

Idiom by Lon Yan

漫不經心

man4 bu4 jing1 xin1

Two US warships collided with commercial ships in June and August, causing the deaths of 17 of their crew members. How such accidents could have happened to vessels operated by supposedly highly-trained military personnel in calm seas during peace time is beyond comprehension.

Now, with the publication of the report of the US Navy investigation, we know why: numerous failures by the crews and commanders of the ships. That includes such things as “not following standard navigation and seamanship practices, and poor situational awareness of what the ships were facing as they navigated congested seas off Japan and Singapore.” Such failures bring blame that everyone on board the ships should share.

A former Navy officer gave a very damning assessment of the performance of

the captains and the crew: “They were either incredibly complacent or sloppy beyond description.” The whole problem, it seems, can be described by the idiom “漫不經心” (*man4 bu4 jing1 xin1*).

“漫” (*man4*) is “free,” “casual,” “unrestrained,” “不” (*bu4*) “no,” “not,” “經心” (*jing1 xin1*) “careful,” “mindful,” “conscientious.” Literally, “漫不經心” (*man4 bu4 jing1 xin1*) is “casual and not mindful.” The idiom means “heedless,” “unmindful,” “inattentive,” “unconcerned,” “lighthearted,” “in a casual way.”

“漫不經心” (*man4 bu4 jing1 xin1*) is very poor work attitude that leads to shoddy work at best, and at worst, injuries or even loss of life in jobs that affect the safety of people.

Another idiom that has a similar meaning is “掉以輕心” (*diao4 yi3 qing1 xin1*), which is “to lower one’s guard,” or “to treat something lightly.”

Terms containing the character “漫” (*man4*) include:

漫畫 (*man4 hua4*) – a cartoon; a comic or funny picture; a cartoon

漫談 (*man4 tan2*) – casual comment; a rambling talk

漫遊 (*man4 you2*) – to roam; to wander; to travel around

漫長 (*man4 chang2*) – very long; endless