

Stena tanker hit three times, no crew on Solong's bridge

The 800 teu container vessel that careered into a tanker loaded with jet fuel, which was at anchorage off the coast of Grimsby on Monday had no crew on the bridge, according to knowledgeable sources.

[Nick Savvides](#), Europe correspondent

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Credit: Maritime & Coastguard Agency UK

The Portuguese-flagged *Solong* collided with the [US](#)-registered tanker *Stena Immaculate* travelling at 16.4 knots, killing one crew member, and causing all 36 other crew, from both ships, to abandon their vessels.

According to *Seatrade Maritime News* sources when the *Solong* hit the tanker the crew on the *Stena Immaculate* were no more than 100 metres away and could see that no seafarers were present at the moment of impact.

“There should have been two crew on the bridge and at least one of them would have seen what was happening,” according to the contact, who added, “It was foggy, but visibility was about half a mile, but the *Solong* should have seen the *Immaculate* on its radar.”

Moreover, when *Solong* clattered into the tanker, igniting a fire in its cargo and causing an explosion, “it knocked the tanker 40ft, but *Solong*’s engines had not stopped and it hit the tanker again, bouncing off the tanker, the third collision was not such a hard hit, the engine power had been reduced by then.”

According to the source luck was on the side of the crew on *Stena Immaculate*, two had been at the bow of the vessel changing a light bulb, when the container vessel ploughed into the mid-section of the tanker, causing an explosion and fire. The two crew had to run passed burning debris as explosions of jet fuel were erupting behind them, to get to the lifeboat.

Related: [Solong Master arrested over North Sea collision with tanker](#)

In addition, the forward tanks were empty, which allowed the collapsed tanks to expand into the void space. While on the previous voyage, the *Stena* ship was loaded with the far more explosive gasoline.

The captain of the *Solong*, a 59-year old [Russian](#) national, has been arrested on suspicion of gross negligence manslaughter, police reported 11 March.

Meanwhile, the HM Coastguard has reported that no further pollution has been reported from the two vessels involved in the accident.

The coastguard's pollution and salvage team has a counter pollution response in place should pollutants begin to leak from the damaged vessels.

"The MCA is working with the salvage companies who are responding on behalf of the vessels' owners and are working in full co-operation with all commercial and government partners. The overarching objective is to protect the public and the environment to the best of our ability, during this ongoing incident response," said a coastguard statement.

Solong ship manager Ernst Russ has confirmed that fire fighters have maintained operations to stabilise the container ship.

In its latest statement Ernst Russ said *Solong* separated from the tanker and had drifted south. Tugs have now attached a towline to the drifting ship and, the coastguard said it is being held in a safe position, with salvage vessels on standby.

"While no fire is visible on the *Stena Immaculate* there are still small pockets of fire on the top deck of the *Solong*. Specialist vessels with firefighting capability continue to provide support to this aspect of the operation," according to the latest coastguard information.

Ernst Russ added the company is working with the investigating authorities "to more fully understand these events and learn from the findings".