



PKBWM

PAŃSTWOWA KOMISJA BADANIA
WYPADKÓW MORSKICH

FINAL REPORT

04/19

very serious marine accident

**M/V
SITULA**

Missing crew member on the Baltic Sea on 10 January 2019

November 2019



The investigation of a very serious marine accident of the **Situla** vessel was conducted on the basis of the Act of 31 August 2012 on the State Marine Accident Investigation Commission (Dz. U. of 2019 item 1374) as well as norms, standards and recommended procedures agreed within the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and binding the Republic of Poland.

In accordance with the provisions of the above-mentioned Act, the objective of the investigation of a marine accidents or incident is to ascertain its causes and circumstances to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve the state of marine safety.

The State Marine Accident Investigation Commission does not determine liability nor apportion blame to persons involved in the marine accident or incident.

The following report shall be inadmissible in any judicial or other proceedings whose purpose is to attribute blame or liability for the accident referred to in the report (Article 40(2) of the Act on the SMAIC).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Facts	2
2. General Information	3
2.1. Ship Particulars	3
2.2. Voyage Information	4
2.3. Accident or Incident Information	4
2.4. Shore Services and Rescue Action Information	5
2.5. Description of Search and Rescue Actions	5
3. Circumstances of the Accident	7
4. Analysis and Comments about Factors Causing the Accident or Incident with regard to Examination Results and Expert Opinions	8
4.1. Mechanical Factors	8
4.2. Human Factors (faults and negligence) and Organisational Factors	8
4.3. Influence of External Factors, Including the Marine-related Ones, on the Accident	9
5. Description of Examination Findings including the Identification of Safety Issues and Conclusions	9
6. Safety Recommendations	10
7. List of Photographs	11
8. List of Figures	11
9. Information Sources	11
10. Composition of the Accident Investigative Team	11

1. Facts

On 10 January 2019, around 9:45 p.m., after arriving at the port of Gdynia the captain of Situla vessel reported to the agent and VTS services the absence of one of the crew members. The missing person was last seen around 4:00-5:00 p.m. during preparations for mooring the ship, when the vessel was sailing along the coast at a longitude of port of Władysławowo [Figure 1].

The vessel's agent reported the information to the relevant services and a search and rescue operation was initiated. The operation was completed on 11 January 2019 at 4:30 p.m., the missing crew member was not found.

The circumstances and exact time when the person went missing are not exactly known and there are no witnesses to the event.

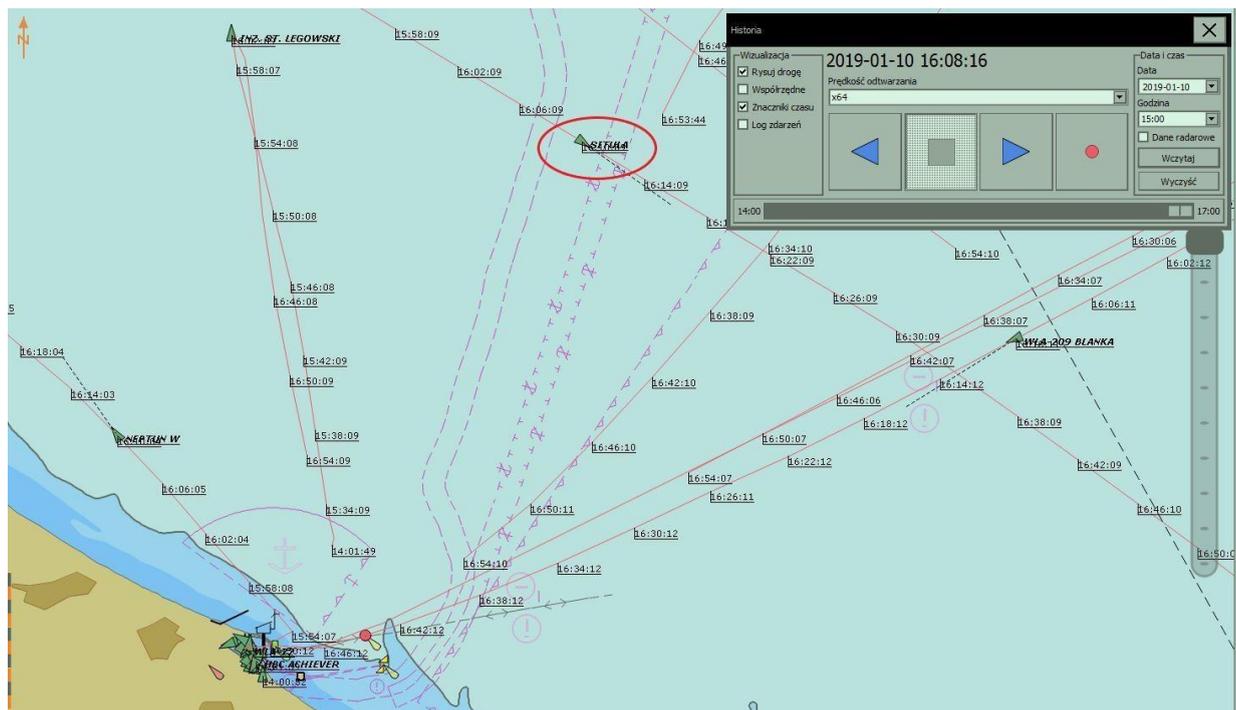


Figure 1. Position of the Situla vessel on 10 January 2019 at 4:08 p.m.

2. General Information



Photograph 1. Situla vessel at the port of Gdynia on 12 January 2019.

2.1. Ship Particulars

Name of the ship	Situla
Flag	Belize
Owner	Seaspan Offshore B.V.
The Shipowner	Seaspan Offshore B.V. (the Netherlands)
Operator	Glomar Shipmanagement BV (the Netherlands)
Classification society	Lloyd's Register
Vessel type	Standby – Safety Vessel
Call sign	V3HV3
IMO number	9246188



Gross tonnage (GT)	438
Build	2002
Power	2x 485 kW
Width	9.50 m
Length overall	34.76 m
Hull material	Steel
Minimum crew	6
Type of VDR (S-VDR)	None

2.2. Voyage Information

Port en route	Doha (Qatar)
Port of destination	Gdynia (Poland)
Type of navigation	Seagoing
Manning (number, nationality)	1 (Russian), 5 (Ukrainians)
Passengers (number, nationality)	No passengers

2.3. Accident or Incident Information

Kind	Very serious
Date and time of event	10 Jan. 2019
Geographical position of the event	Unknown
Geographical area of the event	South-east Baltic Sea
Nature of the water region	Coastal waters
Weather during the event	Wind W-2, sea state – 1, Tp – 1.5°C
Operating state of the vessel during the event	On the way to the shipyard
Place of the accident on the vessel	Unknown
Consequences of the accident to people	Missing crew member



2.4. Shore Services and Rescue Action Information

Entities involved	SAR, WOPR Gdynia, m/f Stena Spirit, m/v Thurkus
Means used	Lifeboats, helicopter
Speed of response, actions of rescue services	9:46 p.m. (notification and beginning of the SAR operation)
Actions taken	Search and rescue operation
Results achieved	Operation with no result, the missing person not found

2.5. Description of Search and Rescue Actions

On 10 January 2019 at around 9:46 p.m., an agent of the Situla vessel notified the Port Authority in Gdynia that a crew member was missing, and subsequently the Authority notified the Marine Rescue Coordination Centre. At 9:54 p.m. the Coordinator of the operation at sea rescue vessel Kapitan Poinc ordered to prepare rescue vessels R3 and R20 for putting to sea. At 10:10 p.m. an order was issued to include the Bryza and BSR WŁA vessels in the search and rescue operation. The search began at a distance of 4 NM north of Rozewie, then on the course of 120° along the Hel Peninsula. At 10:36 p.m. the vessels taking part in the operation were given new instructions to search the fairway near the HEL buoy, then the fairway area towards Gdynia, together with SG-211 vessel [Figure 2]. Bryza and R14 vessels conducted joint search on parallel courses from position 54° 51.2' N 018° 30.0' E. At 10:58 p.m. helicopter 0813 was included in the operation, but it had to stop action due to deteriorating weather conditions in the search area. The helicopter resumed operations at 00:14 a.m. making visual observation using a reflector. Stena Spirit ferry also took part in the search and left the search area at 11:47 p.m. with negative results. At 00:18 a.m. m/v Thurkus was included in the operation. At 00:44 a.m. another SAR vessel – Wiatr – joined the operation. After re-crewing and refuelling, the rescue vessels were reorganised, successively R-20 joined the Wiatr vessel and SG-211 near the GD buoy and together they continued to search in the area of the fairway to the HEL buoy. The R-3 vessel was searching the port road area from the breakwater to the GD buoy. On 11 January 2019 at 01:24 a.m. near the GD buoy, Bumer boat of WOPR of Gdynia joined the search.

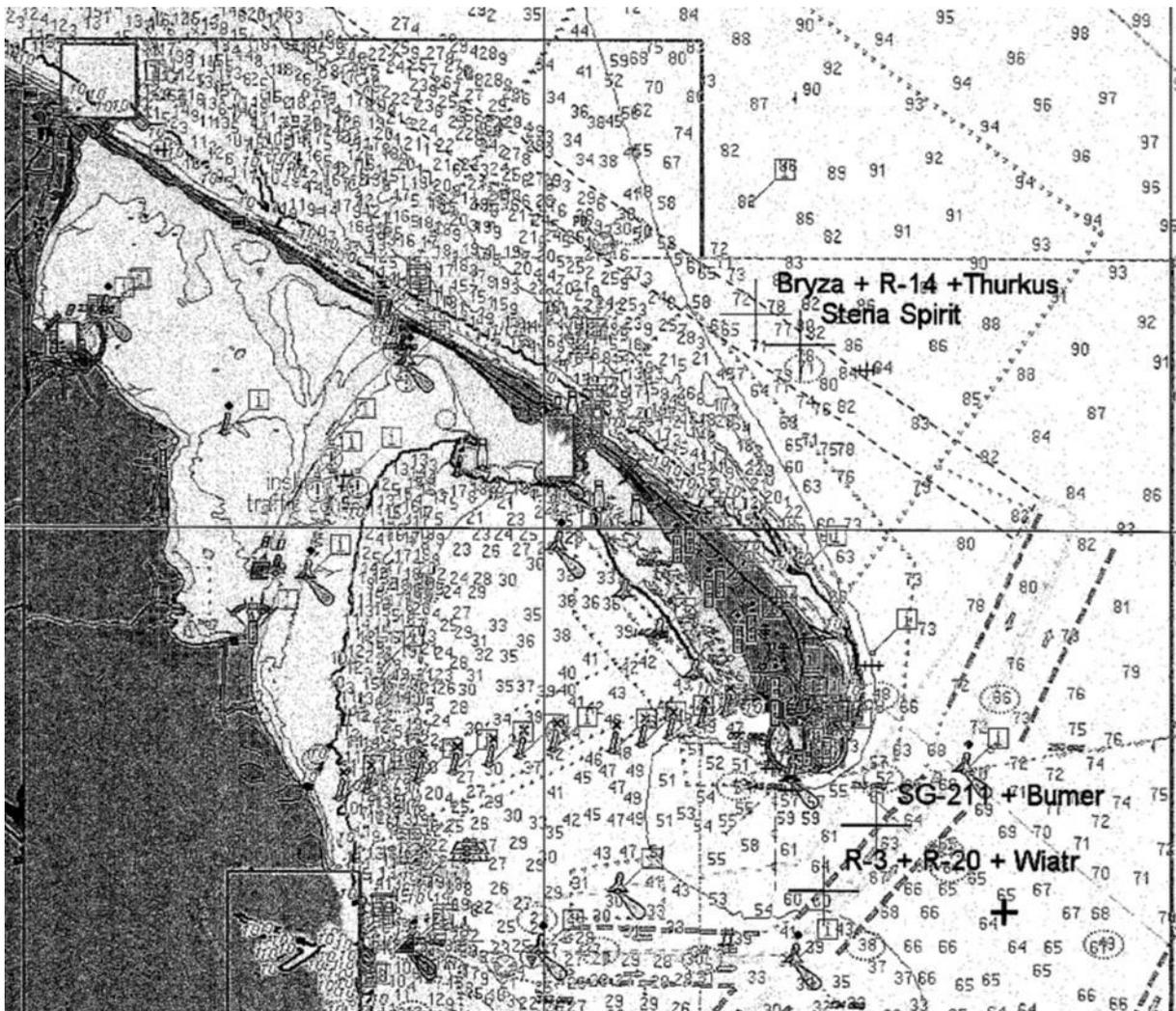


Figure 2. Area of search for the missing crew member of *Situla*.

At 05:23 a.m. vessels participating in the search and rescue operation received a return order, the area was searched with negative results. On the same day, i.e. 11 January 2019 at 08:52 a.m., rescue vessel *Kapitan Poinc* joined the operation at sea after receiving a command to search the area along the Hel Peninsula. Along *Kapitan Poinc* Rescue 813 helicopter joined the search operation (08:45 a.m.), which ended its search at 11:07 a.m. The SAR operation ended conclusively at 04:30 p.m.

3. Circumstances of the Accident

On 10 January 2019, the Situla vessel was on its way from Qatar's port of Doha to the port of Gdynia. At around 4:00 p.m., 4-5 NM north of Władysławowo [Figure 1], the captain instructed the crew to prepare the ship for mooring – laying ropes and attaching fenders. At that time, according to the crew's testimony, the weather was nice, the sea was still, it was almost windless.

After completing the above-mentioned work, the crew together with the missing sailor went to their cabins to rest. At around 9:00 p.m. the crew was called for manoeuvres and the absence of the senior sailor was noticed.

After arriving at the port and thoroughly searching the ship, the captain reported to the agent and relevant services that the above-mentioned crew member was missing.

On the same day at 9:46 p.m. the search and rescue operation began on the Gdynia-Władysławowo route [Figure 2].

The SAR operation ended on 11 January 2019 at 4:30 p.m., the missing person was not found.



Figure 3. Władysławowo-Gdynia route

4. Analysis and Comments about Factors Causing the Accident or Incident with regard to Examination Results and Expert Opinions.

4.1. Mechanical Factors.

Analysing the construction of the Situla vessel, and in particular the elements of the deck part (height of railings and the manner of their construction), it can be stated that the design of these elements could prevent a sailor from accidentally falling overboard [Photograph 2].



Photograph 2. Situla vessel at Nabrzeże Angielskie in the port of Gdynia on 12 January 2019.

4.2. Human Factors (faults and negligence) and Organisational Factors.

In its investigation, the Commission found no grounds to recognise this event as a consequence of human fault or negligence.



Based on the hearings of the crew, it can be presumed that the missing person could have fallen into depression due to the length of the voyage and family problems. No evidence indicating a suicidal death was found and at the same time no third parties which could have caused the senior sailor to go missing were identified.

4.3. Influence of External Factors, Including the Marine-related Ones, on the Accident.

According to the data obtained, the meteorological conditions in the afternoon of 10 January 2019 were favourable and had no effect on the crew member falling overboard. For the safety of the crew, work related to the preparation of the vessel for mooring was conducted in daylight.

5. Description of Examination Findings including the Identification of Safety Issues and Conclusions

Based on the conducted investigation, the Commission is not able to clearly indicate the reasons for the crew member of Situla vessel to go missing.

Analysing the information obtained, it can be stated that one of the factors which contributed to the fact that the crew member was not found was starting the search too late. However, the reaction time did not result from the sluggishness of the rescue services but only from being unaware of the event.

During the investigation, members of the Commission noted the duration of the voyage (6 months) and the fact that the missing person went on his first voyage. As the rest of the crew pointed out, he had changeable moods.

The level of awareness and knowledge of mental illness of crews on ships in conditions of seclusion from home and relatives is very low. The latest research conducted by the English Yale University covering mental health issues of sailors on ships confirms that more than 26% of seamen employed on ships show depressive symptoms.

Sailors starting their work on ships are not examined for their ability to practice this profession, and they do not undergo periodic psychological examinations. The result is a significant number of disappearances and suicidal deaths on ships.



The 2015 report of the IMO includes information that the number of suicidal deaths of sailors compared to land workers is three times higher.

The SMAIC supports the position of other Commissions investigating accidents and Maritime Administrations (flags) that actions should be taken to create a training programme for sailing crews enabling early recognition of depressive states by colleagues on board and immediate assistance until treatment is taken over by appropriate medical services.

In addition, the factor that had a decisive impact on the survival of the missing person was the water and ambient temperature. In January, the average temperature of the Baltic Sea ranges around 2-3°C, and the air temperature around 0°C. The estimated time of survival of a man in water at this temperature without thermal protection is about 15 minutes. According to the crew's testimony, the missing person was wearing work overalls and a vest. This type of clothing did not provide adequate thermal protection in case of falling into cold water.

6. Safety Recommendations

Analysing the material collected in the course of the investigation, there is no information which would explicitly indicate the reason for the senior sailor to go missing on the Situla vessel. However, the State Marine Accident Investigation Commission found it justified to address safety recommendations which are a proposal of actions that may contribute to preventing a similar accident in the future to:

6.1. Minister competent for maritime economy

The Commission proposes to consider introducing changes to the framework training programme for providing medical care to the ill. The changes would consist in extending the training programme to include additional topics related to mental illness of sailors.

Knowledge acquired during such training would be useful for diagnosing depressive states and, consequently, for providing immediate help to the ill.

6.2. Shipowner

The Commission proposes that the shipowner consider equipping crew members working on board with Personal Locator Beacons (PLB).



The use of this type of equipment will have the effect of shortening the search action due to the exact location of the missing person, which will result in a greater likelihood of finding that person.

7. List of Photographs

Photograph 1. Situla vessel at the port of Gdynia on 12 January 2019	3
Photograph 2. Situla vessel at Nabrzeże Angielskie in the port of Gdynia on 12 January 2019.....	8

8. List of Figures

Figure 1. Position of the Situla vessel on 10 January 2019 at 4:08 p.m.	2
Figure 2. Area of search for the missing crew member of Situla	6
Figure 3. Władysławowo-Gdynia route	7

9. Information Sources

Notification about the accident.
Documents of Situla vessel.
Documents received from the MRCK.
Documents received from the Maritime Office in Gdynia.
Hearings of the SMAIC.
Pictures taken by the SMAIC.

10. Composition of the Accident Investigative Team

Team Leader – Monika Hapanionek – Member of the SMAIC
Team Member – Marek Szymankiewicz – Secretary of the Commission