

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

SINKING OF THE *PROASSIST III* *

NEAR YABUCOA, PUERTO RICO, *

Accident No.: DCA21FM011

ON DECEMBER 24, 2020 *

*

* * * * *

Interview of: JOSE RODRIGUEZ, Deckhand
Proassist III

Via telephone

Saturday,
December 26, 2020

APPEARANCES:

MICHAEL KARR, Senior Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

LT [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Senior Investigating Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

CDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED], Chief of Prevention
U.S. Coast Guard

LCDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED], Chief of Inspections
U.S. Coast Guard

LT [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
U.S. Coast Guard

LTJG [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
U.S. Coast Guard

LTJG [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
U.S. Coast Guard

O22 [REDACTED], Translator
U.S. Coast Guard

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Jose Rodriguez:

By LT [REDACTED]

5

By Mr. Karr

16

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 TRANSLATOR: So I have the two phones on the line right now,
3 I'll be listening in on the other one. The other one's muted and
4 over here I'm going to be translating what they say to you, sir.

5 MR. KARR: Hey, that sounds super. This is great. Thank you
6 very much.

7 TRANSLATOR: It's no problem. I'll try to translate as fast
8 as I can what they're saying. So the only thing is if he could --
9 because I didn't know if I had to like step in right after or I
10 didn't know it was real time, if he could explain his first part
11 so I can translate it to you.

12 He was talking about when he got underway, he got underway
13 and the weather when they came close to the coast of Yabucoa
14 that's when they experienced, in his terms, so-and-so weather, and
15 that's when he noticed that he was taking on water, and I believe
16 that his pumps weren't keeping up.

17 But, if he could, if he could repeat his first part, I can
18 translate it for you more accurately.

19 MR. KARR: Well, you know what, we'll just keep going.

20 TRANSLATOR: Okay, all right. No problem.

21 MR. KARR: All right.

22 TRANSLATOR: All right.

23 MR. KARR: I will -- OS2 [REDACTED], I will let Lieutenant, I will
24 let the Lieutenant know to begin questioning again, and we're
25 ready to go.

1 TRANSLATOR: Roger.

2 MR. KARR: All right. Lieutenant [REDACTED] we are ready to
3 go, so continue. I'm going to put you on mute on this and then
4 listen to OS2 [REDACTED] translate.

5 LT [REDACTED] If you have any questions, sir, feel free to
6 interrupt us and we'll give you the straight so you can have
7 clarification on whatever you need, okay?

8 MR. KARR: Well, all right. Well, I'll tell you --

9 LT [REDACTED] (Indiscernible).

10 MR. KARR: I'll tell you what, I will wait until, you know,
11 you're done with the questions, and then you can say -- then you
12 can ask me if I've got any, and then I'll join in.

13 LT [REDACTED] Sounds good, sir.

14 MR. KARR: Right.

15 LT [REDACTED] OS2, if we're going too fast for you, just let
16 us know also.

17 TRANSLATOR: Yeah, no problem. I only ask if you could pace
18 your questions so that I can have enough time to translate it over
19 so that we're not -- I'm not racing against the questions.

20 LT [REDACTED] Roger, sounds good.

21 TRANSLATOR: Thank you.

22 (Whereupon, OS2 [REDACTED] translated the proceedings on behalf of
23 Mr. Rodriguez and summarized questions on behalf of Lt [REDACTED])

24 INTERVIEW OF SEAMAN RODRIGUEZ

25 TRANSLATOR: So he's asking how many people are onboard.

1 MR. KARR: Very good.

2 TRANSLATOR: And how long have you been working in the
3 industry? There are four people. And he's been on that ship
4 5 years. Oh, I'm sorry, 2 years. So there were three people
5 onboard, and he's been onboard that ship for 2 years.

6 MR. KARR: So far so good.

7 TRANSLATOR: During your voyage, what was your chores and
8 your responsibilities? So he was alongside the captain and he was
9 just making sure that the ship was ready.

10 He was on the bridge when he noticed that when the ship was
11 taking on water.

12 He asked how was the crew and himself feeling that day, and
13 he replied that they were feeling good. He was asking about their
14 relationship and communication between himself and the crew, and
15 they say everything was good so far.

16 He was asking about the condition of the boat, and he was
17 saying everything was excellent on the boat. They confirmed that
18 the relationship between the crew members and the person being
19 interviewed, they were on a good relationship, and the condition
20 of the ship at the time, it was in excellent condition.

21 He's asking before they got underway did they have any
22 routine to check the vessel and he's saying that the routine is to
23 make sure that the covers are put on the tanks and make sure that
24 everything is in order in the boat and that everything was looking
25 normal as far as their routine checks.

1 He was asking if there was any conditions on the boats or
2 anything that he noticed that raised any concerns, and he replied,
3 no.

4 Okay. So he was saying -- they were asking how many times do
5 they usually do this voyage from Yabucoa to Guayama, and he was
6 saying that they usually do, in a month, like three to five times
7 to provide service. I think it's like a broad amount of service
8 that they provide.

9 At the time, the weather wasn't bad, and they're really used
10 to that voyage that they usually do since they do it so many times
11 a month. They said around a week, they might do it once a week,
12 so that's why they estimate maybe three to five times in a month;
13 maybe they can do it twice a week or something like that.

14 Now I'm going to tell them to continue their interview, sir.

15 MR. KARR: Okay.

16 TRANSLATOR: They were asking if, before the 24th, if they
17 have encountered weather similar to what they encountered that
18 day, and he said that not to that extreme that the weather changed
19 drastically.

20 So they were asking if he could estimate the weather
21 conditions at that time, if he could remember how high the waves
22 were and how drastic it changed and around what position they were
23 at when it happened. He can't recall exactly where they were at
24 the time, like the exact position where they were when the weather
25 started changing, and he estimated that the waves, an approximate

1 would be if he were to look at them from outside, he would say
2 around 6-foot waves.

3 Yeah. So he can't recall the exact position when it changed,
4 only that the conditions changed drastically, and the waves were
5 around 6 feet if he had to put like a number on the wave height.

6 They were asking if he was with the captain at the time when
7 the weather started changing and if he could recall the wind
8 speed. He can't recall the exact wind speed, because when it
9 started happening, he went down to verify. They're asking if
10 before this incident if they had any issues with the vessel being
11 able to withstand weather similar to the one they encountered.

12 They were asking if the pumps and the generators in the boat
13 worked correctly before this incident, and he's replying, yes.
14 And every time they go into the boat and they are going to start a
15 job or a voyage, they verify the equipment.

16 And they're saying that they always do the same route, they
17 don't, they don't have any other routes. Roger that. They
18 confirm that the generators and pumps, at the time before the
19 incident, they were all working correctly and they only go through
20 -- yeah, you may continue, sorry -- and they only go from Yabucoa
21 to Guayama; that's their main route.

22 Okay. So they're asking if, so they're asking if when they
23 conduct their boat checks if they, if they document it anywhere,
24 and he said that himself, personally, he doesn't document it
25 anywhere, he just communicates it to the captain and the

1 machinist. And if the machinist is making the checks, then he
2 communicates directly to the captain.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: His responsibility is just the deck.

4 MR. KARR: Okay.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's the only thing he's responsible
6 for, that's the only thing he does.

7 MR. KARR: Okay.

8 TRANSLATOR: So he's asking if it would be prudent to say if,
9 days before a voyage, do you guys go over the boat and do their
10 regular boat checks, and he replied, yes.

11 So he's asking, in the event of an incident that occurred,
12 what would be the main procedure that they follow. He said that
13 they would gather everyone on the bridge and the captain would
14 determine if they save or leave the boat, put on life jackets and
15 turn on their EPIRB and determine if they're going to leave or
16 stay on the boat.

17 So he's saying that the way he noticed, the way he noticed is
18 that he was -- he noticed that the focsle of the boat was riding a
19 little low. He opened a compartment door to verify what was going
20 on, and that's when he saw that there was water coming in.

21 They tried turning on the pumps, but he said that a wave came
22 in and hit the pump they were using. I think it was like a 3-inch
23 pump and somehow that wave rendered that pump inoperable. One
24 second, sir.

25 Roger, Captain. They confirmed the information that he saw

1 that the focsle of the boat was riding a little low, water was
2 coming in. They tried, they tried turning on the pump. The pump
3 was hit by a wave and it rendered it inoperable.

4 So he's asking to try to remember when he opened up the
5 compartment, the compartment hatch, if he could see how high the
6 water level was at the time. And so he was saying that the water
7 was at a level that you can walk in that space, it was above the
8 railing.

9 And it was not in the -- machine room is not in the engine
10 room, it was I think a little bit farther back in the focsle, in
11 the back of the boat.

12 MR. KARR: Hey, OS2 [REDACTED], the focsle would be forward.

13 TRANSLATOR: Sorry, I'm sorry. They're talking about the
14 rear.

15 MR. KARR: The fantail or --

16 TRANSLATOR: The fantail, sorry, yeah.

17 MR. KARR: All right.

18 TRANSLATOR: Sorry.

19 MR. KARR: You are forgiven because you are doing a superb
20 job.

21 TRANSLATOR: Thank you. I was just trying to remember. I
22 was like, oh, my gosh.

23 So he's saying that, at the time when he noticed that the
24 water was coming in, they tried turning on the pumps. Like I said
25 before, the pumps stopped working. They checked the other

1 compartments, he checked the engine room, and as far as he can
2 tell, they did not have water. They went into -- they went over
3 to the captain to tell him what was going on.

4 He was asking to see if any of their voyages before this one
5 if they had anything like tangled up in their props or if they've
6 ever run aground or anything like that, and he replied, no.

7 LT [REDACTED] For the purpose of the call, I have the AIS
8 track from marine traffic, which I'm going to provide to him right
9 now and ask a couple of questions regarding that.

10 TRANSLATOR: Okay. They're going over their AIS track, and
11 he's asking about a maneuver they see on the track, and that
12 certain maneuver is when they lost steering. Yeah, they're going
13 over their AIS track. There is a certain maneuver that they are
14 verifying, and the crew member informs that that certain maneuver
15 is when they -- when the boat lost the ability to maneuver.

16 LT [REDACTED] Mr. Karr, did you get the image that I sent you
17 via text?

18 MR. KARR: I'll look for it now. I will look for it now.
19 Got it, thank you.

20 LT [REDACTED] No problem, just so you have a visual of what
21 we are now discussing right now, sir.

22 TRANSLATOR: So looking over that AIS track, they are trying
23 to verify at what point the vessel started taking on water. He
24 can't recall the exact position of where they started taking on
25 water, but he can recall when they lost their ability to maneuver

1 due to the sharp turn that they see on the AIS track.

2 LT [REDACTED] Mr. Karr, you haven't muted your phone, sir.

3 MR. KARR: I will do that now.

4 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

5 TRANSLATOR: Hello, sir, can you hear me?

6 MR. KARR: Yes, I can.

7 TRANSLATOR: Okay.

8 MR. KARR: Yeah, so they were, they were listening to your
9 translation because I hadn't muted theirs.

10 TRANSLATOR: Oh, okay. So they -- they're asking right now
11 where were the pumps that they were using, and they were using the
12 main pumps for the boat and also an emergency pump. That's the
13 one they're referring to when they refer to the one that it's
14 3 inches.

15 I'm sorry, just for translating purposes, was the emergency
16 pump on top of the deck?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It was on the aft deck on top, yes.

18 TRANSLATOR: Okay, right. I'm sorry, sir, I said that in
19 English, I don't know why. But yeah, the emergency pump was
20 located on the aft.

21 MR. KARR: Yeah. Ask him who rigged that pump.

22 TRANSLATOR: Who rigged it?

23 MR. KARR: Yeah. You know, who would have dragged it out,
24 set it up, put the hose inside, stuff like that?

25 TRANSLATOR: Okay. I'm sorry, sir, they're talking about

1 where the pump was positioned. Unfortunately I can't -- I don't
2 have the picture that they're looking at.

3 MR. KARR: Understood.

4 TRANSLATOR: Yes, it's kind of hard for me to try to paint a
5 picture since I don't know what they're looking at.

6 MR. KARR: They're still looking at the AIS picture?

7 TRANSLATOR: No, they're looking at -- they're trying to
8 figure out where the pump that they used was located, the
9 emergency pump and where the hose was located and all that.

10 MR. KARR: All right.

11 TRANSLATOR: Yeah. So they're trying to pinpoint and try to
12 paint a picture of where the pump was located, and it was close to
13 the hatch that he opened up to verify that the water was coming in
14 on the (indiscernible) at that time. They're trying to verify if
15 there's like a hatch or a door that leads to that compartment that
16 was taking on water to the engine room or machine room.

17 LT [REDACTED] For reference on the phone, I'm just showing --
18 I'm showing him photos of different steering systems and
19 (indiscernible) systems, and I'm just trying to identify what kind
20 they had onboard to see if we can identify a source of water and
21 (indiscernible).

22 TRANSLATOR: Roger. I also have -- I want to interrupt real
23 quick. So just trying to confirm, it's kind of hard to hear the
24 other person, but he was saying that that compartment had no hatch
25 or door that led into the machine room, so it was taking water on

1 on its own on that compartment?

2 LT [REDACTED] Correct. There's no doorways or entryways
3 between the engine room and both the steering compartment from
4 what our -- from what he's saying.

5 TRANSLATOR: So he's asking, when he noticed the water level,
6 was he able to see the components that were in the -- that
7 compartment? He said, no.

8 Right now they're asking him if he can recall approximately
9 how big is that compartment, can he fit in easily, and he said
10 it's like, like 7 feet.

11 So she's asking just to make sure if he were, if he were able
12 to enter the compartment at the time that they were taking on
13 water around, he would have been covered by water? Yeah.

14 LT [REDACTED] At the time that he saw the compartment, if he
15 would have jumped in the compartment, the water would cover him?
16 So there were more than 6 feet of water in the compartment at the
17 time that they identified.

18 TRANSLATOR: They're asking, at the time when he was on the
19 bridge with -- on the bridge with the captain, did any alarm go
20 off or did you just notice that the fantail was lower than usual?

21 They are also asking him, when you guys do your boat checks,
22 do you have any -- do you make sure that the alarms are working?
23 Do you have any alarms, do you have any alarms that indicate water
24 levels or anything like that? And he's just replying that maybe
25 the machinist would be able to say if there's any alarms.

1 Yeah. So they're trying to verify to see if they had any
2 type of alarms or if they check any alarms before they go out on a
3 voyage. And the person being interviewed right now said that the
4 person that can answer that question would be their machinist.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think that's all I have. [REDACTED]

6 LT [REDACTED] As of right now, I don't have any further
7 questions.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr. Karr, I think as of right now with
9 the information that we have covered, we have no further questions
10 at this point.

11 MR. KARR: All right. Standby. I have some follow-up
12 questions, and what I will do is I'll ask them and then OS2 [REDACTED]
13 can interpret them and ask the question, and then we'll listen to
14 the answer. We'll have the answer repeated back to me. Ready?

15 TRANSLATOR: Roger.

16 MR. KARR: All right. And here's this -- here's -- OS2 [REDACTED],
17 if I put you on mute, will you be able to hear me over the other
18 phone?

19 TRANSLATOR: I believe so. If you want to do a quick test
20 real quick. I have, I have two phones on me right now, one with
21 the interviewers and one separate for you.

22 MR. KARR: Well, you know what, now I guess you can work on
23 this one phone then.

24 TRANSLATOR: On this one right here?

25 MR. KARR: Right.

1 TRANSLATOR: Roger.

2 MR. KARR: All right. So here's -- and, [REDACTED] perhaps the
3 question's already been answered and you can tell me that and what
4 the answer was. The first one was, what was their trade? What
5 were they actually doing at the time of the sinking? Were they
6 carrying cargo, were they touring, were they traveling between
7 ports?

8 LT [REDACTED] They were transiting back to the homeport.

9 TRANSLATOR: Okay, so they were transiting back to homeport.

10 MR. KARR: All right. And before they -- so what were they
11 doing prior to their transiting?

12 TRANSLATOR: They were doing some bay service.

13 LT [REDACTED] They were bringing a vessel in.

14 TRANSLATOR: Okay. This -- for some reason, the sound on
15 this phone is a little off.

16 LT [REDACTED] That and everybody wearing masks, it always
17 makes it a little challenging.

18 TRANSLATOR: Okay, sorry about that. So they were towing
19 back a boat?

20 LT [REDACTED] They were bringing a vessel back into port.

21 MR. KARR: All right. So they were a harbor assist tug?

22 TRANSLATOR: Yes.

23 MR. KARR: All right. And when did Mr. Rodriguez come
24 onboard the vessel before the accident?

25 TRANSLATOR: As in how long he's been on this boat or the

1 particular day or this particular operation in itself?

2 MR. KARR: For this particular operation, when he left home,
3 when he got onboard, and -- yeah.

4 TRANSLATOR: All right. So around 7 a.m. they got underway
5 from Yabucoa to -- okay. So they left, they got underway at
6 7 a.m. from Yabucoa to Guayama, but he can't recall around what
7 time he got into embark the vessel. He can't recall the exact
8 time.

9 LT [REDACTED] So they were on the vessel at 0600.

10 TRANSLATOR: Yeah, so an hour before.

11 So from -- they got underway from Yabucoa to Guayama at 7 in
12 the morning, and they came back from Guayama to Yabucoa around --

13 LT [REDACTED] He doesn't remember, but it was still daylight.

14 TRANSLATOR: Okay. So he can't remember when they were
15 transiting back to homeport, but it was still during the day. He
16 can't recall the exact hour.

17 LT [REDACTED] And the other question that I asked, just for
18 the purpose of clarification of the trip in itself, is how long
19 did it take him for to go from Point A to Point B and from Point B
20 to Point A? And each leg is approximately three hours.

21 MR. KARR: And can -- and who rigged -- can he describe
22 who -- where the pump, where that emergency pump was located and
23 who were the people that set it up?

24 TRANSLATOR: I'm sorry, sir, can you repeat the question? I
25 couldn't hear it properly.

1 LT [REDACTED] I can take it.

2 TRANSLATOR: Okay.

3 LT [REDACTED] Mr. Karr, if you look at the picture that I
4 send you, there are going to be two Xs, one right next to the
5 watertight door on the side of the vessel -- or weathertight door
6 actually on the side of the vessel and then you're going to have
7 another X on the deck. The pump in itself was located within the
8 superstructure of the vessel right next to that door. At the time
9 of the incident, they grabbed the pump and the machinery -- right,
10 what do you want to call him, the engineer?

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Engineer, yeah.

12 LT [REDACTED] Him and the engineer and then they put it on
13 deck and set it up.

14 MR. KARR: All right, good. And ask him was there any
15 indication that the ship's pumps were working?

16 LT [REDACTED] He is unaware of it.

17 MR. KARR: All right. And then when he was on deck with that
18 emergency pump, please describe how the seas were coming onboard
19 the vessel.

20 LT [REDACTED] The waves were going over the vessel.

21 MR. KARR: From which direction were they coming, you know,
22 relative to the boat? Port side, starboard side, aft?

23 LT [REDACTED] He said from port side and starboard side.
24 Port and starboard, they were coming from both sides.

25 MR. KARR: Just ask, please describe -- let me think about

1 this. Please describe the working -- as you were working with the
2 pump, describe how the waves affected you?

3 LT [REDACTED] So he's saying that -- he's saying that when
4 they were operating the area when the waves kept coming in, it was
5 basically not flooding the compartment but it was exacerbating the
6 weather conditions, so he had like around 6 inches, so his feet
7 were covered in water.

8 MR. KARR: And how was -- did he -- can he describe how the
9 water left the -- how the water was draining from the main deck?

10 LT [REDACTED] He mentioned that it was draining, but the
11 waves were too consistent and maintained the condition.

12 MR. KARR: And when he was working on the deck with the pump,
13 was there any noticeable list or can he describe the list that the
14 vessel had?

15 LT [REDACTED] It was astern, it was astern in itself, the
16 full -- all astern.

17 MR. KARR: All right. And, you know, I'm looking at the
18 diagram now with the X on the deck; is that one large compartment
19 or is it two or more compartments?

20 LT [REDACTED] So that is just one compartment, and that is
21 basically the steering compartment capturing the shaft and all
22 that. Right in the center is the hatch that he opened to look
23 inside and see the condition of the actual compartment.

24 MR. KARR: All right. And what is -- so the X on deck marks
25 where the pump was?

1 LT [REDACTED] Where they located the pump.

2 MR. KARR: Right, all right

3 LT [REDACTED] Because right behind that X you're going to see
4 some tires.

5 MR. KARR: Correct.

6 LT [REDACTED] And behind the tires there's a little hatch.
7 That's the hatch that they were putting the -- they were putting
8 the pipe down the hatch so they could drain the water.

9 MR. KARR: All right. And ask him --

10 LT [REDACTED] Yes, sir, I'm listening.

11 MR. KARR: Okay. Ask him to describe the decision, the
12 decision to abandon ship and then describe how they abandon ship.

13 LT [REDACTED] So they were working with the pump. As soon as
14 the pump efforts were failing, they went to the bridge to tell
15 their captain the actual condition of what was going on. At that
16 point, they put on the life vests. From there, he took the
17 (indiscernible), the captain made the mayday call, and from there
18 they let the life raft go and abandoned the ship. That's all he
19 remembers.

20 MR. KARR: All right. And can he describe how he actually
21 left the ship, got into the life raft?

22 LT [REDACTED] He says he doesn't really remember, but they
23 jumped off the side of the vessel. From the port or starboard
24 side? From the port side.

25 MR. KARR: And from what, and from what level?

1 LT [REDACTED] From the main deck.

2 MR. KARR: So did he jump --

3 LT [REDACTED] I'm listening, sir.

4 MR. KARR: Did they all jump at the same time?

5 LT [REDACTED] So when they deployed, all three of them
6 deployed the life raft, and when the life raft fell in the water,
7 it was -- it did not open properly, so the captain jumped in first
8 so he could finalize the inflation process. Then the currents
9 were really strong, and then they jumped in the water.

10 MR. KARR: All right. And where was the life raft stored and
11 who brought it down? You know, I guess the simple question is was
12 the life raft stored on the main deck? No, I see it.

13 LT [REDACTED] Sir, if you look at the picture that I give
14 you, the first X that's right next to the watertight door, it's
15 right on top of it.

16 MR. KARR: All right. And can he -- and who deployed -- who
17 actually deployed -- who actually placed the canister into the
18 water or released the -- released the canister?

19 LT [REDACTED] So he cut all the wirings and everything on it,
20 and then him and the captain were the ones that threw it
21 overboard.

22 MR. KARR: And when the captain jumped in the water -- once
23 the captain got in the water did -- was he able to get the life
24 raft to inflate?

25 LT [REDACTED] Yes.

1 MR. KARR: Did you have any problems getting into the life
2 raft after it inflated?

3 LT [REDACTED] They had issues getting to the life raft more
4 than anything else because the currents were really strong.

5 MR. KARR: Was the -- does he recall if the life raft was
6 still tied to the vessel?

7 LT [REDACTED] No, they were holding it.

8 MR. KARR: What does -- explain that more, they were holding
9 it?

10 LT [REDACTED] It was still tied to the vessel.

11 MR. KARR: Okay. And then when they left -- when he jumped
12 into the water, how did the vessel look with regard to sinking,
13 listing -- you know, I'm trying to get a picture of what the
14 vessel looked like on the water when he left?

15 LT [REDACTED] The stern was on the water and the vessel was,
16 as he's describing, basically in the air sinking.

17 MR. KARR: Had -- with the stern under -- ask him if the
18 stern was underwater. Had water reached the main structure on,
19 you know, the main cabin area?

20 LT [REDACTED] No, it was, it was right next to the watertight
21 door that has the X.

22 MR. KARR: All right. Okay. When was -- did the vessel
23 still have power when he jumped off the -- when he jumped off?

24 LT [REDACTED] It still had power.

25 MR. KARR: All right. And can he describe the freeboard, the

1 normal freeboard? The simplest thing might be is the freeboard
2 the same as pictured in the photograph I'm looking at?

3 LT [REDACTED] At what time? Like before everything happened?

4 MR. KARR: Yes, you know, like when they left. Yeah, when
5 everything was normal.

6 LT [REDACTED] He said normal conditions.

7 MR. KARR: So the picture shows -- the picture is normal?

8 LT [REDACTED] Yes.

9 MR. KARR: All right. And who -- does he recall how long he
10 was in the life raft and who picked him up?

11 LT [REDACTED] So he said that they never, they never went
12 inside the life raft; they were just holding to it. And a small
13 boat came and picked them up. He doesn't remember very well what
14 happened or how long they were there.

15 MR. KARR: Was there any reason why -- ask him if --

16 LT [REDACTED] I'm listening, sir.

17 MR. KARR: Why did you not go into the life raft?

18 LT [REDACTED] Every time they tried to do it, the
19 (indiscernible) were pulling it away, and the sea conditions were
20 rough.

21 MR. KARR: How cold was -- did he, did he get cold while he
22 was in the water?

23 LT [REDACTED] He said it was very cold.

24 MR. KARR: Was he shivering?

25 LT [REDACTED] He said, he said, yes.

1 MR. KARR: Were his -- were your teeth chattering?

2 LT [REDACTED] He said, he said, no, but it was cold.

3 MR. KARR: All right. Are you a good swimmer?

4 LT [REDACTED] He said he knows how to swim.

5 MR. KARR: That's all the questions I have.

6 LT [REDACTED] Just for the sake of understanding and
7 translation, Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] asked him if, when they
8 left the vessel, all the compartments and all the doors on the
9 side of the vessel were secured. He said, yes, all doors were
10 secured, and to the best of his knowledge, the only compartment
11 that was taking in water was the steering compartment in the back.

12 MR. KARR: Well, let's, let's be specific -- or I'll be
13 specific with a question. When did Mr. Rodriguez check the
14 hatches for the steering compartment? What time and what date?

15 LT [REDACTED] That would be during the incident or before the
16 incident or when the -- when everything was happening?

17 MR. KARR: Well, that would, that would be, you know, prior
18 to getting underway. So before the incident, you know, when they
19 were still in port, you know, when did they do the check, the
20 check of the decks to make sure everything was -- all the hatches
21 were closed and everything was watertight and they were ready for
22 sea?

23 LT [REDACTED] He said earlier that they check everything and
24 they do a deck walk and make sure everything is secure for sea.

25 MR. KARR: All right. Well, then here specific, when was

1 that deck walk conducted?

2 LT [REDACTED] He said an hour prior to departure, but he did
3 not remember the time that they departed (indiscernible).

4 MR. KARR: And was -- and did he do the deck walk or was it
5 he alone or someone else did it?

6 LT [REDACTED] He was by himself. He's in charge of deck.

7 MR. KARR: All right. So he did the deck walk about an hour
8 before they got underway, all right. And did he report his
9 findings to the captain?

10 LT [REDACTED] Yes.

11 MR. KARR: All right. All right. No more questions from me.

12 LT [REDACTED] Yes, sir, no questions. So this would conclude
13 our interview.

14 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

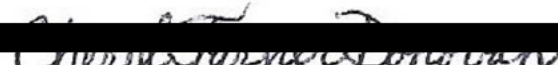
IN THE MATTER OF: SINKING OF THE *PROASSIST III*
NEAR YABUCOA, PUERTO RICO,
ON DECEMBER 24, 2020
Interview of Jose Rodriguez

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA21FM011

PLACE: Via telephone

DATE: December 26, 2020

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.


Cheryl Farner Donovan

Cheryl Farner Donovan
Transcriber