

1. INTRODUCTION

IRVING FOREST a Bermudian Registered 8,100 tonne deadweight ship left St John, Canada, on 6 January 1990 with 18 crew and one supernumerary (wife of crew member) on board, carrying a cargo of wood pulp and newsprint. Her first port of call was scheduled to be Rouen, France with an estimated date of arrival of 14 January.

Late on the 10th, in mid-North Atlantic, during storm weather conditions of 65 knot winds (Beaufort force 12) and 6-9 metre seas, the ship took a starboard list of some 20 degrees, as a result of ingress of water into the starboard side ballast tanks.

Early on the 11th as a result of the heavy list and the prevailing conditions the ship suffered a total blackout which resulted in loss of propulsion. A deck stowed container was lost overboard and subsequently three other deck stowed containers were also lost.

By noon on the 11th the ship, in mid-North Atlantic without any power, was listing 30-35° to starboard. The Master sent out a distress call at 1210 hours (1310 GMT) and as a result contact was made with BT NESTOR a tanker of 69,900 tonnes deadweight which was some 3 hours steaming time away from IRVING FOREST.

Everyone was then mustered on the port side of the boat deck in their survival suits and the Master's plan was to abandon IRVING FOREST on the arrival of BT NESTOR which was estimated as 1615 hours local time.

During the preparations to abandon ship using the 20 man inflatable liferaft stowed on the boat deck - portside - the 2nd Engineer's wife (the supernumerary), the Chief Officer and a GP seaman were washed overboard. Fortunately an RAF Nimrod aircraft had arrived over the ship at this crucial time and they dropped an air-sea rescue pack including two inflatable liferafts, one of which the three persons in the sea eventually boarded.

The remaining members of the crew subsequently left the ship by jumping overboard while hooked onto the ship's liferaft painter, the liferaft having been successfully launched into the sea.

All IRVING FOREST's crew, including the supernumerary, were embarked aboard BT NESTOR by 1900 hours local time.

As a result of the condition of the ship exacerbated by the weather conditions, communications from and to IRVING FOREST proved difficult throughout the emergency. However using the various equipment carried by the ship successful transmissions were made and received at the critical times.

There was no loss of life as a result of this accident. IRVING FOREST subsequently sank.