Lessons Learnt from Costa Concordia Emergency
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Final document proposed by participants

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Preamble

It is felt, in a general way, that the huge size of the modern cruise ships transporting thousands of people on board is a new challenge, in case of emergency, for the response organizations.

With the continuous development of the cruise industry with vessels that are increasing their size all the time there is a serious challenge to maritime rescue as never before.

An accident which develops the need for mass rescue is a rare and very complex event with possible very serious consequences which demands the skills and the most sophisticated rescue knowledge: technical, managerial and operational.

Events like this may require an international response in view of the specific technique needed to respond in such a situation.

As events like this fortunately are very rare the maritime search and rescue organizations are not, normally, prepared for such a situation, including the fact that the maritime rescue has different terminology and language than the civil protection.

Believe that such a challenge demands an adequate response from the coastal states which should cooperate among themselves in view of situations of this kind. According to the SAR convention for the maritime means.

It seems that behind the grounding as we have seen in Costa Concordia accident a case of extensive fire on board, would be of even more serious consequences.

Member states may not be fully prepared with all the response capabilities that may be needed in case of several scenarios that can develop with a ship of the dimensions of the modern cruise ships, so cooperation is paramount and MIC can play a fundamental role facilitating, as appropriate, the information of members states and the request (CECIS) of air SAR facilities, divers with skill to operate in enclose spaces…

Taking into account the rareness and so exceptional character of this accident with a modern passenger ship, all possible lessons learned should obtained regarding maritime safety and emergency response, in view of the increasing activities of cruise ship industry in Europe
Follow are some ideas to complement those that were developed during the workshop on the 15 of November in the island of Giglio.

1. To make mandatory, if not still, the exercise of the cooperation plans between passenger cruise ships, their companies (company crisis cell) and the MRCCs (as of the regions where they operate) taking into account the n.º 3 of the rule 7 of the chapter V of the SOLAS convention.

2. Establishing a civil protection coastal incident plan for each European coastal country, including all response entities and in coordination with the MRCC, involving every possible asset and community: fishing community, pleasure boats communities....

3. Underline the role of the person on board responsible for emergency communication linking with the MRCC. Ensure that the delay on raising the emergency alert does not occur, it’s preferable a false alarm than a bigger crises.

4. Appoint incident commander on scene. Procedures have to be in place to appoint the most appropriate OSC in case of a joint operation, who is able to co-ordinate activities of all organizations involved in emergency response.

5. Include in local emergency plans of coastal regions the risk of maritime accidents in view of the assets that are locally available for assistance.

6. Establish a cooperation between EMSA and MIC, as exists for pollution response, to develop the doctrine for this type of accidents.

7. Establish a program of common exercises involving both maritime response and civil response organizations working in close co-operation with each other have. Exercise has to be carried out on national and international scale, as well as Mass Rescue Plans have to be exercised involving crews of passenger vessels.

8. Ports that are more frequently visited by cruise ships should have an emergency plan to assist cruise ships. A way should be though to have the drawings of the ships available in case of emergency. The list of persons on board should be available on a system like those foreseen in the EU directive 65/2010 (FAL 6 – list of passengers) that will be supported on safeseanet from EMSA.

9. The MIC should have a data base of the assets available in member states and capable of being employed in complex maritime emergencies.

10. EMSA/MIC should organize a core of specialists in maritime emergencies response, ready to be deployed, to assist member states in case of request or necessity.

11. Restricted water maneuvering condition: When closing to the shore the bridge should be organized for pilotage not allowing, in principle, persons not involved with navigation to get in.
12. Responsibilities on sea and shore, and the interface between sea and shore has to be define. Ass well a clear definition of responsibility of maritime authorities, e.g. coast guard and coastal authorities, e.g. firefighting service has to be made in advance in order to co-ordinate joint emergency response (SAR, oil contingency, wildlife response, salvage)

13. Member States must have in place Mass Rescue Plans for incidents at sea both in case of a passenger ships as well as aircraft. Considering that MROs are complex operations there will be tasks that go beyond maritime SAR. Hence there should also be a separate plan for critical incident management (at sea) where there is a clear link to maritime SAR that remains under the authority of the national SAR competent authority.

Notes on MROs

The Mass rescue plan and the Critical Incident Management Plan should outline a clear command and control as well as a decision making hierarchy.

MROs are complex and costly to exercise. Hence it may be expedient to break down the whole exercise in manageable sectorial sections, eg Communications Plan, Public Relations Plan et, to build up to a major live exercise. Local authorities as well as national authorities must be conversant with such plans. The relevant industry should also be involved.

Unlike the Costa Concordia, MROs can happen where a multi national response is necessary. Therefore every opportunity should be availed of for MS to have joint exercises involving all the relevant national authorities including military.

A mass rescue operation (MRO) is one that involves a need for immediate assistance to large numbers of persons in distress such that capabilities normally available to SAR authorities are inadequate. MROs are relatively rare low-probability high-consequence events compared to normal SAR operations, but major incidents leading to the need for MROs have not been infrequent on a world-wide basis, and can occur anywhere at any time. The nature of such operations may be poorly understood due to limited chances to gain experience with major incidents involving MROs, hence the importance to identify lessons learnt from this rather unique incident.

The sequence of priority in major multi-mission incidents must be lifesaving first, generally followed by environmental protection, and then protection of property. Moral and legal obligations and public and political expectations require preparedness to carry out MROs safely and effectively should they become necessary. Since the need for MROs is relatively rare, it is difficult to gain practical experience to help deal with them. Types of potential MRO scenarios vary, but there are certain general principles that can be followed based on lessons of history.

These lessons learnt have been compiled and reproduces in the form of guidelines in the International Aeronautical and Maritime SAR Manual (IAMSAR) of the International Maritime Organisation and the International Civil aviation Organisation Volume II at para 6.15 and Appendix C.