



FORMER SHIP MATE SENTENCED IN TUGBOAT COLLISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 24, 2011

JOHN BAVARET, 42, a resident of Marrero, Louisiana, was sentenced today by U. S. District Judge Martin L.C. Feldman to six (6) months imprisonment, followed by six (6) months of home detention, and a \$125 special assessment after pleading guilty in January, 2010 to a two-count bill of information, announced U. S. Attorney Jim Letten. **BAVARET** was charged with a felony violation of the Ports and Waterways Safety Act and a misdemeanor violation of the Clean Water Act.

According to court documents, **BAVARET** held an apprentice-mate license, which allowed him to lawfully steer a tugboat only when a properly licensed captain was standing next to him on the wheelhouse. From approximately July 20, 2008, through July 23, 2008, **BAVARET** admitted to unlawfully steering a vessel, the M/V Mel Oliver, without a properly-licensed captain present, for DRD Towing, L.L.C., a marine company that operated tugboats. During this same period of time, at approximately 1:30 a.m. on July 23, 2008, while **BAVARET** was unlawfully at the helm of the ship by himself, the M/V Mel Oliver collided with the M/V Tintomara, a 600-foot tanker ship, causing the release of approximately 282,828 gallons of fuel oil in the lower Mississippi River near downtown New Orleans.

Commenting on today's sentence, Rear Admiral Roy A. Nash, the Eighth District Coast Guard Commander for the United States Coast Guard said:

"The catastrophic consequences in this case demonstrate the importance of having a properly licensed mariner in charge of a vessel at all times. The Coast Guard remains steadfast in our resolve to protect our waterways and the lives of those who sail upon them. I am especially grateful to the Department of Justice for their tireless efforts in this case."

The case was investigated by agents from the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Coast Guard Criminal Investigative Service. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U. S. Attorneys Matt Chester and Dorothy Taylor.