

Investigation Report

Date: 8 September 2016

Less serious marine casualty

Collision between the JADE and MV WILSON FEDJE on 5 March 2014 in the port of Hamburg

1 Summary

At about 0802 on 5 March 2014, the Barbados-registered cargo ship WILSON FEDJE collided with the German-flagged inland motor vessel JADE in extremely dense fog with visibility of significantly less than 100 metres in places on the northern edge of the northern Elbe main fairway in the port of Hamburg level with the Seemannshöft pilot station.

The WILSON FEDJE had sailed in ballast from Rotterdam and was proceeding to her berth in the port of Hamburg under pilotage and shore-based radar guidance at the time of the accident. The large container ship XIN LOS ANGELES was sailing about 1 nm ahead of the WILSON FEDJE, also heading for Hamburg.

For her part, the fully laden JADE, carrying approximately 1,000 tonnes of soybean meal, left the port of Hamburg (Reihe-Hafen port) for Beidenfleth at 0700. After sailing out of the Köhlbrand secondary fairway, she proceeded downstream on the northern side of the northern Elbe main fairway in accordance with requirements. This vessel did not make use of any pilotage whatsoever.

There was radio contact between the WILSON FEDJE's port pilot and skipper of the inland motor vessel ALMERODE about nine minutes before the collision. The ALMERODE was approaching from the east and intended to turn from the northern Elbe main fairway into the Köhlbrand secondary fairway, which branched off to the south of her current position, after the passage of the XIN LOS ANGELES and preferably before the passage of the WILSON FEDJE. The WILSON FEDJE's pilot agreed to this request. A green-green encounter was agreed upon and corresponding information sent to the radar pilot, who had no objection given the general traffic situation but advised the two vessels about a vessel following the ALMERODE, i.e. also sailing downstream on the River Elbe. It later transpired that this was the JADE.

To implement the green-green encounter agreed with the ALMERODE, the WILSON FEDJE's pilot started to steer the ship into the northern part of the fairway at about 0755. At 0756, he notified shipping of this course alteration and the intention to return to the southern side of the fairway after passing the ALMERODE on VHF channel 74.

In the ensuing period, the WILSON FEDJE's pilot notified shipping of the position and destination of his ship several more times on channel 74. There was no communication with the

vessel following the ALMERODE (the JADE), the name of which was still unknown to both the WILSON FEDJE's pilot and the radar pilot.

The WILSON FEDJE's pilot decided not to continue with his plan to return to the southern part of the fairway immediately after the green-green passage with the ALMERODE. On the one hand, he wanted to avoid crossing the heading line of the still anonymous oncoming JADE, which was approaching on the starboard side of the WILSON FEDJE. On the other hand, given the prevailing situation he assumed that the JADE would maintain her course even without a clear arrangement and that a green-green encounter of the two vessels would thus unfold without any complications.

The skipper of the JADE had apparently not followed the preceding communication concerning the intentions of the WILSON FEDJE on channel 74, however. Consequently, he believed that the approach with the oncoming WILSON FEDJE, which in his opinion was quite clearly on the 'wrong' side of the fairway, was not a readily manageable green-green encounter without complications, but reportedly feared that the WILSON FEDJE was on a collision course. To avoid a collision, the skipper of the JADE initiated a rigorous course alteration to starboard. By this time, the two vessels were already so close to each other that it was too late for a corresponding course alteration to starboard by the WILSON FEDJE. Despite the stop and subsequent full astern manoeuvre initiated on the bridge of the WILSON FEDJE immediately after the JADE's course alteration to starboard was recognised, the two vessels collided at 0802.

The WILSON FEDJE's bulbous bow ploughed into the port side of the JADE at an angle of about 90 degrees. The WILSON FEDJE parted from the JADE by moving astern shortly afterwards. The skipper of the JADE managed to manoeuvre the inland waterway vessel to the northern embankment of the northern Elbe under her own steam, where he deliberately grounded her. It was thus possible to prevent the JADE, which had sustained heavy water ingress as a result of the collision, from foundering. After reporting the accident to the vessel traffic centre (Hamburg Port Traffic), several unsuccessful attempts at contacting the JADE, and looking out for but not finding any crew members of the JADE overboard, the WILSON FEDJE, which only suffered very minor damage due to the collision, continued her journey toward her berth.

The JADE was lightened and her buoyancy temporarily restored in the days that followed. The inland waterway vessel was then towed to the Jöhnk-Werft shipyard in Hamburg-Harburg, where she was scrapped because a repair would not have been economically viable.

The accident did not result in any injuries, nor did it harm the environment.

2 Safety recommendations

The following safety recommendations do not constitute a presumption of blame or liability in respect of type, number or sequence.

2.1 Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI); Directorate-General for Waterways and Shipping (GDWS)

AIS carriage requirement for inland waterway vessels

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the BMVI and its subordinate GDWS establish a carriage requirement for AIS on inland waterway vessels at short notice within their geographic area of responsibility, similar to the measures already adopted for the River Rhine. In particular, on heavily congested navigable waterways used by both inland waterway vessels and seagoing ships, the BSU believes that extending the scope of the AIS carriage requirement on federal waterways to include inland waterway vessels is urgently necessary to enhance the safety and efficiency of shipping traffic.

2.2 Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg; Authority for Economic Affairs, Transport and Innovation; Hamburg Port Authority

2.2.1 Revision of the Regulation on traffic in the port of Hamburg and/or the Regulation on port pilots

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the bodies responsible for the administration and regulation of port traffic and port pilotage in the port of Hamburg critically review the provisions of the Regulation on port pilots in relation to the existing complete exclusion of a large percentage of inland waterway vessels from the obligation to make use of pilotage services. If the outcome of such a review is that a percentage of inland waterway vessels is neither required to engage a port pilot nor register for shore-based radar guidance even in restricted visibility in the future, then the BSU recommends that the applicable provisions at least be adapted to the effect that all vessels are required to use – i.e. listen in on (passively) – the radar guidance channel relevant in the particular section as an information medium in addition to the traffic channel if the technical requirements on board for that are given.

2.2.2 AIS carriage requirement for inland waterway vessels

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the bodies responsible for the administration and regulation of port traffic and port pilotage in the port of Hamburg introduce a carriage requirement for AIS on inland waterway vessels within their area of responsibility, similar to the recommendation (6.1) addressed to the federal government.

2.3 Hamburg Harbour Pilots' Association

2.3.1 Communication between pilot and ship's command

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the Hamburg Harbour Pilots' Association urge its pilots during in-service training and/or by written information to make available any information of importance to the vessel under pilotage, including any derogations from the steering rules, to the party on the bridge responsible for the ship's command. It is especially important to ensure that ship's commands which understand only a little German or none at all are always aware of the content and outcome of radio communications held in German.

2.3.2 Derogations from the steering rules applicable in the port of Hamburg

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation recommends that the Hamburg Harbour Pilots' Association raise awareness among its pilots during in-service training and/or by written information of the indispensable need to ensure that any traffic affected by a derogation from the steering rules (agreement on a green-green encounter, temporary use of the 'wrong' side of the fairway, for example) is informed reliably and in good time and – wherever necessary – has agreed explicitly and unequivocally.

