

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

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ON AUGUST 17, 2016

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Interview of: YAZMIN OTERO BERRIOS

Via Telephone

Thursday,
December 8, 2016

APPEARANCES:

LARRY D. BOWLING, Senior Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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

██████████ KARR, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

LTJG ██████████ ██████████
United States Coast Guard

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

MANOLO RODRIGUEZ, Esq.
P&I Club

MR. GUERRERO, Esq.
MR. ROSARIO, Esq.
(Attorneys on behalf of Ms. Otero Berrios)

MR. ██████████
Interpreter

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3 MR. BOWLING: -- recording, and the floor will be turned over
4 to Mr. Adam Tucker.

5 (Whereupon, MR. [REDACTED], a Spanish/English interpreter,
6 interpreted the questions posed to and answers given by YAZMIN
7 OTERO BERRIOS.)

INTERVIEW OF YAZMIN OTERO BERRIOS

8
9 BY MR. TUCKER:

10 Q. Okay. Good afternoon, Yazmin. Thank you very much for
11 speaking with us.

12 A. (In English) Good afternoon.

13 Q. I will be asking you some questions. And I will ask it in
14 English, and then Mr. [REDACTED] will translate for you, and he will
15 give us the English translation back.

16 So, the first question that I have for you is was there
17 anybody traveling with you that had any disability or special
18 assistance needs?

19 INTERPRETER: She's saying that on the vessel there were
20 traveling a few people with disability. Okay. She said that she
21 was traveling with one person with disabilities and he get a
22 little -- got worse with -- the condition got worse in travel,
23 with the travel.

24 MR. TUCKER: Okay. Do you know what condition that was?

25 INTERPRETER: Okay. So she's saying that she does not know

1 the condition of the person, specific condition. She didn't know
2 the disability of the person but she noticed that the person was
3 feeling a lot more dizzy. Yeah, so she does not know the
4 scientific terminology for the disability that the person
5 handled -- the person has, but she said that he was feeling dizzy
6 and short breath, short of breathness [sic].

7 MR. TUCKER: Okay.

8 INTERPRETER: So -- okay, so she's saying that she's not
9 going to add anything else from that.

10 MR. TUCKER: Okay.

11 INTERPRETER: From the first question.

12 MR. TUCKER: The next question is did she have any minors
13 under the age of 16 traveling with her?

14 MR. GUERRERO: Okay. So this is Attorney Guerrero. Yazmin,
15 I believe that they are asking you in connection with the group
16 that was traveling with you.

17 MS. OTERO BERRIOS: (In English) Yeah.

18 MR. GUERRERO: Is that correct, my perception?

19 MR. BOWLING: Mr. Guerrero, this is Larry Bowling, the
20 facilitator here. Feel free to provide that to the witness in
21 Spanish.

22 (Mr. Guerrero and Ms. Otero Berrios converse in Spanish.)

23 MR. GUERRERO: Okay, in short, she's saying that the group,
24 within the group that she was traveling there were not minors, but
25 she's stating that in the vessel there were some people that were

1 minors.

2 MR. TUCKER: Okay. That is --

3 MR. GUERRERO: Under the age of 16.

4 MR. TUCKER: Yes. That is understood. No minors in her
5 group, understood. Thank you.

6 MR. GUERRERO: Right, right.

7 MR. TUCKER: Yep.

8 INTERPRETER: Okay. So I just explained to Yazmin that she
9 should refer only to her live experience, not to everybody else on
10 the vessel.

11 MR. BOWLING: Okay. Thank you, Petty Officer [REDACTED].

12 Adam Tucker, you had more questions?

13 MR. TUCKER: Yes, more questions. Can you ask her if this
14 was her first time sailing on board the *Caribbean Fantasy*?

15 INTERPRETER: She said it's her first time.

16 MR. TUCKER: Thank you. Can you ask her did the crew, before
17 the vessel left port in Santo Domingo, did the crew conduct any
18 type of safety briefing or drill? What does she remember?

19 INTERPRETER: Okay, let me -- so, first of all, the first
20 question, I expanded it a little, trying to explain to her what it
21 was, probably the exercises and drills, and she mentioned that it
22 was no, that they were actually having dinner.

23 MR. TUCKER: Okay. Understood. The next question I have is
24 was she aware of where to go during an emergency? Was she
25 informed by any crew member or by any notice on the ship? Did she

1 have any information as to where to go during an emergency?

2 INTERPRETER: Okay. So, what Yazmin is saying, first of all,
3 she didn't know any areas or meeting points for abandoned ships.
4 She came out with her luggage, and a lot of people came out with
5 their luggages, and they had to return to like leave them. And
6 also, they were following the people exiting, well, towards the
7 lifeboats. And basically, they were just following people. There
8 were no personal --

9 MR. TUCKER: Okay.

10 INTERPRETER: Okay. So she's saying that at the beginning
11 there was some person that actually works with the vessel that
12 told her that you have to leave their luggage. They returned to
13 drop their luggages, and then afterwards they just start following
14 people around.

15 MR. TUCKER: Okay. The next question I have related to that
16 is, was she assigned a cabin or was she staying in the general
17 seating area?

18 INTERPRETER: She said that she was in her cabin.

19 MR. TUCKER: Does she remember the cabin number?

20 INTERPRETER: Okay, let me -- all right. So she mentioned
21 that she was assigned a cabin and, for some reason, they just
22 preferred to change cabins. So they re-accommodate them, and she
23 basically thinks it's 6035.

24 MR. TUCKER: Okay. And now if you can ask Yazmin where was
25 she when she knew that something was wrong?

1 INTERPRETER: She's mentioning that on Sunday morning, and
2 she was in the cabin.

3 MR. TUCKER: Okay.

4 MR. GUERRERO: Because it was at 8:00. This is Attorney
5 Guerrero.

6 MS. OTERO BERRIOS: (In English) But it Thursday -- I don't
7 remember.

8 INTERPRETER: She said that, first of all, making memory,
9 making her memory, they left on Tuesday and arrive -- like, the
10 emergency happen on Wednesday morning. But she said that she
11 started feeling certain anomalies on Tuesday. Okay, so she
12 started seeing some anomalies since the moment that they were
13 boarding the vessel.

14 MR. TUCKER: Okay. Okay. Now what I'm going to do, and this
15 is going to be a little bit of a learning curve here. What I
16 would like to happen now is that Yazmin recall from memory, from
17 the minute that the accident happened, what she did, where she
18 went, how she left the ship, and pretty much right up to when she
19 arrived in the port of San Juan, and to the end of the day, when
20 she put her feet up, and just for her to give us her -- what she
21 experienced, what she felt throughout that day during the
22 emergency and what happened to her.

23 If you can ask her to give us that information, we would be
24 very happy for that. And I believe how it's going to go is she's
25 going to have to pause at certain points so you can translate that

1 back to us in English.

2 INTERPRETER: Absolutely.

3 Okay. So far, Yazmin has mentioned that in her perception,
4 there was no coordination on the vessel by the crew. There was
5 not much of a communication with everybody. She said that her
6 functioning around the whole emergency was totally, like, off.
7 She said that preventative maintenance, it was not, like -- let me
8 see, was not carried out. And the crew's reaction, it was like
9 despair. Like they were, like, prancing around.

10 MR. [REDACTED]: If I may, this is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I just want
11 to interject real quick. [REDACTED], if we could get -- this is good.

12 She's telling us like -- she's giving us her opinion of what
13 she saw. What we want to do is have her tell her story. So if
14 you could tell her from the moment that she woke up until she got
15 to the pier, if she could just tell us step by step of what she
16 did. For example, I woke up at 6:00 and then I went to go eat
17 breakfast, and then after that I heard or I saw.

18 INTERPRETER: Okay.

19 MR. [REDACTED]: So if you can relate that to her, because
20 she's just giving us an overview.

21 INTERPRETER: It looks like she's not understanding.

22 MR. [REDACTED]: Well, we want just more --

23 INTERPRETER: Not her opinion, her story?

24 MR. [REDACTED]: Her story. Exactly. That's what we're
25 looking for.

1 INTERPRETER: Got it.

2 All right. So, Yazmin is mentioning that the vessel, first
3 of all, the vessel was stop, there was no air conditioning, and
4 she thought that it was probably a immigration or customs
5 procedure. They just stand up; they got ready. They mentioned
6 that -- she heard that they were mentioning that breakfast was
7 being served, but they did not go for breakfast. 7:00 to 7:30,
8 she heard an announcement of abandon ship and she grabbed her
9 luggage.

10 Okay. So she's mentioning so far that a female crew member
11 help her out with her luggage. A male crew member actually
12 stopped them and told them not to take the luggage with them. So
13 she goes back to her cabin, grabs her luggage, grabbed a friend so
14 they don't get lost -- well, like so they will be together. Her
15 friend -- she mentioned a friend named Lisa. She asked Lisa to
16 look at her cell phone for cell phone signal so she can call 911.
17 She also realizes that there was no people on deck.

18 MR. GUERRERO: Sir? This is Attorney Guerrero. Excuse me.
19 She said that she went upstairs and there was no people to rescue
20 them, as I recall her testimony.

21 INTERPRETER: Yeah. I went a little bit backwards. I'm
22 sorry. My apologies.

23 MR. BOWLING: That's fine. And this is Larry Bowling. So
24 for the record, we'll have the translation that it was the witness
25 that identified she went upstairs or topside and there were no

1 individuals there to rescue them.

2 MR. GUERRERO: And then she asked her friend to dial 911.

3 MR. BOWLING: Okay. All right. We'll go with that
4 interpretation. And if the witness can continue to tell us how
5 her day went?

6 INTERPRETER: So when she spoke to her friend Lisa about
7 calling the 911, so she said that everybody seems to be lost.
8 Nobody knew where to -- how to locate their emergency exits or
9 locations for the lifeboats and lifejackets. She saw someone
10 sitting on the lifejacket boxes. And when she was available to
11 grab one lifejacket, or a lifejacket, she was proceeding -- and I
12 stopped there. Sorry.

13 So she mentioned that they got into a lifeboat. She's
14 mentioning her friends: Lisa, previously mentioned; there is a
15 friend called Juanda -- that is pretty much the brief or common
16 name for Juan David -- Ariverto (ph.), Rafael, Francesca, and
17 Jowan (ph.). They said all of them, they tried to stick together
18 and went into the lifeboat.

19 MR. GUERRERO: There was only one lifeboat.

20 INTERPRETER: There was only one lifeboat. Exactly.

21 So she's mentioning that before they line up to be -- before
22 going into the one lifeboat, they line up to be, like, the first
23 ones to go down. And she actually, she encountered someone and
24 asked them about the fire. The person actually mentioned that
25 they utilized one CO2 fire extinguisher.

1 So the person mentioned to her that the fire was out, that
2 the abandon ship was due to the smoke that was coming off the
3 vessel in order to prevent the people -- to help people's health.
4 She actually realizes that it's still fire, and she was mentioning
5 that it was mostly like electrical fire, that it was a black smoke
6 coming off.

7 So she's mentioned that they were trying, and emphasizes and
8 trying, to lower the only lifeboat. She was saying that there was
9 not good communications within the person that was inside the
10 lifeboat to lower it with the person that was on deck trying to
11 lower it.

12 All right. So she's mentioning about the davits. She
13 mentioned the mechanical arms. She's referring to the davits for
14 the lifeboat. And she was mentioning that they have wire and
15 pulleys, which is the mechanical system for the davits system.
16 She said that one of the wires were tangled and there was one
17 person that actually climbs on top of the lifeboat in order to
18 release or untangle the actual wire.

19 She was mentioning that they not only try once, they try four
20 to five times, until they finally get to the boarding, for the
21 boarding point.

22 All right. So what she's mentioning is in the boarding -- at
23 the boarding position, they start counting people, right? They
24 count a person with a wheelchair first, and I believe the thing
25 that she mentioned was an extremely obese person.

1 MR. GUERRERO: Right.

2 INTERPRETER: But she was mentioning that there was a female
3 crew member that was counting some sort of surreal number, so
4 nothing that is real.

5 Okay. So she's mentioning that the female crew member
6 actually counts 70 to 80 people. And she was mentioning, also,
7 that there were 50 more missing. They were a little surprised
8 because they were mentioning that the capacity for the vessel was
9 150, and they think it was a little confusion within the personnel
10 that it was boarding the lifeboat. And she's mentioning that it
11 was 50 more -- I think she misunderstood that part -- and loading
12 the vessel. She's mentioning, also, that she sits down like in
13 the -- like on the border near the lifeboat waiting for the
14 boating -- to board the lifeboat.

15 MR. GUERRERO: Sir, this is Attorney Guerrero. She indicated
16 that she did not know whether it was by head count or it was by
17 the weight of the capacity of the lifeboat.

18 MR. BOWLING: All right, this is the facilitator Larry
19 Bowling here in Fort Lauderdale. Are there any objections to that
20 Spanish to English translation?

21 (No response.)

22 MR. BOWLING: If not, we'll accept that translation.

23 Yazmin, this is Larry Bowling in Fort Lauderdale. If we ask
24 you the questions in English, do you think you would understand
25 them and you can just respond in Spanish? Would that help?

1 INTERPRETER: She's mentioning that she's able to understand
2 the questions, but she prefers Spanish.

3 MR. BOWLING: Okay. We'll continue to do that then. Thank
4 you very much.

5 All right. I think with that clarification, we probably need
6 to continue from this point with Yazmin's story.

7 INTERPRETER: She was on board the lifeboat. Okay. So what
8 she's mentioning was that she was already inside the lifeboat and
9 then she was actually accommodated to the border of the -- inside
10 the lifeboat.

11 Okay. So she's mentioning that they accommodated about an
12 amount of 110 people inside the lifeboat. When they tried to
13 lower this lifeboat, the wire seems to be, like, not in condition
14 to lower the vessel. And when they finally released the lifeboat,
15 it start hitting against the bulkhead, the hull bulkhead.

16 MR. GUERRERO: Sir, this is Attorney Guerrero. She said that
17 they were -- only one wire was released and then, from there on,
18 the lifeboat was pounding with the ferry.

19 MR. BOWLING: Okay. This is Larry Bowling. Is everyone okay
20 with that interpretation of the Spanish statement that the witness
21 provided?

22 MR. [REDACTED]: Yes.

23 MR. BOWLING: All right, hearing a yes and no objections,
24 we'll put that -- that interpretation will be the copy on the
25 record.

1 Please, Yazmin, continue.

2 MR. GUERRERO: And, sir, I have a question. How many wires
3 were there holding the lifeboat?

4 INTERPRETER: She's mentioning two wires.

5 MR. GUERRERO: Thank you.

6 INTERPRETER: All right. So she's mentioning that -- she
7 went backwards to the part they were losing the first wire and
8 they start lowering the lifeboat. When they lose the second wire
9 to lower the lifeboat, it was a little hectic due to sea
10 conditions. She mention also there is another vessel that tried
11 to help.

12 All right. So she mentioned that the vessel that was trying
13 to help them, it was a little higher and their intentions were
14 that from the lifeboat they jump into the other vessel, but it
15 wasn't -- so she mentioned that it was impossible because the
16 other vessel, it was bigger.

17 So she's mentioning that when they reached water, they were
18 waiting for authorization to start moving the lifeboat and the
19 lifeboat actually start generating smoke. She's mentioned that
20 everyone, with the smoke inside the lifeboat, they start feeling
21 dizzy, throwing up. I believe she mentioned seasick, throwing up,
22 most of the people inside the lifeboat.

23 Okay. So she was mentioning that the lifeboat was moving
24 very slowly and every time it accelerates it was creating more
25 smoke. She also mentioned that it was overloaded, and she said

1 that she thought that, oh my god, it was going to sink.

2 Okay. So she was saying that we're going to go backwards a
3 little bit. When the lifeboat was speeding a little, it was
4 generating more smoke. So they start advancing towards the coast.
5 She mentioned her friend Juanda was choking, some sort of
6 respiratory condition start, like, probably. Then they saw a
7 Coast Guard vessel getting closer, and they asked them how many
8 people were on board.

9 She mentioned when the Coast Guard member asked them about
10 the amount of people that was there and who were -- they were
11 mentioning that there were people sick. She mentioned -- so she
12 mentioned that it's a lady named Juanda that is the director of
13 the group, gives like the touristic guide.

14 Okay. So she's mentioning when they actually transferred
15 from the lifeboat to the -- she mentioned Coast Guard boat or
16 Coast Guard vessel, this lady named Juanda and another lady, that
17 they were not feeling too good. They took -- Coast Guard took it
18 to coast to be taken care of, the first aid. And from there, they
19 don't know anything -- I'm sorry -- anything about her friend
20 Juanda.

21 Okay. So she's saying that when they make it to coast,
22 medical emergency personnel, they help them, but they were asking
23 them a few times their names. And she was wondering if they
24 didn't know about a list, like a passenger list, but they were
25 continuing asking their names.

1 All right. So she was saying that after the medical first
2 aid help, they took everybody towards the immigration services,
3 which the immigration services officials, they asked them again
4 their names.

5 All right. So after they give their passport to immigration
6 services officials, they exit immigration and they got some
7 documentation being handed by the Coast Guard about the emergency
8 and probably a witness statement from -- she's regarding to a
9 witness statement from the previous evening and the morning.
10 After she received that, she mentioned nobody from American
11 Ferries was nearby.

12 Okay. My apologies. In the part that I mentioned American
13 Ferries, there was an individual. She mentions there were some
14 individuals. They asked their names in order to arrange the
15 luggages, the return for the luggage.

16 So after she spoke to the American Ferries personnel, she
17 missed her family, still didn't know where her friend Juanda's
18 location was. Then she find out that she was in the Presbyterian
19 hospital. So she mentioned that she went home. Afterwards, she
20 went home.

21 Is there anything else that you want me to continue her part?

22 MR. BOWLING: Actually, this is Larry Bowling with the NTSB.
23 That's quite a good story. We appreciate -- Yazmin, we appreciate
24 you conveying that to us. I think Mr. Tucker has a few more
25 questions, and then we'll turn the floor over to one of the other

1 interviewers. Are you okay to continue with the interview?

2 INTERPRETER: She mentioned yes, she can continue with other
3 questions.

4 MR. BOWLING: Okay. We'll try and make it as quick as we
5 can. Mr. Tucker?

6 MR. TUCKER: Thank you. One second.

7 Can you ask her if she has any pictures or video from her
8 cell phone and, if so, is she able to share that with us?

9 INTERPRETER: She mentioned that her cell phone was low
10 battery and she didn't have cell phone from the previous night.

11 MR. TUCKER: Thank you. Can you ask Yazmin if she was
12 injured during this event?

13 MS. OTERO BERRIOS: (In English) In English or Spanish,
14 costochondritis, I don't know.

15 MR. GUERRERO: Costochondritis, por favor.

16 C-o-s-t-o-c-h-o-n-d-r-i-t-i-s.

17 INTERPRETER: Okay. So she's mentioning that, first of all,
18 she was seasick. She was throwing up. She's saying, also, there
19 is an inflammation in the chest.

20 MR. GUERRERO: Thorax, yes.

21 INTERPRETER: On the chest, thorax. And she mentioned what
22 she has is costochondritis. I'm not completely sure if I'm
23 translating that correctly.

24 MR. GUERRERO: It is.

25 INTERPRETER: It's her -- the condition given by the doctor.

1 MR. GUERRERO: Yes.

2 INTERPRETER: I was asking Yazmin if she got any other type
3 of injury regarding scratches, broken bones, swelling, hitting her
4 head, anything. She mentioned no.

5 MR. TUCKER: Okay. My last question. I did forget, and if
6 she's not willing to share, that's fine. I'm wondering if we can
7 have her age?

8 INTERPRETER: Absolutely.

9 MS. OTERO BERRIOS: (In English) Forty. I'm 40.

10 INTERPRETER: So she's 40 years old.

11 MR. TUCKER: Forty years old. And nationality?

12 MS. OTERO BERRIOS: (In English) American.

13 INTERPRETER: Can you say again the question, sir?

14 MR. TUCKER: Nationality?

15 INTERPRETER: Oh. She's an American citizen.

16 MR. TUCKER: Very good. Thank you. I'm going to pass it
17 over to our facilitator, Larry Bowling.

18 MR. BOWLING: All right. Yazmin, thank you. Bear with us.
19 Commander [REDACTED], any questions?

20 CDR [REDACTED]: Good afternoon. I have, I think, one question.
21 Yazmin, is this your first time sailing on a passenger vessel?

22 INTERPRETER: She mentions that she has traveled before in
23 cruise ships for vacations.

24 CDR [REDACTED]: Was the experience on a cruise ship different
25 than the experience on this ship?

1 INTERPRETER: Completely. She's mentioning completely
2 different. She's mentioning that in the cruise ship the drills
3 and everything was conducted with -- the words is proficiently.
4 Compared to the other vessel, they were not.

5 She's mentioning that the cruise ship, there were well-
6 assigned areas, there were a lot of signs, evacuation signs, and
7 there were plenty of lifeboats for the crew and passengers, more
8 likely, compared to the ferry.

9 She's mentioning that the air conditioning in the cruise ship
10 was a lot better. They didn't have any sort of air conditioning
11 in the ferry.

12 MR. BOWLING: Commander [REDACTED], any further questions?

13 CDR [REDACTED]: No, that's all I have. Thank you very much for
14 your time.

15 MR. BOWLING: All right. [REDACTED] [REDACTED], the senior
16 investigating officer at San Juan, let me go to you now. Any
17 questions for the witness?

18 MR. [REDACTED]: No, sir. I do not have any further
19 questions.

20 MR. BOWLING: Okay. [REDACTED] Karr, we'll come back to you.

21 Mr. Rodriguez, any questions for this witness?

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: No, sir. Thank you, no questions.

23 MR. BOWLING: Mr. Guerrero or Rosario, any questions for this
24 witness?

25 BY MR. GUERRERO:

1 Q. Yes. Yes, I am Attorney Guerrero. I would like to ask
2 Yazmin that you mentioned that there was some black smoke, and by
3 that you indicate that the fire was not extinguished. Do you want
4 the translation for that or you understand my question?

5 A. (In English) I don't understand. Okay --

6 (Mr. Guerrero and Ms. Otero Berrios have a conversation in
7 Spanish.)

8 BY MR. GUERRERO:

9 Q. Oh, you're a chemist?

10 A. (In English) Yes. I'm working in the industry, in the
11 pharmaceutical industry in Puerto Rico.

12 Q. So because you're a chemist, you concluded that the black
13 smoke that you saw couldn't be extinguished because as a chemist
14 you know that if you mix a fire with CO₂, it will turn from -- to
15 a grey and then to white smoke; is that correct?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. Okay.

18 MR. GUERRERO: That was something I wanted to clarify for the
19 record.

20 MR. BOWLING: Okay. And, Mr. Guerrero, while you're on, for
21 clarification on the record, and for all parties, this is Larry
22 Bowling with the NTSB, the witness had indicated earlier when she
23 was describing the lifeboat falls as a wire. And would all the
24 parties be in agreement that it should have been wire rope, as far
25 as the Spanish to English translation, or a wire as in lifeboat

1 davit falls, not wires in singular?

2 MR. GUERRERO: Right, right. She said that there were two
3 wires.

4 MR. BOWLING: Okay. All right. All right. I'm sorry,
5 Mr. Guerrero, anything else for the witness?

6 MR. GUERRERO: Not at this point, sir.

7 MR. BOWLING: Okay. [REDACTED] Karr, NTSB?

8 MR. KARR: Hello, Yazmin.

9 MS. OTERO BERRIOS: (In English) Hello.

10 MR. KARR: Do you recall what time you entered the lifeboat?

11 INTERPRETER: All right. So she's mentioning, first of all,
12 she emphasized that the emergency started by 7:00, 7:30, until the
13 moment that they arrived to coast, 11:30. She does not remember
14 well, but she mentioned about 8:30 to 900. She does not remember
15 well because she was not carrying her cell phone or anything, any
16 device that could tell her the time.

17 MR. GUERRERO: Excellent answer. That was good.

18 INTERPRETER: She also re-emphasize 7:30 to 11:30.

19 MR. GUERRERO: 7:30, right.

20 INTERPRETER: To 11:30.

21 MR. BOWLING: [REDACTED] Karr, any further questions for the
22 witness?

23 MR. KARR: Yes. Yazmin, where was the lifeboat on the side
24 of the ship when you noticed that the davit was tangled, that the
25 wire rope was tangled?

1 INTERPRETER: You mentioned -- the question was loose -- I'm
2 sorry. Can you repeat the question for second?

3 MR. KARR: Earlier, she had mentioned that the lifeboat davit
4 wire was tangled. So the question is where was the lifeboat on
5 the side of the ship when she saw that? Was it at the deck or was
6 it in the water?

7 INTERPRETER: She's mentioning that the vessel was not even
8 positioned in boarding position. They were just trying to lower
9 it to boarding position.

10 She's mentioning, first of all, there was a little confused
11 with location, but she was mentioning that her left side was
12 pointing towards someone, her right side was pointing towards the
13 ocean.

14 Okay. She mentioned that the vessel was in front of her, San
15 Juan was towards the left side, the ocean was on the right side.

16 MR. KARR: What I'm looking for here is where the lifeboat
17 was. I'm assuming that the lifeboat was either at the deck or
18 being lowered to the water. So somewhere along that path she saw
19 that it was tangled, that the davit wire was tangled, and I'd like
20 to know where that was.

21 INTERPRETER: Okay. So what I was trying to determine was
22 the side that the lifeboat was by questioning the person, asking
23 about what side -- can she see the hull of the vessel while they
24 were lowering. She mentioned that she was sitting down in the
25 corner and she could -- she was sitting down in the corner that

1 goes towards the water and she was seeing the hull. So
2 accordingly to her mention, it was the right side of the vessel.
3 That will be starboard side.

4 So she was mentioning that the vessel, both of the wires were
5 not in good condition, some sort of a tangle. The one that she
6 was referring that they have to liberate, it has the side --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Port side. The wire on the port side?

8 INTERPRETER: Yeah, well, yeah. The wire towards the stern
9 of the lifeboat.

10 MR. GUERRERO: Where the crew member had the -- was
11 maneuvering.

12 INTERPRETER: Yeah, where she maneuvers, when the member
13 maneuvers and has the rudder.

14 MR. GUERRERO: Right. Okay, this is Attorney Guerrero. I
15 think she mentioned that when they were on the upper deck of the
16 ferry they have to put the lifeboat, they have to lower it to
17 board the lifeboat, and there were problems in that. And then
18 they boarded the lifeboat and they were going down to the sea,
19 already boarding the lifeboat, and then there were other -- still
20 there were problems with the davits tangled, the wires tangled.

21 Can you please clarify that for the record?

22 MR. KARR: Well, I tell you what --

23 INTERPRETER: It was a little confusing, the question, so I
24 can try to -- I'll try to translate it in a certain way.

25 MR. KARR: Well, let me -- let's not go there.

1 INTERPRETER: Will you please rephrase?

2 MR. KARR: Yeah. The reason I'm saying let's not go there is
3 because I was just following up on a particular question, and that
4 sounds like we were going to go through the whole scenario again.

5 INTERPRETER: Okay.

6 MR. KARR: So let me just focus on two or three more follow-
7 up questions. And this goes -- so I'm not going to talk about the
8 tangle anymore.

9 INTERPRETER: Okay. All right.

10 MR. KARR: Yazmin?

11 MS. OTERO BERRIOS: (In English) Yes?

12 MR. KARR: Can you tell me what difficulties you noticed as
13 they brought the lifeboat down to the boarding position?

14 INTERPRETER: Okay. So she mentioned, number one, the wire
15 or falls for the lifeboat. She mentioned that, for number one,
16 that the wires were crooked. She also mentioned part -- as number
17 one, of the part of somebody climbing on top of the lifeboat
18 trying to untangle the wire or the falls to be able to lower the
19 lifeboat.

20 We're going to number two. She's mentioning the davits that
21 hold the lifeboat. On several occasions, they were trying to
22 lower but they were, like, getting stuck.

23 Number three. She's mentioning number three is when they
24 were trying to load the vessel and she actually sees that it's an
25 overload on the lifeboat, actually. So she mentioned also that

1 the harnesses or the -- to lower the lifeboat, they were having
2 some difficulty to -- okay, when they start up lowering the
3 vessel, the harnesses were kind of stuck as well.

4 Okay. So she was mentioning that number three was, just to
5 recap, the overload of the lifeboat and the harnesses were kind of
6 getting also stuck in order to lower the lifeboat.

7 She mentioned, also, that when the lifeboat reached water,
8 that's when the vessel start crashing against the hull, against
9 the hull of the vessel.

10 MR. [REDACTED]: This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I just want to
11 interject real quick. She had mentioned that when it hit the
12 water that they were having trouble releasing it from the harness.

13 MR. GUERRERO: Right. Right.

14 MR. [REDACTED]: That's when it started to hit the vessel.

15 MR. BOWLING: Thank you, [REDACTED]. All right.

16 [REDACTED] Karr, you had other questions, I believe?

17 MR. KARR: Yes.

18 MR. BOWLING: How many do you have, [REDACTED]?

19 MR. KARR: Two more.

20 MR. BOWLING: Okay. Go ahead.

21 MR. KARR: Yazmin, when the boat was in the water and the
22 crew was having trouble releasing the harness, can you recall what
23 they said, what the crew said to each other with regard to the
24 problems of releasing the harness?

25 INTERPRETER: Okay. So she's mentioning, first of all, that

1 she thinks that they were talking about releasing the harnesses
2 but, in reality, she could not hear what they were talking about
3 due to a lot of people yelling and screaming in fear due to the
4 vessel not releasing the harnesses and crashing against the hull
5 of the vessel. And she also mentioned that there was an
6 individual, again, climbing up on top of the lifeboat trying to
7 release the harnesses.

8 MR. KARR: All right. Thanks. Last question. Can you
9 describe how you received your lifejacket?

10 INTERPRETER: All right. So she's mentioning that, to begin
11 with, she didn't know -- they didn't know about the lifejackets.
12 She recalling one of the previous questions and her -- she was
13 mentioning that people were sitting on that box where the
14 lifejackets were stowed. Then she remembers, also, that a person
15 calls out the people that was sitting on that box to take them
16 out, to take out the lifejackets, and the same passengers were
17 passing each other lifejackets.

18 MR. KARR: All right. Thank you.

19 INTERPRETER: Just to add, she was saying that she reached
20 hers and then tried to -- she put it on and tried to help out her
21 friends to put on the lifejackets.

22 MR. KARR: That ends my questions. Thank you, Yazmin.

23 MS. OTERO BERRIOS: (In English) Thank you.

24 MR. BOWLING: All right. Thank you, [REDACTED] Karr. I think
25 that's it. If I've missed anybody, are there any further

1 questions for this witness before I turn the floor over to the
2 witness, any of the parties or attorneys?

3 MR. GUERRERO: No, I have no further questions.

4 MR. BOWLING: Okay. Yazmin, we've almost talked to you for 2
5 hours, so we thank you for supporting the investigation, and
6 you've given us a lot of good information. Now is your turn to
7 ask us a question if you have any, or did we fail to ask you any
8 questions, or do you need to get anything on the record? I'll
9 turn the floor over to you.

10 INTERPRETER: She said that there's something that she wants
11 to add on to the comments.

12 MR. BOWLING: Well, please tell her to do so.

13 INTERPRETER: She was mentioning in the night that they were
14 boarding the vessel, when they assigned their cabins there was
15 strong smell like burning wire. It was in the -- the smell was
16 located mostly in the bathroom area. She also mentioned that the
17 ventilation system was not flowing correctly and some of the fumes
18 and gases from the combustability was kind of creating smells
19 inside the cabin.

20 So she actually went over to reception and informed the
21 situation. They sent an electrician to make sure what is the
22 matter. Okay. So she's mentioning that the electrician, after
23 checking out the cabin, he mentioned that it might have been that
24 the ventilation sucked in some of the fumes and took them in,
25 transported it into the cabin, but it was nothing related to

1 electrical wiring.

2 So she also mentioned that afterwards he mentioned that there
3 was -- they had the option to change cabins due to the thing
4 continuing after they went out for dinner. That's when they
5 actually took the option of changing their cabin. And then
6 everything else she has told us.

7 MR. BOWLING: Okay. Thank you. Yazmin, we have an engineer
8 investigation group convened in this group, and we also have a
9 fire forensics group convened in this accident. And the two
10 investigators in charge here, Adam Tucker and Commander [REDACTED],
11 will certainly convey this information to those two teams, because
12 they're unfortunately not present during the interview.

13 Anything else that you would care to get onto the record?

14 INTERPRETER: I'm sorry, sir, bio, you mentioned bio --

15 MR. BOWLING: We had a fire investigation team, a forensic
16 team involved, and also an engineering team, and we will make
17 sure -- they are not present during this interview. We will make
18 sure we get Yazmin's information about the smells and the
19 electrical situation in her cabin to those investigators when we
20 get our first opportunity.

21 INTERPRETER: Absolutely.

22 So she mentioned that she has no more comments.

23 MR. BOWLING: Okay. We will conclude the interview at this
24 point. And, Yazmin, thank you very much for taking 2 hours out of
25 your evening to talk to us. We really appreciate it. And your

1 feedback and your comments about what happened to you are
2 instrumental in helping us to get to a conclusion in this matter.
3 If something comes to you later that you feel we need to hear,
4 please get that to your attorney, Mr. Guerrero, and he can forward
5 that to Lieutenant [REDACTED] [REDACTED] at Coast Guard Sector San Juan.

6 MR. GUERRERO: Sure. Of course, sir.

7 MR. BOWLING: All right.

8 (Mr. Guerrero speaks to Ms. Otero Berrios in Spanish.)

9 MS. OTERO BERRIOS: (In English) That's fine.

10 MR. BOWLING: All right. Thank you everyone. We will
11 conclude this interview. And thanks again, Yazmin. Have a good
12 evening.

13 MR. GUERRERO: Thank you, everybody.

14 MR. BOWLING: All right, everyone, bye-bye.

15 MR. GUERRERO: Goodnight.

16 MS. OTERO BERRIOS: (In English) Bye-bye.

17 (Whereupon, 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 Yazmin Otero Berrios

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA16FM052

PLACE: Via Telephone

DATE: December 8, 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.

Lisa Fuerstenberg
Transcriber