

Sent: Mon Jan 10 02:17:01 2005
Subject: USS SAN FRANCISCO SITREP -2100W/9 Jan 05

unclas update on the SAN FRANCISCO incident for your situational awareness:

At 10 January 1634 local (100134 EST) the USS SAN FRANCISCO returned safely to Apra Harbor, Guam. The ship moored with her own line handlers in a normal submarine configured mooring (AFT draft is 27'-10" (normal AFT draft is 32') and FWD Draft is above the draft marks with the waterline at the point the towed array faring begins; 0.8 degree STBD list and 1 degree Down bubble indicating by naval architecture calculations that 1 A/B and 2A/B MBTs are most likely flooded). The severely injured Machinist Mate (Engineroom Upper Level Watch at time of grounding) was evacuated immediately and transferred by ambulance to Naval Hospital Guam where a fully staffed medical team was standing by. He is conscious and in stable condition. Approximately fifteen additional injured personnel requiring medical care subsequently departed the ship and were transported to the hospital after taking a moment to meet with family members. Crewmembers from the USS CORPUS CHRISTI, HOUSTON and FRANK CABLE assisted in linehandling and various return to port evolutions such as propulsion plant shutdown, shorepower cables, and rig for surface. Standing by on the pier was a full complement of watchstanders from USS CITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI (and SAN FRANCISCO stay-behinds) to satisfy all watchstanding requirements for reactor plant shutdown with follow-on inport forward and aft watchsections.

Following the grounding on 8 January, the ship transited on the surface at 8kts with surface escort, USCGC GALVESTON ISLAND to Apra Harbor, Guam. Due to deteriorated weather conditions on the evening of 9 January, the Commanding Officer shifted bridge watchstations to control and shut bridge access hatches to maximize watertight integrity in light of reserve buoyancy concerns. The ship maintained stability throughout the surface transit with continuous operation of the Low Pressure Blower on the Forward Main Ballast Tanks. SAN FRANCISCO has experienced no reactor plant, propulsion train or electrical system degradations as a result of the grounding. The Commanding Officer shifted the Officer of the Deck's watch to the bridge on 10 January in preparation for piloting into Apra Harbor.

The critically injured Machinist Mate (Auxiliaryman) passed away yesterday afternoon as a result of his injuries. The MM2 was in Aft Main Seawater Bay at the time of the grounding and his body was thrown forward approximately 20 feet into Propulsion Lube Oil Bay. He suffered a severe blow to his forehead and never regained consciousness.

Emergency medical personnel, including a Naval Hospital Guam surgeon, Undersea Medical Officer and Independent Duty Corpsmen, arrived on the ship via helicopter transfer to provide immediate medical care and prepare the crewmember for medical evacuation on the morning of 9 January. Unfortunately, the sailor's condition deteriorated and he died onboard while under the care of the embarked physicians. Just moments prior to the sailor's death, I spoke with the Sailor's father in preparation for their pending travel from Ohio to the West Pacific to see their Son. Since then I have passed on to his Dad my condolences on their Son's death and reassured them their Son's remains would be treated with utmost respect and dignity. His father expressed great gratitude for the extraordinary efforts made by the Navy to save his Son's life. He told me his Son loved the Navy, having just reenlisting earlier this year and wanted to make it a career. That when he called home he always talked about the many friendships and the wonderful camaraderie the crew of SFO exhibited. Prior to sailing, he was really excited about the pending ship visit to Australia. The parents are considering traveling to Guam, with Navy support, at some point to meet the crew and partake in a memorial service for his Son.

For the remainder of the transit, the embarked medical trauma team administered medical care to the other injured personnel. Their careful attention and evaluation augments the ship's Independent Duty Corpsman's heroic efforts since the grounding.

Submarine Squadron Fifteen COMMODORE, Captain Brad Gerhke and Captain Paul Bushong, Commanding Officer of the Submarine Tender USS FRANK CABLE have mobilized their assets, staffs, crews and local Navy Community to provide comprehensive support to the SAN FRANCISCO. Professional counselors, medical personnel and Navy Chaplains are scheduled to meet with the entire crew to provide grief counseling and assistance throughout the next several days and as required over the long term. Brad has been meeting frequently with the SFO families and they are doing remarkable well. The entire Navy community in Guam has come to the SFO's families' assistance. I have talked to Kevin Mooney's (SFO Skipper) wife, Ariel. Her state of mind is positive and resolute, with a courageous and upbeat view of the trying days ahead.

The ship's Main Ballast Tank damage and deformation has degraded maneuverability and mandated the use of two tugs to moor in Apra Harbor. A Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard/NAVSEA Material Assessment Team comprised of a structural engineer, MBT vent expert, air systems expert and naval architect arrived in Guam with special ship salvage and recovery equipment to stabilize the ship piersonside as soon as possible. The team, led by Captain Charles Doty, commenced a seaworthiness and repair assessment upon the ship's arrival. Once additional buoyancy measures are in place and tested satisfactory, the Low Pressure Blower will be secured to allow divers to enter the water to conduct an inspection.

While this grounding is a tragedy, with a through investigation led by Cecil Haney, we will find out all the facts and then ensure we learn from the mistakes. But, I too believe we have much to be thankful for today, and much to be confident in. An operational warship has returned to port on her own power with all but one of its crew after sustaining major hull damage. The survival of the ship after such an incredibly hard grounding (nearly instantaneous deceleration from Flank Speed to 4 KTS) is a credit to the ship design engineers and our day-to-day engineering and watchstanding practices. The continuous operation of the propulsion plant, electrical systems and navigation demonstrates the reliability of our equipment and the operational readiness of our crews as a whole. The impressive Joint and Navy team effort which resulted in SFO returning to port safely says volumes about the ingenuity and esourcefulness of all our armed services. For all who participated in this effort, thank you and your people. We are all eternally grateful to each of you.

Very Respectfully - Paul Sullivan