

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FIRE AND GROUNDING OF THE

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RO-RO P/V *CARIBBEAN FANTASY* OFF

*

Accident No.: DCA16FM052

SAN JUAN PUERTO RICO AT 0744

*

ON AUGUST 17, 2016

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Interview of: FRANCISCO JOSE MARTINEZ RIVERRA

Via Telephone

Wednesday,

December 9, 2016

APPEARANCES:

ADAM TUCKER, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

CARRIE BELL, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MICHAEL KARR, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

CDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED], Lead Investigator
Cruise Ship National Center of Expertise (CSNCOE)
United States Coast Guard

LTJG [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
United States Coast Guard

[REDACTED], Interpreter
United States Coast Guard, Civilian

MANOLO RODRIGUEZ
P&I Club

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:15 a.m. EST)

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3 CDR [REDACTED]: All right. Good morning, everybody. The time
4 is 0915 here in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The time in Puerto Rico
5 is 10:15. This interview is between the Coast Guard, the National
6 Transportation Safety Board, and Francisco Martinez regarding the
7 casualty on the *Caribbean Fantasy* that happened August 17th, 2016.

8 My name is Commander [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the U.S. Coast Guard.
9 Here in the room is?

10 MR. TUCKER: Adam Tucker with the National Transportation
11 Safety Board.

12 CDR [REDACTED]: In Puerto Rico?

13 MR. MANOLO RODRIGUEZ: Attorney Manolo Rodriguez for the P&I
14 Club.

15 LTJG [REDACTED]: Lieutenant Junior Grade [REDACTED] [REDACTED],
16 Coast Guard.

17 MR. [REDACTED]: [REDACTED], U.S. Coast Guard,
18 civilian.

19 LTJG [REDACTED]: Anybody else on the line?

20 MR. MARTINEZ: Francisco Martinez.

21 LTJG [REDACTED]: Did we miss anyone? [REDACTED] Karr.

22 MR. KARR: This is [REDACTED] Karr with the National Transportation
23 Safety Board.

24 CDR [REDACTED]: Is Carrie still there?

25 MS. BELL: Carrie --

1 CDR [REDACTED]: Okay.

2 MS. BELL: I'm here, yes. Carrie Bell, NTSB.

3 LTJG [REDACTED]: Okay. Perfect. That will be it.

4 CDR [REDACTED]: Okay. Thank you very much. We're -- I'm going
5 to turn it over to [REDACTED]. He is going to ask you to tell a
6 story, and then after your story we will follow up with any
7 questions that we may have after.

8 MR. MARTINEZ: Okay.

9 (Whereupon, [REDACTED], a Spanish/English interpreter,
10 interpreted the questions posed to and answers given by JOSE
11 MARTINEZ RIVERRA.)

12 INTERVIEW OF FRANCISCO JOSE MARTINEZ RIVERRA

13 BY LTJG [REDACTED]:

14 Q. Please state your full name.

15 A. Francisco Jose Martinez Riverra.

16 Q. Okay. Nationality?

17 A. Puerto Rican. American.

18 Q. Age?

19 A. (Untranslated).

20 Q. Okay. What we'd like to do is just hear from you in your own
21 words -- and you can do it in Spanish again. We'll have our
22 interpreter, I guess, stop you along the way in your story so that
23 he can convey that message in English. But if you could tell us
24 what happened from the moment you woke up the day of the incident,
25 all the way to the moment that you got to San Juan, Puerto Rico,

1 and you were at the pier, and you finished processing with us.
2 Just the chain of events that happened, any detail that you
3 remember, no matter how minor you might think it is, just from
4 start to finish everything that you experienced.

5 A. Okay. We got up at 7 a.m. in the morning, and we went out to
6 breakfast. When we went to breakfast, somebody from the crew came
7 and told there was a problem with the ventilation. Leave the
8 breakfast where we at, and to just go upstairs. We went down
9 without having breakfast. We tried to get our luggage, but they
10 wouldn't let us, and so we went upstairs.

11 When we went up there, we were there for a long time and
12 nobody had told us what was happening. But immediately, we saw
13 the smoke that was coming out, and it was a lot of smoke. So they
14 took us to this small space that's like a theater, and they let us
15 there for some time. And then, while we were there, crew members
16 came. They gave us lifesaving appliances.

17 So they transferred us to the lifeboats, and they were
18 loading (indiscernible) and children. But they had problems.
19 When they tried to bring down the lifeboat, it got stuck.

20 MR. MANOLO RODRIGUEZ: When they lowered the first, it did
21 not release, I believe.

22 LTJG [REDACTED]: That, that's not -- can you repeat the
23 question, please? Can you repeat your question?

24 MR. MANOLO RODRIGUEZ: No, I was making a remark about the
25 translation. He said that when the first one was lowered, it did

1 not not release.

2 LTJG [REDACTED]: Okay. All right.

3 MR. RIVERRA: When they tried to lower the second one, it
4 never reached the water. That was the only lifeboat available.
5 And they started throwing the life rafts into the water.

6 So they told us to move to the area to go down the floating
7 slide. So we waited there about an hour, hour and a half. Then
8 down the slide. So when we reached the bottom of the slide, we
9 were there about 30 minutes waiting on a life raft. When we got
10 to load on our life raft, it was the Coast Guard who brought it.
11 We got into the life raft. It was completely loaded. And we wait
12 about 30 minutes.

13 From the -- so they got transferred from the life raft to a
14 small -- Coast Guard small boat, to a big boat. And then on that
15 big boat, they took us -- they took our names. They gave us
16 water. Then after that, they put us in another boat. From that
17 boat, we went to the pier. On that pier, they took us to another
18 pier where they question us.

19 LTJG [REDACTED]: Okay. (Untranslated).

20 The gentleman finished with his narrative. What I'm going to
21 start doing is asking our questions.

22 BY LTJG [REDACTED]:

23 Q. First question. Do you or anyone traveling with you have any
24 disability or special needs?

25 A. (In English) No.

1 Q. How, how many people were traveling in your party?

2 A. Just my friend and I.

3 Q. You and a friend?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. Was your friend under the age of 16?

6 A. No.

7 Q. How many times have you sailed on the *Caribbean Fantasy*?

8 A. Just this time.

9 Q. Just once?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. On the evening -- that's the night before, that the ship
12 departed Santo Domingo -- or the day of, I'm sorry -- did the crew
13 conduct any type of safety brief or drill?

14 A. Yeah, they did.

15 Q. What do you remember about the drill?

16 INTERPRETER: So he's saying that they went to sleep. He
17 knows they were giving the drill, but he went to sleep.

18 BY LTJG [REDACTED]:

19 Q. And how did you know they were having a drill? They made an
20 announcement, or the crew just talking about it?

21 A. (Through interpreter) So we were at the lobby when they
22 started in the drill. But we were tired and we went to our room
23 to sleep.

24 Q. Okay. The day of the incident, other than the -- when you
25 were eating, and then telling you that there was a problem with

1 the ventilation, was there anything else that indicated that there
2 was some type of emergency happening on board the vessel?

3 A. After they tell us to go upstairs and when we went upstairs,
4 that's when the alarms sound off.

5 Q. What did you hear? What alarm did you hear?

6 A. Baah, baah, baah.

7 Q. Was this the ship's horn or was it something --

8 A. (In English) No.

9 Q. Okay. An internal communication you heard of --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Do you recall how many beats or blasts you heard?

12 A. No, I don't remember.

13 Q. Did you hear any announcements from the ship's crew about the
14 emergency?

15 A. (Through interpreter) The only communication that we had was
16 the gentleman that approached us.

17 Q. Did the lights go out at any time?

18 A. (In English) Yes.

19 Q. Do you recall where you were when the lights went out? And
20 which lights did you see go out?

21 A. (Through interpreter) When they went to lower the second
22 lifeboat, that's when the lights went out.

23 Q. Did you see any rooms with the lights off?

24 A. (In English) No, not with the lights.

25 Q. Okay. So you're assuming the lights went out because the

1 boat stopped moving?

2 A. No.

3 (Through interpreter) We saw when the theater -- there was no
4 light in the theater. And when we, when we went into the Coast
5 Guard boat, that's when one of the crew members of the boat told
6 us that the light went off.

7 Q. Did the crew assist you where to go?

8 A. (In English) Yes.

9 Q. And did the crew tell you that there was a problem? Or what
10 the problem was?

11 A. (Through interpreter) Said that it was a emergency
12 evacuation.

13 Q. Were the crew members easy to identify?

14 A. (In English) No, (untranslated).

15 Q. Did you know who the crew members were?

16 A. No. No, sir.

17 INTERPRETER: He identified the crew because of the clothing
18 identified.

19 LTJG [REDACTED]:

20 Q. During the emergency, did you know how to get to your
21 emergency station?

22 A. (Through interpreter) Yes. I went where the crew told us to.

23 Q. When you went to the station that the crew members told you
24 to go, did any of the crew member take your name or check you off
25 or write a number?

1 A. (In English) No.

2 Q. Do you know if they were taking account of how many people
3 were at that station?

4 A. (Through interpreter) I didn't see anything.

5 Q. Did you get a life jacket?

6 A. Si, (untranslated).

7 Q. How did you get that life jacket?

8 A. (In English) The crew member gave us the life jackets.

9 Q. You said you went down the slide. Correct?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Did the crew members direct you to go down the slide?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Did you notice any passengers that were disabled or
14 handicapped?

15 A. (Through interpreter) One try to go down. The slide was too
16 steep, went down, went down too fast. That's when the problems
17 started. Because when the people started going down, there were
18 people, there were people overweight who went down. Some people
19 have a problem with their ankles as soon as they got -- slide
20 down, and I think that somebody broke their leg.

21 Q. Okay. Did you see anybody in wheelchairs before the slides?
22 There are.

23 Did you have -- did you take any pictures or any video of --

24 A. (In English) Yes.

25 Q. Would you be able to provide those to me?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Okay. Once we finish here, I'll give you my information. If
3 you don't mind, just to send them to me.

4 A. Sure.

5 Q. It would greatly help us out with our investigation.
6 Did you see any smoke inside the ship?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Did you use the elevator just before or during the emergency?

9 A. No.

10 Q. What language of announcements and the crew members'
11 instructions that were given to you? Spanish?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Do you have any comments on how the crew performed their
14 duties?

15 A. (Through Interpreter) It was disorganized.

16 Q. Anybody --

17 A. They took too long to get the people out of the boat.

18 Q. Were you injured at all during the emergency? Were you
19 injured?

20 A. My feet got burned when I was going down the slide.

21 LTJG [REDACTED]: Okay. That sums up some of the questions
22 that I had. I'm going to open up the floor to my colleagues.
23 Thank you for giving us your story and answering those questions.
24 I have a translator here, just in case you need him as well.

25 CDR [REDACTED]: Thanks, [REDACTED]. This is Commander [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

1 and I have just a few questions. Is this the first time he's
2 sailed on a passenger vessel?

3 LTJG [REDACTED]: Hello? We just lost him. I just noticed
4 the call dropped. So, give me a minute. I'm going to call him
5 real quick.

6 CDR [REDACTED]: We're going to stop the recording. The time
7 is --

8 MR. TUCKER: 9:40.

9 CDR [REDACTED]: 9:40.

10 (Off the record at 9:40 a.m.)

11 (On the record at 9:42 a.m.)

12 CDR [REDACTED]: Okay. Great. The recording has started again.
13 We have reestablished communication with the witness. The time is
14 0942.

15 BY CDR [REDACTED]:

16 Q. The last question that I had that he did not hear was, is
17 this the first time that you have sailed on a passenger vessel?

18 A. (In English) Yes.

19 Q. Okay. You mentioned that the crew was assisting you. What
20 were they telling you to do?

21 A. (Through interpreter) To be relaxed and just to follow
22 instructions, wherever they tell us to go to.

23 Q. While you were evacuating to your muster station, did you
24 notice any signs to tell you where to go?

25 A. (In English) No.

1 CDR [REDACTED]: That's all the questions that I have for now.
2 I'll turn it over to Adam Tucker with the National Transportation
3 Safety Board.

4 BY MR. TUCKER:

5 Q. Hello, Francisco. This is Adam Tucker with the National
6 Transportation Safety Board. Thank you very much for talking with
7 us today. We really appreciate it.

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. I do have a few follow-up questions. And one of the
10 questions is you mentioned you heard an alarm. And I would really
11 like to know if you can draw back in your memory what that sounded
12 like, again.

13 INTERPRETER: He mentioned that he doesn't remember exactly
14 how the alarm sound.

15 MR. MANOLO RODRIGUEZ: That (indiscernible).

16 INTERPRETER: It was loud.

17 MR. MANOLO RODRIGUEZ: Loud noise, I guess.

18 INTERPRETER: Uh-huh.

19 BY MR. TUCKER:

20 Q. Okay. I will ask, did the alarm sound like a ship's whistle
21 or a horn?

22 A. (Through interpreter) Can't remember.

23 Q. Okay. That's fine. Francisco also mentioned that he got
24 burned. I would just like to know, was that burned from the fire
25 or burned from the slide?

1 A. (In English) Yeah, it was from the slide.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. (Through interpreter) It wasn't with a fire. When I went
4 down the slide, because it was too steep, that's how -- that's why
5 I burned my feet.

6 Q. He burned his feet. Okay. Thank you.

7 The other question I have is I would like to know when he got
8 dropped off by the boat in San Juan, what does he remember when he
9 got dropped off? What -- if he can be more specific about what he
10 saw and what he witnessed when he got dropped off by the boat.

11 A. It was a lot of people. They put us like a little band,
12 green in color. And they put us in a big bus. They gave us food.
13 The people that were injured they didn't load on the bus, but they
14 were taken care of. From there, they took us to another pier and
15 the process was the same. We went in, until the guard interviewed
16 us.

17 Q. Thank you. And now, with the lifejacket, just a simple
18 question. Was he able to put the lifejacket on by himself? Did
19 he know how to or did someone have to help him?

20 A. I put it on myself.

21 MR. TUCKER: Okay. Okay. That's the -- I may have another
22 question, but I'm finished for now. And we can turn it over to
23 Carrie Bell.

24 BY MS. BELL:

25 Q. Good morning. I only have two questions. The first one, you

1 said that you ended up in the slide and in a life raft. But were
2 you first instructed to go to a lifeboat?

3 A. First, we were upstairs where they going to load the
4 lifeboats. And they got full immediately. And then that's when
5 they instructed us to go down the slide.

6 Q. Okay. Thank you. And how were passengers reacting to the
7 emergency? Were they calm, scared, crying?

8 A. At the beginning, people were calm. Then when they told us
9 to go down the slide, it took too long, like an hour or -- maybe
10 an hour or a little bit more than an hour. That's when people got
11 desperate and started pushing and yelling. It was a lot of kids
12 and they were crying.

13 Q. And how did the crew react to that? Did they try to calm
14 people down?

15 A. (In English) Yeah.

16 MS. BELL: Okay. That's all the questions I have for now.
17 Thank you.

18 CDR [REDACTED]: Okay. Next, [REDACTED] Karr with the NTSB.

19 BY MR. KARR:

20 Q. This is [REDACTED] Karr. I just had one question. Did you have a
21 vehicle on board the ferry?

22 A. (Through interpreter) No.

23 MR. KARR: All right. That's all I have.

24 MR. TUCKER: Okay. Mr. Rodriguez -- Manolo Rodriguez, do you
25 have any questions?

1 MR. MANOLO RODRIGUEZ: No, thank you. No questions on my
2 part.

3 MR. TUCKER: Okay. Commander [REDACTED]?

4 CDR [REDACTED]: I have no further questions too. Does anyone
5 have any follow-up questions that is on the line?

6 LTJG [REDACTED]: I have one quick question, just for
7 clarification. This is [REDACTED].

8 CDR [REDACTED]: Go ahead.

9 LTJG [REDACTED]:

10 Q. Francisco, I just wanted to clarify, because I'm assuming --
11 and I don't really want to assume, the reason why you burned your
12 feet going down the slide -- did you have shoes on?

13 A. (In English) No.

14 Q. Okay. You were barefooted, and with the friction of the
15 slide, that's how you burned your --

16 A. Yes. Yes.

17 Q. Okay. Thank you.

18 CDR [REDACTED]: And it looks like Adam has another question
19 here.

20 BY MR. TUCKER:

21 Q. Yeah, Francisco, Adam with the NTSB. I forgot to ask you,
22 were you in a cabin or did you sleep in the general area where
23 every -- where all the chairs were?

24 A. No, we have -- we had a cabin.

25 Q. Okay. You had a cabin. Do you remember the cabin number?

1 If not, that's okay.

2 A. No. 5204-4.

3 Q. 5204-4. And your friend was with you in that cabin as well?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Okay. I guess the other question, and the biggest question
6 that I have, and most important, is, Francisco, is there something
7 that we forgot to ask you that you think is important for us to
8 know?

9 A. No, I don't think so.

10 MR. TUCKER: Okay.

11 BY MR. KARR:

12 Q. Francisco, this is [REDACTED] Karr of the NTSB. Were you asked to
13 take your shoes off before you went down the slide?

14 A. (Through interpreter) Yes. The crew instructed us to take
15 off the shoes.

16 MR. KARR: Thanks.

17 BY CDR [REDACTED]:

18 Q. Sorry, I have, I have one other question. How did you get to
19 Dom Rep from Puerto Rico?

20 A. With a plane.

21 CDR [REDACTED]: Okay. Thank you.

22 MR. TUCKER: That's all I have.

23 CDR [REDACTED]: Okay. Is -- anybody else have any further
24 questions?

25 BY MR. KARR:

1 Q. Yeah, just -- Francisco, why did you go -- what was the
2 purpose of your trip to the Dominican Republic?

3 A. (In English) It was vacation.

4 MS. KARR: Thanks.

5 CDR [REDACTED]: Okay. The time local in Fort Lauderdale is
6 0954. We're going to stop the recording.

7 (Whereupon, at 9:54 a.m., the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FIRE AND GROUNDING OF THE
RO-RO P/V *CARIBBEAN FANTASY* OFF
SAN JUAN PUERTO RICO AT 0744
ON AUGUST 17, 2016
Interview of Francisco Jose Martinez
Riverra

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA16FM052

PLACE: Via Telephone

DATE: December 9, 2016

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

Jane W. Gilliam
Transcriber