

CUI

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CUI

(b) (6)

17 Sep 7

Interview with (b) (6)

Date of Interview: 17 Sep 7

Time of Interview: 1235

Interviewers:

(b) (6)

Respondent:

(b) (6)

interviewer: I'm (b) (6). 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 12:35. The individuals assisting me on this investigation will now introduce themselves.

interviewer: Hi, good afternoon. (b) (6), Commanding Officer Coast Guard Activities Far East.

interviewer: (b) (6), I'm a JAG Officer with the 14th Coast Guard District.

interviewer: (b) (6), Deck Watch Officer SME from Coast Guard headquarters.

interviewer: Good afternoon, sir. (b) (6) (incomprehensible)

interviewer: Good afternoon, sir. (b) (6) Investigations National Center of Expertise.

interviewer: (b) (6), US Coast Guard Investigations Center of Expertise.

interviewer: I'm (b) (6). I'm from the Naval Safety Center.

interviewer: (b) (6). I'm the senior member Safety Investigation Board. We are observers in this, uh, today's proceedings.

interviewer: (b) (6) Safety Investigation Board.

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interviewer: [REDACTED], if we could start the interview just by having you state your name

respondent: Uh, [REDACTED].

interviewer: And the spelling as well for?

respondent: [REDACTED]. Middle initial [REDACTED]. Last name [REDACTED].

interviewer: Thank you very much.

interviewer: [REDACTED], I'd like to start if you could describe your career in the Navy up until this point, a brief description please.

respondent: Joined the Navy in 1989. Uh, let's see Fire Controlman. Went to A-School in the Great Lakes. After that I was on USS Belknap, Italy, as a CIWS tech. After that USS Spruance Mayport Florida as a CIWS tech / Harpoon tech. Shortly after that Louisville, Kentucky as a Fleet Liaison Officer and Instructor. After that NAVSEA as Fleet Liaison Officer for CIWS / RAM and NATO Sea Sparrow test and evaluation. After that I got commissioned as an LDO. From that I went to USS Calphens as a Systems Test officer out of Yokosuka, Japan. Stayed about three years there. From there, I went to USS Halyburton in Mayport Florida for roughly two years as an Electronics Material Officer. Shortly after that I transferred to, uh, Mobile Mine Assembly unit 10 in Okinawa as a Commanding Officer. Shortly after that, during that tour, I uh, redesigned to the 11-10 community and uh received orders to Center for Combat Systems detachment Mayport six months as OIC just awaiting my class-up for Department Head tour.

interviewer: 11-10, could you explain that?

respondent: Surface Warfare Officer community.

interviewer: Thank you.

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respondent: So completed Department Head School in 2009, reported to USS McCambell DBG-85 in Yokosuka, Japan, did the Department Head tour there as Weapons Officer, and flected up to Combats Systems Officer. From there, I went on to the Naval War College for one year. Then after that I was Commanding Officer of the research center in Las Vegas, Nevada, Nellis Air Force Base. From there I went to PCO pipeline and reported to USS John S McCain in June 2016.

interviewer: Understand. First time as XO?

respondent: Yes, sir.

interviewer: First time on command, in a command staff position?

respondent: Uh.

interviewer: In the leadership triad, the XO, CO

respondent: I had command twice ashore so...

interviewer: Command twice ashore.

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: Okay, first Command Assignment although not the CO afloat.

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: Okay. Got it. Um, can you describe the um transit on the day up to the collision on the 21st? Can you describe the transit and the plan for entering Singapore for the John S McCain?

respondent: So, Sunday, the day before, it was holiday routine. We had the navigation brief 24 hours prior to entering port, so that was Sunday afternoon. We discussed the transit, some of the outliers on that transit, when we were going to set special sea and anchor detail. After the brief

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interviewer: NAV brief?

respondent: After the NAV brief, the Navigator and I printed out the chart as to where we needed to set sea and anchor detail and the track prior to entering the traffic separation scheme. Briefed the Captain. Say hey Captain if by the NAV norm we need to set sea and anchor, because of these two shoals, at this time which would mean reveille is 0400, special sea and anchor detail with the exception of line handlers by 05. Captain looked at the track, saw the two patches of shoal water were very brief. He says let's go ahead and do it one hour after that. So we settled on sea and anchor (coughing in the room) reveille at 5, sea and anchor at 6. That day was holiday routine, weather was great. We had a steel beach picnic on the flight deck. Officers were preparing meals. Had some games on the mess decks (incomprehensible) tournament. Weather was great. Traffic was light, you know the night before. Um, I went to bed fairly early. I will say 20 or 2100 because I knew I put in the night orders to give me up at 4. I knew the Captain was going to be there shortly after midnight based on the traffic so I know that we stop all admin and kinda clear the Captain's schedule after 1700 so that he could get some rest to get up early in the morning. I woke up at, got my woke up call at 0400 in the morning. Woke up, shaved real quick, made a cup of coffee, and I was up on the bridge by 0430. Illumination was nonexistent, I believe it was either 0 or 1%. Very low. So I know it took me, uh, it took me about 5-10 minutes to get my night vision, get settled and get the picture up there. Usually when I come up to the bridge I'm, I'm quiet, just kinda getting my bearings straight. I don't distract by asking questions. See if I can figure it out by myself. I figured out where we were at, looked at VMS. In about 10 minutes I had situational awareness, just kinda watching everything that was going on, watching traffic around us. Um, at the time the log says we lost, we had a steering casualty. People reacted to it, we called it away, we ordered red over red. Captain orders slow down. I went to the bridge wing to see where traffic is at. We were slowing down. I did notice that we weren't bleeding off speed as quickly as we should have, from the speed that we were doing.

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interviewer: Where were you on the bridge?

respondent: I usually just, I'm always walking around, window, looking front, looking at the sides. I remember going to the starboard bridge wing because we had overtaken a ship, and I wanted to see that that side was clear. Always kinda make sure that we have a way out if anything happens. I knew that I, I couldn't see that ship any longer. Then I knew we had another ship that we were probably gonna overtake on the starboard side. We had overtaken the tanker on our port side. And then again, the casualty got called away. We order red over red, order to slow down, call the casualty away. People responded. I would say a little bit of chaos settled on the bridge quickly, and I went out to the bridge just to make sure that traffic wise. Then I go up to the front again, and I feel the ship turning. I see the lights shifting as CO's turning to port. I immediately look up to the IBNS repeater to see where the rudder was, and the rudder indicated at midships, both of them. So I couldn't understand why the rudder was at midships and we were turning so fast. So then I went out to the port bridge wing and I saw that we were going into the path of the merchant vessel that was coming in. I went back inside the bridge to see what we were doing. I know they were trying to get control of the rudder. It was like, it was dark on the bridge. There were like three or four people on the console, Safety Officer. I looked back again at the rudder to see if I could explain cause a ship does not turn that fast unless you have a rudder on, and I still saw the rudder at midships on the IBNS indicators. Went back to see where we were at. I saw the tanker at a distance, but it was kinda hard for me to gauge if we were going to collide because it was dark and all the background lighting. As the ship started turning and it kind of became obvious that it was going to be either a close call or a collision. Went back in to see if we had regained control of the rudder. It seemed like we had not regained control of the rudder but there were like three or four people working the problem. I know they had COMMS with aft steering so aft steering was manned. I know we ordered a right rudder, but at that point it was too late. I ordered the collision alarm to be sounded, the general quarters, and I remember from reading the Fitzgerald incident that one of the problems was they didn't report the casualty

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right away. So I knew we had COMMS with Singapore Port Control. I immediately went over to the bridge-to-bridge grabbed it, and I reported to Singapore Port Control that we had been involved in a collision. I said it twice. I think I passed our position. Um, but I don't recall. Then we started assessing once the Captain kinda had situational awareness on the bridge, we were sounding the alarms and everything else. I went down to CCS to assess damage control efforts. And then from there, you know, once I saw damage control efforts were tracking I kinda went to the different spaces to assess as everything, everything was doing. Berthing 3, flight deck, um.

interviewer: Okay. Was everything pretty routine up until the time of the casualty starting with the NAV brief. NAV brief executed routinely, any concerns starting with the NAV brief up, up until the time of the casualty?

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: Um, during the NAV brief, was the traffic density discussed?

respondent: It was. It was discussed. The Captain and I, we both mentioned that it was the busiest, one of the busiest waterways of the world. Uh, so yes, it was discussed.

interviewer: Any risk mitigation discussed regarding what you do in the situation where traffic density is high?

respondent: So, we, we did discuss that, and Shipping was manned earlier than usually Shipping gets manned during MOD NAV. We manned that up, we went to MOD NAV. The discussion of the sea and anchor detail which would bring up a master helmsman, lee helm and the manning of the aft steering was brought up with Navigator and I and the CO in the CO's cabin as I mentioned earlier. That was in the afternoon.

interviewer: That was after the NAV brief?

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respondent: That was after the NAV brief.

interviewer: So, NAV brief was executed, and you had some times decided on, or at least briefed in the NAV brief regarding MOD NAV would be stood up and when special sea detail would be stood up, is that correct?

respondent: I'm sorry, say that again?

interviewer: So during the NAV brief it was discussed when you're standing up MOD NAV in special sea?

respondent: It was discussed, uh, MOD NAV, not sea and anchor because we were going to bring that discussion up to the Captain with the chart to make a decision whether we were going to do reveille at 04 to set sea and anchor at 05 or reveille at 05 and then sea and anchor at 06.

interviewer: Okay. So it was covered in the NAV brief when you were going to stand up MOD NAV?

respondent: Yes sir.

interviewer: And later with the Captain it was discussed regarding an early stand up of MOD NAV and special sea?

respondent: Not MOD NAV. MOD NAV was set.

interviewer: Set and did not change.

respondent: It was the sea and anchor, special sea and anchor detail.

interviewer: Got it. And the discussion on setting early special sea, can you talk about what was discussed there? What were the things you considered? What was the decision you came to?

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respondent: Uh, so, we briefed that to the CO. I don't recall the time, but I know it was in the afternoon. I asked NAV to bring me the track, the VMS print out so that we can brief the Captain on when to set sea and anchor, based on traffic density and distance to land. We brought that up to the CO in his cabin, we discussed it, sat at the table. He made the decision to set it at the time when we set it.

interviewer: Okay. And who was present at this discussion with the CO?

respondent: It was Captain, myself and the Navigator?

interviewer: Got it. And were there any concerns expressed with the plan that you had for setting special sea detail? Special sea and anchor detail?

respondent: We just laid it out, hey this is the busiest water of the world. I think, and I might be speculating at this point, but the Captain was most concern was safe water. Um, and I think the two decision points, or the two items he consider for the sea and anchor detail were the distances to shoal...

interviewer: Sure.

respondent: ...and how much water space we have to those distances to shoal.

interviewer: Were there any concerns expressed either in the NAV brief or this discussion that happened afterward with any equipment, propulsion, steering, navigation equipment, any of that come up during these briefs.

respondent: Uh, no, just our standard NAV brief and actions to do when casualties happen.

interviewer: Oh, so as part of the NAV brief you'll discuss some hypotheticals, some situations that this might happen?

respondent: Loss of NAV, loss of VMS, loss of an engine, loss of pitch control. We discussed that.

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interviewer: Do you remember any...?

respondent: And the controlling stations, discussed that.

interviewer: Do you remember any particular scenarios that was discussed during this NAV brief that occurred on the day before the casualty?

respondent: No, we cover, in every NAV brief we cover the standard...

interviewer: Oh, all of them?

respondent: ...casualties, steering, loss of GPS, loss of VMS, loss of CRP, loss of an engine, loss of a generator, loss of a, so all the standard casualties we discuss and the pre-planned responses to these.

interviewer: I see. And, uh, what is generally the participation level um of a NAV brief. Is it pretty much the Navigator briefing or designated Junior Officer briefing or is there questions or concerns being expressed to essentially collaborate on the brief. Or is it just essentially, um, we are briefing out the final decision? How does it go in the NAV brief?

respondent: So, there is a list of attendees for the NAV dorm and all those personnel are present. We also have usually the Chiefs that are not on watch, the Officers that are not on watch also attend. It is a hey this is what we plan to do, and towards the end we open it up to the room around the room for concerns.

interviewer: Uh-um.

respondent: Then CMC, XO and the Captain.

interviewer: Were there any concerns expressed during this particular NAV brief?

respondent: I, can't recall.

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interviewer: Okay.

respondent: The only thing I do remember is discussing that it was going to be a very lengthy NAV brief. So, uh, that people should get rest. We discussed that the weather was going to be hot and the actual length. Cause usually, we usually set NAV detail for the NAV during and sea and anchor like about an hour or hour and a half prior to pulling into port. But for this one because of the transit through all the way to Simba-1. It was gonna be a lot longer. That was one of our concerns, keep an eye on watch standers you know for fatigue for standing and also for hydration.

interviewer: So just to be clear, it was going to be a very lengthy NAV detail, not a lengthy NAV brief. Right?

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: Okay. Okay. I thought that's what you meant. Okay. I'd like to get an assessment of your navigational team. Could you talk about your best OOD you have on board and why?

respondent: The best OOD I have on board. I'm gonna look at the watch bill. Um, so out of the assigned?

interviewer: Out of those you have.

respondent: Out of those I have or all that are qualified but not really standing OOD right now?

interviewer: I'm really looking for the qualities that you look for in your best OOD.

respondent: Okay.

interviewer: So, um, let's just go with the ones that are qualified or assigned to stand OOD right now.

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respondent: Okay.

interviewer: So, um, they're all, all of them are pretty new. [REDACTED], she's really good. She's very methodical in her process. One of the things I like about her is the fact that she's not afraid to ask questions, and she always communicates with the TAO. [REDACTED], he's been also assigned on the watch bill. He's pretty senior. I would say he's just sometimes a little quiet and doesn't tell you what he's thinking, but he's very good in the decision-making process. Um, [REDACTED] he's not assigned on the watch bill. He's probably one of the best probably because he's been on board the longest. (b) (6) [REDACTED] Should I just keep going down to?

interviewer: Let me ask you, what makes [REDACTED], is it [REDACTED]?

respondent: [REDACTED].

interviewer: What makes [REDACTED] the best OOD in your mind?

respondent: So, let me take that back. I'm not saying she is the best. I mean if you're gonna say the best I think it's [REDACTED] but he's not assigned as OOD right now. Out of the new Ensigns we have standing the watch, um, I think she has the most foresight with regards to being an OOD. She calls, and she talks, she talks problems through with other watch standers down in CIC so she uses all of her resources when it comes to standing OOD. She uses the CIC. She uses OSS when available. She talks to the TAO. She talks to SWC. She drives the problem, not reacts to the problem.

interviewer: Okay. How about the OOD's relationship with the Captain? We can start with [REDACTED], but generally, how do you see your qualified pool of OD's, those who are standing watch, their current relationship with the Captain, that communication that has to happen between the OOD and the Captain? Can you talk about that?

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respondent: So, um, what I can tell you is when I sync up with the Captain, CMC and I, he'll comment about things that happened throughout the night, how many phone calls he received. I know for a fact that when they call them, you know, he, um, uses the opportunity to teach. Um, when the OODs they're not maybe seeing the big picture, but they call. They call whenever they have questions and to make contact reports. I know the one thing that I have put in the night orders before is that sometimes the OOD and the TAO don't communicate well with regards to calling the Captain, and they call the Captain too much. So they will call him for one report. The OOD will call him for one report, and then the TAO will call him almost immediately with the same report.

interviewer: For the same report.

respondent: So, one, one of the things I put in the night orders, they build that relationship, you know, be considerate. If you have one report hey talk to the TAO and before you call the Captain, just make sure you guys sync up and make sure you guys give him one report. Don't double tap.

interviewer: So when the Captain experiences communications issues such as that, what's his reaction to it? How does he resolve that, that issue?

respondent: He talks to me about it, and I tell the TAOs. I gather the TAOs since they are the Senior Officers on Watch, mostly the department heads. To kind of foster that relationship and to make sure that the communication is loose so that we avoid that double tapping of information.

interviewer: And does the crew, the bridge team respond to that?

respondent: They do. I, uh, had to go up once or twice if I can recall and reinforce the OOD pass down log because we do have an OOD pass down log. Sometimes I put notes in there just to make sure, and then I quiz the OODs to make sure that they are reading it, and say hey what did I put in the OOD pass down log, just to try

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to use it as a training tool and kinda reinforce the building process. I have to do that once or twice maybe, I would say, in the past couple of months.

interviewer: How often is the Captain on the bridge? So you mentioned you were on the bridge during the casualty. We understand the Captain was as well. How often is he on the bridge? Just relative to your experience on other Navy ships, how would you assess the Captain's presence and frequency, uh, when he's on the bridge?

respondent: He is probably on the bridge more than other COs that I have experienced in the past. Um, usually when I if I need to go to his office to brief him on something, and he's not there he is usually that's my next stop. So, he's usually there in the mornings. He goes there in the afternoons and sometimes he, depending on admin and things going on, he may be, you know, on the bridge in the Captain's chair on the bridge. I would say he spends significant time up there.

interviewer: Do you have any ideas of why that might be?

respondent: Um, I would only be speculating if I tell you.

interviewer: Just from your experience?

respondent: From my experience, this is my second Captain on this ship. The first Captain for all special evolutions like gun shoots and things like that he went down to CIC. He wanted me on the bridge. When we had a change of command, [REDACTED] came in it was the other way around. He says I want you in CIC cause that's most of your background. You're more comfortable down there, I'm more comfortable on the bridge. And so that's, I would say the reason he's up on the bridge is because he's more comfortable on the bridge.

interviewer: He's comfortable there.

respondent: Yes.

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interviewer: Thank you. And are you typically on the bridge when the CO is there? I guess I should say how often are you on the bridge when the CO is also on the bridge?

respondent: During special evolutions, uh, we are both there. Um, preparations for like underway replenishment, I'm usually up there ahead of time doing preparations for entering and leaving port. I'm up there well ahead of time, and then he kinda comes up. We usually refer to it as I go up and I kinda set everything up for him, and, uh, then he comes up and just kinda takes the last 5-10 minutes. It's been like that for UNREPs

interviewer: This is a planned engagement between you, the XO and the bridge team.

respondent: So, so I would say that, that we, we kinda found our rhythm. It was not like discussed, hey I'm gonna go and then you gonna come in at the last 10 minutes. We just kinda found, found our rhythm. So it's been working out like that. For nighttime I know sometimes I offer to be up there of assistance during either heavy transits, and it's like no, no I got it. So I just go up anyways. So like I said this time around I knew he was gonna be up there around 1, so I wanted to be up there early enough to allow him the opportunity to either get some coffee or whatever. But for transits like that that are early, he's usually up there first and then I come in behind. But for special evolutions then it's the other way around. I'm usually up there early, setting it up, and then he comes in and takes the last 5-10 minutes.

interviewer: I see. Can you describe his interactions with the OOD and other watch standers when he's on the bridge?

respondent: So, so I would say, um, I guess it depends on the mood. Okay. Some days he's, uh, he's friendly and approachable. Some days it's just the opposite.

interviewer: Can you describe some of those situations?

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respondent: Um, so some days very calm, cool and collected. Uh, and then sometimes chaotic.

interviewer: Okay. So can you describe a time when it was chaotic?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

interviewer: This is unclassified by the way.

respondent: Yes, so. Call OPS. So then rather than say something, you know, or give a command, he will, you know, he will yell, okay.

interviewer: At who?

respondent: At either the CONNING Officer or the OOD.

interviewer: Have, um, so you've obviously witnessed this. Have you had any engagement or involvement or any intervention in that particular or any situation like that?

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: You have. Can you describe that for me?

respondent: So, uh, one significant one was July 9th where we were, it was a very busy day. We pulled into Subic Bay to do stores. Um, we went to one pier, to another pier, we did stores. We did a whole bunch of pallets, I forgot the count, but we did a lot of pallets. All hands working party. From there we had to get underway

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to go to the fueling pier. So we did that, we got to the fueling pier, this is all in a span of one day, to take on fuel cause they wouldn't do a barge. So we took fuel, and we were done. So we discussed setting sea and anchor detail, so as usual I go up there start setting it up. He comes up. I don't know what was, uh, what was going through his mind, but he started just taking over like as either OOD. Something that he usually doesn't do, he just started sort of micromanaging which like I said we have worked out this rhythm of I go up there and he just comes back on the last 10-15 minutes. And, uh, so I noticed that as he starts taking over things he's not letting the watch team follow the check list that we have for, for getting underway. And I noticed that we're starting to miss steps, making reports hey this is completed when it's actually not completed. So, um, so he was just all over the place. I grabbed him on the port bridge wing and say hey Captain slow down. Cause he has told the whole bridge team before when I get like that pull me aside and slow me down. So, I went to the bridge wing, said hey Captain slow down, we're missing steps. Okay. This is, we don't need to hurry this up. And he yelled back at me and says I gotta go, I'm only doing colors once and that's when I get underway. I'm not gonna do it twice. Cause we were close to sunset to do colors. So he wanted to do colors once, and that when I get underway. And at that point I felt like no matter what I did he just kinda took over the problem and kinda shut everybody out.

interviewer: So, regarding doing colors, um, seems like a fairly minor thing in the grand scheme of things, right?

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: That was your, that was your assessment?

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: Any other chances to readdress later? So there was the bridge wing conversation. Was it something that you and the CO talked about later or?

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respondent: We did. But it was pretty much a one-way conversation. That same evening.

interviewer: What did he say?

respondent: Um, um, he's like when I gotta go, I gotta go, essentially.

interviewer: Meaning?

respondent: And I said, Captain, I, I got it, but there was no reason for going so fast. We were missing steps. And he said no, we were not missing steps. Um, so.

interviewer: Um, so it sounds like there were other situations like this. Uh, is this one example? Is this the exception? Or is this, does this happen quite a bit?

respondent: This is the one example that resonates in my head as one of the worst. That's why I'm able to tell you that it happened on July 9th.

interviewer: So there are other similar, just not as bad.

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: Okay. And, um, obviously this was, this happened on the bridge wing close by other watch standers. Did you feel that the bridge team and others were witness to this situation?

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: And did you hear any of the crew, bridge team, in the wardroom, senior leadership happen to mention it to you later?

respondent: No sir.

interviewer: Obviously they witnessed it.

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respondent: Yes sir.

interviewer: Other than these type interactions that you had with the CO how is your relationship otherwise? Day to day, routine, um, how often do you talk? What do you talk about? How was the day to day relationship with the CO?

respondent: We, uh, we had a daily sync with, uh, with him and the CMC every morning, with the exception of Saturdays which was our CO, XO, CMC, Department Head meeting so we didn't meet. We just met once that day for about an hour amongst the department heads, XO, CMC, and leading Chief Petty Officers for each department. Uh, then on Sundays sporadically at the OPS Intel brief. So we did interact every day.

interviewer: Okay. Did the CO have any situations like he had with you on the bridge wing with any other member of the crew, say Command Master Chief, department heads, um, that you know of, or that you're aware of? Any other interactions like that? Or in that variety?

respondent: Um, on the bridge specifically?

interviewer: Really anywhere?

respondent: Not with CMC that I witnessed, but with other Officers and Chiefs, yes.

interviewer: Would you be, uh, can you talk about those?

respondent: Uh, I mean, as far as what the content?

interviewer: Some examples, just some examples, yes.

respondent: Um, sometimes the Department Heads were not, were not producing or getting the products that he needed. So, he reacted in a similar way. Um, sometimes, uh, at OPS Intel when there were just Chiefs and Officers

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interviewer: So this is a routine brief, OPS Intel brief?

respondent: Yes, OPS Intel, daily brief.

interviewer: Uh-um.

respondent: So, I would say that type of interaction was with just Officers and Chiefs. I never heard of an interaction like that with E6 and below.

interviewer: Okay. So when these interactions happen with others did you ever become involved in any way to talk to the CO about his interactions with the Officers and Chiefs?

respondent: Um, I did, but there was no, pretty much a one-way conversation.

interviewer: Did that deter you from bringing any other issues to his attention?

respondent: Well, at one point if you're bringing stuff to and, and, you're essentially unheard then, yeah, just kinda limited my roll.

interviewer: Understand. So let me roll back to the time of the casualty. So the CO was on the bridge and had been there since shortly after midnight. Um, you were there since shortly after 0400. Can you describe the interactions between the CO and the bridge watch team that occurred leading up to the casualty?

respondent: So leading up to the casualty the Captain and [REDACTED], and again I was just observing, I know it was busy so I didn't want to interrupt so I was just kinda observing. Looking out and kinda validating their conversations in my mind, and chiming in once in a while. But it was, it seemed a junior subordinate you know relation, hey what do you think about this guy? What are we doing about this guy? What's the CPA? Okay. What's your recommendation?

interviewer: This was between the OOD and the CO?

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respondent: Yes sir. So, you know, overtaking this merchant, you know, doing this. So it was very (snapping sound). It was normal. It was quiet. There was no chaos. It was busy. It was busy because there was a lot of traffic, but it was normal.

interviewer: Normal for this CO and his interaction with the bridge team or normal for most any Navy vessel you've been on.

respondent: I would say most, most, most Navy vessels. So, so there was, there was like a, like a team work relationship. Hey Captain this is my intention with this guy. Yes, I concur. Hey what do you think about this guy? So, sort of coaching and evaluating each other's, you know, actions leading up to the point of the casualty.

interviewer: Did you get the sense that the CO, when he was on the bridge, was, uh, to use your words before micromanaging at any point, during this particular night?

respondent: So, um, when I went back to micromanaging that was in a specific situation which was getting underway, which is a check list that we have to follow.

interviewer: Okay.

respondent: Okay? On this particular point there was just navigation and contact management. Um, so was he micromanaging the picture? Um, I would say no. There was just him and the OOD and the rest of the watch team, myself included. We were just navigating and managing the picture.

interviewer: As expected, routine. There was nothing heavy-handed or abnormal about what was going on between that interaction between the OOD and the CO. Alright. Was there some point in the, the chronology, the sequence of events that that changed?

respondent: Um, I would say, I would say probably when the casualty was, was called away. Um, there was a sense of, um, probably a little bit of chaos you know

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respondent: On the bridge. It was dark. Everyone from the Boatswain Mate of the Watch kinda wanted to help. People jumped on COMMS trying to get COMMS with aft steering. And it was just a little chaotic.

interviewer: Uh-um. Was there any direction or guidance given by the CO to any watch standers? Specifically, what I'm looking for is any, any communications between the CO and any other watch standers that were on the bridge other than the OOD?

respondent: I, I think he called the CON cause he usually likes the CON to follow him everywhere he goes. Um, I think it was he gave some orders to the CON, but like I said I was worried about contact management and figure out hey what's going on. I know he gave order to slow down. Um, and then shortly after that he was very specific to 5 knots. Um, but that's, that's all I can recall.

interviewer: Any interactions directly between him and the helm station leading up to the call of loss of steering?

respondent: Leading to the?

interviewer: Leading up to the time loss of steering was called out, do you recall any interactions between him and the helmsman?

respondent: No.

interviewer: Okay.

interviewer: Did you see him participate in any like the watch swapping or anything like that, managing people on the bridge? Do you recall?

respondent: Um, no.

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interviewer: Um, did you provide any guidance or direction to the watch team or OOD during this lead up to the casualty?

respondent: Um, I asked what was the indication, because based on the indication, um, there are actions that you take so what, what, was the indication for loss of steering? Was there a pump that we lost? Was the other available? But at that point the [REDACTED], he is the division officer for electrical and auxiliaries, he became involved.

interviewer: Was he a watch?

respondent: Yes, (incomprehensible) he was the Junior Officer of the watch.

interviewer: Okay. And so you asked this question of him?

respondent: Of the helmsman. The helmsman was the one that called away loss of steering.

interviewer: And what was his response?

respondent: Um, I didn't get a response.

interviewer: Did the CO ever take control of the deck and/or the CON during this evolution? The work up to the casualty?

respondent: So, I never heard him say that he has the deck. Um, I know he gave, he gave some rudder orders but it was to the CON so the CON could repeat those back. Um.

interviewer: Is that, is that typical that the CO would give direction to the CON directly to the CON?

respondent: So, when you're coaching it is typical, but when you, every ship that I've been to, when the CO gives a command like you know a rudder order that

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automatically, in my view and everything since I've been trained the Captain takes the CON.

interviewer: At that moment, whether he says it or not.

respondent: At that moment when he gives that order, the Captain takes the CON. We do not do that because he does give orders but he expects for the CON to give those orders to the helm and the lee helm.

interviewer: I see. So, in this case when those orders were they given to the CON was the OOD aware of the orders?

respondent: I, I don't know.

interviewer: Do you have any concerns with those directions coming from the CO directly to the CON or to any other watch stander, um, without the OOD involved?

respondent: Um, my concern is, like I said, in every ship that I've been to when the Captain gives the Conning order he takes the CON.

interviewer: meaning that he announces the CON I've got the CON? Or it's a defecto?

respondent: It's a defecto that if I'm the Captain and I said right full rudder that means now that the helmsman is taking orders from me directly, and I take over the CON.

interviewer: Right.

respondent: For the deck I have to say I have the deck.

interviewer: Okay. So, in this case the CO gave some orders, specifically to slow, and I think there's a right rudder ordered. So in that case it's yours, and, well, it's your impression that at that moment he was acting as a CON.

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respondent: When he said slow down? No. Because slowdown is not a standard command. So when he said slowdown that was for the OOD and the CON to order a speed less of what we were doing.

interviewer: That's guidance to the OOD and the CON. But when he says, like I said if I'm the CO and I said 5 knots that is, that is not a standard command so that doesn't automatically, but that is very specific guidance. And then the next thing should be for the Conning Officer all engines ahead one-third for 5 knots.

interviewer: Standard command.

respondent: It's a standard command.

interviewer: Understand. Okay.

respondent: So, slow down and 5 knots is not a standard command. Those are guidance that he gives, and he expects the OOD and CONNING Officer to react to that and give out the standard command or order the standard command for that.

interviewer: Okay. And in your mind, there's no problem with that. The CO giving that kind of guidance to the OOD is common, routine, no problem.

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: Were you unaware, were you aware with any issues of the steering gear system?

respondent: So, we've been having, yes. We've been having some communications issues with the steering gear, loss of COMMS. This is all part of the new IBNS install. So, if as I understand it, if one of the units loses COMMS with the IBNS server it will generate a fault, a major fault, because then IBNS says hey I don't know the status of this HPU. Um, so if, if you are in those HPUs the, you can select the other HPUs which are normally running. Seamless transition. Um, and sometimes the fault just sets and resets. Almost immediately.

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interviewer: So, this issue had been ongoing for some time? The faults?

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: And what was your assessment of the resolution of those issues, and what was your interactions with the Chief Engineer regarding how this problem was being resolved?

respondent: So, the Chief Engineer owns the pump side, hardware side of the steering. The IBNS side is owned by EMO.

interviewer: EMO, okay. The electronic control.

respondent: The Electronics Materials Officer. So he owns, he owns that side. Um, we have had tech reps on board before for the VMS node crashes, and we have been distant support trying to figure out what the problem was with this. The same tech reps that were supposed to actually meet us here in Singapore were going to take a look at the problem. But when a problem, when a fault happens and it resets it's very difficult to troubleshoot until the fault happens again. So, the fault will never set and stay long enough to troubleshoot it. But it was a loss of COMMS.

interviewer: Okay. Had you, had the McCain lost steering before in your recollection?

respondent: No. We had steering, casualties, with the loss of communications between the systems in aft steering and the bridge but not a loss of steering.

interviewer: Not a loss of steering.

respondent: So, communication faults.

interviewer: Right. What was your assessment of the crews training and familiarity with the new steering gear system?

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respondent: So, I can tell you that steering system was installed during the last shipyard period. And I was not there for that. So, I do not know what type of training was provided, what type of SOVAT was performed on the system and who was trained on it. Um, I can tell you that it was a, it's a complex system that only a few of the ETs know, but usually when we have a fault with that system their resolution is to reboot the system.

interviewer: How about the operators? Are they familiar with the system? Helmsman? Lee helmsman?

respondent: To my knowledge, yes.

interviewer: Was there any concerns expressed by those who operate the system with it that you know of?

respondent: Not that I'm aware of.

interviewer: How about loss of steering drills? Any concerns when executing a drill regarding loss of steering?

respondent: So, we had ran a couple of loss of steering drills, and the feedback that I received from OPS and Navigator who were running the drills up on the bridge was that hey we need to run more of these drills. And I said concur, let's do it.

interviewer: Why did they feel you needed to run more drills?

respondent: So, part of it was during normal underway we had not had opportunities to practice loss of steering and having people, you know, go back aft, you know, and take aft steering control. So we were kinda getting back into that routine, and we had said hey off-going watch team, kinda like we do for boat officers or the off-going JOOD goes to be boat officers or the off-going section is the one that responds to the casualty. So we were working through those kinks. We had that portion figured out. Um, I, I think the feedback that I received from NAV

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and OPS is the transferring control from bridge to aft steering and we need to practice that more.

interviewer: Can I take it to mean that there were some problems in transferring control before or just the crew was unfamiliar or uncomfortable with operating the equipment?

respondent: I would say that because it's such an unusual pulling out the book to read and respond they were rusty on doing that procedure.

interviewer: As in the casualty control procedure.

respondent: As in the casualty control procedure.

interviewer: Okay. Was there any concerns expressed from watch standers, um, Navigator regarding, um, knowing where control of the steering was at the time? Any confusion between what's on the screen and the watch standers understanding of where their control of the rudder was? Any concerns expressed?

respondent: So, no concerns expressed with that. It was just the actual procedure, the EOSS procedure to transfer that control because we hadn't done that in so long.

interviewer: Yeah.

respondent: They were kinda rusty trying to follow those procedures.

interviewer: Okay. And there was a plan to do more drills and exercises?

respondent: Yes, we said absolutely.

interviewer: Okay. Got it.

interviewer: Do you recall when the last loss of steering drill was completed?

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respondent: I do not. Without looking at a calendar and plan of the week and POD, I could not tell you. I know we had been, because of the type of operations we had been doing we had been dedicating a lot more time to training because the operations were not so tactically significant that running drills would disrupt the tactical operations we were doing.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Um, has the McCain had any near misses or close calls that you can recall? Mostly regarding navigation, safe navigation.

respondent: Safe navigation as to, like running aground?

interviewer: Or nearly so, near misses, close calls, almost colliding, almost running aground, but not a casualty.

respondent: So, during the last two underway replenishments, um, during the last two underway replenishments I heard that, I did not hear it on bridge-to-bridge but I heard from the watch stander that the RES ship called on bridge-to-bridge and told us that we were getting a little bit too close.

interviewer: Okay. And how was this um, was there a debrief afterward?

respondent: Yes.

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interviewer: Discussion. Um, and how, who attended and what was the discussion like?

respondent: For this particular?

interviewer: For this particular one.

respondent: So, we found out after, after.

interviewer: As in like you and the CO?

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: Oh, okay. How did you find out?

respondent: One of the Officers mentioned it. For one of the evolutions I had stepped off the bridge and gone back aft to check on the, on the um, rep station, the CON rep station. And on the other one I was on the boat deck cause we were transferring personnel.

interviewer: Okay.

respondent: Um, but I heard an Officer that yes, they called us and uh, for one it was an approach. We made an approach too close. Um, but I think the Captain and I were on the bridge wings and we didn't hear the call on bridge-to-bridge.

interviewer: And so it was brought to your attention. How long after the near miss was it brought to your attention?

respondent: So, so when a merchant tells you hey you're getting too close I, I. For the approach for that particular one where we heard that the USNS ship called us, the Captain and I both were on the bridge wing making our approach. And I did mention hey it looks like we are a little too close, and we corrected. You know, we came, uh, we came port to make that approach. We've never come in closer than

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180 to another ship alongside. If anything, we usually come in wide, 200 feet. So, um, so at the, at the debrief we discussed how was our approach. We did discuss that. That we came in, started coming in at 1000 yards, a little bit too close for the approach but we corrected and we came, we came left port to open up that and come in at about 180.

interviewer: The debrief, was it planned or is this routine after each special evolution.

respondent: Each special evolution has a debrief.

interviewer: So the fact that you came in a little close this time was just covered as a routine part of the debrief.

respondent: Yes. The fact that we didn't hear the merchant tell us hey you're coming in too close came afterwards, but we had addressed that when we were doing the radian rule that we were coming in a little bit too close.

interviewer: Okay. And did you feel that the issues uncovered during the debrief, that there was adequate corrective action taken to prevent that from a similar recurrence?

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: Okay.

respondent: And usually our First LT for deck evolutions, she writes, writes down some of those points of debrief. And when we're doing the next evolution we go over previous lessons learned.

interviewer: Okay. Overall, how do you think that process works on the McCain? So essentially identifying areas for improvement and making a plan and then fixing it for next time? How would you describe that, how that works on the McCain?

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respondent: Um, it works. I mean we identified what the problems we saw before and we brief them. Say, hey this is a problem we saw the last time we did this. Please make sure we do X, Y, Z so this doesn't happen again.

interviewer: How would you compare how the McCain does that to other Navy ships you've been on?

respondent: Pretty similar. Actually, the whole PBED process on this ship

interviewer: PBED?

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: Plan? What's the acronym?

respondent: Plan Brief Execute Debrief.

interviewer: Okay. Very good.

respondent: So, it's, I had not seen it in previous ships. So this is something that is kinda, should have been in place because aviators do it all the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] is one of the guys who is pushing that up to the Surface Committee for the whole PBED process. Um, I heard it when I was going through the PCO pipeline. PBED, PBED, PBED. When I was Department head, we planned, we briefed, we executed, but we didn't really debriefed.

interviewer: So this is something you've implemented since you've been on board?

respondent: Uh, I would say that it was there, it's just that I just hadn't seen it before because it was to me, based on the last time I was on a ship, it was not, it was not there before.

interviewer: Okay.

respondent: The plan, brief and execute was. The debrief was hit or miss.

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[REDACTED]

interviewer: Understand.

interviewer: Just had a couple of questions from early on describing up on the bridge, the casualty. Um, again you said you looked up at the monitor and saw that the rudder was in midships. Is there any throttle control or throttle indicators up on that screen?

respondent: Yes, that screen has rudder, depending on what you have selected, speed, speed over ground or through the water speed over ground because our Pit Sword was CASREPd. Um, and, um heading. You can also select to see winds, true, relative.

interviewer: Does it have specifically what the thrust was on port and starboard shaft?

respondent: No.

interviewer: Do you recall seeing that on any screen?

respondent: No.

interviewer: At the time do you know if lee helm was stood up?

respondent: It was not stood up per the watch bill, but the off-going helmsman had stayed behind to help with, to split the helmsman and lee helmsman duties because normally underway condition 3 steaming those duties are with one person.

interviewer: Do you know who had made that decision to have the?

respondent: I was not there when that decision was made.

interviewer: Again, so the previous helmsman was at the lee helm station and operating the throttles.

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interviewer: One follow-up question there, is it normally announced when there's a transfer of control between stations on the bridge?

respondent: Between when you split the helm and lee helm?

interviewer: Right.

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: Did you hear that announced?

respondent: No.

interviewer: And who is it that operates the screens to split those two stations?

respondent: The watch stander.

interviewer: The watch stander. And for my clarification, sir, I just want to kind of get again the timeline of events of, of alarms, radio calls, starting from the loss of steering. Once again if you could step through that process on the morning of the 21st.

respondent: Okay. Um, from the time we lost steering?

interviewer: Yes, sir.

respondent: Okay. So loss of steering was announced. I asked what was the indication to make, to assess what kind of whether it was a COMMS fault or a total loss of steering. I didn't get an answer, but I saw [REDACTED] go out there to the console immediately and the Boatswain Mates, I couldn't tell you which Boatswain Mates because it was dark. I looked forward to look at traffic. I remember Captain ordering slow down. I remember I think we ordered 10 knots first and then he said 5 so we ordered 5. Then I went out to the bridge wings to see um who was around us. We ordered red over red. Um, then I came out to the port bridge wing, and I

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saw, um, the tanker that was in our quarter at a distance. Went back in, looked forward and I noticed that we were turning as if a rudder was put over. I immediately looked at the IBNS repeater. I saw that rudder was at midships. That just completely threw me off cause a rate of turn like that does not happen with a rudder in midships. So, because we were turning so fast that's when I went to the port side to assess, say hey we're turning, why are we turning because one thing did not. Rudder at midships and the rate of turn did not make sense. So I asked the question, hey why are we turning? Why are we turning? I went out port side, and I saw that we were kinda crossing over to the lane of that merchant. Um, I noticed that we were not decreasing speed as fast as we should have been. When you order 5 knots, typically on our ship, you will feel the, I can't say that you feel the CRP move, but the blades move and you will feel that cavitation, sort of the drag that creates the new speed. Sort of acts like an air brake if you will, but in the water. That's when I noticed that it was going to be either a close call or a collision. And I, when it was imminent that it was gonna be a collision, and I'm summarizing three minutes, I said hey sound the collision alarm. I went over bridge-to-bridge immediately, made the call, sound general quarters. The ship kinda sort of got wrapped, we started to turn. My fear at the moment was that because we are in a traffic separation scheme we probably, there was other traffic around us. So once I noticed that we had kinda come to almost like an all stop drifting speed I said to the captain hey, I'm gonna go down to central to assess damage and, you know, damage control efforts.

interviewer: So, if I could just clarify, in this timeline you've just given me, when was the collision? Cause I have, uh, you're crossing into the merchant's (incomprehensible), speed is not decreasing as quickly, you can see it's a close call, that the collision is imminent and then we have sound collision alarm and then you're on the bridge-to-bridge. Where is the collision in there?

respondent: When I go out to the port bridge wing for those, for that last 30 seconds if you will, and I see us crossing over, where, because of the darkness I

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could not tell if it was gonna be a close call or a near miss. Once I saw, I saw the, I saw the light that was coming right by the, by the aft missile deck I told the Boatswain Mates sound the collision alarm, hit, and that's when I went to the bridge-to-bridge immediately. I know when we got hit the Captain went to the port bridge wing immediately.

interviewer: So relative to the collision when did you sound, or when was the collision alarm sounded?

respondent: I, I would say within seconds of the collision.

interviewer: Before or after?

respondent: I don't know.

interviewer: Do you have a rough idea of prior to slowing down what the vessel's speed was?

respondent: It was 16, 16 knots.

interviewer: And do you know what the current was at the time? Going with the ship? Going against?

respondent: Ah, I had checked set and drift earlier, but at the time I do not recall what it was.

interviewer: When you saw it earlier do you know what it was at that time?

respondent: I don't recall.

interviewer: Thank you, sir.

interviewer: (b) (6). Uh, you had mentioned that there was a, you felt like there was a lack of training or practice with the crew as far as switching or doing drills with the steering system. Is that, right?

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respondent: So there was a, because it's such an unusual and the procedure for transferring control, it was, we needed to do it more often to build that muscle memory. Casualty control actions were supposed to have a muscle memory built into it. You follow the procedure but you're supposed to have, you're supposed to know immediate controlling actions.

interviewer: Is that steering system that's on the McCain is that very unique or so much different vessels that you know of?

respondent: I've never seen it before. IBNS I've never seen it before.

interviewer: Never had that system before. As far as the bridge team, the NAV team that was up there, do you feel like they were seasoned, experienced?

respondent: It's an Ensign is not seasoned or experienced, an Ensign with three years in the Navy. But the level of supervision and backup was there.

interviewer: So, as far as them having the knowledge of doing the transfer of steering, how would they have gotten that? Where would that have come from?

respondent: The training that we do. The drills that we do. It's also a part of the qualification process because before you qualify OOD you're supposed to be helm safety qualified. Helm safety covers all of those, all of those casualties.

interviewer: And that would have covered this unique steering system?

respondent: Yes.

interviewer: Okay. Thank you. (whispering). XO, from your experience there being on the bridge and also your experience from being the Executive Officer, what do you think happened?

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respondent: Um, I think we had an indication of a loss of steering, and um it was probably misinterpreted. Um, that's, that's about, that's about all, I can think of. Somebody called because they saw something, and I don't know what they saw. Could have been a loss of COMMS. I don't know what they saw.

interviewer: Why do you think that the loss of steering was misinterpreted?

respondent: Because aft steering was manned quickly, and if we had lost steering at the SCC and aft steering taken control, um, we probably would have never had this accident. If the rudder, um, I, I never saw the rudder other than midships but I know ships, and I know ships don't turn that fast unless there is a force acting on it. Um, the only force that could have been acting on it was, was the rudder. The current, when I recall, it was not that, it could have not caused that rate of turn.

interviewer: Okay.

respondent: From my briefings, the Master Helmsman if he loses, if he loses. If a Master Helmsman, the standard answer they give you is if I lose control the rudder is in midships. I do not test for positive rudder control until I'm given the order by the Conning Officer.

interviewer: So, from what you saw did you feel that the casualty control procedures were followed and should have regained control of steering?

respondent: I don't know because I don't know what the casualty was. I don't know what that screen said as far as the casualty was.

interviewer: Okay. XO, do you feel that, when thinking back about the casualty, anything that first of all you could have done differently or anything the McCain could have done differently to prevent this casualty?

respondent: Uh, so I've been thinking about that a lot. I think, um, the only thing that we could have done to prevent this casualty, this particular casualty is to, um,

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man the sea and anchor detail earlier. That would have manned aft steering with a Master Helmsman, a Helm Safety, the electricians and AUX personnel. I would have put a Master Helmsman on the bridge, put a lee helm, it would have had that split. Based on the, on the watch bill. And had a Helm Safety Officer already present.
(coughing in the room)

interviewer: But there's nothing really in your risk assessment that would have said to man it up earlier. This is just hindsight so to speak.

respondent: Yeah.

interviewer: Okay. Thank you XO.

interviewer: Again, we definitely appreciate your time here today and all the information you've provided to us. If you have any questions for us or if there's any additional information that comes to mind you want to communicate, please do reach out to us as we would like to discuss that information with you. Again, thank you so much for your time here today.