

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CAPSIZING/SINKING OF THE *GOLDEN*
RAY IN THE BRUNSWICK RIVER,
GEORGIA, ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2019

Accident No.: DCA19FM048

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Interview of:



U.S. Coast Guard

Military Safety Unit
Savannah, Georgia

Wednesday,
January 29, 2020

APPEARANCES:

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

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of [REDACTED]:

By Lt. [REDACTED]

4

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 LT [REDACTED]: Good morning. This is Lieutenant [REDACTED]
3 with the United States Coast Guard. I work for the District 8
4 Response Advisory Team. I'm the supervisor there, and I'm here
5 conducting interviews in response to the *Golden Ray* incident and
6 the push and response and salvage aspect. My name is spelled
7 [REDACTED]. And I'm here interviewing:

8 MR. [REDACTED]: MST3 [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

9 [REDACTED].

INTERVIEW OF [REDACTED]

11 BY LT [REDACTED]:

12 Q. And your role at the MSU?

13 A. I am the Port State Control Department as a vessel examiner.

14 Q. And your role during the *Golden Ray* response?

15 A. I was a bit of a floater for the first 2 weeks that I was
16 there, I filled a SCAT position. I also filled a position on
17 on-water recovery.

18 Q. Okay. And do you consent to this interview being recorded?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. So now, tell me about approximately when you were
21 notified of the incident.

22 A. So I believe the incident happened on September 8th. I
23 received a text message from the duty stander at around 6 o'clock
24 in the morning telling me to get to the office as soon as
25 possible, that the vessel had capsized down in Brunswick.

1 So it took me about 30 minutes to get in the office. And
2 then from there we left almost immediately, got there around, I
3 would say 8 o'clock. From there, I met with a -- with Petty
4 Officer [REDACTED]. And we were the first two to go on-water to do
5 an assessment to see if there was any pollution in the water.

6 Q. And was there pollution in the water?

7 A. There was some sheening and some -- there was some pollution
8 in the water. And from there, we started trying to develop some
9 sort of plan as to what to -- where the sensitive areas were, what
10 we needed to protect immediately, and while assets were being
11 mobilized.

12 Q. Okay. And what was your role that first day that you were on
13 scene?

14 A. It wasn't really clarified until the end of the day when the
15 strike team got there. But I think that was -- ended up being
16 on-water recovery.

17 Q. Okay. And then for your on-water recovery activities,
18 what -- describe to me what your activities looked like that first
19 day.

20 A. That first day, we set -- we got out there almost
21 immediately. We set, I believe it was 600 feet at the bow and
22 then another 600 at the stern. And then we were calling back to
23 the office trying to get the -- where the sensitive areas were,
24 which ended up being identified as Bird Island. But I don't --
25 I'm not positive, but I don't believe anything was done with Bird

1 Island my first day.

2 Q. Okay. And how was the boom -- was the boom anchored off the
3 stern and the bow?

4 A. Yes. We dropped it, I believe it was like 50 yards off the
5 stern and then let it drag back. But with the current and other
6 factors wasn't really causing the anchors to hold all that well,
7 so it was dragging back pretty good distance.

8 Q. Okay. So what was the purpose of that boom?

9 A. Just trying to -- we're booming for -- trying to boom for
10 both tidal cycles and trying to contain as much as possible with
11 the assets that we had there.

12 Q. Okay. And that boom was deemed kind of ineffective?

13 A. Ineffective almost immediately.

14 Q. Okay. And was it ever discussed booming around the entire
15 vessel?

16 A. Yes. It was recommended, but we really never heard much back
17 from that.

18 Q. And that was never done, correct?

19 A. It was never done.

20 Q. Okay. Was -- and then other than that boom, what was -- what
21 did you do with your activities after that?

22 A. So it -- as far as the next day?

23 Q. Is that all -- so that was pretty much the first day,
24 booming?

25 A. First day was just trying to boom off as much of the vessel

1 as possible. And then I think SAR took precedent for the first
2 couple days.

3 Q. Okay, yeah. Makes sense. And then so the second day, what
4 were your activities?

5 A. Second day, I was again on one of the workboats monitoring
6 work. And then I can't remember whether it was that day or the
7 third day that we were starting to have pretty good streamers in
8 the water that were using the sorbent boom. We were towing
9 sorbent boom to try and recover.

10 Q. In between two boats?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. And that was pretty much the strategy for the first
13 few days, correct?

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. So just doing the boat until some more researchers got on
16 scene?

17 A. Yeah, until more researchers got on scene; correct.

18 Q. And how effective was that?

19 A. It wasn't the most effective method. We were going through a
20 pretty good amount of sorbent material because it was only really
21 picking up probably about half the capacity of the sorbent
22 material.

23 Q. And what would you do with that sorbent material once it was
24 full?

25 A. It would be bagged and brought back to staging at the Lanier

1 Bridge, and where another individual was keeping track of the
2 amount of waste that was being accumulated.

3 Q. Okay. Did you bring it back, or was there like a separate
4 boat that would pick it up and bring it back?

5 A. I'm not clear on that.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. I don't quite remember.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. But I'm almost positive that it was another boat that was
10 picking it up from us.

11 Q. Okay. And then they just probably give you new boom?

12 A. Giving us new, and then offloading anything that was old.

13 Q. Okay. Makes sense. And then about how many days did you do
14 those activities?

15 A. I would say for most of the first week that was what we were
16 doing. And then it was identified at the end of that first week,
17 we had a work chart that was finally developed. They wanted
18 somebody with SCAT experience to go over and start conducting
19 SCAT. And I had gone to the school, so I was the one that was
20 identified to go to -- to be part of the SCAT team that was being
21 organized.

22 Q. Okay. Up until that, did anything majorly deviate any
23 operations, or was it pretty similar up until you moved to SCAT?

24 A. It was pretty similar, mainly just chasing any streamers that
25 were coming off the vessel.

1 Q. And did you -- so were you still out there -- so were you --
2 during the 13th when the weather started to come in --

3 A. I was not on water that day --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- I was with SCAT.

6 Q. SCAT? Okay. Now, can you kind of walk me through your -- as
7 you transitioned to SCAT, walk me through your activities with
8 SCAT.

9 A. So SCAT -- the issue with SCAT is we were using Department of
10 Natural Resources' boats. And they -- it was unclear as to
11 whether we would have one, or two, or -- that day. And we had two
12 people assigned to SCAT, so one team per boat. So they would --
13 they wouldn't necessarily send out boat teams that day. On the
14 days that they didn't have two assets to send out, I would go back
15 on on-water recovery.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. So as I said in the beginning, I was a bit of a floater going
18 back and forth. The first day on SCAT, they did their little
19 coordination to make sure everybody was on the same page, the
20 calibration. So that dedicated most of the first day. And then
21 the next couple days, we did Quarantine Island. I think I have
22 that name correct. It was just outside of Lanier Bridge, so it
23 was this patch of shoreline right here.

24 Q. Okay. So let the recording show he's pointing to Brunswick
25 Point and then to the west along land off Brunswick Point.

1 A. And a lot of the first couple days was trying to identify
2 what we could access and what we couldn't, because at the very
3 point of it is all oyster beds, and with the boats that we had, we
4 would've disturbed the oyster beds if we had tried to nose up in
5 there. So it was a bit of a learning process as to figure out
6 like what we could actually access and what we couldn't.

7 Q. And what was the makeup of the SCAT teams?

8 A. It was myself as Coast Guard, we had a representative from
9 Gallagher, and we had someone from the state, so Department of
10 Natural Resources.

11 Q. Didn't --

12 A. And then NOAA would come in every once in a while.

13 Q. Okay. That was going to be my question. And for the
14 recording, SCAT stands for Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique.
15 Was there -- when you were doing SCAT, was there -- at this point,
16 was there already reports of oiled shoreline?

17 A. Yes. So we were told that the shoreline that I previously
18 referred to was heavily oiled. And then up near Lanier was
19 also --

20 Q. So Lanier Island, from the marina on the east side heading
21 south towards the point.

22 A. I believe it was the marina that called and put in a report
23 that they had experienced impact.

24 Q. And so what was the -- were you part of the remediation
25 efforts or just assessing the shoreline?

1 A. Just assessing the shoreline.

2 Q. Okay. And so what was your process for that?

3 A. So we would go out, we would pick -- we would get segments,
4 because they segmented everything pretty fast. And we were given
5 a set group of segments to assess that day, and then we would
6 determine how heavy the oiling was, how far back it went, and then
7 whether it was transferrable or not.

8 Q. Okay. And what would you do with that information?

9 A. That information was filled out on the SCAT forms and then
10 given to the EU, Environmental Unit.

11 Q. And would you get any feedback from the Environmental Unit,
12 or would you just move on to your next grid section?

13 A. We -- so the -- let me clarify first. The forms are filled
14 out at the end of the day, after all the segments were filled out.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So we would just go through all of our segments right away,
17 make notes of what recordings that we would take, and then we
18 would go back and fill out the SCAT forms.

19 Q. At the end of the day with --

20 A. At the end of the day.

21 Q. -- the Environmental Unit?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. And then we would get a new set of segments for the next day.

25 Q. The next day? Would you get them that evening when you

1 checked in, or did you have to go back in the morning to get new
2 segments?

3 A. The Gallagher rep would come with them already.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So we would all meet at the Coast Guard station, right near
6 the Lanier Bridge, and the Gallagher rep would already have the
7 segments that we'd be looking at the next day --

8 Q. And was that --

9 A. -- or that day.

10 Q. For the time you did SCAT, was that pretty typical of all of
11 your activities?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Did it ever deviate from that?

14 A. No, not really. It was pretty much the same throughout. The
15 only real deviation was some days we would have two teams go out,
16 some days we would have one. On the days that we would only have
17 one team go out, I would switch back over to on-water recovery.

18 Q. And then when you would switch back to on-water recovery,
19 were you just doing the same, towing a sorbent boom between --

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. -- two vessels? Did that ever deviate?

22 A. Not really.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Obviously, it would depend on how much was actually coming up
25 that day. It was a lot of going around searching, and then we

1 would find a streamer and try to recover it.

2 Q. And then was there anything ever outside the normal of your
3 on-water recovery and your SCAT activities?

4 A. As far as?

5 Q. Just anything that you might want to add to the recording of
6 activities you did that just isn't covered by the things you've
7 already talked about.

8 A. No, not that I can think of right now.

9 Q. Okay. Was -- did you make any recommendations for different
10 response strategies?

11 A. I think that a lot of it was a joint effort with -- so Petty
12 Officer [REDACTED], Petty Officer [REDACTED], and myself were all kind of
13 included in those conversations. I know that we recommended
14 booming off the entire vessel and that got -- I'm not sure where
15 that ever ended up with, other than it never happened. And I'm
16 not positive, I'm not positive what else got recommended. I know
17 that there's probably more, but it's been a couple months.

18 Q. And how would you -- did you feel like the response was
19 successful in the portions that you were involved in?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Based on the objectives you were given, I should say.

22 A. Well, we weren't really given objectives.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. We were kind of out there trying to figure it out ourselves
25 and then not getting much feedback from the ICP. So we would

1 recommend like booming the vessel; we would recommend that. And
2 we would never hear anything back, or we were told, no, that's not
3 possible, and then never find out why that's not possible. It --
4 there was definitely communication breakdown between the ICP and
5 the guys out in the field.

6 Q. And was it within the operation section, or was it -- do you
7 think it was outside or just couldn't speak to it?

8 A. I spent maybe 2 days total in the ICP, 1 day checking in and
9 1 day deep open. So I can't really speak to where the breakdown
10 was. Everything would get filtered through -- we got filtered
11 through the branch chief and then --

12 Q. And who was the branch chief?

13 A. It was --

14 Q. Or at least what was the organization they represented?

15 A. So we had one for the Coast Guard and then Gallagher had
16 their own.

17 Q. Okay. It was like assistant branch chief and a branch chief?

18 A. Yes. So --

19 Q. And that -- was that pretty typical of the organizational
20 structure and Ops that there would be Gallagher and Coast Guard
21 mirroring each other, whether one was the section chief and one
22 was the deputy?

23 A. It stayed that way even like -- so I left, and I came back.
24 I demobed around the 20th, and then I came back the 6th of
25 October. And for that next month that I was there the

1 organization stayed the same.

2 Q. Okay. Did the -- was it -- when you came back on the 6th,
3 was it -- did it seem like there was better communication?

4 A. There was much better communication. So I'm not sure what
5 changes were made during the time that I was gone or what changes
6 were made that I just didn't see when I was there the first time,
7 but communication was a lot better, and everything was going --
8 seemed to be going a lot smoother.

9 Q. Okay. But the structure was pretty much the same within
10 operations?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Different people had changed out, but the structure was
14 almost the same.

15 Q. Okay. And kind of going back. When you were either on-water
16 or SCAT -- if it's different, let me know the difference -- but
17 who was your boss for those activities?

18 A. So when I was in SCAT, I was reporting directly to Lieutenant
19 [REDACTED], and then when I was with on-water recovery, it was a
20 couple different individuals during my time there. There was a
21 Chief [REDACTED], a --

22 Q. And he was deputy officer at one point, correct?

23 A. I believe so.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And then it became, I believe it was MST1 [REDACTED] (ph.).

1 Q. Okay. What was Lieutenant [REDACTED]' role when you were
2 reporting to her?

3 A. I don't think it was actually put in writing as what the name
4 was yet, but I would say that would be the SCAT coordinator if --

5 Q. Okay. So at least the changes mirrored what should occur in
6 a nice set structure?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay. Anything else?

9 A. I can't speak on the two major events that happened because
10 that was -- I wasn't there during that time. But when I finally
11 got back on the 6th of October, everything seemed to go pretty
12 smoothly. We would have the occasional tar ball pop every once in
13 a while, but nothing like -- nothing major, nothing recoverable
14 other than just tar balls.

15 Q. Okay. And what was your role when you came back on the 6th?

16 A. I was DIVS for on-water recovery.

17 Q. Okay. And is that primarily what you did that second time
18 down?

19 A. That is what I did for the whole entire -- from the 6th of
20 October until the 11th of November.

21 Q. And then you just recover occasional tar balls and --

22 A. Recover occasional tar balls. I was on the command boat the
23 whole entire time. We would ride around, give direction to the --
24 however many workboats we had that day. And for the most part we
25 didn't really see anything, because it's my understanding the

1 vents were already capped, any potential discharge was -- we
2 weren't going to see for the most part, because --

3 Q. And they had lightered the tanks at this point?

4 A. They were lightering the tanks for the duration of the time
5 that I was there. And we never had anything -- any back pressure
6 or anything. So --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. We would get a daily report each day from Donjon, the salvage
9 team, as to what operations were being done, and then we'd
10 coordinate assets accordingly.

11 Q. And I guess my last question would be, what -- or two
12 questions -- but what do you feel went really well with the
13 response?

14 A. I think after the -- after I came back on the 6th, it seemed
15 like they had gotten a good ICS structure together and things were
16 starting to move a lot more smoothly. So whoever it was in the
17 ICP, they adapted to everything pretty well, and they got things
18 rolling together pretty smoothly.

19 Q. Okay. And then overall, what would you say would be one of
20 the things we could improve or your biggest frustration with the
21 response?

22 A. First time I was down there, communication was very poor. As
23 far as communication from the top down, we -- I was finding out
24 everything through Gallagher, whereas like I wasn't getting passed
25 information from my superiors in the Coast Guard.

1 Q. Did you ever see any 204s?

2 A. No. So I had to get that from Gallagher.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. I had to request that from the Gallagher rep that I was
5 working with.

6 Q. Who would've been probably the DIV group you -- for -- that
7 you were on?

8 A. It was -- I'm not sure what his title was -- it was John
9 Spenik (ph.).

10 Q. Okay. Anything else you want to add before we conclude?

11 A. Nothing I can think of.

12 LT [REDACTED]: All right. Well, thank you for your time.

13 MR. [REDACTED]: All right.

14 LT [REDACTED]: And that concludes this interview.

15 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: CAPSIZING/SINKING OF THE *GOLDEN*
 RAY IN THE BRUNSWICK RIVER,
 GEORGIA, ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2019
 Interview of [REDACTED]

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA19FM048

PLACE: Savannah, Georgia

DATE: January 29, 2020

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

[REDACTED]

Jeffrey
Transcriber