

Ivan Papanin arrives at Tristan

Title

Yesterday saw the arrival of the Russian research/Antarctic supply vessel ?Ivan Papanin?. This is the fourth vessel chartered by the owners of the ?OLIVA? and their insurers since the incident, following after the ?Edinburgh?, ?Smit Amandla? and the ?Svitzer Singapore?. The ?Edinburgh? and the ?Smit Amandla? were chartered on the day of the incident by the owners? appointed salvors. The ?Ivan Papanin? is carrying the balance of the SANCCOB supplies and oil abatement equipment that was not able to be collected prior to the departure of the third vessel, the ?Svitzer Singapore? on 29th March. She also carries a Bell-212 helicopter, which will greatly improve the deployment of the oil abatement teams and equipment into the oiled gulleys and bays on Alex (or Middle) Island, the focus of the clean-up efforts. There is presently a 28-person-strong team of international responders on the island, including SANCCOB/Veterinarians/ITOPF/Oil Pollution & Salvage response experts, working alongside an 80-strong island volunteer force. To date 3718 oiled penguins have been recovered and transferred to Tristan for rehabilitation. The last 56 of these arriving from Nightingale on 10th April. Fortunately the penguins have completed their moulting period, and the vast majority of the penguins have left the rookeries and gone to sea following feeding grounds during the pelagic period of their yearly cycle. They are not back at Tristan until they return in August for the start of the next breeding season. With the onset of the southern winter, the adverse weather has brought with it gale force winds and heavy seas. While hampering the clean-up response, these have broken up the majority of the released oil, although there are still clear signs of pollution around Nightingale. The remote location of Tristan, along with the fact that no air-field exists closer than Cape Town (some 2,200km away), makes mobilisation of response equipment & supplies more challenging. The ?OLIVA? was on a voyage from Brazil to China carrying 65,000T of soya-beans as cargo, and grounded on the early morning of 16th March. The 22-strong crew were rescued from the casualty before she subsequently broke in two on the night of 18th March, releasing a large quantity of bunker oils.