INDONESIA: SINKING OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT VESSEL

START OF SUMMARY

A SUSPECTED ILLEGAL ENTRY VESSEL (SEV) CARRYING 397 POTENTIAL ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (PII) SANK ENROUTE TO CHRISTMAS ISLAND DURING THE AFTERNOON OF FRIDAY 19 OCTOBER. THE SEV IS BELIEVED TO HAVE FOUNDERED IN ROUGH SEAS TO THE SOUTH OF SUNDA STRAIT WITHIN THE INDONESIAN MARITIME SEARCH AND RESCUE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY. 45 SURVIVORS WERE RESCUED BY TWO INDONESIAN FISHING VESSELS AND RETURNED TO JAKARTA LATE ON THE AFTERNOON OF 22 OCTOBER. THERE HAS BEEN CLOSE INTEREST BY THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA IN THE STORY.

END OF SUMMARY

2. TUESDAY 16 OCTOBER - APPROXIMATELY 430 POTENTIAL ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (PII) DEPARTED CEPINAS (SOUTH OF JAKARTA) AND TRAVELLED TO SUMATRA VIA JAKARTA AND HERAK. THE SURVIVOR SAID THAT ON ARRIVAL IN SUMATRA, THEY THEN TRAVELLED ONE AND A HALF HOURS BY BUS TO A HOTEL. THEY REMAINED OVER NIGHT IN THAT LOCATION (POSSIBLY BANDAR LAMPI)

3. WEDNESDAY 17 OCTOBER - AMU QUASSAY INFORMED THE PII'S THAT THEY WERE TO PACK THEIR BELONGINGS AS THEY WERE DEPARTING THAT EVENING. LATER THAT DAY THEY MARCHED FROM THE HOTEL TO THE POINT OF DEPARTURE, ONLY A FEW KILOMETRES AWAY. THE VESSEL WAS WAITING FOR THEM. THE DIMENSIONS OF THE VESSEL WERE REPORTED AS 19.5 METRES LONG WITH A BEAM OF 4 METRES. A MAKESHIFT UPPERDECK HAD BEEN ADDED, WITH THE AFTER DECKS ENCLOSED BY CHIPBOARD (PRESUMABLY TO ENHANCE
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SEAWORTHINESS).

4. THURSDAY 18 OCTOBER - THE VESSEL DEPARTED BANDAR LAMPUNG AT APPROXIMATELY 0130. AT THIS TIME, DUE TO THE SIZE OF THE VESSEL, 10 PIIS REFUSED TO EMBARK, LEAVING 411 PIIS ON BOARD. APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR AFTER DEPARTURE, PIIS APPEARENTLY BECAME APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE ABILITY OF THE VESSEL TO REMAIN AFOAT WITH THE NUMBERS ON BOARD. THE VESSEL STOPPED APPROXIMATELY 5 KILOMETRES FROM THE POINT OF DEPARTURE, DURING WHICH TIME THE CREW WAS IN RADIO CONTACT WITH ABU QASSEZ. THE VESSEL THEN RESUMED ITS PASSAGE AND ABOUT 0300 AGAIN STOPPED NEAR AN ISLAND "DUE TO HIGH SEAS". A NEARBY FISHING BOAT CAME ALONGSIDE THE VESSEL TO REMOVE 24 PIIS (387 PIIS REMAINING).

5. FRIDAY 19 OCTOBER - AT ABOUT 1400 THE VESSEL BEGAN TAKING WATER. THE CREW SOUGHT TO REASSURE THE PASSENGERS BY TELLING THEM THAT THIS WAS A SMALL PROBLEM. THE PIIS ASSISTED THE CREW TO BAIL THE VESSEL, USING IMPROVISED SCOPS FASHIONED FROM THE HULL TIMBER. AT THIS TIME, THE VESSEL WAS CUT OF SIGHT OF LAND.

6. AT 1500, THE VESSEL BEGAN TO LIST HEAVILY TO PORT. WITHIN FIVE MINUTES, THE VESSEL CAPSIZED. IT SANK COMPLETELY AFTER MOMENTARLY REMAINING NEUTRALLY BOYANT. DEEKS SOON SURFACED AFTER THE SINKING. THE MAJORITY OF THE PIIS DROWNED IMMEDIATELY, WITH SOME 120 INITIAL SURVIVORS. THERE WAS A HEAVY SEA RUNNING, AND IT COMMENCED RAINING AFTHER THE SINKING. THE EXACT POSITION OF VESSEL AT THE TIME OF SINKING IS UNKNOWN, BUT IT IS JUDGED AS NO FURTHER SOUTH THAN 8 DEGREES SOUTH LATITUDE ON A DIRECT LINE FROM SUNDAY ST TO CHRISTMAS IS.

7. SATURDAY 20 OCTOBER - THE SURVIVORS REMAINED IN THE WATER FOR APPROXIMATELY 19 HOURS, WITH MANY OF THE SURVIVORS PERISHING DURING THAT PERIOD. AT APPROXIMATELY 1030, THE REMAINING SURVIVORS WERE APPROACHED BY TWO INDONESIAN FISHING BOATS. ONE VESSEL TOOK ON BOARD 44 PIIS (41 ADULTS AND 3 CHILDREN), WITH THE SECOND BOAT PICKING UP 5 PIIS. OF THESE, 4 WERE ALREADY DEAD AND THE REMAINING SURVIVOR WAS A FEMALE.

8. THE CREW OF THE FIRST BOAT (44 PIIS) CONTACTED THEIR CHINESE OWNER FOR INSTRUCTIONS. THEY WERE SUBSEQUENTLY DIRECTED TO PROCEED TO JAKARTA WITH THE PIIS. THE TIME OF ARRIVAL IN JAKARTA WAS APPROXIMATELY 1800 ON MONDAY 22 OCTOBER.

9. A VESSEL OVERDUE ALERT MESSAGE WAS ISSUED BY RESCUE COORDINATION CENTRE AUSTRALIA ON MONDAY 22 OCTOBER AND FORWARD TO INDONESIAN SEARCH AND RESCUE COORDINATION CENTRE (BARSARNAS) IN JAKARTA.

GENERAL (U/L)

10. LOSS OF LIFE - 353 PERSONS (INCLUDING 70 CHILDREN). THE SAFETY EQUIPMENT CARRIED ON BOARD WAS ENTIRELY INADEQUATE CONSISTING OF 70 NON SERVICEABLE LIFE JACKETS.
11. It is assumed that the 10 passengers who refused to board the boat at Bandar Lampung remain in southern Sumatra. The whereabouts of 24 pts removed from the vessel prior to sinking are unknown. The whereabouts of the 1 female pt on the second rescue boat is also unknown.

12. The survivors have been taken by VCM to accommodation in Bogor area and are the subject of considerable attention by the international media.

ACTION: DR. A. CALVERT (DFAT)

DR A HANKE (SEC DEF)

ADM C BARRIE (CDF)

MR W FARMER (DIMCA)

MR M M-WILTON (DFHC)

PRIME MINISTER
ATTORNEY GENERAL
MIN JUSTICE-CUSTOMS
COM.M KEELTY (AFP)

MIN FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MIN DEFENCE
MR R CORMALL (AGC)
MR L WOODWARD (ACS)

MINISTER FOR TRADE
MIN IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS
MR RICHARDSON (ASIC)
RADM M BONSER (NSC)
MR F LEMINGAMP (DIO)  MR C R JONES (CRA)  --+

ACTION: MR R SMITH (DOB)

DR A CALVERT (SEC)  MR P GREY (D/S)  MS P FAYLE (D/S)
DR A THOMAS (D/S)  MR D RITCHIE (D/S)  MR J FRYDENBERG (MIN B)
MS S BORCHERS (MIN F)  MS A HAWKINS (MIN G)  MS L MANTON (MIN H)
MS C MILLAR (EXB)  MR P GRIGSON (SED)  MR G LADE (MBE)
DR B RABY (ILL)  MR P DOYLE (TS TP)  MR I MCCONVILLE (LGE)
MR B PATTERSON (ISD)  MR C SPARKE (GCB)  MR B MILLER (STB)
MR L ROWE (PCC)  MR C DECUPE (PNB)  MR E DAVIS (DG-AUSMID)
MR C TAPP (PH*)  MR P FLANAGAN (HCB)  MR M DILLON (APNG)
MS A O KEEFFE (SPA)

ACTION: ;
INFO: :