

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

In the Matter of:

ALLISION WITH STATEN ISLAND
FERRY TERMINAL MAINTENANCE
PIER AT ST. GEORGE'S,
STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK BY THE
FERRY ANDREW J. BARBERI on
OCTOBER 15, 2003

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DCA-04-MM-001

Friday
October 17, 2003

Staten Island, NY

INTERVIEW OF:

IZET ADZEMOVIC

PRESENT:

ROB JONES, NTSB
RICHARD GONZALEZ, USCG
STEVE MATTEI, NYPD

P R O C E E D I N G S

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MR. JONES: It is October 17. And this is an interview of --

MR. ADZEMOVIC: Izet Adzemovic.

MR. JONES: Who was a passenger aboard the ferry.

MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes.

MR. JONES: And we are there with?

DETECTIVE MATTEI: Detective Steve Mattei.

MR. JONES: From the NYPD. And Richard Gonzalez from the U.S. Coast Guard.

MR. GONZALEZ: Yes.

MR. JONES: And Izet, if you could just tell us in your own words approximately where you were before the incident and then what you remember, what happened.

MR. ADZEMOVIC: Well, before the accident I was, I left work and I was coming, I brought a bottle of water by the ferry's, where you buy water, you know. So, I brought the water and I got up there and we waited for the ferry. I got inside the ferry. When I got inside the ferry, I went, you know, from the top, from up here, we get in the top and then I went over on the bottom, because I brought my car in the ferry. So, it is easy for me, where you get out from downstairs

1 and things. So, I sit in the half of the boat, the
2 middle, between. Don't hold me exactly in the middle,
3 but I was there.

4 MR. JONES: Just to corroborate, so the lower
5 level, approximately in the middle of the boat.

6 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes.

7 MR. JONES: Okay.

8 MR. ADZEMOVIC: And I was thinking, the next
9 thing the boat is pulling out, and I see the boat just
10 rocking right and left. So I said, what the hell is
11 going on? So, I looked and to see the water, if there
12 was a lot of waves. A little bit but nothing really
13 particular. So, as we go on, I was sitting, you know,
14 sitting there and the next thing I see the New Jersey
15 side, I was sitting on the right side of the boat where
16 the accident was.

17 So, I see the pier, I said, wow, we got in
18 fast. The next thing, 30 seconds or 40 seconds, around
19 the time, I hear pop, pop, pop, pop, kind of chock like
20 a knife. And everybody running. And we jumped out, I
21 saw a lady, I picked up a lady, she said, I am okay,
22 thank you. And I was jumping, that thing was getting
23 closer to me. So, I jumped over the, the broken seats,
24 and I fell back and I hit my head. And then I was
25 running again. I was running. And I went upstairs,

1 and I was just shaken up. And I saw right there was an
2 officer, the young lady, I don't know her name. I saw
3 her picture in the paper. And she stated that one of
4 the detectives, because they were waiting for
5 stretchers, they didn't have no stretchers for me.
6 So, they wait there and she stayed there until they
7 came, the stretchers and they took me and they brought
8 me to -- the hospital.

9 MR. JONES: Okay. And prior to the, what was
10 the first thing that, you heard the accident or felt
11 the accident?

12 MR. ADZEMOVIC: As far as it was going, I say,
13 when I looked at the Jersey and I saw that thing about
14 30, 40 seconds, I hear pow and it started cutting off
15 the boat, you know, where the, on the right side of the
16 boat. And man, everything disaster just start coming.
17 The boat was going fast. It was now slowing down.

18 MR. JONES: Yes.

19 MR. ADZEMOVIC: I don't understand it, why the
20 boat was going. Usually every time I took the boat,
21 because I take the boat for work, the boat usually
22 slows down. He don't go that type of speed he was
23 going there. I would say probably 20, 25, 20 mile an
24 hour. I don't know what fast he was going, but it was
25 going fast docking in. And that is it, really.

1 After that, you know, about 30 or 40 minutes
2 later, an announcement come on, something like that,
3 you know, something to, for people to come down and go
4 on the back of the boat. That is the only time. But,
5 it never happen when the accident was going, nobody
6 squawked nothing.

7 MR. JONES: So you did hear an announcement,
8 by your estimate, it was how long?

9 MR. ADZEMOVIC: About 30, 40 minutes later.

10 MR. JONES: Thirty minutes later.

11 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes.

12 MR. JONES: But, nothing before. So, no
13 alarms --

14 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Oh, no, no, no, no.

15 MR. JONES: -- no bells?

16 MR. ADZEMOVIC: No, no, no.

17 MR. JONES: No whistles?

18 MR. ADZEMOVIC: No.

19 MR. JONES: And nothing on the PA?

20 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Nothing. Nothing. Then later
21 on, you know, when I was sitting down, one of the boat
22 guy saw me shaken up, he went and got me a bottle of
23 water. The gentleman who works on the ferry. I don't
24 know his name, if I see him I recognize him.

25 MR. JONES: You knew a crew member.

1 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes, he is a crew member, yes.

2 MR. JONES: So you were assisted by the crew?

3 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Well, by the officer.

4 MR. JONES: By an officer and the crew, from
5 the vessel.

6 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes, the crew guy give me
7 bottle of water, the officer was massaging my back
8 because my neck was bothering me. And she was rubbing
9 and holding my hand.

10 MR. JONES: Now, the police officer?

11 MR. ADZEMOVIC: The police officer, young
12 lady. Her picture in the paper.

13 MR. JONES: Okay.

14 MR. ADZEMOVIC: At that moment, I couldn't
15 read that name, forget about that day.

16 MR. JONES: Right.

17 And you said you ride the ferry often?

18 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes, I take the ferry to work
19 into the city.

20 MR. JONES: Every day?

21 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes.

22 MR. JONES: Okay. And your first indication
23 that it was going too fast was just --

24 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Well, the first indication was
25 shaking like this, it was going, it was rocking right

1 or left.

2 MR. JONES: And that was as you left Manhattan
3 you are saying?

4 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes, it was left, about two
5 minutes later, a minute and a half, something like
6 that. I was surprised, because usually, you know, and
7 I said, maybe it is a big wave. So, the waves, I
8 looked at the wave, it was all right, nothing too bad.
9 I rode that ferry boat with a bigger wave and bigger
10 storms.

11 MR. JONES: Yes.

12 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Ice. And the next thing, you
13 know, as we got to Staten Island, I am looking Jersey,
14 you know, where they keep oil barges, whatever, 30, 40
15 second later, pop, pop, pop. And that is it. And then
16 everything hit the ceiling.

17 MR. JONES: Okay. Now, when you went up to the
18 second deck, after the accident --

19 MR. ADZEMOVIC: I was running then. I was
20 going, I was running.

21 MR. JONES: Okay. And you are being treated
22 for back pain?

23 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Over here? My knees, my back,
24 my neck, one of my shoulders I am having a problem and
25 a headache. I constantly have a headache.

1 MR. JONES: Yeah. Did you get knocked down
2 with the first impact?

3 MR. ADZEMOVIC: No, sir.

4 MR. JONES: Okay.

5 MR. ADZEMOVIC: The thing I noticed was
6 hitting, the noise, started hitting the boat, you see
7 the smoke, I mean, everything jumped in the air, so we
8 jumped, and we seen, you know, as the boat was going,
9 because it didn't slow down, so we jumped right away,
10 too, and the lady, as I said, lady in front of me, the
11 lady lifted up, I am okay, and I started running. As I
12 was running, I was then, the seats were getting, I
13 jumped over the seats, you know, because there a
14 different way, it is not like the old boats. The new
15 boats are a little bit different, seats made. So, I
16 jumped, and when I jumped, I just fell back. I fell
17 back with my, you know, my foot. Honestly, I don't
18 even know how the foot hit that thing.

19 MR. JONES: All right, well, no, as you were
20 trying to escape --

21 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes, escape, you know, running
22 for your life. That is all.

23 MR. JONES: Exactly. Okay.

24 All right, I am going to open up the
25 questioning to the Detective here.

1 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Did, when you downstairs,
2 did you see any crew members down there?

3 MR. ADZEMOVIC: No, sir.

4 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay. When you said you
5 ran, you went up to the second floor or to the top
6 deck?

7 MR. ADZEMOVIC: I was the second floor.

8 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Second floor.

9 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes, sir.

10 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Did you see any crew
11 members around there?

12 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes.

13 DETECTIVE MATTEI: What were they doing? And
14 how many did you see?

15 MR. ADZEMOVIC: I saw two guys. There was one
16 guy with moustache and one, one, the guy that give me
17 the water, two guys.

18 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay.

19 MR. ADZEMOVIC: I mean, if I see them, I know
20 who they are, because I take the boat every day. It is
21 my time, I take the six o'clock boat, three o'clock
22 coming back, every day, so I know.

23 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay. So the one crew
24 member gave you water.

25 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes.

1 DETECTIVE MATTEI: What was the other crew
2 member doing?

3 MR. ADZEMOVIC: The crew member was just
4 walking around, you know, he was in shock, too.

5 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Was he an older gentleman
6 or a younger gentleman?

7 MR. ADZEMOVIC: He was the old gentleman, both
8 of them were the old gentlemen.

9 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay. Can you just describe
10 the guy that who was walking around in shock?

11 MR. ADZEMOVIC: The one in shock was the one
12 with the moustache. He had moustache like this, long
13 moustache right there.

14 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay. If you see his
15 picture again, you would recognize --

16 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Oh, if I see picture, I can
17 point it to you, I know who he is.

18 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay.

19 MR. ADZEMOVIC: I know.

20 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Was that guy helping
21 anybody or just --

22 MR. ADZEMOVIC: He was in shock.

23 DETECTIVE MATTEI: He was in shock.

24 MR. ADZEMOVIC: He was in shock.

25 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Did any of the crew members

1 say anything to you of what happened?

2 MR. ADZEMOVIC: No, nobody said to me nothing.

3 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay.

4 MR. ADZEMOVIC: All the, when that detective
5 came in, and somebody was yelling, they were yelling,
6 where the Captain, where is the Captain? They were
7 yelling where is the Captain. But, that is all I
8 understood --

9 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay. And when the crew
10 member gave you water, did you ask him like, you know,
11 what happened, or what is going on or --

12 MR. ADZEMOVIC: No, I didn't ask him.

13 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay.

14 MR. ADZEMOVIC: He didn't -- He didn't
15 volunteer either. He didn't ask how I was.

16 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay. Did you have to be
17 moved by stretcher off the --

18 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Oh, yeah, my picture was in
19 the paper.

20 DETECTIVE MATTEI: It is in the paper.

21 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes. I saw it. And then I
22 was worried because of my heart, because I had a
23 previous heart attack, so I was worried about my heart,
24 you know.

25 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay.

1 MR. ADZEMOVIC: You know, I sold the
2 restaurant because of that reason.

3 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Yes.

4 MR. ADZEMOVIC: So, okay.

5 MR. JONES: Richard?

6 MR. GONZALEZ: Prior to the hit, prior to the
7 time that you heard the --

8 MR. ADZEMOVIC: The noise.

9 MR. GONZALEZ: The noise, did you feel, did
10 you feel the vessel slowing down or --

11 MR. ADZEMOVIC: No, sir. No slowing down at
12 all.

13 MR. GONZALEZ: No slowing.

14 MR. ADZEMOVIC: That is my surprise was. He
15 didn't, and nobody is stopping, usually, I know, when
16 you, I got in a car accident, you know, you hit the
17 brakes. This one is no brakes, like the boat is making
18 his mind. That, I was surprised about that. Like the
19 boat is driving himself, you know.

20 MR. GONZALEZ: That is all I have.

21 MR. JONES: Okay. We will just go around
22 again. This is Rob Jones again.

23 MR. ADZEMOVIC: No problem.

24 MR. JONES: Do you feel, with the extent of
25 accident and the injuries around you, were you tended

1 to good enough by either the crew and the responding
2 medical facilities and off to the hospital?

3 MR. ADZEMOVIC: The hospital, okay, let's stop
4 for a moment.

5 MR. JONES: Sure.

6 MR. ADZEMOVIC: They did a great job. The
7 police, the EMS, the firemen and the other cops, the
8 special cops, those guys.

9 DETECTIVE MATTEI: OEM.

10 MR. ADZEMOVIC: No, they are like -- EMS. The
11 cops, they were really good. The other officers, they
12 were doing their job, but they were helping me. And,
13 but the only problem they have there, they had me
14 staying in a seat and somebody, the cop lady was
15 holding my neck. The only problem there, they have no
16 stretchers. They don't have enough stretchers. Okay.
17 So, I had to wait at least half hour for a stretcher
18 for me.

19 MR. JONES: Okay. And that is --

20 MR. ADZEMOVIC: And that, because that is
21 probably good for you, good for -- because you were for
22 the -- anyway. So, no, because if they don't have
23 enough stretchers, three o'clock is not a rush hour.
24 Thank God that didn't happen at 4:30 or five o'clock,
25 it would be a more disaster.

1 MR. JONES: You are right and this is the
2 information we got --

3 MR. ADZEMOVIC: That is exactly, we can always
4 fix the pier, it doesn't have to be fixed today, but,
5 it is good for you, guys, that you really know. I had
6 to wait for a stretcher almost a half hour, it was
7 crazy. I have a witness for that, the officer was with
8 me.

9 MR. JONES: I see. Is there anything you can
10 think of that would aid us? Now is a good time to tell
11 us, other than you just gave us a good suggestion.
12 Anything else about the accident, itself?

13 MR. ADZEMOVIC: No, the accident? I don't
14 know, truthfully, you know, I was reading in the paper
15 there was only one guy up there. I don't know why.

16 MR. JONES: Well, we are still looking at
17 everything and so.

18 MR. ADZEMOVIC: My son has a license to drive,
19 and when we go somewhere, I take the wheel, not my son.
20 He still has got to learn.

21 MR. JONES: Yes. Excuse me.

22 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Sure, no problem.

23 MR. JONES: Steve?

24 DETECTIVE MATTEI: These crew members, going
25 back to them.

1 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes, sir.

2 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Did you see any of them
3 with any blood on them? Were they bleeding?

4 MR. ADZEMOVIC: No, sir.

5 DETECTIVE MATTEI: And if they were, do you
6 think you would have noticed it?

7 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes.

8 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay.

9 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes, there was no blood. They
10 were shaken up.

11 DETECTIVE MATTEI: And as far as, okay, but,
12 as far as the crew members, you only seen two crew
13 members, right?

14 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Yes, sir.

15 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay.

16 MR. ADZEMOVIC: And there when the cops and
17 everybody was coming in, I saw a lot of people with the
18 white shirts, they would for them, but, that is when we
19 were in the dock.

20 DETECTIVE MATTEI: No, when you went out on,
21 when you got to the second floor, the two deck guys
22 were walking around.

23 MR. ADZEMOVIC: Only two guys. That is it.

24 DETECTIVE MATTEI: And they weren't bleeding.

25 MR. ADZEMOVIC: No, sir.

1 DETECTIVE MATTEI: They didn't sustain any
2 injuries.

3 MR. ADZEMOVIC: They were standing up. The
4 guy got me the water. He asked me, if I wanted water
5 and I said, please, because my throat was full of dust,
6 you know.

7 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Right.

8 MR. ADZEMOVIC: And he got me the water.

9 DETECTIVE MATTEI: Okay.

10 MR. JONES: Richard, anything?

11 MR. GONZALEZ: No, I am okay.

12 MR. JONES: Thank you very much.

13 MR. ADZEMOVIC: My pleasure.

14 MR. JONES: Hope you get better soon.

15 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)