MEDICAL EVACUATIONS FROM SHIPS AT SEA ALONG THE SOUTH AFRICAN COASTLINE

The Risk of Evacuations by Boat and the Need for Helicopter Capacity on the South African Coastline

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CEO NSRI
The NSRI, is a registered NPC Company (No 1967/013618/08) and Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) with the Department of Social Development, which delivers maritime rescue services along the coast and on inland navigable waters in South Africa.

In addition, it delivers advocacy and preventative programmes which target drowning particularly in children.
STRUCTURE

• The organization operates from a central head office and thirty three rescue bases (33), which create a geographic footprint of services along a coast of almost 3 000km (and 1 300km on inland dams), each with a defined management (Station Commander and committee), crew structure (1013 volunteers) and rescue resources (90 rescue craft and 28 vehicles).
National Sea Rescue Institute of South Africa

Rescue Bases
In terms of the SASAR (South African Search and Rescue) Act, the NSRI is delegated as a sub-sub-Rescue Coordinating Centre at Station Level to effect coordination and control over Maritime Rescue. The MRCC (Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre) and Port Captains provide National and Regional coordination. The MRCC are receiving 112 emergency calls and SafeTrx overdue alarms and acting as a dispatch centre for the NSRI.

SEA RESCUE EMERGENCY NUMBER
112
FROM YOUR CELL PHONE

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VIDEO OF ACTUAL INCIDENT
Dear Portfolio Committee Chairperson
Portfolio Committee on Transport

The NSRI performs more than 70 medical evacuations from ships at sea on behalf of SASAR/SAMSA and DOT every year.

The transfer of patients and personnel between two vessels at sea is risky and we have advised the Maritime Sub Committee of SASAR and the SASAR Executive that we deem the risk of medical evacuations by boat to be of an unacceptable risk and that Helicopter Evacuations are more appropriate.

We have had two incidents in the last year where crew/patients escaped death/injury by very narrow margins and I need to impress on you the consequences of not resolving this issue by ensuring the appropriate availability of Helicopter Medical Evacuation Services along the South African coastline through the South African Air Force or Private sector.

If we see ourselves as a maritime nation and expanding the ocean economy then medical rescue of crew from vessels at sea is a pillar to that vision.

I attached a video of an incident on the 11th of May 2015 and it can be clearly seen how a crew member escapes death by centimetres as the gangway descends onto the boat deck.

The video can be accessed by clicking the following link - https://vimeo.com/127599249 The password is Spirit.

I am available to do a presentation at the Portfolio Committee if necessary but I think the attached video underlines that urgent action is necessary and that we cannot wait for committees to convene and make decisions. This requires common sense executive decision making within the Department, SASAR and the SANDF.

The email is copied in support of motivation of the urgency and importance that I place on this matter having worked through the channels and not receiving satisfactory resolution.

I am available to do a presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Transport if necessary.

Thank you for receiving my submission.

Yours Sincerely

Dr. Cleeve Robertson
MEDICAL EVACUATIONS FROM COMMERCIAL VESSELS

Sea Rescue performed 75 medical evacuations of patients from ships at sea, and only a portion of these resulted in a donation from the shipping companies. We will continue to work towards an appropriate contribution from the shipping industry.
SOUTH AFRICA

• The Big Five
  – A big coastline 3000km
  – Big Seas (Cape of Storms)
  – Big Ships (Europe to the East)
  – Big shipping traffic
  – Big problems
MEDICAL EVACUATION STRUCTURE

- Cape Town Radio Receives all requests or Medical Evacuations
- Emergency Physicians in Cape Town evaluate requests
- Standard Text TMAS (Telemedical Advice at Sea) and photograph
- Physician Recommends Medical Evacuation
- Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Cape Town coordinates response
RESPONSE

• Helicopter Evacuation by
  – South African Airforce
  – Private Operator (R200,000)

• Boat Evacuation by
  – NSRI (NPC)
  – Private Operator
LEGISLATIVE MANDATE

• South African Search and Rescue (SASAR) Act 2002
• MRCC
• Tasking via Port Captain (SubRCC)
• Station Commander (Sub-sub RCC)
HELICOPTER EVACUATION

• NSRI has rescue swimmers and supports local EMS and Helicopter providers in providing crew for Helivacs.
BOAT EVACUATIONS

• The NSRI performs an average of 70 evacuations of sick or injured seamen from ships at sea by boat every year.
Gang Plank and Pilots Ladder
Altitude!
Night Operations
Sometimes a Crane
Personal Protection
Pitfalls of Evacuation by Boat

- Three objects moving in three dimensions
- Risk to the Boat
- Risk to the crew
- Risk to the Patient
- Inexperienced Medical Personnel
- Risk of Patient falling in the Water
- Rescue Equipment appropriate to the ask
- Climbing Risk
- Medical Equipment up to the task
Recent Safety Incidents

Incident 1
Boat sucked under the stern into propeller wash crushing superstructure/aerials

Incident 2
Gang Plank Descending, missing crew member by centimeters and damaging boat
Recommendations

Recommendation 1
Evacuation by Helicopter

Recommendation 2
No Gang Plank

Recommendation 3
Climb with protection on rope
Recommendations

Recommendation 4
Full PPE, Helmet, Harness, Lifejacket

Recommendation 5
Bauman Bag and Vacuum Mattress for patient

Recommendation 6
Fully redundant rope lowering system
Bauman Bag and Vacuum Mattress
Coastal Medical Evacuation Helicopter Solution

Rescue Bases

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4 Helicopter Stations

- Orange River Mouth
- Dassen Island
- Cape Agulhas
- Seal Point
- Great Fish River Mouth
- Tugela River Mouth
- Ponta do Ouro
- Port St Johns
HELICOPTERS

- First Prize SAAF because of existing footprint
  - Oryx Helicopters (two ready to fly), aircraft, crew, training
- Second Prize Private Sector National Coastal Provider
  - Equivalent/Twin Engined (two ready to fly)
- Formal Bid and Contract (DOT/SAMSA Budget)
- Single Provider for Medivacs from Ships
- Dedicated Crew, Pilot(s), Engineer, Paramedic, Swimmer
- CAA Licensing CATS 138 with equipment/personnel
- Currency Training
- Built on top of current service
Estimated Flying Costs Per Annum SAAF (Fuel Only)

- **Operations**
  - R15000/hour
  - Assume 150 hours, two hours per 75 rescues.
  - R2,250,000.00

- **Training**
  - Assume 4 hours training for each operational hour.
  - R9,000,000.00

- **Total Fuel cost per annum**
  - Approximately R12 million.
Conclusion

- South Africa is a Maritime Nation
- We have an International Responsibility to Provide Rescue
- Helicopter Evacuation of patients is safer
- Cost is affordable
- Standing contract with SAAF or Private provider is essential
THANK YOU