

Complacency Costs

By Shannon Smith

When everything is going well and you get into a routine— especially over a long period of time — you get comfortable. You become confident that nothing bad will happen because nothing has, at least in a long time. You lose focus and begin to run on autopilot. You become complacent.

Complacency is feeling satisfied with yourself and your efforts, especially when unaware of potential problems or dangers. Kind of like walking in to a job interview fully confident that you look your best and totally unaware that your fly is open, there is a stain on your shirt and toilet paper trailing from your shoe.

Staying focused and diligent is probably one of the hardest things to do in a busy work environment, especially when standing watch.

In 2017 four navy ships from the Pacific fleet have been involved in collisions resulting in 17 casualties. The disturbing trend is that each one seems to result from failures in watch standing and navigation.

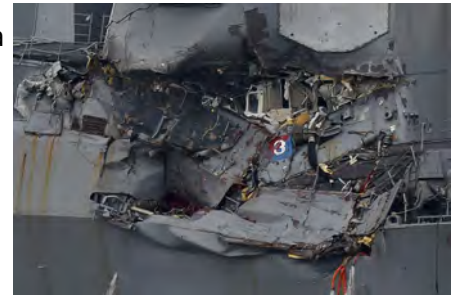
U.S. Navy Punishes Senior Staff in Deadly Warship Collision

The U.S. Navy has removed the two senior officers and the senior enlisted sailor on a U.S. warship that almost sank off the coast of Japan in June after it was struck by a Philippine container ship, the Navy said on Friday.

The punishments are the first public admission by the U.S. Navy that mistakes by the crew contributed to the deadliest incident on a U.S. warship since Islamist extremists bombed the USS Cole in Yemen's Aden harbour in 2000.

"The collision was avoidable and both ships demonstrated poor seamanship. Within Fitzgerald, flawed watch stander teamwork and inadequate leadership contributed to the collision," the U.S. Seventh Fleet said in a media release.

The commercial vessel had the right-of-way under maritime rules and the Fitzgerald, which was hit on the starboard side, was likely at fault. Several U.S. and Japanese investigations are still under way



The collision tore the outer bulkhead off the commanding officer's cabin and crushed the interior, injuring and trapping the CO.

Watchstanding Tips

1. Know and follow Master's watchstanding orders.
2. Alternate manual steering with autopilot every 20 – 30 mins.
3. Get enough sleep on your rest hours.
4. Stay hydrated.
5. Avoid heavy meals before watch.
6. Set timers to complete tasks during watch.

TOP Safety Card Hits

(Fleetwide last month)

Housekeeping 23

Safety Attitude 15

Communications 11

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into how the Fitzgerald and the much larger ACX Crystal collided in clear weather south of Tokyo Bay.

One pertinent question, said two naval officers who spoke on condition of anonymity, is what was happening at the time in the Fitzgerald's Combat Information Center, where crew members monitor radar that should have detected the approach of a 30,000-ton cargo vessel.

Commander Bryce Benson was relieved "due to a loss of confidence in his ability to lead", the Seventh Fleet said.

Commander Sean Babbitt and Master Chief Petty Officer Brice Baldwin "contributed to the **lack of watch stander preparedness and readiness** that was evident in the events leading up to the collision", it said. Several other junior officers have also been relieved, with administrative action taken against other members of the ship's watch teams.

The collision, at 1:30 a.m. local time, tore a gash below the Fitzgerald's waterline and sent water pouring into the warship, the report said.

"Water on deck," sailors in a berthing area started yelling. "Get out," they shouted as mattresses, furniture, and even an exercise bicycle began to float. **The berthing was completely flooded within 60 seconds**, although more than two dozen of the 35 sailors in it escaped. The last sailor to be rescued was in the bathroom at the time of the collision.

"Lockers were floating past him, ... at one point he was pinned between the lockers and the ceiling of Berthing 2, but was able to reach for a pipe in the ceiling to pull himself free," the report said.

Two sailors stayed at the foot of the ladder in the compartment to help others escape. "The choices made by these two sailors likely saved the lives of at least two of their shipmates," the report said.

Commanding Officer Benson was trapped in his cabin and five sailors used a sledgehammer to break through the door.

"Even after the door was open, there was a large amount of debris and furniture against the door, preventing anyone from entering or exiting easily," the report said.

The sailors tied themselves to each other with a belt and rescued Benson, who was hanging from the side of the ship.

By Idrees Ali and Tim Kelly



Leadership comes from the top...

August 20th, days after the **USS Fitzgerald** officers were relieved of command, the destroyer **USS John McCain** collided with a Liberian flagged tanker. Five crewmen confirmed injured and ten dead. Shortly afterwards, **Vice Admiral Joseph Aucoin was relieved of duty as commander of the 7th Fleet, "due to a loss of confidence in his ability to command."**