

Fishing Boat LIAN SHENG FA Major Marine Occurrence

Executive Summary

On October 7th, 2022, at approximately 13:30 hours (Taiwan local time), a Taiwanese fishing boat named "LIAN SHENG FA" with a total tonnage of 98 and registration number CT4-2896, departed from Port Louis, Mauritius, to operate in the South Indian Ocean. The boat carried 1 Taiwanese captain and 15 Indonesian crew members, totaling 16 persons.

According to the marine casualty notification, on February 19th, 2023, at 12:21 hours, the "LIAN SHENG FA" was approximately 490 nautical miles northeast of Port Louis when the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) reported abnormalities and the boat's satellite phone unable to contact. On February 24th, 2023, a search and rescue agency in Mauritius found a fishing boat suspected to be the "LIAN SHENG FA", and on February 26th, Mauritius's coast guard confirmed that the boat was the capsized hull of the "LIAN SHENG FA". Subsequently, the boat's hull was towed to Mombasa Port in Kenya. On May 20th, 2023, divers conducted an underwater inspection of the hull, but the inspection did not find any missing crew inside. This occurrence resulted in the "LIAN SHENG FA" loss and capsizing, with all 16 crew members reported missing.

In accordance with the Taiwan's Transportation Occurrence Investigation Act and the Casualty Investigation Code of the International Maritime Organization, the TTSB is an independent transportation occurrence investigation agency responsible for conducting this investigation. The investigation team also included members from the Maritime Port Bureau of the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, and Fisheries Agency, Ministry of Agriculture.

After comprehensive investigation and analysis of the factual data, a total of 9 findings and 3 safety recommendations were obtained.

The findings related to probable causes are as follows:

1. The day before the occurrence, a strong hurricane named "Freddy" was moving from east to west over the Indian Ocean, gradually approaching the area where the "LIAN SHENG FA" was located. The intensity of the hurricane continued to increase. It is probable that the captain of the "LIAN SHENG FA" did not know the predicted path of Hurricane "Freddy", and he did not choose to change course early to avoid it, instead continuing to approach the path of the hurricane.
2. On the day of the occurrence, Hurricane "Freddy" reached its most severe level (Category 5, with wind speeds exceeding 252 kilometers per hour). Although the captain of the "LIAN SHENG FA" was informed by contacting a nearby vessel that the hurricane was approaching, they immediately changed course to move away from the hurricane. However, at that time, the "LIAN SHENG FA" was within 50 nautical miles of the radius of Hurricane "Freddy's" storm zone, making it difficult to safely escape the storm. Ultimately, the "LIAN SHENG FA" capsized after being hit by strong winds and huge waves.

The findings related to risk are as follows:

1. When the "LIAN SHENG FA" was in distress, there was no signal from the boat's Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB), and the opportunity for timely rescue was lost.
2. From August 2019 to the end of March 2023, a total of 12 domestic fishing boats were lost or sunk. During this period, the Cospas-Sarsat system(Taipei Mission Control Center) did not receive the Emergency Positioning

Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) of the previously mentioned boats' EPIRB signal. It shows that there are issues with the installation and usage of EPIRB on domestic fishing boats.

3. On the morning of the occurrence, "LIAN SHENG FA" was about 50 miles away from Hurricane Freddy. The captain of the boat inquired about the weather to two other ships nearby through a satellite phone. The captain learned that the hurricane was approaching, and then changed the sailing plan to go northwest immediately. However the escape timing and travel speed of "LIAN SHENG FA" could not ensure that it would not be affected by the strong hurricane.

The other findings are as follows:

1. All crew members' certificates were within the validity period.
2. "LIAN SHENG FA" held the Republic of China Ship Inspection Certificate and the fishing license issued by the Fisheries Agency, Ministry of Agriculture, both of which were valid.
3. "LIAN SHENG FA" completed its regular vessel inspection on May 20, 2022, and the inspection results indicated that it complied with relevant regulations.
4. The main engine failure and structural damage to the hull structure of "LIAN SHENG FA" have been ruled out as the probable cause.

Safety Recommendations

To Fisheries Agency, Ministry of Agriculture

1. Strengthen the training of crew members on offshore fishing vessels to proficiently use various life-saving and distress signaling equipment, to reduce the risk of encountering severe weather conditions during offshore fishing.

2. Coordinate and collaborate with relevant domestic and international agencies to assess the weather observation and forecasting data required for the operation of individuals in our country's offshore fishing industry, to enhance the operational safety of offshore fishing vessels.
3. To maintain navigational safety, please review the current promotion methods for installing Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) on national fishing boats, to prevent fishing boat crews from removing EPIRB after annual inspection.

Note: The final report of this occurrence investigation is published in Chinese. To facilitate understanding for non-Chinese readers, the Executive Summary has been translated into English. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, discrepancies may occur. In the event of any inconsistency, the Chinese version shall prevail.