

## **Statement by Gregg Bemis to the response of Capt. Uno Laur**

The response by Captain Uno Laur to the questions submitted by Estonia Prosecutor Margus Kurm leaves a lot to be desired. In the first place, Mr. Laur is far too defensive. Rather than accept the fact that it has been alleged by many persons that the JAIC report suffers from many omissions of relevant material as well as committing significant numbers of errors, Mr. Laur has chosen to lash out at those who have raised valid questions. When 852 innocent people have suffered the ultimate painful deaths imposed from the sinking, those who are willing to challenge convenient misrepresentation should in fact be appreciated rather than castigated. But I can certainly understand why he opposes “a new investigation commission” as it is virtually a no-win situation for him and his JAIC partners. A more realistic and commendable approach would be to welcome legitimate questions and seek answers.

His position and the whole JAIC process is severely compromised by the questions raised by several points. 1. Why were the Rockwater divers sworn to secrecy and why was Rockwater ordered (I believe) to destroy their internal copies (etc.) of reports? 2. Why have quite a few knowledgeable Swedish members of the investigation and of their government refused to be questioned. 3. When the Swedish Judge was asked to investigate the allegations of the former customs official concerning war material being transported, not only did he perform the most limited investigation possible to perform his responsibility, but he also reported that the high defense officials with whom he spoke couldn't “remember” anything about the matter. (This is the classic Clinton defense for malfeasance.) What should we conclude from this? 4. Why has there been no accounting for or respected investigation into the disappearance of the members of one life raft who were rescued? 5. Why has there been no serious analysis of or repudiation of the results of the 3 lab reports on the metal recovered from the forward bulkhead. (The BAM study was full of holes.) 6. Why has there been no known effort to investigate the final two trucks that boarded the ferry boat before she sailed? This would be incredibly simple to do and could put to rest many additional questions.

It is interesting to note the careful wording in Mr. Laur's statement, “no explosion was registered at the time of the accident” by the Helsinki University Institute of Seismology. What about 1-2 hours before the accident? Or what about the next day if the explosion discovered by the “dissidents” occurred as a result of divers removing the visor the next day? And are we sure that the very minor use of shaped charges underwater to release the visor would in fact be enough to be recorded, assuming the hearing device was monitoring the area the next day? Is that it hadn't been turned off?

It makes little sense to critique the many remarks of Mr. Laur. They are too long and too self-serving to deserve the attention unless within a truly professional environment. It is much more appropriate to ask WHY he is so reluctant to allow for a proper, impartial, and professional further review of the incident and of the wreck in situ. This can be done without disturbing the “place of rest” of the 852 lost souls and could do much to either prove the validity of his report or, worst case scenario, prove the inadequacy thereof. The more he and his associates posture and object, the more suspicious they become. NO competent or proper forensic examination is complete without a thorough examination of the in situ evidence when possible as in this case. This dogged determination to prevent such only adds fuel to the supposition that there is something to hide.

Sweden is spending over \$1 million for laboratory simulation studies when for half that amount they could conduct a better investigation of the facts at the scene of the disaster. That is not to say that the studies can not bear fruit, and it is possible that with a broadening of their charter, some worthwhile information can be developed. But it still will leave forever in question whether or not there are secrets readily available only 80 meters below the surface.

I will only add that in a matter of this seriousness, it seems to me better to err on the side of curiosity and research than the dogmatic insistence that there can only be one answer. There are too many inconsistencies and too many contradictions to brush aside serious allegations by labeling their protagonists simply as “amateurs” or “dissidents”. These are cheap shots that do nothing to clear the air or get closer to the truth. For myself, I can truthfully say that “I have no dog in this fight”. While I abhor the thought that there might be a huge undisclosed governmental cover-up involved, my life will not change one way or the other therefrom. In this day and age, it seems to me more is gained by openness than the apparent close mindedness of the JAIC and the governments supporting them. So be it.

Gregg Bemis,  
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