



Agenda Item: ATCM 9
Presented by: ATS
Original: English

Sinking of M/V Explorer Flag State Investigation



Office of
Deputy Commissioner
of Maritime Affairs

THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

BUREAU OF MARITIME AFFAIRS

8418 WESTWOOD CENTER DRIVE, SUITE 300
VIENNA, VA U.S.A. 22182
TELEPHONE: 703-790-3434
TELEFAX: 703-790-5655

14 May 2008

Mr. Jan Huber
Executive Secretary
Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting
Antarctic Treaty Secretariat
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Dear Mr. Huber,

This is in response to the request of Mr. L. Robert Hughes, Antarctic Advisor, U.S. Department of State for a background document on the Liberian flag state investigation into the sinking of M/V EXPLORER in the Antarctic on 23 November 2007. We understand that the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) will be held in Kyiv on June 2, 2008 and conference participants will discuss tourism related issues including the safety of passenger vessels operating in Antarctic Treaty waters. The sinking of the EXPLORER will be considered in your deliberations.

We have attached a synopsis to aid in your conference discussion of the EXPLORER incident. As we have noted in the synopsis report, the attached document is not a preliminary report nor is it the final flag state report. We are submitting the synopsis to the ATCM for your discussion without prejudice to our on-going investigation and final report.

As our investigation progresses, our investigation team continues to collect evidence despite the time period since the incident. Therefore, the synopsis cannot be treated as preliminary report nor bind the Liberian Administration to a final report.

Please do not hesitate to contact us in case you have any question.

Sincerely,

Captain Robert Ford
Vice President, Quality & Audits
LISCR, LLC
For the Deputy Commissioner Maritime Affairs
Republic of Liberia

Michael Davies-Sekle, Esq.
Vice President Marine Investigation &
Assistant General counsel – LISCR, LLC
For the Deputy Commissioner Maritime Affairs
Republic of Liberia

Enclosure/Attachment: as stated



Office of
Deputy Commissioner
of Maritime Affairs

THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
BUREAU OF MARITIME AFFAIRS

8618 WESTWOOD CENTER DRIVE, SUITE 300
VIENNA, VA. U.S.A. 22182
TELEPHONE: 703-790-3434
TELEFAX: 703-790-3655

**THE SINKING OF MS EXPLORER IN THE ANTARCTIC ON
NOVEMBER 23, 2007 – ON-GOING CASUALTY INVESTIGATION BY
THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

Introduction:

On November 23, 2007, at about 0200 local time, the Liberian flagged passenger vessel EXPLORER sank in a position about 20 miles south-southeast from King George Island, Antarctica after sustaining hull damage while transiting an ice field. All 54 crewmembers and 100 passengers abandoned the ship without injury and were rescued by the Norwegian flagged vessel NORDNORGE.

Note:

The Liberian Administration's investigation into the casualty is on-going and the investigation team continues to collect evidence. This synopsis should not be treated as a preliminary report nor bind the Administration to the final report.

General Particulars:

Port of Registry	Monrovia
Official Number	8495
IMO Number	6924959
Call Sign	ELJD8
Year Built:	1969
Builder	Nystad Varv. A.B. Finland
Owners:	Gap Shipping Co. Limited
Managing Company	Gap Shipping Sweden
Length Overall (LOA)	76.2 meter
Beam	14.0 meter
Depth	5.6 meter
Gross Tonnage	2398

I. Factual Information¹

- EXPLORER entered an ice field about 2200, 22 November 2007
- Vessel maneuvered through an ice field until about 2345 when crew and passengers on the bridge said that the vessel came to a stop after hitting densely packed ice
- At about the same time that the vessel came to the stop, and while the Master attempted to maneuver the vessel through the area, the passenger alarm on the bridge sounded
- Crew was sent to investigate and found that four passenger cabins on the 300 level on the starboard side (cabins 308, 310,312, and 314) were flooding
- Damage Control D/C team mustered and sent to pump out water using portable submersible pumps and attempt repair
- Passengers were mustered in lifejackets in vessel lounge
- D/C team knocked out a small section of bulkhead panel down to determine extent of damage (extent of damage to be developed in report)
- Portable pumps were rigged up and initially crew believed they were succeeding in pumping out water (explanation to be further developed in report)
- About 0215 local time, vessel suffered a blackout. The Emergency Generator energized and provided emergency lighting. During the blackout the Master saw that he was drifting astern into the ice field. He decided at this point to abandon passengers from the vessel as precautionary measure
- The engine crew re-started the generators and engines, and the bow-thruster was energized. The main engine was re-started
- The deck crew and hotel staff was sent to man the lifeboats and with the passengers abandoned the vessel. All passengers were off the vessel and into the lifeboats by about 0530. The engine crew remained on board to keep the engines and generators operating
- Only one of the four lifeboat engines was able to be started
- Bosun with Expedition Group launched Rigid Inflatable Boats (RIB) referred to as Zodiacs, the manufacturer of the RIBs.
- The Chief Engineer reported to the Master that the flooding could not be stopped and the Master made the decision for the engine crew to abandon the vessel on to Zodiacs
- The Master and Expedition Group leader remained on vessel until Controllable Pitch Propeller went full astern and vessel's speed increased to 8-9 knots astern. Master attempted to stop engine but could not. The Master and Expedition Group leader abandoned the vessel on to a Zodiac
- NORDNORGE and ENDEAVOR arrived at about 0700, 23 November and all passengers safely boarded on to NORDNORGE

¹ See section VI for evidence collected during investigation.

II. Potential Causal Factor Issues

- Shiphandling techniques and decisions of Master in Ice
- Gauging history and regulations
- Damage Control Response
- Watertight Door Procedures
- Engine Design
- Double hull

III. Potential Survival Factor Issues

- Emergency Briefing
- Training in starting lifeboat engines
- Open vs. Closed Lifeboats
- Carriage of Immersion Suits for all passengers on board
- Crowd Control before and after abandoning vessel

IV. Additional Potential Issues

- Recovery of Voyage Data Recorder
- Treatment of passengers after being returned to Argentina
- Expedition Group not certificated crew members

V. Conclusions-Recommendations

- Being developed and will be reflected in the casualty investigation report

VI. Investigative Evidence

- On-scene interviews of crewmembers conducted by Liberian Investigator in Punta Arenas, Chile 26 November through 30 November
- Passenger questionnaire sent out and received responses from more than 25 percent of passengers
- Phone interviews of passengers and Expedition Group members
- Interview with former Master and Ice Pilot
- Class survey and gauging reports
- 2007 shipyard repair record
- Interview of surveyor during 2007 shipyard period
- Photographs taken by passengers and crew
- Video taken by passenger while vessel in the ice field