

SK3 [REDACTED] was interviewed via telephone by LCDR Thomas L. Copenhaver, JAGC, USN on 17 November 2000. SK3 [REDACTED] was on leave at his parent's home [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He returns from leave on 1 December. A summary of his interview is provided below.

SK3 [REDACTED] was assigned to escort the husbanding agent during the refueling in Aden. He believes the husbanding agent arrived on board the ship by the Jacobs ladder located on the aft end of the ship. He met the husbanding agent in the wardroom. He escorted the husbanding agent around the topside of USS COLE.

1. What boats came along side the COLE? There were two CHT barges tied together, one with a tank and one without. The CHT barges were older ships. There was also a garbage barge. The garbage barge was older than the CHT barges.

Where did they tie up? When did they leave? The garbage barge was tied up amidships. The two CHT barges were aft of the garbage barge, tied up below the CHT discharge. The two CHT barges split up and pulled away from the ship at approximately 1055-1100, prior to the explosion. The CHT barge with the tank proceeded away from the ship. The crewmembers from the other CHT barge were trying to pass drinking water to the crewmembers on the garbage barge and then proceeded to tie up aft of the garbage barge to take on some additional garbage. The garbage barge left at approximately 1105-1110. Leaving only the CHT barge tied up aft ready to take on the additional garbage.

2. Who gave permission for these boats to come along side? OOD. The husbanding agent would tell the OOD that a boat was approaching and that it was one of his boats.

3. Did you tell anyone about the boats along side? All the boats that were alongside either were the husbanding agent's boats or were associated with him. After the garbage barge left, the husbanding agent started speaking with one of the men in the CHT barge. At this point SK3 [REDACTED] noticed a white boat, 14 to 15 feet in length, traveling parallel to the COLE about 15 feet from the ship. As he was waiting to ask the husbanding agent if this was one of his boats, the boat turned in and exploded. They were standing on the aft end of COLE at the time.

Did anyone ask about the boats? SK3 [REDACTED] was trying to ask the husbanding agent about the boat that exploded when it turned in. He did not have time to report it.

Were any more boats due to come along side? None that he was aware of.


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