

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

HAFNIA AMESSI TANKER ALLISION WITH
 PIER BRAVO ON THE COOPER RIVER,
 AT JOINT BASE CHARLESTON,
 NEAR CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA,
 ON JANUARY 14, 2024

Accident No.: DCA24FM018

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Interview of: CAPT. ANDREW YARBROUGH, Master
Diane Moran, Tugboat
 Moran Towing

Charleston Branch Pilots
 Association
 Charleston, South Carolina

Tuesday,
 January 16, 2024

APPEARANCES:

LT [REDACTED], Senior Investigating Officer
US Coast Guard, Sector Charleston

ANDREW EHLERS, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

CAPT DOUGLAS LOGAN, Pilot
Charleston Branch Pilots Association

JOHN CAMERON, Consultant to
Commissioners of Pilotage, Lower Coastal Area

SEAN HOUSEAL, ESQ.
Womble Bond Dickinson
Counsel for Owners of the Vessel

BRAD WARING, ESQ.
Butler Snow
Counsel for Charleston Branch Pilots Association

CRAYTON WALTERS, President
Charleston Branch Pilots Association

DAVID GALLOWAY, Board Member
South Carolina Commissioners of Pilotage
Lower Coastal Area

JULIUS SINES, ESQ.
Attorney for Captain Yarbrough

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:22 a.m.)

LT [REDACTED]: Good morning. This is Lieutenant [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] from the Coast Guard, Sector Charleston. I'm the
investigating officer with our unit, and we're here today at the
Pilots Association Office in Charleston to discuss the incident
that happened on Sunday, January 13th [sic], 2024, involving the
tank ship, *Hafnia Amessi*, and Pier Bravo at Joint Base Charleston.
The time is 1122, January 16th, 2024. And we're here to interview
Captain Andrew Yarbrough

And we're going to go around the room and do introductions
for everyone else.

MR. EHLERS: Drew Ehlers, investigator-in-charge, National
Transportation Safety Board.

CAPT. LOGAN: Douglas Logan, Charleston Pilot.

MR. HOUSEAL: Good morning. Sean Houseal with Womble Bond
Dickinson, appearing on behalf of the owners of the vessel.

MR. GALLOWAY: David Galloway, South Carolina Commissioners
of Pilotage for the Lower Coast Area.

MR. CAMERON: John Cameron, consultant to the Commissioners
of Pilotage, Lower Coastal Area.

CAPT YARBROUGH: Andrew Yarbrough, Captain, from Moran
Towing.

MR. SINES: Julius Sines, counsel for Captain Yarbrough.

CAPT WALTERS: And Crayton Walters, president of the

1 Charleston Branch Pilots.

2 MR. WARING: Brad Waring, counsel for the Charleston Branch
3 Pilots Association with Butler Snow.

4 LT [REDACTED]: Thank you. That concludes the introductions.
5 And, Captain Yarbrough, do you have any objection to being
6 recorded on this interview today?

7 CAPT YARBROUGH: No, ma'am.

8 INTERVIEW OF CAPT ANDREW YARBROUGH

9 BY LT [REDACTED]:

10 Q. So why don't we just start off, you can introduce yourself
11 and talk about your experience as captain, as a mariner, and then
12 I'll let you just tell your story of what happened on Sunday.

13 A. Okay. I have been in the industry for 13 years all with
14 Moran Towing. I've been, you know, traveling these waters for 13
15 years. Been a captain for a few years, was a mate before that,
16 engineer before that. So kind of a hawse pipe route.

17 Q. How many years specifically as a captain? Do you remember?

18 A. As a captain, maybe 3.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I was a mate for I think 5, 5 years before that, and then an
21 engineer before that.

22 Q. And which vessel were you on, on Sunday?

23 A. I was on the *Diane Moran*.

24 Q. Okay. If you had to estimate, how many times have you
25 captained that boat?

1 A. That boat is recently here. It's a boat that's filling in
2 while our vessel, the *Elizabeth Turecamo* is in the shipyard. So,
3 I would say a couple months since it's been here. But it's been
4 here before. So I've ran the boat prior a few years ago.

5 Q. Okay. And what's your work schedule like?

6 A. We work week on, week off.

7 Q. About how many trips do you do during the week?

8 A. How many trips or --

9 Q. Like how many jobs do you do? How many hours?

10 A. Typically how many job? Well, we work 12 and 12, and it all
11 depends on how busy, but a typical week would be anywhere from 20
12 to 30 jobs. That's for the whole boat itself. So my opposite
13 watch would be running the boat as well.

14 Q. Okay. All right. So --

15 A. Some weeks are busier than others.

16 Q. Okay. Did Mr. Schalles already talk to you about doing a 96
17 hour work/rest worksheet?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Okay. We can fill that out later.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. We'll just basically log like everything you've did for the
22 last 96 hours prior to that incident, like when you slept and ate
23 and worked and all that.

24 A. Sure, yeah.

25 Q. But we can do that after this.

1 A. Okay.

2 Q. Okay. So why don't you just start off and describe what
3 happened from the time when you started the job with *Hafnia Amessi*
4 on Sunday.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. So from the actual sailing of the ship.

7 Q. Um-hum.

8 A. First off, we had -- I actually brought Captain Logan to the
9 ship with Captain Kern (ph.). The docking pilot was Captain Kern.
10 On the transit up, you know, just shooting the breeze. Captain
11 Logan then on his way out asked me if I would standby on his
12 starboard bow on the way out as far as like a courtesy escort kind
13 of deal. Well, we're going the same way when we leave.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. So, you know, sometimes we'll follow the ship out just for
16 safe practice if they, you know, if they need it. So I dropped
17 them off, and they sailed the ship, and it picked up Captain Kern,
18 and then I started trailing the ship. The *James Moran* took off
19 and they were headed back to the dock. So we just followed the
20 ship out. And everything as per usual. And then when we were
21 coming by the Naval Weapons Station, I was called in from Captain
22 Logan to assist on the starboard bow for the turn.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. And, we nosed up, started pushing, I came full on the
25 tugboat, trying to give them as much as could to get his bow to

1 port as much as possible. And we did so. We helped some there
2 with that. Then when it was no longer safe for the tugboat I
3 backed clear and then I believe Captain Logan radioed us to make
4 sure the *James*, or it could have been Captain Kern, my radio was
5 kind of cut up, but we called the *James Moran* to come back up and
6 I put Captain Kern on board.

7 Q. You put Captain Kern back on the board the --

8 A. The ship, yes.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Yes, ma'am.

11 Q. So they could dock down here.

12 A. Right, yep, yep.

13 CAPT LOGAN: Can I say something? The intention was to bring
14 Captain Kern up right away, we weren't sure of the status of the
15 ship and I wasn't sure, you know, we didn't have instructions
16 where to go, what was going on, and we -- I decided to make up
17 both tugs on each side of the bow and get him up there just
18 because we didn't know what, you know, if the rudder was damaged,
19 you know, if the propulsor was damaged, or whatever.

20 LT [REDACTED]: Okay.

21 CAPT LOGAN: So it wasn't just in preparation for docking.
22 It was just like we didn't know what had happened to the ship.

23 LT [REDACTED]: Yeah. Okay. We can definitely explain more of
24 that in your interview.

25 MR. EHLERS: And for the recording, that was Captain Logan.

1 CAPT LOGAN: Yeah.

2 LT [REDACTED]: And in a few minutes when I'm done, Mr. Ehlers
3 will ask some questions, and then we'll open up to the table and
4 you can always ask questions, too.

5 BY LT [REDACTED]:

6 Q. Well, thank you for explaining all that. It helps us
7 understand a little bit about what happened, and I do thank you
8 for, you know, the actions you took, quick response. From what I
9 understood about the incident, I think it definitely helped
10 mitigate a more severe allision. So thank you --

11 A. Thank you.

12 Q. -- for a great job.

13 A. Thank you.

14 Q. Okay. Do you remember approximately what time this all
15 happened or when the ship got underway?

16 A. From sailing from --

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. It was 9:30 sailing. So we were -- I think we were on time.
19 So, you know, the undocking is a process. So it's not like we're
20 outbound at 9:30. The sailing time, taking in lines. So maybe,
21 you know, departing the dock there close to 10 o'clock maybe --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- ballpark.

24 Q. And then you said that Captain Logan asked you to, you know,
25 after you all got underway, after the ship got underway --

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. -- he asked you all to kind of standby or follow the ship
3 out?

4 A. It was more of a -- we were just chatting in the wheelhouse,
5 and we were going to discuss it further, but like I said, it's
6 safe practice. We tend to -- since we're all heading in the same
7 direction, due to the last incident, we tend to -- will follow the
8 ship out if they would like us to, you know, when they're being
9 escorted, you know, just to be there since we're headed down the
10 river --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- that if they should need any assistance. We travel, you
13 know, we all work together, you know, in this harbor. So.

14 Q. Okay. Have you all ever had another time where you've needed
15 to assist or another time that you know if you've have needed to
16 help push over?

17 A. I can't speak on other tugs.

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. As far as ships, we do so many jobs it would be really hard
20 for me to actually give you an example. I mean tug and barges,
21 but they don't require pilots. So.

22 Q. You don't recall any other like near misses --

23 A. No.

24 Q. -- where you've had to come and push the bow over to try to
25 prevent an allision in that area?

1 A. No, ma'am.

2 Q. Okay. And about how far off of the bow of the ship were you
3 following with the *Diane Moran*?

4 A. I was definitely -- probably a couple hundred feet, something
5 like that, 150 feet, you know. We're both sharing the channel.
6 So, yeah, safe room for everybody. So we just typically -- yeah,
7 we'll just ride the edge of the channel if we need to just to be
8 near the ship if needed. The last thing we want to be is behind
9 the ship and like, hey, would you mind -- we need you, and then
10 you've got to hike all the way up there. So during those turns,
11 we tend to stay off the ship and if they need us we can get over
12 there in a timely manner.

13 Q. When you all are sailing by Joint Base, was the *Diane Moran*
14 like off to the side of the ship or was it more like midship or
15 were you sailing in front?

16 A. What location are you talking about? We weren't in front.
17 What location?

18 Q. I guess like before he called you over.

19 A. We were favoring midship, starboard bow area.

20 Q. Okay. So just kind of following along the side --

21 A. Yeah, beside.

22 Q. -- but in the forward area of the ship?

23 A. Um-hum. Yeah.

24 Q. All right. Approximately what speed were you all making?

25 A. I don't know. That one would be a hard one for me. I

1 couldn't give you --

2 Q. Throttle position, RPM.

3 A. I couldn't. Yeah, I couldn't. You know, I wasn't staring at
4 my speed really.

5 Q. Right.

6 A. I was just kind of following them out. I wasn't throwing a
7 wake or anything by any means. We tend to travel at a, you know,
8 lower speed, cruising out there.

9 Q. So you were making about the same speed as the ship?

10 A. Yeah, I was trying to ride with them, yeah

11 Q. Okay. And then when you came over to push on the bow, you
12 came up in speed. Is that correct?

13 A. Yeah, I did. I did. I increased speed to get over there
14 quickly for them.

15 Q. Okay. About how much time would you say was the span between
16 like when he asked you to come over and when you made contact with
17 the ship?

18 A. Due to the circumstances, it was fairly quickly. I kinda
19 assessed the situation, realized I was needed over there so we
20 got, you know, got over there as quickly as we could, safely as we
21 could.

22 Q. Like 10 second, 30 seconds, a minute?

23 A. No, not a minute. No, 20 seconds, 30, something like that.

24 Q. All right. And so you said you pushed on the bow as much as
25 you could --

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. -- until it wasn't safe any more. Describe what you mean by
3 that?

4 A. Well, just, you know, but as far as with the tugboat, where I
5 was pushing, I didn't want to get the tugboat caught up in any
6 situation with pilings or the dock, the pier there, you know. The
7 last thing we want is, you know, something gets -- you know, that
8 dock has been messed up. So I don't know what's around there.
9 Something could get in my drives or something, and then I lose
10 propulsion. So, I just judged it the best that I could and then
11 felt that we did the best we could there and backed on out and
12 then waited for more orders.

13 Q. Okay. So you backed off and the ship passed by the pier and
14 then I assume you followed the ship after that?

15 A. Yes, ma'am.

16 Q. And you passed by the pier.

17 A. Yes, ma'am.

18 Q. What happened after the ship passed the pier? Did it
19 continue down river, stop? Were there any more discussions or
20 anything?

21 A. I believe Captain Logan asked if I would just watch. Like I
22 said, it was kind of in the mix, but to watch the pier or watch
23 the ship or something. I can't think of that one, but as far as
24 my understanding, just drove it back on out to the channel. I
25 didn't notice any stop or anything.

1 Q. Okay. Thank you.

2 A. Um-hum.

3 LT [REDACTED]: Do you have?

4 BY MR. EHLERS:

5 Q. I'll back up a little bit.

6 A. Sure.

7 Q. Tell me a little bit about the *Diane Moran's* engines,
8 rudders? Is it a traditional tugboat? Is it --

9 A. It's an Azimuth stern drive. So we call it an ASD tug or
10 better known as a tractor tugboats.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. She is 5,000 horsepower. We do everything kind of bollard
13 pull, as far as with lines. She's on the weaker side. She's one
14 of the first class boats of her kind. So she's like, maybe 55
15 tons -- but as far as bollard pull, but it's just an older Jensen
16 class tugboat.

17 Q. Okay. And you said 5,000 horsepower. Is that combined?

18 A. Uh-uh. Two engines.

19 Q. Two. Okay. You mentioned this is a replacement for another
20 tug that's in the yard.

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Is it a similar tug?

23 A. Yeah. Well, I mean they're all different classes. As far as
24 operating-wise, yeah, they're the same.

25 Q. AST?

1 A. ASD.
2 Q. ASD.
3 A. Um-hum.
4 Q. Okay.
5 A. They operate in the same manner.
6 Q. Okay.
7 A. Some are bigger than others.
8 Q. Yeah, yeah. How big is the *Diane Moran*?
9 A. She is around 83, 84 feet long.
10 Q. Okay.
11 A. Something like that.
12 Q. So -- and what's the other tugboat?
13 A. The *Elizabeth Turecamo*.
14 Q. Okay. And do you always -- are you always on the same
15 tugboat? Obviously you switch out because of the yards but are
16 you always on when -- right now, are you always on the *Diane Moran*
17 or do you rotate between other tugboats as well?
18 A. I'm typically on the *Diane Moran* until our boat returns. But
19 it's not a normal practice for us to be needed on another tugboat,
20 but it's not frequent.
21 Q. Okay. Okay. And you felt comfortable --
22 A. Yeah, absolutely.
23 Q. -- on that day? Okay. All right. As far as that section of
24 the river, is that a section of the river that you often operate
25 in above JBC, around JBC?

1 A. Yeah, we typically go up there. It's not as frequent.

2 Q. What to you mean by as? Like give me a sense of how often
3 you're up there?

4 A. I was up there yesterday morning, up there at Nucor. But,
5 you know, past those terminals are popular terminals, you know,
6 from North Charleston down but, yeah, we had a tanker -- for our
7 business. Now, for as far as ships going up there, we split work
8 from McAllister and Moran. McAllister tends to have more
9 contracts in that area but, yeah, we frequently go there.

10 Q. Okay. All right. The courtesy escort that you did, you
11 mentioned that the captain asked you to do it while you were in
12 the pilothouse. Did he express any specific concerns going for
13 that courtesy escort, things to watch for or anything like that?

14 A. I think it was just a brief, you know, standby for those
15 turns.

16 Q. Okay. What were the conditions like that morning as far as
17 tides, currents, winds?

18 A. Yeah, it was like -- I can't really remember. It was clear.
19 It was a nice day. It was a nice morning.

20 Q. Did you have any trouble pulling the ship off the pier?

21 A. No, sir.

22 Q. Okay. All right. Current, any?

23 A. Yeah, a little bit, I believe, a flood -- kind of a flood up
24 there or something.

25 Q. Okay. So the captain called you to come over and help out on

1 the starboard bow. Where were you in relation to like on the ship
2 exactly?

3 A. Where I was pushing?

4 Q. Yeah, yeah, like where? Were you right below the hawse pipe,
5 below the anchor?

6 A. No, I wasn't that far up. I was -- I would say I would more
7 shoulder area.

8 Q. Shoulder.

9 A. That was the quickest place I could get to there.

10 Q. Okay. And what angle did you have on the ship? I assume you
11 weren't perpendicular?

12 A. Well, he had some headway. So we broke the motor around as
13 much as we could, you know.

14 Q. Do you have an idea of the angle? 45, something like that.

15 A. I wouldn't say a 45. I mean I couldn't break all the way
16 around (indiscernible), but it might have been some, a little bit
17 of angle.

18 Q. Okay. All right. And, where did you have the throttle to?
19 Did you go all the way to full?

20 A. Full.

21 Q. All right. Until you had to back off?

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. Okay. Was there ever -- did you have to put a line over?

24 A. No, sir, until after the fact.

25 Q. Okay. And you said after the fact. When was that that you

1 put the line over?

2 A. When our pilot, you know, got on board and they got
3 everything situated and then we did an escort out. They were
4 talking together coming up with a plan up there. So I don't get
5 that part of that. I don't get to see that. I just get the
6 radio.

7 Q. Okay. So was the line put over after the ship had
8 recommenced going downriver again or was it --

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Okay. So you weren't using the line to assist the ship to --

11 A. No.

12 Q. -- to get away from the pier or stop its motion?

13 A. No. No, sir.

14 Q. Okay. And so -- and then you said you escorted. You had the
15 line over further on down the river?

16 A. Um-hum. We did some escort. We had myself on the *Diane*
17 *Moran* was on the port bow and we had the *James Moran* on the
18 starboard bow.

19 Q. Okay. Is that typical to do that?

20 A. For some jobs, but not all the time. It's not that frequent.

21 Q. Okay. When you say some jobs, is there a particular type of
22 vessel or a particular vessel?

23 A. Yeah, if it's a large vessel, very large vessel or, you know,
24 wind or bad, terrible weather or a ship that -- it not as -- but
25 we don't do it as frequently, no, sir.

1 Q. Okay. All right. Before Captain Logan called you over to
2 assist, did you notice the ship rock at all or do anything, an
3 unusual motion?

4 A. No, sir.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. No.

7 Q. All right. And after it had glanced the pier, did you see it
8 -- did it appear that the ship ran aground at all?

9 A. No, sir.

10 Q. Okay. All right. I think that's all I have.

11 A. That's it.

12 Q. Thank you.

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have any questions.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have any questions.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Nothing from me.

17 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

18 Q. I've got just one or two just because I'm curious. Did you
19 actually see the allision when you were backing off? Did you see
20 what happened to the vessel?

21 A. Yeah, he cleared it. There was just pilings and then just
22 kind of -- it didn't look -- it just kind of scraped the side. It
23 didn't look -- I guess you all seen the pictures and stuff. It's
24 that little concrete section.

25 Q. And did anything drop off into the water or anything like

1 that?

2 A. Not I could tell.

3 Q. Okay. So it was more like a scrape?

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. Okay. I also thank you for your efforts.

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 CAPT LOGAN: Yes, thank you, Andrew.

8 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

9 Q. I assume it could have been a lot worse. The only other
10 thing I'll ask, you've been up there assuming your career. Tell
11 me a little bit about the dock. I know it suffered previous
12 damage.

13 A. Right.

14 Q. But in that turn, you're a professional mariner. Do you
15 believe that is a hazard to navigation up there?

16 A. Yeah, I do.

17 Q. Okay. And why?

18 A. Well, for making the turn -- well, it's a hazard, too, for
19 now because it's already -- are you talking about previously
20 before it was hit?

21 Q. Yeah, before and after.

22 A. Yeah, I mean making that turn, the ships, you know, rely on
23 having to make that turn. It's a fairly sharp turn, and having
24 that there is definitely impeding, to me, it seems like it's
25 impeding, you know, the passage out, you know. They've really got

1 to make that turn fairly sharp especially while turning.

2 Q. Thank you, sir.

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 BY LT [REDACTED]:

5 Q. Okay. Did you notice or did you hear any communications from
6 the pilot about any issues with the steering or that the ship was
7 having prior to the incident?

8 A. No, ma'am.

9 Q. Like did it make all the other turns just --

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. -- as expected, as normal?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. I think that's all I have. Do you have any questions for us
14 or anything else we need to consider?

15 A. I don't.

16 Q. Okay.

17 LT [REDACTED]: All right. Well, that will conclude this
18 interview, and the time is 1147.

19 (Whereupon, at 11:47 a.m., the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

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


IN THE MATTER OF: *HAFNIA AMESSI* TANKER ALLISION WITH
PIER BRAVO ON THE COOPER RIVER,
AT JOINT BASE CHARLESTON
NEAR CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA,
ON JANUARY 14, 2024
Interview of Capt Andrew Yarbrough

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA24FM018

PLACE: Charleston, South Carolina

DATE: January 16, 2024

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber