

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: \*

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FIRE ONBOARD *SPIRIT OF NORFOLK* \*

NEAR NORFOLK NAVAL STATION, \*

Accident No.: DCA22FM022

VIRGINIA ON JUNE 7, 2022 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
United States Coast Guard

via telephone

Thursday,  
July 28, 2022

APPEARANCES:

LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
District 5 Formal Investigation Team

ERIC DENLEY  
City Cruises, *Spirit of Norfolk*

MICHAEL KARR  
National Transportation Safety Board

COMMANDER ERIC ROY  
District 5 Formal Investigation Team

LT. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
District 5 Formal Investigation Team

LT. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Counsel  
United States Coast Guard

MAGDALINI GALITOU, ESQ.  
Phelps Dunbar on behalf of Captain Nadeau

DAN STILLMAN, ESQ.  
Willcox & Savage

ALAN WEIGEL  
Blank Rome on behalf of Hornblower

COMMANDER RANDY WADDINGTON, Lead  
District 5 Formal Investigation Team

DAVID FLAHERTY  
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(8:30 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Before we begin the initial  
4 introductions, do you have any questions?

5 CWO [REDACTED] I don't.

6 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] All right. For the record, can you  
7 just acknowledge that the tape recorder is on and running?

8 CWO [REDACTED] Yes, I see that the tape recorder is on.

9 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Thank you. So, we're here -- we're  
10 doing a joint investigation. The Coast Guard's the lead agency.  
11 We're conducting it jointly with the NTSB.

12 CWO [REDACTED] Okay.

13 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] We also have some parties-in-interest  
14 and counsel involved as well. They are on the line as well. Mr.  
15 Denley here will do formal introductions after this. But the date  
16 is July 28th, 2022. The time is 8:30 a.m. We're in an interview  
17 with Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED] [REDACTED] at the Portsmouth  
18 Federal Building in downtown Portsmouth in the D5 Prevention  
19 conference room.

20 Again, we're here conducting an interview to examine the  
21 events surrounding the fire and subsequent loss of the vessel, the  
22 *Spirit of Norfolk*, which occurred on June 7, 2022.

23 If we could just go around the room and we'll start with you,  
24 sir, and if you could just state your name, your affiliation and  
25 then spell your last name for the record, we'll go around the do

1 the same.

2 CWO [REDACTED] Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED]  
3 I'm with Sector Virginia command center. I'm the assistant chief  
4 there and the capacity I was filling that day, I was an IMD or  
5 IMDO, Incident Management Duty Officer. And last name's spelled B  
6 like in [REDACTED]

7 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] I'm Lt. Commander [REDACTED] last  
8 name [REDACTED] and I'm part of the D5 Formal Investigation Team.

9 MR. DENLEY: I'm Eric Denley, D-e-n-l-e-y. I'm with  
10 Hornblower and City Cruises, the *Spirit of Norfolk*.

11 MR. KARR: I'm Michael Karr, K-a-r-r with the NTSB.

12 COMMANDER ROY: Commander Eric Roy, R-o-y, and I'm part of  
13 the D5 Formal Investigation Team.

14 LT. WHALEN: Lt. [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and I'm with the D5  
15 Formal Investigation Team.

16 LT. [REDACTED] Lt. [REDACTED]. I'm counsel  
17 for Coast Guard.

18 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] And parties-in-interest, for Captain  
19 Nadeau.

20 MS. GALITOU: Magdalini Galitou, G-a-l-i-t-o-u, with Phelps  
21 Dunbar for Captain Nadeau.

22 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Okay. And the parties-in-interest,  
23 for Bay Diesel?

24 MR. STILLMAN: Dan Stillman, S-t-i-l-l-m-a-n with the law  
25 firm of Willcox & Savage.

1 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Parties-in-interest for Hornblower on  
2 the phone?

3 MR. WEIGEL: This is Alan Weigel, Blank Rome, spelled W-e-i-  
4 g-e-l, representing Hornblower and City Cruises.

5 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Coast Guard members on the phone.

6 COMMANDER WADDINGTON: Yes, Commander Randy Waddington.  
7 Waddington is spelled W-a-d-d-i-n-g-t-o-n. I'm the District 5  
8 Formal Team lead.

9 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Is that everyone on the phone or did I  
10 miss anyone?

11 MR. FLAHERTY: Hi, this is David Flaherty, last name F-l-a-h-  
12 e-r-t-y, with the National Transportation Safety Board.

13 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Thank you, Mr. Flaherty.

14 All right, just a few ground rules. If you could avoid  
15 acronyms and if you do use them, just spell it out so we know the  
16 acronym. You may change, modify any of your statements or if you  
17 want to go back and change something you said, we can, you know,  
18 change the record. We'll create a report of investigation at the  
19 end of this investigation and you have the right to appeal  
20 anything in the report of investigation. And if you want more  
21 information about the process of what we're doing, the Marine  
22 Safety Manual, Volume 5, spells out the District's formal  
23 investigation process.

24 CWO [REDACTED] Okay.

25 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] And with that, we'll go ahead and

1 begin.

2 INTERVIEW OF CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

3 BY LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED]

4 Q. I'll just ask you to kind of go through your history in the  
5 Coast Guard and your background (indiscernible).

6 A. Okay. Coming into the Coast Guard, I came in as -- bootcamp  
7 to A school, I was part of the "A" school, which was a  
8 (indiscernible). From there I went to the Coast Guard Cutter  
9 Mellon 378 out of Seattle, Washington, where I worked in the  
10 combat information center for two years. After that I remained E-  
11 5 on the ship and then E-6 while transferring. At that time, I  
12 became an OS-1, operations specialist first class. Went to St.  
13 Pete, Florida as an operations unit controller. I did SAR there  
14 for four years. And then after St. Pete, I came to Virginia at --  
15 to Sector Hampton or Sector Hampton Roads at the time. I was an  
16 operations unit controller there, made chief, became a command  
17 duty officer there. I was also the comms chief there while I was  
18 stationed there.

19 Following four years at Hampton Roads, I then went to the  
20 Coast Guard Cutter Northland, where I was the combat information  
21 center chief there. I did -- I only did a year there because of  
22 shore tour, then I came here to the Portsmouth Federal Building in  
23 land 62 (ph.) as the assistant CSO, as the chief, for three years.  
24 Made E-8. Following that tour, I went to the communications  
25 command down at Chesapeake, Virginia. Was an E-8 and then did

1 three years there, promoted to warrant, leaving there. And now  
2 I'm currently at Sector Virginia. Been there for a little over  
3 three years now where I'm a command duty officer, SAR mission  
4 controller, as well as many other hats that I may wear depending  
5 on the situation. That's my history.

6 Q. Can you kind of describe -- you said command duty officer.  
7 Can you kind of describe your position at Sector Virginia, your  
8 day-to-day?

9 A. So, as command duty officer, you're in charge of the watch  
10 team. You have the comms watchstander, you have the operations  
11 unit control and the situation unit watchstander. So, there's  
12 your -- you made up your core watch team and within the sector you  
13 have various student positions that you work with and/or are  
14 subject matter experts in their field.

15 Command duty officer, your role is to basically oversee the  
16 watch, keep that higher level picture of everything that's going  
17 around in the Virginia's AOR and then having (indiscernible) as to  
18 what's going on in other AORs and how they impact your operations.  
19 You're not solely directed at one mission. You're multi-mission  
20 as a command duty officer and a direct representative of the  
21 captain of the port.

22 Q. And on the day of June 7th, 2022, what was your role that  
23 day? Can you describe that?

24 A. I was actually just there day working, working on something  
25 else. And where my office sits in the command center, I can



1 pretty much hear everything that's going on. I heard fire on the  
2 *Spirit of Norfolk*, they had people embarked. One of the ensigns  
3 came in and said, yes, there's a 100 -- there's over 100 people  
4 onboard.

5 And so I came out and I talked to the SMC, who was Lt.  
6 Commander [REDACTED]. Generally, when we have major incidents where  
7 ICP is being stood up, our best practice is to get someone on  
8 scene to kind of cut through the filter or be a filter where  
9 information is flowing through, because in a command center you're  
10 getting phone calls, you're getting radio calls, and then  
11 sometimes information's not clear. So, I asked Commander [REDACTED] m,  
12 I said, do you want me to go and she said yes. So, in that  
13 capacity I was responding as an incident management duty officer.

14 Now, I know it's not an official Coast Guard title by any  
15 means. It's just something -- it's the best practice in Sector  
16 Virginia where we use -- get someone on scene who has a little bit  
17 of experience in multi-mission to provide the information back to  
18 the command center.

19 So, I believe that call came in roughly around -- somewhere  
20 around between 12:00 and 12:15 on the 7th. And I asked  
21 Ms. [REDACTED], I said, do you want me to go. She said, yes, let's  
22 go. Had a quick pow-wow with Captain Stockwell. I believe  
23 Captain Britten (ph.) was there as well in the hallway just to  
24 kind of identify what our priorities were at that time till I  
25 arrived on scene.

1 Q. And can we talk about when you on scene, can you kind of talk  
2 about what those priorities were?

3 A. So, priorities were immediately safety of life. We needed to  
4 confirm everybody was safe, ensure the SAR aspect of the situation  
5 was contained, safety of the waterway and the vessel, pollution.  
6 Those were kind of the priorities, you know, the people, property,  
7 environment.

8 Q. When you kind of get there, we'll have follow-up questions  
9 for you, I'm sure. But can you kind of go through -- I know you  
10 briefly described speaking with Lt. Commander Pulliam. Can you  
11 kind of go through from the time of that 12:00 or 12:15 when you  
12 got notified, and as much detail as you can, just kind of go  
13 through your day, arriving on scene, what you witnessed and just  
14 be detailed as possible, just kind of bring us through that day.

15 A. Okay. I was sitting on the Mac in my office. I heard over  
16 the radio that a vessel was on fire and they said the *Spirit of*  
17 *Norfolk*. I'm pretty sure it was Ensign [REDACTED] who came back and  
18 said yes, we got a fire. Because generally at that time, if  
19 there's day workers on staff, we search the launch and help out  
20 with phone calls and anywhere we can assist.

21 But as information was coming in, they said the *Spirit of*  
22 *Norfolk* was on fire with 108 people. Ms. [REDACTED] was standing in  
23 the front getting the brief from the OU and the CDO, and I asked  
24 her -- I said do you want me to go. She thought about it for a  
25 second then she said yes, let's get someone out there because

1 information was coming in so rapidly. We had already -- I believe  
2 they were in the process of launching Station Portsmouth to get  
3 them out there.

4 I don't believe at that time we knew the American Rover was  
5 on scene yet. We just knew it was on fire, there were tugs on  
6 scene and we knew it was right off of Norfolk naval base there.  
7 They said they mentioned Pier 4, so that's when I asked if she  
8 wanted me to go, she said yes. Captain Stockwell concurred and  
9 provided -- we went outside to the hallway to kind of get out of  
10 the noise of the command center. We had a conversation in the  
11 hallway about, you know, what our priorities are, determine who  
12 the IC was on scene, and just get an overall situation.

13 Bill Burket, who is our maritime incident response team there  
14 with the Virginia Port Authority, was our port partners who we  
15 work very closely with because they're pretty much firefighting  
16 search and rescue. They're a godsend, really. They help us out a  
17 lot. So, I knew Bill was going to be -- he was actually enroute  
18 to Sector Virginia for a separate meeting. We had Harbor Fest  
19 coming up so we had -- he was coming to Sector Virginia for that.  
20 Then we passed other.

21 So, I got in my vehicle, set my GPS to Pier 4, Norfolk Naval  
22 Station. I went that way. I saw Bill in passing him on the road;  
23 he was headed to Sector Virginia. At that point, I tried -- I  
24 think I tried calling him but no answer because he was probably  
25 going through the gate at the base. So, took the route to the

1 downtown tunnel over to -- I don't know what street that is -- but  
2 towards the naval shipyard. Right at the naval shipyard, I wasn't  
3 sure if I was going to be able to get through the gate or not  
4 because I'm assuming there was probably a lot of response assets  
5 there.

6 But the gate crew knew I was Coast Guard. They directed me  
7 right to where the incident was happening. So, I pulled up to the  
8 parking lot. I saw there was numerous fire trucks from multiple  
9 agencies already on scene on the pier. I arrived down to the pier  
10 and I asked someone on scene where's the IC and they pointed me  
11 down to the truck with the flag on it that said ICP. I arrived at  
12 the ICP on or around 12:30 to 12:45, somewhere in that timeframe.  
13 I spoke with the IC. He kind of pushed me back a little bit  
14 because he didn't know who I was, like, I kind of need everyone to  
15 stand back here because they were still trying to figure out the  
16 situation.

17 I can see the *Spirit of Norfolk* was actively smoking. There  
18 were no visible flames when I was there, but I told the IC, look,  
19 I'm from the Coast Guard, I'm an agency rep. I'm here to confirm  
20 safety of life and he standby. He put me in contact with somebody  
21 else and they said yes, there's -- they transferred 106 people to  
22 the American Rover. And it wasn't a ferry at that time. It was  
23 an American Rover or *Victory Rover*, very similar sounding names  
24 that operate in the same area because we thought it was the  
25 sailing vessel, American Rover. Obviously, how that transfer went

1 was definitely in our mind. But once we confirmed it was the  
2 *Victory Rover*, it made sense.

3 So, as the -- I can see the tugs assisting the *Spirit of*  
4 *Norfolk*. They were actively putting water on the vessel. From  
5 what I could see, they were shooting it down the stacks to kind of  
6 minimize the smoke and doing exterior cooling while putting water  
7 down the stacks. I talked to IC, I said the *Victory Rover's*  
8 headed to Waterside, which is down in Norfolk, to disembark the  
9 passengers. Then we got word that there were children on board on  
10 a school trip. We wanted to confirm that there were no injuries  
11 to the children or the passengers. We did confirm that.

12 We also wanted to find out who was still on the *Spirit of*  
13 *Norfolk*. I got passed that there were still two crewmembers on  
14 the *Spirit of Norfolk*, but they were currently disembarking into  
15 the tugs. And I believe that was Captain Nadeau and I can't  
16 remember the other crew member's name. I'm pretty sure it was a  
17 (indiscernible), but they had disembarked.

18 So, as I was there, they were bringing the *Spirit of Norfolk*  
19 over at Pier 4 at Norfolk Naval Station. The fire trucks were set  
20 up on the pier to begin firefighting operations. So, I relayed  
21 that back to the command center. I made numerous calls back to  
22 the command center. I'm sure you probably heard all the calls; I  
23 can't recount every single one, but I called them. My main  
24 priority was to let Ms. Pulliam know that all passengers were safe  
25 and disembarked, which provided them confirmation because they

1 were getting conflicting reports.

2       So, I did confirm that 106 were on the *Victory Rover* enroute  
3 to Waterside. I made the recommendation to have someone from  
4 prevention, since our prevention office is in downtown Norfolk, to  
5 have someone from the prevention office meet them down there so we  
6 can confirm that all passengers made it off safe. Because one  
7 thing we did want is wanted a crew manifest or a passenger  
8 manifest. We found out that they don't keep a manifest. They  
9 just -- it's a headcount only, so definitely some concerns on that  
10 one, too, especially with little kids, you know, it could be  
11 shifted around. So, we had someone meet them at Waterside.

12       While at Waterside, I got confirmation that the *Victory Rover*  
13 had 106 onboard. When the *Spirit of Norfolk* moored up, I made  
14 contact with Captain Nadeau and confirmed the two made it off  
15 safely. So, at that point I confirmed with Ms. Pulliam in the  
16 command center that the safety -- everyone was safe and off the  
17 ship at that time. Keep going?

18 Q. Sure. Keep -- if you are on -- can I just -- I don't want to  
19 interrupt, but when you were talking about the incident -- ICP --

20 A. Incident Command Post, yes.

21 Q. -- the IC, the incident commander, who was that you were  
22 talking to? Who was the designated on scene incident commander?

23 A. It was a little blurry at that time, because I believe  
24 Norfolk fire and the tie-in chief from the naval station Norfolk's  
25 fire team, the naval fire department, they were both wearing IC

1 vests. So, the person I talked to be the Navy Mid-Atlantic  
2 (indiscernible) chief with the IC vest on, the incident commander  
3 vest on.

4 Q. And when you were talking in the hallway with Commander --  
5 Captain Stockwell --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. -- at the time and you were discussing who was going to be  
8 the incident commander, what was said during that conversation?

9 A. It was just trying to identify who was taking the lead on the  
10 scene at that time for the firefighting operations.

11 Q. And what was the discussion on?

12 A. There really wasn't much discussion on who was taking it. It  
13 was just to determine who was taking that initial on-scene -- who  
14 was in charge, who's leading the charge down there. So --

15 COMMANDER ROY: I need to (indiscernible). So, since you're  
16 already talking about it.

17 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Sure.

18 COMMANDER ROY: This is Commander Roy, Coast Guard, for the  
19 people on the phone.

20 BY COMMANDER ROY:

21 Q. So, what was the exact -- what was the discussion, was it who  
22 was actually taking it or just to identify, like, when you get on  
23 scene to identify who was going to be there? Was it a discussion  
24 like who should be or --

25 A. No, there was no discussion on who should be. It's just who

1 is currently leading the operations right now, the firefighting  
2 operations right now. Just who can we -- what button do we need  
3 to push, who do we need to talk to. And that was really --

4 Q. Was it to find out who to talk to or --

5 A. Right.

6 Q. -- was it a discussion of who should be -- I'm trying to --

7 A. There wasn't a discussion on who should it be. It was just  
8 talk to whoever was leading --

9 Q. Okay, got it --

10 (Crosstalk)

11 A. -- at this time --

12 Q. -- got you.

13 A. Because we were -- because in the command center you're going  
14 through Norfolk, because it's in their jurisdiction, but you're  
15 also going through the Navy battle watch. So, the Navy battle  
16 watch has got to go down to whoever's on scene. And, so, it's a  
17 game of -- it's a phone game. So, we're going through  
18 dispatchers, we're going through -- so we wanted a contact on  
19 scene. But I ended up being that contact on scene, and so the  
20 rest of them are Coast Guard team to get there.

21 BY LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED]

22 Q. Did you go ahead and after you verified all the passengers  
23 that disembarked, continue (indiscernible)?

24 A. Sure. So, that was roughly around 1300 when I confirmed 106  
25 were on the American Rover. Simultaneously, another incident was



1 happening at the same time. The *Spar Lyra*, I believe, was a bulk  
2 carrier had lost propulsion just north of where the *Spirit of*  
3 *Norfolk* was on Pier 4 and ended up hitting a buoy. And the other  
4 tugs on scene were able to push it away, because it was about to  
5 have a collision or a lead in with the Navy pier. So,  
6 simultaneously, we're working that situation.

7 But once they were -- I spoke with Captain Nadeau, so the  
8 next priority was to confirm how much product was on board. We  
9 confirmed that they had -- with Captain Nadeau had 5300 gallons of  
10 fuel on board, so I relayed that back to our command center who  
11 subsequently relayed that to our pollution responders team, our  
12 FYCRs (ph.), so they have an idea of what was going on there.

13 I continued to observe the firefighting operations. They  
14 were working on getting the foam trailer down there. It looked  
15 like they started applying foam. They had -- the trucks I  
16 observed were from Norfolk Chesapeake. I can't remember who else,  
17 but the Navy response they had actually probably an overwhelming  
18 number on board from other ships or from the base just standing  
19 by, passing out waters, making sure the people had access to  
20 whatever they needed.

21 So, they moored it up. I believe it was -- they moored it up  
22 starboard side to the south side of Pier 4. They attached the  
23 lines. The lines appeared to be holding. When I observed the  
24 *Spirit of Norfolk*, it didn't seem like it was riding well at that  
25 time. They were continuing to pour water on it. There was

1 discussion -- I believe -- I don't have it written down in my logs  
2 when the rest of our team started arriving -- but I know Captain  
3 Stockwell, Captain Britten arrived on scene; our IOs and Mis  
4 arrived on scene.

5 Our IO actually then had a lengthy conversation with the  
6 captain and started his investigation. Our investigating officer  
7 had started his conversation. That was Lt. [REDACTED] I'm  
8 trying to think who else was on the scene. I believe the police  
9 responders arrived a little bit later. But at that point, I just  
10 continued just passing information if the captain needed  
11 information. So, at that point, it kind of shifted from me to the  
12 captains. Some of the information that we wanted to know was the  
13 captain of prevention was now issuing a captain of the port order.

14 We needed to get a hold of a qualified individual, who I  
15 think had written down as John Blake (ph.), a qualified individual  
16 for the pollution aspect of it. Then I have written down at 1520,  
17 somewhere around there or before there, they were attempting entry  
18 into the vessel. You could see the fire teams devising a plan to  
19 make entry to the back hatch on the aft end of the ship. When  
20 that happened, you could visibly see the ship, the *Spirit of*  
21 *Norfolk*, shift to port hard. The lines went very taut and you  
22 heard a loud explosion or a loud noise. I'm not sure if it was an  
23 explosion or not, but it was later explained it was a backdraft  
24 when they opened that hatch. At that point, all the sirens,  
25 everybody was yelling get off the ship, get off the ship, because

1 it did appear like it was going to roll at that time.

2 So, it was kind of a high tension moment there, and then I  
3 believe that IC made the call to pull everybody off the ship at  
4 that point. But there was some trouble as if somebody went down,  
5 one of the firefighters went down in the ship. So, it took them a  
6 second to get him off. Once they got everybody off -- I was not  
7 privy to the conversation, but I'm pretty sure there was a  
8 conscious decision not to send anyone back onto the ship because  
9 of stability issues.

10 At that point, you know, there were discussions about what  
11 hazardous materials were still on the vessel, and obviously we  
12 went back to the 5300 gallons of fuel. They wanted to meet with  
13 the salvagers. I can't for the life of me remember who the  
14 salvage team was that was contracted by the *Spirit of Norfolk's*  
15 company to come down to develop a salvage plan. But it went  
16 through that night, at 8:15 that's when they held a unified  
17 command meeting hosted by Captain Stevens, who did arrive.

18 Captain Stevens, who was the sector commander at the time,  
19 hosted the parties that were there. It was Captain Stevens, the  
20 Coast Guard, you know, Coast Guard representatives, the Navy --  
21 the two captains from the Navy. So, VM -- Virginia Fire Emergency  
22 Management, Department of Environmental Quality and City Cruises  
23 was also there, Norfolk EOC and the Navy EOC were online as well,  
24 as well as our command center were on that call. They were just  
25 discussing the events throughout the night. I believe Norfolk

1 Fire was going to pull out and the base firefighting team was  
2 going to remain on scene for the firefighting operations. At that  
3 time, I believe it was a conscious decision just to continue hull  
4 cooling, keep the hull cool -- try to let the fire consume itself  
5 and go out throughout the night.

6 That's day one.

7 Q. And did you continue to stay on the scene throughout the  
8 night or --

9 A. No, I think I departed around -- after 2200. When I was  
10 leaving, you could see visual flames coming out of the starboard  
11 side windows. I went home. I went back; I believe I got on scene  
12 around 7:30 the next morning. It was still afloat. I met with  
13 our PR team there just to confirm if anything needed to happen or  
14 if I was needed anymore. I was looking at demoting (ph.) probably  
15 around 1000 after the morning conference call with everybody to  
16 see if there's anything else that I needed to do or if I could  
17 provide any value.

18 But at that point, we had a full IC -- our full ICS team  
19 stood up. We had people called in from -- IM teams, the incident  
20 management team, from the Coast Guard. They responded to assist  
21 with situation briefs and just documentation altogether to help us  
22 out, because at that time we were -- we had operations going on in  
23 multiple places at that time. So, Sector Virginia team was  
24 stretched pretty thin at that point. But our pollution  
25 responders, they remained on scene throughout the night, as well

1 as the next morning. So, they had continuous monitoring of the  
2 situation. So, at that point, I was really no longer needed.

3 Q. Thank you. Before I pass it to Commander Roy, I just had one  
4 follow-on question. When the firefighting efforts were happening  
5 on board the *Spirit of Norfolk*, were you witnessing that? Did you  
6 witness them go on to the vessel --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- and -- which -- was it the Navy, was it Norfolk Fire, do  
9 you remember?

10 A. I couldn't tell who was who. It was hard. From where -- it  
11 was probably 25 yards, 50 yards off the stern off the *Spirit of*  
12 *Norfolk*, so they were all wearing the same gear. I couldn't  
13 really tell who was going on.

14 Q. Thank you. I'm going to pass it to Commander Roy.

15 BY COMMANDER ROY:

16 Q. Okay. Good morning. All right. Let's -- I'm going to go  
17 back a little bit here. You mentioned the IMDO, incident manager  
18 duty officer, you said that wasn't -- is that an actual position  
19 at Sector or is that just -- is that a duty position or is it just  
20 something you guys call whoever was the lead on scene?

21 A. That's something we just call who the liaison going on scene.  
22 It could be a variety of people from different departments. It's  
23 just someone who can get on scene to the incident command post and  
24 just kind of act as -- really it's just an agency rep --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- an organization rep.

2 Q. Okay. So, it's not a duty position?

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. Okay. I'm not sure I (indiscernible). When you said that  
5 the IC pulled everyone from the ship when the firefighters made  
6 entry to the ship, what IC was that? You have two ICs, right?  
7 You have a Mid-Atlantic, you know, Norfolk. Do you know which one  
8 of them was the one --

9 A. I couldn't tell which one was doing it. It was --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- pretty much the entire -- all the firefighters were  
12 yelling get off.

13 Q. But you spoke to -- your contact was the Navy --

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. -- senior officer on scene? Okay. So, were you part of all  
16 the meetings that you said you were going to -- you talked about  
17 several meetings, the 2015 meeting and you said that there was  
18 another one in the morning. Were you part of those meetings?  
19 Were you there?

20 A. I was there, yes, I was -- I wasn't there for the morning  
21 meeting, but I was there for the 2015 meeting.

22 Q. So, the morning meeting you were not on the morning  
23 conference call?

24 A. I was on the call, but where I'm sitting, I was sitting  
25 outside -- so the truck we used, the Virginia Port Authority PAC-

1 1. It was tight for everyone to get in there. So, I sat outside  
2 with our pollution responders and we listened on the phone. It  
3 was hard to hear because we're outside, diesel generators running  
4 everywhere.

5 Q. Okay. So, you were on the 2015 meeting. You were on the  
6 call. Were you in person at 20 --

7 A. I was in person.

8 Q. Okay. During that call, who was the lead from Coast Guard?

9 A. Captain Stevens.

10 Q. Captain Stevens took over?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. So, Captain Stevens. And before that, who was the  
13 lead for the Coast Guard?

14 A. Captain Stockwell.

15 Q. And how do you know that? I mean, what -- was there  
16 something that happened that kind of shifted that?

17 A. They did a pass down. We -- I'll say it right around what --  
18 we'll call it dinner time. Captain Stockwell was there, the  
19 captains I remember they had a media interview, I want to say  
20 around 1800. Captain Stockwell kind of took that lead on the  
21 media interview. I can't recall what time Captain Stevens, but I  
22 know they had a pow-wow about continuity of operations, about who  
23 was going to stay on the team, when, between Captain Stevens and  
24 Captain Stockwell. I wasn't there for that, but they did a full  
25 rundown, and then Captain Stevens took over and Captain Stockwell

1 was going to leave, and then she was going to come back in the  
2 morning.

3 Q. Did Captain Stevens stay throughout the night, do you know?

4 A. I don't know how long he stayed because he was there after I  
5 left.

6 Q. Got you, no worries. So during -- let's go back to the --  
7 again about the first meeting on the 2015 meeting, was a position  
8 identified or not as to who was going to serve what role in the  
9 incident management team?

10 A. So, yes and no. It was attempted. I believe Commander Elfin  
11 (ph.) was kind of facilitating that. Commander Elfin, who was --  
12 she was our REH at that time.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. She pleaded out from IMD -- REH. She tried to facilitate  
15 that but the Navy wasn't very up on ICS -- incident command  
16 structure. They were like I don't know what that is. They really  
17 didn't understand that. They tried informing, like, they needed a  
18 safety officer and tried to get logistics and all these other  
19 things. They really didn't understand and they did provide --  
20 yes, they did identify who was going to be fulfilling some roles,  
21 but it was very flexible for ICS.

22 Q. Do you know who filled the major roles, like claims section  
23 chief, ops section chief after that call? Were they identified?  
24 Do you remember?

25 A. I can't recall.



1 Q. Okay. Was it Coast Guard people, was it --

2 A. It was a discussion where -- so the -- I know the UC was made  
3 up of Coast Guard, Captain Stevens/Captain Stockwell, the Navy  
4 captain -- the Navy's two captains, as well as City Cruises.

5 (Crosstalk)

6 Q. How many captains were there?

7 A. So, it was Captain --

8 Q. Do you know the roles? Like what --

9 A. The base -- it was the base CO and the deputy base CO --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- and the XO -- she was XO.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. I want to say ops was Commander Elfin, but I'd be  
14 speculating.

15 Q. Okay. And who else in the Coast Guard was in that meeting  
16 besides you, Commander Elfin.

17 A. There was a lieutenant from IMT. I can't remember her name,  
18 but she was from IMT and she was going to kind of fill that civil  
19 role situation, you know, role. We had our pollution responders  
20 team was on the line as well, Lt. Pope. I know they were back in  
21 the office working on a captain of the port order. Lt. West  
22 (ph.), she was on the line from EMFR risk management, force  
23 readiness. She was on line as well. Virginia Port Authority,  
24 obviously. Bill Burket, Tracy Friedman (ph.) were on scene. I  
25 don't believe Norfolk Fire was on the line at that point.

1 Q. Were they on the scene still?

2 A. I believe they were demoting at that time.

3 Q. Okay. Do you remember a discussion about a safety zone at  
4 any time?

5 A. Yes. So, immediately we established a safety zone -- I'm  
6 sorry, well back into the immediate operations just because there  
7 was a fire going on right there in Norfolk harborage town, it was  
8 a (indiscernible). So, captain did approve a safety zone there,  
9 we placed it in effect. It was relaxed once it got near the pier.  
10 I remember that call from the command center that said hey, do we  
11 still need this now that the waterway is open. I talked to  
12 Captain Stockwell and she said yes, we can go ahead and stand down  
13 that safety zone for traffic coming down the waterway. We talked  
14 -- it was talk with the firefighters and the tug operators to make  
15 sure boats passing by isn't going to cause any affect to you and  
16 then it was nil at that time.

17 So, we reopened or stood down the safety zone, but we did end  
18 up implementing a slow speed zone, because as one boat -- it was  
19 actually the Army Corp of Engineer's boat -- came by, kind of  
20 caused a little wake to the *Spirit of Norfolk*. So, we just  
21 reiterated that with all the port partners, hey, slow down your  
22 speed boat through here.

23 Q. Did your order (indiscernible)?

24 A. No, they were using slow speed going through that area  
25 anyway, so.

1 Q. Was that broadcast as well?

2 A. Yes, it was, the safety marine information broadcast.

3 Q. And you said you had notes or log or file sheet. You said  
4 you had -- did you take notes while you were there?

5 A. I did my best to take notes, kind of shorthand. I try to  
6 write the times down, but during the initial response, some things  
7 -- it got busy at some point, so I apologize.

8 Q. At some point, did you have any pictures or anything like  
9 that?

10 A. I did have pictures and videos.

11 Q. That's one thing, if you can get us those at some point --

12 A. Sure.

13 Q. -- provide notes and pictures, that would be great.

14 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED]: And you can get back to us --

15 COMMANDER ROY: Yes.

16 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Same with -- if we can just get a copy  
17 of the notes --

18 (Crosstalk)

19 CWO [REDACTED] Sure.

20 COMMANDER ROY: That would be awesome. I think that's -- all  
21 I have (indiscernible).

22 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Any questions (indiscernible)?

23 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

24 Q. Sir, just one question. With regards, so you had mentioned  
25 that they intended -- the firefighters made their way onto the

1 vessel to try and fight the fire on board the vessel. You said  
2 that they tried to access the aft hatch. Do you know specifically  
3 which hatch they were trying to access?

4 A. I don't know which specifically. My understanding was that  
5 it was on the aft side of the ship, the aft of the ship.

6 Q. Okay. Was it on the main deck or was it below decks?

7 A. I believe it was below deck, because you can see them go on  
8 down to the main deck, and I believe there was a hatch right here  
9 on the main deck. I didn't actually take a look at the schematics  
10 of the ship or anything like that.

11 Q. Were they out of view?

12 A. Yes, they were out of view --

13 (Crosstalk)

14 Q. From where you were out on the stand? How long were they in  
15 that thing -- inside the vessel for, roughly?

16 A. I mean, maybe 5, 10 minutes. It wasn't very long. I mean  
17 you could -- so, we had the ladder across the stern and so they  
18 started staging on -- near the aft of the ship when they were  
19 staging. And then they made -- they all went down and you can  
20 tell when they made entry because you heard the boom. At that  
21 point, I did record -- right after the boom, I recorded a video of  
22 it.

23 Q. And then how long before they then exited?

24 A. It was probably maybe 3 to 5 minutes they're getting  
25 -- we saw people started coming off and then they started going

1 back on. Because then we later learned that someone had went down  
2 in there.

3 Q. Did anybody have any stories or when they come off and say  
4 we, you know, from -- did anybody talk to you about it or --

5 A. I just heard the recap later on, you know, they made entry  
6 and someone -- it was when they opened the hatch, it must have  
7 shifted water and it caused the, you know, air to come in and  
8 cause a backdraft. That's what I recall hearing. I can't  
9 remember specifically -- it might have been the Dover captain that  
10 was talking to us about it from the Virginia Port Authority.

11 Q. Were they able to resecure that hatch?

12 A. I'm not sure if they actually re-closed -- resealed the hatch  
13 or not. I'm not sure on that one.

14 Q. Thank you.

15 A. Yes.

16 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Mr. Karr. We'll go to the NTSB.

17 MR. KARR: Mike Karr with the NSTB.

18 BY MR. KARR:

19 Q. At that time that you're describing, were there -- did you  
20 see flames on the vessel?

21 A. So, specifically when the hatch opened or when they --

22 Q. At that time, at --

23 A. I didn't --

24 Q. -- 1520?

25 A. I don't recall any visible flames at that time.

1 Q. And in that time thereafter, you know, 1520, 1525, 1530?

2 A. I don't recall flames at that time. I know just large  
3 amounts of smoke. I know there's periods were less smoke and then  
4 you kind of see where there was a lot more dark smoke. It was  
5 very black smoke at that time, so it appeared to be a  
6 (indiscernible) fire at that time.

7 Q. You said there were -- you said you saw flames coming out the  
8 windows. What time was that?

9 A. That was right around when I was leaving, so 2100, 2200,  
10 somewhere around that timeframe.

11 Q. And those windows were -- can you describe those windows so  
12 we can get an idea of where on the vessel they were?

13 A. It was on the starboard side main deck from what I remember.  
14 I know someone sent me a picture of it later on that night from  
15 Facebook. So, yes.

16 Q. And those pictures, you said -- and those -- that'll be a  
17 picture that we'll receive from you?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay, all right. Some other follow-up questions. When you  
20 passed -- I'd like to know the factual information -- I'm  
21 interested in how the passengers were accounted for, so when you  
22 pass on the factual information to the command center that all was  
23 accounted for, what in your mind did you use to say the passengers  
24 are accounted for?

25 A. So, I talked to Captain Nadeau and the -- I can't, I wish I

1 can remember his position -- the other crew member that was on  
2 there. And I wanted to know if they had a manifest, a passenger  
3 manifest and they said no, they just use a head count method. I  
4 confirmed with our team at waterside the number 106 and they also  
5 confirmed that the chaperones for the children all confirmed they  
6 had their kids with them. So, that's the method we used to  
7 account for everybody.

8 Q. All right, thank you. Back to the 1520 attempted entry, were  
9 you part of any discussion about that entry onto the ship?

10 A. No, I was not.

11 Q. Could you overhear anything?

12 A. I did not.

13 Q. Okay. And at that 2015 unified command meeting, was the  
14 incident commander on the call?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. And at that meeting, was there any detailed discussion about  
17 how they were going to address the fire?

18 A. They were going to continue exterior cooling throughout the  
19 night, allow the fire to consume itself to keep it cool. I  
20 believe they were going to take temperature readings and once the  
21 temperature readings were proper, they were going to try to make  
22 reentry again to potentially overhaul it -- overhaul the fire.  
23 But there was a conscious decision that, you know, they needed to  
24 ensure its stability, too, before they put people on there.  
25 Stability -- so I believe the salvagers were consulted about how

1 much free board draft they needed in order to make entry to ensure  
2 the vessel was stable for entry.

3 Q. And at that time, was -- can you describe whether there were  
4 -- can you describe where any flames may have been?

5 A. I don't recall seeing flames prior to going into that  
6 meeting.

7 Q. All right, thank you.

8 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Mr. Flaherty with the NTSB on line, do  
9 you have any questions?

10 MR. FLAHERTY: Sorry about the delay.

11 BY MR. FLAHERTY:

12 Q. I do have a couple of questions. Did anyone -- who responded  
13 -- were they provided with vessel plans?

14 A. So, yes, eventually the vessel plans did arrive. I wasn't in  
15 there. I just saw that they brought out the paper copies and they  
16 were looking at them and they were trying to give -- I believe,  
17 actually, it was our marine inspector. So, they worked with  
18 somebody and they were showing the firefighters where all the  
19 spaces were. But I can't recall for certain at what time that  
20 happened or -- I remember it occurred on the south side of the  
21 pier near our truck. That's all I remember.

22 Q. Okay. Were the firefighters who went on board, do you know  
23 if they were briefed and shown the plans?

24 A. I can't recall that.

25 Q. All right. And outside of going on board and keeping the



1 flares -- the cools and taking temperature, was there any  
2 discussion of using foam or any other fire methods to try to  
3 extinguish the fire?

4 A. So, yes, in the beginning stages, they were using foam and  
5 putting it down through the exhaust vents on the port -- or the  
6 foam was coming in through the starboard side and the tugs were  
7 providing cooling on the port side.

8 Q. Do you recall what time the foam was applied?

9 A. Not a specific time, no. It was -- no, I couldn't recall  
10 what time the foam was applied.

11 Q. And so, how many firefighters were on board at the time that  
12 the hatch was opened?

13 A. If I looked in my video on my phone, I could probably give  
14 you a good estimate. But from memory, probably maybe 10.

15 Q. Okay. And do you know what directions were given to them  
16 specifically about going below decks?

17 A. No, I wasn't involved in that conversation.

18 Q. Was anyone from the Coast Guard involved in that?

19 A. I know our marine inspectors were involved because they had  
20 done the inspection on the *Spirit of Norfolk* recently, I think, a  
21 month or two prior before getting in service. So, they provided  
22 some information about the space to the firefighters.

23 Q. And so your position -- you were representing the Coast  
24 Guard, the command. Is that correct?

25 A. Initially, just to get on scene to establish, you know,

1 safety of life and wherever we're going to do. Once the rest of  
2 the team arrived on scene, I really fell back into a, you know, a  
3 support role.

4 Q. And at what point did the team show up and who among that  
5 team took that role from you?

6 A. I don't have it written down, but it was pretty much when  
7 Captain Stockwell arrived on scene -- Captain Stockwell and  
8 Captain Britten arrived on scene. It wasn't very long after I  
9 arrived on scene. I probably estimate they were on scene maybe  
10 around 1330, somewhere around there, 1300.

11 Q. So, Captain Stockwell took that (indiscernible) as far as  
12 you're aware?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. And then what time did the firefighters board the vessel?

15 A. I have it written down as around 1520.

16 Q. And then how -- just to get the timetable -- how long after  
17 they went on board at 1520 did you hear noise and then the orders  
18 were being given to get people off the vessel?

19 A. It was really quick. It was -- they staged on the aft. When  
20 they made entry, you could hear the boom and the vessel shift, and  
21 the -- it was pretty quick, maybe 10, 15 minutes.

22 (Crosstalk)

23 Q. So, you're saying made entry. So, I know you weren't  
24 directly involved, but the way you're describing it, that was a  
25 planned entry?

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. All right. So, are you aware as it was -- if that was part  
3 of the plans to open up -- to go down below and enter the engine  
4 room?

5 A. No, I was not aware that that was the plan.

6 Q. Okay. All right. No, that's all the questions I have, thank  
7 you.

8 A. Okay.

9 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Before we go to the parties-in-  
10 interest, I just have one quick question.

11 BY LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED]

12 Q. The marine inspectors on scene, who were the marine  
13 inspectors on scene?

14 A. I honestly can't remember. I can't recall which ones it was.

15 Q. Do you know how many were on scene?

16 A. At least two or maybe three.

17 Q. Okay, thank you.

18 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] We'll go to the parties-in-interest.  
19 We'll start with Mr. Denley.

20 MR. DENLEY: Thank you.

21 BY MR. DENLEY:

22 Q. Thanks so much for coming here and providing the testimony.

23 A. Absolutely.

24 Q. Maybe just a couple of follow-up questions. You indicated  
25 that when you initially arrived at Pier 4, I believe you stated

1 that there were, like, IC flags or incident command flags?

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. And you said that it was a little bit blurry about who was  
4 the incident commander?

5 A. Correct.

6 Q. And why -- maybe -- why was that blurry?

7 A. Well, because there was two of them wearing the vest and  
8 so --

9 Q. Okay. I believe you said the Navy and the Norfolk?

10 A. Correct?

11 Q. Okay. Did that -- did it become less blurry as the, you  
12 know, I believe you said you arrived around 12:30, 12:45?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. Did it get less blurry as the afternoon went on?

15 A. It did. It seemed to kind of shift. Norfolk was kind of  
16 more on the -- to me working with Norfolk, well, it seemed like  
17 they had a better idea of what to do and then it kind of shifted  
18 more to the Navy, the Navy Mid-Atlantic, specifically the  
19 firefighting operations. He was wearing an IC vest, but once  
20 Captain Stockwell -- once they established the unified command,  
21 then it was really clear who was making the decisions. They were  
22 making it as a collaborative at that point. That didn't happen  
23 until later on.

24 Q. That was like 2800?

25 A. Correct.

1 Q. Okay. So, it was at -- what was it -- at the 2015 ICP  
2 meeting, it became clear who was --

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. And then -- but what about at 13 -- I think you said Captain  
5 Stockwell arrived around 1330?

6 A. Somewhere around there.

7 Q. What happened then? Did she -- was she the incident  
8 commander?

9 A. She was getting up to speed on everything, on where the  
10 firefighting efforts were. She was working with Bill Burket and  
11 the MIRT, Maritime Incident Response Team. And they were  
12 collaborating what the plan was. I believe they were in  
13 discussion of how they were going to make entry, what the  
14 firefighting efforts were going to be. I wasn't privy to that  
15 conversation.

16 Q. Okay. So, I believe you said Bill Burket?

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. Captain Stockwell?

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. Somebody from the Navy with the IC vest on?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. Somebody from Norfolk with an IC vest on?

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Anybody else involved in that?

25 A. Maybe the captains from the naval base, but I can't recall

1 who was involved in that.

2 Q. And would you say at that point -- so what time would you say  
3 that was? Captain Stockwell arrived around 1330; entry was made  
4 around 1520. It's just kind of that two-hour period, between  
5 there?

6 A. I can't recall. Maybe it was a long -- there were in  
7 constant discussion in getting everything established and set up  
8 and continuing to put water on the vessel, water on the exterior  
9 of the vessel. So --

10 Q. So, at that time around 1520, could you describe how the  
11 *Spirit of Norfolk* looked? I think we knew it was more of  
12 starboard side, too. We know there was firefighting water. Was  
13 it stable, listing?

14 A. It was riding lower in the water than it normally would, but  
15 it wasn't listing at that point.

16 Q. And can you talk about the smoke right around the 1500 time?

17 A. Black plumes of smoke.

18 Q. So, when the firefighters went on, there was still black  
19 plumes of smoke?

20 A. That I can't recall if it was a heavy -- I'd have to look  
21 through my picture log and otherwise I can't recall,

22 Q. Okay. So, do you remember when you observed the firefighters  
23 going on board, do you recall if they carried any equipment with  
24 them? Did they have hoses, did they have --

25 A. They did have hoses because I know they were cooling the

1 hatch prior to opening it.

2 Q. Okay. How do you know that?

3 A. Someone had said that on scene that -- I believe it was  
4 Mr. Burket who said that they were going to cool the hatch before  
5 their entry.

6 Q. Did they say anything else about what the plan was?

7 A. No, not that I can recall. I'm sure they did, but I'm just  
8 not recalling.

9 Q. Okay. Do you recall any other equipment that the  
10 firefighters had?

11 A. Not from memory. I'm sure I have it on video and pictures.

12 Q. So, you commented that there was a noise from the -- at 1520  
13 they make entry. There was a lot of noise and there's a list to  
14 port, hard list to port?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. I believe you said that the mooring lines became taut.

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. Did the mooring lines stay taut?

19 A. Yes, so the aft mooring line -- I couldn't see the fore  
20 mooring line or the spring line, but that aft mooring line it was  
21 slack and then it went immediately taut, and then to me it listed  
22 to port.

23 Q. Okay. And then it stayed listed to port or did it come back?

24 A. It stayed listed to port. Eventually later on, it did kind  
25 of level itself out, but yes, it was a hard list to port.

1 Q. And was anything done with the tugs? How many tugs were on  
2 scene?

3 A. At least three that I can recall. They were smaller, pusher  
4 tugs. There were the fire boats as well.

5 Q. Was anything done with the tugs to help with the stability of  
6 the vessel if there was a concern?

7 A. I don't remember. Where I was standing, I was watching the  
8 firefighters in the boat next to me. They were suiting up in  
9 their dive gear.

10 Q. Do you remember -- one of the things you talked about was  
11 that there was a conscious effort to talk to salvage teams or RP  
12 salvage teams. Do you remember when the salvage team arrived on  
13 scene?

14 A. It was prior to the 2015 meeting or at least one  
15 representative was there prior to the 2015. I can't recall  
16 specifically what time they arrived.

17 Q. Was it after the 1520 backdraft or --

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. But before the 2015 --

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. Were there any other discussions or plans made for  
22 firefighting interests?

23 A. I'm sure there was, but --

24 Q. Before the 2015 ICP?

25 A. Correct. I'm sure there was, but I wasn't privy to those.



1 Q. Okay. And then can you just describe -- you did it once, but  
2 I kind of want to -- do you recall the changes in smoke and fire,  
3 beginning at 1520, going up to the -- I guess when you all got out  
4 of the ICP meeting?

5 A. I don't recall -- the first day, I don't recall many changes.  
6 It was black smoke. I know there was periods where it would be  
7 less smoke where we kind of got hope that the fire would  
8 extinguish itself.

9 Q. What about right after 1520? Like the -- I know that the  
10 vessel listed.

11 A. I'd have to look back on pictures to --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- see or the videos. I can't recall (indiscernible).

14 Q. And then I believe you said that after the ICP meeting,  
15 around 2100 to 2200, you saw flames coming out of the windows.

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. Okay. So, that was the change? There weren't any flames  
18 coming out of the vessel at 1520?

19 A. Correct. I believe someone had made the comment that it had  
20 breached the galley at that point, because I know the galley door  
21 was sealed. And there was a discussion about how long those  
22 galley doors could withstand a fire for. I can't recall  
23 specifically what it was at the time.

24 Q. So, but no flames before the ICP meeting?

25 A. Not that I personally saw, if I remember.

1 Q. I don't have any more questions. Thank you so much.

2 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] We'll go to Phelps Dunbar, the party-  
3 in-interest, for Captain Nadeau?

4 MS. GALITOU: No questions, thank you.

5 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] And the parties-in-interest, for Bay  
6 Diesel, Mr. Stillman?

7 MR. STILLMAN: No questions. Thank you very much, Chief.

8 CWO [REDACTED] Thank you.

9 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Does anyone else in the room --  
10 Mr. Karr?

11 BY MR. KARR:

12 Q. A question. You mentioned Captain Britten. Who is Captain  
13 Britten?

14 A. Captain Britten was the incoming deputy sector commander.  
15 This was her welcome aboard.

16 Q. And up until -- prior to the 1520 boarding of the vessel by  
17 the fire teams, was there any -- can you recall what anyone said  
18 was the source of the fire? What was feeding the fire?

19 A. There was speculation that it was the port engine. I believe  
20 there was speculation that it was the port engine that was on  
21 fire. And when I talked to the captain -- Captain Nadeau and the  
22 mate, they said they went down there, they saw flames and felt it  
23 better to seal off the compartment.

24 Q. Let me focus the question on what the, you know, the  
25 firefighters were dealing with, trying to respond to the fire.

1 The fire's still burning three hours after the original fire. So,  
2 was there --

3 (Crosstalk)

4 A. -- at that point.

5 Q. Any details about --

6 A. No, not that I can recall.

7 Q. All right. Was there, at the meeting ahead of the 1520  
8 boarding of the vessel by the fire team, was there a City  
9 Cruises/Hornblower rep at that --

10 A. They did have a rep on scene. I can't remember what time she  
11 got there. It must have been -- it was relatively quick, because  
12 she met with Captain Nadeau early on, so I can't remember or  
13 recall, like, her role in everything and what exactly she did.

14 Q. Do you remember her participating in the incident command  
15 discussions?

16 A. At the 2015, yes, but I don't remember her prior to the 1520  
17 event.

18 Q. All right. Last question. You mentioned the galley doors.  
19 Can you describe what doors those are?

20 A. Do you want fore or the engine room compartment?

21 Q. So, was it the door going into the engine room?

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. Okay, thank you.

24 MR. KARR: That's it.

25 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Commander Roy.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, I'm sorry.

2 COMMANDER ROY: Do you want -- go ahead.

3 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

4 Q. Did Captain Stockwell or Bill Burket make any comments or did  
5 they -- did you talk to them about what happened when the  
6 firefighters went on board and there was the hardness to port?

7 A. They gave us a rundown later on that night, kind of like what  
8 he thought or -- I don't think anyone knew for certain how, like,  
9 what caused it. But from their experience they -- it was the  
10 shifting of the one -- you open up an air pocket or a shifted the  
11 water that was already on the boat and then caused the oxygen to  
12 enter the compartment. That's kind of like -- it wasn't here's  
13 exactly what's happening here. It's what they suspect had  
14 happened.

15 Q. But, I mean, we could presumably know what happened, right,  
16 by talking to the firefighters?

17 A. Actually I didn't talk to the firefighters.

18 Q. Yes. I mean, did Bill?

19 A. I'm not sure what Bill talked to them about. I'm assuming  
20 that he did, but I don't know for sure because I didn't see that  
21 conversation happen.

22 Q. Okay. And what time did Bill get that rundown? Was that  
23 part of an ICP meeting?

24 A. It was sometime before that. I can't recall specifically  
25 when. We may have been trying to get a (indiscernible) at that

1 time or (indiscernible) any of that time when we were having that  
2 conversation.

3 Q. And who was there when you gave the rundown of what happened?

4 A. I believe the captains were there when Bill was giving that  
5 rundown.

6 Q. And that's Captain Stockwell?

7 A. Captain Stockwell and Captain Britten.

8 Q. Okay. Anybody else, other agencies?

9 A. No, it was just our Coast Guard team. I know there were a  
10 few other Coast Guard members there, but I can't recall  
11 specifically who was there.

12 Q. Okay, thanks.

13 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Commander Roy.

14 BY COMMANDER ROY:

15 Q. What is the role of the MIRT?

16 A. Good question. So, the Maritime Incident Response Team, they  
17 basically facilitate -- so if you ask Bill, he's not in charge of  
18 anything. But he coordinates pretty much responses with the fire  
19 departments, the police departments, all of our local agencies to  
20 work together in a collaborative piece. He's our (indiscernible)  
21 within this quorum. So, we have a major event, we call Bill, they  
22 have the PAC-1, Port Authority mobile command post that can set up  
23 an ICP pretty much anywhere with the communications and  
24 capabilities. But (Indiscernible) experience with firefighting  
25 and operations. When anytime we use search and rescue or marine

1 firefighting, he hosts marine firefighting symposiums, work with  
2 our local agencies on how to tackle these things. I've sat in  
3 meeting with him on one of these container ships that catch on  
4 fire, it's a container, you know, in the middle of a stack, you  
5 know. We go over lessons on how to best attack that, what the  
6 proper protocol should be or, you know, and how to work together.  
7 So, basically he's a facilitator.

8 Q. So, he doesn't -- they don't command anything. They just  
9 coordinate this whole thing?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. So, let's go back to the incident commander, firefighter  
12 incident commander discussion. So, you said you arrived on scene,  
13 you had two firefighters, Norfolk fire department and the Navy  
14 fire department, both had an IC vest on. And you were in  
15 communication with the Mid-Atlantic Navy fire department incident  
16 commander.

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. Okay. Did -- before the 2015 meeting, did it become clear in  
19 that time before the meeting that one fire department kind of take  
20 the senior role or is this still kind of blurry as who was, like,  
21 leading the firefighter portion of the response?

22 A. I guess you could say it was kind of blurred, but it seemed  
23 like they were coordinated. To me, I wasn't in the discussions  
24 with the firefighting, but to me it seemed like there were  
25 coordinated efforts between the two of them, because they were all

1 -- all the firefighters, like I couldn't tell Chesapeake from  
2 Suffolk, from Norfolk to the Navy. They all seemed to be working  
3 together.

4 Q. Okay. But you never, like, said hey, you know, this fire  
5 department's the lead?

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. Okay. You didn't know that?

8 A. Correct.

9 Q. And then you also said at one point part of the discussion  
10 was the Navy -- during maybe the 2015 meeting -- the Navy fire  
11 department, I think you stated about -- they weren't familiar with  
12 ICS. Can you elaborate on that a little bit more?

13 A. We were going to the titles and the positions, and they had  
14 numerous questions about what role that meant to take. We got a  
15 little uneasy feeling in there from the Navy captains where, well,  
16 we should be in charge because it's our base and, you know,  
17 Captain Stevens kind of reiterated like what his role and what the  
18 captain of the port was. And so, once they clarified that, it  
19 was --

20 Q. So, that -- so, when the ICS discussions out from the Navy  
21 fire department chief or whoever the senior person was or was that  
22 from the senior -- the two captains from the Navy base?

23 A. The Navy captain, but I believe the discussion with the Navy  
24 fire chief when they were talking about the safety officer portion  
25 and stuff like that. The battalion chief didn't really know what

1 that entailed for ICS.

2 Q. So, the confusion was not from the Navy and OB captains. It  
3 was from the fire chief?

4 A. It was both.

5 Q. Both.

6 A. They, all three, were sitting in the line. Two captains were  
7 sitting there and the Navy fire captain was sitting on a bench  
8 right behind the captains.

9 Q. Let's talk a little bit on the -- you said about the Navy  
10 wanted to be in charge. What was that discussion? Were you there  
11 when that discussion happened?

12 A. I was. It was mainly about jurisdictions and authorities  
13 since it was their -- it was on their pier. They kept referencing  
14 back to the Bonhomme Richard fire down in San Diego, about, you  
15 know, how that was handled. I didn't really get where they were  
16 going with that, but it seemed as if they wanted to kind of have  
17 that lead role because since it was on Navy property. But Captain  
18 Stevens does a really good job of clarifying things and talking  
19 things out, explaining, you know, what Coast Guard jurisdiction,  
20 what a unified command does, how we all work together. We're not  
21 going to make a decision in a bubble, it's going to be a  
22 collective decision and bring, you know, the parties.

23 Q. And after that kind of discussion, how was the -- how do you  
24 read the room? Was it better, was it still kind of uneasy?

25 A. No, I think, you know, leaving that meeting everyone shared



1 the same goal and vision, and understood that, you know, the Navy  
2 has, you know, national security interests in mind and, you know,  
3 as well as public relations. And that was one of the other big  
4 topic, the one making sure all our public -- you know, City  
5 Cruises, Coast Guard, Navy, public affairs were in sync so that we  
6 were conveying the right message about the operations ongoing.

7 Q. You also said that when you left the meeting, it wasn't  
8 really clear like who held what ICS position?

9 A. It was following that meeting where they knew who the UC were  
10 -- I'm sorry, I can't remember who ops was.

11 Q. But it was clear, but you're just not privy.

12 A. I just can't recall.

13 Q. Okay. But it was clear they had definite roles set up?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. So, somebody had that information?

16 A. I believe that was one of the objectives.

17 Q. Okay. I think that's all I have.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just one follow-up, I appreciate it.

19 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

20 Q. Are you aware if there's a marine firefighting plan for the  
21 sector or the port?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. Who is the keeper of that plan?

24 A. Marine firefighting plan, like, specifically saying marine  
25 firefighting plan. There's contingency plans and the air

1 contingency plan, there's marine pollution. You know, SAR kind of  
2 goes into who's -- what -- who should be the IC roles for marine  
3 firefighting. But on -- specifically mention tactics, I can't  
4 recall only, like, for tactics specifically.

5 Q. So there's -- so you -- is there a plan or is there not a  
6 plan or is it kind of talked about from other references?

7 A. It's talked about in multiple references, but one specific  
8 plan I, you know, I'm kind of embarrassed to say I haven't seen it  
9 or even if one exists.

10 Q. Sure. You commented that the Navy had a concern and voiced  
11 the concern about their jurisdiction over the base. Do you know  
12 if any of these plans say who has jurisdiction for firefighting?

13 A. So, specifically in the Coast Guard addendum, it does say  
14 that when there's active search and rescue ongoing, Coast Guard  
15 assumes that incident command, specifically the SAR mission  
16 coordinator. But once it transitioned to that, it has to be a  
17 qualified marine firefighting officer is the IC on that.

18 Q. Okay. So, your understanding of Coast Guard policy is that  
19 once you confirm safety of life, the incident command for  
20 firefighting should be a firefighter?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. Thanks.

23 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Yes, Mr. Karr.

24 BY MR. KARR:

25 Q. You mentioned the operations leader. Do you remember from

1 what organization that person was from?

2 A. I'm sorry, say again?

3 Q. The unified command operation section chief, what  
4 organization was that person from?

5 A. So, I believe it was Commander [REDACTED] (ph.) from Coast Guard  
6 Sector Virginia, but I can't -- look, I feel like I'm speculating.

7 Q. And then just curious, have you yourself even been through a  
8 shipboard firefighting training --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- course. And how many years ago was that?

11 A. I've been through, I think, two or three. One in Washington  
12 probably 2003; I think I went to two in Washington, 2002 and 2003,  
13 and then I went to one here back in -- on the ship back in maybe  
14 2013, 2014 timeframe.

15 Q. Okay, thanks.

16 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Does anyone --

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hi, just a --

18 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Yes, sir, go ahead.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, sorry.

20 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

21 Q. A few questions. You said you heard a loud noise on the boat  
22 about the time that the firefighters stepped on. What did it  
23 sound like, that noise?

24 A. To me, just trying to recall it, it sounded like a very deep  
25 boom. That's what I can recall, but it was also very noisy on the

1 pier but that noise did stand out above all the other noises. You  
2 knew something happened. It drew everyone's attention to the boat  
3 and then you saw it quickly snap to port.

4 Q. And at the time, you said that you saw there was a rush of  
5 air going into the compartment. Is that correct?

6 A. I think that's kind of what I put together later on, just for  
7 me. But it could have been an explosion, it could have been a  
8 shift in water. I would be speculating at that point.

9 Q. Okay. Well, would it what have been that led to the engine  
10 room where they were sealed?

11 A. Not to my knowledge.

12 Q. Again, did you ever see (indiscernible)?

13 A. I did not.

14 Q. And then to your knowledge, have there been any drills  
15 involving the Navy and other port partners with the Coast Guard,  
16 either a tabletop or some sort of exercise?

17 A. To my knowledge, I can't recall the Navy participating in any  
18 of them, but that's not to say it didn't happen.

19 Q. Did the Navy ever -- was the Navy ever present on any type of  
20 incident management, port safety committee meetings of any type?

21 A. Port safety? I believe they do hold a maritime safety  
22 committee, but as far as like port safety, like a harbor safety  
23 meeting, I don't believe I've seen them there, but I could be  
24 wrong.

25 Q. Does your unit have any instructions on coordinating with the

1 Navy if there was a fire at the piers, at their facility?

2 A. Specific instructions, no. But if it was a Navy asset, Navy  
3 pier, we would be a support role with them.

4 Q. Is there any type of memorandum of understanding between the  
5 Coast Guard and the Navy on an -- a response for a Navy assist  
6 that is not a Navy asset?

7 A. I can't say if there is or there isn't.

8 Q. All right, thank you.

9 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] I'm sorry, Mr. Denley.

10 BY MR. DENLEY:

11 Q. You said that if it was a Navy asset on fire at a Navy pier,  
12 at a Navy facility, the Coast Guard would be a supporting role?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. And what would you be supporting?

15 A. Safety of the waterways, establishing that safety zone, if  
16 they needed help transporting people or if any of the, you know,  
17 safety of life or something like that. We're not -- Coast Guard's  
18 not trained to fight fires on the ships.

19 Q. Are you trained to fight fires on commercial vessels?

20 A. Only our own vessels.

21 Q. Thanks.

22 LT. COMMANDER [REDACTED] Does anyone else on line have any  
23 questions? Okay. Does anyone else in the room have any  
24 questions? Okay.

25 We'll go ahead and conclude the interview at 9:44 a.m. Thank

1 you again, Mr. [REDACTED] We appreciate --

2 (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 ONBOARD *SPIRIT OF NORFOLK*  
NEAR NORFOLK NAVAL STATION, VIRGINIA  
ON JUNE 7, 2022  
Interview of Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA22FM022

PLACE: via telephone

DATE: July 28, 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.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Maria Socorro R. Abellar  
Transcriber