



CCAMLR

COMM CIRC 11/130
SC CIRC 11/62

Tuesday, 20 December 2011

Fishing vessel Sparta - information submitted by New Zealand

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION AND THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

New Zealand has requested the attached information be circulated to all Members of the Commission. Members wishing to follow the on-going SAR operation of the fishing vessel Sparta can find further information on www.maritimenz.govt.nz/news/media-releases-2011.

Andrew Wright
Executive Secretary

Telephone: +61 3 6210 1111
Fax: +61 3 6224 8744
Email: ccamlr@ccamlr.org
Web: ccamlr.org

PO Box 213, North Hobart, Tasmania 7002 Australia
181 Macquarie Street, Hobart, Tasmania 7000 Australia



CCAMLR

PO BOX 213, NORTH HOBART, TASMANIA 7002 AUSTRALIA
181 MACQUARIE STREET, HOBART, TASMANIA 7000 AUSTRALIA
Website: www.ccamlr.org

Phone: (61) 3 6210 1111
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18 December 2011 - 5PM

Crew on board the Russian vessel **Sparta** have requested more equipment to help repair damage to the boat's hull while rescue efforts are hampered by icy conditions in the southern ocean.

Sparta issued a distress call around 3am on Friday from a position next to the Antarctic ice shelf, about 2000 nautical miles (3704 kilometres) south east of New Zealand.

The 48m vessel, with 32 crew on board, had hit ice and put a 30cm hole in the hull, 1.5m below the water line. It was taking on water and listing 13 degrees.

The Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) tasked three nearby vessels to assist **Sparta**, but all three have been hampered by heavy sea ice.

One, the New Zealand vessel **San Aspiring**, was released from the rescue yesterday after its crew determined the more than 470 nautical mile (NM) journey was too dangerous.

The Norwegian vessel **Sel Jevaer** is only 19NM away but is currently hemmed in by ice and unable to proceed. **Sparta**'s sister ship, **Chiyo Maru no. 3** is slowly making its way towards the stricken vessel but is still days away.

Yesterday, a Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) C130 Hercules dropped extra pumping equipment and fuel to the vessel, after a seven-hour flight from Christchurch.

The Hercules was returning today and due back in New Zealand tonight. RCCNZ Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator Neville Blakemore said the crew was continuing to pump water from the ship using the on-board pumping equipment and the one delivered yesterday.

"They are keeping ahead of the water ingress using two pumps," Mr Blakemore said.

"But they are having difficulty in trying to fix a patch to the damaged part of the hull because they need to stop one of the pumps to do this, and then the water level creeps up again."

Mr Blakemore said **Sparta**'s stability was currently the number one priority for the rescue operation.

"With help days away at least, we need to keep the crew on board **Sparta** where they have their best chance of survival.

"The crew has manoeuvred the vessel alongside the ice shelf and attached mooring lines to the ice. They have also deployed their life rafts which are alongside **Sparta**.

"They have told us they need more equipment to assist with repairs and securing the vessel."

Mr Blakemore said the ship's agent was sourcing the equipment and RCCNZ would coordinate its delivery.

Sparta's owner has commissioned the South Korean icebreaker **Araon** to go to **Sparta** to offer assistance. **Araon** left New Zealand just after midnight and is expected to take about eight days to reach **Sparta**.

Weather conditions in the area remain calm.

For further information contact:

Maritime New Zealand Media Line
Phone 04 499 7318

19 December 2011 - 8.30AM

There was no change to **Sparta**'s condition overnight. Crew are continuing to keep up with water ingress using two pumps.

The ship's agent is obtaining further equipment to assist the crew in repairing the hole in the vessel's hull. RCCNZ will coordinate the delivery of this equipment over the next couple of days.

Sparta's sister ship, **Chiyo Maru no. 3**, is now around 100 nautical miles (NM) away. It is expected to take several days to reach **Sparta**.

The Norwegian ship **Seljevaer** is around 18NM away but remains hemmed in by sea ice. Both vessels are still making efforts to reach **Sparta**.

The South Korean icebreaker **Araon** is now approximately 1600NM from **Sparta** and is expected to take about six days to reach the ship.

The long-range forecast is for increasing winds in the area, but this is not expected to have too much effect on **Sparta**. **Sparta's** crew have attached mooring lines to the ice to give the vessel greater stability.

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