

M/V BOLTONOR

Capt. J.O. Strüselar

CAPTAIN'S REPORT OF THE SALVAGE VENTIL / VENPET

16, 12, 77

1015 Arrival Mossel Bay with back cargo from oil rig Sedco K, discharging deckload.

ca 1030 First information by Wharf Superintendent of Soekar, Mr. Ken Martin, about a collision of two tankers about 15 n.m. south of location Sedco K.

Helicopter is said to be already at the position of the collision to rescue the crew members and to bring them on board the rig and on board passing British ships.

One tanker is said to be still okay.

- We assure us with charter party about legal situation of salvage. Salvage of property only with the consent of charterers.

ca 1100 Conference with Mr. Walker - Project Manager of Soekar, Mr. Field of Sedco and another gentlemen from Sedco about incident anchor handling with Sedco K and towing of rig into the bay of Mossel Bay.

ca 1130 Mr. Walker is recalled into his office, conference interrupted; received information from Ken Martin that Smit Lloyd 109 is either on her way to the casualties or will soon be leaving location. No release for salvage because all crew members rescued already.

- Discharging deckload.

1230 Received order from Ken Martin to depart to the rig and perform stand-by duties at the rig, while Smit Lloyd 109 will be standing-by for assistance with the casualties.

- 1250 After termination of discharging departure Mossel Bay.  
Due to the urgency of the situation, it was not possible to bunker gasoil or water stock on board at departure: gasoil 37,9 M<sup>3</sup> heavy oil 53,5 M<sup>3</sup>.
- 1322/25 Call to Commander Howarth /USA, Johannesburg, via Cape Town radio.  
Informed Mr. Howarth about situation and received information that USA, London was already informed and that negotiations on hand with Gaskor. Mr. Howarth holding contact with either USA and Gaskor.
- 1335 Received query from Sedco K - how much petrol we have on board, answer 20 litres of petrol/oil mixture for 2 stroke purposes.
- 1525/29 Call with Cadr. Howarth, he informed us that negotiations on hand and that Soltentor probably will be participating at salvage under sub-contract of Sefmarine.
- ca 1400 Received on request position of casualty by helicopter.  
Position  
Names of tankers - Venail and Venpet.
- 1507 Mayday relais from ISG Venail and Venpet 52 ab silence finish, v.h.f. channel 15.
- On the voyage to Sedco K, try to contact Smit Lloyd 109.
- 2005 Arrival location Sedco K.  
Standing by for further orders.
- 2010 Received order by Gaskor, rep. o/b Sedco K, to proceed to casualties, relieve Smit Lloyd 109 Smit Lloyd has to come back to the rig and to discharge cement she has on board.



After discharging of cement, Smit Lloyd 109 shall go back to the casualty, relieve Saltentor and Saltentor has to come back to the rig to continue her stand-by duties.

2010

Departure to the casualties.

from 2010

Try to contact following persons of VTS via Norddeich radio:

Gigerich, Rabenberg, Sikora, Hauer, Galts, Euler, Jorga, Zehalka.

Succeeded in contacting Mr. Zehalka and informed about the situation. Asked him, due to the urgency of the situation, to inform Mr. Gigerich and Rabenberg as soon as possible. Received recommendation to hold contact with Cadr. Howarth because he was the man of the spot.

2020

Informed Smit Lloyd 109 about rig orders and was informed that Smit Lloyd 109 is extinguishing the fire on board "Verpet".

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During the voyage to the casualties:

Listening to conversation between Smit Lloyd 109 and Captain of Verpet in lifboat. Captain of Verpet refuses to let Smit Lloyd 109 crew members on board.

Smit Lloyd 109 is extinguishing the fire by monitors and starting to give hoses on board the Verpet to connect them there to the ship's own facilities in order to extinguish the fire in the accommodation.

-

Prepare towing gear.

2050/54

Call to Cadr. Howarth, informed Cadr. Howarth about situation and that Saltentor has to relieve Smit Lloyd 109. Received recommendation to give all necessary assistance and if necessary, to connect toeline.

- During the voyage to the casualties, according to radar bearings, both tankers were drifting towards the coast at a speed of about 3/4 of a knot.
- ca 2145 Received wind warning from Port Elizabeth radio 033 6-7.  
Received confirmation by Smit Lloyd 109.
- ca 2200 Approaching the first of the two tankers.  
Approaching port bow.  
Tanker is unlit, spot the searchlights onto the tanker, distinguish her as Venoil and try to ascertain if there was still anybody.  
Approaching up to 20 metres distance on the port side.  
Soltentor is being called at channel 6 v.h.f. by Mr. Walker/Soskor and being asked what we were doing at the position Venoil and what Smit Lloyd 109 was doing and what were our orders.  
Informed him of the situation and the rig orders, contact Smit Lloyd 109 on channel 16 v.h.f.
- 2210 Arrival position Venoil, continuing to prepare towing gear.
- On board Venoil, no fire, no smoke, around Venoil no oil in the sea.  
On board Venoil, three men, Dick Walker and apparently two helicopter pilots.
- Transmit order of Mr. Walker to Smit Lloyd 109 that Soltentor has to relieve Smit Lloyd 109 with the extinguishing work and that Smit Lloyd 109 has to go back to the rig.
- Smit Lloyd 109 refuses due to the fact that she had already started to extinguish the fire and that she had connected waterhoses to the Venpat's fire-fighting system to extinguish the fire in the accommodation.



- Due to this now worsening of the Venail's situation, explained to Dick Walker that both tankers are drifting towards the coast at a rate of 3/4 knots and that speed will be increasing after freshening of wind. Due to this danger of stranding to the coast, Baltentor gave recommendation to connect towlines to prevent both the Venail and the S.A. coast from a stranding of a fully-laden tanker.
- Received consent from Mr. Walker.
- After illumination of the fog's, it was quite clear that we could not tow the Venpet forward bow heading due to the bad damage at the starboard bow. Besides this, Dick Walker informed us that the forward deckplates were so hot that nobody was able to pass them.
- Explained to Mr. Walker how we would like to fit the towing connection.  
(Bridle: 2 110 m pendant wires to the Venail's aft bits, the 2 pendants connected to a 30 m rig chain by shackles and a stretcher ring chain connected to the main tow wire).
- Continuing preparation of towing gear.
- Continuous increasing of wind.
- 2348 Cast first heaving line on board Venail, to this connected a messenger line (3 tigger wires  $\phi$  25 mm, 150 m length).  
  
Passing up 2 forms of Lloyd's open form with request to let them sign whenever anybody of the crews or the Captain appears on board the tanker.
- Received lof.back without signature and information that nobody on board to sign Lloyd's open form. Underwriting could be done later.

- Tugger wire is taken through roller fairlead on board Venail and guided round a bit or other and given back to Baltentor through fairlead, by means of heaving line tugger is given back to Baltentor. A 110 mm Ø 53 mm tow-wire is shackled to the tugger and hauled on board Venail by means of our own tugger winches.

- Due to that we had to use a connected messenger line, we could not use a securing shackle on deck of the Baltentor, therefore the Baltentor crew were in a very unsafe position. At the second leg of the bridle, it happened that the messenger line parted and endangered heavily the deck's crew.

13.12.72

0008

First leg of bridle connected to the port aft bit of the Venail with it's soft eye.

0010

Second heaving line cast to Venail, again give up tugger wire. Against my order, the emergency crew guided the tugger round the outer roller of the roller fairlead. By this, tugger was bent about 90° directly behind the roller fairlead, due to this danger of breaking.

0020

Messenger line parted, by backing of parted wire endangering of Baltentor's deck's crew.

- Bringing now Baltentor - with the already connected towline - to the Venail's port side in order to let two experienced crew members jump onto the down-hanging port boat ladder.

Mr. Walker refuses strictly to let my crew members on board, to avoid a furthergoing dispute with the charterer's representative, I abandoned my plan and brought the tug into the position aft of the Venail's stern again.

- It must be mentioned that by this risky manœuvre with the connected towing gear and on top of it the refusal of Mr. Walker, ship and towing gear were heavily endangered.



- After repair of messenger line with clips, cast again heaving line on board "Vencill" and give up messenger line. Again messenger line was taken round the roller fairlead itself. Fortunately emergency crew succeeded to haul towline on board and to secure the second leg of the bridle with its soft eye onto the starboard aft bit.
  - During the whole time I had to manoeuvre the tug in a distance of 1/2 to 3 metres from the Vencill's stern to enable my crew a safe work on deck, although the wind was still increasing.
  - The towing bridle is now fixed as aforesaid, 2 tow wires of 110 m 36 mm  $\phi$  each connected with it's hard eye by a 130 T. shackle to a 40 x 80 x 10 cm. steelring. On the other end of the ring connected by a 130 t. shackle a 3" 60 m rig chain. This rig chain is connected to the main tow wire with a 130 t. shackle. The main tow wire leads through a special designed tow bollard at the ship's centre point, then into the winch room onto a 150 t. friction winch. Before the friction winch the wire is pulled up onto a storage winch.
- 0110 Second leg of bridle connected.
- 0130 Drop chain.
- 0140 Slacking tow wire to a length of 950 metres towing connection has now a length of 950 + 60 + 110 metres.
- 0140 Weather S'l 7-8, sea rough.
- 0200 Start of tow.
- Decide to tow Vencill free from the S.A. coast in direction to Port Elizabeth. Danger of leaking out of oil did not exist anymore, due to that the damaged tank was already empty. Due to heavy weather and the danger of strong currents further offshore remaining in distance of about 15 n.m. to S.A. coast.

- It should be mentioned that even the much more powerful tug, S.A. Walraad Woltemade had difficulties later on to hold the Venail against the strong Agulhas current.
- During the first time the tow made a speed of about 1-3/4 knots, later after increasing of current, still about 1 knot.
- Between 0200 and 1100 covered distance 9 n.m., time 9 hours, average speed 1 knot.
- ca 0700 Tug S.A. Walraad Woltemade appears on the scene.
- Boltentor is being requested to hand over the tow to S.A. Walraad Woltemade. (Zbug)
- Due to that the charter or contract situation was not sure and that I did not know the owners of Zbug and that I did not receive any concrete orders from neither Safmarine, nor Osa, nor Sookor, I refused to hand over.
- Informed Mr. Walker.
- Following a long dispute between Mr. Walker and Captain Nagel of Zbug concerning the handover of Venail and the takeover of Venpet by Zbug.
- Zbug is ordered by Mr. Walker to proceed without dispatch to relieve Unit Lloyd 103.  
Unit Lloyd 103 has to proceed to the rig end to discharge cement. Due to a case of emergency, the cement is urgently needed on the rig.
- After this dispute Zbug disappeared in direction to Venpet.
- ca 1000 Zbug back on position Venail.
- 1044/46 Call from Cadr. Howarth, received confirmation to handover Venail to Zbug due to existing subcontract with Safmarine. Legality is proved by Osa, London.
- 1050/58 Received telegram of Sofftag to hand over Venail to Zbug.



- 1105/10 Call of Capt. Zandy/Safnarina, confirmed  
Capt. Zandy that we received definite order for  
handover just a few minutes ago.
- 1110 Informed Mr. Walker.
- 1112/28 Received second telegram from Safnarina.
- 1115 Shortening towline.
- Pass over tigger wire by means of heaving line  
and to ease disconnection also a snatchblock  
(5 t. SWL).
- The snatch block is fitted behind the accommodation  
and the tigger wire guided through. Chain is  
attached to the tigger wire. By means of this  
the tow wires are heaved up a touch and the workers  
at the Venail are enabled to release the two 110 m  
tow wires.
- Meanwhile about 15 - 20 persons were flown by  
helicopter to the Venail.
- After disconnecting the towlines, 2 heaving lines  
and the snatchblock were attached to the tigger  
wire, but due to the bad attachment, got lost.
- 1315 Towing gear disconnected, handed over the tow  
to Zbug.
- 1320 Departure position Venail 34 20 9 24 17 E.
- 1450 Arrival position Verpet.
- Smit Lloyd 109 has already shortened up and pre-  
pared the handover.
- Cast heaving line over to Smit Lloyd 109,  
attached to this a tigger wire.
- Smit Lloyd 109 disconnects tow wire from stretcher  
and ties our tigger wire behind loop of stretcher.
- Hauling stretcher by means of our tigger winch  
on board.
- Smit Lloyd 109 stretcher is connected to Verpet  
by 1 225' rig pendant and a doubled pendant of  
about 20' of length. This doubled pendant is  
secured to the starboard forward bow bit, stretcher

and pendants are connected by 120 t. shackles.

1515 Towlins connected.

1520-1700 Slackin towsline to 1000 metres.

1700 Start of tow.

1550/55 Call with Cadr. Howarth.

1705 Order of Cadr. Howarth to hold Vespert 40 n.m. free of coast between Cape Seal and Cape St. Francis.

- Due to changing wind and current directions, try to hold Vespert 20 n.m. South of rig Saxon K and 40 n.m. South of S.A. coast.

ca 1900 Tug F.T. Bates of Railway and Harbour authority arrives at tow position.

2047 Received message of Port Captain of Port Elizabeth, via Port Elizabeth radio, to hand over to tug F.T. Bates.

Strictly refused unless I had instructions by Saffarine.

2317/20 Informed Capt. Biggerich /VTS about situation.

18.12.77

0430 Vespert shears to starboard out of control, shorten up towsline, cross the bow, bring towsline in normal position again and Vespert onto old course. Wind ESE 6 - 7.

- Steering changing across due to continuous sheering of Vespert and try to hold Vespert in agreed sea area.

- rudder of Vespert lies nearly hardstarboard due to this she sheers steadily to starboard.

0700 Wind s'1 6, long moderate swell. Turn tow to starboard to make lee, prepare rubber dinghy with outboard motor for crossing to Vespert.



Let dinghy to water with Chief Officer Spalek,  
Chief Engineer Schaidt and Bosun Ludwig.

Size of dinghy has 3,00 x 1,50 metres,

Outboarder 20 h.p. Johnson.

Dinghy is set in water by provision crans on  
Saltentor's port side.

- Intend to supply Venpet crew with food, since  
the time of collision the crew members had only  
one meal which was provided by Salt Lloyd 109,  
before she had left the scene. On this  
occasion we intended also to survey the damages,  
to put the rudder in the midships position again,  
to find out gasoil stock for bunkering and to find  
out possibilities for power supply for the anchor  
windlasses.

0730

Dinghy alongside Venpet.

Mate Spalek tries to mount the ladder which is  
hanging from the starboardside. At this very  
moment the engine of the boat went out of order  
and the boat drifted rapidly towards the Venpet's  
stern. Spalek fell into the water, life vest  
did not open automatically and Spalek was at least  
twice overflushed by 2 - 3 m. high waves.  
Fortunately he succeeded in gripping a rope which  
was hanging besides the ladder and climbed up a  
few metres until he was above the reach of the  
waves.

Alongside the Venpet, the waves were found to  
have a height between 4 and 5 metres, which we  
did not expect from our view from the tug.

During this time the rubber dinghy drifted rapidly  
towards the huge leak on the Venpet's starboard  
side and the danger of ripping off the boat at  
the outhanging scrap was imminent.

With the small paddles the boat crew avoided a  
collision with the scrap parts and succeeded in  
not being flushed under the Venpet's stern.

Meanwhile Spalek tried to climb up further, but because he was very exhausted after his ordeal in the sea, the ascent took 3/4 of an hour. During his ascent he was again very much endangered by the swinging of the ladder due to the now heavily rolling Verpet. I had to make lee with the Verpet so she was now lying crossway in the wind. From this Mr. Spalek received some abrasions and bruises.

Losses during this manoeuvre:

† Omega chronograph wristwatch

† Stormo walky-talky damaged by sea water.

- Followed attempts to start emergency diesel, but unfortunately all cables leading from the engine room to the accommodation and to the foc'sle were burned.

1148 By mistake, this time was put down in the Radio Log Book as 1448 GMT.

Received request from Saftug to survey all damages on board Verpet.

- Exact statement of all damages on board Verpet by Mr. Spalek with the help of the Verpet's Chief Officer.

Entrance to the accommodation was not possible due to the heavy smoke and small fires.

- Mr. Spalek discovered that Verpet not gas free.

- Rudder cannot be put into midships position without any external power, i.e. hydraulic pumps or other.

- When entering the engine room this was dark and slippery by the spread of heavy oil.

- Gasoil stock only 1000 litres in the day tank.

- Rubber dinghy undertakes two more trips in order to provide Mr. Spalek with dry clothes and the crew with more food.



ca 1000 Supply vessel Agulhas of Land & Marine Salvage, arrives tow position, prepares gasoil transfer.

1003/08 Received call from Cmdr. Howarth to take over 45 tons of gasoil from Agulhas and another 150 tons the following day.

ca 1200 Agulhas alongside Saltentor in loose connection with one spring line and protected by yokohama fenders.

- Tow makes slowest speed.

1220 Start of gasoil transfer.

1325 Gasoil transfer finished, have bunkered 45 tons.

1513 Chief Officer Spalek back to Saltentor by helicopter. He was lowered down onto the deck by means of a rescue sling.

2100 Tow is standing more or less at the spot due to strong current.

2325 Received telegram by Salvtag to go on course and to hold waiting position 34 40 S 25 52 E.

2335 Turn tow onto new course.  
Position 34 53 S 23 45 E.

12.12.77.

0000 Turn tow slowly onto new course - eastwards.

0330 Start of tow again position 34 59,5 S 23 47,5 E.

- Due to beaming winds and the hardstarboard position of the rudder, continuous sheering of Venpat to the starboard side. Saltentor and Venpat sailing parallel to each other. High strain on towing gear and steady listing of Saltentor.

0730 Wind wts. 7/8, sea rough.  
Venpat sheered out of control, Saltentor steams ahead of Venpat. This is a very risky manoeuvre and had to be performed several times to bring the salvage to a good end. Slacking towline to 1100 metres, change course to SE to avoid strain on towing gear.

- 0810 Sheering out of control of Venpet instant  
perform complete turn of 300 deg. over the  
starboard bow due to hardstarboard position of  
Venpet.
- 0930 Turn finished, steering no/1 courses.
- 1100 Tug F.T. Bates of Railways & Harbour authority  
endangers tow by approaching very close to Venpet  
and to the toeline.  
Steams directly ahead of Venpet bow and touches --  
as I could see the toeline with her starboard side.  
I contacted F.T. Bates via v.h.f. channel 16 with  
the following words:  
Don't approach anymore so close to the tow and  
the toeline. If you do so once again, I'll  
regard this as an act of piracy.  
Answer by F.T. Bates: I have received orders by  
the owners to have a look at your towing connection.  
- After this, F.T. Bates disappeared from the scene  
in the direction to Port Elizabeth.
- 1340 Stop tow, shorten up toeline completely, in order  
to catch wire protectors and to control stretcher.  
Towing gear in good condition.  
When stopping the tow, Venpet sheered directly  
to starboard.
- 1420/40 Slack toeline and start to bring Venpet onto  
e - course again.
- 1600 Tug and tow on e- course again,  
Position 34 53.5 S 24 11 E.
- 1820 Give s.t.a. to owners rep. at Vercil for tomorrow  
morning 0900 at position 34 50 26 11
- 1848/54 Call from Cadr. Howarth / Gaa, received information  
that Boltentor released from her normal charter  
duties with Seekor for the duration of the  
salvage, anchor handling abandoned until the  
return of Boltentor to the location Sedra K.



- 1900 Agulhas arrives at tow position again with a 100 t. of gasoil on board for Boltentor.
- 1905 Gave Agulhas order neither to do the transfer nor to correct towline at the moment due to that Boltentor is burning heavy oil for the time being and therefore cannot decrease speed and also to wait for weather improvement.
- 1910 Position 34 53.5 S 24 27.0 E.
- 2000 Position 34 54.0 S 24 31.0 E.  
Tug and Venpet rolling heavily in w'l sea and s'l swell. Boltentor listing occasionally up to 15 deg., maindeck is flushed by seawater.
- 2050 Received telegram of Saftug that permission of Government for entering Algoa Bay not yet obtained and that we have to hold waiting position.
- Tug and tow rolling heavily in high sw'l swell. Boltentor listing occasionally up to 15 - 20 deg. to starboard, deck continuously flushed by seawater. Port propeller sometimes free turning (out of the water).  
Decrease of speed not possible due to danger of sheering Venpet out of control.  
Occasionally Venpet and Boltentor rolled to the opposite sides due to this highest strain on tow line and other towing gear.
- 0300 Position 34 45 S 24 50 E.
- 0500 Position 34 41.5 S 25 07.5 E.
- 0600 Stock on board gasoil 67.9 cu. m., heavy fuel 44 cu. m.
- 0830 Stop of port engine, heavy loss of luboil by leaking labyrinth shaft packing. Due to steady listing, heavy weather, high swell and continuous sheering of Venpet to starboard.  
Start immediately repairs to still hot engine to bring operation to good end.

0955 Position 34 36 S 25 25 E.  
1000 Position 34 37 S 25 20 E.  
1015 Salvage Surveyor, Mr. Walker on board Venpet.  
1030 Released Agulhas to assist Venpet, fuel tank of Venpet is leaking and Agulhas has to wash this tank out to enable entrance into Alcoa Bay without loss of oil.  
1200 Position 34 35 S 25 25 E.  
1315 Venpet sheered out of control again, Boltentor not able to hold tow with one engine only. Boltentor and Venpet rolling heavily.  
1545 Tow sheered once again out of control.  
1700 Port engine repaired by engine crew. They did a reworking with soft metal and after that smoothening by hand to the labyrinth shaft packing. (Ausgeschliffene Labyrinth dichtung wurde mit lot wider aufgebaut und anschlie Send per hand eingeschliffen).  
1730 Position 34 35 S 25 41 E change course to North.  
1730 Received telegram of Saftug to come as close as 20 n.m. to Cape Recife, but not closer until received further orders.  
- Due to heavy rolling of both Venpet and Boltentor, no gasoil transfer of Agulhas was possible during the whole day.  
1800 Publication of the percentage of the salvage award to the crew according to German law.  
From 1900 Giving continuous navigational warnings via v.h.f. 16 and 2182 kHz., viz:  
Security, security, security, security, security, security,  
All ships, All ships, all ships,  
This is tug Boltentor in tow with tanker Venpet, position at 1900 hours 34 28 S 25 42 E, course true North, speed 3.5 knots, length of tow 1500 metres. The towed tanker is unfit, please keep a good lookout and a wide berth.  
Boltentor out.



- Navigational warnings are picked up by Port Elizabeth radio and transmitted on channel 13 v.h.f.
- Venpet is unlit. Formerly we requested from emergency crew to let navigational lights be brought on board by helicopter. Obviously this was forgotten.  
We on board the Baltentor intended to bring patrol-navigation lamps over to the Venpet, but abandoned this plan because the Venpet was not gas free.  
Illuminating Venpet continuously with search-lights.

21.12.77.

- 0200 Shorten up towline to about 500 metres due to weather improvement and expected entering of Algae Bay.
- Due to strong w - e ship's traffic, hold course down South again, to avoid dangerous approaching of other ships.
  - Continuous navigational warnings transmitted by Baltentor and Port Elizabeth radio.
  - Venpet is illuminated from both sides by Baltentor and Agulhas.
- 0300 Position 34 36 S 25 42 E increasing wind and swell. Start to slack tow wire to a length of 1000 metres. Due to difficulties during the slacking, takes about 1,5 h.
- 0300 Position 34 40 S 25 39 E.  
Meanwhile Venpet sheers out of control again and starts to roll heavily in the now considerably high seas and swell. At the same time oil leaks out of the damaged fuel tank of Venpet. Qanara's representative, Captain Eyck arrives by helicopter at Venpet and requires a more powerful tug because in his opinion, Baltentor cannot keep the tanker from rolling.  
I explained the situation, but he could not or

would not understand my explanation of my present situation.

- After slackening of tow wire, holding the tanker against wind, sea and swell to prevent her from rolling.

- Swell is building up very rapidly due to current and wind running against each other.

1110 Order of Safmarine to let Agulhas connect tow line to Venpet and to hold her so against the wind so that she was not able to roll anymore and to avoid damage to the engineroom bulkhead by the water entering the huge leak at the Venpet's starboard side.

1110 Due to heavy strain on the engines, decreasing of speed, then immediately sheering out of control of tanker and heavy rolling again.

1110-1130 Agulhas tries to connect towline to assist Saltator in towing and to prevent tanker from rolling in very high swell.  
Tries two or three times to cast a heaving-line to the tanker's stern.

1130 Agulhas abandoned attempts.

1130 Meanwhile, a 20 m. swell has built up from SSW, wind SSW 7, steaming with full power against sea and swell, so after our experience, the smallest decrease of speed forced the tanker to sheer out to starboard.

Holding Venpet from rolling.

When rolling in this high swell there is always the possibility that sea water may flow into the damaged fuel tank and that this could break the engineroom's bulkhead. This could cause loss of the tanker by sinking over the stern.

- I am of the opinion that the tanker could already be safely anchored.

- Highest strain to tug, engine, towing gear.



- Heavy listing, sometimes up to 30 deg., due to this free running of engines and strong vibrations, ballasting the tug to her port side to avoid listing.

- Due to this dangerous situation issuing of lifevests.

1300 Weather forecast of Port Elizabeth radio from 1100 gmt. to 2200 gmt. 21 st. from Cape Agulhas to East London gale warning no wind w'l to sw'l 15 - 25 knots, later between 10 - 15 knots, partly cloudy, visibility good.

1330 Position 34 50 S 25 23 E, Agulhas is ordered to proceed to rig Sedco K and pick up standby duties there.

1545 With decreasing winds, Verpet sheered once again out of control, steaming towsline into normal position again.

- Steaming the towsline into position means: Decreasing of speed until the towsline is slack. Meanwhile tug is near the stern and being overhauled, then at full speed ahead steaming alongside the tanker and ahead of the tanker's bow, slack down speed again and tighten up the towsline slowly. Following, bringing the tanker back on course again. Mostly this was combined with a complete turn of 360 deg. to starboard, as the tanker was not willing to fallow over the port bow. These manoeuvres were considerably dangerous, because Boltentor is not a harbour tug, the towing ballard is too high for these purposes and due to this Boltentor very easily listed.

The towsline had to hang down in the original length because the danger of being overrun by the tow is greater with a short wire, but having paid out the long towsline, was insofar dangerous again as the wire could stack at the bottom and pull Boltentor over on the side.

When running ahead of the tanker's bow, there was also the danger of being overrun by the tanker which had considerable speed for quite a while.



1900

wind and swell decreasing.

1945

By heavily up and down stroking tow wire stern gate was damaged and jumped open.

-

Shorten up towline.

-

With shortened towline and tow wire leading directly from the tow bollard up to the tanker's bow, bring sterngate into position again. Sterngate is secured by spot welding.

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During this work the crew were endangered because the towline could not be secured down onto the deck, due to be able to bring the sterngate into position.

With this work, my crew were very much endangered as both Baltantar and Venpet were still rolling and pitching. At any time could they have been hit by the tow wire which was moving up and down. This work could not also be done by turning the tug to one side and securing the tow wire with the towing pins, because this job had to be done quickly and the Venpet had again still considerable speed.

2130

Sterngate in position again, start of tow again, bringing tow onto course 30 deg. in direction to the coast, to enable us to have exact positions again.

2130

Received message of Mr. Bruce Ridell of Land and Marine and Salvage at the Venpet, that the rudder was put into midships position.

2130

Position 35 10 S 24 19 E.

Baltantar is being accompanied by anti-pollution boat Kusweg 1.

22.12.77.

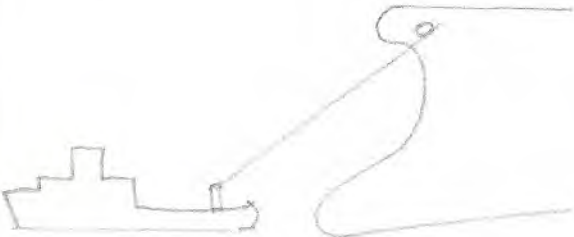
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To receive exact positioning standing towards the coast. Due to atmospheric disturbances, neither decca nor the direction-finder could be used.

0430

Astr. position 34 49 S 24 32 E.

Continue processing to coast.





0500 Cape Recife true 35 deg, Cape St. Francis  
dist. 28 s.m.

0600 Received report from Keesing 1 that Venpat is  
definitely not losing oil.

ca 0630 Give Smit Lloyd 109 approximate position via 2162

0800 Give Smit Lloyd 109 exact position via v.h.f.

0800 Cape St. Francis true 20 deg, 19 n.m. dist.

0800 Slacking down of speed due to oil loss at port  
engine, caused by contemporary listing.  
After slacking down of speed, Venpat sheered out  
of control.

0930 Venpat under control again.

0930 Smit Lloyd 109 arrives at position of tow.

0930 Cape St. Francis true 19 deg, 20 n.m. dist.

- Due to that we had not received a definite order  
about the connection of Smit Lloyd 109 to the  
Venpat, I refused connection until having received  
such order.

1010 Call Commander Howarth, informed of situation and  
request confirmation that connection of Smit Lloyd  
109 with Venpat is okay.

1015 Received confirmation from Cadr. Howarth to allow  
Smit Lloyd 109 to connect towline to Venpat.

1015 Slacking down speed.

1030 Begin rewinding the tow wire.

1035 Call from Capt. Zandy/Saftug, confirmation to  
allow Smit Lloyd 109 tow connection due to that  
South African government demands a certain tug  
power for entering Algas Bay.

1050 Tow wire jumps over the friction sheave.

1050 Brian Ludwig and A.S. Stiller are picked up by  
helicopter and transferred to Venpat. They are  
to give assistance in fitting the tow connection  
of Smit Lloyd 109 to the Venpat. Two crew  
members of the Smit Lloyd 109 are also transferred  
to the Venpat.

Meanwhile on board the Saltentor, the tow wire is being put into the original position again.

1120 Tow wire clear again.

1125 Unit Lloyd 103 has fitted her towing connection.

1150 Start of tow again position 34 32 S 24 52 E.

1312 Received instructions by Saftug to complete salvage in good seamanship against ultimatum of Bomkar.

1700 Position 34 23 S 25 32 E wind WSW S increasing Course 80 deg. ETA holding position 1830 hours.

1725 Informed Captain Culbert/Saftug about situation. Received message that permission to enter Algea Bay is not yet given.

1815 Arrival holding position.

1830 Received message of Boon Ludwig at the Venpet that two parts of the nylon stretcher are parted and that the stretcher should be exchanged to enable a safe entering into Algea Bay.

1900 Shorten up tow line in order to exchange nylon stretcher.

- To prevent Venpet from rolling, Unit Lloyd 103 has to stem ahead, and due to this Saltentor has to manoeuvre, utmostly risky. Saltentor could not be kept the normal way stern to bow, but had to swing around and had to be held heading by stern into the tow direction, Saltentor worked very close to the Venpet's bow being parallel to the Venpet in a distance between 0,5 and 2,0 metres and always in the danger of being overrun by the Venpet's bow. This manoeuvre was not only very dangerous for the tug, but also for her on-deck working crew.

- Wind WSW S/S, swell 15 - 20 feet same direction.

2100 Position 34 25 S 25 52 E.  
Exchanged stretcher and start of tow again.

2100 Received message from Venpet that auxiliary diesel



is working and also one of the ballast pumps, navigation lights are installed and burning.

2123/35 Call of Smr. Howarth, there is possibility that both Smit Lloyd 103 and Baltentor will be relieved by tug Lloydsman tomorrow.

2138/42 Call to Captain Cowly of Land and Marine and Salvage, were informed that ETA helicopter today at 2230 hours.

2143/84 Informed Capt. Rebenberg about situation.

2205 Position 34 26 S 25 54.5 E.

2212/20 Call to Capt. Culbert/Saftag, were informed that tow is allowed to approach coast closer than 20 n.m., relief by Lloydsman negative.

2230 Turning tow into northerly direction.

2300 Turn finished, towing now northwards.

2300 Received permission by Kusag 1 to approach coast closer than 20 n.m. during afternoon and evening definitely no oil pollution was seen.

2319 Received message from Captain Cowly that today definitely no helicopter flight.

2400 Position 34 27 S 25 54 E.

23.12.77.

- Towing together with Smit Lloyd 103 Venpet northwards in direction to Cape Recife.

0300 34 15 S 25 55 E.

0400 34 10 S 25 55.5 E.  
By strong WNW '1 wind force 7 increasing of swell.

From 0500 Steaming against sea and swell to prevent Venpet from rolling, due to this courses following the wind directions.

From 0800 WNW'1 courses.

0720 Discussed highline manœuvre with Smit Lloyd 103 for the transfer of gasoil.  
Baltentor gave special connection over to Smit Lloyd 103 by heaving line, then following a 60 m. 4" flexible hose existing of 6 single

parts connected by 4" Weco couplings. This hose was fitted to a 10 cm. diameter Polypropylene mooring line to avoid the strain directly to the flexible hose.

- On Saltentor's side, hose and rope were hung into the provision cross on port side to avoid that the hose was hanging into the water. On Smit Lloyd's side, such a precaution was not taken, although I asked for it. All hoses used were brandnew and never before used.
- 0744/50 Information by Captain Cowly/Land and Marine and Salvage that owner's representative.
- 0810 Received instructions from Captain Culbart/Saftug to proceed close to the shore to enable the Government Surveyor to make a survey.
- 0830 Received urgent message from Captain Gillespie/Saftug, to remain in position until Inspector of Department of Transport came on board.
- During the highline manoeuvre with Smit Lloyd 109 both tugs had to manoeuvre very carefully due to bad weather and to avoid a collision.
- 0848 Smit Lloyd 109 starts to pump gasoil.
- 0850 Gasoil hose parted due to that Smit Lloyd 109 started to pump immediately with full power, so one coupling parted from the hose. Although the pumping was stopped immediately, several litres of gasoil polluted the sea, which could not be avoided. 1 gasoil hose of 9 m. length, 4" diameter with 2 4" Weco couplings damaged.
- 1010 Due to that gasoil transfer failed changing over to burn heavy fuel and steaming on full power in order to save gasoil and to be enabled to enter safely into Alga Bay. Stock on board only 32 cu. metres gasoil. Turning tow over the port bow southwards.
- 1030 Position 34 13 S 25 44 E.



1200 Two crew members transferred by helicopter back to Saltwater.

1210 Informed Captain Gillespie about fuel situation and received information that bunkering is planned after arrive in port.

1235/40 Informed Commander Howarth.

1315/1400 Turning tow no. words.

1430 Received definite order from Captain Gillespie to meet pilot, dockmaster and harbour tugs tomorrow 0500 local time at position 34 S 23 E and then bring Verpet to anchoring position 33 55 S 25 48 E in Algas Bay.

1500/11 Informed Commander Howarth.

1530 Turning tow westwards position Cape Recife 285 deg. 7 n.m.

1600/05 Informed Captain Reberberg/VTG.

1642/50 Repetition of order to be at meeting position tomorrow morning 0500 local time by Capt. Culbert.

2200 Position 34 22 S 25 02.4 E.

2400 Position 34 23 S 25 11.5 E.

2400 Start to turn tow northwards.

24.12.77.

0110 Turn to north finished.

0200 Towing Verpet to meeting position.  
Position 34 20 S 25 04 E.

0415/0500 Shortening up of towline to 350 m. of length.

0500 Position 34 05 S 25 04.6 E.

0600 Arrival at meeting position.

0605 Cape Recife 275 deg. 20.3 n.m.

0637 Pilot and a Captain on board Verpet by helicopter.

0700 Cape Recife true 255 16.5 n.m.

0705/09 Call of Captain Gillespie repeating anchor position.

ca 0715 Received weather forecast by Port Elizabeth radio saying that easterly winds force 6 to 7 imminent.  
Confirmation of this by Smit Lloyd 109 and pilot.

0720/23 Informed Commander Howarth.

- Harbour tugs didn't arrive yet.

- For towing course and positions see extract of seechart.

- Master of Boltentor towing master, Boltentor leading tug.

- Towing Venpet into Algoa Bay after pilot's recommendations and instructions of Master Boltentor.

0915 Arrival at anchor position.

0920 Two harbour tugs tied up to Venpet's stern tow line connected from tug's bow to Venpet's stern. One harbour tug standing by.

0935 Towline of one harbour tug parted.

0945 Stopping tow, Smit Lloyd 109 and Boltentor going backwards and pulling astern to stop Venpet.

1000 Venpet completely stopped.

1015 Venpet drops port anchor, 8 shackles to water. Smit Lloyd 109 and Boltentor towing backwards to straighten chain.

1020 Anchor of Venpet holding.

1040 Venpet safely anchored in Algoa Bay.  
Anchor position Port Elizabeth breakwater true 240 deg. 7.5 n.m. dist.

1100 Received telegram from Saftug saying that Boltentor and Smit Lloyd 109 shall remain with Venpet until released by cablegram only.

1100 whilst manoeuvring with towline, touched Smit Lloyd 109 on her port hull protector.  
Damage will be stated at a later stage.

1130 Dropping starboard anchor 8 shackles remaining connected to Venpet.



25.12.77.

Anchored in Algas Bay. Still connected by towline to Venpet.

25.12.77.

- 0215 Received following telegram from Saftug:  
Master Saltentor Port Elizabeth radio  
Lloyds open form on Venpet will be terminated at  
0300 local time today December 25th 1977 STOP  
At that time you are released by Safmarine from  
your contract to us.  
Many thanks your cooperation and good work.  
Regards Saftug.
- 0300/0300 Waiting on power at the Venpet's windlasses as  
promised by Bruce Redell of Land & Marine & Salvage,  
to release toelines.
- 0315 Due to the fact that the Master of Saltentor has no  
certificate of delivery in hand, Captain Strüssler  
flies to Port Elizabeth by helicopter to meet  
owners or main contractors.
- 0300/1230 Captain Strüssler contacts Captain Gillespie  
and Captain Culbert of Saftug in the Elizabeth Hotel  
and receives a general certificate of delivery which  
is still unsatisfactory.  
Captain Strüssler is informed that a theft of  
4000 U.S. dollars occurred during the salvage  
operations on board the Venpet and that this is to  
be taken very seriously.  
Captain Strüssler contacts Commander Howarth and  
receives instructions of Capt. Rabenberg/VTS that  
this general certificate of delivery is sufficient  
and that Saltentor can disconnect towline.  
Mr. Fisher of Grindrod was witness during the  
discussions with the Safmarine people.
- Meanwhile Saltentor is under the command of Chief  
Officer Spalek who is waiting for the definite  
order by Captain Strüssler to disconnect towline.
- 1210/1235 Shortening up towline.

1230 Boltentor received order to disconnect towline  
by Captain Strössler.  
1245 Towline disconnected.  
1250 Towline on board Boltentor.  
1253 Sailing to Port Elizabeth.  
1335 Pilot on board.  
1355 Arrival Port Elizabeth, alongside bunker pier.  
1400/1730 Bunkering 150 t. gasoil and 65 t. of fresh water.  
1700 Pilot on board.  
1730 Departure Port Elizabeth.  
1745 Pilot disembarked.  
Sailing back to rig Sedco K.  
2200 Chief Officer Spalek, Boatwain Ludwig and A.B.  
Stiller informed about theft at Venpet of 4000  
U.S. dollar. They assured me into my hand that  
none of them had anything to do with the said  
theft.

27.12.77.

0200 Arrival Sedco K. Ship on hire again. Stock on  
board heavy fuel 28.7 cu. m.  
          gasoil 199,2 cu. m.  
          fresh water 65,0 cu. m.  
          Mobilgard 412 3840 litre.  
          Mobilgard 312 1115 litre.

During the salvage operation Venail/Venpet, which  
had a duration of 10 days and 6 hours, the crew  
were fully stressed. In particular, Chief Engineer  
Schmidt, Chief Officer Spalek and Capt. Strössler,  
who had been on duty during the whole operation,  
interrupted only by occasional rests of, at the  
utmost, two hours.

Signed by CAPTAIN J.D. STRÖSSLER,  
M/V "BOLTENTOR"