

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

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Investigation of:

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COSCO BUSAN/BRIDGE ALLISION  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

\* Docket No.: DCA-08-MM-004

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Interview of: CAPTAIN ELLSWORTH F. HOBURG

Pilot Commission Office  
Pier 9  
San Francisco, California

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to Notice.

BEFORE: TOM ROTH-ROFFY  
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

1  
2 INVESTIGATOR ROTH-ROFFY: Okay, good morning. My name  
3 is Tom Roth-Roffy. I'm a Investigator with the National  
4 Transportation Safety Board, and I'm acting as the Investigator in  
5 Charge of the investigation of the Cosco Busan allision at the  
6 Oakland Bay Bridge.

7 We're here to conduct a safety investigation of the  
8 accident, as well as to look at some of the oil spill response by  
9 the various agencies, but our primary focus is, is the allision or  
10 the collision of the bridge.

11 BY INVESTIGATOR ROTH-ROFFY:

12 Q. And if you would for the record, sir, go ahead and  
13 identify yourself.

14 A. My name is Ellsworth F, as in Frank, Hoburg, commonly  
15 known as Frank. I am a member of the San Francisco Bar Pilots,  
16 have been for 20 years; and I relieved Captain Cota on the bridge  
17 of the Cosco Busan shortly after the allision with the Delta Tower  
18 and when the ship was anchored in Anchorage 7.

19 Q. Okay. Sir. What I'd ask you to do now is just from  
20 your recollection to go back say from the time you woke up in the  
21 morning. If you could briefly summarize your activities, and then  
22 as you -- at the time you were notified of the allision or  
23 notified that you had to go out and relieve Captain Cota, provide  
24 additional details as much as, as you can.

25 A. My dispatcher called me at about three in the morning,

1 and told me that there were two 6 o'clock sailings, and I had the  
2 choice. I chose to make a change of pilots off of Angel Island on  
3 a Chevron tanker, and I was down at the office at 5:30, and a  
4 pilot sailing ahead of me on a ship from Oakland on a Maersk  
5 Sealand Ship was sitting over at Oakland in the fog. The fog on  
6 the Bay was extremely dense. You couldn't see the bridge. You  
7 couldn't see the base of the tower, you couldn't see Treasure  
8 Island or YBI. And fog reports were coming in over the radio, and  
9 even inland reports, I think I heard NAPA had 20 feet of  
10 visibility. So the ship that I was going to take to sea was not  
11 leaving, the Chevron -- and subsequently we heard that the Maersk  
12 Sealand Ship cancelled their sailing until 9 o'clock. And then  
13 there were other pilots in the office because of the fog, that  
14 things were delayed. And there was a pilot, Bob Pinder (ph.), who  
15 was scheduled to take a ship to Redwood City, and that ship was  
16 coming into the Bay with Captain Greg Wau (ph.), was the pilot,  
17 and Captain Pinder was going to relieve him off the front. And  
18 Captain Pinder said that he was going to relieve Captain Wau and  
19 just take it to the bridge and anchor it, and just remain at  
20 anchor until such time as he felt he could see where he was going.

21 So the dispatcher then was looking at his arrivals because the  
22 two pilots who were supposed to cover two noon arrivals were, were  
23 not getting out there. So at that point, the dispatcher said  
24 we'll go out -- at 10 o'clock, and at this point it was about 8  
25 o'clock. So I went out to my truck parked in the parking lot to

1 get my stuff, and I happened to step out onto the apron of the  
2 pier to call my wife and tell her that things were changing, and I  
3 saw Captain McIsaac, Captain Wau, and Captain -- Coney coming out  
4 of the pilot galley and kind of heading towards me. And I said,  
5 are you guys coming for me, jokingly, and Captain Coney said John  
6 Cota just hit the Delta Tower of the bridge. So he said why don't  
7 you come with us. So I said, fine, because I didn't have any  
8 place -- I needed to be at the office at 10 o'clock, be back by 10  
9 o'clock. So we got on the pilot boat Golden Gate and went into  
10 the fog and first we went to the Delta Tower and looked at it, and  
11 saw the piling and the sheaving structure had been wiped away from  
12 it, and there was black oil on it. And so we just looked at that,  
13 and then we proceeded north to -- into Anchorage 7, and as we  
14 approached the ship, which was half a mile away, he had just  
15 dropped anchor. He was still flooding. His bow was somewhat to  
16 the North, and he had a tractor tug tethered on the stern of the  
17 ship. So as we came up to port side, we came forward at mid-ship,  
18 but not all the way up to the opening of the ship, and at that  
19 time oil was coming out of the opening in the side of the ship,  
20 and it was right at the turn of the hull on the port side. And as  
21 I have speculated -- one of the big questions that I kept getting  
22 asked was how much oil do you think went in the water? And my  
23 answer was always, I don't really know. Because when I first saw  
24 the oil coming out of the side of the ship, it appeared to me as  
25 if someone had a 5-gallon bucket and they were pouring it, and the

1 oil as just coming out. It wasn't shooting out. It wasn't  
2 dripping down the side. It had little momentum to it. And by the  
3 time -- and so then we were involved with getting the crew of the  
4 ship to drop the ladder low enough so we could get on it. And  
5 Captain McIsaac, the port agent, said somebody should relieve  
6 John. So it had not been arranged. I was only there through a  
7 happenstance. And I said, I'll relieve him. So he said, you're  
8 okay with that? I said, sure. So I got on the ladder and got up  
9 on deck, and, and I think a crewmember took me to the elevator,  
10 and I went up. And when I arrived on the bridge, we were still in  
11 very dense fog. Couldn't see, couldn't see anything. But when I  
12 asked where Captain Cota was, one of the crew members on the  
13 bridge said that he was in the lavatory. And I walked out on the  
14 port bridge wing and from my vantage point, I could not see oil  
15 going in the water at that time. And the ship hit the bridge at  
16 8:30, which is the time I think that is advertised as the time of  
17 the allision. I'd say we were pretty close to 9 o'clock maybe or  
18 10 to 9, 5 to 9. I don't know. But the Captain told me that they  
19 were shifting the bunkers out of that tank in order to get the  
20 level down to stop the flow. So shortly thereafter, Captain Cota  
21 came out of the lavatory and I greeted him and told him I had it,  
22 and then Captain Coney came up, and Captain Coney and Captain Cota  
23 went out on the port bridge wing and were looking at what they  
24 could see, and at that point, I called VTS. So there's a record  
25 of that somewhere. And I told VTS that I had the con, and as soon

1 as possible, visibility allowing, I was going to move the ship  
2 into the south bay. Because the draft of the ship was 40 feet,  
3 and where we were when the tide dropped it could give me a little  
4 problem at that draft. So there was some urgency to move the  
5 ship. And at the time, the visibility was still zero, and Captain  
6 Cota had one of these strips that you put in your mouth for  
7 alcohol or drug testing. So I think he did that with Captain  
8 Coney. And at the same time, the Captain of the ship had a sheet  
9 of paper that was in a plastic that was under the plastic -- the  
10 chart table, and it had about eight names of companies and  
11 telephone numbers, and it was the who you call if you have trouble  
12 list. So after calling VTS, I then called them on my phone and  
13 had them patch me through to the Marine Safety Office, and I told  
14 the Marine Safety Office that as soon as I had visibility, I  
15 wanted to move the ship, and asked them if they were coming out,  
16 and they said they were dispatching units, but what that meant, I  
17 don't know. Subsequently, I saw some small boats. And then the  
18 Captain was having trouble communicating with the people on this  
19 list. So he made a copy of the list and gave it to me and I  
20 started calling the people on the list. And I don't recall who  
21 they were, but they had to do with emergency response; and that,  
22 that list is still on the ship. And, and the big question that  
23 they kept asking me was how much oil do you think went in the  
24 water? I don't know. You know, maybe 10, 15 barrels. If it  
25 started at 8:30 and they shut it off by shortly before 9, and, you



1 know, the volume was similar to what I saw, just in my layman's  
2 observation, I thought well maybe 10 or 15 barrels, was my best  
3 guess. And then I, I called the spill prevention people that are  
4 located in Richmond, and I think that number, which is in our tide  
5 books, I think it patched through to some other place, some  
6 distant location. It wasn't the people in Richmond. It wasn't a  
7 direct connection with the people spill response equipment. And  
8 I told these people that we had an oil spill and we needed  
9 equipment. And at that time, the ship was still facing Angel  
10 Island. It was still riding into the flood. And it occurred to  
11 me that all that oil was in the South Bay, and that slack water  
12 was going to be about 11, 11 o'clock, and the ship was going to  
13 start to turn, and the oil in South Bay was going to start heading  
14 out. And the tide turns in Anchorage 7 about an hour sooner than  
15 it does at the Golden Gate Bridge. So 11 o'clock slack the Golden  
16 Gate, 10 o'clock slack in Anchorage 7, and in Oakland Bar Channel  
17 area. So by that time, Captain Cota and Captain Coney were gone,  
18 and I continued to field protocols, and I asked VTS if that spill  
19 response vessel in Richmond was underway, and they say -- and they  
20 told me, it's still at the dock. They could see it on their  
21 radar. And again, you know, I wasn't studying the timeline on  
22 this, but it's on VTS's tape. So about this time the visibility  
23 began to improve and the ship started to turn, and I could see the  
24 San Francisco city front very clearly. I could also see the Alpha  
25 Bravo Span of the Bay Bridge, and I thought to myself, now is the

1 time to get out of here. So I called VTS, and I said, I can see  
2 the city front, I can see Alpha Bravo. Do I have permission to  
3 shift the ship, and they said, wait a moment. And at the same  
4 time, I had called the operations pilot at the Pilot Office, and  
5 said see if you can find me a tractor tug in case I need an  
6 escort. Because in so many instances where there's something  
7 amiss with a, a ship, the Coast Guard says put an escort boat on  
8 it. So the operations pilot was, was looking for a boat for me,  
9 and then VTS called me back and they said you have permission to  
10 ship, and I said, do I need an escort, and they said, wait a  
11 minute, and they came back and said, no, you don't. So the minute  
12 he said I had permission to go, I said to the Captain, start  
13 heaving the anchor. We had -- there were five shackles of chain  
14 out, and it was a very slow process.

15           And by this time, the stern of the ship was directly  
16 towards the shoreline of Treasure Island, and the bow was pointing  
17 at San Francisco 27 29 Piers -- tower. And as the anchor was  
18 coming up, I was getting a little antsy because the ship was not  
19 coming around, and, and I had a feeling that we were getting ready  
20 to start touching the bottom. So the bow, the bow was starting to  
21 come past North Channel 2, and that was going to make it difficult  
22 for me to bring it back and get the thing moving, because it would  
23 have been bad if I was still pointing towards Angel Island and I  
24 had this red buoy on my bow cranking around. So we put the bow  
25 thruster on, and the bow thruster was able to bring the bow past

1 the buoy and get the buoy back on my starboard side, and I had the  
2 rudder hard to port to take advantage of any current action on the  
3 rudder. And as soon as the Captain told me that the anchor was up  
4 and down, I had him put the engine slow ahead, and we proceeded  
5 out of the anchorage, and I proceeded towards Blossom Rock Buoy  
6 and got it on my starboard side, and then continued over towards  
7 the ferry building, just piloting on visual indicators, and kept  
8 bringing the shift left and opened up to Alpha Bravo span of the  
9 bridge. And in my earlier communications with vessel traffic,  
10 they said that the northwest corner of the anchorage was available  
11 for me, and that's the deep, deep corner by the anchorage 9 buoy.  
12 So I proceeded down into the anchorage and went a half mile past  
13 the buoy and stopped the ship and backed the engine slightly and  
14 we dropped the anchor, and I waited for my boat to come and get  
15 me. There were two Coast Guard people that came out that didn't  
16 -- and BHS had called me and told me that they were coming, a man  
17 and a woman, and they didn't seem like the regular Coast Guard  
18 people. And they came aboard, and the woman proceeded to  
19 breathalyze the Captain, possibly the engineer, I think he might  
20 have been up there, and some of the other, the mate or mates that  
21 were there on the bridge. She had a case that she opened up and  
22 she had this breathalyzer stuff. The fellow was out on the  
23 starboard bridge wing, and there was another fellow not -- that  
24 came with them who was not in uniform, and I don't know what his  
25 function was. And the fellow in the Coast Guard coveralls was

1 sort of wondering out loud about what the ship would do, and I  
2 said, well, I have a feeling that they're probably going to have  
3 to take it back to Oakland and discharge it and then there's a  
4 couple of places here in the Bay where they could put it alongside  
5 like Pier 70, and effect the repair without putting the thing in  
6 dry dock. And we talked about an allision some years earlier when  
7 a Maersk ship hit the wharf in Oakland and went stem on into the  
8 dock and opened up this big rectangular gouge, and they repaired  
9 it right at the dock. So I thought that's possible. So at that  
10 -- around that point, and I think by now we're down around 10:30,  
11 coming up on quarter of 11, and I called my office, and I checked  
12 out with -- traffic, said we're anchored -- five in the water, bow  
13 to the South, ETA unknown or ETD. And he said the boat is coming  
14 for you, and I said to the Captain, would you like to see the  
15 damage, and he said, yes. So he and I went down and went down the  
16 ladder and got on the boat and slid up the port side so he could  
17 get a firsthand look at what was going on, and he took some  
18 pictures and we brought them back, got -- the ladder, put him back  
19 on the ship, and my boat returned me to the dock.

20 Q. That was very good narrative of the events. Appreciate  
21 that amount of detail. I do have a couple of follow-up questions  
22 that I'd like to pick out a couple of more details. You mentioned  
23 that you were being asked by people about the amount of oil that  
24 had been put into the water. Would you be more specific on who  
25 asked you and what information you provided and when you provided

1 it?

2 A. The information I provided was pretty much just exactly  
3 what I've told you. It was just pure speculation on my part based  
4 on what I had seen and what I knew to be about the duration from  
5 the time it started until they had stopped it, and I think man I  
6 was talking to -- his name might have been Dennis, I'm not sure --  
7 and he's on that list of people, and I called, I called two of the  
8 names on that list I made contact with. Those -- I think those  
9 were the only two that the Captain wanted me to call. And, again,  
10 that list is available. I'm sure it's still under the plastic on  
11 the bridge. And I think, I think Marine Safety Office asked me,  
12 and I -- when I was -- when we were at anchor, I saw the big  
13 recovery vessel from Richmond, and it was between the ship and San  
14 Francisco Pier 50. And I think I might have talked to them, that  
15 they might have called me.

16 Q. In each case you gave them the same estimate of -- you  
17 said --

18 A. Yeah --

19 Q. -- you said 10 or 15 --

20 A. -- 10 or 15 barrels.

21 Q. And, again, tell me how you estimated that, that  
22 quantity. You said based on flow rate and the amount of time that  
23 it was flowing. Did you before you came aboard or at any time  
24 quantify the extent of the damage? You said there was like a 5-  
25 gallon can pouring out, but from my -- our information it's like a

1 200-foot long gash.

2 A. But it was only coming out at one point in that hole.

3 Q. That hole, that long rip?

4 A. In that whole long rip. The forward section of that  
5 rip, the shell plating was bent, bent under right at a stringer.  
6 It was a nice clean where the bridge contacted it, and it was like  
7 the, the cement of the fender curves down, and so when the ship  
8 hit it, that curve of the fender I think lent itself to bending,  
9 bending the shell plating of the ship in at the top of that gash,  
10 and I think at the bottom of the gash it was a little more torn.  
11 But looking in, you could see the side of number one hatch, which  
12 I think it was number hatch, the, the vertical upright. And you  
13 could see where the vertical pieces had been sheared off. And so  
14 you could see, see that inside section of the ship very plainly,  
15 and as you came aft, you came to whether it was a bunker tank that  
16 began at that point or whether it was a, a pipe that carried  
17 bunkers somewhere, but it was back aft at the -- you know, if the  
18 ship had pulled away by a couple of feet, it wouldn't have gotten  
19 it, I think. But it was not coming out of this entire opening.  
20 It was coming out right at the absolute end of it.

21 Q. Okay. Most of these conversations that you had with the  
22 various people, was it by your company cell phone, ship cell  
23 phone, VHF, or how were you making these calls?

24 A. On my cell. Well, some of them on my cell phone, but  
25 the Captain had a built-in phone in the -- attached by his

1 computers and such, and I think this fellow I -- whose name I  
2 thought was Dennis, I think I first talked to him on that phone.  
3 And then there -- and I might have given him my number because I  
4 think I talked to him on my cell phone also.

5 Q. Is that your personal phone or is that a association  
6 phone?

7 A. My phone.

8 Q. Okay. Perhaps after this interview, if you'd give me  
9 that phone number, and perhaps ask you if you could provide us a  
10 copy of the records --

11 A. Sure.

12 Q. -- of that so that we can kind of establish -- help us  
13 with establishing the timeline --

14 A. Sure.

15 Q. -- of your actions as far as your calls and who you  
16 called, duration, et cetera.

17 A. Sure. I can do that.

18 Q. And did you use the VHF radio while you were onboard?

19 A. I did.

20 Q. The calls to the VTS -- VHF -- what channel was that?

21 A. 14.

22 Q. Okay. Going back to when you first board the, the Cosco  
23 Busan, you described how you came up the gangway, and you went up  
24 the elevator and went onto the bridge. Please in little more  
25 detail, if you would, describe what you first saw, what you have

1 heard, and if anything -- anybody said anything to you at that  
2 time in as much detail as you can recall.

3 A. Well, I arrived on the bridge, and as I stated, Captain  
4 Cota was in the lavatory. The -- I told the Captain who I was and  
5 why I was there, and he seemed relieved, and he wasn't saying  
6 much. He -- his English was adequate, I think, between a master  
7 and a pilot, but in this situation, he had trouble getting his,  
8 his wishes across, and that's why when he asked me to talk to the  
9 guy on the phone, and he then took the sheet out from under the  
10 plastic and made a copy of it and gave me the copy, and I talked  
11 to the fellow on the phone, and I gave him my phone number, and  
12 then I seem to recall talking, phoning somebody else on that list,  
13 and possibly giving him my phone number too. So and then I  
14 remember being back on that phone, the ship's built-in cell phone.  
15 I guess it could have been a satellite phone. I don't know.

16 Q. Where was that phone located physically? On the bridge?

17 A. On the bridge right by -- on the starboard side behind  
18 the chart table. So you have the long chart table and you come to  
19 the end of the chart table where the navigation stuff is, and then  
20 there's computers and printers and this phone it's involved in  
21 that. Also it was black, I remember.

22 Q. Okay. So again I'm just trying to get as much detail as  
23 you can recall.

24 A. Sure.

25 Q. When you first stepped on the bridge, you told the



1 captain who you were and --

2 A. Why I was there.

3 Q. -- why you're there. And what did you tell him? That  
4 you --

5 A. And I told him that we were going to need to move the  
6 ship as soon as we had some visibility.

7 Q. Okay. What did he say to you?

8 A. Okay. He nodded in agreement.

9 Q. Okay. And then immediately after that, is that when he  
10 went to the, the sheet? Or did he say anything else in the  
11 interim?

12 A. Well, he was -- I think he made the first call, and he  
13 was having a lot of trouble with it.

14 Q. Communicating because of the language?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And so he gave me the phone, and I was -- at the same  
18 time I had been talking with VTS -- Safety Office, and I'm looking  
19 at him, and he's in distress holding the phone, and I went over to  
20 him and took the phone and told whoever it was who I was and what  
21 was going on. And then I gave that guy my phone number, and there  
22 were just a lot of phone calls.

23 Q. Okay, and now please tell me your first interaction with  
24 Captain Cota and how long that was after you arrived on the  
25 bridge.

1 A. Well, I --

2 Q. And your observations --

3 A. I was on the bridge probably for five minutes when he  
4 came out of the lavatory, and he seemed totally in charge of  
5 himself and, you know, there was no apparent anxiety or lack of  
6 control on his part. He and I conceded that something pretty bad  
7 had just happened, but we didn't get into it there. There was  
8 nothing that was going to be accomplished by talking about it.  
9 And about that time Captain Coney appeared, and I devoted myself  
10 to the communications, and Captain Coney and Captain Cota were out  
11 on the port bridge wing, and then the next time I noticed that  
12 John had this, this foil packet that has been given to all the  
13 pilots to carry, and he and -- he had -- and I noticed he had the  
14 thing in his mouth, and Captain Coney, I assume was talking to the  
15 office, because as I recollect now it was the pilot boat Drake  
16 that came out and took them off the ship and took them back to  
17 Pier 9.

18 Q. Did you have any other conversations with Captain  
19 Cote [sic] after the initial ones that you described?

20 A. No. I called him at his home yesterday. Yesterday?  
21 Maybe the day before yesterday. Just to say hello, and we were  
22 both in Marin County. He and his wife wanted to get out of town  
23 because I knew that he was getting a lot of heat, and they could  
24 come down to our place and my wife and I are old friends. But we  
25 didn't, you know, we didn't cut it up.

1 Q. The, the use of -- I'm not sure what, you know, how you  
2 describe or what word is used, but the portable electronic  
3 navigation system that some pilots use, is that something that's  
4 used in San Francisco by the pilots?

5 A. There, there are some pilots that carry electronic  
6 charts.

7 Q. Okay. Did Captain Cote [sic] have this sort of a  
8 system?

9 A. I don't think so.

10 Q. Is it a optional sort of arrangement?

11 A. It totally is. If a pilot wants, wants to have the  
12 electronic chart system, it's up to him to go and buy the laptop  
13 and buy the software and buy the attendant blue tooth equipment,  
14 and, and make use of it, but it's purely optional.

15 Q. Do you use that equipment yourself?

16 A. No.

17 Q. And as far as you know, Captain Cote [sic] does not use  
18 it? Are you certain of that?

19 A. I don't think he has one. I couldn't say for a fact,  
20 but --

21 Q. You didn't see --

22 A. I didn't see it.

23 Q. And this system, is there a name for it? Do you know  
24 if --

25 A. ECDIS electronic --

1 Q. Okay, that's the -- system. But is there a  
2 recommendation that comes from your Pilots' Association on the  
3 hardware and software or is it left strictly up to --

4 A. I think it's left to the individuals with regard to what  
5 works and what doesn't work. And we have enough pilots that, that  
6 have them, and, and that have trouble with them, and I frequently  
7 hear, I have to get together with so and so because my software  
8 went bad on me or I can't get the AIS system to work. It's got me  
9 going in a different direction. So I think it comes down to the  
10 systems that work the best are the ones that get talked about, and  
11 that's the direction that people go, if they're going to purchase  
12 that stuff.

13 Q. Is there any technical support provided by the Bar  
14 Pilots' Association in, in using these systems or is it again left  
15 to the --

16 A. It's totally up to the pilot, to the individual.

17 Q. Now is there some kind of a standard plug that these  
18 systems can interface with the ship so --

19 A. I think by law that a pilot AIS plug is mandatory.

20 INVESTIGATOR ROTH-ROFFY: All right, I'm going to go  
21 ahead and go to my right here. Ross, if you're -- go ahead and as  
22 you start your interviews, please introduce yourself.

23 BY INVESTIGATOR WHEATLEY:

24 Q. Sure. Good morning, Captain. My name is Ross Wheatley,  
25 and I'm the senior investigator assigned to sector San Francisco.

1 I only have a couple of questions. They're mostly for  
2 clarification. You indicated that you boarded the vessel while it  
3 was anchored in Anchorage 7. Maybe I missed it. Do you know  
4 approximately what time that was?

5 A. No, because -- approximately, sure. If the allision  
6 happened at 8:30, which is the number I keep hearing, and the ship  
7 never stopped, and from the Delta Tower to the place we were in  
8 the middle of Anchorage 7, it took them 20 minutes to get there,  
9 so and I came aboard as the ship was backing and the tractor tug  
10 was, was back there, and so I think it was slightly before  
11 9 o'clock.

12 Q. Okay. And then another just point of clarification.  
13 You indicated that you had called the MSO to basically report that  
14 the oil, you had observed the oil. Do you recall who you spoke  
15 to?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Do --

18 A. But --

19 Q. I'm sorry.

20 A. I first called VTS, and I said I need to talk to the  
21 Marine Safety Office. They gave me a phone number, and I called  
22 the phone number and said that I was on the pilot -- I was the  
23 pilot on the ship in Anchorage 7 that has an oil spill, and I  
24 needed to know if they were sending people out. Because in --  
25 because I was going to move the ship. And in, in my experience,

1 when things like this happen, the Coast Guard shows up, bang,  
2 they're there. And so many pilots have gone aground or had  
3 something happen, and Marine Safety Office investigation is there,  
4 and they want statements and they want, they want to do it right  
5 there on the spot, and for the most part the pilots will say I'm  
6 going to go ashore, I'm going to talk to my lawyer, I'll talk to  
7 you tomorrow. So I wanted Marine Safety to know that I was on the  
8 ship now, and that I was going to be shifting it to Anchorage 7  
9 and were there people from your office coming out? And I think  
10 the answer was we are dispatching some units, and I think those  
11 units were small craft, and I -- at some point one of them called  
12 me and asked me to lower the ladder on the starboard side to not  
13 be in the oil thing, and I told the Captain to lower the ladder on  
14 the starboard side. Who -- I saw those units in the water just as  
15 I was getting underway, just as the anchor was up. I saw them  
16 aft. And I don't know if they ever came aboard because they  
17 didn't come up, they didn't come up to the bridge if they did.

18 Q. Thank you. That helps. And now, I have a couple of  
19 questions. You indicated that you observed Captain Cota go out on  
20 the bridge wing and he had these little test packets. I guess  
21 they're supposed to test for presence of alcohol.

22 A. For alcohol, okay.

23 Q. Okay. And you saw Captain Cota basically place it in  
24 his mouth and apparently do the test?

25 A. Correct.

1 Q. Did you have any conversation with either him or with  
2 Captain Coney about the results of that test?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Okay. Did you otherwise become aware of what the  
5 results of that test were?

6 A. Not of that particular test, but I think I became aware  
7 because of the, the statement that Captain Cota hadn't been tested  
8 from long period of time, and a statement coming from the pilots  
9 that not only was that statement incorrect, that he had been  
10 tested immediately upon his arrival ashore, and that the tests  
11 were negative for drugs or alcohol. So, and I think I read that  
12 in the paper.

13 Q. Thank you.

14 BY MR. HOLLY:

15 Q. Good morning, Captain. My name is Rick Holly with the  
16 Department of Fish and Game, and I just had a quick question that  
17 pertains to just for my information and understanding, when you  
18 were getting underway from Anchorage 7 going out to Anchorage 9,  
19 could you describe for me exactly how you -- what your position  
20 was, bridge wing, center -- on the way down to Anchorage 9 and  
21 what the visibility was at that time and how you brought the ship  
22 down there?

23 A. Well, my, my position on the bridge prior to the anchor  
24 being up and down was out on both bridge wings and watching the  
25 ship's movement, the visual movement of the ship, and being

1 concerned that the need to get out of there was, was significant.  
2 And then when we were down to maybe one shackle in the water, and  
3 I had moved the bow thruster lever to move the bow to port in  
4 order to get that buoy over on my starboard side, and at that  
5 point, I was in the center of the bridge standing next to the  
6 quartermaster, and as soon as the Captain said the anchor's up and  
7 down, I put the engine ahead and stood right there and watched our  
8 position relative to number two as we started driving out of the  
9 anchor -- anchorage. And I stayed right there because the fog was  
10 still sort of wispy and we have this thing in piloting we call a  
11 sucker hole where you might be tracking fog and all of a sudden it  
12 opens up and you think, great, I'm going to go, and you let go and  
13 the fog comes back, and you just set yourself up for a sucker  
14 hole. And the fog was still hazy and smoky from the center tower  
15 to Yerba Buena Island. And I had, you know, I had a good vision  
16 of the city front and Alpha Bravo, and the sun was coming up  
17 pretty bright, but I was watching Blossom Rock Buoy, and I just  
18 wanted to make sure that I had an object that I could assess my  
19 movement on as I started making my, my swing to the left to start  
20 setting up for the Alpha Bravo span of the bridge.

21 Q. Could you clarify one, one item. When you said you were  
22 standing beside the quartermaster, that's back by the helm or up  
23 by the Polaris in front of the helm?

24 A. No. I was standing next to him.

25 Q. Thank you.



1 MR. MOLONEY: Want me here?

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Uh-huh, if you will.

3 INVESTIGATOR ROTH-ROFFY: Pat, sorry. You're with who?

4 MR. MOLONEY: Oh, I'm sorry, Board Pilot Commissioners

5 BY MR. MOLONEY:

6 Q. When you were describing the oil spilling out from the  
7 ship as you were coming alongside, was that -- we're told that the  
8 bunker tank was open, and I understand the dimensions of the tank  
9 to be approximately 30 feet. You described it as being like a 5-  
10 gallon oil can being poured out. Was that the size of the spill  
11 or are you talking about the, the projection of the oil being 30-  
12 foot long spill or just actually like a 5-gallon spill? What --

13 A. Well --

14 Q. -- the width of the oil coming out the side of the ship.

15 A. It's the -- this is the hull of the ship, and we're back  
16 about mid-ship, and I could see the stream of oil coming out like  
17 this. It wasn't shooting out. It wasn't dribbling down the side  
18 of the ship. It was in my mind's eye as if you had a 5-gallon  
19 bucket and you started pouring it out.

20 Q. But was -- kind of like the visual of how far it's  
21 coming out to the --

22 A. Then of course, of course --

23 Q. Was it this much oil or was it 30 feet of oil or 3 feet  
24 of oil?

25 A. You mean the hole that --

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. -- it was coming out of?

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. Well, I'd say the hole was something like this.

5 Q. Oh, okay.

6 A. Because the -- do we have any markers on that --

7 INVESTIGATOR ROTH-ROFFY: Actually, sir, I'd like to ask  
8 you to make a little sketch here, and then we can enter it in the  
9 record. Otherwise, all this visual stuff is, is not captured.

10 CAPTAIN HOBURG: Sure. To the best of my -- the -- I  
11 think the, the name on the side of the ship started right over the  
12 end of the opening on the side of the ship, and the upper portion  
13 of the plating was bent under, very nice, folded under. And I  
14 could kind of see the occasional upright, and I was looking at a  
15 bulkhead that was a straight up and down bulkhead, which I assumed  
16 to be the port side of number one hatch. And, of course, there's  
17 flare of the bow in this area, so the upper portion of the tear  
18 projected out further than the lower section of the tear. And it  
19 was back here in this area at the end of the tear that the oil had  
20 been coming out of. And as I say, I couldn't tell you whether  
21 that was a rip into a bunker tank that was right there. I don't  
22 know. It could have been a pipe that got ripped from the, you  
23 know, the force of the allision. I don't know. When, when I had  
24 the captain on the boat, this forward section of the tear is very  
25 clean, and there were pilings and chicken wire still stuck in it,

1 but it was clean. The black didn't start until you were down here  
2 at the end of the tear. And when, when we came along the side of  
3 the ship, we came along side, the side of the ship looking  
4 forward, this is what I think I saw in the terms of the oil. And,  
5 and it was coming down the side of the ship, and by the time I got  
6 up to the bridge and I went out again and looked, it appeared the  
7 oil had stopped, and the Captain told me that they had been in the  
8 process of transferring the oil that was coming out here  
9 transferring it out of whatever tank it was in, but I don't know  
10 if that tank was right here or whether -- I don't know.

11 BY MR. MOLONEY:

12 Q. So it appeared that it was a, a relatively concentrated  
13 stream, as you say possibly a pipe as opposed to a curtain --

14 A. Oh, sure.

15 Q. -- was not. Okay.

16 INVESTIGATOR ROTH-ROFFY: Let me ask you if you would to  
17 put some labels on here like forward aft. And if you could draw  
18 the outline of the tear.

19 CAPTAIN HOBURG: Here's the name, I think starts.

20 INVESTIGATOR ROTH-ROFFY: Okay.

21 CAPTAIN HOBURG: And this is the inner bulkhead, which  
22 appeared to me to be the source of the oil.

23 BY MR. MOLONEY:

24 Q. In relation to the name of the ship, would it have been  
25 under the H under --

1           A.    I think -- yeah, just about.  I think there's a lot of  
2 photographs of this around.

3                    INVESTIGATOR ROTH-ROFFY:  Okay.  I also ask you to do  
4 that to the other drawing as well.  Okay, so this is an axial or  
5 longitudinal view?

6                    CAPTAIN HOBURG:  Uh-huh.

7                    INVESTIGATOR ROTH-ROFFY:  The other one is kind  
8 of --

9                    CAPTAIN HOBURG:  Side.

10                   INVESTIGATOR ROTH-ROFFY:  -- side view.  Okay.  And then  
11 maybe write -- say looking at port side or something like that  
12 just to -- just so we know, if you would just either initial or  
13 sign that, we know where it came from.  That's a big help.  Pass  
14 that down to our --

15                    Anybody want to look at that drawing for reference  
16 pretty quick?

17                    UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  Okay.

18                    BY MR. MOLONEY:

19           Q.    Just as a minor clarification.  Doesn't have anything to  
20 do with the spill itself, but you said that when the Captains Cota  
21 and Coney left the ship, they went back on the Drake.  Did you  
22 guys go out initially on the Drake or the Golden Gate?

23           A.    We went out on the Golden Gate, but the -- there was  
24 still the need to get two pilots out to the pilot station for 10  
25 o'clock.  So the Golden Gate went back to the dock in order to do

1 that, and then they fired up the -- Drake and came out, and I, I  
2 saw the Drake leave. I didn't see it arrive. And when it did  
3 arrive at that point the ship was still tending towards the north.  
4 So the boat would have come up on the stern, but I wasn't looking  
5 for it.

6 MR. MOLONEY: That's all I have.

7 BY MR. BOWLING:

8 Q. Captain, forgive me. I'm Larry Bowling with the NTSB.  
9 I've been coming and going trying to document evidence, but I do  
10 have a few follow-up questions, and I'll be brief. When you first  
11 appeared on the bridge and interacted with Captain Cota, do you  
12 recall if he was wearing his glasses or if he didn't have his  
13 glasses? Do you recall? Does he normally wear glasses?

14 A. Well, he's almost my age, so I think he wears glasses,  
15 but I don't recollect one way or the other.

16 Q. Just to give me a sense of his mental and physical  
17 condition. Were there any behaviors that came to your attention?

18 A. No. I thought that he was, I thought he was calm and  
19 collected and we sort of, you know, there was nothing to be said.  
20 Everything was pretty apparent, so we didn't get into it.

21 Q. There was a series of radio interactions between the  
22 Coast Guard VTS and the bridge of the Cosco Busan, and prior to  
23 the allision --

24 A. Uh-huh.

25 Q. -- and after the post-allision. Did you hear any of

1 that on either hand-held or other radio?

2 A. I was -- as I say, I think I was talking to my wife on  
3 my cell phone, you know, out on the apron at Pier 9, so I didn't,  
4 I didn't hear anything.

5 Q. Okay. Through the course of the interview, you  
6 mentioned the term sucker hole and explained it very well. But  
7 then you mentioned your visibility at the time of your passing  
8 through in the area of Blossom Rock, I think Buoy 2, is that  
9 correct?

10 A. That's Anchorage 7 buoy.

11 Q. Approximately what time period was that? Do you recall?

12 A. I'd say it was after 10 because I think I was anchored  
13 at about 10:30.

14 Q. Thank you. Once you assumed responsibility from Captain  
15 Cota and began interacting with the crew on the vessel, what was  
16 your assessment of the crew's ability to exchange information  
17 effectively in a working language of the ship, which was English?

18 A. I think everybody had a fundamental command of English  
19 as would be used in general navigation of the ship. If I said  
20 port 10 or hard starboard, I know that that would work. I was --  
21 so in that regard, I think that the bridge, the mates and the  
22 captain were capable of the fundamental vocabulary of bridge  
23 communication.

24 Q. All right, and when you had the control on the vessel as  
25 a pilot, who was at the helm at the time? Was it a, an able

1 seaman?

2 A. I couldn't tell you that. I know that mates were young  
3 guys, and it could have been a mate for all I know. They were in  
4 white coveralls.

5 Q. Were the directions being repeated from the helmsman to  
6 you, as you --

7 A. Yeah. I'm pretty fussy about that, and I was standing  
8 right next to him, and I think I was giving him headings. Because  
9 ultimately we're going to go through the Alpha Bravo Span at about  
10 1:45, and it had started to ebb, and so I was just working my way  
11 over towards the city front and giving, giving headings in I think  
12 5 degree increments.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And to work my way over to about 1:40, 1:45 to go  
15 through the span.

16 Q. As you worked your way through these series of 5 degree  
17 course changes, the helmsman was repeating those commands to you?

18 A. Yeah. Because I'd tell him like 1, 2, 5, and then I'd  
19 watch the rudder angle indicator, and he'd say 1, 2, 5, and then I  
20 could see he was starting to steady up on it, and then I'd give  
21 him 5 more.

22 Q. Final question regarding the communication there. At  
23 any time during your tenure on the bridge, were there any  
24 instances where a direction or order from you was not properly  
25 interpreted by any one of the crew when you had to do any kind of

1 corrective measures?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Final question. This is related to your description of  
4 the, the flow of oil out of the penetration in the side shell of  
5 the ship. How much time elapsed from the time you actually saw  
6 this oil flow coming from the penetration of the side shell to the  
7 time you saw it slack or subside so it was just running down the  
8 ship? Do you recall what the timeframe was?

9 A. We went alongside the ship, and the pilot with Golden  
10 Gate, and it was Captain McIsaac, Wau, Coney and myself and the  
11 guy running the boat. We slip up forward just to about I'd say  
12 mid-ship of the vessel. We were forward of the pilot ladder.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And we all observed the oil, and about that point  
15 Captain McIsaac said we better relieve John.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. And I said, I'll do it. While we were backing up to get  
18 under the ladder, and, and as soon as we were alongside, I think  
19 the ladder was a little high, but I still managed -- the pilot  
20 ladder, which was attached to the accommodation, I still managed  
21 to get on it. Went up the pilot ladder, up the accommodation  
22 ladder on deck. A crewman met me and we went right in. I think  
23 the elevator was there, and the elevator went right up to the  
24 bridge. I walked onto the bridge and walked out onto the port  
25 bridge wing, and I didn't see the oil.



1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Coming out. So from the time I saw it until the time I  
3 didn't see it could have been 5 or 10 minutes.

4 Q. Thank you. That's all the questions I have.

5 BY CAPTAIN AGA:

6 Q. My name is Captain Aga. I work with Fleet Management.  
7 We are the technical operators on ship. Couple of questions. On  
8 your passage from Anchorage 7 to Anchorage 9, you described your  
9 maneuvers using visual, visual lining up. Did you ever use any of  
10 the navigational aids on the ship?

11 A. Well, I used -- I was using the radar just to watch the  
12 heading flasher move, but curiously enough the, the sun was pretty  
13 much stem on, and by the time we're over coming through the  
14 bridge, we had full sunlight streaming in through the bridge  
15 windows, and it made seeing the radar and electronic chart very  
16 difficult, to the point where the mate offered to lower the  
17 blinds, the sun screens. But I didn't need that, those cues,  
18 electronic cues, because by that time the fog was really  
19 disappearing, and even on the east side over towards Oakland, and  
20 the big thing I was interested in was the Anchorage 9 buoy, and it  
21 was down there ahead of me.

22 Q. Do you think when you went on the bridge, the captain  
23 could have been emotionally affected to restrict his communication  
24 and --

25 A. Well, the only -- I thought, I thought that he was

1 pretty in control. I thought all things considered, he was doing  
2 okay, when you consider the ramifications to him of a circumstance  
3 like this. He seemed very under control. The place where he  
4 needed help was talking on the phone with people who were  
5 obviously not face-to-face with him. It's one thing to talk to  
6 somebody face-to-face, if there's a bit of a language barrier.  
7 You can kind of coax it out -- either party about what do you  
8 want? You can use your hands, you can -- but talking to a fellow  
9 who as I recollect one of the, one of the people I talked to was  
10 in the Midwest, and I talked to -- when I called Marine Spill  
11 Response, which is the outfit that I thought was the outfit in  
12 Richmond, I got a woman I think in Ohio, who was going to patch me  
13 through to the proper party, but she wanted the details of what  
14 was going on so she could pass it on to somebody else. So I know  
15 that the Captain would have had a very tough time dealing with  
16 that.

17 Q. Thank you very much. How many people do you think you  
18 call on the listing? More than one or just one?

19 A. No, I think on that listing, I think there were two  
20 specific numbers that, that he had me --

21 Q. Both numbers were in the United States?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. And, again, both of the numbers were on that list.

25 Q. Did the Captain make any calls in your presence to

1 somebody? Did you hear him speak about this to some other  
2 person?

3 A. I can't say that he did, but he was not of concern to  
4 me. He was attending to his business, and that was fine with me.

5 Q. Just -- thank you very much.

6 A. He was talking on the phone, but other than the  
7 instances where he handed the phone to me, he may have made calls,  
8 but I don't know.

9 Q. Thank you very much. I have no more questions.

10 BY MR. SCHAEFER:

11 Q. Good morning. I'm Commander Scott Schaefer, Coast Guard  
12 District 11, Incident Management.

13 A. Correct. Pleasure to see you.

14 Q. Appreciate what you did to mitigate the situation and  
15 make the -- I have a couple of questions --

16 A. Let me ask you a question, Scott. Do you not have -- is  
17 there a record at VTS and MSO that --

18 Q. We have a -- at the VTS we have all the audio recordings  
19 and then all the lines into the command center there at Vessel  
20 Traffic Control -- any phone lines in there also.

21 A. Okay, well you've got it all.

22 Q. Okay. First, when you first got onboard at Anchorage 7,  
23 did you have an opportunity to check out the radar then?

24 A. All I know about the radar was that the ship's heading  
25 was at about 320, which was pointing towards Point Blunt on Angel

1 Island, and as time went on, the heading changed, but what it was  
2 changing to, I was just looking at it relative to the ship, and  
3 being aware that at a certain point we were going to come all the  
4 way around, and I felt the need that we should be out of there  
5 before that happened. So there were two factors. There was the  
6 visibility, which continued to be bad, and the strength of the  
7 tide, the tide turning.

8 Q. Did you have any opportunity to see the picture on the  
9 radar or to see any of the RACONS?

10 A. Actually not. The, the Delta Echo RACON is I think  
11 notoriously tough to spot. The Alpha Bravo RACON and the Charlie  
12 Delta RACONS, I think show up better, but again, I didn't, you  
13 know, at that point, I had other things going on, and I wasn't, I  
14 wasn't able to move the ship until I was able to move it, so I  
15 wasn't -- and I wasn't going to move it until I could see where I  
16 was going. So the only thing about the radar that I, you know,  
17 really recall is that glare through the wheelhouse windows  
18 obscured the radar in a very major way. And these radars, they're  
19 beautiful radars, but they're flush into the console and they  
20 don't have hoods on them.

21 Q. Trying to track down the phone recordings of -- you  
22 mentioned you called VTS and -- to talk to the Marine Safety  
23 Office. Did they pass you through or give you a --

24 A. They gave me a phone number.

25 Q. And what will really help here is do you remember if it

1 was a 415, which would have been over at the sector or a 510,  
2 which would have been over in prevention shop over in Alameda?  
3 That would help me figure out where --

4 A. Yeah, where that call was. I had a -- I think I, I had  
5 this copy of the official phone numbers of the ship, and I think I  
6 probably wrote that number on that sheet of paper, which I did not  
7 take with me. And I'm trying to think as to whether it was a man  
8 or a woman. I think, again, because it was a woman that answered,  
9 because on one of the ship's numbers I got a woman. My phone  
10 records would, would indicate. But I'll have to call T-Mobile and  
11 -- or actually I think -- go online and print it out.

12 Q. Will help.

13 A. Sure. Long as I -- we can -- I'll printout my phone  
14 record.

15 Q. Be nice if we had the phone number, then we can figure  
16 out the notifications.

17 A. Okay.

18 Q. On your phone notifications, do you remember talking to  
19 -- going from that list of eight, and you talked to a couple of  
20 them, do you remember the state or national Response Center being  
21 in that group or was it the -- you mentioned MSRC?

22 A. Well, I -- as I say, I called -- I think I called one  
23 number and the Captain was on the phone with one of the numbers,  
24 and so the best of my recollection, I talked to two people on that  
25 list.

1 Q. Remember a Danny Herron (ph.)?

2 A. That could have been the name, because I recall it was a  
3 D name. And as I say, I thought I talked to someone named Dennis.  
4 It could have been Danny. Who is he with?

5 Q. It's either O'Briens or MSRC, somewhere --

6 A. O'Brien's. Who is O'Brien?

7 Q. That's the qualified individual that manages the  
8 response for the vessel.

9 A. Yeah, well, that, that is very -- that rings big bells.  
10 I remember hearing the O'Brien and talking with a guy numerous  
11 times with a D name.

12 Q. That's all I have.

13 INVESTIGATOR ROTH-ROFFY: Okay, I don't have any further  
14 questions.

15 Anybody else have any questions -- Captain --

16 BY INVESTIGATOR ROTH-ROFFY:

17 Q. Okay, maybe just a little bit of your background, sir.  
18 You mentioned that you were a pilot for about 20 years. Could you  
19 also tell us just briefly, not in a lot of detail, but when you  
20 started your, your maritime career, where you got your training,  
21 education, and a little bit about your experience in piloting?  
22 How many transits or however you term it, trips? Just, you know,  
23 about your background.

24 A. I made my first trip to sea as an ordinary seaman on the  
25 standard oil Teak 2, R.G. Folis (ph.), in 1960. And I sailed in

1 the Deck Department, and went to work for Matsum (ph.) Navigation  
2 as a marine staff officer during -- lot of the Vietnam period.  
3 And then I came ashore and went to work on tugboats in the Bay.  
4 Worked in the Bay on tour boats and tugboats, and the natural  
5 progression of working on ship assist tugboats and working with  
6 pilots, and, and moving up that ladder going to the Coast Guard  
7 and taking the tests and getting the licenses, and then coming  
8 into the pilots in 1987 or so. And as a working pilot, we work a  
9 week on, a week off, and during a standard week, normally sail a  
10 ship and bring a ship in, two a day for seven days. Or you can do  
11 Bay moves where you take a ship from the South Bay to a refinery.  
12 So in the course of a month, you could move 16, 17, 18 ships.

13 Q. Okay. All right, I think that's enough detail. I  
14 appreciate that.

15 INVESTIGATOR ROTH-ROFFY: Anybody else have any  
16 questions? If not, time is about 11:38, and that will conclude  
17 our interview of Captain Frank Hoburg.

18 Thank you very much for coming in, sir.

19 CAPTAIN HOBURG: Pleasure.

20 (Whereupon, at 11:38 a.m., the interview of Captain  
21 Hoburg was concluded.)

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:           The Investigation of the Cosco  
                                  Busan/Bridge Allision  
                                  San Francisco, California  
                                  Interview of Captain Ellsworth F. Hoburg

DOCKET NUMBER:           DCA-08-MM-004

PLACE:                     San Francisco, California

DATE:

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to  
the recording accomplished at the hearing.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Katherine Motley  
Transcriber