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After Mississippi River ship collision, divers looking for below-water damage to tank ship

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Following a **Mississippi River** ship collision, divers are investigating the extent of damage below the water line to the 816-foot tank ship Bravo as it remains pinned to a docking facility at the Ergon-St. James oil terminal near Convent, a spokesman for the **U.S. Coast Guard** said Tuesday (Apr. 7). The Bravo was **hit by the bulk carrier Privocean**, which broke from its moorings Monday afternoon.

The lower part of the Bravo is also being inspected with side-scan sonar for any signs of damage, said Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Carlos Vega, as officials try to determine whether the ship can be removed from the river for repairs.

The Bravo was offloading crude oil at the time of the collision, and Coast Guard officials estimated that 420 gallons of oil discharged into the river and another 126 gallons of oil were spilled on the Bravo's deck.

An initial inspection determined none of the ship's cargo tanks were breached, but an estimated four ballast tanks sustained damage. Ballast tanks hold liquids that keep a ship floating level.

The Ergon facility was shut-in and boomed off, and Coast Guard officials have classified damage to the structure as a major marine casualty.

Vega said two pollution response teams are at the scene conducting an investigation, but there's no indication of a further release of oil from the ship. He said the oil that was in the river "seems to have dissipated."

However, an aerial overflight late Monday did spot some pollution in the water at the Ergon St. James terminal.

And Jonathan Henderson, an official with the Gulf Restoration Network environmental group, filed a report with the Coast Guard's National Response Center on Tuesday that there was oil on the batture adjacent to loading area and in adjacent water. Henderson said oil and sheen also were visible in the river.

The accident occurred Monday when the river was at 25.8 feet just upriver at Donaldsonville, about a foot below flood stage.

The Privocean also is being inspected for seaworthiness, Vega said. Before hitting the Bravo, the Privocean also collided with the 98-foot towing vessel Texas, which was moored at the time.

Vega said four Texas crew members were taken to a local hospital with minor injuries. He did not have information on their status on Tuesday.

The Texas had begun to take on water and pushed up on the river bank immediately after the accident. The vessel is now headed for a Bollinger Shipyards facility for repairs, he said.

The Coast Guard reopened a 3-mile segment of the river between mile marker 163 and 154 to one-way ship traffic late Monday, Coast Guard officials said.

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