

Test gone awry puts ship on tilt

By Parker Robinson
STAFF REPORTER

A balancing experiment gone awry caused HMCS Algonquin to take on water and lean dramatically to port Friday afternoon at its CFB Halifax berth.

A navy spokesman said the ship, which was provisionally returned to the navy from a refit program in early October, was not in any danger although emergency response teams, fire department crew and other officials were standing by.

"I don't think it's very serious at all," said Capt. Al Dunlop, standing beside the crazily tilted ship as water was being pumped out. "No one got hurt and the ship is coming back up."

But dock workers and a number of technicians held different opinions on the possible consequences of the water intake.

Some said information gleaned from those working to right Algonquin led them to believe a very expensive repair job would await the navy once the ship's insides were dry.

"The engines are under water, that means they're badly damaged," said one worker. "Once salt water hits the engines, any engine, it's gonna have to be torn apart."

Others stood nearby, smiling and shaking their heads, discussing the condition of the Tribal-class destroyer as it slouched against the concrete dock.

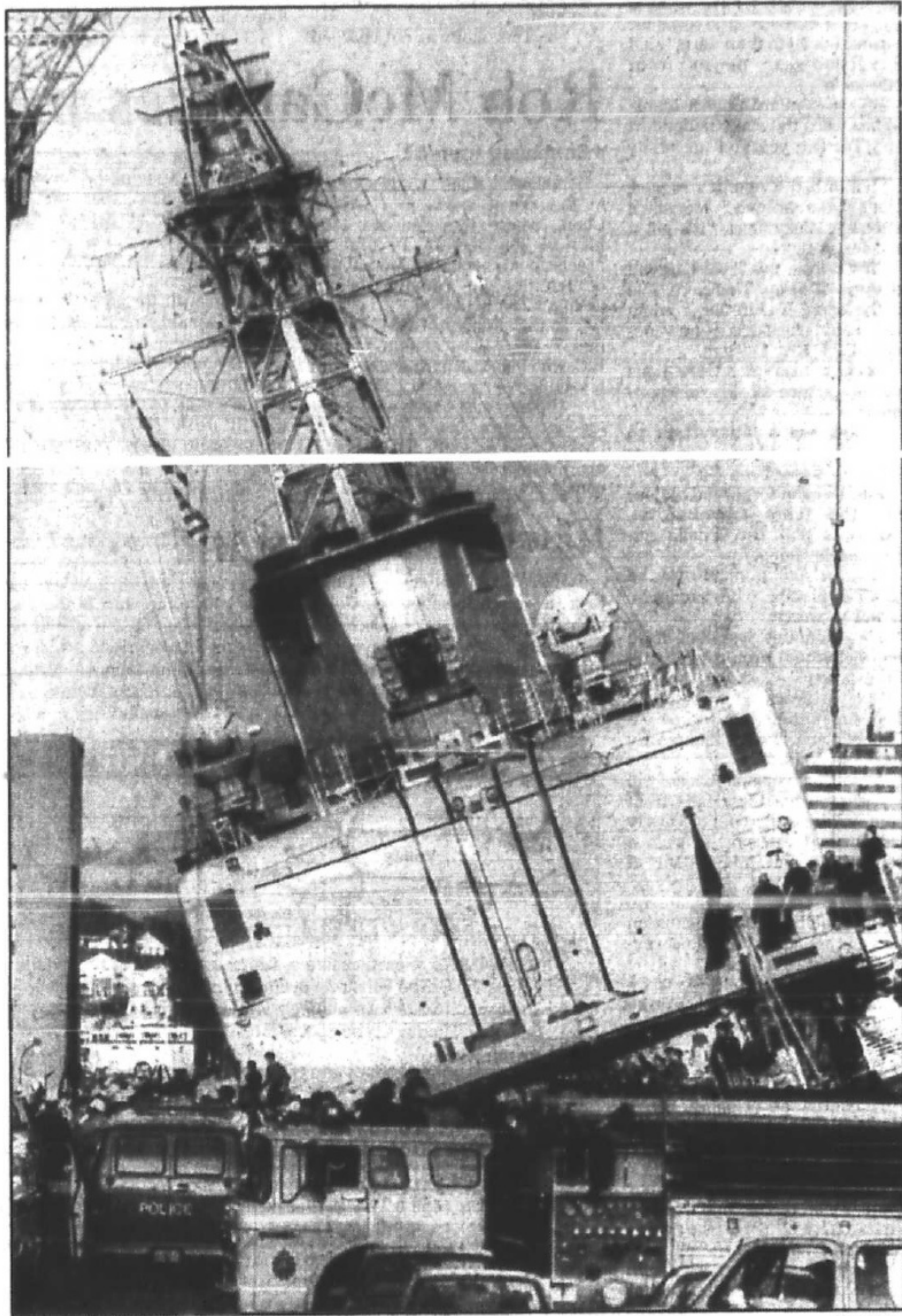
"It had to have taken in a lot of water to lean like that," said another. "Water is probably over a lot of wiring — maybe the electric generators and probably the sleeping berths."

The exercise being conducted is called a tilt and incline experiment wherein weights are placed on one side to make the ship lean. Then the vessel is monitored to gauge its performance.

The experiment is conducted only at dockside because a crane must move the iron weights. Algonquin was supposed to tilt 20 degrees but ended up at almost 25 degrees, Capt. Dunlop said.

Capt. Dunlop said he couldn't speculate on the amount of water involved, or how or where it might have come in. But bystanders said a burst pipe started the problem.

He said the ship's captain, Cmdr. Jean-Yves Forcier, was in charge and was dealing with the situation.



Mike Harvey

HMCS Algonquin lists at an unnatural angle to port at dockside in Halifax Friday, the result of a navy balancing experiment gone awry. Below, a crewman pumps water off the ship's stern.

Algonquin had spent almost four years in the Tribal Class Refit, Update and Modernization Program.

When the navy provisionally accepted the ship in October, there already existed a sizeable list of defects that various subcontractors were committed to fixing, program head Capt. Yvon DeBlois said last month.

Capt. Dunlop said he could not comment on whether the experiment's failure might be connected to the refit work done, for the most part, at the MIL Davie shipyard in Lauzon, Que.



Ship's damage toll escalates — navy

By Parker Robinson
STAFF REPORTER

Navy officials say the estimate of water damage to HMCS Algonquin has gone up, admitting one of the ship's engines may need to come out.

On Friday, the ship developed a severe list when a balancing experiment went awry, causing water to flood normally dry lower decks.

Saturday, the navy said in an interview no damage was done to any of the ship's four engines, although workers on the ship Friday had said the engines were under water, meaning they would be badly damaged.

But Sunday, Capt. Al Dunlop said a cruise engine was completely submerged in seawater, meaning it will probably have to be returned to the manufacturer, Pratt & Whitney.

"We still don't know all the damage done," said Capt. Dunlop. "But we have a picture now of the significant damage."

Friday, Capt. Dunlop had said he didn't think the damage to the ship was "very serious at all."

Replacing an engine wouldn't be too costly, he said in Sunday's interview.

"There's no replacement value to the engine because we already have it," said Capt. Dunlop, explaining that spares are kept. This engine would be repaired under warranty conditions and then put back on the shelf as a spare.

Three other engines, one a cruiser and two of a larger type,

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— navy spokesman

were untouched by water, he said.

"The damage won't be in the millions (of dollars)," he said, explaining he couldn't yet put an exact number of the cost. Also unknown is the actual cause of why water entered during the tilt and incline experiment Friday.

During a media tour of the engine room Sunday, Capt. Dunlop pointed out how high the water levels actually reached.

"We'd be under water where we're standing right now," he said, standing beside the swamped three-metre-high cruise engine.

About one-fifth of the engine room was under water, meaning wiring and electrical boxes must be examined. One electrical cabinet will require two weeks of solid work to repair.

As he spoke, engineers were at work in the cramped, oil-covered room, checking wiring and other equipment.

Computer systems were untouched, he said, as were electrical generators.