

Statement of NPS Ranger
Keith Gad

Three (3) pages total including this cover

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
SUPPLEMENTAL CASE/INCIDENT RECORD

ORGANIZATION (PARK) NAME Everglades National Park		CASE/INCIDENT NUMBER 02 - 3 3 0 5
LOCATION OF INCIDENT Indian Key Pass near USCG Marker number 7		DATE OF INCIDENT 12/30/02
NATURE OF INCIDENT Rescue - Water Area, Disaster - Vessel, Damage to Property - Private		
COMPLAINANT'S NAME	COMPLAINT'S ADDRESS	

On December 30, 2002 at approximately 1440 hours I was patrolling in Indian Key Pass in a 21 foot Flats Cat. I had just come out of an inlet near USCG marker number 10 on the South side of the pass and headed west toward Russell Pass. As I was nearing USCG marker number 7 I observed 5 to 8 people swimming in the water near two large vessels with many people on board. I drove toward the two vessels to warn the people about swimming in the marked channel.

As I drove closer I was able to see that the people were swimming away from a sunken vessel toward the other two vessels, a commercial crabbing vessel and a private vessel. I also noticed that two people were still hanging on to the red rails on the bow of the sunken vessel. There was approximately 4 feet of red railing still above water. I immediately recognized the red rails on the bow of the sunken vessel as one of the park concession operation's Panther tour boats.

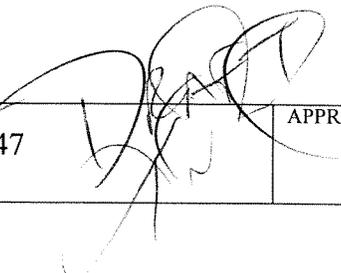
I maneuvered over to the two people hanging onto the bow of the sunken vessel and assisted them in getting onto my boat. I first helped Mr. St-Cyr into my boat, then we both pulled aboard his wife, Mrs. St-Cyr who was having great difficulty in climbing aboard.

With Mr. And Mrs. St-Cyr aboard I drove over to one of the two other vessels that helped with the rescue and asked Mr. Daniel Maye, the captain of the sunken vessel (Panther I), if all people were accounted for. Maye replied that all 36 passengers were accounted for and all were uninjured. Maye hailed the US Coast Guard twice on channel 16 informing them that the Panther I had sank and all people were safe and accounted for.

Mr. St-Cyr and I picked up captains seat and a wood and metal door from the water because I believed them to be possible hazards to other vessels. The engine cover, which was also floating in the pass, was too heavy for us to recover.

While driving back to the station I observed the commercial crabbing vessel and private vessel offloading passengers onto the Panther II and the Skimmer.

We arrived safely back at the Gulf Coast Visitor Center where I dropped off Mr. and Mrs. St-Cyr, then began speaking with passengers and collecting contact information. NPS Interpretation employees Candace Tinkler, Daniel Martinez, and Susan Reece all assisted with collecting contact information from the passengers.

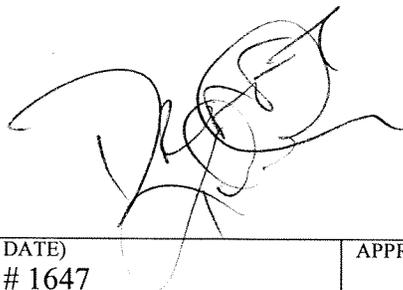
INVESTIGATED BY (SIGNATURE AND DATE) Keith A. Gad Commission # 1647	APPROVED BY (SIGNATURE AND DATE) 
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At the request of the MSO, NPS maintenance worker John Russell and I drove out to the scene in our 18' Boston Whaler to prevent anyone from moving the Panther I from its new location. Shortly after we arrived on scene, Sammy Hamilton III, "Joey" Hamilton, Stanford Daniels and his son (JUV), and Kenny Wells arrived in a commercial crabbing vessel and the Skimmer. They had all been advised before coming out that they were not permitted to touch the Panther I. We all tied up and drifted around Indian Key Pass and Russell Pass until Ranger Gier arrived with MSO officers Marc de Jesus and Nicolette Arroyo.

After observing the scene and taking pictures, de Jesus and Arroyo gave the concessionaires permission to tow the Panther I a short distance to allow the Panther I to be above the water at low tide so they could tow it in the morning.



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