



Bundesstelle für Seeunfalluntersuchung Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation

Federal Higher Authority subordinated to the Ministry of
Transport and Digital Infrastructure

Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation • P.O. Box 30 12 20 • 20305 Hamburg

Office Building
Bernhard-Nocht-Str. 78
20359 Hamburg
Tel.: + 49 (0) 40 31 90 – 83 11
Fax: + 49 (0) 40 31 90 – 83 40
posteingang-bsu@bsh.de
<http://www.bsu-bund.de>

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+ 49 40 31 90 – 83 11
email: posteingang-bsu@bsh.de

Date
14 July 2017

PRESS RELEASE No 16/17

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation (BSU) published the investigation report No. 459/15 on 14 July 2017. The report deals with the collision involving MV EENDRACHT and MV TRANSCAPRICORN on the Elbe on 26 November 2015. Upon request the report will be forwarded. Alternatively, this report – as well as all previous reports – is available on the website www.bsu-bund.de for download.

Short version:

Serious marine casualty – collision of MV EENDRACHT with MV TRANSCAPRICORN

At 0528 on 26 November 2015, the Dutch-flagged EENDRACHT, sailing downstream the Elbe, collided at high speed with the Gibraltar-flagged MV TRANSCAPRICORN, sailing upstream, at buoy 51 off the Oste-estuary. Due to an abrupt course alteration by the EENDRACHT to port, she crossed the middle of the fairway and sailed across the TRANSCAPRICORN's

bow rendering a collision unavoidable.

Rudder and engine manoeuvres implemented by both vessels prevented an obtuse collision angle and more severe damages. Both vessels scraped past each other. Thereby the TRANSCAPRICORN ran aground in the mud and had to be hauled clear with tug assistance, while

the EENDRACHT remained flutable.

No persons were injured and no pollutants escaped.

The investigation report was published on 14 July 2017 by the Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation and can be downloaded at www.bsu-bund.de.

Long version:

Serious marine casualty – collision of MV EENDRACHT with MV TRANSCAPRICORN

At 0850 on 26 November 2015, the on-call service of the BSU was notified of a serious collision on the Lower Elbe nearby the Oste-estuary by the waterways police boat BÜRGERMEISTER BRAUER. At 0528, the MV EENDRACHT, sailing downstream the Elbe, collided at high speed with the MV TRANSCAPRICORN, sailing upstream, at buoy 51. Both vessel sailed under pilotage. The scene of the accident was already secured by the NEUWERK at the request of the Central Command for Maritime Emergencies and the DGZrS's rescue cruiser HERMANN HELMS. As a consequence of the collision, the TRANSCAPRICORN ran aground at groyne 3 and did not manage to get afloat again unassisted. At first, the forecastles struck each other with the EENDRACHT's starboard shoulder and the TRANSCAPRICORN'S port shoulder. The collision angle was about 40° and on the EENDRACHT a south-easterly course was set. Afterwards, the forecastles parted from each other and a second contact occurred in the area of the aft ships. The EENDRACHT's transom (starboard edge) touched the port aft section of the TRANSCAPRICORN (forward edge of the bridge). After the two vessels parted, the EENDRACHT moved full astern with her bow thruster set full power to port. This manoeuvre made it possible to stop and avoid running aground. The EENDRACHT remain floatable and anchored at 0544 on Neufeld-Reede anchorage. At 1002, the TRANSCAPRICORN was hauled clear with the assistance of the tugs TOW 3 and TOW 7 and also shifted to Neufeld-Reede anchorage. Nobody was harmed in the course of the collision and no pollutants escaped. Due to the material damage, the Ship Safety Division issued a detention order and both vessels sailed to Cuxhaven at about noon. The EENDRACHT was permitted to sail to Harlingen in order for repairs to be carried out, considering the weather conditions. TRANSCAPRICORN was not subject to conditions. Apart from the collision damages, not deficiencies as regards manning and equipment could be detected on both vessels. The EENDRACHT sustained dents with cracks in the bow section on the starboard bulwark and on the starboard side of the transom.

The collision is attributable to a non-maintained track by the EENDRACHT and a missed course alteration to starboard. The analysis of the TRANSCAPRICORN's VDR and the VTS's AIS-recordings reveal that the TRANSCAPRICORN, sailing upstream on the Elbe, and the EENDRACHT, sailing downstream on the Elbe, initially sailed as they should on the right-hand side of the fairway. The EENDRACHT was outside the channel. Only when she approached Neufeld-Reede anchorage west at the buoy 54/anchorage, she provided space for BBC FUJI which was at the edge of the anchorage between buoy 50-52, and moved towards the middle of the fairway. At this time, the dredger NJÖRD was not involved in the close-quarters situation. At 0525, the TRANSCAPRICORN had already overtaken the NJÖRD for a longer period and the BBC FUJI just shortly before.

The EENDRACHT would have had sufficient time and space between the BBC FUJI on the boundary of the Neufeld-Reede roadstead and the dredger NJÖRD to pass safely on the right-hand side of the fairway. According to the AIS-recordings, the EENDRACHT crossed the radar reference line towards the wrong fairway side at 052722. At 052734, immediately afterwards, she started a turn to port leading to the collision. She had previously kept the Otterndorf/Belum leading lights ahead for too long on a true course specified in the navigational chart of 245.5°.

Possibly the master of EENDRACHT noticed the imminent collision too late, since the upcoming TRANSCAPRICORN approached the EENDRACHT with a constant bearing and a relative speed of 19 kts.. A hard to port course alteration would then have been the last possibility to minimize the imminent damages. The BSU was not able to establish why a timely course alteration to starboard with the autopilot was missed, especially since it was possible to follow each vessel's track on the chart radar almost in real time. Potentially a determined communication between the master and pilot was missing here.

Ulf Kaspera
Director