

Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race – Rescue Incidents

Status report as at 2100 (9.00pm) 28 December 1998

This report is related to status report of 1200 (12.00 noon) of 28 December:

Yacht Atara has been located and found to be in good condition and continuing to Hobart

Search has continued until nightfall for man overboard from Sword of Orion without result. This search has now been suspended, as there is no chance of survival in the conditions that have prevailed since he fell over board.

Search for Winston Churchill continued and a raft with four survivors has been located and four survivors rescued by helicopter. The four survivors have been landed at Mallacoota. The survivors reported that the other five crewmembers of Winston Churchill had escaped the vessel in a similar life raft. A major search for this raft is continuing. It has been scaled down during the night and will resume at full strength at first light.

RAN Frigate HMAS Newcastle is expected to rendezvous with dismasted yacht Solo Globe Challenger some time this evening assist and evacuate injured crewmembers. It is expected that transfer will be delayed until daylight on 29th December 1998.

Since operations began at 1500 (3.00 pm) 27th December 1998 a total of 52 people have been rescued, with searches continuing for five missing from Winston Churchill.

Status report as at 12.00 am 28 Dec 1998.

At approximately 3.00pm 27 Dec 1998, RCC Australia became involved in a number of incidents related to yachts engaged in the annual Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. These incidents took place between Eden and Mallacoota.

The weather conditions in the area were not good with south-westerly winds of 30 to 50 knots and seas 5 to 6 metres. Visibility was fluctuating, deteriorating to 2 to 3 kilometres with a cloud base of 900 feet. These conditions have continued through the night. Winds have abated to 30 to 40 knots, visibility is between 3 and 6 kilometres; this is reported to improve during the day, however the sea state is expected to remain high for some time.

Currently search and rescue action is being taken in respect of;

- Continuing the search for man overboard from the Sword of Orion.
- Winston Churchill with 9 POB has been out of contact since a may-day call late on the afternoon of 27 Dec. Intercepted radio message indicated that the crew were going to abandon ship and take to life rafts. A major search involving fixed and rotary wing aircraft is in progress.
- The yacht Atara has transmitted an emergency call. Currently located approximately 150 nautical miles East-north-east of Launceston. A search aircraft will be proceeding to the location and is expected to be there at 1.30pm.

There are approximately 24 fixed wing and 6 helicopters committed to the search for the man overboard and the Winston Churchill. In addition to search aircraft the Young Endeavour is in the area and the RAN Frigate Newcastle has arrived in the area. One aircraft is committed to the Atara, and additional air assets are available and will be committed if necessary.

Since commencing operations at 3.00pm on 27 Dec 1998, approximately 17 other yachts have reported difficulties, initiated distress beacons or fired flares:

- 7 yachts that have suffered problems ranging through dismasting, steering problems and injuries of varying severity, and have made their own way to safety.
- One total crew of 12 were rescued from the yacht Stand Aside and the yacht was abandoned.
- The Kingurra reported a Man-over-board. This person was rescued and returned to land by helicopter.
- Solo Globe was dismasted. 3 crew have been taken off, 5 chose to stay on board. Crew requested a tow to be arranged.
- Business Post Challenger with 9 POB rolled over and was taking water. 7 crew have been taken off. 2 crew were reported dead on board by the rescued crew; they are still on board.
- Midnight Special has had 9 crew lifted off and returned to land.
- B52, with 9 POB, is dismasted has been located and is returning to Eden under own power.
- Sword of Orion with 10 POB, lost 1 crew-over-board at approximately 8.00 pm on 27 Dec. This person is subject to on-going search by rotary wing and fixed wing aircraft.. All other crew have been taken off by helicopter.
- Miintinta was damaged and under tow subsequently all 6 crew were lifted off by the towing fishing vessel.

Totally 48 crew have been rescued from 7 craft, 10 crew are still at risk and 2 crew are reported deceased.

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SITREP
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SYDNEY TO HOBART YACHT RACE - SITREP 1 AT 12.00 28 DEC 98

1. At approximately 3.00pm 27 Dec 1998, RCC Australia became involved in a number of incidents related to yachts engaged in the annual Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. These incidents took place between Eden and Mallacoota.

2. The weather conditions in the area were not good with south-westerly winds of 30 to 50 knots and seas 5 to 6 metres. Visibility was fluctuating, deteriorating to 2 to 3 kilometres with a cloud base of 900 feet. These conditions have continued through the night. Winds have abated to 30 to 40 knots, visibility is between 3 and 6 kilometres; this is reported to improve during the day, however the sea state is expected to remain high for some time.

3. Currently search and rescue action is being taken in respect of;
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 - b. Winston Churchill with 9 POB has been out of contact since a may-day call late on the afternoon of 27 Dec. Intercepted radio message indicated that the crew were going to abandon ship and take to life rafts. A major search involving fixed and rotary wing aircraft is in progress.
 - c. The yacht Atara has transmitted an emergency call. Currently located approximately 150 nautical miles East-north-east of Launceston. A search aircraft will be proceeding to the location and is expected to be there at 1.30pm.

4. There are approximately 24 fixed wing and 6 helicopters committed to the search for the man overboard and the Winston Churchill. In addition to search aircraft the Young Endeavour is in the area and the RAN Frigate Newcastle has arrived in the area. One aircraft is committed to the Atara, and additional air assets are available and will be committed if necessary.

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