MCIB
Marine Casualty Investigation Board

Leeson Lane, Dublin 2.
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REPORT OF INVESTIGATION INTO INCIDENT AT DONEGAL POINT, KILKEE, CO.CLARE ON 5th NOVEMBER 2011

REPORT No. MCIB/208
(No.12 of 2012)

The Marine Casualty Investigation Board was established on the 25th March, 2003 under the Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) Act, 2000.

Report MCIB/208 published by The Marine Casualty Investigation Board
Printed 4th November 2012.

CONTENTS

1. SUMMARY

1.1 On Saturday 5th November 2011, Mr. Armands Silins, a 52 year old Latvian national who had been living in the Kilrush area for some 10 years, took to his Seahawk 11 inflatable dinghy without engine, personal flotation device, emergency flares and without any form of communications, when his dinghy capsized in heavy waters of 2.5 metre swell in an enclosed bay north of Donegal Point, Kilkee, Co. Clare. He held onto the overturned dinghy for a period of time. He was subsequently recovered by Kilkee Coast Guard and Kilkee Rescue Service, airlifted by helicopter R115 and brought to Limerick General Hospital where he was declared dead at 16.30 hrs.

2. FACTUAL INFORMATION

2.1 Dinghy Particulars

The craft was a Seahawk 11 inflatable dinghy of 2.97 metre length and 1.27 metre breadth, manufactured by Intex of China and described as a heavy duty dinghy. It was constructed in extra heavy duty reinforced vinyl material and it is understood that the vessel complied with the Recreational Crafts Directive. The design of this dinghy incorporates twin safety main chambers with an inflatable floor, easy inflate/deflate screw-in marine valves, and double action air hammer pump. It had a pair of alloy oars in rowlocks integral with the pontoons. The empty weight was approximately 34 lbs.

2.2 Marine Casualty or Incident Information

Personal Information:

Mr. Silins was dressed in a grey jumper, black tracksuit bottoms, woollen hat and brown boots. He was wearing a high visibility padded jacket with hood.

Incident Information:

5th November 2011 – 13:56 hrs local time:
Incident considered as a Man-Overboard following dinghy capsize and subsequent loss of life.

2.2.1 Location

The incident occurred in an enclosed bay north of Donegal Point, some 3 cables north of Kilkee, the bay being known variously as "Hubbains/Bealnalicka" and "The Horseshoe".

The entrance to the bay – opening to the NW - is surrounded by 76 m (250 ft.) high sheer cliffs.

Refer to extract ex Chart 2173 - Loop Head to Slyne Head.

2.2.2 Weather & Tidal

Weather conditions attending were recorded as:
Wind North Westerly Force 2 – Light breeze, 4/6 knots
Tidal (Seafield Point taken as representative): High Water – 13:08 hrs and height 3.8 m (where Galway was taken as High Water) – 13:20 hrs and height 4.2 m.

Met Éireann estimate of the weather conditions in the sea area off Donegal Point, North of Kilkee, Co. Clare – 5th November 2011, between 12:00 and 18:00 hrs was:

Winds: Light to Moderate, Force 2 to 4 from between a north-west and a south-west direction.

Weather: Generally dry and sunny. There were a few showers but these passed quickly and occurred mainly in the early part of the period.

Visibility: Good.

Waves: Moderate to Rough (Rough further off-shore) and mainly swell from a north-westerly direction.

Temperatures: Air temperatures were close to 11°C and sea temperatures were 13°C.

2.3 Shore Authority involvement and emergency response

The rescue was organised and co-ordinated by MRSC Valentia.
On receipt of the emergency call at 13:56 hrs from Mr. William Ryan the following emergency services were tasked:

2.3.1 Kilkee Coast Guard Unit

The Coast Guard Unit was tasked at 13:57 hrs and mustered out eight persons from the local Rescue Centre equipped with two Jeeps. Initially they proceeded to Ballard Bay – slightly to the north of the incident location. Nothing was visible from the cliff top. They contacted Mr. William Ryan by mobile and he directed them to "Hubbains" – by Bealnalicka Quarry. MRSC Valentia was advised accordingly.

Mr. Ryan advised that he was on foot by Donegal Point tracking the dinghy/casualty.

On arriving at the entrance to the Donegal Point area they found their way barred by two padlocked gates. A local farmer attended, opened the gates and allowed access. On arriving at the Point, some 0.5 miles distant they met up with Mr. William Ryan who advised them that Kilkee Rescue RIB had recovered the casualty from the water.

MRSC Valentia was advised accordingly, the CGU was stood down and they picked up Mr. William Ryan, returned him to his own vehicle and proceeded back to their Base.

2.3.2 Kilkeel Rescue Service

Kilkee Rescue was mustered out at 14:14 hrs from their Rescue Centre Base at Kilkee. The Service uses a 6.8 m DELTA powered by twin 100 HP Yamaha engines.

Arriving on scene in "Hubbains" (The Horseshoe) at 14:28 hrs they located the capsized dinghy but were unable to sight the casualty initially.

They were advised by Shannon Radio that the casualty had floated away from the dinghy.

Mr. William Ryan was positioned on the cliff top and directed them by means of hand signals to the location of the casualty.

Closing up with the casualty they found him face down in the water with only the crown of his head visible. He was noted to be wearing a high viz. padded jacket but no movement on his part was observed.

The Delta RIB was fitted with a patent recovery unit called a "Jason Cradle". This in effect is a "U" shaped lattice construction cradle which can be clipped onto and deployed over the RIB's side such that the "U" section is immersed thus allowing an inert casualty in the water to be manoeuvred "scooped" into the Cradle and thus brought on board – landing him on the pontoon cradle.

The RIB was manoeuvred in to position at 14:30 hrs to effect a Jason Cradle recovery. The casualty's head was kept up during this manoeuvre. It was noted that his jacket had not been closed.

The casualty was noted foaming at the mouth, felt cold to touch but was limp and supple.

His pulse was checked and CPR was commenced with oxygen administered.

The Cox was in contact with Shannon Radio and was advised that SAR – R115, which had been on duty off Achill, was now re-fuelling at Knock Airport and had been re-assigned to the incident.

R115 arrived from the north-west and hovered, some 300 m off the casualty. The casualty was moved to the bow of the RIB to facilitate lift off – CPR being maintained throughout.

Difficulty was experienced in aligning the RIB and R115 in the 2.5 m swell conditions and it took two attempts. The initial attempt was made into the wind with a RIB speed of 5 kts. The second attempt was made at 10 kts, and was successful with the casualty being lifted by Hi-Line Transfer at 15:02 hrs.

While the ideal is to maintain the casualty in a horizontal position this is not always feasible depending on circumstances. It was thus on this occasion that the casualty slipped while in the H-Line and his jacket fell into the water.

On completion of the transfer the RIB prepared to return to Base. The casualty's hi-viz. jacket fouled the starboard propeller. The affected engine was lifted, the propeller cleared and the remains of the jacket recovered. This was subsequently handed over to the Gardai at Kilrush.

Having departed the scene they decided to return and see if they could locate and recover the dinghy. This was unsuccessful and they were stood down by Shannon Radio and returned to Base at Kilkee at 15:29 hrs.

2.3.3 SAR – Helicopter R115

R115 Duly arrived on scene, took command and effected the transfer of the casualty from the Delta RIB. The casualty was airlifted to Limerick Regional Hospital arriving at 16:23 hrs where he was declared dead at 16:30 hrs.

3. NARRATIVE

3.1 Mr. Silins' movements prior to the incident

As far as could be established Mr. Silins had the inflatable dinghy for some time but there is no independent evidence available that he had used it to fish off the Kilkee coast.

His route on this occasion would appear to have been to drive up close to the old quarry at Bealnalicka – virtually on the cliff top on the northern side of the "Hubbains/The Horseshoe" – left his car there and proceeded on foot and alone along a rough heavily grassed track diagonally down the cliff to gain access to a shingle beach tucked under the sheer cliffs at the head of the bay.

It would appear that he launched the dinghy from the beach.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 Awareness

While Mr. Silins appears to have been familiar with the topography of the area and its remoteness, it is clear that the site is very remote with poor and dangerous access, in particular for an emergency response.

Launching from such a remote location and putting to sea in a small inflatable dinghy, from an enclosed and exposed bay, surrounded by high cliffs is inherently dangerous and inadvisable.

4.2 Planning

It does not appear that Mr. Silins made any arrangements with regard to advising third parties as to his itinerary - his next of kin were unaware of his movements for the day.

In the event, it was fortuitous that Mr. William Ryan observed the incident that triggered the emergency response.

4.3 Equipment

Notwithstanding all of the foregoing, he was ill equipped for the intended trip. His personal safety equipment was deficient and inappropriate in the circumstances. In particular, he was not wearing a PFD (Personal Flotation Device). The craft carried no emergency flares, he was devoid of communications and he was not tethered by lanyard to the dinghy.

In addition, as observed from the shore, it would appear that he was unaware of the appropriate drill/procedure to right the dinghy following capsize. The Investigation notes that the dinghy was set about with a becketted line which could have been used for this purpose.

The manufacturers of the dinghy class it as a one engine three-person craft. In this instance with only a single occupant and in the prevailing swell conditions, the craft would have been vulnerable to capsize in a beam sea/breaking swell.

4.4 Prevention

The circumstances of this incident are not uncommon on this section of coast while not always ending in tragedy.

The local Coast Guard Unit and members of the Kilkee Rescue Service have on various occasions attempted to stop individuals and/or diving clubs from putting to sea from Kilkee in what they considered inappropriate sea conditions.

There have been instances when their advice has been ignored, the offending party got into trouble and subsequently had to be rescued.

The nature of the coastline along this stretch of Clare coast seems to act as a beacon to various people wishing to either get on the water or fish. However the attendant dangers given the exposed nature of the shoreline, its sections of sheer cliffs, constant swell and general remoteness in the event of an emergency are not appreciated by the general public engaging in these activities.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Circumstances of Incident

The circumstances attending the incident were tragic in the extreme but avoidable. It was only through fortuity that the circumstances of the incident became known.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recreational Craft Less than 7 m in length

All persons on board a recreational craft of less than 7 m are required by law to wear a suitable PFD/lifejacket.

In the context of this incident where a person was operating a manually propelled inflatable craft alone in a location and conditions which may be regarded as bordering Category B – Offshore/Category C – Inshore, the Board would make the following Recommendations.

6.1 Pre- passage planning

- Make yourself familiar with the area and any potential hazards likely to be encountered.
- Check weather forecast for area.
- Have a nominated person ashore who is familiar with the intended itinerary and able to raise the alarm in the event of not being advised that the passage has been concluded successfully in a pre-set time.
- Craft to be operated only in daylight hours and allowing ample reserve times to conclude the passage in daylight.

6.1.1 Safety equipment to be carried:

- Suitable PFD (Personal Floatation Device) of at least 150 Newtons (CE EN 396) to be worn at all times while at sea.
- PFD to have a whistle attached.
- Flares – Four – hand held distress, Four – Parachute rocket red flares, Two – Orange smoke signal canisters.
- Hand held compass.
- Waterproof Torch with facility for signalling.
- Knife with lanyard.
- Waterproof hand held radio.
- Carry spare food and drink.
- Wear appropriate clothing and stay warm.

6.1.2 Equipment:

- Ensure that the two oars/paddles are tethered to the craft by a lanyard to obviate possible loss.
- Carry a bilge pump or some arrangement for bailing out in the event of the craft being swamped.
- Emergency anchor and warp to be carried.

6.1.3 Emergency Plan:

In the context of capsize of an inflatable – be familiar with the method of righting the craft in the water by standing in the beckets on one side and heaving on the beckets on the opposite side.

In the case of an inflatable with external hand grips fitted externally to the bow and stern, the fitting of a strop secured to each hand grip and run fore and aft under the craft would greatly assist a lone person to right the craft in the event of capsize.

A short safety strop around ones waist with a suitable carbine clip on the free end is recommended. The Carbine clip may be clipped into a suitable strong point on the craft and ensures that the occupant will not drift away from the craft in the event of capsize even if unconscious. The inflatable will be a larger target for those tasked with the rescue.

7. LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 7.1 Photographs taken by Mr. William Ryan on 5th November 2011.

(a) Initial sighting of Mr. Silins in dinghy

(b) Subsequent sighting of Mr. Silins in dinghy

Appendix 7.1 Photographs taken by Mr. William Ryan on 5th November 2011.

(c) View of inner sweep of northern side of the "Horseshoe"

(d) Inner sweep of southern side – exposed rocks and breaking swell

Appendix 7.2 Chart Extract – Chart No. 2173, Loop head to Slyne Head, posited about the Kilkee, Donegal Point area.

Appendix 7.3 Illustration of inflatable dinghy – SeaHawk 11.

Appendix 7.4 Tidal Data.

0709 GALWAY
53°16'N 9°03'W Ireland 05 November 2011 +0000
Data Area 1-4. Europe, Northern Waters & Mediterranean Version 11

05/11/2011			06/11/2011			07/11/2011			08/11/2011		
	Time	Height		Time	Height		Time	Height		Time	Height
High	01:04	4.1 m	High	02:01	4.3 m	High	02:47	4.5 m	High	03:26	4.6 m
	13:20	4.2 m		14:16	4.3 m		15:02	4.5 m		15:41	4.6 m
Low	06:52	2.0 m	Low	07:46	1.8 m	Low	08:32	1.6 m	Low	09:12	1.4 m
	19:28	1.7 m		20:15	1.6 m		20:53	1.4 m		21:28	1.3 m
09/11/2011			10/11/2011			11/11/2011					
	Time	Height		Time	Height		Time	Height			
High	04:01	4.7 m	High	04:35	4.8 m	High	05:09	4.8 m			
	16:18	4.7 m		16:53	4.8 m		17:29	4.8 m			
Low	09:50	1.2 m	Low	10:25	1.2 m	Low	10:59	1.1 m			
	22:01	1.2 m		22:34	1.2 m		23:06	1.2 m			

Predicted heights are in metres above Chart Datum

0709 Galway – 05.11.2011

0712 Seafield Point
52°48'N 9°30'W Ireland 05 November 2011 +0000
Data Area 1-4. Europe, Northern Waters & Mediterranean Version 11
Predictions are based on GALWAY

05/11/2011			06/11/2011			07/11/2011			08/11/2011		
	Time	Height		Time	Height		Time	Height		Time	Height
High	00:52	3.7 m	High	01:50	3.8 m	High	02:37	4.0 m	High	03:17	4.2 m
	13:08	3.8 m		14:05	3.9 m		14:52	4.1 m		15:32	4.2 m
Low	06:48		Low	07:43		Low	08:30		Low	09:11	
	19:24			20:13			20:52			21:27	
09/11/2011			10/11/2011			11/11/2011					
	Time	Height		Time	Height		Time	Height			
High	03:52	4.3 m	High	04:27	4.3 m	High	05:02	4.4 m			
	16:10	4.3 m		16:45	4.3 m		17:22	4.3 m			
Low	09:50		Low	10:26		Low	11:01				
	22:01			22:35			23:08				

Insufficient source data inhibits the computation of full predictions for this tidal station
Predicted heights are in metres above Chart Datum

0712 Seafield Point – 05.11.201

Appendix 7.5 Met Éireann Weather Report.

MET ÉIREANN
The Irish Meteorological Service

Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9, Ireland.
Cnoc Ghlas Naion, Baile Átha Cliath 9, Éire.
Tel: +353-1-806 4200
Fax: +353-1-806 4247
www.met.ie
E-mail: met.eireann@met.ie

Our Ref: WS3018/2C_14354
Your Ref: MCIB/

10/11/2011

Estimate of the weather conditions in the sea area near Donegal Point, Kilkee, Co. Clare, on the 5th November 2011, between 12 and 18 hours.

General Situation

A ridge of High Pressure was building over Ireland. Waves from Low pressure areas in the Atlantic were arriving on the west coast.

Details for the Donegal Point sea area:

Winds: Light to Moderate, Force 2 to 4, from between a north-west and a south-west direction.

Weather: generally dry and sunny. There were a few showers, but these passed quickly and occurred mainly in the early part of the period.

Visibility: good

Waves: Moderate to Rough (Rough further off-shore) and mainly Swell from a north-westerly direction.

Temperatures: air temperatures were close to 11°C and sea temperatures were 13°C

Evelyn Murphy B.Sc. M.Sc. Meteorologist
Research & Applications Division

Appendix 7.5 Met Éireann Weather Report.

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The Irish Meteorological Service

Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9, Ireland.
Cnoc Ghlas Naíon Baile Átha Cliath 9, Éire.
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Tel: +353-1-806 4200
Fax: +353-1-806 4247
E-mail: met.eireann@met.ie

Appendix

Beaufort Scale of Wind

Force	Description	Speed* knots	Speed* km/hr	Specification -sea	Wave height** (metres)
0	Calm	<1	<1	Sea like mirror	
1	Light air	1-3	1-5	Ripples	0.1 (0.1)
2	Light breeze	4-6	6-11	Small wavelets	0.2 (0.3)
3	Gentle breeze	7-10	12-19	Large wavelets, crests begin to break	0.6 (1)
4	Moderate breeze	11-16	20-28	Small waves becoming longer, frequent white horses	1 (1.5)
5	Fresh breeze	17-21	29-38	Moderate waves, many white horses, chance of spray	2 (2.5)
6	Strong breeze	22-27	39-49	Large waves, white foam crests, probably some spray	3 (4)
7	Near gale	28-33	50-61	Sea heaps up, streaks of white foam	4 (5.5)
8	Gale	34-40	62-74	Moderately high waves of greater length	5.5 (7.5)
9	Strong gale	41-47	75-88	High waves, dense streaks of foam, spray may reduce visibility	7 (10)
10	Storm	48-55	89-102	Very high waves, long overhanging crests, visibility affected	9 (12.5)
11	Violent storm	56-63	103-117	Exceptionally high waves, long white foam patches cover sea	11.5 (16)
12	Hurricane	64+	117 & over	Air filled with foam and spray, sea completely white	14 (-)

*Speed a mean speed at a standard height of 10 metres.
**Wave height is only intended as a guide to what may be expected in the open sea. Bracketed figures indicate the probable maximum wave height.

Wave Heights / State of Sea

The wave height is the vertical distance between the crest and the preceding or following trough. The table below gives a description of the wave system associated with a range of significant wave heights. The Significant wave height is defined as the average height of the highest one-third of the waves. (It is very close to the value of wave height given when making visual observations of wave height.)

Sea State (Descriptive)	Significant Wave height in meters
Calm	0 – 0.1
Smooth(Wavelets)	0.1 – 0.5
Slight	0.5 – 1.25
Moderate	1.25 – 2.5
Rough	2.5 – 4
Very rough	4 – 6
High	6 – 9
Very high	9 – 14
Phenomenal	Over 14

Individual waves in the wave train will have heights in excess of the significant height. The highest wave of all will have a height about twice the significant height

Visibility Descriptions of visibility mean the following:

Visibility (Descriptive)	Visibility in nautical miles (kilometres)
Good	More than 5 nm (> 9 km)
Moderate	2 – 5 nm (4 – 9 km)
Poor	0.5 – 2 nm (1 – 4 km)
Fog	Less than 0.5 nm (< 1km)

Appendix 7.5 Met Éireann Weather Report.

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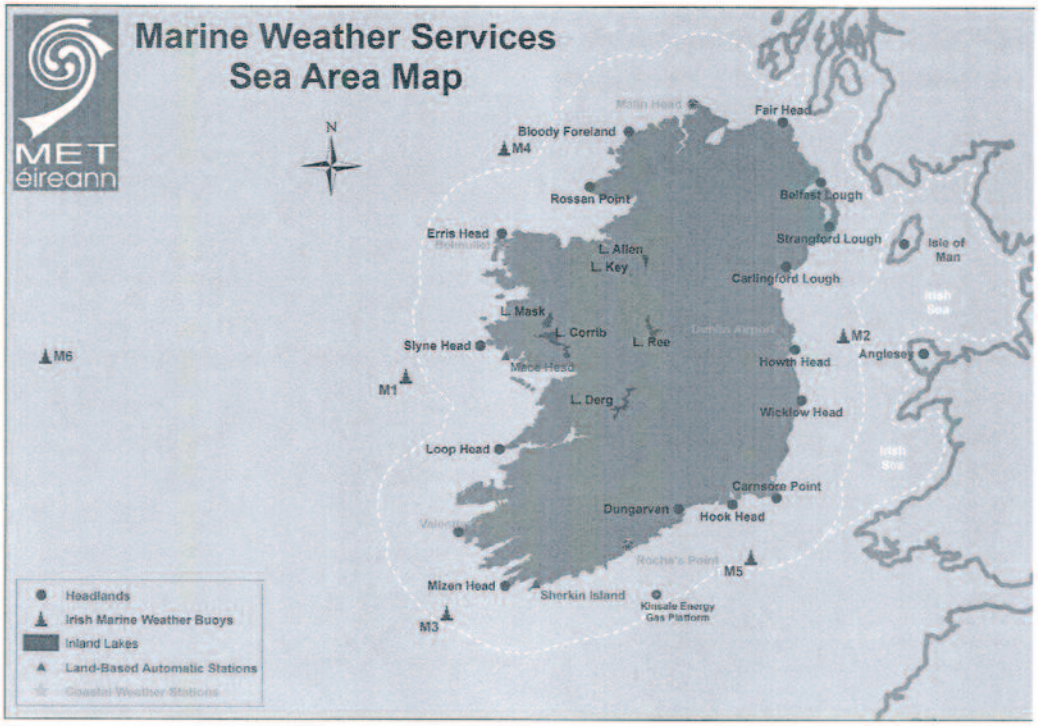
The Irish Meteorological Service

Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9, Ireland.
Cnoc Ghlas Naíon, Baile Átha Cliath 9, Éire.
www.met.ie
Tel: +353-1-806 4200
Fax: +353-1-806 4247
E-mail: met.eireann@met.ie

Map of Ireland with Headlands, coastal stations and offshore weather buoys



8. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

Note: The address and contact details of the individual respondent have been obscured for privacy reasons.

AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA

An Cheannfort,
An Garda Siochana,
Cill Rois,
Co. An Chlair.

Tel/Teileafon: 065 - 9080557.
Fax/Facs: 065 - 9080555.

Please quote the following
Ref. No: KH015.21/11.

Superintendent,
Garda Station,
Kilrush,
Co. Clare.

Web Site:

E-Mail:

AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA
SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE
- 2 MAY 2012
KILRUSH GARDA STATION
DIVISION OF CLARE

Your Ref: MCIB/12/208.

Ms. Helen Conway,
Marine Casualty Investigation Board,
Leeson Lane,
Dublin 2.

Dear Ms. Conway,

Thanks for the copy of the draft report of the investigation carried out by the M.C.I.B. into the fatal accident at Donegal Point, Kilkee, on 5th November, 2011. I have read the report, and I agree with the facts as outlined in the report.

I would ask that Clare County Council be invited to consider launching an information campaign highlighting the danger of launching such crafts on the Kilkee Coastline. That information specific to this area could be included in their website.

Yours sincerely,

Marine Casualty Investigation Board
03 MAY 2012
Bord Imscrúdú Taismí Muirí

Superintendent.
Gerard Wall.
May, 2012.

MCIB RESPONSE
The MCIB notes the contents of this correspondence

Department of Transport
An Roinn Iompair

April 2012

Irish Coast Guard
GARDA CÓSTA na hÉIREANN

Your Ref. MCIB/12/208

Our Ref. 22/52/2

Ms. H. Conway
Secretariat
Marine Casualty Investigation Board
Leeson Lane
Dublin 2.

Draft Report of the Investigation into fatal incident at Donegal Point, Kilkee, Co. Clare on 5th November 2011

Dear Ms. Conway,

The draft report in relation to this incident has been reviewed and the Coast Guard would like to draw your attention to the following items:

2.3.1. Coast Guard Volunteer Units are not entitled to cut padlocks and enter private lands.

2.3.2. Recovery from Rescue RIB's underway is a standard Coast Guard practice but is highly skilled and can be hazardous.

- Please delete "Shannon Radio" and insert "Valentia Coast Guard".
- Please amend "Shannon R115" with " Coast Guard Shannon helicopter call sign Rescue 115".

2.3.3. Delete "took command" and insert "took on scene co-ordination".

In our opinion, Mr. Silins, died needlessly. If he had taken the appropriate safety equipment he would, in all likelihood have survived. Safety equipment- strongly recommend adding a float free EPIRB .

Yours sincerely,

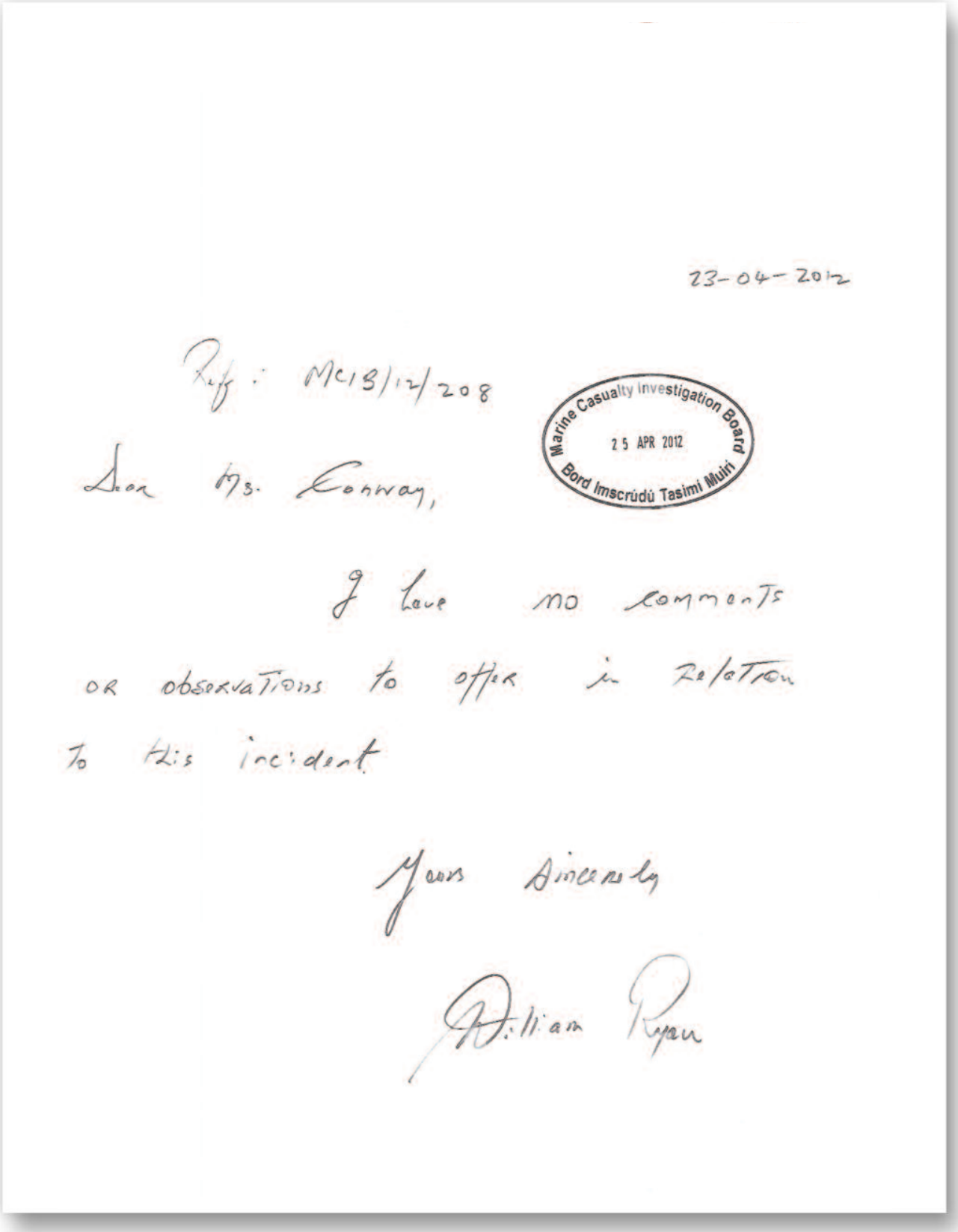
Chris Reynolds
Director

Marine Casualty Investigation Board
23 APR 2012
Bord Imscrúdú Tasimí Muiri

Director's Office, Irish Coast Guard, Department of Transport, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, Ireland.
Oifig an Stiúrthóra, Garda Cósta na hÉireann, An Roinn Iompair, Lána Chill Mochargán, Baile Átha Cliath 2, Éire.
Tel: + 353 1 6783440, Fax: + 353 1 6620930, email: chrisreynolds@transport.ie

MCIB RESPONSE

The MCIB notes the contents of this correspondence and has made the necessary amendments



23-04-2012

Ref: MCIB/12/208

Marine Casualty Investigation Board
25 APR 2012
Bord Imscrúdú Tasimi Muiri

Dear Ms. Conway,

I have no comments or observations to offer in relation to this incident

Yours Sincerely

William Ryan

MCIB RESPONSE
The MCIB notes the contents of this correspondence