



Monday, December 17, 2007 - Page updated at 04:32 PM

*Permission to reprint or copy this article or photo, other than personal use, must be obtained from The Seattle Times. Call 206-464-3113 or e-mail [resale@seattletimes.com](mailto:resale@seattletimes.com) with your request.*

## Terrifying tilt of cruise liner may have been caused by ship's officer

By **RON WORD**

*The Associated Press*

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — A second officer may have turned off auto pilot on a cruise ship causing the vessel to tilt sharply at sea last year, injuring 227 passengers and 57 crew members, according to transcripts released by transportation officials.

Interviews with Capt. Andrew Proctor and Second Officer Adam Stratford indicated that Stratford may have been responsible for taking the Crown Princess off auto pilot after he became concerned with the speed of a turn. The information from the National Transportation Safety Board was included in about 1,700 pages released Friday regarding the July 2006 incident off the coast of Port Canaveral.

"I switched the system off of NACOS (auto pilot) into hand steering and then I took the wheel myself," Stratford said. "I turned the wheel to port, which was my mistake. I meant to go to starboard with the ship sheering off to port. I need to go to starboard, but I went to port."

"The ship was doing, you know, started leaning over, and I was starting to ... get a bit nervous ... I was just trying to do whatever I could whatever I could to stop what was happening," Stratford said.

In his interview, Proctor told investigators, "The Second Officer told me ... 'I'm sorry, that, you know.'"

Proctor was not on the bridge when the July 18, 2006, accident occurred and he had placed the ship on auto pilot.

The information released by the NTSB is factual and does not provide an analysis of what caused the accident. The final report, along with conclusions and a probable cause, will be released later.

The Crown Princess unexpectedly heeled to its side shortly after departing Port Canaveral, where it stopped for a few hours before a scheduled return to New York to finish off a nine-day Caribbean cruise.

The ship tilted an estimated 16 to 18 degrees, seriously injuring at least 14 people after passengers and objects tumbled. After the accident, the ship returned to Port Canaveral.

Those aboard described a terrifying interlude in which they were certain the entire 113,000-ton ship would tip over. All 3,100 passengers and 1,200 crew members were accounted for, and all customers received a full refund for the journey.

More than 90 people on the ship were transported to hospitals, two with critical wounds.

At the time of the incident seas were calm and there was no indication a rogue wave or foul play contributed to the roll.

In the newly released NTSB information, about 200 separate reports deal with a variety of subjects including the ship's equipment, to officer interviews, to engineering studies to passenger interviews are covered in the document release.

At the time of the accident, Princess Cruises officials said "the incident was due to human error and the appropriate personnel changes have been made."

It did not blame Proctor and did not mention Stratford.

A call to Princess Cruises was not immediately returned.

Gretchen Nelson, an attorney whose firm, Kreindler & Kreindler, of New York City, represents 21 injured passengers, said the report will shed more light on the events that day.

"We have ordered the full docket from the NTSB. I anticipate there will be more information on the cause of the accident."

Princess is operated by Miami-based Carnival Corp., the world's largest cruise operator. A similar tilt occurred in February 2006 on a ship also operated by Princess. The 2,600-passenger Grand Princess left the Port of Galveston but soon made an emergency turnaround because a passenger suffered a heart attack. The ship tipped sharply on its side, injuring 10 crew members and 27 passengers. The cause of that list was determined to be human error.

[Copyright © 2007 The Seattle Times Company](#)