ORIGINAL

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *
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FIRE ABOARD YACHT *FLAGSHIP* NEAR *
MIAMI, FLORIDA ON APRIL 28, 2024 * Accident No.: DCA24FM035
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Interview of: DANIEL DACOVICH, Mechanic
RMK Merrill-Stevens Shipyard

via telephone

Monday,
May 13, 2024

APPEARANCES:

DAVID FLAHERTY, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

ARNOLD AKGUN, Chief Financial Officer
RMK Merrill-Stevens

VICTOR IGLESIAS, Superintendent
RMK Merrill-Stevens

OZGUR DELI, Refits and Projects Manager
RMK Merrill-Stevens

DAVID FAMULARI, Esq.
Famulari, Butto & Higginbottom, PLLC
Representing RMK Merrill-Stevens

I N D E X

ITEM	PAGE
Interview of Daniel Dacovich:	
By Mr. Flaherty	5

I N T E R V I E W

(1:52 p.m.)

MR. FLAHERTY: Here we go. All right.

MR. DACOVICH: Hi, my name is --

MR. FLAHERTY: No, I --

MR. DACOVICH: Hi.

MR. FLAHERTY: -- go first. I'll go first.

MR. DACOVICH: Hi, my name is -- my name is Daniel Dacovich, I'm a mechanic at RMK Merrill-Stevens.

MR. FLAHERTY: Can you spell your last name, please?

MR. DACOVICH: Daniel Dacovich. It's D-a-n-i-e-l. My last name is D-a-c-o-v-i-c-h.

MR. FLAHERTY: All right. Thank you very much, sir. My name is David Flaherty, I'm with the National Transportation Safety Board, my last name is spelled F-l-a-h-e-r-t-y.

MR. AKGUN: My name is Arnold Akgun, I am the chief financial officer of RMK Merrill-Stevens shipyard, my last name is spelled A-k-g-u-n.

MR. IGLESIAS: Victor Iglesias, superintendent at RMK Merrill-Stevens. My last name is spelled I-g-l-e-s-i-a-s.

MR. DELI: My name is Ozgur Deli, I'm the refits and projects manager of the RMK Merrill-Stevens shipyard.

My last name, D-e-l-i.

MR. FAMULARI: And I am David Famulari, F-a-m-u-l-a-r-i, and I'm legal counsel for RMK Merrill-Stevens.

MR. FLAHERTY: Thank you. Sir, before we continue, do I have your permission to record this interview?

MR. DACOVICH: Oh, yeah.

MR. FLAHERTY: All right, great.

INTERVIEW OF DANIEL DACOVICH

BY MR. FLAHERTY:

Q. All right. So let's get a little bit of background on you and then I'll ask some questions and ask you to describe your work day, the last day you were on board the vessel prior to the fire. So if you can describe, how many -- who do you work for currently right now?

A. We work on the roof, it's paneling or basically filling the roof, they don't have many leaks for water, that's it.

Q. All right. And how long have you been working on ships and yachts like this?

A. In ships, three years, three year and a half.

Q. All right. And then how long have you been with this company?

A. I been in the company for almost three years.

Q. All right.

A. If you don't mind --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If you don't understand something (indiscernible).

MR. DACOVICH: Yeah, some time I need some help, because I can't hear good.

BY MR. FLAHERTY:

Q. That's fine. So I'll try to be straightforward. What was the last day you were on board the vessel prior to the fire?

A. Friday. Friday, yeah -- I don't remember the date, actually, but the last Friday.

Q. All right, so that would've been the 19th of April?

A. Yes, let me see. Can I check it right now, (indiscernible). See, when was -- yeah, it was the 19th.

Q. Okay, great. What time did you arrive at work on the 19th?

A. Sorry, can you repeat that?

Q. What time did you arrive at work on the 19th of April, do you recall?

A. Oh, 6:50, 6:40, maybe.

Q. Okay. And then what type of work were you assigned to do that day?

A. My job that day was seal all the possible water leaks on the roof.

Q. Okay.

A. Just with what kind of tool, mainly 600 and put in bolts, that's it.

Q. All right. And were you working with someone else during that time period?

A. Yeah, with my -- with Joel, the other mechanic on the ship.

Q. Okay. Could you describe how the work went, like you -- you just went on board and you started working with Joel, could you

just describe what you encountered, how did it go?
A. Okay. Let me see what -- yeah. Well, at the beginning, I just see some water accumulate on the roof, we -- we cleaned the drain --
Q. Um-hum.
A. -- and drained all the water from the roof and try to see where the -- where the possible leaks coming from, to move the solar panel, just from the (indiscernible), we don't touch nothing around the electrical and then we start to sanding and repair some little holes on the roof and put in new -- where they need it and that's it.
Q. So you were basically putting sealant around the bolts that were holding the solar panels down?
A. Yeah, that's right.
Q. All right. Were there any difficulties encountered when you were removing the bolts?
A. No, not really.
Q. All right. Were there any problems when you were removing or reinstalling the solar panels?
A. No, no, because we don't finish to install the solar panels, we just disassemble.
Q. Okay. When you were on board the vessel, did you -- where were you working on board, which deck?
A. Oh, on top.
Q. So that would've been --

A. The roof.
Q. -- the flybridge?
A. No, the --
Q. Oh, the --
(Crosstalk)
MR. DACOVICH: They're on top of the boat.
BY MR. FLAHERTY:
Q. Okay. When you were on board and, you know, going on board and coming off, did you notice any unusual odors or smells?
A. No, not really.
Q. Were you using any electrical equipment that day when you were working on the vessel?
A. Well, they have tools, like three lining (ph.) guns, that's it.
Q. Okay.
A. And one vacuum cleaner.
Q. Were you using any cleaning materials around the area to make sure that the adhesive would work better?
A. Yeah, some mineral spirit and acid salt (ph.).
Q. All right. And when you were done working at the end of the day, were your tools and the cleaning materials left on board or were they taken off and put someplace else?
A. Yeah, we left the -- some tools, like three Allen keys --
Q. Um-hum.
A. -- in a bucket, the vacuum cleaner, we leave the vacuum

cleaner there, and the epoxy product, like 5200 (ph.) and acid.
Q. Okay. And where was it left on the vessel, do you remember?
A. Sorry, what?
Q. Do you remember which deck you left it on board?
A. On the top.
Q. On the top deck, okay. You mentioned a vacuum cleaner.
A. Yeah.
Q. Was the vacuum cleaner plugged into the ship's electrical system or the --
A. No, the vacuum cleaner was connected to the marine, not to the boat.
Q. Okay. All right, good. And then how many times have you been on board working on that vessel prior to the fire, do you recall?
A. Maybe in linear (ph.) time, maybe one week.
Q. All right. And then during the other additional times you were on board the vessel, did you encounter anything like an unusual smell or odor on those incidents?
A. Oh, no, no. Just normal details for a boat.
Q. And did you encounter anything that was maybe just kind of -- maybe at the time you thought was a little unusual with the vessel that you didn't think about before but maybe now you think hey, that was kind of strange?
A. Yeah, just for bolts and some things were leaking water and that's it.

Q. Do you know where the water was leaking into?
A. For the roof?
Q. So it was going in from the roof into the cabin upstairs, right?
A. Yeah.
Q. And then by chance, do you know if the water was leaking any -- was the water maybe -- are you aware if the water was leaking further down into the vessel or was it just staying --
A. No. No, the boat has two floors, just leaking in the terrace, the area, like where deck reel (ph.) and they opened.
Q. So there was no other indication of water leaking into any of the decks below?
A. No, I didn't see water inside.
Q. All right. Is there anything you -- if you -- when you left that day, was there anything that you were like, maybe you had questions about or a concern or was everything fine?
A. Everything was fine.
Q. All right. How did you find out about the fire?
A. Sorry, can you repeat that?
Q. How did you find out about the fire?
A. Because the Victor called me and he was here in the marine for move boat because -- and the captain, for a couple boats here.
Q. Oh, okay.
A. And (indiscernible).
Q. All right. So you actually saw the vessel on fire that day?

A. Sorry, can you repeat that?
Q. Did you see the *Flagship* on fire the day of the --
A. No.
Q. No.
A. No. I just see smoke, some smoke coming from the flashing (ph.), that's it.
Q. Okay. Is there anything you feel would be helpful to the investigation, I mean, even if, you know, just off the top of your head, something that you might -- might have found as being odd but it didn't like -- it wasn't a concern to you at the time but maybe now it might be?
A. No, not really.
Q. All right. All right, do you have any questions for me?
A. No.
MR. FLAHERTY: All right. Well, with that, I appreciate your time, sir.
MR. DACOVICH: You, too.
MR. FLAHERTY: And it is 2:04 on May 13th, 2024, this concludes the interview. Again, thank you very much, sir.
(Whereupon, at 2:04 p.m., the interview concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	FIRE ABOARD YACHT *FLAGSHIP* NEAR MIAMI, FLORIDA ON APRIL 28, 2024 Interview of Daniel Dacovich
ACCIDENT NO.:	DCA24FM035
PLACE:	via telephone
DATE:	May 13, 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.

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Karen D. Martini
Transcriber