

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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CRANE EQUIPMENT FAILURE ONBOARD
CARGO VESSEL *THORCO BASILISK*, IN
HOUSTON, TEXAS ON JULY 26, 2022

Accident No.: DCA22FM031

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Interview of: JOAQUIN ALVAREZ, Shore Laborer
WATCO

Houston, Texas

Wednesday,
August 3, 2022

APPEARANCES:

██████████, Lieutenant, Marine Investigator
United States Coast Guard Sector Houston

██████████, Chief Warrant Officer, Marine Investigator
United States Coast Guard Sector Houston

██████████, Lieutenant Junior Grade
United States Coast Guard Sector Houston

DEREK JOHNSTON, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:10 p.m.)

1
2
3 [REDACTED]: All right. We are here at WATCO Greens Port
4 Terminal at 13901 Industrial Road, Houston, Texas. It is
5 August 3, 2022, approximately 12:10 p.m. We are conducting a
6 marine casualty investigation of the crane equipment failure of
7 the *Thorco Basilisk* on July 23. I am Lieutenant [REDACTED].

8 [REDACTED]: I'm Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED].

9 [REDACTED]: I'm Lieutenant Junior Grade [REDACTED].

10 MR. ALVAREZ: I'm Joaquin Alvarez.

11 [REDACTED]: And, sir, your title again?

12 MR. ALVAREZ: Laborer.

13 [REDACTED]: Laborer? Okay. And, NTSB, if you'd go
14 ahead with your introduction and your statement, please?

15 MR. JOHNSTON: Sure. Hi, Mr. Alvarez. My name's
16 Derek Johnston. I'm a marine casualty investigator with the
17 National Transportation Safety Board. Before we get started, I
18 just want to tell you a little bit about where I'm from and where
19 I work. I work at the NTSB. It's an independent federal agency.
20 We are separate from the Coast Guard. We're charged by Congress
21 to investigate major transportation accidents with the objective
22 to increase safety. We don't have any regulatory or enforcement
23 powers. We gather the facts and the evidence along with the Coast
24 Guard; and then, we perform a separate, our own, analysis of the
25 facts and produce our own report. The report'll contain a

1 probable cause, findings, and, in some cases, recommendations,
2 with the intent of preventing these types of accidents from
3 happening in the future. So, we essentially study accidents. So,
4 after this interview, we'll produce a transcript that you'll be
5 able to review; and then, after your review, it'll be placed in
6 the public document with the full report.

7 MR. ALVAREZ: Sounds good.

8 MR. JOHNSTON: Does that make sense?

9 MR. ALVAREZ: Sounds good. Yeah.

10 MR. JOHNSTON: Thank you.

11 [REDACTED]: All rightie. Excellent. Thank you.

12 INTERVIEW OF JOAQUIN ALVAREZ

13 BY [REDACTED]:

14 Q. Sir, Mr. Alvarez, would you mind walking us through your day
15 as you showed up for work that morning, I mean, you know, arriving
16 at the ship, and --

17 A. (Indiscernible) I'll be here like around 6:00 (indiscernible)
18 6:45 doing the meeting, safety meeting, for the morning.

19 (Indiscernible) and all that stuff. Don't be under the load. So,
20 we're doing good, you know, the rest of the day. Before lunch,
21 whenever we latched the piece, everything was good. The straps
22 and everything was okay. Whenever they lifted like about 5, 4
23 feet, the cable like snatch, and it fell like next to me, like 2
24 feet from me.

25 [REDACTED]: Wow.

1 MR. ALVAREZ: And then, after that, you know, did a
2 standdown. They made me do a paper saying what happened. And
3 then, they sent home.

4 [REDACTED]: So, you were down inside the cargo hold?

5 MR. ALVAREZ: I was, right.

6 BY [REDACTED]:

7 Q. Okay. The safety brief during the morning, at 6:45, you
8 said?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Who was all part of that? Were --

11 A. Jermaine (ph.) and James.

12 Q. Position-wise, are --

13 A. Superintendent.

14 Q. Superintendent? Okay. Anybody else involved?

15 A. Well, the gang foreman. His name is Julian Campos.

16 Q. Okay. Yeah.

17 A. And there were other people.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. I don't know their names.

20 Q. And then, there's -- are there other laborers that do your
21 position, as well?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Okay. How many laborers were there?

24 A. There was five in total (indiscernible).

25 Q. Five total laborers? Okay. All rightie.

- 1 A. And the welders.
- 2 Q. And welders down there?
- 3 A. There were like two of them.
- 4 Q. Two welders in the cargo hold?
- 5 A. Yes, sir.
- 6 Q. Okay. So, your job -- can you describe essentially what your
7 job is?
- 8 A. I'm a laborer. Basically, be inside the boat --
- 9 Q. Yeah.
- 10 A -- most of the time, you know, lashing and pulling straps to
11 make sure the load is going straight.
- 12 Q. Okay.
- 13 A. And then, some of the times, they pull me as an operator or
14 an unloader.
- 15 Q. Okay.
- 16 A. (Indiscernible) forklift.
- 17 Q. For this particular cargo, what was your duties for it?
- 18 A. You know, make sure everything was good, lashed, and that's
19 it.
- 20 Q. So, did you actually connect the crane?
- 21 A. I connected the crane.
- 22 Q. Okay.
- 23 A. The cables and everything.
- 24 Q. Okay. How was the connection made?
- 25 A. Well, it was -- the big shackles was on one side; and then,

1 like two small ones through the middle.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And then, I guess it was good.

4 Q. Yeah. How many straps were there? So --

5 A. Was one, two --

6 Q. -- so, you said two shackles up front, two in the back,
7 two bigger?

8 A. It was four.

9 Q. Four --

10 A. Because they make an extension (indiscernible).

11 Q. What was that?

12 A. They make an extension. Like, they put two straps. One was
13 going like down, and the other one's like, do it, (indiscernible).

14 Q. Okay.

15 BY [REDACTED]:

16 Q. Could you draw that if we gave you a piece of paper? Could
17 you --

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. -- could you draw that for me so I can understand it? I'm a
20 very visual person, so I can't --

21 A. It was something like this. (Indiscernible). Like that.

22 [REDACTED]: Okay.

23 BY [REDACTED]:

24 Q. And what -- front, back, middle --

25 A. This is the -- for the heavy part.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. You've got to fit that piece from inside right.

3 Q. Could you describe it for me?

4 A. Well, on the back of the (indiscernible) is like, like an
5 engine.

6 Q. Okay.

7 [REDACTED]: Okay.

8 MR. ALVAREZ: So, the big, the big shackle, that'll be on the
9 back, and the small shackles in front.

10 BY [REDACTED]:

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. So, what they --

13 Q. So, this small section here on the front, how far apart is
14 that? Is that --

15 (Crosstalk)

16 Q. -- about 5 foot or --

17 A. Not even.

18 Q. -- 6 --

19 A. It's like 1 foot apart.

20 Q. Okay. And so, shackle, shackle, one red strap, nylon strap,
21 wire, cable? What was this piece here?

22 A. It was metal. It's like the base of the piece.

23 Q. Okay. But the actual -- this arch that you drew here.

24 A. Oh, it was a strap.

25 Q. That's a red strap?

- 1 A. Orange. It was orange.
- 2 Q. Okay. So, that's an orange strap, and this is -- what is
3 this piece here, sir?
- 4 A. Another orange strap.
- 5 Q. Another orange strap?
- 6 A. Same thing.
- 7 Q. How -- is this one strap, or is this --
- 8 A. No, it was --
- 9 Q. -- three separate straps?
- 10 A. -- two. So, basically, it was one, two, three, and four.
- 11 Q. Okay. How are these attached here?
- 12 A. On the block from the crane, the main block.
- 13 Q. Okay. So, the actual main hook from the crane, right, is
14 like right here?
- 15 A. Yeah, it is.
- 16 Q. So, this is connected to one side of the hook here?
- 17 A. Yes, sir.
- 18 Q. And then, this section here --
- 19 A. In the middle.
- 20 Q. -- is connected to the other side?
- 21 A. Yeah. These little straps were connected on one side and the
22 other side. This one was going around the block.
- 23 [REDACTED]: Okay, okay. And then, how was this
24 connected here? Was that --
- 25 MR. ALVAREZ: The same thing. This one was one strap, right?

1 [REDACTED]: Yeah. And it'd --

2 MR. ALVAREZ: And then, the other one --

3 [REDACTED]: -- go back to itself?

4 MR. ALVAREZ: -- to the middle.

5 [REDACTED]: Okay. All right.

6 BY [REDACTED]:

7 Q. So, strap was connected to a strap?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. Okay. As the laborer, who told you to -- did you connect
10 this like this?

11 A. No, it was the gear man.

12 Q. The gear man? He gave you the stuff and said, connect that
13 to this, this, and this?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Okay. Who did he get his guidance from on how to connect it?

16 A. I don't know.

17 Q. Okay. I have an unusual question. The way I understand it
18 is, everything was connected, and it fell.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. I understand that you were the first person that went
21 back inside of the nacelle?

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. Did you happen to take any pictures?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Can you share with us those pictures? Do you have those on

1 your phone now?

2 A. I've got them on my phone.

3 Q. Can you show those and kind of write down just kind of what
4 it looked like inside?

5 A. Um-hum. So, basically, the strap was right there on the
6 block.

7 Q. Okay. So, that's the forward section, yes, sir?

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. Okay. Do you have -- and what other photos can you share?

10 A. The shackles. Those are the big ones.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. For the, you know, heavy part.

13 Q. Back corners?

14 A. Um-hum. That's the other one.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And (indiscernible) after the incident.

17 [REDACTED]: Okay. That's the back. What's -- is this
18 going what direction?

19 [REDACTED]: That's -- yeah. That's the gear and the switch.

20 MR. ALVAREZ: Oh, yes, like that. My bad.

21 [REDACTED]: Okay, okay.

22 MR. ALVAREZ: Yeah., yeah.

23 [REDACTED]: Okay.

24 [REDACTED]: So, this is -- that's the engine, the --

25 MR. ALVAREZ: Yeah, the engine.

1 [REDACTED]: And then, this is forward right here?

2 MR. ALVAREZ: I've got a video. You want to see it?

3 [REDACTED]: Please, yeah. If -- any documentation you can
4 share, any -- and we'll give you a business card, sir. We could
5 ask if you could just please --

6 MR. ALVAREZ: On the -- there's a better picture.

7 [REDACTED]: Yep. (Indiscernible).

8 [REDACTED]: Okay. And was everything still intact
9 after --

10 MR. ALVAREZ: Yeah.

11 [REDACTED]: -- the incident?

12 [REDACTED]: So, you were the first man in there, and you just
13 started taking pictures?

14 MR. ALVAREZ: I mean, the superintendent, they didn't want to
15 go down, so --

16 [REDACTED]: Yeah.

17 [REDACTED]: And was that same equipment reused after
18 to --

19 MR. ALVAREZ: No.

20 [REDACTED]: -- pull it off eventually?

21 MR. ALVAREZ: No.

22 [REDACTED]: No? They, they got new --

23 MR. ALVAREZ: Yeah, they bring new ones.

24 [REDACTED]: -- new equipment? Okay.

25 [REDACTED]: Yeah. (Indiscernible) right there.

1 [REDACTED]: Okay. Yeah, we'll ask you to send that to
2 us.

3 MR. ALVAREZ: All right.

4 [REDACTED]: No, not right now. We'll follow up with
5 that.

6 BY [REDACTED]:

7 Q. So, as far as you know, was there any document or procedure,
8 some type of document that would say, this is how you connect?

9 A. Not to -- I don't know.

10 Q. It was just verbal, just told to you --

11 A. Yes, like that.

12 Q. -- this is how you do it?

13 A. Yeah.

14 [REDACTED]: Okay. All right. I don't have anything
15 else.

16 [REDACTED]: I don't have anything.

17 [REDACTED]: Sir, Mr. Johnston, do you have anything?

18 MR. JOHNSTON: Yeah, just a couple of quick questions about
19 the attachment.

20 BY MR. JOHNSTON:

21 Q. You said you put new rigging on there after it fell to use
22 the -- to get it out?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Why did you use new rigging?

25 A. Because, you know, like after an accident like that, I mean,

1 the shackles and the straps, I mean, they might, you know, cut or
2 something, damage from it so that -- you know.

3 Q. Right. Yeah, yeah, that makes sense. Was it attached the
4 same way?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. It was?

7 A. Well, first, we put like cables so we can (indiscernible) the
8 main block from the piece; and then, we use the same thing to take
9 it out.

10 [REDACTED]: To pull the block out.

11 MR. ALVAREZ: Yeah.

12 [REDACTED]: Okay.

13 BY MR. JOHNSTON:

14 Q. Okay. So, the arrangement was basically the same? You
15 checked it?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 MR. JOHNSTON: Yeah. Okay. Just a second, here, sir. Thank
18 you. I think that's all the questions I have.

19 [REDACTED]: Okay.

20 BY [REDACTED]:

21 Q. Have you done similar cargo?

22 A. It was my first time doing it.

23 Q. Doing this type of cargo?

24 A. Yeah, that type of cargo.

25 Q. Did you do the ones earlier with the --

- 1 A. Yes, sir.
- 2 Q. You did? So, how many, by this time, had you lifted that
3 day?
- 4 A. Just like 40, I think.
- 5 Q. Forty of --
- 6 A. Forty --
- 7 Q. -- the same nacelles?
- 8 A. (Indiscernible), yeah.
- 9 Q. From that ship?
- 10 A. Because it was like 12, and then we did like nine, and that
11 was, that was like 20 something.
- 12 Q. So, around 20?
- 13 A. Yeah, around 20.
- 14 Q. Twenty total nacelles? Okay.
- 15 A. Yes, sir.
- 16 Q. Okay. And no incidents on those?
- 17 A. No.
- 18 Q. So, it fell right next to you. You said, 2 feet?
- 19 A. Um-hum.
- 20 Q. Did it fall perfectly flat? Did it hit one end first, the
21 other --
- 22 A. No.
- 23 Q. -- end first?
- 24 A. Flat.
- 25 Q. Flat? Okay. And did you hear anything, any type of noise

1 before? Did you get any warning that --

2 A. Yeah, I was --

3 Q. -- that was happening?

4 A. Couldn't hear for like 10 minutes.

5 Q. So loud? Yeah.

6 [REDACTED]: Yeah.

7 BY [REDACTED]:

8 Q. But prior to the cable snap, there were no noises --

9 A. No noise.

10 Q. -- that warned you something was wrong?

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. No? Okay.

13 [REDACTED]: Did you hear anything over the radio, or --

14 MR. ALVAREZ: (No audible response.)

15 [REDACTED]: How do you communicate down inside the hold:

16 radio, or --

17 MR. ALVAREZ: Well, the only one that has the radios is the

18 gang foreman.

19 [REDACTED]: The gang foreman? Okay.

20 MR. ALVAREZ: He's the only person with a radio.

21 [REDACTED]: Okay.

22 [REDACTED]: All right. That's all I got. Again, NTSB,

23 if you have any outstanding questions?

24 MR. JOHNSTON: Yeah.

25 BY MR. JOHNSTON:

1 Q. How many people were in the hold when the load fell?

2 A. Seven.

3 Q. Seven? And who -- do you guys usually stay down there like
4 for all the previous loads?

5 A. Yeah, we stay in, in one side of the hatch until we're
6 finished with everything.

7 Q. Okay, just like, so, when the tension is given on the line
8 that somebody down there says, you know, all clear, everybody step
9 back, or how does that work?

10 A. Well, we, you know, we lift the piece for the load, and, you
11 know, we step to, we step to the side.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. But we don't get up from the hatch (indiscernible).

14 MR. JOHNSTON: Okay. All right. That's all I got. Thanks.

15 [REDACTED]: I do have one follow-up, Mr. Alvarez.

16 BY [REDACTED]:

17 Q. Understanding that, you know, you're the work down there, the
18 labor, that's connecting and tightening up those shackles and
19 everything, you tighten them up hand tight or with a wrench?

20 A. Hand tight.

21 Q. Okay. My question is going to be, and I'll pre-animate it,
22 so we offloaded the second one, okay? It's almost time for lunch,
23 right? 1300, when you --

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. -- break for lunch? Cut it free from the one that was on

1 pier; brought the straps, shackles, and everything; put it down
2 inside the hold. Did you physically reconnect it before you went
3 to lunch, or did you just let it hang, went to lunch, and then
4 connected it when you came back? Do you recall?

5 A. Whenever there was a load, that was before lunch.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. So --

8 Q. So, the third one was -- the one that fell was connected
9 before lunch and ready to go?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. So, shackled, you had attached it, you tightened everything
12 up. It just wasn't connected to the hook yet, or it was connected
13 to the hook?

14 A. It was connected.

15 Q. So, it was ready to go?

16 A. It was ready to go.

17 Q. At 1 o'clock, the foreman said, lunch. Everybody left the
18 ship and went to lunch, and it just stayed connected?

19 A. No, it didn't.

20 Q. It didn't stay connected?

21 A. Oh, you're talking about the straps and that stuff?

22 Q. Yes, sir.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Everything was set up, ready to go at 1300 when you left for
25 lunch?

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Okay. So, at 1400, you came back from lunch, you had a quick
3 little meeting, you went down into the cargo hold, crane operator
4 went up, walking foreman came down in the cargo hold?

5 A. Talking about when we took the piece from the --

6 Q. The third piece, yes, sir, before it fell.

7 A. Yeah, you're right. I mean, everything you're saying, I
8 mean, yeah.

9 Q. I'm just trying to understand --

10 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

11 Q. -- was it -- if it was connected or --

12 A. It was connected.

13 Q. -- if it wasn't connected.

14 A. It was connected.

15 Q. It was? So, it was connected before you left for lunch?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. And when you came back from lunch, it was still connected
18 exactly the same as --

19 (Crosstalk)

20 BY [REDACTED]:

21 Q. -- same as it was before?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Did it appear as if anybody had used the crane or adjusted
24 how you connected it?

25 A. Nobody used the crane.

1 Q. Nobody touched it?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Okay. And so, then, did somebody verify the connections and
4 everything are still good; and then, we started the lift?

5 A. Yes, sir, my gang foreman did.

6 Q. The gang foreman checked everything; he said, looks good,
7 okay, let's go, lift it up, slow and steady, slow and steady?

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. And it falls?

10 A. Yeah.

11 [REDACTED]: Okay. Understood. Now, that's all I have, sir.

12 Thank you so much. I appreciate your time.

13 [REDACTED]: Okay. All right. Thank you, NTSB. Again,
14 sorry, do you have any outstanding? I know we've jumped back
15 quite a few times.

16 MR. JOHNSTON: Yeah, I just have one more.

17 [REDACTED]: Okay.

18 MR. JOHNSTON: Sorry.

19 [REDACTED]: Yep.

20 BY MR. JOHNSTON:

21 Q. So, sir, you said you came back from lunch, and all the
22 attachment points were all connected inside the unit, and the
23 slings were attached to the hook for the crane, right?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Was there any tension on the crane, on the hook?

1 A. No.

2 Q. So, the straps were, they weren't taut, they were -- or, they
3 weren't tight; they were just --

4 A. I mean, the only heavy thing on the straps was the shackles.
5 So, that's it.

6 Q. Right, but --

7 [REDACTED]: Sure.

8 BY MR. JOHNSTON:

9 Q. -- when you left for lunch, was the hook, you know, the
10 crane, was it pulled up enough to have tension on the straps?

11 A. No, sir.

12 Q. Oh, they were loose?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 MR. JOHNSTON: Okay. I understand. Thank you.

15 [REDACTED]: All rightie. Nothing from us, nothing
16 further. Thank you for your time. I'm going to end the
17 interview.

18 (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: CRANE EQUIPMENT FAILURE ONBOARD
 CARGO VESSEL *THORCO BASILISK*, IN
 HOUSTON, TEXAS ON JULY 26, 2022
 Interview of Joaquin Alvarez

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA22FM031

PLACE: Houston, Texas

DATE: August 3, 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.



Lisa D. Sevarino
Transcriber