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James Fisher and Sons plc James Fisher Rumic Team Rescues Russian Submarine

James Fisher Rumic Limited, which operates the Royal Navy's submarine rescue service, announces the completion of a successful 4-day operation to rescue the Russian *Priz AS-28* submersible, saving the lives of seven Russian sailors trapped in the mini-submarine, 625 ft below the Pacific on the ocean floor off Russia's far eastern Kamchatka peninsula. This was achieved amid estimates that the men had fewer than 10 hours of air left to live.

The team was mobilised on Friday 5th August following a call from the MoD. From the outset the team raced against time to reach the stranded submariners and drew on support from the RAF, the US Navy and local Russian teams to fly the team and its equipment from its Renfrew base to the far east coast of Russia, transport it to a waiting ship, secure it to the vessel and reach the offshore location in the Pacific within 36 hours. It took about five hours to cut the Russian submersible free.



The RAF Boeing C-17 aircraft carrying the British rescue team and the Scorpio remotely operated vehicles touched down at Prestwick Airport, Scotland at 0855 BST yesterday, Tuesday 9th August. The team was met by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the Rt. Hon Adam Ingram M.P. who warmly praised their efforts.

A press conference was held yesterday, 9 August 2005, on the apron at Prestwick Airport, Scotland, with the minister, the Royal Navy Commander Ian Riches who led the British team, the RAF C-17 pilot and Stuart Gold of the James Fisher Rumic Rescue Team who is responsible for the Scorpio system.

Commenting on the rescue, Roger Chapman, Managing Director of James Fisher Rumic, and Vice Chairman of James Fisher Defence, said:

"Our team did very well. This is a prime example of our partnership with the MOD. The fact that we were dealing with people's lives created extra difficulties. The sailors had about 10-to-12 hours in oxygen supply."

He added: *"I would like to commend the professionalism of our team, which worked hand in glove with the Royal Navy and the other naval authorities in this dramatic rescue. Our people and our technology once again showed that James Fisher Rumic is a world leader in providing a high level of expertise and a comprehensive submarine rescue to the Royal Navy. The submarine rescue assets are on 24-hour standby to save the lives of crews of stricken submarines."*

Stuart Gold, the James Fisher ROV Supervisor added: *"It was a fairly long operation, with quite a lot of cutting, but eventually when most of it was freed, the submarine blew its ballast tanks and came free to the surface."*

The Mission

The British rescue team, based at James Fisher Rumic's HQ in Renfrew, Glasgow, with their Scorpio 45 remotely operated vehicle left Britain on Friday 5 August in a RAF Boeing C-17 aircraft, to travel 4,380 miles from Glasgow to the remote Pacific port of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatki, on the east coast of Russia. This followed an early morning phone call putting them on standby and confirmation of the request to mobilise at 1130 BST.

Commander Ian Riches of the Royal Navy and the team of eight civilians from the company, flew with the rescue equipment including the Scorpio 45 submersible, which is the size of a smart car and fitted with lights, cameras and powerful cable-cutting pincers. The team were assisted by the US Navy to offload the equipment onto local vehicles for the hour and a half journey by road to the nearest port. The James Fisher naval architect had traveled ahead to make arrangements for the Russian ship to receive the equipment which was loaded and welded down before the final 45 mile transit to the spot where the mini-sub was snared in pieces of netting.

At 22.20 BST, the British Team deployed Scorpio 45 and, working closely with a team from the Russian Navy, began to cut cables holding the submarine. Underwater footage had revealed pieces of fishing nets wrapped tightly around the Russian mini-sub, along with other debris. The seven submariners had donned thermal suits and huddled inside the submarine in a single compartment, lying flat and breathing as lightly as possible for the remaining air. The lights inside AS-28 Priz submarine were also turned off to conserve energy reserves, with temperatures inside the vessel below zero.

With the help of its onboard cameras the Scorpio's crew, which works in teams of three, manoeuvred the vehicle around the trapped submersible from onboard the ship and used its manipulator arms and cutting tools to grip and then cut the cables which held the mini-submarine. After just over five hours work it cut through the last cable and the Russian vessel resurfaced at 03.23 on Sunday, 7 August 2005. The Priz AS-28 then blew its tanks and three minutes later was on the surface. The crew lifted the hatch themselves and climbed out, receiving assistance from a team of American divers before boarding a ship to return to the mainland.

The successful mission was further evidence of the growing international co-operation now involved in submarine rescue.

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