

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Budget Hearings 2002-2003, 20 November 2002

Question: PM10

Outcome 1, Output 4.1

Topic: DFAT Cable on SIEVX

Hansard Page: F&PA 134

Senator Faulkner asked: 1 outstanding issue from the Select Committee on a Certain Maritime Incident. Relates to DFAT cable on SIEVX. Can a copy of the cable be provided to the committee?

Answer: A copy of the declassified DFAT cable is attached.

O.JA25691 1049 23.10.2001 ~~CLA FIRST SENSITIVE~~ MTO.
PP CANBERRA/RP.
PP GENEVA UN/

FM. JAKARTA/ FA

~~R E S T R I C T E D~~ M

INDONESIA: SINKING OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT VESSEL

~~THE FOLLOWING CONTAINS SENSITIVE INFORMATION~~ M

START OF SUMMARY

A SUSPECTED ILLEGAL ENTRY VESSEL (SIEV) CARRYING 397 POTENTIAL ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (PII) SANK ENROUTE TO CHRISTMAS ISLAND DURING THE AFTERNOON OF FRIDAY 19 OCTOBER. THE SIEV IS BELIEVED TO HAVE FOUNDERED IN ROUGH SEAS TO THE SOUTH OF SUNDA ST WITHIN THE INDONESIAN MARITIME SEARCH AND RESCUE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY. 45 SURVIVORS WERE RESCUED BY TWO INDONESIAN FISHING VESSELS AND RETURNED TO JAKARTA LATE ON THE AFTERNOON OF 22 OCTOBER. THERE HAS BEEN CLOSE INTEREST BY THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA IN THE STORY.

END OF SUMMARY

CHRONOLOGY (U/L) M

2. TUESDAY 16 OCTOBER- APPROXIMATELY 430 POTENTIAL ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (PII) DEPARTED CIPINAS (SOUTH OF JAKARTA) AND TRAVELLED TO SUMATRA VIA JAKARTA AND MERAK. THE SURVIVOR SAID THAT ON ARRIVAL IN SUMATRA, THEY THEN TRAVELLED ONE AND A HALF HOURS BY BUS TO A HOTEL. THEY REMAINED OVER NIGHT IN THAT LOCATION (POSSIBLY BANDAR LAMPUNG)

3. WEDNESDAY 17 OCTOBER - ABU QUASSAY INFORMED THE PIIS THAT THEY WERE TO PACK THEIR BELONGINGS AS THEY WERE DEPARTING THAT EVENING. LATER THAT DAY THEY MOVED FROM THE HOTEL TO THE POINT OF DEPARTURE, ONLY A FEW KILOMETRES AWAY. THE VESSEL WAS WAITING FOR THEM. THE DIMENSIONS OF THE VESSEL WERE REPORTED AS 19.5 METRES LONG WITH A BEAM OF 4 METRES. A MAKESHIFT UPPERDECK HAD BEEN ADDED, WITH THE AFTER DECKS ENCLOSED BY CHIPBOARD (PRESUMABLY TO ENHANCE

SEAWORTHINESS).

4. THURSDAY 18 OCTOBER - THE VESSEL DEPARTED BANDAR LAMPUNG AT APPROXIMATELY 0130. AT THIS TIME, DUE TO THE SIZE OF THE VESSEL, 10 PIIS REFUSED TO EMBARK, LEAVING 421 PIIS ON BOARD. APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR AFTER DEPARTURE, PIIS APPARENTLY BECAME APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE ABILITY OF THE VESSEL TO REMAIN AFLOAT WITH THE NUMBERS ONBOARD. THE VESSEL STOPPED APPROXIMATELY 5 KILOMETRES FROM THE POINT OF DEPARTURE, DURING WHICH TIME THE CREW WAS IN RADIO CONTACT WITH ABU QUASSEY. THE VESSEL THEN RESUMED ITS PASSAGE AND ABOUT 0900 AGAIN STOPPED NEAR AN ISLAND "DUE TO HIGH SEAS". A NEARBY FISHING BOAT CAME ALONGSIDE THE VESSEL TO REMOVE 24 PIIS (397 PAX REMAINING).

5. FRIDAY 19 OCTOBER - AT ABOUT 1400 THE VESSEL BEGAN TAKING WATER. THE CREW SOUGHT TO REASSURE THE PASSENGERS BY TELLING THEM THAT THIS WAS A SMALL PROBLEM. THE PIIS ASSISTED THE CREW TO BAIL THE VESSEL, USING IMPROVISED SCOOPS FASHIONED FROM THE HULL TIMBER. AT THIS TIME, THE VESSEL WAS OUT OF SIGHT OF LAND.

6. AT 1500, THE VESSEL BEGAN TO LIST HEAVILY TO PORT. WITHIN FIVE MINUTES, THE VESSEL CAPSIZED. IT SUNK COMPLETELY AFTER MOMENTARILY REMAINING NEUTRALLY BUOYANT. DEBRIS SOON SURFACED AFTER THE SINKING. THE MAJORITY OF THE PIIS DROWNED IMMEDIATELY, WITH SOME 120 INITIAL SURVIVORS. THERE WAS A HEAVY SEA RUNNING, AND IT COMMENCED RAINING AFTER THE SINKING. THE EXACT POSITION OF VESSEL AT THE TIME OF SINKING IS UNKNOWN, BUT IT IS JUDGED AS NO FURTHER SOUTH THAN 8 DEGREES SOUTH LATITUDE ON A DIRECT LINE FROM SUNDA ST TO CHRISTMAS IS.

7. SATURDAY 20 OCTOBER - THE SURVIVORS REMAINED IN THE WATER FOR APPROXIMATELY 19 HOURS, WITH MANY OF THE SURVIVORS PERISHING DURING THAT PERIOD. AT APPROXIMATELY 1000, THE REMAINING SURVIVORS WERE APPROACHED BY TWO INDONESIAN FISHING BOATS. ONE VESSEL TOOK ON BOARD 44 PIIS (41 ADULTS AND 3 CHILDREN), WITH THE SECOND BOAT PICKING UP 5 PIIS. OF THESE, 4 WERE ALREADY DEAD AND THE REMAINING SURVIVOR WAS A FEMALE.

8. THE CREW OF THE FIRST BOAT (44 PIIS) CONTACTED THEIR CHINESE OWNER FOR INSTRUCTIONS. THEY WERE SUBSEQUENTLY DIRECTED TO PROCEED TO JAKARTA WITH THE PIIS. THE TIME OF ARRIVAL IN JAKARTA WAS APPROXIMATELY 1800 ON MONDAY 22 OCTOBER.

9. A VESSEL OVERDUE ALERT MESSAGE WAS ISSUED BY RESCUE COORDINATION CENTRE AUSTRALIA ON MONDAY 22 OCTOBER AND FORWARDED TO INDONESIAN SEARCH AND RESCUE COORDINATION CENTRE (BARSARNAS) IN JAKARTA.

GENERAL (U/L)

10. LOSS OF LIFE - 353 PERSONS (INCLUDING 70 CHILDREN). THE SAFETY EQUIPMENT CARRIED ON BOARD WAS ENTIRELY INADEQUATE CONSISTING OF 70 NON SERVICEABLE LIFE JACKETS.

11. IT IS ASSUMED THAT THE 10 PASSENGERS WHO REFUSED TO BOARD THE BOAT AT BANDAR LAMPUNG REMAIN IN SOUTHERN SUMATRA. THE WHEREABOUTS OF 24 PIIS REMOVED FROM THE VESSEL PRIOR TO SINKING ARE UNKNOWN. THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE 1 FEMALE PII ON THE SECOND RESCUE BOAT IS ALSO UNKNOWN.

12. THE SURVIVORS HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY IOM TO ACCOMMODATION IN BOGOR AREA AND ARE THE SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION BY THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

XC. O.JA25691

[REDACTED]

XC.

[REDACTED]

ACTION: DR.A.CALVERT (DFAT)

DR A HAWKE (SEC DEF)

ADM C BARRIE (CDF)

MR W FARMER (DIMCA)

MR M M-WILTON (DPMC)

PRIME MINISTER

MIN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINISTER FOR TRADE

ATTORNEY GENERAL

MIN DEFENCE

MIN IMMIG+MC AFFAIRS

MIN JUSTICE+CUSTOMS

MR R CORNALL (A/GS)

MR RICHARDSON (ASIO)

COMM.M.KEELTY (AFP)

MR L WOODWARD (ACS)

RADM M BONSER (NSC)

MR F LEWINCAMP (DIO) MR C R JONES (ONA) +++

ACTION: MR.R.SMITH(IOB)

DR.A.CALVERT(SEC)	MR.P.GREY(D/S)	MS.P.FAYLE(D/S)
DR.A.THOMAS(D/S)	MR.D.RITCHIE(D/S)	MR.J.FRYDENBERG(MIN B)
MS.S.BORCHERS(MIN F)	MS.A.HAWKINS(MIN.G)	MS.L.MANTON(MIN H)
MS.C.MILLAR(EXB)	MR.P.GRIGSON(SED)	MR.G.LADE(MRB)
DR.G.RABY(ILD)	MR.P.DOYLE(PS TF)	MR.I.MCCONVILLE(LGB)
MR.B.PATERSON(ISD)	MR.C.SPARKE(GCB)	MR.B.MILLER(STB)
MR.L.ROWE(PCD)	MR.C.DECURE(PMB)	MR.B.DAVIS(DG-AUSAID)
MR.C.TAPP(PHI)	MR.P.FLANAGAN(HCB)	MR.M.DILLON(APNG)
MS.A.O'KEEFFE(SPA)		

ACTION: ;
INFO: ;