

Statement Regarding the Collision and Sinking of the vessel TREMONT  
28OCT22

[REDACTED], LT, USCG

AT 0618Z, the ODO activated the pagers for the report of a large cargo vessel colliding with a smaller fishing vessel with 13 POB, causing it substantial damage and to take on water. I immediately plotted the point, ensured the C130 AC was awake and alert, and started flight planning/clearing Warning Areas to effect a safe transit to the scene. Before departing, the crew noted from the write-ups that the mission system/communications were severely degraded in the Ready Aircraft and that they would need to conduct operations in backup mode. Taking all PEACE model factors into account, the crew determined the mission to be low risk, high gain, GAR Green, and accepted the operation. With the tower being closed, we took off VFR with CGR2013 at 0655Z and proceeded directly to posn 37-36.61N 074-14.62W, picking up an IFR clearance with Norfolk Approach to transit through the offshore Warning Areas. During this transit, the MSOs stated that the mission system was not operating even at the expected reduced capacity, and that they would need to use some of our navigational radios to maintain comms and employ the FLIR camera only in the raw mode. Recording would not be possible. We arrived on-scene at 0720Z and assumed duties as OSC. The vessel TREMONT was visibly damaged at the port bow and obviously listing to port and bow down into the sea. Nearby the TREMONT was the vessel ATLANTIS, who was lighting the TREMONT with a spotlight and briefing us on the situation over maritime channel 16. The vessel DRYST was also standing off a short distance to assist if necessary. After conversing with the captain of the TREMONT about the assets en route and his options for assistance, he decided to have his crew disembark the ship while he stayed onboard to continue evaluating its condition/chance of salvage (both of which were against our recommendation). We then coordinated with the ATLANTIS to launch their dingy and proceed to the TREMONT, who was in the process of deploying their 16-person liferaft. Upon arrival at the TREMONT, the dingy monitored the transfer of the crew into the liferaft before taking it in tow over to the DRYST. CGR6004 also arrived on scene and stood by in a hover during the crew transfer to the DRYST. While the dingy was towing the liferaft, we continued to urge the captain to disembark his vessel as its condition continued to rapidly deteriorate. Originally the captain believed he would have enough time to wait onboard the TREMONT while his crew was transferred and would subsequently be picked up by the dingy on its return trip, but when it became apparent to the captain that the vessel was going down and that the dingy would not return in time to recover him, he requested the CGR6004 hoist him off the vessel. While preparing for the hoist, the bow became completely submerged, the captain was washed off the top of the pilothouse, and the vessel dove hard into the sea bow first with a violent roll towards port. The TREMONT subsequently sank in posn 37-33N 074-15W. Luckily, our FLIR and the helicopter crew was able to maintain visual with the captain in his lifejacket, and he was recovered via direct deployment of the swimmer. Once the captain was onboard the CGR6004, we initially coordinated transit to KORF so the captain could be further transported to a hospital for evaluation. The captain subsequently refused higher level care, despite his hypothermic state, and we arranged for the CGR6004 to transit to BASE PORTSMOUTH to drop off the captain. After the CGR6004 departed scene, we monitored the transit of CGR47277, who was en route to pick up the remaining survivors. We assumed CGR47277's radio guard after they lost comms with SECTOR VA and vectored them to the DRYST. We then provided overwatch of the crew transfer to the CGR47277 and monitored their transit toward shore until they were able to establish comms with SECTOR VA again. Our final contribution prior to RTB was to overfly the position

where the TREMONT sank during daylight to determine if there was any lingering debris constituting hazards to navigation or any pollution concerns. Upon arriving at the scene again, we did not see any major debris, but there was a sheen that appeared to be from fuel. There was no noticeable heavy petroleum pollution. At 1136Z, we obtained clearance to RTB and transited to AIRSTA ELIZABETH CITY, landing at 1212Z without incident.

I want to note that during this evolution, the MSC RITA confessed to colliding with the TREMONT and remained nearby in case their assistance was necessary. We queried SECTOR VA regarding any required information or actions WRT MSC RITA, but were told they could be released to resume their own navigation. The MSC RITA reported no damage or injuries, and confirmed the integrity of their tanks via sounding prior to departing scene.

I also want to commend the assistance provided by the vessels DRYST and ATLANTIS; their professional seamanship and steadfast resolve to answer a plea for help in the wee hours of a rough morning in the open Atlantic was paramount to the rescue of the 12 TREMONT crewmembers, including a 02 year-old child, ultimately saving their lives. Coast Guard assets may have facilitated and ensured the ultimate disposition of this operation, but it was these willing members of the maritime community that effected the majority of the rescue.