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## 19/02: 7 groups of distress near Greek islands of Lesvos, Pasas and Farmakonisi

📍 In Distress ✖ Interception

VERIFIED

20.02.2016 / 15:51 / Aegean Sea

### Watch The Med Alarm Phone Investigations – 19th of January 2016

*Case name:* 2016\_02\_19-AEG212

*Situation:* 19/02: 7 groups in distress near Greek islands of Lesvos, Pasas and Farmakonisi

*Status of WTM Investigation:* Concluded

*Place of Incident:* Aegean Sea

*Summary of the Cases:* On Friday the 19th of February 2016, the Alarm Phone was alerted to 7 groups of travellers in distress near the Greek islands of Lesvos and Farmakonisi. One group had stranded on Pasas and was picked up and transferred to Chios afterwards. Of 6 boats in distress 3 were rescued by the Greek coastguard, 2 by the Turkish coastguard and one boat reached Lesvos independently.

At 0.26am the Alarm Phone was informed by several contact persons about a boat in distress close to the Greek island of Lesvos, with 55 people on board (case 1). A contact person informed us that the boat's engine had stopped working 20 minutes earlier and forwarded to us the phone number of the travellers in distress. We asked him that they should call the emergency hotlines 112 and 108 and promised to call the Greek coastguard by ourselves. In a call to the Greek coastguard at 0.44am we handed over the received information. But already at 0.52am, one of the contact persons forwarded a message from the travellers to us, stating that they had safely arrived on the island of Lesvos. The other contact persons confirmed this information afterwards.

At 2.46am a contact person alerted us to another boat in distress close to Lesvos, with 42 travellers on board (case 2). We tried to call the boat directly, but did not reach the travellers and thus we sent a WhatsApp message to them. As we were not able to speak to them directly, we hesitated to immediately alert the Greek coastguard. At 3.15am the contact person informed us, that the boat had been rescued by the Greek coastguard in the meantime.

At 4.15am the GPS coordinates and phone number of another boat between Turkey and the Greek island of Lesvos was forwarded to us via WhatsApp (case 3). 50 people were in distress close to the Turkish coast. We decided to immediately call the Turkish coastguard and asked the contact person to urge the travellers to call the Turkish emergency hotline 158. We called the Turkish coastguard at 4.22am, but they were already informed about this boat for about 10 minutes. However, they had not been able to call to the travellers directly, but we confirmed to them that they were in distress and in need of help. At 4.53am we learned from the contact person that the Turkish coastguard had informed him about a successful rescue of this boat, but that he had not received a confirmation of rescue from the travellers themselves, as they were not reachable anymore. At 2.30pm in the afternoon we also talked about this case with the Turkish coastguard and they also confirmed to us that they had rescued a boat at the position in question in the morning.

At 7am a contact person forwarded a phone number and GPS position to us and informed us that the travellers are in need of help (case 4). We tried to contact the boat at 7.05am but the travellers were not answering. At 7.20am we received a new position of the boat, which showed it just 250 meters away from the Turkish coast. The contact person told us that the engine of the boat had stopped and that the waves had pushed the boat back to the Turkish coast. Afterwards, the contact person lost the connection to the boat and we were not able to reach the given number as well. But at 8.30am another contact person informed us, that the Turkish coastguard had rescued this boat.

At 7.48am the Alarm Phone was called and provided with GPS coordinates and a phone number of a boat in distress on its way to the Greek island of Lesvos, with 57 people on board, including 25 children (case 5). We tried to call the boat directly, but did not reach the travellers. At 8.18am we received another GPS position of the boat and another

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09:58 Apr 07, 2019 / Aegean Sea Kms

[06/04: AEG 24 people in distress, rescued by fisherboat to Greece](#)

11:00 Sep 18, 2017 / Aegean Sea Kms

[17/09: 30 travellers rescued to Lesvos](#)


11:32 Aug 31, 2015 / Aegean Sea Kms

[Five Distress Situations in the Aegean Sea, all rescued](#)

13:57 Jun 16, 2017 / Aegean Sea Kms

[15/06: Boat headed to Mytilene, probably intercepted and brought back to Turkey](#)





reach the travellers. At 9.16am we received another GPS position of the boat via another contact person. At that time, the boat was still in Turkish territorial waters. However, at 10.30am we received updated coordinates, showing that they had arrived on the Greek island of Lesvos. At 10.50am we finally reached the travellers directly and learned that the Greek coastguard had rescued them.

At about 8.40am several contact persons alerted us to a group of travellers who had stranded on the Greek island of Pasas and provided us with their phone number (case 6). At 8.52am we were able to speak directly to the travellers and learned that they were 45 persons. At 9am we called the port authorities on the neighbouring island of Chios. They were already informed about the group and had already sent a rescue vessel to the island of Pasas. At 11.16am we received an updated GPS position, showing that the group was still on the island. But at 1.20pm the Chios port authorities confirmed to us that they had picked up the group and transferred them to Chios.

At 10.08am we were provided with GPS coordinates and a phone number of a boat with a broken engine on its way to the Greek island of Farmakonisi, with about 55 people on board (case 7). We called the Turkish coastguard at 10.20pm, they were already alerted to this boat. Because the boat was exactly on the border between Turkish and Greek territorial waters, we also called the Greek coastguard and the Hellenic rescue team at 10.30pm. In the following two hours, we tried to keep in touch with the travellers, but this was difficult due to bad network connections, we only learned that they were still at sea at about 11.20pm. But at 1.05am of the next day we reached them again and learned that they had arrived on the Greek island of Farmakonisi. They reported to us that they had been beaten by 4 men from the military and that they were in need of food and water. At 1.22am we called the port authorities on Leros, who were already informed about the group on Farmakonisi and stated that they will be picked up soon. They asked us about the situation of the travellers and we reported what we had learned from them. We also sent an e-mail to the Leros authorities, to the Greek police, the Leros solidarity group and the UNHCR Greece and provided them with our information. On the next morning, at 7.20am, we called the port authorities on Leros again to ask if they had already picked up the travellers from the island of Farmakonisi, but we did not get an answer. At 7.30am we tried to reach the travellers again, but were not able to speak to them. However, at 7.50am we saw that the Greek rescue vessel ILLAS T had arrived in the harbor of Farmakonisi, probably in order to pick up stranded travellers. At 8.30am the rescue vessel had left Farmakonisi in the direction of Leros. Although we were not able to reach the travellers again, we assumed that they had been transferred to Leros with this vessel.