



National Transportation Safety Board

Marine Accident Brief

Sinking of Fishing Vessel *Long Shot*

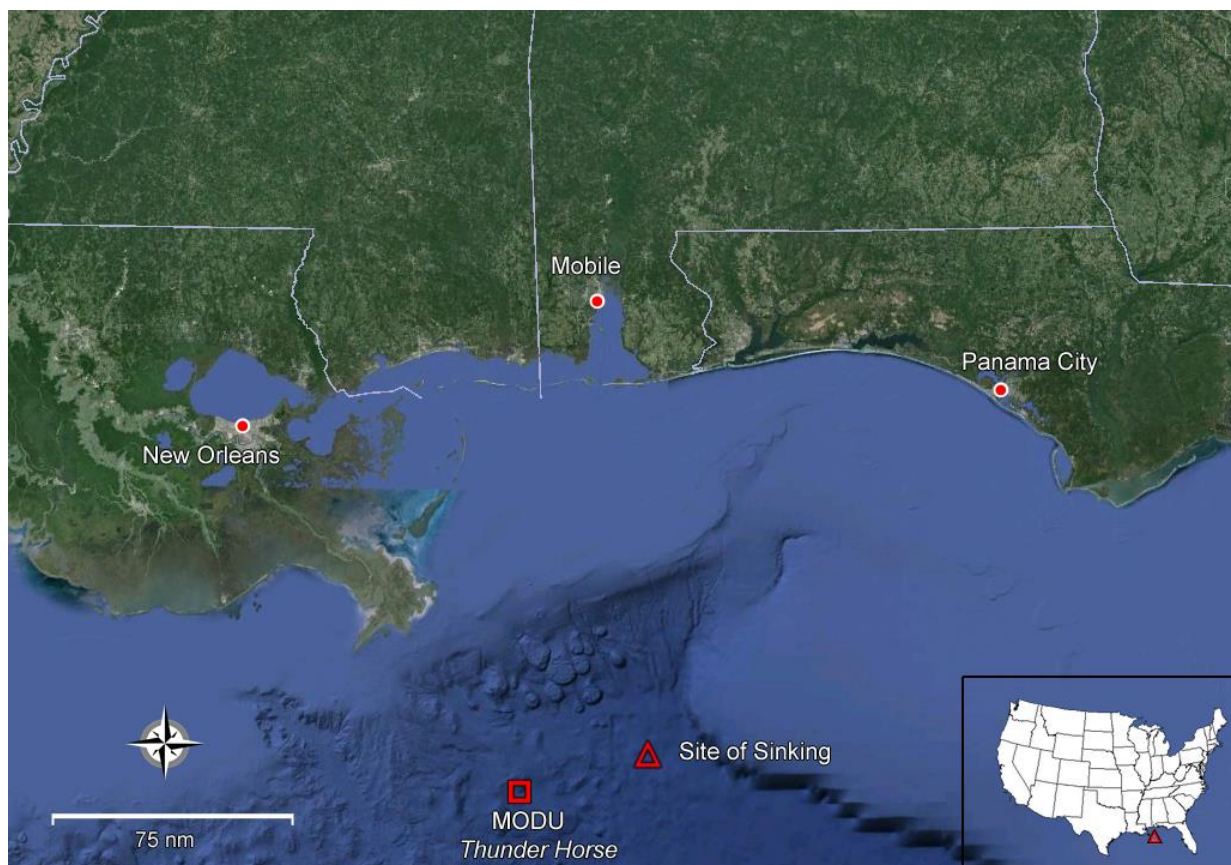
Accident no.	DCA14LM001
Vessel name	<i>Long Shot</i>
Accident type	Sinking
Location	Gulf of Mexico, 150 nautical miles southwest of Panama City, Florida 28°23.0' N, 87°46.0' W
Date	November 15, 2013
Time	Vessel abandoned at 2030 central standard time (coordinated universal time – 6 hours)
Injuries	None
Damage	Total loss of vessel; estimated value of \$150,000
Environmental damage	None observed; potential loss of an estimated 750 gallons of diesel fuel on board
Weather	Northwest winds at 15 knots; clear skies; visibility of 6 nautical miles; air temperature 65°F; seas at 10–12 feet
Waterway information	North central Gulf of Mexico

On November 15, 2013, as the 72.1-foot-long commercial fishing vessel *Long Shot* was returning from a 2-week fishing trip, its main propulsion diesel engine and electrical generator engines failed. Without propulsion and steering to control the vessel's heading, boarding seas hit the stern, and an aft compartment flooded. For several hours, the crew tried to save the sinking *Long Shot* but ultimately needed to be evacuated by the United States Coast Guard. No one was injured, but the vessel, valued at \$150,000, was a total loss.



The *Long Shot* under way several months before the accident. (Photo by W I T Fisheries Inc.)

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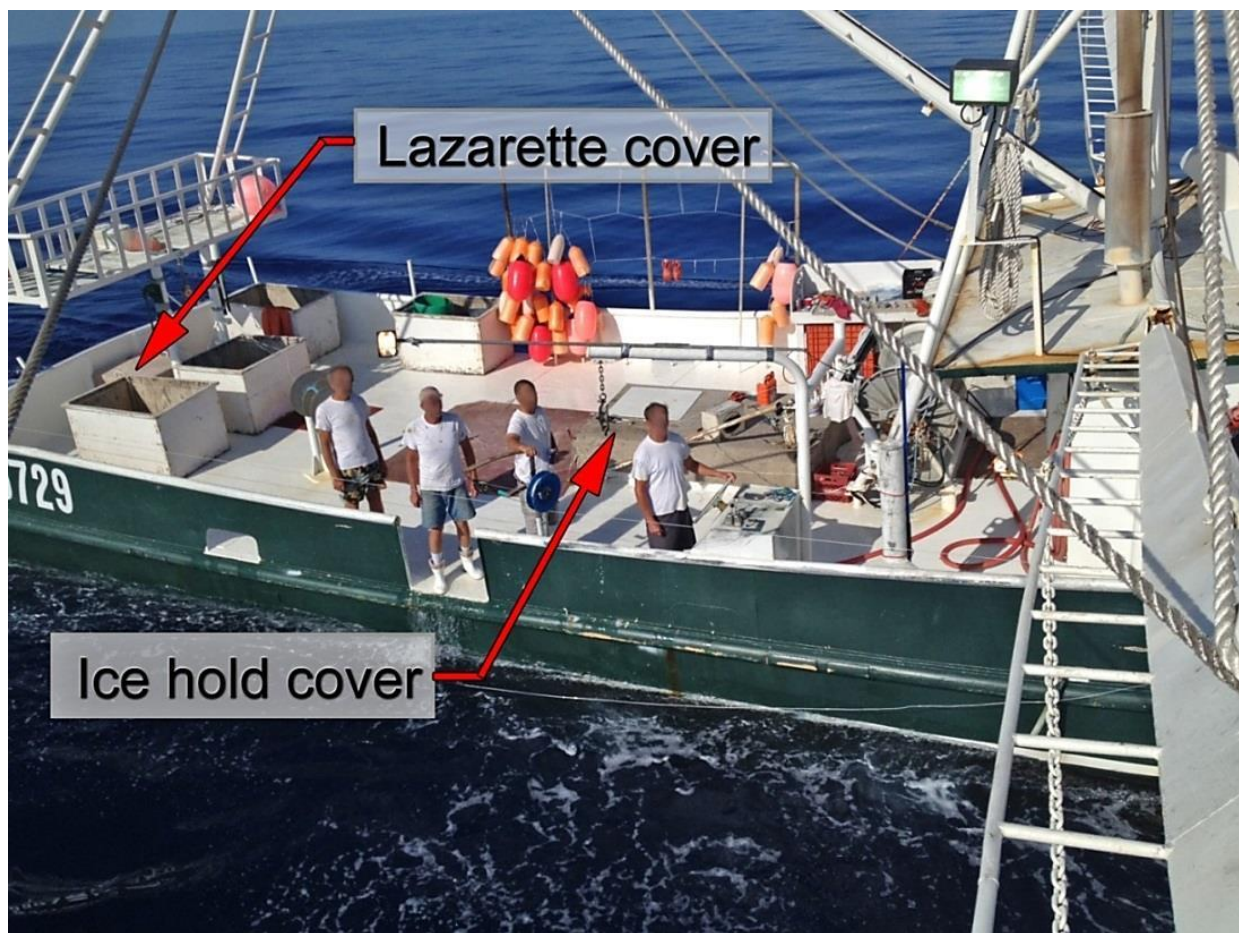


Satellite image of the area in which the *Long Shot* sank. (Background by Google Earth)

About 0100 on November 2, 2013, the *Long Shot* departed Panama City for a 2-week fishing trip in the Gulf of Mexico, with a crew of four and one NOAA fisheries observer on board. The trip was uneventful until, as the vessel was returning to port on the 9th day of the trip, a leak was discovered in the lazarette compartment, the aftmost compartment in the boat. The lazarette contained the steering gear and the rudder post. The rudder post was attached to the rudder at its lower end and penetrated the vessel hull through a packing gland at its upper end.

The leak increased in severity, and on the morning of the 13th day of the trip (November 14), about 2 feet of water had accumulated in the lazarette. The crew began to continuously monitor the leak and pump water out of the lazarette as the vessel proceeded to port. The lazarette had a non-watertight cover that had to be removed to position a portable dewatering pump in the compartment. As required by Coast Guard regulations, the compartment was fitted with a high-water-level bilge alarm but it did not require a fixed bilge pump. At the time, the seas were 6 to 8 feet high.

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The *Long Shot* under way several months before the accident voyage. The lazarette cover and the ice hold cover on the aft deck of the vessel are indicated. (Photo by W I T Fisheries)

About 0130 the next morning, November 15, the captain noticed that the engine seemed to be losing power and felt like it was “backing down.” The vessel did not have engine throttle and gear controls in the wheelhouse, so the captain went to the engine room to investigate the reduced engine power. The captain found that the main engine’s fuel supply filter/water separator contained an unusually large accumulation of water in the bottom of the glass bowl. He also noticed that the fuel level in the port service tank was lower than he expected, but he could not determine where the missing fuel had gone. He had last checked the fuel level about 1–1.5 days earlier, and he believed he had plenty of fuel to return to port. The vessel had two fuel tanks, port and starboard, which supplied both the propulsion main engines and diesel-driven electrical generators. It was the captain’s normal practice to operate both tanks on suction simultaneously, so that their levels would remain equalized. The captain then shut down the main engine and proceeded to drain the water from the separator and change the filters. Before he could finish changing the filters, the vessel lost electrical power when the electrical generator’s diesel engine shut down. With the seas now 10 to 12 feet high, the captain and the first mate attempted over the next several hours to restore operation of the main engine and the electrical generator engine, with limited success.

During his attempts to restore operation of the diesel engines, the captain called the fishing vessel *Orion*, another company vessel, to request assistance. The captain of the *Orion* stated that he was about 68 miles away and that he would proceed to the *Long Shot*’s location to assist. However, the captain of the *Long Shot* misunderstood the *Orion* captain and thought he

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had said 6 to 8 hours away. During the morning, the weather conditions worsened and the *Long Shot* began taking water over the stern and into the lazarette through its cover, which had been left open. Around sunrise, the two captains spoke again and this time clarified that the *Orion* was still 12 to 14 hours away. The captain became concerned for the safety of the vessel and crew, and decided to contact the Coast Guard to request a dewatering pump so that he could pump out the lazarette. The back deck and the lazarette were flooded, but no water had yet entered the ice hold or the deckhouse.

According to the Coast Guard's search-and-rescue (SAR) case log, the Coast Guard Command Center at Sector Mobile received its first report of the vessel's situation about 1335, after the *Long Shot*'s onboard fisheries observer contacted her supervisor to request evacuation from the vessel. In response, the Coast Guard alerted air and surface SAR assets to respond to the emergency and contacted the captain of the *Long Shot*. Two Coast Guard rescue helicopters were launched from Air Station New Orleans with the first arriving on scene about 1530. A fixed-wing aircraft was also dispatched from Air Training Center Mobile, and its crew dropped an emergency dewatering pump to the crew of the fishing vessel when it arrived on scene. According to the first mate, they were able to get the dewatering pump operating within about 10 minutes, but they could not make any progress in dewatering the lazarette because of the seas breaking over the stern and entering the lazarette through the open cover.

About 1900, a Coast Guard rescue helicopter hoisted and transported two crewmen and the fisheries observer to the *Thunder Horse*, a mobile offshore drilling unit (MODU) about 40 nautical miles away. The captain of the *Long Shot* had intended to remain on board with the first mate to continue the attempts to save the vessel while waiting for the *Orion*'s arrival, but as the situation became dire and nightfall approached, the captain requested that the Coast Guard evacuate him and the first mate. About 2030, after refueling on board the MODU, the Coast Guard helicopter returned to the *Long Shot* and hoisted the captain and the first mate from the sinking vessel. The helicopter then returned to the MODU, where all of the vessel's crew remained overnight. An 87-foot-long Coast Guard patrol boat had been dispatched to participate in the rescue operation, but it turned back once the *Long Shot* crewmembers had been evacuated.

The next morning, November 16, two Coast Guard helicopters took the five persons from the *Long Shot* to Air Station New Orleans, where the last crewmembers arrived about 1350. Reportedly, the *Long Shot* eventually sank, but the time and location of its sinking are unknown.

On November 18, 2014, three of the four crewmembers submitted urine samples for toxicological testing and all results were negative for illegal drugs. The first mate was not tested.

The vessel owner told investigators that he purchased the 30-year-old *Long Shot* in February 2008, after which time the vessel was brought up to his standard of repair. In October 2008, the vessel's lazarette flooded as a result of holes in the bottom hull plate of the compartment. The lazarette bottom was repaired by installing doubler plates over the entire stern of the vessel to an area just beyond the fish hold. The owner stated that the thickness of other areas of the hull was examined, and any thinned areas were similarly repaired with doubler plates. Repairs completed at that time also included increasing the size of the rudder (for better handling) and renewing the propeller shaft and rudder post bearings. In May 2011, an electrical fire broke out in the bow area below the main deck, which led the crew to abandon the vessel because of smoke in the living area. Postfire repairs included wholesale replacement of the interior of the crew spaces. In addition, the wheelhouse navigation equipment and wiring was

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replaced. The *Long Shot* was last hauled out in October 2012, at which time any thin areas of the hull plate were repaired with doubler plates. During that shipyard period, the rudder and propeller shaft bearings were replaced, and new packing was installed in both glands.

During a fishing trip in April 2013, with the owner acting as the captain, water was found in the fuel oil system. According to a deckhand, who was later the captain of the vessel when it sank, the water in the fuel had caused stoppage of the main propulsion engine similar to what he experienced on the accident voyage. The owner stated that, in connection with the April 2013 trip, holes were found and repaired in a plumbing discharge pipe that passed through one of the fuel tanks.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the sinking of fishing vessel *Long Shot* was water contamination of its fuel oil storage tanks, which led to failure of the propulsion and electrical generator engines and flooding of the lazarette compartment in heavy seas. Contributing to the sinking was excessive water leakage at the rudder post packing gland, which led to the initial flooding of the lazarette compartment.

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Vessel Particulars

Vessel	<i>Long Shot</i>
Owner/operator	W I T Fisheries Inc.
Port of registry	Panama City, Florida
Flag	United States
Type	Fishing (longliner)
Year built	1978
Official number (US)	590729
IMO number	7742918
Construction	Steel
Length	72.1 ft (22.0 m)
Draft	8 ft forward, 12 ft aft (2.4 m forward, 3.7 m aft)
Beam/width	22.2 ft (6.8 m)
Gross and/or ITC tonnage	114 gross tons
Engine power; manufacturer	400 hp (298 kW); Caterpillar, diesel
Persons on board	5 (4 crew and 1 NOAA fisheries observer)

For more details about this accident, visit www.nts.gov/investigations/dms.html and search for NTSB accident ID DCA14LM001.

Adopted: July 25, 2014

The NTSB has authority to investigate and establish the probable cause of any major marine casualty or any marine casualty involving both public and nonpublic vessels under 49 *United States Code* 1131. This report is based on factual information either gathered by NTSB investigators or provided by the Coast Guard from its informal investigation of the accident.
