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Inquiry told Bourbon Dolphin crew 'lacked experienced'

Bourbon Offshore rejects evidence given in handover report

Pete Bevington

THE CREW of the Norwegian anchor handling tug *Bourbon Dolphin*, which sank off Shetland with the loss of eight lives, were "not sufficiently experienced" for the job, according to new evidence available to the official inquiry into the disaster.

Two reports submitted to the inquiry into the April 12 tragedy cast doubts on the ability of the crew to handle large anchors in such depth of water. The suggestions have been denied by the operator, Bourbon Offshore.

The *Bourbon Dolphin* had been helping with an anchor handling manoeuvre at the Transocean Rather drilling rig 85 miles west of Shetland when it capsized.

Eight of the 15 onboard died, including the captain, Odne Arve Remoy and his 14-year-old son David, who was on work experience.

An official investigation commission into the incident, headed by a judge in Oslo, is due to report in February its findings on the causes that lay behind the sinking.

In a handover report given to the inquiry, and which has been made public, the *Transocean Rather's* towmaster Ross Watson wrote three days before the vessel sank that

"I found the general level of experience among the crew to be too little for this type of work"

the *Bourbon Dolphin* crew were "not sufficiently experienced for this type of work".

He said that the crew needed to take instructions from other vessels about how to manoeuvre anchors, and one operation to lower a grapple on deck took three hours, much longer than it should have.

The skipper on a nearby vessel also conveyed the lack of experience of the crew in his report to the commission. Grim Are Bergtun, master on the tug *Olympic Hercules*, made some personal comments at the end of a long technical report on the incident.

"I found the general level of experience amongst the crew on the *Bourbon Dolphin* to be too little for this type of work, especially the crew on the bridge.

"During the operations I noticed that things took longer compared to other boats and that the *Dolphin*, in certain cases, had problems executing specific operations in a correct way."

Captain Bergtun had to go on the radio to tell the *Bourbon Dolphin* skipper how to carry out certain tasks. "I didn't know any of the crew personally, but I have been told from others that knew some of them that their experience with anchor handling was lacking."

However, Bourbon chief executive Trond Myklebust said this week that he did not accept that the crew lacked experience. "We have internal guidelines for these things stating that the captain and the first mate must have done five rig moves before they can do their job alone," he said.

Captain Remoy had many years' experience in the wheelhouse of a fishing boat, which Mr Myklebust regarded as "relevant experience". He added: "Never at any time was I unconfident sending the *Bourbon Dolphin* to sea with this crew."

What an achievement Lifetime award for Chao



Winner: George Chao, with Noble Group vice-chairman Harry Banga (left) and Lloyd's List executive editor Christopher Mayer.

LLOYD'S List Asia awards have again celebrated the achievements of shipping's most vibrant region.

One of the best attended Lloyd's List Asia Awards ceremonies for years was held in Hong Kong yesterday, where the audience of close to 400 saw Hong Kong's

leading light of the shipping world, George Chao, receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award.

As an inspirational member of the territory's shipping community for more than 40 years, the president and chairman of Wah Kwong Shipping was a popular

choice for the evening's most prestigious award. On the night, Singapore companies took the awards by storm.

Full details — Page 3.
Watch the exclusive interview with Mr Chao on www.lloydslist.com/ll/news/mediaCentre.htm.

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Dingle blasts environmental 'drivel'

David Osler

CHAMBER of Shipping president David Dingle has launched an outspoken attack on green critics of the maritime industries, branding comparisons in some media between CO₂ output from aviation and shipping as "ridiculous" and "ill-informed drivel".

While the Carnival UK chief executive did not name the publications, his probable targets include the Financial Times, The Times and The Independent.

Mr Dingle was addressing the annual dinner of the Scottish Shipping Benevolent Association in Glasgow on Tuesday night, which attracted around 440 people.

He urged listeners to defend shipping as the most greenhouse gas-efficient mode of transportation, and he presented five facts as "five simple exocets" for ship-

ping employees to fire at critics. "To compare shipping's total output of CO₂ to that of aviation is absurd, because shipping carries 90% of world and 95% of UK trade. It is a vastly bigger industry than aviation and performs a completely different role," he insisted. "It's a bit like comparing all lorry emissions to those from motor scooters."

He next pointed out the scientifically established "multiplier effect" of aviation emissions at high altitudes.

Thirdly, he said, modern ships can emit as little as five grammes of CO₂ per tonne-kilometre, compared to 50 grammes for big trucks and over 500 grammes for planes.

Fourth, shipping has improved its carbon performance over the past three decades. A modern containership emits only around a quarter of the CO₂ emitted by its 1970s counterpart, even though it may be carrying 10 times as many boxes.

Finally, Mr Dingle said, Britain is a small island nation with a high population density and could not sustain its population without shipping.

However, he warned against complacency and said that none of the elements in the emissions debate (including CO₂, sulphur, nitrogen and particulates) can be seen in isolation. "We need to adopt a holistic approach which ensures that in lowering one type of emission we don't simply raise other emissions," he warned.

"However well we may score on CO₂ in terms of cargo carried, we must recognise that all sectors of the economy will ultimately have to address their outputs in absolute as well as relative terms."

Accordingly, the Chamber has been pressing the International Maritime Organization to move faster and further in developing a significant emissions reduction scheme for shipping, Mr Dingle said.



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