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Case of missing Chief Cook from an Oil tanker

1. What happened?

On 25th November 2012 at 1600 hrs, a Chief Cook, 27 years of age, was reported missing from an Oil tanker. Vessel was in the Atlantic ocean, at the time of the incident, en route from Gibraltar to U.S.A East coast.

2. How it happened?

2.1 The Chief cook was last seen on board at around 1400hrs, on 25th November 2012. At around 1600 hrs, ship's staff realized that the Chief Cook was missing. At 1620hrs, Chief Officer informed the Master that the Chief Cook was not responding to his cabin telephone. His cabin was opened but he was not found inside. From 1625 hrs to 1655 hrs, crew was mustered, announcements were made on the PA system and a search was carried out on board.

2.2 At 1707 hrs, vessel was turned around for a search in the water. A distress message was broadcast and the search was carried out in consultation with MRCC Norfolk. However, the Chief Cook could not be found and the search was called off at 0100hrs, on 26th November 2012. The weather at the

time was reported to be moderate/rough seas, moderate swell, overcast and moderate visibility.

2.3 It was noted that the entrance doors of the accommodation, on the Chief Cooks deck, were locked from inside and it is assumed that he went out of the accommodation from the doors at the Upper deck. Being a Sunday, all the crew members were either inside the accommodation or in the engine room. Interviews and checks did not reveal any foul play or provide any reasons for the disappearance of the Chief Cook.

3. Why it happened?

The information available is insufficient to arrive at any firm conclusion. It may be that the Chief cook fell overboard, inadvertently, caused by a slip on deck or probably stumbled on an obstruction while walking on deck near the ship side. Alternatively, he may have fallen overboard while leaning over side, for unknown reasons.

4. Lessons learnt.

4.1 Ship owners/managers/operators should implement procedures to ensure that crew members do not go out on open decks during hours of darkness or outside work hours. Procedures should exist to ensure that crew would inform a responsible officer or the Bridge before venturing out on deck at these times.

4.2 Ship owners/managers/operators should carry out risk assessments and identify potential hazards that exist on board due to which crew members are likely to fall overboard. Appropriate control measures should be implemented to mitigate the consequences of identified hazards by way of procedures, physical barriers, highlighting of obstructions or design changes as appropriate.



Capt. Harish Khatri

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