

UPDATE. Wind Stops Rescue of MFV Geo Searcher Crew

By

FINSA reporter

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#GOUGH66 overwinter team with #MVGeoSearcher Crew at #SouthAfrica station at #GoughIsland after #RESCUE #SANAP @environmentza @NRF_News @fkilpatricktdc Photo Credit: Roelf Daling

The *SA Agulhas II* has arrived at Gough Island to collect the crew of the sunken fishing research vessel, *MFV Geo Searcher*.

The ice breaker polar supply and research ship owned by the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), made good time arriving at approximately 09:30 this morning.

Departure is weather dependent, but wind conditions have hampered helicopter rescue operations.

It was confirmed earlier this evening that attempts to airlift crew to the vessel had been abandoned on account of the weather.

The *SA Agulhas II*, which will also have Tristan observers on board, is hoping to leave tomorrow for Tristan da Cunha.

More details

According to Norman Glass who is the brother of James Glass, the Chief islander of Tristan da Cunha and Director of Fisheries, the ship sank in waters to the north west of Gough island. Gough Island is part of the Tristan da Cunha archipelago.

The vessel was listing heavily at 45 degrees, and they were still evacuating the crew when four of the *Geo Searcher's* powerboats, which were fishing at the time, came to the rescue. They towed the 62 crew in life rafts to the South African Meteorological Station on the other side of the island. This took about four hours.

The bulk carrier *Bahri Arasco* also diverted from her course in response to the distress call from the *Geo Searcher*.

There was a slight swell at the Met station landing, which consists of a 150ft cliff face known as The Crane Point where the crew were hoisted up by crane. The exercise that took a further four hours. All were safely on the island by 19:00.

Load safe

The *Geo Searcher* had been fishing for lobster at the top islands of the Tristan da Cunha archipelago for some weeks. She had caught just over 50 tonnes at Inaccessible Island, and just under 50 tonnes at Nightingale Island.

A few days earlier most of the produce was transshipped to the *MV Edinburgh* and shipped back to Cape Town. The *Geo Searcher* had only been fishing a few days at Gough prior to the incident.

Should the weather permit, the crew will be air lifted to the *SA Agulhas II* tomorrow

