

Mystery of the sinking of m/v "Estonia"

On 28th September 1994 at 01.48 disappeared m/v "Estonia" from the Utö Fort Radar. Before that time m/v "Estonia" was in the Finnish Radar surveillance area together with the other ships: m/s "Silja Europa", m/s Silja Symphony, m/v "Mariella", GTS "Finnjet", m/v "Finnhansa", m/v "Isabella".

Radar tracks from all other ships during the disaster have been reported in the final report from the JAIC (Joint Accident Investigation Commission). Regarding m/v "Estonia" there are no tracks what so ever to be found. From Utö Fort they say they have lost the book with the tracks from m/v "Estonia" this night. No other tracking from her journey has been found.

About 900 people found their end that night. Some of the persons from the ship are still "missing". Eight (8) crewmembers of the m/v "Estonia" were rescued and they have all disappeared within the first 5 days after the disaster. Five of the crew were high officers with the Captain Avo Piht as the highest officer. The three other were women employed on the ship.

It is a fact that no other passenger that should have been rescued has disappeared afterwards. It is also a fact that no other high officer did survive. This is strange in many ways. There are rumours that Avo Piht and Tiina Müür and two sisters: Hannely and Hanka-Hannika Veide were in the same liferaft when rescued. In Swedish news, helicopter-crew told the press that the second Captain Avo Piht was just rescued. The news was sent in channel 4 news. Piht was also seen in ZDF news around 1.30 p.m. by several witnesses, among those Jannika Ade who used to work on m/v "Estonia".

Rescued and disappeared Chief Engineer Lembit Leiger was also marked on the earlier list of persons rescued and also he had to state his name to get on the list. On 18.10.94 was a telephone call held with Swedish phone number 468 7694145, where Mr. Stridlund said that L. Leiger left the hospital 24h after arriving there and that he was well and not injured. He also mentioned that several persons had expressed interest towards him.

Also doctor on board Viktor Bogdanov was marked on the earlier list of persons rescued and after disappeared. On 29.09.94 at 5.30 a.m. Estonian Social Ministry receives a fax that Viktor Bogdanov was found.

Rescued and disappeared IV Navigation Officer Kaimar Kikas was also marked on the earlier list of persons rescued and also he had to state his name to get on the list. On 30.09.94 during the night arrives a fax from "Estline" to Estonian

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Social Ministry with information that IV Navigation Officer Kaimar Kikas was rescued.

IV Engineer Agur Targama, Chief of Tax Free Store Tiina Müür, Variety Dancers Hannely Veide and her sister Hanka-Hannika Veide were also in the list of rescued people and soon they also "disappeared". About every person named here was an announcement from trusted sources from Sweden: Swedish Police, Swedish Red Cross, Swedish Crisis Centre, Huddinge Hospital in Stockholm.

On 02.10.94 a message from reliable sources tell that from Sweden has arrived a fax to the Ministry of International Affairs telling that among other names of rescued are both A. Piht and A. Targama.

So, where is the problem?! If there are witnesses, who have seen those people, it means that they should be alive.

All this mystery leads to one conclusion: there is something wrong with the sinking of the ferry and the officers were probably aware of it after it happened. JAIC states that the reason of the sinking was water on car deck, but that the water couldn't sink the Estonia unless water entered the ship's accommodation areas. How this was possible is not investigated.

The other possible reasons why m/v "Estonia" went down are following:

- Collision. Estonia could have been involved in a collision with some floating object, or even with a ship, for example human smugglers or a military vessel, even a submarine. A floating or half-floating object could have hit the fin stabilisation system causing a leakage.
- Sabotage. There are a number of theories of why sabotage could have been the reason to the disaster. It could have been because of a smuggled cargo, it could be because of a fight between the Mafia in Riga and Tallinn, or because of that the shipping company did not pay the Mafia "port fees".
- Mine. Drifting mines are not unknown in the Baltic Sea. Some time before the disaster there were reports of a drifting mine a bit more north in the Baltic Sea.
- Fatigue. Some underwater part of the hull could have been poorly repaired and has cracked or broke because of fatigue.
- Grounding. Estonia was south of her normal rote. It is quite unlikely, but unknown underwater rocks have been found in a lot of places in the Baltic Sea during the years. One shall remember that most of the deep measurings have been done a long time ago.
- Explosion aboard. An explosion aboard could have happened. There are a number of tanks aboard.

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None of these alternative causes have been investigated nor excluded by any investigation. The sabotage theory was thrown over board just a couple of days after the disaster, almost before the ship was found and long before the visor was found.

There are several indications that some of the alternatives above could be the real reason to the disaster.

- According to witnesses the sound was a blow, explosion or sound that could not have been caused by the waves. The sound was extremely loud.
- The ship was lifted when the sound of the blow came.
- The ship started to move in all directions after the blow. If something hit the fin stabilisation system it could have been a normal behaviour from the ship.
- There are several reports of a secret and dangerous cargo.

My personal opinion right now is that there could have been a bomb explosion. The following pictures can show that there could be an explosion what caused the accident.

These pictures are from the video band "B 40 b", ROV investigation 94.12.03. This is a packet of unknown kind that the ROV camera interests on. The packet is on the port side 1/3 from the bow. Its position is at deck 5.



The pictures have been shown to 5 divers and explosive experts in Sweden and Germany. They all, irrespective of each other came to the same conclusion. The



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packet is most probably an explosive. How and when the packet came there is unknown. The close-up shows that the packet was made of some sort of waxlike paper with tape around. In one end it has been broken. Under the packet there is a visible part of a round object connecting to the hull. It can be a magnetic plate that was used to get the packet to stick to the hull there are also cords tied around the packet

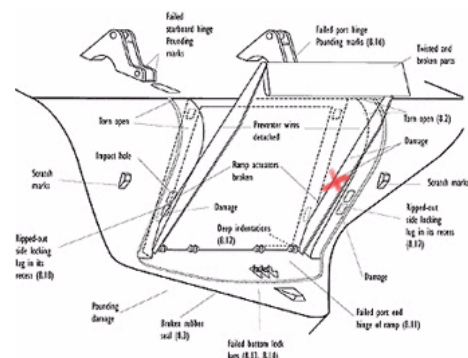
A summary from the experts are that the packet is not diving tools or anything that has to do with survival packets from life rafts or life boats. Survival packets from life rafts at Estonia were packed black, large sacks containing nothing like this packet. The survival packet from a lifeboat is a large paper box containing survival products. The box is inside a canvas sack. All survival equipments have to float for 30 minutes. The packet is typical for an explosive, wrapped in waxlike paper in a simple way with magnetic plating connected. The detonator is connected to one end as usual on this type of explosive. It can be presumed that the packet is made in a hurry, and that the packet can have been lowered from the gunwale of the ship. It can also be presumed that the detonator did not make the packet to explode, only made it to rip open.

These pictures are from the video band "Aktbilaga B 2", ROV investigation 94.10.09.



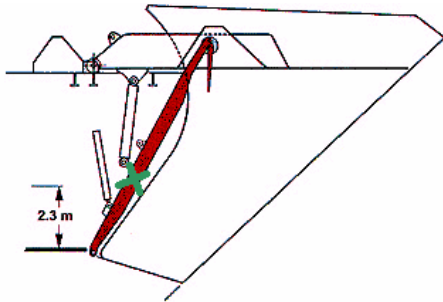
This box can be an explosive of a Hexogen based Composite B

These pictures have been shown to 3 divers and explosive experts in Sweden and Germany. They all, irrespective of each other came to the same conclusion. The packet is most probably an explosive. The explosive must have been there during the sinking of the ship. The white part in the bottom and right of the picture is the ramp. Top left shows the port bulkhead where the box is mounted. I think rope is covering a part of the bulkhead stuck around the box.



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On later video recordings the explosive is gone. It was mounted just to the left of the welded hole at the bulkhead. The thick rope is still there, but moved some to the right. The Green and Red X on the pictures below mark the place where the presumed explosive was mounted on the starboard side.



All above is from a stage in the investigation before it was clear that there could have been an explosion between the ramp and the visor. After finding a non detonated explosive between the visor and the ramp, on the port side, the damages on the ramp, visor and hull have been investigated once more. The conclusions thereafter are as follows.

One of the initial damages on the ship was probably made from an explosion between the visor and ramp. This may have happened around 00.45. The visor itself had been poorly repaired, in particular the upper hinges. The visor broke in its locking lugs, bottom lock and hinges as a result of the explosion between the visor and ramp.

At least two explosives were adapted between the visor and ramp, and at least one exploded. The remaining one has been filmed by the JAIC.

Finally after the ship had a list of 30 degrees the visor fell off towards starboard. Around 15 minutes later two other explosions followed with only some minute apart. The ship then suffered from at least one damage below the waterline. A big hole was ripped open on the starboard side close to the bow. A track with metallic parts from the ship hull was left at the bottom. Several platings from the ship was later found and filmed at the bottom, and the platings were said to come from other parts of the ship.

The videofilms from this survey has not been found but it is well described in letters and telefax.

When the visor fell off it damaged, but not opened, the forward ramp. The damage to the ramp was massive, primary made by the pressure from the explosion, but also from the two hydraulic actuators ripping their way in the

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upper foredeck. The ramp was not properly closed before the explosion and the pressure wave threw the ramp towards a more closed position. When the ramp hit the housing (bulkhead) it bent forward about two meters up and the top of the ramp bent like a "V" and hit the bulkhead hard.

The explosion lifted the visor up and forward leaving it hanging only in its hydraulic actuators. Finally the visor ripped off completely, when the hydraulic actuators ripped their way to the ramp hitting it and bending the upper starboard part of the ramp more forward and outwards. During the loss of the visor the ramp was bent forward and to starboard, leaving an opening in the top of the ramp of approximately 40-cm. Even though the ramp newer was closed before the explosion, it could not open because of the fact that the railings on the side of the ramp got stuck with the hydraulic locking pins extending from the bulkhead. This together with the damages on the ramp, is the strongest proof that the ramp was mainly closed during the sinking. The manoeuvrability was lost but the officers at the bridge did react correctly and made a starboard turn, however everything was already lost because the watertight doors were closed to late, after the bad list occurred.

With a badly list the ship lost the visor, mainly as a result of the badly performed repairs and because the waves hit the forward deck. The visor forced the ramp to open slightly in the upper end before it fell off towards the starboard side into the sea.

The ship sank with a list of 30 - 50 degrees relatively stable during around 15 minutes when in the same time the deck 0 and 1 was completely flooded. In the same time large amounts of water entered into the cardeck. The stability was lost because of the flooded lower deck 0 and 1, and when enough water had entered the cardeck, less than 2.000 tons, the ship capsized to a 90-degree list. The time was around 01.30 and the ship sank after another 20 minutes at 01.48.

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Epilogue

I can't describe my feelings I felt when working through all material about sinking of m/v "Estonia" that I could get. This "conspiracy" seems to be a little bit too fearful to be true. But if it is. . . .

The last thing I add is the telex from Russia to Sweden. The telex (from the Swedish Estonia files E 1) was sent to the Swedish UD 1994.09.29. A Russian underwater expert believes that people can be alive inside the wreck. According to the expert Anatoly Kuteinikov Russia may have the best equipment to save the people trapped inside the wreck. The document was forwarded to the Swedish Transport Ministry and thereafter to the Swedish Board of Accident Investigation. As far as can be found no action at all was taken from the Swedish side.

'94 09/29 16:55 448 8 7231178 UD/R 3 001
UD/R 2
-+
AMBASSADEN MOSKVA 1994-09-29
UD STOCKHOLM. Stockholm 1994-09-29
B R A A D S K A N D E Överlämnas av UD/R 3 till Rätts-
chefen i Kommunikationsdepartementet
för benägen vidare befordran till
Statens Haverikommission.
Lars Andreasson
365. FOER R 3. DELOKS POL 1:1. RE-ESTONIA-KATASTROFEN
TASS AATEROER INTERVJU MED EN RYSK UNDERVATTENSEXPERT, FOERRETRADARE
FOER EN FABRIK I PETERSBURG SOM TILLVERKAR MILITAERA
UNDERVATTENSFAKOSTER. DENNE HAEVDAR ATT DET KAN FINNAS OEVERLEVANDE
I DET SJUNKNA VRAKET OCH SAERER VIDARE ATT DET PAA RYSK SIDA FINNS
STOR ERFARENHET OCH UTRUSTNING FOER UNDERVATTENSARBETEN. HAN
UTTRYCKER ENLIGT TASS NOTIS BESVIKELSE OEVER ATT INGEN BEGAERAN
KOMMIT OM BAKRONGINGSHJAELP.
TASSOIT:
ST. PETERSBURG SEPTEMBER 29 TASS - BY ITAR-TASS
CORRESPONDENT LEV BUNYANTSEV:
A RUSSIAN UNDERWATER EXPERT BELIEVES PEOPLE MAY STILL BE
ALIVE INSIDE THE +ESTONIA+ FERRY WHICH CAPSIZED IN THE BALTIC
SEA ON WEDNESDAY AND LIES AT A DEPTH OF 80-90 METRES.
+HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE REMAINING INSIDE THE SUNK FERRY CAN BE
SAVED AND SHOULD BE SAVED+. ANATOLY KUTEINIKOV, DESIGNER GENERAL
OF THE ST. PETERSBURG-BASED +HALAKHIT+ COMPANY, TOLD TASS ON
THURSDAY. THE COMPANY IS THE LEADING RUSSIAN DEFENCE ENTERPRISE
PRODUCING UNDERWATER CRAFT.
HE SAID THAT AN +AIR CUSHION+ ALWAYS ACCOMPANIES ANY
SHIPWRECK AND MAY ALLOW THOSE REMAINING INSIDE THE FERRY TO STAY
ALIVE FOR AT LEAST A WEEK.
+ONE SHOULD NOT BE SCARED BY THE EXCESSIVE PRESSURE. 80
METRES ARE NOT TOO DEEP+, KUTEINIKOV SAID.
HE REGRETTED THAT THE FINNISH AND SWEDISH AUTHORITIES HAD
NOT REQUESTED THE RUSSIAN RESCUERS TO HELP WITH THE +ESTONIA+
SHIPWRECK. +WE HAVE A BIG EXPERIENCE IN UNDERWATER WORK, AS WELL
AS GOOD AND MAYBE THE BEST EQUIPMENT. IT IS A PITY THAT WE DID
NOT JOIN EFFORTS. HOWEVER, THERE ARE OUR CITIZENS IN DISTRESS+,
KUTEINIKOV COMPLAINED.
THE CHIEF DESIGNER BELIEVES THAT THE MAIN CAUSE OF THE
DISASTER WAS A POOR TRAINING LEVEL OF THE CREW. BESIDES, IT IS
ALSO CLEAR THAT THE SHIP HAD SOME DESIGN FAULTS. +SHIPS OF THE
+ESTONIA+ CLASS DO NOT SINK IN FIVE MINUTES. THEY CAN OVERTURN,
BUT SHOULD STAY AFLOAT FROM SEVERAL HOURS TO A WHOLE DAY+, HE
SAID.
ITEM ENDS
HIRDHAN
AMBASSADEN MOSKVA/CK

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May 2000*

An interview in newspaper "Postimees" 96.07.24 was held with the Estonian chairman of the JAIC Andi Meister. From this interview it is clear that there is at least one "last letter" from a Swedish woman. The letter has been brought up by the divers, but where is it? Was the letter delivered to the relatives of the victim? Probably not.

This indicates that in spite of the quick sinking of the ship, people had time to write "last letters". Can it also be so that people left messages after been trapped in air pockets in the ship?

When will we know the truth about the sinking of the m/v "Estonia" ?

Who is behind all of this?

Where are the people who suppose to be rescued at the first time?

These and many, many more questions have been left unanswered. Will they ever be answered?