

Poorly trained pilots should be grounded, says Cormorant victim's dad

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The father of one of the men killed when a Cormorant helicopter plunged into the ocean off of Canso, N.S, 18 months ago said Tuesday that he wants the Department of National Defence to keep poorly trained pilots away from the controls.

Robert McDavid said Tuesday that it appears three families lost loved ones unnecessarily. His son, Cpl. Trevor McDavid, 31, of Ontario was one of three men killed when the helicopter crashed and sank.

A draft military report looking into the accident suggests the chopper's pilot, Maj. Gordon Ireland, was not properly trained. The Cormorant smashed into the ocean on the night of July 13, 2006, with a crew of seven onboard. The chopper was practising night-time search and rescue manouevres at the time.

"If they make sure that those qualifications are there, it won't happen again. There won't be other families suffering the loss of a loved one," said McDavid, who lives in Capreol, Ont., just north of Sudbury.

Trevor McDavid, along with Sgt. Duane Brazil and Cpl. Kirk Noel, died when they were unable to get out of the submerged chopper. It crashed nose first into the sea at 120 km/h, splitting the aircraft in two.

Robert McDavid said the military has a duty to take care of the widows and families left behind.

"These women are going to need support because they've lost their husbands' livelihood. They're widows now, with children, and I hope the government's not going to just forget about them," he said.

McDavid said that he has been waiting a long time for some official word about what happened the night his son died.

"We were originally told that we would hear within a year and, you know, day goes by, day goes by, you never hear about it and you kind of forget about it. But, at the same time, you don't really forget about the men that did go with it," McDavid said.

The military's draft report suggests the pilot the night of the crash had just returned from a 90-day leave and did not go through the proper training before taking the controls again.

The report concluded that Ireland was "not qualified" to be in the pilot's seat that night and found that an "inappropriate" use of manual flying techniques had overridden an autopilot system that might have allowed the helicopter to stay in the air.

The draft report, obtained by the Canadian Press Tuesday, also said that overall the skills of search and rescue pilots aren't what they used to be because of inadequate training.

The Cormorants fly out of Greenwood, N.S.

Base officers are not commenting on the draft report.

With files from the Canadian Press