

China calls deadly tanker collision 'unprecedented'

First accident with a ship carrying natural gas condensate

By **CHRISTOPHER BODEEN**
Associated Press

BEIJING — The deadly explosion and sinking of an Iranian oil tanker in the East China Sea was without precedent and created enormous difficulties for rescue and recovery efforts, a Chinese official said Friday.

The sinking of the Sanchi after a Jan. 6 high seas collision with a grain freighter was one of the worst maritime disasters in recent years, with all 32 sailors on board believed lost.

It was also a first for a tanker carrying natural gas condensate, Zhi Guanglu, head of the transport ministry's emergency response department, told reporters.

"There was no precedent for this accident," Zhi said. "We are still facing enormous difficulties and many challenges."

Only three bodies of the crew of 30 Iranians and two Bangladeshis were recovered. All 21 crew members of the freighter were reported safe and the cause of the collision and ensuing fire is under investigation.

Cleanup efforts continue, with ships and planes monitoring oil leaking from the sunken vessel. China's State Oceanic Administration said it detected an oil slick in the area that appeared to contain heavy bunker oil from the Sanchi's fuel tanks that could pose a serious threat to the marine environment.

Zhi said attempts to rescue crew members were hampered by a multitude of factors, beginning with the remote location of the collision.

That necessitated a 20-hour round-trip to refuel



In this Jan. 14 photo provided by China's Ministry of Transport, a rescue ship sails near the burning Iranian oil tanker Sanchi in the East China Sea off the eastern coast of China. A Chinese official said Friday that the explosion and sinking of an Iranian oil tanker in the East China Sea was without precedent, creating enormous difficulties for rescue and recovery efforts.

"We can expect damage to marine life in the East China Sea from the condensate that remained in the sinking ship, but we don't know at this point how much."

— **David Pettit**, a senior attorney for the Washington, D.C.-based Natural Resources Defense Council

and refill the firefighting boat's tanks with fire retardant foam, Zhi said. The massive fire aboard the Sanchi required constant dousing with foam that far exceeded the capacity of the ship's storage tanks, he said.

The fire and toxic fumes released also forced rescue vessels to keep their distance and it was only after several days when the fire was beginning to die down that rescuers were able to board the ship using a crane and remove two bodies. Even then, the heat of the fire prevented them from entering the crew quarters.

High winds and waves

up to 13 feet high further increased the difficulty, Zhi said.

"In the process of the rescue, our ships and sailors were constantly in danger," he said.

The transport ministry earlier announced plans to send a robot submarine, possibly followed by divers, to explore and plug holes in the ship. No timeline was given for the mission.

Depending on conditions, divers might also be able to pump oil from the 85,000-ton vessel's fuel tanks before they leak further and contaminate the seabed.

Authorities say the Sanchi

is lying under 377 feet of water in the East China Sea, about 330 miles southeast of Shanghai.

While constituting a threat, the Sanchi disaster probably won't create oiled beaches such as those caused by the uncontrolled blowout on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, according to David Pettit, a senior attorney for the Washington, D.C.-based Natural Resources Defense Council.

"We can expect damage to marine life in the East China Sea from the condensate that remained in the sinking ship, but we don't know at this point how much," Pettit said in an email.

"Shipping hydrocarbons is inherently dangerous and this accident reinforces how important it is for shipping companies and coastal nations to have up-to-date oil spill recovery plans," he wrote.



International Research Institute for Nuclear Decommissioning via AP
A photo taken by a robotic probe shows a part of what is believed to be the handle of the fuel rods container and melted fuel in small lumps scattered on a structure below the Fukushima reactor core.

Melted nuclear fuel seen inside Fukushima reactor

TOKYO (AP) — The operator of Japan's crippled Fukushima nuclear plant said Friday that a long telescopic probe successfully captured images of what is most likely melted fuel inside one of its three damaged reactors, providing limited but crucial information for its cleanup.

Tokyo Electric Power Co. said the fishing rod-like device carrying a camera went deep into the plant's Unit 2 primary containment vessel. The images indicated that at least part of the fuel had breached the core, falling to the vessel's floor, TEPCO spokesman Takahiro Kimoto said.

"There is so much that we still haven't seen," Kimoto told reporters. "But we were able to obtain important information that we need in order to determine the right method for removing the melted fuel debris."

A massive earthquake and tsunami in 2011 caused three reactors at the Fukushima plant to melt. The plant's decommissioning is expected to take decades.

Melted fuel has previously only been documented inside Unit 3, where an underwater probe captured images of large amounts of melted fuel debris that looked like molten lava mixed with broken parts of equipment and structures on the concrete floor.

During Friday's

investigation, the device — developed by Toshiba Corp. and the International Research Institute for Decommissioning, a government-funded organization of nuclear companies — found deposits in the shape of pebbles, clay and other forms, Kimoto said.

Determining the location of the melted fuel is crucial in planning for its removal, the hardest process in the plant's decommissioning.

The government and TEPCO plan to determine the methods and start removing melted fuel from one of the three reactors in 2021. But experts say a lack of data is delaying the development of the precise type of technology and robots.

The images from Friday's probe show what is believed to be a stainless steel handle of a case containing bundles of fuel rods sitting on a pile of pebble-shaped and clayish substances, in a sign the rods melted and breached the bottom of the core. The deposits seemed to be scattered in a wide area around the pedestal, the main structure that sits underneath the core.

Experts say they believe part of the fuel still remains inside the core of the Unit 2 reactor, while almost all of the fuel rods in Unit 1 and 3 melted and fell to the bottom of the primary containment chambers.

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CTUIR - Tribal Environmental Recovery Facility (TERF)

At the end of each year the employees of Pendleton Sanitary Service, Inc. (PSSI) nominate several commercial businesses or institutions for the Commercial Recycler of the Year award. The winning recipient is determined by a vote of PSSI employees, as they are the individuals who deal directly with the recycled materials, and are impacted by the quality of those materials. This award is given to a commercial recycler that does an outstanding job in recycling, and/or has made significant improvements to their recycling efforts over the past year.

The employees of Pendleton Sanitary Service voted unanimously to choose CTUIR and the Tribal Environmental Recovery Facility (TERF) as Pendleton's Commercial Recycler of the Year for 2017.

In 2001, PSSI began working with TERF in their waste and recycling operations. A cooperative partnership formed, and with TERF's concerted recycling efforts, their recycling grew from a small operation to generating 117 tons of cardboard in 2017! In addition to cardboard, TERF recycles: aluminum, scrap metal, plastics, newspaper, office paper, and wood waste.

Not only does TERF do an outstanding job of recycling with the significant volume of materials they produce, the quality control in their recycling effort is excellent, which makes a significant impact on reducing waste going to the landfill. A special thanks go to Bonnie Burke and the team at TERF!! Great job!

Pendleton Sanitary Service would like to congratulate and thank CTUIR and TERF and their employees for the outstanding efforts in recycling!



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