

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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IN RE: :

:

THE FIRE THAT OCCURRED ON : NTSB Accident No.

THE CARIBBEAN FANTASY THAT : DCA16FM052

OCCURRED ON AUGUST 17, 2016 :

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INTERVIEW OF: JORGE OBANDO CABRERA

Sunday,

August 21, 2016

Conference Room

USCG Sector San Juan

Puerto Rico

BEFORE

MICHAEL KARR, NTSB

CARRIE BELL, NTSB

[REDACTED] USCG

LT [REDACTED] [REDACTED] USCG

ANDRES PICO RAMIREZ, PI Club

CDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] USCG

APPEARANCES:

On Behalf of American Cruise:

CARLOS BAYRON, ESQ.
Bayron Offices

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

(6:05 p.m.)

1
2
3 INVESTIGATOR KARR: This is Mike Karr of the
4 National Transportation Safety Board. It's 1805 on
5 August 21st, 2016. And we're in a conference room at
6 Sector San Juan, conducting interviews with regards to
7 the Caribbean Fantasy fire.

8 I'd like everyone at the table to introduce
9 themselves. So we'll go around to my right. Just
10 introduce yourself by name and organization.

11 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] United States Coast
12 Guard.

13 CDR [REDACTED] Commander [REDACTED] [REDACTED] United
14 States Coast Guard.

15 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB.

16 MR. CABRERA: My name is Jorge Obando. I'm
17 the chief housekeeper for the Caribbean Fantasy.

18 LT [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast
19 Guard.

20 INVESTIGATOR KARR: All right. Thanks,
21 everyone. Sir, is it okay if we record the interview?

22 MR. CABRERA: I don't have any
23 (unintelligible).

24 INVESTIGATOR KARR: Okay. Thank you very
25 much. Can you tell us what your position is onboard

1 the Caribbean Fantasy?

2 MR. CABRERA: I'm the chief housekeeper on
3 the Caribbean Fantasy.

4 INVESTIGATOR KARR: All right. And what,
5 can you tell us what your duties are? What duties did
6 you perform the day the ship had the fire? What duties
7 did you perform when they had the emergency?

8 MR. CABRERA: Okay. The first thing when,
9 we don't know what happened there. Because usually in
10 the morning I have a meeting with my team, 7:00 a.m. to
11 7:30 a.m.

12 So when I finish the meeting we start to
13 explain to the passenger where they have to be, where
14 they not have to be, to be ready for when the ship dock
15 to the port to disembark.

16 Maybe around 7:35 a.m. we heard the
17 announcement Mr. Skyla (phonetic), Mr. Skyla, Mr.
18 Skyla. So, we think if (unintelligible), we've come.
19 We no do nothing, because we no have to deal with Mr.
20 Skyla thing. So we continue our job, our duty, and we
21 pay attention to the following announcement, what to
22 happen.

23 So, after that, maybe five to ten minute we
24 start to hear we need to evacuate the people. So,
25 because we have a fire. Where, I don't know. Because

1 they no make announcement where is the fire.

2 So we start to knock on the cabin doors to
3 make sure the passengers can get out in time. So, we
4 start to direct them to emergency station C, where they
5 are to be So, after that we double check if we were
6 missing any cabin, or something.

7 So, but when we start to check in the cabins
8 they called me, and they said the emergency C is full
9 of smoke. So, we have to take all the passenger
10 (unintelligible). So then we, until the
11 (unintelligible) advisement to guide them to Deck 7.
12 Yes, because too much smoke in the emergency muster
13 station C.

14 So, that's what we do. We guide the
15 passengers to Deck 7. And when I finish, and I check
16 every, all the guest is out, no crew members are around
17 also in the cabins. So, I come to them. And we waited
18 for the further instruction of the master.

19 So, after that we stand by. We start to
20 provide the life jacket to the guests. Because in the
21 cabin we don't have no life jacket. All the life
22 jacket is in the muster station by the lifeboat, by the
23 life -- muster station B and A, and muster station C.

24 So we have to get from the lockers, and we
25 give to these passenger one by one, how we start to set

1 it out. And we waiting for the instruction of the
2 commander to see what is the final step.

3 And after that they start to say, okay, we
4 need to start to evacuate the passengers. So, the
5 master is the one to give the order with boat, with
6 lifeboat number 1, number 2, number 3. So, in order,
7 according to the (unintelligible), we have to also to
8 use the MES.

9 But we cannot use the MES port side, because
10 the flap on the platform you cannot open properly. So,
11 then decide to use the MES starboard side. I was the
12 one to start to --

13 We then lower the lifeboat number 1 and 2,
14 so (unintelligible) more passengers. So we start to,
15 we have instruction to guide the passengers to the MES
16 port side, starboard side. And that's what we do. We
17 start to guide them.

18 The staff captain is in charge, and is the
19 one to, in the small platform before the passengers
20 (unintelligible), he's there. And he's the one to
21 start to (unintelligible) the ladies, to get them out,
22 or kids, whatever. We follow all the procedure, what
23 to do.

24 And finally, everybody saved, we saved the
25 life of the guests, and our life also. And also the

1 life of the dog. So, we missing two dog, because we
2 don't have the chance to go down to (unintelligible),
3 because too much smoke. So we save only five of them.

4 So, two, even I feel bad, because I have
5 three in my home. So, and I feel bad about it. And
6 every day I remember this too. Because two small dogs.
7 But I didn't (unintelligible). And that's the only
8 thing I could tell, I could say about this situation.

9 INVESTIGATOR KARR: Okay. When you
10 evacuated, were you in a lifeboat? Or were you in a
11 life raft?

12 MR. CABRERA: I have to be in the MES port
13 side.

14 INVESTIGATOR KARR: Okay.

15 MR. CABRERA: Yes. The MES is not working.
16 So the MES starboard side is (unintelligible), is
17 (unintelligible) we have to move to the other side.
18 So, (unintelligible) the captain is the one to give the
19 instruction, okay. Because this one working,
20 (unintelligible) the passenger accordingly to the
21 (unintelligible), and that's what we do.

22 INVESTIGATOR KARR: And when, did you use
23 the MES?

24 MR. CABRERA: On starboard side or port
25 side?

1 INVESTIGATOR KARR: Starboard side.

2 MR. CABRERA: Starboard side, yes. I'm the
3 last person come down (unintelligible).

4 INVESTIGATOR KARR: Would you like to show
5 us your --

6 INVESTIGATOR BELL: (Unintelligible).

7 INVESTIGATOR KARR: All right. And --

8 MR. CABRERA: Because we were, we take the
9 dog first, we put all the dogs safe with the helicopter
10 and (unintelligible). And after, we go down. So when
11 I was led to the, when I go to the MES, so everybody is
12 on it, three of us missing.

13 So, when I go down, and the gentleman from
14 the Coast Guard help me. Then he asked me if there was
15 somebody else missing. I tell him, yes, two of my crew
16 members. So we waited for them, and after we left.

17 INVESTIGATOR KARR: All right. So, when you
18 loaded the dogs on the helicopters, do you remember how
19 many dogs you would take at a time?

20 MR. CABRERA: We bring by the helicopter
21 area, we bring four kind of big one, four. And the
22 small one, we take it by the life raft.

23 INVESTIGATOR KARR: So, four dogs went into
24 the helicopter all at the same time?

25 MR. CABRERA: No, no, no.

1 INVESTIGATOR KARR: No.

2 MR. CABRERA: In there one by one.

3 INVESTIGATOR KARR: One by one. All right.

4 MR. CABRERA: I saw when they take the small
5 one. Because the other one is bigger. And they said
6 it cannot fit in the (unintelligible). I
7 (unintelligible) hold him --

8 INVESTIGATOR KARR: Okay.

9 MR. CABRERA: -- for they take it.

10 INVESTIGATOR KARR: All right. And when you
11 left the ship, did you get into a life raft? Did you
12 get into a small boat, or a lifeboat?

13 MR. CABRERA: No. I get a small boat of the
14 officers, the Coast Guard.

15 INVESTIGATOR KARR: Coast Guard. Okay. All
16 right. Is there anything you would like to share with
17 us about the accident, that you felt was significant,
18 with regard to the fire, how the crew responded, how
19 passengers responded?

20 MR. CABRERA: I really, really, I don't
21 know. I cannot say nothing. Because I don't know
22 where is the fire. I don't know who. I know, I just
23 followed the, what I have to do in case of emergency.

24 INVESTIGATOR KARR: All right. Did you
25 notice anyone get injured during the evacuation?

1 MR. CABRERA: When I start to bring the
2 passenger, I don't see nobody fall. But I hear, they
3 say only one guest got (unintelligible). But I no see
4 nothing. I cannot say, okay, this would be right.

5 INVESTIGATOR KARR: Understood. Right.
6 Anybody else have any questions?

7 MR. [REDACTED] Yes. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] of the United
8 States Coast Guard. Did you receive, actually, let me
9 go back. What is your emergency duty for abandon ship?

10 So, you've already explained to me what your
11 emergency duty is for the general emergency, which is
12 to evacuate the cabins, and get all the personnel to
13 muster station C. And then, when it goes to abandon
14 ship, then you do what? What is your abandon ship job?

15 MR. CABRERA: That is the MES port side
16 leader.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. What kind of training did
18 you receive on the Marine Evacuation System, prior to
19 becoming the MES leader?

20 MR. CABRERA: Okay. They explained to us
21 how to operate the, how to open it, how to lower it,
22 what to guide the, tell the passengers, to take off all
23 the, any metal or key, whatever can damage the, to take
24 it away.

25 So, in order for the life raft, in my

1 station we start with the life raft number 2. When
2 it's ready, when they finish, when it full, the
3 commander will (unintelligible) away. And after we
4 start with the next one. So, in order, two, four, six,
5 the (unintelligible).

6 MR. [REDACTED] Right.

7 MR. CABRERA: Yes.

8 MR. [REDACTED] So, can you just briefly explain
9 to me, with the MES in the stowed position, how do you
10 launch the MES? Like, MES is in the stowed position.
11 You guys are sailing here. You get this emergency.
12 You get the order from, you know, the hotel director
13 says, launch the MES. How do you do that?

14 MR. CABRERA: Okay. We have the MES team
15 operators. So, if he didn't say okay, they call me.
16 And so, I go to the teams, the operators. And if they
17 want to start to open it or release the hook.

18 MR. [REDACTED] That's what I'm referring to, the
19 physical action that's required to activate the MES.
20 Can you explain that?

21 MR. CABRERA: Okay. The first thing you
22 have to do, you open the small box there.

23 MR. [REDACTED] The small door?

24 MR. CABRERA: You pull on the hook. And the
25 MES is going to be open. So, the only problem there,

1 we don't have alternative. If that not work, you
2 cannot open it, we don't have any alternative to get
3 off.

4 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So --

5 MR. CABRERA: Not like on the Carnival or
6 Royal Caribbean. They have two ways. If this one
7 won't work, you can use step number two, or three. So,
8 this one is only one. If it does not open you have to
9 report it to the command center.

10 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

11 MR. CABRERA: And they going to let you know
12 what you going to do, where you going to guide the
13 passenger, or the crew members.

14 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. That's the only question I
15 have. Thank you.

16 CDR [REDACTED] Good evening. Commander [REDACTED]
17 [REDACTED] with the U.S. Coast Guard. Did you activate
18 the port side MES? Or did somebody else do it?

19 MR. CABRERA: No, sir, not me. When I
20 (unintelligible) it's already, that (unintelligible) is
21 already down. The flap is not open totally, because
22 it's bend at one side. So, I really don't know who
23 pulled it.

24 CDR [REDACTED] And who made the decision not
25 to use that?

1 MR. CABRERA: I cannot say. Because I don't
2 know who is (unintelligible) tell to open it. I don't
3 know who opened it.

4 CDR [REDACTED] But, nobody went down the port
5 side?

6 MR. CABRERA: In port side, nobody use it.

7 CDR [REDACTED] Okay.

8 MR. CABRERA: Yes.

9 CDR [REDACTED] How did you know to go to the
10 starboard side?

11 MR. CABRERA: Because the, on the
12 instruction of the master.

13 CDR [REDACTED] He --

14 MR. CABRERA: And the instruction from --

15 CDR [REDACTED] The public address system?

16 MR. CABRERA: And, yes, direct to the sub
17 captain, the second commander of the ship. Because
18 he's the one to be in the --

19 CDR [REDACTED] So, it was a verbal --

20 MR. CABRERA: No. He --

21 CDR [REDACTED] -- instruction? You were over

22 --

23 MR. CABRERA: I have a walkie talkie.

24 CDR [REDACTED] Oh. You had a walkie talkie?

25 MR. CABRERA: Yes, sir.

1 CDR [REDACTED] Okay. That's all the
2 questions I have. Thank you.

3 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB. Just
4 a couple of clarifications. When you were evacuating
5 the passengers from the cabin, at first you didn't know
6 that you couldn't go to muster station C, correct?

7 MR. CABRERA: Yes.

8 INVESTIGATOR BELL: So, did you start taking
9 people up there?

10 MR. CABRERA: The first time, when they said
11 to evacuate the people, the passenger. So we start to
12 guide them to the muster station, yes. So, after that,
13 the, in that time when we start, the smoke is not in
14 there. No smoke.

15 After that I don't know if the fire getting
16 bigger, or what happen. They call me and say, too much
17 smoke here. So, and the hotel director advise us,
18 because he's the commander of the muster, the
19 operations center. So, he told me to put everybody to
20 Deck 7.

21 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Who was that?

22 MR. CABRERA: The hotel director.

23 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Hotel director. Okay.

24 MR. CABRERA: Yes, the hotel director. He's
25 the, he's in the command center, the (unintelligible)

1 center.

2 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Okay.

3 MR. CABRERA: Yes. So, he's the one to
4 advise us to bring everybody to Deck 7.

5 INVESTIGATOR BELL: So, when you took
6 everyone to Deck 7, did you have plenty of life jackets
7 up there? Or did you have to go back to muster station
8 C to get life jackets?

9 MR. CABRERA: We have life jackets on
10 starboard side and port side. We have for children --

11 INVESTIGATOR BELL: And you had plenty? You
12 didn't have to go back and get --

13 MR. CABRERA: We have for children and for
14 adult there.

15 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Okay. And was there any
16 smoke in the areas where you were evacuating from the
17 cabins?

18 MR. CABRERA: In the moment when we do it,
19 only Deck 5 aft.

20 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Deck 5 aft?

21 MR. CABRERA: Aft is all the way to the
22 back. In that time we stacked, we moved the passenger
23 very quickly. So when the, all the smoke, the
24 passengers is already upstairs.

25 INVESTIGATOR BELL: So, was it hard to see

1 back in that area, when you went back to check to make
2 sure there were no passengers?

3 MR. CABRERA: When I do my double check, the
4 smoke, you still can't go out of -- For that is okay,
5 because we don't get panic.

6 If we get any panic with the guests, with
7 the kids. And so we try to, that's what we try to be
8 in time to create the most, the more faster we can do
9 it. So, when I double check with one of the guy
10 everything is clear. So, I tell the, my leader
11 everything is clear. You can advise the captain.

12 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Okay. And how long have
13 you worked on this ship?

14 MR. CABRERA: I'm going to almost three
15 years.

16 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Three years?

17 MR. CABRERA: Three to four years.

18 INVESTIGATOR BELL: Thank you.

19 LT [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with
20 the Coast Guard. So, when you were redirected to Deck
21 7, from muster station C, did, are there, there's two
22 separate muster stations on Deck 7, A and B. Did you
23 direct passengers to one particular muster station,
24 like one side or the other side of the vessel? Or just
25 go up to Deck 7?

1 MR. CABRERA: So the, first, why we put the
2 lifeboat number 2, the people, sorry, the old people,
3 handicapped, we put in the side. And the B we put the
4 regular guests, (unintelligible) for the lifeboat.

5 We have a procedure, first if you have any
6 sick person, pregnant, or kids. And so, that's what,
7 before actually embarking the lifeboat. And after,
8 when they call me, so I go to Deck 7 aft to start to
9 lead more passenger for the (unintelligible) port side,
10 starboard side.

11 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

12 MR. CABRERA: But already everybody have the
13 life jacket. Everybody is ready just to go down.

14 LT [REDACTED] Did you take accountability of
15 passengers at the muster station?

16 MR. CABRERA: Sorry.

17 LT [REDACTED] Did you take accountability,
18 counting numbers of passengers at the muster station?
19 Or did someone else take accountability of who was
20 present at the muster stations?

21 MR. CABRERA: So, no. I not check any
22 passenger. I just make sure the cabin is empty. And
23 then I start to guide them to the (unintelligible).

24 LT [REDACTED] Okay. And when you got to
25 starboard MES, did you see crew members at the platform

1 trying to bring life rafts alongside the slide?

2 MR. CABRERA: No. Because I no have the,
3 because I see over the top why it cannot seek
4 (phonetic) downstairs.

5 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

6 MR. CABRERA: I cannot tell you if it,
7 somebody (unintelligible).

8 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

9 INVESTIGATOR KARR: Any more questions?
10 Last word, if you'd like to offer us, offer anything
11 else?

12 MR. CABRERA: No. That's, I just want to
13 know what is the final (unintelligible), you know. So,
14 we'd like to help all of you to clear everything, and
15 make sure everything is (unintelligible)

16 INVESTIGATOR KARR: All right. Well, thank
17 you for coming in. So, it's 16, excuse me. It's 1824,
18 and we will stop the recording of this interview.

19 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went
20 off the record at 6:24 p.m.)

21

22

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Fire Aboard Caribbean Fantasy
August 17, 2016
Accident No. DCA16FM052
Interview of Jorge Cabrera

DATE: 08-21-16

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 19 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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