

BM1 [REDACTED]

Below is a summary of interview of BM1 [REDACTED] USCG, conducted by the AIM informal board on 11 October, 2006 concerning the diving incident which resulted in two deaths on August 17, 2006. AIM board members present at the interview were Captain LCDR [REDACTED] and LCD [REDACTED].

BM1 [REDACTED] reported aboard HEALY in July 2004. He stated he is the leading petty officer (LPO) of deck force, and a qualified inport and underway OOD.

17 August started as a normal day. BM1 [REDACTED] stated that he performed his regular deck department duties in the morning. Early in the afternoon BM1 heard a rumor that there would be ice liberty later in the afternoon. BM1 [REDACTED] spoke to BM2 DUQUE, who confirmed the ice liberty rumor and also mentioned that the dive team planned to conduct an ice dive. BM2 DUQUE was very enthusiastic about diving, and told BM1 [REDACTED] he planned to do his first under ice dive.

BM1 [REDACTED] learned that the ship would be stopping around 1530. He knew he would likely be the OOD during a portion of the ice liberty period and began making plans accordingly. He spoke to SCPO [REDACTED] who he was scheduled to relieve as OOD. The two discussed the plan for ice liberty including all aspects of the deck evolution and the OOD chow relief process.

Upon finding a suitable location for ice liberty, BM1 [REDACTED] worked with other members of the deck force to get the ship set up for getting people to the ice safely. He attended several deck briefings, coordinated getting the brow over, and talked with BM2 DUQUE about getting the bear watch established.

After getting preps underway, BM1 later saw BM2 DUQUE heading down to the ice in dive gear. BM1 said that he'd never seen anything official about dive ops, but assumed it might be planned based on BM2's actions. BM1 [REDACTED] contacted SCPO [REDACTED] to make sure someone on the dive side had radio comms with the bridge. SCPO said the dive side would have comms.

BM1 [REDACTED] briefly visited the ice prior to eating chow and assuming the OOD watch. He ate at about 1700. BM1 [REDACTED] said that he did not consume alcohol. He stated that he never really considered ice liberty as time off since deck force typically spent the time working on the brow, standing bear watch, etc. BM1 [REDACTED] i v e d the OOD at 1730.

BM1 said his primary concern during ice liberty was keeping an eye out for unwanted wildlife - particularly polar bears. Additionally, he focused his attention on the ship's position in the ice, and in making sure the brow stayed in place. The ship had 15-20 turns on both screws to hold position in the ice. He stated that with turns on, the ship was a very stable platform when hove-to.

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BM1 stated he was unsure of the status of any dive ops. He could not see the divers from the bridge. Since seeing BM2 DUQUE earlier he had not been informed of any progress. He tried once to raise the dive side on radio, but was unsuccessful. He did call Chief [REDACTED] at the top of the brow, who told him there were no divers in the water, and that someone had an equipment issue, or technical difficulty. This was around 1755-1800.

About 15 minutes later, he saw BM2 DUQUE walking around on the ship, apparently swapping out some gear. A short while later, BM1 noticed that several people were in "skivvies" apparently conducting a polar bear swim. He called to the ice on the radio, and asked that someone stop the activity. BM1 [REDACTED] said he was annoyed that there was a polar bear swim going on that he didn't know about as OOD. He was told via radio that the CO and XO were on scene with the swim. He then dropped the issue, believing it was approved.

A short while later, BM1 got a call from the XO stating that ice liberty would expire at 1845. BM1 piped the expiration of ice liberty over the IMC. Still there was no word of dive ops.

Later, BM1 [REDACTED] got a call that the corpsman was needed on the ice. BM1 [REDACTED] piped "CORPSMAN, your presence is requested on the ice." He knew it was a holiday routine day, so he followed up the pipe with a call to the HSC's room. He thought she might be sleeping. He got a call back from BMC [REDACTED] who reiterated the request for the corpsman, stating "we need her immediately." She was then piped to the ice "corpsman to the ice."

Another call requested a dive manual on the ice, and then the AED. BM1 sent his JOOD to the dive locker to get the dive manual and AED. IT1 [REDACTED] already had the AED, so the JOOD followed him to the ice with the dive manual. There was also a call for two stokes litters and stretcher bearers. Despite the many calls there was never any information passed regarding the nature of the mishap. BM1 said he didn't know exactly what was happening.

After the first stretcher was brought aboard, the CO came up to the bridge. He quickly explained the situation, and instructed BM1 to get everyone off the ice, and prepare to get underway. The CO stated that BM1 was to attempt to make 10 knots in the ice toward Barrow, Alaska. ENS [REDACTED] and ENS [REDACTED] also came to the bridge. They assisted with logs, etc. SCPO [REDACTED] assumed the conn and headed to aloft conn to drive in the ice. BM1 retained the deck.

The XO called and ordered that outgoing comms be secured, including internet and phones. IT1 [REDACTED] was notified and shut down comms, except for medical communications. Several phone calls came from the flight surgeon - they were passed to sickbay.

SCPO [REDACTED] took the deck and retained the conn at around 2030 to 2045. At that time all hands were piped to the flight deck, where the CO notified the crew they had lost

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two shipmates. He told them they were headed to Barrow, Alaska. The schedule was not known beyond that.

In response to questions, BM1 [REDACTED] answered the following:

- There was no formal dive brief "to my knowledge." The OOD was never informed of dive ops.
- BM1 [REDACTED] did not review a copy of a dive plan and to his knowledge one was not posted.
- There was no dive pipe made at any point, nor was any equipment tagged out. In fact the screws were turning.
- No comms link was ever established between the dive ops and the bridge.
- Dive ops were below the rake of the bow, so at no time could the bridge ever see where the dive ops were taking place.
- Dive ops are part of the qual process for OOD in that there is a dive bill in the CORM. All OOD's must be familiar with ship's bills. He does not remember any questions about diving on his OOD board. He had never acted as u/w OOD during dive operations, but does remember acting as inport OOD during a dive operation in Seattle.
- BM2 DUQUE told BM1 that this was a "generic" dive, when BM1 saw him earlier in the day.
- BM1 stated that in his experience as a boat coxswain for previous dives he noticed that SCUBA dives were always "less official" than surface supplied dives which seemed very regimented.
- BM1 [REDACTED] was BM2 DUQUE'S direct supervisor, and said the two had a great working relationship. They had regular interaction throughout the day. In fact, BM1 [REDACTED] was training BM2 DUQUE to assume his position so that BM1 could leave mid-deployment for the birth of his child.
- BM1 [REDACTED] described BM2 DUQUE as a great worker who was extremely motivated. However, sometimes it took BM2 DUQUE a little while to figure things out. He said BM2 DUQUE was a little slow to learn, but a superstar once he came up to speed. For instance, he had difficulty qualifying as a small boat coxswain, but later became the go-to guy and primary instructor for coxswain training.
- BM1 [REDACTED] said BM2 DUQUE was a great visual learner, but sometimes had some difficulty with written directions. For example, BM2 DUQUE was once placed in charge of PMS for the ships ground tackle. He made his way to the foc'sle with a non-rate and misread the PMS card. He released the brake and started to let go the pelican hook. The result, if BM1 [REDACTED] had not been watching from the bridge and able to frantically page BM2 DUQUE to stop him, would have been to let go the ship's anchor in approximately 3000 meters of water.
- BM1 [REDACTED] stated that BM2 DUQUE may have dove once prior to 17 August, down in Tacoma or somewhere before HEALY sailed. He definitely did not dive prior to 17 August during the deployment.

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- Overall, BM1 [REDACTED] stated that BM2 DUQUE was a competent, able-bodied, boatswainmate.
- The mood on the ice was very jovial. Everyone was very excited about the ice liberty. The rumor among the crew was this would be the only opportunity for ice liberty this deployment.
- BM1 [REDACTED] stated that he did not remember any operational dives on the ship's portcall to CABO during the 2005 deployment. He said there were "a bunch of recreational dives," but those were all civilian dives with local dive shops, and was anchored, so it would have been impossible for a dive to have taken place off HEALY without BM1 knowing about it. They would have either needed a boat or a crane from deck department, both of which would require BM1's knowledge.
- BM1 stated that he remembers doing some chamber training before the trip.
- He said he was skeptical when he first heard of the dive ops on 17 August because he didn't think they had enough divers to complete a dive. He remembered thinking they needed a minimum of four. This situation seemed a little "unique."
- BM1 asked BM2 DUQUE how they could do a dive operation with only three people. BM2 DUQUE kind of ignored the question and chose not to answer.
- He said he knew BM2 DUQUE was upset that he didn't get to re-enlist underwater, and that it may have been part of this dive.
- He knew that BM2 DUQUE really wanted to dive under the ice.

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