

1 GOLDEN RAY Hearing

2 21 September 2020

3
4 **CAPT Welborn:** Good morning all. The time is now 10:34, we are back on the record
5 in the matter of: the capsizing of the Motor Vessel GOLDEN RAY on September 8, 2019
6 while transiting the St. Simons Sound in Brunswick, Georgia.

7 Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is Monday, September 21, 2020. This is the
8 sixth day of the public hearing into the capsizing of the GOLDEN RAY. I am Captain
9 Blake Welborn. I am the Lead Investigating Officer for this 7th District Formal
10 Investigation. The Commander, 7th District, has convened this investigation under the
11 authority of Title 46, United States Code, Section 6301 and Title 46, Code of Federal
12 Regulations, Part 4, to investigate the facts and circumstances surrounding the
13 capsizing of the GOLDEN RAY. This investigation was mutually agreed upon to be a
14 joint effort between the ship's flag state, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the U.S.
15 National Transportation Safety Board, also known as NTSB, the Korean Maritime Safety
16 Tribunal, also known as KMST, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

17 Present today, other than myself, are the following members of this Formal
18 Investigation: Mr. Lee Willett and LCDR [REDACTED], who is also the Recorder.

19 The legal counsel to this investigation is LT [REDACTED].

20 The National Transportation and Safety Board is participating in this hearing. Captain
21 David Flaherty, investigator-in-charge, is appearing virtually.

1 The Republic of the Marshall Islands' representative is Mr. Thomas Bremer, who is
2 physically here at the hearing.

3 In addition, the Korean Maritime Safety Tribunal personnel is monitoring this hearing
4 virtually and will provide me questions to ask on their behalf. I will note when I begin
5 asking the questions posed by KMST.

6 I would like to request the cooperation of all persons present to minimize any disruptive
7 influence on the proceedings in general and on the witnesses in particular. Witnesses
8 are appearing before the members of this Formal Investigation to provide valuable
9 information that will assist this investigation. We request members of the public be
10 courteous and respectful of the hearing location during these proceedings and attend
11 via livestream to comply with the Federal, State, and Local COVID-19 guidelines.

12 For those of you participating via phone or video, I ask that you mute yourself until I've
13 recognized you for your questions unless you wish to make an objection. All media
14 inquiries and comments regarding the hearing should be sent
15 to GoldenRayPublicHearing@gmail.com. This email should only be used for questions
16 regarding the investigation and these hearing proceedings. All questions regarding the
17 response efforts should be directed to the Incident Command Post.

18 The Coast Guard has designated Parties In Interest to this investigation. I have
19 designated the following organizations and individuals as Parties in Interest: the
20 Brunswick Bar Pilots Association; including Captain Bruce Fendig and Captain
21 Jonathan Tennant; and the Owners of the GOLDEN RAY, including Hyundai Glovis and
22 G-Marine. The lead counsel for the Brunswick Bar Pilots Association, Captain Fendig,
23 and Captain Tennant are appearing virtually. The lead counsel for the Owners of the

1 GOLDEN RAY, including Hyundai Glovis and G-Marine, is physically here at the
2 hearing. The Coast Guard now calls the following witness, Mr. Clifton Gorden.

3 **Recorder:** Mr. Gorden can you please stand and raise your right hand? A false
4 statement given to an agency of the United States is punishable by fine and or
5 imprisonment under 18 United States Code 1001. Knowing this do you solemnly swear
6 that the testimony you're about to give will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
7 the truth so help you God?

8 **Mr. Gorden:** [In audible].

9 **Recorder:** Thank you please be seated. Mr. Willett the witness is ready.

10 **Mr. Willett:** Thank you. Sir, could you please state your name and spell your last
11 name for the record? Standby we're having a mic problem.

12 **Mr. Gorden:** Okay.

13 **Mr. Willett:** I'll repeat the question. Sir, could you please state your name and spell
14 your last name for the record?

15 **Mr. Gorden:** Clifton Gorden, G-O-R-D-E-N.

16 **Mr. Willett:** Mr. Gorden are you represented by counsel?

17 **Mr. Gorden:** No.

18 **Mr. Willett:** Have you been designed a party in interest?

19 **Mr. Gorden:** No.

20 **Mr. Willett:** Sir do you hold any professional certifications?

21 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes, sir. I have 200 tons Masters inland, Master of towing vessel, near
22 coastal Great Lakes. Also basic STCW and designed examiner.

1 **Mr. Willett:** Thank you. Could you give us a brief summary of your background and
2 experience?

3 **Mr. Gorden:** I started as a – on the tug boats in 1987, 1995 I had my license and was
4 qualified as a Captain. I've been working for Moran Towing since 1990, approximately
5 30 years.

6 **Mr. Willett:** I think you mentioned it. Who is your current employer?

7 **Mr. Gorden:** Moran Towing.

8 **Mr. Willett:** And with Moran what position do you hold?

9 **Mr. Gorden:** Captain.

10 **Mr. Willett:** What are the duties and responsibilities for that position?

11 **Mr. Gorden:** We manage the crew, the tug. We are vessel safety officers along with
12 the daily navigation, daily operations of the tug.

13 **Mr. Willett:** And how long have you held that title as Master of a towing vessel?

14 **Mr. Gorden:** 25 years.

15 **Mr. Willett:** And have you received any training for that position?

16 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes, sir. We are compliant with all ISM subchapter M and also our safety
17 management system. We have a large library of videos on hand training and video
18 training that we comply with. And we have a list of them here.

19 **Mr. Willett:** Thank you. Were you the Captain of the Dorothy Moran from the inbound
20 transit for the GOLDEN RAY?

21 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes, sir I was.

22 **Mr. Willett:** Can you explain what the Dorothy Moran would do on the inbound transit
23 for the GOLDEN RAY?

1 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes. On docking the RO-RO ships the Dorothy Moran usually works the
2 transom of the ship. We push the stern around and then we catch a line on the corner
3 of the ship and guide it to the dock. Once we get it to the dock then we're following the
4 orders of the Pilot the whole time. And basically we push or pull depending on what
5 they need to get to the dock.

6 **Mr. Willett:** Just to clarify the transom is the stern of the vessel or the aft?

7 **Mr. Gorden:** The stern. The stern of the vessel, yes.

8 **Mr. Willett:** How would you communicate with the GOLDEN RAY?

9 **Mr. Gorden:** We communicate with the Pilots on channel, VHF channel 12.

10 **Mr. Willett:** In your many years of experience on the inbound transit did you notice
11 anything unusual about the GOLDEN RAY or anything you observed that was not
12 typical of an inbound transit?

13 **Mr. Gorden:** No I did not.

14 **Mr. Willett:** With your exchange with the GOLDEN RAY you spoke with a Pilot from the
15 Brunswick Bar Pilot Association?

16 **Mr. Gorden:** Correct.

17 **Mr. Willett:** Do you recall who that was?

18 **Mr. Gorden:** JT. Johnathan Tennant.

19 **Mr. Willett:** Johnathan Tennant?

20 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes.

21 **Mr. Willett:** After, sorry. After you completed the inbound transit what did you do
22 immediately following?

1 **Mr. Gorden:** We – she secured at dock at 1730 and we went to our dock and secured
2 for the day.

3 **Mr. Willett:** Were you called or notified that you were going to assist with the out bound
4 transit?

5 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes we have a roster of who's duty and not duty and we knew she was
6 sailing around 1 O'clock in the morning so I knew that was my job.

7 **Mr. Willett:** On the inbound transit were you he only tug involved?

8 **Mr. Gorden:** There were two tugs. Ann Moran was the other tug.

9 **Mr. Willett:** Is that typical for a vessel to come in with two tugs?

10 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes.

11 **Mr. Willett:** Where do you typically meet the vessel on an inbound transit?

12 **Mr. Gorden:** The RO-RO ships we meet on the West side of the bridge.

13 **Mr. Willett:** Is that seaward or inland?

14 **Mr. Gorden:** Inland side.

15 **Mr. Willett:** For the out bound transit what time did you actually arrive on scene to help
16 the GOLDEN RAY come off of the dock?

17 **Mr. Gorden:** 0145. I'm sorry it was midnight 45, I'm sorry.

18 **Mr. Willett:** So everything seemed to be on schedule?

19 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes. We got there the ramp was already up.

20 **Mr. Willett:** Is that typical?

21 **Mr. Gorden:** It depends on the ship. If it has a boarding ladder for the Pilot or not.

22 Sometimes they'll board by ramp, sometimes the Pilot ladder.

23 **Mr. Willett:** When you arrived at the GOLDEN RAY it was dark, correct?

1 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes.

2 **Mr. Willett:** Did you notice any lights on, on the port side of the vessel?

3 **Mr. Gorden:** I don't recall seeing any. I wasn't looking for them.

4 **Mr. Willett:** And I'm going to ask this too, I don't know if you saw it or not. But did you
5 notice if the port side Pilot door was open or closed?

6 **Mr. Gorden:** I did not.

7 **Mr. Willett:** So kind of explain what you did when the GOLDEN RAY came off of the
8 dock, your communications with the Pilot, how long you assisted, and then what you did
9 after you were released from the GOLDEN RAY.

10 **Mr. Gorden:** When we arrived to the ship our normal operations for sailing is to get on
11 the transom of the ship and lay flat. So I put a line on the transom of the ship, when it
12 was time to sail the Pilot asked me if was ready to work as normal. He informed me the
13 lines were going to be let go, they let go of the lines. His next command was to tell me
14 to roll around to take him off the dock. So I laid flat across the transom pushing him off
15 the dock. That only took about maybe 3 or 4 minutes and then he released me back
16 clear of the ship. And then he asked me to follow him down past berth 1, once we got
17 down to berth 1 at Colonel's Island he released me. And from that point I was just
18 drifting because we had another inbound.

19 **Mr. Willett:** And what was that inbound, do you recall the name of the vessel?

20 **Mr. Gorden:** EMERALD ACE.

21 **Mr. Willett:** So on this night you were scheduled to assist the GOLDEN RAY to leave
22 the dock on the out bound transit and then you would hold onto that position and wait for
23 the EMERALD ACE to come in to assist her mooring to Colonel's Island?

1 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes. We were slowly working our way to the bridge where we normally
2 meet them at. So we were just taking our time just drifting.

3 **Mr. Willett:** Mr. Gorden I'm going to pull up a picture of the chart for the Brunswick
4 area. If you could use the laser pointer and just show us where you met the GOLDEN
5 RAY at the dock and then where you went when you were kind of drifting over towards
6 the bridge.

7 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes. If we got up to Colonel's Island up here, the Colonel Island dock
8 they're tied up. Get it zoomed in a little more. Alright so Colonel Island terminal is here,
9 we met the ship here where she's at dock. We met her -----

10 **Mr. Willett:** Mr. Gorden let's just wait and make sure we've got a stable picture.

11 **Mr. Gorden:** Okay.

12 **Mr. Willett:** Okay I think it's on. I guess the gremlins have left us.

13 **Mr. Gorden:** Okay so. Let me get my bearing. Colonel Island is here where the ship is
14 docked. We sailed her from here and then we released probably right around in here.
15 And once we released we just started drifting down towards the bridge real slow. So we
16 were just kind of easing along waiting for the other one to come through. So that's what
17 we were doing.

18 **Mr. Willett:** Do you recall ----

19 **Mr. Gorden:** Can we -----

20 **Mr. Willett:** I'm sorry go ahead.

21 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes so we just usually just drift down the channel real slow until we get
22 close to the ship at the bridge.

1 **Mr. Willett:** That night did you notice anything unusual about the weather or the current
2 or the tides, the wind?

3 **Mr. Gorden:** No it was pretty fair that day. Yeah it was pretty fair. No strong winds.

4 **Mr. Willett:** If there had been strong winds or higher than normal tides or something
5 unusual is it typical for the Pilot to ask for two tugs?

6 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes.

7 **Mr. Willett:** In your experience also has the Pilot ever asked for two tugs when the
8 weather is clear, maybe because the vessel didn't handle correctly or the way they
9 thought it might or they might need additional assistance?

10 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes. There are instances where even though you've got fair weather
11 there's issues with other things that would require a second tug?

12 **Mr. Willett:** What might be some of those issues?

13 **Mr. Gorden:** Other vessels close to it or sometimes the bow thruster might not be
14 functioning.

15 **Mr. Willett:** And I think I might have asked this before, but in this case were you the
16 only tug that assisted the GOLDEN RAY to come off of the dock?

17 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes.

18 **Mr. Willett:** So as you were drifting towards the bridge awaiting the next job, when did
19 you first find out that the GOLDEN RAY had an issue?

20 **Mr. Gorden:** We had an eye on the EMERALD PRINCESS coming in and Jamie
21 Kavanagh on board the EMERALD ACE, contacted me by, or both boats by VHF and
22 said go to the sound JT needs some help.

23 **Mr. Willett:** And that was all by VHF?

1 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes.

2 **Mr. Willett:** How long did it take you to get from where you were drifting to the location
3 of the GOLDEN RAY?

4 **Mr. Gorden:** Approximately 30 minutes.

5 **Mr. Willett:** And when you arrived at the GOLDEN RAY could you describe what you
6 first saw?

7 **Mr. Gorden:** Our first – saw was just the stern of the ship laying on its side.

8 **Mr. Willett:** And where did you proceed once you arrived to the GOLDEN RAY on its
9 side?

10 **Mr. Gorden:** I was headed towards the transom of the ship. And just to observe the
11 scene, our crew was on deck keeping an eye out for anything in the water. And so I just
12 kind of pulled up to the stern of the ship and stopped there.

13 **Mr. Willett:** Did you have your spotlights on and flood lights and you kind of lit the area
14 up?

15 **Mr. Gorden:** Yeah. Yeah I had my bow light on and had my flood light on, my
16 spotlight.

17 **Mr. Willett:** Did you notice any fire or anything other than the GOLDEN RAY being on
18 its side at that time?

19 **Mr. Gorden:** Not at that time.

20 **Mr. Willett:** When you arrived at the scene did you begin to communicate with the
21 GOLDEN RAY or were you communicating with Jamie Kavanagh who was the Pilot on
22 the EMERALD ACE?

23 **Mr. Gorden:** No I was communicating with JT on the GOLDEN RAY.

1 **Mr. Willett:** And via?

2 **Mr. Gorden:** VHF.

3 **Mr. Willett:** Were there any other vessels at the scene by the time you had gotten to
4 the GOLDEN RAY?

5 **Mr. Gorden:** I think we pretty much all arrived at the same time. I don't know how
6 many other vessels, there were numerous small vessels there, yes.

7 **Mr. Willett:** After you arrived when you got to the stern or the transom what did you
8 begin to do?

9 **Mr. Gorden:** We were on the phone with our operations manager and our OUM, Dick
10 Qua (sic) and Al Cook. We had instructions to assist with survival, or survivors.
11 Anybody that had life threatening situation and as soon as we had approval from the
12 Coast Guard we could start assisting the vessel itself.

13 **Mr. Willett:** What is OUM?

14 **Mr. Gorden:** Operations Unit Manager.

15 **Mr. Willett:** And you said that was Dick Qua (sic) and Al Cook?

16 **Mr. Gorden:** Yeah, Dick Qua (sic) is operations manager and Al Cook is the OUM, or
17 operations unit manager.

18 **Mr. Willett:** What other vessel was with you when you arrived on the Moran side, from
19 the Moran fleet?

20 **Mr. Gorden:** Ann Moran.

21 **Mr. Willett:** Did you or the Ann Moran ever push on the GOLDEN RAY?

22 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes after we received approval from Commander [REDACTED] we were instructed
23 to assist the Pilot in any way possible under their direction. And the Ann Moran landed

1 on the transom of the vessel, contacted by JT in doing what he wanted him to do at that
2 time.

3 **Mr. Willett:** And [REDACTED] he's the Commander, or the Commanding Officer for
4 Marine Safety Unit Savannah?

5 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes.

6 **Mr. Willett:** Do you recall what JT asked you to do, or Johnathan Tennant the Pilot on
7 board the GOLDEN RAY?

8 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes he asked us to push on the transom and try to push him ahead
9 because he wasn't sure how far up on the sandbar he was. By the time we got the
10 approval the Ann was closest and she nosed up at the transom and started pushing on
11 the stern.

12 **Mr. Gorden:** I know you weren't the Master of the Ann, however, do you recall if the
13 Ann, was she able to push the GOLDEN RAY at all or was she already aground?

14 **Mr. Gorden:** She was already aground. There was a little bit – the ship did move a
15 little I think, but not much.

16 **Mr. Willett:** After that was completed did the GOLDEN RAY ask you to assist with
17 anything else?

18 **Mr. Gorden:** JT had called me on the radio and asked me if I could get [in audible]
19 from the bow of the ship. Which being on its side was impossible and I informed him of
20 that.

21 **Mr. Willett:** What did you do after that? Did you assist with any crewmembers on the
22 evacuation of the GOLDEN RAY?

1 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes. The Pilot boat had tried, there was three crewmembers back aft of
2 the companion way, which I had spotted earlier and notified the Pilots that there was an
3 injured crewmember back there. And I lit him up with my light. By the time the Pilot
4 boat got over there, there were also two other crewmembers in the same area behind
5 the companion, on the backside of the companion way. Bruce Fendig called said he
6 needed a deckhand for one of the Pilot boats. [Lost audio].

7 **Mr. Willett:** I believe we lost your feed. You're back. The mute I think. I see you but I
8 cannot hear your audio. Could do a test, 1, 2, 3 again.

9 **Mr. Gorden:** Test 1,2,3.

10 **Mr. Willett:** There you go.

11 **Mr. Gorden:** Test 1,2,3.

12 **Mr. Willett:** You're back on. Okay we were at the point where you said you talked to
13 Bruce Fendig. I asked about the crewmembers you remember seeing.

14 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes. And he had one of the Pilot boats close to the area but he needed a
15 deckhand for it. Since I was just drifting at the time I offered my deckhand to get on the
16 Pilot boat to help out. So they came and got my deckhand and went to the ship. There
17 was another Coast Guard vessel there that was trying to get to that area too. I think
18 they quickly realized that they were too low to the water, the guys were too high up. So
19 Bruce Fendig asked me if I could land in that area since I was so much higher than the
20 other vessels to try to get to them. And so I said yes I should be able to get in there.
21 So I nosed up to that area which was right behind the companion way, right after the
22 rescue boat. And then we started from there trying to get the guys off of the ship.

1 **Mr. Willett:** When you were trying to get these people off of the ship, the
2 crewmembers, do you recall if they were wearing life jackets and had lights, any of that?

3 **Mr. Gorden:** No there was one, one crewmember was sitting in the open doorway with
4 his leg wrapped up. So he was not able ambulatory. The other two were ambulatory
5 but none of them had life jackets. As soon as my deckhand got back on board he had
6 out lifejackets already on deck. So I instructed my crew to send life jackets up to the
7 crew on the ship.

8 **Mr. Willett:** Were they able to get the lifejackets you had on your vessel? You actually
9 gave them to the crewmembers of the GOLDEN RAY?

10 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes we threw a heaving line up, tied our lifejackets to it and they pulled
11 them up. And they didn't put them on, I don't know if they were uncomfortable, the style
12 of lifejacket or if they were just too nervous, but they never actually – they tried putting
13 them on, but they never did get them on.

14 **Mr. Willett:** Were they work vest style or the kind you put on, the horse collar type, or?

15 **Mr. Gorden:** Type 1 that you pull over your head.

16 **Mr. Willett:** Thank you. Do you recall when you were notified there might be possibly
17 crewmembers trapped on the GOLDEN RAY?

18 **Mr. Gorden:** Not, I don't remember the exact time, no.

19 **Mr. Willett:** Were you made aware at some point that there were -----

20 **Recorder:** We need to pause for livestream. Livestream down, one second.

21 **Mr. Willett:** Sorry. Captain Gorden do you need a break or anything?

22 **Mr. Gorden:** No I'm good.

1 **Mr. Willett:** Okay sorry about that. We had a break in livestreaming, the gremlins
2 continue to play us. I'm going to back up to the question that I had asked previously.
3 And that was, even though you don't recall at that time you were notified there were
4 crewmembers trapped in the GOLDEN RAY, were you made aware that there were [in
5 audible].

6 **Mr. Gorden:** Yeah at some point JT was talking about how many people were on the
7 vessel and I believe I heard someone say that there were still four men in the engine
8 room, yes.

9 **Mr. Willett:** Were you there when the crewmembers that were on board and located,
10 were you there when they were transferred to rescue vessels and went back to shore?

11 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes the three crewmembers that were on the back of the house, yes.
12 Yes we – they kept trying to come down the hose that was there. We had to keep
13 stopping them from coming down. Eventually the second helo arrived and I started
14 flashing my light and I called him on the radio, me answering him back and I let him
15 know that there were three crewmembers back there. We had a couple conversations
16 about whether they were ambulatory. I told him there was one injured. And I guess
17 once he did his survey and fly around he dropped a rescue diver down and he asked
18 me if he could put the two the ambulatory crewmembers on my vessel. I said sure you
19 can. We turn the lights to the stern. At this time they had connected to the injured
20 crewmember and I guess once they got him on board they realized that he need to go
21 to the hospital right away. So the helo informed me they were taking this gentleman to
22 the hospital and they would be back in about an hour. So we sat and monitored the

1 other crew, kept them comfortable and gave them stuff to drink, sent up water and
2 Gatorade and just kind of kept them calm until the helo returned.

3 **Mr. Willett:** So I guess it's safe to say the operation went on for an extended period of
4 time.

5 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes it was approximately, I would say two hours from the time I nosed up
6 to the ship until the time all three of them were off.

7 **Mr. Willett:** And after you had made sure those three crewmembers had gotten off,
8 what did you next in regards to assisting the GOLDEN RAY?

9 **Mr. Gorden:** Bruce Fendig asked me just to hold my position there until daylight just so
10 everything would remain stable.

11 **Mr. Willett:** Did you nose up to the GOLDEN RAY at all or did you stay off station a
12 little bit?

13 **Mr. Gorden:** No I stayed, I was touched down right aft of the rescue boat.

14 **Mr. Willett:** Were you pushing the GOLDEN RAY at all?

15 **Mr. Gorden:** Just enough to hold my position. I didn't want to put any pressure,
16 downward pressure on the vessel at all.

17 **Mr. Willett:** Did you ever become aware that any knocking or beating on the vessel
18 that might have been survivors?

19 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes. That was later in the day after we had been released and we were
20 just kind of standing by. I heard this transmission from the Coast Guard that they were
21 tapping on the hull and that they had received taps back.

1 **Mr. Willett:** Through this three hour or two hour process during the rescue of the final
2 three crewmembers that you were watching, did you notice any fire or smoke or hear
3 any crashing or anything other, you know that was unusual?

4 **Mr. Gorden:** The first smoke that we saw that was pretty heavy that we thought was
5 smoke was actually a, I believe a man overboard smoke. Then a little while after that
6 we could actually smell electrical smoke. We could see smoke and you could – smelt
7 like an electrical. I believe that was when the Engineer was still on board and hadn't
8 gotten off yet. And then about daylight, right around daylight after the crewmembers
9 were off there was another big puff of smoke coming from all the vents up top, all the
10 vents around me down the deck. Pretty good bit of smoke at that time.

11 **Mr. Willett:** Captain I've completed my line of questioning. Thank you very much.
12 Captain Morgan for coming and talking with us. Captain Welborn I'm done with my
13 questions and I release the witness to you.

14 **CAPT WELBORN:** Great, thank you very much. Now we'll ask if we have any
15 questions from our SIS's. Mr. Bremer do you have questions for this witness?

16 **Mr. Bremer:** Yes Captain thank you. Captain Gorden you had mentioned that you
17 were eyeing to assist the EMERALD ACE upon berthing. Do you remember what the
18 original scheduled time was for that?

19 **Mr. Gorden:** She boarded in conjunction with the GOLDEN RAY sailing. So she
20 started in at 0100 with the GOLDEN RAY left the dock.

21 **Mr. Bremer:** Okay thank you. And I believe you said you arrived to the GOLDEN RAY
22 about 30 minutes after the incident happened. Do you remember or recall seeing any
23 lights on the ship?

1 **Mr. Gorden:** No I saw the stern lights on the stern plus the working lights, that's the
2 only ones that I paid attention to. I was really looking for, you know anything in the
3 water, any hazards, so I wasn't paying any attention to the actual lights on the ship.

4 **Mr. Bremer:** Okay. But you do recall seeing the stern light you said and some working
5 lights?

6 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes.

7 **Mr. Bremer:** Okay. Thank you very much. Captain Gorden no further questions.

8 **Mr. Willett:** Captain Welborn.

9 **CAPT WELBORN:** Yes Mr. Willett.

10 **Mr. Willett:** Yes I would like to clarify something. I apologize I think I referred to you as
11 Captain Morgan and your name is Gorden. I apologize for that, sir.

12 **CAPT WELBORN:** So Mr. Flaherty do you have questions for this witness.

13 **NTSB:** Yes Captain Welborn. Good morning Captain Gorden how are you doing, sir?

14 **Mr. Gorden:** Good.

15 **NTSB:** You were involved in the – when the vessel GOLDEN RAY left the dock at
16 Colonel's Island, correct?

17 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes, sir.

18 **NTSB:** How did that – could you go into a little bit more detail. How was the
19 communication between you and the Pilot and the other tug in your opinion?

20 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes. It was normal. Every time we sail a ship, get to the ship the Pilot
21 usually tells us what to do. So he informed me he wanted me on the transom of the
22 ship to make fast. So we communicate on channel 12. Once I made fast I let him know
23 I'm made fast and clear the ship's lines because we're under the ship line until we make

1 fast. So I have to get clear of those. And then I'll just stand by until he's ready to let go
2 of his lines. He'll inform me that he's letting go of his lines, once his lines are all clear
3 and he's ready for me to work then he'll ask me to come around to push him off the
4 dock. So I'll lay flat on the transom and just gives me what speed, how much power I
5 need to use until he gets far enough off of the dock that he's comfortable and then he'll
6 release me and I'll back away and stand clear.

7 **NTSB:** Okay. And at the time what's the other tug doing? Or was there only one?

8 **Mr. Gorden:** There was only one tug on the sailing. I was the only -----

9 **NTSB:** I'm sorry you're breaking up.

10 **Mr. Gorden:** I was the only one at the sailing.

11 **Mr. Willett:** I think their mic is pulling out again.

12 **Mr. Gorden:** Can you hear me now?

13 **NTSB:** Sir, can you hear me?

14 **Mr. Gorden:** How about now?

15 **NTSB:** I can't hear him.

16 **Mr. Gorden:** Yeah mic is not working again.

17 **Mr. Willett:** Captain Flaherty sorry we're working on his mic right now.

18 **NTSB:** Alright, standing by.

19 **Mr. Gorden:** How about now?

20 **NTSB:** Very good, sir. I'm sorry. Could you please repeat your answer, you were
21 starting to break up.

22 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes I was the only tug on the sailing. They only required one tug to sail
23 that night.

1 **NTSB:** Is that a normal for just one tug? Or when would a second tug be required?

2 **Mr. Gorden:** If weather conditions, especially if you go a wind blowing on the dock or a
3 real strong wind off of the dock, real heavy tide. If the bow thruster is having any issue,
4 if it's weak or not working then they would use a second tug. And also if there was
5 congestion where you had ships ahead of it and astern of it with a strong tide.

6 **NTSB:** When you were proceeding off of the dock everything went according to plan?

7 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes everything was normal to me.

8 **NTSB:** And then after the vessel is away from the dock what was your role as the
9 assist tug?

10 **Mr. Gorden:** I trailed behind the ship until he cleared all the berths at Colonel's Island
11 in case he needed help. Something, you know gets too close to the dock or the tide or
12 wind will set him one way or the other I could help him adjust his position in the channel.

13 **NTSB:** Right.

14 **Mr. Gorden:** So I just drifted behind him until he released me.

15 **NTSB:** Before we proceed further could you give us some details on the size,
16 horsepower, capabilities of the tug that you're operating?

17 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes Dorothy Moran is – she's a 149 net tons, 99, I mean gross ton, 99 net
18 tons. She's 3200 horsepower. She's 100 feet long, right at 99 and she's 32 feet wide.

19 **NTSB:** Does she have a more of a traditional type propeller and shaft?

20 **Mr. Gorden:** Yeah she's a conventional twin screw tug.

21 **NTSB:** Okay. As the vessel is proceeding down and you're following the GOLDEN
22 RAY, what were you witnessing if you can kind of describe, you know what you saw as
23 the vessel headed outbound?

1 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes until he released me I usually keep a pretty good eye on the ship and
2 I stand back about, maybe 100 feet from it out of his wheel water.

3 **NTSB:** Umm huh.

4 **Mr. Gorden:** And everything looked normal. He was – there was no swaying back and
5 forth when he moved his rudder. And usually I can see a little bit of that. It was just a
6 smooth transit out of the narrow channel into Turtle River.

7 **NTSB:** And even though it was nighttime you were able to see the vessel with no
8 problem?

9 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes I keep my bow lights on and have LED bow lights and it's pretty
10 bright. So I can see the transom of the ship pretty good.

11 **NTSB:** Okay good. Now I'll kind of skip ahead. You're beside the GOLDEN RAY, the
12 casualty has occurred. Your first indication that there was a fire on board, as I
13 remember correctly you observed smoke. Is that correct?

14 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes, sir.

15 **NTSB:** Did you ever see actual flames while you were there?

16 **Mr. Gorden:** Not at that time. After the ship had slowly rolled enough to where I had
17 the back clear of it, right around daylight, and when I saw the second round of smoke
18 coming through the vents and the helo was there and he asked me if I could spray, it
19 was a lot of black smoke on the starboard side.

20 **NTSB:** Okay.

21 **Mr. Gorden:** And he asked me if I could ----- go ahead.

22 **NTSB:** I didn't say anything, sir.

1 **Mr. Gorden:** Okay. He asked me if I could spray my firehouse because it's just mainly
2 for, it's a small firehose just for the boats. And I told him it wouldn't do any good.

3 **NTSB:** Okay. Now when you were approaching the GOLDEN RAY, I'm sorry I'm
4 moving back a little bit in the timeline, and you saw that the vessel was on its side, by
5 chance did you hear any noises as you were approaching it?

6 **Mr. Gorden:** No, sir, not at that time.

7 **NTSB:** When you were alongside it, the transom I know there was a lot of stuff going
8 around, but do you recall hearing any loud banging noises or any other unusual noises?

9 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes, sir

10 **NTSB:** What did that noise sound like?

11 **Mr. Gorden:** It was just a loud, like something falling inside the vessel.

12 **NTSB:** Did that just happen once or on more than one occasion?

13 **Mr. Gorden:** More than one occasion.

14 **NTSB:** While you were there?

15 **Mr. Gorden:** Yes, sir. While I was nosed up.

16 **NTSB:** By chance could you give an approximate location or it was just, you could not
17 identify the place?

18 **Mr. Gorden:** Yeah, the way the ship is designed I really couldn't say whether it was
19 ahead, astern, or aft of where I was at. It was just a pretty loud noise.

20 **NTSB:** Did it sound like it was coming from inside the vessel or maybe coming out of
21 the vents?

22 **Mr. Gorden:** No it sounded like it was inside the vessel.

1 **NTSB:** Okay. Thank you for your time Captain. Captain Welborn that's all the
2 questions I have.

3 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you Captain Flaherty. So we'll shift to our PII's to see if we
4 have questions there. Mr. Gilsean did you have questions for this witness? Hearing
5 nothing I'm move on. Mr. Reisman, do you have questions for this witness?

6 **Mr. Reisman:** Thank you Captain. No questions.

7 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you Mr. Reisman. Captain Gorden thank you very much for
8 coming out today we do appreciate it. I just want to let you know that you are – you will
9 remain under oath and subject to recall until the end of these formal proceedings. So
10 again we thank you for your testimony today. And you're currently dismissed. The local
11 time is -----

12 **Mr. Gorden:** Thank you for the opportunity.

13 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you Captain. The local time is 11:16. We will stand
14 adjourned until 12:30. At which time we will hear from Boatswain's Mate Second Class
15 Jeremy Shaw. We stand in recess.

16 *The hearing recessed at 11:16, 21 September 2020*

17 *The hearing was called to order at 12:30, 21 September 2020*

18 **CAPT WELBORN:** Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen the time now, local time is
19 12:30 and we're back on the record for the formal hearing of the capsizing of the
20 GOLDEN RAY. The next witness we will call is Boatswain's Mate Second Class
21 [REDACTED]. Mr. Lee Willett will conduct this interview.

22 **Recorder:** Please stand and raise your right hand. Boatswain's Mate Second Class
23 [REDACTED] a false statement given to an agency of the United States is punishable by fine

1 and or imprisonment under 18 United States Code 1001 and the Uniform Code of
2 Military Justice. Knowing this do you solemnly swear that the testimony you're about to
3 give will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

4 **BM2** [REDACTED] I swear.

5 **Recorder:** Thank you please be seated. Mr. Willett the witness is ready.

6 **Mr. Willett:** Thank you. Sir, could you please state your full name and spell your last
7 name for the record?

8 **BM2** [REDACTED]: My name is [REDACTED]

9 **Mr. Willett:** Petty Officer [REDACTED] are you represented by counsel?

10 **BM2** [REDACTED] No I'm not.

11 **Mr. Willett:** Have you been designated a party in interest?

12 **BM2** [REDACTED]: No I have not.

13 **Mr. Willett:** Do you hold any professional certificates or certifications?

14 **BM2** [REDACTED] I do.

15 **Mr. Willett:** Could you describe those?

16 **BM2** [REDACTED]: I hold a Coxswain qualification with the United States Coast Guard.

17 **Mr. Willett:** And Coxswain, what is that exactly? Can you explain that a little bit more
18 in detail?

19 **BM2** [REDACTED]: Coxswain is the person that is in charge of the vessel that is heading out
20 for search and rescue.

21 **Mr. Willett:** These vessels, are they small boats or large ones or?

22 **BM2** [REDACTED]: They are small boats. You have small boat, response small boats and our
23 response boat medium.

1 **Mr. Willett:** Are you Coxswain on both the response boat medium and the small
2 response boat?

3 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** Yes I am.

4 **Mr. Willett:** What are the lengths of these vessels?

5 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** The first length is a 45 foot vessel and the second one is a 29 feet vessel.

6 **Mr. Willett:** And I know you've already described this, but just for the record who is
7 your current employer?

8 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** United States Coast Guard.

9 **Mr. Willett:** And in your position besides Coxswain what is your mission at the unit?

10 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** I'm a Boatswain's Mate Second Class.

11 **Mr. Willett:** And what is the name of your unit?

12 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** Station Brunswick.

13 **Mr. Willett:** How long have you been stationed at Station Brunswick?

14 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** I've been at Station Brunswick for a little over 3 years.

15 **Mr. Willett:** Have you received any training while at Station Brunswick?

16 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** Yes I have.

17 **Mr. Willett:** In regards to your current position as a Coxswain?

18 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** Yes I have.

19 **Mr. Willett:** Petty Officer Shaw I'm going to ask you to describe the events that
20 occurred on September 2019 regarding the GOLDEN RAY and your involvement, and
21 what you did with the Coast Guard and the rescue of the crewmembers on board the
22 GOLDEN RAY.

23 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** Yes.

1 **Mr. Willett:** So I understand you have a PowerPoint you want to utilize to explain your
2 role during that night.

3 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** Yes, sir. So this would be Motor Vessel GOLDEN RAY response. Of
4 course as we talked about my name is Petty Officer Shaw, I'm a Boatswain's Mate
5 Second Class. My roles and responsibilities that night was on scene commander and
6 Coxswain. A little thing about me I've been in about 9 years, Coxswain I've had 5. My
7 current unit is United States Coast Guard Station Brunswick. Time at the unit I have 3
8 years. And I've had 24 cases as a Coxswain at Station Brunswick. So on the morning
9 of 8 September 2019 I received a call at 1:30 in the morning from 911 dispatch saying
10 that there was a vessel that was flipped over on its side. While we were on the phone
11 at that time we also received another phone call from somebody that was on the St.
12 Simons Pier visually seeing. So we ended up launching the boat, the boat was the
13 45741, it's a 45 response boat medium. The boat crew consisted of myself as the
14 Coxswain, my break in crew navigator BTM was Petty Officer Third Class [REDACTED] (sic). My
15 BO Engineer was MK1 [REDACTED] and Crew Engineer MK3 [REDACTED] and crew BTM
16 Engineer MK3 [REDACTED] (sic). Alright so the crew launched from Station Brunswick at 1:54
17 in route to St. Simon Sound. Sea state at the time was 2 to 3 feet at 5 seconds with an
18 ebb tide. Once we were on scene Sector Charleston and Station was notified. Other
19 assets that were on scene and utilized would be Coast Guard 29139, that is a 29 foot
20 response boat small. There was also two Brunswick tug boats, the Georgia Department
21 of Natural Resources, DNR, Sea Tow responder and two Pilot vessels. So during the
22 evolution of the first crew when we showed up there was a lot of alarms, things like that
23 going off. We did have people on the aft end of the vessel that were sitting outside.

1 One of the back hatches, you know waiving yelling for help. We got in communication
2 with the tugs, the tugs recommended that we needed to stabilize the vessel, told them
3 to go for it. So they started positioning themselves across the stern to keep the vessel
4 stabilized to keep it from that 70 degree list. It was at a 70 degree list and then we were
5 able to, the 45741 we were able to get into contact with the Pilot boat and confirm that
6 there were 24 crewmembers and a Pilot on board the vessel GOLDEN RAY. The Pilot
7 on board via GOLDEN RAY was directed to lower the firehose to the bridge down to the
8 port bridge wing. Once the firehose was lowered at 2:56 the first crewmember came
9 down the bridge and the 45741 was able to retrieve the crewmember. This process
10 was repeated 11 times. In the process of removing the first crewmember via the CG
11 45741 was damaged with the sea state off of stern pushing us into that port bridge wing.
12 We sustained across the bow and on the starboard side as we were pulling people off.
13 Because it was a 3 to 4 foot drop from the bridge wing to where the bow of boat was.
14 The CG 45741 rendered first aid to those who needed it. And then the CG 29139
15 arrived on scene to bring crewmembers to shore. At 0344 the CG 45741 transferred
16 the first 11 crewmembers to the CG 29139 so that the crewmembers could be
17 examined by local EMS. During the transfer Georgia DNR was able to retrieve two
18 additional members. The CG 45741 they returned to retrieve additional people from the
19 Motor Vessel GOLDEN RAY. The last crewmember retrieved was the Chief Engineer.
20 He was trapped in the statement below the port bridge wing. We were able to break a
21 window and tie two extension cords down together and lowered and we took the 45741
22 tied a 60 foot line to the extension cords at the end and he was able to pull the line up to
23 make a secure way down. At this time the vessel caught fire and black smoke started

1 to fill the area around the CG 45741. The smoke entered the cabin and for the safety of
2 my crew we backed out, let the smoke clear out from the cabin, made another approach
3 and we were able to get the Chief Engineer out. At 6:45 the Chief Engineer was
4 directed to move down, he was able to slide the down the Motor Vessel GOLDEN RAY
5 into the 45741 using the extension cords and the 60 foot line. At 6:57 the remaining
6 crewmembers were transferred to the 29139 to receive EMS treatment. During the
7 transfer of the Chief Engineer via CG helicopter retrieved an additional crewmember
8 from the starboard bridge wing. And lowered the remaining crewmembers from the aft
9 area down to the tugs. The last four crewmembers reported to be trapped in an engine
10 room. The CG 29139 had transferred a local fire and rescue team to the 45741. Local
11 fire and rescue along with a CG rescue swimmer were on the 741 and we transferred
12 them to the port aft section of the GOLDEN RAY. They made an attempt to open
13 hatches and they continued to try to find a way to rescue but determined that the risk
14 was to great due to the fire and the smoke. After that we pulled the fire and rescue
15 swimmer back on the Motor Vessel GOLDEN RAY and we transferred the fire team and
16 rescue swimmer up to the St. Simons Pier and contained a security zone around the
17 vessel. At approximately 1100 CG 45741 returned to Station Brunswick to switch out
18 crews and to refuel. And then later on that night at approximately 1630 the original crew
19 of the Coast Guard 45741 assumed the security zone and continued communication
20 with the trapped crewmembers by tapping on the hull with a hammer.

21 **Mr. Willett:** Thank you Petty Officer [REDACTED]. I have a couple additional questions just to
22 clarify some things that you went over during the PowerPoint. You mentioned the sea
23 state was 3 to 4 feet, is that correct?

1 **BM2** [REDACTED]: Yes.

2 **Mr. Willett:** So the 3 to 4 feet is that typical for this area that time of year?

3 **BM2** [REDACTED]: Yes, sir.

4 **Mr. Willett:** You also mentioned about a fire. You arrived on scene, I can't remember
5 what time you stated. It was approximately 30 minutes to an hour after the capsizing, is
6 that correct?

7 **BM2** [REDACTED]: Yes, sir.

8 **Mr. Willett:** When you arrived on scene did you see a fire or smell smoke as soon as
9 you got there?

10 **BM2** [REDACTED]: No, sir.

11 **Mr. Willett:** Did you hear any crashing or banging or loud sounds when you arrived on
12 scene?

13 **BM2** [REDACTED]: The only loud sounds that were on scene were the alarms and the people
14 on the aft yelling and waiving at us.

15 **Mr. Willett:** You mentioned you gave first aid to some of the crewmembers. Do you
16 recall what kind of triage you did for those members?

17 **BM2** [REDACTED]: I personally did not do the triage. That would have been my
18 crewmembers. They were rendering first aid to a ladies hand. I believe from what I
19 remember is that it was smashed in a scuttle. And there was also some other members
20 that had lacerations, things of that nature.

21 **Mr. Willett:** Thank you Petty [REDACTED]. Captain Welborn I've completed my questions for
22 the witness. I will turn it back over to you.

1 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you Mr. Willett. So now we'll poll our SIS's to see if they
2 have any questions for this witness. Mr. Bremer do you have questions?

3 **Mr. Bremer:** Yes Captain, thank you. Petty Officer [REDACTED] you mentioned there were
4 alarms that you heard upon arriving on scene to the GOLDEN RAY. Can you describe
5 these alarms? Could you tell where they were coming from or any ideas?

6 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** The only description of the alarm I would have would just be a normal
7 alarm, loud, buzzing sound. I cannot confirm or deny what type of alarm that was.

8 **Mr. Bremer:** Okay, thank you. And was that audible anywhere on the ship or was it
9 only audible when you were near the bow, or do you remember?

10 **BM2 [REDACTED]** It was audible throughout the whole space of the ship.

11 **Mr. Bremer:** Okay. And upon arriving on scene do you remember seeing any lights
12 on, on the ship such as work lights on deck, nav lights, anything of that nature?

13 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** No, sir.

14 **Mr. Bremer:** Okay. Thank you Petty Officer [REDACTED] no further questions Captain.

15 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you Mr. Bremer. Captain Flaherty do you have questions for
16 this witness?

17 **NTSB:** Yes I have a few Captain Welborn, thank you. BM2 [REDACTED] could you go over
18 the start of your testimony when you first encountered the smoke and flame. Was it
19 sudden or was it something that started growing while you were there?

20 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** Well, sir, there was actually no flames that were visually seen by myself or
21 my crew. The smoke was something that had started very subtle and then built. And
22 once we were able to back away from the vessel, clear the smoke from our cabin and
23 go back in the smoke had subsided inside the GOLDEN RAY.

1 **NTSB:** And did you ever see actual flame?

2 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** No I did not see any flames.

3 **NTSB:** Okay. Let's see. And just to confirm while you were there you heard no noises,
4 loud noises from inside the ship?

5 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** No, sir, not from what I can remember.

6 **NTSB:** Alright. Thank you very much. No further questions Captain.

7 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you Captain Flaherty. Now we'll check with our PII's. Mr.
8 Reisman do you have questions for this witness?

9 **Mr. Reisman:** No questions. Thank you Captain no questions.

10 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you Mr. Reisman. Mr. Gilseman, are you online? Hearing
11 nothing we'll move on. KMST, do we have questions for this witness.

12 **WIT:** None received Captain.

13 **CAPT WELBORN:** No questions from KMST. Also let the record show that I did query
14 KMST, or KMST was queried for the last witness, Captain Gorden and they had no
15 questions for Captain Gorden. So BM2 I just want to follow-up just really quickly on
16 what you said about your arrival scene on the 45 foot response boat medium. You said
17 that there was other assets on scene when you got there, is that correct?

18 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** Yes Captain.

19 **CAPT WELBORN:** So the 29 launched and was there before you were, is that correct?

20 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** No Captain. The 29 was – had a crew recalled in and they were launched
21 after we had been on scene pulling members off of the vessel GOLDEN RAY.

22 **CAPT WELBORN:** Understood. Okay. Thank you for the point of clarification. Okay
23 BM2 thank you very much for your testimony today. Thank you for your actions during

1 that evening. We do appreciate what you've done then and again what you've done for
2 us throughout the investigation. Please note that you're subject to recall until we've
3 finished these formal proceedings if we need to ask you some more questions we'll
4 bring you back in. But thank you very much for your --- oh, I'm sorry I have one more
5 question from Mr. Willett.

6 **Mr. Willett:** Sorry Petty Officer [REDACTED]. I had a couple more questions that I should
7 have asked before. I wanted to clarify all the comms you had with the Pilot on board the
8 GOLDEN RAY. Were those through VHF?

9 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** Johnathan Tennant.

10 **Mr. Willett:** Johnathan Tennant.

11 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** Yes those would through VHF [lost audio]. Sorry yes we did have
12 communications with the Pilot but it was not direct communications. We could not
13 actually hear him over the radio, but his other Pilot vessel that was there they had
14 contact with him. So we were talking with the Pilot vessel, the Pilot vessel was talking
15 with him. So it was through a third party communicating.

16 **Mr. Willett:** So do you know if he was on his cell phone talking to the Pilot boat?

17 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** No.

18 **Mr. Willett:** If you don't know that's fine. And one other thing I wanted to ask about in
19 missing crewmembers, what did -- who notified you that there were four additional
20 crewmembers on the vessel still missing?

21 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** When the Chief Engineer came on board he said he knew he had four
22 more men that were in the engine room.

1 **Mr. Willett:** And at that point did you take the Chief Engineer back to Station or transfer
2 him to the 29?

3 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** Yes, sir.

4 **Mr. Willett:** And was it your crew that actually went around the vessel and made
5 contact with the crewmembers trapped in the engine room?

6 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** Not the original contact, but that night when we came in to stand the
7 security zone, yes we did sit alongside with the hammer and tap on it. And also the
8 tugs that were out there as well they helped in that process of coming alongside and
9 tapping the hull as well.

10 **Mr. Willett:** Is that normal Coast Guard procedure to do that, tap on the hull and try to
11 make comms with the trapped crewmembers? Or did you guys come up with that on
12 the fly?

13 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** Well to be honest with you sir I wasn't on the vessel that made the original
14 contact, so I don't know if that was something that they had come up with as a thought
15 process collectively. But yeah for training wise yes if we do have a vessel that's flipped
16 over you tap on the hull to see if you can have any kind of response.

17 **Mr. Willett:** So it was Coast Guard individuals that made initial contact to the four
18 trapped, crewmembers/

19 **BM2 [REDACTED]:** From my recollection yes.

20 **Mr. Willett:** Thank you. Thank you Captain, that's all I have.

21 **CAPT WELBORN:** Again thank you very much BM2. You are subject to recall. So at
22 this time the witness is dismissed. The local time now is 12:50 we'll take a 10 minute
23 recess to set up our next witness Captain John Reed. We stand adjourned.

1 *The hearing recessed at 12:50:16, 21 September 2020*

2 *The hearing was called to order at 1:00, 21 September 2020*

3 **CAPT WELBORN:** Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen we are back on the record
4 formal hearing regarding the capsizing of the GOLDEN RAY. Our next witness is
5 Captain John Reed, United States Coast Guard. Captain Reed are you with us?

6 **CAPT REED:** I am. Can you hear me?

7 **CAPT WELBORN:** Captain Reed I believe you're muted.

8 **CAPT REED:** Can you hear me Captain Welborn?

9 **CAPT WELBORN:** Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] will now swear the witness in.

10 **Recorder:** Good afternoon Captain. Please stand and raise your right hand. A false
11 statement given to an agency of the United States is punishable by fine and or
12 imprisonment under 18 United States Code 1001 and the Uniform Code of Military
13 Justice. Knowing this do you solemnly swear that the testimony you're about to give will
14 be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

15 **CAPT REED:** I do.

16 **Recorder:** Thank you Captain. Please be seated. Captain Welborn the witness is
17 ready.

18 **CAPT WELBORN:** Captain Reed are you there?

19 **CAPT REED:** I am. Can you hear me?

20 **CAPT WELBORN:** Okay. Yes I do. I'm sorry my headphones were off. Good
21 afternoon Captain. A couple of formative questions before we get started. I know that
22 you have a presentation to go through and we appreciate you formulating that for us.

1 So we'll get to that here in just a moment. Captain can you tell us what your current
2 position is?

3 **CAPT REED:** Currently I'm the Chief of Staff at the Coast Guard's Eighth District in
4 New Orleans, Louisiana.

5 **CAPT WELBORN:** And how long have you been there Captain?

6 **CAPT REED:** I've been there for four months.

7 **CAPT WELBORN:** Captain what was your previous job before that?

8 **CAPT REED:** My previous was Sector Commander for Coast Guard Sector
9 Charleston.

10 **CAPT WELBORN:** And were you the Sector Commander on the evening of September
11 8th, 2019?

12 **CAPT REED:** I was.

13 **CAPT WELBORN:** Captain can you tell us a little bit about the responsibilities and
14 duties of a Sector Commander? What official titles and designations does the Sector
15 Commander hold?

16 **CAPT REED:** In my role as Sector Commander I'm the, generally the one in charge of
17 Coast Guard operations for a geographic region. All aspects of those operations from a
18 coordination standpoint. And some of the roles would include, as we're going to talk
19 about here search and rescue coordination as a search and rescue mission coordinator.
20 And as in this particular instance in Brunswick I oversee the MSU who holds Captain of
21 the Port authority and Federal maritime security coordination authority for the Port of
22 Brunswick. The interesting role – or the interesting thing about Charleston is it's kind of
23 a split system where I hold certain authorities as Captain of Port in the State of South

1 Carolina and those authorities are delegated in law really to Commander Witt for the
2 State of Georgia. So in this capacity, or in the role I played in Brunswick it was more
3 from a leadership role, a search and rescue mission coordinator type role. And really
4 an advisor and leadership role of what the whole Coast Guard effort was.

5 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you Captain. So just to clarify you're the Sector Commander
6 in Charleston, but the local unit in Savannah who the Port of Brunswick falls under
7 worked for you, is that correct?

8 **CAPT REED:** That's correct. The Sector is homeported in Charleston, but it includes
9 the coast of South Carolina and Georgia.

10 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you. And just to confirm we've heard previous testimony
11 that mentioned a command center. Can you tell us where the command center was
12 located for Sector Charleston?

13 **CAPT REED:** Absolutely. The command center for Sector Charleston is located in
14 North Charleston at the Federal complex.

15 **CAPT WELBORN:** And any search and rescue calls that come in would be
16 coordinated through that command center there in Charleston?

17 **CAPT REED:** That's correct.

18 **CAPT WELBORN:** Captain can you recount the evening, or excuse me the morning as
19 you recall it, September 8th, 2019, that's the date that the GOLDEN RAY capsized? We
20 can pull up your presentation if need be at this time. But I would like for you to walk me
21 through the events as they unfolded for you that morning.

1 **CAPT REED:** So just in that morning, we'll go ahead skip the slideshow. And then
2 there were introductory comments. Do you want me to go through those or come back
3 to those later?

4 **CAPT WELBORN:** That will be fine Captain you can start with the first slide of your
5 presentation.

6 **CAPT REED:** Okay. So the first slide gives a quick overview of what I'll be going over.
7 I'm sorry, second slide. There we go. And thank you for the opportunity to speak to this
8 matter. It is an honor and privilege to be here to shed light on the search and rescue
9 aspects of the Motor Vessel GOLDEN RAY incident. While I spent time preparing this
10 statement, it is limited to my recollection of events from more than a year ago. And I
11 trust they will be able to convey the outstanding work of the teams involved to rescue all
12 24 people aboard the ship after it rolled onto its side in the early morning hours of
13 September 8th, 2019. Following this statement I will answer any questions that you
14 have and I will be more than willing to provide whatever information I can to the board.
15 My role in the incident involved leadership with some of the assigned Coast Guard units
16 and overall coordination of search and rescue efforts through our command center in
17 Charleston. While some of the Coast Guard units responding to the incident function
18 within the organizational structure of the Coast Guard Sector, others such as Air Station
19 Savannah provide support through coordination and collaboration. Responsibility for
20 the execution of search and rescue mission within this portion of the Seventh District
21 search and rescue region is delegated to me as Sector Commander. I further delegate
22 that to a search and rescue mission coordinator. In this case it was Lieutenant [REDACTED]
23 [REDACTED]. The incident provided an outstanding example of teamwork, risk management,

1 and cooperation amongst industry and the Government to achieve something that many
2 have – may have been the most challenging set of circumstances faced by all involved
3 in the rescue. And certainly for those trapped inside the GOLDEN RAY. Seeing
4 firsthand the work of all 24 – the work to save all 24 people from the GOLDEN RAY has
5 truly changed my perspective on the industry and their ability to come together to solve
6 a most complex problem. While the Coast Guard, Moran Towing, Georgia Department
7 of Natural Resources, Glenn County and others did great things to support the rescue of
8 the first 20 people in less than 3 hours. It was a monumental undertaking over the
9 ensuing 30 plus to remove the final 4 members. Next slide please. I was awake at
10 approximately 0150 on Sunday morning, September 8th by a phone call from
11 Commander [REDACTED], Commanding Officer of Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit
12 Savannah and Captain of the Port. He informed me that he had received a strange
13 report and was following up on it. But he was told a large vessel had rolled on its side in
14 St. Simon Sound as it was leaving the Port of Brunswick. Within 5 minutes I received
15 another call from our command center in Charleston confirming that report and the
16 watch provided their initial actions of launching rescue resources and set us up for a
17 conference call with the senior staff. Following that call I decided to make a 3 hour drive
18 to Brunswick recognizing the severity of this situation. The search and rescue mission
19 coordinator our Chief of Prevention and Chief of Inspection Division would also make
20 their way to the scene to assist. Next slide please. While crews begin to respond from
21 Air Station Savannah and Station Brunswick our command center was informing Coast
22 Guard leadership and setting up a critical communication call with Coast Guard
23 Headquarters and ever echelon in between. I departed at approximately 0300 and was

1 involved in calls the entire drive South. Our Deputy Commander, Command ██████
2 remained on these calls for more than 7 straight hours coordinating throughout
3 command center with supporting units, responding units, and higher Headquarters. As I
4 drove I received updates about the number of people on board, then the number of
5 people being rescued, the number of people accounted for and finally the number of
6 people who are not rescued but believed to be missing. I was also made aware that
7 Glenn County heavy rescue eight was going to be attempting an entry to see if they
8 could make contact with anyone else inside the ship. Then we received word about a
9 fire breaking out and the plan was put on hold. We had halted operations having
10 rescued 20 of the 24 people aboard. I would later learn that day that our Coast Guard
11 vessel sustained damage as the team maintained station alongside the GOLDEN RAY
12 so people could embark. I would also learn a month later that the smaller Georgia
13 Department of National Recourses boat also sustained damage during the night. It was
14 clear, on scene initiative and judgement were being used by all to the extent we could,
15 the mission – we continued the mission despite damage to our equipment and some
16 level of risk to our personnel. Next slide please. I arrived in the Brunswick area just
17 prior to sunrise but could see the outline of the vessel on its side as I proceeded toward
18 Coast Guard Station Brunswick. Once there I received a brief update from the Station's
19 second in charge. Spoke with some of our crew and saw a number of the rescued crew
20 from the ship as they gathered in the Station's training room. I also met with
21 Commander ██████, Lieutenant ██████ and the marine surveyor Captain Jerome Ferreira.
22 The four of us took a boat out to the scene for an initial assessment. Arriving at the
23 scene around 0730 in the morning. As we neared the vessel we could see and smell

1 smoke. The odor made me think it was burning plastic of some sort. We could also
2 smell some diesel fuel on the water and observed sheening already coming from the
3 vessel. We could also hear the sounds of large crashes inside the hull every few
4 minutes. We believe those noises to be the sounds of cargo falling to the port side as
5 the tie down systems continued to fail. We also stopped during this trip to speak with
6 executives from the Georgia Ports Authority who were at the Pier on St. Simons Island.
7 Commander Witt was able to discuss the port closure and impact. We then returned to
8 the GOLDEN RAY noting what appeared to be the ship's movement toward Buoy 19.
9 We were not sure if this was just an optical illusion as the ship continued to roll to port
10 nearing 90 degrees or if there was some level of buoyance left in the ship and as the
11 tide was going out the GOLDEN RAY was moving with it. Our greatest concern was
12 that it would roll or slide into the main ship channel further hampering the rescue of the
13 4 crew, a challenge – the 4 remaining crew and the challenge and possibly cutting off
14 the Port of Brunswick for months. We asked the tug to move back to the position on the
15 stern to try to stop the movement and they immediately moved the tug back to the stern
16 pushing to steady the ship in place. We then moved closer to observe and listen for any
17 signs of life. Captain Ferreira commenced knocking on the vessel's hull in hopes of
18 hearing some sort of reply from the men stranded inside. We continued to hear an
19 occasional crash. In the nearly two hours we were on scene that morning we observed
20 the vessel continue its roll maybe 5 to 10 degrees further to port. To the point that the
21 port side vents became submerged when they were completely visible upon arrival. We
22 also observed the life boat self-launch from astern of the vessel as it became
23 submerged. By the time we returned to the Station there were salvage experts

1 interviewing crew. One of the rescue swimmers had made his way to the Station to
2 provide his insights and observations to salvers. The Korean Consultant in Atlanta sent
3 Korean diplomats to care for their citizens. We moved to the developing incident
4 command post where a unified command was being set up to deal with the ongoing
5 responses to saving the 4 crew, environmental pollution and eventual removal of the
6 vessel. Next slide please. When we initially met at the unified command there was a
7 great deal of doubt concerning any remaining survivors at that point. We had not heard
8 any tapping back on the hull of the vessel, but at some point that evening word was
9 relayed that there was at least one survivor and likely more based on two possible
10 locations of responses. This is where our Coast Guard capabilities started to take a
11 back seat to the capabilities, experience and expertise of the salvers, marine engineers
12 and consultants. Through the night came Don John Smith with assistance from other
13 companies developed a plan to access the hull of the ship to locate the individuals and
14 begin communication, to supply fresh air, water, food and eventually awaited equipment
15 to cut them out. I over simplify here because it is not an area of expertise for me. The
16 location of the access point had to be precisely located to allow for movement and
17 access around the ship's fuel tank and other obstructions that would be on the bottom of
18 the ship. The salvage master, Sylvia Turvort (sic) of Smith Salvage led the effort with
19 Doug Martin of Don John Smith. They coordinated the involvement of least a dozen
20 other companies to make this rescue happen. All were now energized by the
21 knowledge that we were dealing with at least one life inside the GOLDEN RAY awaiting
22 our assistance. And we all hoped it was 4. Next slide please. The next morning
23 Lieutenant [REDACTED] and I met at St. Simons airport, Lieutenant [REDACTED] has sought Coast

1 Guard aviation support to move the initial team out to the GOLDEN RAY. Mr. Doug
2 Martin with Don John Smith, Mr. Tim Ferris of Defiant Marine briefed the team of
3 roughly six members of elevated safety who would perform the initial setup aboard the
4 ship, securing lines and repelling to the location they would start to access the hull.
5 There was a good amount of gear and a few people that we would need to deliver to the
6 top formerly the starboard side of the GOLDEN RAY. Lieutenant, now Lieutenant
7 Command ██████████ the pilot in command along with her crew were a part of this
8 briefing and based on the amount of equipment and persons to be delivered they
9 planned to conduct a landing on a horizontal surface. Hearing that team come together
10 to identify and assess risk with the crew from elevated safety was outstanding and
11 spoke to the professionalism of all involved. They were intent on saving more lives and
12 managing risks to responders in the process. Locating the group of 3 survivors, the first
13 3 survivors happened about 10:15 on the morning of the 9th. After the bore stroke was
14 used another hole was drilled roughly two and a half inches in diameter to pass water,
15 food and communicate with survivors. One of the Korean officers was aboard one of
16 the tugs and out at the scene to act an interpreter and translate. Fresh air was also
17 forced in by means of a gas powered leaf blower and two more holes were cut. I was
18 called at approximately 1300 to recommend we pause the operation and awaiting full
19 cutting apparatus in order to ensure we don't use a torch or something that would cause
20 an explosion based on atmospheric readings. Again while this is not my area of
21 expertise I happen to be in the company of a few experts who had access to health and
22 medical professionals. I understood the need to be careful about creating sparks or
23 flames, but knew if we had people alive in that type of atmosphere there was a great

1 risk that they would expire before we could wait the 14 hours for the equipment to get
2 on scene. I asked and conferred with the Navy supervisors of Salvage Atlantic if the
3 readings we were receiving could support life inside the ship for the amount of time that
4 they had already been in there. We agreed that waiting while the 3 survivors sat in that
5 atmosphere was not a good option. At the time we summarized there may be some
6 level elevated readings at the site of the drilling from that operation, but we did not
7 consider that some of the readings may have been impacted by the use of a gas
8 powered leaf blower. In the end I asked if they could just keep drilling the two and a half
9 inch holes in a large enough pattern to connect the dots and create an access. I believe
10 each of those holes was about 15 minutes to cut through the nearly inch thick steel. I
11 understand it became even a little faster as holes overlapped, but it still took some time.
12 The teams were able to access the first 3 survivors around 1500 that same afternoon.
13 We also became aware the 4th was trapped in the engine control room and while
14 rescuers could see him through the fireproof and explosion proof glass they could not
15 break through it. The challenge was met with the ingenuity, resourcefulness and
16 determination of the rescue team who at this point were near at exhaustion suffering the
17 effects of operating for even 5 minutes at a time inside the ship where temperatures
18 exceeded 155 degrees Fahrenheit. Eventually a handheld grinder was used to score
19 the glass and with the aid of an ax they were able to access the engineering control
20 room and free the final survivor. Next slide please. Again I cannot overstate the
21 outstanding coordination, communication, and collaboration that went into making this
22 such a success from the search and rescue aspect. I remain grateful for the Federal,
23 State and local Government officials whose teamwork, advice and counsel informed our

1 collective decision making. I'm further grateful for the outstanding work of the industry
2 professionals from the Pilot of the GOLDEN RAY to the crew of the GOLDEN RAY for
3 remaining calm in their egress and for those remaining aboard for maintaining the
4 presents of mind to move to one of the few places along the bottom of the ship where
5 they could be accessed. We were fortunate to have the vessel salvage and marine
6 firefighting provided Don John Smith on scene to leverage their extensive network of
7 providers to make this rescue complete. The results of the rescue was a testament to
8 the training and readiness of all involved. Coast Guard, Georgia Department of Natural
9 Resources, Don John Smith, Columbus Marine, Reid Maritime, Moran Towing, Glenn
10 County, Defiant Marine, TNT Salvage, hazmat special services and U.S. Fire. That
11 training and readiness was only eclipsed by the individual courage and determination of
12 each individual involved. Next slide please. While in no way will this be the only
13 outstanding result or interesting aspect of the GOLDEN RAY response, it will always be
14 the most rewarding. Thank you and I'm happy to answer your questions.

15 **CAPT WELBORN:** Captain Reed thank you very much for your presentation. So now I
16 would like to check with our substantially interested States to see if they have any
17 questions of this witness. I'll start with Mr. Bremer. Do you have questions for Captain
18 Reed?

19 **Mr. Bremer:** No questions, Captain.

20 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you Mr. Bremer. Captain Flaherty do you have questions for
21 this witness?

22 **NTSB:** Yes Captain, thank you. Captain Reed how are you doing, sir?

23 **CAPT REED:** Good thank you.

1 **NTSB:** Did you conduct a hot wash with your crew following this incident?

2 **CAPT REED:** I think individually, but not as whole yet, no. We knew this was all under
3 investigation and we were waiting for that to kind of get squared away and for things to
4 kind of settle down so that we were not speaking inconsistently with what was going to
5 happen or what might be the result of this investigation.

6 **NTSB:** Okay understood. Just curious from your experience with this very unique
7 situation. What recommendations would you make to enhance, if this were to occur
8 again, a similar incident?

9 **CAPT REED:** Well I know of a couple of my own kind of lessoned learned. One from a
10 search and rescue aspect I'm very fortunate that no one entered the water. We took it
11 for granted that 4 people remained aboard that ship, that they had good accountability
12 and they knew they were in the engine room. One lesson learned was they go ahead
13 conduct, in that kind of situation make sure we conduct a search for people who may
14 have jumped overboard in the middle of the night and that would have been a serious
15 issues. Another aspect I think is continuing to exercise. We are very fortunate in the
16 previous May I believe it was we had conducted our first salvage and marine firefighting
17 exercise and had some of those very same players in that in the tabletop. So it was
18 actually a seminar, it wasn't even a tabletop. But becoming familiar with what happens
19 in salvage operations it wasn't a test of what happens when a ship rolls over, it was just
20 a firefighting issue. But understanding what industry brings to bear in those vessel
21 response plans and as salvage marine firefighting providers is key to what they were
22 able to do. And as far as accessing and removing the people from the ship. Further
23 lessons learned, I just try to move as we can with regard to helping the industry get their

1 people and things there, helping them mobilize. They did outstanding work. I think
2 some of the rescue teams have come up with some interesting, you know desires or
3 needs and lessons learned.

4 **NTSB:** Right.

5 **CAPT REED:** Such as smaller cutting units. Being able to deploy those faster in these
6 instances to cut through the bottom of ships. I think that's some of it. I think being at
7 the scene is important. I think that's a search and rescue best practice we had
8 implemented probably six or seven months before this incident in a number of smaller
9 search and rescue cases, but devastating. Leading up to this we had a few instances
10 where our partners weren't necessarily aware of their access to Coast Guard resources
11 and we were able to, putting someone there on the ground whether it's a Station Officer
12 in Charge or someone has a direct communication when locals are doing search and
13 rescue you get a sense for what all does, not just the Coast Guard, but the U.S.
14 Government bring to bear in these kinds of situations. So that's another good lesson
15 learned. Other than that, sir, I think that's about it for now.

16 **NTSB:** Did you have a single place where the survivors from the vessel were brought
17 to?

18 **CAPT REED:** Yes, sir. The survivors, well some had to go to – some were treated, but
19 the other location was initially the Coast Guard Station at Brunswick. And then I think
20 after that they were put up in hotels pending, you know further evaluation. I'm not sure
21 if the initial investigating officers or team were able to use them or speak to them, but
22 the initial rally point was at the local Coast Guard Station.

1 **NTSB:** And do you recall, sir, how long, outside of the 4 engineers who were trapped
2 on board the vessel when the rescue operations started, how long did take all the
3 resources from the different agencies that were responding to confirm that the other
4 crew members were all accounted for?

5 **CAPT REED:** Great question. And I'll answer that, but there was one more lesson
6 learned.

7 **NTSB:** Sir.

8 **CAPT REED:** So and it's related to your question. Initially I was told there was 23
9 people on board. We were just using the ship's personnel. And then it became 24
10 because we found out about the Pilot. And even in those first few hours the numbers
11 weren't lining up. And that tends to happen as people are accounting for different
12 people on board and speaks to the need to get with one of the ship's officers,
13 understand who actually was on board and let them start helping you account for who
14 was left and who might not be. We relied wholly on the report that those four remained
15 on board because they were apparently engineers or in or near the engine room. I'm
16 sorry I might have forgot your question.

17 **NTSB:** I was asking kind of based on that, do you recall how long it took until you
18 confirmed that, outside of the 4 trapped engineers that everyone else on board the
19 vessel had been accounted for?

20 **CAPT REED:** Probably three hours.

21 **NTSB:** Three hours. Okay. And from your training and experience what did you draw
22 upon the most during this initial response?

1 **CAPT REED:** Understand what you – understand your gaps. Understand where to
2 seek advice and counsel. And let people solve the problems while you manage risk.
3 There's risk involved in every aspect of what we do on the water whether your mariner,
4 a Coast Guard man or woman or just, you know a citizen on the water. When it comes
5 to something like this and we're now doing things at night, lowering people from
6 helicopters, going inside ships that are on their sides, pulling boats along ships that are
7 rolling over, there is risk involved. And I'm grateful that what we have trained people to
8 do and this includes we the collective we, you know the people on scene at the towing
9 vessel and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources that may be damaging to your
10 equipment, but the greater good is that mission of pulling the people off. So risk
11 management is probably the other big piece as opposed to risk aversion. Mitigating
12 what we can, understand and discuss what we cannot mitigate and move forward.

13 **NTSB:** And you have access authority, correct?

14 **CAPT REED:** Yes, sir. So if it were to come to a case of us having to call off the
15 search we would have had to through the, in that case for persons known to be missing
16 I would have consulted with my boss in Miami.

17 **NTSB:** And are you ISM qualified as well?

18 **CAPT REED:** I am not.

19 **NTSB:** I'm sorry. ICS.

20 **CAPT REED:** ICS?

21 **NTSB:** Yes.

22 **CAPT REED:** Yes, sir. I was incident command system qualified.

23 **NTSB:** Why type level are you?

1 **CAPT REED:** I was only a type 3.

2 **NTSB:** Okay. And your communication, just going through the list, communication with
3 your partners in the commercial, the vessels that are scene, how did that go?

4 **CAPT REED:** From my perspective I learned a little bit about that as we were
5 recognized by a group out of Washington, D.C. But apparently it was going better than I
6 had initially thought. The Pilot did have comms with one of our watch standers in
7 Charleston through his radio. So he was talking directly to Petty Officer Steve [in
8 audible] I believe it was back in Charleston. And they were able to communicate.
9 Between the ships or the boats on scene and the tugs I really don't have a good sense
10 for that. But I know it worked itself out quite well. And even between the aviators and
11 our command center it appears that those communications were good. There may be
12 room for improvement, but I had not heard any aspect of that being a problem.

13 **NTSB:** Okay. Was there any resources that you – that were not available that you wish
14 you had on scene?

15 **CAPT REED:** No, sir, not that I can think of. I mean that brings up another great point.
16 Probably the ability to access that ship safely from a planned – from a exercised no
17 kidding capability with the right kind of people, the ability to access it short of having to
18 wait to mobilize and cut through. Knowing what I know now about the capability of
19 those drills and to get through that kind of steel, maybe it's – that's a tough thing to deal
20 with. But I think being able to access crews and those safety teams for technical rescue
21 are paramount to being able to get inside. And I can't even speak to the difficulties that
22 those teams had once they got inside the skin of the ship as it lay on its side. Covered
23 in oil and being able to try to move around where the side is the bottom and what was

1 the bottom is now the side and you're in an ship's athwart ship passageway becomes a
2 deathtrap, it's not a – probably not a great situation and not one that we in the Coast
3 Guard have the capability to do. Nor do I really advocate that we should. I think
4 industry does a great job of that. I think we should be helping them as much as we can
5 getting them into our exercising plans and ensuring they maintain the ability to respond
6 as they did in this situation.

7 **NTSB:** Now, sir, you, when it was realized that the 4 crewmembers were trapped and
8 in your opinion being on scene and in charge of this rescue operation, did the vessel
9 continue – continue to roll to port that did facilitate any of the rescue operations?

10 **CAPT REED:** Did it facilitate. It probably helped in some ways. You see the shaft alley
11 on the bottom of the ship where we kind of used the access. That became a – that
12 became almost a flat surface for team to work from as it rolled, you know probably 2 or
13 3 more degrees through the night. But it was always a concern that it would continue to
14 roll. I think even in the following weeks that was a critical thing that we were trying to
15 measure was is this thing going to stay where it's at or is there a risk of sliding down into
16 the main ship channel.

17 **NTSB:** Right.

18 **CAPT REED:** But the roll and the angle that we were at was fortunate for us to be able
19 to set that crew up of about 20 people who were going inside over a course of a number
20 of hours and drilling right there on that side of the shaft. Almost as if it were, if they had
21 an emergency rest spot by design.

22 **NTSB:** Did you have access to the vessel's plans when you were making those
23 decisions?

1 **CAPT REED:** Sir, I did. But at the time I'll tell you I didn't even know it. I knew Sylvia
2 had them. I knew smart people at the Coast Guard Salvage Emergency Response
3 Team had it. I knew the Navy's supervisor of salvage had it. I had general ideas about
4 what it was and it was all being posted that evening in the unified command. But yeah I
5 actually looked back through some of my files a few weeks ago and that wasn't even an
6 email that I had opened. But I didn't need to open it. I mean it was there for us if I
7 needed it. It was sent within, I want to say a matter of hours from our search.

8 **NTSB:** And prior to anyone entering the vessel to rescue the crew members when they
9 took, when they tested the air in that space what were the readings, do you recall or
10 have them available?

11 **CAPT REED:** I don't. I mean I have in one of those photos you saw in my presentation
12 was one of those sets of readings that was text to me that very day. I have another one
13 as well. And to tell you the truth I don't even know that I could – I would read them. I
14 will provide them to you. I mean I'll access them so I can speak to it right now. Hold on
15 one second. Okay. So if you see back on slide, right there, bottom right. So at the top
16 he says I've got CO is 202, O2 is 20.6, VOCs I think it shows 60,200 parts per million,
17 benzene 2.73 and 3.08. And then I have another reading of O2 of 20.6, CO of 259, H2S
18 of .7 PPM. And then at 1243 benzene at 3.7 PPM. That was one of them. And the
19 other reading I got was zero percent LEL, or 487 CO, 20.9 O2, and 750 PPB or parts
20 per billion I believe of DOC.

21 **NTSB:** Okay.

22 **CAPT REED:** And that was I believe a later reading.

1 **CAPT WELBORN:** Captain Flaherty, excuse just one moment. Captain Reed I just
2 wanted to make sure so that, the numbers that you were reading that's off that slide
3 executing rescue plan, the notebook there with handwritten numbers on it?

4 **CAPT REED:** Yes, sir.

5 **CAPT WELBORN:** Okay so we have that. Just let the record reflect that the witness
6 was clarifying the slide that he submitted in his presentation.

7 **CAPT REED:** And I believe that was one of national strike force personnel at the scene
8 you know making the safety call, that hey what I'm reading here is not good and
9 forwarded that to me. And I was in company then with you know Commander [REDACTED],
10 there was a former OPS officer at the pack strike team, the Navy supervisor of salvage,
11 Mr. Doug Martin, Commander [REDACTED] and together we were looking at this and really I
12 had to rely on them to make better sense of what I was looking at. That was the
13 discussion in my testimony concerning the, you know hey if this what – if it's that bad
14 and you're telling me I need to stop I've got to be concerned about what the atmosphere
15 is doing inside to 3 people who are currently alive.

16 **NTSB:** Right, understood. Now were you concerned – while you're discussing the
17 rescue attempt, is there any concern about by opening up the hull that that might cause
18 or allow for additional flooding?

19 **CAPT REED:** In the event they, yes, you know let the air out that was holding that was
20 causing the buoyancy?

21 **NTSB:** Correct.

22 **CAPT REED:** No I believed it was pretty much resting on the bottom at that point.

23 **NTSB:** Okay.

1 **CAPT REED:** So we were pretty confident that was not going to be the case. One of
2 the, you know always a consideration is are we going to allow oxygen back in there.
3 There had to be enough oxygen in there anyway to sustain life through the night. So we
4 just needed to get in there and get these people out.

5 **NTSB:** Right. Alright. Well again thank you for your time Captain. I appreciate it.

6 **CAPT REED:** Sir, thank you.

7 **NTSB:** Captain Welborn that's all I have.

8 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you Captain Flaherty. Just querying if we have any
9 questions from KMST. Do not see any questions from KMST. However, and I'm
10 reading directly, Captain Reed, KMST is participating virtually in our hearing here today
11 and they sent in, that KMST would like to express their gratitude to all of the agencies
12 and responders that took part in the rescue that day. So thank you to you, your team
13 and those partners that you had at the port there from KMST, Captain Reed. So now
14 we'll check with our parties in interest. Mr. Reisman do you have questions for this
15 witness?

16 **Mr. Reisman:** No Captain, no questions.

17 **CAPT WELBORN:** Mr. Gilson do you have questions for this witness? Hearing
18 nothing. Captain Reed again thank you for your detailed account, the presentation. I
19 do have a couple things I would like to clarify. We have several folks outside of the
20 maritime world and realm that are listening in Captain Reed. So I would like to clarify a
21 couple of the terms that were used in your testimony today. So one point to correct the
22 record as far as your ICS qualifications I do believe the Coast Guard policy that all
23 Sector Commanders are designated as a Type1 Incident Commander inherent with

1 their position as Sector Commander. So I want to make sure the record does reflect
2 that. Captain you referenced an access authority. Can you tell us a little bit about what
3 that means?

4 **CAPT REED:** Yes, sir. Access really stands for active search suspension authority. In
5 other words that's the authority to tell people to go ahead and stop searching where we
6 may have or we know we have someone missing in the maritime domain. It's the
7 responsibility, not taken lightly and one exercised with great care having known you've
8 done all you can to look for or find that person who's missing in the ocean. But it
9 basically means we're calling off a search and if someone were out there they would be
10 on their own. Active search that is. So should, and it's only suspended. So to clarify if
11 some other information came up or something else came out that you know we have
12 more information that might help us find this person we could, you know go back to
13 searching. It doesn't mean we're closing a case, they're only suspended pending
14 further information.

15 **CAPT WELBORN:** Understood Captain. And that fell under your authority as a SAR
16 mission coordinator, is that correct?

17 **CAPT REED:** That's a kind of, that's a divot, so level up from the search, the SAR,
18 search and mission coordinator and on purpose. So Lieutenant Heflin's job make sure
19 that the search patterns are right. Make sure the responding units are doing what
20 they're supposed to be doing. Make sure the planning and execution and
21 communications are going well. And if he has to come to me at some point and say, sir,
22 I recommend – we've done all we can to find these I need to, I would request
23 suspension of searching. He would come to me as the access authority to do that. And

1 as I said before in cases where we know people are missing in the maritime domain I
2 get concurrence of my boss in Miami at the Seventh District to go ahead and suspend
3 on those cases.

4 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you for that clarification. Captain you also used a term
5 athwart ship passageway. Can you tell us a little bit about what that means?

6 **CAPT REED:** Yes, sir. So if you were walking in the ship say centerline moving
7 forward and you came to a passageway that crossed, an intersection, in this case if it
8 went all the way across the ship and it was your normal route to egress and were then
9 walking on the walls if you were to step or try to cross that in the case of the GOLDEN
10 RAY, I think you're talking about 100 and something feet across you could end up falling
11 that whole way and possibly injuring or worse to yourself.

12 **CAPT WELBORN:** So an athwart ship passageway would be a hallway that goes from
13 one side of the ship to the other side of the ship, is that correct?

14 **CAPT REED:** Yes, sir.

15 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you. And Captain you mentioned shaft alley. Can you tell
16 us what that is?

17 **CAPT REED:** Well yes and I'll try to find, let me see which one of those slides might
18 give you, it may not be a technical term but I would say on the initial observation slide,
19 arrival and initial observation slide I think that's slide 4. Man it doesn't show up there
20 very well. How about on slide, I didn't do a good job there. Slide 7, nope slide 8. So
21 where these men are standing in the bottom right picture is basically a long appendage
22 that sticks out of the ship, the ship's bottom through which the shaft runs and then you
23 can see it come out the back toward the rudders. Probably the lowest part of the ship.

1 But you see what they're standing on there is, you know probably 20 or 30 feet to a
2 rounded edge and then it goes on to what would normally be the bottom of the ship is
3 behind them. So that's the path for which the ship's shaft runs.

4 **CAPT WELBORN:** So Captain it would be the lowest portion of the after part or the
5 back part of the ship where the shaft and the rudder and the propeller come out of the
6 engine room, is that correct?

7 **CAPT REED:** Yes, sir. And forward of there as well up to wherever it needs to be,
8 probably the back of the engine. Somewhere near the engine room.

9 **CAPT WELBORN:** Essentially from the engine room aft then, correct?

10 **CAPT REED:** Yes, sir.

11 **CAPT WELBORN:** And Captain you also referred the pack strike team. I believe you
12 said that Commander Witt was a member of the pack strike team. Can you tell us what
13 that is?

14 **CAPT REED:** The specific strike team is part of the national, the Coast Guard's
15 national strike force when it comes to responding to environmental hazards both in the
16 water and well as in other parts over land. It's a team, a specialized team that will go in
17 and do hazardous waste removal. You know respond to events of hazardous nature.

18 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you. Let me check through my notes to make sure I hit
19 everything. I believe that's it. Captain Reed did you have any parting thoughts,
20 anything else you would like to share with us today?

21 **CAPT REED:** No nothing else. Again thank you very much for the opportunity to
22 provide the testimony. And I remain available should you need any further questions
23 answered.

1 **CAPT WELBORN:** Thank you Captain Reed I do appreciate it. Your testimony was
2 very informative today and really helped us see a little bit more of the response and
3 then again portray that for the public. So thank you. As you previously stated you
4 remain subject to recall until the end of these formal proceedings. But at this time
5 you're dismissed.

6 **CAPT REED:** Thank you, sir.

7 **CAPT WELBORN:** So today, we heard from Mr. Clifton Gorden of Moran Towing. He
8 spoke about towing procedures in the Port of Brunswick and the typical use of tugs on
9 RORO, or roll on roll off vessels such as the GOLDEN RAY throughout the St. Simons
10 Sound. He referred to Coast Guard Exhibit 02, NOAA Chart 11506, and discussed the
11 inbound and outbound transits on his tug, the DOROTHY MORAN, with the GOLDEN
12 RAY. Mr. Gorden also spoke about his actions on the DOROTHY MORAN when he
13 learned of the GOLDEN RAY's capsizing. He testified about his discussions with nearby
14 RORO vessels, members of the Brunswick Bar Pilots Association, and the Coast
15 Guard; and his involvement in the rescue efforts of the GOLDEN RAY's crewmembers.
16 We also heard from BM2 [REDACTED] of the U.S. Coast Guard's Station Brunswick.
17 BM2 Shaw presented briefing slides to discuss the response to the capsizing of the
18 GOLDEN RAY by Coast Guard Station Brunswick. BM2 [REDACTED] spoke to the Search and
19 Rescue efforts by Coast Guard Station Brunswick of the crewmembers on board the
20 GOLDEN RAY. At this time, I would like to enter that presentation as Coast Guard
21 Exhibit 14, unless there are any objections from the SISs or PII's. Any objections at this
22 time. Hearing none, Coast Guard Exhibit 14 is so entered.

1 In addition, we heard from Captain John Reed, the Sector Commander of the U.S.
2 Coast Guard's Sector Charleston at the time of the GOLDEN RAY's capsizing. Captain
3 Reed discussed the Coast Guard's response to the incident, presenting slides to
4 summarize the rescue efforts by the Coast Guard and other external operators and
5 technical experts on-the-scene. At this time, I would like to enter that presentation as
6 Coast Guard 15. I would also like to enter Captain Reed's written statement as Coast
7 Guard Exhibit 15A. Coast Guard Exhibit 15 and 15A will be entered, unless there are
8 any objections from the SISs or PII's. Hearing nothing both exhibits are so entered.
9 Should any person have, or believe he or she has information not brought forward but
10 which might be of direct significance, that person is urged to bring that information to my
11 attention by emailing: USCGGoldenRay@gmail.com. This email is only for information
12 regarding this hearing and or the investigation. Any questions regarding the response
13 should be directed to the Incident Command Post.

14 During tomorrow's session, we will hear from Lieutenant [REDACTED], naval architect at
15 the U.S. Coast Guard's Marine Safety Center; and Dr. Jeffrey Falzarano of Texas A&M
16 University, an expert witness on hydrodynamic stability. We will also hold time for the
17 Chief Officer of the GOLDEN RAY to possibly testify. At this time we do not expect the
18 Chief Officer to present himself for testimony but we may read excerpts from previously
19 sworn testimony. Thank you for your attendance. The time is now 1:51 local. Hearing
20 Session Day 6 is now adjourned.