

August 31, 1990

John Cummings  
19 Wedgewood Avenue  
East Northport, N.Y.



Dear John,

I apologize for my tardiness on this information. It's an election year for us and other duties are calling.

Anyway, let's start the rundown on the 7 airplanes Terry Reed says he flew while training pilots at Mena. As I indicated in some of our telephone conversations, he kept logs on the planes. Sometimes he had registration or N numbers as well as the serial numbers. It's kind of unusual for a pilot to keep serial numbers. But Reed says he learned the practice from the pilot who taught him at Springfield, Missouri. And in actuality, it's a good practice. Because it's easy to change N numbers, but not serial numbers.

These are the planes he says he flew, their registration numbers as he recorded them, their serial numbers as he recorded them and the kind of airplane they were:

- 1) N36998 sn 404-0090 1977 Cessna 404
- 2) N5425G sn 404-0045 1977 Cessna 404
- 3) N69889 sn 421B-0529 1974 Cessna 421 B
- 4) N5774C sn 402C-0042 1979 Cessna 421 B
- 5) N9490Y sn BA-540 1963 G185 Beech
- 6) N8275T sn 348170016 1981 Deneca
- 7) N4677W sn 13-273 1978 Rockwell Commander

What's most interesting and peculiar is how each of the planes as Terry Reed knew and flew them and recorded them in his log books was a stolen airplane 'at the time.' By checking the registration numbers 'at the time' anyone would have learned they were real and legitimate airplanes and not stolen, or so it would seem. For instance, plane number one, N36998 in the time frame fitting Reed's use was a 1977 Cessna 404 belonging to the Cessna Aircraft company in Belgium. But it had a different serial number. Plane number two, N5425G was recorded with the Faa as Sale reported, out of Winter Haven, Florida. It too had a different serial number. Plane number three, N69889 belonged to the Coca Cola Bottling Company of Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Plane four, N9490Y was owned by Rainbow Islands Cargo Inc of Honolulu, Hawaii. Plane number six, N8275T had a registered owner of Ranger Aviation Enterprises Inc of San Angelo, Texas. And airplane number seven, N4677W was owned by Kent B. Sands of Bellevue, Washington.

Stay with me. It sounds complicated but it's not! Okay so far the registration numbers on the airplanes flown by Reed belong to other planes of the same make, but located in other parts of the country. And those registration numbers are not listed as stolen. So Reed's planes are carrying 'false' registration numbers. So his planes 'appear' legitimate.

Now checking the serial numbers of the planes flown by Reed, we learn they're stolen!

Plane number one again, N36998 or serial #404-0090 turns out to be a Cessna 404 stolen March 1, 1983 from a Falcon Field near Atlanta, Georgia. It was flown at the same time under N3241B. Its disappearance, which has never been solved, was questionable. I've talked to the insurance people. Three guys, including an air line pilot, out of Georgia owned the plane. The insurance company questioned the theft and there was civil litigation in the Georgia courts over the settlement. An insurance company officer told me the air line pilot later was arrested for carrying dope on board one of his airliners in Florida. There was a stink over it but the pilot was later released and either cleared or charges dropped. It was insured by Fireman's Fund Insurance and Associated Aviation Underwriters.

Plane Number two, flown by Reed as N5425G, was also a 1977 Cessna 404 Titan. But its real Registration was N5425G. It was stolen in November of 1984 from an airfield at Addison, Texas which is part of Dallas. It was owned by Holmes Leasing company of Dallas. Insurance was carried by Aviation Office of America in Dallas, Texas. Again the theft involved drugs! The President of Holmes Leasing was a John Holmes. His attorney tells me Holmes' partner was dealing dope. The plane was apparently missing on a dope flight when two guys cracked it up

loaded with Pot or some such stuff just across the border in Mexico. Turns out there were several people indicted in the drug operation. Holmes was not one of them. He and his attorney, understandably were extremely nervous in discussing the theft etc.

Plane number three, N69889 turned out to be N55F, also a 1974 Cessna 421. It was stolen in January of 1985 from Orlando, Florida. Marshall Boone owned the plane at the time. I interviewed him. He indicated it was stolen after he had just installed a new radar system and other avionics as well as a new right engine. About 3 weeks later or perhaps a month, he couldn't recall exactly, the plane turned up crashed just off shore of Rutter Cut Key in the Bahamas.

The tail was still visible and a friend of Boone's took pictures, which indicated the registration number had been changed with tape to resume 5S8 or 5SB. Maps were found in the plane indicating it had been flown in Colombia and Venezuela. He said he first learned of the crash when a federal law agency called him.

Plane number four, N5774C, turned out to be N5779C, again a 1979 Cessna 402C. It was stolen September 2, 1983 from Palm Beach International Airport at West Palm Beach, Florida. It was owned by Planeholder Inc, a Florida corporation out of Miami. I've never been able to talk to anyone about this theft. But notes in the aircraft file indicate the plane was stolen early in the morning, refueled at Boca Raton. The passenger seats were removed and the occupants were believed to be a female and a Jamaican male. The plane's never been found. Case remains unsolved.

Plane number five, N9490Y was really N9412, again a 1963 Beech 18. It was owned by Perkiomen Airways Ltd of Reading, Pennsylvania and was stolen July 1, 1983. In Puerto Rico, where Perkiomen had some sort of a mail route contract. The insurer was Aviation Office of America. I could never locate the owner. But a former employee told me the company filed bankruptcy in the Spring of '83' and he wouldn't put it past the principal owner to let the plane disappear. Regardless, the plane has never been found. The case remains unsolved.

Plane number six, N8275T, was really N8280D, a 1981 Piper Seneca. Yes, there was a Seneca flown by Reed. I recall you mentioning Seale's fondness of Senecas. Anyway, this airplane was stolen January 1, 1985 from Tampa, Florida where it was owned at the time by Topp of Tampa Airport Inc which is now Airofly Tampa Inc. Jamie Jordan of Topp of Tampa owned the plane about 5 to 6 months before it disappeared from the Tampa airport. It was insured by U-S AIG or U-S Aviation Underwriters. The plane was never recovered.

Plane number seven, N4677W was really N4697W, a 1978 Rockwell Commander. It was reported stolen in a very bizarre case in September 1983 from Washington State. No insurance on the plane. This was the only plane of the 7 which was recovered after being stolen. However after its theft in 1983 in an admitted theft by the owner who was in a legal dispute with the bank, the plane reappeared in January or February 1990. The owner didn't know where the plane was all these years, or so he claims. And by all circumstances it might be the case. He had 2 friends steal the plane and arranged for them to know where it was to be located but not tell him. The pilot died several months later and reportedly didn't tell the owner where the plane was hidden. Very strange tale.

Summarizing these 7 planes, the registration numbers belonged to unstolen planes located elsewhere around the country. But the serial numbers, which aren't routinely checked or observed easily, proved the planes were stolen.

The FAA no longer maintains files reflecting if airplanes are stolen.

But a check with the International Aviation Theft Bureau, phone 301-694-5444 proved the planes were listed as stolen.

A Bob Collins handles the bureau and ran the checks for me.

Now if you take Reed's own airplane, it makes 8 planes which were stolen and flown under Registration numbers belonging to legitimate and unstolen airplanes elsewhere around the country. Further, the planes of the legitimate registration numbers were the same model and year of the ones actually being flown by Reed in Arkansas. Think about that one! It'd take a little research to find matching planes. I could do it. But what kind of drug operation, if this is what Reed was doing, or as far as that goes a Contra training operation, would take the time to research the airplane background? Perhaps one with government connections? Think about it. Anyone who steals an airplane for a few days of drug-hopping missions just tapes over the N number to make it appear to be something else. They then usually ditch the plane in the ocean or abandon it, right? But not Seale and his boys. No, they needed the planes for a little longer. Now either Seale and his people were extremely sophisticated, or they had the assistance of some very well heeled backers.

They couldn't afford to be snatched or tripped up by the usual tape method of registration alterations. They had to employ a far more sophisticated method. That's why it seems almost out of character for the way Reed's plane was found and observed with taped numbers. Remember the private detective who says he 'stumbled' onto the airplane when the wind blew open the door described the supposed sloppy job of taping over the registration numbers? It's totally out of character! It doesn't fit Seale's operational methods. Somebody obviously set up Reed, trying to make it appear he was sloppy and a stupid crook! I don't buy it.

By the way, in case you've never known. Reed's airplane had a registration number belonging to an identical Piper airplane hangared in Columbus, Ohio. The plane was sold to a West German and exported. Interesting point. It is near Columbus, Ohio where supposedly there might have been some kind of Contra training operation. And it is near Columbus where an avionics firm, with defense contacts, is located. Seale's old buddy, Homer 'Red' Hall worked for the avionics firm, and supposedly received 750-thousand from Seale to do avionics work on his airplanes. It proved so profitable for Hall, he left Ohio and moved to Mena for a while.

Well, enough. If you need more, call or write.

Sincerely,

Jerry Bohnen

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