

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of:

*
*
*
*
*
*

SHIPBOARD FIRE ABOARD THE *HOËGH*
XIAMEN IN JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA,
ON JUNE 4, 2020

Accident No.: DCA20FM020

* * * * *

Interview of: MIN ZHAO, Second Mate
The *Hoëgh Xiamen*

Jacksonville, Florida

Saturday,
June 6, 2020

APPEARANCES:

MARCEL L. MUISE, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

JOSEPH PANAGIOTOU, Fire and Explosion Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

LTJG [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Investigator
U.S. Coast Guard, Sector Jacksonville

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

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] Investigator
U.S. Coast Guard, Sector Jacksonville

JIMMIN CHANG, Chinese Interpreter
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

JONI A. POITIER, Attorney
Moseley, Prichard, Parrish, Knight & Jones
(On behalf of the *Hoëgh Xiamen*)

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Min Zhao:

By LTJG [REDACTED]

6

By Mr. [REDACTED]

9

By LT [REDACTED]

10

By LTJG [REDACTED]

13

I N T E R V I E W

(2:38 p.m.)

1
2
3 LTJG ██████ Good afternoon, everyone. My name is LTJG
4 ██████ I'm an investigator with the Coast Guard here in
5 Jacksonville, Florida. We're here to do an interview with the
6 second mate of the *Hoëgh Xiamen* in regards to the fire which
7 occurred on June 4th, 2020.

8 I'm going to go around the table and have everyone introduce
9 themselves by name, and then -- the phone, and then we'll get
10 started with the interview.

11 MR. ██████ Good afternoon. ██████ ██████ Sector
12 Jacksonville investigator.

13 LT ██████ Good afternoon. LT ██████ Sector Jacksonville
14 investigations.

15 MR. ZHAO: Good afternoon, sir. I am second officer of the
16 ship *Hoëgh Xiamen*.

17 LTJG ██████ Can you say your full name please?

18 MR. ZHAO: Full name is Zhao, Min.

19 LTJG ██████ And then, Ms. Joni?

20 MS. PORTIER: Joni Portier. Moseley, Prichard, Parrish,
21 Knight, and Jones here on behalf of the vessel interest.

22 LTJG ██████ And just so everyone's aware -- I'm sorry.
23 Please, NTSB?

24 MR. ZHAO: What?

25 MR. MUISE: This is Marcel Muise, NTSB marine safety.

1 MR. PANAGIOTOU: And Joseph Panagiotou, NTSB Office of
2 Research and Engineering.

3 MR. CHANG: Jimmin Chang, U.S. Coast Guard auxiliary Chinese
4 interpreter.

5 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay. So --

6 MS. PORTIER: There's an interpreter on the phone.

7 MR. ZHAO: Okay.

8 MS. PORTIER: So if you don't understand what they're
9 asking, they can interpret for you.

10 MR. ZHAO: Oh, okay.

11 MS. PORTIER: Okay?

12 MR. ZHAO: Okay. Understand.

13 LTJG [REDACTED] Perfect. All right, so we're going to get
14 started. We just want a brief overview of the events that
15 happened during that day --

16 MR. ZHAO: Yeah.

17 LTJG [REDACTED] -- of the fire. So if you could just tell us
18 what happened, and then if you need help or you want to use the
19 translator, just talk directly into the phone, and then he'll
20 translate to us.

21 MR. ZHAO: Okay.

22 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay.

23 MR. ZHAO: Okay, yeah. Yes, I understand.

24 (Whereupon, a Chinese language interpreter translated the
25 questions and answers for Mr. Zhao, as required.)

INTERVIEW OF MIN ZHAO

BY LTJG [REDACTED]

1
2
3 Q. Okay. So please let -- tell us what happened the day of the
4 fire.

5 A. From what time?

6 Q. From the end of cargo operations to when you got off the
7 ship.

8 A. Please say again.

9 Q. From when cargo operations ended.

10 A. Oh, okay.

11 Q. And then to when you were on the pier and the firefighters
12 showed up.

13 A. Okay, I see.

14 Q. Understand?

15 A. Yeah. I understand. After finish all cargo operation, and
16 at that time, I am -- I was on Deck 7. Then I walked into Deck 11
17 from Deck 7. Then one deck -- from one deck check --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- from Deck 11 to Deck 7, including Deck 10, Deck 9, Deck 8,
20 and Deck 7. Then after a while -- OS was standing by at side of
21 ramp, but chief officer wanted to help him -- wanted the OS to
22 help him, so OS needed to leave. I -- and so I went down from
23 Deck 7 to Deck 5, and standing by them there. After, chief
24 officer hosed off the side of ramp, then finish all of this, then
25 I went to the bridge to prepare for some documents for departure.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Then after, I don't know how long, I heard a bunch of some
3 voice from walkie-talkie that -- from Deck 8 has had -- found some
4 smoke. Then I rushed into the Deck 7 immediately. I -- when I
5 turned the front door, found so heavy smoke. I -- and -- in each
6 of the dock. I cannot see anything inside.

7 Then I ran back -- go back to the bridge and wear fireman's
8 outfits. Then immediately go down with AB. And when I arrive
9 there, the fire team number one was there. At that time,
10 emergency alarm already sounding. So everybody take the action.
11 Then after captain led us from where we found the fire, the smoke
12 is too heavy. We cannot go inside. Then we go back, muster -- at
13 Deck 12 muster station, and loading (indiscernible). And then we
14 see.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. At that time, the port fire department arrived. Then captain
17 made us all go down to Deck 5. When the port fire department and
18 -- was there, then I remember one fireman let me show him the way
19 to Deck 8. And me and captain with this fireman, show him to Deck
20 8.

21 Then he opened the Deck 8 door, find much so, so heavy smoke,
22 and then closed it. Then we all go down to Deck 8 -- no, Deck 5.
23 Then next, we are -- we were asked -- the fire department asked us
24 to leave. So we all must at the pier.

25 Q. Okay. I'm going to ask about the decks. So you did the

- 1 walkthrough on Deck 7 and 8 after cargo was completed, correct?
- 2 A. Say again please.
- 3 Q. So after cargo was -- operations were done --
- 4 A. Yeah.
- 5 Q. -- you did the walkthrough on Deck 7 and Deck 8, correct?
- 6 A. Yes. From Deck 7 to Deck 11.
- 7 Q. Yeah.
- 8 A. And then Deck 11, to 10, to 8 -- no, to 9, to 8, to 7.
- 9 Q. So you did two checks of each deck?
- 10 A. Sir, first, we just go up. And then, when I come down, one
- 11 by one.
- 12 Q. You did? Okay.
- 13 A. Yes.
- 14 Q. So can you tell me what Deck 8 and Deck 7 looked like?
- 15 A. At that time, I found it all normal.
- 16 Q. All normal?
- 17 A. Yes.
- 18 Q. Did you see any cars leaking?
- 19 A. No. At that time, I didn't find.
- 20 Q. Did -- could you smell any gasoline?
- 21 A. No.
- 22 Q. Okay. What were the conditions of the cars? Were they good
- 23 cars? Bad cars?
- 24 A. Secondhand cars.
- 25 Q. Did they look like they had been in accidents? Like crumpled

1 up in the front?

2 A. Yes, some like this.

3 Q. Okay. Is there anything else unusual? So you said it was
4 all normal?

5 A. Yeah, all normal --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- at the time.

8 BY MR. [REDACTED]

9 Q. Okay. How many rows of cars on Deck 8?

10 A. How many?

11 Q. How many cars, like, in line on the deck?

12 A. I don't know.

13 Q. Okay. So when you do your walkthrough, do you just do one
14 walk around? Or do you go back and forth several times?

15 A. So, yeah, so between rows, some of the spaces allow space to
16 walk around, but what I did is I made -- basically I made one loop
17 around. I mean, some cannot go. Some I can go.

18 Q. Okay. What was your job during cargo operations? What did
19 you do?

20 A. When -- during cargo operation, I -- at that time, duty on
21 car deck. When they loading, I just, I check.

22 Q. Okay. You're checking cars?

23 A. No. Checking lashing, and when -- the progress of unloading.

24 Q. Okay. And on any certain decks, or all decks do you check
25 the progress?

1 A. Say again?

2 LT [REDACTED] Are you doing that the entire time? Are you
3 covering the entire vessel, or are you assigned as a duty person
4 to specific decks?

5 MR. ZHAO: So when I'm on duty, I'm only responsible the deck
6 that is unloading.

7 LT [REDACTED] Okay. So what decks were you on duty for?

8 MR. ZHAO: Including Deck 7 and Deck 8.

9 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

10 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

11 BY LT [REDACTED]

12 Q. And are you trained -- what are you looking for when you're
13 on duty? You're -- you mentioned that you're looking at lashings.
14 Is there anything else that you're trained to look for?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. What items are you trained to look for other than lashings?

17 A. Trained for?

18 Q. What are you -- what function are you performing on duty
19 besides checking lashings?

20 A. So I also checked for any leakage. If there's any oil leak,
21 immediately I'm supposed to take care of it.

22 Q. So when there's a leak, and you take care of it, what does
23 that entail? What are you doing? Do you wipe it down with a rag?

24 A. Yeah. I use rags to wipe.

25 Q. Okay. If it continues to leak, even if just a drip, do

1 people go around and re-wipe? Are they wiping again? Or is there
2 anything else that -- any other action you take? Like sometimes
3 people put down sand or absorbent pads.

4 A. So I would continue to wipe, and if it continues to leak,
5 then I'll notify or report to the chief mate, and we could refuse
6 the vessel -- the car.

7 Q. On the day of the incident, you were responsible for Deck 7
8 and 8. Was there anything on those decks during loading? Do you
9 remember wiping up leaks, specifically on Deck 8?

10 A. No, I -- so when I was on duty, I didn't found any.

11 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Was there anybody on Decks 7 and 8 with
12 you? Any other crew members?

13 MR. ZHAO: No.

14 MR. [REDACTED] You're -- so okay, you're the only ones for Deck
15 7 and 8? And what time were you on duty?

16 MR. ZHAO: From 1200 to 1600.

17 LTJG [REDACTED] And that's for all of the cargo loading
18 responsibilities?

19 MR. ZHAO: No. Just for my duty.

20 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay.

21 MR. ZHAO: At that time, loading deck.

22 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So help us understand how the loading
23 works. Do they load cars outboard to inboard, inboard to
24 outboard, one side to the other? How do they load?

25 MR. ZHAO: So I guess it's not exact order in principle to

1 load the cars. I guess it follows, I guess when -- where I guess
2 it's coming in or where it's supposed to be unloaded. And in
3 general, it's inboard to outboard, that type of stuff.

4 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Can -- does he recall if the port side on
5 the 8th deck, the aft port side, was that some of the earliest
6 loaded cars or later loaded cars?

7 MR. ZHAO: So when I was on duty, the only cars that was
8 loaded was actually at the end. It was mainly on Deck 8 as
9 opposed to the Deck 9 area. Those are the only few cars that I
10 was, I guess, observing loading onboard. The other cars -- the
11 Deck 8 port side aft was not loaded on when I was on duty.

12 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

13 MR. ZHAO: My -- I much -- to say, while I duty, Deck 8
14 nearly -- almost finished. You know what I mean?

15 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay.

16 MR. ZHAO: There only a few cars at middle of the deck.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. All right.

18 LT [REDACTED] So port side aft was loaded before noon on Deck
19 8?

20 MR. ZHAO: No, I don't know.

21 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

22 MR. ZHAO: Yes.

23 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

24 MR. ZHAO: Correct.

25 MR. [REDACTED] All right. Around how long was it after you did

1 your final check on Deck 8 before you heard on the walkie-talkie
2 the report on the smoke?

3 MR. ZHAO: I don't remember.

4 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay. Can you give, like, an approximate
5 time? Was it an hour, 30 minutes, 10 minutes? Do you have any
6 idea?

7 MR. ZHAO: I think more than 30 minutes.

8 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

9 LTJG [REDACTED] Thank you.

10 LT [REDACTED] Can we just talk a little more broadly about the
11 schedule that day? Was there a pressure to have the vessel ready
12 to get underway? Did you feel that you had enough time to do your
13 walkthroughs? Or were you trying to accomplish them quickly? Did
14 you feel that you were rushed?

15 MR. ZHAO: So it wasn't really rushed, so I have finished my
16 inspection, and I have closed the doors behind me.

17 LT [REDACTED] Okay. Thank you.

18 BY LTJG [REDACTED]

19 Q. And so on Decks -- Deck 8 in particular, is there anything
20 other than cars loaded?

21 A. No, I didn't see any.

22 Q. And then for Deck 7 and 8, are -- you are sure that all of
23 the watertight doors were closed, even those going to the aft
24 mooring station?

25 A. Repeat the -- say again please?

1 Q. So you're sure all watertight doors for Deck 7 and 8 were
2 closed?

3 A. Deck 7 -- between Deck 7 and 8, no watertight. Deck --

4 Q. I mean --

5 A. Deck 8 and Deck 9 --

6 Q. Closed?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And what about Deck 7 to Deck 6?

9 A. Yes. Deck 7 and Deck 6, yeah, are closed.

10 Q. And then Deck 7 to the mooring station?

11 A. Deck 7, oh, yes.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Deck 7 to mooring -- aft mooring station?

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. Yeah.

16 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay. All right. The Coast Guard is done
17 with their line of questioning if the NTSB would like to take
18 over.

19 MR. MUISE: Sure. This is Marcel with the NTSB. Maybe just
20 a couple of questions. Is there any mooring lines -- extra
21 mooring lines stored inside on Deck 7 or 8?

22 MR. ZHAO: So since I am only responsible for the deck, so I
23 am not sure if there's any of those items.

24 LTJG [REDACTED] Okay.

25 MR. MUISE: Okay. While you're on watch that day, on your

1 shift, did the longshoreman damage the ship at all? Did they hit
2 a column or the side of the ship with the cars that day?

3 MR. ZHAO: So when I'm on watch, I didn't see any accident.

4 MR. MUISE: Okay. Thank you.

5 Joe, do you have anything to add?

6 MR. PANAGIOTOU: Just curious about the loading. Are the
7 cars loaded on brought on under their own power, or are they towed
8 in?

9 MR. ZHAO: So both. So some are driven on, and some are
10 actually towed by a vehicle.

11 MR. PANAGIOTOU: Does he have a feeling of approximately how
12 many would get towed on? Like percentage. 50 percent or 10
13 percent or something?

14 MR. CHANG: So less than half.

15 MR. ZHAO: The -- during my watch, less than half.

16 MR. PANAGIOTOU: Okay. Thank you. I don't have any further
17 questions.

18 LTJG [REDACTED] Mr. Muise, are you good?

19 MR. MUISE: I am good. Thanks, guys.

20 LTJG [REDACTED] All righty. Then we will end the interview
21 with the second mate of the *Hoëgh Xiamen*. It's about 3:11 in the
22 afternoon of June 6th, 2020.

23 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: SHIPBOARD FIRE ABOARD THE *HOËGH XIAMEN* IN JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA,
ON JUNE 4, 2020
Interview of Min Zhao

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA20FM020

PLACE: Jacksonville, Florida

DATE: June 6, 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.



Christy Wilson
Transcriber