Hafnia Nile and Ceres I collision in the Singapore Eastern OPL

Authored by: Skytek
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Summary

The Singapore Strait, a vital chokepoint connecting the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea, sees heavy traffic due to its strategic location and Singapore's status as the world's largest bunkering hub. Ships refuel here before continuing their journeys, adding to the congestion. The adjacent Singapore's Eastern Outer Port Limits (East OPL) extends the busy zone eastward, as ships leaving the strait often anchor there for cargo, bunkering, or supplies. This concentration of maritime activity, from transiting traffic to anchoring and refueling, makes both the Strait and East OPL a congested area requiring constant management for smooth and safe passage, but only the Strait is constantly supervised by the Singapore Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) and not the Eastern OPL.

On the morning of July 19th, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) received reports of a collision between two tankers within their Search and Rescue zone. The incident occurred at 6:04 local time (which translates to 10:05 UTC on July 18th). The identities of the vessels involved are:

Hafnia Nile, IMO: 9766217

The 2017 built 74,189 DWT, Oil Product Tanker "Hafnia Nile", registered to Singapore flag, in class with Lloyd's Register and with a P&I cover from Gard while Skuld leads the Hull and Machinery slip, is owned by BW Aldrich Pte Ltd, operated by Hafnia Pools Pte Ltd and technically managed by BW Fleet Management Pte Ltd.

Hafnia Nile loaded part cargo, approximately 300,000 bbls of Naphtha from the Torre Arenilas Terminal in Huelva, Spain for CEPSA (Compañía Española de Petróleos, S.A.U.), for a destination at Kashima, Japan.

The safety records in Skytek databases indicate good safety standards for the "Hafnia Nile".

CERES I, IMO: 9229439

The 2001 built 299,999 DWT, Crude Oil Tanker "Ceres I", registered to Sao Tome and Principe flag, in class with a non-IACS (International Association of Classification Societies), society, and without P&I club inside the IG P&I Group, is owned by Ceres Shipping Ltd-HKG, operated and technically managed by Shanghai Prosperity Ship Mgmt.

The ship "Ceres I" unloaded its cargo at one of the Zhoushan port islands in China. It then departed empty and arrived at the Singapore Eastern Outer Port Limits (East OPL) on June

8th, 2024. While there have been some gaps in the ship's reported location since then, according to the Automatic Identification System (AIS) data, "Ceres I" has remained anchored at the East OPL since its arrival on June 16th.

A review of safety records in Skytek databases shows the "Ceres I" had below average safety performance before 2019. In that year, the ship's management changed from COSCO Shipping Seaman Shipping Management to its current manager, Shanghai Prosperity Ship Management. Since then, the "Ceres I" hasn't been inspected by Port State Control.

Two ships currently managed by Shanghai Prosperity Ship Management, have been investigated in the past by Gabe for potential involvement in dark fleet activities. One of these ships, "Ceres I," seems to have a history of transporting Iranian oil cargoes to Chinese ports, with its most recent voyage in March 2024 raising similar suspicions.

The absence of an International Association of Classification Societies (IACS) member classification society to provide Emergency Response Service (ERS), coupled with the lack of reputable Protection and Indemnity (P&I) and Hull and Machinery (H&M) insurance from an International Group (IG) P&I club, if insured at all, has significant consequences. In the event of potential pollution or wreck removal, there would be no responsible party to cover the costs.

The collision

The "Hafnia Nile" sailed without incidents through the Singapore Straits, exiting into the South China Sea after passing the Horsburgh Lighthouse at 19.50 UTC on July 18th, 2024.
At 21.02 UTC on July 18th, the ship altered to a Course of approximately 021° heading towards the anchored position of "Ceres I".

On July 18th, 2024, at 22.02 UTC, the AIS data for the two vessels indicate that the "Hafnia Nile" collided with the starboard bow of the anchored "Ceres I", at a speed of around 14 Knots, resulting in a fire raging on both ships.

Figure 1 below maps the positions of the "Ceres I" and the track of the "Hafnia Nile" for July 18th and 19th, 2024. The data is captured from their AIS broadcasts. "Ceres I" was anchored during this period and dragged slightly after the collision. The "Hafnia Nile" track represents the sailing out from the Singapore Straits to the Eastern OPL until shortly after the collision.

The Singapore Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) coordinates the search and rescue efforts. All the 22 crew from the "Hafnia Nile" were rescued, 16 by a Singaporean frigate and other 6 from a rescue boat by a Malaysian government boat.

A Singaporean flag supply vessel rescued 14 crew from "Ceres I" while 26 remaining crew are conducting firefighting onboard the ship.

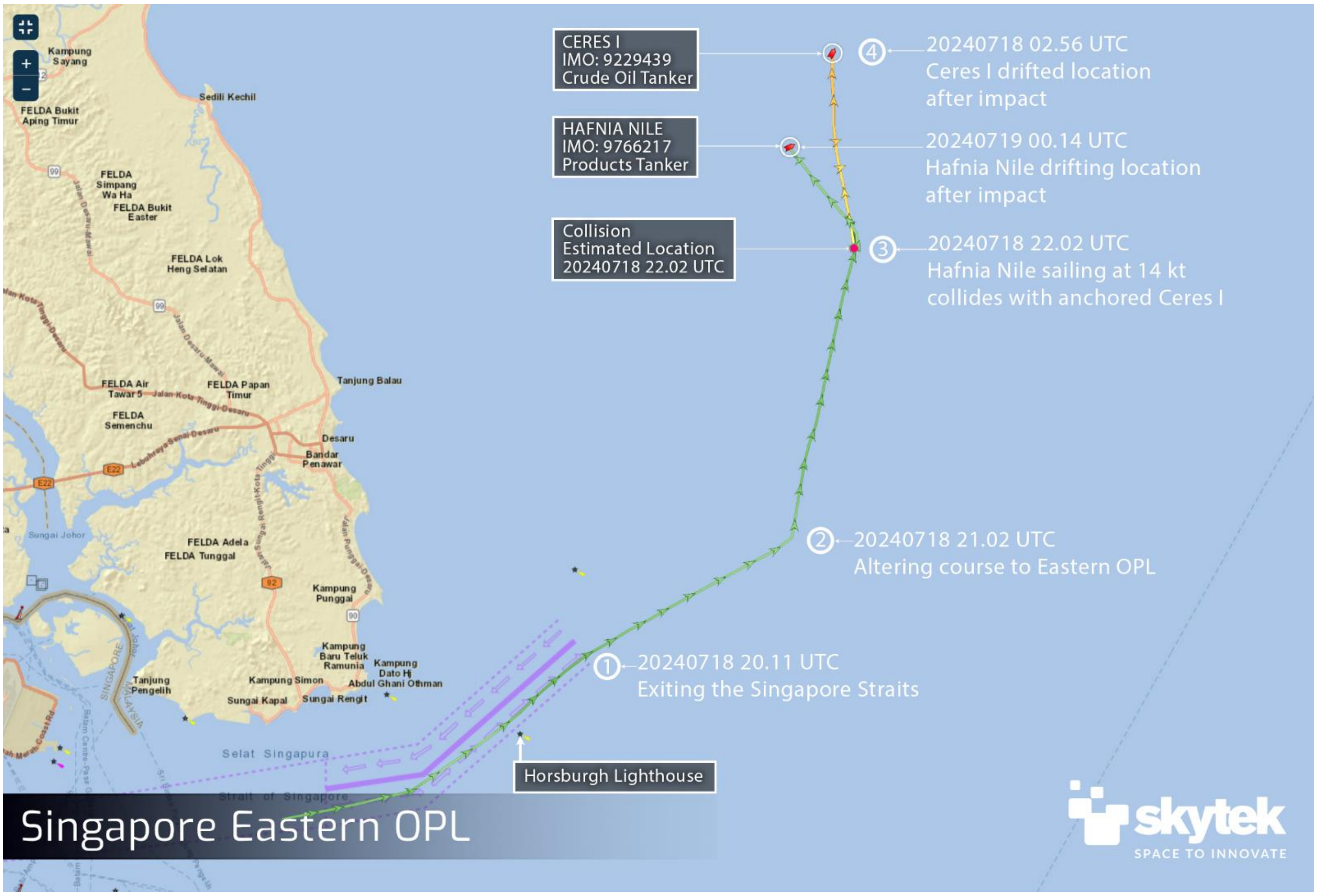

Figure 1 - Skytek mapping the track of "Hafnia Nile" and "Ceres I" from July 18th to July 19th, 2024

While there's still a risk of pollution, Skytek notes that the "Hafnia Nile" was carrying naphtha, a highly volatile product that's unlikely to form a persistent oil slick on the water's surface. Even though Iranian crude oil, like the kind potentially onboard the "Ceres I," is lighter than seawater and would form a sheen if spilled from a hull breach, the "Ceres I" appears to have been empty at the time of the collision, so the amount of oil released would likely not be significant.

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