

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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IN RE: :
 :
THE ALLISION INVOLVING THE : NTSB Accident No.
AFRAMAX RIVER ON THE HOUSTON : DCA16FM055
SHIP CHANNEL ON SEPTEMBER 6, :
2016 :
 :
-----:

INTERVIEW OF: MICHAEL MCGEE

September 7, 2016

BEFORE

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ USCG
BRUCE DAVIES, USCG
LUKE WISNIEWSKI, NTSB
MIKE USHER, Port Pilot Commission
for Harris Co. Ports
CPT. ROBERT SHEARON, Houston Pilots

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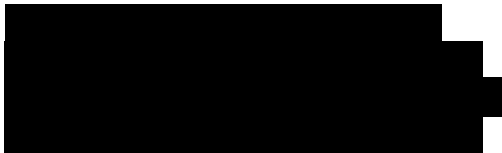
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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

1
2 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] All right. Well, good morning
3 everyone, thank you for being here. We're just
4 conducting a post casualty interview with one of the
5 pilots that was on board the Aframax River when it
6 allegedly alighted with a dolphin. I'm [REDACTED]
7 [REDACTED] and the Coast Guard has the lead in this
8 investigation. NTSB has an interest, so they'll be
9 here as well. I guess to begin this interview, we'll
10 just go do a roundtable, everyone say their names and
11 who they're representing and we'll start. So, again,
12 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the investigator on duty. I work
13 for the Sector Houston Galveston, Mr. Davies'
14 Investigation Division.

15 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Hi, good morning. Luke
16 Wisniewski, National Transportation Safety Board. I'm
17 a marine engineer.

18 MR. DAVIES: Bruce Davies, Chief of
19 Investigations for U.S. Coast Guard, Sector Houston.

20 MR. HARTMAN: Keith Hartman, Royston Rayzor,
21 on behalf of Navigate Charters.

22 MR. DURHAM: Andy Durham for the interests of
23 the Aframax River.

24 MR. HUFFMAN: Jay Huffman with Blank Rome on
25 behalf of G&H Towing.

1 MR. USHER: Mike Usher on behalf of the Pilot
2 Board Investigation and Recommendation Committee of the
3 Board of Pilot Commissioners for Harris County Ports.

4 CPT. MCGEE: Mike McGee, Houston Pilots.

5 MR. BROWN: Jim Brown, counsel for Captain
6 McGee.

7 CPT. SHEARON: Captain Robert Shearon,
8 presiding officer of Houston Pilots, representing
9 Houston Pilots.

10 [REDACTED] All right. So, Captain, to
11 begin, like I said, I'll be asking some questions and
12 then Mr. Davies will also be adding. So, if you have
13 any questions for us, anything, anytime, just feel free
14 to stop us. So, Captain, I'll start by asking for a
15 little background information on your experience as a
16 Houston pilot. How long have you been a pilot here?

17 CPT. MCGEE: Been a pilot 18 years.

18 [REDACTED] And how many transits have you
19 conducted as a Houston pilot.

20 CPT. MCGEE: I don't have any idea.

21 [REDACTED] Do you have a general range?

22 CPT. MCGEE: I mean, we do somewhere around
23 17, 18 jobs every two weeks, so that's every month for
24 18 years.

25 [REDACTED] All right.

1 CPT. MCGEE: They fluctuate when it's busy or
2 whatever.

3 [REDACTED] All right. Safe to say in the
4 thousands?

5 CPT. MCGEE: Yes.

6 [REDACTED] How many transits with Aframax
7 tankers have you been a part of?

8 CPT. MCGEE: I'm not sure. I don't remember
9 working on that ship before.

10 [REDACTED] Or that style of ship, that
11 size ship, have you --

12 CPT. MCGEE: That size of ship, sure.

13 [REDACTED] All right.

14 CPT. MCGEE: Several times.

15 [REDACTED] Just never on that --

16 CPT. MCGEE: That's the size of ship that
17 goes in there normally.

18 [REDACTED] Okay. Just not with that
19 specific ship? You don't recall ever operating on that
20 ship?

21 CPT. MCGEE: I don't recall that ship, no,
22 sir.

23 [REDACTED] Have you ever undocked any
24 ships in that facility, Houston Fuel Oil Dock?

25 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, I have.

1 [REDACTED] Both ahead, astern, coming in
2 and out in --

3 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, sir.

4 [REDACTED] All right. Daytime, nighttime?

5 CPT. MCGEE: Both.

6 [REDACTED] And do you use tug assist for
7 all of these undocking, docking --

8 CPT. MCGEE: Yes.

9 [REDACTED] I would just say, is this
10 facility difficult, easy, moderate?

11 CPT. MCGEE: It's pretty well normal, I would
12 say.

13 [REDACTED] Have you ever encountered any
14 problems or issues mooring or unmooring at this
15 facility specifically?

16 CPT. MCGEE: No.

17 [REDACTED] So, I guess let's move on to
18 the actually day of the incident, 05 September, you
19 came onboard. Can you just tell us what time you
20 arrived onboard the ship?

21 CPT. MCGEE: It was a little after 23:00. It
22 was an order for 23:30.

23 [REDACTED] All right. And can you just go
24 over the sequence of what happened once you got
25 onboard?

1 CPT. MCGEE: Well, there was a delay, we
2 didn't get underway until midnight or 1:00. So, waited
3 for tugs to get there, make them fast, ship wasn't
4 quite ready. And once we did that, we started taking
5 in lines. The normal procedure.

6 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Now, Captain, before taking in
7 lines, did you conduct any kind of -- have any
8 discussions with the master or the bridge team?

9 CPT. MCGEE: I did.

10 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] You did? Did you go over the -
11 -

12 CPT. MCGEE: The ship had come in the day
13 before and Captain Phillips was on it the day before
14 and I asked him about the ship and how it operated and
15 any problems with the ship or crew or anything. And he
16 said, no, everything was fine.

17 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] You say this was Captain
18 Phillips?

19 CPT. MCGEE: He was on it the day before.

20 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] How about with the master, did
21 you have any conversations?

22 CPT. MCGEE: Well, I talked to the captain
23 after that, so I'm saying, I talked to Captain
24 Phillips, he said he was on the day before, there was
25 no problems, and then when the captain got up there, I

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1 asked him was everything okay with the ship, are you
2 ready to go? And he said, yes.

3 [REDACTED] Did you review the pilot card?

4 CPT. MCGEE: I did.

5 [REDACTED] Was there any discussions with
6 the master regarding the pilot card or any concerns of
7 any kind from you?

8 CPT. MCGEE: There was no concerns on it to
9 me that I could tell, I mean, typical pilot card. No
10 issues with the ship or notes. So, we went on started
11 making tugs fast and taking in lines, like normal.

12 [REDACTED] Now, Captain, did you -- who
13 was on the bridge with you during the evolution?
14 Bridge team, regarding the ship personnel? I know you
15 said Captain Phillips was there and the master was
16 there.

17 CPT. MCGEE: When are you asking?

18 [REDACTED] Right before --

19 CPT. MCGEE: When we walked onboard or when
20 we were doing the operation or what

21 [REDACTED] After your pilot exchange,
22 pilot/master conference.

23 CPT. MCGEE: Okay. Captain was up there, the
24 mate, and I believe that was it besides Captain
25 Phillips.

1 [REDACTED] All right. Was there any
2 meeting with the bridge team or any discussions with
3 the mate? You said you spoke to Captain Phillips and
4 the actual master of the ship.

5 CPT. MCGEE: Correct.

6 [REDACTED] Did you have any discussions
7 with the mate that was up there?

8 CPT. MCGEE: No.

9 [REDACTED] Now, was there a helmsman?

10 CPT. MCGEE: Yes.

11 [REDACTED] This wasn't the mate?

12 CPT. MCGEE: It's not the mate, no, sir.

13 [REDACTED] Do you recall who was directing
14 the helmsman? Who was giving the helmsman orders?

15 CPT. MCGEE: I was.

16 [REDACTED] All right. So, were there any
17 language problems?

18 CPT. MCGEE: Not too -- no, not really.
19 Indian crew, but other than, it was pretty much the
20 normal Indian crew.

21 [REDACTED] Now, was the helmsman relaying
22 commands back to you?

23 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, he was.

24 [REDACTED] He was? Clear?

25 (No audible response.)

1 [REDACTED] Were there any discussions of
2 any potential hazards in the area with the bridge team?
3 Any concerns prior to --

4 CPT. MCGEE: I told him about the dredge that
5 was down below in Peggy Lake, that was really the only
6 thing that I thought that he needed to know as far as
7 potential problems. I told him the traffic was, there
8 was no traffic in the area, because there wasn't. Not
9 in the immediate area anyway. While we were doing our
10 maneuver, it was going to be just us out there.

11 [REDACTED] Okay. Now, Captain, do you
12 recall who was on the engine order telegraph?

13 CPT. MCGEE: I would assume it was the mate,
14 but I'm not quite sure.

15 [REDACTED] And do you recall if there were
16 assigned lookouts on the ship? On the bow and stern of
17 the ship?

18 (No audible response.)

19 [REDACTED] Do you recall if the master was
20 communicating with the lookouts?

21 CPT. MCGEE: The captain was talking to
22 several people.

23 [REDACTED] Now, Captain, was weather and
24 visibility, any concerns?

25 CPT. MCGEE: No concerns, it was a clear

1 night.

2 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] And, prior to getting underway,
3 were there any concerns with the unmooring evolution?

4 CPT. MCGEE: No, it's pretty cut and dry at
5 that dock. We had two line boats, so it went pretty
6 quick.

7 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Now, Captain, if it's not too
8 much trouble, would you be able to draw a sketch of the
9 way the ship was laying with the tugs, the way the tugs
10 were or where the tugs were, prior to getting underway
11 or prior to unmooring from the dock?

12 CPT. MCGEE: Sure. I'm not an art major, but
13 --

14 (Laughter.)

15 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Just a very rough, rough
16 sketch. I do have -- if you want to make it here or --

17 MR. BROWN: He can draw on that.

18 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Okay.

19 MR. BROWN: If you want him to draw on that -
20 -

21 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Whatever's easiest for him.

22 MR. BROWN: Okay.

23 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Nothing -- yes.

24 CPT. MCGEE: Okay. This was the -- do you
25 want the tugs' names on there or do you know them?

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1 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] If you have them, if you can --
2 one of them was the Jess Newton?

3 CPT. MCGEE: He was on the corner.

4 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] All right. So --

5 CPT. MCGEE: My wife was an art major, I
6 wasn't.

7 (Laughter.)

8 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] If you have one in the family,
9 that's good. So, just go over the evolution, Captain,
10 of the unmooring.

11 CPT. MCGEE: Okay. We had head lines, breast
12 lines, and spring lines, and we started with the head
13 lines and stern lines, took those in first, worked to
14 the breast, springs. Once we got those onboard, we
15 breasted her off and then started coming astern with
16 the ship.

17 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] You mentioned the tugs, you
18 were in communication with the tugs?

19 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, sir. And they had both
20 worked away from the dock, pulling me away from the
21 dock at the same time.

22 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] This was --

23 CPT. MCGEE: And once I got her comfortably
24 off the dock, we started astern on the ship, pretty
25 much like normal. Didn't have to wait for anybody,

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1 there was no traffic.

2 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Radio comms with the tugs?

3 CPT. MCGEE: No problems.

4 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Now, Captain, were you aware
5 that there was a dolphin down there by that dock, ITC?

6 CPT. MCGEE: I am.

7 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] And do you know if the tugs
8 were aware of that dolphin?

9 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, I'm sure they are. It's
10 been there for a long time.

11 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Was that dolphin lighted?

12 CPT. MCGEE: Not that I'm aware of, but it
13 might be. I'm not sure.

14 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] All right. And do you -- I'm
15 guessing --

16 CPT. MCGEE: It doesn't have any fendering
17 around it, I will tell you that. But it's not intended
18 to lay against.

19 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] All right.

20 CPT. MCGEE: It would be nice if it would've
21 had some.

22 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Do you know if there was any
23 discussions with the lookouts about that dolphin or any
24 other hazards in the area from the master to just kind
25 of make sure you're aware that there is a dolphin there

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1 or there's something else in that area, just let us
2 know for --

3 CPT. MCGEE: Well, I told the captain to let
4 me know, just watch the bow and watch the stern as
5 we're doing this maneuver. He and I were on the
6 starboard bridge wing as we backed out of there, so we
7 could see the starboard side of the ship and I had
8 Captain Phillips on the port side, watching that side
9 of the ship.

10 [REDACTED] So, Captain, so right after
11 your lines were off, what was the first helm command
12 given to the helmsman?

13 CPT. MCGEE: I never gave him a command
14 coming out of there, I just kept the wheel midship.

15 [REDACTED] All right. And how were you --
16 were you using ship's propulsion to come off?

17 CPT. MCGEE: We were, yes, sir.

18 [REDACTED] All right.

19 CPT. MCGEE: I gave him dead slow stern
20 order.

21 [REDACTED] Do you recall what speed you
22 were doing? Dead slow stern?

23 CPT. MCGEE: At what time?

24 [REDACTED] Dead slow stern, after that
25 first command.

1 CPT. MCGEE: At which -- I mean, immediately
2 or --

3 [REDACTED] Well --

4 CPT. MCGEE: -- halfway through the deal? It
5 increases, I mean, we were up to three and a half
6 before the collision, which is quite fast.

7 [REDACTED] And do you recall how long it
8 took you to get to 3.5 knots?

9 CPT. MCGEE: Not sure.

10 [REDACTED] Now, once your commands were
11 given, was it what you expected from the ship, handling
12 wise? As for the dead slow stern and the way that --

13 CPT. MCGEE: At first, yes, sir. At first,
14 but within a few minutes, you could feel the ship
15 increase propulsion when I never gave another order
16 until I told him to stop.

17 [REDACTED] So, from dead slow astern --

18 CPT. MCGEE: My next order was stop and I
19 gave it to him several times. They were having
20 communication problems, I'm not sure what. And then my
21 next order was dead slow ahead, slow ahead, half ahead,
22 full ahead, which we never got.

23 [REDACTED] Now, were the tugs involved?

24 CPT. MCGEE: They were working the whole
25 time, yes. Jess Newton was backing the whole time.

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1 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] So, when you realized that you
2 were not getting the -- the vessel wasn't responding
3 the way you wanted to, did you engage the tugs to try
4 to assist?

5 CPT. MCGEE: I had them working the whole
6 time.

7 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Okay.

8 CPT. MCGEE: What I did when I realized I
9 wasn't getting any response from the engine, we dropped
10 anchor, both anchors.

11 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] All right. Captain, let's go
12 back to the two pilot system. Can you just describe
13 why were the two pilots onboard?

14 CPT. MCGEE: For the larger vessels, we do
15 that for fatigue, for the most part, split the job up
16 half and half, for half of transit. But when things
17 change as far as like visibility, problems with the
18 ship, engine problems, or whatever, then you call on
19 the other pilot to help.

20 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] And who --

21 CPT. MCGEE: And we did that, Mike was
22 involved helping me the whole, pretty much the whole
23 way through, trying to work with Coast Guard and
24 everybody, fire crew and all that. So it was vital
25 that he was there.

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1 [REDACTED] Do you guys have a written
2 procedure as Houston pilots for the two pilot system?

3 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, sir.

4 [REDACTED] Okay.

5 CPT. SHEARON: What was the question?

6 [REDACTED] Is there a written procedure
7 for the two pilot system?

8 CPT. SHEARON: No.

9 [REDACTED] No?

10 CPT. SHEARON: No.

11 CPT. MCGEE: Well, I mean, as far as how we
12 break the job up.

13 CPT. SHEARON: But he says, is it written
14 somewhere where you can --

15 CPT. MCGEE: Oh, no.

16 CPT. SHEARON: No. He can explain it, but
17 there's no writing that I know of.

18 [REDACTED] Okay.

19 CPT. MCGEE: Yes.

20 [REDACTED] Well, Captain, is there at any
21 point, and I'm going back to when you dropped the
22 hooks, was there any point where you felt that there
23 was a chance that the vessel might hit that dolphin?

24 CPT. MCGEE: When I couldn't get a response
25 from the engine, yes, sir, that's why I dropped the

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1 anchors to stop it from happening.

2 [REDACTED] All right.

3 CPT. MCGEE: And we had the tug working full
4 trying to keep it from happening until his line parted
5 with the fire.

6 [REDACTED] All right. We'll move down the
7 line here.

8 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Luke Wisniewski, NTSB.
9 Captain, I'd just like to back up a little bit toward
10 the beginning there when you said you came onboard.

11 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, sir.

12 MR. WISNIEWSKI: The crew, were they familiar
13 with the terminal? Were they familiar with that area?

14 CPT. MCGEE: They had been there the day
15 before, so I would assume so.

16 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Do you know if that ship has
17 frequented that terminal or that area before?

18 CPT. MCGEE: I'm not sure.

19 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

20 CPT. MCGEE: But they had been there the day
21 before.

22 MR. WISNIEWSKI: And then, you indicated
23 there was a delay, that the ship wasn't ready, do you
24 know what was --

25 CPT. MCGEE: I have no idea why.

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1 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Was it something with
2 engineering or --

3 CPT. MCGEE: No, sir, I don't know why.

4 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Cargo?

5 CPT. MCGEE: He said there was no problems
6 with the ship, they were ready to go, but it just --
7 like I said, it was a 23:30 order, we didn't get
8 underway until a minute after midnight.

9 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. I was just going to
10 when you talked about the dead slow astern order that
11 you gave, do you know how long that was, that order was
12 for?

13 CPT. MCGEE: No, not particularly, no, sir.

14 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Do you know what the RPM, I
15 know they usually have somewhere in the centerline of
16 the bridge the RPM gauge, do you know what that read?
17 Did you happen to look at that?

18 CPT. MCGEE: I looked at it, it was working
19 in astern bearing, I could see that from where I was in
20 the bridge wing, yes, sir.

21 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. You couldn't see the
22 RPM it got up to?

23 (No audible response.)

24 MR. WISNIEWSKI: And then I guess I have --
25 the ship's going to make note of vacations to the

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1 Captain of the Port, their vessel response plan, is
2 there any procedures that you have written from the
3 Houston Pilots to go through notification that you have
4 to make?

5 CPT. MCGEE: No, sir.

6 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. That's all I have at
7 this time.

8 MR. DAVIES: Yes, Captain, Bruce Davies from
9 the Coast Guard Investigations. To back when you are
10 going, you said slow astern and you increased to --

11 CPT. MCGEE: No, no, no, no, let's make that
12 very clear.

13 MR. DAVIES: Dead slow.

14 CPT. MCGEE: I was only dead slow astern,
15 okay?

16 MR. DAVIES: Right.

17 CPT. MCGEE: And then my very next order was
18 stop.

19 MR. DAVIES: That's what I'm getting at.

20 CPT. MCGEE: All right.

21 MR. DAVIES: That's setting the stage for my
22 question --

23 CPT. MCGEE: Okay. And then my very next
24 order was dead slow ahead, slow, half, full, which I
25 never got any of those.

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1 MR. DAVIES: Okay. Well, that's my question
2 here, you were going dead slow astern and you said the
3 speed was increasing, correct?

4 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, sir.

5 MR. DAVIES: Okay. And then you said you
6 gave it to them several times, the order to stop, who
7 did you give that order to?

8 CPT. MCGEE: Captain.

9 MR. DAVIES: Who was working the engine order
10 telegraph at that time? Do you recall?

11 CPT. MCGEE: No, sir.

12 MR. DAVIES: At any time --

13 CPT. MCGEE: I think it was the mate, but I'm
14 not sure.

15 MR. DAVIES: Okay. When you said you had the
16 tugs working the whole time, who was directing the
17 tugs? Was that you?

18 CPT. MCGEE: Me.

19 MR. DAVIES: What did the captain, when you
20 said you gave him the order several times, actually,
21 what did the captain do? Did he give you any type of
22 explanation why this thing wasn't stopping?

23 CPT. MCGEE: He was about as nervous as I've
24 ever seen anybody, even at that point. He was running
25 around and running into the wheelhouse, coming back

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1 out, and I'm trying to maneuver the ship and he's
2 running away from me. So, I had to kind of run him
3 down, stop, I couldn't get him to stop, so I'm trying
4 to come ahead, like I said. So, I don't know what his
5 problem was, but he was very nervous from the start.

6 MR. DAVIES: All right. From the start of,
7 when you pulled out --

8 CPT. MCGEE: As soon as I couldn't get the
9 order we asked for, stop, then all of a sudden, he was
10 on the radio, he ran into the wheelhouse, came back
11 out, back and forth.

12 MR. DAVIES: And that radio, who was he
13 speaking with? Do you know? If you know.

14 CPT. MCGEE: I don't know.

15 MR. DAVIES: Did he ever or did anybody ever
16 contact the engine room that you know of?

17 CPT. MCGEE: Not that I'm aware of. I'm sure
18 they were, but I don't know.

19 MR. DAVIES: Okay. I don't have any other
20 questions for that.

21 CPT. MCGEE: Okay.

22 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Going around the room, anybody
23 --

24 MR. DURHAM: Nothing from the Aframax group.

25 MR. HUFFMAN: This is Jay Huffman on behalf

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1 of G&H Towing. Captain, the two tugs that you had, the
2 Jess Newton --

3 CPT. MCGEE: Gasparilla.

4 MR. HUFFMAN: -- and the Gasparilla, did they
5 respond to the commands when you issued them?

6 CPT. MCGEE: Sure.

7 MR. HUFFMAN: Any delay?

8 CPT. MCGEE: No delay. I mean, the Jess
9 stayed in to the bitter end, until his line parted with
10 the fire. I mean, that guy did a great job. Along
11 with all the other ones that were there doing the
12 monitor work, with the fire monitors, they did a hell
13 of a job.

14 MR. HUFFMAN: Thank you, Captain. No further
15 questions.

16 CPT. MCGEE: Okay.

17 MR. USHER: Yes, Mike Usher. For the sake of
18 a long title, the PBIRC is referring to the Pilot Board
19 Investigation and Recommendation, for the record.
20 Captain McGee, thank you for being here this morning
21 and providing this testimony. You may have mentioned
22 this and I might have missed it, but I apologize to
23 make you have to repeat it, but you said you dropped
24 the anchors. Was that --

25 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, sir.

1 MR. USHER: Do you know if that was prior to
2 impact or after?

3 CPT. MCGEE: Oh, no, sir, it was before.

4 MR. USHER: It was prior to impact?

5 CPT. MCGEE: Yes. Yes, I couldn't get
6 response, any response, so I dropped anchors. And I
7 was still trying to get ahead bells, which I never got
8 anything. So, I don't know what was the problem with
9 the engine room, I have no idea.

10 MR. USHER: Did the anchors ever fetch up or
11 did you --

12 CPT. MCGEE: I'm not sure. I really think
13 with the impact stopped us, before the anchors did.

14 MR. USHER: Okay. Thank you. That's all I
15 have.

16 [REDACTED] All right. Captain, you said
17 you never got ahead?

18 CPT. MCGEE: No, sir.

19 [REDACTED] Okay.

20 CPT. MCGEE: And we replayed the tape
21 yesterday and, the Raven tape, and you can see where we
22 never increased speed. And I never saw anything on the
23 register that showed we got ahead bell. I don't know
24 what kind of failure they had. Something.

25 [REDACTED] And after the incident, was

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1 there any discussions with the master --

2 CPT. MCGEE: Oh, sure, there was --

3 [REDACTED] -- about the --

4 CPT. MCGEE: -- a lot of discussions.

5 [REDACTED] Anything referencing the
6 engineering, mechanical issues, that you're --

7 CPT. MCGEE: He had an issue with the chief
8 engineer, I mean, he said a couple things about him.
9 I'm not sure what their problems were, but the
10 engineer, he was talking to the captain and he said, we
11 were on 30 RPMs and then all of a sudden we were on 80.
12 Now, I don't know what caused that, I've got some
13 ideas, but that's all they are.

14 [REDACTED] All right.

15 CPT. MCGEE: But I did hear him say that. He
16 was talking to the captain when he said that. And he
17 was on the phone talking to someone when he said, I
18 thought he needed full astern, and that was his words.

19 [REDACTED] His, I'm sorry, his is the --

20 CPT. MCGEE: This is the chief engineer.

21 [REDACTED] Chief engineer, okay.

22 CPT. MCGEE: And, again, I don't know who he
23 was talking to on the phone, but he said, I thought he
24 needed full astern. So, why he thought he could do
25 something in the engine room, I have no idea. But

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1 there again, I've got some ideas of I think why he did
2 it.

3 [REDACTED] All right. Anyone else?

4 MR. DAVIES: Yes, I just have another
5 question to follow up on --

6 CPT. MCGEE: Sure.

7 MR. DAVIES: -- the master. This whole
8 evolution is happening and what I mean by the
9 evolution, is when you're asking for ahead and you're
10 not getting it, is the captain responding to you and
11 saying, Mr. Pilot, I can't give it to you, something's
12 wrong?

13 CPT. MCGEE: No, sir. He was running around
14 like a chicken with his head cut off and I'm chasing
15 him down trying to get it. And he's on the radio, he's
16 screaming, he's quite hectic. And then --

17 MR. DAVIES: And who said, drop the anchors -
18 -

19 CPT. MCGEE: I did.

20 MR. DAVIES: -- at this point? Okay.

21 CPT. MCGEE: I said drop both anchors, is
22 what I said.

23 MR. DAVIES: And was there any problems with
24 that?

25 CPT. MCGEE: There was no hesitation in that,

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1 no, sir. He radioed that and he hollered that right to
2 the crew.

3 MR. DAVIES: And to get back to the EOT
4 again, were they moving the EOT, if you know, if you
5 were in a position to see that when you were giving,
6 say I need to come ahead, were they actually moving the
7 EOT or not?

8 CPT. MCGEE: I couldn't tell you. I couldn't
9 see it, I was way out on the bridge wing trying to
10 watch --

11 MR. DAVIES: Okay. One other --

12 CPT. MCGEE: -- the docks.

13 MR. DAVIES: One other question, was the ship
14 in engine room control, do you know, or was it in
15 bridge control?

16 CPT. MCGEE: Well, I heard, I don't know if
17 that will do you, if that's what you want to hear, but
18 for a fact, I don't know. But the engineer did say
19 when we gave the order of stop, he couldn't do it, so
20 he took it in engine room control and put it on
21 emergency stop. Now, then, why he went from emergency
22 stop to full astern, I don't know. Did he do that? I
23 don't know either, I just heard what he said on the
24 phone to someone, which I kind of thought was probably
25 a port engineer or company official of his, but I don't

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1 know. But I heard him say it at the top of his lungs.

2 MR. DAVIES: Okay. I have nothing else.

3 CPT. MCGEE: Okay.

4 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Luke, NTSB. Just to
5 clarify, when you were pulling back away or your
6 discussion with the captain, your pilot/captain
7 exchange, there was no discussion about it was going to
8 be under bridge control or engine control for the main
9 engines? Who was going to have control of the
10 throttles? Was it going to be the bell?

11 CPT. MCGEE: There wasn't a particular
12 discussion about it, no, sir.

13 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. And even during the
14 event, you said that you think it was on the bridge
15 because you try to bring it back to stop?

16 CPT. MCGEE: No, I'm just saying what the
17 chief engineer said to the captain after everything was
18 over and --

19 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. This was a --

20 CPT. MCGEE: -- we're down --

21 MR. WISNIEWSKI: -- discussion afterwards?

22 CPT. MCGEE: -- we had already shipped it and
23 towed it down to Cemex and were alongside, fire was
24 over, all that. The chief finally came up there and
25 that's when I heard him on the phone and that's when he

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1 said that it went from 30 to 80 and all that.

2 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

3 CPT. MCGEE: That's when all that happened is

4 --

5 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Oh, okay.

6 CPT. MCGEE: -- we were at the dock and
7 everything was over --

8 MR. WISNIEWSKI: All right.

9 CPT. MCGEE: -- and we were tied up.

10 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Did you hear any alarms?

11 CPT. MCGEE: No, sir.

12 MR. WISNIEWSKI: All right. And no
13 discussion with the engine room?

14 CPT. MCGEE: No.

15 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

16 CPT. MCGEE: We had fire running, bellowing
17 over us on both sides. I can't think of a worse
18 situation, in my life anyway.

19 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

20 CPT. MCGEE: And I was just trying to keep
21 that ship from hitting anything else in the area and
22 making it much, much worse. And that's all I thought
23 of.

24 MR. DAVIES: Well, we didn't even talk about
25 the fire. I mean, did you take any actions to protect

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1 yourself, or could you have taken any actions up on
2 that bridge when that fire came up? I mean --

3 CPT. MCGEE: No, sir.

4 MR. DAVIES: -- what were you doing?

5 CPT. MCGEE: I don't think -- well, I was
6 still conning the ship, I mean, I was still trying to
7 work tugs and get the ship back into the -- because we
8 were in this area here and I'm trying to move the ship
9 out and turn it. We're trying to move the ship, we're
10 coming out this way, and then we turn right here. And
11 we have 1,200, 1,300 feet here, this is an 800 foot
12 ship, there's plenty of room. Okay.

13 So, all I'm doing at this point is trying to
14 get this ship back here and I had a same size vessel at
15 this dock, 800 by 138, another ship here, another ship
16 here, I had a barge sticking out past the dock at this
17 ITC berth, and I was trying to get it to this position
18 and hold it and let it burn out. And then, once we got
19 that under control and we had it burn out and we had
20 all the tugs working, everything going on, then once
21 that happened, we picked up anchors and we towed it
22 down to just below all these docks to get them away
23 from more damage. And then we moved it to Cemex for a
24 lay berth.

25 MR. USHER: But how long were you on fire

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1 while you were doing that, before you moved?

2 CPT. MCGEE: Well over an hour, it seemed
3 like. From memory.

4 MR. USHER: And fire was on both sides of the
5 vessel?

6 CPT. MCGEE: It was on both sides of the
7 vessel and it, I'm telling you, it went, at one time,
8 it went over on both sides of the bridge wing and it
9 came up both sides and it ran Captain Phillips inside
10 and I was still out trying to dodge these, this ship
11 and barge over here, because that's -- I'm on this
12 ship, on the starboard bridge wing over here and I'm
13 over here and the fire literally came right over my
14 head and it singed my face and I ran back inside. And
15 then I tried to do as much of it from inside the
16 bridge, but I couldn't.

17 So as soon as the fire, because the fire was
18 black, I mean, you couldn't see a foot in front of you,
19 so when I'm trying to get it back over here, I would
20 run from side to side just to where I could get away
21 from the smoke long enough to make sure we're okay.
22 And then, when I got it here, we just let it sit there
23 and burn.

24 MR. DAVIES: How about on the bridge itself,
25 did the smoke come into the bridge?

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1 CPT. MCGEE: Oh, yes, sir.

2 MR. DAVIES: Were you able to see on the
3 bridge at --

4 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, you could see. I mean, it
5 was heavy smoke, but the doors were open and it was
6 running through. But it's about as hairy a situation
7 as I can imagine.

8 MR. DAVIES: What about the helmsman during
9 this time, did he stick on the helm with you?

10 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, but it was pretty frantic,
11 you had people running everywhere. We had the deck
12 crew manning hoses and we couldn't ever get any water
13 pressure. And that was another problem with the ship
14 and the engineer, I would guess, the engineer's
15 problem, but we never really got any more pressure than
16 a garden hose in your back yard.

17 MR. USHER: Your Raven antenna on the bridge
18 wing melted?

19 CPT. MCGEE: And my antenna, I don't guess
20 it's in here, it was in the office, but it melted. The
21 cap rail all around, I'm sure you understand cap, that
22 was all just singed. And sandbags on the side of the
23 wheelhouse, those were on fire. I mean, everything, it
24 was incredible. I was just trying to keep everything
25 to where we could get off the damn thing eventually.

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1 MR. DAVIES: Well, how did you get off the
2 boat eventually?

3 CPT. MCGEE: We went down to -- we got it
4 here, let it burn out, and then we towed it down here
5 to just below all these docks, there's a big wide area
6 there, just above the Battleship, if you know where the
7 Battleship sits.

8 MR. DAVIES: Yes.

9 CPT. MCGEE: We sat there for quite a while
10 until Coast Guard gave us approval to go down to Cemex
11 for a lay berth. And so we held it there, but at this
12 point, we didn't really, we had no problems with fire
13 anymore. So then, once we got clearance, they had
14 problems getting a hold of Cemex, the dock company, to
15 let us go alongside there, so that's when we held up
16 there. And then once we did, went on to the dock and
17 tied it up.

18 MR. USHER: You towed it though, you didn't
19 use --

20 CPT. MCGEE: We towed it, I didn't use the, I
21 was afraid to use the engine because I didn't know if I
22 was going to get full head instead of dead slow ahead.
23 So, I just towed it.

24 MR. DAVIES: Did you know what the extent of
25 the damage was at any time or did you suspect what the

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1 damage was?

2 CPT. MCGEE: Well, we knew there was a gash
3 in the side of the port quarter and we had estimates of
4 about 30 feet.

5 MR. DAVIES: And that was given by the tugs?

6 CPT. MCGEE: Tugboats, yes. Because the tugs
7 did a hell of a job, I mean, they really did. I
8 commend them. I wish we had had fire boats from the
9 Port of Houston closer stationed, that is a huge thing
10 that we should have with all these docks, all these
11 tanks. Look at all these tanks, this is just one
12 section, and there's no fire boat in this area. That's
13 --

14 MR. USHER: They got there about at the end.

15 CPT. MCGEE: Yes. They were -- yes.

16 MR. DAVIES: The fire boat eventually got
17 there?

18 MR. USHER: Yes.

19 CPT. MCGEE: Yes.

20 MR. USHER: It was almost out at that point.

21 CPT. MCGEE: Well, they eventually got there,
22 I'm not --

23 MR. USHER: Yes.

24 CPT. MCGEE: -- saying they didn't there.

25 MR. USHER: They have a ways to go.

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1 CPT. MCGEE: Yes. But if it weren't for
2 harbor tugs, that thing would have sat there and
3 probably sunk, I don't know what would have happened.
4 It was horrible. But we had the Thor there throwing
5 water on it and we had several tugs working on it,
6 Gasparilla, they all just about had to get their
7 monitors working. It was an unbelievable fire. I
8 mean, it was unreal.

9 MR. DAVIES: We saw the pictures. I mean --

10 CPT. MCGEE: Yes.

11 MR. DAVIES: -- I was driving into work and I
12 heard it on the radio.

13 CPT. MCGEE: Yes.

14 MR. DAVIES: I said, why wasn't I notified?

15 MR. USHER: You kept it in the middle though,
16 because you didn't want to drift on the tankers on
17 either side and then --

18 CPT. MCGEE: Yes.

19 MR. USHER: -- they catch on fire.

20 CPT. MCGEE: That was my main concern at that
21 point. Once all the collision had happened, at that
22 point, I'm just trying to keep anything else from
23 starting fire. And I was working the tugs the whole
24 way through and I commend them for that, because, I
25 mean, that was a hairy situation for them to come

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1 alongside or stay alongside and work.

2 MR. DAVIES: How soon after you hit the
3 dolphin, or let's say you didn't even know you hit the
4 dolphin, you hit something --

5 CPT. MCGEE: Right.

6 MR. DAVIES: -- how soon after that collision
7 did the fire erupt? Was it --

8 CPT. MCGEE: Immediate, I'd say.

9 MR. DAVIES: All right.

10 CPT. MCGEE: I would say within a minute. I
11 mean, it was --

12 MR. DAVIES: That's close enough to
13 immediate.

14 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, sir. It was -- and it went
15 from no fire to full blaze, unbelievable fire. And
16 that's when Captain Phillips was on the port side and
17 it came right over his head and he ran in. And I'm out
18 on the starboard side and it was unbelievable. I
19 mean, I tell you, I've had some hellacious dreams
20 already of what might have happened. We were real
21 lucky. I really, I mean, there was -- that's a
22 horrible thing to happen, but I do still strongly feel
23 that we did the best to keep anything else from
24 happening that would have been much, much worse. But
25 if there was any way to get fire boats in that area and

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1 keep them there, that would be the first thing, if we
2 do anything from this, that should happen. And
3 fendering on that dolphin, without a doubt. But I'm
4 just the pilot.

5 MR. USHER: Yes, I mean, it's close to the
6 channel, it's right there.

7 CPT. MCGEE: Yes.

8 MR. DAVIES: I don't have anything more.

9 MR. WISNIEWSKI: So just --

10 [REDACTED] All right. Gentlemen?

11 MR. USHER: Mike Usher, again, Captain McGee,
12 PBIRC. And I think, just to comment here quickly on
13 behalf of, I'm sure, the facilities in the area and the
14 maritime industry as a whole, and I can certainly feel
15 comfortable speaking on behalf of the PBIRC and the
16 Pilot Commission, you and Captain Phillips did a
17 commendable job after this circumstance occurred. And
18 I think it was heroic.

19 CPT. MCGEE: I don't know about that, but I
20 mean, I think Captain Phillips was invaluable for me.
21 I know these companies talk about this two pilot
22 system, but I tell you what, it would have been really
23 hard to do it without him.

24 MR. USHER: I can identify with that.

25 CPT. MCGEE: He was working with the --

1 MR. USHER: He handled the comms with the
2 Coast Guard?

3 CPT. MCGEE: -- Coast Guard, he was talking
4 with the fire crew. I mean, he was actually putting
5 out some of the fire --

6 MR. USHER: Himself.

7 CPT. MCGEE: -- himself. So it --

8 MR. USHER: He let a hose out himself.

9 CPT. MCGEE: Yes. So if they ever question
10 that, that would be the first thing I'd say. I mean,
11 sure this doesn't happen everyday and thank God it
12 doesn't, but when it does, it's invaluable to have
13 somebody else to help you.

14 MR. USHER: Absolutely. And like you had
15 mentioned, fire boat response in that area would have
16 helped alleviate --

17 CPT. MCGEE: It would have been crucial,
18 because --

19 MR. USHER: -- crucial and alleviate --

20 CPT. MCGEE: -- we waited forever to get the
21 big boats there, because they weren't right there.
22 They're --

23 MR. USHER: Not faulting them, they've just
24 got a ways to go.

25 CPT. MCGEE: Well, no, and they're stationed

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1 for jobs coming up that are down below or whatever.

2 MR. USHER: The assist tugs.

3 CPT. MCGEE: The assist tugs --

4 MR. USHER: Yes.

5 CPT. MCGEE: -- the harbor tugs. And when
6 they got there, they did a great job.

7 MR. USHER: It's my understanding they
8 provided a lot of water --

9 CPT. MCGEE: Oh, gosh, yes.

10 MR. USHER: -- for fire protection --

11 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, sir.

12 MR. USHER: -- when they arrived and --

13 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, sir, they did.

14 MR. USHER: -- they're to be commended also.

15 But, again, certainly do commend you and Captain
16 Phillips for how you handled this situation once it got
17 into dire straights. Just a follow-up question, on
18 impact of the mooring dolphin, if that's what we'll
19 determine was the cause of the impact or what the ship
20 alighted to, did you have any idea you were fixing to
21 hit it?

22 CPT. MCGEE: Well, I --

23 MR. USHER: At any point?

24 CPT. MCGEE: I mean, I knew that it was
25 getting very, very close, that's why I kept trying to

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1 get the ahead bells and then when I couldn't get that,
2 I dropped both anchors to try and avoid it. I mean,
3 I've sailed ships out of there for 18 years, I was a
4 tugboat captain for 11 years, I know the area very
5 well.

6 MR. USHER: Okay. Did the stern lookout
7 happen to identify how close you were getting close to
8 this dolphin?

9 CPT. MCGEE: Well, Captain Phillips was on
10 the port side and he was saying we were getting close
11 back here. I knew we were getting close back there --

12 MR. USHER: Okay.

13 CPT. MCGEE: -- and I'm on the starboard
14 bridge wing trying to avoid it. I mean, I don't know
15 what happened in the engine room and I'm sure we'll
16 eventually find out, but, I mean, I have theories. I
17 mean, why would you ever go to full astern on something
18 if you're not in control, you're down in the engine
19 room?

20 MR. USHER: Yes.

21 CPT. MCGEE: I don't know what he was
22 thinking or what --

23 MR. USHER: Were you working the tugs on VHF
24 Channel 14?

25 CPT. MCGEE: 14, yes.

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1 MR. USHER: Did the assist tug Jess Newton
2 ever notify you and identify how close you were getting
3 to the dolphin?

4 CPT. MCGEE: No. No, but there again, he was
5 in front of the bridge. So, his line of sight probably
6 wouldn't have been able to see that dolphin.

7 MR. USHER: Okay. Because he was above --

8 CPT. MCGEE: Yes.

9 MR. USHER: -- in front of the --

10 CPT. MCGEE: Yes, sir. He was --

11 MR. USHER: Okay.

12 CPT. MCGEE: Right.

13 MR. USHER: On the port quarter?

14 CPT. MCGEE: And he was in front of the house

15 --

16 MR. USHER: Okay.

17 CPT. MCGEE: -- so I, well, I don't --

18 MR. USHER: Okay.

19 CPT. MCGEE: -- think he could have seen it.

20 MR. USHER: Okay. That's all I have. Thank
21 you, Captain.

22 CPT. MCGEE: Okay. Thank you.

23 [REDACTED] One more?

24 MR. DAVIES: I have just one more, Captain.

25 CPT. MCGEE: Okay.

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1 MR. DAVIES: With the crew's action, you
2 mentioned the captain was running around, but how about
3 the crew's action and their response, did they go to
4 their fire stations?

5 MR. USHER: Deck crew?

6 MR. DAVIES: Could you go through and --

7 CPT. MCGEE: Deck crew --

8 MR. DAVIES: -- elaborate a little bit on
9 that?

10 CPT. MCGEE: Deck crew did a great job.
11 Those guys, they were -- and I had a harbor tug, the
12 Gasparilla, told me one time, he said, the deck crew,
13 they're standing in fire, let them know that they're, I
14 said, they know they're standing in fire. And they
15 were working those hoses trying to put that fire out
16 and the fire was all around. I'm telling you, I was
17 watching them on one side on the port quarter when I
18 went over there, and the fire was running up and down
19 both their legs and they're out there trying to work
20 the hoses to put that fire out. They did a hell of a
21 job.

22 And the problem is they didn't have any
23 water pressure. If those guys would have had any water
24 pressure, that might have helped a hell of a lot. And
25 I don't understand what happened there, but there's an

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1 issue there we need to look into. But they had this
2 limp hose they were trying to put this fire out with.
3 It was horrible. I mean, it looked like --

4 MR. DAVIES: That's all I have. Thank you.

5 CPT. MCGEE: Okay.

6 [REDACTED] Thank you, sir.

7 CPT. MCGEE: Thank you.

8 [REDACTED] That concludes the interview.

9 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went
10 off the record.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Allision Involving the Aframax River
on the Houston Ship Channel, Sept. 6, 2016
Accident No. DCA16FM055
Interview of Michael McGee

DATE: 09-07-16

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 44 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

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