



Report of investigation
into the suspected falling
overboard of Deck Cadet from the
Hong Kong Registered Bulk Carrier
"Federal Rideau" in positions
between $40^{\circ} 37.8' N$ $019^{\circ} 01.9' W$
and $40^{\circ} 33.3' N$ $019^{\circ} 08.8' W$
on 5 August 2008



Purpose of Investigation

This incident is investigated, and published in accordance with the IMO Code for the Investigation of Marine Casualties and Incidents promulgated under IMO Assembly Resolution A.849(20). The purpose of this investigation conducted by the Marine Accident Investigation and Shipping Security Policy Branch (MAISSPB) of Marine Department is to determine the circumstances and the causes of the incident with the aim of improving the safety of life at sea and avoiding similar incident in future.

The conclusions drawn in this report aim to identify the different factors contributing to the incident. They are not intended to apportion blame or liability towards any particular organization or individual except so far as necessary to achieve the said purpose.

The MAISSPB has no involvement in any prosecution or disciplinary action that may be taken by the Marine Department resulting from this incident.

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1. **Summary**

- 1.1 At about 1700 on 5 August 2008, the Deck Cadet was found missing. It was suspected that he had fallen overboard while he was throwing domestic garbage overboard at the port side on main deck alone without being seen by other crewmembers at time between 1500 to 1530 on the same day, when the vessel *FEDERAL RIDEAU (the Vessel)* was in positions between 40° 37.8' N 019° 01.9' W and 40° 33.3' N 019° 08.8' W.
- 1.2 At 1900, the Master declared Man Overboard, after searching the whereabouts of the Deck Cadet was in vain and the Bosun reported that he had earlier found the weathertight door leading to the main deck port side was opened, and soft drink cans, a rubber sandal and a cabin's garbage bin were found in the area.
- 1.3 Despite the SAR (Search and Rescue) operation, which was jointly conducted by *FEDERAL RIDEAU* and other vessels as well as a SAR aircraft in the vicinity, the missing Deck Cadet still could not be found. The SAR operation was stopped at 2125 on 6 August 2008.
- 1.4 This incident was caused by the failure of the Deck Cadet to follow the Master's instructions of not to go on to open deck in rough weather without his permission.

2. Description of the vessel

2.1 Particulars

Port of Registry	:	Hong Kong, China
IMO No.	:	9200445
Call sign	:	VRWG7
Type	:	Bulk Carrier
Year Built	:	1999
Gross Tonnage	:	20,659
Net Tonnage	:	12,019
Length Overall	:	199.99 metres
Breadth	:	23.762 metres
Summer Draft	:	10.754 metres
Summer Deadweight	:	36,563 tonnes
Main Engine	:	KAWASAKI B&W 6S46MC-C
Engine Power	:	6,697 kW
Number of cargo holds	:	6
Speed	:	14 knots
Class	:	Det Norske Veritas (DNV)



Figure 1- FEDERAL RIDEAU

3. Sources of evidence

- 3.1 Statements from the Master and crew members of *FEDERAL RIDEAU*; and
- 3.2 Anglo-Eastern Ship Management Ltd.

4. Outline of events

- 4.1 At about 0020 on 2 August 2008, the Hong Kong registered bulk carrier *FEDERAL RIDEAU (the Vessel)* departed from Antwerp, Belgium to Mobile, USA with partial cargo of steel products in all six cargo holds and on deck.
- 4.2 At 1600 on 4 August 2008, the Deck Cadet reported to the Second Officer that he was suffering from mild fever and body pain. After checking the vital signs e.g. body temperature of the Deck Cadet, the Second Officer prescribed him some medicines i.e. Paracetamol and Ibuprofen. The Deck Cadet kept navigational watch with the Chief Officer on the bridge from 1600 to 2000. On the next day, the Deck Cadet felt better and he kept navigational watch with the Chief Officer from 0400 to 0800.
- 4.3 At 0740 on 5 August 2008, the Chief Officer instructed the Deck Cadet not to take the morning round of ballast and bilge soundings on deck due to rough weather and to report to deck office after breakfast. The Vessel was rolling and pitching in the North Eastern Atlantic Ocean on a southwesterly heading while encountering southwesterly wind of force 7/8 and a swell with a height of 3.5 metres.
- 4.4 The Chief Officer instructed the deck crew to work within the accommodation due to rough weather. At 0830, he asked the Deck Cadet to issue some nails to the Bosun from the deck store situated within the accommodation. At about 0900 the Deck Cadet reported to the Chief Officer in the deck office and complained that he suffered mild fever and body ache. The Chief Officer instructed the Deck Cadet to take rest and discharged him from work.
- 4.5 At about 1040, the Master gave instructions to the Chief Officer that no one should be allowed to go on to open deck without his permission due to deteriorating weather conditions. All weathertight doors of accommodation leading to the main deck were closed. The Vessel was shipping moderate seas on deck especially on the starboard side. At 1200, the wind was southwesterly with force 7/8 and a west-southwesterly swell with a height of 3.5 metres with intermittent showers.
- 4.6 At 1230, when the Deck Cadet reported to the Chief Officer of fresh water soundings obtained from the engine room, the Chief Officer relayed the instructions of the Master to him that “no person to go on deck without Master’s permission”. At 1245, the Third Officer visited the Deck Cadet in his cabin and the Deck Cadet told him that he was feeling weak.

4.7 The crew members took the tea break from 1500 to 1530 and after returning from tea break at 1530, the Bosun found that the weathertight door leading to the main deck on the port side was opened. He saw some soft drink cans littered on the main deck just outside the weathertight door and he instructed one AB to clean it up. While the AB was cleaning up the soft drink cans, he observed a rubber sandal and a cabin's garbage bin were also at the location (Figure 2). He threw the rubber sandal overboard and brought the garbage bin inside the accommodation and informed the Bosun. The weathertight door was closed afterward. However, they had not reported to the navigational watchkeeping officer on the bridge or to any other crewmembers on board about that matter.



Figure 2 – Diagram showing the locations of soft drink cans, rubber sandal and cabin garbage bin on the main deck

4.8 At 1600, the wind was southwesterly with force 6/7 and a westerly swell of 3.5 metres. It was raining with a moderate visibility and the ship was rolling and pitching moderately. At 1700, the Second Officer went to the Deck Cadet's cabin intended to check his condition but he could not find him. Later when the Second Officer could not find the Deck Cadet in his cabin again at 1730, he started to

make enquiries of the whereabouts of Deck Cadet from deck crew. At 1830, the Second Officer made an announcement on the Public Address system calling the Deck Cadet to report on the bridge.

- 4.9 At 1840, the Second Officer reported to the Master that he and the deck crew were unable to find the Deck Cadet. At 1845, the Master ordered all crew to muster in the deck office where he instructed search parties to look for the Deck Cadet. At this stage, the Master was informed by the Bosun that he had earlier found the weathertight door leading to the main deck on the port side was opened and soft drink cans, a sandal and a garbage bin were found on the main deck outside the weathertight door.
- 4.10 At 1850, the Master rushed to the bridge and ordered the *Vessel* to turn around and take a reciprocal course. At 1855, the Master and Chief Engineer went to the Deck Cadet's cabin and found that the garbage bin designated for other garbage was missing. (All crew cabins were provided with two garbage bins, one for plastics garbage and the other for other garbage that could be disposed of at sea in accordance with Annex V of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships). At 1900, the Master declared 'Man Overboard' and took actions in accordance with the relevant emergency procedures.
- 4.11 At 1945, an "Urgency All Ships Call" was made on Very High Frequency (VHF) Channel 16 and at 1955, "All Ships Urgency" alert was also transmitted by Medium Frequency Digital Selective Calling (MF DSC). Acknowledgement was received from shore station in Finisterre, Spain. At 2044, Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) Ponta Delgada called the *Vessel* and instructed her to continue to proceed to the last known positions where the Deck Cadet was presumed missing. At 2238, *ZIM HAIFA* was directed by MRCC Ponta Delgada to join the search and rescue (SAR) operation. At 2242, another vessel *ZIM QINGDAO* also joined the SAR operation under the direction of MRCC Ponta Delgada.
- 4.12 At 2325, MRCC Ponta Delgada issued a detailed search pattern based on which *FEDERAL RIDEAU* and the above two participating vessels commenced the SAR operation under the guidance of MRCC Ponta Delgada. MRCC Ponta Delgada also informed that an aircraft would be deployed for the SAR operation in daytime. At 0708 on the next day, i.e. on 6 August 2008, *FEDERAL RIDEAU* was contacted by a Portuguese SAR aircraft. The first search pattern covering an area of 22 nm x 30 nm was divided into three sections and was performed by the three vessels in parallel sweeps. The entire area was also searched aerielly by the SAR

aircraft. The first search conducted on the above area took 14 hours and 40 minutes to complete.

- 4.13 At 1104, MRCC Ponta Delgada informed that *FORT ST. PIERRE* would replace *ZIM HAIFA* and *WINSBOR ADVENTURE* would replace *ZIM QINGDAO* and together with *FEDERAL RIDEAU*, they would continue the SAR operation on a new search area covering 22 nm x 48 nm, also performed by three vessels in parallel sweeps and searched aurally by a SAR aircraft. At 1208 and 1500, the SAR aircraft contacted *FEDERAL RIDEAU* inquiring about the result of SAR operation. The second search conducted on the area took 8 hours and 42 minutes to complete. There were slight to moderate seas with low swell over most part of the search.
- 4.14 Despite of the searching efforts made by a total of 5 ships and an aircraft, the SAR operation was unsuccessful and the missing Deck Cadet still could not be found. At 2158 on 6 August 2008, as there was no result found, the search operation was called off and all SAR parties were released by MRCC Ponta Delgada. At 2242, *FEDERAL RIDEAU* resumed voyage to Mobile.

5. Analysis of evidence

Weather Conditions

- 5.1 According to the record of the *Vessel*, at the time of accident, a southwesterly wind with a force of 6/7 and a westerly swell with a height of about 3.5 metres were prevailing in the area. The visibility was moderate due to rain and the *Vessel* was rolling and pitching moderately.

Certification and Experience of the Deck Cadet

- 5.2 The Deck Cadet held a Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDC) issued by the Government of India. He joined *FEDERAL RIDEAU* on 30 March 2008 at Chenxi, China and that was his first vessel at sea.

Certificates of Vessel

- 5.3 The certificates of the Vessel were valid and in order.

Safety Awareness of the missing Deck Cadet

- 5.4 The Deck Cadet was a new entrant joining his first ship i.e. *FEDERAL RIDEAU* for just about 4 months before the accident and he had been provided with familiarization training on safety and security when reporting duty on board the vessel on 30 March 2008. It appeared that he was not aware of the high risk of a person falling overboard when staying on open deck in rough sea, especially when a person was feeling sick and uncomfortable. Although the Chief Officer had already instructed him not to go on deck without Master's permission due to the deteriorating weather conditions at about 1230 on 5 August 2008, the Deck Cadet ignored his instructions. It was highly probable that the Deck Cadet, who was wearing rubber sandals, had opened the weathertight door leading to the open deck on the port side. Without closing the door, he went to the shipside on main deck to throw the garbage contained in the garbage bin overboard. Unfortunately, he might have slipped and fell overboard without being seen by other crewmember onboard.

Actions of Crewmembers

- 5.5 Although the Bosun and the AB had found that the weathertight door leading to the main deck on the port side was open and that soft drink cans, a rubber sandal and a garbage bin were in the area, they were not alerted by the unusual scene. Therefore,

they had not reported to the navigational watchkeeping officer on the bridge nor talked about it among crewmembers.

Physical condition of the missing Deck Cadet

- 5.6 The Deck Cadet was certified fit for duty at sea by an approved medical examiner on 24 March 2008 prior to joining the *Vessel*. Before the accident, he had complained of having a mild fever and body pain to the Second Officer and was prescribed with medicines of Ibuprofen and Paracetamol for treatment. Ibuprofen would have a side effect of causing dizziness and drowsiness to the Deck Cadet whose physical condition might have been impaired after taking the medicine. Under such conditions, he was at risk and prone to slip overboard when standing near the shipside throwing garbage while the *Vessel* was rolling in heavy seas.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 Between 1500 to 1530 on 5 August 2008, the Deck Cadet on board the vessel *FEDERAL RIDEAU* was suspected to have fallen overboard in a positions between 40° 37.8' N 019° 01.9' W and 40° 33.3' N 019° 08.8' W while he was throwing domestic garbage overboard at the port side on main deck alone.
- 6.2 At 1900, the Master declared Man Overboard, after searching of the whereabouts of the Deck Cadet was in vain and the Bosun reported that he had earlier found the weathertight door leading to the main deck port side was opened, and soft drink cans, a rubber sandal and a cabin garbage bin was found in the area.
- 6.3 There were a southwesterly wind with a force of 6/7 and a westerly swell with a height of about 3.5 metres prevailing in the area. The visibility was moderate due to rain and the Vessel was rolling and pitching moderately.
- 6.4 Despite the Search and Rescue operation, which was jointly conducted by *FEDERAL RIDEAU* and other vessels in the vicinity as well as a Portuguese SAR aircraft, the missing Deck Cadet still could not be found.
- 6.5 This incident was caused by the failure of the Deck Cadet to follow the Master's instructions of not to go on to open deck alone in rough weather without his permission.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 A copy of the report should be sent to the ship management company of *FEDERAL RIDEAU* who should issue notice to draw the attention of their masters and officers to the findings of this report. The masters should be reminded to take measures to ensure that in rough weather, no crewmembers will be allowed to go on to open deck without their permission.
- 7.2 A Merchant Shipping Information Note (MSIN) should be issued to draw the attention of the Shipowners, Ship Managers, Ship Operators, Ship Masters and Officers of Hong Kong registered ships the lessons to be learnt from this incident and urging them to pay more attention to newly-joined and / or inexperienced junior officers and ratings on their safety awareness in shipboard environment.

8. Submission

- 8.1 In the event that the conduct of any person or organization is commented in an accident investigation report, it is the policy of the Marine Department to send a copy of the draft report or parts thereof to that person or organization for their comments.
- 8.2 The final draft report was sent to the Company, Master and Chief Officer of *FEDERAL RIDEAU* requesting them to revert with their comments to this department.
- 8.3 Submissions were received from the above parties and the draft investigation report was amended as appropriate according to their submissions.