



PRELIMINARY REPORT
MARINE
DCA16MM001

The information in this report is preliminary and will be supplemented or corrected during the course of the investigation.



On Thursday, October 1, 2015, about 07:15 a.m. eastern daylight time, the US Coast Guard received distress alerts from the 737-foot-long roll-on/roll-off cargo ship El Faro. The US flagged ship, owned by Sea Star Line, LLC, and operated by TOTE Services (TOTE), was 36 nautical miles northeast of Acklins and Crooked Islands, Bahamas, and close to the eye of Hurricane Joaquin. The ship was en route from Jacksonville, Florida, to San Juan, Puerto Rico, with a cargo of containers and vehicles. Just minutes before the distress alerts, the El Faro master had called TOTE's designated person ashore and reported that the ship was experiencing some flooding. He said the crew had controlled the ingress of water but the ship was listing 15 degrees and had lost propulsion. The Coast Guard and TOTE were unable to reestablish communication with the ship. Twenty-eight US crewmembers and five Polish workers were on board.

The Coast Guard deployed helicopters and search vessels to the ship's last known position, but the search was hampered by hurricane force conditions on scene. On Sunday, October 4, a damaged lifeboat, two damaged life rafts, and a deceased crewmember wearing an immersion

suit were found. On Monday, October 5, a debris field and oil slick were found, and the Coast Guard determined that the El Faro was lost and declared the event a major marine casualty. The Coast Guard suspended the unsuccessful search for survivors at sundown on Wednesday, October 7.

On Tuesday, October 6, the National Transportation Safety Board launched a full team to Jacksonville to lead the federal investigation in cooperation with the Coast Guard, the American Bureau of Shipping (the El Faro's classification society), and TOTE as parties. The US Navy Salvage and Diving division of the Naval Seas Systems Command was contracted to locate the sunken ship, assist in the sea floor documentation of the wreckage, and recover the voyage data recorder.

Note:

On Nov 1st 2015, the Associated Press reported that the wreckage of the El Faro was believed to have been found in the vicinity of the ship's last known position (36 NM NE of Crooked and Acklins Islands in the Bahamas) at a depth of 15,000 feet. The wreckage appears to be in an upright position and in one piece.