

A Hong Kong Registered Ship “Top Glory” Collided With A German Registered Ship “Ville d’Orion” In Restricted Visibility

A. The Incident

In the early morning on 23 January 2003, in restricted visibility and rough weather, a Hong Kong Registered Ship “Top Glory” and a German Registered Ship “Ville d’Orion” collided at sea at the approximate position of 26° 52’N 160° 47.5’W, about 265 nautical miles north north west of Kauai, the Hawaii Islands. “Top Glory” sustained structural damages at the bow as a result of the collision while “Ville d’Orion” sustained damages at the port side amidships side shell. There was no injury to the crew in this incident.

B. Findings

1. The primary cause of the incident was the failure of look-out on both vessels to detect the presence of the other vessel before the collision. Improper use of radar by the officers on watch on both vessels is identified to be the most probable cause of failure to detect the other vessel.
2. Both vessels had failed to give sound signals in restricted visibility condition in accordance with the Collision Regulations to alert other vessels in the vicinity. Both Masters were not on the bridge in restricted visibility before the collision. “Ville d’Orion” did not reduce its speed while navigating in a state of restricted visibility.
3. The Second Officer of “Top Glory” failed to inform the Master about the collision. Neither did he slow down the vessel nor check for damage after the collision. No attempt was made to communicate with the “Ville d’Orion”.

C. The Lessons

1. Under bad weather condition, the normal detection capability of the radar would be adversely affected by waves and rainstorm, making it difficult to differentiate a ship target. However, since the echoes generated by a steel hull vessel are stronger and more consistent than those of waves and rain, a genuine ship target is detectable by the radar if its sea and rain clutter settings are carefully adjusted to suppress the interferences.
2. The need to notify the master immediately when restricted visibility is encountered or expected is of utmost importance. Under restricted visibility

conditions the presence of the master on the bridge is imperative to take over the command when situation warrants. Furthermore, should the master not be called up under this situation, the officer on watch would be deprived of the benefit of better knowledge, experience and judgment that can be provided by the master.

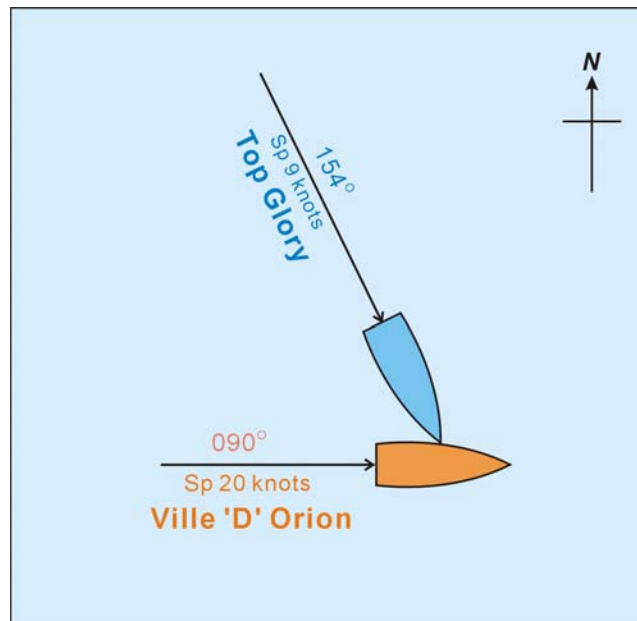


Figure 1 – Collision tracks of “Top Glory” and “Ville d’Orion”



Figure 2: A photograph of “Top Glory” after collision



Figure 3 Collision damages of “Ville d’Orion”