

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FIRE AND GROUNDING OF THE  
RO-RO P/V *CARIBBEAN FANTASY* OFF  
SAN JUAN PUERTO RICO AT 0744  
ON AUGUST 17, 2016

Accident No.: DCA16FM052

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Interview of: ROBERTO CANDELARIO

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

LTJG [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
United States Coast Guard

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

MANOLO RODRIGUEZ  
P&I Club

MANUEL SOSA, Esq.  
(Attorney on behalf of Captain Candelario)

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I N T E R V I E W

(1:37 p.m.)

1  
2  
3 LTJG [REDACTED]: All right. Matter under investigation is  
4 the fire on the *Caribbean Fantasy* that occurred on Wednesday, the  
5 17th of August 2016. This is a interview of Mr. Robert  
6 Candelario. Today's date is December 9, 2016. Current time in  
7 Puerto Rico is 1337. Location, San Juan pilot --

8 MR. CANDELARIO: San Juan (indiscernible).

9 LTJG [REDACTED]: (Indiscernible).

10 MR. CANDELARIO: Yes.

11 LTJG [REDACTED]: This interview is conducted by myself,  
12 Lieutenant Junior Grade [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Others present in this  
13 room are?

14 MR. CANDELARIO: Captain Roberto Candelario, pilot on duty on  
15 the day of the event.

16 MR. SOSA: Manuel Sosa, counsel for Captain Candelario.

17 LTJG [REDACTED]: And via teleconference out of Florida, who  
18 do we have on the line?

19 MR. TUCKER: You have on the line Adam Tucker with the  
20 National Transportation Safety Board.

21 CDR [REDACTED]: Commander [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the U.S. Coast  
22 Guard.

23 MS. BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB, on the line.

24 MR. KARR: Michael Karr, K-a-r-r, NTSB, on the line.

25 LTJG [REDACTED]: And the P&I for the *Caribbean Fantasy*?

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Hello?

2 LTJG [REDACTED]: Mr. Manolo, are you still online?

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Oh, I'm sorry. I had my phone on mute. Good  
4 afternoon to Roberto and my colleague, Manuel. Manolo Rodriguez  
5 for owners' P&I.

6 MR. CANDELARIO: How you doing, Manolo? Pleased to hear you.

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Same here. Same here. Fine.

8 LTJG [REDACTED]: Okay. Anybody that we missed?

9 Okay. Thank you.

10 MR. TUCKER: [REDACTED], I do have one question, one request.

11 LTJG [REDACTED]: Yes, sir.

12 MR. TUCKER: Even though we can hear you well, I was  
13 wondering if you can probably position the [REDACTED] a little bit  
14 closer to the pilot?

15 MR. CANDELARIO: How do you hear me now? This is Candelario.

16 MR. TUCKER: Yeah. Very good now. Thank you.

17 MR. CANDELARIO: Very well.

18 LTJG [REDACTED]: Okay. All right.

19 INTERVIEW OF ROBERTO CANDELARIO

20 BY LTJG [REDACTED]:

21 Q. Roberto, and you give us permission to record this  
22 conversation?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Okay. Thank you. If you can, just give us a little bit of  
25 background about yourself. How long have you been a pilot?

1 A. Okay. I've been in the maritime industry since early 1970s,  
2 mostly United States Army, Vietnam era veteran '70, '73. I worked  
3 for various type of company, Puerto Rico Lifebridge (ph.)  
4 (indiscernible), Crowley Maritime, Lockheed Martin in the Rosie  
5 Road, ITT Federal Service. I became a pilot here the 1st of April  
6 1999 until present.

7 I hold eight pilot endorsements, first class San Juan, Ponce,  
8 Las Marias, for Mayaguez, Guanica, Ayelar (ph.) and Guayanilla.

9 Q. Okay. Thank you. And have you ever piloted the *Caribbean*  
10 *Fantasy*?

11 A. Yeah. Many, many times.

12 Q. Perfect. Okay. Thank you for that. If you can, we would  
13 like to get, just to hear your story. The day you started duty,  
14 that day of the 17th?

15 A. Yes. I commenced duty at that date first in 0400. I was the  
16 lead pilot, which is number one pilot for that date. I had  
17 various service, which included the *Caribbean Fantasy*. On heading  
18 toward the *Fantasy*, I did receive a request from the captain,  
19 request tugboats, which was not a normal event. Apparently they  
20 were having some type of mechanical issues.

21 At that time, we went through the protocol of him reporting 3  
22 miles from the entrance, preparing the starboard side ladder for  
23 my boarding and all that.

24 Soon after there, maybe 10, 15 minutes after he made the  
25 request for the assist tugs, which I relayed to the base here, the

1 pilot station, he informed me that there was a fire on board. So  
2 upon hearing that, I went through the normal maritime protocol  
3 when there's a fire on board, especially with passenger vessels.  
4 I did activate all the resources available. I informed the pilot  
5 office related to all matters concerning this emergency. At that  
6 time there was no abandon ship.

7 I did notice some smoke coming out of the stacks, normal  
8 smoke, black smoke. I was understanding maybe they were doing the  
9 routine pre-arrival checks of, you know, checking their main  
10 engines and so and so. So maybe 10 or 15 minutes after that,  
11 that's when he declare there was a fire on board and I was heading  
12 to board him. He indicated at that time for me to stand by, not  
13 to board the vessel.

14 So I became basically a bridge communication with the Coast  
15 Guard and the pilot's station of the events that were happening  
16 there and he established that they were going to abandon ship  
17 based on the fire, because the fire got -- not under -- it was not  
18 under control. So he indicated he was going to evacuate  
19 passengers. So all resources available, which are the tug  
20 companies and all vessels that were within the vicinity, proceeded  
21 to tend to the situation there.

22 I never boarded the vessel at that time. I just was a,  
23 basically, a relaying any communication as to the Coast Guard base  
24 and so and so. So we established a, basically a working frequency  
25 of 07 for the tugboats and all that. The only situation was

1 there, I was never on board relaying. At maybe 35, 40 minutes  
2 after that, that's when one of those big Coast Guard cutters  
3 arrived and basically took command of the scenario. So after that  
4 I was basically following orders, which we did evacuate 20 person  
5 -- 20 passengers from one of the Coast Guard cutters and brought  
6 them ashore.

7 And that was basically it. I can't tell you how the fire  
8 started or -- I know that the -- there was peeling paint on the  
9 starboard side. That's when I was really concerned because I said  
10 it must've been a big fire. And that's about it.

11 Q. Okay. Thank you. No, that's great. That's really good. So  
12 I have a few follow-up questions to that, and then I'll open it  
13 up. You had stated that the captain had requested a tug assist.

14 A. Which was not a normal routine with us.

15 Q. Okay. And so normal, a vessel calls the pilot from the pilot  
16 station about 2 to 3 nautical miles out, correct?

17 A. Well, they normally call 1 hour out from the pilot station.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Before they reach the 3-mile. Then they give a second call  
20 to port control at the 3-mile location, let them know they're  
21 arriving and all of that. That's when we proceed to board them --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- 2 to 3 miles from the entry.

24 Q. So the tug request, that was made --

25 A. It was prior him arriving at the pilot station.



1 Q. So about an hour before --

2 A. Thirty minutes or so.

3 Q. About 30 minutes? And I'm unfamiliar with your processes of  
4 the pilots. So you have scheduled pilot times when they're  
5 supposed to be at a certain --

6 A. Yeah. There is, there is a list already of the vessels'  
7 arrival and departure.

8 Q. Okay. So roughly around what time do you think that he got  
9 there?

10 A. It was 0730.

11 Q. 0730 was when he --

12 A. He arrived. His arrival time.

13 Q. Is that --

14 A. So maybe 6:30 or 6:45, that's when he called. Yeah, it was  
15 prior to arriving the 3 miles from --

16 Q. Perfect. So around 6:30, captain notified of tug assist?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Roughly. Okay.

19 A. He notified us of his arrival. The most that had been about  
20 10, 15 minutes then he requested the tugboat.

21 Q. Okay. In what frequency does that --

22 A. Channel 14.

23 Q. Channel 14. And then, the 7:30 pilot time, that's when you  
24 were heading out there?

25 A. That's their arrival time, his arrival time that was part of

1 the schedule that day.

2 Q. Okay. You had said that you were, you were relaying  
3 information from the tug?

4 A. From the vessel, from the captain himself. When he indicated  
5 that -- after the fire, when he declared there was a fire on  
6 board.

7 Q. Okay. And then that information, you were relaying it to the  
8 Coast Guard?

9 A. Coast Guard base, yes. They were having issues with  
10 communication and all that, so I was basically right in between; I  
11 was relaying messages.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. That was on 16, then they went down to 22 Alpha. There was  
14 some communication -- interference and stuff and all that, so --

15 Q. A lot of traffic I'm sure.

16 A. Yeah, a lot of -- yeah.

17 Q. Okay. You went from Channel 16 to 23 Alpha?

18 A. Twenty-two (indiscernible).

19 Q. Twenty-two? Was the post already out on scene?

20 A. No. When he declared the fire, I passed on to my base on our  
21 internal frequency, which is 07, 07 alpha, that the captain had  
22 declared there was a fire on board, you know, to file all  
23 resources (indiscernible).

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. They called tug companies on 79, 66, which is Moran Towing,

1 and all of them responded quickly there. So within 40 minutes  
2 after the fire was clear, there was basically people coming on  
3 hand with the small boats from the Coast Guard base. I was  
4 already -- I was alongside waiting, monitoring the situation and  
5 being the messenger.

6 Q. Okay. Did the interaction that you had with the vessel  
7 captain, what language was that?

8 A. English.

9 Q. English?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And then with San Juan?

12 A. English. All, all was in English. And there was some  
13 Spanish in between and all that, but there was primary language  
14 communication, everybody understood English in the event that was  
15 happening.

16 Q. Okay. And then the tug, did they also speak English or --

17 A. Yes. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. So you were, like, kind of like the on-scene, you're  
19 assisting, communicating with the tug --

20 A. Yeah. Well, I was the first responder there --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- and basically activating all the resources available.

23 Q. Okay. And I'm sorry, how many passengers did you say --

24 A. On board the pilot boat number 1, we took off 20 or 30, about  
25 5 small kids, women, 2, 3 males.

1 Q. And how did you get those passengers?

2 A. We picked them up from one of the Coast Guard cutters.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. RST (ph.), which we there, which was basically a command post  
5 that was established (indiscernible) I think it is, it starts with  
6 a T.

7 Q. Tezanos?

8 A. Yes, that's --

9 Q. Okay. And you picked up your passengers --

10 A. From off that --

11 Q. Off --

12 A. The cutter, yeah.

13 Q. Okay. And then from there --

14 A. I brought them to Pier Number 6.

15 Q. Number 6? Okay. After that, did you go back out there or --

16 A. No, no. We just stand by because basically there were  
17 vessels bringing in and out. There was nothing I could do. I did  
18 pick up the two lifeboats that they utilized for evacuation and I  
19 took them over to the Coast Guard base (indiscernible).

20 Q. Okay. The lifeboats, we're talking about the --

21 A. The regular lifeboats, the (indiscernible) --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- 4 or something. The two lifeboats that they use. I don't  
24 remember the number.

25 Q. Was there any passenger (indiscernible)?

1 A. Yes, there was passengers that came to Pier Number 6. After  
2 we were discharged from there, then I picked those lifeboats up  
3 and took them out to wait because all the traffic (indiscernible).

4 Q. Did you drive them or you towed them?

5 A. No, I towed them (indiscernible).

6 Q. Okay. And so you -- after the lifeboats, dropped them off at  
7 Pier 6 --

8 A. (Indiscernible) in there, and took them to the Coast Guard  
9 base.

10 Q. Okay. I'm trying not to jump all over the place. I'm sorry.  
11 But so when you were approaching the vessel and before you knew  
12 that there was a fire, you're already on scene where you would  
13 normally go pick them up?

14 A. Yes. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. Did you at any time hear any sound signals  
16 (indiscernible)?

17 A. No. No abandon -- it was all with (indiscernible) because I  
18 was never on board the vessel. There was no abandon ship or  
19 whistles or anything like that --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. -- that were sounded.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I don't know if the general alarm was sounded or --

24 Q. And as far as the ship's horn?

25 A. No, there was no, no whistles.

1 Q. Okay. And after you towed the two empty vessels to the Coast  
2 Guard, what did you do? Did you go about your normal --

3 A. No, we're just standing by. The harbor was closed for that  
4 period of time while all the evacuations was done and all that.  
5 Then the vessel was -- like I said, the Coast Guard cutter was the  
6 one that took control of everything.

7 Q. Okay. You go back to your normal --

8 A. I -- yeah, yeah. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. So what was the next vessel, if you will, that you  
10 took home?

11 A. I don't think I did another vessel that day because of the  
12 closure of the harbor and all that. Everything was just stopped.  
13 I can't remember. If I did, it's probably in the log here. It  
14 was so -- I mean, it was chaos there and all that.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. My primary concern was the evacuation of the passengers to  
17 make sure their safety.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And the entrance was never blocked, so -- which a couple of  
20 vessels that were going to come in, but they were held out based  
21 on the emergency.

22 Q. Okay. Perfect. Well, thank you. Thank you for that. I may  
23 have a question later on the back end, but right now what I'd like  
24 to do is just open it up to my colleagues if they have any follow-  
25 up questions as well.

1 A. Very well.

2 Q. I appreciate that.

3 LTJG [REDACTED]: Let's open up -- I'll pass on to Florida,  
4 to you guys in Florida.

5 BY CDR [REDACTED]:

6 Q. Thank you very much. Thank you for your time. This is  
7 Commander [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the U.S. Coast Guard. And my only  
8 question has to do with how you found out or knew that the Coast  
9 Guard cutter took control of the situation?

10 A. I was on scene there, basically that he was giving all the  
11 orders and all that to the small boats. The evacuation, they were  
12 taken on board that vessel. From that vessel, that's where I  
13 picked up the 20 passengers.

14 Q. Did he announce that all communications should come through  
15 him or was it assumed?

16 A. It was assumed that he was taking command because he was  
17 giving all the direct orders.

18 Q. Okay. When normally -- how does it normally work?

19 A. Well, I mean, the Coast Guard, you're on scene until the  
20 Coast Guard arrives or any enforcement authority that assumes that  
21 role. So I was just following directions from the cutter there at  
22 that time. Like I said, I evacuated 20 passengers from his  
23 vessel.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. (Indiscernible).

1 Q. Did you have a good view of the MES deployment?

2 LTJG [REDACTED]: That's the slide that --

3 THE WITNESS: Yes, yes, yes. I was right there when they  
4 activated them.

5 BY CDR [REDACTED]:

6 Q. Did it appeared that it worked, in your professional opinion,  
7 as it was designed?

8 A. Well, it -- the bad thing about it is the way they were  
9 facing. Vessel couldn't move at all headways for -- because of  
10 the, you know, they were facing forward and all that, and the  
11 evacuation was on the starboard side, the starboard chute because  
12 they see the port chute, fire was concentrated on that side. No,  
13 they were on the windward side evacuating, to keep the passengers  
14 away from flames or where the heat or the smoke.

15 Q. Did it appear orderly or disorganized?

16 A. Well, there was some chaos to a certain point there. I mean,  
17 that's just based on my opinion from the outside. They did have  
18 problems with one of their boats there not lowering and all that.  
19 The captain kept on requesting, try to get some vessel alongside  
20 there, which was impossible because it was on the windward side  
21 and the swells were kind of high that day.

22 Q. Okay. Thank you very much. I might have some more questions  
23 later, but that's all I have for now.

24 A. (Indiscernible).

25 CDR [REDACTED]: I'm going to pass it to Adam.



1 BY MR. TUCKER:

2 Q. Good day, sir. Adam Tucker again with the NTSB. I do have a  
3 few questions for you.

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Thank you, first of all, for speaking with us. While we're  
6 on the subject of weather, I understand you're very familiar with  
7 the port and the environmental conditions in the area. Do you  
8 remember what the weather conditions were that day, pertaining to  
9 wind, wind direction, swell, current, anything at all?

10 A. The wind was basically out of the northeast there. It was  
11 about 15 to 20 and some gusts there. It wasn't cloudy. The sea's  
12 conditions were basically about 4 to 6.

13 Q. Okay. So you mention as well that you had piloted the  
14 *Caribbean Fantasy* many times before?

15 A. That's correct.

16 Q. Did you recognize the master's voice? Were you familiar, had  
17 you piloted with this particular master?

18 A. Well, this master was a new master, had come recently. I  
19 just had met him one time prior in one departure.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. It was not even a month on board that vessel.

22 Q. Okay. And in previous times piloting the *Caribbean Fantasy*,  
23 I understand she was a starboard-side ship?

24 A. It was -- starboard side alongside.

25 Q. Do you remember ever any requests to either go port side

1 alongside or in the harbor of San Juan, kind of drift for a short  
2 period of time, to put any lifeboats or survival craft in the  
3 water?

4 A. I don't understand the question.

5 LTJG [REDACTED]: Could you rephrase the question? He didn't  
6 understand your question.

7 BY MR. TUCKER:

8 Q. Okay. Does he recall -- do you recall if you've ever had a  
9 request to put the vessel port side alongside?

10 A. Well, basically it's gone through various maintenance here,  
11 even coming here in front of our dock, Frontier Pier. It laid  
12 over there to do repairs on various sides of the vessels and all  
13 that. But their normal operational procedure was starboard side  
14 alongside to use the full ramp. They didn't at the beginning from  
15 (indiscernible). In other words, they were using a stern ramp.  
16 That was way at the beginning; I know that.

17 Q. Okay. And what I'm trying to get at is have you ever  
18 witnessed the vessel trying -- using the lifeboat on the port  
19 side, lowering it down to the water?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Okay. And with your experience piloting the vessel, what was  
22 a typical arrival for that vessel? In other words, how many --  
23 roughly how many people were a part of the bridge team and what  
24 would be a typical task assignments for those bridge team members,  
25 if you remember?

1 A. Yes. Well, you had one gentleman -- there was about seven or  
2 eight people total, with the pilot. One gentleman would be the  
3 helmsman, one would be on the radar, one would be in the engine  
4 control, staff captain and the captain will be there, and maybe  
5 another one or two security, stuff like that.

6 Q. Okay. And had you ever witnessed any -- if you don't know  
7 the answer, that's fine. Have you ever witnessed, previous to  
8 this, any issues with leadership or bridge resource management  
9 during your time piloting the vessel?

10 A. Negative.

11 Q. Okay. Now I'm going to get back to the on-scene. So I  
12 understand you were the first ones out there and as you were  
13 approaching the ship and getting ready to board on the starboard  
14 side pilot ladder. Was there anybody else, any other pilots with  
15 you in the pilot boat that day?

16 A. Well, negative. Just the pilot boat operator and the  
17 deckhand.

18 Q. Okay. And during the communications, you mentioned before  
19 Coast Guard arrived, that they're -- you were handling some of the  
20 communications and advising the pilot, the pilot station, Coast  
21 Guard, et cetera. Were you on the radio or was it the pilot boat  
22 skipper or the deckhand or what do you remember of that?

23 A. I was personally on the radio.

24 Q. Okay. Was the other pilot boat out there that day?

25 A. The second pilot boat came out after all resources that were

1 available were activated and all that. Then I had some other  
2 fellow pilots, my number two pilot, number three pilot, everybody  
3 came in to assist as possible.

4 Q. Okay. And while you were on-scene and in the pilot boat,  
5 roughly where -- it's probably a hard question to ask you, given  
6 your -- there were a lot of vessels on scene, but roughly where  
7 did you -- where was the pilot boat positioned in relation to the  
8 *Caribbean Fantasy*?

9 A. I was on the starboard side there where normal boarding would  
10 be at.

11 Q. Okay. Would you estimate you were a couple of hundred feet  
12 or were you close, were you not close? What do you remember?

13 A. I was about 100 feet off, probably.

14 Q. Okay. And before the launching of any life-saving appliances  
15 or anything like that, were there -- and besides, you mentioned  
16 you saw the smoke from the stack, any other unusual observations  
17 during that time?

18 A. Well, when I saw the paint started to peel off the starboard  
19 stack there.

20 Q. Okay. And was that before the slide and the rafts were  
21 deployed that you saw that?

22 A. They were right -- I would say it's right, right, right at  
23 the same moment there.

24 Q. Okay. And with that paint peeling off, anything else that  
25 you remember? Like, obviously for it to peel off like that it has

1 to be hot. But do you recall pretty --

2 A. (Indiscernible) the smoke --

3 Q. I'm sorry, say it again?

4 A. I said the smoke started getting more dense.

5 Q. Okay. Now I'm just wondering if you can recall from memory.  
6 I'll be quiet. Again, recognizing that you're a professional  
7 pilot, professional mariner, could you just recall your  
8 observations from the time when you started seeing the vessel, the  
9 ship commence launching of its life-saving appliances -- that  
10 could be the slide, the rafts, the lifeboats going down -- just in  
11 general, what you remember of that?

12 A. The first, like I said, they started, they activated the  
13 slides. I was on the starboard side of the vessel when they  
14 started deploying one of the -- or loading one of the lifeboats  
15 there, as I, as far as I could see. There was personnel up on the  
16 upper deck there.

17 Q. And during the lowering and launching of appliances, did you  
18 witness any people falling into the water, jumping into the water,  
19 anything at all?

20 A. There was conversation on the frequency there that a couple  
21 of -- somebody had jumped overboard. I didn't personally see it.  
22 That was just based on the, you know, the communications there  
23 they were saying.

24 Q. Okay. And now I understand that -- I think you mentioned one  
25 of the boats was -- or there was something with people on the

1 starboard side and you were concerned. Can you clarify that?

2 A. Well, there was one lifeboat. No personnel was on board, but  
3 apparently there was something wrong that they couldn't lower it  
4 down and release it from the davit.

5 Q. Okay. The next question I have is, did you witness at any  
6 time -- I know you're -- you've been on this ship before. Did you  
7 witness any of the car loading ramps open or close?

8 A. Negative.

9 Q. Okay. Now we're back to the lifeboats. When the two  
10 lifeboats left the ship, were they towed into port or did they go  
11 into port under their power? What do you remember of that?

12 A. I know one of them was having problems with the engine, but  
13 both of them basically proceeded towards the harbor.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. With passengers on board and all that.

16 Q. Okay. And I'm just trying to understand. So with respect to  
17 the Port of San Juan, you mentioned there's a harbor control or  
18 harbor authority; is that correct?

19 A. There's port control. It's called port control.

20 Q. Port control?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Do you recall any type of communications from port control to  
23 you on scene or to the lifeboats?

24 A. Negative. I had relayed to the port control also that  
25 *Caribbean Fantasy* was on fire and all that and all available

1 resources were being activated and all that, and basically we shut  
2 down the entrance for the harbor movements. We did have another  
3 vessel that was going to be arriving, one of the Dole ships. He  
4 was kept out 7 miles offshore there until the situation was under  
5 control.

6 Q. Okay. I'm almost done with my questions. So I've been to  
7 Puerto Rico a few times, but I just want to clarify. Pier Number  
8 6 --

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. -- is -- trying to visualize where that is, so --

11 A. Okay. That's the old dock where it now is -- it's not at  
12 berth anymore, but it's still called Pier 6. It's right by Pier 4  
13 where the cruise ships dock at, where the IRS building is located.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. The Old San Juan area.

16 Q. Old San -- okay.

17 A. You have the Coast Guard base, Pier 1 ferry terminal, Pier 3,  
18 Pier 4 and you have Pier 6 right there. It's located right there  
19 at the end of the San Antonio Channel.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. In the right side you're coming out into the channel. Left  
22 side, you're coming in. It's right there in the corner where Pier  
23 Number 4 East is located at.

24 Q. Understood. And that's where you dropped the passengers off  
25 and that's also where you saw the lifeboats drop people off?

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Okay. Now the ship normally, in a normal day, they didn't  
3 dock there. Where did they dock?

4 A. The Pan American West dock.

5 Q. Pan American West dock.

6 A. Pan American West. That's in the San Antonio Channel.

7 Q. Okay. And that's on Isla Grande?

8 A. That's correct.

9 Q. Okay. Like my colleagues, Mr. Pilot, thank you very much.  
10 And I may have one or two more questions at the end of this.

11 A. You're welcome.

12 MR. TUCKER: [REDACTED]?

13 LTJG [REDACTED]: Yes. Anybody else has any follow-up  
14 questions?

15 BY MS. BELL:

16 Q. This is Carrie Bell, NTSB. I have a couple of questions. So  
17 one of the questions -- you were saying that you could see that  
18 they were filling the lifeboats. I was curious if you could tell  
19 if it seemed like they were being filled to capacity. Could you  
20 see that much?

21 A. Well, a lot of passengers were in the vessels and all that.  
22 I think there was 150 or so.

23 Q. So did it seem that they were filling them to capacity when  
24 you could see -- from where you could see?

25 A. Well, as best as I could see. I wasn't actually on board,



1 but I saw passengers boarding the lifeboats.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And some of those slides and all that, when I went on the  
4 other side there were small inflatables, were the only ones that  
5 would probably be able to approach, including one of the police  
6 boats there. So they were picking them out from the slides and  
7 taking them to the Coast Guard cutter there.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Plus the other ones --

10 Q. And you said that -- oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

11 A. Well, the other ones that were in there in the lifeboats,  
12 they came directly to inside the harbor.

13 Q. Okay. And you said that you picked up 15 to 20 passengers;  
14 is that correct?

15 A. Twenty -- yeah, 20 passengers on board the pilot boat number  
16 1, plus us three. That was the maximum I could load on there.  
17 Children, females and males.

18 Q. Okay. And did they make any statements that you can recall  
19 regarding what they had witnessed?

20 A. Well, I mean, it was different comments and all that, but I  
21 wasn't really concentrating on that. I was -- my concern was to  
22 bring them ashore and make sure they got ashore safely and listen  
23 to the communications, make sure everything was -- you know, if  
24 they needed me again or whatever.

25 Q. Okay. But was there a general mood that you noticed among

1 the passengers?

2 A. Well, some -- I mean, I wasn't (indiscernible) but everybody  
3 was calm. They were safe. They were glad, giving thanks to God  
4 and all that as we were heading ashore.

5 Q. Yes. And were any of them, did you have any injuries on  
6 board?

7 A. No. No, not that I recall. It was one lady that grabbed  
8 onto the railing there. She didn't want to let go. She kind of  
9 panicked. It was a small boat. It was bobbing up and down and  
10 all that, but everything was calm. She was escorted back, had the  
11 deckhand and the pilot boat operator, because at that time I took  
12 command of the pilot boat alongside the Coast Guard cutter since I  
13 had more experience and the weather wasn't that good. But there  
14 was no injuries.

15 Q. Okay. And one other question, and this is more a general  
16 question about a previous -- you said you'd only worked with this  
17 captain one other time. Do you recall, when you were on the  
18 bridge of the *Caribbean Fantasy* the previous time, what languages  
19 were being used on the bridge?

20 A. We -- English. We speaking language (indiscernible).

21 Q. Were there other languages being used as well?

22 A. I think the captain was French, had Greeks on board, various  
23 nationalities. The English was the common denominator there.

24 Q. Okay. That's all the questions I have. Thank you very much.

25 A. Sure, ma'am.

1 BY MR. KARR:

2 Q. And this is [REDACTED] Karr of the NTSB and I've got one question.

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. When you did the -- when you were listening to all the radio  
5 conversations, can you describe any conversations where people  
6 commented about how well the evacuation was going, comments  
7 about --

8 A. No. Not really. I mean, it was just coordination of picking  
9 up the passengers from the small boats, which were the ones that  
10 were approaching the slide, and taking them up to the, you know,  
11 the Coast Guard boat, and then the lifeboats, they were heading  
12 towards the entrance and the other traffic that was coming to  
13 assist.

14 Q. Thank you.

15 A. You're welcome, sir.

16 MR. KARR: No more questions for me.

17 MR. CONDELARIO: Very well.

18 LTJG [REDACTED]: Okay. Does anybody else have any follow-on  
19 questions? I have two, but I'll wait to see if anybody else wants  
20 to add anything else.

21 MR. TUCKER: Okay. [REDACTED], it's Adam. You know I always  
22 have a question.

23 BY MR. TUCKER:

24 Q. Adam Tucker with the NTSB. Mr. Pilot, I forgot a few more  
25 things here.

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. During your time on board, did anybody on the pilot boat take  
3 any cellphone video, cellphone pictures, anything that might be of  
4 interest to us?

5 A. I can inquire about that with the two gentlemen who were on  
6 board the vessel. I can ask them and all that. Basically we was  
7 all concentrating on the evacuation and making sure there's --  
8 obviously there should be some videos or something taken. We  
9 could always use that, those factors. But I can ask.

10 Q. Okay. Yeah, and if you do come across something, they  
11 might --

12 A. We'll hand it over to Lieutenant [REDACTED] here, okay?

13 Q. Yes. Exactly. Thank you very much. And with that, does the  
14 pilot boat have any type of cameras or recording devices on board?

15 A. They do not.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. We have in our facility, but not on the pilot boat.

18 Q. Okay. Again, recognizing that you were close to the  
19 *Caribbean Fantasy*, I wanted to -- I did forget to ask you, when  
20 the slide for the marine evacuation system was down, did you  
21 witness any of the passengers or crew sliding down?

22 A. Yes. Once the vessel was -- the Coast Guard took control, I  
23 went on the other side, which were where they were coming on the  
24 windward side. I did see them being deployed there, on the  
25 passenger slide and stuff.

1 Q. How did that appear? I'm pretty sure it was probably your  
2 first time seeing that as well. Did you see any injuries or any  
3 problems during that time?

4 A. Not from my view. I could not get a very, you know, say that  
5 I saw -- I just saw the passengers sliding down and all that.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. You know, maybe 100, 200 feet away from there.

8 Q. And during that time, did you hear any communications or any  
9 dialogue or requests from the ship to make any changes to the  
10 direction of the slide?

11 A. No. The only concern was, I mean, you know, they were on the  
12 windward side, like I said, and the seas kind of hitting it on  
13 that side. I imagine they did that because they wanted to keep  
14 the people away from the leeward side, which was, you know, the  
15 smoke and the flames would be going.

16 Q. Okay. This is probably a question [REDACTED] was going to ask,  
17 but I'll ask it since it's on my list. Mr. Pilot, is there  
18 anything that we have either forgotten to ask you or is there  
19 something that you feel that you have witnessed that may help us  
20 in this investigation?

21 A. Basically, what I saw is what I can explain. I can't, you  
22 know, speculate or assume, you know, what somebody else said or --  
23 you know, because that's -- you know, I wasn't really  
24 concentrating on other people's conversation. I was -- you know,  
25 when I was picking up the passengers and all that, my

1 concentration was there, handling the vessel and make sure  
2 everybody got on board, and keeping the headcount make sure we  
3 didn't overload our vessel, take us safely back with the  
4 passengers.

5 Q. Okay. Thank you.

6 MR. TUCKER: That's all the questions I have, [REDACTED].

7 BY LTJG [REDACTED]:

8 Q. Okay. I have a few follow-up questions. The first one,  
9 after the pilot -- I'm sorry, after the master reported that there  
10 was a fire on board, you had said that you had contact with your  
11 office and then you made -- contacted these other vessels --

12 A. Right.

13 Q. -- other (indiscernible) to see --

14 A. Well, the tugboat companies.

15 Q. Those tugboat company, to basically get all assets out there.

16 A. Get all -- exactly.

17 Q. Now, that action alone possibly helped save a lot of the  
18 lives I think --

19 A. Well, when they declared the fire, that's when I said --

20 Q. Right.

21 A. -- before it got under -- out of control.

22 Q. It's awesome that you did that. Is that a company policy or  
23 how did you know to do that?

24 A. Well, I have advanced firefighter training.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. I've taken various courses on that. And out there, you're by  
2 yourself. You can't dial 911. So based on my experience and  
3 training.

4 Q. Okay. Have you ever heard the term mass rescue operation?

5 A. I've heard it, yeah.

6 Q. Have you ever practiced anything like that here --

7 A. Well --

8 Q. -- in Puerto Rico?

9 A. -- they've had various drills here, port authorities and  
10 stuff, with the Coast Guard and all that.

11 Q. Okay. Have you been a part of those?

12 A. I've participated.

13 Q. Okay. Do you remember the last drill that you participated  
14 in?

15 A. It was last year. We had one at Pier 4 --

16 Q. Last year there was one at Pier 4 and you were part of that?  
17 Okay.

18 A. The whole harbor was. It was a drill.

19 Q. Yeah. So it seemed very organized --

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. -- is where I was getting at. And then again, your action,  
22 you got the report that there was a fire and it -- I appreciate  
23 that.

24 A. It's part of my job. I mean, that's what we're trained for.

25 Q. Right. Okay. I don't have any further questions. Unless

1 anybody else has any, otherwise I think we can conclude the  
2 investigation.

3 A. Yeah, and I --

4 LTJG [REDACTED]: Mr. Manolo Rodriguez, anything to add, any  
5 questions?

6 MR. RODRIGUEZ: No, thank you. No question on our part.  
7 Thank you.

8 LTJG [REDACTED]: Okay. I have 1421. I count that as the  
9 time that we've concluded the interview. If you guys want to shut  
10 down the recording.

11 (Whereupon, at 2:21 p.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 Roberto Candelario

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.

---

Karen Stockhausen  
Transcriber