



was interested in participating in this work. I contacted John McRainey and volunteered to come to El Salvador to work on the air resupply program.

3. I commenced work on approximately August 1, 1986. I signed an Independent Contractor Agreement with Corporate Air Services.

4. Neither John McRainey nor William Cooper nor anyone else ever suggested or implied that I worked for Southern Air Transport. I did not believe that I worked for Southern Air Transport.

5. I never received any instructions, directions or orders from Southern Air Transport while I worked on the airlift. I flew the Maule aircraft and also flew as first officer on the DH-4 and C-123 aircraft which were the aircraft in the resupply fleet.

6. In April, 1987, subsequent to the termination of the resupply operation in early October 1986, I was hired by Southern Air as a first officer for Southern Air's L-100-30 aircraft. I worked for Southern Air for approximately four months but voluntarily resigned so I could spend more time with my family than was possible working as a pilot.

7. On Friday, October 3, 1986, a briefing took place at the Contra base at Aguacate in Honduras on a C-123 flight to be operated on October 5, 1986, from Ilopango Air Force base into Nicaragua to drop supplies to Contra forces in Southern Nicaragua. Present at this briefing, among others, were William Cooper, Eugene Hasenfus, William "Jake" Wehrell and myself. Also present were General Enrique Bermudez, the FDN (Contra) Military Commander, and an American who we understood was from the CIA or the U.S. military.

8. At the briefing, General Bermudez stated that a battalion size group of Contras on the Southern front was surrounded by Nicaraguan forces and that they desperately needed supplies. General Bermudez pleaded that the flight be operated.

9. The American who had satellite photos and other intelligence information, recommended that the flight not be operated. He told us that the Nicaraguan military had moved in 100 millimeter radar-guided anti-aircraft guns along the southern border of Nicaragua which narrowed the flight entry lane to penetrate Nicaraguan air space from Costa Rica which was the normal route for the resupply flights we operated with the C-123 aircraft. The American stated that the Nicaraguan military had moved a contingent of special forces troops into the lane who were equipped with SAM-7 heat-

seeking missiles. He stated that the Nicaraguans were waiting to shoot us down and he specifically advised that we should not go because it was too dangerous and we would be shot down.

10. General Bermudez urged us to make the trip because of the critical need in the field.

11. William Cooper said that the flight would be performed. Cooper said that he could get through. Eugene Hasenfus agreed with Cooper that we should go and that we could make it.

12. After the briefing, those of us from the resupply operation returned to Ilopango where the mission was to originate.

13. I was scheduled to fly on the October 5, 1986, flight with Cooper as the First Officer. However, because of the briefing I was very concerned about the safety of the flight.

14. I expressed my concern to Jerry Stemwedell, a more senior resupply pilot who told me I did not have to go if I felt the risk was too great. Stemwedell suggested I tell Cooper I would not go.

15. I then told Cooper I would not go. Cooper was very upset. He then said he would substitute Wallace "Buz" Sawyer for me.

16. A short time later, Sawyer came by to see me. Sawyer told me he did not want to go on the trip. Sawyer said that he had a girlfriend and wanted to stay in El Salvador, that he wanted to be promoted to Captain and that Cooper told Sawyer he had to go if he wanted the promotion. Sawyer told me that he had decided to go on the trip.

17. The October 5, 1986, trip was going to be performed in daylight. Cooper had previously decided to fly during the day because of his difficulty in locating the drop sites at night. All the flight crew members discussed on various occasions the extra risk of being hit by groundfire or missiles on daylight flights.



David A. Johnson

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