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M.V. "SEISTAN".

Vessel arrived Bahrain at 0530 hours on Tuesday the 18th February, 1958. Being anchored two miles eastward of South Sitra Beacon (six miles from shore). On being boarded by Agents, the captain stated that smoke had been detected from No.5 hold at 0700 hours on the 17th February, 1958. Fire tender offered prior to arrival by radio and rejected as unnecessary by the Master.

Captain Crombie attended aboard at 0900 hours and accompanied by Chief Officer examined No.5 tween deck and explosive magazine finding no trace of fire or smoke. The captain stated that on detection of smoke, smothering steam had been introduced into No.5 hold tween deck resulting in the apparent extinguishing of the fire.

After discussion, arrangements were made to discharge explosive using two stevedoring gangs and when Captain Crombie left the vessel on Tuesday afternoon everything was in order and the work of discharging progressing.

When Captain Crombie attended aboard at 0830 hours on Wednesday morning the Master reported that smoke had been detected from No.5 lower hold about mid-night and that as a precautionary measure the hatch was again battened down and smothering steam applied to both lower hold and tween deck by which time about half the explosive cargo had been discharged. The Stevedores were sent to S.S. Muristan at 0900 and told to stand by. The question of flooding No.5 hold was discussed with the Master and in view of the eventuality Captain Crombie went ashore and discussed the proposition with Bapco Marine Staff with a view of removing the vessel inshore into a more favourable anchorage. Captain Mason and Captain Torgeson attended aboard the vessel about 1400 hours and the vessel was shifted 2 miles inshore to a position due south of Sitra Beacon and due east of Sitra Shoal Beacon, in 42ft. at high water.

This position was agreed on by all parties as being satisfactory and the question of the fire discussed and measures to be taken agreed on as satisfactory, bearing in mind the success of using smothering steam when the fire was first detected.

It was decided by all present that if the position was unchanged in the morning the hold would be flooded. All would be present to examine the hold on opening up by which time the Lloyd's Surveyor would also be available.

Mr. Orde, Manager of Messrs. Gray Mackenzie & Co., Ltd., attended aboard at 1500 hours and the question was again discussed and on examination of the vents only white steam could be seen. The discussion regarding the procedure for the following day remained unchanged.

Captain Crombie offered to remain aboard, but the Captain of the vessel deemed this unnecessary as he was convinced that the fire appeared to be no longer active.

As a precautionary measure the tug "SOHAIL" remained alongside the vessel. Mr. Orde and Captain Crombie left the vessel at 1800 hours everything appearing to be under control.

At 2135 hours a violent explosion in No.5 hold wrecked the after end of the vessel, followed by fire. As a result of the explosion the tug "SOHAIL" sunk alongside.



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Tugs and small craft were on the scene within half an hour and a number of survivors removed from the vessel ashore. An extensive search of the area was afterward carried out and resulted in the recovery of two members of the tug's crew.

At 0730 Captain Crombie and Mr. Mitchell, Lloyd's Surveyor, boarded the vessel which was still burning amidships, and a search for survivors was made resulting in the discovery of one live seaman. At this time the stern portion of the vessel was under water and the forward draught read 11' 6".

Fore Deck Hatch Covers appeared intact with the exception of the after end of No.2, deck cargo appearing only superficially damaged. Various small cases of detonators which had been removed from No.4 hatch and carried forward by the ship's crew were found intact where they had been placed beside the windlass (These cases were afterwards disposed of by Bahrain State Police).

Captain Crombie and the Lloyd's Surveyor, Mr. Mitchell, then joined in the search for possible survivors prior to proceeding to the barge into which 75 tons of explosive had been discharged the previous day. The wooden cases which appeared to be stained by the contents and smelling of charred timber were examined and it was decided to tow the barge out a further two miles eastward and dispose of the cargo. On the return trip it was noted that the vessel was drawing 12ft. of water forward. At 2.00p.m. it was reported that the wooden explosive cases would not sink and it was decided that the barge should be anchored 5 miles from Sitra and the crew removed until expert advice could be obtained. The barge was securely anchored with two anchors later in the afternoon at which time it was noted that the draught of the "SEISTAN" was 14ft. forward.

On the 21st February, 1958 at 1100 hours Captain Crombie and Lloyd's Surveyor made a further examination of the vessel including the mid-ship accommodation which was found to be completely gutted. The hold bilges were sounded and recorded as follows: No.1-8", No.2-6ft. (approximately) and No.3-15ft. at after end. No.2 hold was entered and the cargo appeared intact, with the sounding taken at the after end showing approximately 6ft. of water. It was noted that the Port Bridge space was still burning. The vents were then blanked off and arrangements made for flooding.

On return, the explosive barge was examined and was found to be securely anchored and the cargo in order. At a later time the "SEISTAN" was again examined by members of the management of the agents and the draught noted as being 16' 3".

SATURDAY - 22ND FEBRUARY:

Vessel boarded in the morning. All the fore deck wing steam pipes examined and found in order and flanges prepared for attachment of air compressors.

No.2 hold forward derrick port side, lifted with the aid of Bapco tug in preparation for lifting pumps etc. aboard.

The fire in port side bridge space was extinguished with the aid of Bapco tug. Templates were made with a view to blanking off all entrance hatches into No.1 hold with steel plates. Draught was checked at regular intervals and it was found that the vessel was continuing to settle by the head.

SUNDAY - 23RD FEBRUARY:

Vessel boarded early morning until working party consisting of officers from the S.S. "MURISTAN" and local labour. All doors, hatches and vents leading into No.1 hold blanked off as well as possible.

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One small duplex pump manhandled down into No.2 hold tween deck and operated with compressed air from a compressor on a barge.

Two petrol pumps positioned also in No.2 tween deck and by the afternoon it was thought that the level of the water in No.2 hold was being held. Arrangements were made for ship's engineers from the S.S. "MURISTAN" and "KOHISTAN" to work shifts all nights to keep the pumps running. At 2100 hours it was found that the water had risen to within 8" of the top of No.2 hatch coaming and it was decided to stop pumping removed all men and tow the barge with compressor to safety.

MONDAY - 24TH FEBRUARY:

At 8.45 as launches were approaching the M.V. "SEISTAN" water commenced flooding over No.2 hatch coaming at the after end and the vessel quickly settled on the bottom.

Captain A. Brown, Marine Superintendent of Messrs. Frank C. Strick & Co., Ltd., attended on board the M.V. "SEISTAN" on the 23rd February 1958 and examined the vessel, approving of the work which was being undertaken. Mr. Larimer of the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation accompanied Captain Brown. Mr. J.P.S. Delacour of the Associated Ethyl Co., Ltd., also visited the vessel in view of the fact that 1215 drums of Tetra Ethyl Lead was stowed in No.3 tween deck, but as the compartment was flooded no inspection of the cargo was possible.

At noon on the 26th February 1958, the barge with explosives which had been discharged from the M.V. "SEISTAN" prior to the accident was towed to a safe position and blown up by an explosive expert from the U.K.

BAHRAIN:

25TH FEBRUARY, 1958.



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