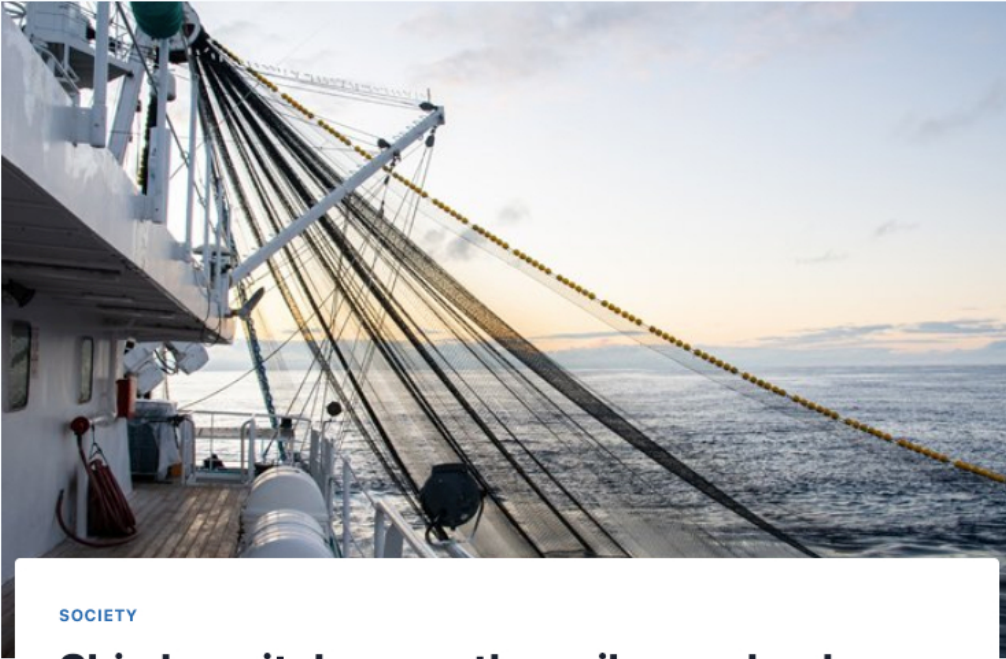




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The topic of emergency medicine continues to excite the Russian fishing industry. Its new surge occurred recently, when **the Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia Alexander Bastrykin**, during a reception of citizens, temporarily suspended the acting head of the Primorsky Investigative Department for Transport of the Eastern Interregional Investigative Department for Transport **Andrei Raikhert from his duties**.

The reason was a two-year court case between Dobroflot captain **Sergei Bova** and sailor **Viktor Boshko**. Now this case has come under the personal control of the head of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, which means that from a dispute between a boss and an employee (and simultaneously a doctor and a patient) it has turned into a reason for making a decision that is of the utmost importance for the entire industry.

The question is essentially this: will Russian fishermen have the opportunity to receive medical assistance at sea? Or will captains be more relaxed about following instructions and calling a helicopter from the shore for every case of injury, thereby removing responsibility from themselves, even if one does not arrive?

In just 40 minutes

At the end of November, Viktor Boshko from Kaliningrad, who worked as a sailor on one of the Dobroflot seiners in the Sea of Okhotsk, approached Alexander Bastrykin during a personal appointment. In January 2020, as a result of personal carelessness, his left hand was crushed by a fishing trawl warp. It is difficult for an ordinary person to understand the entries in medical documents, so we will explain more simply what happened: metal cables did to the hand approximately what children do when playing "Nettle", only with incomparably greater force. They twisted soft tissues, simultaneously crushing them. The thumb was torn off instantly, the muscles of the forearm were significantly damaged and crushed, but remained hanging on the skin.

The captain of the seiner-trawler (STR), an experienced fisherman, assessed the severity of the injury and immediately stopped fishing. This is confirmed by the entries in the ship's log, satellite monitoring and witness testimony. He was faced with a choice: to transport the bleeding sailor to the nearest port of Magadan and hand him over to shore doctors or to deliver him on board the floating base "Zaliv Vostok", where a permanent hospital was deployed and a trauma surgeon was on duty?

The passage to Magadan would have taken about 12 hours, the route to the floating base – less than 40 minutes. At the same time, January is fierce in the Sea of Okhotsk, and the port of Magadan, as well as the approaches to it, were closed – in the conditions of the Far North, the water area at this time is covered with thick ice, through which a seiner of such an ice class cannot break through.

The weather did not indicate that the air ambulance helicopter could quickly fly, although information about what had happened was transmitted to the shore. And the captain makes the only correct decision – he takes the victim to the "marine hospital", where he begins to receive assistance within 40 minutes after the injury.

It is good that the fishing seiner was not far from the floating base with a "marine hospital" on board. Otherwise, as follows from the medical examination, the sailor

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could have died.

On the floating base "Zaliv Vostok" the victim was handed over to a surgeon with 20 years of experience. Later, during the trial, two independent groups of medical experts from different regions will come to the same conclusion: with such an injury, the ship's doctor should have amputated the arm right on the spot. That is, the indications for amputation occurred at the time of the injury due to the irreversible nature of the damage.

But the doctor felt sorry for the young guy, and he tried to save his hand.

What are these "naval hospitals"?

What is this "marine hospital" and where did it come from on the floating base "Zaliv Vostok", and even with an experienced surgeon on duty?

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In the absence of federal standards regulating the provision of assistance to the sick and injured on board a ship, Dobroflot, on its own initiative, recalled the Soviet experience and deployed ship hospitals on all of its floating factories and floating bases - with operating rooms, X-ray rooms, separate wards and full-time trauma surgeons. All of them operate on the basis of licenses issued by the Primorsky Krai Health Department.

The largest floating base of the group of companies, Vsevolod Sibirtsev, even has dental and gynecological offices on board. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ventilators and oxygen concentrators were installed on it. The floating base hospital allocated "red" and "green" zones in case of quarantine measures, isolated 4 wards, where a closed ventilation and air purification system was installed.

At the same time, the current Charter of Service on Fishing Fleet Vessels requires companies to have only a ship's doctor, and only if the crew size exceeds 100 people. This means that 90% of existing fishing vessels may not have doctors on their crew at all. Most do not.

Meanwhile, sailors sometimes get serious injuries. And then one of the crew members, most often the first mate, looking at the instruction book, stops the bleeding and bandages the torn limb as best he can. That's it, first aid is provided, the requirements are met.

The ship owners of Dobroflot, realizing that such an order is not an order, went another way. Full-fledged hospitals and surgeons on floating bases mean that small fishing vessels are always close to a doctor, because seiners and trawlers usually fish near the "mother" floating bases. By the way, fishermen from other companies, where there is no such level of medical service in the fleet, also turn here for help. More than once, doctors on floating bases have saved lives.

Thus, on September 21, 2014, in the Sakhalin Region, corrugated packaging caught fire on the Bagration vessel. 62 crew members were evacuated to the Kapitan Efremov floating plant. On September 24, 2019, a fire broke out on the Pyotr Zhitnikov

floating plant in the Pacific Ocean near Iturup Island. There were two Dobroflot vessels nearby — they transported 170 people to the Vsevolod Sibirtsev and 42 to the Zaliv Vostok. And in January 2020, the Vsevolod Sibirtsev took 47 crew members from the Enigma Astralis trawler, where the fire occurred. They were given medical assistance.

Threat to life

But let's return to the story of sailor Boshko. The next day after the operation, the situation was stable, the temperature did not rise, the threat to life had passed. And the doctor began drug treatment on board. It led to an improvement in the patient's condition: the temperature did not rise, the paralysis below the elbow disappeared and the sensitivity of the fingers was restored.

Upon arrival at the port of Nakhodka, the victim in a moderate condition was transferred to the vascular department of the Nakhodka hospital. There, conservative treatment was continued. On the 4th day, an examination of the arm vessels was conducted – angiography. On the 11th day of treatment on the shore, Nakhodka surgeons decided to amputate the arm.

Four months later, in May 2020, sailor Viktor Boshko filed a lawsuit. The victim believes that he was taken too long to get to shore and that is why he lost his arm. That is, not because of the injury, as a result of which the soft tissues were twisted and separated from the bone, but because of the untimely delivery to shore.

His despair is understandable: it is difficult for a young man to come to terms with the loss of his arm. And he believes that the captain of the seiner should have broken through the ice ridges to the port of Magadan or called a helicopter for evacuation. He does not understand that in the first case there would have been a threat to his life ("the traumatic shock could have worsened and the victim could have died," according to the medical examination) and the entire crew (the vessel could have been holed), and in the second case there would also have been a threat to his life, since the helicopter could not have flown out of Magadan into the stormy Sea of Okhotsk.

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By the way, the possibility of helicopter evacuation was studied during the trial. It turned out that the regulations for the departure of air ambulances do not depend on the captains of the ships – the organizations providing such services decide for themselves whether the helicopter will fly or not on call, without the participation of the captain and the ship owner. Therefore, it is impossible to blame the captain for the fact that a helicopter did not fly to his small trawler in a storm.

Verdict on thousands of fishermen

The Primorsky Transport Prosecutor's Office took control of this difficult case and sent it back for further investigation several times. The investigation lasted 2 years. Independent examinations were conducted, experienced doctors and witnesses were heard.

Ultimately, it was recognized that "the actions of the captain [...] in delivering the

victim to the nearest location (PL "Zaliv Vostok"), where he was given medical assistance, cannot be considered as abandoning the victim in danger." The same applies to the doctor who saved the sailor's life.

"The doctor provided appropriate medical assistance, relieved the traumatic shock, and stopped the bleeding from the damaged vessels," the case materials state.

Two expert assessments of the ship's navigation confirmed that neither the vessel on which Boshko was injured, nor the floating base on which he was operated on, could enter the port of Magadan, since their ice class does not allow it. The port captain did not give permission because the vessels could get a hole in the ice, thus putting the lives of their crews at risk.

Now this case must be sorted out by investigators from the central office of the Investigative Committee of Russia. And they will essentially be assessing not only the actions of a specific captain, a specific doctor, and a specific ship owner. They will have to pass a verdict for thousands of fishermen who know that injuries in the fleet remain high.

Without creating a serious medical service and equipping full-fledged "marine hospitals", the issue of emergency assistance obviously cannot be resolved. After all, the flight of a medical helicopter is limited by fishing areas and weather conditions, and transporting victims to the shore under their own power often takes a long time, and is not always possible due to storm and ice conditions. Meanwhile, injuries usually occur during storms.

Comment

AiF contacted Dobroflot to find out the group of companies' position on the situation. And received the following comment:

"The Dobroflot Group of Companies considers the actions of the ship's captain and ship's doctor to be entirely correct. We believe that some of the latest publications in the media can be regarded as slander against highly qualified specialists. Our legal service will make every effort to protect the employees.

The group of companies has 3 floating factories and about 1.5 thousand crew members. We were the first among the Far Eastern fishermen to revive the Soviet organization of medical care. In 5 years, we have re-created a system of licensed full-fledged medical care at sea. Every year, the crews of other fishing companies, as well as fishermen from Japan and Korea, turn to the doctors of Dobroflot ships. We hope that our experience in creating medical units in the fleet will serve as an example for other participants in the industry."

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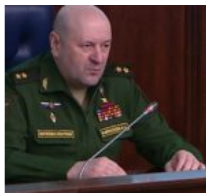




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