



Mr Ken Foxe

02 July 21

ken@righttoknow.ie

Ref: 07/2020

European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007 to 2018

Dear Mr. Foxe,

1. I refer to the request you made under the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment) Regulations 2007 to 2018 (S.I. No. 133 of 2007, S.I. No. 662 of 2011, S.I. 615 of 2014 and S.I. No. 309 of 2018) (hereafter referred to as the AIE Regulations) for access to information held by the Defence Forces relating to copies of all records held referring or relating to Naval Service involvement in averting an environmental accident on the west coast of Ireland as referenced in the following newspaper article: <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40027865.html>
2. A decision has been made on 02 July 21.
3. I have decided to **Part Grant** your request.
4. Listed below are the records enclosed and my decision in relation to each of them;

Rec No.	Record	Dated	Decision	Article
1	Letter to OCNOC from Lt Cdr Murphy	12/08/2021	Part Granted	9 (1)(a)
2	Incident Report	03/08/2020	Part Granted	9 (1)(a)
3	AF 26 (1300hrs)	03/08/2020	Granted	
4	AF 26 (1900hrs)	03/08/2020	Granted	





5. I have made a decision on your request on 22 June 2021. I have identified four (4) records which relate to your request. I have decided that you should be granted access in full to two (2) records, number three (3) & four (4). I am granting access to a further two (2) records with some information redacted by reason of Section 9 (1) (a) - A public authority may refuse to make available environmental information where disclosure of the information requested would adversely affect – (a) International Relations, National Defence or Public Security. These records are number one (1) & two (2). The requested records, one (1) and two (2) contain operational information referring in general to operations of this nature carried out by the Defence Forces (in this particular case the Naval Service), and also operational information that is specific to this evolution carried out by the Naval Service. I am of the view that the release of this information in full to the world at large may adversely affect National Defence.
6. Under Article 11 of the AIE Regulations you have the right to request an Internal Review of this decision. An Internal Review involves a complete reconsideration of the matter by a member of the staff of the Defence Forces, unconnected with the original decision, of the same or higher rank than the original decision-maker, who may affirm, vary or annul the original decision.
7. If you wish to request an internal review, you can do so in writing to Comdt Aidan O'Mahoney, AIE Officer, referring to this decision, quoting the AIE reference number. This request must be made within one month of the date of receipt of this decision. The decision of an internal review will be communicated to you within one month of receipt of your request for an internal review.
8. Please contact the address or phone number below if we can assist you in any matter relating to your request.
9. For your information as requested.

The person dealing with your request is:

Equality & Freedom of Information Officer
Defence Forces Headquarters
Station Road
Newbridge
Co. Kildare
045 492577

R. SHEERIN
COLONEL
DIRECTOR HUMAN RESOURCE BRANCH (J1)





STRENGTHEN THE NATION

OCNOC

12th August 2020

Sir,

RE: TOW OF MV AQUA TRANSPORTER

Background

1. L.E. NIAMH was on Sailing Order on Monday 3rd August 2020. L.E. NIAMH had left [redacted] on Sunday 2nd August and was patrolling in a southerly direction, south of [redacted] and [redacted]
[redacted]
2. At approximately 0010hrs on the 3rd August 2020, a watch officer with the Coast Guard, [redacted] [redacted] [redacted] [redacted], contacted the ship's mobile phone to inform the CO of a vessel, MV AQUA TRANSPORTER, who had lost propulsion and was drifting. The SDO on the Naval Base- Lt Cdr A. O' Regan also contacted the ship at that time to inform of same. The CG were requesting that we take the vessel under tow at first light.
3. MV AQUA TRANSPORTER was approximately five (5) nautical miles from L.E. NIAMH and approximately nine (9) nautical miles from the nearest point of land.
4. MV AQUA TRANSPORTER was drifting in a NE'Ly direction at a rate of 0.6 knot.
5. The distance to MV AQUA TRANSPORTER was closed and they were hailed on VHF. The Master of the vessel was questioned as to their cargo and possible towing arrangements. At approx. 0100hrs the master of the vessel stated that the owners of the vessel had contacted him and informed him that a tug had been organized and would be leaving Achill at approx. 0500hrs and would be on scene at approx. 0800hrs and they would tow the vessel.
6. At the calculated drift rate MV AQUA TRANSPORTER was in no immediate danger. The Coast Guard and SDO were informed of the arrangements made by the owners and the Coast Guard requested that L.E. NIAMH remain on station overnight to render assistance if required. The Master of MV AQUA TRANSPORTER was contacted via email and informed that L.E. NIAMH would remain in the vicinity overnight and to contact us if he required any further assistance. The Master replied to the email with a copy of the emergency towing booklet for the MV AQUA TRANSPORTER if it was required. The position and drift rate of the MV AQUA TRANSPORTER and the weather conditions were monitored overnight.
7. At approx. 0730hrs the Coast Guard contacted L.E. NIAMH by telephone to inform the Commanding Officer that the tug that was arranged by the owner was now unavailable and would not be in a position to tow MV AQUA TRANSPORTER and to request that L.E. NIAMH tow the MV AQUA TRANSPORTER. OC L.E. NIAMH responded that the ship would be in a position to conduct a tow, the SDO on the Naval Base was contacted and informed of same.





Towing Evolution

- 8. At 0745hrs the Executive Officer, Lt (N.S.) Fox briefed the Bosun, PO Beattie of the requirement to tow the MV AQUA TRANSPORTER and the Bosun began to make preparations. At this point MV AQUA TRANSPORTER was 4.7nm from the nearest point of land and drifting in a NEly direction at a rate of 0.6 of a knot. At 0900 the drift rate changed –MV AQUA TRANSPORTER started to drift in a SE'ly direction at a rate of 0.4 of a knot. She was drifting parallel to the coast line.
- 9. The emergency towing booklet provided by MV AQUA TRANSPORTER was studied and connecting a tow to her foc'sle was deemed feasible. The Master of the vessel confirmed that he had power and so could operate her windlass/capstan on the foc'sle to heave in the towing hawser. He also confirmed that he was not in a position to break his anchor cable so the tow would need to be connected to his deck using a SWR towing pendant and D shackle provided by L.E. NIAMH
- 10. It was decided to send across the two OUT's for the duration of the tow and also a L/Sea prior to the tow commencing to access the vessels foe'sle and also to check the diameter of the fairlead to ensure that the hard eye of the towing hawser would fit through.

1



12.



_____ p q II
sufficient time to prepare for the evolution.

- 13. At 0915hrs a command brief took place on the bridge and all required personnel were present. The weather conditions were accessed and risks identified. The intended approach was discussed by Command and any questions or queries were addressed. At 1009hrs _____ L/Sea Clarke were sent across to the MV AQUA TRANSPORTER. Appropriate PPE was worn with respect to COVID 19 and the RHIB was decontaminated when it was recovered.
- 14. Once the assessment of the foc'sle was completed, L/Sea Clarke returned to L.E. NIAMH and additional safety and seamanship briefings took place. At 1110hrs L.E. NIAMH closed up to towing stations. The weather conditions were favorable– wind was W'ly at 12knots. Swell was NW'ly and





approx. 1.0m. The MV AQUA TRANSPORTER was 4.1nm from the nearest point of land. Drift rate remained SE'ly at 0.4 of a knot.

15. At 1115hrs L.E. NIAMH commenced her approach on MV AQUA TRANSPORTER. A converging approach was selected by the OC.
16. At 1128hrs on the first approach the gun line was fired and received on the foc'sle of the MV AQUA TRANSPORTER. At 1143hrs the towing hawser was received on the deck of the MV AQUA TRANSPORTER and the foc'sle party commenced connection. At 1144hrs the foc'sle party confirmed that the tow was connected and they were ready to be towed.

17.



18. The initial position selected and agreed was North of Inishmore Island, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
On consultation with the RNLi located on Inishmore - they advised that the area selected for the original anchorage was littered with fishing buoys and would not be an ideal anchorage and recommended an area further to the east which added and additional three nautical miles to the tow.

19. At 1628hrs another Command brief was held, detailing the procedures to tow the vessel to an anchorage and then disconnecting the tow. This information was then passed to the foc'sle party who then briefed the Master of the MV AQUA TRANSPORTER who indicated that he was happy with the procedure. It was decided a running anchorage would be used.
20. At 1701hrs the MV AQUA TRANSPORTER let go his port anchor and at 1706hrs the foc'sle party confirmed that the vessel was securely at anchor and the Master was happy to disconnect the tow.
21. At 1711hrs the tow was disconnected from the MV AQUA TRANSPORTER and recovery of the towing hawser commenced on board L.E. NIAMH. At 1732hrs all lines were recovered and the tow was completed. At 1752hrs the foc'sle party [REDACTED] were recovered from the MV AQUA TRANSPORTER and at the request of the [REDACTED] E. NIAMH remained in the vicinity until a tug was on scene— anchoring to the west of the AQUA TRANSPORTER.
22. At 0900hrs on the 4th August 2020 the tug OCEAN BANK was standing off MV AQUA TRANSPORTER and connecting towing lines. MV AQUA TRANSPORTER was then towed to Galway Harbour for repairs.

Conclusion

23. A successful tow was completed with MV AQUA TRANSPORTER— towing her approx. 18nm to a safe anchorage until an ocean going tug could tow her to effect main engine repairs.





24. The emergency towing booklet provided by the Master of the vessel was a useful tool and guide.

25.

[REDACTED]

26. The weather conditions were very favorable for towing evolutions and the drift rate of the vessel was slow.

27. Taking all this into consideration it allowed Command to adequately prepare for the tow and sufficient time was allowed for all elements of the evolution.

28.

[REDACTED]

29.

[REDACTED]

Recommendations

30.

[REDACTED]

31.


[REDACTED]

32.

[REDACTED]

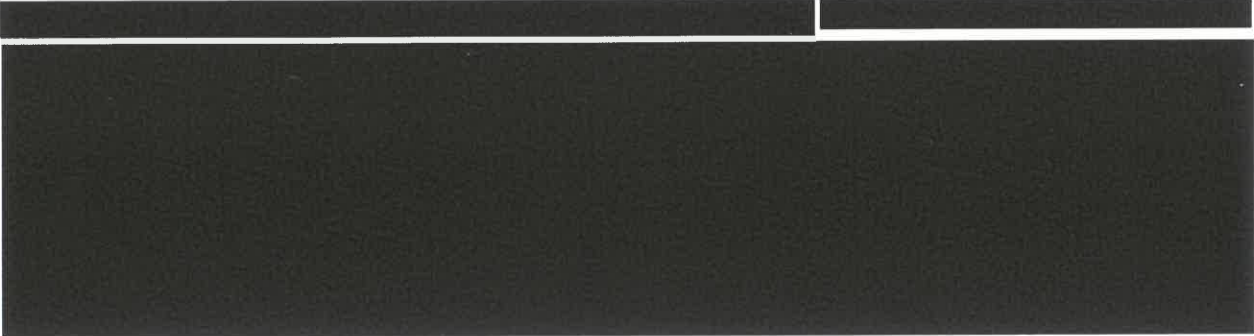




33. The vessel, whilst it did not have propulsion, had power so was able to utilise its capstan/windlass to haul in the towing hawser. 



34. The hard eye on the towing hawser fit through the fairlead on the MV AQUA TRANSPORTER,



35. Submitted.

C.MURPHY
LTCDR
OCLENIAMH





Óglaigh
na hÉireann
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES

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THE NATION



Fig 1



L.E. NIAMIP50 I/L NIAMIP5-2
An Buidéil Chabhlaigh I/L Síomhaigh Cóbh, Co. Chiarraí, P24 CP21, Éire
Haulbowline, Cobh, Co. Cork, P24 CP21, Ireland





Óglaigh
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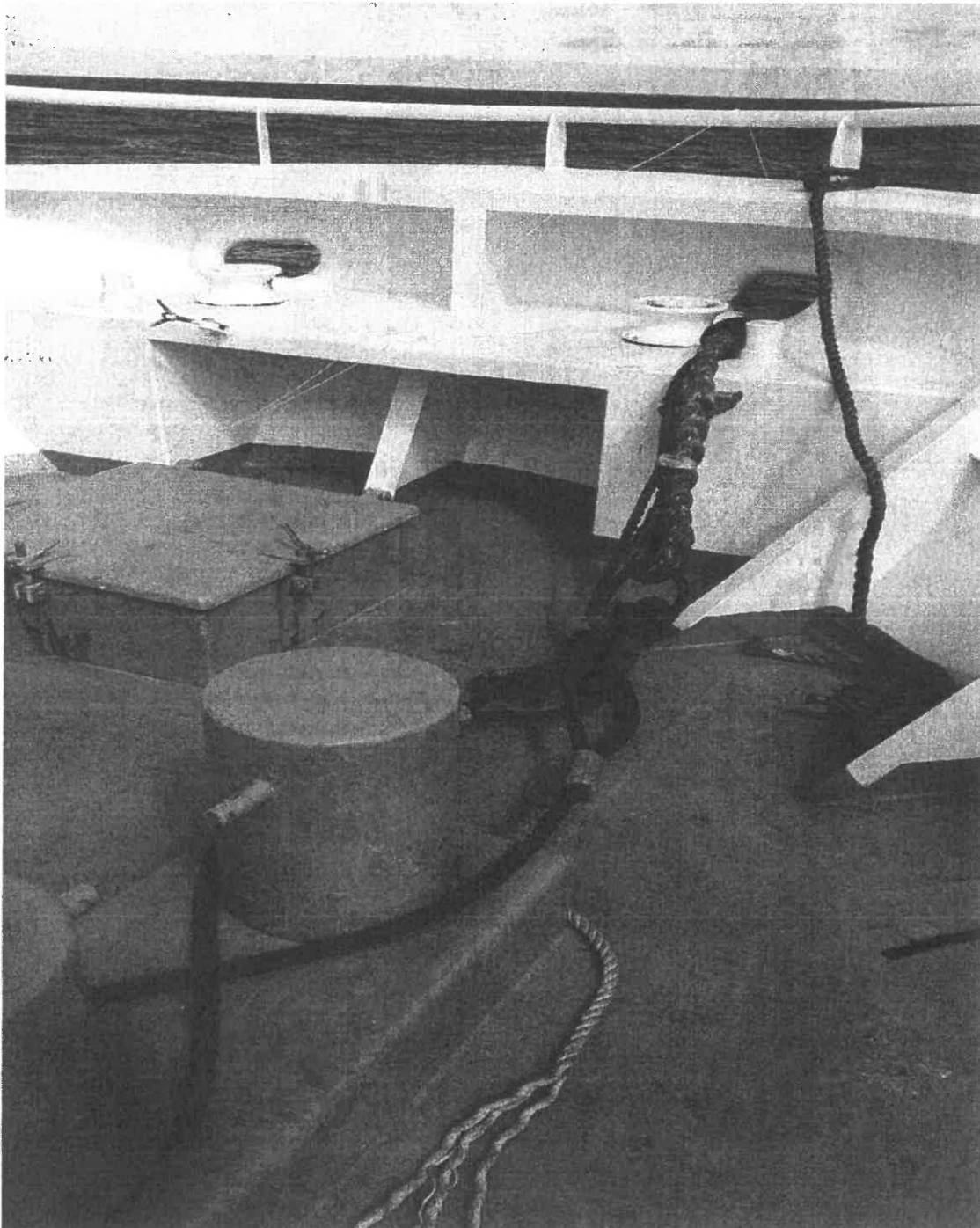


Fig 2



L.E. NIAI/MHP 52, L.E. NIAI/M P 52
An Bhuí at Chabhlaigh, Inis Siannach, C o bh, Co. Chorcaí, P24 CP2 1 Eire
Haulbowline, Cobh, C o Cork, P24 CP21, Ireland



RESTRICTED

INCIDENT REPORT

To:	DFHQ
From:	NAVAL OPS
Title:	INCREP NS 108E/20
DTG:	03 2130 A AUG 2020
Reference number:	NS 108/20
A	Incident Type Response to request for maritime assistance – West Coast
B	Source of information/requested Irish Coastguard MRCC
C	Location [REDACTED]
D	<p>Timings</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 03 0021 A AUG 2020: IRCG request assistance of a Naval Vessel to assist a broken down vessel the Aqua Transporter, [REDACTED] 03 0025 A AUG 2020: L.E. NIAMH tasked to assist 03 0040 A AUG 2020: L.E. NIAMH to stand off Vsl overnight and initiate a tow in daylight hours 03 0730 A AUG 2020: L.E. NIAMH commenced preps to begin a tow on the vessel Aqua Transporter. 03 1300 A AUG 2020: L.E. NIAMH 1150 tow commenced. Tow speed 3knots. ETA [REDACTED] 031800 A AUG 2020. 03 1659 A AUG 2020: L.E NIAMH 1659A Aqua Transporter anchored [REDACTED]. On request of IRCG LE NIAMH to remain in vicinity of vessel until arrival of tug. ETA of tug unknown at this time. 03 1900 A AUG 2020: LE NIAMH anchored [REDACTED]. ETA Tug 'Ocean Bank' 04 0500 A AUG. 20. 04 0800 A AUG 2020 Tug OCEAN BANK on scene tow passed to Aqua Transporter and commenced to Galway. 04 0800 A AUG 2020 LE NIAMH continued MDSO. This incident is now closed
E	<p>Details of Incident</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> LÉ NIAMH (P52) proceeded to assist the vessel which was only 4Nm away. L.E. NIAMH (P52) standing off the vessel overnight and will initiate a tow to bring the vessel into Galway Bay in daylight hours. L.E. NIAMH (P52) stood off the vessel overnight and at the request of IRCG they are commencing preparations to initiate a tow on the drifting vessel. Intention is to tow the vessel to nearest safe water for anchorage in the vicinity of [REDACTED] L.E. NIAMH (P52) towed vessel to safe anchor position north of [REDACTED]. LE NIAMH (P52) remaining with vessel awaiting arrival of tug.
F	<p>Casualties/damage to equipment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> NIL
G	<p>Any other relevant details</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> NIL

Anthony O'Regan
Lieutenant Commander
Naval Operations Centre

RESTRICTED

PRECEDENCE - ACTION PRIORITY	PRECEDENCE - INFO	DATE-TIME-MONTH-YEAR 031300 A AUG 20	NO OF GPS SECURITY CLASSIFICATION RESTRICTED
FROM: L.E. NIAMAH	TO (ACTION): OCNOC		DELIVER Y INDICATOR OPS
TO (INFO): -			

1. RESPONDED TO REQUEST FROM IRCG TO STANDBY STRICKEN VSL MV AQUA TRANSPORTER.
2. 0730 A CONFIRMATION RECEIVED NO TUG UNAVAILABLE TO TAKE VSL UNDER TOW.
3. 0800 A THIS UNIT TASKED TO TAKE VSL UNDER TOW.
4. 1143 A TOW CONNECTED.
5. 1150 A TOW COMMENCED.
6. TOW COURSE 110 TOW SPEED 3 KNOTS ETA NORTH INISHMORE 1800 A.

BT

NNNN

3 AUG 2020

NOCC / Naval Operations Command Centre

OCNOC	✓
FOO	
OIC NOCC	
SD NOCC	
NOO / C NOCC	
SDO	MH
DUTY COXM	SO

INTERNAL		DRAFTERS		BRANCH		EXTNO	
FILE REF:	DOES THIS MSG REFER TO A CLASSIFIED MSG	NAME	RELEASING OFFICERS SIGNATURE AND RANK				
Page of 1 OF 1							
R	DATE	TIME	SYSTEM	OP	D	DATE	TIME

