



Report of investigation  
into the falling overboard of  
Seaman I from the Hong Kong  
Registered Car Carrier  
*“Hua Xing”* off Ulsan  
on 4 September 2008



The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
Marine Department  
Marine Accident Investigation Section



## **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 1849 (Local Time) on 4 September 2008, when the Hong Kong registered car carrier *HUA XING (the Vessel)* was leaving Ulsan in the approximate position at 35° 26.5'N 129° 24.0'E, a Seaman I fell overboard from the bottom platform of the accommodation ladder while he was engaged in recovering the pilot ladder on the starboard side.
- 1.2 The Master reported the accident to the Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) of Ulsan at 1858 and VTS initiated a search and rescue (SAR) operation for the Seaman I. Despite the SAR operation was jointly conducted by a pilot boat, two tugboats and four Coast Guard boats, the missing Seaman I could not be found. The SAR operation were stopped at 1100 on the next day, i.e. on 5 September 2008, when the body of the missing Seaman I was found by a fishing boat.
- 1.3 The cause of the accident was due to the failure of the Seaman I to take safety precautions of wearing safety belt and lifejacket when working over the shipside.

## 2. Description of the vessel

### 2.1 Particulars

Port of Registry	:	Hong Kong, China
IMO No.	:	9232331
Call sign	:	VRZZ8
Type	:	Car Carrier
Year Built	:	1991
Gross Tonnage	:	16,839
Net Tonnage	:	5,502
Length Overall	:	151.60 metres
Breadth	:	21.00 metres
Summer Draft	:	6.91 metres
Summer Deadweight	:	9,313 tonnes
Main Engine	:	AKASAKA-MITSUBISHI 8UEC37LA
Engine Power	:	4,118 kW
Speed	:	12 knots
Class	:	Nippon Kaiji Kyokai (NK)



Figure 1- *HUA XING*

**3. Sources of evidence**

3.1 Statements from the Master of *HUA XING*; and

3.2 Management Company of *HUA XING* - Janfield Shipping Limited.

#### 4. Outline of events

4.1 At about 1806 on 4 September 2008, the Hong Kong registered car carrier *HUA XING (the Vessel)* departed from Ulsan, Korea to Senboku, Japan. After the Pilot disembarked at 1836, three crew members including the Bosun, a Seaman I and a Seaman II were ordered to recover the pilot ladder at 1846. Seaman I was arranged to take off the pilot ladder securing rope at the bottom platform of the accommodation ladder (Figure 2).

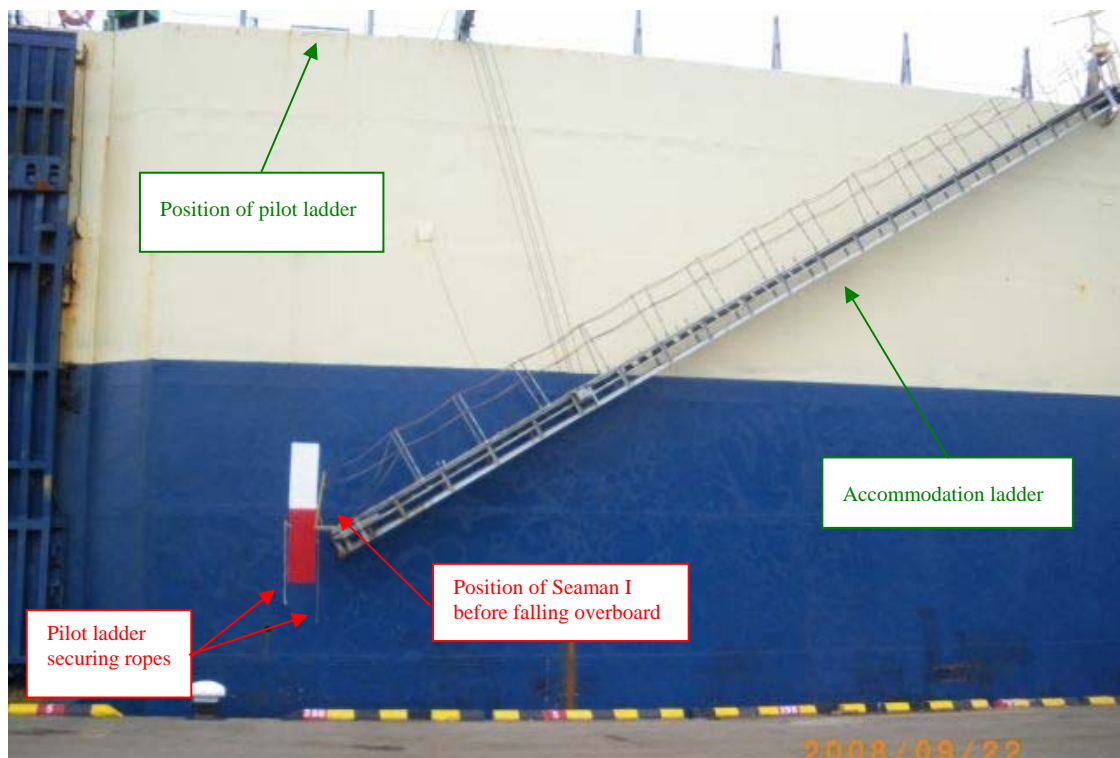


Figure 2 – Diagram showing the position of the Seaman I

4.2 At about 1849, the Bosun and Seaman II found that the Seaman I was missing and was suspected that he had fallen overboard. They reported the incident to the Master at 1853. At 1854, when the Master began to take actions to slow down and turn around the vessel, a crew member saw a floating object at sea and was suspected to be the missing Seaman I. At 1856 the Master ordered to lower and stand-by the rescue boat for search and rescue (SAR) operation. At 1858, the Master informed the local authority, Ulsan Vessel Traffic Services (VTS), and requested for their assistance in the SAR operation for the missing Seaman.

4.3 The *Vessel* dropped anchor at 1925 in position 35° 24.8' N 129° 24.1' E. At about 1930, a pilot boat arrived at the scene and the SAR operation was commenced under the instructions of Ulsan VTS. Later, two tugboats joined in the SAR operation at about 2000. At 2200, the *Vessel* shifted her anchor position to 35° 25.3' N 129° 25.5' E. At 0700 on 5 September 2008, four Coast Guard boats and one tugboat were still engaged in SAR operation for the Seaman I. At about 1100, the body of the Seaman I was found and recovered by a fishing boat.

## 5. Analysis of evidence

### Weather Conditions

- 5.1 According to the record of the *Vessel*, at the time of accident, a northeasterly wind with a force of 3 and a southerly swell with a height of about 0.5 metre were prevailing in the area. It was cloudy and the visibility was about five nautical miles. The *Vessel* was not rolling and pitching.

### Certification and Experience of Seaman I

- 5.2 The Seaman I held a valid certificate for A.B. forming part of a navigational watch on ships of 500 GT or more issued by Guangdong Maritime Safety Administration of the People's Republic of China on 23 March 2006. He joined his first ship as an ordinary sailor on 28 October 2003 and was promoted to Seaman I on 28 November 2004. He signed on *HUA XING* as Seaman I on 9 January 2008.

### Pilot Transfer Arrangement

- 5.3 Under Regulation 23 of Chapter V of the International Convention on Safety of Life at Sea, if the freeboard of a vessel is more than 9 metres, an accommodation ladder in conjunction with the pilot ladder shall be provided for safe and convenient access to and egress from the ship for the pilot. At the time of accident, the freeboard of the *Vessel* was 19.95 metres and the above pilot transfer arrangement was required. Figure 3 illustrates the required rigging arrangement.

### Safety Awareness of the Seaman I

- 5.4 According to the statement of the Master, rigging and recovery of the pilot ladder was a routine job of the Seaman I who should be very experienced in discharging the above duties. However, routine and regular jobs/tasks might lower one's safety awareness. In this case, it appeared that the Seaman I was not aware of the potential risk of falling overboard when recovering the pilot ladder at the bottom platform of the accommodation ladder. In this connection, the Seaman I might have slipped and fell overboard without being seen by the Bosun and Seaman II who were working with him in recovering the pilot ladder.

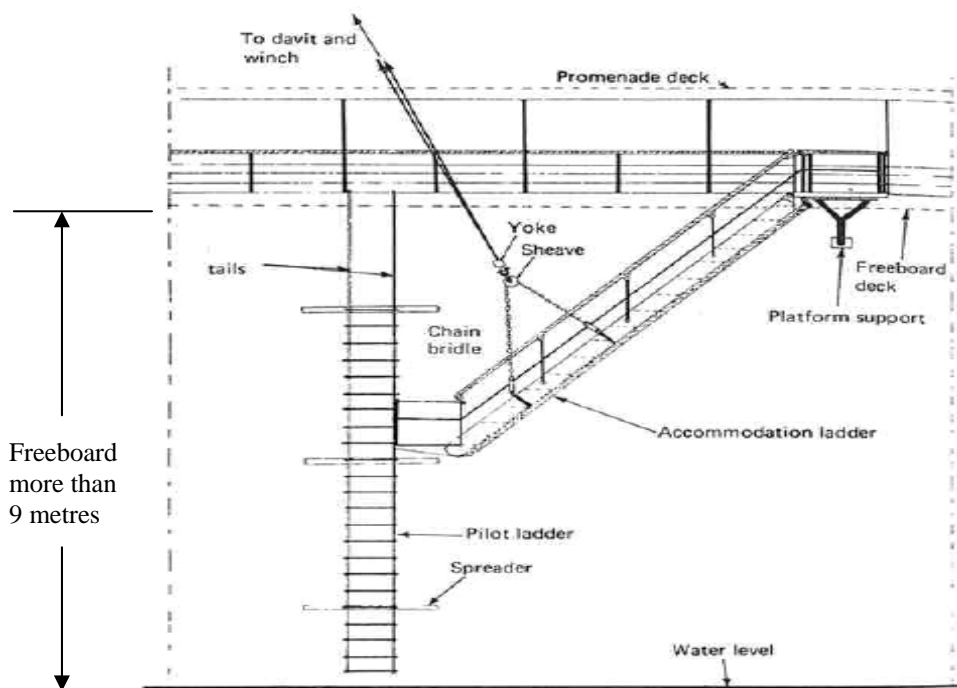


Figure 3 – Combination ladder arrangement for pilot transfer

Physical condition of the Seaman I

5.5 The Seaman I was certified fit for sea service after taking a medical examination on 8 January 2008 prior to joining the Vessel. There was no evidence that he had suffered from bad health. The other crew members were not aware that he had taken any medicine or alcohol before he commenced recovering the pilot ladder.

Working over the Shipside – Safety Precautions

5.6 It was stipulated in the ISM Manual of the Vessel that when working at places where there is potential danger of dropping onto the sea, a crew member should take personal safety precautions by wearing a safety belt and a lifejacket to prevent him from falling overboard and drowning. However, it was found that the Seaman I had not taken the above safety precautions. The Bosun who was in charge of recovering the pilot ladder should ensure that crew members engaged in works over the shipside were in compliance with the above ISM requirements.

## Fatigue

- 5.7 According to the Overtime Record of Seaman I, he worked between 0800 – 1800 daily from 31 August 2008 to the date of accident i.e. 4 September 2008. Under the above working arrangements, there was no evidence to suggest that the Seaman I had suffered from fatigue in the incident.

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 At about 1849 on 4 September 2008, while the vessel *HUA XING (the Vessel)* was leaving Ulsan in approximate position at 35° 26.5' N 129° 24.0' E, the Seaman I fell overboard while he was engaged in recovering the pilot ladder at the bottom platform of the accommodation ladder on the starboard side of the vessel.
- 6.2 The weather was cloudy with a good visibility. There was a northeasterly gentle breeze with a wave height of about 0.5 metre. The vessel was not rolling and pitching.
- 6.3 Despite the search and rescue operation jointly conducted by a pilot boat, two tugboats and four Coast Guard boats, the Seaman I could not be found. The body of the Seaman I was later found by a fishing boat at about 1100 in the morning on 5 September 2008.
- 6.4 This incident was caused by the failure of the Seaman I to take safety precautions of wearing safety belt and lifejacket when working over the shipside as stipulated in the ISM Manual. Also the Bosun had failed to ensure that the Seaman I complied with the relevant ISM requirements.

## **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1 A copy of the report should be sent to the ship management company of *HUA XING* who should issue a notice to draw the attention of their masters and officers to the findings of this report. The masters and persons in charge e.g. Bosun should be reminded to ensure that crew members should wear safety belt and lifejacket when working over the shipside.
- 7.2 A Merchant Shipping Information Note (MSIN) should be issued to draw the attentions of all concerned parties to the lessons learnt in the incident.

## **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 Master of *HUA XING* requesting him to revert with his comments on the draft investigation report to this department and there was no comment from him.

