the same. We do have Colgan-
9 specific items in there, though. We have our Colgan -- you know,
10 the way that we want to do the stall series, the way that we want
11 to do the steep turns, our call-outs, our checklists, our
12 emergencies or QRH, all the items that have been developing as the
13 airplane has become more familiar to us. The core is the same as
14 we started and we just keep adding and improving as we move along.

15 Q. Sheri Baxter, Sheri, Sheri Baxter, if I'm saying it
16 right, is the manager of flight standards.

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. Does she report to you?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Okay. I have a question that I'm not going to address
21 to you then, in that regard.

22 MR. COX: Gene, do you want to consider those for a
23 minute --

24 MR. CONWAY: Sure.

25 MR. COX: -- while we go around the room? I mean, we

1 can let the others, if you're still considering any additional
2 questions. Or are you done?

3 MR. CONWAY: No, I think I'm done now.

4 MR. COX: Okay.

5 MR. CONWAY: Yeah.

6 MR. COX: I wanted to be sure.

7 MR. CONWAY: And I'll speak up if there's something
8 else.

9 MR. COX: Okay.

10 MR. CONWAY: Thanks very much.

11 BY MR. SIMPKINS:

12 Q. Thanks. Did Bombardier ever conduct any initial ground
13 school training for Colgan?

14 A. Bombardier, the company?

15 Q. Yes.

16 A. For flight attendants.

17 Q. For flight attendants, but for pilots?

18 A. It was FlightSafety.

19 Q. And did Bombardier conduct any initial sim training for
20 pilots?

21 A. That's FlightSafety.

22 Q. And did Bombardier conduct any initial checkride
23 training?

24 A. FlightSafety again.

25 MR. SIMPKINS: I have no further questions.

1 MR. COX: Ken?

2 MR. WEBSTER: I have no questions at this time.

3 MR. COX: Mike?

4 MR. WICKBOLDT: I actually don't have any questions.

5 MR. COX: Tim?

6 BY MR. DITTMAR:

7 Q. Just a couple, Darrell, yeah. Before, you said that
8 tail stalls, it wasn't relevant to our fleet? Did you say that?

9 A. Is that the words I used?

10 Q. I'm just asking. I wasn't sure what you said.

11 A. Regarding the video? Are you talking about that
12 training video and --

13 Q. Yeah, just in general, are tail stalls relevant to our
14 fleet?

15 A. That video is a general video. I used a bad verb or
16 something. Specifically, our aircraft do not -- we don't have
17 procedures for tail plane icing. Can aircraft get tail plane
18 icing? Yeah, any aircraft can. Can they experience a tail stall?
19 I would assume that they could. Any plane could.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. So it is relevant to our airplanes, in the fact that any
22 airplane can get icing on the tail. But specifically, that's not
23 to our fleet.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. It's not a manufacturer video or anything, it's general.

1 Q. Have you heard from either Saab or Bombardier, the fact
2 that either airplane cannot develop a tail stall?

3 A. I haven't heard either way on that.

4 Q. You were also talking before -- I just want to clarify.
5 You said, in initial they will see the video. Which video were
6 you referring to?

7 A. They're going to see the corporate and regional pilot
8 icing.

9 Q. Okay. You said that you never had an instructor, a
10 ground school instructor that got fired. Have you ever had a
11 ground school instructor that, after auditing the class or
12 something, you didn't think that they were doing a good enough job
13 and you removed them from that position and put them on the line
14 or something like that?

15 A. Yeah, I've had them where I just didn't use them, I
16 mean, because they weren't full-time instructors.

17 MR. DITTMAR: Okay. All right, no further questions.

18 MR. COX: I'm looking for cleanup from anyone.

19 MR. SIMPKINS: He asked the questions --

20 MR. COX: Okay. And Gene, I didn't want to --

21 MR. CONWAY: No.

22 MR. COX: I want to give you an opportunity.

23 MR. CONWAY: I'm fine. I just wanted to make sure while
24 I still had Darrell here.

25 MR. COX: No, he's still here, you know.

1 MR. CONWAY: I'm good.

2 MR. COX: Yeah.

3 BY MR. BYRNE:

4 Q. I've got a couple. Darrell, this is Captain Renslow's
5 file. Could you point out where the captain management training
6 he would've received when he upgraded to captain on the Saab is?

7 A. That is not an FAA-required program. That is something
8 we do, as a company, above and beyond any requirements, and so
9 therefore it's not tracked as a qualification item.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. This would contain qualification items.

12 Q. His qualifications.

13 A. Right.

14 Q. The other courses that you provide aren't on there?

15 A. Yeah, that's part of the -- the class syllabus contains
16 it.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Every upgrade will have it, yeah. It's not a tracking
19 item.

20 Q. And I guess going -- how you reconstruct things, going
21 back a couple years, what --

22 A. That actually is a piece of paper we do keep, that is
23 one, although it's not a required item. But we do keep that
24 particular item.

25 Q. Where is that kept?

1 A. It's in my office.

2 Q. Can we get a copy?

3 A. I can produce Captain Renslow's, yes, I can.

4 Q. Thank you.

5 A. He attended it.

6 Q. And as far as the -- I think Roger was asking you about
7 training effectiveness and failure rates and things like that, I
8 guess. What reports are you required to produce, and on what
9 frequency, regarding training effectiveness?

10 A. The reports that we would produce to the FAA actually
11 come from standards and it's the failure rate of fails.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And I don't produce that report. I do an annual report
14 to the -- for the board meeting, of the effectiveness of the
15 training for the past year.

16 MR. BYRNE: Okay, thank you.

17 BY MR. COX:

18 Q. That leaves just one or two little things, okay. One, I
19 just want to make sure we get this follow-up -- we get this crew
20 qual., Darrell, that has the additional items on it.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. And we had Sheri here and she mentioned that she had the
23 precise statistics on the failure rates or success rates.

24 A. She's in that department.

25 Q. So could I get a commitment to get last year's gross

1 numbers?

2 A. Um-hum.

3 Q. You know, just what the failure rate was overall. And I
4 know you keep that and you report it to the FAA. We're going to
5 ask for it through the FAA, but since you're all here and you
6 produce it, maybe that would be the shortcut way to do it, just so
7 we have that.

8 A. Got it. I'll get it tomorrow.

9 Q. The only other thing I thought was -- it's just this
10 topic about new hires. And I know right now and in the recent
11 past we've had hire-time people coming in as the economy as the
12 economy has crashed. But going back to the period of time in
13 recent years where we've had lower-time new hires and thinking of
14 that period, have you found that there was any -- generally
15 speaking, any extra training required for low-time new hires that
16 come into Colgan? When you hire them in with your minimum of 600
17 hours up to, you know, a little bit more than that, and you
18 present them with your initial training curriculum, have you found
19 that there is additional training that's required?

20 A. In some cases there are, but we did look at that and
21 tried to find if we could put a number on it and surprisingly, it
22 doesn't stick to any particular level of flight total time.

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. We found that we've had as much difficulty with a
25 1500-hour pilot as we had a 400-hour pilot, sometimes. It's the

1 individual. So we have to look at those always on an individual
2 basis.

3 Q. So your response to that is individualized?

4 A. Yeah, it's individualized, yeah.

5 Q. Okay. Are there any areas of aircraft performance or
6 airline-oriented performance where new hires all seem to need
7 additional help?

8 A. No, I wouldn't put my finger on any particular one area,
9 no. We're getting a good mix.

10 Q. Okay. It's an interesting subject, but I think I'll let
11 it -- you answered the basic question, that's all I want to know.

12 A. Yeah.

13 MR. COX: Anyone else have anything today? That's it,
14 Tim, thank you.

15 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled matter
16 was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: CRASH OF CONTINENTAL CONNECTION
 FLIGHT 3407, OPERATED BY
 COLGAN AIR, INC.
 FEBRUARY 12, 2009, 2217 EST
 CLARENCE, NEW YORK
 Interview of Darrell Mitchell

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-09-MA-027

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

DATE: March 11, 2009

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording accomplished at the hearing.

Timothy Atkinson
Official Reporter