

16 sailors missing after ships collide

by UPI

TOKYO - Searchers looked for seven South Korean and nine Indonesian sailors missing after their cargo ship collided with a freighter off the Japanese coast Tuesday.

The cargo ship Orchid Pia collided with Panamanian-registered automobile carrier Cygnus Ace near Izu Oshima island south of Tokyo, the South Korean news agency Yonhap reported. Contact has been lost with the South Korean vessel, which officials say they presume sank.

The crew of the 10,833-ton Panamanian ship were unharmed, the news agency said.

Japanese authorities mobilized six patrol boats and four airplanes for a search-and-rescue operation, a South Korean Foreign Ministry official said. Japanese officials said earlier they found life vests and an emergency raft at the accident site.

"We will send a ministry official and a veteran staff member from the (South Korean) coast guard to assist the operation," said Kim Yu-chul, the ministry's director handling accidents involving South Koreans abroad, said. "The government has already formed an emergency team to deal with the situation."

Families of the missing South Korean crew are expected to leave for Japan soon, he said.

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