

Fatal Accident of a crew after fallen overboard from the Indian registered motor tanker “Havildar Abdul Hamid PVC” in Hong Kong on 23 April 2004

1. The Incident

1.1 At about 2225 hours on 23 April 2004, a crewmember of the Indian registered motor tanker “Havildar Abdul Hamid PVC” was reported to have fallen overboard from the vessel in the vicinity of south of Lamma Island while the vessel had just heaved up its anchor for departure from Hong Kong.

1.2 A search was carried out in the vicinity by various government launches and helicopter. About two hours later at 0039 on 24 April 2004, a body was recovered from nearby water. It was later identified to be the deceased who had fallen overboard earlier.

2. Findings

2.1 After finishing weighing the anchor for the ship’s departure, the anchor team went to the port gangway to check the cause of the vibration noise which was heard during lowering of the gangway in earlier hour. To reach the gangway from the side, one had to climb over the 1.5 m high railing and stepped across the sheer strake of the ship (edge of the shipside). However, the sheer strake was a curved shell plating and did not provide proper foothold for personnel to stand on. Also the steel wires for operation of the sliding frames were running just above deck level along the row of steel frame seatings. Personnel getting across through the seatings to the gangway might easily tripped over the steel wires.

2.2 At the rear end of the gangway a safety net was loosely laid around the gangway. However the net did not straddle across the shipside and the gangway and therefore could not offer protection to personnel from falling through the gap between the gangway and the shipside.

2.3 It is believed that the deceased had climbed over the handrail trying to reach out to the gangway from the side in order to investigate the abnormal noise. While crossing over he might have slipped or tripped by the steel wire and fell through the gap between the gangway and the shipside into the water below.

3. The Lesson

- 3.1 The investigation establishes that the lack of awareness of the deceased to the man-over-board hazards associated with the inspection on the gangway under the prevailing circumstances without taking the necessary precautionary measures, had contributed to the occurrence of the accident.
- 3.2 The Master is recommended to enhance crew training on board to improve their safety awareness while at work in a potentially hazardous environment.



The gangway under operation at the port side of the vessel



Position of the gangway when the accident occurred

Steel wire