

Summary of Witness Statement: [REDACTED], BM2, USCG

Date Statement Given: 28 Mar 07<sup>th</sup>  
Witness Name: [REDACTED] USCG  
Unit: MSST 91111 (Anchorage)  
Date/Time/Place of Incident: 25 Mar 07, Puget Sound, IVO Vashon, Washington  
Crew Position at time of Incident: Boat Coxswain, CG 25501

PO [REDACTED] entered the USCG in 1999 and was initially stationed on USCGC POINT BRIDGE (WPB 82338). After attending [REDACTED] "A" School, PO [REDACTED] was stationed at [REDACTED] and then [REDACTED] where he made E-5/PO2. In March 2002 PO [REDACTED] was assigned to PATFORSWA in Bahrain. In [REDACTED] PO [REDACTED] also received an LOC for the repair of unit radios. In 2007, PO [REDACTED] requested MSST Anchorage and changed ratings to Boatswain's Mate (BM).

On Saturday, 24 Mar 2007, PO [REDACTED] was not on duty having been excused due to a medical situation with his grandmother. This absence was approved by the DTL, ENS [REDACTED] PO's [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] filled in for PO [REDACTED]. PO [REDACTED] did not feel that the situation with his grandmother affected him detrimentally.

On Sunday 25 Mar 2007, PO [REDACTED] awoke at 0900-0930. PO [REDACTED] met the other members of the crew on 25501 and 25493 in the lobby of the Holiday Inn at approximately 1200. After retrieving weapons from their location on USCGC POLAR STAR (WAGB 10), the crews met on the pier for a brief from the DTL, ENS [REDACTED]. Some of the members of the crew were upset because the morning crews had not completed any escorts but had spent the morning on Lake Washington. PO [REDACTED] received his trip ticket from ENS [REDACTED] and it called for 4 ferry escorts and as many critical infrastructure patrols as possible during the 1300-2000 patrol. Upon getting underway PO [REDACTED] met up with the 25493 in Elliott Bay and conferred with the Coxswain, PO [REDACTED] on the patrol activities. Who would serve as Patrol Commander was not discussed but [REDACTED] deferred to PO [REDACTED] due to his experience. The agreed course of action was to proceed to Vashon to conduct escorts followed by lunch. CG 25501 and 25493 proceeded to Vashon and picked up an east bound ferry en route Fauntleroy, WA. During this escort PO [REDACTED] was in the bow manning the forward gun, PO Gill was in the Nav/Comms seat manning the radio and PO [REDACTED] was sitting in one of the aft cabin seats with the stern watch. During the initial westbound escort, PO [REDACTED] executed several "J" type power turns.

PO [REDACTED] wanted to be in the forward gunner position; however, PO [REDACTED] took it easy because he was the new guy.

After completing the first escort, the 25501 and 25493 picked up a westbound ferry that was preparing to depart Fauntleroy, WA, OOA 1400 local.

PO [REDACTED] noted that PO Gill enjoyed riding in the forward gunner position...he liked being where the action was. PO [REDACTED] noted that PO Gill was bored in the cabin and, after commencing the second run, PO Gill asked permission from PO [REDACTED] to relieve PO

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[REDACTED] at the forward gunner position saying, "let me go out, let me go out." Upon approval from the Coxswain, PO Gill departed the cabin via the port side window and proceeded to the bow area to relieve PO [REDACTED].

PO [REDACTED] stated that there was no standard procedure or equipment for communication with the forward gun position.

At approximately the same time as PO Gill relieving the forward gun, the escorted ferry initiated communications with CG 25493 and notified them that they were conducting a man overboard drill. PO [REDACTED] acknowledged this transmission. At this time, CG 25493 was on the starboard quarter and CG 25501 was on the port quarter of the ferry vessel as it began slowing down. CG 25501 had no visual of the CG 25493 at this time.

After the Ferry came down and PO Gill had relieved the forward gunner, PO [REDACTED] turned outboard, to port, and proceeded east. PO [REDACTED] noticed a sailing vessel that was crossing the stern of the ferry heading north. PO [REDACTED] slowed and trained on the ferry with the forward gun remaining in the "ready air" position. As the ferry concluded the drill and began to come up to speed. The CG 25493 established communications with a MSST Seattle boat operating in the area and the MSST Seattle boat notified CG 25493 that they would intercept the sailing vessel. One of the two boats from MSST and Station Seattle intercepted the S/V as the ferry completed the drill and began to come up to speed. PO Gill gave a whirly-bird signal with his hand and PO [REDACTED] proceeded to a position off the ferry's port bow. After noting that the forward portside of the vessel was clear, PO [REDACTED] executed a "J" type power turn to port and proceeded down the side of the ferry towards its stern. PO [REDACTED] proceeded down the side of the vessel until abeam of the stern. PO [REDACTED] uses the stern of the escorted vessel to gauge his turns because if he goes past a position abeam of the stern, at the ferry's transit speed, he will be outside of the zone by the time his turn is completed. PO [REDACTED] also stated that by turning at the stern he is able to avoid any interference on the boat's performance from the escorted vessel's wake. PO [REDACTED] always turns outboard to ensure maximum readiness to engage incoming targets and protect the engines which are vulnerable if a turn is executed towards the escorted vessel. PO [REDACTED] stated that he was traveling at approximately 25-30 knots at the time he came abeam of the ferry's stern at which time he executed a "J" type power turn to starboard. The ferry's wake did not affect the turn.

As PO [REDACTED] commenced his turn, he came down a couple hundred RPMs on the throttles to sink the bow and ensure the performance chine was in the water to avoid "lock". Trim was down. PO [REDACTED] described "chine lock" as a phenomenon that occurs when the boats performance chine comes out of the water in a turn. When it reenters the water and catches it is like "hopping a curb" when a car's wheels unintentionally strike a curb. This occurred during the starboard turn. PO [REDACTED] was looking to starboard, the direction of the turn, when he caught PO Gill's feet going over the side in his peripheral vision and the other members of his crew shouted "man overboard". PO [REDACTED] immediately came down on his throttles and straightened out. He immediately transmitted "man overboard" on channel 21A including a position in latitude and longitude. PO [REDACTED] also sent POs [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to the back deck of the boat. PO [REDACTED] recalled initially seeing PO Gill

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face down in the water in the wake of the boat with no evidence of injury. PO [REDACTED] stated, "He's fucked up, He's fucked up," and PO [REDACTED] saw blood in the water. PO [REDACTED] asked for permission to enter the water to assist PO Gill and PO [REDACTED] immediately granted permission. PO [REDACTED] disconnected his kill switch and proceeded to the back deck where he assisted PO [REDACTED] in lifting PO Gill from the water onto the boat's back deck. PO [REDACTED] estimated that PO Gill was in the water for only about 20-30 seconds. PO [REDACTED] was back on board the boat before the arrival of the EMT, PO [REDACTED] from the MSST Seattle boat that was operating in the area and had come alongside shortly after hearing the man overboard radio transmission. PO [REDACTED] recalled that when they brought PO Gill on board he was moaning and attempting to breathe. PO [REDACTED] and PO [REDACTED] rolled PO Gill on his side to facilitate breathing. The EMT pushed PO [REDACTED] out of the way and took charge of first aid treatment to PO Gill. PO Gill then pushed the man overboard button on his navigation equipment. One of the other boats called for a helicopter medevac at PO [REDACTED], the EMT, request. After hearing the 30-40 minute ETA for a helo, PO [REDACTED] requested Sector Seattle direct them to the point where local EMS would be most rapidly available. Sector advised Fauntleroy and the 25501 proceeded there. After arriving at the Fauntleroy ferry terminal PO [REDACTED] disembarked and proceeded up the ramp to direct EMS. PO [REDACTED] does not remember many details after this.

PO [REDACTED] stated that PO Gill often mans the forward gun with only one hand holding on. If using two hands, PO [REDACTED] recalled that PO Gill would ride with one hand on the stock of the weapon and one on the ammunition box. PO [REDACTED] did not see PO Gill's hands prior to the incident as he initiated his turn to starboard. PO Gill having only one hand on the forward gun would not have been a factor to cause PO [REDACTED] to abort the "J" type power turn as executed.

PO Gill was a good crewmember, in whom PO [REDACTED] had complete trust, and he cannot recall having to reprimand him for his performance.

PO [REDACTED] noted his feeling that [REDACTED]

PO [REDACTED] noted the following top concerns regarding the operation of the 25' Defender RBS:

1. [REDACTED] MSST 91111 had several, but crews had been informed that they were not authorized equipment for the boat.
2. The lack of any means of communication with the forward gunner is an important safety issue. PO [REDACTED] recalled noting this at an all hands meeting approximately a year ago attended by a LCDR who was one of the co-founders of the MSST

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program. PO [REDACTED] stood at the meeting and reported that the most dangerous part of the job is not being able to communicate with the forward gunner.

3. [REDACTED]

PO [REDACTED] understands that purchase requests were submitted for communications gear for use between the forward gunner and coxswain but he never heard on their status and never saw any communications equipment.

PO [REDACTED] concurred that in two-boat performance operations the presence of one fully qualified EMT with appropriate equipment would be a good safety precaution.

I certify that this is an accurate summary of the PO [REDACTED] statement.

[REDACTED]

Summary of Witness Statement: [REDACTED] MK3

Date Statement Given: 28 Mar 06<sup>7</sup>  
Witness Name: [REDACTED] USCG  
Unit: MSST 91111 (Anchorage)  
Date/Time/Place of Incident: 25 Mar 07, Puget Sound, IVO Vashon, Washington  
Crew Position at time of Incident: Boat Crew, CG 25501

On 25 Mar 06, PO [REDACTED] completed a approximately 7 hour patrol commencing at 1300 and ending between 1800 and 1900. After completing the patrol on 24 Mar 07, PO [REDACTED] returned to the hotel, took a shower, went to dinner and and was asleep sometime between 2230 and 2300. Did not consume alcohol during the evening prior to the day of the incident under investigation.

On 25 Mar 07, after arriving at the Sector Seattle and preparing the boat for patrol conducted a patrol pre-brief. The DTL, ENS [REDACTED] completed the pre patrol brief. Patrol tasking was for 4 escorts for the day with RTB at 1900. GAR scores were completed; PO [REDACTED] recalled that the score was below twenty and in the green. Communications between boat crew were not discussed. Underway OOA 1300 in CG 25501 with PO [REDACTED], coxswain; PO Gill boat crew; PO [REDACTED] boat crew; and PO [REDACTED], boat crew.

25501 proceeded to Vashon Island ferry terminal and commenced an escort of the Washington State Ferry KITSAP proceeding from Vashon Island to Fauntleroy. PO [REDACTED] was stationed as the forward gunner in the bow of the boat during the entire run and recalled that three "J" type power turns were executed on the escort.

The weapon is the handhold used by the forward gunner. PO [REDACTED] had heard that there were belts to secure himself to the boat, but he had never used one during actual operations or in training. PO [REDACTED] places both hands on the butt of the weapon to secure himself during "J" turns. On a previous patrol, approximately one week earlier, the force of one "J" turn was enough to cause the mount to rotate approximately 25 degrees altering the position of the butt of the weapon from directly astern to the starboard quarter despite the presence of a clamp type locking collar. PO [REDACTED] was not sure if that event occurred on the 25501 or one of the other two RBSs deployed from MSST 91111. PO [REDACTED] did recall reporting the incident to the boat's coxswain.

PO [REDACTED] had no communication with the coxswain from the forward gunner position. The loud hailer was operational as PO Gill had asked him if he was cold during the first escort. Upon completion of the first escort, from Vashon Island to Fauntleroy, the 25501 immediately commenced a second escort, escorting a ferry from Fauntleroy to Vashon Island Terminal. Approximately 3/4 of the way through this escort, the ferry came to a stop in order to conduct a man overboard drill. At his time PO [REDACTED] was relieved by PO Gill in the bow of the vessel and proceeded down the port side of the boat, entered the window and sat in the Nav Chair.

PO [REDACTED] recalled observing PO Gill with his right hand on the butt of the forward gun and his left holding the ammunition box. After PO [REDACTED] was in his seat, the coxswain

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(PO [REDACTED]) commenced a normal turn to port to investigate a sailboat that was off the port quarter of the ferry vessel. PO [REDACTED] observed another USCG RBS alongside the sailboat. After executing the port turn and coming DIW trained on the sailboat. Upon seeing the sailing vessel was engaged by another USCG boat, 25501 the came up to speed, approximately 20-30 knots, and executed a starboard turn. At the time of the turn, the sailboat was approximately 200-300 yards away.

The starboard turn was normal operating procedure. As he executed the turn the coxswain stated hang on.

The turn appeared normal and was similar to those executed on the escort completed immediately before. At the time of this starboard turn PO [REDACTED] was in the starboard aft seat in the cabin. The coxswain was looking in the direction of the turn. PO [REDACTED] was watching PO Gill.

PO [REDACTED] noted the PO Gill's left hand was in the air, possibly waving to passengers on the ferry and his right hand was on the butt of the forward gun on the narrow part of the stock.

During the starboard turn, [REDACTED] was not strapped into his seat as he watched PO Gill.

PO [REDACTED] estimates that approximately 85% of the way through the turn PO Gill went overboard. PO [REDACTED] observed PO Gill's face as he went over the port side of the vessel and he appeared to have a surprised look on his face. PO [REDACTED] stated the boat experienced a force that felt similar to the wheels of a car had hitting the curb. It happened so fast that Gill's hand was jerked off the weapon.

PO [REDACTED] did not recall seeing any part of PO Gills body strike any part of the boat as he was thrown out over the port side. PO Gill's head stuck the water first and was followed by his feet.

PO [REDACTED] immediately shouted man overboard and the PO [REDACTED] brought the engines down. PO [REDACTED] did not feel the boat strike PO Gill as the engines appeared to pass over Gill. PO [REDACTED] then saw PO Gill immediately astern of the boat in the wake.

PO Gill was face down in the water off the port quarter. The PO [REDACTED] maneuvered the 25501 for a starboard side approach and PO [REDACTED] jumped into water after notifying the PO [REDACTED]

As he lay face down in the water, one of PO Gill's arms appeared to move. PO [REDACTED] and PO [REDACTED] pulled PO Gill from the water onto the aft deck of the 25501. PO [REDACTED] remained in the water until PO [REDACTED] was able to assist him into the 25501 shortly after getting PO Gill into the boat. PO [REDACTED] noted PO Gill appeared to be breathing when he was brought onto the 25501. Blood appeared to be passing in and out of the airway.

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One PO Gill was on board the 25501 POs [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] placed PO Gill on his side. Within approximately 30 seconds PO [REDACTED] came over to the 25501 from CG 25002 with his EMT kit began directing first aid by proceeding to cut PO Gill's helmet, tac vest, body armor and drysuit. The removal of this equipment took approximately one minute to accomplish.

PO [REDACTED] was not carrying a weapon and he holstered PO Gill's weapon as PO [REDACTED] commenced first aid. PO [REDACTED] directed PO [REDACTED] to hold PO Gill's head to assist in opening an airway. Shortly after PO [REDACTED] arrived, PO [REDACTED] arrived from CG 25493. and proceeded to assist PO [REDACTED] in administering first aid. After brief initial communication with PO [REDACTED] PO [REDACTED] directed the 25493 to break tow and said let's go.

Approximately one minute from clearing the gear off PO Gill, it appeared that he stopped breathing and no pulse was found. PO [REDACTED] remained in position, holding PO Gill's head following PO [REDACTED] instructions until the 25501 arrived at the Fauntleroy ferry terminal for transfer to EMS. During the transit PO [REDACTED] operated the airbag, PO [REDACTED] administered chest compressions and PO [REDACTED] operated the 25501. After PO Gill was removed and taken away by the ambulance, PO [REDACTED] and the other members of the 25501 crew were driven back to the hotel by Sector by personnel and then to the Sector. Urine and blood samples were collected at the ISC Seattle clinic and PO [REDACTED] completed a 72 hour report and wrote out a statement of his recollection of the facts.

PO [REDACTED] was a qualified boarding team member and boat crew at his former unit, USCG Station Oak Island.

PO [REDACTED] has been at MSST 91111 for approximately 5 months. PO [REDACTED] received a complete Boat Crew recertification during MSST 91111's recent deployment to Guam. PO [REDACTED] stated that training was not provided on the forward gunner position nor was it covered in the applicable PQS.

PO [REDACTED] stated that when conducting escorts, it is SOP to have a person stationed in the forward gunner position manning the mounted weapon. This person is always required to use helmets. PO [REDACTED] stated that PO's Gill and [REDACTED] may have used had signals to communicate between the cabin and the forward gunner position in the past but there were no standardized communication procedures of any kind between these two positions.

PPE used during this incident was manual inflating and PO [REDACTED] reported he had not trained by actual operation of the flotation equipment. PO [REDACTED] was not aware of a standardized maintenance program for PPE and indicated that it was the responsibility of individual members to self check their own PPE gear.

PO [REDACTED] had not been through RFO since arrival at MST 91111. TCT was conducted since his arrival at MSST 91111.

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PO [REDACTED] reported that he was scared of the forward gunner position due to the forces involved and speeds reached by the 25' RBS as were many of his peers. He did not pass these concerns up his chain of command.

PO [REDACTED] noted the on scene weather at the time of the incident was sunny with good visibility, 1-2 foot seas and winds of 5-10.

When asked about PO Gill, PO [REDACTED] stated that he was a physically pretty strong guy. PO [REDACTED] felt that had PO Gill known the turn was coming he would not have fallen and that perhaps he was waving to passengers on the ferry with one hand which could have contributed to his falling off.

PO [REDACTED] stated that there was nothing unusual or unexpected that he could recall regarding the day of the incident and noted no problems with the other members of the crew.

PO [REDACTED] stated that post-incident CISM training was helpful.

PO [REDACTED] noted that PO's [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and himself distinguished themselves in their actions following the incident.

PO [REDACTED] prepared and signed the attached diagram to assist the investigators in understanding of the incident scene.

I certify that this is an accurate summary of the PO [REDACTED] statement.

[REDACTED] CDR

Summary of Witness Statement: [REDACTED], MST2

Date Statement Given: 28 Mar 07  
Witness Name: [REDACTED] USCG  
Unit: MSST91111 (Anchorage)  
Date/Time/Place of Incident: 25 Mar 07, Puget Sound, IVO Vashon, Washington  
Crew Position at time of incident: Boat Crew, CG 25501

PO [REDACTED] has been stationed at MSST 91111 since stand-up in 2004. On 24 Mar 2007, PO [REDACTED] was on patrol between 1300 and 2000 IVO Kingston, WA, conducting ferry escorts and a minor SAR case. After completing the patrol and returning to the hotel for a shower, PO [REDACTED] stayed in for the evening going to sleep at approximately 0100-0130, PO [REDACTED] awoke on 25 March 2007.

PO [REDACTED] stated that at the pre-patrol briefing they were informed by the DTL, ENS [REDACTED] that they would be conducting escorts and critical infrastructure patrols. The selection of the specified number of escorts was left to the patrol craft's discretion. The GAR score was 15. PO [REDACTED] noted that he was angry as everyone else had gotten 5 days off during the deployment and he had received only 2. PO [REDACTED] noted he is not particularly friendly with PO Gill. No animosity, just have different interests.

CG 25501 got underway at approximately 1300. Between the two boats, PO [REDACTED] called the shots. PO [REDACTED] assumed the rear lookout and was sitting in the aft starboard seat with his legs athwartships to brace himself during turns. When stationed at the forward guns, PO [REDACTED] hangs onto the small of the butt stock. The turns executed on this patrol were standard in the sense that they had performed them hundreds of times. "J" type power turns are a tactic used for deterrence by projecting an aggressive posture.

Approximately halfway through the second escort, PO Gill asked to stop the CG 25501 so he could relieve PO [REDACTED] on the forward gun. PO Gill wanted to do "J" type power turns and told PO [REDACTED] that he wanted to go up and do some turns. PO [REDACTED] noted that PO Gill likes to be in the limelight and PO [REDACTED] believes that PO [REDACTED] understood that this was Gill's motivation for wanting to relieve the forward gun. PO [REDACTED] gave permission and PO Gill proceeded to the bow and relieved PO [REDACTED].

PO [REDACTED] stated that there was no standard operating procedure regarding communications between the forward gunner and the coxswain, including standardized hand signals.

It was the third turn when PO Gill fell. The boat was trimmed down; they don't like being trimmed up for "J" type power turns. PO [REDACTED] estimated the CG 25501 was traveling at approximately 30 knots. At the time of the turn, PO [REDACTED] observed PO Gill with his left hand on the gun stock and PO [REDACTED] did not see his right hand. PO Gill was looking towards the ferry. PO [REDACTED] saw PO Gill give a surprised look as he fell backwards head over heels landing in the water face first in a belly flop position. PO [REDACTED] did not feel the CG 25501 strike PO Gill.

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Immediately after seeing PO Gill fall overboard, PO [REDACTED] exited the cabin aft and threw the CG 25501's life ring into the water. PO [REDACTED] observed PO Gill astern approximately 20 - 30 feet astern of CG 25501 with his face down in the water. He appeared to be moving his arms. PO [REDACTED] said [REDACTED], he's not flipping over. PO [REDACTED] saw blood in the water and entered the water in the starboard side of CG 25501 swimming approximately 20-30 feet before reaching PO Gill who remained face down in the water. PO [REDACTED] noted that PO Gill appeared to be moving until he entered the water. Upon reaching PO Gill, PO [REDACTED] turned PO Gill over and thought he saw recognition and fear in PO Gill's face.

PO [REDACTED] swam PO Gill back to the CG 25501. It was difficult swimming and PO [REDACTED] estimated that it was approximately 1.5 minutes from his entering the water to POs [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] hauling PO Gill onto CG 25501. PO [REDACTED] remained in the water, holding onto the CG 25501 as PO's [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] began assisting PO Gill and PO [REDACTED] boat came alongside. After getting out of the water, PO [REDACTED] returned to the cabin of CG 25501 and subsequently assisted with the first aid as directed by PO [REDACTED].

After approximately 10 minutes, the boat began to transit to Fauntleroy. PO [REDACTED] estimated that the ambulance arrived at the Fauntleroy pier approximately 4 minutes after the arrival of CG 25501. During the transit, PO [REDACTED] had been assisting with first aid at the direction of PO [REDACTED] and held PO Gill's legs as PO [REDACTED] did compressions and PO [REDACTED] held PO Gill's head. Upon arrival, PO [REDACTED] ran up the ramp and briefed EMS when they arrived. After the arrival of EMS, PO [REDACTED] and a female crewmember segregated POs [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], leading them to an empty office in the ferry terminal. PO [REDACTED] appeared to be in shock. [REDACTED]

PO [REDACTED] noted that the first aid kit on board the CG 25501 was insufficient and that the EMT kit that PO [REDACTED] supplied had the required equipment for the injuries encountered.

I certify that this is an accurate summary of the PO [REDACTED] statement.

[REDACTED], CDR