



Report of investigation  
into the falling overboard of  
Assistant Third Officer from the  
Singaporean Registered  
Container Carrier “*WAN HAI 205*”  
at Western Anchorage No. 2  
in Hong Kong  
on 25 August 2009



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 1045 (Local Time) on 25 August 2009, when the Singaporean registered container carrier *WAN HAI 205* was at anchor at Western Anchorage No. 2 in the position at 22° 18.87'N 114° 04.76'E, the Assistant Third Officer fell overboard from the starboard lifeboat while he was engaged in carrying out maintenance work on the lifeboat.
- 1.2 A search and rescue (SAR) operation for the Assistant Third Officer was jointly conducted by government launches and a helicopter in the vicinity. A body was found near Kau Yi Chau at 1830 on 28 August 2009 and it was later identified to be the Assistant Third Officer who had fallen overboard.
- 1.3 The cause of the accident was due to the failure of the Assistant Third Officer to take safety precautions of wearing safety belt with a lifeline and lifejacket when working aloft outside the starboard lifeboat.

## 2. Description of the vessel

### 2.1 Particulars

Port of Registry	:	Singapore
IMO No.	:	8914025
Call sign	:	S6BV5
Type	:	Container Carrier
Year Built	:	1991
Gross Tonnage	:	17,134
Net Tonnage	:	7,246
Length Overall	:	174.00 metres
Breadth	:	27.00 metres
Summer Draft	:	9.85 metres
Summer Deadweight	:	23,676 tonnes
No. of Hold	:	5
Main Engine	:	HITACHI B&W 7S50 MC Diesel Engine
Engine Power	:	9,101 kW
Speed	:	17.5 knots
Class	:	American Bureau of Shipping (ABS)

2.2 A totally enclosed motor lifeboat was stowed on the davit installed on each side i.e. port and starboard side of the accommodation of the vessel. Each lifeboat can accommodate a total number of 24 persons. There was an opening on each side of the lifeboat for access of crew members. Figure 2 shows the position of the Assistant Third Officer before he fell overboard.



Figure 1- WAN HAI 205

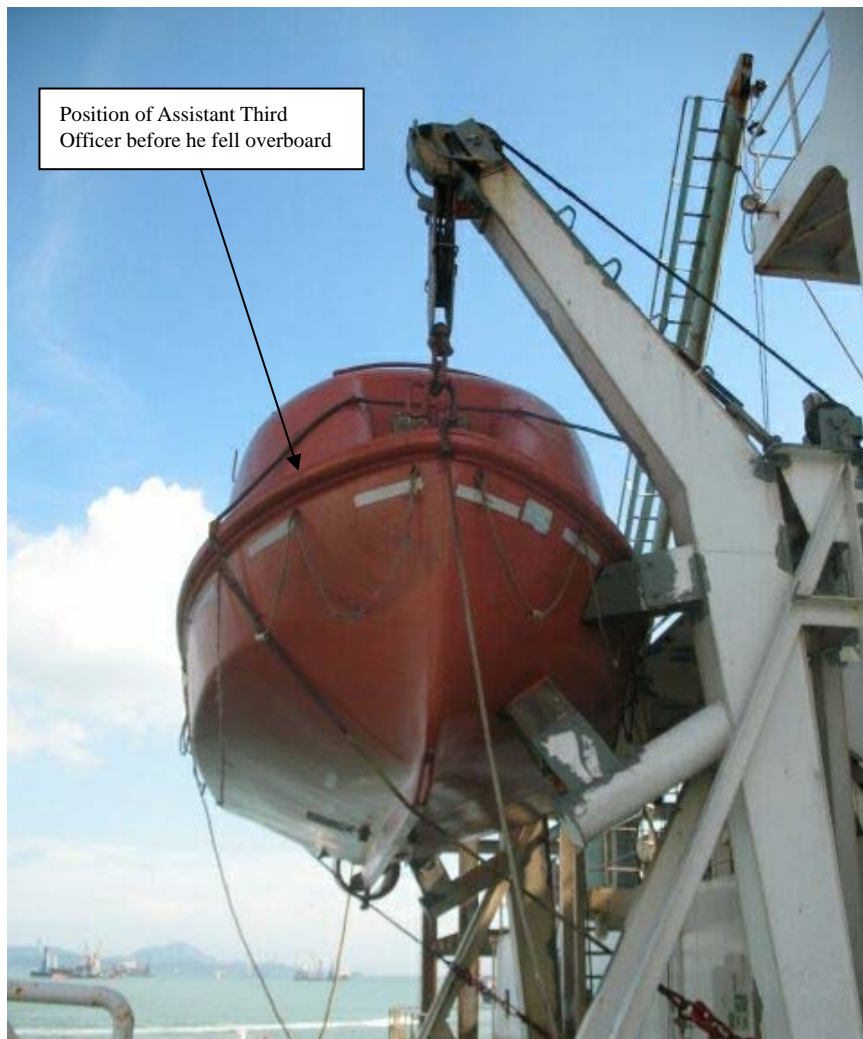


Figure 2 – Position of the Assistant Third Officer before he fell overboard

### **3. Sources of evidence**

- 3.1 Statements from the Master, Chief Officer, Bosun and Deck Cadet of *WAN HAI 205*; and
- 3.2 Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC) and Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) of the Hong Kong Marine Department.

#### **4. Outline of events**

- 4.1 The Singaporean registered container carrier *WAN HAI 205* arrived and dropped anchor at Western Anchorage No. 2 in the position at 22° 18.87'N 114° 04.76'E in Hong Kong at 2048 on 24 August 2009 for cargo operations. The cargo operations completed at about 0836 on 25 August 2009. At about 1000 the Assistant Third Officer and the Bosun were tasked to carry out maintenance work on the starboard lifeboat.
- 4.2 At 1045 while the Chief Officer was working on the platform of the starboard lifeboat, the Bosun and Assistant Third Officer were inside the lifeboat. In order to carry out maintenance work i.e. to change the grablines on the starboard bow of the lifeboat, the Assistant Third Officer went outside of the lifeboat from the door on the outboard i.e. starboard side of the lifeboat. When the Bosun came out from the port side of the lifeboat, he could not see the Assistant Third Officer but found that he had fallen overboard into the water.
- 4.3 The Bosun informed the Chief Officer immediately and a AB on the main deck threw a lifebuoy into the water for the Assistant Third Officer who unfortunately failed to catch the lifebuoy. The Chief Officer immediately reported the incident to the Master who informed the Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC) by VHF at 1049. The Bosun and the Deck Cadet tried to reach the Assistant Third Officer by jumping into the water with the Bosun carrying a lifebuoy attached with line. However, they failed to get hold of the Assistant Third Officer who was drifting away by current and disappeared from the sea surface.
- 4.4 The Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) initiated a search and rescue (SAR) operation for the Assistant Third Officer at 1155. Surface search was jointly conducted by government launches with the assistance of a helicopter from the Government Flying Services. Underwater search was carried out by divers from the Fire Services Department during daytime on 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of August 2009. However, the three-day SAR operation was in vain. The body of the Assistant Third Officer was located near Kau Yi Chau (22° 17.05'N 114° 04.58'E) at 1830 on 28 August 2009.

## **5. Analysis of evidence**

### Weather and Sea Conditions

- 5.1 According to the record of the vessel, at the time of accident, there was an easterly gentle breeze with a slight sea and low swell. It was partly cloudy with a good visibility.

### Certification and Experience of Assistant Third Officer

- 5.2 The Assistant Third Officer held a valid Certificate of Competency as Third Mate issued on 11 September 2008 by the Maritime Safety Administration of China eligible for working on vessels of 3,000 gross tons or above. He joined his first ship as Able Body Seaman (AB) on 18 June 2007 and was promoted to the rank of Assistant Third Officer on 16 November 2008. He signed on *WAN HAI 205* as Assistant Third Officer on 22 April 2009.

### Safety Awareness of the Assistant Third Officer

- 5.3 According to the statements of the Chief Officer and the Bosun, the Assistant Third Officer had not put on lifejacket. Although he had worn the safety belt, the lanyard of the safety belt had not attached to any lifeline. In this connection, it appeared that the Assistant Third Officer had under-estimated the potential risk of falling overboard when carrying out maintenance work outside the lifeboat.

### Physical condition of the Assistant Third Officer

- 5.4 A medical examination of the Assistant Third Officer conducted on 10 April 2009 certified him fit for sea service prior to joining the vessel. There was no evidence that he had suffered from bad health, nor had he taken any medicine or alcohol before he commenced working on the lifeboat.

### Working aloft and outboard – Safety Precautions

- 5.5 It is stipulated in Chapter 15 of the Code of Safe Working Practice that personnel working aloft (above 2 metres) should wear a safety harness with lifeline or other arresting device at all times. Additionally, where work is done overside, buoyancy garments should be worn and they should be under observation from a person on deck. The Company's ISM shipboard manual also gives the procedures in the form of a work permit when undertaking outboard or aloft work. In this incident, there was no evidence to show that the Assistant Third Officer had used the buoyancy garment or a lifejacket and he had not used the safety belt with a lifeline.

## Fatigue

- 5.6 According to the Record of Hours of Work of the Assistant Third Officer, there was no evidence to suggest that he had suffered from fatigue in the incident.

## Probable cause of falling overboard of Assistant Third Officer

- 5.7 Neither the Chief Officer nor the Bosun witnessed how the Assistant Third Officer had fallen overboard from the lifeboat. However, it was discovered that a section of the handrail on the top of the lifeboat at the starboard side forward was missing after the accident (Figure 3). It was deduced that when the Assistant Third Officer came out from the starboard side of the lifeboat and moved forward on the narrow gunwale, he grabbed the handrail to balance his body or he anchored the lanyard of his safety belt to that section of handrail. A section of the handrail detached from the mounting on the roof and parted by the body weight of or the force exerted by the Assistant Third Officer. He might have lost his balance and fell overboard into the sea. The Chief Officer confirmed that prior to the accident, the handrail was intact but the section was found missing after the accident.

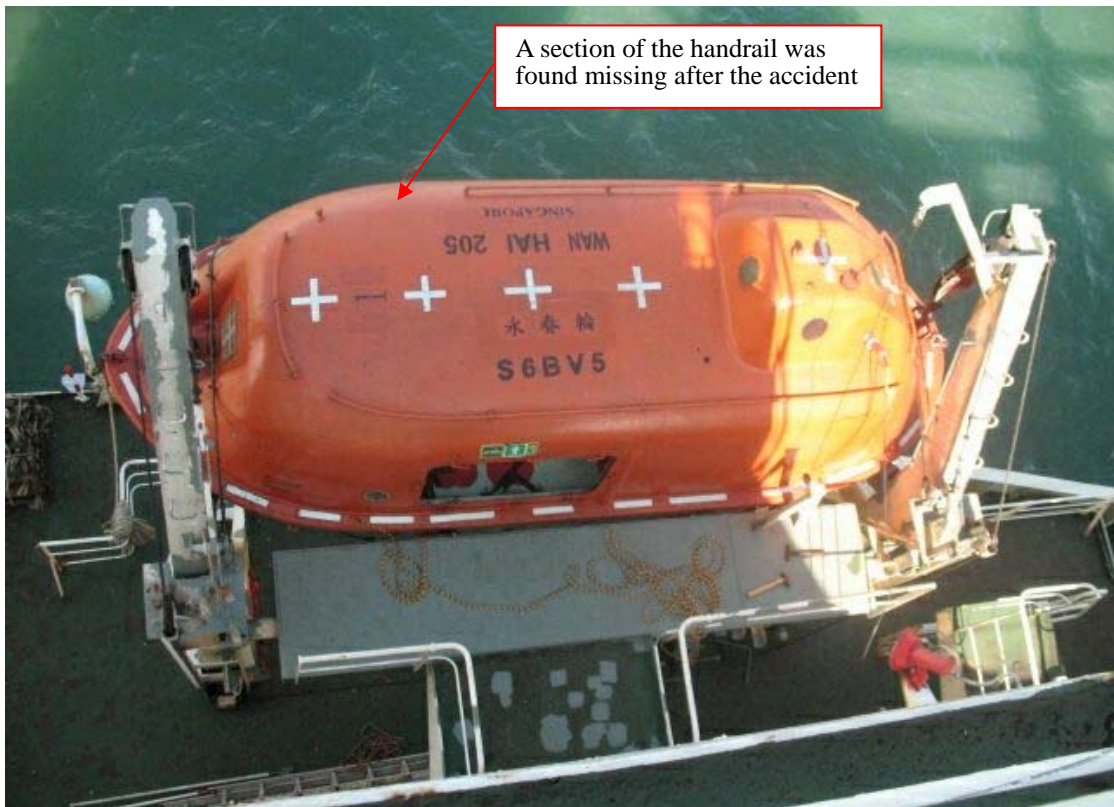


Figure 3 – A section of handrail was found missing after the accident

## 6. Conclusions

- 6.1 At about 1045 on 25 August 2009, the Assistant Third Officer fell overboard into the water from the starboard lifeboat of the Singaporean registered container carrier *WAN HAI 205* while the vessel was at anchor in approximate position at 22° 18.87'N 114° 04.76'E. At the time of the accident, the Assistant Third Officer was engaged in carrying out maintenance work on the lifeboat.
- 6.2 A search and rescue (SAR) operation was carried out in the vicinity by government launches, helicopter and divers for three days but was in vain. His body was found near Kau Yi Chau on 28 August 2009.
- 6.3 It is believed that while the Assistant Third Officer was trying to carry out maintenance work on the starboard bow of the lifeboat, he was standing on the starboard gunwale and used his hand to grab or anchored the lanyard of his safety belt on the handrail on top of the lifeboat. The handrail parted and the Assistant Third Officer lost his balance and fell overboard into the water.
- 6.4 The investigation establishes that the Assistant Third Officer had under-estimated the man-overboard hazards associated with the maintenance work on the lifeboat over the shipside without taking the necessary precautionary measures, e.g. donning of lifejacket and wearing of safety belt with a lifeline, had contributed to the occurrence of the accident.

## **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1 A copy of the report should be sent to the ship management company of *WAN HAI 205* who should issue a notice to draw the attention of their masters and officers to the findings of this report. The Company should instruct their masters and senior officers on board ships to follow company procedures when requesting newly joined and/or inexperienced junior officers/ratings to work aloft and over the shipside.
- 7.2 A copy of the report should be sent to Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, as Flag State Administration of the vessel, for their information and follow-up actions if deemed necessary.

## **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 and Chief Officer of *HUA HAI 205* requesting them to revert with their comments on the draft investigation report to this department.
- 8.3 Both the Master and Chief Officer offered no comment on the draft investigation report.