

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 :
 :
 ----- :

INTERVIEW OF: [REDACTED]

Monday,
August 22, 2016

Sector San Juan

BEFORE

LARRY BOWLING, NTSB
LT [REDACTED] USCG

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

(9:19 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. BOWLING: All right. And we are
4 recording. This is Larry Bowling with the National
5 Transportation Safety Board, Office of Marine Safety
6 out of D.C. We're here at Sector San Juan.

7 We're going to be doing an interview of BM2-
8 1 [REDACTED] who was a crew member of the Coast Guard
9 small boat CG45751. It's around 9:19 Monday, August
10 22, 2016. And besides the witness, participating in
11 the Coast Guard -- in the interview with the Coast
12 Guard.

13 LT [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

14 MR. BOWLING: And for the witness, would you
15 please state your name for the record and spell your
16 last name.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] O [REDACTED].

18 MR. BOWLING: Okay. And for the purpose of
19 the interview, can we just call you -- can I use your
20 first name, the name you go by, [REDACTED]

21 MR. [REDACTED] Sure.

22 MR. BOWLING: Okay. And [REDACTED] we had some
23 off the record conversations, but I want to make sure
24 you just understand. You understand you have a right
25 to an attorney but you're a factual witness, and from

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1 what I understand, you would like to not have Coast
2 Guard counsel.

3 MR. [REDACTED] Yes.

4 MR. BOWLING: Okay. And when all this is
5 done, we'll get a transcript put together. We'll get
6 it to the small boat station and we'll ask you to take
7 a look at it and make sure that the transcriptionist
8 has captured everything that you conveyed to us on the
9 record, okay.

10 If at any time you need a break, let me or
11 the lieutenant know and we'll stand down and take a
12 break. You need water, looks like there's a fresh
13 unopened one. And I think with that said, let's just
14 jump into the interview. I know you want to get out of
15 here.

16 Tell me at high levels about just your
17 maritime background and your maritime training. How
18 did you get from, for example, high school to BM2 with
19 the Coast Guard.

20 MR. [REDACTED] Well, I actually found out about
21 the Coast Guard in a phone book. I was waiting to be a
22 state cop in Puerto Rico, and I was looking for a
23 number, found out about the Coast Guard, went to the
24 recruiter, went through the steps.

25 I kind of liked it. I liked the deal of --

1 I thought being from Puerto Rico, I just thought
2 immigrants. And I could see myself doing that, and
3 nothing. I did all the paperwork. I took my ASVAB and
4 joined the Coast Guard. Right off the bat I was sent
5 as a fireman to the 110 in Massachusetts, the Grand
6 Isle. It's decommissioned now.

7 After that, once I went there and I went to
8 BTM school I realized I wanted to be a Boatswain Mate
9 and put my name on the A school list. There I went to
10 Virginia to BMA school, out of BMA school I came down
11 to Puerto Rico to do another 110, Coast Guard Key
12 Largo.

13 And yes, I dealt a lot with immigrants, drug
14 trafficking. That's where I got my first coxswain
15 letter on RHI. After that, I went to Station San Juan,
16 also a lot of drug trafficking, some migrants and SAR
17 cases.

18 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

19 MR. [REDACTED] So I was part of the National
20 Guard helicopter that went down a couple years back
21 where all the crew died, but we were out there for at
22 least a month looking for the bodies, helping all the
23 other agencies try to locate the bodies. That was the
24 biggest SAR case until now, I believe.

25 After that, after Station San Juan I went to

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1 Coast Guard Cutter William Flores out at Miami, Florida
2 and also same deal, same tempo dealing with immigrants.
3 This time they were Cuban, dealing with drug
4 trafficking and also SAR case.

5 I was also a coxswain on there, on the OTH.
6 And after that, I decided to come back to the station
7 and here I am.

8 MR. BOWLING: Okay. And so the operational
9 quals that you currently hold, can you just hit those
10 real quick?

11 MR. [REDACTED] Sure. I'm a coxswain on the
12 RBM, coxswain on the 33 Speckle SPCLE, special law
13 enforcement craft.

14 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

15 MR. [REDACTED] I am tactical coxswain, tactical
16 crew, pursuit coxswain, pursuit crew. I'm translator
17 and yes, I'm also qualified as coxswain on the OTC and
18 crew member at the 25 even though we don't have them
19 anymore at station. I'm also qualified as coxswain and
20 crew.

21 MR. BOWLING: Okay. The total years of
22 service, including your enlisted -- your non-rate time.

23 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. I joined in '06, May of
24 '06, so roughly around, I'm all eleven years now.

25 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

1 MR. [REDACTED] But yes, creeping up on eleven
2 years.

3 MR. BOWLING: All right. Now this tour at
4 the small boat station, when did you come back to --

5 MR. [REDACTED] I came back I believe it's 2014,
6 July 2014.

7 MR. BOWLING: Okay. All right. So the
8 reason you're here is we want to talk to you about the
9 events related to the Caribbean Fantasy. So tell you
10 what, can you pick up with what time did you get to the
11 station and walk me through the answer to the SAR call?

12 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Well, it was actually a
13 support stay station, but I had some credit card
14 training. So I was in my ODAs (phonetic). I reported
15 to station around 0630 just making sure everything was
16 good because I was off going.

17 Oncoming crew came on at 0700 when liberty
18 (phonetic) expires. We were just waiting around until
19 our leaves got done. A bunch of the guys were on PT
20 here, so they were about to go do support stay and
21 nothing.

22 We actually got the call around
23 approximately 0710 or 715, around there that the
24 ferry's on fire. The Carribean Fantasy is on fire. So
25 we pretty much -- I didn't get the call. BM2 [REDACTED]

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1 did. I was right next to him and being that I was in
2 uniform, I told Roger that.

3 I'll go get -- we tried to find whoever was
4 in uniform so we could respond as quickly as possible.
5 So myself, BM2 [REDACTED], BM3 [REDACTED] (phonetic), MK2
6 [REDACTED] (phonetic) and I don't know if he's a seaman or
7 seaman apprentice, but he's pretty much one month out
8 of boot camp, Seaman [REDACTED] as a bring in just for
9 extra hands.

10 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

11 MR. [REDACTED] So we all got underway. That's
12 three people with the certification of coxswain. BM2
13 [REDACTED] being that he was oncoming, he took main
14 coxswain, so he was in charge overall. And I assumed
15 the duties of a crew member.

16 So we got underway on the 45 RBM, and once
17 we exited the harbor, the gated pair, we saw the
18 Caribbean Fantasy which was smoking. So we got on
19 scene. I believe there was a pilot boat on scene,
20 possibly a tug.

21 And yes, they hadn't deployed their slides
22 yet, so we told sector on scene. We guard before
23 heading out. I forgot to say that, in the harbor.
24 Yes, we got on scene. We reported what we saw, and you
25 could see black smoke coming out of the sides.

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1 You could see the people on the top of
2 cruise ship, on the sides kind of mustering up kind of
3 deal. And yes, eventually time went by. I'm not too
4 sure how much. We were just trying to visually take in
5 all we could. You could see kind of smoke coming out
6 of the lower I want to say vents.

7 They could have been windows. They were
8 kind of coming out of the side, just black smoke. So
9 about -- I'd say about maybe 30 minutes went by until
10 the actual evacuation. But before that, that's when
11 the slides were deployed. We were on the port side
12 when we saw the first emergency ramp or slide be
13 deployed.

14 And then we kind of went to the starboard
15 side and same thing as well. They deployed the slide.
16 They also deployed about two life rafts I saw were
17 thrown over. So what I was doing was I just reporting
18 that to the coxswain.

19 I was hey, you got this life raft thrown in
20 the water. Ramp deployed on port side, just trying to
21 make sure because he was on the radios making sure he's
22 having that overall picture and we're keeping him
23 informed, especially with those leading lines for the
24 life rafts, that we have a jet. We didn't want to suck
25 up any line or nothing like that.

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1 Eventually -- I was mostly outside making
2 sure I keep an overall picture of what's going on and
3 helping them out as much as I could. Eventually, I
4 heard over the radio -- I went inside. I heard over
5 the radio. Fire's out of control. We can't control
6 it. We're abandoning ship.

7 So right there and then we kind of got in
8 the mindset things are about to get real. So I believe
9 it was off the starboard side was where the first, I
10 want to say the motorized life raft was being hoisted
11 down.

12 Also about -- I don't know. When we got on
13 scene about ten minutes later, maybe 15, other assets
14 started arriving like the 33, two other 33s and -- so
15 yes, other assets were arriving on scene more and more
16 trying to get as many assets on sea.

17 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

18 MR. [REDACTED] So when that first life raft
19 came down, we stood close by making sure everything
20 went smoothly. It seemed like they were having trouble
21 getting the pulley system off of the life raft, just
22 trying to unhook it because obviously they're dead in
23 the water. They're drifting.

24 It seems there was a lot of movement, so
25 they couldn't really get it. At that time, we saw one

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1 of the workers from the Carribbean Fantasy fall
2 overboard just from the movement of the boat getting
3 waked out, not waked out but just the sea state and the
4 movement of the Caribbean Fantasy.

5 He fell in the water. I yelled man in the
6 water. We rapidly crept up on him. MK2 [REDACTED], he
7 threw a heating bag toward the person, and I told him
8 in Spanish swim toward the line and we'll pull you in.
9 Sure enough, he swam to the line.

10 We pulled him in our starboard side. We --
11 myself and MK2 [REDACTED], we pulled him out of the water
12 and he was fine, so not hurt in any way. So he got on
13 scene, and at that point the boat was already in the
14 water but it still wasn't released from the pulley,
15 from the actual pulleys.

16 I was trying to calm the people down because
17 we were already close enough to where we could see
18 them. And they're asking us to please help them, so
19 I'm trying to keep them calm, trying to let them know
20 everything's fine. Everything's going. This is just
21 part of the process of the evacuation.

22 So at that point, one of the ladies, one of
23 the passengers she sees us and she jumps in the water.
24 So MK2 [REDACTED] was actually ready with another rescue
25 bag. He threw it towards her, but she was already

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1 swimming toward the boat.

2 So she got to the side. We picked her up
3 from the recess and we got her onboard. She was just
4 saying she's scared, and we just calmed her down.

5 Listen. Everything is now. Right now let's just --
6 the evacuation process.

7 But we have you onboard. We escorted her
8 inside kind of deal, and we just -- I got on the loud
9 hiller (phonetic), and I told everyone you need to stay
10 calm. You can't jump overboard. Right now, everything
11 is going the way it's supposed to.

12 I understand you're panicked. I understand
13 you're scared, but you need to cooperate with us and
14 make it easier for us. If everyone jumps in the water,
15 it's going to be hectic.

16 So most of the people were kind of looking
17 at me with a scared look in their eyes. But most of
18 them were giving me the nod like we understand. So
19 they actually finally got the pulley system released,
20 but they were -- it seemed like they weren't
21 controlling the vessel.

22 So we moved closer to them. I asked -- the
23 person on top was a Caucasian male. That's the best I
24 could describe him because most of the workers were of
25 Latin descent of some sort. So I asked him do you

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1 speak English or Spanish.

2 He told me English. I'm like, you're in
3 charge of the lifeboat. He's like yes. I was like
4 what's going on, sir. He told me he couldn't operate
5 the boat. The boat wasn't working. So I was like
6 okay. I understand you.

7 You need us to take -- I was already telling
8 BM2 [REDACTED], I recommend to take him to the long side
9 (phonetic) so if it gets to because the wind and
10 current was pushing them toward the ferry. So we
11 didn't want them to get pinched up or get on the wrong
12 side of the ferry.

13 So we were getting the deck ready, making
14 sure. As we did that, he was still continuing trying
15 to deal with that. He actually got it to work to a
16 point where he just backed out so he wasn't as close to
17 the ferry.

18 As we were talking to him, it seemed like he
19 was panicking, which I mean -- the amount of stress he
20 was going through I'm pretty sure I could relate. But
21 he was panicking. I was talking to his crew members
22 making sure we saw what fittings they have.

23 So they had a D bolt in the front, which
24 that was an option. If we did have to tow them, we'd
25 have to skiff hook it but his crew members were telling

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1 me that they were taking on water. So we talked to the
2 captain. We were like hey, can you operate the boat.

3 He's like yes, I moved the stick forward.
4 It doesn't go forward. We're like okay, so that's bad.
5 So we try to set up alongside tow just to get him away
6 a little more. It didn't work just because the
7 fittings. We didn't want to attach the skiff hook just
8 yet because if they're taking on water, that's just
9 going to be an anchor if they were going to sink.

10 So we didn't want to attach the skiff hook.
11 We tried hooking the lines to these little horns that
12 were like little L horns that they have on the side.
13 And that just wasn't working obviously because the line
14 is going to come off no matter what. There's nothing
15 to keep that line onto their life raft.

16 So we tried it. It didn't work. We were
17 banging mostly along their hole kind of deal just
18 because of the current, so we didn't want to make the
19 situation better. We just took off lines and got away.
20 At that point, the captain says hey, there's like a
21 foot and a half of water. We need to get out of here.

22 So at that point, I told the coxswain he
23 needed the decision to start trying to take people off.
24 So he got alongside. We asked for the females and
25 children first. We got as many as we could onboard.

1 I'm not sure about the number.

2 I believe we counted around 21, but that's
3 just -- I'm not completely sure, just with the
4 adrenaline and running around and trying to get people
5 safely onboard. I believe -- I mean I didn't, but I'm
6 pretty sure the coxswain was passing all this through
7 the radio, giving all this information.

8 I'm just trying to keep him informed and
9 keep these people calm to where they could work. The
10 process could go a lot smoother. So we got those
11 people onboard and we -- at that point I believe the
12 Tezanos was taking on scene commander.

13 I believe the coxswain was passing to them
14 what we're doing and all that good stuff. So from
15 there I remember instead of taking the people to the
16 Tezanos, they told us to go take them to -- take them
17 into the harbor where they were waiting for us at the
18 pier with EMS.

19 And so we did that. We RTP'd. I tried to
20 keep everyone calm, collected and somewhat organized on
21 the back deck. And the crew member, actually the
22 initial crew member that fell overboard, he actually
23 helped out a lot.

24 He was assisting. He did a great job. He
25 actually wanted to stay onboard. We told him hey, I

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1 like where your head's at. That would be great, but we
2 can't. We got to get all people that were on that boat
3 off to the pier and making sure that they're fine.

4 But yes, we arrived on the pier. Chief
5 [REDACTED] (phonetic) was actually there waiting for us
6 at the pier. He's the EPO from station, so instead of
7 just staying in the station, he went to the pier making
8 sure he's hands on. And he assisted us getting the
9 people off.

10 After that, we headed back out. Obviously
11 the Caribbean Fantasy is still drifting due to the
12 current and wind. The wind was blowing pretty hard.
13 They were ready around the Punta Salinas area kind of
14 deal. They were creeping more and more towards that
15 area pretty quickly.

16 Once we got on scene again we let the
17 Tezanos know hey we're back on scene. What is our
18 tasking? At that point I'm trying to remember what we
19 did that second trip.

20 MR. BOWLING: If you don't, I mean we want
21 to know the facts. If you don't recall, that's fine.

22 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. I know we --

23 MR. BOWLING: You turned back out. You went
24 back on scene and you guys were working with the on
25 scene coordinator for tasking.

1 MR. [REDACTED] Correct. So I believe -- I'm
2 not completely sure. I'm trying to think. We took off
3 a bunch of people. I'm just trying to remember if the
4 second trip was -- it was either a pregnant lady or a
5 guy having a seizure that we removed.

6 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

7 MR. [REDACTED] I just can't remember right at
8 this time. At that time, there were much more assets
9 on scene. There was a couple more 33's. There was a
10 55, AN team (phonetic) 55 which we saw come out when we
11 were heading in, a couple of CBP pilots were assisting.

12 There was a couple more tugboats. We even
13 saw a couple fishermen heading out with their boats, so
14 we had a lot of assets on scene. Yes, I believe that
15 second trip was the pregnant lady, pretty sure. So she
16 was pregnant. I guess she was having complications.
17 She was dizzy.

18 We got off of the 55 I want to say and we
19 brought her in. It was just that one person just
20 because we weren't sure of her health state, so they
21 wanted her to be brought back to the pier. So we did.
22 We brought her back. EMS is waiting on scene at the
23 pier with Chief [REDACTED] and we got her off.

24 Then we headed back out. Once we headed
25 back out, the AN team was on their 55. They were --

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1 one of the life rafts, the motorized life rafts, wasn't
2 -- it was halfway, didn't get to deploy all the way.
3 So the AN team, what we saw was being that they had the
4 height, their boat wasn't perfect.

5 But it was high enough to where they could
6 bow up to it and get one person at the time off the
7 life raft. It seemed like it wasn't going down
8 anymore, something with the pulley system or something.

9 We also did notice there was a lot of life
10 rafts undeployed around the area. There was a couple
11 that didn't deploy, like two or three that just
12 weren't, didn't inflate at the time. Maybe it was just
13 because I know there's a certain amount of line that
14 has to be pulled out before you get that red line, and
15 then it deploys.

16 MR. BOWLING: Right.

17 MR. [REDACTED] They were still -- being that
18 the waves and what not and wind were kind of pushing
19 everything that general direction, I could see how it
20 didn't extend further enough to inflate. At that time,
21 we did notice that one of the slides was pushed along
22 the hull of the Caribbean Fantasy.

23 I believe the 33's were working with that
24 and also with the life raft that had people onboard
25 that seemed it had a little too many people onboard.

1 And they were trying to figure that out. They were
2 kind of trying to tow it away from th Caribbean
3 Fantasy. That's just what I saw, what went on there.

4 After that, we kind of noticed that
5 obviously if there 150 people on that life raft that
6 the AN team's pulling off, eventually they're going to
7 have too many people onboard. So we recommend to the
8 Tezanos, hey, can we go take people off the 55 and
9 return them to the pier. So that way, we're created
10 more space for the main people in the life raft.

11 We pulled alongside. We got a bunch of
12 people off of the 55. I don't remember a number off
13 the top of my head. Actually, correction. I believe
14 the Tezanos when we got on scene, we got back out after
15 dropping off the pregnant lady.

16 They asked us to take people off a fishing
17 boat, which was a yellow sport fishers. They asked us
18 to get people off of that boat, and there was around
19 seven and one person that had -- I'm not too sure what
20 he had, but he couldn't walk right.

21 I believe it was his leg. He hurt, so that
22 took a little maneuvering. Like they had a big cherry
23 fender (phonetic), so we asked them to remove their
24 cherry fenders. We put our fenders, which were
25 slimmer, so we could get a little closer to the hull.

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1 And being that he couldn't put any weight on
2 that leg, so we got close enough. At that point I was
3 driving. I just was helping BM2 [REDACTED] out. So we
4 switched roles.

5 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

6 MR. [REDACTED] I was driving. We got -- I got
7 close and they pulled him onboard. They told me he was
8 onboard. I pulled away. We had around seven people
9 onboard. Then we went to the AN team 55. It was like
10 hey, give us people. Unload some people off on us so
11 you can have more space.

12 At that time, BM3 said that there was two
13 melecoms (phonetic) for me just making sure that she's
14 informing everything that we're doing to the Tezanos.
15 So yes, when we pull alongside and we're offloading
16 people, one of the persons I believe started convulsing
17 in the AN team -- I'm just trying to think because
18 obviously all of it went down pretty quick and everyone
19 generally was rushing pretty much.

20 He started convulsing. And they said they
21 started CPR on him, so we went to the 55. We took that
22 person off of -- one of the 55 crew members. And we
23 headed into the pier. We were waiting on scene. And
24 yes, we all floated them.

25 I mean EMS, there was a lot of people on the

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1 pier waiting that had their little -- kind of like
2 their own -- the rigid stoke slitters (phonetic) armed
3 in color so they come onboard, try to treat them and
4 transfer them to the pier which they would then go to
5 their ambulance.

6 Actually, sir. You know what? Before that
7 last trip at I just said about the convulsing --

8 MR. BOWLING: Right.

9 MR. [REDACTED] -- there was a trip where we
10 took passengers off the 55, and there was a woman with
11 a hurt leg --

12 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

13 MR. [REDACTED] -- and a bunch of children. So
14 that was before the trip where the person was
15 convulsing. We got her off first, and then we got the
16 rest of the passengers off. Then on that third trip is
17 where we took the people off the fishing boat and then
18 got the person that was convulsing.

19 And we ended up with one of the crew members
20 from the 55. Just because the 55 -- by the time we got
21 back out, the 55 was coming in with all the passengers
22 they had onboard. And so we just said hey, we'll stay
23 with them and we used them on our way out. That's
24 where we pulled alongside the fishing vessel.

25 And when we came back in, they were trying

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1 to get off the extra crew member to the 55 again. They
2 headed out again just to help with -- I'm not sure what
3 they were doing, the AN team, but I know they got
4 further taxied.

5 So when we headed back out, the Tezanos
6 asked us to start pulling alongside them and getting
7 people off as well. So we started. They were
8 (inaudible) their personnel, their survivors to us. So
9 we did one trip where we took around I want to say 20
10 people, took them all onboard.

11 We took them all back in. Then we asked for
12 further tasking. We came back out and had 05 people
13 left, which we took those 05, took them back into the
14 pier and those were the last passengers we took off.
15 Then we headed back, further tasking.

16 Well, on our way out we requested further
17 tasking and they said that the 55 had run over a sea
18 painter, one of those life raft sea painters. And so
19 we headed out to assess the situation. It seemed like
20 they had a life raft under their hull, like in the
21 rudder kind of deal, not rudder, crop.

22 So we assessed the situation and we actually
23 took them in tow, took them back into the harbor,
24 transitioned to the wrong side and moored the 55. At
25 that point, the Tezanos had no further tasking for us

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1 and we were done. And yes, that was it. It was pretty
2 much.

3 MR. BOWLING: Quite a busy day.

4 MR. [REDACTED] Yes. Funny thing was we were
5 kind of like the first ones there and the last ones to
6 leave from the small boat.

7 MR. BOWLING: The 45 is a good platform.
8 (Inaudible). I mean it's just a lot of activity going
9 on and really appreciate the feedback there. Let me go
10 back in and just follow up on a couple of quick
11 questions. We'll start. Then I'll turn the floor over
12 to Lieutenant [REDACTED] there.

13 And what I'm going to do is I'm going to
14 step back in this time line. We went through it, and I
15 realize it's been a long day. And again, if you don't
16 know, you don't know. It's not a pass or fail test
17 here, but would you say -- we started out.

18 You're at the small boat station, took a
19 call. That radio or land line?

20 MR. [REDACTED] Via our station OD phone.

21 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

22 MR. [REDACTED] So it's a duty phone. We have
23 it on us. Whoever's the OD was that time.

24 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

25 MR. [REDACTED] Being that he was oncoming, we

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1 already passed the phone to him. So yes, we got a call
2 from there and that's where we received it.

3 MR. BOWLING: So that would have come in
4 from Sector Command Center?

5 MR. [REDACTED] Sector Command Center, yes.

6 MR. BOWLING: Okay. All right, so that
7 tripped everything in motion there at the small boat
8 station. So go back through the crew that was on the
9 45 with you again by rank and last name.

10 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So we had -- main
11 coxswain was BM2 [REDACTED]. And they was myself,
12 BM2 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] There was BM3 [REDACTED]
13 (phonetic). She was -- I said BM3. She's also
14 coxswain. MK2 [REDACTED] and Seaman -- I don't
15 know his. I guess he was brand new to the --

16 (Simultaneous speaking)

17 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

18 MR. [REDACTED] We just got him a month ago.
19 Seaman [REDACTED], [REDACTED].

20 MR. BOWLING: Okay. All right. When the 45
21 or 751 just first got on scene out there, I think you
22 indicated there was -- at that time there was a pilot
23 boat and a tug on site. Do you happen to recall either
24 name of the vessel?

25 MR. [REDACTED] No.

1 MR. BOWLING: Okay. So you just got out on
2 site. You said you saw the pilot tug and the tug and
3 pilot boat. You were talking about some black smoke,
4 and what I want you to do is think about back and I'm
5 going to ask you some questions about the color of the
6 smoke --

7 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

8 MR. BOWLING: -- and kind of the areas of
9 the ship you saw that emanating from. So with regard
10 to the color of the smoke, and I'm holding up a Coke
11 Zero bottle here. It's probably caramel, but the label
12 is black.

13 So when you look at a description, if I say
14 black, are we talking about dense black smoke or
15 something that's kind of a gray? What were you seeing?

16 MR. [REDACTED] It was dense.

17 MR. BOWLING: Dense.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Yes. It was black smoke.

19 MR. BOWLING: Okay. And where did you see
20 it coming from? You can draw.

21 MR. [REDACTED] From the stacks, but excuse my
22 drawing. It's not pretty.

23 MR. BOWLING: And for the record, what we'll
24 do Lieutenant, is we will take a digital image of the
25 witness' sketch and we'll make it part of your

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1 transcript.

2 MR. BOWLING: These are the stacks.

3 LT [REDACTED] So you came up to the starboard
4 side of the vessel?

5 MR. [REDACTED] Correct. When we got on scene
6 we were first on the service side. And then obviously
7 we're assessing the whole hull so we would go back and
8 forth, checking the bow, making sure we're seeing all
9 the -- so the smoke was coming out of the stacks. It
10 was pretty dense black smoke.

11 We didn't have any respirators onboard, so
12 the coxswain actually said hey, make sure you have some
13 like whatever mask you have because obviously to inhale
14 that smoke is just -- it's rough for the crew members.

15 MR. BOWLING: Sure.

16 MR. [REDACTED] We were looking for safety. And
17 then the people. You had like your life rafts here.
18 Then your inflatable. There are two rows of these, and
19 yes, then you had your people kind of like on the top.
20 And so yes, that's what we saw when we were first on
21 scene.

22 MR. BOWLING: Okay. What about the -- was
23 there smoke coming from any of the openings below the -
24 - that level?

25 MR. [REDACTED] Afterwards there was smoke.

1 There's like these little -- they seemed like they were
2 closed. They were -- I don't know if they were windows
3 or vents, but they were circular, kind of like this and
4 they had like these little -- it was like that.

5 MR. BOWLING: Like louvers, rain louvers?

6 MR. [REDACTED] Yes.

7 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

8 MR. [REDACTED] So you could see the black smoke
9 coming up from there.

10 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

11 MR. [REDACTED] It started pouring out pretty
12 black.

13 LT [REDACTED] Was that pouring out when you
14 first got on scene or after a while?

15 MR. [REDACTED] I didn't notice. I think it was
16 after a while. And we kind of just like oh, look at
17 the smoke coming out of these.

18 MR. BOWLING: All right. With regard to the
19 description of the witness, from the witness, you just
20 basically indicated -- well, you were drawing the
21 figures on top. Were those crew members from your
22 visual perspective, or was it crew members and
23 passengers?

24 MR. [REDACTED] Passengers.

25 MR. BOWLING: Passengers. Okay. Could you

1 hear? At that time, could you hear any audio being
2 piped over the PA system, the public address system on
3 the vessel that you recall?

4 MR. [REDACTED] Me personally, no.

5 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

6 MR. [REDACTED] But we had a lot of chatter on
7 the radios. And me, mostly I was just walking around
8 outside making sure, kind of seeing what was going on.

9 MR. BOWLING: All right.

10 MR. [REDACTED] At this point we were kind of on
11 their port side. When I started seeing this, it was on
12 their port side.

13 MR. BOWLING: Okay. And you're saying --
14 you're pointing to the -- for the record, you're
15 pointing to the image you drew and you're referring to
16 the -- well --

17 (Simultaneous speaking)

18 MR. BOWLING: -- ventilation docks on the
19 port side.

20 MR. BOWLING: When I first got on scene,
21 this is what I saw --

22 MR. BOWLING: Yes.

23 MR. [REDACTED] -- which was light slope
24 (phonetic). And it was their starboard side, our port.
25 And obviously -- not obviously, but we were doing

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1 horseshoes making sure that they had visuals from both
2 sides.

3 So eventually the 33 actually got on scene,
4 so we were essentially keeping on their port side.

5 MR. BOWLING: Okay. All right.

6 MR. [REDACTED] So that's where I noticed on the
7 opposite side. That's when I noticed that these window
8 vents, that black smoke was coming out. This is where
9 the hiss where they deployed kind of like a slide.

10 MR. BOWLING: Port stern. Staying in this
11 time line, so we're still back where you've started
12 seeing the smoke come out of the vents, we'll call
13 them, on the side shell of the ship.

14 Through the course of your description of
15 the vents, you said at some point in time, you recall
16 hearing or understanding they said the fire is out of
17 control. Abandon ship. Tell me about that. How did
18 you hear that? Where did that come from?

19 MR. [REDACTED] That was from the radio, and we
20 heard it. It was -- he said we cannot control the
21 fire. We're evacuating.

22 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

23 LT [REDACTED] This from Channel 16?

24 MR. [REDACTED] I want to say yes, but I wasn't
25 at the radio. But it wasn't a coast. It was

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1 definitely coming from the ship. So he was like, we
2 cannot control the fire. We're evacuating. We're
3 abandoning ship.

4 MR. BOWLING: And for the record, that was
5 Lieutenant [REDACTED] I'm just trying to keep it so the
6 transcriptionist knows who asked it. Sorry. So I want
7 to kind of progress back up through this time line
8 again.

9 When you heard that come over the radio, did
10 you hear anything going on on the ship, any sound
11 signals or communications that you could hear from the
12 small boat onboard where they -- any orders for the
13 passengers to go to muster stations or lifeboats below?

14 MR. [REDACTED] I didn't hear anything about
15 that.

16 MR. BOWLING: Okay. You were talking about
17 the -- watching the crew having some difficulty with
18 the releasing mechanism. You said that it looked like
19 they were having difficulty unhooking.

20 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

21 MR. BOWLING: What were you seeing there?
22 Can you build there? Was it one person you were
23 seeing, two persons? What were you seeing?

24 MR. [REDACTED] There was -- well, overall there
25 was the person in charge of the life raft, the

1 motorized life raft. I want to say there was another
2 person with a white shirt kind of like on the inside.
3 I don't know the layout of the inside of the boat, but
4 there's like a little window on the top and another
5 window right here kind of deal.

6 MR. BOWLING: Forward, yes.

7 MR. [REDACTED] Yes. This person was on top.
8 You could see he was trying to deal with whatever.
9 One, two, three, four, five. One of them fell over.
10 Let's see, five that I could count up. Yes, they were
11 coming down. They were kind of on the water and they
12 were trying to unhook.

13 But just the dynamic forces from the outside
14 were just moving that boat, and you could see like the
15 pulley system just kind of banging. At point one of
16 the guys are like dude, they're going to lose a hand
17 because it was just smacking against the top part of
18 the ship.

19 MR. BOWLING: So the releasing mechanism,
20 the hook was basically on top of the lifeboat?

21 MR. [REDACTED] The pulley system.

22 MR. BOWLING: Yes.

23 MR. [REDACTED] The big metal pulley system, and
24 they were trying to unhook it. And one of those
25 movements where the boat was just going back and forth,

1 that's when like you heard the smack of the pulley.
2 Then you just -- I saw the crew member fall back first
3 straight into the water.

4 MR. BOWLING: That crew member, was that
5 crew member up through the forward portal or access
6 space? Was he on deck?

7 MR. [REDACTED] He was on top of the life raft
8 trying to unhook that pulley.

9 MR. BOWLING: Okay. So he was actually
10 external on the lifeboat itself. All right. Bear with
11 me. A couple more questions, and I'll turn the floor
12 over to the lieutenant here. Oh, the -- and I'm going
13 to use the term lifeboat commander.

14 You didn't use that, but the individual that
15 was in this area you described at the top is in charge
16 of the operation. You said that there were some
17 (inaudible) or somehow you understood that the lifeboat
18 wasn't running.

19 He wasn't able to get the motor running, but
20 then he did get it running. How did you get all that
21 information?

22 MR. [REDACTED] Well, I asked him
23 straightforward. I was like, are you in charge. He's
24 like yes. I was like, do you prefer English or
25 Spanish. He's like English. And I told him, can you

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1 operate the boat. He's like, it's not working. I'm
2 going -- I'm moving. He's making hand movements. He
3 was like I'm going like this, and it's not working.
4 Okay.

5 MR. BOWLING: And this was going between you
6 and him in English --

7 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

8 MR. BOWLING: -- and you run the aft
9 (phonetic) deck to the 45?

10 MR. [REDACTED] Correct. I was kind of around
11 the recess area on the service side to their port. So
12 he's trying to figure that out, and I'll letting the
13 coxswain know. I was like hey, I think we might have
14 to -- we should set up for a long side tow because it
15 seems like they can't operate the boat. It's not
16 working, or they can't operate it.

17 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

18 MR. [REDACTED] So he continues to try, and we
19 move a little closer just to assess their fittings, see
20 how we could get them away from the boat. But they, at
21 one point, they actually backed up.

22 So it was like the cruise ship is here. The
23 ferry is here, and they're kind of drifting towards it.
24 But at one point you could hear the motor engage, and
25 they gave us a thumbs up when it went -- it backed up.

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1 But they stopped again. It's like, it's not
2 working. Okay. Well, we're talking to them, and
3 that's when we tried to get them alongside just to get
4 them away a little bit more.

5 MR. BOWLING: Okay. But -- so the female
6 that jumped into the water, they were having some
7 difficulty unhooking. I'm trying to get everything
8 down, the time sequence here. They're having
9 difficulty unhooking. You're interacting with the
10 lifeboat commander.

11 MR. ██████ Oh no, I'm sorry. Okay. So
12 yes. So the guy falls overboard. The pulleys are
13 still attached. He falls overboard, so we pull that
14 guy onboard. They were still hooked and that's when
15 there's like this big passenger entrances or exits.

16 That's when I see the female just kind of
17 run through like three people and jump in the water.
18 We retrieve her and then they seem -- they let loose of
19 the pulleys. Like they finally did after we retrieved
20 her.

21 After I retrieve her, that's when I gave --
22 I got on the loud hiller and I'm trying to calm
23 everyone down, tell him they can't jump overboard.
24 It's just going to make the process that much more
25 difficult. So just calm down. This is part of the

1 emergency evacuation. And that's when they all gave me
2 like the head nod. After that, that's when they kind
3 of unhooked and they were free.

4 MR. BOWLING: Okay. So that's when they got
5 it free, and then somewhere in there you --

6 MR. [REDACTED] Correct. That's when we made
7 our approach closer to the boat and talked to -- we
8 assessed. We asked who's in charge, and he seemed like
9 he was the vessel commander like you said. So yes, so
10 he said it's no working. It's not responding.

11 I go like this and it just stays here. And
12 then eventually, like I said, he backed up and he gave
13 us like the thumbs up. He's like okay, we got it. But
14 then they're like, it's not working again. And that's
15 when we pulled port side and reassessed.

16 MR. BOWLING: That's when they went to the
17 hip tow.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Correct. We tried to get it in
19 the hip tow. It was just the fittings that they had
20 wasn't going to work for us. And they were like in
21 gray suits, the other person. They worked for the
22 Caribbean Fantasy. They preferred Spanish.

23 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

24 MR. [REDACTED] And they're saying like yes,
25 we're taking on water, a little bit of water. There's

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1 water in there. I'm like okay, but so what can we use.
2 And he's like there's a bulk, there's a depot at
3 forward. So we saw the depot.

4 We assessed if we want a skiff up there, but
5 if you skiff up that we either lose that line or if we
6 try to tow them and they're taking on water, that jumps
7 becomes an anchor. So we can't take that risk. We
8 didn't want to take it there just yet.

9 So we hooked up our mooring line to their
10 little forms, L horns kind of deal on the side, and
11 that didn't work. The lines were slipping off. We
12 tried the hand rail. That broke off. So at that
13 point, the captain is like hey, we're taking on water.

14 And he's just kind of freaking out. So
15 we're like hey, sir, you need to calm down. You're
16 freaking out the passengers. And that's when we
17 decided to take the people onboard.

18 MR. BOWLING: Okay. Did -- were there any
19 distinguishing physical appearance on the lifeboat
20 commander that you recall? Could you describe him to
21 me?

22 MR. [REDACTED] He's a Caucasian male, had kind
23 of like a grayish, whitish hair.

24 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

25 MR. [REDACTED] He's, I'd say around 40, 45.

1 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

2 MR. [REDACTED] Dressed in white.

3 MR. BOWLING: Any rank insignia you recall
4 seeing? Any kind of striping or anything?

5 MR. [REDACTED] There might have been. I
6 honestly wasn't paying attention.

7 MR. BOWLING: Yes, right. I think the last
8 couple questions and I'll turn the floor over to the
9 lieutenant here. Oh, winds. You made a comment about
10 the winds, and they were drifting toward the Puntas
11 Salinas area. What was the wind direction from your
12 assessment at that point?

13 MR. [REDACTED] The wind was coming from the
14 east.

15 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

16 MR. [REDACTED] As usually they do, east,
17 southeast kind of deal. And also, I received a current
18 -- the waves were pushing that way as well, as they
19 normally do. So yes, so it's drifting pretty fast.

20 MR. BOWLING: Through the original
21 description of events, you said you'd noticed that
22 there are a couple of life rafts that did not deploy.
23 Get more detail. What did you see? How did you know
24 they weren't deployed? You did say something that they
25 weren't inflated. But what did you see and tell me

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1 what you --

2 MR. [REDACTED] They were deployed, but I
3 understand that those type of life rafts, they have sea
4 painters. And after a certain footage or yardage,
5 that's when you start seeing the red line just like we
6 have on our cutters.

7 So they deployed them, but obviously the
8 winds were pushing that way. So the life raft is just
9 following the cruise ship or the ferry. It's not
10 really -- it's not getting that distance that it needs
11 to deploy.

12 MR. BOWLING: When you say deploy --

13 MR. [REDACTED] To activate.

14 MR. BOWLING: The air bottles to inflate.

15 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

16 MR. BOWLING: All right, so they were just
17 on the surface of the sea uninflated.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

19 MR. BOWLING: Okay. And how many do you
20 recall that you saw?

21 MR. [REDACTED] With me, I'd say two, three but
22 once we left with the first group of passengers and we
23 came back, there was a couple of life rafts open
24 already. So they obviously deployed more, but towards
25 the end of the day, there were still like I think we

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1 counted two that were -- that never deployed.

2 MR. BOWLING: Was the 751 putting AIS on the
3 non law enforcement broadcast? Do you know if you guys
4 --

5 MR. [REDACTED] We always --

6 MR. BOWLING: So you would be putting out
7 AIS's. It's like a public vessel rather than a --

8 (Simultaneous speaking)

9 MR. [REDACTED] No, we had secured.

10 MR. BOWLING: So it's secured. Okay. I
11 just (inaudible), too. At this point, let me turn the
12 floor over to the Coast Guard, Lieutenant [REDACTED],
13 please.

14 LT [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED]

15 MR. BOWLING: [REDACTED] sorry.

16 LT [REDACTED] It's okay. Just first, you
17 were the first asset on scene. Correct? I know you
18 said there was a pilot boat and a tug boat, but those
19 were already --

20 MR. [REDACTED] Coast Guard asset, yes.

21 LT [REDACTED] Okay. Were there any other CBP
22 or any other assets on scene when you first arrived?
23 Or you were like the first response asset, I should
24 say?

25 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

1 LT [REDACTED] And when you approached the
2 vessel from the starboard side, your very initial
3 approach, there's no slides or life rafts or lifeboats
4 to pulley.

5 MR. [REDACTED] No. From what I saw, there was
6 one getting ready to be launched. It was still at the
7 top but kind of off to the side, like they were working
8 on it.

9 LT [REDACTED] One lifeboat?

10 MR. [REDACTED] Yes, the motorized.

11 LT [REDACTED] Okay. And for the record, to
12 clarify, life rafts are the inflatable life rafts. And
13 lifeboats are the hard shelled motorized lifeboats.
14 Okay. So they --

15 MR. [REDACTED] Yes.

16 LT [REDACTED] One lifeboat in preparation
17 stage.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

19 LT [REDACTED] Okay. And then you said you
20 were doing horseshoes on the aft section of the ferry,
21 and did you -- which side of the ferry did you see the
22 slide deploy from? Did you see both slides deploy?

23 MR. [REDACTED] The one that we saw was on the
24 port side.

25 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

1 MR. [REDACTED] That was the first one we saw.

2 LT [REDACTED] And were there any issues with
3 the port MES slide being deployed when you saw it?

4 MR. [REDACTED] Honestly, I've never seen on
5 deployed before, so I really didn't know what to
6 expect. I said hey, the slide is deployed. It just
7 looked all black and I know that takes time to unravel
8 and do what not. But I mean I don't know.

9 LT [REDACTED] Could you describe the shape of
10 the slide? Did it come out at an angle, or was it --
11 did it look like an L shaped?

12 MR. [REDACTED] It came down, and it kind of
13 looked like a brain kind of deal. Like it was just all
14 black and it was just, you could tell that it's still
15 getting whatever's feeding it to pop up and be what
16 it's supposed to be, like a slide or what not.

17 MR. BOWLING: Lieutenant, Larry Bowling. If
18 you don't mind, may I suggest you have the witness do a
19 second drawing, and we'll label it Witness 2 --

20 LT [REDACTED] Sure.

21 MR. BOWLING: -- so we can visually lay out
22 what the lieutenant was just asking you with your
23 visual perspective with the MES or re-evacuation system
24 slide look like.

25 MR. [REDACTED] So it kind of deployed around

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1 this area. All we really saw was kind of just a black
2 kind of deal like this. And we could hear it hissing.
3 I don't know if it's CO2 or what it is that they have
4 that inflates it, but you can just tell it was taking
5 up wherever that is to become like the slide.

6 It had like an octagon kind of deal, almost
7 like a life raft at the bottom as well. So there was a
8 slide. Eventually we saw it. There was a slide. It
9 was like orange on the inside and kind of like an L
10 here where they (inaudible).

11 And then there's like a little platform.
12 That's what we eventually saw, but initially it was
13 kind of this, which makes sense. Once it inflates, it
14 will turn into this. Then we moved to the starboard
15 side. And on the starboard side there's the same deal.

16 We could tell it was deployed. And then we
17 did notice on the starboard side that the wind and seas
18 pushing that way, the raft was kind of -- like it
19 stood. It wasn't just straight out. It was kind of
20 like pushed along side the hull.

21 So eventually throughout the day when we
22 were kind of running to the 55 and back, we noticed a
23 33 and by then there was like OTHs. There's CBP boats
24 on scene. We weren't involved in it, just what I saw,
25 but you could see the 33 kind of -- like you could see

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1 the 33 pulling this this way. The OTHs were here kind
2 of recovering the people and waiting in line kind of
3 deal.

4 MR. BOWLING: And for the record, this is
5 Larry Bowling with the NTSB. The witness, when he said
6 the 33 pulling this, he was adding a description of the
7 33 with a tow line connected to what they call an IDA
8 or a platform there at the bottom of the slide. Is
9 that correct? Where you just drew that the square
10 rectangle is the 33. It was pulling that --

11 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

12 MR. BOWLING: -- base of the slide and IBA
13 out the way from the ship is what you're saying.

14 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

15 MR. BOWLING: Okay. Thank you. We may ask
16 you to -- we'll label that Witness 1 and Witness 2 once
17 we got done, and I'll take pictures of it for your
18 file.

19 MR. [REDACTED] I believe some of the guys --
20 I've even seen pictures of -- they were on the other
21 platforms, of them doing the same deal.

22 MR. BOWLING: Okay. You could actually see
23 it as well. Thank you. Sorry. I'm just making sure
24 we get that on the record because they won't know when
25 you say this what we were doing there. Sorry,

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1 Lieutenant.

2 LT [REDACTED] No worries. [REDACTED]
3 with the Coast Guard. So I did want to backtrack real
4 quick to when you came on scene and you saw passengers
5 on the top deck. Did you notice them forward of the
6 stacks and aft of the stacks or all in one area?

7 MR. [REDACTED] They were kind of -- they behind
8 the stacks.

9 LT [REDACTED] They were both --

10 MR. [REDACTED] They were mustered. Correct.

11 LT [REDACTED] Okay. And then the port side
12 MES, when it deployed, it looked straight vertical
13 down. It was not at an angle from the ship?

14 MR. [REDACTED] I have no idea. I was just. It
15 was straight down kind of inflating, like almost like a
16 bed, like you just see it unraveling and doing the
17 same.

18 LT [REDACTED] Okay. And then when you said
19 you went back around to the starboard side after seeing
20 the port side slide deploy, the starboard slide was
21 already deployed.

22 MR. [REDACTED] I want to -- I don't remember if
23 I heard it deploy, so I'm just going to say it was --

24 (Simultaneous speaking)

25 LT [REDACTED] And you said two life rafts

1 were also deployed. Did you see the canister?

2 MR. [REDACTED] Fall down, yes.

3 LT [REDACTED] Okay. Can you describe that,
4 like what you -- did you see someone on the ship
5 releasing them or you just saw the canisters already in
6 the water?

7 MR. [REDACTED] No, we just saw it hit the
8 water.

9 LT [REDACTED] How many?

10 MR. [REDACTED] I at least remember seeing two.

11 LT [REDACTED] Okay. Did you see any life
12 rafts inflate from the canisters?

13 MR. [REDACTED] No.

14 LT [REDACTED] No. Okay. Did you see any --
15 the evacuation process of passengers and crew members
16 from the slide onto a life raft, or were you just sort
17 of separated from the evacuation of those personnel?

18 MR. [REDACTED] I was kind of separated away
19 from those being that we -- once we saw that first life
20 -- that's called lifeboat.

21 LT [REDACTED] The hard shell?

22 MR. [REDACTED] Yes, the hard shell. Once we
23 saw that one deploy, we kind of stood close by just to
24 make sure. And that's when they started taking on water
25 and we had to take people on. So we were already on

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1 our way in.

2 By the time we got back out it was a whole
3 different world. There's more assets heading out.
4 There's life rafts around kind of deal. There's other
5 boats like towing those life boats into the harbor. So
6 it was a whole other world when we got back out.

7 LT [REDACTED] Okay. With regards to the
8 lifeboat with the engine troubles, they were able to
9 back out from the ferry and then the engine stopped
10 again. Did the -- do you know if the lifeboat engine -
11 - if they were able to ever get propulsion back?

12 MR. [REDACTED] It never worked. Whatever they
13 were doing never worked again.

14 LT [REDACTED] Okay. So you took onboard
15 about 21 female children passengers and left the
16 lifeboat in the water and returned to port, to shore.
17 And you said Tezanos was the on scene commander. Was
18 that from -- who is that, and where was he located?

19 MR. [REDACTED] The Tezanos is a FRC, and what
20 they did was they got on scene about I want to say 15,
21 30 minutes after us. So they took on the on scene
22 coordinator. So we were passing everything through
23 them.

24 LT [REDACTED] Okay, via radio?

25 MR. [REDACTED] Via radio. Correct.

1 LT [REDACTED] What channel were you
2 monitoring?

3 MR. [REDACTED] I wasn't on the radios. I just
4 was hearing the transmissions, but normally we operate
5 on 113 and Channel 16.

6 LT [REDACTED] So the 113 was with the on
7 scene commander?

8 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

9 LT [REDACTED] And then the passengers that
10 you took to shore, which pier did you go to?

11 MR. [REDACTED] We took them to the -- I can't
12 be sure the name of that pier, but it's a little
13 floating pier right there where the little shuttle kind
14 of does its -- it's a newer pier. It's just an
15 aluminum kind of floating pier.

16 LT [REDACTED] Were there buses there?

17 MR. [REDACTED] When we got there, there was CPB
18 INS I believe, HSI, CBP coastees and you could see the
19 ambulance. But there were so many people that you
20 couldn't really tell what was out.

21 LT [REDACTED] Okay. So that was your very
22 first trip. Your second trip when you went back out,
23 you went back to the lifeboat?

24 MR. [REDACTED] When we went back, there were
25 other assets dealing with the lifeboat, so there was a

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1 bunch. So we asked the Tezanos for tasking. That's
2 when I believe they asked us to get the pregnant
3 female.

4 LT [REDACTED] Okay. So you never returned
5 back to the lifeboat that you had originally assisted
6 in the beginning?

7 MR. [REDACTED] No, because there was assets
8 already assisting.

9 LT [REDACTED] And the pregnant woman was on
10 the 55. Correct?

11 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

12 LT [REDACTED] And you just did that one trip
13 just for her.

14 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

15 LT [REDACTED] And then on your third trip,
16 you said you got one person off from the life raft.

17 MR. [REDACTED] No, for --

18 LT [REDACTED] The life raft was not deployed
19 all the way on the 55 foot (inaudible), and they were
20 helping people take people --

21 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

22 LT [REDACTED] -- one at a time.

23 MR. [REDACTED] The 55 exactly was assisting a
24 lifeboat that didn't deploy fully.

25 LT [REDACTED] So a life raft?

1 MR. [REDACTED] No, a boat, the hard top boats,
2 like on the pulley system.

3 LT [REDACTED] A different lifeboat.

4 MR. [REDACTED] Correct, a different one. So
5 they couldn't -- something -- I don't know what
6 happened but they weren't deployed all the way. They
7 were still on the hinges kind of suspended in the air.
8 So the 55 was butting their bow.

9 LT [REDACTED] Which side of the ferry was
10 that?

11 MR. [REDACTED] Starboard.

12 LT [REDACTED] So the same side that you had -
13 - so the second lifeboat on the starboard side of the
14 vessel was still attached through the pulls, the falls,
15 the life pulley system to the ship and the 55 was
16 disembarking passengers from this lifeboat to their
17 vessel.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

19 LT [REDACTED] Okay. Did you assist this
20 particular cutter lifeboat situation, or that's just
21 what you saw?

22 MR. [REDACTED] It was just -- yes, that's what
23 I saw. I mean they were -- it was pretty close
24 quarters so we didn't want to mess up anything like
25 that just to be clear.

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1 LT [REDACTED] Okay. And then at this time
2 there were some inflated life rafts with the
3 (inaudible).

4 MR. [REDACTED] Yes.

5 LT [REDACTED] So I got a little bit lost in
6 what you did next I guess. After you took the pregnant
7 lady back and you came back out, which scenario were
8 you assisting next? Was this the seven people with the
9 broken leg from the fishing boat?

10 MR. [REDACTED] I'm having trouble kind of
11 putting them in order.

12 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

13 MR. [REDACTED] But the next trip I believe was
14 we took people off the 55, and one of the females had a
15 hurt leg.

16 LT [REDACTED] Oh.

17 MR. [REDACTED] She just had a hurt leg. It was
18 bruised.

19 LT [REDACTED] Oh, okay.

20 MR. [REDACTED] So we took those people back,
21 and then when we came back out I believe is when we
22 took the people from the sports fisher and then they
23 had the person with the cardiac -- not cardiac but that
24 they were performing -- he was having seizures and they
25 performed CPR on him. That's at least what I heard

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1 from the radio.

2 LT [REDACTED] So you took the fishing boat
3 people and the convulsing passenger from the ANT in one
4 trip?

5 MR. [REDACTED] Yes. We were trying to -- we
6 were already going to the 55 to see if we could take
7 more people and they told us hey, we got this guy
8 convulsing. So we got him on, and we came back.

9 LT [REDACTED] Okay. The passenger or the
10 person with the broken leg on the fishing boat, do you
11 know who that person was?

12 MR. [REDACTED] I do not. I don't know if it
13 was -- he was just hurt. So he couldn't move under his
14 power. I don't know if it was broken or not. But he
15 couldn't -- like he couldn't put any weight on it.

16 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

17 MR. [REDACTED] He -- it took a little more
18 getting closer to the fishing boat just to get him on
19 because he was kind of sitting down. We had to pull
20 him onto our boat. He was a -- he seemed like a hefty
21 gentleman. At that time -- at that point I was driving
22 the 45, so I wasn't as hands on with the other.

23 LT [REDACTED] Okay. And then did you see
24 anywhere during this scene people getting into the
25 inflatable life rafts?

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1 MR. [REDACTED] I did see people in the
2 inflatable life rafts, but we didn't deal with them as
3 much as the other assets. We were just trying to help.
4 It seemed -- well first was that first lifeboat and
5 second was assisting the 55 just to make sure they had
6 room.

7 And honestly, it was whatever the Tezanos
8 asked us to do but it seemed like we were more dealing
9 with them just because they -- it seemed like they had
10 all those people coming from that lifeboat.

11 And eventually they're going to run out of
12 space. So we just tried to alleviate that space so we
13 could get more people on. And that's less time for
14 those people in that lifeboat.

15 LT [REDACTED] Okay. And you said you did end
16 up towing the 55 back?

17 MR. [REDACTED] Correct. After all the persons.

18 LT [REDACTED] After this --

19 MR. [REDACTED] All the survivors were back. We
20 ended up towing the 55 back.

21 LT [REDACTED] Okay. From your -- sir, do you
22 have anymore questions with regard to this?

23 MR. BOWLING: Yes. Just -- you done right
24 now for the first --

25 LT [REDACTED] I'm done for now.

1 MR. BOWLING: Bear with us. We've been --
2 and look, I told you 30 minutes. I lied. We're at an
3 hour and six, but there was a lot of activity going on
4 out there. So are you okay? You need a break, or can
5 we go ahead and wrap it up?

6 MR. [REDACTED] No, I'm fine.

7 MR. BOWLING: Okay. The -- just a couple of
8 quick things for the record. I want to make sure we're
9 good on the acronyms. You said RTB, return to base?

10 MR. [REDACTED] Return to base.

11 MR. BOWLING: And then we also, referring to
12 chief at the station you used EPO, engineering petty
13 officer?

14 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

15 MR. BOWLING: Okay. Then EMS, emergency
16 medical services?

17 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

18 MR. BOWLING: Helping the transcriptions
19 here. The questions related specifically -- the on
20 scene coordinator was the Tezanos.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

22 MR. BOWLING: And from a scene point of I'm
23 trying to give an idea of a passenger accountability.
24 As a first responder working for the on scene commander
25 there, how are you and the boat crew accounting for the

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1 survivors you're taking on? Are you doing head counts,
2 name, rank, serial number? How are you --

3 MR. [REDACTED] Well, on the first trip, it was
4 kind of an emergency kind of hey, they're taking on
5 water. We need to get them off. And obviously we
6 couldn't fit 150 people on the 45, so we took 21 or
7 approximately 21 and we let the Tezanos know. And we
8 took them straight back to the harbor.

9 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

10 MR. [REDACTED] Just instead of -- I believe the
11 coxswain let the Tezanos know because they wanted us to
12 transfer them to the Tezanos. We said hey, we might as
13 well just take them straight in, less people to worry
14 about, less space occupying.

15 So what we did is we kind of took -- we made
16 sure we weren't over our capacity, so that's why we cut
17 it off around there. And we head back in, and we try
18 to get a head count at the pier just to be sure of how
19 many people we had.

20 But didn't seem to work out, and we were
21 just trying to -- we got people off board. We asked
22 because it seemed like there was a person kind of
23 taking inventory of all the people that are coming up
24 the ramp.

25 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

1 MR. [REDACTED] But we asked them and they
2 seemed like they were rattled, too. So it was around -
3 - what we counted was around 21.

4 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

5 MR. [REDACTED] But throughout the whole case we
6 tried to keep count, but sometimes those numbers were
7 off. We couldn't give you an exact number of how many
8 people just because of the organization.

9 We were more worried like half of the trips
10 were someone that needed immediate medical attention.
11 So we just -- whatever we had onboard or like whatever
12 that case came on, we'd just get them back --

13 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

14 MR. [REDACTED] -- as soon as possible just so
15 they could get that medical attention that was waiting
16 on the pier.

17 MR. BOWLING: Okay. Through the course of
18 the response there or your statement, you indicated
19 that there was someone you visually observed at the
20 pier that looked to be kind of doing some
21 accountability for the passengers.

22 MR. [REDACTED] Correct.

23 MR. BOWLING: Can you -- was it a coasteer or
24 --

25 MR. [REDACTED] No, he was local. He seemed

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1 like he was a local authority. I'm not completely sure
2 just because there were so many people at that pier
3 eventually. Like the first trip, we were able to
4 actually get to him and talk. The second trip, forget
5 about it. There were so many people on the pier we
6 couldn't really get off the asset.

7 MR. BOWLING: Right.

8 MR. [REDACTED] We just kind of got them, and we
9 took off just to make space for the other assets coming
10 in with survivors.

11 MR. BOWLING: All right. And I know the
12 lieutenant -- you went through it with me and the
13 lieutenant did a follow up. From the best of your
14 recollection, approximately how many runs were there
15 from on scene to a shore side pier facility with
16 passengers or survivors?

17 MR. [REDACTED] I'd say around six.

18 MR. BOWLING: Around six, okay. And then my
19 final question I have for you was the two radio
20 frequencies you were working off of.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Like I said, I wasn't in the
22 cabin most of the time.

23 MR. BOWLING: But normal, yes.

24 MR. [REDACTED] But normally it's 113, CG 113
25 and 16.

1 MR. BOWLING: 60?

2 MR. [REDACTED] And 16, 1-6.

3 MR. BOWLING: 16, all right. Got you.

4 Perfect. I don't have anything else. Lieutenant, do
5 you?

6 LT [REDACTED] Just sort of a generic question
7 on how you felt. I mean you've experienced the search
8 and rescue cases in your ten years of service, and how
9 do you think -- what were the positives and the
10 negatives from this whole evolution as a responder
11 standpoint?

12 MR. [REDACTED] I mean on such a large scale
13 just I would say it is the bigger -- so many people
14 involved of survivors. Normally it's like a fishing
15 boat or three to five people without counting obviously
16 NMIO cases or alien migration or eviction cases.

17 But the positives was it was kind of nice to
18 see a whole maritime community get together just to
19 help each other out. I definitely -- that was a big --
20 that was just impressive, everyone working together and
21 coordinating in some way to where it wasn't a hazard at
22 all to us navigating and what not to where everyone
23 assisted as much as possible and also staying out of
24 the way.

25 It wasn't just like every boat would just

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1 creep up and try to help because sometimes that's not
2 the best case. But they would wait from tasking. And
3 to see just civilians with their sport fishers
4 assisting as well with the deployed life rafts and
5 towing them back, it just nice.

6 It was a nice flow. It was nice to see, and
7 I mean I can't really say negatives. It was just
8 eventually -- I mean that's what we're trained for. So
9 it was good to -- everyone, even our non rate who's
10 just been out of boot camp for one month, he took task
11 direction very well.

12 He went with the flow, the adrenaline. We
13 were fighting a lot of things out there, adrenaline,
14 making sure no one gets hurt, making sure that we're
15 following policy as well. And honestly, I think we did
16 a great job. Everyone pulled together.

17 Everyone involved in the case did great
18 communicating and just at least from the responders
19 point of view. And on the pier there was some
20 confusion. But overall, I think it went good.

21 LT [REDACTED] When you say on the pier
22 there's some confusion, just are you talking about
23 among the local authorities there with the passengers
24 after -- this is the pier that you dropped the
25 passengers off at. Correct?

1 MR. [REDACTED] Correct, because eventually I
2 was like hey, how many people have been brought to the
3 pier. And it was no one could give me a straight
4 answer. So I kind of crept towards the person that I
5 saw that was taking inventory.

6 He kind of set up shop right there where the
7 passengers were leaving. I was like hey, I need to
8 know how many people have been dropped off here just so
9 we can have a visual. And he said -- he gave me well,
10 more or less around 400.

11 And it was like well, do you have an actual
12 number? And he said, not really. It's been around
13 400. He had a sheet, but it seemed like he was writing
14 names down. So I asked him, have you checked those
15 names against the manifest of people.

16 And he said no, we haven't done that yet.
17 So I was like how do we know if someone's missing. And
18 he kind of said, well, I'm going to talk to my boss now
19 and we'll figure it out. So at that point, the case is
20 already kind of winding down.

21 We ended up -- I believe -- actually I
22 believe that's when I brought the five, the last five
23 that I took off the Tezanos and my chief, Chief
24 [REDACTED], he was asking us do you know if there's
25 anymore passengers or any other boats.

1 And I was like, at this time I don't, but I
2 believe there shouldn't be. So that's when I talked to
3 the guy. He didn't really know. He couldn't give me a
4 straight answer, so I was like Chief, I'm sorry. I
5 don't know.

6 So the chief did some asking, too.
7 Obviously those anchors pushed a little more weight
8 than I did. I think everyone -- it was just a lot of
9 agencies involved at least at the pier, and I don't
10 think they were communicating well.

11 But eventually, Chief came to me. He was
12 like hey, all people accounted for. There was one
13 person that I guess was left at the pier or didn't get
14 underway with them so they didn't update the manifest
15 or something like that.

16 So I was like all right, but as long as
17 everyone's accounted for, we're good. And then that's
18 when we headed out. We got the call from Tezanos that
19 the 55 needed help.

20 LT [REDACTED] That person that you were
21 speaking to directly, do -- you said he was some kind
22 of authority person. Do you know what he was wearing
23 or if he was with a company?

24 MR. [REDACTED] He was wearing black. I can't
25 tell you right now.

1 LT [REDACTED] Do you know his (inaudible)?

2 MR. [REDACTED] It said something Puerto Rico,
3 so I really honestly, I just wanted a straight honest.
4 There were so many uniforms around.

5 LT [REDACTED] And then one more question. I
6 know you mentioned that radio traffic, people were
7 stepping over each other. Was this because everyone
8 was communicating on Channel 16 or were --

9 MR. [REDACTED] It was just because it was a big
10 evolution, a lot of assets so at times people would
11 step on each other. They kind of caught on, and we
12 just rolled with it.

13 But there was just so many assets and so
14 many things going on at once that it's inevitable. It
15 happened in every case, but eventually they catch on
16 and it just rolls through. Everyone gets their message
17 through.

18 LT [REDACTED] Okay. That's all the questions
19 I have.

20 MR. BOWLING: I have one final, and then
21 we'll turn the floor over to you to let you get an
22 opportunity to ask us questions. Then we'll wrap up.
23 When you took the 55 in tow, at any time did anybody
24 validate that it was actually a life raft up under the
25 intake or was it lines or what ended up happening with

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1 that?

2 MR. [REDACTED] I'm not sure exactly what they
3 were doing. I kind of got an idea, but they were
4 trying to pick up those life rafts that never deployed.

5 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

6 MR. [REDACTED] But it seems like when they
7 picked up the sea painter 1 (phonetic), it kind of
8 pulled up the other, which got caught in the rudder.

9 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

10 MR. [REDACTED] That's kind of what I got from
11 it.

12 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

13 MR. [REDACTED] But you could see the line
14 across the hull, and you could see the arms like -- I
15 don't know if it was the ratchet (inaudible) itself or
16 the canopy. You could see it under there kind of like
17 floating under there. So that's -- I mean it was a
18 straightforward case. I don't know. The next day, I
19 don't know if they sent people down --

20 MR. BOWLING: A diver down and all that.

21 MR. [REDACTED] -- yes, a diver down.

22 MR. BOWLING: All right. You've been here
23 now an hour and ten minutes. We've asked you a lot of
24 questions and good information. I'm really
25 appreciative of it. Do you have any questions for us?

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1 Have we failed to ask you anything that's
2 relevant you'd like to get on the record to help us?
3 We're trying to determine the causal events and how to
4 keep this from happening again, so.

5 MR. [REDACTED] I mean honestly the way I see
6 it, I mean at least I see from when I was on the
7 cutter. We train for emergencies, and a lot of times
8 it's to prevent the emergency from getting that far to
9 where we have to abandon ship.

10 That's the last resort. But I mean
11 everything that could possibly go wrong I guess went
12 wrong to where they had to abandon ship. And I think
13 we did -- everyone pulled their part.

14 They did their part and I think it was a
15 great case. All people got out. Minimal injuries. It
16 was -- I think it's the best outcome that could come
17 from that situation at least from us. That's it. It's
18 an emergency. That's what we train for, and I felt
19 like this is the best outcome. It really was. You
20 can't complain about it.

21 MR. BOWLING: Okay. Lieutenant, anything?
22 All right. Then I will secure the interview now, and
23 let me kill this here.

24 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went
25 off the record at 10:38 a.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Fire Onboard the Caribbean Fantasy
August 17, 2016
Accident No. DCA16FM052
Interview of [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

DATE: 08-22-16

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 63 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.

[REDACTED]

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