

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FIRE ON THE *PRESIDENT EISENHOWER*  
SOUTHWEST OF SANTA BARBARA  
HARBOR, ON APRIL 28, 2021

Accident No.: DCA21FM026

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Interview of: RICK FRANCIS, Lead Firefighter  
TNT Salvage

Los Angeles, California

Friday,  
April 30, 2021

APPEARANCES:

BART BARNUM, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

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

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

JOE WALSH, Attorney  
Collier Walsh Nakazawa  
(On behalf of the vessel owners)

ANTOINE LETOURNEL  
APL Maritime

RICK FRANCIS  
TNT Salvage

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:46 a.m.)

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2  
3 LT [REDACTED] This is Lieutenant [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the United  
4 States Coast Guard. Today is April 30th, 2021. The currently  
5 time is 11:46 a.m. We are on board the motor vessel President  
6 Eisenhower at berth LA 46 to investigate the engine room fire that  
7 occurred onboard the vessel on the morning of April 28th, 2021.

8 In the room is myself and the following individuals.

9 LCDR [REDACTED] Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

10 MR. BARNUM: Bart Barnum, NTSB Office of Marine Safety.

11 That's Barnum, B-a-r-n-u-m.

12 CWO [REDACTED] Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast  
13 Guard, sector Los Angeles, Long Beach.

14 MR. LETOURNEL: Antoine Letournel, Technical Director of APL  
15 Maritime.

16 MR. WALSH: Joe Walsh with Collier Walsh Nakazawa, counsel to  
17 APL.

18 MR. FRANCIS: Rick Francis, leader firefighter at TNT  
19 Salvage.

20 LT [REDACTED] And one more time for the record, Mr. Francis, do  
21 you consent to this interview being recorded?

22 MR. FRANCIS: Sure, yes.

23 LT [REDACTED] All right. Thank you, sir.

24 INTERVIEW OF RICK FRANCIS

25 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

1 Q. So, Mr. Francis, if you could go ahead and just kind of give  
2 us a really quick background as to your experience and your time  
3 as a salvage, as a salvage --

4 A. I'll expose my age. I started firefighting in 1974,  
5 graduated Dallas County Fire Academy in structural and moving to  
6 industrial. I moved then into the marine division. Eighteen  
7 years later, heavy industrial firefighting, high profile fires in  
8 Kuwait. We were working with putting out well fires there, marine  
9 fires, production fires offshore. So it kind of built up, and  
10 then I and my MPA instructor were very passionate about training  
11 and so we continued that.

12 I've been with TNT over 10, 12 years as their firefighter,  
13 and we've done several high-profile fires, several container ship  
14 fires around the world. So I'm probably one of the most  
15 experienced firefighters in the marine division, you know, around.  
16 I know there's a couple more with other companies. So I've been  
17 around -- I've got 48 -- right at 48 years' experience.

18 Q. Thank you. And your current position right now with TNT and  
19 onboard the President Eisenhower is?

20 A. Leader firefighter.

21 Q. Okay. And if you could go ahead and just maybe start at the  
22 beginning when you got the phone call and kind of walk us through  
23 what happened and your experience onboard the President  
24 Eisenhower.

25 A. Sure. I got an email or text, I can't remember, in the early

1 morning and we were alerted through the -- I don't know, I guess  
2 the QI or whoever it was notified our marine response coordinator  
3 of a fire aboard here, the Eisenhower. I gave the captain a call  
4 and I gave -- they text the number. I gave the captain a call.  
5 He was very calm, professional. He explained to me what was -- I  
6 asked him to explain to me what was happening and he said they do  
7 have a fire in the engine room, and that --

8 I said, can you tell me what you have done until this point.  
9 He said that they have observed the -- a fire of a catwalk when  
10 they went in to attack and he said it looked like cardboard boxes  
11 or paper or wood box with parts in it. He said the attack team  
12 tried to knock it out, I believe, with lines and they were -- said  
13 that the heat was more intense, that they felt wanted to escape  
14 from below the area, and they made the decision to get out. They  
15 came out and they closed the door, talked to each other, and then  
16 went ahead and -- well, my understanding is they dumped the system  
17 and -- this is what I heard at that time. They had dumped the  
18 system, the CO system.

19 And then he said what should we do from here, and I  
20 instructed him, whatever you do, sir, if we don't come, whoever  
21 comes, do not open that door for at least 24 hours, or at least  
22 until we can get some TIC readings on it, thermal imaging camera  
23 readings rather, and then when we open it, we want to make sure we  
24 do air monitoring and see what it looks like.

25 So they -- and I think he said that they were -- I said, are

1 you boundary cooling, and he said, yes. And they -- when we came  
2 up, they had water on the deck around that area, and I asked him  
3 was the water evaporating, and he said, I don't believe it is. I  
4 said, good. I said, keep that water going, keep it flowing, just  
5 don't let it get in any side of your voids and just keep it coming  
6 overboard and keep it cooling. So he said, okay, and after that,  
7 the -- I asked him how many bottles did he dump and he said  
8 approximately -- he had to get -- for a moment. He said  
9 approximately 300 bottles. I said, okay, now, is there any way,  
10 while we're talking, that if we're coming on our way, you can talk  
11 to your engineers and get them to figure out if we can bypass the  
12 system and take cargo hold number one, two or three, or all of  
13 them, and bypass it and get them back in -- filtered in to your  
14 engine room discharge. This way, we can back him up again, and  
15 that way if, when we open the door, if we can't get the fire out,  
16 we shut it down and we have a back up and we can flood it again.  
17 He said they would work on that.

18 So I -- that's pretty short and sweet. Everyone was calm.  
19 That's about the end of that conversation -- or that part of it.

20 Q. And then from there, you flew out from -- was it Houston?

21 A. Houston.

22 Q. And you --

23 A. Myself and I can take four other people.

24 Q. And you arrived here in California at approximately what  
25 time?

1 A. It's a name that starts with an O.

2 CWO [REDACTED] Oxnard?

3 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

4 Q. Oxnard?

5 A. Yeah. We landed there, and then there's about a 45-minute  
6 drive over to here. Probably 3 hours and 15 minutes on the plane,  
7 45 minutes here. Crew boat that we caught was about a -- it was  
8 supposed to have been about an hour-and-a-half and it ended up  
9 being almost three hours. It's pretty rough water out there. We  
10 had some (indiscernible) and then we got into here; couldn't come  
11 up the gangway, went up the back, got on another tugboat and came  
12 up (indiscernible).

13 Q. So roughly what time did you board the vessel?

14 A. It was about --

15 Q. It could be approximate. It doesn't have to be exact. Just  
16 the best of your --

17 A. (Indiscernible) time change too. I'm guessing that it's  
18 between 4 and 5. I'm --

19 Q. Is that a.m., p.m.?

20 A. Afternoon.

21 Q. Afternoon?

22 BY LT [REDACTED]

23 Q. And that was on April 28th?

24 A. The day of the fire.

25 BY LCDR [REDACTED]



1 Q. So the 28th of April, approximately 4 to 5 p.m.?

2 A. I'm pretty sure.

3 Q. And then so once you did get aboard, can you kind of just  
4 walk us through what you and your team did?

5 A. Sure. We got everything on board. We can into the ship's  
6 office and we met with the captain and the engineers, anyone that  
7 was involved in the firefighting that we could talk to that could  
8 explain to us -- because we wanted to know their assessment of  
9 what they had done. And we did that. They had a small video from  
10 CCTV and we observed that and watched it. We spent a little time  
11 analyzing that to see how the fire was acting and if it was still  
12 live. So --

13 Q. It was still what? I'm sorry.

14 A. I'm sorry?

15 Q. If it's still what?

16 A. Live.

17 Q. Whether it was a live fire.

18 A. Okay, if it was a live fire. Pardon me.

19 Q. And so the engineer that was showing it to us -- there was  
20 one live feed left and we could see into the cameras what  
21 happened, except for the live feed. It still came up. And we  
22 were noticing that this is very clean in there as far as the  
23 atmosphere; no black smoke at the time when looking at the live  
24 feed. There was no -- we could see some flickering in one corner  
25 here and a little bit here, but couldn't make it out, and so one

1 of the guys thought maybe, well, you know, there's filters over  
2 there. It could be the filters burning like a wick, flickering.  
3 It still didn't look right for, like, that kind of flickering for  
4 sure.

5 Then we got back and we sat down and said -- looked at it  
6 again and we made a plan. We did not want to open the main door  
7 to the engine room because we still didn't want to dump any CO2  
8 into the atmosphere.

9 BY LT [REDACTED]

10 Q. Sorry, sir. In that space that you're referring to that  
11 still had that live stream on the CCTV, do you recall which space  
12 that was?

13 A. That was in the engine room.

14 Q. That was the engine room.

15 A. The engine room's about three stories or so, I guess.

16 Q. Thank you.

17 A. It was only port side by the -- I think it was by the  
18 compressor area -- generator/compressor area. So after we looked  
19 at that, we got the team together, we talked about what we were  
20 looking at. We shot IRs on the doors and came back and looked  
21 again.

22 BY MR. WALSH:

23 Q. IR is infrared?

24 A. Yeah, sorry. And we did around the boundaries. We started  
25 boundary cooling all the way around the engine room -- I'm sorry,

1 shooting IR -- TIC, thermal imaging, and trying to figure out a  
2 pattern where the heat was and the highest heat, where if we did  
3 go in, we would be able to attack that area first. The readings  
4 were coming back pretty normal.

5 We didn't -- we stepped back again and looked at this and  
6 decided that we're not going to dump the system, we're not going  
7 through the main entry. So I put one of my men in with SCBA, then  
8 had another guy that's with the ship - I think he was one of the  
9 engineers - that knows the area. I didn't want to put somebody in  
10 there that didn't know -- wasn't familiar. And then I had set up  
11 a RIT team, a rescue team with air packs ready to go in for  
12 backup.

13 We figured that the two flickering areas we could see because  
14 the air was so clean that if they could get in and do an  
15 assessment and look around to see where it was in the actual -- in  
16 the engine area, we could hit the -- they took two small  
17 extinguishers with them. They could hit that one furthest away  
18 from the escape first and then come back, get the other one, get  
19 it, and come back out.

20 And one they -- we got that done, we verified that air  
21 monitoring is very high for VOCs. It was off the chart, and --

22 BY LT [REDACTED]

23 Q. And, sir -- sorry. How was -- can you explain how the air  
24 was being monitored?

25 A. We were using a 5-gas.

1 Q. And who had the 5-gas?

2 A. We had three of them. He had one with him --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. The entry people had one and we had one at the door. That's  
5 two we had, sorry. The ship had one or two. Those were 4-gas,  
6 I'm sorry.

7 So once we verified, well, this could be (indiscernible), you  
8 know, got them all masks, checked everybody, checked everything,  
9 got the RIT team set up. We still didn't have that high of heat,  
10 even on the -- sitting there getting ready to get the tunnel on  
11 the doors, even the entry door. It was right next to the control  
12 room, and we didn't have that much in that. You could touch it  
13 with your hand (indiscernible) right at -- under 100.

14 And so we just kind of cracked and looked to get the air  
15 reading, and it was pretty high and everything so we shut it back  
16 down. We noticed the emergency room lights -- the emergency  
17 lights were still on in there. The area was clear, no smoke.

18 BY LT [REDACTED]

19 Q. I'm sorry, sir. Which hatch were they opening at this  
20 moment?

21 A. This wasn't a hatch. It's the door to the control room.

22 Q. Door looking into the control room?

23 A. Right. We were cracking --

24 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

25 Q. Port or starboard?

1 A. Starboard side. I've been around the ship so much I had to  
2 think --

3 (Crosstalk).

4 MR. FRANCIS: And then we said, okay, we'll leave that door  
5 shut and we went in through the door going in toward the engine  
6 room, and went up and over and then went down into -- I can't  
7 remember what you call it.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Which one?

9 MR. FRANCIS: From the hallway -- from the tunnel, you have a  
10 door, and then you have another door going -- it's a safe space  
11 right there. So we were in the safe space and we left this -- the  
12 tunnel door open because we had good air coming through there --  
13 flow, for natural ventilation. And we went ahead and opened the  
14 door to the control room, to the small entryway, and went in and  
15 -- we had radio contact. We had two different radio contacts. We  
16 had our radios and also the ship had their private frequencies  
17 also. So that's how we communicated.

18 There was nothing panicky. Everything was nice and small.  
19 We went in and I got a call that said, well, we'll be coming out,  
20 everything's good. So they came back out and explained. The  
21 flicker we saw was an emergency yellow blinking light that had  
22 been (indiscernible). That's what the flickering was, and that's  
23 what we were looking at in the reflections of other areas. So  
24 they verified on that, and they verified they had no live fire to  
25 see at that time.

1 LT [REDACTED] And that was -- at that point, they had entered the  
2 engine control room?

3 LCDR [REDACTED]

4 Q. Roughly what time did they enter the space? Do you recall?  
5 Again, approximate. It doesn't need --

6 A. I'd have to look. I can't -- it was -- okay, you're asking  
7 me -- you asked about the engine control room. When they entered  
8 the engine control room?

9 Q. Yes.

10 A. It's a larger area, okay? It's wide open, and there are  
11 three stories maybe. Is that about right? Three stories.

12 BY CWO [REDACTED]

13 Q. The space that they entered?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So it's in sections. There's no water tight doors in between  
17 any of those areas. You look down and they found a way down to  
18 where -- down to the smaller area where the generators were where  
19 we saw the flickering, and that was -- (indiscernible). Okay.

20 I can't tell you for sure.

21 LT [REDACTED] That's fine.

22 MR. FRANCIS: And then they came up. They went and verified  
23 what the flickering was first, okay. (Indiscernible). And then  
24 when he came out, he said there's nothing down there. He said  
25 lots of heat, lots of heat. The VOCs were off the chart. We

1 never had (indiscernible). And we had -- the O2 was just below  
2 good air, 20.8, and we came back out and looked at it, and so --  
3 and looked what happened. The VOCs apparently came from all that  
4 diesel and everything.

5       So we worked on the other control room to see -- we didn't  
6 want to turn on any of the lights. We didn't nothing -- nobody to  
7 turn on anything. We wanted to start doing natural ventilation.  
8 So we had our masked guys go in. They went back and they got over  
9 to one other side to where we could get a cross coming out and  
10 they opened another door to get a cross blow to start ventilating.  
11 We did it gradually over probably an hour and we started getting  
12 our temperatures dropping enough that we could almost -- within  
13 two hours, we didn't need any -- or within a hour or so maybe.  
14 When you're in the (indiscernible) of it, you're not thinking of  
15 time. That's --

16       But we started gradually getting it, testing the air and the  
17 air came up to normal readings. VOCs, after we cracked everything  
18 (indiscernible), went back to nothing. So we -- then we could all  
19 go in there and start doing -- seeing what else we could find. So  
20 then we went in. So I did a spot check on all of the areas,  
21 seeing if we could find anything with the engineers, and there was  
22 -- they looked and found lots of -- of course, lots of diesel.  
23 That's really (indiscernible). And I --

24       BY LCDR [REDACTED]

25 Q. You said you found a lot of diesel, like --

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Where roughly (indiscernible)?

3 A. (Indiscernible) area, and then there was a few spills around  
4 the generators so we didn't know what led them to do that. We  
5 went ahead -- they went -- I'm sorry, the compressor area.  
6 (Indiscernible) engines in there. I mean, I still -- we didn't  
7 want to take the chance of starting it up. So they cleaned it up  
8 after a while, hours later, got the compressor up because the  
9 ventilation of -- your louvers are air control. So we got some --  
10 a couple of my guys, they got up there with the guys and they got  
11 one part open where we could get a little air coming through  
12 there. And then we got it cleaned up enough we could start the  
13 compressor. This was late that night. We still had good air  
14 coming through there, VOCs gone, but we could still feel a lot of  
15 the heat coming through the ducts.

16 Now, these ships, they get into the air conditioning ducts,  
17 the heat does, and it just hangs in there. That's usually the  
18 last place we do (indiscernible) there's nothing going through  
19 there. So, basically, that's -- we opened up and we got that  
20 cleaned up, we got the crew's -- they got the compressor going  
21 about 1 in the morning or so. (Indiscernible) I'm just guessing  
22 these times. And we got the vents open, they got ventilation  
23 going through it that morning early. It cleared everything out.  
24 It was -- it turned into an atmosphere like you're sitting in  
25 right now, simple air conditioning, and, you know, we continued to



1 monitor hot spots. We wanted to get the generators back on  
2 because there's 160-something reefers on this -- onboard. You  
3 know, we wanted to try to do what we could do to help with the  
4 cargo. So the electricians were working on all of that. We kept  
5 checking hot spots. There were very few hot spots. It wasn't  
6 nothing that needed to be -- there was a lot of damage of heat.  
7 You could see in places that we roped off; we don't want people to  
8 walk in.

9 We noticed in the engine area by the engine, there was --

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How's it going, guys?

11 LT [REDACTED] Sir, we're --

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

13 LT [REDACTED] Yeah, please.

14 (Crosstalk)

15 MR. FRANCIS: So we --

16 LT [REDACTED] Just for the record, we had an individual enter --  
17 open the doors and bring us some food and water, but he did not  
18 enter the room. He -- we secured the door. Same participants.

19 MR. FRANCIS: So we were looking around just to kind of see  
20 what was happening on the heat where it -- the fire had died just  
21 for -- to make sure we didn't have anything hidden anywhere. We  
22 noticed that along the wood that you could look at -- okay, wood  
23 is charred and burnt down and charred, so you could see that it  
24 was a -- it died under a weak fire, which is telling me that --  
25 telling me, as a firefighter, that the CO2 hit it and the CO2

1 pushed it down. It didn't burn out the charcoal. (Indiscernible)  
2 so apparently the CO2, from what I'm seeing, worked in suppressing  
3 the fire and dealing with those low areas.

4 So after we saw that, we didn't worry too much about any  
5 hiding ignition, but we still went ahead and looked for higher  
6 readings because we wanted to make sure that we didn't -- wouldn't  
7 have reignition. So we never found it (indiscernible) ignition  
8 sites.

9 That's about it on the fire side. It went pretty really  
10 smooth. It was pretty textbook.

11 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

12 Q. And then you -- so you -- when you rode the ship in, you were  
13 monitoring the engine room as well; is that correct?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. And what were you doing as the ship was making -- coming back  
16 in under tow?

17 A. Well, we checked that we -- and made sure, before it was ever  
18 really under tow, that everything was out and the temperatures  
19 were all gone, and then the guys were running fire watches. The  
20 crew, the ship's crew, they had maintaining fire watches, and we  
21 just assisted them (indiscernible). They were actually in charge  
22 of it. We gave it back basically to them because they -- the fire  
23 was out. At that time, we had the generators back. We had -- I  
24 can't tell you technically on the ship stuff, but I believe it was  
25 generator 1 and 3. They got those running again, and so we had

1 (indiscernible) make sure that the -- air was still moving through  
2 the ship and we had no trapped anything.

3 BY CWO [REDACTED]

4 Q. In your first conversation, you had advised, I believe it was  
5 the chief engineer, to see if he could reroute the CO2 bottles  
6 from a couple of voids (crosstalk).

7 A. Yeah. That was going to be a backup for if we had to -- if  
8 we started losing everything, but then we started looking at it  
9 and -- I believe they were working on it. They found a -- there's  
10 a way they could do something with control valves, but I said,  
11 well, stand by. Let's see if (indiscernible) and they -- like, I  
12 said, when we made entry, there was no heat, there was no ignition  
13 temperature. Everything was below ignition temperature

14 (indiscernible), and unless there's a sleeping fire back there,  
15 you know, 200, 300 yards in the back somewhere, you're not going  
16 to know that until you get in there. But the temperature was down  
17 enough that we could -- the fire could not grow that fast on us.

18 Q. So they didn't have to complete that operation? They didn't  
19 have to complete the operation of transferring those CO2 bottles  
20 -- of rerouting those CO2 bottles?

21 A. I don't know.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I don't know.

24 Q. And then also, disregarding the timeline -- I know you said  
25 obviously off the top of your head is kind of difficult to recall

1 the times, but you did mention that I might have to look. Do you  
2 happen to have a log of some sort regarding your times --

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. -- for the fire team entry? You do?

5 A. What we do is one of the guys, he just kind of writes down a  
6 little book or something. It's not that accurate because when  
7 you're in there doing that, it's not like you can pull out a --

8 Q. No, I totally understand. It wouldn't -- is it possible for  
9 us to get a copy of that before you depart?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Okay, thank you.

12 A. And I'd just like to say it's rough.

13 Q. Yeah, of course. And then I guess the other thing too, I  
14 know you said you saw, you know, basically diesel fuel around the  
15 engines during the entry. Was that diesel fuel seen along all  
16 cylinders or was it puddled or what kind of did that look like?

17 A. We did not spend that time in that area -- in the engine area  
18 once we shot the TICs because we were in an area that's -- you  
19 know, we were not really protected. It's too big of an area and I  
20 didn't want to (indiscernible) my men. We did get it down to a  
21 safe level. So I can't tell you exactly where all of the diesel  
22 was.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. But it was -- from what we saw, it was more than we could  
25 handle unless we had a lot of foam. So we waited. That's why we

1 let it all cool down and then I -- and we really handed this back  
2 to the crew because we're not handling the investigation part. So  
3 we stayed there with them and helped make sure -- because the  
4 generators -- when you kick a generator on, you could have sparks  
5 burning and flying, so that's -- that was our concern about the  
6 whole, you know -- so we made sure that we had enough live lines  
7 around that if we had to -- actually, dry powder. We could knock  
8 it out real quick. We didn't want to put any more water out  
9 there. It really wasn't that -- we didn't have any water. I  
10 believe -- okay. What they did, I was told -- did I mention about  
11 the steam system?

12 Q. No.

13 A. Okay, I'm sorry. They had -- let me back up. I'm sorry.  
14 They had -- after we saw the video and looked at it, we saw the  
15 chief engineer (indiscernible) they did everything but they had  
16 backed out. When they couldn't handle the fire, they closed the  
17 door and they shut all the ventilation off, then they started  
18 injecting their water mist system on the cylinders. Then, after  
19 that, they fired -- they dumped their CO2 system, and then that  
20 set there for almost -- we let it sit for almost 18, 20 hours to  
21 make sure we had (indiscernible). And apparently, the -- we  
22 didn't even see any of that mist or any kind of water anywhere  
23 because the fire was so hot. So apparently, it evaporated.

24 Q. Wow.

25 A. That's why we say the CO2 worked because of the kill burn

1 that's done on the wood. You could tell something killed that  
2 wood while it was burning. It didn't just burn out. It did just  
3 burn out, but something took the oxygen away (indiscernible).

4 Q. So just out of curiosity, so the fuel that was there, has  
5 that fuel been removed now that was around the engines? Has that  
6 fuel been removed in some manner?

7 A. I don't think they touched it.

8 Q. You don't think they touched it?

9 A. I mean, they're not going to do anything to -- the only place  
10 they removed fuel was they wiped the floor up around the  
11 generators and everything in the -- it wasn't that thick like it  
12 is around the engine. It was just runny-like.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. And we just did not want them to start the compressor or any  
15 of that until they had cleaned it up good. And I know they're  
16 basically safe and everything, but I didn't want to come  
17 (indiscernible). So they worked with that for really, really  
18 quite a while. They did an awesome job of getting it clean. I  
19 mean, everything they did on shutting down, and honestly between  
20 us (indiscernible), they did everything textbook by the way they  
21 responded to this fire as far as going in and making their attack,  
22 too much, don't try to just be a hero, get out, shut the door, get  
23 your water mist on your injectors and start cooling, and then get  
24 your CO2 and stay the hell out. It was just textbook perfect in  
25 my opinion, I mean, you know, for what it is. No one got hurt and

1 that's all we can --

2 Q. Yes, sir.

3 LT [REDACTED] So thank you much, Mr. Francis; appreciate your  
4 time. I will open up the floor one last time for any other  
5 comments and then we'll be done.

6 MR. FRANCIS: Okay.

7 BY MR. BARNUM:

8 Q. I had a couple of questions for you. Thank you, Mr. Francis.  
9 At the time your team entered the space, other than the initial  
10 hose team, had anybody else entered the space from the ship's  
11 crew?

12 A. No, not that I know of. None -- I mean, when while we were  
13 here -- you're saying --

14 Q. After the hose team backed out, secured the --

15 A. No. No one back -- no one went in. We were the last ones.

16 Q. And then you were talking about how that initial team went in  
17 and checked for hotspots and took those TICs. After that, they  
18 came out. Who went in after that?

19 A. After we cleared the atmosphere?

20 Q. Yeah. Who was the second team in? Was it --

21 A. After we -- we never had a second team in until after we  
22 could clear the atmosphere; getting the VOCs down and the O2 back  
23 up. That was the rest of my firefighters and myself. We went in  
24 and started monitoring for hotspots and make sure nothing's coming  
25 back up.

1 Q. When you're monitoring, are you doing any -- are you just  
2 using your thermography equipment, or are you actually breaking up  
3 stuff and --

4 A. No, we didn't --

5 Q. -- moving things around?

6 (Crosstalk)

7 A. -- anything. We didn't -- if we don't see any heat in there  
8 that we need to get to that's below ignition temperature, we're  
9 not going to touch it. That's for the investigation.

10 Q. Did anybody from your team or that you know of go around the  
11 main engine at all or any of the cylinders up on the --

12 A. I'm sorry. Say that again.

13 Q. Did any of your team members or any -- did you see any crew  
14 go around the main engine? I'm just trying to ascertain if --

15 A. They went with the ship crew just to make sure they were  
16 safe, and, you know, we had somebody assigned with them  
17 (indiscernible) check everything. But I -- we're not in charge of  
18 that. We just did it for safety (indiscernible).

19 Q. So were they -- they were up on top of the engine then  
20 looking for hotspots?

21 A. No, we could see it -- we can get up on -- now, you're  
22 talking about the ship crew?

23 Q. Yeah, both.

24 A. I don't remember them getting on top of the engine. You  
25 could shoot some of the cylinder head and I think our highest



1 reading on it was someone got a 154. A cylinder head's going to  
2 hold (indiscernible) there' -- going to hold temperature for two  
3 to three days, you know, (indiscernible) temperature is.

4 Q. What is your understanding of how the fire started?

5 A. From -- it's all hearsay. I didn't go into the investigation  
6 of it. All I can say is it could've -- it sounds -- from  
7 experience, and I've seen this on other that had to -- I've seen  
8 injectors break. Injector lines vibrate lose and hit the manifold  
9 so from what -- the flash that we saw from the flash fire on the  
10 video, I would say that something might -- this is just my  
11 observation. That something came loose and hit that manifold, and  
12 when it hit the manifold, that's when it had the ignition. And  
13 that's when we lost the video so --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. We've seen -- you know, so many ships have (indiscernible)  
16 that.

17 Q. Thank you.

18 A. I'm not saying that's what happened. It's just -- you know,  
19 I'm looking at somebody else's video.

20 Q. Did -- the signs that you saw locally in the engine room  
21 after, did --

22 A. I'm sorry?

23 Q. When you were in the engine room after -- I understand you  
24 saw the video and then in the engine room after, did the evidence  
25 support your theory of --

1 A. I'm not sure exactly what I was looking at, but I did -- you  
2 know, I could see the line and the manifold where it could come  
3 loose.

4 Q. Do you know if that was a high-pressure line or was it a low  
5 --

6 A. I don't think -- from what I'm understanding, hearsay, is --  
7 from one of the chiefs that it might be two-gallons a minute at  
8 the most. So that's not very high pressure. I mean, it depends  
9 on what you call high pressure. I'm looking at -- my stuff's  
10 6,000 gallons per minute so I'm --

11 Q. How big as this line that you saw?

12 A. I want to say, you know, maybe an inch or so. I can't --  
13 you're going to have to look. I really can't tell you, honest  
14 truth. I just looked at it and saw it. Again, I'm not in the  
15 investigation part.

16 Q. Yeah. No, that's useful. You remember what cylinder it was  
17 on?

18 A. They were counting them. Somewhere around three, three,  
19 five, four, somewhere in that area. I mean --

20 Q. And that was everyone's consensus?

21 A. You'll see from -- if you stand back and observe and assess  
22 it, you can see (indiscernible) area and (indiscernible).

23 Q. After the fact, was there any talk amongst the crew or  
24 amongst you that, you know, were they aware that they -- there was  
25 that problem with that line recently or --

1 A. No, they weren't.

2 Q. -- they know that or --

3 A. We never heard that, no.

4 Q. You never heard anything? Thank you, sir. That's all the  
5 questions I had.

6 LCDR ██████ Again, I will --

7 BY LT ██████

8 Q. Going back to that, at what point, did the chief engineer  
9 bring you into the engine room to show you that line, which day  
10 and what time?

11 A. He never showed me.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. We had one of our guys -- one of our firefighters was  
14 following him. He never took us to show us what it was, that I  
15 remember. I mean, because we had one guy assigned with each guy  
16 when they were doing something.

17 BY LCDR ██████

18 Q. Who was assigned with the chief engineer? Do you recall?

19 A. I'm sorry?

20 Q. Do you remember which of your team was assigned to the chief  
21 engineer?

22 A. Yeah. I think it was Johnny (ph.). He's -- actually, he is  
23 a third engineer.

24 Q. Johnny who?

25 A. (Indiscernible) spell his name, C-e-r --

1 Q. You can --

2 A. -- v-i-a. He is actually -- we're going to lose him as a  
3 firefighter. He's actually an A&M graduate, third engineer, and  
4 he's been on oil tankers as a crew member and everything so -- he  
5 was just going along to see what he could do to support the ship  
6 crew only. That was all.

7 LCDR ██████ Thank you, Mr. Francis. I really appreciate  
8 your time.

9 It is now 12:27.

10 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

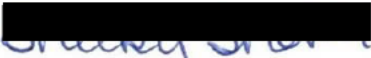
IN THE MATTER OF: FIRE ON THE *PRESIDENT EISENHOWER*  
SOUTHWEST OF SANTA BARBARA  
HARBOR, ON APRIL 28, 2021  
Interview of Rick Francis

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA21FM026

PLACE: Los Angeles, California

DATE: April 30, 2021

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.

  
Shelby Shover  
Transcriber