

# **Sinking of Chinese cargo vessel “Shun Feng 168” (順風168) East of Yin Tsz Ngam (燕子岩) on 30 December 2004**

## **1. The Incident**

- 1.1 At about 1600 of 30 December 2004, “Shun Feng 168” (see fig. 1) loaded with approximate 500 pieces of used computer monitors on board departed from Eastern Quarantine and Immigration Anchorage.
- 1.2 After passing the Tathong Channel, the sea condition became rough with strong wind and large waves. The ship was rolling heavily and could only proceed at about 5 knots. Due to the heavy rolling, seawater started getting into the cargo hold. Crewmembers used the portable bilge pumps to clear the seawater.
- 1.3 At about 2020, large amount of water entered into the cargo hold and the engine room as the bilge pumps could not cope with the rate of ingress. The vessel started to develop a list to port. The crewmembers abandoned the vessel at about 4 nautical miles east of Yin Tsz Ngam. The vessel sank shortly after it was abandoned. Two of the four crewmembers were found missing in the incident.

## **2. Findings**

- 2.1 According to the weather report, northerly wind at force 6-7 was prevailing in the area. The vessel experienced waves at height of 4.0 to 5.5 metres. The Master was not aware of the strong monsoon signal which had been hoisted since 1800 on 30 December 2004 shortly after the departure.
- 2.2 The cargo hold of the vessel was not covered throughout the voyage. In adverse weather condition, there is always a risk of excessive ingress of water into the cargo hold that may cause the vessel to sink.
- 2.3 The estimated freeboard on departure was about 1 metre. With waves of 4.0 to 5.5 metres in height, seawater could swamp the vessel’s deck and enter the cargo hold through the open cargo hatch and the engine room.

## **3. Lessons**

- 3.1 The master of cargo vessels should ensure that the cargo hatch was properly

closed and the vessel is seaworthy prior to proceed to sea.

- 3.2 The masters should obtain necessary weather information in preparation for the voyage and should not proceed to open sea when severe weather conditions are prevailing in the area.



Fig. 1: “Shun Feng 168” before the incident