BEFORE THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20594

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IN THE MATTER OF TWA FLIGHT:
800; INTERVIEW OF:
MAJ. FREDERICK C. MEYER:
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TAPE TRANSCRIPTION


CAPITAL HILL REPORTING
(202) 466-9500
APPEARANCES:

NORM WIEMEYER
NTSB Official

TERRY STACEY
Trans World Airlines Representative

LOU BURNS
Air Line Pilots Association

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Federal Aviation Administration

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INDEX

WITNESS:
MAJ. FREDERICK CHARLES MEYER/Pilot, H-60 Helicopter,
New York National Guard.

(Tape 2, Side B, third interview continuing to Tape 3,
Sides A and B.)

(No exhibits were presented or accepted into evidence
at or as a result of this interview.)
MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. If you would, state your full name for the record, and please spell your last name.

MAJ. MEYER: All right. I'm Maj. Frederick Charles Meyer, M-E-Y-E-R -- M, as in Mike, E-Y-E-R. And my address is 10 Sagamore, Shinnecock Hills, New York.

MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. And what was your exposure with regards to the events surrounding TWA --

MAJ. MEYER: I --

MR. WIEMEYER: -- 800 loss?

MAJ. MEYER: I am a pilot in the H-60 helicopter. I was flying as pilot in the right seat. That night we took off at 8:00 o'clock local time -- 8:00 p.m.

And I was out on the instrument landing approach to this airport -- to runway 2-4 at this airport about 8:30 in the evening. We were practicing instrument landing approaches waiting for it to get dark so that we would go out and do another mission, which was night-air refueling on night vision goggles. Chris Baur, whom you've interviewed was my co-pilot, and Dennis Richardson was the flight engineer. Those were the only three people in the
aircraft at the time.

The fourth member of the crew was acting as a safety ground party for a parachute jump that was in progress at the same time, and he was on the north landing zone here at the airport. The plan was that after we finished our instrument approaches we'd go over and pick him up and we'd have a complete crew for the air-refueling.

Chris was flying the particular approach. He was between 200 feet and 100 feet above the ground. He was on a heading of 2-3-8 degrees magnetic to this field. And I can be precise about that because as the non-flying pilot my role, as he comes down that glide slope, is to call his altitude 100 feet above the -- the minimums for the field. We were flying a copter-only approach, which has a 100 foot minimum. And, therefore, at 200 feet I said, "100 foot above."

And at that point I was looking around the pattern. There was one other aircraft in the pattern. And, frankly, I was looking for an aircraft that was in the pattern at that time.

And I looked up and to my -- slightly to my left front, and I saw streak of light. And I might also say here that approximately a week -- I can't remember the date. But approximately a week after the...
accident I debriefed our commander here, Dave Hill [phonetic sp.]. Bob Walters [phonetic sp.], one of your agents, was in that meeting.

MR. CLEMENS: Okay.

MAJ. MEYER: And I drew a diagram. And the only reason I tell you that, Dave Hill took the diagram. And if there's any variance between what I say now and what I say then, that's probably the more accurate because that's exactly what I told him back then. As I say, much closer in time period to the accident than -- than this, six months later.

Now, he asked me -- and I'll -- I'll tell you what I talk -- I told him. I'm -- the aircraft is facing 2-3-8 degrees magnetic. The runway heading is 2-4; it's actually 2 degrees off magnetic heading.

I saw to -- in front of me and slightly to my left of dead front I saw a streak of light in the sky. I have no idea what it was. And my reaction when I saw it was, what the hell is that?

I observed it for somewhere in approximately three to five seconds moving in a gradually descending arc -- sort of a gentle descending trajectory. Similar to that which you would observe at night if you observed a shooting star. The difference is that it was red-orange in color and it was broad daylight. It
was as bright then as it is right now looking out that window. It was broad daylight.

And there were no clouds in the sky -- absolutely cloudless night. Other people have told me there was some haze. If there was, it was very minimal.

I observed the streak of light for three to five seconds. And then I saw an explosion. And about one to two seconds after that I saw a second, and possibly a third, explosion. Now, these were hard explosions. This looked like flak. It's a hard explosion. It's like an HPX explosion, as opposed to soft explosion like gasoline, or something.

How do I know that? Well, I'm recalling back 20, 25 years. And I put -- if -- if I observe something in the air in Vietnam, different things exploding did different characteristics. Somebody would have to be more technical. That's -- that's as much as I can tell you, is that some things are hard explosions. They're gen -- they -- they, to me, resemble anti-aircraft fire and other things are soft explosions; like if you saw somebody hit a fuel storage depot, the type of explosion that would occur there would be slow.

What I saw were -- and I want to -- I want to
step back and tell you that at no time during what I observed did I ever see the airframe. I never saw anything that told me there was an airplane out there. So, the streak of light, I saw the explosion about one to two seconds -- second and poss -- just a little -- there's something in my mind's eye that says there was a little something -- for want of a better term -- maybe a nanosecond after that second explosion.

And then, from that approximate position emanated this fireball, which was a soft explosion. And it was definitely petroleum. If you've ever seen a -- I -- I did not fly attack; I flew rescue. But I was in position to observe A-4s and F-4s hitting storage depots and watching the color of a storage depot that's being hit and exploding and blowing up. And I knew at that moment -- of course, we all know now -- but I knew at that moment that that was a petroleum explosion.

And that fireball -- you know, it -- it was huge. It was easily four fingers, at my extended arm's length. I looked over here at -- at -- on my right, and I had the setting sun. Now, the sun was just maybe a couple of degrees -- the lower orb of the setting sun was bright red, and it was probably just a couple of degrees above the horizon at the time this happened.

And at that time I estimated the size that this
fireball grew to be approximately four times the size of the sun. So, I can't give you degrees and I can't -- all I can do is give you relativity.

I didn't put my hand out in front of me at the time, so I can't really tell you that it was four fingers. But it was -- it was probably even bigger than that. It was probably the spread of a hand across the windshield. And at that time I was somewhere between 10 and 13 miles away.

At that time I was right over the numbers at the end of this runway, 2-4. At the time we saw the fireball the wheels were probably passing right over the beginning of the -- the apron of the runway.

Now, at that moment Chris said to me, "Is that pyro?" And I said to him, "No pyro like I've ever seen." Because by this time -- by the time those words came out this fireball was huge.

I kind of thought, should I go get the PJ? Let's go check that out. So, we set -- we -- we're now cruising down the runway. Now, when we shoot that approach, we shoot it at 90 knots. It's a copter-only approach, so we have to shoot it at 90 knots -- as min. procedures.

So, we were moving down the runway at about that speed, not -- which isn't very fast. And we had
covered -- I don't know -- maybe a thousand foot of the runway, when I called the Tower -- and if you have the -- the Tower tape, you know I called them after clearance south of the field; said, we just observed a fireball. We want clearance out of the control zone to the south to investigate.

And at that time I didn't know what it was. I have no idea what it was. Chris didn't know what it was. And Dennis -- because Chris was flying the approach, Dennis had moved from his normal station on the right side of the aircraft to the left side. And Dennis saw the fireball.

I don't know what those two guys saw prior to the fireball, but they were both on the left side of the aircraft -- which is the south side of the aircraft -- and they were in a position to see something down there. I told you what I saw.

Now, we turned south. We're probably at that point somewhere in the neighborhood of 200 feet above ground level. Chris was on the controls, and I didn't take the controls from him. I said, yeah, let's just go -- all right?

So, he turned the aircraft; he accelerated. He probably picked us up to about 150 knots indicated. And we flew at about 200 feet, 150 knots indicated in
the direction of the fireball. And the fire --

(Tape 2, Side B ends abruptly. No carryover. Loss of dialogue. Interview resumes on TAPE 3, SIDE A.)

MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. Go ahead.

MAJ. MEYER: Now, the fireball had hit the water before we crossed the beach. We estimated to each other at the -- an hour or two later -- or maybe it was the next day -- that it had taken approximately 10 seconds to fall. But it had to have taken a lot longer than that. But, I mean, our -- our memories were distorted.

But all three of us asked each other, how long do you think it talk -- took to fall? And we all said, about 10 seconds. And -- I mean, that's just crazy, but it gives you some idea of the -- the fact that when you observe things sometimes your -- your timing mechanism is off.

But I do know that the -- that the fireball hit the water before we crossed the beach, 'cause I have a mental picture of just the sand and the beach. And I expected that fireball to be extinguished when it hit the water, but it just continued to burn. And it burned across -- not as a ring. The whole thing burned, and those flames were 50 feet high -- and we
measured them because we were hovering at 50 feet over
the water and we were looking at the tops of the
flames.

I don't know how much detail you want about,
you know, from then on the things in the water.
Approaching -- as we approached across the water and we
saw the thing fall, something fell out of this plume of
smoke that was following the fireball into the water.
Something fell out. Chris got a better look at it,
observed it, commented. We don't have voice recorders
in the aircraft, but Chris can tell you more about what
he saw.

I saw a fireball. As you can see, I -- I
wear -- I had these glasses on at the time. My eyes
aren't as good as his. He told me at that time, or
shortly thereafter, that he observed something like a
vortex inside the fireball. I did not observe that.

But I did see something fall out of it. And
when we -- later on we went out and we searched the
debris field and we marked the fireball debris field.
We marked the upwind, which is the southwesterly corner
of it -- because we have an INS that's corrected by GPS
and we had it on and it was in the aircraft, and it's
giving us lat. and long. to -- to hundredths of a
degree. I don't think -- it's not seconds. It's
hundreds -- two decimal places; hundredths of a degree, not seconds.

We radioed those two positions, either before or after I warned that -- I think it was after I warned the 130 about the falling debris. We radioed those two exact lat. and long. positions to the 130 -- it was after. And they’re in that 130 log -- and that might be interesting for you guys to know that we have a written record of the exact point of the upwind edge of the fireball, and of the secondary debris field that was further to the southwest.

We flew over it and we marked it. We recorded it. We transmitted that -- I mean, we recorded it by transmitting to the radio operator in the C-130, who told me later that he took down that information.

I presume that that was transferred to the Coast Guard. And I was very curious as to why the Navy came up and spent two weeks looking for those debris fields. And when they subsequently came up, it’s my recollection that they found them within a few seconds of lat. and long. from where we had pointed them out five minutes after the impact.

As we approached the fireball, I told Chris to slow down. We were moving at about 150 knots, and I
could see debris falling out of the sky. And I told
him to slow down, and I got on the radio -- and I think
I was on company freq., which does not have a tape on
it. I might've been on Tower -- and if you can get the
Tower tape, you can check that.

I called the 130 and I -- and -- and Strata
[phonetic sp.] just said to me that he was going to
overfly -- he had -- the pilot can transmit, as well as
the radio operator on the 130. Strata told me he was
going to overfly. And I said, "Don't overfly." I
said, "There's debris falling, you're going to run into
it." And they said, okay, we'll make a circle. So,
then they diverted, and I did not have them in sight,
but I guess they went north and came around.

I was not looking up at them at the time. I
was watching this debris in front of me.

For the next week or so I had a recurring
dream. And the dream was like a loop of tape. And it
was this moment in time, or four or five seconds in
time, when I was approaching; told Chris to slow down
and we're approaching, and I'm watching the debris
falling.

And I -- I know the Thursday after -- a week
after -- the Thursday a week after the -- the accident
I had spent the whole night -- I didn't go to sleep at

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all. And the next day I saw the thing in my mind. And what was happening is I wasn’t seeing clearly what I was looking at; because before I could clearly distinguish it (sound of smacking hands) it’d shut off and I’d go back and -- and the thing’d start over again. And it was just going over in my mind.

About a week later, during the day -- you know, I was so distracted by this thing I drove my car over a curb and blew a $250 Pirelli tire, and had to buy a new one. And I was saying to myself, I’d better stop driving because I’m going to have an accident.

And eventually -- some time that afternoon, it worked itself out, and I saw what I was looking at. And I know why my mind was doing what it was doing. Because what I was looking at was debris, like, fuselage, skin -- aluminum skin, or stuff -- tumbling in the air. Now, if you shred an aircraft and it tumbles in the air maybe it’s falling at somewhere up to 40 miles an hour; and it’s falling in an erratic -- you know, you watch things fall. They spin and the flop, and they -- they do all kinds of things.

Right in the middle of this field of falling debris -- some of it burning -- there are objects moving coming down at terminal velocity: 160, 180 knots. If you do any parachute jumping, you -- I fall
at pretty close to 180 knots; some guys lighter --
thinner guys fall at about 160. I’m presuming --
because I -- my -- my gauge of speed is -- is not that
good -- that these seats -- and there were people in
them -- were falling at 160 to 180 knots.

And I realized that this is logically
inconsistent. Now, they couldn’t have debris
tumbling -- lightweight debris tumbling in the air,
falling past my field of vision in the same field with
objects moving at terminal velocity if they had
emanated from the same spot at the same time. I
thought that was very significant.

And at the later meeting which we had --
which was the Friday a week after the accident, which
would be 10 days later -- when we actually called the
FBI at Moriches, and they sent two agents -- a female
and a male -- up to Jim Finkel’s [phonetic sp.] where
we were meeting at that time -- and I met with them and
I told them this. I told them what had come out of
this dream.

And I thought it was extremely significant,
because the logical answer to me is that the head --
the heavy stuff had to go somewhere else first, before
it came down, or it wouldn’t have come down and been
passing -- I would say 500 feet to the surface -- it
wouldn’t have been passing through my field of vision if -- if it’d all come down at once. It had to go somewhere else first because it was travelling, when it came down, at a much greater speed.

That indicated to me that probably these seats had been blown vertically, with the people in them. And I didn’t do the math, and some physicist will have to. But they had to be blown up to zero acceleration -- to zero air speed and then turn around and begin an acceleration and come down. And to come past my view, which is very limited; 500 feet out of 10,000 or more.

So, it occur -- I thought that was very significant, and I reported it to the FBI agents. And, you know, that -- that was -- that was 10 days after the -- after the event. I thought that was very significant. Let’s go on from that.

I don’t know how much you want me to go into debris, or the bodies, or anything --

MR. WIEMEYER: In as --

MAJ. MEYER: -- like that.

MR. WIEMEYER: -- detail as you can recall.

MAJ. MEYER: Okay. At this point I’d taken the -- the position of linebacker. I was the non-flying pilot. I continued -- even though I’m the
aircraft commander, I continued to be a non-flying pilot.

Chris was flying. I had Dennis on the left side. So, we have something to do here. We don't know what yet -- I mean, the -- the learning curve here was fairly slow. We -- it was about 15 minutes before we realized we had a 747 in the water.

In the first place we didn't know what we had. I think we speculated that we might've had a mid-air because we know from here a lot that aircraft from Easthampton Airport and Montauk Sky Portal and aircraft from west of here fly the beach, and they look at the mansions along the beach. And we know that it's very common to have aircraft flying at 1,000 to 2,000 feet, east and west, right at each other along this beach.

It's very dangerous. It's all VFR traffic. It's unregulated. The only regulation at all occurs when they fly through the southern tip of a control zone. They'll call this tower for clearance through the control zone. They'll say, all right. I'm at 1,500 feet. And the tower will tell them, well, you got another guy westbound and he's at 1,500. So, why don't one of you change altitude. So --

Mid-airs are -- the potential is always
there. It's a very dangerous situation. We thought we had one. We were amazed at the size of the fireball.

As we got out over the water, and we -- the debris fell to the water, and I cleared us on INSET -- okay, you know, keep going. Let's go in.

We went to the fireball and we decided immediately that we would not go downwind, 'cause now we had a lake of fire. The ocean did not quench this at all. It was burning in the middle. It was burning an incredible intensity. And those flames were 50 feet high, because we had the helicopter hovering at 50 feet on a radio altimeter -- radar altimeter, and we're looking out over the tops of the flames. So, we -- this is not estimation. It's not, you know, a sea story growing. We know exactly how high those flames were.

We knew that if we tried to go downwind we'd probably get into the -- the smoke and the exhausts. And we -- if we weren't choked ourselves the engines might be choked and we -- we'd go down. So, we went to the north -- I'd say the northwest end arc, and we began working around to the southwest, and eventually around the arc of the southwesterly hemisphere of this lake of fire at about 50 feet -- between 50 and 100 -- looking for anything.

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And the first thing we saw -- and I only saw one. Chris reported to me that he had seen on the left side of the aircraft four bodies. And I said, "Okay. Turn and check them out." And we came down to 40 feet -- I think at that time we were at a -- at that -- when we first saw them we were at about 100 feet. We came down to 40 feet to -- to shake them up with the rotor wash.

And he flew around. He said, "We've got four bodies." And Dennis confirmed four bodies. And there was one guy wearing T-shirt and dungarees, and Chris described that to me at that time. We checked them out and he said, "Looks to me like they're all dead."

I said, okay, let's -- there's a triage that takes place in the helicopter. Perhaps we should've gone back and gotten the rescue men. Perhaps we should've dropped the rescue men in the water. But at that time we made a decision, and the decision was that -- that there was no motion; that these people looked like they were dead. So we left them, looking for possible survivors.

As we moved further around this arc of the windward edge of the -- of the -- the fire, we saw some debris. And the first things we saw were completely nondescript. We looked for several minutes for
anything that looked like anything. I mean, everything was fragments.

The first thing we saw that -- that I recall that indicated that we had an aircraft was the section of the kind of plastic lining that is in most commercial airliners where the windows are. And you see a -- an almost square window with the corners rounded and there's usually a shade that you pull up and down.

We saw a piece of broken plastic that had two of those distinct shapes. And it was this off-white, vanilla sort of color, laying the water -- floating in the water and we said, that's definitely an aircraft.

So, now we knew -- and that's the first time we knew we had an aircraft.

We went from there further around the arc and we saw what we thought was -- it was an airfoil; we thought it was a section of the wing. We thought it was the wing.

We know now having seen the same thing over in the hangar that what we were looking at was the rudder. But the rudder on the 747 is so damn big.

This thing was partially out of the water; partially elevated and partially sunk. We looked at that and we said, "It's a wing. Check the markings." It had red
and white markings.

And Chris, who can also transmit on the radio, was telling me this -- I don't know whether it was going out on the radio, or whether it was just coming to me in the ICS -- I was reporting on the other frequency. We had company -- I think he had company, and I had the Tower. I was telling the tower we had -- definitely had an airfoil on the surface and it had red and white markings on it.

I was also switching back and forth; I was also talking to the -- the 130, which was overhead. I think they were flying at about 3,000 feet -- I don't know that for a fact. We were right down between 150 feet -- 100 feet and 50 feet.

We saw more debris as we started to work our way around to the southeasterly side of the fireball. The 130 said to us, from overhead, we've got a raft; it's about a mile and a half south -- south to southwest of your position. I said, "Let's go."

We turned the helicopter; Chris flew it.

When we turned the helicopter we then saw the strobe in the water. And there was -- like right feeling of elation. I don't know what conversation took place in the cockpit. But we fly together a lot, so it really isn't necessary for us to talk to each a lot.
Something -- very -- two and three word comments made transmit a great deal of information.

We went directly for it -- we got a raft, we got a strobe, we got survivors. So, we're off and going. Probably got up to 120, 130 knots just crossing a mile and a half. When we got there we realized that what we had was a partially inflated escape ramp -- the type you see on a commercial airliner. So, it was partially deflated, there was nobody in it. It was obvious what it was. And we knew at this point that we had a commercial airliner and maybe not one of these corporate jets that just -- that go out to -- I mean, if you live out here in Southhampton and Easthampton you see multi-million dollar private aircraft coming in here quite a bit.

But at this point we realized that this was a commercial airliner. And we didn't know what we had until we had a commercial airliner.

So, we looked around there and there was very little debris in that area. Now, that's about a mile and a half on a course of about south/southwest from the oil burn going off. When we got down there and there was -- there was nobody in there, but there was a debris fell -- field that seemed to move in a westerly direction. That's west/southwest, perhaps. And it

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seemed to be more debris going in that direction.

And so we followed that debris field I -- I
would say, perhaps, two miles. I'm not certain. The
-- we gave these coordinates to the 130, so if they're
recorded and they're in the 130 log that will tell you
approximately where we were.

And when we got there we came upon a cluster
of a great deal of debris, of all kinds. I saw
honeycomb metal; things that you see in aircraft
construction -- things of that nature. More of the
white stuff. Some seats. And some bodies -- a cluster
of bodies of approximately 30 to 35 bodies, all
clustered together. And we began observing them from
100 feet for motion and going down to 40 feet, shaking
them up with the rotor wash looking for any signs of
life.

At this point we were contacted by the Tower
who said, "ATC's just reported that they lost radar
contact with a 747." And we had thought, well, okay,
we've now got about 40 bodies here. We've probably got
a light commuter going up to Boston, or something, and
we've had a serious aircraft accident. And then when
we heard 747 we said, "Holy shit. There's another 200
people out here, we gotta find 'em."

And the sun is setting -- the sun is gone at

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this time, and it's starting to get dark. So, I
immediately said, okay, creeping line search. Let's
use a half mile space -- actually we probably should've
used a quarter, but we were -- we knew the light was
fading. So, I told Chris what I wanted. I wanted it
oriented 2-4-0 and I wanted a creeping line search.
And that's a search where we basically fly sideways,
and we fly and then we move forward a half a mile, and
then we come back across the same path again. And we
basically fly a -- a back-and-forth pattern moving,
advancing at the end of a two-mile track, and we move
forward a half mile.

And I was moving to the southwest because the
-- the debris field seemed to go in that direction with
very little wind, maybe 5 knots of wind, and it seemed
to be -- it was coming from the southwest. And I was
looking for survivors.

Now, as we started tracking down we didn't
see much more. We saw a few more bodies. We saw a
little more debris. Then it got -- time was late now.
Now it was probably 8:40, 8:45.

Mike Noyes called and said -- who were we?
1-1? 1-1 come back -- "Charlie 1-1 come back to the
field for crew swap." PJs are ready. The -- the other
thing I forgot to tell you. We called on Company and

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said, "Get some PJs ready. Get them in their swimming
gear. I think we might have an accident out here."

He called on our Company frequency. He said,
"The PJs are ready to be picked up. Come on in and do
a crew swap." I had to get out of the pilot seat
because I am not a qualified night water hoist
operator. Okay. I -- a night water -- NVG, night
water qualified pilot -- there's a lot of reasons for
that we don't need to go into. But I have more water
pick-ups -- more water rescues than this entire wing
and everybody who's ever flown in it combined. I'm a
Navy combat pilot. All right. But, because of little
games they play around here, I'm not qualified.

So, I had to -- we had to come in -- had to
land and swap pilots. So, I got out. Mike Noyes got
in. Mike Noyes asked me to get in the back as an
observer. Why? Because I had the night vision goggles
on. He had put his goggles on. Everybody else in the
crew had night vision goggles.

So, I got in the back as an observer; got in
the left seat. Two PJs got in the back -- we opened
the doors so they could lay on the floor in the back
and look out the doors. And by this time -- by the
time we took off from the ramp again it was pitch
black. And then, we went back out.

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We went back out to the datum. Chris, of course, had been flying with me was in the left seat and Mike was in the right seat. And we picked up that creeping line search and started moving further to the southwest, looking for more bodies.

The Coast Guard came out then. We made contact with some boats. I was in the back. I got some of the radio transmissions. I really don't have a good idea -- situational awareness as to where we were at any point from then on because I was looking out one side of the aircraft. I didn't have a compass heading.

And I think -- I could tell you what I saw. And we saw -- I remember seeing very few bodies from then on. The one body I did see was a body of young woman; blond hair wearing a white outfit, and it was in perfect condition, floating face down. Hanging in the water like, you know, the dead man's float. And we tried to steer some Coast Guard vessels over to it. And we -- we all experienced some frustration in trying to get the Coast Guard to -- to heed our directions to these bodies.

And the problem is that there are two different frequency bands that is being used at this time. The surface vessels were on one; the air vessels were on the other. The Coast Guard helicopters and
aircraft had both in the aircraft; we did not. We couldn’t talk to the Coast Guard vessels -- or the surface vessels. So, there was some frustration there. And then, of course, the Coast Guard came in with a very conventional bright light search. Mike elected to take the helicopter out to the extreme edge of a possible impact area where we would be away from their lights and where we could use our night vision goggles to see if there was anything out there.

And then, they asked the 130 to remain on station to drop the parachute flares. And we were at that point virtually useless. We wanted to stay there, but then we got down pretty close -- we had about 20 minutes, half hour’s worth of fuel left on board. And Mike asked to be released from the search.

And the Coast Guard -- by this time a Coast Guard cutter was on-scene and they released us. And we flew back to -- to base.

But I really think as far as my contribution goes, I think the first 15 minutes -- probably up until the point where they -- the Tower announced there was -- that we had a 747. That -- everything we saw and everything we found that I think there’s any significance happened in that period of time.

MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. And the streak of light
that you saw, could you give us a color?

MAJ. MEYER: Yes. It was red-orange. And that's -- I made a distinction -- and there's a lot of tape out there of me talking to news media, and everything, that it looked like a shooting star. And the two exceptions that I made were that, No. 1, a shooting star is generally white light; not red-orange in color; and this was broad daylight. You don't usually see -- but, just imagine a flat, gently curving trajectory.

A slight descent. But moving from my right to my left. Which is either -- when I'm facing southwest is either north to south, or west to east. And that's directly contrary to everything -- everybody else has heard. But all I can tell you is, that's what I saw.

MR. WIEMEYER: Do you notice if -- speaking of the time you were over Vietnam -- compared to what you witnessed over there, what would you -- could you equate the speed of what you saw here to anything that you've witnessed in the past?

MAJ. MEYER: I've tried to do that. And it -- it just was too fast. I mean, the -- the -- what happened to her -- I wasn't prepared to observe something mentally, I guess. And when I saw it, I -- I
really -- I really can't give you an idea of speed. I can give you an idea that it -- it probably covered -- the streak of light probably covered two to three fingers of -- of distance -- whatever that is; five degrees of the horizon -- in three to five seconds.

It appeared to be fairly rapid. It could've been a jet plane. It wasn't a bird. It's very hard for me to judge speed. And I -- and the other thing, it's not only the speed. But I've no idea of the angle. It could've been anywhere from -- you know, all I could perceive was left to right. It could've been north to south. It could've been west to east.

MR. WIEMEYER: Do you have any feel for time span between seeing the streak and seeing the hard explosion?

MAJ. MEYER: Almost immediately. The first hard explosion, in my recollection, was at the end of the point of light.

MR. WIEMEYER: What color was that explosion?

MAJ. MEYER: It was a lighter -- closer to yellow, all right? And it was more like a -- a yellowish bright light. And I saw two of them. And they were about one to two seconds apart. And then I saw something -- and I don't know whether it was a third explosion, or part of the second explosion. It
was -- they were almost simultaneous and almost in the
equal same position.

MR. WIEEMEYER: Okay.

MAJ. MEYER: And then the fireball seemed to
grow out of -- out of that point in space.

MR. WIEEMEYER: The fireball itself, did it have a trajectory? Or was it --

MAJ. MEYER: Not in --

MR. WIEEMEYER: -- did it go vertical?

MAJ. MEYER: I -- I didn't observe a trajectory immediately. It then did have a trajectory, yes. It had a very -- what appeared to me a very slow, gently -- an arc. And it did -- it did move from where it originally grew -- and that's what I mean. The -- the first two were (sounds of hands clapping in quick succession.)

And then this thing grew. There were actually, maybe, two to three -- maybe even four seconds before it reached its full size. And it seemed to hang in air. And then I could perceive motion to my left and down, simultaneously in -- in parabolic arc trajectory.

MR. WIEEMEYER: Okay. That's all the questions I have for right now.

Lou?
MR. BURNS: Yeah, hi. Lou Burns, Air Line Pilots Association. Do you recall any conversation, or were you in conversation with a -- the Navy aircraft -- a P-3 that might've come into the zone for --

MAJ. MEYER: I was on two frequencies. One is a ultra high frequency, which is our 287.5. And I was on the Tower, which was -- it's -- is 125.3. And, as a matter of fact, I wasn't even on approach control.

If I recollect, we got -- because the day was absolutely beautiful, we got permission to fly the approaches with Tower. The normal procedure is if we're going to go up there and take up the air space that IFR traffic might be in, we call New York center or New York approach control in Islip on 120 -- 132.25. All right?

And we request -- we practice ILF -- the 2-4 at Suffolk, they give us a squawk. You know, we -- and they identify and maybe tell us to ident -- give us radar contact and clear us to the approaches. And maybe we'd ask them for a radar vector.

We didn't do that. We got permission to shoot the approaches with the Tower. So, the only two frequencies that we listened to during that whole flight were Tower here and our own Company frequency.

MR. BURNS: Thank you.
MR. CLEMENS: Al Clemens, with the FAA. I'd like to go over the fireball again, just for my own clarification. Now you were facing the out-flight?

MAJ. MEYER: Right.

MR. CLEMENS: The initial fireball, was it faster than the secondary one? And did it follow the same trajectory?

I think you mentioned it came from west to east -- the first one that you saw.

MAJ. MEYER: Oh, that I saw? It's -- let me characterize it as a streak of light.

MR. CLEMENS: A steak of light.

MAJ. MEYER: All right. It was definitely moving faster than the fireball would eventually develop. Did they seem to follow the same trajectory? Or in the same direction of flight?

MAJ. MEYER: Yes, they seemed, from my perspective, to move in the same direction of flight. They were moving from my left of center to further left. And then, of course, when you talk about the fireball, by the time we were watching the trajectory of the fireball we had, in fact, turned the helicopter so that now the relative picture of the fireball falling had moved back into my -- the center of my windscreen.

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I'm giving you this relative to the windscreen. That's the only thing I really --

MR. CLEMENS: Right.

MAJ. MEYER: -- I really have in my mind's eye, is the -- is the metal frame and the piece of glass. There's another piece of glass in the center, and then there's the co-pilot.

But if you saw the streak of light, did it seemed to -- you saw right to the point where it became another form of light, and then follow a similar trajectory and then slow down?

MAJ. MEYER: The first -- the first streak of light appeared to me almost a flat trajectory; slight downward curve.

MR. CLEMENS: At a constant speed?

MAJ. MEYER: At a constant speed. And then, as I say, I saw no airframe.

Then, probably at the end of that point -- very short -- I -- I didn't see much of it. Very shortly I saw first explosion, maybe 1/1000th -- you know, maybe a second and a half to two seconds, a second explosion, and then the fireball -- the fireball seemed to come from about the same point in space -- maybe a little bit further to the left. But as it grew it just engulfed both those first two explosions.
And -- and it just grew to a tremendous size.

MR. CLEMENS: Thank you.

MR. METCALF: Scott Metcalf, with the FBI. I don’t have any questions.

MR. STACEY: Terry Stacey, with TWA. I think I’m -- I’m getting the orientation now.

But the streak of light relative to the windscreen, describe that again. Which --

MAJ. MEYER: Upper -- as we were coming down -- you know, I’m lining up -- the reason I’m twisting my chair in front of you --

MR. STACEY: Yeah.

MAJ. MEYER: -- is that that runway out there faces about down there to that crack in the wall on --

MR. STACEY: Uh-huh.

MAJ. MEYER: All right?

And my windscreen is about so big (demonstrates size with hands) and about here (demonstrates with hands), which is to the left of center, as we’re facing -- let’s say -- 238, flying down then ILS. From about there (demonstrates with hands) just -- just to left of the center of the windscreen and high on the windscreen, almost -- perhaps, two inches below the metal frame, which -- which holds the top of the plate of glass is where I
observed this streak, moving from right to left -- just
-- (sound of mouth noise ).

I put sound effects in. I didn’t hear
anything. Remember, I’m flying in a helicopter. I’ve
got earplugs in. I’ve got earphones over it to try to
safe my ears. The damn things are incredibly noisy.
So, I didn’t hear anything of the explosion or --
anything outside that aircraft, except the radio.

And -- but I -- it just kind of like (Sound
of mouth noises), boom, boom -- boom, boom, boom.

MR. STACEY: Okay. Did you have -- does a
helicopter have any kind of a threat warning --

MAJ. MEYER: Yes.

MR. STACEY: -- installed in it?

MAJ. MEYER: Yes.

MR. STACEY: Was it operative?

MAJ. MEYER: I --

MR. STACEY: Operating?

MAJ. MEYER: I don’t believe so. I don’t
think we had it on.

MR. STACEY: How far would you say you were
from the objects that were falling at terminal velocity
within the other objects that fluttering down? Do
you --

MAJ. MEYER: Within two miles. But they were
of such a size -- when I initially saw this stuff falling, we were probably between a mile and two miles. And -- probably because I couldn't see it farther than that.

MR. STACEY: So, this -- from your description of being over the beach when the fireball hit the water --

MAJ. MEYER: Yeah, we were north of the beach -- but just, maybe, half a mile.

MR. STACEY: And then this occurred -- this next event occurred some time after that?

MAJ. MEYER: Yes. Oh, yes. We travelled -- if I'm right then, we travelled about -- before we slowed for this debris we probably travelled -- three miles?

MR. STACEY: Okay.

MAJ. MEYER: And that -- at better than 120 knots, really. Going two miles a minute -- probably two and a half miles a minute; somewhere around a minute, minute and 15 seconds after the fireball impacted was when I saw the debris and saw the -- the seats coming down.

MR. STACEY: What time can you -- what time did you terminate the mission? Right --

MAJ. MEYER: Quarter to 12:00.
MR. STACEY: Quarter to 12:00.
And you had a debriefing here, after that?
Or not?

MAJ. MEYER: No. We came in. I threw my stuff in the locker. I had a tremendous feeling of depression, as you might imagine. And people were running around here like chickens with their heads cut off.

And I -- I guess I -- I have a very angry personality, I guess -- a negative personality. But I just said, look, you know, somebody's running around now. They're probably going to form a parade. And I just said, "I'm tired. I'm out of here." And I hung my stuff in the locker. I went home.

The next day when they called me, I says, look, ask Dave Hill [phonetic sp.] if he wants me to come down, all right. Because I'm senior in age to most of these guys around here. I had attended a service break, and they were all colonels and I'm a major passed over for lieutenant colonel -- so there's some bitterness in my -- in my relationship with these people.

And none of them have any combat experience, except Paul McCree [phonetic sp.]. And none of them have done anything except fly around the flagpole here.
at Suffolk County. And so, I guess I -- I have
somewhat of a negative attitude.

And at 12:00 o'clock at night after I came in
and took my stuff off after having searched the water
for bodies -- at that point realizing what I'd just
observed, I just went home.

MR. STACEY: And then, did you discuss the
events with anyone after you went home?

MAJ. MEYER: I went home and my wife was
watching it on the television, and normally she's in
bed long before I get home. And she was sitting up on
the front porch watching the television.

And she said, "Did you hear about this?" And
I said, "Yes." I said, "I was just out searching for
survivors." And we talked about it, maybe, a few
minutes. And then she went to bed. I did not. I was
up until, oh, probably 2:00, 2:30. And probably had
about five or six drinks. And eventually got drunk
enough to go to sleep, then went upstairs and went to
bed.

MR. STACEY: Did you write any of your
observations down?

MAJ. MEYER: No, I didn't. The next day I
went to work. And I had a lot of things I had to do,
so I did them. I can't tell you now whether I had a
court appearance or not. But I had appointments. I might've been in court at 9:00 o'clock. So, I just -- you know, changed uniforms; put on the blue suit, and went and did my thing.

And later that afternoon I got a call from Dave Ruvola that said, you know, they want everybody that witnessed the accident down there for a press conference. And I said, Dave -- I said -- this is Dave Ruvola's so -- ask Col. Hill if he wants me there, or not. Because generally they've been trying to get me out of the limelight.

And he called me back and said, yes, Dave just says, "Be 35-10." Now, that's a superseded instruction, but it means, you know, make sure your hair's cut and check if your nails are clean. I -- I took it to mean he wanted a blue uniform. So, I got out of my suit, got into my blues and came down here. When I got down here -- if you see this tape, you'll see everybody else was in a flight suit, and I'm in blues. I don't know, it's just 'cause if I misinterpreted the instructions.

And when I came down here I walked in and walked down the center hall and I met Jim Finkel [phonetic sp.], and I said, Jim, you know, do you have any instructions before you go into this thing? And he
said, "Look, don’t discuss the bodies. Don’t speculate. Don’t give any opinions. Just tell them what you saw." And that’s what I did.

And I got some questions after that about, what do rescue pilots do that I answered that don’t have anything to do with what I saw. And eventually they cut me off and then when the guy had the -- it’s about -- I think I spoke for about 10 minutes.

MR. STACEY: Then when -- was the FBI present there? Did anyone conduct the interview --

MAJ. MEYER: I --

MR. STACEY: -- the FBI did?

MAJ. MEYER: No. Beyond those -- the -- I -- I was not contacted by the FBI. And then that was Thursday.

Friday they called me and asked me to come down. And told me they’d give me a -- a duty day, if I had the time off, to go talk to some reporters over at the Coast Guard station at East Moriches. So, I had nothing for -- I -- I think that was fry -- I had nothing on for Friday.

So, I jumped into a flight suit, this time, came down here and Dave Ruvola actually flew the helicopter. And they -- they helicoptered me over to the Coast Guard station. Did a couple of interviews.

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And eventually it -- because Dave Hill told me to -- I went up and knocked on the FBI door and said, "I was the pilot of the helicopter. Do you want to interview me? And two guys said, oh. Oh, yeah. And then, as an afterthought, they took me back into the rear room. And they said, well, go ahead and tell us, and they turned on the little tape machine -- a little handheld job.

And I basically told them my story. And I said, you know, do you have any questions. And they said, no. And I got up and walked out. I think the total time I'd been in the trailer was about six minutes. I looked at my watch for some reason. It was about six minutes, and then I walked out.

MR. STACEY: Okay. Just one more question.
Have you seen type of streak of light similar to that before or since?

MAJ. MEYER: Yes, I have. But I don't -- what I tried to do at the time -- let me tell you what happened.

I walked out of that interview and the guy says to me in here, I just saw you on television, and Peter Jennings says you saw it was a missile. The next thing you know Dave Hill's all over my ass, like a snake on shit, saying, "Did you say it was a missile?"
Did you say it was a missile?" And there's Cause
[phonetic sp.] and Fenimore [phonetic sp.] saying --
Fenimore is the -- the adjutant general -- "Didn't you
say it was a missile? Are you absolutely sure of
this?" I said, "I didn't say it was a missile, God
damn it. I said I saw a streak of light."

Now, the -- the panic -- the hysteria of the
media at that time was just -- if it hadn't been such a
tragedy it would've been laughable. Did it look like a
missile? In some respects, yes; in others, not. I'll
tell why.

I've seen two kinds of missiles -- well,
actually three different types I believe. SAM-1s,
SAM-2s and SAM-7s. All right.

Now, a SAM-7 comes at you like a corkscrew,
like that (demonstrates with hands.) You see,
fortunately I never saw one coming at me -- all right
-- But I'd see them going through the air and I think
someone was trying to acquire me when they fired. All
right.

But I learned -- and that's another thing.
You know, I learned to fly this mission in combat. I
learned on the job. And I learned to keep my feet in
the grass, all the time -- and never fly over anything
I could fly under, around or through. And that's just
a simple straight rule.

So, I didn't -- I wasn't the target of missiles, 'cause you don't break and avoid a missile -- the hell about this is, if you have to break you're dead.

I saw a missile fired from Hai-phong Harbor -- I used to sneak into Hai-phong Harbor every once in a while to -- to try to be in position to pick a guy up, because if they knock them down in Hai-phong Harbor I'd have to get them right away. And I had an abortive attempt; we couldn't get the guy. He was dead. He was machine gunned in the chute on the way down in the -- on the Do-son peninsula -- it's a little creek which is the part of the peninsula that forms the southern edge of Hai-phong Harbor.

And so, I saw these miss --

(Tape 3, Side A ends abruptly. No carryover. Loss of dialogue. Interview resumes Tape 3, Side B.)

MR. WIEMEYER: Yeah.

MAJ. MEYER: But a SAM-1 and a SAM-2, when they go through the air they would have a -- a little hitch in their gittle. A little jog. The -- they did not fly a smooth flight path, usually.

A SAM-7 just -- it -- it's a wild looking thing coming at you, because it comes at you in a
corkscrew. And -- and if you see it fired it goes in a corkscrew. If you see -- if you see these other missiles, the -- they have these large -- in the first place, these missiles all had smoke trails.

A SAM-1 and a SAM-2 leave a trail 10,000 feet long in the air. A SAM-7 leaves a trail, too. You can see these damn spirals after the missile is gone. And, matter of fact, what you're probably seeing is the smoke because the missile's moving too fast to be seen.

This thing that I observed from the angle at which I observed it was a very -- to me -- to my perception it was a very steady path. And it wasn't a long time. It was, as I said, maybe five seconds, total. That'd be the outside, as to the amount of time I saw it.

But it was a very steady thing. It didn't have an erratic -- well, cert -- it didn't have a smoke trail. And it didn't appear to me to have an erratic flight path.

MR. STACEY: Okay. But you have never seen anything similar to that in this area, is that correct?

MAJ. MEYER: No. No.

MR. STACEY: That's all I have. Thank you.

MR. WIEMEYER: I have a couple of follow-up questions, Fred. It's Norm Wiemeyer, of the Safety CAPITAL HILL REPORTING (202) 466-9500
You mentioned at one point in time that you saw a strobe light.

MAJ. MEYER: Yeah.

MR. WIEMEYER: Did -- were you able to identify that and find it when you got down into the localized?

MAJ. MEYER: Yes. The strobe light was on the emergency evacuation ramp -- the inflatable ramp -- that we thought was the life raft. When we got there the strobe light was actually fixed to some part of that raft -- to that -- to that ramp. And -- and that was -- it was one and the same. They were in the same place.

But I can't describe to you the emotional roller coaster of seeing what appeared to be a raft with a strobe light and -- you know, the up and down of this thing wasn't fantastic.

MR. WIEMEYER: Yeah. I can appreciate that. What do you do? What is your civilian occupation?

MAJ. MEYER: I practice law.

MR. WIEMEYER: And what kind of aircraft did you fly in Vietnam?

MAJ. MEYER: I flew an H-2 -- a UH-2(K); a
command sea sprite rescue helicopter.

MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. I don't have anything else. Does anybody else have any other follow-ups?

MR. METCALF: Just one.

MR. WIEMEYER: Okay. Scott.

MR. METCALF: Scott Metcalf, with the FBI.

In your military experience outside the States, have you ever seen anything like this streak of light you've -- you told us about?

MAJ. MEYER: No. You know, I -- trying to go back -- even -- even in -- at times much closer to the actual event than today. But even back there a day after I was trying to go back in -- in my own mind and say, what the hell was this thing?

And I can't say -- I -- I -- and I said to people who have said, well, was it a missile? And I said, all I can know is what my body told me at that time, or didn't tell me. And when I looked up at this thing in the air nothing said, missile.

Nothing clicked in my mind and said, missile. But then again, the technology of the missiles that I had an opportunity to observe was 20, 25 years earlier. So, I really don't know what it was.

It was a streak of light. It appeared to be about the same color of the sun. And it occurred to me
that this either could've been a window flash, or it
could've been -- it's even occurred to me it could've
been something that was -- that was of its own nature;
perhaps even light colored by the sun.

'Cause you know if you see -- at sunset when
the sun is lower you'll see clouds or you'll see
contrails in the sky, or things. And very often they
assume the color of the sun at that point.

This, I think, was not a contrail. All
right. It -- it didn't have any endurance. And I
really don't know what the hell it was. I -- I have
not -- I can't recall in my life having had a -- a
similar observation.

MR. METCALF: Thanks a lot. Nothing further.

MR. WIEMEYER: I have nothing further. I'm
going to shut this down. And thanks very much for your
help, sir.

MAJ. MEYER: You're welcome.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded [no
time noted].)