

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

FIRE ABOARD *GRANDE COSTA D'AVORIO* *

AT BERTH 16 IN THE PORT OF NEWARK IN *

Accident No.: DCA23FM039

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY ON JULY 5, 2023 *

*

* * * * *

Interview of: MR. CIUMALA, 3rd Officer

Grande Costa D'Avorio

via Microsoft Teams

Friday,
February 2, 2024

APPEARANCES:

CDR CHRIS BARGER
United States Coast Guard

LT. BRANDON REED, Recorder
United States Coast Guard

LCDR STEPHANIE MOORE, Assistant Investigating Officer
United States Coast Guard

LCDR KATIE WARD, Legal Advisor
United States Coast Guard

WILLY PITTMAN
Investigations, National Center of Excellence
United States Coast Guard

BART BARNUM, Office of Marine Safety
National Transportation Safety Board

NANCY McATEE, Fire and Explosion Specialist
National Transportation Safety Board

GARY LIPSHUTZ, ESQ.
City of Newark, New Jersey

JOHN REILLY, ESQ.
Squire Patton Boggs
Counsel for Port Authority

ROBERT O'CONNOR, ESQ.
Montgomery McCracken
Counsel for Grimaldi Deep Sea

GINO ZONGHETTI, ESQ.
Kaufman Dolowich
Counsel for Ports America

MATTHEW PALLAY, ESQ.
Freehill Hogan & Mahar
Counsel for American Maritime Services

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Mr. Ciumala:	
By LT Reed	4
By Mr. Barnum	5
By LDCR Ward	8

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

Mr. Lipshutz: But you had to wait because there was no water coming of the hose?

MR. CIUMALA: Yes, we connected, and we were waiting for the water. So, yeah. While I was there with the Chief Officer, no water came out of this hose.

Mr. Lipshutz: About how long were you there waiting for the water to come out?

MR. CIUMALA: We didn't wait too much. It was very fast because the smoke, the black smoke from the car covered the entire area very fast. Since I arrived in deck 10 until I left, it was very, very fast. We had time to connect it and to open and we saw it's not coming out water, and the water -- the smoke was already coming to our side. So we had to leave it and from here --

Mr. Lipshutz: So --

MR. CIUMALA: Yeah, continue please.

Mr. Lipshutz: I'm sorry. It's hard over the computer, but I didn't mean to interrupt you. You've said very fast, but I don't really know what that means. So can you give me an estimate about how long you waited for water before the smoke came over and you decided you couldn't do it?

MR. CIUMALA: Best estimate because I never check my watch. So I can't say, but taking into consideration that I am young, it was very fast and because of adrenaline, it was very fast.

1 Mr. Lipshutz: So may I -- let me ask it this way. Was it
2 more than a minute that you were standing there holding the hose?

3 MR. CIUMALA: I don't know. As I said, I don't know. I
4 can't estimate. Some things I don't know.

5 Mr. Lipshutz: Okay. Thanks very much. I don't have
6 anything else. Thank you.

7

8 MR. CIUMALA: You're welcome.

9 Mr. Lipshutz: I'm finished. Thank you.

10 CDR BARGER: Okay. Thank you. Are there any follow-up
11 questions from the investigation team?

12 MR. BARNUM: I do have two I guess commander.

13 CDR BARGER: Okay. Go ahead, Mr. Barnum.

14 BY MR. BARNUM:

15 Q. All right. Mr. Ciumala, just a couple questions here for
16 clarification for me. On the location -- where was the Jeep when
17 you saw the smoke coming out of it? Was it on board the ship?

18 A. So when I saw the smoke out -- you mean in the morning time?

19 Q. Yes, sir.

20 A. Yes, when I saw it, it was already on board. As I said
21 before, I don't know to whom, I don't know if it was from outside
22 from the shore with the smoke but I saw it only when it was on
23 board our vessel.

24 Q. All right. So was it on the ramp leading from shore to deck
25 3 or was it on the flat area or was it on the ramp going to deck

1 6?

2 A. It was deck 3 on the flat area.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Between the two ramps.

5 Q. Gotcha. And then just to circle back from the ventilation,
6 when you were on deck 12, the liaison liaising between the fire
7 department and the captain, you indicated that ventilation was
8 turned on twice, correct?

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. And do you know if it was turned on twice? I'm just trying
11 to determine, was it before they brought the firefighter up,
12 turned on twice, or was it once before and once after or --

13 A. So both opening was before the first body was outside, before
14 the -- before I saw the first body. These two were before.

15 Q. Okay. And then how -- did you become aware that there is a
16 mayday called from the fire department that was operating, they
17 were in trouble?

18 A. No. So as I said before, at some point I become aware that
19 one person is missing, and after they bring the first person, I
20 become aware of the second one. But as I said, I become aware of
21 this information from the firemen, from the firemen, not from
22 other people. From -- I don't know if it was the team leader, but
23 I found some of the firemen that was near me.

24 Q. So when you found out they were missing, had the ventilation
25 already been turned on before that or was the request after that?

1 A. Can you repeat?

2 Q. So when the first time the ventilation was turned on, was it
3 before you were notified that there was a missing fireman or was
4 it after?

5 A. As I said, I think it was one at a time. I become aware at
6 some point here, I told you how, but I don't know if I become
7 aware of the missing person before the opening of --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- but I know that I become aware, and I told you how, but I
10 don't remember when, it before or after.

11 Q. Okay. And how about why? Did the firemen when he requested
12 ventilation, did he tell you why he wanted it turned on?

13 A. At some point, that's what I told you, at some point they
14 told me to open the ventilation because they need to see how the
15 fire will react, and I don't know if he told me after I told him
16 if you open, the fire will spread like before, but he told me this
17 because they want to see how the fire will react.

18 Q. Okay. Do you remember him at any point saying that they
19 wanted the ventilation turned on in order to help locate a missing
20 fireman?

21 A. No, I don't remember this as I said. I don't remember where
22 I find -- when I found out. I remember that I found out when I
23 was in that position somewhere in that place near the staircase,
24 but I don't know when or how. I remember that I found out from
25 them but I don't know in what circumstances.

1 Q. Gotcha. All right. Thank you. That's all the questions I
2 have for you.

3 A. Okay.

4 CDR BARGER: Lieutenant Commander Ward, did you have a
5 follow-up question?

6 LCDR WARD: I did.

7 BY LCDR WARD:

8 Q. Good afternoon. I just wanted to specify the testimony that
9 you previously provided prior to this testimony today. So have
10 you ever talked to the Coast Guard before today?

11 A. No, I never talked to. The only thing I did with Coast
12 Guard, I write this statement, my statement on paper right after
13 the incident.

14 Q. Okay. And have you ever talked to another federal agency in
15 regard to the incident?

16 A. Can you repeat please?

17 Q. Have you talked to any other federal agency?

18 A. I don't know if they were federal agency. I had one
19 testimony when I was in United States but I don't know party or
20 parties were there, if it was federal or what.

21 Q. Okay. So there is one prior occasion that you provided
22 testimony for this case on?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. Do you remember what month that was?

25 A. Somewhere, somewhere in September.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Before we were given the approval to leave the United States.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Somewhere at that point.

5 Q. Okay. And so that's the only occasion that you previously
6 talked about witnessing smoke?

7 A. Yes, in September was the first time.

8 Q. Okay. That's all I have. Thank you.

9 A. You're welcome.

10 CDR BARGER: Okay. Thank you. Any other follow-up questions
11 from the investigation team?

12 (No response.)

13 CDR BARGER: Okay. Hearing no, Mr. Ciumala, I want to thank
14 you for your time and testimony today. You are subject to recall
15 if we have any further questions and the sequestration order that
16 we spoke about previously remains in place until you're notified
17 by Lieutenant Reed, our recorder, that you are released from that.

18 The time is now 12:21 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. The
19 hearing will remain in recess pending scheduling of any additional
20 virtual testimony from other witnesses.

21 Thank you, and we'll end the recording here.

22 (Whereupon, at 12:21 p.m., the above entitled matter was
23 adjourned.)

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: FIRE ABOARD *GRANDE COSTA D'AVORIO*
AT BERTH 16 IN THE PORT OF NEWARK
IN NEWARK, NEW JERSEY ON JULY 5, 2023
Interview of Mr. Ciumala

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA23FM039

PLACE: via Microsoft Teams

DATE: February 2, 2024

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.


Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber