



# Bundesstelle für Seeunfalluntersuchung Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation

Federal Higher Authority subordinated to the Ministry of  
Transport and Digital Infrastructure

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## PRESS RELEASE 19/17

The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation (BSU) published the investigation report No. 44/16 on 5. Oktober 2017. The report deals with the foundering of the fishing vessel CONDOR. Upon request the report will be forwarded. Alternatively, this report – as well as all previous reports – is available on the website [www.bsu-bund.de](http://www.bsu-bund.de) for download.

### Short version:

Very serious marine casualty – Foundering of the fishing vessel CONDOR east of Fehmarn

On 6 February 2016, the fishing vessel CONDOR foundered about 3.5 nm east of the island of Fehmarn. Both fishermen drowned in the Baltic Sea. On 7 March 2016, the fishing vessel was raised on behalf of the BSU, taken to the buoy yard Rostock/Hohe Düne and put ashore on the pier. In the ensuing month, the BSU carried out extensive investigations at the fishing vessel with the assistance of external experts.

Besides clarifying the complex question as to why the fishing vessel foundered without external impact, the cause for the failure of the life raft which did not float up to the surface after the accident and was therefore not available as life-saving appliance for the crewmembers, was examined.

The investigation report published today concludes with safety recommendations addressed to the Ship Safety

Division, the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure and the manufacturer of the life raft.

The investigation report was published on 5 October 2017 by the Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation and can be downloaded at [www.bsu-bund.de](http://www.bsu-bund.de).

Long version:

### **Very serious marine casualty – Foundering of the fishing vessel CONDOR east of Fehmarn**

At 0647 on the day of the accident, the fishing vessel left her port of registry Burgstaaken (island of Fehmarn) for a one-day-fishing voyage. At about 1130, after several highly productive hauls which resulted in an estimated 3,000 kg of fish being deposited on her deck, the fishing vessel started her voyage home. A few minutes afterwards, the fishing vessel capsized and foundered in the Baltic Sea in a water depth of about 20 m. The self-inflating life raft on board which should have floated up to the surface after the fishing vessel foundered was dragged into the depths. Therefore the life raft was not available as a life-saving appliance to the crewmembers who could only be recovered dead from the Baltic Sea in the course of an extensive search in the previous evening. The Emergency position-Indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) did not float up as well. The fishing vessel was only discovered by the BSH-vessel DENEK, tasked with the search for the wreck, on 9 February 2016 on the sandy sea bottom of the Baltic Sea.

The subsequent dives carried out by police divers and the BSH did not produce any evidence as to the cause of the foundering of the fishing vessel. She lay on her starboard side on the seabed and was largely undamaged. The Federal Bureau of Maritime Casualty Investigation (BSU) tasked the Baltic Taucherei- und Bergungsbetrieb Rostock GmbH with salvaging the CONDOR. On 7 March 2016, the wreck was raised and taken to the area of the buoy yard Rostock/Hohe Düne (outlying area of Waterways and Shipping Office (WSA) Stralsund. Initial investigations carried out there confirmed the assumption that solely stability issues, possibly combined with technical issues in the areas of the steering gear, the engine or the winches, are responsible for the foundering of externally undamaged fishing vessel. The BSU tasked two external experts with the clarification of the hydrostatic and technical aspects. In addition, the Office of Criminal Investigation (LKA Hamburg) provided the BSU with administrative support by carrying out a 3D laser scan of the fishing vessel in the interest of a detailed survey (see Fig. 10). Other focal points of the BSU's investigation were aimed at clarifying why the liferaft on board the fishing vessel did not float up to the surface after the vessel foundered and why the emergency position-indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) installed on the fishing vessel, which was designed to transmit an automatic distress signal after the vessel foundered, also failed.

According to the expert opinion, the foundering of the fishing vessel was caused by the stability properties not complying with the provisions. The proof of stability of the See-BG, approved on the basis of pertinent regulations, were apparently based on a faulty analysis of the characteristic values determined on the occasion of a combined rolling- and inclining test by Germanischer Lloyd. The test was not carried out using the exact shape of the fishing vessel but as usual so far a scaled comparison vessel.

On the day of the accident, the construction induced insufficient righting lever, already adversely affected by other factors, (stowage of the complete haul on deck and not in the fish hold, hard-rudder position and not much fuel as counterweight in the tanks, was even more deteriorated. The failure of the life raft can unequivocally be attributed to a maintenance error. No reason could be found why the EPIRB did not float to the surface. It was obviously prevented from floating to the surface by an obstacle in the area of the fishing vessel.

As a consequence of the accident, the BSU deems it absolutely necessary to carry out an unscheduled review of the proof of stability of all German fishing vessels. Moreover, the procedures applied should be checked for their reliability. From the perspective of the BSU, the legal framework for determining and monitoring the stability properties should be checked with respect to practicability and legal certainty. Furthermore, the BSU suggests stipulating a redundancy in the future, i.e. duplication of the EPIRB system for smaller fishing vessels, in order to trigger an automatic activation of the rescue chain by a redundant EPIRB. The BSU issued safety recommendations addressed to the competent authorities, the Ship Safety Division and the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure with regard to the aforementioned aspects. Moreover, the manufacturer of the affected life raft is recommended to consider constructive modifications in order to reduce a fatal maintenance error.

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Director of the Bundesstelle