

ACTIVITY: Sea disaster

CASE: GSAF 2007.09.30.b

DATE: Sunday September 30, 2007

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Sulu Sea 28 nautical miles southwest off Cagayancillo, Palawan, Philippine Islands.

NARRATIVE: The 426-ton cargo ship *Mia* was carrying cement from central Cebu province to Brooke's Point township in Palawan when she encountered heavy seas churned up by Ineng, a tropical depression that lashed the northern Philippines. Based on the marine protest filed by JPS general manager Gallagher Gallarde to Marina-7, the vessel sank about 11 p.m. on September 28. Report from the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) in Manila, however, said M/V *Mia* went under about 4 p.m. on September 29, but according to the Palawan police, the vessel overturned after the enormous waves damaged its hull about 2:40 p.m. on Sunday September 30. The vessel listed and then capsized, the report from the Palawan police said. According to Gallarde, JPS shipping personnel received a radio message from the M/V *Mia* crew members about 1 p.m. on September 28 that the cargo vessel was already 20 miles off Tubbataha Reef, off Puerto Princesa City, Palawan.



Survivors who were rescued on Sunday said they were among 11 of the *Mia*'s crew who decided to tie themselves together with a rope, believing they would have a better chance of surviving. But they unhitched themselves from the rope after one of them was attacked by a shark.

"The four survivors are still in shock; they said they saw their fellow seamen being eaten by the sharks but there was nothing they could do," said Senior Superintendent Dennis Peña, Palawan police director. Fermin Soto, a radio operator on the rescuing vessel, The four were identified as chief mate Roulette Sapallida, seaman Rey Cabuhay, oiler Marlon Tiguman and apprentice Richard Abrigona, who were rescued by passing fishing boat *Alister* (or *Alice Third*), said the four survivors were taken to Cuyo District Hospital in Cuyo town, between Palawan and Panay in Palawan. Soto said three of the four survivors were wearing life vests.

Ineng intensified into a tropical storm, hampering search and rescue efforts, but Coast Guard officer-in-charge Danilo Abrinoja said they would continue and he ordered an investigation of the sinking start after all 14 missing people had been found.

INJURY: Presumed fatal

SPECIES: Not identified

SOURCES: AP, October 2, 2007; Manila Standard Today, Wednesday October 3, 2007; Cebu Daily News, October 3, 2007

Crew of sunken ship feared eaten by sharks

(China Daily — Xinhua) Updated: 2007-10-03 14:01

Manila -- Fourteen crew members of a cargo ship which sank in waters off western Philippines' Palawan Island last weekend were believed to have been eaten by sharks, reported the Philippine News Agency Wednesday.

The news agency quoted Roulette Sapallida, one of four people who survived the wreckage on September 29, as saying that the ill-fated MV *Mia* was in a shark-infested area. MV *Mia* sank on September 29, some 28 nautical miles southeast off Cagayancillo in Palawan due to strong waves brought about by tropical depression "Hanna".

The town island of Cagayancillo, Cabili Island, is also haunted by sharks which live near a World Heritage Site-declared Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park.

Sapallida and three other crew members of the ship were rescued by a passing fishing boat. The Philippine Navy and the Philippine Coast Guard divers and rescuers have been in the area for a joint rescue operation for days without finding any survivor.

http://www.chinadaily.com/cn/world/2007-10/03/content_6151781.htm

Search for survivors

Cebu Daily News

Last updated 02:17pm (Mla time) 10/03/2007

CEBU CITY, Philippines - Four survivors of an ill-fated cargo ship from Cebu that sank off Palawan are still in shock.

They could still hear their co-workers shouting for help while being eaten alive by sharks, a police official in Palawan said.

"Sabi nung mga survivors narinig pa nilang sumisigaw yung iba habang humihingi ng tulong. Nakita daw nila na kinakain na ng mga pating yung mga kasamahan nila. Pero wala silang magawa (The survivors said they heard the others screaming while asking for help. They said they saw their fellow seamen being eaten by the sharks but there was nothing they could do)," said Senior Superintendent Dennis Peña, Palawan police director.

The four were identified as chief mate Roulette Sapallida, seaman Rey Cabuhay, oiler Marlon Tiguman and apprentice Richard Abrigona, who were rescued by passing fishing boat *Alister*.

The survivors are now confined at the Cuyo District Hospital in Cuyo town, Palawan.

Because of this account of the survivors, Peña said most of the 14 missing crew members of M/V *Mia* of JPS Shipping Lines in Cebu could already be dead. But, he added, they have not given up hope.

Divers and rescue swimmers of the Philippine Coast Guard continued their search in the hope of finding more survivors.

The Maritime Industry Authority in Central Visayas (Marina-7) has started its investigation into the sinking of the cargo vessel about 28 nautical miles southwest off Cagayancillo, Palawan.

Mardon Martin, Marina-7 safety engineer, said the probe would determine if the shipping corporation could be liable for the incident or there was negligence on the part of the crew members.

The M/V *Mia*, loaded with 880 metric tons of cement, left San Fernando town in southern Cebu about 5 a.m. of September 27. It was expected to arrive in Brooke's Point, Palawan on September 29.

Based on the marine protest filed by JPS general manager Gallagher Gallarde to Marina-7, the vessel sank about 11 p.m. on September 28.

Report from the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) in Manila, however, said M/V *Mia* went under about 4 p.m. on September 29 reportedly due to bad weather.

But according to the Palawan police, the vessel overturned after the enormous waves spawned by typhoon Hanna damaged its body while it was crossing the sea off Cagayancillo about 2:40 p.m. on Sunday. The vessel tilted to its side and the overturned, the report from the Palawan police said.

According to Gallarde in his marine protest, the JPS shipping personnel received a radio message from the M/V *Mia* crew members about 1 p.m. on September 28 that the cargo vessel was already

20 miles off Tubbataha Reef, off Puerto Princesa City, Palawan.

The crew members also told the shipping lines that their estimated time of arrival in Brooke's Point would be delayed by seven hours — from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. on September 29 — due to rough seas.

“This was the last radio communication from the crew of M/V Mia; hence, there was neither radio contact nor cellular phone communication from September 29, 30 and October 1 except from the fishing boat Alister at 8:10 a.m. on October 1,” according to the marine protest.

Gallarde said in the marine protest that representatives from the fishing boat informed JPS Shipping through radio on October 1 that they were able to rescue four of the 18 crew members.

The fishing boat happened to pass by and saw what happened. The crew men of F/B *Allister* daringly plucked the four survivors from the rough seas, according to Peña of the Palawan police.

Peña said the Palawan police were also conducting an investigation to check into the possibility that the sunken cargo ship might be overloaded.

The sinking of M/V *Mia* was the second sea tragedy in Palawan in September.

Martin of Marina-7 said the Philippine Coast Guard would convene the Special Board of Marine Inquiry to look into the cause of the sinking. Marina would also check if the vessel was seaworthy when it sailed to Brooke's Point, he added. Martin said they would also verify if the vessel had proper life-saving equipment on board such as life-jackets and that all crew members had the proper papers. To determine these, he said Marina officials would interview the survivors.

But Martin said there was no reason to ground the two other vessels of JPS Shipping Corp. “If there are administrative lapses, we can impose a fine or suspend the certificate of public convenience of the shipping company”, he said.

In the meantime, the Coast Guard continues its search for missing crewmen.

Lieutenant Armand Balilo, PCG spokesperson, said the rescue team's operations were hampered by the incessant rains brought about by tropical storm “Ineng.”

“But rest assured that our search and rescue operations will not cease until we find the missing persons,” he said. /*Correspondent Jhunnex Napallacan and Inquirer*

http://globalnation.inquirer.net/cebudailynews/news/view_article.php?article_id=92248