

In english, please

«I'M SORRY, SAY AGAIN CACTUS...»

FROM TAXIING TO DITCHING, 22 MINUTES IN THE LIFE OF AWE 1549

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For the past 20 years, "Cactus" has been America West radio call sign. This Phoenix, Arizona-based airline (hence the "Cactus") merged in 2005 with US Airways. Since 2008, the combined airlines have operated with US Airways new aircraft livery and America West Airlines ICAO identifier (AWE) and radio call sign. On January 15th, 2009, AWE 1549 was scheduled to commute from La Guardia airport, New York, to Charlotte, North Carolina. The messages that follow are excerpts from the official FAA control frequencies transcription (1). All times are UTC.



Listen to the audio version with the original recordings on www.anglais-pour-voler.com

La Guardia ground control

GC - 20:12- Cactus 1549 taxi foxtrot bravo, hold short echo just got to hold you for about three minutes for your in trail to Charlotte.

AWE 1549- foxtrot bravo short of echo, Cactus 1549.

GC-20:15- Cactus 1549 follow Northwest you can monitor tower.

AWE 1549- Cactus 1549 follow Northwest monitor the tower,

thank you.

La Guardia local control

LC-20:20- Cactus 1549, La Guardia, runway four position and hold, traffic will land three one.

AWE 1549- position and hold runway four for Cactus 1549.

LC-20:24- Cactus 1549 runway four, cleared for take off.

AWE 1549- Cactus 1549, cleared for take off.

LC- Cactus 1549 contact New York departure, good day.

AWE 1549- good day.

New York TRACON

AWE 1549-20:25- Cactus 1549 seven hundred climbing five thousand.

NYDep- Cactus 1549, New York departure, radar contact, climb and maintain one five thousand.

AWE 1549- maintain one five thousand Cactus 1549.

NYDep-20:27- Cactus 1549 turn left heading two seven zero.

AWE 1549- this is Cactus 1539 (3) hit birds we lost thrust in both engines we're turning back towards La Guardia.

NYDep- OK yea you need to return to La Guardia turn left heading of two two zero.

AWE1549- two two zero.

NYDep- tower stop your departures we got an emergency returning.

LC- who is it?

NYDep- it's 1529 he ah bird strike he lost all engines he lost the thrust in the engines he is returning immediately.

LC- cactus 1529 which engines?

NYDep- he lost thrust in both engines, he said.

LC- got it.

NYDep- 20:28- Cactus 1529 (4) if we can get it to you do you want to try to land runway one three?

AWE 1549- we are unable we may end up in the Hudson.

NYDep- alright Cactus 1549 it's going to be left traffic to runway three one.

AWE 154- unable.

NYDep- okay what do you need to land?

NYDep- Cactus 1549 runway four is available if you want to make left traffic to runway four.

AWE 1549- I am not sure if we can make any runway, oh what's over to our right, anything in New Jersey, may be Teterboro?

NYDep- okay yea off to your right side is Teterboro airport.

NYDep- 20:29- do you want to try and go to Teterboro?

AWE 1549- yes.

NYtracon- Teterboro, empire (5) actually La Guardia departure got an emergency inbound

Teterboro- okay go ahead.

NYtracon- Cactus 1549 over the George Washington bridge wants to go to the airport right now.

Teterboro- he wants to go to our airport check does he need any assistance?

NYtracon- yes he, he was a bird strike can I get him in for runway one?

Teterboro- runway one that's good.

NYDep- Cactus 1529 turn right two eight zero you can land runway one at Teterboro.

AWE 1549- we can't do it.

NYDep- okay which runway would you like at Teterboro?

AWE 1549- we're gonna be in the Hudson.

NYDe- I am sorry, say again Cactus?

NYDep- Cactus, Cactus 1549 radar contact is lost you also got Newark airport off your two o'clock and about seven miles.

NYDep- 20:30- Eagle flight 4718 turn left heading two one zero.

EGF 4718- two one zero, 4718, I don't know I think he said he was going into the Hudson

NYDep- Cactus 1529 you still on?

NYDep- Cactus 1529 if you can you got runway two nine available at Newark off your two o'clock and seven miles.

Unknown- 20:31- was that Cactus up by the Tappan Zee (6)?

NYDep- yeah it was a cactus he was just north of the George Washington bridge when they had the bird strike.

La Guardia class B airspace

At 20:27, the controller is in radio contact with two helicopters, N461SA and N152TA.

CBA- 20:29- 2TA traffic at your twelve o'clock and five miles southbound airbus three twenty.

N152TA- we're looking for the traffic 2TA.

CBA- yeah 2TA, he's at nine hundred feet

abeam the North Hudson, he's, looks like he is descending into the Hudson river.

CBA- 2TA looks like this may be an incident here.

N152TA- roger keep my eyes out 2TA.

CBA- 2TA he's twelve o'clock and two and a half mile.

N152TA- Got him in sight maintaining visual.

CBA- 2TA roger.

CBA- 20:30- 2TA is he still flying?

N152TA- Still flying.

CBA- Thank you.

N152TA- flying past the (unintelligible) right now looks like he getting lower.

CBA- 2TA roger.

N461SA- going down.

N161SA- looks like he is going down.

CBA- roger.

N561SA- he's in the water.

The rest is history. 155 unhurt passengers waited for rescue on the aircraft wings, or in the inflatable emergency chutes. The captain wal-



ked up and down the aisle, twice, to make sure that no one was left behind. The unanimous praise came not only from the aviation community, but from the world at large. Would'nt everybody love to have that kind of pilots on their next flight? ●

(1) www.faa.gov

(2) In the US, all ground frequencies are 121 decimal something. Here the controller is transmitting only the "something" and is using "point" instead of "decimal".

(3) the pilot gives a wrong callsign...

(4) ... and so does the controller

(5) EMPYR sector is in charge of south arrivals for La Guardia.

(6) a bridge on the Hudson

More vocabulary

THE AISLE	le couloir
CHECK	.OK
TO DITCH	.atterrir en urgence dans l'eau
AN EMERGENCY CHUTE	.un toboggan d'évacuation
AN EXCERPT	.un extrait
GOT IT	.compris
HENCE	.d'où
THE AIRLINE LIVERY	.les couleurs de la compagnie
TO MERGE	.fusionner
TO MONITOR	.veiller