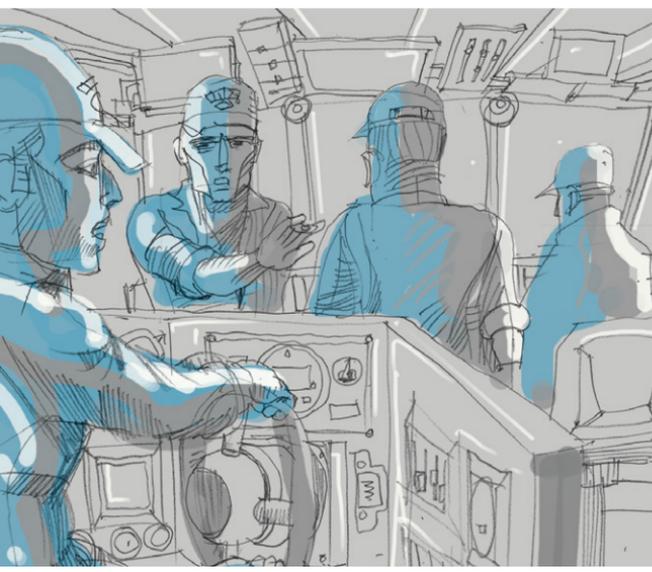


# Warship on a collision course

A US Navy investigation report sheds light on the final moments leading to the fatal collision between the USS John S. McCain and tanker Alnic MC on Aug 21, resulting in the deaths of 10 US sailors.



## A SERIES OF MISSTEPS

### Confusion and loss of control

**At 5.19am** The commanding officer (CO) of the USS John S. McCain notices the helmsman, whose duty is to steer the ship, having difficulty keeping course and speed. The CO then divides the duties. He assigns one sailor to steer and another to control the throttle. This leads to some confusion when steering control is inadvertently transferred to the sailor in charge of the ship's speed. The combination of wrong moves that affected the rudder and the two propeller shafts causes the USS John S. McCain to be steered towards the left, in the direction of three ships, including the Alnic MC.



### Collision course

**At 5.20am** USS John S. McCain enters the busy Traffic Separation Scheme in the Singapore Strait. Roughly three minutes from the time a loss of steering is reported, the warship regains steering control. However, steering and speed corrections are made too late. Just before 5.24am, the USS John S. McCain crosses in front of Alnic MC's bow and collides with the tanker.

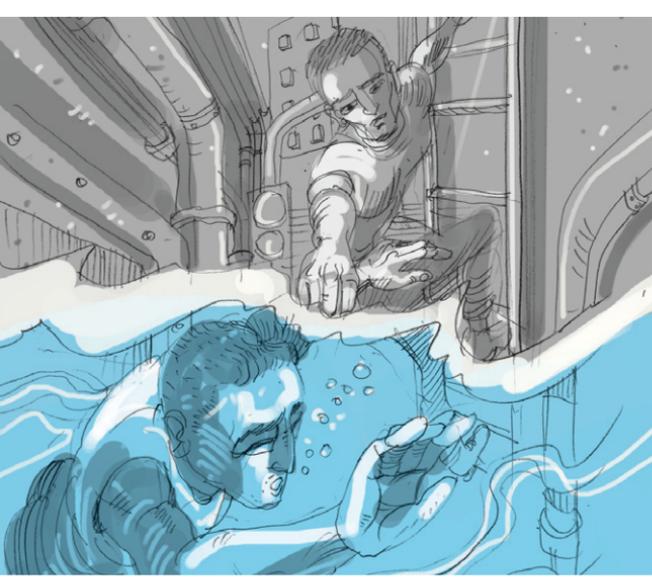


### Impact

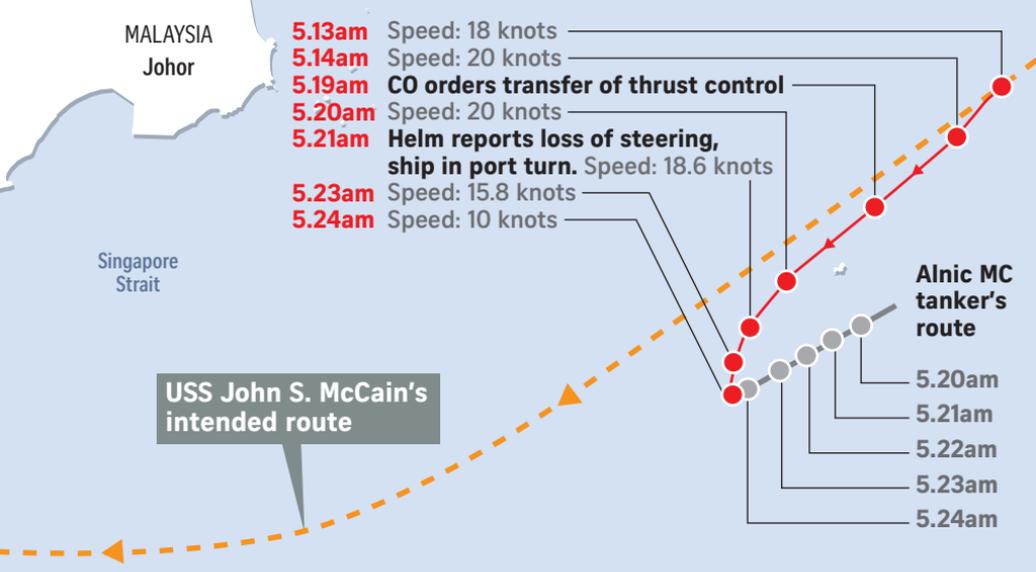
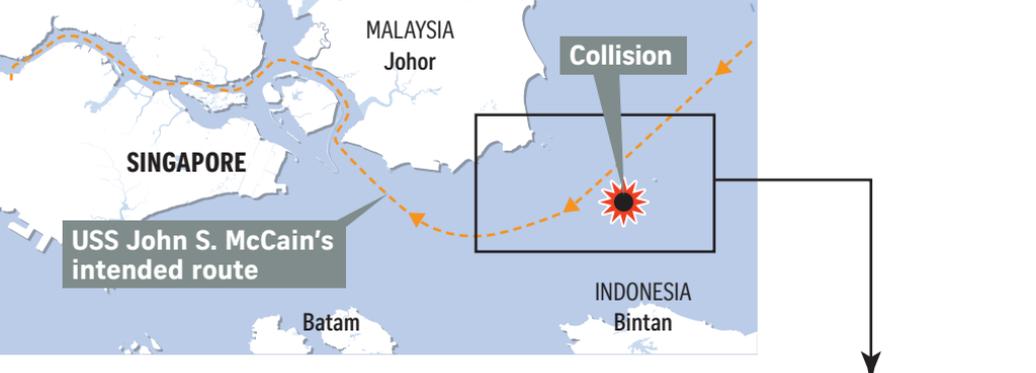
**Just before 5.24am** The collision between Alnic MC's bulbous bow and the USS John S. McCain leaves a hole roughly 8.5m in diameter on the left, near the rear of the warship. Crew compartments, known as Berthings 3 and 5, are struck. The impact is felt throughout the warship and some sailors are thrown off their feet. A few thought the ship had run aground, while others feared an explosion or an attack.

### Escape and rescue

**About 5.26am** An alarm is sounded to begin damage control efforts. There is flooding, internal fuel leaks and loss of ventilation as well as internal communications. One of the sailors in Berthing 5, with injuries to his back and legs, scrambles up a ladder to flee the compartment which is being flooded by seawater and fuel. A rescue attempt to enter the compartment fails after a sailor is forced back up the ladder by the pressure of escaping air and rising water. Just as he leaves, the rescuer sees another sailor swimming towards the exit and yanks him out of the water. Ten other sailors in Berthing 5 do not make it out.



## WHERE IT HAPPENED



## ALNIC MC



## USS JOHN S. MCCAIN



## HOW THE SHIPS COMPARE

	Alnic MC	USS John S. McCain
Length	183m	154m
Width	32.2m	20m
Weight	30,040 tonnes	9,000 tonnes
Ship type	Chemical/oil tanker	Arleigh Burke-class destroyer
Built in	2008	1991