Incident Review
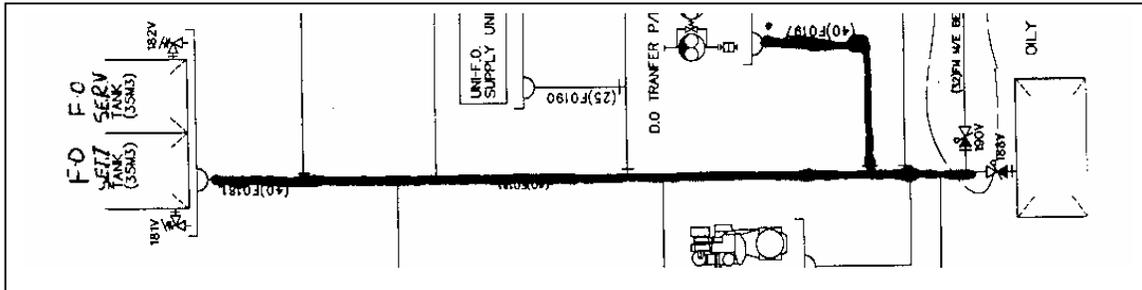## *Oily Bilge Tank Overfill*

Incident Details:

The Oily Bilge Tank high-level alarm was activated at around 0151 hours while the Engine Room was operating in the UMS mode. The Duty Engineer attending the alarm found that the level in the tank had increased from 2.2 m^3 (33%) at 2130 hours the previous day to 5.5 m^3 (83%).

On further check oil was observed to be dripping slightly from the spring-closed drain valve on the HFO Settling Tank, into the containment tray. The containment tray itself drains into the Oily Bilge Tank, resulting in the over-fill.

Investigation carried out on board revealed an ingenious hold-back arrangement fitted to the spring loaded drain valve, as shown in the attached photograph. The original design required the Watch-keeping Engineer to be in continuous attendance during draining,

with his foot operating the valve lever. The improvised arrangement was fabricated to allow unmonitored draining of the HFO Settling Tank. In this particular case, upon completion of draining, the screw down T-bolt was presumably not turned back fully enough to allow the valve lever to return to the closed position, which caused the valve to drip.

INCIDENT ANALYSIS

Root Cause:

1. The spring-closing safety device on the drain valve was deliberately obstructed.
2. Modification of the spring-closed valve was carried out without authorization and risk assessment as required by the operations manual Section 6.10, due to lack of awareness of procedures.

Corrective Actions:

Hold-back arrangement on this valve and such arrangements at other locations on this vessel were removed following the incident. **An inspection must be conducted on all vessels and similar unauthorized arrangements must be removed immediately.**

Lessons Learnt:

1. The only purpose of such an arrangement would have been to allow the watch-keeper to leave the drain valve open and unattended. The inherent danger of such by-passes is too obvious.
2. Unsafe conditions must be identified during safety rounds and corrective actions taken immediately.