



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



DoJ Settlement in Dali Allision

A US\$101.98 million settlement was recently announced between the United States Justice Department and Grace Ocean and Synergy Marine, the Singaporean owners and operators respectively of the 299.92-metre and 95,128-GT containership Dali.

The settlement resolved the claim for federal costs borne in responding to the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge and restoration of access to the Port of Baltimore following the 9971-TEU Dali's allision on 26 March.

The claim was brought under the United States Rivers and Harbors Act, Oil Pollution Act and general maritime law, with settlement monies reportedly being directed to Treasury and the budgets of several federal agencies directly affected by the allision or involved in the response.

In a 24 October statement, Principal Deputy Associate Attorney General Benjamin C Mizer praised the work of Justice Department attorneys "since day one of this disaster" to secure the settlement "just over one month into litigation".

"Nearly seven months after one of the worst transportation disasters in recent memory, which claimed six lives and caused untold damage, we have reached an important milestone with today's settlement," he said.

"This resolution ensures that the costs of the federal government's cleanup efforts in the Fort McHenry Channel are borne by Grace Ocean and Synergy and not the American taxpayer."

Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Brian M Boynton added that the settlement "fully compensates the United States for the costs it incurred in responding to this disaster and holds the owner and operator of the Dali accountable".

The settlement came in addition to US\$97,294 recently paid by Grace Ocean to the United States Coast Guard National Pollution Fund Center for costs incurred to abate the threat of oil pollution arising from the incident. It did not cover any damages pending for the reconstruction of the Francis Scott Key Bridge.

Overseas media reported that lawyers for Grace Ocean and Synergy Marine as well as 46 claimants met in a United States District Court for the District of Maryland before Judge James K Bredar on 29 October.

Judge Bredar reportedly quipped if the Dali was "to be the vessel with which we rewrite maritime law" and stated he would be issuing key rulings to "bring structure to this sprawling and unusual matter".

Representatives of those numerous remaining claims are understood to be seeking the trial to commence in December next year, while defendants have reportedly proposed January 2027.

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