

Tapes Reveal Details of Fresno Air Crash / Pilots believed Learjet's engines were on fire

1995-04-21 04:00:00 PDT Fresno -- "C'mon baby, don't crash on me now," a Learjet pilot is heard pleading, shortly before he and his co-pilot crashed into a Fresno apartment complex in Radio transcripts published yesterday by the Fresno Bee and broadcast by KSEE-TV detail the last five minutes of conversation between the pilots of the military- contracted plane and the Fresno Air Terminal control tower.

B The jet was carrying electronic equipment to make it the "target" in a war game in which it was chased by National Guard jets. The pilots, Richard Anderson, 36, and Brad Sexton, 34, both from Klamath Falls, Ore., were the only people aboard the plane.

According to the transmissions, the pilots believed that the Learjet's twin engines were on fire. But the National Transportation Safety Board reported in January a pilot mistakenly thought one engine was on fire and shut it down.

At 11:43 a.m., the pilots declared an "emergency engine fire." They reported at 11:44 that they could see a runway and were cleared for visual approach.

About a minute later, the pilots apparently realized that to reach the runway they needed to make the equivalent of three 90-degree turns.

Both pilots were killed and 18 people on the ground were injured in the December 14 crash.

"We've got an engine fire on the right side, too, it shows," one of the pilots said at 11:45. The pilots then tried to control the plane for the next minute.

"Do we have any power?" one of the pilots asked.

"I'm not getting any response, man," the other pilot answered.

As the plane fell, a pilot of another plane approaching the airport asked the control tower, "Did that guy who was having problems make the runway?"

"Negative," the tower replied.

Although the pilots were lauded as heroes for intentionally veering to avoid crashing into Ewing Elementary School, the transcript does not indicate whether they even saw the school, located a few blocks from the crash scene.

RADIO TRANSCRIPT OF FATAL FLIGHT

The following are excerpts from radio transcripts recorded before the December 14 crash of a Learjet into a Fresno apartment complex.

11:43:16 a.m. -- (Pilots declare an emergency engine fire.)

11:45:21 -- We got an engine fire on the right side too it shows.

11:45:23 -- (Expletive) Do we have any power?

11:45:26 -- I'm not getting any response, man.

11:45:29 -- Gears coming down. Pull it in.

11:45:32 -- I'm coming, I'm coming. I'm not gonna. . .

11:45:44 -- Full power full power. Pull up. I (expletive) pull up dude . . . full right rudder in.

11:46:01 -- Oh (expletive).

11:46:04 -- Get it.

11:46:08 -- C'mon baby, don't crash on me now.

11:46:32 -- Oh (expletive).

11:46:33 -- Oh (expletive).

11:46:34 -- Oh (expletive).