

Failure of life raft securing strap

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A life raft from the starboard forward life raft station made an unplanned deployment into the sea

What happened?

The incident occurred in early afternoon with calm seas and clear skies.

The life raft remained attached to the painter line and vessel.

The vessel was later able to safely recover the life raft to deck.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Work authorisation



Line of fire



Photo 1
Image of sling after the life raft deployment, as found.

Photo 2
The sling parted in the buckle at its weakest point.

Photo 3
The sling material was found to be fragile and parts easily, suggesting UV degradation.

What went wrong?

There was a failure of the securing straps designed to hold the life raft in place.

This allowed one life raft to deploy into the sea. The securing straps had only been installed one-year prior to failure.

The vessel was in operation in the Middle East, with high temperatures and high UV levels.

What was the cause?

The hold back strap, used to retain the life raft in place, was found to be degraded to the point of failure.

This appears to have been caused due to the extremes of temperature and ultraviolet light.

Action

Inspection routines for life rafts and associated lashings should consider the environmental conditions, and all parts of the equipment should be visually inspected and maintained at appropriate intervals.

Assumptions should not be based on vessel operating areas; UV damage may occur within any region.

- Conduct immediate inspections of life raft securing straps and associated equipment.
- Replace any items which are of concern or appear to be faulty.
- Verify manufacturer's instructions with regards to the service life of the securing straps.
- Any temporary secondary securing arrangements should not affect the ability to launch any life raft – as per SOLAS requirements.
- Members may wish to refer to UK MCA Guidance note MGN 343 Hydrostatic release units: stowage and arrangements for liferafts.

Members may wish to refer to:

- Life raft self-activates and falls to the quayside
- Unplanned deployment of free fall lifeboat

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