From: Chief, Merchant Vessel Inspection Division
To: Commandant


1. Pursuant to the provisions of Title 46 C.F.R., Part 156, the record of the Marine Board convened to investigate subject casualty, together with its Findings of Fact, Opinions and Recommendations, has been reviewed and is forwarded herewith.

2. The steam tanker L. F. ST. CLAIR of 8,066 g.t., was inbound and the MSTS FVT. SADAQ S. MUNEMORI was outbound in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The weather was overcast, light breeze, fog patches, visibility varying with the density of the position of the fog patches from six miles to one-half mile. Both vessels sighted each other visually before the collision, but due to fog patches lost such contact. Both vessels had each other in sight on their respective radars. Upon closing in each vessel took collision-avoiding action, but, nevertheless, both vessels collided at approximately 1719 on 20 May, 1961, four and one-half miles SSW of Sherringham Light, Vancouver Island, B.C. No injuries or loss of life were sustained as a result of this casualty. The damage to the L. F. ST. CLAIR was estimated at $125,000 and to the FVT. SADAQ S. MUNEMORI at $10,000.

3. The Board made the following Findings of Fact:

"1. At 1719½ hours (PDTST) on 20 May, 1961, the Union Oil Company Tanker, L. F. ST. CLAIR, and the MSTS FVT. SADAQ S. MUNEMORI collided in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, four and one-half miles south, southwest of Sherringham Light, Vancouver Island, B. C., with extensive damage to both vessels, but no injuries or loss of life to the personnel of either vessel.

The vessels involved are:

"2. L. F. ST. CLAIR; Official Number 236115; an American Inspected Steam, Coastwise Tanker of Los Angeles, California; 8066 gross tons; built of steel in the year 1939 of which Captain [redacted], San Pedro, California is Master and the Union Oil Company of California, 617 West 7th Street, Los Angeles, California is the owner. The vessel is equipped with radar and same was in use at the time of the casualty."
The weather conditions prevailing at the time were:

4. Overcast with light NW breeze, force 2; fog patches; smooth sea and visibility varying with the density of and position of the fog patches, from six (6) miles to one-half (1/2) mile. Tide was flooding, last of flood.

5. On 17 May, 1951, in San Pablo Bay, California, at Body #13, at 1726 hours (PDT), the L. F. ST. CLAIR, a tanker took departure for Seattle, Washington. On the 20th of May, 1951, at 1636 hours, the L. F. ST. CLAIR rounded Tatoosh Island, being 1.6 miles distant, and entered the Strait of Juan de Fuca, on course 101° true. Course 101° was continued and at 1820 hours, one mile distant, Naada Island was abeam. Vessel was proceeding at "FULL SPEED" at approximately 11.5 knots, 62 RPM's, when at 1828 hours (DST), the vessel was abeam Slip Point, distance five miles, still on course 101° true, and at "FULL SPEED" at approximately 1645 hours (PDT), by use of the radar, two vessels were picked up showing as pips on the radar screen, approximately 13.5 miles distant and bearing about 46° on the L. F. ST. CLAIR's starboard bow. The Master came on the bridge and remained there in charge of navigation. One vessel was apparently heading in and at this time was meeting the other, which was enroute out to sea, as at 1706 hours (PDT) the vessel enroute out was seen approaching, visually, at a distance of about five and one-half miles, bearing approximately 140° on the starboard bow, by the radar. At this time a fog patch obscured the two vessels. The L. F. ST. CLAIR had sounded fog signals and posted lookout, also placing engines on the "STAND-BY" at 1659 hours, as the fog bank was on her starboard beam. At 1712 hours the L. F. ST. CLAIR, now being in fog, stopped her engines as she heard the fog signal of the approaching vessel, which was still bearing 140° on the starboard bow, by radar, and at a distance of two and one-half miles. At 1715 hours (PDT) there was still being no change in the bearing, the L. F. ST. CLAIR went "FULL ASTERN", as she visually
sighted the bow of the approaching vessel through the fog, and sounded three (3) blasts on her whistle to indicate her engines were under full astern, and at 1712 gave a "JUDICIAL" to the engine room. At 1717 another "JUDICIAL" and again another at 1718. The vessel's head was now falling off to the left. At 1718, on steaming at 100', a impact occurred and engines were stopped. The vessel was equipped with a gyro course recorder, which was in operation throughout.

"S. The USNS "NIT. SADAC 8. MINNESOTA" departed Seattle, Washington, bound for sea, on 20 May, 1961. At 1800 hours (PST) at B specify, Washington, the Pilot was discharged and the vessel put on course 200° true, "FULL SPEED", of approximately 15 knots. At this time visibility was excellent. The Third Officer, Mr., was in charge of the watch and the Master left the bridge, going to his room, where he remained approximately an hour, then went to the dining room for his supper. At 1900 hours, (PST), the Third Officer, Mr., relieved the watch, taking over from Mr. for a watch, which time the vessel was proceeding on course 200° at "FULL SPEED", the vessel still proceeding at "FULL SPEED" on course 200° true, now encountering fog. The vessel is equipped with radar and was in use, a check which was made by Mr. for 1930 or 1931, approximately, and a target or pip was sighted ahead, a distance of about seven miles. The vessel continued at "FULL SPEED" and a line a "STAND-BY" was indicated on the engineering telegraph and engines and the engines started. Fog patches appeared and fog headers were commenced and a lookout posted on the bridge. The target was reduced to three miles, with no change in bearing. Visibility was estimated at two miles. The approaching vessel was visible through the binoculars, bearing just a shade to the port bow. At this time, 1718, course was changed on circle of the Fife to 200° true and visual contact was lost in the fog. The engines were put on "DEAD STOP" and the lookout was sent for the Master at 1714 and engines were increased to 100' and the look of the other vessel seen through the fog, and at 1715, the rudder put "HARD RIGHT" and the engines were run "FULL ASTERN", immediately followed by a "JUDICIAL". At 1718 impact was made with the tanker L. F. ST. CLAIR. The PTU SADAC 8. MINNESOTA's heading being 090° true. Contact was estimated to be at right angles, but was actually at an angle of 45° right of the bow of the L. F. ST. CLAIR, on port side on the other vessel. Both vessels proceeded to Seattle, Washington area, under their own power. There were no casualties, injuries or loss of life to any of the personnel on board either vessel."
"7. The damage to the L. P. St. CLAIR was estimated at $125,000.00 plus damage and $50,000.00 to her cargo. The damage to the FVT SADAO S. NUMEMORI was $10,000.00 plus damage, delay etc.

"8. The testimony of the L. P. St. CLAIR's witnesses indicated that the L. P. St. CLAIR was stopped dead in the water at the time of the impact. The L. P. St. CLAIR's witnesses claim they were navigating parallel to a fog bank in clear weather until at 1712 hours fog patches set in. They also testified the vessel was sounding regulation fog signals. That the vessel held course of 101° true until steersway was lost, when heading changed to left. Current was caused by flood tide, flooding in an easterly direction. Light breeze from the WSW caused the vessel to back in a straight line. The L. P. St. CLAIR's witnesses also testified that their vessel stopped in one-half the visible distance. They further testified that all that could be done, according to the Rules of the Road was done and no blame should attach to them for this casualty.

"9. The FVT SADAO S. NUMEMORI's witnesses testified that their vessel was almost dead in the water, with only little way on. They testified that the L. P. St. CLAIR was crossing their bow from port to starboard and they were the privileged vessel. They further testified that no blame should be attached to them as they sounded proper signals, reduced speed and maintained a lookout, that the casualty was due to fog."

4. The Board expressed the following Opinions:

   It is the opinion of the Board that this casualty was caused by:

"1. The failure of the FVT S. NUMEMORI to observe Article 16 of the Rules to Prevent Collision of Vessels in International Waters, 'Failure to stop her engines when she heard the fog signal of another vessel forward of her beam'.

"2. The failure of the FVT SADAO S. NUMEMORI to maintain a lookout at or near the bow during fog or obscured visibility.

"3. The failure of the FVT SADAO S. NUMEMORI to reduce speed during obscured visibility when radar observations indicated a vessel forward of her beam.
"4. That the Third Officer of the M.V. SADIK B. MUSHERI failed to notify the Master that he was encountering fog.

"5. That the said Third Officer failed to notify the Master of a change in course.

"6. That the said Third Officer failed to maintain a lookout as required by law during a period of low visibility.

"7. That the Master of the M.V. SADIK B. MUSHERI failed to exercise due regard and circumspection in his vessel's operation when his vessel was in extreme circumstances.

"8. The failure of the L. F. St. Clair to reduce speed during reduced visibility when radar observations indicated a vessel approaching her beam.

The Board made the following recommendations:

"1. In view of the above facts and opinions, action under Rule 12 of the Rules of the Road as amended, as recommended and as has been taken in the cases of the Master of the M.V. SADIK B. MUSHERI, James R. Ellis (see Seattle Pilot Case 655-5515), the Third Mate of the M.V. SADIK B. MUSHERI, Louis G. Halverson, (see Seattle Pilot Case 655-5516), and the Master of the L. F. St. Clair, James R. Ellis (see Seattle Pilot Case 655-5517), it is further recommended that the rules of the road as presently amended be amended so as to require that it be mandatory, with radar in operation, to be used as an aid to navigation, that all targets appearing forward of the beam be plotted and the courses and speeds of moving targets be ascertained. It is further recommended that this case be closed."

REMARKS

6. The Board recommended that the rules of the road to prevent collision be amended so as to require that it be mandatory, when radar is available, to be used as an aid to navigation, that all targets appearing forward of the beam be plotted and the courses and speeds of moving targets be ascertained. The International Conference on Safety of Life at Sea, held in London from 23 April to 10 June, 1960, gave extensive consideration to the adoption of mandatory..."
requirements with respect to the use of radar in marine navigation. This Conference, in its formal Recommendations, concluded as follows:

"19. Navigation of Ships Equipped with Radar, etc.

The Conference, while recognizing that the recent advances in radar and electronic navigational aids are of great service to shipping, is of the opinion that the possession of any such device in no way relieves the master of a ship from his obligation strictly to observe the requirements laid down in the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, and in particular, the obligations contained in Articles 15 and 16 of those Regulations."

Records of investigation contain substantive evidence to indicate that had certain of the vessels involved in serious collisions complied with the applicable provisions of the statutory and administrative collision regulations rather than relied upon the radars on board, such collisions would have been avoided. Due to this fact and other factors such as technical qualifications of operators, manning, maintenance, etc., the "Radio Technical Commission for Marine Service," consisting of government and industry representatives has undertaken, and is now in the process of making, a study for the determination of preventing collisions of vessels fitted with radar installations.

7. Subject to the foregoing remarks, it is recommended that the findings of Fact, Opinions, and Recommendations of the Marine Board of Investigation be approved.

From:

Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety

To:

Commandant

Forwarded, recommending approval.

APPROVED: DEC 18 1951

MERLIN O'NEILL
Vice Adm., U.S. Coast Guard
Commandant