

## Statement Regarding “Conception” Dive Boat Tragedy

by Michael Wolf, Captain, The Disperser and victim of illegally operated dive operation in Mexico

My companion and I predicted and have been waiting for a dive accident; but we were convinced we would, once again, witness a disaster firsthand, or at least that it would happen to the company whose Mexican franchise operator had destroyed my vessel and left me for dead. We both assumed that the safety considerations for dive excursions were as thorough as those I had learned in my efforts to learn sailing after deciding it was the only future available to me, and with a particular emphasis on fire safety, given that my life's present course had been decided by a house fire 15 years ago, today actually.

Boating in the United States of America, as I understand it, should be without accident or incident. I never took a single lesson or asked a single expert a question, yet my knowledge and understanding of boating safety have remained as intense as my first time at my helm. I see no reason why such logic in the form of safety regulations cannot be as taken for granted on a dive boat as diver safety - why fire extinguishers aren't treated with the same regard as air tanks for example.

So it is with great surprise that I read about a dive boat accident outside of Mexico, especially one operated in a market where a boat I recommended be purchased, and no less in California, where I was so paranoid about breaking rules because of the level of enforcement I experienced there myself.

While it is far too soon to say what happened and how; it is never too early to say that it should not have happened. On my ship, I teach, and I demand that we consider the worst case scenarios before they happen. An example is our purchase of safety helmets; specifically lacrosse helmets, for use during heavy weather. In a short-handed situation, as two people on a large sailboat is, losing consciousness or suffering a concussion can be the death of all aboard. So we thought ahead to prevent that disaster before it happened. In my mind, there is no possibility this accident aboard “Conception” could have happened because it should have been foreseen and prevented, by law!

But the core of our message is this: Do not go onto a live aboard dive boat unless you fully understand all aspects of safety related to that particular ship and situation or can otherwise be guaranteed by a confirmable, trusted entity that the ship in its present configuration is safe for the voyage. And given our being eye witnesses to the terrible things that go on with a dive boat operated under the auspices of an American booking company, and the fact that this accident happened in what can be assumed to be widely believed to be the safest place for live aboard dive excursions; we cannot recommend any American dive company as being able to provide safe diving. We also suggest that no one participate in any dive excursion operated in Mexico or by Mexican-owned/operated vessels due to our witnessing of the participation of the Mexican Navy in corruption related to boater safety and which is documented at <http://disperser.info/documents/QuejaZonaSegundaArmada2.pdf>.

Our own experiences with Aggressor and it's owner, Cantamar and Pedro Alberto Bazua Aguilar who operates Cassiopeia/Socorro Aggressor as well as Buceo y Servicio BCS/Cantamar dive center in La Paz, Baja California Sur, are fully documented on [www.disperser.info](http://www.disperser.info) and includes documentation of our experience saving the life of the first dive master on Cassiopeia last year.

Finally, our condolences to the family, friends, and communities this tragedy has affected. Try to take comfort knowing that they are now immortal, forever helping to spare others what you suffered today.