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The *Sian Yung* was a liberty ship hull transiting Southbound through Gaillard Cut in the Panama Canal. In the vicinity of Contactors Hill, the ship veered to the right striking the rocky sheer bank on the port side. The rocks holed the hull in the vicinity of the engine room and the ship started taking on water. The pilot called for assistance and tugs were sent to assist the vessel. The vessel proceeded about 1/2 mile before the ship sank to a point where the main deck was awash. The tugs then pushed the vessel to the bank as far as possible to lessen the extent the ship would obstruct the sailing navigation channel. The ship sank to the bottom with only the two bridge decks above water. The main deck was about four feet below water at that lake elevation.

The *Sian Yung* was loaded with a cargo of rice and baled cotton. It also had about 200 barrels of heavy fuel oil aboard which began to leak through the vents into the fresh waters of Gatun Lake. The location of the primary fresh water intake for the all of the Pacific Side communities both in the Canal Zone and Panama was only 200 yards from where the ship went down.

Within a matter of days, the cargo of rice began to ferment. Oil booms were placed around the ship and oil collection equipment was assembled on the West Bank of the Canal adjacent to the ship location and on floating barges.

Salvage experts were assembled on site and the arduous task of salvaging the ship began. First it was decided to remove as much of the cargo as possible in order to lighten the vessel, allow the patching of damage in the cargo spaces, and to remove the rotting cargo from the fresh waters of Gaillard Cut and reduce the threat of contamination of the fresh water supply.

Using divers, the cargo offloading operation began. It was a labor intensive and tortuous operation. In the meantime, experts from the Panama Canal Company's Dredging Division, along with consultants, devised a design to modify the 24-inch cutter suction dredge *Mindi* in such a way as to allow the cargo to be hydraulically pumped from the cargo holds to disposal sites normally used to contain siltation dredged from the Gaillard Cut during routing maintenance dredging operations.