

MARINE OCCURRENCE REPORT

GROUNDING

**OF THE BULK CARRIER "VAKHTANGOV"
IN THE PORT OF SOREL, QUEBEC
24 AUGUST 1995**

REPORT NUMBER M95L0078

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada (TSB) investigated this occurrence for the purpose of advancing transportation safety. It is not the function of the Board to assign fault or determine civil or criminal liability.

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SUMMARY

On 24 August 1995, at about 1607, the "VAKHTANGOV" departed berth No. 15 in the Port of Sorel, Quebec, with a cargo of 21,805 tonnes of wheat, bound for Italy. Shortly after departure, the vessel grounded in the approaches to the Port of Sorel. The downstream current and the strong winds carried the vessel onto a shoal. Damage to the bulk carrier's propeller was reported as a result of the grounding. No one was injured and there was no pollution as a result of this occurrence.

Ce rapport est également disponible en français.

FACTUAL INFORMATION**Particulars of the Vessel**

Name	"VAKHTANGOV"
Port of Registry	Valletta, Malta
Flag	Maltese
Official Number	4270
Type	Bulk carrier
Gross Tonnage	16,502
Length	172.73 m
Draught	Forward: 10.21 m Aft: 10.21 m
Built	1984, Bulgaria
Propulsion	One B&W 8,827 kW engine
Crew	25
Owners	Vakhtangov Shipping Co. Ltd. Valletta, Malta

On 24 August 1995, the vessel was preparing to depart from her berth in the Port of Sorel under the conduct of a pilot. Two tugs were dispatched to assist in the undocking operations. The first, the "RICHELIEU", took up a position at the bow on the centre line of the vessel, and the other, the "CATHY McALLISTER", took up a position at the stern on the centre line of the vessel. The manoeuvre consisted in moving the vessel away from the port facilities by backing her up northward and then turning her to starboard, with the aid of the current and the tugs. The vessel would thus point downstream, and could then get under way normally and freely. At about 1100, the mooring lines were cast off, and the manoeuvres proceeded as planned until the vessel was ready to begin her downbound voyage under her own power, on a course of 050°T, and very close to the south edge of the channel. The pilot asked the tugs to let go the lines that had been used to move the vessel, and thanked them for their services.

However, the "VAKHTANGOV" could not use her engine because a line was still in the water near the propeller. While waiting for the crew to haul in the line, the vessel was drifting. The current, estimated at 1.4 knots, and the west wind at 20 knots carried the vessel toward a shoal with a depth of 8.8 m, as marked on Canadian Hydrographic Service chart No. 1338. The vessel was not able to counteract the drift in time, and she grounded on the shoal just as the main engine was engaged.

On 25 August 1995, the vessel was refloated using four tugs. An underwater inspection conducted shortly thereafter found no damage to the hull but some slight damage to the propeller blades, which

¹ All times are EDT (Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) minus four hours) unless otherwise stated.

were slightly bent at the ends and scratched.

ANALYSIS

The testimony indicated that it took the crew several minutes to haul in the line at the after end, which had been let go by the tug. The length of line paid out to the tug was estimated at between 60 and 120 metres. The reasons for the delay in hauling the line on board could not be determined. The main engine could not be engaged until the line was completely hauled on board to avoid the line fouling the propeller. It was estimated that the vessel drifted over about 500 metres before grounding on the shoal. The current and the wind contributed significantly to the rate of drift, which was estimated at about 2.4 knots, and the vessel grounded before the main engine could be used.

The draught confirmed to the pilot was 10.21 m, and the water depth at the wharf was 10.04 m at amidships on the port side when the vessel was still at the berth. According to witness statements, the vessel was resting on the bottom at the time of departure, and she was seen to be listing to port after leaving the berth.

On 25 August 1995, after being refloated, the vessel was still listing to port, and the maximum draught was 10.54 m at amidships on the port side, although the average draught was still 10.21 m. The list appears to have been caused by a transfer of water ballast from the forepeak to the No. 2 port double-bottom tank because of a non-watertight valve in the ballast pumping system.

FINDINGS

1. As soon as the vessel had been turned by the two tugs and was ready to get under way, the line that had been used to move the vessel fell down close to the propeller.
2. The main engine could not be engaged because it took the crew several minutes to haul the line on board.
3. The current and the strong winds carried the vessel toward a shoal with a depth of 8.8 m, as marked on CHS chart No. 1338.
4. The draught was greater than that observed at the wharf, since the vessel had been resting on the bottom at that time.
5. The vessel grounded just as the main engine was engaged for forward motion.

CAUSES AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

The "VAKHTANGOV" grounded in the Port of Sorel because the line on the after end fell down close to the propeller, making use of the main engine risky. The time it took the crew to haul in the line at the after end, the strong winds and the downstream current all contributed to the vessel drifting toward the shoal.

This report concludes the Transportation Safety Board's investigation into this occurrence. Consequently, the Board, consisting of Chairperson, John W. Stants, and members Zita Brunet and Maurice Harquail, authorized the release of this report on 21 May 1996.