

Inquest into the death of Nguyen Van Thanh

Coroner's Summary of Facts

Nguyen Van Thanh was an Indonesian national. He was employed as on the Aurora 2 and at about 7 o'clock on 19th August was working on the deck while the trawl net was being hauled in at latitude 49° 18.30' South, longitude 60° 08.50' West. There was a wind of 12metres per second and the sea was rough.

Mr Thanh was operating the winch capstan or drum himself as the trawl cable was being hauled in. He was in charge of the switch gear mechanism. The statements from the other crewmen working on the deck at the time show that his sleeve was caught in the cable, he was pulled off his feet, lost his balance and could not free himself. There was insufficient time to turn off the capstan before his whole body was dragged round it. His fellow crewmembers ran to give assistance and switched off the winch but he was found to be dead.

Aurora 2 brought his body to Stanley where it was taken to King Edward VII Memorial Hospital and an autopsy was carried out by Dr Ben Swift. He concluded that Mr Thanh had suffered massive injuries to his head and neck such that he was all but decapitated. He believed the injuries had been caused by the pressure and strength of the trawl cable when Mr Thanh's body was caught round the capstan. Death would have rapidly ensued, and his injuries were such that no medical intervention could have saved him.

I record a verdict of accidental death.

This incident shows the great need for care and vigilance when operating machinery onboard fishing vessels such as Aurora 2. It serves to confirm what very dangerous and precarious work fishing is. It raises the issue of safety precautions and protection from the dangers inherent during fishing operations, particularly in adverse weather and sea conditions. I conclude that Mr Thanh's loose clothing and the lack of a guard on the capstan may have posed particular dangers. However, I have insufficient information to make a formal recommendation and can only express my concern.

I offer my sympathy and condolences to Mr Thanh's widow, family, friends and colleagues.

Clare Faulds
Her Majesty's Coroner for the Falkland Islands

18th December 2006