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## **PRESS RELEASE: LACK OF SAFETY ON PASSENGER FERRIES**

The Independent Fact Group (Sweden) have during the summer -99 made safety inspections on board a couple of ferries that travel to ports in Sweden. The inspections that have been focused on passenger safety (life-saving appliances and arrangements including fire safety) bring into daylight an almost catastrophic low safety level. The inspections were done in reference to the international conventions Safety of Life at Sea -74 (SOLAS) and International Code of Safety for High-Speed Craft (HSC Code). As the Factgroup only had access to spaces and accommodation areas open for passengers, the inspections were limited to such areas.

The new High-Speed craft, HSC Gotland, that sails between Nynäshamn-Visby and Oskarshamn is according to the Factgroup highly dangerous in case of a fire on board. The crafts only two evacuation stations are situated mid-ship on each side at deck 5. Forward and aft of the stations are the passenger accommodation areas, on deck 5 accommodating 292 respectively 260 persons. The forward area is also connected through a staircase to an accommodation area on deck 6 with room for 148 passengers. In case of an emergency all passengers are to be evacuated from the two station's mid-ship at deck 5. No other alternatives, as required by the conventions, exists. The accommodation areas on deck 5 are separated by manual smoke tight doors adjacent to the evacuation stations.

In case of a fire close to the evacuation stations, or even worse, in one of the stations, all possibility to evacuate the passengers may be lost. The requirements of evacuation paths in each end of a passenger zone leading to safe areas and evacuation stations or survival crafts are not fulfilled. No such alternative exist.

In case of a fire, the smoke tight doors shall be closed providing safe areas for the passengers and crew. The construction of the doors shall be smoke tight during the time the zone is certified for. Unfortunately the doors have been places between two doors leading in to the evacuation room on each side of the craft. This provides for a new open passage for the smoke (and fire) through the evacuation room if the forward and aft zone are to be evacuated in the same time. Please see enclosed plan of the craft and illustrations on page 2-4 showing this situation.

Besides the most serious faults that can not be corrected unless the ferry is put out of traffic for reconstruction, the Factgroup found some 20 other deficiencies on this craft.

The Factgroup informed the Shipping company and the Swedish Maritime Administration, but nevertheless the craft continues in normal traffic exposing thousands of passengers every day to these dangers.

The Factgroup takes the initiative for increased personal safety by informing the media, hopefully to get publicity on the lack of security so that necessary measures are taken to correct the situation. The full correspondence regarding the HSC Gotland can be received from the Swedish Maritime Administration, director Johan Franson.

Please feel free to contact us for further information.

Johan Ridderstolpe                      Björn Stenberg  
070-644 01 07                              070-858 05 06

Sources: HSC Code 4.7 Exits and means of escape, 7.11 Arrangements

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