

# Synopsis

The accident was notified to the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) Duty Co-ordinator by HM Coastguard, through the Department of Transport Duty Officer, at 0530 on 26 March 1997. An investigation began immediately and was carried out by Captain D J B Dunn, Principal Inspector.

CITA was being operated as a feeder container ship on a weekly schedule between Rotterdam, Southampton, Belfast and Dublin. She was manned with a Polish master and crew. She left Southampton during the morning of 25 March for Belfast. The planned route was to be via the northbound lane of the Land's End Traffic Separation Scheme and thence towards Belfast.

Shortly after midnight (ship's time) on 26 March, the Mate took over the bridge watch from the Master as CITA was approaching a course alteration position south of Lizard Point. On reaching it, course was altered to head for the southern end of the Land's End Traffic Separation Scheme. Some time later the Mate fixed the vessel's position and found he was about a mile to the north of the intended track. To regain it he adjusted the course to port by a few degrees and returned to his seat to resume his watch. Soon afterwards he fell asleep. Two and a half hours later, and without anyone on board being aware of what was happening, CITA ran aground on rocks at Northumberland Point, Isles of Scilly, while heading westwards at 13 knots.

The investigation identified the following causal factors:

- (i) – that the officer of the watch onboard CITA selected a course to steer that would, unless subsequently changed, lead her to running aground on the Isles of Scilly;
- (ii) – that the officer of the watch fell asleep after he had selected the course to steer.

The investigation also identified serious shortcomings with bridge manning at night, with the ship's management and with the failure to have a working watch alarm switched on.

Eight recommendations are made.