

Arriving in ballast condition? Avoid delays!

The scenario described in this article is a typical and common problem causing delays in vessel's operations. It happens quite often at the outer roads of Novorossiysk and Port Kavkaz.

A 50000 dwt bulk carrier arrived at anchorage area of Port Kavkaz for bunkering. The vessel was in ballast condition. There was a light wind that day, sea swell did not exceed 0.5 m. The inward clearance formalities team (Customs and Immigrations Officers) tried to board the vessel using her aft accommodation ladder, but failed and came back due to unsafe conditions of disembarkation.

The vessel had to wait for the next opportunity to pass the inward clearance, which became possible 3 days later, after weather improvement.

This issue raises no concerns in calm weather and, despite its apparent simplicity may become an unsolvable problem in case of even comparatively small swell.



- The boat needs to rest against the vessel's hull firmly and be able to retain position required for safe disembarkation within at least 10-15 seconds. The engine power of those old boats used for delivery of the formalities is limited and sometimes insufficient to ensure the boat is safely fixed against the vessel's hull, and prevent movements of the boat under the effect of swell.
- The second and major problem is the curved shape of the vessel's hull in its aft bottom part. The distance between the bottom part of gangway and place on hull where the boat can rest on (marked red) is quite often longer than the distance between the bow and superstructure of the boat (marked green). The gangway is fixed to the vessel and can be used only if the boat is within its range. In many cases the boats have to use solely their engines to keep position under the gangway, without touching the hull.
- The Immigrations Officers can only use accommodation ladder for boarding the vessel. They are strictly instructed not to use a pilot ladder. Therefore, a combination ladder (conjunction of pilot ladder and midships accommodation ladder) is not an alternative solution.

Recommendations

- It would be advisable to ensure the maximum ballast is taken prior to arrival, including the floodable holds if available, in order to keep the freeboard at the aft part as low as possible. The deeper the vessel's aft draught, the shorter the distance from hull to gangway and the more chances for a boat to rest on vessel's hull and provide safe transferring of people to/from vessel. This recommendation is subject to the draft and trim limitations in the designated anchorage point.
- The Master should be ready to use the vessel's engine for maneuvering in order to protect and cover the boat from wind and swell with the vessel's hull.