

**INTERSPILL 2022 - Topic « Crisis and Incident Management »**

## **Collision at sea**

### **ULYSSE // CSL VIRGINIA**

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### ***Abstract***

On October 7, 2018, a collision occurred off the coast of Corsica between the Cypriot-flagged container ship CSL VIRGINIA and the Tunisian-flagged vessel RO-RO ULYSSE. This accident caused a spill of more than 500 m<sup>3</sup> of MFO380. Very quickly, the French authorities activated their emergency response mechanism and requested regional assistance from Italy and European assistance from EMSA to try to recover the oil spilled at sea.

The deployment of these major resources (41 vessels, 17 aircraft) was not sufficient to contain the pollution which reached the coastline of the Côte d'Azur in an ecologically sensitive and tourist area.

Cedre was called upon to provide its expertise to the maritime authorities for several days during the response phase at sea, and was then mobilised for eight months to assist the land-based authorities during shoreline clean-up operations.

First, it is appropriate to address the specific circumstances of the incident. On October 7, 2018, at daybreak, the ro-ro vessel ULYSSE was sailing at 19 knots towards Rades (Tunis). She had to pass through the Corsica Canal traffic separation scheme and was following its usual route.

The container ship CSL VIRGINIA was anchored about 15 miles north of Cap Corse, 11 miles from the ecological protection zone of the Corsica Canal Traffic Separation Scheme.

At 07h02, the ULYSSE violently collided with the CSL VIRGINIA on her starboard beam. The two vessels remained embedded.

The accident did not cause any casualties or injuries, but generated a pollution of 520 m<sup>3</sup> of MFO 380, the CSL VIRGINIA having lost most of the fuel oil contained in a fuel tank. The pollution slick spread and major pollution response means were deployed to contain the pollution at sea. Despite the efforts made, the pollutant reached the Var coastline and more particularly a Natura 2000 protected natural area.

After a few days, the vessel ULYSSE was separated off the CSL VIRGINIA and returned to Tunisia to unload her cargo and be repaired.

The CSL VIRGINIA returned to Turkey, after having changed her name and flag.

The French organization of rescue operations at sea is based on a gradual response plan, with level 1 being the normal operational watch level and level 3 being the maximum level allowing the director of rescue operations to have all the synergies necessary to resolve the crisis. Level 3 was activated less than 24 hours after the collision, which allowed the

use of EMSA's intervention assets and the activation of the regional mutual assistance plan RAMOGEPOL, which allowed the reinforcement of Italian and Monaco intervention means.

Level 3 involves an incident management component, in charge of the tactical and operational response, and a crisis management component whose mission is to propose strategic options to the director of emergency operations to guide the response, to provide the necessary support for the conduct of the response, to ensure information and liaison with the central and prefectural authorities, and to anticipate the long-term repercussions. This crisis management element includes a sea/land interface responsible for organising the transfer of authority if the pollutant arrives on land. The departmental prefect then takes charge of the response operations. Cedre took part in the crisis management with both the maritime and land authorities.

The response at sea was carried out by the French Navy, which took on the role of On-Scene-Commander. The different phases of the intervention consisted of maritime, aerial and satellite reconnaissance carried out by French, Italian and European resources, as well as the intervention at sea composed of offshore and coastal resources for the coastal fringe. The response means deployed were defined in collaboration between the French Navy and Cedre, based on the characteristics and behaviour of the pollutant.

The intervention on land took place during the emergency phase with the resources of the fire department brigades and the technical personnel of the cities affected by the pollution. These were gradually replaced by a private response company commissioned by the P&I and the decontamination work lasted approximately nine months.

Cedre played an active role in this phase by carrying out reconnaissance, making technical recommendations for clean-up and waste treatment, organising clean-up worksites and closing the operations at the end of June 2019. Cedre also played an important mediation role between the stakeholders: local and state authorities, the clean-up company, ITOPF and the population.

The main challenges encountered during this operation concerned the monitoring of the fragmented slick, which had been swept away by the Ligurian current and was subject to an ageing process which complicated its relocation and recovery, particularly on the coastal fringe where the means of the French Navy were not very well adapted. The disposal and treatment of waste was also an important challenge, made difficult by the environmental conditions and the lack of cooperation from the local authorities.

The strong and improvement points to mention will be presented to the audience.

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