

USS John S. McCain Accident, 2017

[US Navy: Lack of compliance lead to warships' collisions](#), 2017-11-02

The US Navy released a report detailing the events and actions that led to the collision of USS Fitzgerald and ACX Crystal, off Japan on 17 June, and the collision of USS John S. McCain and merchant vessel Alnic MC, on 21 August. The report concludes that **both incidents were avoidable** and resulted from lack of procedural compliance.

USS JOHN S. MCCAIN

USS JOHN S MCCAIN collided with Motor Vessel ALNIC MC on 21 August 2017 in the Straits of Singapore and resulted in the **deaths of 10 U.S. Sailors** due to impact with MCCAIN's berthing compartments, located below the waterline of the ship. ALNIC suffered no fatalities.

The collision between John S. McCain and Alnic MC was also avoidable and resulted primarily from complacency, over-confidence and lack of procedural compliance. A major contributing factor to the collision was **sub-standard level of knowledge regarding the operation of the ship control console**.

In particular, **McCain's commanding officer disregarded recommendations** from his executive officer, navigator and senior watch officer to set sea and anchor watch teams in a timely fashion to ensure the safe and effective operation of the ship. With regard to procedures, no one on the Bridge watch team, to include the commanding officer and executive officer, were properly trained on how to correctly operate the ship control console during a steering casualty.

[Years of Warnings, Then Death and Disaster](#), 2019-02-07

The Navy, embarrassed and scrambling to explain to Congress and America's allies how such seemingly inexplicable disasters could have happened, moved quickly to prosecute members of ship crews it declared all but incompetent and to strip senior officers of their commands.

But the swift, seemingly decisive action masked a much more damning story of failure by the Navy's top command and the Pentagon. Aucoin had hardly been the only one detailing the once-proud 7th Fleet's perilous condition. **The alarms had been sounded up and down the**

chain of command, by young, overmatched sailors, by veteran captains and commanders, and by some of the most respected Navy officials in Washington.

“In No Way ... Prepared for an Actual Real-World Emergency”

The subsequent internal investigation of the McCain crash, obtained by ProPublica, unspools an **almost inconceivable collection of lapses and blunders**. Many were foreshadowed during the previous seven years, from the Balisle report in 2010 through Aucoin’s pleas for help.

The captain ordered a second crew member at a different computer console to take control of the speed, but that only led to more confusion and eventually panic. **No one fully understood how to use the new touchscreen navigation system**. For several minutes, the crew mistakenly thought it had lost control of the steering. Then they accidentally slowed the propeller on only one side, forcing the McCain to turn sharply left.

The initial investigation chronicled a familiar list of deficiencies: The ship had too few sailors, and those it did have were getting just **four to five hours of sleep a day**. The chief petty officer in charge of teaching the sailors how to use the new steering system had received **less than an hour of instruction**.

[NTSB Releases Its Analysis of the USS John S McCain Collision](#), 2019-05-08

The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has released its analysis of the August 21, 2017, collision between the USS John S McCain and the tanker Alnic MC, stating it was caused by **insufficient training, inadequate bridge operating procedures and a lack of operational oversight**.

The NTSB determined the probable cause of the collision was a **lack of effective operational oversight** of the destroyer by the U.S. Navy, which resulted in insufficient training and inadequate bridge operating procedures. Contributing to the accident were the John S McCain bridge team’s loss of situation awareness and failure to follow loss of steering emergency procedures, including the requirement to inform nearby vessel traffic of their perceived loss of steering. Also contributing to the accident was the **operation of the steering system in backup manual mode**, which allowed for an unintentional, unilateral transfer of steering control.

The Navy installed touch-screen steering systems to save money, 2019-12-20

To guide the McCain, Bordeaux relied upon a navigation system the Navy considered a triumph of technology and thrift. It featured slick black touch screens to operate the ship's wheel and propellers. It knit together information from radars and digital maps. It would save money by requiring fewer sailors to safely steer the ship.

Bordeaux felt confident using the system to control the speed and heading of the ship. But there were **many things he did not understand** about the array of dials, arrows and data that filled the touch screen.

Sanchez grew to distrust the navigation system, especially for use in delicate operations. He often ordered it to run in backup manual mode, which eliminated some of the automated functions but also created new risks.

The NTSB put it plainly: "The design of the John S McCain's touch-screen steering and thrust control system," the board found, "**increased the likelihood of the operator errors** that led to the collision."

The Navy, while publicly blaming the McCain's crew, also took steps to make sure other sailors were better equipped to avoid similar disasters. Commanders issued new instructions to the Navy's entire fleet of destroyers on how to properly use the navigation system to avoid the kinds of mistakes that could lead to "inadvertent" loss of control.

Navy Reverting Back to Physical Throttles, After Fleet Rejects Touchscreen Controls, 2019-08-09

SAN DIEGO – The Navy will begin reverting destroyers **back to a physical throttle and traditional helm control system** in the next 18 to 24 months, after the fleet overwhelmingly said they prefer mechanical controls to touchscreen systems in the aftermath of the fatal USS John S. McCain (DDG-56) collision.

Wikipedia: [Investigation of Incident](#)