

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
OFFICE OF MARINE SAFETY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

- - - - - x
:
EXPRESS SHUTTLE II :
NTSB #DCA05MM002 :
:
INTERVIEW OF :
CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH :
:
- - - - - x

An interview in the above entitled matter was held
on Saturday, October 23, 2004, commencing at 11:30 a.m.,
before:

BOB FORD, NTSB
BRIAN CURTIS, NTSB
NANCY MCATEE, NTSB
MAC MELENDEZ, FL PD

1 PROCEEDINGS

2 MS. MCATEE: It's October 23rd. It's 11:30 a.m.,
3 we are interviewing Corporal Michael Koch with the Port
4 Richey Fire Department. Corporal Koch, if you could just
5 give us what you were just telling us about all of your
6 roles here at the police department.

7 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: Okay, my primary function
8 is I'm a patrol supervisor. I, generally, work the road.
9 I'm also the head of our marine unit. I am a homicide
10 investigator, and I'm also our property/evidence custodian.

11 MS. MCATEE: How were you first made aware of the
12 fire last Sunday?

13 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: I had stopped in the
14 station here. I was giving the on duty dispatcher a couple
15 minute break, relieving him. About that time the 911 system
16 rang. Upon answering it, it was a resident from the Harbor
17 Pointe subdivision, advising that the Casino boat was on
18 fire out in the river.

19 MS. MCATEE: I forgot to identify myself. I'm
20 Nancy McAtee, with National Transportation Safety Board.
21 Why don't you walk us through from the point you got the 911
22 call, until you left the scene?

23 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: Okay, basically, as soon
24 as I got the 911, I called the dispatcher back in.
25 (Indiscernible) the dispatch is probably one of the first,

1 and then I called the dispatcher back in. When they retook
2 their post, I went to my cruiser, started heading over that
3 direction knowing the boat -- I know they generally carry a
4 lot of passengers. My first concern was if they were loaded
5 with passengers, getting people off that boat and out of the
6 water, and back to shore.

7 So, I started heading over to one of our boats
8 that were in the water. I was going to go out with that.
9 It was a little bit low on fuel at the time. So, I stopped
10 to get a couple extra gallons. It's a diesel boat, so, I
11 know it's not going to burn through that much that quickly.
12 I got a little bit extra fuel on board, and then I responded
13 out to the point where the vessel was.

14 At that time, the Pasco County Sheriff's Office
15 had two marine units already on scene. I believe it was
16 Marine I, Don Diso (phonetic sp.) and Marine III. UDS
17 Marine III.

18 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: I believe that the
19 deputy's name was Chris LaFambois (phonetic sp.). About
20 that time, I believe, the firefighters had already hooked up
21 their hose lines from the sewer. I ran the hose line
22 through the water, and a couple of them were on the front of
23 the Marine III vessel fighting fire on the boat.

24 The boat was in the middle of what we call the S-
25 turn. I could show you an aerial photograph in a little

1 bit, if you need to. It was facing, kind of, in a southward
2 direction, which would be on the -- would indicate to me
3 that he was on the inbound path coming in. It was towards
4 the -- towards the outer edge of the channel.

5 It was fully engulfed, from what I could see at
6 that point. Basically, at that point, I stood by and helped
7 the other sheriff's vessels keep the flow of traffic away.
8 Shortly later, a Coast Guard vessel came in from the Gulf
9 and they took the post on the outer -- on the opposite side
10 of the burning vessel, and kept the flow of traffic out on
11 that side.

12 As they fought fire, I basically stood by in
13 keeping the other traffic away, and once it was under
14 control, and I could be released, I went back to the dock
15 and resumed my other patrol duties.

16 MS. MCATEE: Have you done any follow-up with
17 regards to this accident? Does that fall within your
18 responsibilities, or once everything was taken care of by
19 the fire department, everything was secure, then you went
20 back to your normal duties and that was it?

21 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: Correct, the only other
22 thing additionally that I spoke with, myself and an officer
23 from FWC, (indiscernible) marine patrol, stopped and talked
24 with the, I guess, the initial Coast Guard crew, just to
25 find out what was going to be happening as far as removal of

1 the vessel, and environmental issues and all that.

2 At that point, I was advised that the vessel was
3 already in tow to, I believe, Tarpon Springs, and that they
4 would be evaluating the environmental issues of it.

5 MS. MCATEE: Okay.

6 MR. FORD: Bob Ford, investigator in charge, NTSB.
7 You're City of Port Richey Police, is that correct?

8 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: Correct.

9 MR. FORD: And the fire is City of Port Richey
10 Fire, and then you have Pasco County Sheriff, correct?

11 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: Correct.

12 MR. FORD: And then, do you have Pasco County Fire
13 and Rescue?

14 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: Correct.

15 MR. FORD: Can all these groups talk to each
16 other, communication wise, with radios?

17 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: Yes.

18 MR. FORD: As everyone knows, 911, NYPD and the
19 Fire Department of New York couldn't talk together, but that
20 was one.

21 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: We just have to switch
22 frequencies.

23 MR. FORD: So everyone has the same radios to talk
24 with each other, okay. Do you conduct response drills with
25 the Coast Guard?

1 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: I do not, no.

2 MR. FORD: That's all I have.

3 MR. CURTIS: Brian Curtis, NTSB engineering
4 investigator, no questions.

5 MR. MELENDEZ: Mac Melendez, State Fire Marshal's
6 Office. I just have one question in reference the personnel
7 on the boat. How did they get off the boat?

8 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: The personnel on the
9 burning vessel?

10 MR. MELENDEZ: Yes.

11 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: Well, until I arrived on
12 the scene by boat on my side, I initially met with Pasco
13 County's Marine I Deputy Diso (phonetic sp.). One of my
14 first questions to him was, if anyone was on board or not.
15 At that point, he had advised me that they had already been
16 removed. So, that was all prior to my arrival.

17 MR. MELENDEZ: Okay.

18 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: Where we keep our patrol
19 boat is called American Marina. It's a side channel off the
20 main river channel. As I was coming out of that side
21 channel to respond, I noticed a -- probably about a 17-foot
22 flats boat on plane, in -- down in the river. I assumed at
23 that point that they had probably (indiscernible) on board
24 and were bringing them into the dock.

25 I didn't make contact. Obviously, I was going out

1 to the bay, and it was a distance away, but they were --
2 they were moving at a pretty good clip, and it was a zone
3 that's restricted. So, there had to be a reason.

4 MR. MELENDEZ: Okay.

5 MS. MCATEE: All right.

6 CAPTAIN CONNOR: I can comment on that if you
7 wanted me to.

8 MS. MCATEE: We'll get to you.

9 MR. FORD: I had one other question. Were you
10 told at one point, how many people were on board?

11 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: I had heard three, and I
12 had heard five.

13 MR. FORD: Did you know whether they were crew,
14 passengers, or did they tell you it was strictly crew on
15 board, or just numbers?

16 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: My understanding it was
17 crew.

18 MR. FORD: Okay, thanks.

19 MS. MCATEE: Do you have any questions? All
20 right, Corporal Koch.

21 CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH: Thank you.

22 (Whereupon, at 11:36 a.m., the interview was
23 concluded.)

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

DEPOSITION SERVICES, INC., hereby certifies that the attached pages represent an accurate transcript of the electronic sound recording of the proceedings of the National Transportation Safety Board Interview regarding the Express Shuttle II, NTSB #DCA05MM002.

INTERVIEW OF CORPORAL MICHAEL KOCH
CITY OF PORT RICHEY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Eve Jemison, Transcriber

