

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: DOUGLAS SCOTT

September 9, 2016

BEFORE

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ USCG
BRUCE DAVIES, USCG
LUKE WISNIEWSKI, NTSB
MIKE USHER, Port Pilot Commission for Harris
Co. Ports
RUSSELL GIBSON, G&H Towing Company

APPEARANCES:

On Behalf of G&H Towing Company:

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On Behalf of the Interviewee and Other
Individuals Involved in this Investigation:

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

11:10 a.m.

Hey, good morning, captain.

The approximate time on deck is 11:10. It is September 9th. We are conducting a post-casualty interview regarding the allision involving the Aframax River in the Houston Ship Channel on September 6th. I am

I am the investigating officer, Sector Houston Galveston. And we'll go around and introduce everyone at the table.

MR. DAVIES: Bruce Davies, Chief investigations for Section Houston Coast Guard.

MR. USHER: Mike Usher, PBIRC.

MR. HATZEL: Cameron Hatzel, on behalf of the two pilots.

MR. WISNIEWSKI: Luke WISNIEWSKI, NTSB.

MR. DURHAM: Andy Durham with Easton Watson for the Aframax River.

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

MR. GIBSON: Russell Gibson, Senior Port Captain, G&H Towing.

MR. SCOTT: Douglas Scott, Master Gasparillia, G&H Towing.

MR. DURHAM: I'm sorry, I didn't catch your

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1 name?

2 MR. SCOTT: Douglas Scott.

3 MR. DURHAM: Douglas Scott? Thank you.

4 [REDACTED] All right, captain, thank you
5 for being here. You sat through the other interviews
6 so it will kind of be the same thing. If you don't
7 mind starting, just giving us a little background
8 information on your maritime experience and training.

9 MR. SCOTT: I've been a master with G&H 20
10 plus years. I started my career in 1978 with the U.S.
11 Coast Guard.

12 [REDACTED] And the 20 plus years as a
13 master with the -

14 MR. SCOTT: With G&H, yes, sir.

15 [REDACTED] And what capacity, what
16 vessel, what types horsepower have you, vessel types,
17 horsepower, that you've been a master on?

18 MR. SCOTT: C drives all the way back to the
19 boats that are gone and sold.

20 [REDACTED] I'd ask you how many jobs
21 you've been involved in, but I'm -

22 MR. SCOTT: Quite a few.

23 [REDACTED] And I'm guessing you've been,
24 you've assisted vessels of the Aframax size type -

25 MR. SCOTT: Yes, sir.

1 [REDACTED] -- before? And how are you
2 made aware of when you have a job?

3 MR. SCOTT: I'm notified by dispatcher.

4 [REDACTED] Okay. And, on September 5,
5 2016, when were you first notified that you were
6 supposed to assist the Aframax River unmoor?

7 MR. SCOTT: I'd have to look at our time
8 log, but, it's usually about 15 minutes before arrival
9 time.

10 [REDACTED] And where were you when you
11 were notified?

12 MR. SCOTT: Tug dock at HD1.

13 [REDACTED] You were on watch?

14 MR. SCOTT: Yes, sir.

15 [REDACTED] Who else was with you,
16 captain?

17 MR. SCOTT: Excuse me?

18 [REDACTED] Who else was with you?

19 MR. SCOTT: I had my training mate.

20 [REDACTED] Anyone else with you on deck?
21 On the bridge?

22 MR. SCOTT: Only after I sounded the general
23 alarm, mustered the crew.

24 [REDACTED] So, once you arrived at the
25 dock where the Aframax River was moored, can you just

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1 explain a little bit, what were your actions?

2 MR. SCOTT: Standard procedure. We ordered
3 along side by the pilot, put our line up, and held them
4 at the dock until we were ordered otherwise.

5 [REDACTED] All right. You communicated
6 with the pilot via -

7 MR. SCOTT: Via the HF, 14.

8 [REDACTED] The HF? How was the
9 communication with the pilot?

10 MR. SCOTT: Excellent.

11 [REDACTED] Do you recall which pilot you
12 were communicating with?

13 MR. SCOTT: 166.

14 [REDACTED] And, what was the pilot's
15 orders to you?

16 MR. SCOTT: It was a number of orders
17 coming, it's the regular evolution.

18 [REDACTED] I'm sorry, prior to getting
19 underway, when you first arrived, you said you had a
20 line -

21 MR. SCOTT: Just put up a line and it's
22 automatic. We pinch them in working clutch ahead.

23 [REDACTED] All right.

24 MR. SCOTT: Unless we're told otherwise.

25 [REDACTED] Now, what was the tug, in

1 reference to the ship was it -

2 MR. SCOTT: I was on the port bow.

3 [REDACTED] Port bow. Was there any
4 discussion about the maneuvering that was going to be
5 taken or how the pilot was planning on turning the
6 ship?

7 MR. SCOTT: None. It's standard procedure.

8 [REDACTED] Do you recall the first
9 command that was given to you by the pilot?

10 MR. SCOTT: Probably all stop. And come
11 away slow. I'd have to see the, hear the radio
12 transcripts to be accurate.

13 [REDACTED] Come away slow?

14 MR. SCOTT: That would be my guess.

15 [REDACTED] All right.

16 MR. SCOTT: It was a normal job.

17 [REDACTED] And did you notice the ship
18 moving away from the dock at this time?

19 MR. SCOTT: We pulled it off dock, yes sir.

20 [REDACTED] All right. Anything caught
21 your attention? Anything different about this job? At
22 the time?

23 MR. SCOTT: Not really.

24 [REDACTED] After -

25 MR. SCOTT: I heard speed is a factor, but

1 I've seen faster. And, it's like I said, it seemed
2 like a normal job up until they got close on the pylon.

3 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] So after the command of come
4 away slow, you pull the ship off the dock, was there
5 any other commands given to you prior to the allision?

6 MR. SCOTT: Last command I received prior to
7 the collision was full tore and it should be on the
8 transcripts, I was working slow away at the time and
9 said, all stop and I believe full tore. Came ahead on
10 the ship.

11 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Now were you listening into
12 the Jess Newton warning the pilot about the piling?

13 MR. SCOTT: Yes, I heard all the
14 conversations.

15 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Did you make any preparations,
16 Captain, for a possible allision? Anything that you
17 did that wasn't requested from the pilots on your own
18 initiative?

19 MR. SCOTT: No, no. We don't act unless
20 we're instructed.

21 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] All right, captain, I'll pass
22 it on to Mr. Davies.

23 MR. DAVIES: Yes, captain, you said you hold
24 a captain's license, but could you be a little more
25 specific what the particular captain's license or

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1 master's license is?

2 MR. SCOTT: I have a 1600 near coast master,
3 1600 oceans mate. I have the towing endorsement for
4 oceans for tugs, towing.

5 MR. DAVIES: Okay, and your duty schedule
6 when you're working for G&H? What is your hitch, for
7 the lack of a better term?

8 MR. SCOTT: Generally, it's seven and five.
9 I was a 12 hour boat. I didn't have a true mate. And,
10 I was well within my 12 hour period.

11 MR. DAVIES: I'm not questioning that, I'm
12 just getting that information down. We just, so you
13 were seven days on, five days off?

14 MR. SCOTT: No, no, four days on, four days
15 off.

16 MR. DAVIES: Okay.

17 MR. SCOTT: And we were the first day of
18 the hitch.

19 MR. DAVIES: All right. And how many people
20 are on the entire crew?

21 MR. SCOTT: Four men.

22 MR. DAVIES: And that's master, relief
23 master, mate, whatever, and then two deck hands?

24 MR. SCOTT: No, sir. Engineer, I had a
25 training mate, and an able-bodied seaman.

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1 MR. DAVIES: I'm going to pass the witness.
2 We'll get into the firefighting next round.

3 [REDACTED] Mike?

4 UNIDENTIFIED: So much for the questions.

5 [REDACTED] All right.

6 UNIDENTIFIED: No, I don't have any.

7 [REDACTED] All right, Mike?

8 MR. USHER: Yes, Mike Usher, PBIRC. Good
9 morning Captain Scott, thank you for being here. Thank
10 you for your service. Had you just come on watch for
11 this job, or?

12 MR. SCOTT: I've been handling all the jobs
13 as per se through the day.

14 MR. USHER: Okay.

15 MR. SCOTT: As I said, I was well within my
16 12-hour time limit.

17 MR. USHER: Okay, so I mean, what time did
18 you come on watch for this time frame?

19 MR. SCOTT: There was no true watch. I get
20 called out as -

21 MR. USHER: Oh, per job?

22 MR. SCOTT: -- as, yes, sir.

23 MR. USHER: Oh, okay, I see. It's not like
24 push-boat industry where they stay six on, six off, so.

25 MR. SCOTT: That's our normal watch

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1 schedule, yes, sir.

2 MR. USHER: Oh, okay, thank you, captain,
3 that's all I have.

4 [REDACTED] Mr. Hatzel?

5 MR. HATZEL: Nothing at this time, thank
6 you.

7 [REDACTED] All right, counsel, I guess
8 we'll move into a post-incident, so, last command you
9 said you had was full thor?

10 MR. SCOTT: Pull tore, yes.

11 [REDACTED] Pull tore, which means?

12 MR. SCOTT: I was pushing ball, bow of the
13 ship out towards the center channel to be pointed
14 outbound for sea.

15 [REDACTED] Okay. When were you first
16 made aware the vessel had alighted? Did you feel it,
17 did you see it?

18 MR. SCOTT: We saw it.

19 [REDACTED] You saw the allision?

20 MR. SCOTT: Yes, sir.

21 [REDACTED] And the fire, you saw the
22 fire?

23 MR. SCOTT: Yes, sir.

24 [REDACTED] Would you say that was
25 immediately after the allision?

1 MR. SCOTT: Yes, sir.

2 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] And can you just go over some
3 of the actions after the fire, after you saw the fire?

4 MR. SCOTT: I -

5 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] From your crew and your
6 vessel.

7 MR. SCOTT: I mustered my crew, hit the
8 general alarm, lit off our fifis. It was definitely
9 growing quickly, so we engaged our deluge system, and I
10 wanted it on immediate stand by so we fired it and
11 turned it back off, so it was ready to go. I never put
12 the cannons on the vessel.

13 And we put our stream to starboard towards
14 the stern, that's where the flames were at the time.
15 We had a south wind, I was afraid it was going to push
16 the fuel at us, so basically we were in a defensive
17 mode.

18 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Are you, you were made up to
19 the ship?

20 MR. SCOTT: Yes, sir.

21 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] At all times?

22 MR. SCOTT: There was one point I was
23 ordered just to stick a midship after we took in and
24 then he moved me back to the port quarter and put
25 another line on.

1 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Were you getting commands from
2 the pilot or anyone on the ship?

3 MR. SCOTT: Yes, sir.

4 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Can you, what were those
5 commands?

6 MR. SCOTT: All the ship commands from 166
7 and Captain Philips was pretty much trying to handle
8 the, I guess, officer in charge for moving the boats
9 around for firefighting.

10 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] And did you kind of know what
11 the intentions were of the captain in regards to the
12 commands that you were being, that you were -

13 MR. SCOTT: Yes, sir.

14 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] All right. Mr. Davies?

15 MR. DAVIES: Yes, on the bridge, I've been
16 on a few G&H tugs, but the bridge of this particular
17 one, it is kind of self-contained where you can kind of
18 secure, like the airflow in there?

19 MR. SCOTT: Yes, sir.

20 MR. DAVIES: So, safe to say that you were
21 not affected inside the bridge with the smoke?

22 MR. SCOTT: We could smell the fumes pretty
23 strong towards the end of the job.

24 MR. DAVIES: Was it having an effect on
25 anybody?

1 MR. SCOTT: No. By that point, it was
2 permeating despite everything.

3 MR. DAVIES: And you said you aimed your
4 hoses towards the starboard side of the Aframax River?

5 MR. SCOTT: No, our starboard of the tug.

6 MR. DAVIES: So your starboard side of the
7 tug and why, again, did you do that?

8 MR. SCOTT: I was holding the ship off
9 Houston Fuel Oil Number One. And, for quite a while I
10 was the only vessel on that ship with the line on it.

11 And, like I said, I was defensive and I had
12 to keep all the flames out of that, it was pretty tight
13 in there. So, we had, we kept the water flow going and
14 it kept the flames off the port side.

15 MR. DAVIES: So were you trying to push,
16 like the fuel away from your boat?

17 MR. SCOTT: Up, I mean the whole length of
18 the ship is basically what we did.

19 MR. DAVIES: At this point, how intense were
20 the flames because you could feel the heat -

21 MR. SCOTT: Excuse me, I've got a stiff
22 neck.

23 MR. DAVIES: How intense were the flames?
24 Could you feel the heat in the bridge?

25 MR. SCOTT: There was a point where we had

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1 flames literally going over the top of our vessel.

2 MR. DAVIES: And at this point, were you
3 still connected?

4 MR. SCOTT: Yes, sir.

5 MR. DAVIES: Did you say to the pilot, hey,
6 wait a second here, it's time for us to leave?

7 MR. SCOTT: Yes, we're all in it.

8 MR. DAVIES: And while you were cut in the
9 defensive posture for both yourself and the Aframax,
10 when did the other tug arrive? That, I believe another
11 tug from G&H arrived to help with the firefighting?

12 MR. SCOTT: We had a number of tugs. It was
13 so hectic I couldn't tell you who came first or where
14 they were at.

15 MR. DAVIES: Doesn't matter, the best you
16 can, your recollection is, what, how it happened.

17 MR. SCOTT: David B, was first, I remember,
18 being on scene. But, I'm probably wrong.

19 MR. DAVIES: And did they use a monitor to
20 help with -

21 MR. SCOTT: I couldn't tell you what they
22 were doing.

23 MR. DAVIES: Okay. Any other tug that you
24 can remember from G&H came?

25 MR. SCOTT: We had a number of tugs there

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1 and Thor and Oceanus but, I, to give you the whole
2 list, I couldn't do that.

3 MR. DAVIES: Okay, well we can get that if
4 we need it. What about the, when you were still
5 tethered to the ship, how much longer did you stay
6 tethered when this fire was going on?

7 MR. SCOTT: Pretty much the whole duration
8 with the exception of one short hitch, I was pushed in
9 in mid-ship.

10 MR. DAVIES: So you never left the side of
11 the ship whether you were tethered or just pushing
12 against it?

13 MR. SCOTT: No, sir.

14 MR. DAVIES: Did you feel like your life was
15 in danger at any time?

16 MR. SCOTT: Pucker factor was pretty good.

17 MR. DAVIES: When did the fire, you were
18 still there when the fire went out, when you were still
19 against the ship?

20 MR. SCOTT: Yes, sir.

21 MR. DAVIES: Were you concerned about any
22 re-flash?

23 MR. SCOTT: Always.

24 MR. DAVIES: And what did you do after that?
25 The fire's out, you're still up against this ship, what

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1 maneuvers did you make then?

2 MR. SCOTT: I wouldn't make a maneuver
3 unless I was ordered by the pilots.

4 MR. DAVIES: Well, did the pilots order you
5 to do anything right after the, let's say at the
6 conclusion of the firefighting?

7 MR. SCOTT: Just the regular ship holding
8 us, coming astern, we're pushing on them as ordered.
9 And the only thing we did was kept our cannons going
10 for, make, keep the fuel out.

11 MR. DAVIES: Anything else you can think of
12 you want to add to this? Any concerns -

13 MR. SCOTT: No, sir.

14 MR. DAVIES: -- about the firefighting?
15 Anything that we didn't cover that we should know
16 about? Any thing of that nature?

17 MR. SCOTT: Not really.

18 MR. DAVIES: Mike? Throw it to you?

19 MR. USHER: Thank you, Mr. Davies.

20 Actually, if I could, Mr. [REDACTED] Mr. Davies, make a
21 comment instead of a question. As a former first
22 responder, I would be remiss not to recognize the
23 gallant effort and commend the assist tug crews for the
24 brave efforts executed attacking, the firefighter
25 measures used to mitigate circumstances. Thank you

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1 both, gentlemen.

2 I wish the Captain of the Thor and the other
3 tugboat captains were here to thank them as well. I'd
4 also like to extend gratitude to G&H Towing for
5 providing their personnel with the equipment and
6 training needed in marine safety. Thank you.

7 [REDACTED] Luke, what you got?

8 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Luke WISNIEWSKI, NTSB.
9 What's the, your monitors on board, what's the flur
10 rate? Pounds per minute?

11 MR. SCOTT: 6,000 per minute per cannon, two
12 cannons.

13 MR. WISNIEWSKI: You had two cannons aboard?
14 You go and just describe the, and I, if, I apologize if
15 I butcher this, was called the free-free or, the, I
16 guess that -

17 MR. SCOTT: Fee Fee. Those are the cannons.

18 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Fee Fee. Okay, that's the
19 cannons?

20 MR. SCOTT: Yes, sir.

21 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Is there any dousing system
22 where you have a, or cooling system to keep the boat
23 cool, any sprinklers?

24 MR. SCOTT: Yes, that was the deluge system
25 I mentioned in the beginning.

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1 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Could you go in and just
2 describe deluge a little bit?

3 MR. SCOTT: It's piped around the boat and
4 it's got a number of nozzles. It'll cover your boat in
5 a nice spray. It's a cooling device and in the event
6 of a major fire, we're -

7 MR. WISNIEWSKI: And that worked well for
8 you? No issues?

9 MR. SCOTT: I turned it on and it worked
10 well and I turned it off so I could see.

11 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Could you see the
12 firefighting efforts that were being conduct onboard
13 the vessel?

14 MR. SCOTT: I know they turned on the
15 ballast pumps, because they had overflow from the deck.
16 Other than that, no I couldn't. I couldn't see
17 anything.

18 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Can you see if that, did
19 that help at all? The ballast water?

20 MR. SCOTT: It had to.

21 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Now, I guess at one point
22 you were at mid-ships and I guess the ballast water was
23 from the video we just watched -

24 MR. SCOTT: It was all in this -

25 MR. WISNIEWSKI: -- exiting just over the

1 scuppers, just forward of the house.

2 MR. SCOTT: Almost the full length of the
3 house.

4 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

5 MR. SCOTT: And, if it was doing the same on
6 the starboard side, I couldn't tell you.

7 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Could you see if
8 that was pushing any of the fuel away from the ship?

9 MR. SCOTT: No. It was pouring down in but
10 it wasn't moving any water.

11 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay, so it was just
12 rushing over the side of the ship? You couldn't, okay,
13 you couldn't, okay. That's all I have at this time,
14 thank you. Mr. Durham?

15 MR. DURHAM: Just to clarify, and I think
16 you were asked, was there any damage to your tug?

17 MR. SCOTT: No, sir.

18 MR. DURHAM: Was anyone injured -

19 MR. SCOTT: No.

20 MR. DURHAM: -- or hurt? Okay, thank you,
21 that's all I have.

22 [REDACTED] All right, well, just the last
23 question. In your personal, professional opinion, is
24 there anything you could have done to mitigate or
25 minimize this accident?

1 MR. SCOTT: I'll always question it, but
2 there is so much I don't know, it wouldn't, I couldn't
3 make a fair judgment.

4 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Several more, NTSB. From
5 the video we could see a fire inside the hull. Could
6 you see that from -

7 MR. SCOTT: Not really.

8 MR. WISNIEWSKI: -- your perspective on the
9 mid-ships?

10 MR. SCOTT: Not really from, when it was
11 flaring, yes, but when they brought the Thor up, I
12 couldn't see anything.

13 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. That's all I have,
14 thank you.

15 [REDACTED] Thank you very much, captain.
16 That concludes the interview. It is approximately
17 11:30.

18 (Whereupon the above-entitled matter went
19 off the record at 11:30 a.m.)
20
21
22
23
24
25

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 Douglas Scott

DATE: 09-09-16

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 22 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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