

Criminal Liability in Maritime Offenses Regarding Ship Accident Incidents

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KEYWORD	ABSTRACT
ship accident, shipping, <i>lex specialis derogat legi generali</i> , criminal liability, KMP Tunu Pratama Jaya.	Indonesia as an archipelagic country places sea transportation as a vital means for national connectivity, population mobility, and the distribution of goods. In the context of the state of law, the handling of ship accidents should be subject to the provisions of laws and regulations, especially Law Number 17 of 2008 concerning Shipping as amended by Law Number 66 of 2024, Government Regulation Number 9 of 2019, and Regulation of the Minister of Transportation Number 6 of 2020. However, in practice, there is still a tendency for law enforcement officials to directly apply the provisions of the Criminal Code (KUHP), without prioritizing the mechanism of preliminary examination of ship accidents by Syahbandar or Ship Accident Inspectors (PKK) as stipulated in the Law on Shipping. This research is normative legal research with an analytical-descriptive approach. This study also aims to analyze the liability of shipping crimes for ship accidents, especially the application of the principle of <i>lex specialis derogat legi generali</i> between the <i>Shipping Law</i> and the <i>Criminal Code</i> , as well as the implementation of law enforcement in the case of the sinking of <i>KMP Tunu Pratama Jaya GT.792</i> in the Bali Strait. The results of the study show that, normatively, there is a clash of norms between two different regulations, namely between the Shipping Law and the Criminal Code. The analysis shows that the Shipping Law as a special rule—based on the principle of <i>lex specialis derogat legi generali</i> —is a rule that must take precedence in handling ship accident events, while the Criminal Code applies as a <i>lex generalis</i> which is subsidiary. The case of the <i>KMP Tunu Pratama Jaya</i> shows the dualism of the examination and the potential for overlapping authority between Syahbandar/PPPK, PPNS Directorate General of Transportation, and the Police, which has implications for legal uncertainty and the unenforced principle of <i>ultimum remedium</i> in law enforcement of shipping crimes.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as the largest archipelago in the world, consists of thousands of islands stretching from Sabang to Merauke (Jayawibawa, 2024; Touwen, 2021). This geographical condition makes *Indonesia* a maritime country with a vast sea area that holds significant strategic value in terms of economy, politics, and security. Maritime experts emphasize that the sea is no longer seen as a barrier between islands but as a unifier of the archipelago, connecting all regions of *Indonesia*. In this context, ships play a vital role in maintaining national connectivity, mobility, and the distribution of goods between islands. As an archipelagic

country, the sea is viewed as a means of connection rather than separation, reinforcing the importance of maritime transport in uniting the nation's various regions.

From a constitutional law perspective, Article 1, paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of *Indonesia* affirms that *Indonesia* is a state of law (Wicaksono, 2021). The concept of a state of law means that shipping operations must adhere to laws and regulations, including those governing ship accidents, which affect life, property, and environmental safety. These regulations are specifically outlined in Law Number 17 of 2008 concerning Shipping, last amended by Law Number 66 of 2024—a special provision (*lex specialis*) governing shipping and ship accident inspections. This law is further supported by Government Regulation No. 9 of 2019 and Minister of Transportation Regulation No. 6 of 2020 regarding ship accident inspection procedures.

In practice, however, the enforcement of liability for shipping crimes in ship accidents often does not follow the principle of *lex specialis derogat legi generali*, where special laws override general ones. In some cases, law enforcement officials tend to apply the Criminal Code (*KUHP*) to ship accident events, particularly Article 359 concerning negligence, without prioritizing or considering the procedural requirements for a preliminary ship accident inspection mandated by the Shipping Law. This discrepancy became evident in the sinking of the KMP Tunu Pratama Jaya in Banyuwangi, which occurred in the Bali Strait on July 2, 2025. The Water and Air Police of East Java immediately began investigating the incident without waiting for the technical examination by the Ship Accident Inspector (*PKK*), despite the clear legal requirements.

The investigation of the KMP Tunu Pratama Jaya sinking highlighted the dissonance between criminal law and shipping law frameworks. While the Police began their investigation without waiting for the results of the preliminary examination by *PKK*, the Ministry of Transportation (*Kemenhub*) was still conducting its own. This situation illustrates the need for harmonization between agencies involved in ship accident investigations, such as the Police, *PKK*, *Syahbandar* (harbor master), *PPNS* Sea Transportation, and the Shipping Court. Such harmonization is essential to ensure that ship accident inspection mechanisms follow legal procedures and provide legal certainty and fairness for all parties.

A criminal approach to ship accidents should only be taken when there is clear evidence of intentionality (*dolus*) or gross negligence (*culpa lata*). If an event is purely accidental or beyond human control, it is inappropriate to apply criminal sanctions immediately without conducting a proper accident inspection process. The Preliminary Inspection of Ship Accidents, as regulated by the Shipping Law, should be carried out to gather information and evidence regarding the cause before any criminal charges are applied. Criminal sanctions should only be imposed after thorough investigation and confirmation of culpability, ensuring they serve as a last resort to improve behavior, especially in cases of criminal negligence.

Accidents are generally undesirable events, and criminal actions against those involved should be preceded by a comprehensive technical examination process to avoid violating the principles of justice and legal certainty. Law enforcement officials must distinguish between accidents and offenses, as they have fundamentally different legal and moral implications. The law must uphold fairness, ensuring that legal processes are followed to achieve certainty and justice for all parties involved in a ship accident.

The premature application of criminal law to ship accidents also causes disharmony between general law (*KUHP*) and special law (*lex specialis*) in the maritime sector. The Shipping Law is specifically designed to regulate maritime governance, including inspection procedures for ship accidents and the enforcement of shipping crimes. Ignoring these provisions in favor of applying the Criminal Code undermines the principle of *lex specialis derogat legi generali*. This inconsistency in legal interpretation can lead to legal uncertainty and affect the shipping industry's development and safety.

The lack of a clear, consistent approach to ship accident investigations can create an unhealthy climate for shipping businesses, which are essential to *Indonesia*'s economy as a maritime nation. Legal uncertainty can erode the confidence of shipping operators and captains, who may prioritize avoiding criminal prosecution over their professional responsibilities and technical duties. This contradicts the spirit of shipping safety and development mandated by national laws and international conventions like those from the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Legal certainty, justice, and the benefits of a fair system are crucial to ensuring a stable and thriving shipping industry in *Indonesia*.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed normative legal research—a doctrinal or theoretical approach relying on secondary data such as laws, regulations, court decisions, legal theories, and principles. It adopted an analytical-descriptive method, drawing on primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials gathered through literature studies and analyzed to evaluate the application of criminal law to ship accident events. The study focused on the dualism in the criminal liability process for ship accidents.

This approach suited the core issue: a norm conflict leading to dual examinations of one object at the same *locus delicti*, inconsistent application of the *lex specialis* principle, and procedural discrepancies in enforcing shipping crimes for ship accidents. The objects of study included legal concepts, laws and regulations, principles, expert doctrines, and relevant prior journals. Normative legal research examined literature-based secondary data to identify rules, principles, and doctrines addressing these issues. This method also tested norm consistency between general law (*KUHP*) and special law (Shipping Law).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Position of the Criminal Code (KUHP) in the national legal system

The position of the Criminal Code in the national legal system occupies a central position as the main basis and reference point for all criminal law arrangements in *Indonesia*. The Criminal Code functions as a general criminal law that contains the principles, definitions, elements of criminal acts, criminal liability, and types of punishment that apply to all citizens, without exception. In the hierarchy of laws and regulations, the Criminal Code is under the 1945 Constitution but is on par with other laws. However, its role is fundamental because it is the foundation for the formation, application, and development of national criminal law. The codification of *Indonesian* criminal law, known as the Criminal Code, is a general criminal law that forms the basis for all criminal laws, unless a special law specifies otherwise (Hamzah, 2016).

As the core criminal code, the Criminal Code provides a binding normative framework for all law enforcement officials. The Criminal Code ensures that state actions in punishing a person must be in line with the principles of legality, due process of law, and respect for human rights. In this case, the Criminal Code limits and controls the power of the state so as not to use arbitrary punishment. The Criminal Code contains general rules that apply to all criminal acts and serves as a guideline for law enforcement in assessing criminal acts and criminal liability (Moeljatno, 2008).

In addition to being valid as a general criminal law, the Criminal Code is also the parent of various criminal provisions outside the Criminal Code, such as the Narcotics Law, the Child Protection Law, the Electronic Information and Transaction Law, the Corruption Law, the Shipping Law and others. Provisions outside the Criminal Code are *lex specialis* which regulates certain criminal acts with special characters. Although they are special, all of these laws remain within the framework of the national criminal law system that is based on the principles of the Criminal Code, so that harmony and integration between general criminal law

and special criminal law are created. Thus, the Criminal Code is not just a law that regulates criminal acts, but a philosophical, juridical, and sociological foundation for all criminal law buildings in Indonesia. In the Indonesian criminal law system, the Criminal Code is the parent of all criminal regulations. It is the basic framework that limits and directs the formation of criminal provisions outside the Criminal Code (Arief, 2010).

The Position of Shipping Law in the national legal system

The position of the Law on Shipping in the national legal system is in a strategic position that regulates the implementation of shipping comprehensively, as well as being the legal basis for all marine transportation activities in Indonesia, including law enforcement in the event of ship accidents. The Law on Shipping functions as a special law that regulates aspects of shipping safety, maritime security, sea transportation, ports, marine environmental protection, and law enforcement in the shipping sector. Due to its technical and specific scope, the Law on Shipping fills the regulatory needs that cannot be adequately covered by other general laws. The Shipping Law is the main legal basis for the implementation of sea transportation in Indonesia and includes provisions regarding safety, security, ports, maritime environmental protection, and liability in ship accidents (Purwanto, 2014).

In the hierarchy of national laws and regulations, the Law on Shipping has a position as a law under the 1945 Constitution and is on par with laws in other sectors, such as the Aviation Law, or the Maritime Law. Its status as a law makes the Shipping Law have national binding power and becomes the basis for the formation of derivative regulations in the form of Government Regulations, Regulations of the Minister of Transportation, as well as various technical regulations related to safety and shipping operations. The Shipping Law also functions as a *lex specialis* in the field of sea transportation. In many cases, it overrides the general provisions contained in other general laws when there are differences in regulation.

As a *lex specialis*, the Shipping Law regulates detailed matters such as ship seaworthiness standards, seafarer certification, marine pollution management, carrier responsibility, and port governance as well as procedures for inspecting ship accidents including liability for shipping crimes. Thus, this Law plays an important role in providing legal certainty, operational safety, and maritime environmental protection in activities related to shipping. The Shipping Law is a *lex specialis* that regulates technically and comprehensively all aspects of shipping, ranging from safety, sea transportation, ports, to marine environmental protection that cannot be reached by general provisions in other laws (Saad, 2019).

Institutionally, the Shipping Law establishes a legal framework for the implementation of the duties and authorities of the government, both central and regional, in the implementation of shipping. This arrangement strengthens coordination between agencies such as the Ministry of Transportation, Municipal Affairs, Port Authority, TNI Navy, Police and other maritime security agencies. All of this emphasizes that the Shipping Law is not only the technical basis for operations, but is an integral part of the national legal system in realizing safe, efficient, and in accordance with the principles of the state of law. In the field of sea transportation, the Shipping Law is the main legal instrument that regulates the implementation of shipping as a whole, including safety rules and law enforcement mechanisms in the event of a ship accident (Martono & Sudjatmiko, 2011).

The basics of *lex specialist derogate legi genarali*

The principle of *lex specialis derogat legi generali* is a legal principle that emphasizes that when there are two provisions that regulate the same thing, then the special rules must take precedence and override the general rules (Tanya et al., 2021). In the context of liability for shipping crimes against ship accidents, this principle is clear because the shipping sector has very specific provisions regarding safety, manning, seaworthiness, and the liability of the

captain and ship owner. When an accident occurs such as a ship sinking, catching fire, colliding, or running aground, the examination and determination of fault does not directly use general criminal law, but first uses special rules in the field of shipping that have been designed to regulate in more detail the actions, obligations, and standards that must be met by each party involved in ship operations.

Provisions such as the skipper's obligation to prove that he has carried out his duties according to safety procedures, the mechanism of preliminary inspection by Syahbandar, to the authority of the PPNS Directorate General in handling alleged shipping crimes, are all forms of application of this principle. Therefore, in the event of a ship accident, the general criminal law (KUHP) is not the first reference, but is used only if there is no special regulation or if the act includes a general criminal act such as gross negligence, persecution, or destruction that results in an accident. Thus, hierarchically and functionally, it can be affirmed that the Criminal Code is positioned as a *lex generalis* (general rule), while the Shipping Law and its implementing regulations are *lex specialis* that override these general provisions if they regulate the same thing in the scope of shipping.

Normatively, the principle of *lex specialis* is also affirmed in Appendix II of Law Number 12 of 2011 concerning the Establishment of Laws and Regulations which has been updated through Law Number 15 of 2019 and Law Number 13 of 2022. Appendix II of Law 12/2011 contains the principles of regulatory formation, including the principle of priority that special provisions must take precedence when regulating the same scope as general rules. Thus, the prioritization of the Shipping Law over the Criminal Code is not only based on the doctrine of criminal law, but also based on the normative basis of the formation of laws and regulations. The Criminal Code is a general criminal law (*algemene strafrecht*) that applies if there is no special provision that regulates a certain act, thus the Criminal Code has a nature that is subsidiary to the special criminal law (Lamintang, 2013).

The principle of *lex specialis derogat legi generali* means that if there are two legal provisions that regulate the same thing, then the special provisions must take precedence and override the general provisions. In the context of shipping, the meaning of this principle is obvious because technical aspects such as shipworthiness, crew certification, navigation, safety standards, and ship accident investigation mechanisms are areas that can only be appropriately regulated through special legal norms. The Shipping Law contains provisions specifically formulated to address these technical problems, so that the general provisions in the Criminal Code or Civil Code are no longer adequate to resolve cases that require maritime safety expertise and standards. If there are rules that are general and rules that are specific, then special rules must be used first. This is the so-called principle of *lex specialis derogat legi generali* (Mertokusumo, 2003)..

Discussion of the Shipping Law as *lex spesilis* and the Criminal Code as *lex generalis*.

In the following description, the position of the Shipping Law will be analyzed in the context of the implementation of criminal provisions that are also regulated in the Criminal Code. If we pay attention to the provisions of Article 63 paragraph (2) of the Criminal Code, it can be explicitly read that the Criminal Code provides an explicit basis for the application of the principle of *lex specialist derogate legi generali*. The article states that if an act is covered by the general criminal rules as well as special criminal rules, then the applicable special criminal rules are the rules.

This, Article 63 of the Criminal Code is a juridical basis that directly strengthens the application of the principle of *lex specialis* and becomes a meeting point between the doctrine of criminal law and the positive legal system of Indonesia. In the context of shipping, criminal liability procedures for ship accidents, acts such as the skipper's negligence, violations of documents, violations of shipworthiness, or failure to meet the standards of the ISM Code are

types of acts that are regulated in detail in the Law Therefore, the Criminal Code cannot necessarily be used as a basis for punishment when the Shipping Law regulates more specific criminal norms. This application is in line with the principle of *lex specialis derogat legi generali*, where special rules override general rules as long as they have provided complete and comprehensive arrangements. However, if the special law does not provide adequate criminal norms, then the general provisions in the Criminal Code are the basis that must be enforced (Hiariej, 2014).

Various legal studies have examined the position of Law Number 17 of 2008 concerning Shipping as a *lex specialis* in law enforcement against shipping crimes. Eka Putri Ernanda, Moch Mansur, and Ichwal Subagjo in the journal *JUSTITIABLE* (July 2024) discuss the criminal liability of a skipper in a ship fire incident. They emphasized that technical negligence in ship operations must be analyzed based on the special provisions of the Shipping Law, not through Article 359 of the Criminal Code. According to the study, a skipper's fault can only be fairly assessed through technical parameters such as safety management standards, engine condition, navigation, and compliance with the ISM Code. From this literature, it can be concluded that there is an academic understanding that the Shipping Law is a *lex specialis* that should be the main reference in law enforcement of shipping crimes against ship accidents.

Law Number 17 of 2008 concerning Shipping and its amendments (the last Law 66 of 2024) has regulated all aspects of safety, security, seaworthiness, ship management, crew competence, as well as procedures for law enforcement of shipping crimes, and operations regarding shipping comprehensively. Due to the technical and specific nature of its regulation, the Shipping Law cannot be equated with the general criminal provisions in the Criminal Code. Some researchers, as discussed earlier, emphasized that the Shipping Law must be used as the main basis in law enforcement against law enforcement of shipping crimes, especially for ship accidents. Thus, in the event of a ship accident, the law enforcement process must first refer to the provisions of the shipping law before opening the law enforcement option for the use of the Criminal Code.

The Shipping Law occupies a position as a *lex specialis* that specifically regulates technical and operational aspects in shipping activities, so its position overrides the Criminal Code as a *lex generalis* when regulating the same event, especially related to ship accidents. These technical rules are not regulated in the Criminal Code which only provides general regulations regarding criminal acts such as negligence, the consequences of acts, and criminal liability without considering the special characteristics of the shipping world. Therefore, in law enforcement practice, investigators, syahbandar, and shipping authorities are required to first refer to the provisions of the Shipping Law when a ship accident occurs, before applying the provisions of the Criminal Code.

This approach is in line with the principle of *lex specialis derogat legi generali*, which states that special laws should take precedence over general laws. Thus, the Shipping Law is not only a technical legal tool for shipping, but at the same time the main basis for determining faults, negligence, and criminal liability in ship accident incidents, while the Criminal Code is only valid as long as it does not contradict or is not regulated in the special provision. The provisions in the Shipping Law are *lex specialis* so as to override general rules such as the Criminal Code when regulating events in the shipping sector, especially those related to safety, security, and responsibility in ship accidents (Saad, 2019).

Case Analysis of the KMP Tunu Pratama Jaya GT.792 Ship Accident in the Framework of Lex Specialist Derogate Lex Generalis

KMP Tunu Pratama Jaya GT.792 sank in the waters of the Bali Strait on July 2, 2025, about 20 or 30 minutes after departing from Ketapang Port to Gilimanuk. The ship was carrying passengers and vehicles, it is suspected that the ship had a leak in the engine room which caused

seawater to enter and trigger the shutdown of the ship's engine and electrical system. The wave condition at that time was quite high, making the situation worse until the ship tilted, the vehicle load shifted, and the ship capsized in a short time. The SAR operation stated that the total number of rescued victims was 30 people and 19 people died, as well as 4 victims who have not been identified and as many as 16 victims have not been found, declared missing (MetroTVNews.com, 2025). The East Java Regional Police (Dirpolairud) has begun to investigate the sinking incident of KMP Tunu Pratama Jaya. The investigation was carried out by asking for information from dozens of survivors and survivors (Liputan6.com, 2025).

The East Java Regional Police Directorate conducted a thorough investigation and investigation, examining dozens of witnesses including survivors and crew members. On the other hand, Syahbandar through KSOP also carried out a ship accident investigation process to continue to the stage of investigating shipping crimes carried out by the PPNS Directorate General of Transportation. This investigation then developed into an investigation process by the PPNS Directorate General of Transportation which led to the determination of one suspect, namely an official from the company that owned the ship. officials of PT Raputra Jaya, the company that owns KMP, were designated as suspects by civil servant investigators (PPNS) of the Ministry of Transportation. The man born in Aceh has also been detained at the Banyuwangi Class II A Prison (Radio VIS FM, 2025). Thus, both the police and the PPNS Directorate General of Hubla play an active role in enforcing the law against the occurrence of the KMP sinking ship accident. Tunu Pratama Jaya.

Law enforcement against the KMP Tunu Pratama Jaya accident should be carried out through an inspection mechanism that has been clearly regulated in the Shipping Law, PP 9/2019, and Permenhub PM 6/2020, not through a dualistic inspection procedure that has the potential to cause overlapping authorities and does not provide legal certainty for ship accident events. The regulation emphasizes that Syahbandar or the appointed government official is the party who is obliged to conduct a preliminary examination in accordance with the provisions of the shipping law, including examining witnesses, collecting technical evidence, evaluating aspects of the ship's seaworthiness, manning, navigation, and compliance with safety standards. The results of the preliminary examination are then determined whether the case is forwarded to the Shipping Court, PPNS Shipping, or the Police. Thus, the examination of witnesses by the National Police from the beginning before the results of the Syahbandar examination has the potential to ignore the procedures that have been established by laws and regulations and are not in accordance with the principle of *lex specialis derogat legi generali*, namely that specific provisions in the shipping sector must take precedence over general provisions such as the Criminal Code.

Furthermore, the examination mechanism that has been determined by law aims to avoid the dualism of examination, because dualism not only causes confusion for the parties being examined, but also creates legal uncertainty and allows for different interpretations between institutions. Therefore, law enforcement in the case of the KMP ship accident. Tunu Pratama Jaya should be carried out according to the procedures that have been regulated in the mechanism for inspecting ship accidents in the Law on Shipping, if an alleged technical or professional violation is found, the case is transferred to the Shipping Court, and if an alleged general crime is found, then the police will enter to conduct an investigation. The principle of *ultimum remedium* also emphasizes that the use of criminal instruments must be the last resort after all administrative and technical mechanisms regulated in the shipping legal system are implemented. By following the rules that have been set, law enforcement not only runs more structured, but also provides legal certainty and ensures that the authority between agencies does not overlap.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that handling ship accidents in *Indonesia's* national legal system must prioritize Law Number 17 of 2008 concerning Shipping (as amended by Law Number 66 of 2024), along with implementing regulations such as Government Regulation No. 9 of 2019 and Minister of Transportation Regulation No. 6 of 2020, as *lex specialis* governing inspection procedures, safety standards, crew competence, and accountability—superseding the Criminal Code (*KUHP*) as *lex generalis*. Analysis of the KMP Tunu Pratama Jaya GT.792 sinking revealed dualism between Police and PPNS Sea Transportation investigations, causing inter-agency disharmony and legal uncertainty by bypassing the mandatory preliminary examination by the Ship Accident Inspector (*PKK*), which is essential for objectively determining accident causes before criminal enforcement. Thus, the Shipping Law should serve as the primary basis for establishing fault, negligence, or liability, with the Criminal Code applied only subsidiarily and criminal sanctions as *ultimum remedium* after exhausting technical and administrative measures. Future studies could empirically examine post-2024 Shipping Law amendments through case analyses of multiple ship accidents, assessing compliance rates and proposing legislative reforms for clearer inter-agency coordination protocols.

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