

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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GROUNDING OF TOWING VESSEL *

Accident No.: DCA22FM035

CC PORTLAND ON AUGUST 8, 2022 *

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Interview of: KEVIN MONACO, Branch Pilot
Aransas-Corpus Christi Pilots

MATTHEW WHITE, Deputy Pilot
Aransas-Corpus Christi Pilots

Corpus Christi, Texas

Thursday,
August 11, 2022

APPEARANCES:

LCDR [REDACTED], SIO
United States Coast Guard

R. JON FURUKAWA, IIC
National Transportation Safety Board

CWO [REDACTED], IO
United States Coast Guard

LTJG [REDACTED], IO
United States Coast Guard

PAXTON CREW, ATTORNEY

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:06 a.m. Central)

1
2
3 [REDACTED] So good morning. It is 10:06 Central Time on
4 Thursday, August 11, 2022. We're at Coast Guard Sector Corpus
5 Christi. I'm conducting an interview concerning the incident that
6 occurred on the *CC Portland* on Sunday, August 7, 2022, at 1625
7 Central Time that resulted in a grounding and subsequent property
8 damage to the *CC Portland*. My name is Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED]
9 [REDACTED]. I'm the senior investigating officer. And I'm going to
10 have everyone in the room please state their name.

11 MR. FURUKAWA: And organization.

12 [REDACTED] And organization, yes.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

14 [REDACTED] Start (indiscernible).

15 MR. FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa, National Transportation Safety
16 Board.

17 [REDACTED] Okay. Kevin.

18 MR. MONACO: Kevin Monaco, I'm a Branch Pilot here in Corpus
19 Christi.

20 MR. WHITE: Matthew White, Deputy Pilot here Aransas Pilots.

21 MR. CREW: Paxton Crew, I'm an attorney. I'm here on behalf
22 of both Captain Monaco and Captain White.

23 [REDACTED] Okay.

24 [REDACTED]: Lieutenant Junior Grade [REDACTED]. I'm the
25 investigating officer.

1 [REDACTED] Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED],
2 investigating officer.

3 [REDACTED] Okay. Thank you. And, Kevin, do I have your
4 permission to record this interview?

5 MR. MONACO: Yes, ma'am.

6 [REDACTED] And, Matt, do I have your permission to record
7 this interview?

8 MR. WHITE: Yes.

9 [REDACTED] Awesome. All right. So, Jon, did you want to
10 give your statement for NTSB? Did you have a statement? You said
11 you -- entrance statement.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Not really --

13 [REDACTED] All right. We'll get going. So like I said,
14 we'll do a little bit of a round-robin. So I'm going to start off
15 with how long have you all been Aransas-Corpus Christi pilots?

16 MR. MONACO: I've been a branch pilot almost ten years, going
17 on ten years.

18 MR. WHITE: I started as a deputy pilot in February of last
19 year so about a year and a half now.

20 [REDACTED] And are you still a deputy pilot?

21 MR. WHITE: I'm still a deputy --

22 [REDACTED] Okay. Awesome. And before being a pilot,
23 what were you all doing?

24 MR. MONACO: I graduated from (indiscernible) Academy, Kings
25 Point in 2003. And I went to sea for (indiscernible) master

1 license, worked on oil tankers for about ten years before I
2 started (indiscernible) the Pilots here.

3 [REDACTED] Great. What company was it?

4 MR. MONACO: Sira (ph.) Bermerto (ph.).

5 [REDACTED] And, Matt, how about you?

6 MR. WHITE: I went to Texas Maritime Academy, graduated 2008,
7 worked my way up to Masters [sic] Unlimited as well for MARILEE
8 sailing on LNG ships actually.

9 [REDACTED] Oh, great.

10 MR. WHITE: So got some experience there and came shoreside
11 for a short while here in Corpus Christi and got in with the
12 Pilots last year.

13 [REDACTED] Awesome. What were you doing in shoreside?

14 MR. WHITE: I actually worked for Cheniere as part of the
15 project team to open the facility there, yep.

16 [REDACTED] Awesome. Well, thank you so much.

17 Jon, did you have any questions for them?

18 MR. FURUKAWA: Kevin, how old are you?

19 MR. MONACO: Forty-one.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And, Matt --

21 MR. WHITE: Thirty-seven.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Thirty-seven. Okay. So years in the maritime
23 industry is pretty much since graduation, right?

24 MR. MONACO: Yeah, (indiscernible), 2003 --

25 MR. FURUKAWA: Fifteen years --

1 MR. MONACO: -- at least 20 years next year.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: Twenty years. Okay. And for yourself?

3 MR. WHITE: Same, 2008 until now so 15 years actually
4 (indiscernible).

5 [REDACTED] All right. So, Kevin, if you could go ahead
6 and just walk us through what happened on the day of the incident
7 leading up to it from the time that you all took (indiscernible)
8 on side until they grounded.

9 MR. MONACO: So we were inbound (indiscernible). We had the
10 three tugs -- well, one needed to stop ashore (indiscernible) tug
11 number four. The other two tugs, let us inside the jetty, which
12 was to escort us around the (indiscernible). We were proceeding
13 inbound approaching the direction of *MacArthur*. The *CC Portland*
14 was going to be the number one tug (indiscernible). They did call
15 on the radio, our working channel, asked us to make sure the crew
16 had a weight on heaving line when they made fast, which is --
17 pretty much, we tell every crew on any ship to make sure they have
18 a weight on the heaving line because of the wind, you know, it
19 takes a lot so -- and we were just proceeding inbound like we
20 normally do. We were getting ready to slow down for Ingleside and
21 turn into La Quinta Channel. And we got a call on the radio from
22 the *Portland*, they were going to have to free spool their line.
23 At which point I said, do whatever you need to do because the crew
24 never told us anything, was going south or anything.

25 At that point, I told the *Portland*, whoever was talking on

1 the radio. And I'm not sure, at this point, who was driving. I
2 think I might've heard a rumor, whatever, that it was a training
3 mate. But I'm not positive. Whoever was driving was on the
4 radio. I said, do whatever you need to do to keep yourself safe
5 or whatever. I mean, we didn't need to make fast at that point.
6 I started backing the (indiscernible) tug to potentially give them
7 any more time or to help the situation. Then they, I guess they
8 apparently grounded after that. I'm not sure what happened on
9 their side so.

10 [REDACTED] Okay. And Matt, is there anything else that
11 you remember from the time leading up to fill in for Kevin or --

12 MR. WHITE: No, that's pretty much the way I remember it. I
13 mean, the only thing I could say is that Kevin was communicating
14 with the tugs on the ship. I started speaking with ship's crew
15 because we don't have -- you know, you're familiar with LNG ships.
16 We can't see the tug from where we are. We can't see them at all,
17 huge blind sector. So I asked the ship's crew to report on the
18 status of the tug. And the only thing that was reported to us was
19 that the messenger line that they were using had parted, had
20 broken. That's the only thing that was reported to us from the
21 ship's crew in the wheelhouse at least so --

22 [REDACTED] And was the channel that you all were working
23 on at with the *Portland*? Do you remember?

24 MR. MONACO: I think it was 77 --

25 MR. WHITE: Yeah, it was 77.

1 MR. WHITE: -- either 77 or 66, I don't know. But I think it
2 was 77.

3 [REDACTED] Okay. All right. And then, you mentioned
4 that they did not necessarily need to be made fast at that point.
5 Why is it that they were making-up when you were at that location?

6 MR. MONACO: (Indiscernible).

7 [REDACTED] What was that?

8 MR. MONACO: You'd have to ask them.

9 [REDACTED] Okay. You're not sure. They didn't really
10 say or -- as pilots, what is your role in the decision making on
11 when tugs are made-up, where they're made-up? If you could talk a
12 little bit about that.

13 MR. MONACO: There is on every job where when I want tugs
14 based on when different factors. I mean, every job's different.
15 That particular job, I'd want them made fast by the time they got
16 to Enbridge before we were making our turn into La Quinta Channel.

17 [REDACTED] And what's your reasoning for wanting them by
18 that point?

19 MR. MONACO: Because I have trouble making the turn --

20 [REDACTED] Okay. Jon, did you have any questions?

21 MR. FURUKAWA: No, not yet.

22 [REDACTED] Okay. All right. So I'll just keep going
23 along. What was the *LNG Fukurokuju* drafting during the transit?
24 Do you recall?

25 MR. WHITE: I think it was about 33 feet, but I'd have to

1 look on --

2 (Crosstalk)

3 MR. MONACO: -- I could look --

4 MR. WHITE: -- I could look it up and tell you the exact
5 draft.

6 [REDACTED] Do you have, like, your -- how do you all
7 track that? Is it something that you can send me or --

8 MR. MONACO: It's on the pilot (indiscernible)?

9 [REDACTED] Do you have a copy of that?

10 MR. MONACO: I don't have a copy of that, no.

11 [REDACTED] No.

12 MR. WHITE: I didn't get that from the ship. But, you know,
13 we keep notes about vessels and whatnot. So I can tell you their
14 actual drive, 33 feet, 10 inches.

15 [REDACTED] Was it even keel, or was there a little bit of
16 trim?

17 MR. MONACO: There's a half a meter of trim. I seem to
18 remember that.

19 [REDACTED] So they had pretty large freeboard. All
20 right. And then, what was their speed at the time that you all
21 were trying to make the *Portland*?

22 MR. MONACO: I recall that we were doing approximately
23 (indiscernible) somewhere in that neighborhood.

24 [REDACTED] Okay. Is that pretty standard for this
25 evolution to move in at eight and a half knots when you're taking

1 (indiscernible).

2 MR. MONACO: That's completely up to the tug --

3 [REDACTED] It's the tug.

4 MR. MONACO: -- operator. Like I said, (indiscernible) where
5 they make fast as long as for me. Every pilot's different. You
6 know, somebody might want them made fast before we got to the
7 dredge or something like that. But for me, as long as they're
8 made fast (indiscernible) of Enbridge getting ready to make the
9 turn into La Quinta Channel --

10 [REDACTED] So your main goal is having that available
11 when you're going through La Quinta Channel.

12 MR. MONACO: Yeah. When I'm starting my turn, the channel
13 narrows down, and so that, me personally, that's when I want them
14 made fast.

15 [REDACTED] Okay. All right. And what was, do you all
16 recall what the wind speed and direction at the time?

17 MR. MONACO: That was southeast, 20 knots. It was 20 to
18 25 --

19 MR. WHITE: Yeah, it was probably in that range.

20 MR. MONACO: --because we actually talked about the wind
21 afterwards, after the grounding happened because we were now down
22 a tug. And we're talking about -- and I had sent the number three
23 tug --

24 [REDACTED] To the bow.

25 MR. MONACO: No --

1 MR. WHITE: No --

2 [REDACTED] No.

3 MR. MONACO: I had sent them to go try to --

4 MR. WHITE: -- to assist --

5 MR. MONACO: -- assist the *Portland*. I said, go give them a
6 hand if you need to because I didn't need them until we were
7 turning up and looking to base them --

8 MR. WHITE: It was the *Aransas*. You released the *Aransas*.

9 MR. MONACO: I released the *Aransas* to go help them because I
10 didn't know -- at that point, we were trying to figure out what
11 was going on. And then, I told the number two tug to make fast
12 (indiscernible) forward. So they went and made fast up there.

13 [REDACTED] And which tug was that?

14 MR. WHITE: *La Quinta* and *Vansen* (ph.) moved forward. The
15 *Gregory* aft --

16 (Crosstalk)

17 MR. MONACO: -- when we ended up turning (indiscernible).

18 [REDACTED] Okay. So you have the *CC La Quinta* ended up
19 being (indiscernible) forward. And then, who was aft, you said?

20 MR. MONACO: *The Gregory*.

21 [REDACTED] *The Gregory* was aft.

22 MR. MONACO: They didn't meet us until we were pretty much
23 turning up into *Cheniere* base up there.

24 [REDACTED] *The Gregory*.

25 MR. WHITE: *The Gregory* was the first (indiscernible) fast

1 offshore.

2 [REDACTED] Offshore, right?

3 MR. WHITE: Yep.

4 [REDACTED] And then --

5 MR. MONACO: Oh, I'm sorry, I thought --

6 [REDACTED] No, that's fine. Okay. So we have -- I just
7 want to make sure I understand. So we have the *CC Gregory* aft
8 that met offshore. And then, around Harbor Island is where you
9 took your two and three, and that was the *Aransas* and the *La*
10 *Quinta*.

11 MR. WHITE: Correct, just escorting --

12 [REDACTED] Just escorting, no lines. And then, as you're
13 passing the *General MacArthur* is when your *CC Portland* came to try
14 to make-up. So that whole time, the *CC Aransas* and the *CC La*
15 *Quinta* were never made-up.

16 MR. MONACO: Correct.

17 [REDACTED] They were just assist. Okay. Following. Was
18 there a tide at the time? Was it ebbing, flooding?

19 MR. MONACO: It was an up-current.

20 [REDACTED] Up-current. Do you know approximately what
21 the speed was of the current?

22 MR. MONACO: It was pretty decent. I think it was around a
23 knot, at least a knot when we were coming because in the
24 jetties -- but I can go back and look.

25 [REDACTED] Okay. All right.

1 MR. MONACO: (Indiscernible) just be guessing the exact
2 speed.

3 [REDACTED] Okay. So is there, like, a preferred time
4 that you would want to make a transit with LNG vessel, or does the
5 current not come into a factor when they're scheduling the ships?

6 MR. MONACO: No really.

7 [REDACTED] No.

8 MR. WHITE: There's no --

9 MR. MONACO: There's no -- yeah, when we bring it in at
10 (indiscernible) whatever.

11 [REDACTED] Or slack.

12 MR. MONACO: Yes.

13 [REDACTED] Just based on scheduling of the facility not
14 on any of the conditions necessarily unless, obviously, there's
15 something, like a safety or notice out broadcast --

16 MR. MONACO: Correct --

17 [REDACTED] -- that you can't bring anyone in. Okay. All
18 right. So what's your experience with tractor tugs?

19 MR. MONACO: What do you mean?

20 [REDACTED] I mean, how long have you been working with
21 having them as your assist, tractor tugs specifically with Z-
22 drive?

23 MR. MONACO: For the last ten years, ever since I become a
24 pilot, we've had tractor tugs.

25 [REDACTED] Okay. So pretty familiar.

1 MR. MONACO: (Indiscernible).

2 [REDACTED] Have you ever had or heard of any incidents
3 happening similar to this?

4 MR. MONACO: I believe they had a couple months ago, but I'm
5 not positive --

6 [REDACTED] Yeah, we did have one a couple months ago,
7 very similar actually with the *Gregory*. But I was curious that
8 there was, like, any other ones that may stand out or --

9 MR. WHITE: I mean, I've certainly heard about tractor tugs
10 running aground, tractor tugs, you know --

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They're doing ship assistance.
12 Sometimes they get out of the channel, whether they have a line or
13 not, they might run aground.

14 MR. WHITE: I've certainly heard those stories. Personally,
15 I don't have any personal experience being on a ship like a
16 tractor or any tug when it's aground but certainly heard those
17 stories, yeah.

18 [REDACTED] Okay. And then, with your experience as a LNG
19 master actually, I'm curious, that bow lead, is that a common
20 configuration to have them, like, fouled a bow with an LNG vessel?

21 MR. WHITE: I've seen it in a couple other places. But to be
22 honest, the places that went, this is probably one of the narrower
23 channels that I've ever seen LNG ships navigating in. So I've
24 seen them made fast center lead forward like that but not for this
25 type of transit. I've seen it, you know, shorter transits or just

1 for docking or just for --

2 (Crosstalk)

3 MR. MONACO: -- center lead forward on a daily basis all over
4 the world. Like, it's not an uncommon thing --

5 [REDACTED] It's not an uncommon --

6 MR. WHITE: We use it in other places in this harbor --

7 MR. MONACO: They use us to get to the Panama Canal --

8 MR. WHITE: Yeah.

9 MR. MONACO: -- the new canal. The tugs are center lead
10 forward. So the center lead forward tug is nothing new and
11 nothing out of the ordinary.

12 [REDACTED] Is it normal for them to be in the
13 configuration when they're like bow-to-bow when they're center
14 lead forward, or is it typical for them to have their stern --

15 MR. MONACO: That's where their winch is (indiscernible)
16 called a stem (indiscernible).

17 [REDACTED] Okay. I'm just trying to understand because
18 one of the -- like, as an IO, we kind of look into every possible
19 why. So we're wondering, well, why are they in that position, and
20 is it absolutely necessary that they're in that position if it's
21 so sensitive with the Z-drives. You can make one slight wrong
22 correction and then, like, end up in a bad situation very quickly.
23 So that's why I was curious how common it was that they're in this
24 bow-to-bow or bow lead position, and why they're not just off the
25 quarter of the bow or if they can wait until you're at a slower

1 speed to be at that position if that makes sense. I don't know if
2 you have any thoughts on that or recommendations on that.

3 MR. MONACO: Like I said before, that's completely up to
4 whoever's driving the tug.

5 [REDACTED] Okay.

6 MR. MONACO: And their experience, I mean, what they're
7 comfortable with I would say.

8 [REDACTED] Would it be possible to meet the same end goal
9 if they were not in that bow lead position?

10 MR. MONACO: I can't speak for every pilot. But for me, no,
11 that's we're they're going to be in and they're going to continue
12 to be there (indiscernible) shoulder. La Quinta Channel, like I
13 said, is a narrow channel. It's unfortunate that had the incident
14 with the *Portland*. But it's not going to change where I put my
15 tug. They're still going to center lead forward every job that I
16 do up to Cheniere (indiscernible).

17 [REDACTED] Okay. Just because of how narrow that channel
18 is --

19 MR. MONACO: Yeah, like I said --

20 [REDACTED] -- that's like one of the main factors.

21 MR. MONACO: I want to make fast ready to go in case I do
22 need them. Most of the time we don't need to use them, but if
23 something happened to that tug or the ship or whatever, they're
24 made fast and ready to go. And they can, you know -- there's a
25 lot more options there so --

1 [REDACTED] Is it common for you all to be at about eight
2 knots, or is it practical to be slower than eight knots when
3 you're moving in that part of the channel?

4 MR. MONACO: It's all different. I mean, yeah --

5 MR. WHITE: Weather or traffic --

6 MR. MONACO: I wanted to keep my speed up. I was going to
7 slow down for the ships at Ingleside, but when we're coming up on
8 the bridge -- you know, because it was windy that day. The LNG
9 ships have a lot of --

10 [REDACTED] Oh, yeah, especially a third in ballast so --

11 MR. MONACO: Yeah.

12 [REDACTED] All right. Let's see. How was your
13 communication? You said earlier that you only really heard
14 from -- you thought it was whoever was operating the *Portland*.
15 Briefly, how was your communication with them? You weren't really
16 aware that you lost them other than the crew telling you that the
17 messenger line snapped.

18 MR. MONACO: No, I didn't lose them. They were there. They
19 said he was going to have freewheel it.

20 [REDACTED] Oh, that's right, you said that --

21 MR. MONACO: And I said do whatever you need to do because at
22 that point I didn't need to make fast. You know, I don't know
23 what's going on, so I just said do whatever you need to do, like,
24 keep yourself safe and --

25 [REDACTED] So there's nothing that -- yeah. Okay. That

1 makes sense. All right.

2 Did you have any questions, Jon?

3 MR. FURUKAWA: So after they're freewheeling the line, then
4 the crew said that the master parted.

5 MR. WHITE: The crew didn't report anything voluntarily. I
6 had to ask them what was going on.

7 [REDACTED] Because they --

8 MR. WHITE: They were very calm. And they didn't seem to be
9 too concerned. Kevin obviously was handling radio coms with the
10 tug. And I was trying to assist him. And so, I asked the
11 captain, do we have any information, what's going up there with
12 the tug? And all that they said was that the messenger line had
13 broken, had parted.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: But he already knew that, or did you have to
15 ask?

16 MR. WHITE: I did not know that at the time, I believe. I
17 don't recall exactly how that line of communication went, if I
18 asked him and he already knew or if he had to ask the mate on the
19 radio. I can't recall which order that was in, if he already knew
20 that and he just didn't volunteer it, or I don't know.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: And so the channel here is pretty narrow.

22 (Indiscernible) channel --

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

24 MR. FURUKAWA: And how narrow is it?

25 MR. WHITE: Certain stretches are down to 300 feet wide.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: And let's see. Kevin, how long have you been
2 a full pilot?

3 MR. MONACO: Since January 15th of 2015.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: And, Matt, you're going to be a deputy pilot.
5 Is it what, a three-year program or --

6 MR. WHITE: It's two years total. So I'll be a full pilot,
7 or I'm scheduled to get my commission in February '23.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: February '23. Where did the *Gray* (ph.)
9 *Hyperion* meet you guys again? The first tug was (indiscernible)
10 offshore.

11 MR. WHITE: Yeah, offshore. Yeah, they met us out somewhere
12 in the entrance channel, I don't recall exactly where.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: And they just follow you in. They don't
14 make --

15 MR. MONACO: No, they make fast, center lead aft.

16 MR. FURUKAWA: Center lead aft. Is that the control speed?
17 Do these LNG ships have, like a minimum speed that's something
18 crazy? Some ships will have, like, minimum speeds --

19 [REDACTED] Oversteer --

20 MR. FURUKAWA: -- or something.

21 MR. MONACO: No, no, there's no --

22 MR. FURUKAWA: Only (indiscernible). And then around Harbor
23 Island, two tugs met -- they escort, you know, make fast. And
24 what were those two tugs again?

25 MR. MONACO: The *Aransas* and the *La Quinta*, *CC Aransas*, *CC La*

1 *Quinta*.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And then before the dredge when you
3 want to ease the *Portland*.

4 MR. MONACO: Negative.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: No. So --

6 [REDACTED] It was after the dredge when they wanted to
7 have the *Portland* available.

8 MR. FURUKAWA: After the dredge. Okay. And that's to make
9 the turn. Is that it?

10 [REDACTED] To prepare for (indiscernible) to channel

11 MR. FURUKAWA: By that time she should've already been made
12 up and all that ideally.

13 MR. MONACO: Yes.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And after you make the turn and all,
15 pull that, you'd have, ideally, the *Portland* would be number one
16 on the bow, the *Gray* would be number four aft. Did the *Aransas*
17 and the *La Quinta* ever make fast with you guys?

18 MR. MONACO: They wouldn't make fast once we got up in the
19 Cheniere basin to turn the vessel. They'd make fast on starbound,
20 starboard quarter.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: And that's (indiscernible) basin. Okay. And
22 then, he'd stay there until you're more and all that.

23 MR. MONACO: He turned and went back down (indiscernible).

24 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. We're not familiar with this area so --

25 [REDACTED] I was just going to say we don't have a --

1 [REDACTED] We don't have a chart in here. I'm surprised.
2 I've already made that comment before. Yeah, we don't have the
3 necessary chart in here for some reason that kind of shows
4 (indiscernible).

5 MR. FURUKAWA: I saw it in your --

6 [REDACTED] In my office, yeah.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: What's the name of LNG facility again?

8 [REDACTED] Cheniere. Here's La Quinta Channel, Harbor
9 Island -- or Harbor Island's out there. Pelican Island is around
10 where the tug ended up. And this is kind of where they were when
11 it all happened. And La Quinta Channel is up this direction.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: (Indiscernible) kind of narrow.

13 [REDACTED] Yeah, it's very narrow.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: Are there any plans to widen the channel?

15 MR. MONACO: I think (indiscernible), there's certain
16 limitations on what they can and can't do.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: (Indiscernible) right there.

18 MR. MONACO: Yeah, (indiscernible). And their constricted
19 with that.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. (Indiscernible) [REDACTED].

21 [REDACTED] Okay. I don't have too many more questions
22 actually. We already covered a lot of my questions about the bow
23 placement, and why they would be configured that way. Does the
24 freeboard of the LNG vessel come into effect at all when you're
25 deciding on your bow placements or --

1 MR. MONACO: No --

2 [REDACTED] No. All right. And then, is there a minimum
3 speed -- or actually, I should say, is there a maximum speed that
4 the tugs can be made up at?

5 MR. MONACO: You'd have to ask them.

6 [REDACTED] Okay. It's based on the captains of the tugs.

7 MR. MONACO: Yeah, and how fast the tug can -- some of the
8 tugs can go faster than others, so, I mean, I don't think you're
9 going to make fast at 13 knots or something but it's --

10 [REDACTED] It doesn't sound smart.

11 MR. MONACO: No. But I really don't -- it's up --

12 [REDACTED] It's up to them, okay. Yeah, I'm just trying
13 to also understand, like, what decisions are solely on the captain
14 of the towing vessel when it comes to -- I guess -- well, they
15 have ultimate responsibility of their vessel --

16 MR. MONACO: Absolutely --

17 [REDACTED] -- so they can dunk out at any time, right.
18 And first, it's like, what the pilots can tell them to do. Is it
19 more of a suggestion when you talk to the captains on these towing
20 vessels, or is it a discussion at all or --

21 MR. WHITE: If we walk them --

22 MR. MONACO: What are you talking about?

23 [REDACTED] Like, when you're deciding where you need an
24 assist tug.

25 MR. MONACO: Yeah, I mean, every tug in the harbor -- I mean,

1 if they tell me, if the tug captain or mate says, hey, I can't
2 work here, it's unsafe, I'd rather go to this chock or whatever,
3 when their working with me -- and I pretty much (indiscernible).
4 I want them to be comfortable. The *Portland* is no use to me when
5 it runs aground and --

6 [REDACTED] Well, yeah.

7 MR. MONACO: -- so I want them safe and where they can work
8 and give me the most bang for my buck, if you will. If they're
9 going to have trouble getting into their line, if they're in a
10 certain position because of the, say, the anchor or whatever, I
11 will say, yeah, go wherever you're comfortable. And you can give,
12 you know -- because I want them comfortable and to be able do the
13 best job for me and the vessel that I'm calling.

14 [REDACTED] That makes sense. And they didn't raise any
15 concerns before saying that they were free spooling.

16 MR. MONACO: Nothing.

17 [REDACTED] No. Okay. Yeah.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: Do you know where the LNG ship was coming
19 from?

20 MR. MONACO: No, but I can find out.

21 [REDACTED] It was, like, France.

22 MR. MONACO: I write it in my book so --

23 [REDACTED] I have the notice of arrival, Jon.

24 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And after loaded, do you know where
25 it's going to.

1 [REDACTED] Maybe it's going back to France.

2 MR. WHITE: They departed from Dunker (ph.), departed from
3 Dunker to Corpus. I don't know where their next destination is.

4 [REDACTED] The captain, when I spoke with him, sounded
5 like they were going to France.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: Back to France.

7 [REDACTED] Yeah, back to France.

8 (Crosstalk)

9 [REDACTED] Well, it sounds like they were, like, kind of,
10 their orders kept changing --

11 MR. MONACO: They do that. Sometimes they'll ask the
12 captains where they're going, and they're like, yeah, we're going
13 to Europe. But we don't know where. Double-side --

14 [REDACTED] The captain was funny when I spoke with -- I
15 went onboard there Sunday night. And he was kind of like, oh,
16 well, they had us going here, and then here, and then here, and we
17 ended up here. I'm like, okay. I got it.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: The ship's already been loaded and gone.

19 [REDACTED] I don't know actually if they've departed yet.

20 MR. MONACO: I had to look it up, find out what flag it is.
21 It's a Bahamian flag, so it's just kind of shocking --

22 [REDACTED] Yeah, Bahamas.

23 MR. MONACO: -- but it was in France whenever I looked it up
24 so --

25 [REDACTED] Recently.

1 MR. MONACO: Yeah, it was on (indiscernible) where DT, where
2 its destination was --

3 [REDACTED] I can actually look it up for you right now
4 and see where they're at.

5 MR. MONACO: Can you say the name of the vessel five times
6 quickly --

7 [REDACTED] It's *LNG Fukurokuju*.

8 MR. MONACO: Say it five times *Fukurokuju*.

9 [REDACTED] *Fukurokuju* --

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Yeah, when I saw that, I was like --

11 [REDACTED] It took a lot of practice --

12 MR. FURUKAWA: That's a harder name than my last name, you
13 know. I can't even pronounce it.

14 [REDACTED] It did take a lot of practice for me to get
15 that one out. I stumbled on it on many interviews. It's recorded
16 so --

17 MR. FURUKAWA: And when [REDACTED] said what her last name
18 was -- okay.

19 [REDACTED] Sorry. Yeah, I really don't have any more
20 questions unless you do. Do you all have any questions for us? I
21 always open it up.

22 MR. MONACO: Not really. I mean --

23 [REDACTED] Tell me again what was the threshold to make
24 this a --

25 [REDACTED] Oh, major --

1 [REDACTED] -- major, yeah --

2 [REDACTED] Yeah. So \$500,000 property damage --

3 [REDACTED] It was the \$500,000 property damage --

4 [REDACTED] -- which does not take much if you

5 (indiscernible).

6 [REDACTED] Yeah.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: It's \$1972. This \$500,000 will be the water
8 gate. Six fatalities or a (indiscernible) U.S. vessel, motor
9 vessel over a hundred gross tons.

10 [REDACTED] Oh, it's outbound now.

11 MR. FURUKAWA: So the hundred gross tons, six fatalities are
12 still there. And we're changing the threshold to about two
13 million. Figure it out with (indiscernible) on those online
14 calculators, a half a million \$1972 is about two and a half
15 million today.

16 [REDACTED] Yeah. So it doesn't take much for this one to
17 reach it. It reached it pretty quickly. I think their initial
18 last minute was 1.3 million. So thankfully, no one was injured.
19 That's wonderful news. And the only damage was sustained to the
20 tug, didn't even touch the LNG vessel. So it's a very interesting
21 case. But yeah, --

22 (Crosstalk)

23 MR. FURUKAWA: -- pilots' organization, how many members do
24 you have?

25 MR. MONACO: There's 19 branch pilots.

1 MR. FURUKAWA: And you guys work, like, two weeks on, two
2 weeks off or one week on, one week off.

3 MR. MONACO: Correct. Two weeks.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: Two weeks on, two weeks off. Okay. And, you
5 know, we can't speculate, but you guys can. Is there anything
6 that we can do to make sure an accident like this never happens
7 again?

8 MR. MONACO: I hate to get into the what ifs not having
9 talked to the guy on the tugs, so I'm not going to -- from my
10 point of views, nothing out of the ordinary, nothing that I would
11 do differently, just an unfortunate incident.

12 MR. WHITE: I would continue to use the tug center lead
13 forward on LNG ships (indiscernible) La Quinta Channel. This
14 hasn't changed my opinion of their usefulness.

15 [REDACTED] No, that's really helpful for us because, like
16 I said, I was going down that rabbit hole because I was like,
17 well, how common is this? I mean, if it's a pretty common
18 practice then --

19 MR. MONACO: We did tons of simulation for the Cheniere
20 facility before we did even the first vessel. And like I said,
21 this has been tried and true to work and --

22 [REDACTED]: Well, you guys have a (indiscernible) issue too
23 on the 300-foot channel.

24 MR. MONACO: Yeah. No, exactly. That's when I'm not
25 changing --

1 [REDACTED] What kind of simulation did you all do? Was
2 it --

3 MR. MONACO: We went up to MITAGS --

4 [REDACTED] Oh, okay.

5 MR. WHITE: Full bridge simulators --

6 MR. MONACO: Full bridge. Every pilot went up there and had
7 to tug the Chouest tug operators. I mean, it was done right, the
8 simulations. There was not a leaf unturned, if you will.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: Just as long as you guys' training --

10 MR. MONACO: All the Chouest tug --

11 [REDACTED] Captains --

12 MR. MONACO: -- are good operators. And they were in
13 separate simulators, so it was real as a simulation can get --

14 [REDACTED] Oh, that's awesome. So is that where they
15 determine, hey, this is the best arrangement for this area?

16 MR. MONACO: Yeah. I mean -- yeah, I would say that's where
17 we kind of start, you know. I'm not saying every pilot will
18 continue (indiscernible) it's every day, every job's different.
19 But that's my opinion. And I'm going to continue center lead
20 forward --

21 [REDACTED] How long ago was that simulation that you all
22 took?

23 MR. WHITE: That was in '18 and '19.

24 MR. MONACO: Yeah, it was whenever --

25 [REDACTED] Like three or four years ago.

1 MR. MONACO: Yeah.

2 [REDACTED] That must be -- so the captain actually on the
3 tug, mentioned simulation in MITAGS as well. So it might've been
4 the same. He might've been up there for it. I don't know if you
5 remember. His name is Josh Baker. I don't know if he was there,
6 if you recall him.

7 MR. MONACO: I think he was.

8 [REDACTED] Yeah. So he mentioned a MITAGS simulator when
9 I spoke with him, so that might've been the same one.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: So the Cheniere facility hasn't been opened
11 that long.

12 [REDACTED] The Cheniere facility.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Cheniere.

14 [REDACTED] Do you recall what -- well, you were on the
15 team. Do you recall when they opened?

16 MR. WHITE: I mean, we started in 2016. The facility opened
17 2019 really. It was '19 and '20 (indiscernible) first cargo,
18 first LNG, first cargo.

19 [REDACTED] For that training specifically, are you deputy
20 pilots required to go through the same simulator or was that just
21 used for the purpose of figuring out how to handle the Cheniere
22 facility --

23 MR. MONACO: Yeah. Now they're trained with (indiscernible)
24 program --

25 [REDACTED] Okay. Awesome. So it's just passed on based

1 on what you all learned. Okay.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: And was that on the La Quinta Channel? Is
3 that first dredge for this facility or is --

4 MR. MONACO: Negative.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: -- it's the assisting.

6 MR. MONACO: Yeah.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. So those other refineries down that
8 channel.

9 MR. MONACO: Other facilities, there's none really. I guess,
10 the --

11 (Crosstalk)

12 MR. WHITE: -- occidental. Yeah. Occidental and --

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Petroleum.

14 MR. WHITE: There's petroleum. Yeah, petroleum is also a
15 bulk (indiscernible) dock in there. Then Sherwin (ph.) used to
16 be --

17 (Crosstalk)

18 MR. MONACO: -- out in La Quinta Channel so --

19 MR. WHITE: La Quinta Channel's in some form has existed for
20 a long time.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: So we already got the name of the motels.

22 [REDACTED] You know, it's they stay when they're very
23 close (indiscernible) La Quinta. I'm like, like the hotel, like
24 that's how you spell it.

25 MR. FURUKAWA: That's pretty much all I have.

1 [REDACTED] Yeah, I don't really have anything else.
2 Thank you again. We really appreciate -- this was very beneficial
3 to us. And if you need anything from us, let us know. You have
4 my -- actually, I have some cards for you all so --

5 MR. MONACO: I'm sorry, I didn't bring one. I didn't think
6 about it --

7 [REDACTED] Oh no, you're fine. I'm sure we'll cross
8 paths again. It's always nice to meet a fellow Kings Pointer.

9 MR. MONACO: Yeah.

10 [REDACTED] (Indiscernible). I was surprised. There's
11 not too many -- I'm going to actually conclude the recording.
12 This is Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED]. It is 10:44 Central
13 time at Sector Corpus Christi. This concludes our interviews of
14 Captain Kevin Monaco and Captain Matthew White.

15 (Whereupon, at 10:44 a.m. Central, the interview was
16 concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: GROUNDING OF TOWING VESSEL
 CC PORTLAND ON AUGUST 8, 2022
 Interview of Kevin Monaco and
 Matthew White

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA22FM035

PLACE: Corpus Christi, Texas

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.


Janet Deal
Transcriber