

RESCUE SWIMMER

2016 Nobody gets left behind

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NORMAN ATLANTIC

Troubles in the
Mediterranean page 8.

Massevacuation in the
middle of the Sea page 12.

Machine god like in all
greek tragedies page 16.

SPRINGBOKS SAVING SOULS AT SEA

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STRESS EXPOSURE TRAINING

Teaching them how to be afraid.

Page 30.





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BROTHERS WITH FINS

Our associations name is EURORSA but as Eurovision song contest this year, we have had members all the way from Australia many years. Actually nowadays there are swimmers from 5 different continents in our association. When we did meet last time in Gijon there was lot of new guys coming to our family and never seen and felt such a brotherhood. Guys from different part of our planet, like crown together. We share same kind of education, work, missions and way of life. You never know what will happen during your work day, shoudnly you can be in different country doing tasks to save lives. I have started to like more and more motto founded 2012 in Denmark: Be ready to shoot from hips. It describe so well attitude we share, you have to be ready always. In Spain 2014 we created two great traditions. Rescue Swimmer Wings and Award. This year we start new tradition doing EURORSA PT test and relay competition and I'm sure in after swim we will have things to discuss. Every 2 years seems to be good way to organize our meetings. Once again it has been passion and life for few guys to organize this unique way to meet. Great thanks to Italy CG and especially to Fabio. This year we organized with really fast reactions for MOAS our members to work voluntary in they rescue ship at Aegean Sea. Big hand to our members from Creek and Spain who jumped in their ship to save humans crossing sea.

Be safe in work and take care of you families off duty.



Juha Eteläinen
President, EuroRSA
Rescue swimmer
Air Patrol Squadron
Finnish Boarder Guard



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NOBODY GETS LEFT BEHIND

During the summer of 2012, a delegation from the Finnish Border Guard was on an assignment to my base at Sarzana for testing and evaluating new helicopters in use with the Italian Coast Guard.

Among them was a Rescue Swimmer, who from the beginning, was very keen to share some very interesting ideas and thoughts about techniques and working procedures.

That Rescue Swimmer, a founding EURORSA member, asked me to join the association to share my experiences with many other Rescue Swimmers from around the world.

I was the first Italian to join the EURORSA, and four years later it gives me great pleasure that Italy now has 30 members in the association and is the proud host country of RSM16.

Thanks to that encounter with my friend Sami, I could understand the importance and the possibilities that our association and its great wealth of experience and knowledge can offer to those, who every day, give their best, hanging to a cable, suspended 50ft above the sea with the single purpose, to save lives !



Fabio Pieretti
EuroRSA Board Member



DEAR GUESTS,

It is a pleasure to tell You welcome to La Spezia for Your meeting. I am Luca Bondielli, Consultant for Eurorsa about the organization. In these days I will be with You to live together an event that will make You discover the beauty of our Land and will talk about the issues that You are passionate about.

I hope that my support can be useful for You and I trust that Your stay in La Spezia can be enjoyable."

Buon soggiorno e buon lavoro a tutti voi!

Luca Bondielli
RSM16 Manager



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NORMAN ATLANTIC

ATLANTIC TROUBLES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN page 8
MASSEVACUATION IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SEA page 12
MACHINE GOD LIKE IN ALL GREEK TRAGEDIES page 16

THE NIGHT BETWEEN THE 27th AND 28th DECEMBER 2014
is worldwide sadly remembered for the shipwreck of the
Norman Atlantic, one of the biggest and most complex
SAR operation ever occurred in the Mediterranean Sea.

ATLANTIC TROUBLES IN THE **MEDITERRANEAN**

ON THE 28TH OF DECEMBER 2014, at 0436, the cruise vessel Norman Atlantic, Italian flag, sends a digital selective call reporting a distress situation on board. The call is received by all the Coast Guard Stations along the south-eastern coast of Italy, and particularly by the Coast Guard of Bari which is a Maritime Rescue Sub-Center (MRSC) and by the Operative Center of the Italian Coast Guard General Command, which is the national Maritime Rescue Coordination Center (MRCC).

Paolo Cafaro

Through the coastal radio service the captain of the vessel reports the situation on board: the ship is in position lat. 40°17' N and long. 019°01' E which falls inside the SRR (Search and Rescue Region) of Greek responsibility, the garage deck has got fire, the engines have failed with no possibility to control the navigation and there are 58 crew members and about 400 passengers on board. Immediately after, MRCC Rome contacts JRCC Piraeus, which assumes the coordination of SAR operation as it is the competent authority over that area. At 0500 MRSC Bari, in accordance with JRCC Piraeus, sends three SAR vessels respectively from the ports of Otranto, Brindisi and Santa Maria di Leuca; it engages also two tugs from the port of Brindisi with two teams of fire men on board. In the meanwhile, JRCC Piraeus diverts towards the ship in distress the M/V Spirit of Piraeus. At 0531 the captain of Norman Atlantic orders to abandon the ship. Other merchant ships are diverted by the Greek JRCC which employs also two helicopters Super Puma and a SAR vessel. MRCC Rome sends a circular message through INMARSAT C in order to alert all the merchant ships transiting in the area of Italian responsibility close to the position of the ship in fire and decides to employ all the Coast Guard air assets immediately available: an airplane ATR 42MP from the air station of Pescara and two helicopters AW139 from the air station of Catania. The weather and sea conditions are awful: wind from SW force 9 in the Beaufort scale and sea state 8 in the Douglas scale with a poor visibility. The SAR vessels and the merchant ships start recovering some castaways on board of life rafts but it appears immediately clear that only a huge intervention of helicopters can assure the evacuation of passengers and crew almost all of whom are still on board of Norman Atlantic (411 passengers and 58 crew members have been officially recorded on departure) due to very bad meteorological conditions. Fortunately one of the merchant ships engaged in the rescue operation has a flight deck (Cruise Europa, Italian flag) and JRCC Piraeus designates her as On Scene Coordinator. Wind and current make Norman Atlantic drift inside the SAR area under Albania responsibility. At 0900, after an agreement with Albanian and Greek authorities, MRCC Rome assumes the coordination of the rescue operation, keeping the M/V Cruise Europa as OSC.



The helicopters have started recovering people from Norman Atlantic winching them on the flight deck of M/V Cruise Europa, while air coordination is assured by the Coast Guard aircraft ATR42 MP designated as ACO by MRCC Rome. In the meanwhile the tugs are involved in fire extinguishing operation and the merchant vessels keep recovering some people from life rafts. Hoisting operations are carried on by Italian Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard helicopters together with one Greek Super Puma, but the wind, the uncontrolled movements of the ship, the flames and the smoke slow down rescuing operation. The arrival in the area of the Italian Navy ship San Giorgio at 1900 with 3 helicopters EH101 and 1 helicopter

AB212 operating directly from the board makes rescue activity much faster. At this time 6 merchant vessels, 3 tugs, 3 Coast Guard SAR vessels, 1 Coast Guard aircraft, 2 Coast Guard helos, 1 Air Force helo, 1 Greek helo and ITS San Giorgio with her helos are engaged in the operation. A Navy team including a doctor is winched on Norman Atlantic to better coordinate the mass evacuation, while the tugs keep trying to get the ship towed, but the ropes can-

not resist the high temperature generated by the fire and the weather conditions and sea state make the whole operation a real nightmare. Nevertheless helo activity, coordinated by the ATR42, goes on even at night in marginal visibility conditions due to both low ceiling and darkness. Late at night the weather improves a little bit and the fire diminishes together with the smoke, so rescuing can proceed faster. At 0800 of December 29th there are no flames visible from outside and only 85 people on board. In the morning ITS Durand de La Penne joins the operation area with helos on board and the remaining passengers can be evacuated in few hours. At 1432 the captain of Norman Atlantic declares that there are no more passengers on board and that he can be recovered at last. At 1449 the captain leaves the ship: mass evacuation operation from Norman Atlantic is over. SAR activity still goes on for few days, but no other person is found alive. Totally 453 people have been rescued and 9 people have been recovered dead. Due to the roughness of the sea, the tugs can reach the harbor of Brindisi with the towed ship only on the 2nd of January 2015.

Aircraft employment

Mass rescue and evacuation of passengers and crew members of Norman Atlantic was mainly operated by helicopters under co-ordination of an airplane. It assumed an exceptional character due to the following factors:

- weather conditions and sea state were particularly bad with thunderstorms, 40-50 kts wind speed, severe turbulence, poor visibility, low ceiling and sea state 8 in the Douglas scale;
- presence of smoke;
- the ship was totally uncontrollable under the effects of very strong wind and rough sea;
- different helicopters of the Italian and Greek Armed Forces with different operational characteristics were employed simultaneously, obliging the ACO to keep constantly updated the flight endurance of each helo, time of hand-over and refueling needs;
- helos operated at a very low altitude and weren't able to maintain positive radio contact with air traffic controllers. ACO assured it for everybody;
- presence of 30 meter high flames very close to the deck where hoisting operations were performed.

The extreme environmental conditions obliged the helicopters and their crews to operate at the limits of their operational capabilities: it was particularly difficult to keep hovering while winching due to the ship uncontrolled movements and to the presence of smoke especially at night. Nonetheless the helicopters rescued 349 people totally.

But the very good success gained by the helos was mostly due to the highly effective air coordination performed by the 2 airplanes ATR 42MP of the Coast Guard which alternated as ACO during the whole operation. The crew are trained for such a job, but it has never happened in a so complex situation and in so extreme conditions. A good task-sharing inside the aircraft allowed ACO to constantly maintain positive radio contact with all the actors that were inside the operational area, particularly with the OSC and each helicopter that was joining, holding, operating or exiting, as well as with air traffic controllers. First of all ACO established an area of 5 NM of radius centered on the position of Norman Atlantic, where every entering aircraft had to be already in contact with ACO on specific frequencies and at an altitude of 1500ft, while the leaving ones had to fly at an altitude of 1000ft. ACO maintained 2000ft due to low ceiling. ACO established also a pattern to follow by the helos: it was developed in order to avoid the smoke and included a sort of "downwind" leg to fly at 500ft, a turn inbound the ship, hovering on the deck to recover people, releasing on M/V Cruise Europa or on ITS San Giorgio/Durand de La Penne and getting back to the "down-

wind" leg for another pattern or reaching the exit point to go for refueling or else. If recovering or releasing operations were longer than usual, in order to assure an adequate separation ACO assigned the upcoming helos some holding points. In this way ACO could manage the simultaneous presence of an average of 5 helicopters in the area.

Lessons learned

What we've basically learnt from Norman Atlantic event, I think can be summarized as follows:

- The helicopters that participated in Norman Atlantic SAR operation had different operational characteristics and, particularly, different flight endurance. So it was really hard for ACO to establish priorities in employing them in order to optimize their intervention. The problem was that the helos took off to join the area without any coordination with ACO and sometimes without coordinating with MRCC either. So it happened that especially in daytime there were too many helos and some had to wait for their turn at a holding point wasting fuel and reducing the resource effectiveness. Probably we would have had an ideal solution for this problem if helos had taken off under direct coordination of ACO, even if difficult to put in practice.
- The presence of TCAS (Traffic Collision Avoidance System) on board of the ATR 42MP turned out to be very useful in this operation, given that, of course, participating aircraft must have the transponder on. In fact, it facilitated very much the workload of coordinating the air assets, allowing ACO to have a constantly updated situational awareness.
- Not all the helicopters were equipped with NVGs for night operations: the availability of NVGs should be mandatory in order to take part in SAR activities at night, also considering the particularly bad conditions they had to operate.
- - The presence of a merchant vessel like Cruise Europa with a certified flight deck allowed to speed up the releasing of a high number of people, even not able to cooperate. Helo crews must be kept well trained in using flight decks.

The SAR operation we've examined has undoubtedly a historical importance for the Italian Coast Guard: it was a highly complex operation where air and naval assets of different forces and countries joined together in order to save hundreds of persons facing prohibitive weather and sea conditions. Even if we've got still to work in order to improve our capabilities in mass rescue operations, I think it was a good success. Even if this event showed that we have to set up certain aspects in SAR crews training and in standardizing air coordinating procedures, it also showed that we are on the right track. ■

Captain (ITCG) Pil. PAOLO CAFARO

- Born in Turi (BA) on October 26th, 1958.
- After achieving the degree in political science, he joined the Italian Coast Guard with the rank of Ltjg.
- After the training course carried out in Leghorn Naval Academy, he was assigned to the office of Chioggia Harbor Master, before being admitted to the aircraft pilot training course: from November 1988 he attended flight courses with the U.S. Navy, receiving the pilot's license in April 1990.
- Getting back to Italy, he was assigned first to the ITCG 2nd Air Group in Catania (1990-1992) and then to the 1st Air Group in Sarzana (1992-1994), before being appointed as Head of the Harbor Master office in Vasto.
- In July 1995 he was moved to ITCG General Command, where he was assigned to the Air Component Office of the Department IV: in this period he prepared and reviewed the directives concerning the Corps flight crew training.
- In July 1996, he was transferred to the ITCG Air Base in Sarzana and, on the next September, was sent to attend the Staff course at the Maritime War Institute in Leghorn.
- After the course, in 1997 he was employed as J4 in the Headquarters of the Operational Forces in Albania during the "Alba" mission; later, he was sent to the High Defense Study Center in Rome to attend the Navy Staff upper course and the Joint Staff course.
- In July 1998 he was back in Sarzana, appointed as responsible for the ITCG Flight Standardization and Training Center, where he remained until 2001.
- From July 2001 to February 2005 he was appointed as Commandant of the ITCG 2nd Air Group in Catania: after that, he was assigned to the ITCG General Command, as Head of the Air Component Office (2005-2009).
- In October 2009 he was moved to the ITCG 1st Maritime Directorate in Genoa, as Commandant of the Operational Department for the related maritime region.
- From June 2011 to July 2015 he was moved back to ITCG General Command, where he was committed as Head of the Operational Office in the Department III.
- From November 2012 to June 2013 he attended the Defense High Study Institute in Rome. Since the 26th of July 2015 he has been the Commandant of the ITCG Air Base in Sarzana.
- He has more than 3000 flight hours as pilot on board of the ITCG airplanes (P166DL3 and ATR42 MP).



DECORATIONS

- In 2006 he received the gold medal for 25 years of military service and in 2007 he was decorated for participating in the Multinational Protection Force engaged in "Alba Mission" (UN Security Council resolution n° 1101 on March the 28th 1997).
- In 2011 he received the gold medal for long air navigation and the title of knight of Merit Order of the Republic. In the same year the Civil Protection Department released him the certificate of merit for participating in the operations aimed to face the emergencies caused by the eruption of Etna and Stromboli volcanoes in 2002 and 2003. In 2014 he received the cross swords with the Merit of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

Massevacuation in the middle of the Sea



THE NIGHT BETWEEN THE 27th AND 28th DECEMBER 2014 is worldwide sadly remembered for the shipwreck of the Norman Atlantic, one of the biggest and most complex SAR operation ever occurred in the Mediterranean Sea.

Salvatore Pulvirenti & Gaetano Coronello

SALVATORE PULVIRENTI

A fire broke out on board the vessel that flared briefly, enveloping, almost entirely, all the structures of the ship. More than 400 passengers on board were at the mercy of an ungovernable ferry adrift in the Adriatic Sea – half-way between the archipelago of the Greek Ionian islands and the coast of Apulia – in weather conditions at the limit: winds in excess of 50 knots, stormy seas and freezing temperatures.

I am Boatswain Mate 2nd class Salvatore Pulvirenti, Italian Coast Guard Rescue Swimmer assigned to the 2nd Coast Air Wing of Catania, Sicily.

I had spent a pleasant evening with my partner in a restaurant in my town. When home I fell asleep quietly, without being able to imagine what would happen soon. After only a few hours, my sleep was interrupted by the sound of the phone; with few, agitated words, the receptionist informed me of a request of SAR and asked me to rush.

While driving in the silent night, my mind was crowded with thousands of assumptions about what I had to face, and the memory went back to the previous rescues.

At the base LT **Valerio Verdecchi** (Pilot in Command), LTJG **Angelo Schembri** (Co-pilot), Petty Officer 3rd class **Delfo Scuderi** (Crew Chief) and I were informed by the Maritime Rescue Center about the scenario.

Realizing the severity of the event, and after all the pre-flight procedures, at 0755 we took off heading Galatina, on board the AW139, rescue name RIMC. The weather conditions during the flight foretold us the difficulties that we were going to encounter in the area of operations.

Landed at Galatina (Lecce) Air Force Base, I quickly got to talk to an Italian Air Force rescue swimmer, one of the first to intervene on behalf of the passengers of the Norman Atlantic; from his fast and troubled words I began to realize that what was waiting from each of us would have been a hard test for our courage, abnegation and professional capacity.

As refueling operations were completed, we took off again heading the scenario of the mishap, and we saw the ship by that

time already engulfed in flames. The cars in the garage, fuel filled, fed an unquenchable fire – the flames will be tamed only a week after the event – making ship decks and metal structures incandescent. The force 7 sea whipped the ship that, at the mercy of the waves, was following, with intense rolling movements, the wind gusts in excess of 60 knots that were investing the ship itself.

Many people were blocked by flames on the head-frame of the bow and on open decks free from fumes and fires. The shipwrecked persons were forced to stay on board the adrift ferry: it was impossible to safely abandon the ship, due to the cold water and the height of the decks, and many of the lifeboats entrances were blocked by flames.

After a brief search for the most suitable area to conduct rescue operations and planning in advance the steps to be taken, the pilots flew the helicopter towards the forecastle and, in hovering, we begun the operations using the HI-LINE procedure.

This particular procedure permits to minimize the time spent in hovering over the vertical of the castaways, giving the helicopter the chance to safely keep away from the hazardous fumes produced by the fire, and meant that the castaways were invested, exposing the castaways for only few seconds at the rotor flux.

At the completion of the first cycle of operations, we were able to rescue 8 people, and a total of 40 after an exhausting activity protracted in the following hours.

Many things about those tragic days have left their mark: the chill that gripped us in a vice, the winds that closed our eyes and especially the outstretched hands and the strain of men and women in disbelief of what was happening, desperate about their fate.

What I cannot get out of my mind are a face and a look of a castaway that made me understand how important life is. I carry inside me that emotion, even now, after six months and after many other rescues behind. That emotion made me understand the meaning of the phrase “So others may live”.

“The weather conditions during the flight foretold us the difficulties that we were going to encounter in the area of operations.”

GAETANO CORONNELLO

I am Boatswain Mate 2nd class Gaetano Coronello, and I am assigned to 2nd Coast Guard Air Wing of Catania, Sicily, as a rescue swimmer.

The morning of December 28th was my last service duty of the year, at the end of which I was going to begin my Christmas leave; my wife and my daughter were still sleeping and, while having breakfast, I turned on the TV looking for the news channel. I could not believe my eyes: a ship on fire, 30 miles from Apulian coasts, with 400 people on board.

I checked my phone petrified by the fact that I had not heard it ring, but I did not find any missed call. I decided then to call the operational center from which I got to know that the crew on duty the previous day took off before sunrise and they were already conducting rescue operations.

I stayed tuned on the news channel to follow the evolution of the operation, which already appeared very demanding and that it was going to last over time.

I asked my wife to have lunch earlier than usual, assuming I was going to be called for my duty shortly. When I received the call from the operational center, I kissed my daughter and my wife – clearly reading anguish in her eyes – and walked out quietly to comfort her, but then I rushed to get to the base.

LT **Luca De Ponti** (Pilot in Command), LTJG **Cristiano Romeo** (Co-pilot), Petty Officer 2nd Class **Fabrizio Messina** (Crew Chief) and Aviation Boatswain Mate **Giuseppe Zattara** (Flight technician) and I met for the flight briefing and shortly we were already airborne towards the scenario of the mishap. We landed at Galatina Air Force Base for refueling, and there we met the crew that was already operating in the area, exchanging with them information about procedures that we had to perform.

From the Maritime Rescue Center we had been tasked to recover two crew members from the stern and bring them to the bow to allow them to tie up the Norman Atlantic to the tugs.

Once we reached the Norman Atlantic, the scenario looked dramatic: lots of people wearing their life jackets waiting on the

upper decks of a ship, shrouded by smoke and flames, at the mercy of a stormy sea.

We focused our attention on the stern of the ship, looking for the crew members we were tasked to reach; a radio call informed us that the two seamen managed to reach the bow and shortly they were going to begin towing operations.

We were then tasked to carry a jacob's ladder on board; the purpose of its use was speeding up rescue operations especially at night time. After picking it up from Bari airport, we took off again reaching the ship back.

The pilots maneuvered to maintain the hovering over the ship and I was lowered on the deck, where I found two Air Force rescue swimmers that were giving assistance to a group of castaways. They helped me in moving the ladder on board the Norman Atlantic, and immediately after we were beginning rescue operations via the hoist of that group of people. Once the last castaway was rescued, we headed towards Galatina airport where on ground we found Red Cross personnel ready to give the castaways medical assistance.

After being informed that the use of the ladder was suspended due to a problem occurred, and after refueling operations, we took off again heading to the Norman Atlantic, where we noticed the scenario changed again: the wiring used to tow the ship broke.

On the upper deck of this ship shrouded by the smoke, we could see a conspicuous number of strobe lights, as many as each soul we would have never left at the mercy of that hell.

We landed back at Brindisi airport at 4 a.m. and the morning after we waited for further instructions. After rescuing a crew member on board of a ship close to the scenario and understanding everyone had been evacuated, we continued our flight towards Catania Air Base where, once landed, we completed the institutional tasks.

I will keep this experience with me for the rest of my life; from it I have been able to grasp the real danger of my profession, but the immense satisfaction it can also present to us.

Now, more than before, I feel proud and honoured to serve and be a member of the Italian Coast Guard. ■

“Once we reached the Norman Atlantic, the scenario looked dramatic: lots of people wearing their life jackets waiting on the upper decks of a ship, shrouded by smoke and flames, at the mercy of a stormy sea.”



3 ITCG RS tasked for operation:
Gabrielle, Salvatore and Gaetano.



Transferring ladders.



Lives saved from fire.



MACHINE GOD LIKE IN ALL GREEK TRAGEDIES

Nikos Panagopoulos

Chief Petty Officer
Rescue Diver
Hellenic Coast Guard

Sunday 28th December 2014, the Ferry MS Norman Atlantic, departed from the Greek port of Patras with 487 passengers, and 12 crew aboard, bound for Italy and the port of Ancona. It was early hours in the morning and apart from some security night lights, deep dark still covered the vessel, since most of the passengers had withdrawn to their cabins for the night. As estimated it needed all but a few more hours to reach their destination.

Without any prior warning or something to suggest foul play, two loud explosions shook violently the vessel and rattled everyone on board from their cabins and beds. The two explosions were the first of many more to come. A fire broke out on the car deck. Immediately a distress whistle sounded three times indicating the emergency alarm, followed by panicking passengers, lost in the midst of this nightmare yet not fully developed. Some passengers with more clear state of mind, tried to wear warmer clothes in an effort to get outside and reach the upper decks of the vessel. The flames spread quickly; the heat and smoke chased all those on board outside into howling winds and lashing rain, exposing them to gales and enormous waves sometimes as high as ten meters. The hours followed were described as “scenes from hell”. Some passengers in their despair and panic jumped in the dark waters and eventually were lost, nowhere to be seen any more.

Then the Italian Master of the Ferry MS Norman Atlantic, transmitted a dramatic distress signal.

Almost immediately an unprecedented international rescue effort, led and coordinated by the Italian Coast Guard commenced, since the vessel was closer to Italian waters. By 08:00–09:00 hours in the morning other passenger and merchant vessels, both Greek and Italian, sailing nearby were deviating in order to reach the point of the accident in a race against the clock. They tried to approach the burning Norman Atlantic but force nine/ten strong gales, made their efforts unsuccessful.

The situation was critical. The blazing lower decks had created “like hell” temperatures, preventing those on board to walk topside since melting shoe soles were adding to their disbelief. Desperate passengers snuggled next to each other for protection, against howling winds and lashing rain in the front upper outer deck by the bridge of the vessel.

One group of 150 passengers managed to escape in the first lifeboat finally put on the water by the ship’s crew, but others were prevented from doing so as two of the four lifeboats were destroyed by the fire. Until 13:00 only 33 of the above mentioned 150 were embarked on board and rescued by container ship

“Spirit of Piraeus” due to extremely heavy seas. By then, the absolute horror scene was composed by the blazing vessel adrift, with the fire ball that was flaring, engulfing almost all parts of the topside of the ferry and the rescuers’ efforts to reach the blazing vessel resulting in vain.

It was more than obvious that the solution in that very late hour was to be given by the “Machine God” like in all “Greek tragedies”, only then in the shape and form of the Navy and Air Force S.A.R Helicopters. Italian Air units were the first responders. As ordered they were trying to approach the area of the accident. At the same time despite the heavy weather two “Fireboats” set course from the Greek ports of Patras

and Igoumenitsa to Adriatic Sea in order to join the “battle”.

It was later known that both Fireboats were unable to reach the area of the accident due to weather barrier.

At 14:00 noon it was announced that only one out of the two Eurocopter AS 332 Super Puma of the Hellenic Air Force (HAF), ordered to flight to Adriatic Sea, was able to take advantage of a small “window” of opportunity and break through the weather barrier, reaching the MS Norman Atlantic. Immediately Super Puma’s crew started operating, and the first eight people women and children mainly, were “lifted” to salvation.

Eventually, the operation was relayed back in the hands of our Italian Coast Guard and Navy S.A.R colleagues. More than 400 people were rescued, most in daring helicopter sorties that persisted despite high winds and seas. No one gets left behind. ■



SPRINGBOKS SAVING SOULS AT SEA

All South-african helicopter rescue swimmers are trained on the various helicopter platforms available in their region. Making Station 29 a very unique team, some crew are proficient on 3 different air craft platforms.



Kim Germishuys

NSRI Station 29 ASR
Training Officer
Rescue Officer and Rescue Swimmer



Photo: Glenn Käsner

SPRINGBOKS SAVING SOULS AT SEA

03:00am

03:00am Tuesday, 1st December 2015, the phone rings.

"Morning Andy. Are they wanting air support for that call up the West Coast?"

Andy Connell is the Station Commander for the National Sea Rescue Institute's Station 29 Airborne Sea Rescue team. When a NSRI boat station needs air support or if there is a medevac pending, one of a few phones will ring. Either Andy's, or one of the 3 helicopter duty coordinators, regardless of the time of day.

"Yes, Station 4 has requested our assistance. Let's get the ball rolling."

Being the on-duty helicopter coordinator, I had already been alerted to a small crayfish vessel (known as a crayfish bakkie) with engine failure, just after NSRI Station 4 Mykonos received their alert at 00:14am. These small crayfish bakkies rarely have any lights or electronic navigation, so the crews needed to wait until first light to begin the search.

In the meantime and in two different towns, I was on a business trip and Andy at home just outside Cape Town, Andy and I opened up our laptops, made phone calls and sent messages. Gathering as much information as we could, to ensure a SAR flight would be approved for as early as possible.

08:20am

At 08:20am, the Station 29 ASR team were put on standby, pending flight approval. Not much more could be done besides receive information, so we went to work, carried on with our day jobs until a SAR flight was approved.

10:32am

That call came through at 10:32am and the ASR team were asked who could respond. Voluntarily leaving their day jobs for an unknown period of time, to help those in need.

First to respond was rescue officer, **Marius Hayes**, a marketing manager for a security firm, "I had a hectic morning at work and was about to walk into another meeting when my phone sounded, the saved beep for Sea Rescue. I thought it was

just an information notification and proceeded to start with meeting, but instinct made me reach for my phone and flip to my messages."

"I sincerely apologised to my directors and excused myself from the table, leaving in a haste, already going through the pre-take-off procedures."

Across town, rescue swimmer Davide Del Fante, a director in a family run paint company, had just arrived at a site meeting. Calling in 'Available', he apologised to his clients and made his way to Ysterplaat Air Force Base.

In the background a group of us worked on relaying incoming information to the crew. Station 4's shore team had intermittent cellular phone contact with the casualties, whilst the rescue boat attempted to search the large area.

11:16am

With thin mist moving through the St Helena Bay area, Rescue 935 took off at 11:16am. A South African Air Force (SAAF) Oryx helicopter, with 5 crew onboard, 3 SAAF air crew and 2 volunteers from the NSRI's Station 29 ASR.

The aircraft refuelled at Langebaan Air Force Base before heading out to sea to join the search for a 5m blue and white crayfish bakkie, presumed to be approximately 8NM off shore, they started searching between all the anchored vessels, before proceeding seaward.

12:52pm

The small vessel was located by the air crew at 12:52pm. Rescue swimmer, **Davide Del Fante**, deployed from the helicopter into the water and swam over to the boat. He found that the 3 men on board were all okay, albeit cold after being exposed to the elements for such a long period of time. After hoisting the 3 into the helicopter using the rescue strop, they returned to shore and handed over the casualties to a waiting medical crew and crew from Station 4 Mykonos. They then returned to Ysterplaat Air Force Base for the debrief, before heading back to work for an hour or so to tie up loose ends and then head to our team's twice monthly training.



SPRINGBOKS SAVING SOULS AT SEA

Leaving work, heading back to work, coordinating a rescue call during work. This is what makes things very different in South Africa. We are all volunteers.

The National Sea Rescue Institute, is a non-profit organisation and is manned by over 1000 volunteers at their 31 stations around the coast, and 4 inland dams and along South Africa's 1600 mile coast line. The head office is situated in Cape Town and our mandate is to save lives on South African waters.

All crew members from Station 29 ASR have their primary responsibility first to their boat stations, where they fill the roles of boat crew, rescue swimmers and rescue coxswains. They are on crews which stand duty 24/7, for one week in a 3-4 week cycle. In that week, they are expected to attend boat station training, respond to any calls that may come through at any time of day and monthly meetings. For some responding to call outs may be difficult during work hours, so they only respond after hours.

Should an NSRI volunteer want to join Station 29 ASR, they will also need to commit to being available for team training twice a month and flight training at least once a month. All this in addition to family and work life, and their boat station responsibilities. In addition to their initial helicopter rescue swimmer training, which is an intense period, lasting around 6 months.

NSRI Station 29 is present in 4 different regions along South Africa's coastline: Western Cape, Southern Cape, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. All our helicopter rescue swimmers are trained on the various helicopter platforms available in their region. Making Station 29 a very unique team, some crew are proficient on 3 different air craft platforms.

The NSRI does not have a dedicated sea rescue helicopter, we make use of the South African Air Force (throughout the country), the Red Cross Air Mercy Service (in the Western & Southern Cape) and the Port Authority helicopter (in KwaZulu-Natal). What we do from Cape Town, is set the standards & guidelines for the rest of the country, each then adapts it to their particular platform.

These platforms include the Atlas Oryx, MBB/Kawasaki BK117 and the AW Super Lynx 300 Mk64 from the SAAF, the SA Red Cross Air Mercy Service (AMS)'s AW119ke and Transnet Port Authority's AW109.

Due to the nature of South Africa's coast line, the unpredictability of when an emergency will arise and the lack of a full time coast guard, Station 29 ASR operates on an availability system for their crews, by checking "who is available now" or giving notice for a "possible call for take-off in 2 hours." This has proven very successful, as it gives the team the much needed flexibility that they need to be able to juggle family, work, boat and air station commitments. ■



3rd Rescue Swimmer meeting in

GIJON 2014



Family pic with red caps in Centro Jovellanos.

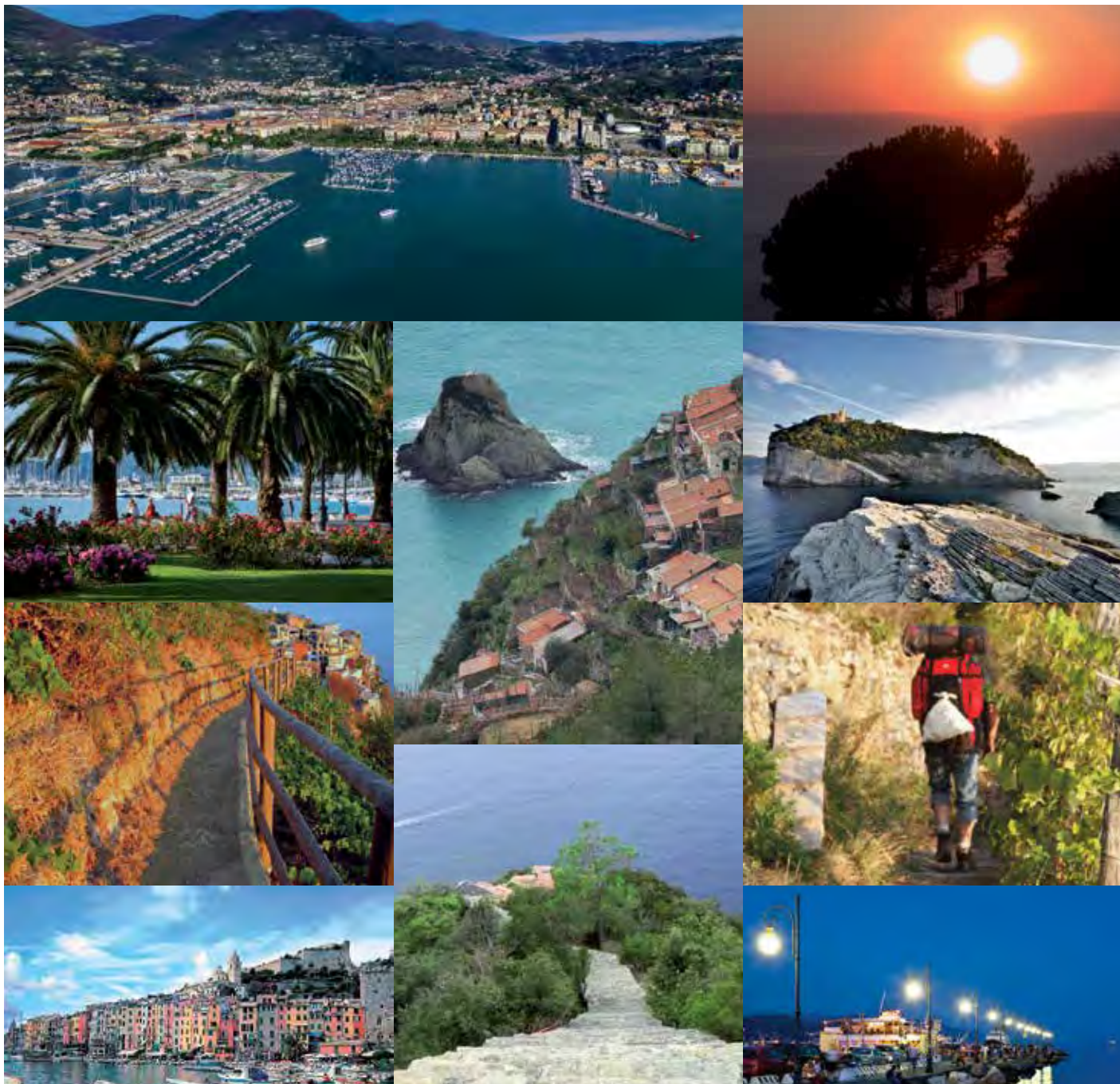
Spain hosted the biggest Rescue Swimmer meeting so far. Meeting took place in Gijon, north of Spain. **Carlos "Charlie" Del Campo Campos** had great team behind him and location was really unique.

In Spain we started also two great tradition. Rescue Swimmer wings was given to members who have been working as a Swimmer. Second great tradition was Rescue Swimmer award: 1st was given to **Juan Burgoa** and **Javier Morales** from Argentina after they had done successful evacuation. Special award was given to Swedish Rescue Swimmer **Daniel Ericsson**. Unfortunately Daniel wasn't in Spain. **Risto Leino**, a finnish swimmer he saved 2004, took his prize and delivered it later to him.

Actually first meeting took place 2009 in Finland and Estonia.



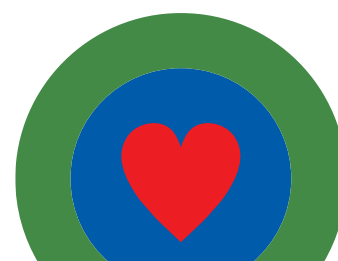
1. 1st Rescue Swimmer awards was given to Argentina, Sweden and Finland. | 2. Australian members giving surf lesson.
 3. Hoist training from tug. | 4. Having confereense in Jovellanos. | 5. Rescue Swimmer wings waiting to be given.
 6. Rescue training in Centro Jovellanos.s



La Spezia, capital city of a strip of Liguria on the border with Emilia and Tuscany, is a land which offers lots of sightseeing, food and wine tasting and cultural opportunities. It is the town of the Poets' Gulf and the Cinque Terre, with a typical Ligurian structure, its castle, tiny squares, narrow streets, small shops and the market.

It is a welcoming and vital city, in which the old and the new show up in monuments, museums and in the architecturally significant buildings from the 19th and 20th century. With its gardens and the waterfront, the small ports and the big arsenal, La Spezia is also the centre of the big historical and natural district of the


Sea Parks and the Appennines, counting two national parks, two regional parks and a protected marine area, but also Porto Venere, the archipelago and the Cinque Terre, which are part of the Unesco World Heritage. Moreover, there are Lerici and the maritime villages, the valleys with biological agriculture, the Vara Valley, the parish churches and the castles. But also the ancient Roman colony of Luni, Sarzana and the Lunigiana area, the Alta Via dei Monti Liguri (High Route of the Ligurian Mountains) and a thick network of paths connecting the sky to the sea. La Spezia. Wonder starts here. With the colours of our homes, the charm of our sea, the scents and flavours of our land.



mySpezia

WONDER STARTS HERE

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4TH EUROPEAN RESCUE SWIMMERS ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL MEETING

Pre-meeting day, 07/06/2016

- 16:30 Welcome party
- 19:00 Transfer to Castel San Giorgio
- 20:00 BUFFET DINNER IN CASTEL SAN GIORGIO

Day 1, 08/06/2016

- 07:30 Transfer from hotel to meeting location
- 08:00 Members registration
- 09:00 Meeting opening and president speech
- 09:30 Welcome by authorities
- 11:00 Briefing: Meeting presentation
Speaker: EURORSA board member **Fabio Pieretti**
- 11:30 Briefing: Redefining limits: the hidden value of hard
Speaker: mr. **Mario Vittone**, (USCG retired)
– product development manager lifesaving systems corp.
- 12:00 LUNCH
- 13:00 Briefing: Standardization
"EURORSA physical test"
Speakers: eurorsa board members **Sami Ollila** and **Benjamin Darlington**
- 13:45 Transfer to ITN pool
- 14:00 EURORSA physical test competition
- 16:00 Transfer to hotel
- 16:45 Visit to the sponsors
- DINNER

Day 2, 09/06/2016

- 08:30 Sponsor presentation at Sala Leonardo (hotel)
- 10:50 Transfer to ITCG helicopter SAR base – Sarzana
- 11:00 Tour to ITCG SAR base
- 12:30 LUNCH
- 13:30 Transfer at La Spezia harbour
- 14:30 ITCG SAR exhibiton
- 15:30 Transfer at Sala Dante
- 16:00 Briefing: Municipality of La Spezia
- 16:30 Briefing: Hellenic CG "Norman Atlantic"
Speaker: eurorsa vice-board member **Nikos Panagopoulos**
- 16:45 Briefing: ITCG "Norman Atlantic"
Speakers: **Saverio Coco** and **Angelo Schembri**
ITCG pilots – EURORSA member **Gaetano Coronello**
- 17:00 Briefing: We have lost the rescue swimmer
Speaker: eurorsa vice-president **Carlos Del Campo Campos**
- 17:30 Transfer at hotel
- 20:00 GALA DINNER
Rescue swimmers awards

Day 3, 10/06/2016

- 09:00 Sponsor expo
- 10:00 Briefing: Share learn live "post traumatic stress"
Speaker: eurorsa member **Sam Fielder**
- 11:00 EURORSA annual meeting
- 11:30 Presentation of RSM18
- 12:00 End of meeting



RESCUING IN THE AEGEAN SEA

RESCUING LIVES AND HOPES IN POSEIDON'S WATERS

Our service – because is not a job – has no policies, sees no color, no nationalities, no religious beliefs, no political allegiances, has no choice but to save people. Today he was Syrian, yesterday from Iran, Greek or Turkish fisherman, French seaman, German sailor.

Nikos Panagopoulos

Chief Petty Officer
Rescue Diver
Hellenic Coast Guard



05:30 Hours. The phone's loud ringing interrupts violently my mind's hibernation.

On the other end of the line the message is all too familiar.

"An overloaded boat with 20 immigrants/refugees capsized five miles off Chios' Island's port at the east".

That fix point at sea is well known. We already had many incidents in the same area during these past months.

A quick wash of the face drags me back to reality. A brief check on the map, followed a phone call to ops center in case there are any more available intelligence, then an incomplete but all due necessary briefing. Everybody's heart is pumping while we are loading the gear, a quick bite on last night's bread, and we are on our way.

Within a few moments we are airborne.

The journey is rather short. The hoist Operator's signal washed away my thoughts, lost in a dead child's image, I took with me during my latest search and rescue mission southern of Rhodes island.

He shouts "Gear up! ETA ten minutes."

I stand fast on board, the Eurocopter AS 332 Super Puma, one of the total twelve in service for the Hellenic Air Force, that reached almost in no time the fixed position of the wreck and after a tactical low over flight, fourteen castaways were scarcely identified in the stormy sea ready to vanish.

A Hellenic Coastguard patrol boat, also summoned at the spot, is our ally against the odds. The crew of these vessels are doing a tremendous job, they put up with all the pressure to save lives in great numbers, all at the same time. They sail like hell to save those we indicate from above. Whereas our job is to go after the individual few, the one or the two that are separated from the group and their only chance not to add their name in the long catalogue of those lost at sea, is the "hand of god".

And then - what is following is a familiar picture to the most if not to all the readers of this text. The "wet/dry" suit is on, flippers and scuba ready, harness, HELD standing by, and then the side door opens. The helicopter is flying at high altitude; the castaways are showing like dots, somewhere in the middle of the waves. Lowering the winch takes but a few minutes, the swinging and spinning around in mid air is a common part of that phase, always disorientating, but "eyes" always fixed on "target". A man or woman at sea.

Perhaps it's our training, preparing always for the worst 15 years now is an ongoing way of life that never stops, perhaps it's the long service and the accumulative experience that goes with it, made me always hear the "man at sea"

scream as a command for the ultimate sacrifice. At that moment, there is no "it is my duty to save that person" any more. It becomes "I want to save that person, I must, save that person" and "I will succeed no matter what".

I am in the water. For a split second, and a few swimming strokes away before I reach the "castaway" my human reaction surfaces and makes me wonder "oh dear God" how did this person manage to survive without a life vest? Then professionalism kicks in and immediately I place the "HELD" (Human Extraction and Lifting Device) around survivors' chest, which is facilitated by the fact that he wears no life jacket. He is still reluctant to let go of the piece of foam that kept him afloat all this time. Meanwhile a rogue wave hits us violently.

I still remember, some years back, my instructor at Rescue Diver's School, nearly at the end of my four months intensive training, kept stressing out how important was during a rescue attempt, to "keep castaway's head out of the water at any cost, even if it meant that your head had to be underwater". "We are the professionals", he claimed, "we must keep control of the situation, we have the experience". A person at sea may have been hours in the water, may have been tired, he is suffering from hypothermia, even a sip of water may become a sip too many for him.

I am in the middle of the rescue operation. The hoist Operator "connects the last dots of the puzzle" by extracting and lifting from the water both the rescue diver and the castaway, glued together as in a firm handshake. Thankfully we are not spinning around. For that we have to thank my helicopter pilot/commander, an "old boy" who knows all too well, all the "tricks on the book" and stirs the right maneuvers to that end. The person harnessed with me is exhausted. I shake lightly his head to attract his attention. I shall need his attention to work with me for the safe boarding. The helicopter's side door is getting closer.

Hypothermia, as a medical condition suffered by persons when long exposed at sea, is well known to most rescue divers, especially to our Northern Europe colleagues. Hypothermia might occur even at the warmer waters of the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas, and for this reason the above mentioned "rescued" person could only "crack" a smile after changing into dry clothes (always provided with our gear on board the helicopter) and having a few sips of hot tea with honey. "I am alive" he might have thought. Standing on European soil.

RESCUING IN THE AEGEAN SEA



I was recently interviewed by a rather open-minded leftist journalist, and he asked me what is the message needed to be relayed to European politicians and policy makers with regard to refugee crises. I instantly and without hesitation replied in a short phrase “S.O.S - PEOPLE AT SEA, - REFUGEES AT SEA”. Our service – because is not a job – has no policies, sees no color, no nationalities, no religious beliefs, no political allegiances, has no choice but to save people. Today he was a Syrian, yesterday an Iranian, a Greek or Turkish fisherman, a French seaman, a German sailor.

Current refugee crises nowadays epitomize the Syrian drama, since the bulk of the incidents at sea involve people of Syrian nationality. Population movements are not something new to Europe. Before and after the two great wars large populations were displaced and forced to move. Greeks for this reason have large communities in Diaspora. We know at firsthand what is to lose everything and trying to start over. Syrian war and the continuing Middle East crises, religious conflicts, “Arab Spring” and many other economic reasons created an exploding mix ready to “go” in the area, are forcing people to risk their lives for a better future. Huge waves of refugees are knocking Europe’s doors using Italy’s and Greece’s seas as entrance points.

In their desperation refugees jump on purpose into the rough seas, just to make sure they will be collected by the Coast guard patrol vessels, when the latter are approaching their boats.

When you face such despair, not helping is out of the question. We cannot stop being human.

Nowadays is well documented and extensively covered by the media the human tsunami that landed in Greece’s shores. Alas! those were the lucky; none knows the exact number of those that perished while trying to cross over the Aegean from Turkey to Greece.

A recent report issued by Greek Police HQ highlighting facts and figures with regard the refugee crises shows rather grim results. By comparison to 2014 figures, in the first seven months of 2015 the numbers of refugees entering Greece and using it as transit point were almost quintuple. For the period between 1st Jan and 31 July 156.726 refugees/migrants appeared before the Greek authorities, while the figure for the same period in 2014 was a mere 32.070. At the same period Greek authorities put under arrest 727 traffickers while the 2014 number was 637.

Of the above mentioned figure around 128.000 people entered Greece by crossing its sea borders while the 2014 number was 8.738 people. 61.636 were disembarked and registered at Lesbos Island, 14.604 at Samos Island, and 21.925 at Chios Island.

The same report indicated that the majority of the refugees a total of 88.264 held Syrian nationality, 32.414 held Afghan nationality, 9.445 were Pakistani nationals and 5.421 were Iraqis. ■

TEACHING THEM HOW TO BE AFRAID:

STRESS EXPOSURE TRAINING



Looking down at the Atlantic 400 miles offshore, a hurricane was bearing down on us, and a family was huddled in their sailboat, ready to jump into the ocean to escape the storm. All we had to do was get them into the helicopter.

Mario Vittone

USCG, retired

I trained for two years to get the job as a helicopter rescue swimmer for the U.S. Coast Guard. I drilled and practiced and had proven myself qualified over and over again. In a few seconds, I would be swimming in the storm-tossed Atlantic, cutting through the waves to reach the sailboat. The hoist operator stopped me and pointed at my feet. “You forgot your fins!”

That was the first mistake of many I made during the first fifteen minutes of a rescue that, once we figured out what we were doing, lasted only 12 minutes. In 25-foot seas and 70 knots of wind, forgetting my fins could have been more than embarrassing, it could have been dangerous. Later, I worked out that I had trained or simulated our “coming to the door” procedure over 300 times. I never forgot my fins. Why did I then?

That SAR case was the first time I performed that procedure under extreme stress. In just a few minutes I would be holding a four-month-old baby above the waves, hoping that I wouldn’t make another mistake that would get him killed. No amount of yelling during training from my instructors came close to simulating or stimulating that level of adrenaline and cortisol in my blood. My whole brain wasn’t available and I was literally dumber than I ever had been in my life.

What we teach our crews is meaningless if they are unable to recall that information under duress. It’s not just what they know to do but how well they do it when it matters. And though many think of stress as a “soft” issue in an otherwise hard job, acting calm and being calm are two different things altogether.

Stress Exposure Training (SET) is missing from most courses on emergency response. Reserved primarily for combat operators, a class on how the brain reacts to stress, what the warning signals are, and how to cope with stress wasn’t something the U.S. Coast Guard had in place when I went to school. It is now, and it should be inserted into the daily training and formal courses for all rescuers. And to be effective, SET must happen in three distinct phases.

First, your team must be educated on how the brain and body react to physical and emotional stressors, and how to recognize those reactions for what they are. Secondly, they have to be taught how to deal with those reactions and practice – in a controlled environment – the techniques used to stay calm in uncommonly stressful situations. Finally, you need to inject real stress (not just yelling and screaming) into the drills and exercises they do every day so they can practice recognizing their personal reactions and staying calm, real-time.

The mistake that many organizations make is fail to connect the stress and physically taxing parts of their training to the management of stress in operations. On a long enough timeline, the physical stresses and mental and emotional stress in training explained as “preparing students for the worst” or, “They have to be ready for anything” or the worst possible reason, “We’ve always done it that way.”

Most training organizations do well enough on the third part. I’ve seen plenty of yelling and screaming and distraction thrown into drills and exercises. However, these tactics fail to prepare rescue personnel for many of the intense distractions that we find in the environments and cases we work in some days. Whether they know it or not, the best reason to make training hard is to prepare rescuers for the very soft job of staying calm and thinking. Rescue work is rarely about how tough you are. It’s not about being fearless. Often, it is about knowing how to handle the stress of fear when it happens, and thinking your way through it.

By failing to teach the first two elements of SET and giving our teams the tools to recognize and mitigate stress, we are sending them out the door without their fins: without two vital tools for success in the worst missions. ■

For more information on Stress Exposure Training, download the University of Central Florida paper on SET available at eurorsa.com/stress

EURORSA initiative for COMMON RECURRENT PHYSICAL TESTING

EURORSA RS PT 2.0

Set 1: 200m swim

Climb Up

A maximum of 4 minutes shall not be exceeded.
Swim goggles allowed.

Set 2: 200m swim with fins, mask, snorkel

Climb Up

Gear up with fins, mask and snorkel (at the poolside)

Set 3: 100m weight swim with fins

Climb Up

Picking up the weight (4kg) from bottom. The weight should be carried with both arms on the weight. The weight should be positioned on the chest – upper stomach area. No attachable weight belts should be used.

Set 4: 100m: 25m dive + 75m swim with fins, mask, snorkel

Climb Up

Submersion to the weight (4kg) in bottom.
25m weight push/pull + 75m swim for finish.

CLOCK STOP

Weight push/pull shall be done in approx. 1–2m depth. The weight must be in the bottom of the pool at all times and the swimmer can either push or pull it in the bottom. The swimmer can resurface for air as many times as he desires.



The board of the EURORSA announced an initiative in 2015 to develop a common recurrent physical test for operational rescue swimmers in Europe. A group of EURORSA country delegates was convened to evaluate and discuss the existing physical tests of different operators and how they could be used as reference for the development of EURORSA physical testing standards.

It is hoped that developing these EURORSA standards will be seen as an initiative for the Maritime and Aviation safety authorities in Europe. While cultural, environmental and operational differences can be found between the various SAR operators in Europe the requirements for a high level of physical ability, especially when working in a hostile offshore environment can be considered vital to all rescue swimmers.

When evaluating the current physical testing in Europe, it is apparent that the standard varies from minimal physical requirements and no water based tests, to demanding multi faceted tests where no age/experience compensations exist. Working in heavy seas is not an everyday job for a rescue swimmer, but it is certainly the most demanding situation, both physically and mentally so it's easy to understand why this is also the most important scenario to get prepared for when thinking of the physical challenges of the job. Below average strength and water confidence does nothing to ease the mental stress a rescue swimmer may encounter during a rescue in low visibility and heavy seas with the possibility of multiple victims to be rescued. As a result it is in the Rescue swimmers best interest to be able to have every tool at their disposal to ensure they are physically capable to complete any tasks required of them in a maritime environment. It is hoped that a common fitness test is another tool that enables Rescue swimmers to gauge their level of preparedness for such scenarios.

The question faced by the EURORSA board is how to establish a standard that will be embraced by operators across Europe. Pilots currently have their JAR-OPS regulated licenses and type ratings which certifies that they have a certain level of experience and skills to undertake their duties. It is the EURORSA position then that a common Rescue Swimmer test could also be introduced across Europe to help produce a standard certifying that as a helicopter SAR crew member, the Rescue Swimmer meets a certain standard in aquatic competency. Such a test could be encompassed in an annual medical examination.

A swimmer's aquatic ability along with their mental preparation is their primary tool in the toolbox. Looking ahead at the relatively young and constantly changing industry, common physical standards of the helicopter rescue swimmers is seen as a necessity for the SAR crews to be able continue their work effective and safe in the future as well.

We started our work by developing a simple swim test, with needed functionality, to measure the rescue swimmers general water confidence and "water fitness". The swim test "RS PT 2.0" is designed to be carried out with minimal gear preparation and can easily be conducted in any standard sized swimming pool (25m/50m) with knowledgeable supervising.

The basic elements of the EURORSA RS PT 2.0 swim test:

- Basic swimming ability without easing equipment.
- Ability to swim with basic RS gear; fins, mask and snorkel and breathing through snorkel while swimming. Upper body strength that is required when the Rescue swimmer is required to board life rafts or other vessels.
- Ability to adjust and cope with short breath holds with increased respiratory rate.

An evaluation session will be taking place at RSM16 where Cressi will be providing mask and Fin sets for all participants undertaking the fitness test. With all swimmers using the same equipment the evaluation session will be a fantastic opportunity to gather data that will help set the standard for what will be a new measure for Rescue Swimmers across Europe.

EURORSA Board members,
Mr. Sami Ollila
Mr. Ben Darlington

LIGHTWEIGHT CREW HARNESS



The new lightweight crew harness is designed to provide maximum safety and comfort while performing crewman and SAR swimmer duties in the cabin of fixed and rotary wing aircraft.

This new design offers three applications in one harness;

- Despatching and restraining
- On winch hoisting
- Swimming

Incorporates adjustable main lift webbing, body restraining straps and adjustable leg and chest straps, featuring full adjustability for a comfortable fit for nearly all users in a variety of roles.

Our innovative product line includes:

- Air Deployable Life Raft Systems
- Hoist Harnesses
- PSP Personal Survival Packs
- Child Rescue Valises
- Gunner Belts & Despatcher Belts
- Rescue Strops
- Hi-Lines
- Restraint Tethers
- Crew Harnesses
- Emergency Escape Parachutes
- Aircraft Survival Packs
- Aircrew Restraint Harnesses
- SAR Marine Markers

Certified in accordance with PPE Directive 89/686/EEC to EN 361:2002, EN 358: 1999, EN 1497: 2007

Airborne Systems is an ISO9001 manufacturer with UK MoD DAOS Design Approval

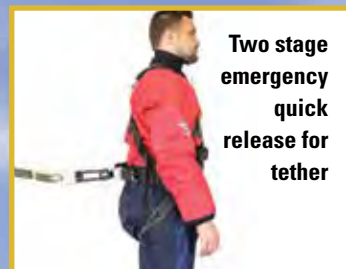


Basic harness weighs only 3 lb



Mission adaptable design

Easily integrates any molle based LP Life Preserver system (LPU-40 etc.),



Two stage emergency quick release for tether



Constructed of low maintenance Mil spec webbing

Corrosion resistant hardware, adjustable to fit small medium or large



Molle system to attach lightweight life preservers

Airborne Systems

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New Airborne Systems Europe video!

MEGA RESCUE OPERATION IN THE AZORES ISLANDS

the 7th of May 2015

Ivo Pinto

12 persons rescued by 5 aircraft, 3 merchant ships, 1 hospital ship and a Navy Cutter. Gale force winds forced the rescue of 5 sailing boats crews, during a two day period.

In the early hours of the 6th of May, 500 miles south of the Azores Islands, a violent storm catches up with five sailboats that crossed the North Atlantic towards Europe. Winds around 90 kilometers per hour and 10 meters waves.

Distress signals started to arrive MRCC Ponta Delgada, that in conjunction with RCC Lajes, launched a large scale search and rescue operation that started 2am on the 6th up to 12am on the 7th.

The EH-101 was the first on scene rescuing 4 crewmembers from sailboat “Kolibri”, with a broken mast and no communications. All four crewmembers jumped from the disabled vessel to enable a safer water rescue.

Notwithstanding, the rescue carried some perils that are explicit in the video footage of the rescue.

They were airlifted to Horta Island. In this mission, the EH-101 helicopter performed the longest uninterrupted flight in the squadron’s history, flying for seven hours and 30 minutes.

One hour later, 2 Serbian crewmembers from the “Manca 3” were rescued by merchant ship “Archangelos Gabriel” after they lost steering.

Around the same time (19h on the Wednesday, 6th of May), 2 crewmembers from the “Gandul” were being rescued by merchant ship “Cafer Dede” after having lost their rudder.

However a family of four on the “Rêves Dô” were not as

lucky. At 2am on the 7th of May, the French yacht capsized and sank, and its occupants, the family of four aboard the ship, was split, as mother and son were able to board the emergency raft and were later rescued by merchant ship “Yuan Fu Star”. Father and six year old daughter fell in to the water and were reported missing.

A P-3C “Orion” from Squadron 601 receives take-off orders to begin search operations. At first light, 2 hours after they had started their search, they spotted them. They launched a survival kit that housed them until the arrival, around 09h30, of the

Spanish Navy hospital ship “Esperanza del Mar”. The ordeal of over seven hours adrift in the North Atlantic, was very sadly, fatal to the six year old.

In this mission that lasted 34 hours, there were 5 aircraft, two C-295M, one P-3 “Orion”, one EH-101 “Merlin” of the Portuguese Air Force and a C-130J from the American Coast Guard, as part of the Search and Rescue Exercise SAREX15, as well as the Navy Cutter “Jacinto Cândido”. ■



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Guillaume Nery
-126m

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EURORSA – MOAS. HELP ASKED AND GIVEN.



Early this year MOAS (Migrant Offshore Aid Station) approached EURORSA with a request to give a helping hand in saving lives at the Aegean Sea. EURORSA answered the call and started to gather volunteers, within the association, who would be able to volunteer as a MOAS responder. We were able to have volunteers from Greece and Spain.

Eurorsa wish to thanks **Javier Losada Carballo** (Spain), **Carlos Rodriguez Castro** (Spain) and **Nikolaus Dimitros** (Greece) for a safe and great working period with MOAS. Fortunately situation was already quiet in Aegean Sea while our guys was working there anyway they effort was really great. Big respect Javier, Carlos and Nikolaus!

Can you hear me?

Communication has always been one of the biggest problems between swimmer and copter. When it works in a proper way it increases safety and professionalism a lot.

1. You have been using Polycon. Has the system answered in this question?

2. Any greetings to brother with Fins around the world?



1. Yes it has! Earlier models and versions suffered from a lot of child diseases such as water intruding (via PTT), poor connection/range between Helicopter and RS and internal electric malfunctions. But the last five years or so, I must say that I've been very happy to use the system and it barely ever let's me and the crew down.

2. You're doing a great job! Proud to be a member.



1. In my opinion having a comm with helo is a big advantage. And it definitely rises the safety and the speed of actions and reactions not only for the RS but for the helo crew also. We are satisfied with the Polycon! It's like coming out from the caveman era.

2. Keep Your fins wet and 100% dedicated to what You love to do the most!



PATRIK NILSSON
SWEDEN, SJÖFARTSVERKET

1. I have used Axnes Polycon system since the early 2000s. First in our Sikorsky S76 fleet and now in our new AW139s. Over the years we have tried other systems but have not found any other system that lives up to our expectations in terms of range and availability. With the Polycon system the Rescue swimmer can still be linked to the helicopter's intercom during the time he/she is outside of the helicopter. A major advantage of this, except to communicate with colleagues in the helicopter, is that the Rescue swimmer constantly hear what is said in the helicopter. If pilots communicate e.g. engine failure via the intercom the Rescue swimmer hear the call out at the same time as the rest of the crew and can act accordingly depending on where in the hoist cycle they are right then. The same applies, of course, then other problems arise, or other information conveyed. In a normal hoisting without special problems the crew communicating with the Rescue swimmer through Polycon (intercom) while rescue swimmer responds with signs such as thumbs up or down. But still, we work with finding the "perfect" headset to connect to the Polycon system for use in the water. The headset we tried until today still leaves something to be desired in terms of reliability. And to get adequate sound attenuation it is required to complement a headset with eg earcups.

2. Swimmers around the world, keep up your good work. And for EuroRSA board, you're doing an impressive job for us Rescue Swimmers.

PNG

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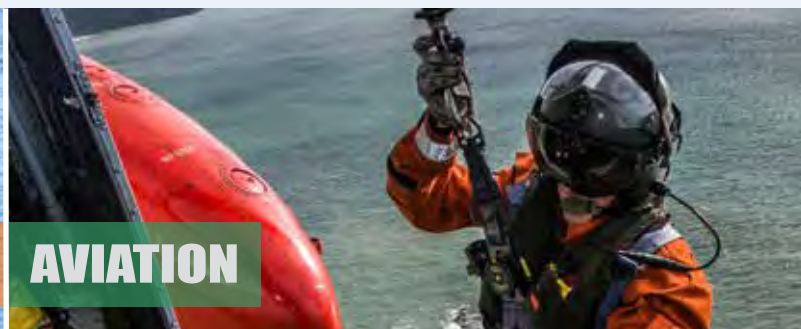
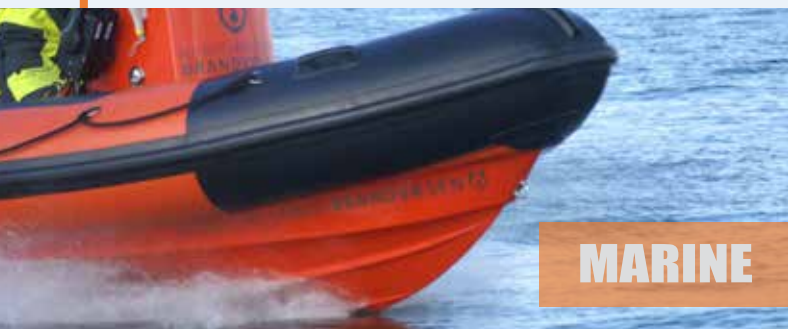
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