

# CUI

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# CUI

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Interview with (b) (6)

Date of Interview: 17 Sep 7

Time of Interview: 1506

Interviewers: [Redacted]

Respondent: [Redacted]

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Interviewer: Good afternoon. I'm [Redacted]. I am the senior investigating officer for the US Coast Guard Activities Far East. Under the authorities of Title 46 US code 6301 and Title 46 CFR Part 4 an investigation is being conducted into the circumstances of the collision between the USS John S McCain and the ALNIC MC which occurred on August 21, 2017. This investigation is intended to determine the cause of casualty to the extent possible and to obtain information for the purpose of preventing similar casualties in the future. To assist with the accuracy of our investigation we will be recording today's interview, which is taking place on September 7, 2017 at 15:06. The individuals assisting me on this investigation will now introduce themselves.

Interviewer: Good afternoon. I am [Redacted], Commanding Officer of Coast Guard Activities Far East.

Interviewer: [Redacted], I'm a JAG officer with the 14th Coast Guard District.

Interviewer: I'm [Redacted], Deck Watch Officer SME from Coast Guard headquarters.

Interviewer: [Redacted], Investigations National Center of Expertise in New Orleans.

Interviewer: [Redacted], Coast Guard Investigator, Investigations Center of Expertise.

Interviewer: [Redacted] from the Naval Safety Center, advisor to [Redacted] of the SIB.

Interviewer: Captain, my name's [Redacted], I'm the Senior Member of the Safety Investigation Board. These are teammates, trained investigators. We will be observers only for this discussion. We will have questions for you later.

respondent: Thank you, sir.

interviewer: [Redacted] Safety Investigation Board.

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**interviewer:** [REDACTED], Safety Investigation Board.

**respondent:** Alright. Before we proceed, we're recording this. Will, I have access to that, to these recordings?

**interviewer:** I believe you will be.

**interviewer:** That remains to be seen. That's a question that will be discussed later. I can't give you a definitive answer at this time.

**respondent:** Okay. Sounds fair.

**interviewer:** If we could begin by having you state your name along with spelling.

**respondent:** My name is [REDACTED]. How you spell [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Middle name [REDACTED] Last name [REDACTED]

**interviewer:** Thank you, sir.

**interviewer:** Captain, let me start with asking you to describe your experience, career including assignments in the Navy, in brief.

**respondent:** 19, 19-1/2, uh, going on almost 19-1/2 years in the Navy. Commenced, came into the Navy 1998. OCS. Commission started in aviation. Discovered aviation is not my calling. Converted to 1300 General Aviation Billet. Assigned on board USS Enterprise Deck Division. Stood deck watches mainly Conning Officer and Junior Officer of the Deck aboard USS Enterprise. From there I proceeded to convert to 1165, went to SWOS and from there proceeded to USS Bunker Hill out of San Diego, California. There I was two years serving as Damage Control Assistant. Deployed in support of Operation Iraqi, Iraqi Freedom, from sometime in October till June, May-June of the next year 2002-2003. From there I went to be an instructor at SWOS. At that time was went through transition. Used to be a Cove instructor when I was at N72.

**interviewer:** What kind of instructor again?

**respondent:** Uh, Cove on the new, that's when we had the SWOS in a Box conversion so I was there when we moved from the old building to a new building. From there, uh, went to, went to the USS Rentz FFG-46 out of San Diego, California, as a Chief Engineer. Did 23 months and change as a Chief Engineer. From there went to be the Chief Engineer onboard USS Gettysburg out of Jacksonville, Florida. From there I, uh, went to do my Master's at Naval War College. Following Master's degree went to be the aide to Admiral, now retired Admiral LeBrien, for our Navy Air Missile Defense Command. Following that short tour went to, uh, went to the Joint Staff, J5, Middle East Directorate. And there I worked for six months at the Iran Contra desk, next nine months as Executive Assistant to [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. From there

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went back to be the Egypt Desk Officer, Commands pipeline in July 2014, I would say, yeah July 2014 reported on board USS John S McCain as Executive Officer on April 20, 2015. The ship was in Yokosuka, while we were there completed a yard period. The ship came out of the yards approximately March-April time frame was when we started floating.

interviewer: 2015?

respondent: Uh, 2016. I left the ship for pipeline in July 2016, and assumed command of USS John S McCain on 21 September 2016. Um, since I took over the ship has been basically underway. Operational, I'm not going to discuss the schedule. I think we are provided the schedule already, but it has been hectic.

interviewer: Okay.

respondent: Over 67,000 miles covered while in command, less than a year. So.

interviewer: Captain, if you'll give me just a moment. [REDACTED], would you mind going to get [REDACTED]?

interviewer: Sure.

interviewer: Missing a member of our team as it turns out.

respondent: Ah, it's okay.

interviewer: Hold on for just for a second.

respondent: Not a problem.

interviewer: My apologies.

respondent: Surprisingly, time is the only thing that I really have. Well, time is the only thing that I own.

interviewer: Time, yes.

respondent: So, yeah, a lot of moves, good mix, being on both coasts. Surprisingly, Japan has been the longest we have even been in one same home port. Makes my wife very excited to leave.

interviewer: Your wife is in Yokosuka?

respondent: Uh-um. Yeah, wife, and son, [REDACTED], and my daughter, [REDACTED], who is [REDACTED].



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**interviewer:** Okay. We'll resume now. Captain, would you mind describing the weeks and days leading up to the casualty on August 21st in terms of routine, operations, ship schedule. Do you mind describing the ship's operations leading up to the day of the casualty?

**interviewer:** Unclassified please.

**interviewer:** Unclasps, yes.

**respondent:** Okay. So ship has been, uh, had been underway the prior three weeks. We were approaching 26-27 days underway. We deployed in, uh, we started a 6-month deployment on the 26th of, uh, on the 26th of May of this year so this kinda marked the half way, the half way point of the deployment.

[REDACTED]

The ship has been, had been in a fairly good, fairly good routine. What I mean by that is we, we stress a routine on the guys. Not so much to be the routine but kind of an expectation to the maintenance. Most of my, as you will probably notice a lot of my tours have been in engineering so I am very much a stickler for material condition, one of the drivers, uh, one of the drivers on the ship, and for that the XO and I always stressed on ensuring the meetings are predictably always in the morning, leaving maintenance time in the afternoon, big substantial blocks, uh, blocks for maintenance. GQ or damage control depends on which week it was. Every weekend, every Saturday 8-11 it was our day for damage control training. We call it damage control training because Condition 2 DC or general quarter, depending on which weekend. We alternated one Saturday was condition to DC, one other Saturday was general quarters. But also during that time is the time that all the training teams made their packages, that when we did ASW training. CSTT training, STT training, everything on the same, kinda from the same windows. we were big muscle, big muscle movement for the ship that got to the, I don't want to say disrupt, but disrupt the usual routine and the ability of the, of the sailor, of the sailor to conduct his maintenance. And during the week we had it sporadically, or sporadic, kinda sprinkled throughout the week, the targeted training, as you would call it. Flying squatters, your first responders on the ship or your crash and salvages, once a week requirement. Or your engineering evolutions and drills were in the evenings. Like every good engineer for some reason we love doing drills at night. It was normally, notionally two times, two times a week.

**interviewer:** The plans by the training teams, they were discussed, planned on Saturday? Can you explain that a little bit? The plans for the next week were presented by the training teams on Saturday?

**respondent:** Yes, they were presenting. The packages were submitted beforehand. Packages were pre-approved, and then the training Saturday. So a normal routine on the ship, we will start reveille, breakfast, quarters, just go, just go so forth. Saturday, the only difference to the routine is that we went from instead of doing quarters we went

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straight to training team briefs and from there we proceeded to safe to train. Once safe to train was achieved we placed the ship in a training team environment and from there we proceeded to training.

**interviewer:** And so the Saturday before the incident that occurred on routine?

**respondent:** Yeah, the only difference is that two weeks before we discovered that, uh, we discovered our basic. You always revisit, right? So we are very harsh on, the ship we have been very harsh on ourselves in terms of always, always revising. We discovered kind of a hole within of that, most of the damage, so we did the basic damage control qualifications we didn't incorporate into part of the in dock. But what we discovered was that looking back at it, it was like wow this is a lot of, a lot of theory but not, not enough hands on. You know, I can show you a Peri-Jet eductor. I can give you a Peri-Jet eductor, but it's a lot different when you have to connect four lengths of hose and put it down, put it down the space and discover the Peri-Jet eductor doesn't work cause we didn't set up right. Goes to material condition. So that Saturday was different. Cause the Saturday before we set up, took advantage that we had a slow, slow SOA. I believe we were like 12 knot SOA, so it gave us plenty of time to slow down, beautiful day in the south China sea. The south China sea is fantastic place for to do training. Uh, and we set stations. I want to say it was either seven or eight damage control stations where the, where we cycled the whole crew. And when I saw cycled the whole crew, it was not only engineers, not only the guys on the damage control repair locker watch bill, but rather the guys that normally won't, won't be part of the repair organization that is (incomprehensible). And it was live hose handling, actual rigging your P-100s for the water, rigging your P-100 for firefighting, rigging your P-100 for deep suction. We did that that morning, two days two days prior, which the guys kind of enjoyed because it broke the routine instead of just having the scenario of going through the motions of an Integrated Training Team hey loss of steering, loss of this, loss of that, it was more of a hey, let's all have fun and good aviation fashion we re-blued. We will call it, a little bit of rebluing to make sure that everybody was, uh, even on the playing field, if you will call it, on the level of knowledge.

**interviewer:** And so after drills on Saturday morning you were in a holiday routine after that? How does it work?

**respondent:** No, after that the afternoon is kind of, kind of free. There was a couple of, that day we had a couple of briefs, nothing too taxing. Just standard, standard afternoon. The Sunday prior was holiday routine. We had been very, very fortunate that our schedule has not, has kept our Sundays. And I guess that's the beauty of being independence teaming operations is that we own our Sunday. Sunday was traditional holiday routine. We had a very much aware that Monday was an early start. For us normally reveille is at 0600. That day reveille was going to be at 0500 for a 0530 sea and anchor, sea and anchor detail. Some stations were going to be manned or as conditions required, like piloting and shipping and modified navigation detail. So everybody understood that it was going to be a long, long day. Knowing that the sea and anchor is approximately four hours and change if everything goes right. Knowing



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that it is a high stress, high, high dens, high density, high density traffic area so. So extremely cautious on the schedule for Sunday to preserve the holiday routine to make sure the guys were, guys were as fresh as possible, that everybody was afforded the opportunity to be rested, to be on their game.

**interviewer:** Captain, what was your assessment of, certainly they were afforded the chance on Sunday. What was your assessment of their readiness, uh, including rest, training, everything, going into that transit in Singapore. What was your assessment of the crew's readiness for this evolution.

**respondent:** We, uh, I assessed that we were fully, we were fully trained, that we were ready, that we were rested. The evolution had been briefed before. Sunday afternoon we conducted, Sunday afternoon or Sunday early evening we had conducted our navigation brief. Rudder swing checks were conducted that afternoon. Digital flux magnetic, I always get it wrong, digital Fluxgate magnetic compass checks were completed the night before, the day before early. So everything had been stacked to make sure that the crew had a chance to get a rest and be ready for it. Uh, and the afternoon was kept, uh, surprisingly, surprisingly light, even for me. I normally don't close my door but I closed that day around 1700, knowing that at midnight I was going to be up and knowing that shortly thereafter shower, shave I will be up on the bridge making the approach to the Straits of Malacca. We had been stressing the crew, the crew was aware of where we were going. I don't know if you, I don't know if you, I think they provided you copies of the night orders. Two nights before by any chance? Two days?

**interviewer:** No, I've got today's. I've seen the nights before.

**respondent:** Okay. So we had been drumming the, hey the Straits of Malacca, that's the place where you're gonna see the supertanker, the fishing vessel and a guy in a canoe. So everybody and their mother is gonna be, is gonna be on the Straits of Malacca. So everybody was very much aware of where we were, where we were going. Uh, I don't have an A-team approach, and what I mean by that is, the if I qualify you to be the OOD I trust you to be the OOD, perform the evolution at hand. So the guys on watch were the guys who were supposed to be on watch.

**interviewer:** Regular routine?

**respondent:** Regular rotation, yeah.

**interviewer:** This is where you are scheduled to be.

**respondent:** Just to make sure that you don't disturb, uh, sleep patterns or anything, anything else. And it's a good experience. Everybody has to, to go through it.

**interviewer:** So, take me back to the NAV brief. What was discussed in the NAV brief?

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**respondent:** The navigation brief was, uh, we discussed the, discussed the times that we were gonna be expected to set the different, the different details. Uh, discussed the track for making the, for making the, uh, following sea and anchor so discussed the track from zero, from 0530 on. There was some parts of the track of how to get there were discussed on it. Uh, the watch team that was going to be doing the sea and anchor was on uh, was on deck, was not on the, was on the brief.

**interviewer:** Uh-um.

**respondent:** Uh, everybody discussed, discussed the lesson learned discuss emerge, well, discussed emergency procedures both for, uh, both for, uh, loss of steering, loss of gyro and engineering casualties, to include the differences when we are in restricted maneuvering doctrine and the deviations authorized to your, to our casualty control procedures. Uh, did the ORM, uh, ORM. I discussed the mitigations, mitigations in place. Did an around the room. Well, Navigator briefed was learned lessons, the lessons learned to make sure it was lessons learned, not lessoned identified. Uh, from there proceeded to go an around the room call. Some comments here and there on what was expected, what was not expected. Uh, asked, asked the Master Chief for his comments. Asked the, uh, the Executive Officer for his comments. Proceeded to tell everyone hey we're manning at 0530. I need everybody to be at 0530 at their stations. This is not the time to hear reveille at 05 and gingerly proceed at 0530, but rather at 0530 we need to be manned and ready. We were not gonna, at 0530 we were gonna man the whole detail with the exception of line handlers. Line handlers we were expecting to man up later on, later on. A couple of reasons for it is since sunrise was not until 7 o'clock, uh 7 o'clock and change in the morning, expecting to be pier side at 9:30 so I kinda had the time and didn't warrant to bring people, additional people on deck other than the guys who were going to be ORM anchored, at the anchor station. Made the comment the anchor was gonna drop if I needed it because last time we, uh, last time we went to do an anchorage we, we went through the procedures. We released from the house, the house didn't release so we ended up having to just follow the current and just ended up lowering. So we had actually taken the chains off of the anchor. Windlass replaced, repacked, replaced the grease to make sure that, that if we needed the anchor the anchor was gonna drop from the house. Because the last thing I needed was to, uh, to have to wait for engaging the wildcat to be able to starting paying out anchor, then to release from the dip. Um, that was, that was about it.

**interviewer:** So, during the NAV brief you mentioned that you went, went around the room. Asked and received some comments. What were the comments that were, uh, made during this particular NAV brief?

**respondent:** A lot of concerns that were brought up were the length of the NAV brief. Not the length of NAV brief, I'm sorry. The length of the NAV detail.

**interviewer:** Right.



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**respondent:** Uh, in particular, considerations I've been operating the south China Sea for a long time. We had, we have had some heat stress casualties before so heat stress was very predominant. The importance of having hydration. Hydration stations. Being able to, uh. And everybody that if. So one common theme that we always had was for the controlling stations to take a good look at the guy. And, and if he was not ready, it's okay. We don't need to Ironman this, we can always raise the hand, no consequences. If you needed, needed to be relieved, if you were not ready to take the deck, if you were not ready to be on the detail. It's okay. We'll get, we'll replace you. We'll annotated on the watch. We will proceed forward.

**interviewer:** Uh-um. Has anybody ever done that? Anybody ever?

**respondent:** Yes. Surprisingly, when we were, uh, I want to see we were in a sea and anchor in preparation for INSERV. And, hey I don't feel right. Okay. No harm, no foul, you know. Um, one thing that I did stress is not a time trial, there are no awards for being on time on the pier. I have a good, uh, track record of being late in every single time I said I'm gonna be pier side. And, and the crew knew that I was okay with being late pulling in because I don't control it. I lay the track, we lay the times but conditions, conditions are different. My first sea and anchor in Command I was 45 minutes late coming to, come to the port De Nang to the whole, to the whole city waiting and I was perfectly fine with it.

**interviewer:** Was there any particular reason to be pier side, was it 09?

**respondent:** 0930.

**interviewer:** 0930. Was there any, uh, time to man on the ship to be pier side 0930, was that coming from any directions or?

**respondent:** No, it was, it was coming at 0930 was a comfortable, we figured 0930 was kind of a sweet spot in terms of normal reveille is at 06 so moving reveille to 05 ain't that much of a stretch. Singapore was a scheduled stop. It was a scheduled stop for a half way, half way mark of the deployment. It was a two-week miniature SEAMAP schedule. And the port was gonna be divided into two. What I mean by the it was two particular, two particular divisions of time. The first week was gonna be duty section on, uh, everybody on the ship. No overnights. Liberty expires on board a ship 2359. Very limited on liberty, or leave. The second half we took advantage when we planned this, uh, this SEAMAP we move it, we moved it to the left to make sure that the families were, families that were in Yokosuka, kids who had not already, not already started school that were in the first couple of days, take advantage of a rotator for families who come in, we had 40, initially we had 45, between 42 to 45 families coming in confirmed for our second part, for our second week. And on that one for the second week it was gonna be duty section, 3-section duty, duty section only, augment as required to make sure that the jobs, the SEAMAP jobs were completed because we knew we were scheduled to get underway the day after Labor Day, Labor Day weekend. Um, but was there a if you don't get at 0930 you will get in trouble? No, no. 0930 was a good time for

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us to pull in, set up services, do the in briefs and still be able to get started on sort of half day one of a SEAMAP. Over 50, I want to say 56-57 jobs were picked up schedule, and we're looking at significantly intrusive, intrusive jobs, not just lagging in Singapore. We were looking at motor bearing replacement for our lube oil service pump, lube oil service houses, structural work, welding, um, fire, fire pumps replacements. So it was an industrial package. It was not the come here in Singapore, get lag and a paint coat. The crew was looking forward to Singapore for two reasons. Uh, one was the first time we were gonna have some time on cold iron, significant time in cold iron. So the engineers were, had some maintenance priorities that they needed to take care of, maintenance that could be done only when the equipment is secure. Topsiders and combat systems, the same thing. We were looking forward just a, a solid maintenance window with equipment secured, just to get, just to get, just to stay on top of the maintenance.

**interviewer:** And what was the other thing, that was uh, the Singapore port call was good for? You mentioned availability of having cold iron.

**respondent:** Oh yeah, and the other thing is the we got a rotator from Yokosuka.

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** So we actually been, and the reason I know exactly how many families were coming is since we were on deployment I issued the letters out to increase their priority to move from, dependent on, dependent on like an A-team.

**interviewer:** EML, right?

**respondent:** Yeah, so they went up to a 6, which is not a bad, not a bad gig. And this was a port that that everybody was looking forward for a) maintenance, b) time off and c) time with family. So, I was telling you the ship got underway, the ship got underway in August. We came back in November, left in December, came back in February. Our 3, or our 11 weeks in port were in support of, of preparation for INSERV so really not that much of a time, of a time off. Scheduled to get underway, we got underway the day after INSERV in support of a, of a congressional delegation visit, Senator John S McCain. John S McCain and two other, two other Senators in Cam Ranh Bay. Following there has just, operation cycle is every 27-28 days we have been pulling into port. I think the longest stretch we went about 30-something out days.

**interviewer:** Captain, you mentioned some mitigations, some risk mitigations were discussed during the NAV brief. Can you talk about those?

**respondent:** Yeah, one of them was, so when we said the detail was uh, hey we're gonna come to full power, we're gonna be all the stations that were manned. It was the extra level of readiness that is assigned, assigned to it in terms of both watches and equipment, equipment line up. Uh, the fact that you have more supervisors in place. Helm safety will be manned. So it's (incomprehensible) caution, hey these are the risks



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and these are the mitigations that we are putting in place. Hey you have a narrow, it's a narrow waterway. Hey, there's gonna be more traffic. Hey, we're gonna have, piloting is gonna be manned up. Shipping is gonna be manned up. So it's kinda the augmentation of readiness. The ship damage control wise, we always run, we always operate on modified Zebra, main deck and, and below with the exception of chill water, the chill water system and the fireman, firemen remains in Yoke.

**interviewer:** Did you have any concerns about the transit plan from the NAV brief? Did you have any concerns? So it was briefed, do you have any outstanding concerns?

**respondent:** No, no concerns in terms of, of the transit plan. Uh, surprisingly, my concern was making the approaches to the Straits of Malacca, and for that one the mitigation was I was gonna be on the bridge before we commence the approach of Straits of Malacca. I have done the Straits of Malacca twice before. I remember very vividly and it was very similar to what I saw that night of having to transit to the ships that are anchored, having to go through the northward, northward lane to come behind the southward lane and then just kind of uh, get yourself. A little bit of an additional pressure for, not pressure but kind of a point of consideration is uh, I wanted to be on the right side of the channel when I come through the Straits of Malacca, so kinda worked ourselves to the, uh, to the right side. The reason for it is I'm making, I wasn't gonna, I was gonna make the (incomprehensible) to the Johor, uh, our pilot point was Johor pickup point on our way up to SImba-1. Lessons learned from us making approaches to, uh, in the Tokyo traffic separation scheme that left turn, has, we have uh, that port turning to Yokosuka Harbor we have sometimes not set ourselves up to for success. We have...

**interviewer:** To be on the left side of that one, right?

**respondent:** Yeah, and we have been like on the right side of it and you're like okay...

**interviewer:** Right, you gotta cut across traffic

**respondent:** ...and now we're gonna cut across traffic. So rather to avoid that we were very conscious from the beginning and say once we, once we cut across we're gonna continue to work ourselves towards the inside of the traffic, inside. Technically, it would be the outside lines, sorry. We'll be the one closest to, uh, to land, but inside the traffic separation scheme.

**interviewer:** Captain, how about any of the equipment. Any concerns? propulsion? steering? navigation equipment during this transit?

**respondent:** Navigation was, uh, we had an IBNS Integrated Bridge Systems. Uh, we had a CASREP open for it. The system had been, uh, as I put on the CASREP, never concerned for the safety of navigation, mainly based on, and that one is based on all the backups, on all the backups that are, all the backups that are in place to include that as a last, last resort you, you can always navigate via dagger, uh or...

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**interviewer:** What is that?

**respondent:** Is a stand, it's a stand-alone, we call it dagger. It's just basically your little GPS receiver. It's an independent, independent certified little laptop with a navigation, uh, navigation integrated chart systems in it. And the fact that it stands alone for everything, that's kind of your last, um...

**interviewer:** Is that used for contact management? AIS?

**respondent:** No, it's not used for contact management. That one is strict, is a strict navigation. It is your last, it is the last resort on board a ship.

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** Uh, it still gets updated. Continuous GPS, military grade GPS so it's not, what is uh, it's that guy that is always running in the back, making sure that in case you need it he's there. Uh, the system had been, uh, unstable in the previous days but stable in the last couple of days.

**interviewer:** This is the IBNS?

**respondent:** The IBNS. In terms of nodes, nodes crashing, uh, but never, uh, never in a, never in a, we were never at a point that we didn't have a navigation node that was operational. So we were never on a. Enough redundancies in the, on the ship, on the system.

**interviewer:** And there's been occurrences of loss of steering, that you know of?

**respondent:** We had a, we had one loss of steering that was similar to this one, in the sense of a loss of steering that you lost indications, but the conditions were not the same. It happened when we were, uh, south China Sea. I want to say about a month or 6 weeks before. Um, and we were on autopilot on the helm forward station, and it was the helm forward station that froze.

**interviewer:** I see.

**respondent:** And it was a matter of having to just take control from the SCC and transfer basically take the helm back to the SCC and that was, that was the only casualty. The IBNS guys...

**interviewer:** So

**respondent:** I'm sorry.



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**interviewer:** I was gonna ask you, how is that done? That transfer from that forward, forward helm location, how is it transferred back to the SCC? Is that, right?

**respondent:** To the SCC.

**interviewer:** Okay. That's in engineering?

**respondent:** No, no, no. That's the SCC is at the...

**interviewer:** ...on the bridge. Okay. So just aft.

**respondent:** ...just aft. So it went from being

**interviewer:** How is that transfer done?

**respondent:** Uh, it was just basically, uh, selected on the console, the SCC console. SCC is primacy on the system so everybody kind of, uh, if SCC takes control from you, you take, SCC will take control from aft steering, aft steering can't take control from SCC. Um, so but open ocean, uh open ocean steam, um, trouble shot, nothing to be found. No error on the logs which is something that is always uh, I don't want to say unnerving but it's always unnerving when you have a casualty and there are no errors. Um, other than that, the system, we have had a, a major, a major minor fault in the communications to the HPUs. But not a loss of, full loss of communications just a matter that for one fraction of a second she will use primary COMMS, will go to second COMMS and the system, all, all the redundancies in the system have always operated so. So the question would come, do you feel safe to operate? The answer is yes, I felt, I felt safe to operate. I come alongside. And the fact that Singapore was gonna let us shut down and I was gonna have the IBNS techs, which we tried to get in Sasebo but we had a slight uncertainty on our schedule and when we were gonna pull into Sasebo. Started as a brief stop for fuel, then brief stop for fuel and personnel, spent two days there and then ran out, uh, storm avoidance. A) getting out of there before Sasebo was, could get clobbered by uh, clobbered by a typhoon. I don't remember the number. If you give me a day I will tell you the warning. But...

**interviewer:** We were tracking it too. (laughing)

**respondent:** But the traditional, the traditional typhoon, uh to Sasebo. So had to, hey you need to get underway the night before. Even for that one we were gonna get underway the night before. Spoke with the Commodores, spoke with the Deputy and said hey, I can get underway in four hours or I can get underway tomorrow morning. I rather get underway tomorrow morning, just move it six hours. Time and distance wise I'll be able to get south of the storm. I think we got 6-foot seas for about an hour and a half before we were, we had been on the other side (incomprehensible) and the DESRON has been always very accommodating in requests for changes in the schedule in terms of managing, of letting the captain manage, manage the amount of,

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manage the amount of risk. I have never, I was never told by my boss if you don't get underway at this time X, Y or Z, or I had that perceived pressure off. The same thing for

**interviewer:** No repercussions for

**respondent:** No, no, no, not. (pause due to coughing) DESRON-15 is a different DESRON, and I say that in a very, in a positive light. What I mean by that is all the, all my stablemates we all live on the same road, our kids go to the same school, we bbq when we're in port together, we are all, we go together. The same thing with the Commodore. The Commodore lives on base. So, it's a different, it's a different feel. It's truly a very close-knit understanding, no fear, very open communication environment among, among destroyer-men if you want to call it. It's actually best experience ever.

**interviewer:** You didn't get the IBNS repaired in Sasebo?

**respondent:** We didn't get, we didn't get the IBNS in Sasebo, but the IBNS was not coming, was not coming into to, to take a look at the IBNS steering issues per se, it was coming in to take a look at the, at the um, at the node crashes that we were having on the system.

**interviewer:** That was resulting from in the COMMS major fault

**respondent:** Yeah, not the COMMS, not the COMMS major fault but since they were there we were gonna have the engineers, we were gonna have the programmers hey give this, give the system a full, a full check, a full clean bill of health.

**interviewer:** So, why did it not happen again?

**respondent:** So, we were, uh, we were otherwise engaged further, further north. Our date of when the exercise was, the exercise that we were monitoring was a moving target. So, and the problem with getting tech reps out here when you're alone and afraid is always a debarkation process of when do I, when do I embark the tech reps, when do I depart the tech reps. We wanted the tech reps to ride with us to make sure they saw the system in operation. The tech reps are coming, are the ISCA that was coming out again. The uncertainty of when, I didn't know till the day before the day that I was pulling into Sasebo so it's hard to coordinate with Stateside on hey, like hey, I need you on the 31st, and oh by the way I don't know if I'm gonna be underway on the 1st or the 2nd so you fly out, you may not see me on the pier. So, it's kinda hard in terms of mobilizing the level of resources. We were scheduled to have two tech reps on board. We were confirmed for them to be meeting us here in, uh, in uh Singapore with a follow-on ride, ride-along with us, cause following here I was gonna meet with the Reagan so once I get with the Reagan now I have a point of, now I have a way of debarking tech reps I used. Cycle them through the COD.

**interviewer:** Is that typical for getting tech rep support, that they're coming from the States and it's hard to schedule them?



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**respondent:** If you're pier side they're not. Support out here is, is the same as if I was. The good thing about being in 7th Fleet is that you're operating like you are deployed in 5th Fleet the whole time. You're forward deployed so all my parts are 9-9-9.

**interviewer:** What is that?

**respondent:** Highest priority.

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** Everything I order is on a high, it's on a high priority. Everything, funding, I have the funding. I got the, I ask for a tech rep, they're supporting a forward deploy. I just take the word forward out, I say I'm a deployed asset. They go like oh, my god, you're on deployment. I'm like absolutely. So, it's not the availability of getting the, the resource availability is not hard. The tough part is arranging for embarkation, debarkation

**interviewer:** With operational schedules.

**respondent:** with, with operational schedules and the curse and the blessing that I'm a flight warranted DDG without a helicopter attachment embarked so for me a PACS transfer is, is whole detail pulling in anchor, small boat or get a tugboat and get you out. So, it's slightly more complex than just when you are with a carrier or if you have a helo there that you can, that you're easier to make log hits. So that's the challenge that we have, but it's not

**interviewer:** So, Captain, you had planned to be on the bridge the night of the incident.

**respondent:** Yes.

**interviewer:** I believe you had a fairly early, early wakeup call. This was discussed in the NAV brief, that you'd be on the bridge?

**respondent:** Yes, that was discussed in the NAV brief and was expected.

**interviewer:** And is that essentially one of your risk mitigations for when traffic is heavy is to be on the bridge?

**respondent:** Yeah. Yes sir. And the reason for it is not out of, not out of lack of confidence to the watch team. But, and, but rather if, if you're gonna call me every 15 minutes I will be up anyways. And sometimes I will just be up anyways. Just sit and watch the radar picture. I got a radar repeater feed from the IBNS, through my lap, IBNS lap from Nav-4.

**interviewer:** In your cabin, is that right?

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**respondent:** In my cabin.

**interviewer:** Okay. So radar picture and the IBNS.

**respondent:** And the IBNS

**interviewer:** Steering and thrust

**respondent:** No, not steering and thrust. I have, uh, the charts basically.

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** [REDACTED]

**interviewer:** Right.

**respondent:** Uh, not hook, I mean, something that has to be tracked.

**interviewer:** Right.

**respondent:** If they haven't tracked it on the 73, my console is slave to from the contacts that are hooked, hook tracked on the 73. So, yeah, it was standard for me either to be sitting on my chair just looking at the contacts, realize hey now is a good time to go up or I will just go up and just sit on the chair. Um, and part of it is if all the guys, and there I have to say guys and gals. I only have male crew. Females are only officers. I only got female officers. If I say guys it's became I'm thinking about....

**interviewer:** Enlisted crew.

**respondent:** My enlisted crew is all male with the exception of one Chief. So, if all the guys who are on the bridge, guys and gals are on the bridge, the guy that has the most amount of years is me. And a lot of times is that I went there at night or that night was not so much of hey I got the deck but more of a okay OOD what are you thinking? Hey, no, that's, I, I know that contact looks bad but hey look at it on the radar, look at it on the MoBoard. So that's not bad. It's that guy over there that you are not looking at right now. So, it's more of a walk you through the process the same way that I was walked through the process. I never had a, I never worked for a screaming Captain in my life. So I strive myself to give them the same courtesies that I was afforded.

**interviewer:** So, I'm sorry. So, up on the bridge shortly after midnight.

**respondent:** Yeah.



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**interviewer:** Can you walk me through, um the events leading up to the collision, from the time you arrived on the bridge?

**respondent:** Yeah, absolutely. So we arrived on the bridge, when I arrived on the bridge we were not, we, when I came onto the bridge we had not entered the traffic separation scheme, we were just making our approaches to the traffic separation scheme. We proceeded by all the best of our anchorage, made our way across, position ourselves there. Initiated the track for, uh, the track that was laid out that will take us, that will take us in. Roughly around, I want to say around 4, 0420, 0430 in the morning the track was laid out, had more than was gonna be the actual, the actual sea and anchor. Um, and proceeded, proceeded inbound. Good night. Good visibility. Winds were all across the deck. Relative winds across the deck. Not that, not that bad. Had 2 knots, 2 knots of set in current so we were making, the track was laid out for 16 knots so the idea was to make 16 knots over 16 knots over ground. We were, we overtook a couple of vessels when we were in the traffic separation scheme. Nothing, nothing too close. Nothing that you would go like oh my god this is a bad. Especially since everybody is kinda going on the same, uh, going in the same direction. Base course. Correct for set and drift. We were driving at 226, 227, 225, kind of on that, kind of on that area coming down.

**interviewer:** What were you, what were you steering? Do you remember the course you were steering? The course you were making over ground?

**respondent:** Uh, I couldn't tell you the difference. I know that we were steering 227. We were between 227 and 226. Uh, I would have to look at the track in order to tell you what was the course for the

**interviewer:** You were getting some set and drift?

**respondent:** Yeah, we were getting some set and drift. We were being sent to the northeast. Yeah, because we, we were set to the north. We had it set on (incomprehensible) so actually we had to order 18 to make 16 over ground.

**interviewer:** Okay. So you were being pushed.

**respondent:** We were pushed back.

**interviewer:** And current coming at you.

**respondent:** And current coming at us.

**interviewer:** Any idea how it was coming across the bow? If it was coming straight at you? starboard to port, port to starboard?

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**respondent:** No, it was coming, it was coming off the port, it was coming off the port, coming off the port bow.

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** Um, now I'm second guessing myself. Yeah, I'd have to look at the numbers but...

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** We had a set (coughing interrupting) had a set and drift, um. Had the conversation that we were already running late, uh, for pulling in. We were roughly about 20, 23 minutes late when we started, when we started the track.

**interviewer:** Was that of concern to anybody? That you were running late?

**respondent:** No. No the concern was like we need to let the pilot, when we get closer we need to let the pilot that we are running, that we are running late. Not in particular, not in a particular hurry to get back on, on PIM. We go back to the same thing, pulling in, if you pull late I pull late, then they wait. Um, so I don't think there was any undue, any undue pressure on hey we need to go a little bit, uh, a little bit faster. The speed was determined on the conditions. I don't think it was unsafe. They didn't determine it to be unsafe, unsafe speed. While we were already in the traffic separation scheme piloting, uh. Mod Navigation detail was set. Navigator was in the bridge. Piloting Officer was already, already manned. Good communications with, uh, with my surface and my SWC, my surface warfare coordinator. Clear radar picture. Um, no, no small vessels in the traffic separation scheme. All fishing vessels or what appeared to be fishing vessels, smaller vessels operating outside of the traffic separation, outside of the channel, outside of the Straight. Good, good visibility. It was a very nice, uneventful transit. Either as we were crossing or as we crossed or while we were in the traffic separation scheme, and I would have to look at the log for that one, we went to computer, we went from computer manual to backup, from computer assist to backup manual. Rationale for it is I have it in my, I have it in my standing orders not to do it during traffic, in terms of traffic but that's how we set up when we're going, coming alongside, going or doing pier landings. Takes one section out, goes back to the, the more direct form of communication between steering and the SCC.

**interviewer:** So, I think you were explaining the rationale for going from computer assist to backup manual. So, why do you do that during this particular evolution? Why did you do that during this particular evolution?

**respondent:** Why did I do that? Because I saw that there is heavier, there is heavier traffic, not heavier than I expected, but trying to up the level of, the level of readiness, trying to we go back and what can I do to mitigate? The idea was hey let's go to backup manual.



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**interviewer:** Does the ship behave or perform any differently in backup manual.

**respondent:** Uh, frankly I don't notice a difference other than, other than the fact that there was some options that you're not gonna have in backup manual. There are options when you're either coming alongside or making approaches or you really don't care. Personally, I wouldn't care. It's like I don't have autopilot. Okay. I cannot have external control. Okay. External control being that I lay down my track, I hit play, the ship accelerates, decelerates to be in the wake points on time. Yeah, so there's all the, all that of the system, and it behaves like an old school, not old school that's a bad term, traditional cabling unit system. So we take some of the, some of the things, some of the options out, but it's a more, and maybe I'm a dinosaur, maybe that's why I do it. I discussed it with the previous captain, [REDACTED] when the system got installed and we went out for sea trial. We were comfortable in that configuration. Fellow COs that had the same system, Curtis Wilbur CO, we felt comfortable also in that. So it's something that had been discussed before. Like hey let's, I don't want to say it's a standard, I don't think it's gonna be in any tech manual, I don't think it is gonna be codified in anything, but it's one of those you know, let's take something out, just make it a more direct path of communication.

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** Um, following, following in. We are doing either 18 or 19 knots. Once again, I have to go back, back on the logs. And 05, that I do remember 0521 we called loss of steering, on or about 0521. We called loss of, we called a loss of steering. Took about two minutes for, two minutes for aft steering, two to three minutes for aft steering to man up. But when we called loss of steering it was the fact that the rudder, rudder was in midships or indications of a rudder in midships. With the ship behaving as if it was on a rudder in midships. And what I mean by that is we have been driving 226, 226, 227, the ship was still steady on 224, 225, 226, so it was not, so we proceeded to slow down. I called for red over red, slow down first initially to 10 knots and then tell the OOD slow down, she goes down to 10 knots. I give like let's come down to 5. XO, actually this is kinda in a parenthesis, the XO came to the bridge. He was on the, he came up to the bridge around 0430. Uh, XO and I, I want to say we have a very good working relationship. Sorry, I'm kinda side tracked. I'm a little bit off track.

**interviewer:** No problem.

**respondent:** But that rationale that he came up around 0430 was a) to be a backup, which he always, he always is. But the other one was he knew that I had been up there since, since midnight or shortly after midnight. He wanted to get himself acclimated, understand where the ship was in case to get to a, afford me the opportunity to get off the bridge, use the rest room, grab a cup of coffee, quick bite and come right back up. And it's something that we have a done before. It's not planned. Uh, but it's something that we have done.

**interviewer:** Did that happen this night?

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**respondent:** Yeah. He went up

**interviewer:** Okay. So he came up at 0430.

**respondent:** 0430, 0430. No, I didn't leave the bridge, but he came up just for that, for that reason. We talked about it, hey this is what I'm seeing. We're in a good spot, running a little bit late, but oh well.

**interviewer:** And so you didn't leave the bridge?

**respondent:** No, never left the bridge. It's one of those things, just didn't feel right, you know what I mean?

**interviewer:** What didn't feel right?

**respondent:** Uh, leaving the bridge.

**interviewer:** Okay. During that, during that moment.

**respondent:** It was during entering the Straits of Malacca, like okay, I will get a, I will have somebody bring me up something if that's the case. And I wasn't overly tired, I wasn't falling asleep in the chair. I was wide awake. Um, so he was, he was there just for backup. Talked about it, how everything was going. Where we were, what we were doing. How the ship was behaving. We were on split plant.

**interviewer:** Can you explain that?

**respondent:** Split plant is one gas turbine per shaft. So the two shafts were driving.

**interviewer:** Uh-um. Okay.

**respondent:** We had done that prior to entering the Straits of, prior to entering the Straits of Malacca. We had been on split plant configuration. Before that we had been trailing, trailing, trailing the shaft. Fuel efficiency based.

**interviewer:** Sure.

**respondent:** Um, so we're coming in, we have a, we have the loss of steering, slow down, we have the indication of rudder midships, ship is behaving like rudder at midships, red over red, very conscious that I, that I had a ship behind me. I am in the Straits of Malacca. I'm very conscious. Went to the starboard bridge wing. I couldn't, at night I couldn't really tell you how far it was, but I was aware that hey, I have a ship behind me so this is

**interviewer:** Do you know how far it was behind you?



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**respondent:** No, I don't. And that's the (coughing). And, I can tell you at night I have a, I had a harder time of telling range but I knew that I had a ship, a ship behind us.

**interviewer:** The ship that you are referring to now, is that the ship that eventually collided with the McCain?

**respondent:** Not that I, not that I think of, personally.

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** Uh, I can almost certainly guarantee that it was not the one that collided with us. The one that collided with us was on our port, riding on our port side.

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** Uh, we.

**interviewer:** How far off of your port was the ALNIC MC?

**respondent:** When we, when we first started I want to say roughly between, roughly between 6, I want to say between 400 and 600 yards. We had overtaking her, we had overtaken her, overtaken her on her starboard, my port.

**interviewer:** Uh-um.

**respondent:** Um, so what got a, what got a little bit confusing was that all of a sudden while looking on a rudder amidships indication I see the combination of course was starting to drift, lights beginning to, lights in the, lights beginning to move to starboard. Aft steering was already manned. There was a, what added to the casualty was that neither station seemed to gain, seemed to have gain control of the rudder. And that's when we started, and right after right after we had the rapid drift in the, rapid drift in the course is when we had the collision, aft of 316ish, uh, 340. Um, the last set of orders to, was to troll at full rudder, full right, right full rudder.

**interviewer:** Orders?

**respondent:** Orders was right full rudder.

**interviewer:** Was that your orders? Was that your orders?

**respondent:** I believe so. And at that moment is a, is based on what we're looking, what we're trying now, the rate that we were going, the rate of motion. One thing that (coughing) was for us was also a little bit disconcerting is how long it took us to slow down. Um, I couldn't, I'm not gonna speculate if it was a problem with the engine or just the fact that time kind of like stood still at the same time it kinda flew by. Kind of an

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awkward uh. And at that time the last rudder, rudder order was a more of trying to ameliorate the blow, minimize the angle. If we're gonna have a, cause it looked like a, like, it looked like what happened, looked like crossing the T.

**interviewer:** Did, did the ship respond

**respondent:** No.

**interviewer:** that last effort? Was that a, was that a rudder command as well? Or was that the right full rudder that you're referring to?

**respondent:** Right full rudder.

**interviewer:** Were there any other commands given to the OOD or navigation team that night leading up to the collision by you?

**respondent:** Uh, the slow down, and slow down to 5, they slowed down to 10. And to make sure red over red was energized when we first had the report of the loss of steering as we were in the process of being manned to make sure, um. And, I don't know if we did it or it got ordered to do the (incomprehensible) that we had a loss of steering. (incomprehensible)

**interviewer:** Okay. How about any guidance to the helm station, the helmsman? Any guidance by you to that, those watch standers?

**respondent:** Uh, no. The rationale for it is all the actions were being taken in terms of transferring, manning up, transferring, transferring steering. And, the initial indications of rudder at midships with a ship behaving as if it was on rudder in amidships, and looking behind and seeing that the actions are being taken is, didn't, I. Everybody is doing what they were trained, instructed to do. So no need to inject myself. One thing though is once, and one thing, one command I did give just prior to the collision was to, to minimize. So, so the helmsman also has the throttles, its standard, standard underway, the helmsman also has the throttles. The helmsman when we had given him an order, an engine command, it's at night, it's touch screen, and you have to order it. You order into a PCL, so you have to take a look at what is the PCL value that correlates with speed that was ordered. We found that the helmsman was spending way too much time looking at the lee helm, at the lee helm portion of it. We directed, actually I directed to the Boatswain Mate of the Watch taking advantage of the incoming, that the incoming sea and anchor detail Boatswain Mate of the Watch was already showing, uh showing up. Hey, somebody give him a hand, split the lee helmsman, which is something that was gonna happen nine minutes after when we set the detail, just to make sure that the helmsman limited his attention to maintaining ordered course. I will let somebody else worry about maintaining ordered speed. That happened prior to the collision.

**interviewer:** So the helmsman you said was looking over at the lee helm? Can you explain what was going on there?



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**respondent:** Okay. So, when we order a change in speed, the. So, you have, you have your console or your SSC with the helm, and the throttles are flat screen, so, but the helmsman has to take his eyes off of his gyro indicator to go up. And in this case, they have to take a look at what it equates on the value that he's gonna order. He doesn't punch in 15 knots. He punches in say a PCL, he punches in a value that equates for the engine control. And that value is dependent on, dependent on your engine configuration also. You have PCL values between trail, split or full or full power are different. It's something that the helmsman has to pay attention to what the value is and then look at the, look at the screen, dial it in, hit accept. So that process, I thought it was a little bit cumbersome.

**interviewer:** Were you, you weren't changing speeds at the time?

**respondent:** No, no, but we had seen it before.

**interviewer:** You had seen what before?

**respondent:** That, that distraction of the helmsman having to take

**interviewer:** Oh, I see.

**respondent:** so once we get

**interviewer:** So, you're anticipating?

**respondent:** I'm anticipating hey this is gonna, we're gonna be, this is not gonna

**interviewer:** Maybe changing some speeds coming up

**respondent:** This is something, the traffic ain't gonna get any better. We are in the process, I'm looking at my watch and I'm nine minutes away from manning up the detail. So the off-going, the Boatswain Mate of the Watch, it was either in-coming or the out-going said hey, give the helmsman, give the helmsman a hand. Place the throttle, place the throttle on the lee helm screen. Cause you have two screens on the SCC. Got a helmsman screen and lee helmsman screen. Just basically hey, take the throttle from the helmsman, move it to the lee helmsman screen so that's what he's doing. So we separate.

**interviewer:** And did you, um, hear the orders? Sorry. Did you hear the announcement on the bridge that that shift had taken place?

**respondent:** No. But I believe it did. It's not something normally that we, it's normally something that the Conning Officer orders, the Conning Officer or the lee helmsman or the helmsman responds the acknowledgement, their response when it's completed.



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**interviewer:** Right.

**respondent:** I couldn't (coughing in the room)

**interviewer:** So, um normally when they are shifting steering or throttle between positions there is, there is an announcement that it has been shifted.

**respondent:** Yes.

**interviewer:** There's an order, there's acknowledgement, and there's an announcement that it's been shifted. In this particular case, did that occur?

**respondent:** I would have to say it occurred, I just did not zero myself into that response.

**interviewer:** Okay. Do you know if the OOD was aware that that shift had occurred?

**respondent:** Yeah, the OOD was aware that that shift was occurring.

**interviewer:** Was this particular shift, is it something that should be covered or was covered in the navigation brief? Normally, you would do that when you're going to sea and anchor detail, right? You'll break that up.

**respondent:** You'll break the two positions, but normally we will do it (coughing in the room) anytime that I thought that the helmsman was getting overwhelmed or the CONNING Officer felt that the helmsman was getting underway, uh, overwhelmed. We will, we had a standard practice of splitting the helm and normally the Boatswain Mate of the Watch will be the one that will take over the, take over the lee helm. And it's a matter of, it's mainly to minimize the distractions. So we will have seen it, you would have seen it on board my ship either when you have a newer helmsman or a helmsman under instruction that we let him just concentrate on the driving, don't worry about changing speed, just concentrate about driving, with guys that were with less experience or not as good as others. So it's a, a judgement call to, uh, manage the bridge watch standers load.

**interviewer:** So, will that shift ever occur without direction from the CON, or yourself or the OOD?

**respondent:** No.

**interviewer:** So it would only occur if directed?

**respondent:** Yes.

**interviewer:** And in this case, you directed that?

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**respondent:** Yes.

**interviewer:** Okay. So at about what time was that? Do you remember?

**respondent:** Before the, before the collision. Not that long before.

**interviewer:** Okay. So, what's your assessment of the experience of your bridge crew, um, generally? In terms of training, competence, familiarity with the equipment?

**respondent:** All the watch stations or this one in particular, sir?

**interviewer:** Let's start with this one.

**respondent:** This was one of my stronger, my stronger OODs. Um, she had not been qualified for that long. If I'm not mistaken I think her board was about three months prior, but she had spent a lot of, a lot of time on the bridge. Um, and particularly her, spending a lot of time on the bridge as by design. She is a Nuclear Option Officer so she is scheduled to go to NUC school. (coughing in the room) She start pre-NUC school in November, I'm sorry December, following on official class of January. Her and [REDACTED] is my other, uh, one of my NUCs are already qualified. So by design they spend a lot more time on the bridge. Cause I got friends that are NUCs and I know that they go from there to a plant and the next time they're on the bridge is when they are a department head and depending on the ship, some ship's department heads don't stand bridge watches. So the next time she could be at a, at a decision point is when she is the Executive Officer of the Ship, expected to make a decision. So she definitely had most amount, a significant amount of reps and sets. A very, I want to say a less limited amount in combat when it comes to the balance of both. She was a bridge, bridge heavy. Uh, utmost trust and confidence in her. Uh, [REDACTED]. He came from USS Antietam. He was my Junior Officer of the Deck.

**interviewer:** Recently then, right? From the Antietam? Was it because of this, uh, transfer...

**respondent:** Yeah, because of their grounding. He's still assigned to Antietam. He was just TAD to me. He has been TAD to me for a long time. He was almost, almost ready. This is, he's a second year Ensign, so he's actually on the window. He's on the window for orders. Uh, so, very experienced. His board is actually scheduled for this afternoon. His OOD board. Very, very competent. Steady guy. [REDACTED], same, same thing. Online to get himself, online to be the next, next guys to be going for the board. Um, the junior most guys was [REDACTED], the Conning Officer, which is normally the junior, the junior guy. But with me he had done already approaches to an oiler. He had done pier landings, getting underway from a pier, man overboard, maneuvering very, significantly close contacts with our Near Peer friends, and all the time that he had been up there was bridge time. Just cause his schedule, was scheduled to commence, or is scheduled to commence A-dock in, uh, in November. This is a guy who graduated ROTC and next thing you know he gets an airplane ticket to go to Darwin, three days

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later he's underway. Never looked back, behind. So everything has been underway on the bridge. Uh, my TAO was my SPO, [REDACTED]. Very confident in him, very diligent. My surface, my SWC was [REDACTED]. Being a prior Fitzgerald sailor, prior of the collision, he transferred to me before the collision of the Fitzgerald. Touched to him very hard so if you want to talk about a guy who's very much paying attention on the console it is that guy. So very...

**interviewer:** What was his position?

**respondent:** SWC

**interviewer:** SWC.

**respondent:** So, good command and throughout the watch very good communications between the TAO, the SWC and the OOD for a, for the contact picture.

**interviewer:** You have any, you have any performance issues with this particular bridge watch team?

**respondent:** No, not at all.

**interviewer:** No interventions?

**respondent:** No, if anything, she is, she will be the OOD that will call me, I want to say too much because there is no such thing as calling me too many times but very early. She was very deliberate. And when I got up to the bridge she was very deliberate in saying hey this is, this is the situation, this is what I'm doing and this is what happened. So she painted, in terms of painting a picture of, she was very much aware. Very good synergy among that watch team. There was no, no bickering or hey, you're an Ensign, I'm almost a JG type of thing. There is no, no significant friction points on the watch bill, on that watch, on the watch section. In general, this is a ship that has been underway so most of my guys have a lot of time compared to a San Diego or a Norfolk ship, just by sheer amount of miles, sheer amount of time on the bridge. So they are experienced. Same day sea and anchors is not uncommon for us, pulling in for a couple hours, do what we need to do, be it a medi-vac or be it a embarkation/debarkation, pull the hook up, get back again. It is not uncommon. Maneuvering in proximity, in heavy contact area not uncommon. So it's a well, it's a well, it's a well experienced, albeit junior, but we've got a good. When we make the watch bills we take a look. The XO and I, we pay a lot of, a lot of attention into making sure that personalities are balanced. Some people work better with others. It's a thing of life.

**interviewer:** If you had to make any adjustments to watch bills?

**respondent:** She would have not, that would have not been the section that I would have adjusted.



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**interviewer:** Not this one.

**respondent:** Not this one. Not this one. And combination of first tour and second tour division officers so you normally had a second tour division officer coming to relieve a first tour division officer OOD just to balance the level of experience to make sure that there is a, that we don't have three first tour Ensigns in a row and then all of a second tour guy comes up and like oh my god this would have been so much better if we had addressed it eight hours prior. But the watch bills, the watch sections were running well. If anything, and that was conversation XO and I used to have, if anything I suffer from over reporting.

**interviewer:** You do or?

**respondent:** No, they do, of over reporting. And XO usually takes a look at the, he'll go back into our orders. He doesn't talk about hey don't call the Captain, make sure the TAO and OOD figure out who's gonna call the Captain cause the Captain seems to be getting the same call by the OOD, by the TAO and then by the Chief Engineer. You're like, okay. And all of them you gotta be very excited to get a phone call at 3 o'clock in the morning because if you're not excited to get that phone call then they don't call you and then you really have problems. So if anything, she was the person that would call me when it was not even reporting criteria, just to let me know hey in about an hour this is what I'm looking at, this is what I'm planning on doing, so. Not to get a dispensation or a free pass on calling me when it was, it was just hey when if you happen to open. I use a lot of times the phrase what are we doing? Since I sleep with a screen right at the foot of my bed to avoid the call of one eye open going oh, hey guys what are we doing? So Chief rather always (coughing in the room) wanted to let me know what was gonna happen before we (incomprehensible) with ample amount of time. She's on track. She's actually a great, solid officer. I wouldn't, even with the power of hindsight and the way back machine, I would not change that watch team for what happened.

**interviewer:** How about their familiarity with the steering gear system? The IBNS.

**respondent:** Familiar?

**interviewer:** Uh-um.

**respondent:** Yes.

**interviewer:** How familiar were they? Any concerns expressed to you with the operation of the system?

**respondent:** Well concerned, concerned with the node crashes. Node crashes were always a, always a concern cause, you know, equipment is designed not to crash so everything that is not performing to spec is a concern.

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**interviewer:** For clarification, sir, when you say node crash. Is that like a screen locks down and like NAV1 or CON1 shuts down

**respondent:** Yeah NAV1 or CON1 shuts down

**interviewer:** So, it's not functionality within a screen, it's a specific screen?

**respondent:** It's a specific node.

**interviewer:** And so their familiarity, their training, their proficiency in using the steering gear system, what was your assessment of that?

**respondent:** It was sufficient, if that will be the term. It was as required, understood what the procedures were. We stress a lot of procedural compliance, uh, on the ship.

**interviewer:** Did you feel that this bridge watch team was following your standing orders regarding loss of steering

**respondent:** Yes.

**interviewer:** for this evening?

**respondent:** Yes.

**interviewer:** Can you describe, Captain, when you're on the bridge your relationship to the OOD and the rest of the watch team? (coughing in the room)

**respondent:** So I spend a lot of time on the bridge for a couple of reasons. First one is I will tell you is selfish, I enjoy being on the bridge. It is the best, it's one of the better, better places to be when you're underway. Mainly, you get a really good feel of the ship. All the reports get funneled through the OOD so it's a great place for situational, uh, for situational awareness. So I tend to spend a lot of time there. We go back to my first comment that I never had a screaming captain. So, I've been blessed that all my COs have been mentors on the bridge and give me enough, enough leeway to work myself through a situation but always knowing that, that if something were to happen there is one guy there that that will go hey got it, this is what we're doing. So I will say that was my relationship with them. Uh, I tend to operate a lot on command by negation, tell me what you're doing until I decide that what you're doing we're no longer in agreement and then we'll stop. And I see it as my responsibility to train, train the junior officers in the operation of the ship. Uh, discussed a lot of things. My time on the bridge was not just for, for contemplation, but we discussed a lot of things from engineering and the understanding of the system or systems. Expectations of an OOD, I don't need you to know what a PSM is doing in MAIN2 when he has a loss of lube oil pressure, but you need to understand what happens so you as an OOD when there is a loss of pressure, loss of lube oil pressure on the system. What are the impact ramifications, consequences, what you need to do to maintain a continuity of propulsion? Propulsion



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is steering on the ship. We talk about weather, especially how to forecast, uh, how to forecast weather and the importance of what things are recommended. Uh, they get pushed back into (incomprehensible) a lot. They may not agree with that one, but there's always a now you've got homework. Discussions on ship handling. So it's a time to interact both professionally and personally with, with the officers.

**interviewer:** How about with the other watch standers? Helmsman? BMOW?

**respondent:** To a lesser extent in terms of mentoring. Don't get me wrong, I can guarantee you my Boatswain Mate of the Watch, my [REDACTED] is a lot better at the (coughing in the room) helm of the ship than I will be if I (incomprehensible) and that's a matter of, of, uh, of practice. But more of a checking on how they were doing, how they were holding, projects that they were working, things that they were looking forward to, things that they were not looking forward to. This crew is, is special in a lot of ways, and the best way is they ask a lot of questions. Um, I have a very, I'm the Captain that doesn't get things in the CO suggestion box. I'm the Captain that gets a lot of questions asked in person. Good or bad. Sometimes I route and put it in the CO suggestion box because they get a lot of I don't know from me, a lot of times like wow that sounds, did not even think about it, but we'll get back to you. We will circle back. But less on the, with the Boatswain Mate of the Watch and the Quartermaster of the Watch was more the management of the, of the bridge. I will make, I will make them read. Like the watch standers guide, the book and said hey take a look at what the Boatswain Mate of the Watch responsibilities are. And my goal with the junior, with the enlisted specifically junior enlisted are they understood, is it understood what my standard was and what are they going to be hold accountable for. And this is the black and white on what your job description is. And if it's 16 items, and I'm gonna hold you accountable for 10 items. Um, so good relationship. I don't think nobody ran to the bridge wings when they announce the Captain is on the bridge. In a nutshell.

**interviewer:** Do you think any confusion might have been introduced when you're on the bridge regarding who's got the deck, who's got the CON? Was it clear to all the watch standers essentially who's fulfilling what role when you're on the bridge?

**respondent:** Yes. Um, well, I guess it was not a yes or no question. So I think I

**interviewer:** Well, if you

**respondent:** So, the answer is no. Not yes, I guess. (laughing in the room) I know

**interviewer:** So, I, I'll give you another shot at it. (laughter continuing and coughing)

**respondent:** Yeah, I'm like

**interviewer:** How about we do this? Describe the relationship.

**respondent:** Let me, okay



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**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** This is a lot better. Yeah, for a moment I'm like yes, no. Uh, the officer had the deck. The Officer of the Deck had the deck. When I had taken, I think I've only taken the CON of the ship twice. Twice I announced it. Twice I expected and waited for their acknowledgement. So they knew that if I took, that if I took the deck or I took the CON I would make it official and there would be an announcement. While I don't, I guess by virtue that I don't normally raise my voice, if I raise my voice on the bridge everybody kinda like perked up and said hey. Uh, I've only taken the deck once. I've only taken the CON twice in a year.

**interviewer:** And when you are there and you haven't announced that you have the CON, but for example,

**respondent:** So,

**interviewer:** I'm sorry

**respondent:** So, I think I. Sorry to interrupt you, Captain.

**interviewer:** Please.

**respondent:** The helmsman was trained that if I said hey let's come right to 300 he will not come right to 300. The CONNING Officer will order come right, steer course 300, come right, steer course 300, ay. My rudder is right 15 degrees, coming to course 300.

**interviewer:** Right.

**respondent:** There was never a time when I will swing by, and very consciously, there was not a time when I will swing behind the helmsman and say hey come right, come right 5 degrees.

**interviewer:** Right. That was an order given by the CON.

**respondent:** Orders always given by the CON unless I took the CON.

**interviewer:** Okay. How about the direction given to put thrust to lee helm? Was that something that should be given by the CON or how did that work? Did people understand where that direction was coming from?

**respondent:** I want to say that they, I gave it and I want to be, I'm almost certain that the OOD was the one who relayed and gave the order. But that one, I'm gonna tell you, I don't (coughing in the room) think, I couldn't pin point it exactly. I apologize.

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**interviewer:** Okay. Does, would the CON ever do, ever order that particular function or that to be executed. Essentially, when it does happen, when you go to sea and anchor detail, and you do split it, is that an order given by the CON to do that? Who normally orders that?

**respondent:** Normally the CON

**interviewer:** Normally the CON orders it. Okay.

**respondent:** Normally the CON for the JOOD. And there, on there I actually think it's part of our check list so it's coming from the guy driving the check list, saying hey CONNING Officer, and he's like oh. So

**interviewer:** So, if you would have, if you would have given it would that be considered as coming from the CON or like you said before that order would only come from the CON if you hadn't announced that you were the CON? Does that make any sense? So if the order came from the CON

**respondent:** Well, the, okay, I got it. So, I will tell you it normally comes from the CON but going back, going back in time I have seen it with the OOD, with me giving the recommendation to the OOD and the OOD directing the Boatswain Mate of the Watch to split the helm.

**interviewer:** Okay. So it'd normally, normally be something essentially came from the OOD down. OOD would tell the CON, CON executes the order. We've relayed status of the control with the rudder, status of control of the thruster, of thrust, and everybody would know. Did I describe that right?

**respondent:** Yes.

**interviewer:** Okay. Okay. So, in the moments between the announcement of loss of steering, which was roughly 0521 I believe,

**respondent:** Yes sir.

**interviewer:** and the collision itself, did you take the deck or the CON.

**respondent:** No.

**interviewer:** Did you consider taking the deck or the CON during that time?

**respondent:** No.

**interviewer:** You had mentioned several situations where you had taken the deck and the CON. What were the circumstances for taking the deck and the CON in this situations?

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**respondent:** Well, if I'm gonna took the deck I was the OOD while covering down for I was assigned the watch bill for the crossing the line ceremony. I had 210, uh, 210 (coughing in the room) WOGS so we had to, somebody had to take the deck so I put myself in the rotation. That's the time, the only time that I have taken the CON, taken the deck. The two times that I took the CON was surprisingly in a very anti-climactic situation. More of a admiring the problem situation as you're going toward a, in this case, for the two times have been fishing buoys. You have the CONNING Officer talking to the OOD. I'm thinking about coming right, and the OOD is like uh, no, let's come left, (incomprehensible). You're just looking at it, (incomprehensible) trying to get this perfect solution. And you're like this is the Captain I have the deck right full rudder, rudder at midships. Come left, steer course blah, blah, blah. I'm done.

**interviewer:** The phone

**respondent:** The phone cause I was on the bridge when the two times.

**interviewer:** Okay. Got it.

**respondent:** The two times that it happened the phone is on the bridge wing as you are, literally you standing there waiting for, for this magical, not magical but this very well-defined solution. And you want to tear up when you got guys trying to do the (incomprehensible) and you're like okay for the love of God, turn.

**interviewer:** Right.

**respondent:** Uh, so those are the only two times I have taken it. Surprisingly, for actually one, yeah, those are the two times, surprisingly with the same Conning Officer.

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** He's a Conning Officer who just needs more (coughing in the room) more attention. When we were doing the FONOPS he was the Conning Officer, I spent a lot of time with the Conning Officer.

**interviewer:** Captain, when did you think that the collision with the ALNIC MC was imminent? Essentially after the loss of steering

**respondent:** So I thought the collision was imminent when all of a sudden, the, we had the rapid, the commencement of rapid drift on course. We went from 227, 226, hovering at 223 for a while, all of a sudden it was like you look up, it goes 210, 196, and I think we collided at 183 was our collision report. And is when we started that rapid drift, I remember I think it was the only time that I have put hands on an officer was on my OOD as I was trying to get out of the door, and it was get out of the way because I'm trying to see where is the ship heading now cause I know I got traffic. All of a sudden now I know I'm roughly, at roughly 40 degrees off our base course so I know that I'm



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heading across the (coughing in the room) traffic separation scheme. I know I had overtaken vessels so I knew that there was somebody coming off our port quarter. And that's when, when you stepped out and the XO is already out, is when you see the...

**interviewer:** XO was on the port bridge wing.

**respondent:** XO was either on the port bridge wing or near that door. It's when you come out and you take a look at it, you go like okay this is gonna be a collision.

**interviewer:** So the OOD was standing in the port bridge wing door?

**respondent:** She was, she was standing, she was either going toward the port bridge wing or coming from the port bridge wing, but from the port side the Boatswain Mates table, I got like a table where they go and keeps, and the JOOD, they do most of their (incomprehensible) documents, right in between that table and the ADC. Uh, as I'm coming out from that one she is, she is there.

**interviewer:** What was she doing? What was the OOD doing when you encountered her right there?

**respondent:** She was actually in my way going out, but I couldn't tell you exactly what she was saying or not saying. I got a ship that is drifting very rapidly to port, not slowing down, not at the speed that, we're drifting rapidly toward what I know is traffic, so it's like hey, and from there it was sound the collision alarm and all the rest is uh...

**interviewer:** Did you, um, did you provide any orders to the OOD? Or any other watch standers during this time?

**respondent:** The only order I remember is right full rudder. That was when I came out I see the contact, and the only thing I'm thinking is I need to somehow get myself off of the T and try to get less of (clearing throat). a blow.

**interviewer:** Did you consider taking the bridge and the CON or the deck and the CON?

**respondent:** No.

**interviewer:** Why not?

**respondent:** All the actions that were being, all the actions that I deemed that were required to be taken were being taken. And I will go back to, to what our priorities are. Our priorities are to regain, to regain steering. And I'm seeing that they are in the process of transferring steering. I'm hearing them in COMMS with aft steering. I'm hearing them in the struggle of which, that nobody has steering control. I'm looking at the rudder that looks at midships on the indicators with a ship that is drifting rapidly to (coughing in the room) port and my assessment is hey, actions are being taken. Me taking the deck at that time or taking the CON at that time would have added to the,

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would have added one more layer, one more layer of confusion when the actions expected are being taken.

**interviewer:** Were you, did you observe any of the actions of the helmsman and the VMW now has the lee helm, right? VMOW. Did you observe any of those actions that they were taking, for example, pushing the big red button? Did you observe any of that or direct any of that during those, those minutes from the time the steering, loss of steering was called out?

**respondent:** Didn't direct it because it's part of the emergency procedures. (coughing in the room) I know that it happened. However, the ship was already in backup, in backup manual and the red button puts you on backup manual. The standard, when you go through the EOC, EOCC procedures that it's the standard so it's the crew reacting to, to repetition. Um...

**interviewer:** When you mentioned.

**respondent:** ...but sorry...

**interviewer:** Sorry, go ahead.

**respondent:** .... the focus, and honestly, I want to say a layer of confusion is my instruments don't match what I'm seeing outside. There is no way that I can, that I can, I don't want to say that that was minutes of contemplation but there was a, there was a specific pause that I remember taking like this makes absolutely no sense. I'm drifting rapid to the left, rudder at midships, I'm seeing light, I'm seeing course changes, and I'm hearing the, hearing them trying to transfer control. So it's like okay waiting for, waiting for hey somebody has control of the rudder. I know I got the XO on the port, on the port bridge wing so my focus was monitoring what is going on back there, knowing that I got a ship going headway, going ahead. Trying to anticipate what is gonna happen fast (coughing in the room) so not involved but kind of in a, an overall aware, ready to, I will say, ready to, ready to inject yourself where you see that the action is not, is not being taken.

**interviewer:** So when talking about the big red button, um...

**respondent:** I can tell that you have talked to my guys already cause they refer to it as a big red button too.

**interviewer:** Actually I like it referred to the big red button because everybody knows what that means. (laughing)

**respondent:** Yeah, no, no. It's a, yeah, I know, it's a...

**interviewer:** I think it's brilliant, really.



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**respondent:** (low) I don't know

**interviewer:** You mentioned "it" happened. Were you referring to someone pushing the big red button? When you were describing that, that event?

**respondent:** Yeah, well, my assumption is that hey this is what, this is what we do, this is what is trained. I can tell you it is, it is dark on the bridge. Can I tell you that I saw the helmsman press the button and make the, make the report of I have pressed the big red button? The answer is no, I cannot tell you, sir. But based on, based on my assumption, knowing my crew I know that it was one of the actions that they will take as part of the casualty control procedures.

**interviewer:** Got it. Understood. [REDACTED] ?

**interviewer:** Just a couple questions, sir, that came up in my notes here. Um, do you recall when the last loss of steering drill was completed?

**respondent:** I want to say it was the weekend prior to that Saturday, but I'll have to take a look at the. It was fairly, it was fairly recent. I will take a, I will have to take a look at the T fault cards.

**interviewer:** Do you have an idea of the results of that steering drill?

**respondent:** Yeah, the results of that steering drill, I know I discussed with the Navigator was that we needed more, more training. But the training required was not in transferring thrust control, uh, thrust control, was not, the assessment was that training was not, that they knew how to take control in aft steering, it is that we did not have the family, the family, okay, familiarity of driving from aft steering either at the helm in aft steering or at the local control knobs in aft steering. And, and I remember making the comment to, surprisingly to the same OOD that the day you lose steering is always at the most, is always at the most inconvenient of times. My concern was not on transfer, my concern was not on transferring, it is if I have to go all the way to the knob, is my helmsman back there able to keep me on a close or almost near ordered course? Because if somebody would have asked me when would I lose steering I would have told you alongside an oiler cause for me that is the worst scenario that I had in my mind. Now I stand corrected.

**interviewer:** Um, the sea and anchor detail being stood up, that was because of the arrival to port and not necessarily the arrival to the TSS, is that correct?

**respondent:** That was because of arrival to port, yes. And the fact that now we are getting closer proximity to, closer proximity to land, brings me the additional, brings me additional, brings me additional watch standers (incomprehensible). And I will, and I will be, I'll be honest, when we were, when we were briefing this, when we were processing this, when we were planning for pulling into Singapore and making the approach to the Straits of Malacca losing steering was not one of the things that I actively mitigated



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against. Is it a possibility? Yes. Did I think about it? Yes. But the, my confidence on the equipment and the crew was in my opinion sufficient, sufficient enough to make the approach to the Straits of Malacca and to be in the Straits of Malacca. Our main priority was traffic management. That was what I, when I came up to the bridge last, that night, of all the things that I thought that could happen my number one priority for going to the bridge was not the possibility of a loss of steering, it was traffic management and contact management. Making sure that we are safely transiting in what can be considered one of the most congested water ways in the world.

**interviewer:** When you set up the lee helm and you asked the Boatswain Mate of the Watch hey can we go ahead and stand that up now, in preparation for sea and anchor detail

**respondent:** No, it was not in preparation for sea and anchor detail.

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** It was, it was based on the fact that it was the order, the speed order had taken the helmsman too much of his attention from maintaining ordered course. And it's to avoid the distraction, reduce the watch load of that watch stander. It's for the helmsman to be aware and responsible other for, only for the ordered course. It's for somebody else to worry about the ordered speed, which in the big scheme of life, is not one of my, was not one of my most concerns. Especially for a guy that just told you that if I'm late, I'm late. What I mean by that is if we're doing 19 and I used to have this joke with the guys, with the helmsman, it's very precise, you order for 19, you know at PCL 805 or PCL 802 is good enough. You know we only go to pitch and turns when we are either alongside a pier or I go to turns when I am alongside an oiler. Other than that if you order 15 point, uh, if you order 16 and you got 15.8, I'm okay, it's not bad. So, so yeah, it was just to minimize, the purpose was to minimize the loading and give the helmsman only the task of minding the ordered course.

**interviewer:** Okay. So again you discussed that with the Boatswain Mate of the Watch and the OOD and the folks on the bridge. Do you know if it was the Boatswain Mate of the Watch who did stand that helm or did they get somebody else?

**respondent:** I can't tell you, more than likely I cannot tell you exactly who did it, but because we were on a, I don't want to say, on an awkward, so the crew pays a lot of attention. It is a very, very disciplined, this is a very disciplined crew. When we put the marker down saying hey guys to be at 0530 I'm gonna keep, we're gonna do reveille at 5, we're gonna man at 0530 because I trust you guys that it's only gonna take half hour to get ready. I had the oncoming sections, the sea and anchor personnel were showing up 9-10 minutes prior to the watch because they wanted to take time to acclimate themselves to it. They knew we're on the Straits of Malacca. The Captain has been frickin jumping up and down for the past two days that this is the most dangerous place that he has ever seen in terms of traffic. Because I've got the guys going like oh we did the Bussan Straits. I'm like uh, my friend, not the same. But we also did the Taiwan

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Straits, chasing our Near Peer carrier. I'm like yeah, not the same. Okay, there's a lot of traffic moving at speed with purpose. So they were, they were there early. My assumption is it was a qualified, it was a qualified guy, and it was one of the incoming watch standers who was just hey alleviating the load on their CNE, filling in qualified guy saying hey got it.

**interviewer:** How is the qualification process for the crew members that came from other vessels? Cause there's the Antietam crew members who are standing watch on the bridge as well as various watch standers, lookouts. How did that process work for you, for the ship?

**respondent:** All the guys who were coming, so we honor, I honor the quals from other captains, right? You have to. However, systems are different so they don't get placed on the watch bill until I am, until I'm notified that hey Senior Watch Officer notifies me, hey this person is qualified. We have the confidence for him to stand the watch Captain.

**interviewer:** Alright.

**respondent:** For watches that are, uh, for OODs, yeah, we go through a re-qual process. For ADOWs? Definitely. Anything that is, so on the ship anything that is, um, I don't question a, I don't question an Officer. If he tells me he is JOOD qualified okay. Second tour Div O coming in from X ship. Yeah, you have an OOD letter. There is a sense of expectation, you know. And if you don't meet the mark you get extra training.

**interviewer:** And would that be the same for the helmsman and lookouts?

**respondent:** For the helmsman, for the helmsman the guys that got sent over that were helmsman qualified and two of the three were working on the Master Helmsman qualifications. They are, they were good. They understood the system.

**interviewer:** Okay so their training period on board the ship, does it take them long before they are put in the watch rotation, like a UI period or?

**respondent:** There is a UI period and then they get placed, and they get placed on the watch. But based on level of competence, you know. This is

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** You just don't show up and find yourself at the helm of the ship.

**interviewer:** Sure. And then one last question, sir. Captain, you said you like being on the bridge because everything filters through the bridge. All the information comes up there. Is there, is there any information that doesn't go to the bridge first? Like the lookouts reports to someone else before it comes to the bridge?

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**respondent:** Yeah, the lookout reports to the surface tracker, surface tracker reports to the SWIC, SWIC reports up to the, up to the, up to the bridge.

**interviewer:** Is there any

**respondent:** I'm sorry

**interviewer:** please

**respondent:** However, the lookouts are very good at letting us, letting the bridge know what they are seeing. Very, so our lookouts are very active. Not by, not because we're very good but because the areas that we have been operating I need the lookouts to be able to look out and go in and make the call.

[REDACTED] So they are very active, very engaged, because we are in a very dynamic AOR. So for them it is, I don't want to say it's a competition, but it's a matter of hey, I was the one that [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Now he gets to pick the breakaway song because...

**interviewer:** He saw it.

**respondent:** because he saw it. So, it's a crew that, uh, and it's little things you know. It is a crew that they're active. Everybody is an active, active player. I don't have that many passengers.

**interviewer:** That's all I have.

**interviewer:** I have a couple questions. You mentioned that at least one member of your bridge team came TDY to you from the Antietam?

**respondent:** Yeah, I have on that bridge team, one of the officers, yes [REDACTED] came from Antietam.

**interviewer:** And when did he check, when did he come to you? When did he come to the McCain?

**respondent:** Right before I left on uh, so he left on patrol with me.

**interviewer:** Which was when?

**interviewer:** Was that May?

**respondent:** 26 May.



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**interviewer:** Okay. Now, you mentioned that different vessels have different systems? Uh, could you describe the system, specifically the steering system or any other related navigation systems, the differences between the Antietam and the McCain?

**respondent:** No.

**interviewer:** So are they the same systems.

**respondent:** I would have to take a look at Antietam.

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** But in operation they're fairly, I want to say their fairly similar. It's the same build. I couldn't, I couldn't tell you, but they're not, we're not looking at a, at a legacy 5, uh, legacy cruiser prior to cruiser mod. Antietam is post cruiser mod, so it's a smart ship, if you want to call it. It's an integrated, he has an integrated bridge system.

**interviewer:** Okay.

**respondent:** Not our exact serial number I guess but

**interviewer:** Okay. So, was he, was he given any training on the differences between them at any point?

**respondent:** (b) (6)

**interviewer:** Yes.

**respondent:** No, not. I can tell you I did not say hey this is the two differences between the Antietam system and this system. No, it was explained on how this system worked and the operation of our system.

**interviewer:** Got it.

**respondent:** And in the position, he was, he's not. The 73, we went over the 73 console because that one is different, but he was there to get reps and sets on the bridge because Antietam came out of the yards, ran aground and he was caught on that generation of, of working towards an OOD qual so that's why he was underway.

**interviewer:** And he got that qual on the Antietam or he hadn't gotten it yet?

**respondent:** No, he hadn't gotten it yet. He was close.

**interviewer:** Okay. And did he get that qual on the McCain?

**respondent:** No, he's still in OOD qualifying.

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**interviewer:** He's still not. Okay. Got it.

**respondent:** His boards, according to my, according to my (coughing in the room) (incomprehensible) his boards started 45 minutes ago.

**interviewer:** Oh.

**respondent:** But it's not happening I'm here, so. So it's rescheduled.

**interviewer:** And just one other question for you, Captain. If you could go back to that day, would you do anything different?

**respondent:** That's a loaded question. That's a loaded question. That's. I lost 10 sailors, I had a collision at sea. I've replay this in every single scenario. So, yeah, I could have not lost 10 sailors. Uh, but based on the, based on the situation and the information that I had I think I made not the, obviously not the right decision, but the best decisions based on the circumstances of the understanding of the situation. If you turn off the recorder and we want to turn on the way back machine I can replay exactly what I could have done different. And in my brain right now, maybe it would have avoided a collision. But I don't know. But I can tell you for certainty, based on the circumstances and my understanding of the circumstances I made what I assessed to be the best decision. It just, it will always be not enough if I come back with...

**interviewer:** Captain, considering, um, you were there on the bridge, you...

**respondent:** I'm sorry.

**interviewer:** ...considering your position on the bridge, obviously you're the captain of the ship, you experienced and were also involved in, in um the activity on the bridge that night, what do you think happened? What's your best estimation of what happened that night?

**respondent:** Had a collision at sea, lost 10 sailors. Alright! My estimation is that we had an initial loss of steering, and I'm still debating whether it was a loss of steering or loss of indication of steering. (coughing in the room) I call it loss of an indication of steering control. That is the one that hounds me the most is the uncertainty of. If I know I had a rudder somewhere close to amidships because I'm not seeing an initial drift and I know that I end up with a substantial amount of left rudder because I'm running away to port but I have an indication of rudder at midships. We never managed to regain, to gain control, to get positive control of the rudder. So, I, and we go back to the same thing. I couldn't tell you if we had control of the rudder but we thought we were at midships and the guy back there was trying to transfer control and testing for rudder control. Is that what got us a left rudder? I don't know. I can tell you one thing; the rudder doesn't work magically. It is a, it is a very redundant system. Two pumps, primaries, secondary, all of them are aligned. If one goes down, the other one starts. If we lost COMMS she will try

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to go from a primary to an alternate, didn't get the alternate, she will go to next unit. So, is the system. Ships are designed to lose everything but steering. It's the. When you look at the system it's the most redundant system. It's more redundant than lube oil, lube oil on the MRG. So, in all honesty, I don't, I don't. But we're trained, and we go back to the training, I trained the crew. I trained my bridge team to respond to a loss of steering. Press the big red button, test for rudder control, right 5, left 5, don't have it, man aft steering, transfer control to aft steering. Test for rudder control, you don't have it. Go to the local. Everything we were doing we either didn't recognize that we had gained steering, somebody had control and we were not seeing it? But I remember like it was perfect right now, seeing a rudder at midships and the ship started going to port. At that moment I knew now the game is, now we're playing a different, not it's a different situation. And we had a collision.

**interviewer:** Well, Captain, um, we understand you've gone through quite a traumatic event. And on behalf of the Coast Guard and our investigators, please accept our condolences for your crew and their families. Figuring out what happened is part of why we're here. Well, it is the reason why we're here. So, we will endeavor to provide some of these answers in due time. So, in that regard we appreciate you coming here and talking to us so openly and frankly to help us try to figure this out.

**interviewer:** [REDACTED], do you have any closing remarks.

**interviewer:** So, Commander, again we do appreciate your time here today. If you do have any questions for us or if there is any other information you want to provide later do reach out to us. We'd be glad to sit down and get that information from you at that time. Thank you so much.

**respondent:** Thank you guys.