UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	
ENDO BREEZE ENGINE ROOM FIRE NEAR RARITAN BAY, NEW JERSEY, ON APRIL 29, 2022	Accident No.: DCA22FM016

Interview of: PAUL JAMES LLAMAS, Master
Endo Breeze

On board the *Endo Breeze*

Monday,
May 2, 2022

APPEARANCES:

[redacted]
U.S. Coast Guard Sector New York Investigations

LUKE WISNIEWSKI, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

[redacted] Investigator
U.S. Coast Guard Sector New York Investigations

ALTON EVANS, Attorney
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Betancourt, Van Hemmen, Greco & Kenyon LLC

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

(1:34 p.m.)

MR. [redacted] Good afternoon. My name is [redacted] My last name is spelled [redacted], and I am from U.S. Coast Guard Sector New York Investigations. We are on board the *Endo Breeze*. It is approximately 1:34 in the afternoon on May 2nd, and we are investigating the casualty that happened on April 29th regarding the fire on the main diesel engine.

CAPT. LLAMAS: Yes, sir. I am Captain Paul James Llamas. Spell out last name L-l-a-m-a-s. I have been a master on board the ship since March 24th, 2022. I joined in Istanbul, Turkey.

MR. EVANS: Good afternoon, Captain. My name is Alton, or AJ, Evans. E-v-a-n-s. And I'm a lawyer for the ship and owners.

MR. BETANCOURT: Thank you, Captain. My name is Ron Betancourt. I'm also the ship's lawyer here with Mr. Evans.

MR. WISNIEWSKI: Good afternoon, Captain. Luke Wisniewski with the National Transportation Safety Board. Last name is spelled W-i-s-n-i-e-w-s-k-i.

MR. [redacted] Good afternoon, Captain. [redacted] with the U.S. Coast Guard Sector of New York Investigations. Last name's M[redacted].

INTERVIEW OF PAUL JAMES LLAMAS

BY MR. [redacted]

Q. All right, Captain. How many years have you held a master credential?

A. Master's? Maybe, approximately 17/18 years.
Q. Is this your first contract on this vessel?
A. On this ship? Yes. I've been with CSM for over 3 years.
Q. How many years?
A. 3.5 years.
Q. On sister vessels such as this?
A. (Indiscernible).
Q. Okay. All right, so on April 29th you left the pier at around 16:00. Can you start from the time that you were taking off lines, and just tell me your chain of events up until the fire happened?
A. Okay, sir. So when we left the pier, of course, we got two pilots. We got the -- what do you call this? The harbor pilots, and then the sea pilot. And then once the, all the others on board. I told the chief officer to prepare the ship. We are going to the (indiscernible). Although, before that I already told him, I just want to remind him because I'm the guy who always remind things to do. And they secured the manifold and then they prepare the things for bunkering and prepare, also, the pilot rudder for the autopilot, which is around the 70's or 80's, maybe. So he has to do taken care of it very carefully. And then when we made that bend when we disembark, everything should be in normal -- what do you call this? Fairway passage. Then they file up again explain to me that we go around, and then go to second turn.
And then while the vessel was normally navigating through

this fairways, I was here when the chief officer got a call from the engine room. I am not sure if he's the chief engineer or second engineer, later on he told me it was second engineer. And then he told the third mate that they want the engine to be stopped immediately, and then they hung up the phone. And then after that our phone rings again, so I was the one who answered the phone and then it was the chief engineer. And the chief engineer told me to stop the engine as soon as possible. I told him 'One moment, Chief. We will check first see if there is any (indiscernible) you can see for us.' And then I saw the depths in the area it is around 8.5/9 meters. Although this is enough, I still have to ask the pilot if this is safe for us to -- and then he was asking the problem, 'What is the problem?' Then I told him there is a problem in engine number 2, but we can still navigate safely. And then later on -- before we must have hung up, I was speaking with the chief engineer.

Then later on in a few seconds the chief engineer told me that we have a fire already. And then after that, I first wanted to reduce, which I reduced the engine. And then when he said there was a fire, then I really have to stop. I put it to zero pitch, and then when it was zero pitch I explained to the pilot we have to slow down. And then we have to anchor, and the pilot was very cooperative. Then he slowly, slowly maneuvered through this safe water area. And then, later on, we keep monitoring this, and we got this alarm. Fire alarm. And then I made an announcement

that we have this fire in the engine room, and then I also told him to make the announcement. And then after that announcement, we made radio contact with chief engineer. And then I told him to contact the DPA and also the QI. Of course, the pilot told me that 'Is it safe now to let go the anchor?' I said 'Yes. We are always ready and we can anchor, but please take into consideration the speed still are 3.5 or 4 knots,' I told him. So what I did was -- because it's a little bit close to the other buoy, we just have to let it go. And then I told him, also, to hold the brake and then once there is a tension, he can open.

And then when the chief engineer or chief mate was hearing on the radio, and instead of going forward he started master of this crew to start doing, combating the fire. After that, I kept monitoring the speed of the vessel, and then pilot said we can only go to four cables in this anchorage because if too long we can get closer to that buoy. And then when I asked him to put on the brake, the chain was already in about four -- what do I call this? On deck. And then I told him to hold it and then we were monitoring if the anchor was holding and then nothing and the anchor was holding.

MR. [redacted] I don't really have any timeline questions, if you do, Luke.

MR. WISNIEWSKI: So this is Luke, NTSB.

BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

Q. So you had two pilots on board? You had a what? A docking

pilot or --
A. Docking pilot, sir.
Q. Did you have an assist tug at the time?
A. Yes, sir, we had a tug.
Q. What was the assist tug?
A. One tug.
Q. Was there a line attached?
A. No, no.
Q. So they were just trailing you?
A. They transferred the line on the port side.
Q. So you did have a line on?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. The tug had a line on your port side?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Was that utilized at all when you were anchoring?
A. I don't know if that’s only for moving the ship out of the pier, sir.
Q. Oh, out from the pier? Okay.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. But you didn't have one during your transit?
A. No, sir.
Q. Oh, okay. And then you indicated the speed of the vessel. So when was it safe to drop that anchor? When you got under what speed?
A. Well, usually, when you are anchoring it is always better to

lower the anchor when your vessel is starting to go astern so your anchor will lay down very nicely on the seabed.
Q. Yes.
A. But, of course, in case of emergency you really have to drop your anchor. But, of course, I have to take also into consideration that if you drop the anchor we should decrease -- reduce the speed as much as possible. Otherwise, we will break also the anchor, and if -- your anchor will be useless, sir.
Q. What speed do you think you were at when you dropped the anchor?
A. We dropped the anchor around three knots, sir.
Q. It was three knots?
A. Yes, sir, it was more than three.
Q. And which of the pilots did you talk to about where was a safe haven to pull off or to drop the anchor?
A. A very nice lady pilot. Yes, sir. Elizabeth Miller.
Q. Okay. And so the female pilot indicated where -- 'This is a good area. This is okay to drop the anchor'?
A. I asked her that 'It is safe here?' and they said 'Yes, this is safe.'
Q. All right, thank you. And then you indicated, okay there was four shots out on deck as far as your length?
A. Yeah.
Q. Did you get a further length at all when you dropped the anchor?

A. First, she held it at from more than three, and then after that keep open again where this is some tension. And then when I saw that the --

Q. Vessel's --

A. The chain was still coming fast, he held it. And then when he told me there was already four on deck, I told him he first reported five on deck. So I said you have to hold in deep. So when he hold the brake, and I told him after sometime he's reported four are in the waters up on deck it was five.

Q. During this, was there any traffic? Were you concerned about anything like that or outbound traffic at the time?

A. I was monitoring, of course, the traffic as well, but there was no traffic at all sir.

Q. Okay.

A. Even for the past six hours from (indiscernible). Only small boats.

Q. Okay. And did the pilots advise you as well if there was no traffic, or did you just monitor that on your own?

A. Later, she told me that there was no traffic. That's why and we are in a good position. So nothing to worry so much about, and (indiscernible).

Q. And if you can recall, other than calling the shore side, the DPA, what notifications are you aware of that they made on your behalf to, let's say, get out an assist tug or get someone out here to help you?

A. Well, the pilot was also reporting 'Would you like me to help, Captain?' So I asked the third mate to call also our police company, but then he was too busy so I asked the pilot 'Is it possible you can call this fire boat?' And then 'Okay, Captain.' So we called the fire boat and then she called, also, the Coast Guard. We called the Coast Guard.

Q. And I just have a couple more regarding before they dumped CO2. Can you just take us through, again, real quick who told you from the muster standpoint that everyone was accounted for to drop the CO2?

A. Well, they reported to me that when there was a fire and then by radio ready (indiscernible) by telephone. With the telephone he told me that we need to stop, and then when I was speaking with the pilot then they told me 'We only have a fire, sir.' And then when she said there were -- when the chief engineer said there was a fire, immediately we got this fire alarm. And then they told me they were trying they want to do it by fire extinguisher. Then later on, the chief engineer told me that 'Captain, we are already outside.' Then I followed him out. I told him 'Let's make sure that if you really cannot fight the fire, you have to go out. And please make sure that everybody is already outside, and then standby. Make sure that all of the ventilations are shut down, and then you have to shut down the CO2 starting from the engine compartment's side.' Then he told me 'Captain, I already press all of this cylinder out.' What can you do? You already press

all.
Q. Okay, so I just want to clarify then who told you it was -- did you give the order to drop CO2 or did the chief engineer just do it?
A. I told him to drop the, or to release the CO2, sir.
Q. Okay. And who told you that everyone was mustered and accounted for?
A. I told him to. It's okay that before we are release any CO2, there should be a muster just to make sure that nobody is left behind, sir.
Q. Right. So who reported back to you that everyone's mustered?
A. Chief engineer, sir.
Q. So that was the chief engineer, not the chief officer?
A. No, sir.
Q. Not the first officer?
A. No, sir.
Q. Okay.
A. Because chief officer was busy preparing for the boundary cooling, and also verify. I gave the, as far as I can remember, I gave the order to verify that the engine compartment is fully sealed, otherwise the CO2 will be useless. And also, after the CO2 was released, I told them again to verify that all of the possibility of air coming in or CO2 coming out is all sealed, sir. And they confirm to me one time or two times after it was shut, sir.

Q. And who was at the verification of the boundaries were sealed?
A. The ventilations were sealed.
Q. Yeah, who?
A. It was --
Q. Do you remember who that was?
A. I think it was -- I know chief engineer. And chief mate assigned someone, but it was already sealed, sir. But I know chief engineer also confirmed after it was released.
MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. That's all I have. Do you have any questions for him Tom? Mr. Evans?
MR. EVANS: Give me just one second.
(Background conversation)
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. Captain, you spoke earlier about the chief engineer reporting that everyone had mustered.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Does everyone mean everyone on the ship or everyone in the chief engineer's department?
A. Everyone from the engine room. Yes, sir.
MR. EVANS: Thank you.
MR. [redacted] Captain, I just had a couple quick questions about maintenance items on the engine.
BY MR. [redacted]
Q. Were you aware that there was maintenance done on the main

engine when you were in the port here? On the affected main engine.

A. No, sir. They said they would do some inspection, which is very normal.

Q. Okay.

A. That they are doing some inspection and every time we are in port. It is normal that they do some inspection on the auxiliary engine as well as the main engine, and major jobs or repair. It is always, they have to always have seek advice from me and they have to advise from our company because we cannot -- what do they call this? Immobilize the vessel. And they only did some inspection. That's what it was.

Q. I just want to clarify what inspection means to you. When they're doing an inspection, does that mean that they're taking pieces off the engine and putting them back on or is it just a visual inspection?

A. I can say that inspection there is maybe some little tightening of the bolts that are loose, or maybe clean the area where there is maybe some oil coming out. And also, because there is a big difference of temperature outside and inside. There is always the expansion and the extraction of the metal of the steel. After stopping the engine, metal can slowly go back to its original size. There is always a leak inspection done. This cannot be avoided. They have to clean that one. Those are the maintenance that they can do while in port, sir.

Q. Now, if a fuel pump is being maintained and you have to take it apart and replace gaskets, is that required to be ran through you?
A. They have to tell us because all of the vessel can run on its own because we have the ability to maintain one. We still have main engine number 2, but, of course, they have to tell me because we are running in a shut ventilator. So all these things must be advised to me.
Q. Okay. Were you told that there was fuel pumps that were being maintained?
A. No, sir.
Q. Okay. Number 1 and number 8 fuel pump, according to the engineers, were taken apart and put back together as per the AMO system right? The maintenance cards. Now, on their maintenance system, do they report to you on every maintenance item? Does it come to you?
A. No, sir.
Q. Okay.
A. If the chief engineer is satisfied, continues maintenance, right? So he's actually the most certified when it comes to maintenance.
Q. Right.
A. And the only thing that is his responsibility is only to tell me so I know when the engine is available or is not available. Or whenever I need to use the tugboat or whenever I have to be

informed to the office, or also permission.

Q. Okay.

A. Because we need to ask permission from you, but chief engineer.

Q. Okay, but if the engine is down for any reason it needs to be ran through you?

A. Yes, sir. Yes.

MR. [redacted] Okay. All right. I'm good with my maintenance questions.

MR. WISNIEWSKI: I don't have anything else.

MR. [redacted] Mr. Betancourt?

MR. BETANCOURT: Nothing, thank you.

MR. [redacted] Captain, do you have anything that I didn't ask that you want to tell us? Maybe I missed that you feel pertinent to say? You're more than free to tell us now before we end the interview.

CAPT. LLAMAS: Well, actually nothing, sir because only thing that I can say is that the crew participated, or cooperated, according to what I have told them to do. If they have done something which I didn't know, maybe they just use their own judgement, or maybe that is their ability to respond to my instruction. But so far I am happy because when they say it is sealed, it's sealed. When they say it was released, it was released. And then when I told them to monitor the smoke when the smoke becomes thinner, meaning the fire in the engine room is

slowly dying down, they report it to me. That is all I can say about the cooperation of the crew. Although, there is a small, very minimal problems with communication. These Europeans can speak English and some Filipinos. Some is really not -- they love to speak English, but sometimes they are too shy. But when you tell them the instructions they really do their best to accomplish the job. So far of what I can say is if you can see also the engine room, it is only in one area. Meaning the damage is quite small. And all the crew participated. They took this time factor into priority.

MR. [redacted] I would agree with you.

CAPT. LLAMAS: I am happy with their performance, sir.

MR. [redacted] I think your crew saved quite a bit of damage from happening.

CAPT. LLAMAS: Yes, sir.

MR. [redacted] I can safely say that. So you have a good crew. This concludes our interview with you, and I appreciate your time and your efforts. Thanks, Captain.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	*ENDO BREEZE* ENGINE ROOM FIRE NEAR RARITAN BAY, NEW JERSEY, ON APRIL 29, 2022 Interview of Paul James Llamas
ACCIDENT NO.:	DCA22FM016
PLACE:	Gravesend Bay, Brooklyn, New York
DATE:	May 2, 2022

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.

Brandy Wainright
Transcriber