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SUBJ: DEFENDER CLASS SAFETY ADVISORY

1. THIS IS AN URGENT SAFETY ADVISORY FOR DEFENDER CLASS BOATS.

2. RECENTLY A DEFENDER B CLASS BOAT VIOLENTLY CAPSIZED AS A RESULT OF A COMBINATION OF SPEED, TRIM, AND SEA CONDITIONS. ALL FOUR CREW MEMBERS WERE ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY EGRESS OUT OF THE CABIN, CLIMB ONTO THE OVERTURNED HULL, AND WERE SUBSEQUENTLY RECOVERED.

3. A MISHAP ANALYSIS BOARD (MAB) WAS CONVENED AND THE FINAL REPORT PENDS. THIS MESSAGE PROVIDES INFORMATION BASED ON PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM THE MAB AND IS NOT THE FINAL ACTION ON THIS MISHAP. IT IS INTENDED TO PROVIDE TIMELY GUIDANCE ON SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS WHILE OPERATING DEFENDER CLASS BOATS AT HIGH SPEED, AND FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT OF A CAPSIZING.

4. DEFENDER CLASS BOATS HAVE ACCUMULATED THOUSANDS OF HOURS WITHOUT A CAPSIZING. THE PLATFORM IS EXTREMELY WELL CONSTRUCTED AND EXTREMELY SEAWORTHY. IN MARCH 2005, THE OFFICE OF BOAT FORCES CONDUCTED A COMPREHENSIVE STABILITY AND CAPSIZING ANALYSIS THAT CONFIRMED THAT THE BOAT WAS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO CAPSIZE. IN THE CASE OF THIS CAPSIZING, THE BOAT WAS OPERATING AT FULL SPEED RUNNING DOWN SWELL WITH THE ENGINES FULLY TRIMMED UP WHEN THE COXSWAIN ENTERED AN AGGRESSIVE TURN. THE SPEED, COMBINED WITH THE FOLLOWING SEA AND ENGINE TRIM, CAUSED THE BOAT TO SKIP AND CAPSIZE OUTBOARD. 5. UPON CAPSIZING, THE CABIN IMMEDIATELY FLOODED BUT THE BOAT REMAINED AFLOAT WITH MINIMAL DAMAGE. ALL CREWMEMBERS WERE ABLE TO SAFELY EGRESS THROUGH THE AFT CABIN DOOR. CREWMEMBERS CREDITED THEIR ABILITY TO SAFELY EGRESS TO THE COMMAND'S EMPHASIS ON EGRESS CONSIDERATIONS. OTHER ITEMS WORTHY OF NOTE INCLUDE:

A. ONE CREWMEMBER ATTEMPTED TO EGRESS THROUGH THE AFT CABIN WINDOW. HE BECAME STUCK IN THE WINDOW, WAS ABLE TO EXTRACT HIMSELF, AND EXITED THROUGH THE AFT CABIN DOOR.

B. THE CABIN HAD AN AIR POCKET FORWARD CONSISTENT WITH OBSERVATIONS MADE DURING THE BOAT FORCES STABILITY AND CAPSIZING ANALYSIS.

C. ONE CREWMEMBER ATTEMPTED TO EGRESS OUT A SIDE DOOR. WITH THE BOAT INVERTED, THE HANDLE TO OPERATE THE DOOR WAS IN A FOREIGN ORIENTATION. THE CREWMEMBER COULD NOT OPEN IT, REQUIRING HIM TO SWIM AFT AND EGRESS THROUGH THE AFT DOOR.

D. ALTHOUGH THE MISHAP OCCURRED IN TWILIGHT. THE CREW REPORTED NEAR ZERO VISIBILITY WHILE EGRESSING FROM CABIN.

E. GEAR ADRIFT INTERFERED THE CREWS ABILITY TO EGRESS. PERSONAL GEAR AND BOAT OUTFIT BECAME DISLODGED AND COMPOUNDED SWIFT EGRESS.

F. AFTER EGRESSING THROUGH THE AFT DOOR, ONE CREWMEMBER SURFACED UNDER THE AFT DECK. HE FOUND A SMALL AIR POCKET THERE AND WAS SUBSEQUENTLY ABLE TO SAFELY REACH THE SURFACE.

6. BASED ON THE ABOVE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE IS

PROVIDED:

A. THE SIDE DOORS REMAIN THE OPTIMAL POINT OF EGRESS FROM DEFENDER CLASS BOATS IN THE EVENT OF A CAPSIZING. ALL CREWMEMBERS SHOULD FAMILIARIZE THEMSELVES WITH THE ORIENTATION OF THE DOOR AND HANDLES IN THE EVENT THAT THE BOAT IS INVERTED.

B. THE AFT DOOR SHOULD BE CONSIDERED A SECONDARY MEANS OF EGRESS DUE TO THE WELL DECK AND OBSTRUCTIONS AFT (TOW BITT, ETC.) AN AIR POCKET SHOULD NOT, REPEAT, NOT BE ASSUMED TO BE PRESENT IN THE WELL DECK.

C. REITERATE LIGHTING CONCERNS IN THE EVENT OF A CAPSIZING. CREWMEMBERS SHOULD EXPECT MARGINAL LIGHTING IN THE EVENT THE BOAT IS INVERTED.

D. EMPHASIZE EGRESS STRATEGY WITH BOAT CREWS AND ENSURE THAT BASIC EGRESS TECHNIQUES ARE INCORPORATED INTO CREW BRIEFS. THE OFFICE OF BOAT FORCES IS IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING EGRESS PROCEDURES FOR CH-1 TO THE DEFENDER CLASS OPERATOR'S HANDBOOK. THESE DRAFT PROCEDURES ARE AVAILABLE ON THE OFFICE OF BOAT FORCES WEBSITE AT:

[HTTP://CGWEB.COMDT.USCG.MIL/G-OCS/G-OCS/RB/EGRESS\(DRAFT\).DOC](http://cgweb.comdt.uscg.mil/g-ocs/g-ocs/rb/egress(draft).doc)

E. REEMPHASIZE SAFE SPEED CONSIDERATIONS WHILE MANEUVERING ALL CLASSES OF BOATS AT HIGH SPEED. ALSO CONTINUE TO EMPHASIZE PROPER OPERATIONAL RISK MANAGEMENT DURING ALL EVOLUTIONS.

7. UPON RECEIPT OF THE FINAL MAB, THE OFFICE OF BOAT FORCES WILL RAPIDLY ADDRESS ANY FURTHER SAFETY CONCERNS AND CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDED CONFIGURATION CHANGES. I WANT TO REEMPHASIZE THAT IN THIS MISHAP, THE BOAT PERFORMED AS EXPECTED BY THE STABILITY AND CAPSIZING ANALYSIS. THE BOAT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO CAPSIZE. IF IT DOES, IT WILL REMAIN AFLOAT WITH A SIZEABLE AIR POCKET FORWARD IN THE CABIN. THE DURABILITY OF THE BOAT WAS VALIDATED BY THE MINIMAL DAMAGE INCURRED DURING THIS MISHAP.

8. WE WERE EXTREMELY FORTUNATE THAT THERE WAS NOT A SEVERE INJURY OR FATALITY DURING THIS MISHAP.

9. RADM D. W. KUNKEL, ASSISTANT COMMANDANT FOR OPERATIONS, ACTING, SENDS.

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