

LOCAL VESSELS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Discussion of the Collision of a Vessel towards the Kap Shui Mun Bridge on 23.10.2015

Purpose

This paper aims to discuss the actions taken in response to the collision of a vessel at the Kap Shui Mun Bridge ('KSMB') and sets out preventive measures to avoid re-occurrence of the incident in future.

Background

2. On the evening of 23 October 2015, a tug boat and barge was heading from Sha Lo Wan via To Kau Wan towards the New Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter. On its way, the derrick boom of the subject vessel rammed KSMB. It then triggered the ship impact alarm of KSMB and resulted in the closure of the Lantau Link and Airport Express for about two hours.

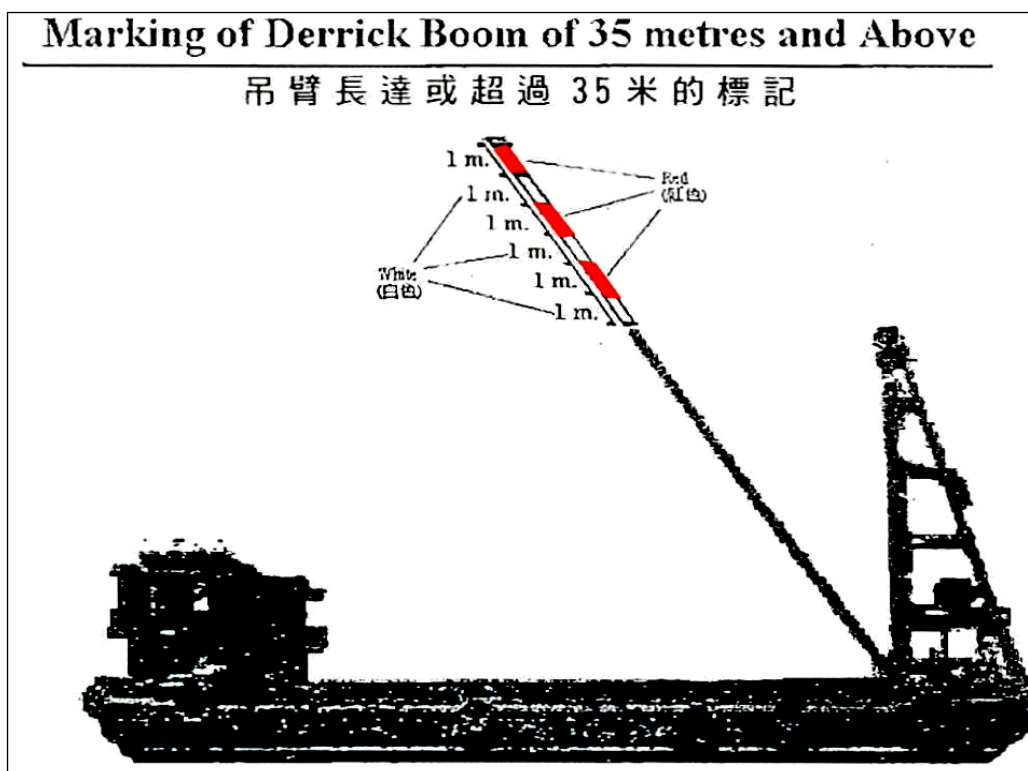
3. A Ship Impact Alarm System connecting, *inter alia*, the Vessel Traffic Centre ('VTC') of the Marine Department ('MD') was installed at KSMB. At about 7:38 p.m. on 23 October 2015, the ship impact alarm inside VTC was activated. The duty officers of VTC immediately reported the incident to the relevant departments in accordance with its operational guidelines and assigned MD's patrol launch to carry out site investigation.

4. Upon arrival at the scene, MD's patrol launch could not identify any vessels suspected to have rammed KSMB. However, the closed-circuit television footage provided by the management company responsible for the operation of the Tsing Ma Control Area revealed that a tug boat and barge had been passing under KSMB at the same time. MD and the Marine Police traced the subject vessel at once and identified the vessel suspected to have involved in the collision at around 10 p.m. that night. MD is currently conducting follow-up investigation. If any irregularities are identified, prosecution will be instituted.

Current Legislations and Arrangements

5. For the sake of the navigational safety of vessels and the integrity of KSMB, MD prohibits vessels exceeding the height limit from entering, navigating or remaining in the height restricted area of KSMB pursuant to section 19(2) of the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (General) Regulation (Cap. 548F) as well as section 23B(2) and paragraph 14 of schedule 5 to the Merchant Shipping Ordinance (Cap. 313A). According to the aforementioned legislation, vessels with a height exceeding 41 metres above sea level are prohibited from entering the height restricted area of KSMB.

6. Moreover, the height of lifting appliances of some local vessels using the Kap Shui Mun Fairway might have exceeded the said limit. To ensure the integrity of KSMB and promote a better understanding of the above legislation in the industry, a licence condition to prohibit vessels with a crane or derrick boom length of 35 metres or more from entering the height restricted area of KSMB has been imposed forthwith on the licence of the vessels since 1 June 1998¹. In addition, alternate red and white strips are required to be marked on the crane or derrick boom that is 35 metres or higher for the purpose of easy identification by the patrol vessels of MD (see *the diagram*² below).



¹ Marine Department Notice No. 68 of 1998 “Boom Length Restrictions for Use of Waterways of the Height Restricted Area of Kap Shui Mun Bridge”

² http://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/pub_services/ocean/pdf/Annex.pdf

Follow-up and Preventive Measures

7. In response to this incident, MD temporarily deployed one additional patrol launch to the area around KSMB and Tsing Ma Bridge³. In tandem, MD is considering to secure resources to strengthen the marine patrol at the area concerned in the long run.

8. On 27 October 2015, MD convened a meeting with the Hong Kong & Kowloon Motor Boats and Tug Boats Association as well as the Hong Kong Cargo Vessel Traders' Association to discuss KSMB Incident. The representatives of both parties showed their full understanding of the height restriction (i.e. the maximum permissible air draught) of KSMB. In this connection, owners, masters, coxswains and persons-in-charge of local vessels, by and large, have been well-disciplined and acquainted with the relevant legislation. The meeting agreed to exert more effort on education and publicity targeting the vessel operators and crew members so as to arouse their awareness of the height restriction for the sake of the navigational safety of vessels and the integrity of the bridges.

9. On 2 November 2015, around 130 attendees partook in a seminar on navigational safety held by MD. The seminar covered case studies on the collision of vessels towards bridges in the world, explanation of the prevailing legislation in Hong Kong, the height restricted areas in the waters of Hong Kong, the calculation method of the air draught, points to note regarding the towing and lightering operations etc. Brochures pertaining to the height restriction were delivered to the attendees. Please refer to *Appendix 1* and *Appendix 2* for a copy of the brochure and lecture notes⁴.

Way Forward

10. Apart from strengthening the marine patrol and exerting more educational effort, MD suggests providing information on the height restriction of different bridges in the seminar on navigational safety which will be held twice a year. For the purpose of counterchecking the crane or derrick boom length and reviewing the licence condition, owners or persons-in-charge of vessels (such as dumb lighter and crane barge etc.) are required to present their register of lifting appliances and lifting gear upon annual licence renewal. For vessels with a crane or derrick boom that exceeds the height limit of 35 metres, the owners of the vessel have to declare whether the alternate red

³ See para. 23(iv) of the discussion paper entitled "Emergency Traffic Arrangements after the Closure of Kap Shui Mun Bridge" at the the Legislative Council Panel on Transport Special Meeting held on 24.11.2015 at <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr15-16/english/panels/tp/papers/tp20151124cb4-245-1-e.pdf>

⁴ Only the Chinese version is available.

and white strips are marked on the crane or derrick boom pursuant to the requirement.

Advice sought

11. Members are welcome to comment on the follow-up and preventive measures as well as the way forward in the wake of the KSMB Incident.

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Port Control Division
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December 2015