

Container ship in tanker collision not carrying sodium cyanide cargo

The boxship Solong involved in a fiery collision with the tanker Stena Immaculate on Monday continues to burn, and one seafarer remains missing.

[Nick Savvides, Marcus Hand](#)

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Screenshot from social media

Solong, the 800 teu container ship involved in a collision in the North Sea yesterday was not loaded with 15 containers of toxic sodium cyanide the ship manager Ernst Russ has confirmed, contradicting previous reports.

In a statement released at midday today (11 March), the manager said that the reports of a sodium cyanide consignment were incorrect, but that the vessel did have four empty containers that were loaded with the chemical.

“We are able to confirm that there are no containers on board laden with sodium cyanide, as has been misreported. There are four empty containers that have previously contained the hazardous chemical and these containers will continue to be monitored,” said the company.

The company thanked the emergency services for their response to the accident, adding: “Our team is actively engaged with all local authorities, and we will work with clean-up teams to ensure every effort is made to mitigate further impacts on the marine environment.”

The company expressed its deepest sympathy for the family of the seafarer who remains missing: “Our first thoughts must be with them at this uncertain and distressing time. All necessary support is being provided to the family.”

Ernst Russ said it is continuing to support its 13 crew that were rescued from the damaged vessel after its collision with the tanker Stena Immaculate, which was loaded with aviation fuel for

the [US](#) military. The collision caused the fuel to ignite causing several explosions with fire rapidly spreading on the tanker and the container ship.

Related: [Solong seafarer still missing in Stena tanker collision](#)

Concerns for the local environment have also been raised with fragile ecosystems under threat from spilled fuel from the tanker, though experts say, unlike crude oil aviation fuel will readily evaporate.

“We recognise the dangers that others are faced with as they work to stabilise and secure the vessels and cargos involved,” concluded the company statement.

Commenting on the potential environmental impact of the casualty Andy Teasdale, a marine safety advisor, [Institute of Marine Science, Engineering and Technology](#) (IMarEST), highlighted the danger of bunker spill.

“We know that the *MT Stena Immaculate* was carrying a cargo of jet fuel, which is a non-persistent oil that has minimal environmental impacts when it leaks, because it will either ignite and burn, or evaporate,” he said

“However, a bigger problem could be that both vessels may be carrying heavy fuel [oil] to power the engines. If the vessel sinks or tanks are breached, then the bunkered fuel may leak out and start to produce pollution. However, we still don’t know what fuels were on board and whether the vessels have hull damage sufficient to cause leakage of the bunkered fuel.”

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However, a number of questions remain unanswered about the *Solong*’s cargo. There was no mention of the number of containers that were on board the vessel, what they contained and how many, if any, were lost overboard.

There is also the question of what caused the incident with AIS tracking showing the *Solong* ploughing straight into the side of the anchored *Stena Immaculate* with no apparent attempt to avoid the collision.

An anonymous American seafarer from the *Stena Immaculate* told CBS News that a “massive cargo ship came out of the blue” and the *Solong* did not stop immediately on colliding with the tanker and flames immediately erupted from the vessel

Teesdale commented: “An expert team of specialists from the Marine Accident Investigation Board will have been scrambled for this incident almost immediately and they will report in due course.

“We can’t speculate on the cause of the accident, but we can see that something was potentially amiss on the *MV Solong*, as no avoidance or slow down can be seen from the route tracking. To explore this, MAIB’s expert investigators will seek to recover both vessels’ Voyage Data Recorders (VDR) and assemble all radio messages between traffic control and coastguards. All those rescued from the vessels will be interviewed and given precautionary drug and alcohol tests.