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Classification: ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ Releasability: Handling:

s22(1)(a)(ii)
[Redacted]

Subject: HQJTF 639 INCIDENT REPORT 086D/11 - TSE MEMBER FELL OVERBOARD FROM SIEV 255
- 21 JUL 11

Source: HQJTF 639

Comments:
s22(1)(a)(ii)
[Redacted]

SUBJ: HQJTF 639 INCIDENT REPORT 086D/11 - TSE MEMBER FELL OVERBOARD FROM SIEV 255 - 21 JUL 11

A. HMAS MELVILLE s22(1)(a)(ii)

1. (R)A MEMBER OF TSE FELL OVER BOARD OFF SIEV 255, MBR HAS BEEN RECOVERED AND IS NOW ONBOARD MVL.

A. HMAS MELVILLE

B. 202200Z JUL 11

C. s33(a)

D. AT 202200Z A MEMBER OF THE TSE EMBARKED ON SIEV 255 FELL OVERBOARD WHILST IT WAS SECURED TO s33(a)(i) BOUY MEMBERS LIFEJACKET ACTIVATED AND HE WAS RECOVERED UNHARMED FROM THE WATER AFTER 5 MNS. (1) MEMBER FELL OVERBOARD WHILST TRANSITING DECK AREA. CURRENT CONDITIONS INDUCED HEAVY ROLL ON VESSEL AND MEMBER LOST FOOTING. MEMBER HAS BEEN RECOVERED TO MEL AND EXCHANGED FOR A MEMBER OF THE

s22(1)(a)(ii)
[Redacted]

(3) TSE MEMBER RECOVERED. MEMBER SEEN BY POMED NIL INJURIES

s22(1)(a)(ii)
[Redacted]

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Australian Government
**Australian Customs and
Border Protection Service**

R E P O R T

Maritime Operations Support

Post Incident Quick Assessment

Report – SIEV 227 SOLAS

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13 April 2011

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Maritime Operations Support
Post Incident Quick Assessment Report – SIEV 227 SOLAS

1. Background

- 1.1. A post incident review of events relating to the SIEV 227 SOLAS is to be conducted in order to: derive 'lessons learnt'; determine any impact on current procedures and capability requirements; and more broadly to inform future Ashmore Island capability requirements.
- 1.2. This post incident Quick Assessment (QA) forms part of the review process and seeks to capture key points for consideration as part of that process.
- 1.3. The content of this QA is drawn from discussion with the Commanding Officer (CO) and crew of Australian Customs Vessel (ACV) Dame Roma Mitchell and the listed references:

2. References

- a. ACV Dame Roma Mitchell – Patrol 10/11-09. Australian Customs & Border Protection Vessel Post Patrol Report - Part 1 Tasking Details Addendum: Minute Paper - Outline of events for SOLAS SIEV 227.
- b. ACV Dame Roma Mitchell – Patrol 10/11-09. Australian Customs & Border Protection Vessel Post Patrol Report - Part 3 Patrol Comments.
- c. Ashmore Guardian – Patrol 10/11-09. Australian Customs & Border Protection Vessel Post Patrol Report - Part 3 Patrol Comments.

3. General Overview

- 3.1. Between the 4th and 17th January 2011, ACVs Dame Roma Mitchell (DRM) and Ashmore Guardian (AG), and HMAS Armidale were undertaking taskings associated with SIEVs 226 and 227 in the vicinity of Ashmore Island. This included maintenance of SIEV hull 226 following the transfer of its 60 PII and crew to ACV Triton on 7th January 2011 and maintenance of SIEV 227 with 76 PII and 4 crew onboard.
- 3.2. On the 10th January 2011, the CO of DRM declared a SOLAS in relation to SIEV 227 and in deteriorating weather conditions 80 PII and crew were transferred onto DRM where they remained until subsequent transfer to ACV Triton on 15th January 2011. In this instance PII and crew were landed in Darwin, NT.
- 3.3. Defence personnel (namely TSE, a medical officer and linguist) were deployed to assist onboard Customs & Border Protection (C&BP) assets. An AFMA officer was already deployed on each of the C&BP assets.
- 3.4. For the purposes of this QA interaction with various other naval and Customs & Border Protection (C&BP) assets are considered peripheral to events surrounding the SOLAS.

4. Timeline (key events)

25 Dec 2010

- MEO Group transit from Darwin & arrive AG

26 Dec 2010

- AG receives 60 PII and crew (SIEV 225) from HMAS Maitland

29 Dec 2010

- 1 x PII attempts to jump from AG

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30 Dec 2010

- Transfer 60 PII and crew to ACV Triton, extra TSE provided from assets in area

04 Jan 2011

- HMAS Glenelg brings SIEV 226 to the outer mooring. PII and crew maintained onboard SIEV Hull 226
- ACV DRM tasked to re-supply AG at Ashmore

07 Jan 2011

- 60 PII and crew from SIEV 226 transferred to ACV Triton

10 Jan 2011

- AG receives SIEV 227 from HMAS Larrakia in outer lagoon. SIEV 227 towed to inner lagoon and placed on AG's mooring by ACV DRM
- Meeting held on AG with MEO Grp Enforcement Commander (EC) & COs ACV DRM and HMAS Armidale. EC assigned local OPCOMD.
- SOLAS (SIEV 227) called by DRM
- 76 PII and 4 crew of SIEV 227 transferred to DRM

15 Jan 2011

- 76 PII and 4 crew of SIEV 227 transferred from DRM to ACV Triton
- DRM departs Ashmore for Darwin

17 Jan 2011

- DRM arrives Darwin

18 Jan 2011

- MEO Grp handover and depart AG for Darwin
- Employee Assistance Program conducted onboard DRM

5. SOLAS

- 5.1. The post patrol reporting suggests there is a clear difference of opinion between the Enforcement Commander (EC) on AG, and CO of DRM, regarding the calling of SOLAS in relation to SIEV 227. The CO of DRM has since provided a detailed outline of events and reasoning (refer Attachment 1) in support of his decision to call SOLAS.
- 5.2. Two key factors (weather and the status of the SIEV 227 hull) emerge as important considerations in the tactical decision making process regarding the SOLAS and might suggest a pre-disposition in terms of the more strategic operational mindset.

Weather

- 5.3. Initially SIEV 227 was brought to an outer mooring. When the ability to maintain security watches became a concern a decision was taken to move the SIEV to the inner mooring. The ACV had to undertake the manoeuvre due to the deteriorating conditions. ^{s22(1)(a)(ii)}

- 5.4. The EC refers to the weather being extreme but despite the fact that AG's resources were not able to address the situation at the outer mooring and the EC subsequently reports that on a number of occasions, due to weather, AG's tenders became inoperable for extended periods in the inner lagoon, the ^{s47C}

¹ Ashmore Guardian – Patrol 10/11- 09. Australian Customs & Border Protection Vessel Post Patrol Report – Part 3
Patrol Comments (Attachment 3)

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5.5. s22(1)(a)(ii)



5.6. Despite the number of assets in relatively close proximity the ability to render assistance or support the SIEV was determined by the weather and sea-state. At a tactical level as these deteriorated those on scene reacted and responded accordingly.

Status of SIEV 227

5.7. s22(1)(a)(ii)



5.10. It appears the master of AG was requested to undertake an assessment of SIEV 227. The CO of DRM was present and in discussions with the master was informed that the people or their welfare were not his concern as he (AG's master) had only been tasked to assess and ensure that the SIEV was and remained secured to the mooring. For that reason the master did not venture below decks but conceded to the CO of DRM that the vessel was obviously not in a good state.

5.11. s22(1)(a)(ii)



² Ashmore Guardian – Patrol 10/11- 09. Australian Customs & Border Protection Vessel Post Patrol Report – Part 3 Patrol Comments (Attachment 3)

³ Attachment 3

s22(1)(a)(ii)

6. Decision Making

6.1. s22(1)(a)(ii)

6.2.

Maintaining Persons on a SIEV

- 6.3. At one level it appears that the safety of embarked security watches prompted a re-assessment of the operating environment. It is unclear how persons remaining onboard SIEV 227 would have managed without re-supply and having to maintain bilge pumps should it have become necessary to remove official presence due to safety concerns.
- 6.4. What is impossible to determine is the reaction of PII and crew on board a SIEV in any given situation. Recent history provides some tragic examples resulting from the unpredictable behaviour of those on board SIEVs. Only a short time before a PII had attempted to jump from AG in circumstances far less threatening than those being experienced by the persons on SIEV 227. If at any point PII or crew of SIEV 227 had decided to go into the water, from fear, encouraged perhaps by the presence of official assets and later the proximity to shore, it could have triggered a disastrous sequence of events.
- 6.5. Since SIEV 227 a SIEV's (228) engine caught fire resulting in its loss and with the boarding party forced into the water when abandoning the SIEV.

Maintaining empty SIEV hulls

6.6. s22(1)(a)(ii)

6.7.

6.8.

7. Issues for Consideration

- 7.1. A number of issues emerge that warrant further consideration in determining lessons learnt and assessing any impact on current procedures and capability.

Tactical Level

7.2. At the tactical level these centre around:

- s22(1)(a)(ii)
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Strategic Level

7.3. At a more strategic level:

- s22(1)(a)(ii)
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8. Maritime Operations Support (MOS)

- 8.1. s22(1)(a)(ii)
- 8.2.
- 8.3.
- 8.4.

Summary Post SOLAS

- 8.5. It appears however, that once SOLAS was called focus and support on the task at hand was fairly unanimous. For crews at sea, especially DRM with 99 persons on board, life was particularly difficult. There were some very real concerns and the situation was extremely worrying for those on board. In surging conditions, high winds and in close proximity to a reef options were extremely limited should the mooring have not held. Loss of life and/or an ACV were probable outcomes. The wear on the mooring lines (apparent having viewed them) suggests strongly that it was fortunate the weather abated when it did.
- 8.6. The actions of all concerned in extremely difficult and dangerous circumstances are commendable. Specifically, the actions onboard DRM following the calling of SOLAS preserved the safety of life at sea for a large number of PII and crew of SIEV 227. The make up of crew onboard DRM comprised 8 ACV crew, 1 AFMA officer, 6 TSE, 1 defence medical officer and a linguist. The unified and unselfish approach by that group deserves recognition particularly the CO and Medical officer who did much to set the conditions that saw the 99 onboard through the experience. The support provided by the MEO Operational Commander and the MEO coxswain is also noted.
- 8.7. The stoical nature and good humour, cooperative and compliant nature of the 80 PII and crew should also be borne in mind as a contributing factor in the successful conclusion to this event.
- 8.8. A range of associated issues emerge, many of which are outlined in the post patrol reporting. Some are recurring and are consistent themes in consecutive reports. It appears that although some may be able to be fixed in isolation all should be reviewed in a stock take of operational capability against the current operating environment.
- 8.9. It should be noted that all 4 MEOs returning to Darwin onboard Oceaneer submitted incident reports relating to that voyage; 2 crew onboard DRM sustained injuries before SOLAS was called and were incapacitated for a period of time; other incident reports have been submitted; an Employee Assistance Program session was facilitated for the DRM crew when it returned to Darwin. The recent SIEV 228 sinking with officers ending up in the water has been reported to Comcare as a dangerous occurrence and the numbers of Incident Reports being submitted generally, ^{s47C} [REDACTED]

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9. Recommendations

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13 April 2011

MOS Post Incident QA Report
- SIEV 227. V3.0 13Apr11

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