

On 28 Nov 1984 USNS HASSAYAMPA suffered three personnel casualties due to a boarding wave during a CONSOL operation. At the time HASSAYAMPA was a participant in FLEETEX 85, a major exercise involving five aircraft carrier battlegroups. HASSAYAMPA was operating under the immediate control of CTF SEVEN FIVE in a surface action group consisting of a cruiser and escorts.

CONSOL operations were in progress with the MV FALCON CHAMPION in moderately heavy weather. The course was into the wind and sea with both ships riding well. Fueling had been completed and rig ten retrieved and secured. Rig eight was in the process of being retrieved and the distance between ships opened slightly when at 2057 the ship was struck on the port side by a wave that apparently broke on deck. The 01 deck was covered with white water and water was observed rolling off the top of the reefer boxes forward of rig eight. Large steel storage boxes were knocked off their foundations and floated across the deck, steam pipes were damaged, a line reel was bent, and personnel thrown about the deck. The ship was forced seven degrees to port and immediate action was required to prevent collision with the FALCON CHAMPION (who was not effected by the wave).

Word was passed to the bridge that there were casualties after the water had drained off sufficiently to allow taking stock of the situation. First aid was given to the obviously injured and preparations were made to take them to sick bay and to get a muster to determine if there was anyone overboard. When all hands were accounted for a group of men returned to the deck to finish retrieving the messenger line on rig eight. When that was accomplished and the deck secured, the ship was turned and closed the surface action group at best speed to get assistance.

At about 2130 the SHIP'S NURSE had determined that two of the injuries were beyond his capabilities to deal with and assistance was requested over a secure voice circuit. As additional information became known it was passed to the medical officer on the cruiser USS STERETT. While closing the group, HASSAYAMPA personnel cleared the deck, repaired what damage they could and prepared to refuel the STERETT and escorts. Once the STERETT was alongside and soundpowered phones were connected the nurse was able to give the medical officer his best evaluation. It was obvious that the medical officer, Dr Davis would have to work on the personnel while arrangements were made for MEDEVAC. Heavy weather precluded transfer by highline and lack of night certification for VERTREP on HASSAYAMPA's helo deck prevented transfer by air. Since the injuries were not life-threatening it was agreed between HASSAYAMPA and CTF 75 that Dr Davis would be heloed in at first light.

At about 0600 on the 29th of Nov, Dr Davis was received aboard by helo. He went to work and over the next ten hours stabilized the injuries of T. SMITH (Total dislocation of right ankle, articular surface of tibia extended through skin, distal fibial fracture above ankle, and superficial laceration of knee) and J. HANSEN (fractured mandible, broken teeth, facial laceration), and suspected possible hairline fracture and bruising of hip and left arm to H. LAND.