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Press Release

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Voyage Data Recorder successfully recovered

The Broadgate VER3000 Voyage Data Recorder (VDR) from the ferry Al Salaam Boccaccio 98, which sank in the Red Sea earlier this year, has been successfully recovered. Stored data has been extracted and is currently being analysed by the International Board of Investigation in Egypt.

The VER3000 'black box' manufactured by SELEX Communications was fitted onboard the ferry and was recovered on 21 February with the help of technical advice and support from the UK Marine Accident Investigation Branch's (MAIB) Technical Support Inspector, who was made available through the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

This is the very first time that any VDR has been used to recover data from an accident and SELEX Communications are pleased to announce that the structure of the protective capsule, the Broadgate VER3000, survived intact and watertight to keep the solid state memory inside completely dry and useable, despite being raised from more than 900 metres below the surface of the Red Sea. The capsule was returned to the UK and we can now confirm that the data from the capsule has been successfully recovered and handed to the Board of Investigation for investigation and event analysis.

Prof. Dr M Shama, Chairman of the Investigation Board, commented that:

"The VDR is time machine that has let us look back into the past so that we can understand what happened and save lives in the future".

It is hoped that this investigation will enable the experts to reconstruct the events that took place during the last voyage of the vessel and to provide insight into the circumstances that surrounded this unfortunate tragedy. By using the VER3000 to piece together more than 12 hours of information from the ship's communication, navigation and onboard electronics systems, together with the recordings of the conversations and background audio from the bridge, it is hoped that a clearer picture of exactly what took place will emerge.

The Al Salaam Boccaccio 98, carrying some 1,400 people, including a 96-strong crew, sank in the Red Sea on 2 February 2006 on a voyage from the Saudi Arabia port of Dubah to the southeastern Egyptian port of Safaga. Officials have said that only 387 passengers are known to have survived the disaster.

About Broadgate Voyage Data Recorders

Broadgate first began developing marine voyage data recorders in 1988 and launched the VER1000, the world's first commercially viable VDR, in 1991. This was followed by the VER2000 and VER500, designed for installation on smaller vessels; ahead of the publication of the IMO's performance standard for VDRs. In December 2000, the Broadgate VER3000 became the world's first fully type-approved VDR. It has, subsequently, been installed on hundreds of new and existing vessels.

The Broadgate VER range is to be expanded with the fourth generation Broadgate VER4000 system. This new product is set to become the best value for money system available in today's market.

SELEX Communications, a Finmeccanica Company, is a communications systems supplier for military and civil customers. Uniquely placed to lead the delivery of Network Centric Communications, the Company's capabilities encompass solutions for joint, land, sea and air applications, secure and mission critical communications. Leader in advanced technology with over 100 years of experience, SELEX Communications develops state-of-the-art communications solutions meeting customer requirements and exceeding their expectations. SELEX Communications employs more than 5,000 people worldwide, with offices and plants in Italy, the UK, USA, Germany, Turkey, Romania and South America.

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