

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

FRANCIS SCOTT KEY BRIDGE *

COLLAPSES AFTER VESSEL *

COLLISION IN BALTIMORE, *

MARYLAND ON MARCH 26, 2024 *

Accident No.: DCA24MM031

* * * * *

Interview of: [REDACTED]

Fifth Coast Guard District Bridge Manager
Mid Atlantic Region

via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday,
August 14, 2024

APPEARANCES:

DAN WALSH, Highway Factors Investigator
Office of Highway Safety
National Transportation Safety Board

SCOTT PARENT, Office of Highway Safety
National Transportation Safety Board

MARCEL MUISE, Investigator-in-Charge
Office of Marine Safety
National Transportation Safety Board

DEREK SODEN, Principal Structural Engineer
Federal Highway Administration

JOSEPH KROLAK, Principal Hydraulic Engineer
Federal Highway Administration

JAMES HARKNESS, Chief Engineer
Maryland Transportation Authority

ERIC NIELSEN, President
Association of Maryland Pilots

JATINDER SANDHU, Managing Director
Synergy Group USA

LT [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Staff Attorney
United States Coast Guard, Fifth District
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I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	
By Mr. Walsh	5
By Mr. Parent	7
By Mr. Muise	8
By Mr. Walsh	17
By Mr. Soden	17
By Mr. Krolak	21
By Mr. Walsh	23
By Mr. Muise	25

I N T E R V I E W

(8:03 a.m. CDT)

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3 MR. WALSH: Today is Wednesday, August 14th, 2024. The time
4 is about 8:03 a.m. Central Daylight Time. This interview is in
5 regard to the Key Bridge collapse in Baltimore, Maryland, that
6 occurred on March 26th, 2024.

7 My name is Dan Walsh, D-a-n, W-a-l-s-h, highway factors
8 investigator, in the NTSB's Office of Highway Safety. And with me
9 is Mr. Parent.

10 MR. PARENT: Scott Parent, S-c-o-t-t, P-a-r-e-n-t, with the
11 NTSB, Office of Highway Safety.

12 MR. WALSH: Mr. Muise.

13 MR. MUISE: This is Marcel Muise, with the NTSB's Office of
14 Marine Safety. My name is M-a-r-c-e-l, M-u-i-s-e.

15 MR. WALSH: Mr. Soden.

16 MR. SODEN: My name is Derek Soden, D-e-r-e-k, S-o-d-e-n.
17 I'm the principal structural engineer in the Office of Bridges and
18 Structures for the Federal Highway Administration.

19 MR. WALSH: Mr. Krolak.

20 MR. KROLAK: Yes. My name is Joe Krolak, J-o-s-e-p-h, K-r-o-
21 l-a-k, and I'm the principal hydraulic engineer in the Federal
22 Highway Office of Bridges and Structures.

23 MR. WALSH: Mr. Harkness.

24 MR. HARKNESS: Good morning. I'm James Harkness, J-a-m-e-s,
25 H-a-r-k-n-e-s-s, and I am the chief engineer for the Maryland

1 Transportation Authority.

2 MR. WALSH: Mr. Nielsen.

3 MR. NIELSEN: My name is Eric Nielsen, E-r-i-c, N-i-e-l-s-e-
4 n, and I'm president of Association of Maryland Pilots.

5 MR. WALSH: Mr. Sandhu.

6 MR. SANDHU: Yes. My name is Jatinder Sandhu, J-a-t-i-n-d-e-
7 r, S-a-n-d-h-u. I am the managing director of Synergy Group USA.

8 MR. WALSH: Lieutenant [REDACTED]

9 LT [REDACTED] Good morning, everyone. My name is [REDACTED]
10 [REDACTED]. I'm a staff attorney for the
11 Fifth District of the Coast Guard and counsel for Mr. [REDACTED]

12 MR. WALSH: And Mr. [REDACTED]

13 MR. [REDACTED] Yes. My name is [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. I
14 am the Fifth Coast Guard District bridge manager here at
15 Portsmouth, Virginia, for the Mid Atlantic Region of the United
16 States.

17 MR. WALSH: Thank you, Mr. [REDACTED]

18 INTERVIEW OF [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

19 BY MR. WALSH:

20 Q. Mr. [REDACTED] what are your duties as the district bridge
21 manager?

22 A. My duties as the district bridge manager are to be the
23 regional storefront for all regulatory actions the United States
24 Coast Guard has over -- associated with bridges over navigable
25 waterways of the United States. It would include functions such

1 as bridge permitting, regulations for draw bridges, monitoring
2 operations on the waterway for bridge construction or maintenance,
3 repair, inspection, all temporary deviations associated with those
4 actions or event actions, and then bridge lighting and other
5 signals and various other matters that fall under the regulations
6 between 33 C.F.R. 114 through 118.

7 Q. Up until the collapse, how did your duties impact the Francis
8 Scott Key Bridge?

9 A. This office had several interactions on the Francis Scott Key
10 Bridge over the 9 years that I've been in this position. I didn't
11 count up the specific number. They ranged from bridge maintenance
12 to repair and inspections, and then the one thing that was
13 accomplished within the last several years, I think it finished in
14 February of last year, was a new lighting plan for the Francis
15 Scott Key bridge, and that was related to some changes that needed
16 to be made to that lighting plan to make any compliance with
17 current regulations.

18 Q. What was your involvement with pier protection for the
19 Francis Scott Key Bridge?

20 A. During my time in this position, I had no direct involvement
21 in pier protection for the bridge. The bridge was permitted in
22 the 1970s, I think '72 if I recall correctly. And that's when the
23 pier protection was put in place. There were several dolphins on
24 both sides of the bridge, and that was the extent of the pier
25 protection, and that was documented within the Coast Guard bridge

1 permit at the time.

2 Q. Thank you.

3 MR. WALSH: Mr. Parent will continue with the questioning.

4 BY MR. PARENT:

5 Q. Good morning, [REDACTED] How are you?

6 A. Good morning, sir. I'm doing fine. And you?

7 Q. Not too bad. I just have a few single questions. Are you
8 aware of any navigation studies that were conducted for the Key
9 Bridge that would include vessel traffic that was diverse under
10 the bridge?

11 A. I have not been involved in any studies along that line. The
12 last time that potentially could have been studied, and I don't
13 know to exactly what extent would have been in relation to the
14 permit that was issued in the early '70s.

15 Q. Do you have any guidance on where we might look to find data
16 such as that vessel traffic including dead weight tonnages of
17 vessels that travel through that Key Bridge?

18 A. Wow. I don't have any firsthand knowledge of where that
19 information could be obtained. However, I would suggest that -- I
20 would assume that the Pilots Association may have some
21 information. There may -- there is a harbor safety committee
22 that's up and standing in the Port of Baltimore area, and some of
23 the folks on that panel, there may be someone that has some study
24 information that you could obtain. But, I've only gone to the --
25 I think maybe twice or three times, I've been able to attend that

1 specific harbor safety committee and meet some of the folks
2 including Captain Nielsen, and -- but that forum, harbor safety
3 committee, might be a good source to figure out who may have some
4 study information that you could look at.

5 Q. Okay. Thank you.

6 MR. PARENT: I have no further questions.

7 MR. WALSH: Thank you. Mr. Muise will continue with the
8 questioning.

9 BY MR. MUISE:

10 Q. Thanks again, Mr. [REDACTED] I just have a few follow ups from
11 there. The -- when you're approving or reviewing a permit for a
12 bridge, let's say a new bridge or maintenance, I've heard your
13 colleagues describe it as a box that's underneath the bridge where
14 you have the width of the channel, the height. Is that the only
15 thing that your program focuses on or is something else inside
16 that box that you look at?

17 A. Well, sir, the box what you call is what we call the
18 navigation envelope, and that certainly is the primary concern
19 that we have is the size of that envelope of horizontal and
20 vertical, and the placement of that envelope over the navigable
21 waterway are certainly primary concerns. But we do, in fact, look
22 at the overall size of the bridge both in terms of height and
23 width and so forth, as well as where structures are going to be
24 place within the navigable waterway because in some cases, those
25 structures might impact existing navigation in a way in which it

1 was not intended depending on how many structures are place in the
2 waterway and their locations.

3 So our role is to ensure that any bridge that's constructed
4 of the navigable waterways does not adversely impact navigation or
5 put another way, it provides for the reasonable means of
6 navigation once it's constructed and in place. I can expand on
7 that if you need further, but that, in a nutshell, that's what we
8 look at.

9 Q. Okay. So how do you -- or who decides how wide that envelope
10 is?

11 A. That's a decision that's made by the United States Coast
12 Guard, both the horizontal clearance is what you're talking about
13 the width, okay, and the vertical clearance above high water.
14 Those are two decisions that are made by the Coast Guard at the
15 time we make a permit decision and the action is the issuance of a
16 Coast Guard bridge permit.

17 Q. Okay. And is that based on some data or some study or I mean
18 how does that -- is that part of the -- I forget the waterways
19 assessment that they do, the local sector or is that just -- or do
20 you see public --

21 A. That is --

22 Q. -- to that.

23 A. Yeah, that has transitioned a bit over the years. The
24 current practice for about the last 10 or 12 years now, has been
25 to require a navigation impact report to be prepared by the

1 perspective bridge owner that we then review and evaluate and go
2 out with a preliminary public notice for navigation that presents
3 a proposed bridge to the public and particularly the mariners and
4 interested parties and gather further information before we then
5 set what we call the preliminary navigation clearance
6 determination which is early in the planning process for a bridge,
7 and that provides what we believe the clearances need to be at
8 minimum, in order for that bridge to be able to permitted once the
9 permit application is received. That process has certainly
10 matured over the years and have been more formalized. Back in the
11 timeframe when this bridge was permitted, I'm not sure exactly how
12 extensive that evaluation was and how it was done. I'm not trying
13 to denigrate it in any way. I just -- I don't have the policy and
14 procedures from that timeframe at my fingertips. So I'm trying to
15 give you what we do today.

16 Q. Sure, sure. Just to confirm, was this bridge built after the
17 Coast Guard inherited this program from the Army Corps?

18 A. It was by a matter of -- oh, about 5 or so years.

19 Q. Okay. So the permit would have --

20 A. The Coast Guard got in the business around 1967.

21 Q. Oh, after. Okay.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Does any of the criteria that you look at include the width
24 of the dredge channel versus the nearest obstruction, so say the
25 channel's "X" wide, are you also looking at -- all right, there's

1 so many meters of mud between me and the first bridge obstruction
2 I mean, or are you just looking at the box above the water?

3 A. I'm -- am I looking at the depth of water? Is that basic
4 question?

5 Q. Well, not necessarily depth but, not necessarily depth but
6 the actual -- the bottom around the channel, between the edge of
7 the channel that's dredged and the first hazard? Is that
8 something that you look at as well?

9 A. I'm not sure exactly how to answer this question. So I'll
10 just -- I'll try to answer what I think you're asking.

11 Q. Sure.

12 A. We do, in fact, look at the depth of water in the navigation
13 span as well as in the areas approaching the navigation spans from
14 all directions to that span, you know, whatever directions there
15 are, to ensure that those depths of water are going to provide
16 reasonable navigation. In other words, is that proposed location
17 of a navigation span appropriate for vessels to transit the
18 specific waterway.

19 Q. Okay. All right.

20 A. And we do look at -- we do also obviously take a hard look at
21 where the federal project is located and what the standoffs are
22 for the federal project as well.

23 Q. Okay. Can we talk a little bit about -- so are your files
24 all paper based? Can you talk about your paper files versus
25 what's in MISLE versus what's in I think it's called AIM is the

1 other database.

2 A. Yes, sir. US AIMS is a brand new database that we are
3 actively trying to populate as new projects come in. What I will
4 say is right now, the majority of what is there is limited to the
5 location of the bridge and the name of the bridge and a few other
6 pieces of information that notionally (ph.) we're able to put in.
7 So most of our record material, archived material, for this
8 office, is still in paper. Some of it has been scanned, in
9 particular for this particular bridge, a fair amount of what we
10 call the record material has been scanned, and I believe provided
11 to you folks at some point, as well as everybody on this call I
12 would imagine. But, US AIMS is still in its infancy, and we're
13 very much working. We barely launched it a matter of months ago.
14 MISLE has some limited information in it. It's never been
15 considered the main repository for bridges. Bridges are in there
16 from the standpoint of being a facility along the waterfront kind
17 of thing, you know, a bridge and so that anything that happens
18 with a bridge from an operational perspective, meaning some type
19 of collision or event, that the Coast Guard investigating folks,
20 the IOs can do an investigation and attach the investigation to
21 the bridge structure that they're doing their investigation on.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. So most of what I have is paper.

24 Q. Can you tell us a little about the Coast Guard smart bridge
25 program?

1 A. Smart bridge program. I'm drawing a blank, sir. I'm not
2 sure what you're talking about.

3 Q. Okay. I think one of the components was actively measuring
4 the air gap and then transmitting that up by AAIS. I know it does
5 a lot more than that, but --

6 A. Oh, okay. I'm sorry. Yeah, okay. I wasn't familiar with
7 the term. I am familiar with that. However, it's not something
8 that -- we allow for those sensors to be placed on bridges, but
9 the maintenance of those sensors and the information drawn from
10 those sensors is under NOAA's control. So, we're aware that
11 they're there, but the Coast Guard bridge program does not have
12 any regulatory control over them.

13 Q. Okay. Regarding response, how much or have you, you know, do
14 you have discussions with the response side of the Coast Guard
15 that would -- just to ensure they know who to contact on how to
16 shut down one of these vehicles for vehicle traffic? Is that ever
17 a part of -- come up in the conversation at all?

18 A. For vehicle traffic?

19 Q. Yes.

20 A. No. No, that's not -- the closure of a bridge for vehicle
21 traffic with the exception of maintenance of traffic, MOT,
22 associated with a bridge program which we do ask about is part of
23 a bridge construction project that follows the bridge permitting
24 action. We do not typically get involved in any conversations and
25 we do not have any regulatory authority over any constraints

1 placed on vehicle traffic on a bridge.

2 Q. Is that something you expect the local sector to do, like to
3 have that information --

4 A. No.

5 Q. -- and know how to --

6 A. I would not expect the sector to. I don't see it to be -- in
7 my experience, I don't see it to be a Coast Guard function.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. You're talking about vehicles over a bridge, right?

10 Q. Yes, right.

11 A. That's -- that would fall in terms of safety and so forth to
12 my view and I'm not trying to throw anybody here on the call into
13 the (indiscernible), but that from a regulatory standpoint, if
14 that bridge is unsafe for vehicles to be on, my view of that would
15 most likely be a highway bridge with fault to Federal Highways and
16 then to the State DOT which is typically the owner. In this
17 particular case, it's under the MDTA, which is a part of DOT. So
18 they would have that responsibility to determine whether or not
19 vehicles can go across the bridge safely.

20 Q. Okay. Let me give you a different example then. So we've
21 investigated ships that have dragged anchors over pipelines and
22 the Coast Guard always seems to have the right phone number to
23 call to shut that pipeline down in a hurry. That's not something
24 that we can do for bridges or that we do for bridges?

25 A. Okay. Now, I get where you're going. That is not -- I mean

1 I have points of contact that I can call for a bridge if I am
2 contacted, but I don't, I don't deal in firsthand emergencies.
3 That typically defers to the local sector Coast Guard. I don't, I
4 don't -- I think you folks have talked to Lieutenant Commander
5 [REDACTED] who is the waterways chief up there, and I know that they
6 have local contact numbers for various entities that they talk to.
7 I don't know if that helps answer the question or not.

8 Q. Sure, it does. I'm not sure if you've talked to the command
9 center there. They told us though that they would have to call
10 you to turn the -- to shut the bridge down. Why would they think
11 that?

12 A. I think that they're thinking about the difference between a
13 fixed bridge and a draw bridge. If the answer is we're dealing,
14 you know, in a draw bridge operation, meaning that a draw bridge
15 can't operate for navigation at that point in time, that is a
16 function that is assigned responsible to the admiral that I work
17 for, the Fifth Coast Guard District Commander, to authorize the
18 deviation for draw bridge operations. And that would come to this
19 office. Again, I mean it wouldn't necessarily be an emergency
20 because the emergencies occur, and the draw bridge gets shut down
21 because it experiences a casualty of some sort, and at that point,
22 that information is reported to the sector command center that
23 then gets reported to the district command center, and then it
24 comes to me down here, and I follow up with the bridge owner to
25 determine what they're going to do to correct the problem. So, I

1 think they're speaking about draw bridge operations versus a fixed
2 bridge which I, you know, the bridge doesn't have to move for
3 navigation. So, there's not for me to do.

4 Q. Okay. I have or I've heard of a Coast Guard pub called *The*
5 *Bridges Over Navigable Waterways* that's been published in a couple
6 decades.

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. I hear there's a reprint coming. Do you have an ETA on that?

9 A. I do not have an ETA. I'd love to be able to give you one.
10 That's part and parcel with US AIMS bridge tile that you spoke of
11 earlier. And the data for that publication once we are able to
12 get to a point where we have sufficient in there to at least
13 depict the bridges and their locations, then that publication is
14 going to literally come from that database system, and at that
15 point, it will actually be real time. So we won't actually have
16 to produce a document. People will be able to go and see the
17 document live.

18 Q. Oh, okay. Well, thank you.

19 A. So that's the direction, that's the direction we're going in.
20 We'd love to get there tomorrow but I'm not going to tell you we
21 can.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Because that would be a lie.

24 Q. And just one follow up from I think it was Scott's question.
25 I think you mentioned a permit for lighting changes. Was that

1 lighting for -- we're talking about navigational lighting, right?

2 A. That's correct. Navigation lighting for the bridge.

3 Q. Okay.

4 MR. MUISE: Dan, I'll hand it back to you.

5 MR. WALSH: Thank you, Marcel.

6 BY MR. WALSH:

7 Q. I just have a follow-up question regarding Marcel's question
8 about dredging. Mr. [REDACTED] have any ports that you're aware of
9 dredged and existing ship channel in such a manner as to prevent
10 ships from colliding with bridge piers?

11 A. I don't know of any specific dredging projects that were done
12 for that purpose specifically, no.

13 Q. Okay. Thank you.

14 MR. WALSH: Mr. Soden will continue with the questioning.

15 MR. SODEN: Sure.

16 BY MR. SODEN:

17 Q. A lot of the questions I had queued up have already been
18 asked, but I can -- a couple things can maybe use some
19 elaboration. So, you mentioned the navigation impact report is
20 developed in developing the navigation window for the permit. Is
21 there guidance on how bridge owners would develop that guidance
22 report in terms of like determining how they might determine
23 vessel sizes, potential like growth in vessel size over the
24 lifetime of the project?

25 A. Yes, sir. There's a -- we have a publication,

1 (indiscernible) publication, called the Bridge Permit Application
2 Guide, and within that document, Appendix Alpha provides a series
3 of questions and informational requirements that should be
4 considered and contained within a completed navigation impact
5 report, and that helps to guide the bridge owner through the
6 process to make sure we have sufficient information in that report
7 so that when we receive it on the Coast Guard side we do some
8 verifications, some checks and we reach out to certain entities
9 from time to time either the Army Corps of Engineers or the local
10 sector waterway shops or both, as we go through the process to
11 then set those preliminary navigation clearance determinations.

12 Q. But then the permit is not, the permit is not established
13 based on the preliminary clearance window, correct? That's
14 usually established after the environmental process plays out?

15 A. The first action after we are aware that there's an ongoing
16 -- that there's an active planning process for the bridge
17 replacement, a new bridge or modification of existing bridge, the
18 very first thing we want to do is try to get the navigation impact
19 report done so that we can go through the evaluation and set the
20 preliminary clearances that then are use within the NEPA (ph.)
21 applying process so any alternatives considered by the bridge
22 owner in order to meet those clearances mostly likely will be able
23 to be permitted at the end. So it's a preliminary decision. It's
24 designed to provide the bridge owner the opportunity to know what
25 clearances we believe are going to be necessary, so that no

1 surprise is at the end. And, for the Federal Highway folks on
2 board, there's both an LOU between DHS and DOT on this matter and
3 a separate MOA between the Coast Guard and Federal Highways on
4 this matter. So, that's something you should folks be able to see
5 as well.

6 Q. So after the bridge project, the bridge is constructed, you
7 mentioned a couple of actions where you're involved in bridge
8 inspection and maintenance activities. Can you describe your
9 activities related to those? Is that still related to the bridge
10 permit and maybe incursions into the navigation (indiscernible)?
11 Is that generally the concern?

12 A. It's several concerns. What we're looking for is to ensure
13 that whatever the scope of the project is, can reside within the
14 existing permit and can reside within the existing lighting plan
15 because obviously if they're going to need to first change the out
16 to out, significantly widen the bridge to put on some type of
17 walking paths on both sides or something of that nature, the out
18 to out distance is part of the permit. So we would then have to
19 basically say, we're sorry, but this is not a maintenance action.
20 We need to go through the permitting process. So assuming,
21 however, what they're doing is "bridge maintenance" which is
22 covered in the regulations as to what that entails, at that point
23 we're making sure that we understand what they're going to do,
24 when they're going to do it, and what impact that has on
25 navigation so that we can then provide a good local notice to

1 mariners, to the mariners, to know how to safely transit the area
2 during that bridge maintenance or construction activity.

3 Q. So -- and at the time of the collapse, there was an active
4 repair project going on. Is there -- was there any interaction
5 between the Coast Guard and MDTA on -- related to the navigation
6 permits in that activity that you know of?

7 A. I don't believe we had anything on that because it --
8 everything was on the road deck, but nothing was going on within
9 the navigation span. So there are times where a bridge owner will
10 do routine upkeep of the bridge that doesn't involve an incursion
11 in the nav span nor activities on the waterway. And, at that
12 point, we don't require them to come up for those. We do require
13 them to come to us for any actions that impact the navigational
14 parts of the bridge or of activities going on in the waterway in
15 the vicinity of the bridge because we want to make sure mariners
16 know what's going on.

17 Q. And I guess one last question, still related to the line of
18 questioning about bridge closures. And, you're totally correct
19 that the closure of bridge to highway traffic is -- would be the
20 decision of the bridge owner, but there have been instances where
21 there's been a need to close a bridge to vessel traffic underneath
22 due to an going safety issues. Would that be handled through your
23 office or would that be handled through waterway management?

24 A. That would be handled through this office because that is
25 essentially an authorization to in some way constrain the

1 navigational clearances of the bridge which is a function of the
2 permit. Therefore, this office gets involved in that. So those
3 actions come here.

4 Q. All right. Thank you.

5 MR. SODEN: That's all the questions I have.

6 MR. WALSH: Thank you, Derek. Mr. Krolak will continue with
7 the questioning.

8 BY MR. KROLAK:

9 Q. Good morning, Mr. [REDACTED] Thank you for your time today. I
10 have a few questions. Have there been any reports of allisions
11 with the bridge or the dolphins? Does the Coast Guard track any
12 of that information or is that the kind of information that you
13 would collect or have data on?

14 A. That's the kind of information that would typically find its
15 way into the database that we spoke of earlier, MISLE, when an
16 investigating officer went out. That's -- I mean I have an
17 interest in ensuring that as a result of the allision, was the
18 bridge damaged? And if it was, is it going to be repaired? So
19 I'm kind on the back side of that equation. The front side of the
20 equation would be in the investigating officer's shop at the
21 sector office, the Coast Guard Sector Office. And previously to
22 that, it would have been a Ring (ph.) Safety Office back in the
23 day before we had our sector commands.

24 Q. I understand. So perhaps there might be some information at
25 the sector level of the Coast Guard that might be available?

1 A. If it -- yes, it would be in there. What I can tell you is
2 in my 9 years in this position, I don't know of any allisions with
3 this particular bridge at all.

4 Q. Fair enough. In typical practice, does Coast Guard issue any
5 types of restrictions or permits related to vessel traffic, for
6 example, say there was a large, tall ship type of function or some
7 other thing, or you knew there was some type of vessel coming in
8 that they hazardous materials or something additionally sensitive.
9 Is that something your office would be involved with?

10 A. No. The Coast Guard District Bridge Office is not involved
11 in the control of vessels on the waterway. The Coast Guard entity
12 that would be doing that would be the Coast Guard captain of the
13 port, officer in charge of marine inspections sector commander.
14 Under one of those hats, they would potentially put -- decide to
15 establish either a stationary or a moving security zone around the
16 vessel. That's a regulatory action under the Administrative
17 Procedures Act, but that's -- in my former life as a Coast Guard
18 officer, I did some of that stuff, but I don't do that any longer,
19 and this office does not do those actions.

20 Q. Thank you. And I think my final question is similar. Your
21 office wouldn't have any process or policies or use of things such
22 as tugboats or other applications to bringing vessels, as part of
23 -- would you have anything for using tugboats operationally at or
24 around the bridge?

25 A. No, sir. Again, that's a vessel control measure. So this

1 office would not have any involvement in that.

2 Q. Okay. Well, thank you.

3 A. Um-hum.

4 MR. KROLAK: Just for everyone to know, we had navigational
5 agreements with the Coast Guard and the Corps of Engineers since
6 the 1950s. So we can make those available to NTSB if necessary.
7 Thank you.

8 MR. WALSH: Thank you, Joe. Mr. Harkness will continue with
9 the questioning.

10 MR. HARKNESS: No questions for me. Thank you.

11 MR. WALSH: Okay. Thank you.

12 MR. [REDACTED] Golly. I was looking forward to an engineer
13 question but, no, never mind.

14 MR. WALSH: Mr. Nielsen will continue with the questions.

15 MR. NIELSEN: I don't have any questions. Thank you for your
16 time.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you, Captain.

18 MR. WALSH: Mr. Sandhu will continue with the questioning.

19 MR. SANDHU: No questions. Thank you.

20 MR. WALSH: Thank you.

21 BY MR. WALSH:

22 Q. Mr. [REDACTED] I just have a few more questions. In your
23 district, how many ports require the assistance of tugboats to
24 protect bridges over navigable waterways?

25 A. I don't have an answer that because that's not within my

1 portfolio. I would suggest that you -- if you want an answer to
2 that, that you'd almost have to go to each individual sector
3 command to see whether or not they have any knowledge of such
4 matters. As an aside, I will tell you in my experience, and I
5 think Captain Nielsen will tell you this. There are oftentimes
6 based on different ports, I was in Houston for one and several
7 others, that a lot of times the pilot associations do, in fact,
8 have pilot rules that set forth those standards in lieu of a Coast
9 Guard requirement or sometimes in combination with. So either
10 way, my office doesn't deal with those matters.

11 Q. Thank you. In your district, how many regulated navigation
12 areas are there?

13 A. I would have to count them up out of the CFR. I don't have a
14 number off the top of my head. I don't establish those as well.
15 That would be something that would be done typically via the
16 sector commander would establish or coordinate the establishment
17 of those through the district commander's office, but not through
18 the bridge office and would be through the waterways world, either
19 sector and then the district waterways.

20 Q. Can you please discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a
21 regulated navigation area?

22 A. I could certainly try, but again that's really outside of my
23 current responsibilities. So I'm going to decline to give you a
24 history lesson. So.

25 Q. Okay. Are you aware of any training for contractors working

1 on a bridge of the potential for bridge strikes?

2 A. I am not. I know they have requirements that they comply
3 with in terms of OSHA and various safety regulations associated
4 with the states. And I do know that some of those regulations,
5 for instance, require safety boats in the waterway available in
6 case someone were to fall overboard from the bridge or fall off
7 the bridge and so forth. So, that's the extent of what I know
8 about that.

9 Q. Thank you. And my final question, in your district, are
10 there any bridges that have advance warning systems or early
11 warning collapse detection systems?

12 A. Not to my knowledge, no. And I don't know, I don't know that
13 I would ever know that necessarily. I think a bridge owner might
14 put something on a bridge that would allow for that. I don't
15 know, but I don't -- it's not something that the Coast Guard would
16 regulate. So if there are any, I would not, I would not know if
17 there were.

18 Q. Thank you.

19 MR. WALSH: Are there any additional questions?

20 MR. MUISE: Dan, if I might.

21 BY MR. MUISE:

22 Q. This is my last one. Is there anything that we didn't ask
23 that we should be aware of? Are there regulatory authorities or
24 legislative authorities that you don't have that you wish you had
25 for example?

1 A. No, in answer to your specific question, the answer is no.
2 Certainly things, from a kind of historical perspective, things
3 have changed associated with, you know, how bridges are protected,
4 and I think the Federal Highways Administration is in a much
5 better position to speak to that than I am, but for instance,
6 since the bridge was knocked down in Florida in the '80s, Skyline
7 Bridge, the AASHTO folks came out with new standards for the
8 protection of bridges. In this particular case, since this bridge
9 was permitted prior to when that incident occurred and prior to
10 when those standards were established under AASHTO, that my point
11 is that the engineering community has established these standards
12 in order to better protect bridges that are being built today. So
13 that would probably be the only thing I could add that was not
14 asked. And we, the Coast Guard, we simply ask, you know, we say
15 we're going to have to have bridge protection. Tell us to what
16 standard you're going to use in designing, and that's the extent
17 of the question that we ask when we go through the permitting
18 process.

19 Q. Okay. Well, thank you for that, sir. I appreciate your
20 time.

21 MR. MUISE: Dan, is there anything else that we're missing?

22 MR. WALSH: Are there any additional questions?

23 (No response.)

24 MR. WALSH: Okay. The time now is 8:42 a.m. Central Daylight
25 Time. We are going to go ahead and conclude the interview. Thank

1 you very much, Mr. [REDACTED] for your participation. We appreciate
2 it very much.

3 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you. Have a good day.

4 (Whereupon, at 8:42 a.m. CDT, 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: FRANCIS SCOTT KEY BRIDGE
COLLAPSES AFTER VESSEL
COLLISION IN BALTIMORE,
MARYLAND ON MARCH 26, 2024
Interview of [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA24MM031

PLACE: via Microsoft Teams

DATE: August 14, 2024

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

[REDACTED SIGNATURE]

Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Highway Safety

Washington, DC 20594



Interview Clarification Form

Sheet 1 of 1

NTSB Interview of [REDACTED]

Date of Interview: August 14, 2024

NTSB Case Number: DCA24MM031

INSTRUCTIONS: After reading the transcript or summary of your interview, please note any clarifications or additions on this sheet. If additional space is needed, make as many additional copies of the second page as necessary. When completed, please sign the bottom of each sheet. DO NOT make any marks or notations on the actual transcript.

If there are no changes, please check this box and sign the bottom of this sheet.

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I declare that I have read my foregoing interview transcript or summary and, together with any clarifications and/or additions made above, the facts stated herein are true.

Name: [REDACTED]

Signature: [REDACTED] 1121267272 Digitally signed by [REDACTED] R.1121267272
Date: 2024.09.05 06:16:00 -0400'

Date: September 5, 2024