

Venezuelan Navy Patrol Ship Sinks After Collision With Cruise Ship



The 1,500 tonne coastal patrol ship *Naiguata* (above) was sunk in the encounter (file image courtesy Luis García Curado)

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An encounter between the Venezuelan patrol vessel GC-23 *Naiguata* and the ice-class expedition cruise ship *RCGS Resolute* resulted in the patrol vessel's sinking, according to the government of Venezuela. In a statement, *RCGS Resolute's* operator asserted that the cruise ship was approached by an armed Venezuelan Navy vessel at a position about 13 nm off Isla de Tortuga. The *Resolute* was drifting with one engine idling and one engine undergoing maintenance. The Venezuelan vessel ordered *Resolute's* crew to follow to the port of Puerto Moreno, Isla de Margarita. As this would result in a deviation from the cruise ship's planned voyage, the master sought to confirm with the shipowner before complying with the request.

While the *Resolute* was consulting with the home office, the Venezuelan Navy vessel allegedly fired shots and then purposely collided with the *Resolute's* starboard side. The ramming was repeated, the firm said, until the Venezuelan vessel encountered *Resolute's* hardened bulbous bow and sustained severe damage. *Resolute* did not suffer any harm affecting her seaworthiness, and after contacting maritime rescue authorities in Curacao, she waited on scene for one hour, her operator said. After MRCC Curacao released her from the scene, she got under way for Willemstad.

Images taken from the pier in Curacao show that the damage to *Resolute* appears relatively minor.

The government of Venezuela identified the lost vessel as the 1,500 tonne, 80-meter patrol ship *Naiguata*, and it has accused *Resolute* of improperly departing the scene after the casualty. "The action of the ship *Resolute* is considered cowardly and criminal, since it did not attend to the rescue of the

crew, in breach of the international regulations that regulate the rescue of life at sea," the statement reads.

In a second [statement](#) attributed to Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro, the government in Caracas alleged that the *Resolute* collided with the *Naiguata* in an "act of aggression and piracy." Further, the government speculated that it could not rule out that *Resolute* "was transporting mercenaries to attack military bases in Venezuela, unloading them out there on the high seas."

Venezuela faces a strict sanctions regime imposed by the U.S. and allied nations. The United States contends that Maduro is not the country's legitimate rule, and it has effectively blocked a large fraction of Venezuela's oil exports. The nation's petroleum-dependent economy has largely collapsed, and millions of Venezuelan citizens have fled to neighboring countries.