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Baltimore salvage ops prove more challenging than expected

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April 2, 2024



Ahead of what will be years of legal wrangling, the owner and manager of the world's most discussed ship, the Dali, have sought to limit potential pay-outs from last week's Baltimore bridge allision.

Singapore-based Grace Ocean and shipmanager Synergy Marine filed a limitation of liability court petition yesterday seeking to cap their liability to just \$43.6m, in a case that overall is expected to see pay-outs in the billions of dollars.

The petition claims that the vessel itself is valued at up to \$90m and that it is owed more than \$1.1m in income from freight. The estimate also deducts two major expenses: at least \$28m in repair costs and at least \$19.5m in salvage costs.

"The Casualty was not due to any fault, neglect, or want of care on the part of Petitioners, the Vessel, or any persons or entities for whose acts Petitioners may be responsible," the filing claims, adding: "Alternatively, if any such faults caused or contributed to the Casualty, or to any loss or damage arising out of the Casualty, which is denied, such faults were occasioned and occurred without Petitioners' privity or knowledge."

The Singapore-flagged *Dali*, on charter to Maersk, struck and destroyed Baltimore's largest bridge at 1:30 am last Tuesday with six people dying. The head of Lloyd's of London warned last week that the *Dali* could prove to be the largest marine pay-out in insurance history.

The ship has been aground for the past week with a section of the structure weighing on its bow. As much as 4,000 tons of steel from the bridge's frame are hanging on the bow of the ship, pinning the hull to the river bed below.

The authorities have managed to create a temporary alternate channel with a depth of 3.35 m on the northeast side of the main channel which a tugboat was able to use successfully yesterday.

A second, temporary alternate channel on the southwest side of the main channel with an anticipated draft restriction of up to 4.87 m is expected to be launched soon.

Two crane barges, a 650-ton crane and a 330-ton crane, are actively working on scene. Bridge wreckage is being lifted and transferred to a barge in daylight hours.

Moving the *Dali* however will prove to be a very tricky process.

Rear Admiral Shannon Gilreath, commander of Coast Guard 5th District, conceded yesterday that dive surveys of the water around the vessel reveal that the mangled state of the bridge below the water makes any metal cutting decisions difficult.

Bridge girders are tangled below the waterline, Gilreath explained, making it difficult to determine where to cut debris so it can be lifted away from the scene.

"It's turning out to be more challenging than we originally thought it might be," Gilreath told reporters.

"Below the waterline, along the bottom, is very challenging because these girders are tangled together, intertwined, making it very difficult to figure out where you need to eventually cut," he said.

Maryland governor Wes Moore commented at a press conference yesterday, "You cannot overstate the complexity of this operation."

US president Joe Biden is due to visit the scene on Friday.

Carried below are the official salvage plans, which also show how the potentially hard-to-remove *Dali* is located largely outside the main shipping channel.

FRANCIS SCOTT KEY BRIDGE RESPONSE

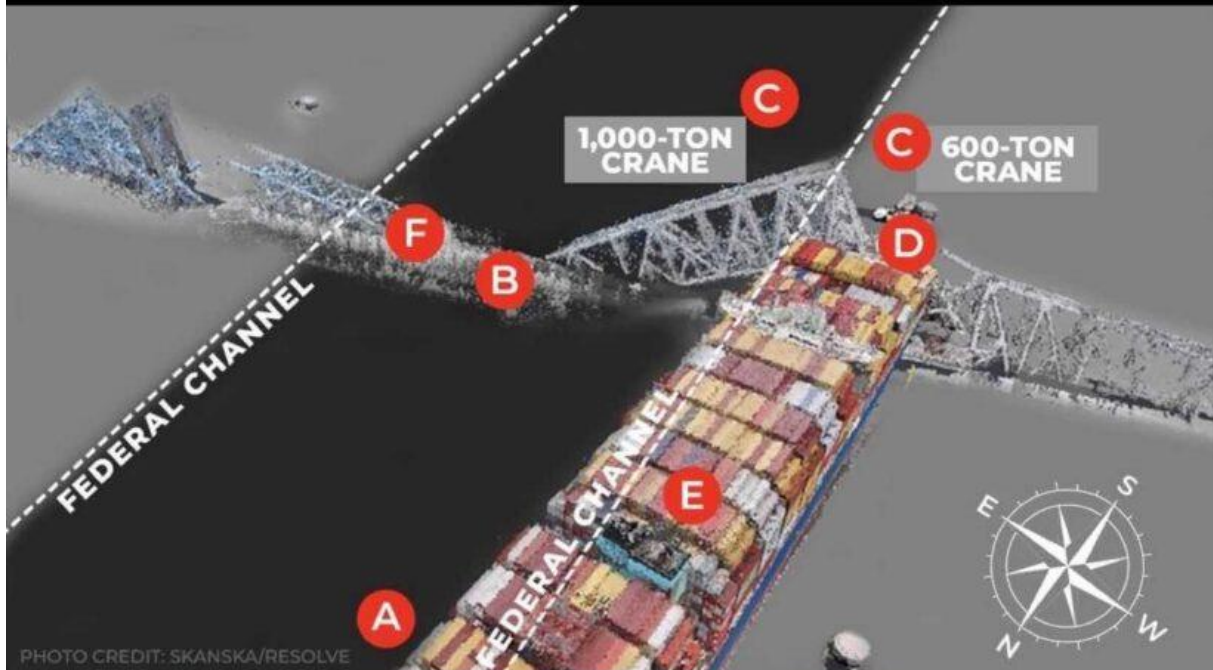


SALVAGE OPERATIONS PLAN

The situation remains dynamic, and the plan and the graphic will be continually updated as the engineering data becomes known.



US Army Corps of Engineers



OBJECTIVES

- A** Stabilize DALI to prevent pivoting.
- B** Analyze internal bridge truss structure.
- C** Position 1000-ton and 600-ton floating cranes.
- D** Cut diagonal truss to lift from vessel and swing wreckage for removal.
- E** Refloat DALI away from wreckage.
- F** Disassemble and remove bridge.

PRIORITIES

- 1** CLEAR FEDERAL CHANNEL
 - Establish wreckage consolidation point
 - Position cranes to remove bridge span from Dali
 - Clear wreckage from DALI
 - Remove wreckage from Federal Channel
- 2** REFLOAT & REMOVE DALI
 - Assess cargo and remove containers as necessary
 - Stage assets for repositioning of DALI
 - Refloat and move DALI from hard grounding
- 3** CLEAR REMAINING WRECKAGE
 - Systematically clear wreckage from outside of the federal channel
 - Facilitated under the direction of Maryland Department of Emergency Services