

Collision between M.V. Federal Hudson and a Chinese fishing vessel on 26.10.2004, three crewmembers from the fishing vessel were missing in the incident

1. The Incident

1.1. At about 1144 local time on 26 October 2004, the Hong Kong registered container ship Federal Hudson collided with the Chinese registered fishing vessel in Yellow Sea. At time of the accident, the weather conditions were rough and the visibility was about 11 nautical miles. The fishing vessel immediately sank after collision. Five crewmembers were rescued but three crewmembers were reported missing. Federal Hudson sustained minor damages to the hull.

2. Findings

2.1. The probable cause of the collision was due to the failure to keep a proper lookout by the Third Officer that the fishing vessel was not observed earlier before the collision.

2.2. Under the prevailing circumstances it is possible that the watch-keeping officer might have difficulty to visually observe the fishing vessel due to its sea blue colouring. The sea clutter due to the weather conditions and the wooden hull of the boat also made radar detection of the fishing vessel difficult.

2.3. The investigation further identified the improper watch-keeping arrangement that the Able Seaman for keeping lookout was sent away from the bridge during the navigational watch. The Master was staying inside the radio annex and left the watch-keeping duty only to the inexperienced Third Officer, who was the sole watch-keeper on the bridge.

3. Lessons

- 3.1. The Third Officer, the Master and the management company of Federal Hudson should be reminded that the importance of maintaining a proper watch-keeping arrangement, particularly when the vessel is navigating in coastal waters.
- 3.2. A Merchant Shipping Information Note (25/2005) should be issued to promulgate the lessons learnt from this collision incident, drawing the industry's attention on the importance of proper arrangement of bridge watch-keeping. The officers on watch should also be reminded of the need to observe for small fishing vessels when the vessel is navigating in coastal waters.