

Unsworn statement by LCDR [REDACTED] regarding the events of 17 Aug 2006 regarding the class A MISHAP involving loss of life from USCGC HEALY (WAGB 20).

On the afternoon of Thursday, 17 Aug 2006, HEALY was concluding science and flight operations in a 9/10ths ice covered area of the Arctic Ocean nearby geographic coordinates 77°N, 177°W, nearly 500 nautical miles northwest of Barrow, AK. The environmental conditions included sunshine, light cloud cover and winds around 10kts. With science operations concluded for the day, the decision was made to put down "ice liberty" wherein HEALY would heave-to amidst suitable ice conditions, put a brow over to the ice and allow shipboard personnel access to the ice.

Prior to heaving-to, I was approached on the Bridge by the Marine Science and Dive Officer, LT Jessica Hill regarding her desire to deploy the dive team for training. We agreed that this would be possible if HEALY found a suitable location to deploy people to the ice. LT Hill indicated that she would route a Dive Plan in case the opportunity presented itself. When it became clear where HEALY would stop in the ice, I noted areas of open water both ahead and astern of HEALY from my vantage point on the fo'c's'le. I remained on the fo'c's'le until the brow was in place from the port side, forward. I stayed topside and forward observing the initial safety party deploy to the ice to ensure conditions suitable for ice liberty. Ice liberty was piped soon thereafter at around 1620. I located the Dive Plan which had been signed by LT Hill and placed in my room. I signed the Dive Plan after making a pen and ink amendment indicating possible deployment of the dive team would be via brow to the ice. The plan was hand-delivered to CDR Jackson (Executive Officer) and handed back to me after review. I then placed the Dive Plan on the Captain's table. Soon after, Captain mentioned to me that the Dive Plan had been signed and placed in LT Hill's inbox. I contacted LT Hill in the Dive Locker and told her the signed plan was in her Wardroom inbox. LT Hill acknowledged and asked if there was a need for a verbal dive brief. I indicated that a verbal brief was not required. LT Hill offered to personally brief the Captain and I agreed that this was a good idea.

By 1640 I was on the Bridge observing people start to cross the brow onto the ice. Dinner was served starting at 1700. At 1705 I went to the Messdeck for chow. Around 1740 I departed my room with the intention of crossing the brow and heading out to the ice. The route I took to the brow was from my room on the 04 deck down to the 01 deck starboard side and up to the fo'c's'le to get a look at the progress of the Dive Operations which had been staged at the open water lead 50 feet ahead of the stem of HEALY. I looked over the fo'c's'le for a short period of time and observed nothing out of the ordinary. There was a good deal of on-lookers in the nearby vicinity. I crossed the brow and remained stationary on the ice about 200 feet from the brow for 30 to 45 minutes. At about 1830, I proceeded back towards the brow and noted a large group of people in the vicinity of the open water area below the port bow and forward of the port bow. I joined the large group of people on the ice below and forward of the port bow and observed people taking turns, one at a time, jump in the water with a tether line tended by DC1 [REDACTED]. This swim activity is commonly referred to as a "Polar Bear Swim." The Polar Bear Swim was taking place below the flare of the port bow and the Dive Team operations were approximately 50 feet forward of the bow as stated above.

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After approximately 5 minutes in the location of the Polar Bear Swim, I overheard and saw BMCS [REDACTED] announce that divers were returning to the surface. He spoke in a loud and commanding voice which reflected some degree of urgency. Within one minute, I noted increased activity at the location of the dive operations and went over to investigate. By that time, a variety of other people had been directed to assist with the two yellow tending lines which were being hauled in. It was just about this moment when it became clear to me that something was quite possibly seriously wrong. Moments later, both LT Hill and BM2 Duque were at the surface. I saw BM2 Duque floating on his back at the ice edge with his head toward the crowd and thought I saw a shaking movement of his right leg. I cannot account for this apparent leg motion as to whether it was by BM2 Duque or a function of him being pulled onto the ice. The direction was made to get LT Hill and BM2 Duque to the ice and immediately, both were pulled onto the ice. I walked closer to the location of LT Hill and as I passed BM2 Duque, I visually observed a large spread of reddish foam down the center of his body. I took a position kneeling at the head of LT Hill and observed ET2 [REDACTED] perform chest compressions and CWO2 [REDACTED] perform mouth to mouth. Between rescue breaths, small but notable amounts of water and foam emerged from the mouth and nose of LT Hill. During ET2 [REDACTED] chest compressions and while CWO2 [REDACTED] was not giving rescue breaths, CWO2 [REDACTED] was cradling LT Hill's head and talking to her. LT Hill was unresponsive. Captain Russell (Commanding Officer) was next to me and directed that I get D-17 on the phone immediately. I left the scene and proceeded to the ship with the intent of contacting the Pacific Area Command Center.

Once back on HEALY, I went to the radio space and saw OSC [REDACTED] starting to make off-the-ship phone calls. I told him that I would take over that role. At 1910 I established initial contact with the Pacific Area Command Center in Alameda, CA. I provided an initial report that HEALY was in the midst of a medical emergency with two persons unconscious who had been pulled from the water during dive operations and that first-aid was being administered. I stated that the ship's position was 77°N, 177°W and we were 500 miles northwest of Barrow, AK. I requested that the duty flight surgeon be patched into this phone call. Soon after, the Command Center introduced CDR [REDACTED] into the conversation. I recapped the situation and noted that I had minimal amplifying information and this was an initial report. CDR [REDACTED] stated that he needed to know if the victims were one, breathing or not and two, had respirations or a pulse. I relayed this request for information to the bridge via the 21MC. At that point, the phone call dropped. I made several additional attempts to contact the Command Center while OSC [REDACTED] and IT1 [REDACTED] policed the radio space and checked external connectivity to ensure we had the best chance at communicating with medical authority through the Command Center. After several unsuccessful attempts to regain a phone connection with the Command Center, I relocated to Sickbay where LT Hill and BM2 Duque had been transferred.

Once in Sickbay, I positioned myself in an adjoining room and continued trying to call off the ship. At 1947 I reestablished a phone connection with the Command Center and CDR [REDACTED]. At this point, I introduced LT(jg) [REDACTED] HEALY's Physician Assistant, and handed him the phone. LT(jg) [REDACTED] began to converse with CDR [REDACTED] and spoke for a few minutes when the phone connection dropped off. Communications were reestablished

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at 1954 and lost again after a minute or two. By this time, LT(jg) [REDACTED] had relayed a substantial amount of information to CDR [REDACTED] and answered many questions. I reestablished contact with CDR [REDACTED] for the final time at 2001, handed the phone to LT(jg) [REDACTED] and became aware that the call had been made to pronounce LT Hill and BM2 Duque dead. I noted the time as 2001. I took the phone back from LT(jg) [REDACTED] and asked the Command Center if they required any additional information prior to terminating this phone call. The Command Center indicated they had the information they needed at that time. I stated that HEALY would reestablish contact in 30 minutes. After hanging up the phone, CDR Jackson (Executive Officer), LT(jg) [REDACTED], ETCM [REDACTED] (Command Master Chief) and myself discussed particulars of the next step which was to cease attempts to resuscitate LT Hill and BM2 Duque. CDR Jackson directed me to depart medical and notify Captain Russell. I located Captain Russell on the Bridge and informed him that the deceased call had been made. Some minutes later, Captain Russell directed that HEALY heave to (we had begun making way towards Barrow while I was in medical) so he could address ship's company on the flight deck with minimal distractions. HEALY stopped, ship's company assembled on the flight deck and Captain Russell passed the word that we had lost two Shipmates. Captain Russell then directed that HEALY make best speed towards Barrow.

Over the next several hours, CDR Jackson coordinated efforts to take appropriate and required immediate administrative measures in light of this class A MISHAP involving loss of life.

[REDACTED] 25 Aug 06
[REDACTED], LCDR USCG
Operations Officer
USCGC HEALY (WAGB 20)

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