

UNITED STATES OF [REDACTED]

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

*

COLLISION BETWEEN USCG CUTTER *

WINSLOW GRIESSER & F/V *DESAKATA* * Accident No.: DCA22PM034

OFFSHORE OF DORADO, PUERTO RICO *

ON AUGUST 8, 2022 *

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Interview of: LTJG [REDACTED] Executive Officer (XO)

USCG Cutter *Winslow Griesser*

US Coast Guard Facilities
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Thursday,
August 11, 2022

APPEARANCES:

MARCEL MUISE, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

██████████ Investigating Officer
United States Coast Guard

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of LTJG [REDACTED]	
By Mr. Muise	4
By Mr. [REDACTED]	20
By Mr. Muise	20

1 I N T E R V I E W

2 MR. MUISE: This is Marcel Muise with the National
3 Transportation Safety Board. It's August 11th. We're in -- at
4 Sector San Juan interviewing the XO of the *Winslow Griesser*.

5 Did I pronounce it right?

6 LTJG [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

7 MR. MUISE: Okay. Regarding a collision from the 8th of
8 August. So with me is the Coast Guard investigating officer --
9 Do you want to introduce yourself?

10 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

11 MR. MUISE: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] common spelling.

12 And XO, go ahead and give you us your name your -- spelling
13 your name for us, too.

14 LTJG [REDACTED] Lieutenant Junior Grade [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
15 [REDACTED].

16 MR. MUISE: And again, you consent to have this recorded and
17 a transcript --

18 LTJG [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

19 MR. MUISE: Okay.

20 INTERVIEW OF LTJG [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

21 BY MR. MUISE:

22 Q. So, XO, can you just give us a little bit about your
23 background to start and how do you get to be the XO of an FRC as
24 far education and experience and training?

25 A. Yes, sir. Absolutely. Went to the United States Coast Guard

1 Academy, graduated in 2020. From there I went to a 210-foot
2 medium endurance cutter of St. Petersburg, Florida, the *Resolute*.
3 I was on there for 2 years.

4 Q. She was just here.

5 A. She was.

6 Q. Yeah. Okay.

7 A. On there 2 years, served as the weapons law enforcement and
8 first lieutenant on board throughout those 2-year period. And
9 then I, from there, put in my career sheet to become XO of an FRC.
10 It was one of my desires and goals to do that. Was selected to
11 come down to Puerto Rico to be the XO of the *Winslow Griesser*.

12 Q. Okay. What kind of pipeline training is involved with
13 getting to be an XO?

14 A. So we take the 2-week course in New London to prospective CO,
15 prospective XO course, which goes through a lot of the stuff that
16 COs and XOs see. We go through different types of mishap. We do
17 simulator training, all that type of training prior to us actually
18 taking over.

19 Q. The simulator training is bridge simulator training?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Okay. How about before that, on the *Resolute*, are you
22 getting some sort of surface warfare or officer training or --

23 A. Professional development from the other officers and people
24 on board. I was qualified as an OOD on board there, and then just
25 that shipboard training, running departments, divisions, those

1 types of things.

2 Q. Okay. How about before that at the academy, are you
3 getting -- what kind of training are you getting there in standing
4 a bridge watch?

5 A. So we take a navigation course. We take one every -- once a
6 year. So throughout the 4 years, you go through four different
7 navigation courses, and you start with the basics and then kind of
8 lead up to more advanced things. And with that we do a lot of
9 simulated -- we do stuff in simulators and it's instructed by
10 other Coast Guard officers.

11 Q. Okay. Do you have a merchant mariner credential?

12 A. Yes, sir. I have a 100-ton license.

13 Q. 100 -- a 100-ton license. Okay. Do you maintain the medical
14 certificate for that, too?

15 A. I haven't actually kept on it, sir. I haven't -- we get it
16 leaving the academy, we take the test and everything, and it's
17 only been 2 years since that, so --

18 Q. Okay. Okay. Tell me a little bit about your cutter, then,
19 your FRC, about capabilities, missions, AOR, that kind of stuff.

20 A. So it's a very high tempo AOR. I've only been down here for
21 about 2 months. I don't have exact dates on how long I've been
22 underway, but it hasn't been much. We've been broken for the past
23 month and a half. We had some engines issues.

24 So I reported on June 1st. We got underway for about a week
25 and a half before it broke, and during that time I was doing my

1 relief process with the off-going executive officer, going through
2 that process. And then capability wise we do counterdrug, AMIO,
3 search and rescue. I don't -- again, I haven't been here for that
4 long so I don't know the exact specs. I'm not actually qualified
5 on the FRC yet. We're still working towards that qualification.

6 Q. Okay. How about your crew? A crew of 20-something, I
7 understand; is that right?

8 A. Twenty -- I think it's 22 right now.

9 Q. Okay. Can you just walk me through the positions? You got a
10 CO, you're the XO. How many departments do you have?

11 A. We have three departments. So we have engineer, deck, and
12 operations.

13 Q. So are those BM1s, BM2s?

14 A. So your operations and your deck are held by junior officers,
15 so either ensigns or lieutenant junior grades.

16 Q. Oh, okay.

17 A. So either their first or second year out of the academy.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And then your engineer is an EPO, so it's a MKC.

20 Q. MKC. All right. And then a mix of BMs and MKs and anybody
21 else?

22 A. Mix of BMs, MKs, ET, CS, EM. I think that covers everyone.

23 Q. Do you have a corpsman?

24 A. GM.

25 Q. A GM?

1 A. We have a GM. We don't have a corpsman. No, sir.

2 Q. So tell me about the -- you've only been here a couple months
3 so you have an outside perspective. Does the crew getting along
4 just fine or is there personnel issues or --

5 A. They do. With being down in Puerto Rico, it's a 2-year
6 billet for the enlisted side, where in the -- in CONUS it's
7 usually a 3-year billet for enlisted, so you see about a -- a
8 higher turnover rate every year. Going through transfer season,
9 which is like July/August timeframe, we pretty much got everyone
10 that was supposed to be out here and then everyone kind of
11 departed. I don't know the exact number of turnover rate that we
12 had, but the crew's been getting along great. We had a lot of
13 talented individuals come in that either had prior FRC experience
14 or prior law enforcement experience, those types of things. And
15 there's been no personnel issue type things. From what I've seen,
16 and with my job what I kind of deal with is the admin personnel
17 end of it, everyone's got along great.

18 Q. Okay. People that are rotating in, are they adjusting okay?

19 A. Absolutely. Yeah. They're really hitting hard with those
20 qualifications and recertifications on certain things and -- but
21 they're actively involved like right away.

22 Q. Good. Okay. So let's talk about this last voyage then.
23 What was the mission, if you can -- if it's not classified, can we
24 talk about where you guys are headed? We'll get into the actual
25 incident later, but --

1 A. I don't -- I'm not actually sure because -- we were heading
2 west. I don't know the exact location, what our mission set is,
3 is classified or unclassified. I'd have to check on that. But we
4 were heading westbound to do normal law enforcement, enforce laws
5 and treaties in the -- between Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic
6 in the Mona Pass.

7 Q. The Mona Pass. Okay. Everything working okay?

8 A. It was. When we got underway it was. Prior to that we had,
9 like I mentioned, we had those engine issues.

10 Q. Sure.

11 A. The MTU, which is the engine type that we have, we had
12 technicians actually sent down. They were here for a couple
13 weeks, replaced a lot of things. We had what we call a shakedown.
14 I want -- I don't know the exact date, but it was probably about a
15 week ago, where we test -- that's when we got underway, test
16 everything, make sure all the parameters are where they need to
17 be. We kind of have a scale of like we were going to go this
18 speed for this long and -- all right, we did that and everything
19 was where it needed to be, and then you kind of go from there. So
20 based on that, everything was working.

21 We were scheduled to get underway Monday morning at 8:30. As
22 we started to do our prechecks to get underway based on our
23 checklist and all those types of things, we were having some type
24 of engine issue. I'm not an engineer by any means so I won't
25 speak too much on what the actual issue was, but they weren't

1 getting enough water into the engines and things like that, so it
2 delayed our leave time.

3 Q. Okay.

4 MR. MUISE: [REDACTED] do you have any background questions before
5 we get into the actual incident?

6 MR. [REDACTED] No. Right now no.

7 MR. MUISE: Okay.

8 BY MR. MUISE:

9 Q. So, XO, what I'd like you to do now is just tell us about
10 that day from the time you guys got underway, what you remember.
11 I know you weren't on the bridge.

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. So with as much detail as possible -- in school they tell us
14 to have you close your eyes if that helps, so feel free. And just
15 walk us through that day as much as you remember.

16 A. Okay. So normal day of getting underway, we're -- liberty
17 expired 7:30, which is normal, an hour before, to give everyone
18 time to get on board, those types of things. And then a nav brief
19 was held at 8 o'clock. During the nav brief is when those engine
20 issues kind of came up. So everyone kind of went to their
21 positions as we were going to get underway and we kind of had them
22 stand down because the MKC was like, hey, we're working through a
23 couple things, we're going to do some trouble shooting. So we
24 just had everyone kind of hanging out, hanging out on the mess
25 deck just doing small little tasks to make sure we were still kind

1 of tracking to get underway.

2 I don't know the exact time that we left. It was around,
3 let's say, 1330. Once they got the engines fired up and all of
4 that, we did another small little brief on the bridge just with
5 the bridge crew and then each watch station itself. So the folks
6 on the fantail, they did their little brief. Talked about risk
7 assessment, see if anything changed from when were supposed to
8 originally get underway. So we made sure we did all that again
9 and then, from there, got underway. Headed outbound, a very short
10 transit to actually get out of here.

11 I was the conn and the CO was my coach. So not actually
12 being qualified, you have a coach to kind of make sure you're
13 doing everything as you're supposed to. So he coached me out. We
14 got outbound, started heading west towards our track line, to
15 intercept our track line and then kind of make our way further
16 west.

17 At that point, BM2, he relieved me. So it was his watch.
18 He's a qualified OOD. He was like, hey, this is my watch. He's
19 like, I know you got a bunch of other stuff going on. He's like,
20 you can stay up here if you want and break in, since I'm still in
21 the break-in process, so under the instruction of the
22 qualified -- but went down below. He took the watch.

23 I was in and out of the bridge for the next 20, 25 minutes,
24 just kind of checking in, seeing where we're going, if we're going
25 to be on time for things, all of that. And then I was down below

1 in my room just working on the computer doing the normal stuff
2 that I do underway, and then heard a noise. And the seas were not
3 great at the time, and so with the FRC you kind of feel a lot as
4 you come up on a swell and then come down on a swell.

5 When it first seemed like when we came down, it wasn't a
6 usual noise that I had heard, either on this boat or another boat
7 kind of from a swell and you kind of feel a vibration once you
8 come down the swell. And it didn't sound normal, so it kind of
9 alerted me. I was like that's not a normal noise that I always
10 hear. So at that point I started walking up towards the bridge
11 and I could feel the engines come down in speed. And by the time
12 I had gotten up to the bridge, I kind of assessed the situation of
13 what was going on. I couldn't visually see anything at that
14 point, just -- you could tell on the bridge before, just coming
15 off that ladder well, I saw that CO was physically driving at that
16 point. And then from there I kind of assessed and saw what was
17 going on.

18 No one really -- I kind of just started directing people
19 towards like, hey, get outside, keep your eyes out, there might be
20 people in the water. So from there we identified the one
21 individual waving his arms. And I kind of helped -- CO was in
22 front of the console driving. So we were pointing out in the
23 direction of where they were and how far away they were. During
24 that time as well I got the small boat ready. So I directed the
25 coxswain to -- like, hey, just go stand by in small boat. We

1 don't really know what's going on, but I want to be able to launch
2 quickly if need be.

3 We got closer. They threw life rings into the water. I
4 don't know the exact number that were deployed, but I know at
5 least two were. They're the two that are still on the small boat
6 now. The one individual that was conscious grabbed the life ring
7 so he had some type of flotation device. He was holding his
8 brother who had -- you could see the lacerations on him, didn't
9 look conscious from initially looking at him. He was kind of in
10 and out of the water as his brother was trying to stay afloat.

11 They made attempts to -- we have a Jacob's ladder on the
12 side -- to kind of see if we could get them up by that. And with
13 that, like he was still holding his brother, so we weren't able to
14 pull them both up. And they got -- they launched a small boat.
15 Small boat went out and the cutter kind of moved away for the
16 small boat to get alongside to them.

17 As they recovered them, they pulled the one brother that was
18 not conscious out of the water onto the small boat and then helped
19 the other individual onto the small boat. Recovered the small
20 boat. And I was limiting the people that were outside at that
21 point. Based on what I saw, just from the lacerations to the
22 extent of what was going on, and I didn't want the entire crew to
23 have to kind of see that. So limited the people that were
24 outside, to grab a few individuals that -- our CS1 who had prior
25 EMT experience. We didn't have an EMT on board at the time. And

1 that was made aware to sector and we were working on getting an
2 EMT. But he had prior medical experience from his time in
3 previous service.

4 So grabbed him, had our EMT bags, had all the gun bags out
5 there to kind of assess immediately what we could do to provide
6 assistance to them. We took the one individual off that -- it was
7 saw that he had lacerations to the back of his head. He was
8 bleeding, some blood coming out of his ear. So took him off the
9 small boat, immediately sat him down, gave him some water. And he
10 spoke -- he was speaking Spanish, so we had one -- we have
11 multiple on board that speak Spanish. So they were kind of
12 communicating with him. I was trying to -- they were checking to
13 make sure he didn't have any other visible injuries.

14 They put some type of gauze around his head just so there
15 wouldn't be any further bleeding. And then our CS1 was -- the
16 small boat crew came off as well. It was the CS1 and the other
17 brother with the lacerations to his body that wasn't conscious on
18 the small boat still, and the CS1 kind of checked him out, looked
19 for a pulse. There was no pulse. Checked his airways, those
20 types of things, and -- he didn't make a determination that there
21 was a fatality, but based on not having a pulse and those things,
22 he said there's not much we can do here.

23 I briefed all that to CO, who was still up on the bridge kind
24 of working communications with sector as we started making our way
25 back. And then just working with the CO and checking in on the

1 other individuals, checking in on the crew, see how everyone was
2 kind of handling the situation. Obviously everyone was very
3 shaken up, distraught. It was not many emotions going on, just a
4 lot of blank stares. So I was checking in on my crews to make
5 sure that like, okay, we're going to be pulling back in, everyone
6 take a deep breath; we have to safely get the ship back still and
7 assess the situation from there.

8 At that point I was also going back and forth between my
9 room, kind of running through our mishap response plan. So
10 there's a checklist in there that kind of says if a type of event
11 like this happens, different types of mishaps, these are the
12 points that you want to hit. So I was making sure that those
13 immediate notifications were made, which they were within a few
14 minutes to the command center. A message was sent out on our SIPR
15 chat of the -- not of the entire event, but just, hey, this
16 happened, and then communication just kind of went over the radio
17 from there, which I wasn't up on the bridge for.

18 And then we pulled in and I started working with the
19 different people that are on the pier. They told us EMS services
20 would be there. EMTs came on board, the local EMTs. I directed
21 them to where the individual we had sitting up on the aft part of
22 the bridge. We had a chair up there just for him to kind of sit
23 and drink water. He was sitting there with two of our members
24 that spoke Spanish. So I don't actually know what they were
25 saying because I don't speak any Spanish. But just checking in

1 with them to making sure that he's okay. And then as EMS came on,
2 they kind of took the situation over from there.

3 And from that point everyone was kind of just inside and
4 CDR [REDACTED] came on. We started working through our mishap
5 process.

6 Q. Okay. Well, XO, thanks. That's detailed information. I
7 learned a lot there. I just have a few follow-up questions
8 actually. Can -- tell me a little bit more about the weather,
9 on-scene weather.

10 A. So I don't know the exact -- it was choppier than usual. As
11 we exited the harbor, I'd say between 5- and 7-foot seas, which is
12 not uncommon for out there. As you leave the harbor it starts to
13 deteriorate. Just based on when I was up on the bridge and we
14 started going west, it was heavier seas than it was in the harbor.

15 Q. Okay.

16 MR. [REDACTED] And the seas were behind you or in front of you?

17 LTJG [REDACTED] I'm not sure.

18 BY MR. MUISE:

19 Q. Okay. PFDs, was there -- did any of the individuals have
20 PFDs on?

21 A. The two individuals from their boat?

22 Q. Yeah. Right.

23 A. Not when we picked them up in the water.

24 Q. Okay. Was there any talk of launching a helicopter?

25 A. There was talk of a medevac, but based on where we were -- I

1 don't know exactly how long it took us to get back after the
2 incident, but to get a helicopter there would have been about the
3 same amount of time. I think they did eventually launch a
4 helicopter -- I'm not 100 percent sure -- but to kind of assess
5 the area itself.

6 Q. Okay. How about the RB-M, what their role in the incident?

7 A. The RB-M? Sorry?

8 Q. The 45-footer.

9 A. Oh, from station?

10 Q. Right.

11 A. So the communication I heard was that they went out to kind
12 of see if the boat was -- see if they could locate the vessel and
13 determine if it was salvageable to put in tow, those types of
14 things. Again, I was in and out of the bridge so I didn't hear
15 all the comms both ways.

16 Q. Okay. I've got some fatigue questions for you, too. Does
17 the cutter or sector or higher up have a fatigue policy?

18 A. Yes, sir. I believe they do. I'm not 100 percent sure on
19 what it is.

20 Q. Do you guys track your hours at all? Like how many hours
21 you're up and how many hours you're on watch?

22 A. It's not --

23 Q. Is there a maximum number of hours you're allowed to be on
24 watch?

25 A. For the -- I would have to look into our actual cutter

1 instructions. I haven't had the chance to go through all that.
2 But based on we were coming off a weekend, the crew had the
3 Thursday off, the Friday off, the Saturday and the Sunday off
4 prior to getting underway.

5 Q. Okay. So it sounds like -- so who had the duty the night
6 before? Who might have been up all night?

7 A. We don't have a watchstander that's up all night.

8 Q. Oh, okay.

9 A. We have -- our in-port schedule is one in-port OOD. They do
10 a 2200 round, and then kind of secure the boat from there, lock
11 what needs to be locked, and then from our alarm system, if
12 anything goes off, they wake up based on that. So no one was up
13 throughout the night on board.

14 Q. Your EMT, are you -- it's a collateral duty for somebody or
15 there is no --

16 A. It is a collateral duty. Yes, sir.

17 Q. But you just don't happen to have one right now?

18 A. Right now we do not, no. We're -- we were in the process of
19 sending someone to school for it.

20 Q. Okay. So it's just one that you're supposed to have or --

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. How long is that training?

23 A. They just kind of changed the program. Before you used to go
24 for a couple months to Petaluma, California and go through the
25 whole process. Now they changed it to partial online where you

1 kind of work through the school end of it and then go for a couple
2 weeks --

3 Q. For the practical?

4 A. -- for the practical, actual hands-on stuff.

5 Q. Okay. That's the hybrid system. Do you know who the EMTs
6 were that you met at the pier, what agency they were?

7 A. No, sir. I do not. It was some local agency.

8 Q. Okay. Bridge team management, does your crew get or have you
9 had bridge team management training?

10 A. Yes. So when we do the XO course, a lot of it involves
11 bridge resource management type stuff. There is another bridge
12 resource management course offered. I don't know who on the ship
13 specifically has taken it.

14 Q. Is that a requirement for anybody?

15 A. It's a requirement for certain -- I wouldn't say it's a
16 requirement, but I know a lot of underway people do take it that
17 intend to continue underway, afloat careers.

18 Q. Okay. But I imagine -- I'm sure the BMT -- I'm sorry -- BTM
19 concepts roll into your training, like -- things like speaking up
20 and communication between people.

21 A. Yes, sir. And that's --

22 Q. Is that on-the-job training or is that some formal training?

23 A. It's definitely on-the-job training that I know of. From our
24 like kind of sign-offs that you get to get those qualifications,
25 part of it is a bridge resource management aspect of let's go

1 through these things and -- like the fatigue, like when do you
2 speak up when you're too tired, when do you kind of make that
3 decision as a leader as well to, okay, my crew's tired, they need
4 rest type thing.

5 Q. Sorry. I'm just texting the ship --

6 MR. MUISE: Go ahead, [REDACTED] Sorry.

7 BY MR. [REDACTED]

8 Q. Yeah. On the OOD training that you get, did they have --
9 there's a spot, right, for crew fatigueness, for bridge resource
10 management, there's items there that they cover that area?

11 A. I would have to double check on that and physically put eyes
12 on it again, but from what I remember, yes.

13 Q. Okay.

14 MR. MUISE: Do you have anything else?

15 MR. [REDACTED] No. Right now, not that I --

16 BY MR. MUISE:

17 Q. XO, the only thing -- my last question is always what went
18 well as far as -- is there a procedure, is there a training, is
19 there -- or a piece of equipment that you were very happy to have
20 that we can share with the rest of the fleet?

21 A. I wouldn't say any equipment. The crew responded how as an
22 XO board want's them to respond. Obviously a very traumatic
23 circumstance happened, but everyone did what they needed to do in
24 that circumstance and kind of be available to kind of direction
25 from someone or direct themselves to, hey, I've gone through

1 training so I've heard of things like this, like what can I --
2 where can I be to help.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And I know the crew pretty well. Again, we had a big
5 turnover, but like with the FRC community, it's really a smaller
6 knit crew. And everyone was very comfortable where they were in
7 what they were doing. And from my perspective, like that's the
8 response that you want from them. And I don't know if that came
9 from previous formal training, informal training, that type of
10 stuff, but the way that everyone reacted to the situation was how
11 anyone hopes that someone would react to the situation. Let's do
12 what we need to do, let's assess the situation, and then we'll go
13 from there.

14 Q. Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to add that we
15 should know or that I didn't ask?

16 A. No, sir.

17 MR. MUISE: Okay. With that, it's 1530 local and we'll
18 secure the interview.

19 (Whereupon, at 3:30 p.m., the interview was concluded.)
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22
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

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

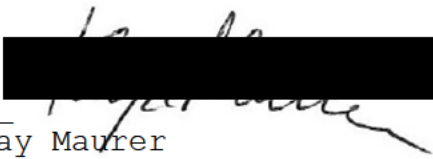
IN THE MATTER OF: COLLISION BETWEEN USCG CUTTER
WINSLOW GRIESSER & F/V DESAKATA
OFFSHORE OF DORADO, PUERTO RICO
ON AUGUST 8, 2022
Interview of LTJG [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA22PM034

PLACE: San Juan, Puerto Rico

DATE: August 11, 2022

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



Kay Maurer
Transcriber