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## Captain's Errors Lead to Loss of \$1.5 Million Cargo Ship Bonnie G Off St. Thomas, Report Finds

An NTSB report reveals multiple miscalculations by the Bonnie G's captain, including deploying too little anchor chain and failing to check navigational charts, causing the vessel to run aground and be declared a total loss.

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The Bonnie G WAS adrift off St. Thomas after the crew abandoned ship, following critical navigational errors that led to the vessel running aground and breaching its hull.  
By. U.S. COAST GUARD

A report from the National Transportation Safety Board finds that the ill-fated Bonnie G, a Vanatu-flagged vessel that [ran aground](#) off the coast of St. Thomas in 2023, had not deployed

enough anchor chain as it waited out adverse weather conditions while waiting to dock.

The cargo vessel arrived in St. Croix around 7 a.m. October 3. By 2 p.m. that day, it was ready to head back to St. Thomas, “loaded with six passenger vehicles, an industrial truck, trailer and scissor lift, a refrigerated container full of fruits and vegetables, and an assortment of other cargo,” according to the [NTSB report](#).

Bonnie G's captain reviewed the weather forecast, which included strong wind gusts later in the night – up to 25 knots by midnight. However, that was long after the ship's expected arrival time. “The crew expected to be tied up to the dock” by then, the report indicates.

However, the winds on St. Thomas were much higher than expected when the ship arrived in Crown Bay. A loaded barge had also become unmoored and was blocking the Bonnie G's docking location. The captain reportedly decided to just anchor the vessel and wait for conditions to improve.

The first error occurred when calculating the water depth. Instead of 68 feet, captain and crew assessed the depth at being 26 feet at most. Therefore, only 135 feet of anchor chain was deployed, instead of at least 340 feet. “Considering the water depth and windy conditions, the Bonnie G captain did not let out enough chain for a secure anchorage,” the report says.

The chain snapped, the vessel began to drift, and the captain made his second error. He reportedly “did not use the available onboard navigational chart to identify a rock nearby, and when maneuvering after the anchor chain failed, he inadvertently steered onto the rock and grounded the vessel.”

Bonnie G's hull was breached just forward of the engine room. After the ship was grounded, the captain made the decision to abandon ship. However, according to the NTSB findings, a watertight door in the engine room was left open as the crew fled. Had that door been closed, the report says, “it is likely that progressive flooding of the engine room and after spaces would not have occurred, limiting vessel damage.”

Given the series of unfortunate events which led to the total loss and ultimate scrapping of the \$1.5 million vessel, the NTSB has reminded mariners to review navigational charts and other sources of information to familiarize themselves with hazards in the area. “It is important to have this information available in heavy weather conditions, when there is heightened risk of drifting and crews may need to get a vessel underway on short notice,” the report concludes.