US Coast Guard Auxiliary
National Response Department
Team Coordination Training 2010 Refresher
Participant Reference

Review & discuss the key risk factors from this patrol that may impact our judgment and decision-making.

Learning Objectives

- How should pre-underway risk assessments be prepared and executed?
- What special risks does the use of a PWC present in operations?
- What impact could the loss of one or more facilities have on a multi-unit mission?
- What responsibilities does an AUXPATCOM (team leader) have for multiple units?

Your Task

1. **Read this sea story carefully**
2. **Discuss at least 3 errors, and 3 good decisions made by these crews during the mission.**
3. **Review the TCT basics starting on page**
4. **Describe the elements in the story where you feel that the principles of TCT were not followed.**
5. **Suggest a course of action or change in behavior that might correct the problem or align this crew's activity with TCT principles.**
6. **Cite the relevant element of Team Coordination basics when completing these tasks.**
7. **Make any assumptions you and the rest of the crew deem necessary to fill in any details not specifically stated in the sea story.**

The Patrol

Venue: The shallow waters of Gastineau Channel, north of Juneau, Alaska between Spuhn Island and Mendenhall Bar. Strong tidal currents are common in narrow channel areas.

Mission: Survey and photograph ATONS used to mark the northern areas of the shallow waters at Mendenhall Bar including those at Spuhn Island. Check for ATONS that may be damaged, missing, or out of position, and assist in replacement ops under the supervision of CGC Elderberry, home ported in Petersburg, AK.

Facilities: 23 foot center consol with a single 175 HP outboard
1 coxswain with 2 crewmembers.

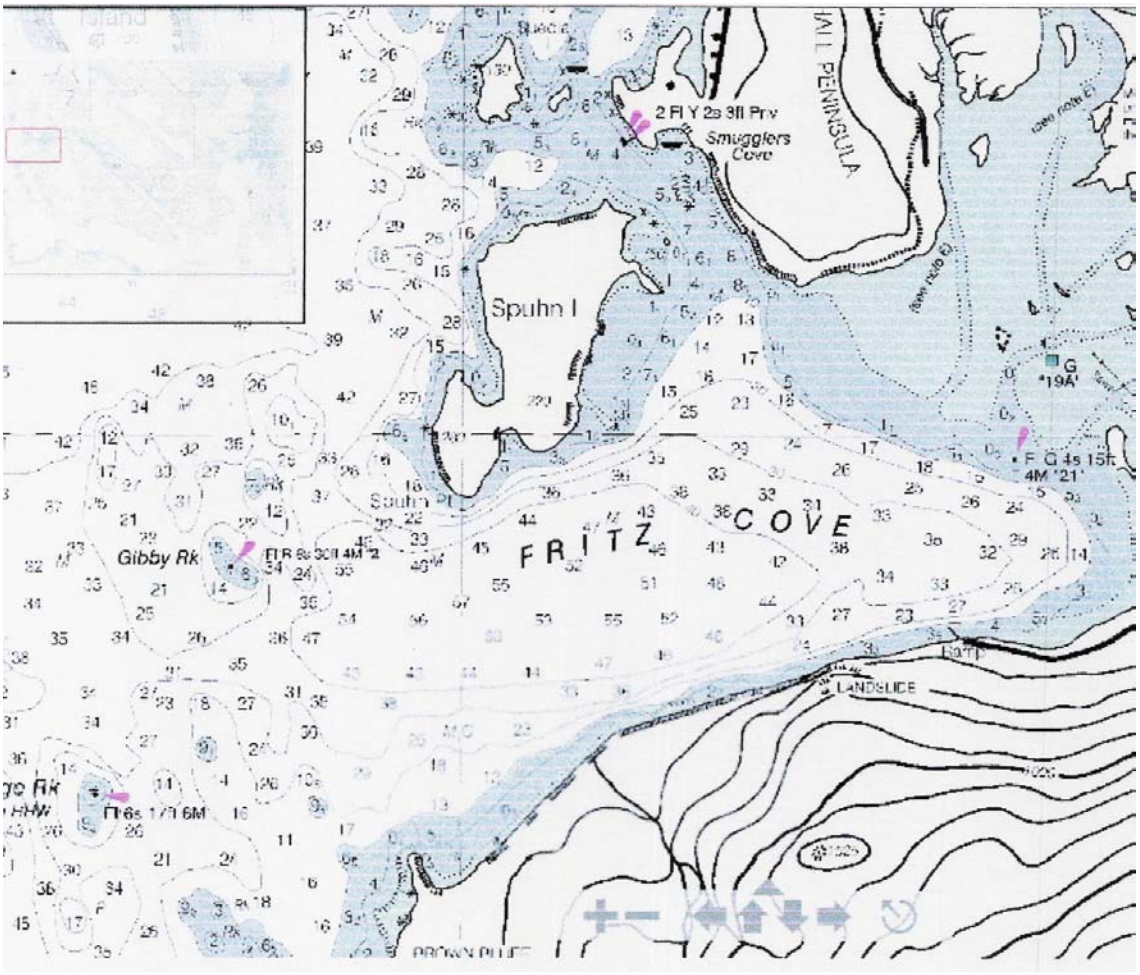
11 foot Yamaha FX Cruiser, 3 passenger PWC, 1812 cc engine displacement, 1 PWO

Weather: 50°F Overcast skies with 50% chance of showers.
Wind: NW at 10-15 mph
Humidity: 82%
Low tide predicated for 1130 hours in this area

Scenario: The Mendenhall Bar area of the channel is known for its shallow waters and boaters are warned that navigation in this area is extremely hazardous. The water deepens as you enter Fritz Cove and the Spuhn Island area to the north and west of Mendenhall Bar.

Each spring, the USCG flotilla in this AOR is requested to assist CGC Elderberry personnel as they prepare for the summer recreational and fishing boat traffic that will begin to increase throughout the season; cruise liners will also begin arriving at Juneau within a few weeks. Many ATONS deployed at the Mendenhall Bar routinely become damaged or are relocated by the effects of severe weather and the extreme tidal flows that reach 19 feet in this area.

Coast Guard Station personnel have requested that Auxiliary facilities assist in this mission. Flotilla Ops officer suggested that in addition to his 23' standard center consol, that a PWC AUXFAC be assigned because of their shallow draft capability that allows close inspection of ATONS and also enables those ATONS that have moved off station to be towed to their original designated location. The Station Juneau OIC agreed and also assigned a 15 foot Rigid Inflatable Boat, Light, to this operation.



Close up view, Area of Operations

At 0730 hours, AUXFAC #231076 and #112212 conducted a pre-underway checklist, and participated in a mission brief with Coast Guard personnel regarding the day's planned activity at Station Juneau. All vessels would meet at Fritz Cove just off the boat ramp located on the northwest side of Douglas Island west of Entrance Point at 0900 to launch the PWC and the CG 15 foot inflatable.

At 0900, the 23foot OPFAC drifted just offshore while the inflatable and PWC were launched in Fritz cove. The 23 footer stayed off shore approximately 100 yards while all three vessels proceeded towards the Mendenhall Bar that begins about a one mile southeast of their position at the ramp. The operator of the PWC moved in close to the bar and began establishing each ATON's current position, and checking the GPS coordinates against the list of coordinates provided by the Coast Guard. The inflatable moved in with the PWC and assisted with the inspection and photography until 1030 hours when the CG vessel was called away to respond to a report of a disabled fishing vessel in Gastineau Channel, south of Juneau.

At the departure of the inflatable, the PWC operator continued to work at establishing current ATON positions, inspecting for damage and photographing each ATON while the 23 footer remained 100 yards off the bar to avoid running aground. His role was to maintain contact with the PWC and act as back-up should the operator encounter trouble.

At this point, the PWC operator left the seat and balanced himself on the stern area of his vessel to secure a line to one ATON that was clearly out of position.

The coxswain saw what was occurring and felt that the PWC operator was taking unnecessary risks by standing upright on the stern of the PWC and trying to manage the ATONS without the 15 foot inflatable's crew to assist. He knew that the tide was still going out and that water depth would worsen the risk of his going aground unless he could immediately maneuver closer in to give a hand with the ATON. He was focused on getting the job done, despite a warning from his helmsman that they had already positioned themselves too close to the bar. He told the helmsman to raise his outboard as high as he dared to maintain propulsion and maneuverability and slowly edged in to approach the ATON and the PWC. He positioned his crew as far forward as he could to raise the motor a little higher as he closed the distance to within 20 yards of the PWC. At this point, the PWC operator leaned over the stern a little more to secure a line on the ATON, causing him to slip and fall into the shallow, muddy water on the bar. The PWC operator tried to stand up but the mud provided no footing as he struggles to extricate himself from the bottom.

Two members of the crew of the 23 footer ran aft to retrieve a "throwable" attached to a line to assist the PWC operator, which caused the stern to settle the prop into the mud, stalling the motor of the facility. The coxswain raised the motor and all three members used the boat hooks and emergency paddles on board to push the boat away from the bar to an area where the motor could be re-started. At this time the PWC operator was still attempting to regain his balance to return to the PWC. The 23 footer gained maneuverability and a line was passed to the PWC operator who was hauled to the boat and helped onboard. The mission was canceled at this time and plans were made to retrieve the PWC when the tide returned sufficiently to recover it. All crew and the 23 footer returned to base.

Review of TCT Basics

A short summary of the key points of Team Coordination Training is provided to assist with your analysis of the case. This information is accessible to all members on the Coast Guard's TCT website: http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg3/cg3pcx/training/tct/default.asp.
A Team Coordination Training student guide is available on the Coast Guard site at http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg3/cg3pcx/training/tct/intro.pdf

Mission Analysis

Always conduct a risk assessment prior to a patrol, no matter how routine you believe the mission to be. Every mission is unique, contingency planning based on experience should include complexity of mission, environmental factors, crew fitness factors and any other circumstance that could impact the mission & your safety

Situational Awareness

We must know what is going on around us to make good decisions. Plans are critical to success, that is for sure…but we must be ready to change those plans, use contingency plans if necessary, based on what we encounter during the mission. Stressful situations, complacency and boredom will inhibit our situational awareness and increase the likelihood of poor decision-making.

Adaptability

Adaptability is the ability to react to changes in conditions, crew fitness, equipment failures, etc. and is based on the "situational awareness" we mentioned above. How flexible are we? How receptive are we to different opinions? Leaders do not necessarily have "all the answers". Leaders do take advantage of everyone's ideas and experience and remain adaptable to new conditions and challenges.

Communication

Communication takes many forms. We have verbal and non-verbal (facial expressions, etc.) communication that everyone uses to convey thoughts and ideas. The key of course is to ensure that the person or persons we communicate with have a clear understanding of what we wish to convey. This involves closing the "feedback" loop. We can ask for feedback, or we can observe behavior to be sure the message was received. The key is a two-way expression, either verbally or non-verbally, that confirms the communication process was completed.

Leadership

Leadership is not about giving orders. Leaders do find ways to obtain the willing participation of others towards accomplishing a goal. That goal, in this case, must be consistent with the Coast Guard's core values as well as consistent with the mission at hand. Since we cannot "order" anyone to do anything, we must strive to achieve the respect, confidence and loyalty of those entrusted to our care…all Auxiliarists have this opportunity to lead, regardless of their position.

Assertiveness

The Coast Guard values people who are assertive, but not aggressive. The difference between these two characteristics is sometimes hard to see. The aggressive person seeks to bully his/her way though situations for their own ego or self image….while an assertive person cares about the "mission" more than themselves and their ego. They always communicate their concerns but they also try to get a reasonable resolution when ideas are in conflict without stepping on top of those who may disagree.

Decision Making

Making good decisions is really at the heart of TCT. How do we ensure that we act or perform in a manner that maximizes mission success and minimizes risk to ourselves, our crew, the public, etc? The other elements of TCT all play a role in improving those decisions. We define a problem or condition, seek information about that problem, analyze that information, identify alternatives and select one or a range of alternatives. Then we measure our success or failure in order to adjust our course of action. This process can take us 20 seconds in the case of routine decisions, or 20 months in the case of large complex problems. The process is the same … the depth of analysis and level of importance is always changing.