

Log M-191
AL-4

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: March 17, 1982

Forwarded to:

Mr. Spyros S. Skouras
Chairman
Prudential Lines, Inc.
One World Trade Center
New York, New York 10048

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

M-82-17 and -18

About 0702 on May 6, 1981, the 820-foot-long U.S. barge carrier SS LASH ATLANTICO and the 470-foot-long Greek freighter M/V HELLENIC CARRIER collided in the Atlantic Ocean about 13 nautical miles (nmi) northeast of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. There were no injuries or deaths. The LASH ATLANTICO experienced damage estimated at \$2,920,000. The HELLENIC CARRIER was a total constructive loss, with estimated repair cost of \$5 million. The North Carolina Outer Banks beaches from Kitty Hawk southward for 50 miles to Avon required cleanup from fuel oil spilled in the accident. The estimated cost of cleanup was more than \$500,000. 1/

The LASH ATLANTICO was equipped with two gyrostabilized 3-cm radars. However, the master and second mate had only the starboard unit operating on the 6-nmi range after the ship left the pilot station off Cape Henry, Virginia, and proceeded to sea, except for two short periods, at 0507 and 0544, when the radar was switched to the 16-nmi range. The master stated that when both radars were in use they interfered with each other.

Since the second mate on the LASH ATLANTICO had observed the HELLENIC CARRIER on radar 10 to 12 minutes prior to the collision, he had sufficient time to plot it and determine its closest point of approach. However, by having the radar on the 6-nmi scale, he provided himself only a relatively short time period for evaluating a meeting situation. If he could not operate the other radar on the 16-nmi scale due to interference problems, he should have alternated between the 6-nmi and 16-nmi scales on the one radar. If the second mate had detected the HELLENIC CARRIER earlier, using the 16-nmi scale, he would have had more time to plot the contact and evaluate the situation.

The LASH ATLANTICO was also equipped with two VHF-FM radiotelephones. The master stated that although he was monitoring VHF-FM channels 13 and 16 2/ on the VHF radiotelephones prior to the collision, he made no attempt to communicate with the

1/ For more detailed information, read Marine Accident Report—"Collision of U.S. Barge Carrier SS LASH ATLANTICO and Greek Freighter M/V HELLENIC CARRIER about 13 Nautical Miles Northeast of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, May 6, 1981" (NTSB-MAR-82-3).

2/ Channel 13 is the bridge-to-bridge navigation channel used in U.S. waters. Channel 16 is an international distress and safety channel.


HELLENIC CARRIER because "the situation was very close, and I wouldn't like to leave my [fog] signal and watch and go to the telephone." Under the existing near-zero visibility conditions, it would have been prudent for the master of the LASH ATLANTICO to have attempted to contact the HELLENIC CARRIER to establish a passing agreement. The Safety Board believes that this accident might have been avoided if the two ships had contacted each other using their VHF-FM radiotelephones and established a passing agreement.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that Prudential Lines, Inc.:

In company instructions to masters, encourage the use of VHF radiotelephones by the bridge watch to establish passing agreements on waters not covered by the U.S. Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-82-17)

In company instructions to masters, encourage the use of both radars on ships equipped with two radars when operating in restricted visibility conditions. (Class II, Priority Action) (M-82-18)

BURNETT, Acting Chairman, and McADAMS, GOLDMAN, and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in these recommendations.


By: Jim Burnett
Acting Chairman