INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT
FOR ALLEGED YACHT CADET TRAINING ABUSE
AT MERIDIAN ADVENTURE LIMITED (TURKEY)

Redacted For Public Dissemination
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Executive Summary

1. A submitted written complaint in November 2021 to Human Rights at Sea (‘or the NGO’) by [Witness B] detailing apparent human and labour rights abuse and abusive cadet training practices towards her son, [Witness A], a South African former cadet-under-training with Meridian Adventures Ltd (‘the Company’) based in Sigacik, Turkey, has been found to have substance, and was corroborated by multiple witness statements and associated evidence.

2. On the evidence and prior to the intervention by Human Rights at Sea, human and labour rights abuses were prevalent, including harassment and bullying as well as controlling and physical abuse behaviour(s) undertaken by named staff members. This seemingly occurred while the Director [Staff Member A] was out of the country for an extended period working in another role.

3. **Headline.** Abusive conduct by staff (crew) trainers must not be tolerated within any training regime, especially with young and impressionable persons at the start of their careers, the consequences of which may lead to the unconscious embedding of normalisation of abuse within the psyche of the individuals thereby affecting their long-term mental health and behaviour towards others, including any vulnerable persons.

4. An embedded culture of fear was apparent from the testimonies obtained. This included a genuine fear by some cadets of being subject to further physical and mental abuse including, but not limited to, intimidation, excessive periods of physical punishment, deliberately restricted rest periods, unsafe training exercises, and the over-arching perceived threat of the potential curtailing of fledgling careers in the crewing industry should complaints be raised. This is despite an established complaints system reflecting Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (‘MLC’) standards.

5. Control of the cadets within the training system appeared to be a combination of instilled and entrenched fear reinforced by some staff who appeared immature in their conduct, with limited experience of professional education practices, who were left to abuse cadets physically and mentally with apparent impunity in a poorly regulated internal environment.

6. Evidence suggested staff interference in the drafting and collation of statements by cadets when valid concerns were raised and investigated internally, thereby circumventing the accountability of the internal complaints process by misleading internal investigations.

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1 The director is not a formal director of Meridian Adventures Ltd., but the term is used in the capacity of an executive of the company.
7. Mental control mechanisms through the alleged misuse of a dedicated training app that every cadet is required to download was apparently used to lever compliance and maintain a degree of uncertainty and fear among the cadets through alleged intrusive and unregulated monitoring by the Company of personal data and data transmissions.

8. Dangerous training practices exposing cadets to unnecessary, poorly supervised, and excessive risk around training activities at sea appeared commonplace. This included, though is not limited to, excessive periods of immersion in the sea without safety cover, treading water with mooring chains around the neck, excessive long swims in tidal zones and exposure to potential hypothermic conditions.

9. Verbal abuse towards family relationships appeared to be a tactic employed by some staff, demeaning cadet-family relationships and, at times being abusive towards family members. This notes that families should have complete faith in the safeguarding and protection of the fundamental rights of their children by the Company.

**Finding**

10. The sum of all the evidence presented indicated that cadets undertaking training with Meridian Adventure Ltd at their facilities in Turkey were, at the very least, open to exposure of abusive training procedures and activities by some staff. At worst, cadets were in clear and present danger of being physically and mentally abused. This resulted in an immediate investigation by the NGO with the consideration of passing case details to state authorities and urgent safeguarding measures needing to be exercised by competent authorities in Turkey.

11. The evidence presented cannot be ignored or excused.

12. The complaint on behalf of [Witness A] by [Witness B] to Human Rights at Sea of an abusive training environment facilitated by some staff of Meridian Adventure Ltd, on the evidence presented was UPHELD.

**Subsequent and Ongoing Remediation Actions**

13. At the invitation of the Company, Human Rights at Sea staff attended the training facilities between 23-29 May 2022 to observe training activities and engage with the crew management structure, including the Director, his crew training team, and the Meridian Group Counsel.

14. At the time of writing, internal reviews, remediation, and restructuring is ongoing and may be further publicly detailed as part of transparent remediation efforts reflecting the second (Respect) and third (Remedy) pillars of the 2011 UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (‘the Guiding Principles’) and applicable requirements under the MLC 2006.

15. The Company have been given a right of reply and notes that since the case was first brought to the Company’s attention in December 2021, there has been open, consistent, and direct engagement with Human Rights at Sea to commence rectification of the issues raised.
Introduction and Background

16. On 12 November 2021, [Witness A] apparently fled Turkey in fear of his personal safety at short notice with limited personal belongings; the rest of his belongings were later returned after Human Rights at Sea’s intervention. He returned home to South Africa, stating that he could no longer endure the abuses he had been made to suffer by some of the Company’s staff during his period of training in Turkey.

17. On 14 November 2021, Human Rights at Sea was first contacted via email by [Witness B], the mother of [Witness A]. Both persons are South African citizens, and at the time of writing, both reside in South Africa.

18. [Witness B] was deeply concerned over the abusive treatment that her 21-year-old son had experienced during his time in Turkey undertaking a marine cadetship with Meridian Adventure Limited (‘the Company’); a sailing and diving company that runs a cadet training academy in Sigacik, Turkey, from a marina and nearby training facility.²

19. During initial correspondence with the NGO, [Witness B] described instances of physical, verbal, and mental abuse experienced by her son.

20. Such instances of abuse, if corroborated, would be tantamount to violations of [Witness A] (and other cadets’) human rights,³ as well as potential breaches of the 2006 Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), including those labour rights’ protections expressly covering harassment and bullying.

21. Following initial discussions with both [Witness A and B] via telephone and Zoom, Human Rights at Sea assessed that these allegations warranted immediate investigation through desk-level review and in-country investigation due to an apparent culture of fear being experienced by some cadets participating in the Company’s training regime.

22. Human Rights at Sea deployed an investigator on the ground in Turkey to engage directly with serving cadets between 29 November 2021 and 3 December 2021 in Sigacik. Since then, the NGO has been undertaking a review of witness testimony and assessing additional evidence submitted by former cadets and family members.

23. Cadet engagement and witness testimony was undertaken entirely on a voluntary basis, noting the multiple requests for anonymity due to fear of staff reprisals and individual concerns over negative consequences for their future professional careers.

24. A series of contemporaneous interviews were held in Sigacik with willing cadets (‘the interviewees’) to help the NGO assess the substance, accuracy and validity of the claims being made against the Company.

25. Four cadets currently under training were interviewed and gave their permission to use their testimony but anonymously and redacted, as necessary. Two former cadets were interviewed and gave evidence. Four cadets initially engaged with NGO staff, then declined to engage further due to concerns about

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their position in the training programme and/or repercussions against them. They otherwise stopped all communications with the NGO's staff.

26. The 13 interviewees collectively corroborated much of what [Witness A] had alleged (redacted interviews are annexed to this report). They also raised further concerns in terms of the conduct of aspects of the cadets’ training regime.

27. Alongside the cadets’ claims of alleged physical, verbal, and mental abuse occurring during the cadetship, the Company had demanded in writing that [Witness A] pay in the region of EUR€18,000.00 in damages for leaving the cadetship early and unilaterally terminating his contract. Initial evidence suggests that this course of action of imposing financial penalties and threats to recover monies had been previously pursued in other such cases.

28. As parent and signatory to [Witness A’s] ‘Cadet in Training Seafarer Employment Agreement’, the claim in damages was made against [Witness B]. At the time of writing, debt collection actions have been stopped from being initiated by the Company, following early intervention by Human Rights at Sea.

29. In addition to the cadet interviews, two Family Impact Statements were voluntarily given. These reflect the personal views and opinions of the mothers of two of the cadets who were victims of the alleged abuse and abusive practices. It details the impact and consequences for them and their sons within the family environment. Both statements are harrowing in their reading.

30. Human Rights at Sea reviewed the initial complaints, collated interviewee evidence, and established direct communications with [Staff Member H], the Company’s Designated Person Ashore (DPA), due to the safeguarding concerns.

31. On completion of its independent investigation and report, the NGO shared a final proof with the Company giving it the right of reply, including the opportunity to instigate internal reviews and take remedial actions.

32. NB: Human Rights at Sea reserves the right to pass all current and future evidence to relevant state authorities and third parties in the interests of achieving justice for all victims and their families and preventing a reoccurrence of the abuses.
Company Overview - Meridian Adventure Limited

Structure and Organisation

33. Meridian Adventure Limited is a company registered in the British Virgin Islands (‘BVI’). Its registered address (as stated in [Witness A’s] Cadet in Training Seafarers Employment Agreement) is:

PO Box 3175
Road Town
Tortola
British Virgin Islands

34. The Company owns a fleet of Lagoon 620 Catamarans, one of which is named Meridian Adventure #101, official number 746683, which is flagged and registered in the Cayman Islands, and represents the vessel to which [Witness A] was contracted to.

35. The Company also has a postal address in Monaco:

Meridian Adventure Limited
C/O Meridian Services SAM
Sea Side Plaza
Block CR Office 1
4 Av Des Ligures
Monaco
98000

36. Known representatives and staff of the Company include, but are not limited to, the following persons:

a. Director [Staff Member A]
b. Crew Member [Staff Member B]
c. Fleet Manager [Staff Member C]
d. Crew Member [Staff Member D]
e. Crew Member [Staff Member E]
f. Crew Member [Staff Member F]
g. Crew Member [Staff Member G]
h. Designated Person Ashore (DPA) [Staff Member H]
i. Administrative Assistant [Staff Member I]
Location

37. The Company run their Turkey-based cadetship programme in Sigacik, approximately a 50-minute drive from Izmir, Turkey.
38. There are two locations in Sigacik from which the Company runs its activities:

**The Marina**

ADDRESS: Akkum Cd. 4/19C, 35460 Seferihisar, Izmir, Turkey.

39. This is a secure, enclosed establishment with controlled access points. The cadets are accommodated inside the marina on board the Company’s catamarans after their initial training period.

**The Barracks**

ADDRESS: Sigacik mh. Akkum cd. 3219/4 sk no: 1 Hiddenbay Teos Residential Estate.

40. The building (referred to as the ‘Barracks’) accommodates the cadets during their first three months of training. It is located approximately 2 km SSW from the marina.
Victims & Witness Testimony: Headline Points

NB: All interviews were individually undertaken on a voluntary basis with express confirmations of their use for evidence purposes was received by Human Rights at Sea. [Redacted to protect witness identities].

1. Witness A

Former Meridian Adventure Limited cadet. Interviewed.

- Complainant #1.
- Returned home to South Africa on or around 12 November 2021 after fleeing the Company cadetship programme.
- Alleges a series of physical, verbal, and mental abuses suffered during his time with the Company in Turkey.
- Initially had items belonging to him retained by Meridian Adventure Limited, namely his Seaman's Discharge Book and Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW) training certificates. The Seaman's Discharge Book has since been returned by courier to [Witness A] after Human Rights at Sea intervention, and the STCW certificates have been re-issued to the source in South Africa with financial reimbursements brokered by the NGO.

2. Witness B

Mother of [Witness A]. Interviewed.

- Complainant #2.
- Contacted Human Rights at Sea regarding her son's experience with Meridian Adventure Limited.
- Provided a Family Impact Statement at Annex 1.

3. Witness C

Current Meridian Adventure Limited cadet. Interviewed.

- Corroborates what Witness A alleges and raises additional issues of abuse suffered by him and others on the cadetship programme.
- Corroborates that [Witness A] was assaulted by [Staff Member B].
- Corroborates that [Witness D] was assaulted by [Staff Member B].
- Corroborates that [Witness I] was assaulted by [Staff Member B].
- States that he has been the victim of physical, verbal, and mental abuse on the cadetship programme. Specifically, references being assaulted by [Staff Member B].
- States that he has heard (hearsay) that the SEG App (reflecting initials of the Director [Staff Member A]) monitors private messages and calls.
- States that he was made aware of the violent nature and culture of the cadetship programme by a former cadet with whom he went to school.
Was asked by the Company to provide a written statement denying abuses took place on the Meridian cadetship programme.

4. Witness D

Current Meridian Adventure Limited cadet. Interviewed.

- Corroborates what [Witness A] alleges and raises additional issues of abuse suffered by him and others on the Meridian cadetship programme.
- Corroborates that [Witness I] was dangerously and violently thrown across a sailing vessel by [Staff Member B].
- States that he was assaulted by [Staff Member B] and had his sunglasses damaged beyond repair by [Staff Member B] during the assault.
- States that sleep deprivation and breach of working hours are a regular feature of the cadetship programme.
- States that the cadets have been made to swim in dangerous conditions in cold water in precarious tidal states without any safety measures in place.
- Was asked by the Company to provide a written statement denying abuses took place on the Meridian cadetship programme.

5. Witness E

Current Meridian Adventure Limited cadet. Interviewed.

- Corroborates what [Witness A] alleges and raises additional issues of abuse suffered by him and others on the Meridian cadetship programme.
- Corroborates that [Witness A] was assaulted by [Staff Member B].
- Corroborates that [Witness D] was assaulted by [Staff Member B].
- Corroborates that the ‘jungle gym’ at the barracks is used as a means of collective punishment for cadets.
- Corroborates that [Witness I] was dangerously and violently thrown across a sailing vessel by [Staff Member B].
- States that he was himself assaulted by [Staff Member B], who punched him in the ribs.
- States that he was aware of the violent nature and culture of the cadetship programme, having been advised as such by a former cadet back in South Africa.
- States that he has been told (hearsay) that the SEG App monitors WhatsApp messages and has heard anecdotally from staff members that calls are monitored too.
- Was asked by the Company to provide a written statement denying abuses took place on the Meridian cadetship programme. Was specifically told to provide a more thorough and precise statement after the first draft was considered insufficient by Meridian staff.
6. Witness F

Current Meridian Adventure Limited cadet. Interviewed.

- Corroborates what [Witness A] alleges but views the situation differently.
- Corroborates that [Witness I] was assaulted by [Staff Member B].
- Corroborates that sleep deprivation is a common feature of the cadetship programme and that contracted working hours are routinely breached. Concedes that this is administered as a form of collective punishment.
- States that he has not been a victim of physical abuse but concedes that he has been pushed and shoved by staff members. He states that he believes that the treatment cadets receive from Meridian Adventure Limited is more akin to 'hard love'.
- States that he is aware (hearsay) of the suggestion that the SEG app monitors messages and telephone calls.
- Was asked by the Company to provide a written statement denying abuses took place on the Meridian cadetship programme.
- **Asked for his involvement to remain anonymous.**

7. Witness G

Former Meridian Adventure Limited cadet. Not interviewed.

- Recently returned home to South Africa after mutually agreeing the termination of his contract with the Company due to the ill health of his father.
- It is claimed by [Witness B] that the Director [Staff Member A] agreed to terminate [Witness G’s] contract on the condition that [Witness G] sign a confidentiality agreement, effectively preventing him from discussing any aspect of his experience on the Meridian cadetship programme. This claim is yet to be corroborated.
- Meridian state that “All cadets are required to sign Confidentiality Agreements on joining the cadet training program. These agreements serve to protect the owners and guests of the vessels, and company information. This is standard industry practice, particularly in the luxury yachting industry where clients expect confidentiality to be observed.” “The cadets are not asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement on leaving the cadet training program; however, the employment settlement document signed by the cadets and crew includes a simple statement reminding them of their Confidentiality Agreement.” (See paragraphs 15.1 and 15.2 of Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022) at Annex 2).
- Was asked by the Company to provide a written statement denying abuses took place on the Meridian cadetship programme.

8. Witness H

Current Meridian Adventure Limited cadet. Not interviewed.

- Was due to participate in the Turkey-based interviews but decided not to as he did not want to cause any trouble.
- Was asked by the Company to provide a written statement denying abuses took place on the Meridian cadetship programme.
9. Witness I

Current Meridian Adventure Limited cadet. Not interviewed.

- Was asked by the Company to provide a written statement denying abuses took place on the Meridian cadetship programme.
- Was named as the individual who was dangerously and violently thrown across the vessel by [Staff Member B].

10. Witness J

Former Meridian Adventure Limited cadet. Not interviewed.

- Had agreed to be interviewed but had yet to commit to a particular day and time.
- Follow-up message sent to [Witness J], but NGO staff heard nothing in response.

11. Witness K

Former Meridian Adventure Limited cadet. Not interviewed.

- Had agreed to write a summary of his experience with Meridian Adventure Limited on condition of anonymity.
- He did not want to jeopardise his opportunities of work in the yachting industry given the connections Meridian Adventure Limited has and the alleged ability for the Company’s Director [Staff Member A] to influence the outcome of such opportunity.
- Follow-up email sent to [Witness K], but nothing heard by NGO staff in response.
- He had asked for his involvement to remain anonymous.

12. Witness L

Former Meridian Adventure cadet. Interviewed.

- Was told that the cadetship followed a ‘military-style’ training philosophy.
- Alleges that he was driven to terminate his contract with Meridian Adventure Limited in 2018 after repeated instances of physical, verbal, and mental abuse received from a member of staff, a Zimbabwean national, first name '[name]', last name unknown.
- Alleges that he was physically assaulted by this member of staff on two occasions. Also alleges this member of staff made him sit in the hull of a Meridian yacht for an entire day as a form of punishment. The member of staff allegedly told [Witness L] that he was being removed from the cadetship programme.
- Was allegedly made to stand to attention for two hours without food or water and ordered to strike his fellow cadet across the face with his hand twice because the first time was not considered hard enough.
- Allegedly witnessed his fellow cadets being denied medical treatment for their infected fingers.
- States that he continues to suffer mentally from his experience with Meridian Adventure Limited.
13. Witness M

Mother of [Witness L]. Interviewed.

- Alleges that her son [Witness M] had his passport retained by Meridian Adventure Limited and was not permitted to return home to South Africa until she had settled the outstanding sum of USD$1547.57, essentially holding her to ransom. The fee was settled, and [Witness L] was ‘released’ by Meridian shortly afterwards.

Comment

All witness statements were undertaken voluntarily, without duress, and were proved with the express aim of stopping the abuse being undertaken as part of the Company’s training regime towards cadets.

Detail of Alleged Human Rights Abuses and a Culture of Fear

Physical, Verbal and Mental Abuse

41. The facts as alleged by [Witness A] describe several instances of abuse in the five-month period in which he participated in the Company’s cadetship programme. These instances are either specifically or generally corroborated by the cadets interviewed, as well as by individuals who have since left the training programme.

42. A common theme to arise from NGO correspondence with the cadets, both former and current, was the military-like training regime that existed within the cadetship. Terms such as ‘the barracks’ and ‘hell week’ have been variously referenced. Indeed, such terms are commonly associated with military culture, the latter being popularly linked with the likes of the selection phase of United States Navy SEAL training, for example.

43. On review of the cadet engagement contract, there is nothing to state that cadets are entering an agreement with the Company that entails any form of military or military-style training by appropriately qualified or professionally competent trainers.

44. Anecdotally, some cadets received hearsay information prior to commencing their cadetship of the military culture and regime which surrounds the approach to training. This information was received from previous cadets but is not part of disclosed public or company policy and is not known to be communicated to the cadets by the Company prior to joining the programme.

45. The military-style training regime has allegedly led to the instances of abuse referenced by both [Witness A] and other cadets. This includes sleep deprivation, collective punishment and a culture of fear as common themes and tactics used for addressing perceived training failures by some staff.

46. The following points are an illustrative list of the alleged instances of abuse stated in witness testimony. (At the time of writing and following the NGOs attendance at the training facilities in Turkey, the above issues have been raised and are being addressed.)
Arrival in Turkey

47. Upon arrival in Turkey, and on day one of their cadetship, cadets were allegedly verbally abused by [Staff Member C] for wearing shoes inside the barracks. Apparently, shoes must be taken off before one enters the barracks. However, this information was not explained or communicated to any of the cadets prior to their arrival, nor as part of any formal initial arrival briefings.

48. On the first night in the barracks, cadets were told that they were not allowed to leave their rooms. In one instance, [Witness G] allegedly left his room and was verbally abused by [Staff Member E] for doing so. Cadets were allegedly not allowed to leave their rooms at night for the first weekend of their training, running from Friday night through to Monday morning.\(^5\)

49. More cadets arrived only to be verbally abused by [Staff Member E] for taking too long to leave the taxi. [Witness E] apparently said that he wanted to go back in the taxi after being screamed at by [Staff Member E].

50. All cadets had their heads shaved to length number one. They were not informed that this would happen and allegedly had no choice but to have their heads shaved.

[Meridian state that “upon arrival, cadets do a week of land-based orientation that covers, amongst many other things, all the learning material that they will be exposed to, plus the Company’s policies and notices, which includes the Onboard Complaints Procedure.” (See paragraph 3.11 of Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022) at Annex 2)].

Hell Week

51. Cadets undertook a large degree of arduous physical training, including running. Cadets were allegedly told that for the run, they had to wear ‘flip-flops’ to harden their feet. Cadets apparently completed a minimum of 12 km per day wearing flip-flops.

52. [Witness C] vomited on the first day of ‘Hell Week’. He apparently told his mother that he did not want to be in Turkey any longer.

[Meridian state that “the first week of attendance is a land-based orientation that covers the SOPs, CoC (pg. 1), the Program, plus the policies and procedures, including the On Board Complaints Procedure (pg. 21). During this time cadets are orientated with their hotel room accommodation, surroundings, introduced to the team (and fellow cadets), and provided with their toiletries, uniforms etc.

“During this week, the cadets are required to learn the SOPs, COCs and Program. Between study sessions or during breaks, cadets do physical activities such as running or circuits in the outdoor gym, which is designed to improve their fitness and strength.

“The purpose of this week is to prepare the cadets, giving them an overview of the cadet training program and to provide them with an understanding of what to expect. Cadets are supervised during study and fitness sessions by at least one permanent crew member.” (See paragraphs 6.1 to 6.3 of Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022) at Annex 2)].
### Deck Training

53. Cadets were allegedly made to study their deck drills in the warehouse from 4:00 am to 6:00 pm without being allowed to sit down. This was apparently because [Staff Member C] was monitoring them on CCTV. Some cadets would sleep while standing up. This practice is said to have continued for one week.

54. Cadets were allegedly made to run to the marina (3 km away from the barracks). They washed one of the vessels from top to bottom. If they did something wrong, they would be made to do handstands on the bow of the vessel, or staff would throw water at them. This continued for one week.

55. It is alleged that on one occasion, [Staff Member E] threw [Witness C] into his room door for no apparent reason.

56. When the cadets went to the bay with the catamarans to practice stern tie operations, they were made to carry out this operation in a certain amount of time; otherwise, they would be made to do it again. Witness I carried out this operation first. The chain was around his neck, and he was apparently starting to drown according to [Witness A]. As [Witness G] prepared to assist [Witness I], [Staff Member E] allegedly told the cadets that they must leave [Witness I]. [Witness G] ignored this instruction and jumped into the water to assist [Witness I] despite this instruction.

57. The cadets went out to the bay for the second time to practice stern tie operations. [Witness A] completed the operation but ended up swallowing some seawater. When he got back on the vessel, he saw a jug of water and took a sip out of it. This was apparently considered disgusting by the Master, [Staff Member F]. [Staff Member F] then allegedly told [Witness A] to swim to the other side of the bay and back — approximately a 2 km round trip. After doing so and on return to the vessel, [Staff Member F] put the stern tie chain around [Witness A’s] neck and told him to tread water. [Witness A] was allegedly left to tread water for almost one hour.

[Meridian state that in relation to the ‘Stern Tie Drill for Small Craft’, “there is a set drill that the cadets are trained on. The drill includes donning a mask, snorkel, and fins. A set procedure is followed, and they are supervised during the training and execution of the drill.

“For Stern Tie Drill for Small Craft – There are two possible drills, one is by tender transfer and another via swimming the line ashore. For the swimming drill, there is a set procedure and checklist to be followed, which includes a spotter and line handler on board. The maximum swimming distance is no more than 20 meters, and the maximum time for the drill is 5 minutes. Stern tie of small craft in the Aegean is a significant feature of the guest cruising experience.

“During the Stern Tie Drill training, the cadets swimming abilities are assessed. In many cases, some of the cadets’ abilities are not up to standard and basic school level training is given, in water, to bring the level of swimming up to at least high school level. Treading water and swimming from the vessel to the shoreline (20 meters) are the exercises they are required to perform to strengthen their abilities and build confidence. Training will generally last between 20 to 30 minutes at a time.” (See paragraphs 10.3, 11.3 and 11.4 of Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022) at Annex 2)].
58. Following on from this incident, [Staff Member E] allegedly made [Witness A] do a handstand on the bow of the vessel from the bay to the marina, approximately a 20-minute sail. Once the vessel arrived in the marina, [Staff Member E] told [Staff Member D] what happened. The cadets were then apparently made to go to the ‘wall of happiness’, a physical wall that cadets are made to do handstands against for an indeterminate amount of time.

[Meridian state that “there is no policy for individual and collective punishment. Meridian Adventure is committed to team achievement and team success. Not achieving a standard or requirement is not punished; rather, the cadets are given the opportunity to do it again correctly. This is a big emphasis and the opportunity to do it again correctly is provided to the team, not an individual. The duration depends on the task, and the cadets are supervised by at least one of the crew.” (See paragraph 8.1 of Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022) at Annex 2)].

59. The same day, [Witness I] stepped onto a vessel with his shoes on. [Staff Member D] saw what happened and made the whole fleet (22 people at the time) detail every single vessel in the fleet (12 vessels at the time) the entire night. The whole fleet, including all cadets, did not have any sleep that night. Cadets allegedly recommenced their training the next morning at 4 am without any rest. This is the day that [former cadet] (surname unknown) left the Meridian cadetship.

[Meridian state that “although the cadets are not ‘at sea’ and live ashore at the hotel, or on board the vessels, which return to the marina at the end of the day, our benchmark with regards to the minimum and maximum hours of work/training and duration of rest periods are as per MLC Regulation 2.3 defined as follows:

"Maximum Hours of Work
No more than 14 hours in any 24-hour period. No more than 72 hours in any seven-day period"

"Minimum Hours of Rest
At least 10 hours of rest in a 24-hour period. At least 77 hours rest in any seven-day period"

(See paragraph 7.1 of Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022) at Annex 2)].

**Sailing Training**

60. Cadets started sailing on the MAT1010 sail boats. Cadets allegedly suffered verbal abuse throughout the day by [Staff Member B].

61. The verbal abuse allegedly continued during this phase of training. [Witness I] was thrown onto the deck by [Staff Member B]. Witness I allegedly sustained small cuts to his head and his eye as a result of this assault. [Witness H] was also punched by [Staff Member B]. This treatment of cadets allegedly continued for another three days.
62. The cadets started sailing on the Lagoon 620 Catamarans for the first time. At this point, the verbal abuse dispensed by [Staff Member B] allegedly became worse. This had the effect of discouraging the cadets from wanting to sail or indeed volunteering to go first. [Witness D] was allegedly thrown to the ground by [Staff Member B] and had his sunglasses stepped on and broken. This treatment of cadets allegedly continued for three days.6

63. [Witness A] lent over to close a jammer7 and accidentally stepped on the winch button. [Staff Member B] allegedly proceeded to hit him hard in the stomach for this mistake and continued to verbally abuse him thereafter.

[Meridian state that “The personal and professional values and standards expected of the Meridian Adventure crew are detailed in the SOPs and CoC (pg. 1).” (See paragraph 5.1 of Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022) at Annex 2)].

Guest Season

64. During guest season, the vessels must be maintained in immaculate condition otherwise cadets are allegedly punished. On one occasion, the waterline on the vessels developed algae on them. All cadets were made to immerse themselves in the cold water and clean the algae from the vessels. This task allegedly took hours. The cadets were not allowed out until all the algae had been removed. Cadets were made to carry out this task on a number of occasions during guest season. Significantly, it is alleged that no safety measures were in place to manage this practice as directed by Meridian Adventure Ltd staff.

65. On one occasion, one of the vessels had lost its strop, which holds the tender lift to the vessel. [Staff Member C] allegedly made the cadets dive for the strop, which was five metres deep until they found it. [Staff Member C] was allegedly watching the cadets via CCTV. The cadets were allegedly told that if they were not diving, they would be in the water the entire night. The cadets could not find the strop after almost three hours of looking for it in the cold water. [Staff Member C] eventually allowed the cadets to get out of the water.

[Meridian state that in relation to working in the water, the company provide “Immersion suit training - donning and familiarisation with immersion suits - The cadets are required to don the suits and enter the water to experience the suits. They are supervised by at least one of the crew during this training.” (See paragraph 10.1 of Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022) at Annex 2)].

66. [Staff Member C] allegedly assaulted [Witness E] on a guest trip. [Staff Member C] allegedly held his radio up against [Witness E’s] neck and verbally abused him.

67. [Staff Member C] allegedly grabbed [Witness E] by his chest and pushed him out of the way, leaving a visible bruise on [Witness E’s] chest (see Image 1).

6 Meridian Adventures Ltd. have made it clear that their position is that physical touching and force was used towards cadets only as part of safety considerations in the handling of the boat.

7 A jammer works in much the same way as a clutch, but the handle cannot be released while under heavy load. Instead, the load in the line must first be taken to a winch and tensioned so all the load is now off the jammer, and only then can the handle of the jammer be pulled out and the rope released (https://www.yachtsandyachting.com/news/218567/Cleats,-Clutches-and-Jammers) - accessed on 04/01/2022.
68. During guest season, the cadets allegedly got very little sleep. **All-nighters were a common theme.** Cadets were made to do anchor watch every night for approximately four weeks.

69. During guest season, [Witness D's] mother apparently fell ill. He urgently wanted to return home to be with his family, but [Staff Member A] allegedly told [Witness D] that he did not care if his mother "fucking dies". [Witness D] was not allowed to leave. If he wanted to leave, he was allegedly told that he must pay [Staff Member A] his money.

70. [Witness H] apparently asked if he could leave the cadetship. He wanted to leave by mutual consent, but he was allegedly denied the opportunity by [Staff Member A]. [Witness H] suggested that he pay Meridian back the money on a fixed monthly payment plan, but [Staff Member A] allegedly did not allow it. [Witness H] did not have the means to pay in full and [Staff Member A] was apparently aware of this fact, so [Witness H] had to stay.

71. While crossing with [Staff Member B] to Diddum Marina, [Staff Member B] instructed Witness A to carry out a specific task which [Witness A] performed but incorrectly. [Staff Member B] allegedly proceeded to hit [Witness A] in his chest and became very aggressive towards him on seeing [Witness A] perform this task incorrectly.

72. On the same occasion, while sailing, [Staff Member B] instructed [Witness A] to ‘furl the Genoa’ on his command as they go around the corner. As the vessel approached the corner, [Witness A] started furling the genoa, but [Staff Member B] said he just wanted it to be eased. With this, [Staff Member B] allegedly became aggressive again and threw [Witness A] out of his way onto the deck.

73. While dry docked, [Witness A] was busy removing barnacles from the vessel's hull. [Staff Member B] allegedly said to [Witness A] that it was going to be a long week for him as he was working too slowly. [Staff Member B] also allegedly made [Witness A] do handstands on the bow of the vessel.

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8 This claim is categorically denied by Staff Member A.
9 Meridian Ltd. have made it clear that the general principle behind the contractual provision to repay monies was to reimburse the company for lost training costs incurred if a cadet left prior to course completion.
Meridian state that “Meridian Adventure is committed to identifying and eliminating any incidents of physical or mental abuse, as per the Bullying and Harassment Policy (pg. 22). The cadets and crew are made aware of and are encouraged to use the On-Board Complaints Procedure (pg. 21). All complaints, grievances and breaches of the MLC 2006 are fully investigated, and the parties involved are addressed or disciplined appropriately. As a result of the allegations raised by Human Rights at Sea, Meridian Adventure has appointed an independent third party to carry out confidential interviews and has also introduced an anonymous questionnaire, which the cadets and crew are encouraged to respond to weekly. This questionnaire serves to identify incidents while they are fresh so that they can be dealt with swiftly.” (See paragraph 9.1 of Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022) at Annex 2)

Third Party Vessel Management Software Application

74. [Witness A] and the cadets interviewed in Turkey all referenced the requirement to download a particular vessel management software application to their phones as part of the Meridian cadetship programme. The app was locally referred to by the cadets as the ‘SEG App’ after the founder and director of the company. It is a bespoke app created in Johannesburg by the ‘App Centre’ and is professionally known as ‘Ephemeris’. Interviewed cadets raised to Human Rights at Sea their alleged privacy concerns about the download requirement and use of the app on their personal phones, though these concerns have not been substantiated nor investigated further at the time of writing.

Deprivation of Liberty

75. The cadets' passports were allegedly taken from them at the commencement of their cadetship and stored in a safe in one of the Company offices. The cadets do not have access to this office safe without the permission of staff members. As the cadets are in Turkey and travelling on South African passports, they would need access to their passports to exercise their right to freely leave the country at any time of their choosing and especially if subject to abuse.

76. It is alleged that it is customary for merchant seafarers' passports to be retained by the master of the ship while at sea.

Meridian state that “the cadets and crew's personal identity documents are not removed and withheld, at times, for the reason set out below the cadets and crew choose to leave their identity documents in the control of Meridian Adventure, its vessels and/or the hotel accommodation as required by the Turkish Authorities:

“When cadets and crew are on board a vessel for either an interstate or international passage, their passports are kept in the ‘GRAB BAG’ on the vessel that they are assigned to. All cadets and crew are briefed on where the bag is kept (which is in the main salon next to the navigation console). The ‘GRAB BAG’ is a waterproof bag designed to protect the contents and one of the crew is charged with the responsibility of grabbing this bag should something happen to the vessel, therefore ensuring important documents such as passports are not lost or damaged.

“Cadets and crew occasionally interchange between vessels depending on vessel movements in order for everyone to gain equal exposure and experience (especially since the Covid-19 pandemic). When cadets and crew change vessels, the crew lists are updated accordingly, and the passports are relocated. Each vessel has a transit log, which is maintained by the Turkish Authorities, and on a regular basis, these transit...
logs are validated against crew lists and passports. Therefore, it is convenient for the identity documents to be safely stored in a central location. The cadets and crew are able to retrieve their documents at any point.

“When the cadets are not accommodated on board a vessel, they are provided with dedicated accommodation ashore. The ashore accommodation used to house the cadets belongs to a hotel company, which like any hotel in Turkey, holds the passports (or copies of the passports) to be inspected by visiting authorities in accordance with Turkish tourism rules. These documents are available to the cadets and crew at any time they need them. Cadets and crew often request their passports when they want to buy a phone sim card or have personal errands to do and are able to do so. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, cadets and crew were advised against taking their passports with them when they went out to party due to incidents of passports being lost and the resulting logistical challenges, costs and loss of time and resources required to have passports replaced.” (See paragraph 14.1 of Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022) at Annex 2).

Paragraph 3.12 of the Standard Operating Procedures and Code of Conduct states that “Passports shall be retained by the Fleet Captain at all times”.

77. During the interviews carried out in Turkey, the cadets were ordered to remain inside the perimeter of the marina. It is not clear why the cadets receive such orders, given the nature of the cadetship. Such orders represent a limit on the cadets' freedom of movement and without justification constitute an encroachment upon their individual liberty. There is no indication of state law or policy which addresses such a commercial need to deprive individuals of their liberty during commercial training courses.

Deprivation of Property

78. Since [Witness A] returned to South Africa his Seaman’s Discharge Book, which was initially retained by the Company, has been returned and STCW training certificates locally re-issued after Human Rights at Sea’s intervention through the DPA.

Fact Finding, Disclosure and Company Response

The Company was approached by Human Rights at Sea for clarification and disclosure of the following matters-in-issue raised by witnesses during the NGO’s investigation. The following first 16 questions were submitted, with a limited Company disclosure at Annex 2.

2. Clarification of all Meridian Adventure Limited staff formal military training qualifications and experience relating to the cadet training regime (described by witnesses as a military-style training). [Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022), Annex 2]
3. Clarification of the written policy for the details of the cadet training regime disclosed to cadets prior to, and on joining. [Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022), Annex 2]
5. Clarification of the personal and professional values and standards expected of Meridian Adventure Limited staff. [Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022), Annex 2]

6. Clarification of the need, requirement, oversight and safety provisions for the ‘Hell Week’ described by witnesses on initial commencement of cadet training. [Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022), Annex 2]

7. Clarification of the minimum and maximum duration of periods of training, including duration of assured rest periods, and policy for tracking all periods of out-of-hours work. [Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022), Annex 2]

8. Clarification of the policy for the reasons for, duration(s) and safety systems in place for cadet individual and collective punishment(s). [Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022), Annex 2]

9. Clarification of the policy for addressing and remediating for incidents of physical and mental abuse by staff towards cadets. [Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022), Annex 2]

10. Clarification of all safety provisions and standards for cadets when they are required, as part of their professional training, to enter the water in and around the vicinity of all vessels, marina structures or other locations. [Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022), Annex 2]

11. Clarification of all reasons, maximum time periods immersed, and maximum distances swum for all periods of water entry, including oversight policies, safety provisions and cadet pre-briefings as to the requirement for them to enter the water. [Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022), Annex 2]

12. Clarification of the technical scope, reasons and role of the SEG App, and details of the disclosure of associated data protection policies under EU Law provided to cadets for the app’s use on their personal phones. [Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022), Annex 2]

13. Clarification of the systems and oversight processes for cadets seeking medical treatment, and disclosure of the details of all reported cadet medical incidents and/or accidents in the past 36 months. [Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022), Annex 2]


15. Clarification as to the reasons for cadets leaving the training programme having to sign non-disclosure agreements. [Meridian Adventure Limited Response (24 January 2022), Annex 2]


**Additional questions yet to be answered.**

17. Clarification as to why cadets were asked to provide written statements denying alleged abuses to Meridian Adventure Limited in the wake of Witness A’s return to South Africa. [Question not put to the Company]

18. Clarification as to why Witness A was denied access to medical treatment for his infected toe. [Question not put to the Company]

**NB:** The Company has had a redacted copy of the Human Rights at Sea report disclosed to it via the DPA [Staff Member H] for review, comment, and the right of reply.
Human Rights at Sea Comment

The evidence received at the time of writing demonstrates multiple credible and corroborated allegations of systemic abuses by some Company staff towards South African nationals as trainee cadets at the Company’s training facility in Turkey.

It is clear from the evidence obtained and transcribed from voice recordings at Annex 2, that the pattern of abuses and a deliberate culture of fear in the training regime is a clear and present danger to the young people exposed to it.

There are clear safeguarding issues being systematically ignored by Company staff, with uncontrolled, unethical, and dangerous training serials being regularly undertaken by staff.

Further, the Company’s internal complaints system is not fit for purpose and appears not to be trusted by the very cadets it is meant to protect, including direct interference by some staff in the drafting and collation of statements by cadets following training incidents or allegations of incidents.

Allegations by cadets of not being able to return home for immediate family matters are of particular concern.

Those cadets and their families who underwrote the cadetship and escaped the training regime have been made to suffer financial hardships, have been subject to threats to sue for outstanding monies, and have suffered loss of future work through loss of a professional opportunity to better themselves. Due to investigation and where necessary, Company remediation must be undertaken for families who have had to pay fees for their sons leaving the course early.

Most concerning is that former cadets have seen their lives and expectations of future careers wrecked, while families have been left feeling helpless and unable to protect their sons.

ENDS.
Annex 1 - Family Impact Statements

NB: All statements are transcribed as provided to Human Rights at Sea as statements by family members in their own words.

1.1 FAMILY STATEMENT: 13 FEBRUARY 2022 – Witness B

The impact that this traumatic event has had on the family as a whole is tremendous. The energy within our home has changed since [Witness A] has arrived home. [Witness A] is not happy and has lost his enthusiasm for life, however, I am still trying to encourage [Witness A] to attend therapy or council, however, he will not go and says he is fine, which is very far from the truth. I am under the impression that he feels or deems it a sign of weakness and that he is able to handle all these emotions that he is feeling.

The disappointment I feel for [Witness A], I cannot describe in words. He worked for two years, waking up at 3.30 am to go to work to save to get to Turkey and buy what was needed for his cadetship. He sold his motorbike and everything he had of value to be mentally, physically and emotionally abused in a way that parents protect their children from.

I am still working through my own feelings around this incident. Very difficult in light of the fact that I went through a very difficult divorce after 23 years of marriage five years ago, of which the children felt the impact of this, especially [Witness A]. No amount of tears can change what has taken place, and that is the worst part of all. We cannot take the trauma back or turn the clock back, and [Witness A] will forever be changed. We were truly misled by Meridian Adventure’s website and what they had to offer these young cadets. I feel like [Witness A] has been robbed of so much, and in saying so, I refer to ‘things’ that cannot be bought or no amount of money can buy. Sorry seems such a useless word in a case like this; it means absolutely nothing.

The abuse of these leaders’ authority and sense of entitlement is absolutely atrocious towards these young adults. The children and parents are left to pick up the pieces and live with the trauma of these past events. [Witness A] has gone from sleeping too much to very little, he is on a roller coaster of emotions and patterns at the present moment. He has excluded himself from the majority of family events; spends most of his day in his room; has mood swings, and is aggressive at times. His siblings tiptoe around him constantly. All these ‘symptoms’ are not a part of [Witness A] character, and it is devastating as a mom to witness. I truly don’t wish this experience on any young adult and family.

I am trying to make arrangements with one of the pastors at our local Church with whom I have spoken to. He knows [Witness A] and has advised me that [Witness A] needs to come out of his own free will for healing. There is, however shame attached to this incident, so I am going to approach this with sensitivity towards [Witness A] this week, and hopefully, he will agree and start to have weekly therapy sessions. The stumbling block here is for [Witness A] to open up, and I think that this is where the ‘rubber meets the road’ for [Witness A]. I believe that there are many more incidences that took place. Trauma has a huge impact on the soul of a human being and, if not dealt with can lead to future issues, which I now have to deal with. [Witness A] is a soft-natured young adult, so the wounds run deep in this instance. I am not sure how much respect [Witness A] is going to have for his superiors after this incident or for those who are his elders. His own father was an abusive man.
I left [Witness A’s] father for this very reason of verbal and emotional abuse five years ago. [Witness A] was all the better with regards to this decision I had made only to have the past revisit him again; when he joined Meridian Adventure, this caused such anger inside me I cannot explain. Just when we thought we were done with all ‘that’, [Witness A] gets trapped into an abusive situation by making a career choice that seemed honest and pure in nature, however only unbeknown to him, he signed a contract that took his rights away as a human being. The disappointment he felt when he arrived home and the fear was sad, to say the least. He stayed with his ex-boss, with whom he worked for, for two years, he was so afraid that Meridian Adventure would come after him, he never stayed at home for two weeks, only after the third week did he come home. No one deserves to be treated the way [Witness A] was or any of the other boys on the cadetship programme. This cadetship is a disgrace to the Maritime Industry and should be shut down.

All of this was so unnecessary, and I ask myself, why my son? however that is such a selfish statement to make as it is not only my son, but many other mothers’ and fathers’ sons who have taken part in this programme before this intake, that too have been exposed to the same abuse and some possibly worse and then those who are still stuck there. The cadetship was supposed to be a jump start to [Witness A’s] career. This has been a point of frustration for [Witness A] and has immensely impacted his hope for his future in this career choice – he left with smiles, anticipation and eagerness, for me that was the worst part of this ordeal, was the state of mind he left in versus the state of mind he returned in.

[Witness A] signed up unaware for ‘Hell Camp’, to be treated and beat upon by his superiors of whom he was supposed to learn from? My heart bleeds for him, and I could do nothing, absolutely nothing as his mother, this is an area of frustration for me, as even if [Witness A] had told me the extent of what was going on, my hands would still have been tied as the money which had to be paid for [Witness A’s] release I could not pay, unless I had started a help fund via Facebook.

It has been two and a half months since [Witness A] has returned home from Turkey, and I still feel so helpless and sad when I think of the events that took place, and I could not help him in any way, the one being when he had to tread water and swim with a chain around his neck, just shy of two hours, I struggle to process this AND deal with these emotions that I feel as a mother. I am having a hard time with this, I am compassionate by nature and feel tremendous compassion for others when sick or hurt and when I heard [Witness A] tell [the NGO Investigator] this specific event that took place on the Zoom interview, my heart dropped and has not come back up again.

ENDS.
1.2 FAMILY IMPACT STATEMENT: 20 FEBRUARY 2022 [Witness N]

[My son’s] experience from the Meridian Adventure Limited debacle left a huge negative impact on him and his interaction with his family.

After leaving the Meridian Cadetship, [my son] was left feeling that he was a complete failure. He also perceived that his family, especially the male members, saw him as a failure.

[My son’s] family is particularly sports orientated, and most of the male members excel in physical activities. His stepfather experienced being called up in the SADF (South African Defense Force) in the 80s. This macho aura only emphasized that [my son] had not been able to live up to family standards by not being able to finish this physically and mentally challenging course.

Although [my son] was happy to have been able to leave the course, he nevertheless felt that he had failed himself and his family. This was supposed to be the opportunity of a lifetime, and he was left feeling that he had not been able to rise to this opportunity.

Once it was seen that other cadets were unable to cope with the harsh treatment on the Meridian Cadetship and left the men in the family conceded that [my son] was not to be blamed for what happened. However, the damage to [my son] and his relationship with them was already done. He felt they had failed to believe and support him in his time of distress.

His initial complaint was how badly the cadets were sworn at. It shocked him as his family does not use bad language. He felt degraded and humiliated by this foul language.

The hours of work left the cadets very little time to sleep as they were also expected to study. They were on a course to completely break them down, one of the methods being sleep deprivation. Those that tried to stand up for themselves or queried the methods in any way were severely reprimanded and punished at times physically. They worked through extreme cold and rain without any break.

[My son] was slow with learning how to tie the knots and was abused physically and verbally because of this. When his messages to the family indicated suicidal thoughts, one of his uncles called the Meridian trainers to try to ascertain what was going on. They fobbed him off by denying physical abuse and lied to him by saying that [my son] was a troublemaker. Nevertheless, his uncle told them that [my son] should be released from the course.

The suffering that [my son] experienced caused a huge amount of stress to his parents and family. This is a close family, and they feared for his mental and physical wellbeing. There was also the stress of putting the money together to get [my son] extracted from the Meridian Cadetship. The money was eventually borrowed. This fact also caused [my son] severe guilt for putting the financial burden on his family.

When [my son] returned to South Africa, the work of the bullies and sadists of the Meridian Cadetship had succeeded. He felt worthless and a failure. He has struggled to find confidence in himself. The subsequent knowledge that he was not the only cadet to leave has helped him come to terms with what he saw as his failure. He has developed a phobia about yachts and will never ever contemplate any work that involves sea-going vessels or the sea. He is clinically depressed, which has had a negative impact on himself and his interaction with others.

The experience has left [my son] damaged in his self-esteem and has damaged his relationships with members of his family. The family feel incredible guilt for initially not believing [my son’s] claims that he was being mistreated. No young boy should have to go through such a damaging experience.

ENDS.
Annex 2 – Interview Transcripts

NB: All interviews have been professionally transcribed to transcription “Level 4 – True (or Strict) Verbatim Transcript”. This means that a complete record of every sound and/or utterance on the recording, which includes coughs, stutters, false starts, any “erms” and “ahhs”, is captured. Although this level of transcription may hinder the readability and flow of the interview transcript, it is a measure employed by Human Rights at Sea to demonstrate that the testimony provided is not being interpreted and is being provided verbatim.

1. Witness D

Date Transcribed: 11th December 2021
Interviewer(s): NGO Investigator
Respondent(s): Witness D

INT: Okay, this is a meeting between [NGO Investigator] and -
RES: [Witness D].

INT: Date is 30th November 2021. Okay, for the record [Witness D] could you just state your full name and date of birth and place of birth?
RES: Right, it’s [Witness D], XX years old and I was born in XXXXX, South Africa, Eastern Cape.

INT: And date of birth?
RES: XX August 200X.

INT: All right, thank you. Okay [Witness D] you know why we’re here, we’re obviously looking into allegations of abuse of mental, physical, verbal, [Witness A] has reported this matter to us through his mother [Witness B] and we at Human Rights at Sea are looking into this on his behalf but also on the behalf of yourself and others in a similar situation. So, given the circumstances and the time imperative and the fact that we’re not able to meet in private and that you are inside the marina that I’m not able to access, if you could just from the top tell me about your experience working for Meridian Limited, Meridian Adventure Limited from May 2021.

RES: So, when we first arrived Sir, we were two days on the boat for procedures and code of conduct, everything was fine then you go through something called hell week where they try to drive you down as much as they can and then obviously they use the term build you up again but in that term its more just excessive training, lack of sleep, sometimes abuse, verbal abuse constantly, they use the excuse they’re trying to put you under pressure, sometimes they go so far they bring family into the matter, we’ve had a meeting with the manager and director of Meridian, where he called all of our parents some pretty bad words if I may use the words?

INT: Yes, use the words.

RES: So, when we first arrived Sir, we were two days on the boat for procedures and code of conduct, everything was fine then you go through something called hell week where they try to drive you down as much as they can and then obviously they use the term build you up again but in that term its more just excessive training, lack of sleep, sometimes abuse, verbal abuse constantly, they use the excuse they’re trying to put you under pressure, sometimes they go so far they bring family into the matter, we’ve had a meeting with the manager and director of Meridian, where he called all of our parents some pretty bad words if I may use the words?

INT: Yes, use the words.

RES: Yes, so he called our parents cunts and that we were all just a waste of cum and that we were never going to amount to anything and as long as we come to this company so the only way to better ourselves apparently according to him is to come to this company and he asked us what we wanted to do and obviously you know, we’re fascinated by the yachting industry, and we wanted to explore the world, and our stay has really destroyed our vision of doing that because you come here expecting to learn the yachting industry where [unclear 00:02:43] to pass the time and if you do something wrong, you know obviously you’re going to make mistakes but the
punishments. So, as a result of the two guys not doing the rope checks, we weren't able to sleep, so we only went to bed at I think just before 5am this morning, we had to be up at 6 o'clock, so barely an hour sleep whereas our contract states -

INT: That was last night?
RES: Yes, correct.

INT: Right, so you basically worked all the way through?
RES: Yes, so we barely slept. Our contract it states I think between 7am to 5pm of working hours and we violate that constantly, I mean we have an application called iRecord of Rest and constantly it's just more than that, it's between 12 hours on a good day to can go up to 23 hours on a hectic day and obviously can go more, we've had three days of no sleep before. I mean 72 hours without sleep is quite dangerous for the human body, you know you start to hallucinate, your body shuts down. We've had a few rough times but then again they do bring in some good things but sometimes you don't really think about the good when you're going through so much things like that, especially during our sailing training, that was probably when the physical abuse aspect climbed a lot with [Staff Member B] the trainer of sailing -

INT: He's the trainer of sailing?
RES: Yes, that's correct and he's also the accounts manager of Meridian. He would beat us, he's hit us, he broke my sunglasses, he punched me in the face so I had to buy a new pair of sunglasses and reimburse me for that, he's thrown people across the deck, my one friend remaining in our group [Witness I], he was thrown across the one race boat that we have and he cut his whole chin open and [Staff Member B] was kind of just like, 'Oh I'm so sorry' but you can't hear the sincerity in his voice you know, it's more of a sarcastic type tune and he would constantly pick on people and just be a bully. Obviously we know we're inexperienced -

INT: How old is this guy, [Staff Member B]?
RES: I'm not sure of his exact age but the last thing I heard he was 38/39, roundabout there.

INT: Okay.
RES: So, he's not too old but we've spoken to [Staff Member C] about this, he's also one of the -

INT: [Staff Member C]?
RES: [Staff Member C].

INT: [Surname].
RES: Yes that's correct. We've spoken to him but his excuse for the whole incident is [Staff Member B] is a weird guy which is not really the answer we wanted to hear. I mean as a result of [Staff Member B], [Witness A] left the company and [Witness A] was a very close mate of mine, he was probably the closest mate that I have here and he's not here anymore because of that so the resentment I hold towards certain people in the company is quite high, but my group and I we've all kind of, not gotten used to the fact that we get shouted at, screamed at, sometimes beaten, we haven't really been hit in a while since [Witness A] left but it almost happened today, [Staff Member D] kind of lost his cool with us.

INT: [Staff Member D] is the?
RES: He's the junior fleet captain.

INT: Junior fleet captain.
RES: Or fleet captain, yes.

INT: And how old is [Staff Member D]?

RES: [Staff Member D] is 24 I think, 25, but he's never ever laid hands on us, he's always been the one that's motivating us and pushing us to do better but just now today unfortunately he did lose his cool with us but that was understandable, we weren't being 100% focused so that was no excuse for us. And [Staff Member D], yes [Staff Member D] has protected us a lot and [Staff Member E], especially during our whole week, [Staff Member E], he is now currently in Indonesia.

INT: Okay.

RES: He took us for hell week and he really protected us a lot, probably the two best guys in the company at the moment for cadets to speak to and open up to, yes they show no judgement and they've never laid hands on us neither so that's also quite nice knowing -

INT: So you've never witnessed [Staff Member D] physically or mentally -

RES: No not at all.

INT: Abuse any other cadet?

RES: No.

INT: No, and he's never abused yourself either?

RES: No, that's, no. [Staff Member D] is a very verbally aggressive person but he's never gone out of his way to you know, say something bad about you, he's always straight onto the facts that if you mess up then he'll obviously say something but other than that he's a really, really good guy, he has good intentions.

INT: Okay, so in terms of the abuse, the physical abuse that you've witnessed, what would you say is the worst case that you've witnessed personally?

RES: The worst case would probably be [Witness I], we were -

INT: Is [Witness I] -

RES: [Witness I], yes.

INT: [unclear 00:07:19]

RES: A friend yes. We were on the race boat and we were out at sea and that's when [Staff Member B] kind of threw him across the boat and he cut his chin open as well as his shoulder but that was not so bad, he almost fell overboard that's where the danger was and he would have fallen right to the propeller of the boat and that's obviously life threatening because he could get sucked in, that was probably one of the worse cases. Other cases it's not really been physical abuse but making us swim for maybe five or six hours in freezing cold water, not allowing us to get out and swimming through dangerous tides and windspeeds with no lifejackets which is quite a bad thing, especially we were [unclear 00:08:00] which is a bay at the other resort that the company owns and we had to go swim there and it does get a bit choppy there sometimes, so yes we had to swim I think it was six and a half hours was the highest amount of time that we had to and some guys were just dropping because they were cramping, they were getting hyperthermia and only then did the company allow us to get out the water. They offered no warmth, they just let us do our own thing, they gave us one towel for eight people which is ridiculous you know, you can't do that.

INT: Was there anything -

[VHF RADIO INTERRUPTION]
I'm at the heads.

[VHF RADIO INTERRUPTION]

I'm at the heads.

[VHF RADIO INTERRUPTION]

By the marina gate.

[VHF RADIO INTERRUPTION]

Copy, on my way. Sorry about that.

Okay you need to go yes?

Yes.

Because [Staff Member D] is apparently looking for you.

Yes, I think it's just to close off the day, have a meeting with us, yes.

Okay, all right listen, thank you very much for your time, I appreciate it's difficult to relax and get your full account across. I'm going to be here tomorrow night and the following night okay, I'd really like us to be able to coordinate some more meetings, if there's anything else that you want to tell me then we can have another meeting ourselves, otherwise we need to get testimony from other guys.

Yes, definitely we can maybe communicate through [Witness A].

Through [Witness A], let's do that, all right [Witness D] thank you very much, I'm turning this recording off now.

Audio ends: [00:09:46]

2. Witness E

Date Transcribed: 11th December 2021
Interviewer(s): NGO Investigator
Respondent(s): Witness E

[Witness E] thanks for meeting me tonight. Just for the record can you please state your full name, date of birth and place of birth?

Yes, perfect I'm [Witness E], I'm XX years old, I was born in XXXX on XXth September 200X.

Great, thank you. And can you please confirm that you're here under your own free will and that you're not being coerced into having this interview?

No one's forced me into this meeting, I came 100% free will.

Great stuff. Okay [Witness E], so you're aware that [Witness A] has reported instances of abuse, verbal, mental, physical experienced by him and witnessed by him during his time working for Meridian Adventure Limited. He has now left the cadetship and is back in South Africa and he through his mother has contacted our organisation to raise this complaint. I'm out in Turkey now obviously to speak to individuals such as yourself that are still on the cadetship programme to find out you know what your experience has been since you started. So, can I ask have you ever experienced yourself personally any physical, mental, verbal abuse on your person?
RES: Physical abuse, yes they’ve got a very rough way of saying things I think to get the things into your head, physical it also gets a bit physical sometimes, I did hear before I came here that it is physical, they’ve got a very militant way of doing it so sometimes it could look abusive from the outside.

INT: Were you aware of the sort of militant nature of the cadetship?
RES: I was aware before I came I heard they are very violent, when I got here it was an eye opener but yes I was aware of it before I came, yes.

INT: And how were you aware of that?
RES: The guy who told me about this place, he told me about stories of how they hit him into the engine room and stuff, yes.

INT: Okay, okay and this guy is he still working for the company?
RES: No, he is back in George.

INT: Okay, okay. So, can you, you’ve mentioned that they’ve been physical in the past, can you recollect a particular instance where they’ve been physical with you?
RES: We had training on a boat and then we’d go out and sometimes we would make mistakes and then they try and say you don’t make those mistakes again and then they go a bit physical. I remember the one time I got hit in the ribs a few times, I know of a -

INT: By who, who would hit you?
RES: Our trainer at the time, it was [Staff Member B].

INT: What’s [Staff Member B’s] full name?
RES: [Staff Member B].

INT: Okay.
RES: And [Witness D], he got hit in the -

INT: [Witness D] is the fellow cadet?
RES: Yes, he’s a fellow cadet, he got hit in the, I think it was in the head and his glasses broke, [Witness I] I know he got hit -

INT: So you witnessed these events?
RES: Yes, I was there. And [Witness I] almost fell of the boat, yes. But the boat was also slanted to the one side.

INT: [Witness I], okay so [Staff Member B] was the perpetrator of that particular instance?
RES: Yes that was, he was the trainer at that time.

INT: Okay, and what exactly did he do to [Witness I], or what did you see him do to XXXX?
RES: Well it was all very fast so I couldn’t really, I can’t remember the full thing but I remember he was pulling his shirt a bit and then I don’t know if [Witness I] lost balance or he pushed a bit hard but [Witness I] fell over and his, I think it was his nose that started bleeding. I felt, because we’re a team here so I felt like really bad for [Witness I] and yes, it made me quite upset.

INT: Okay, and you also mentioned [Witness D] there. [Witness D] mentioned that [Staff Member B] was violent with him as well, did you witness exactly what happened to [Witness D]?
RES: Yes, I think [Witness D] he made a mistake with the winch or something, or the sheave and then [Staff Member B] just said no move out the way and I think he might have done it by accident or on purpose, but he definitely grabbed [Witness D] and then he hit his face but then his glasses broke.
INT: So, do you think it was an accident or done purposely?
RES: He wanted to grab [Witness D] 100% but I don’t think his intention was to break his glasses.
INT: Okay, okay. And you said that you’ve been punched in the ribs? How did that come about exactly?
RES: I’ve, people tell me I have a very, like my facial expression makes it look like I have attitude so I think he thought I was having an attitude with him when I made a mistake and I tried to correct myself and I think I just made him mad, yes.
INT: So, he physically punched you in the ribs for that?
RES: Yes.
INT: How many times?
RES: I think it was just once, I can’t really remember, I think it was once.
INT: Okay, and what was your reaction to that?
RES: I used to do [sport] so when it happened I was like oh, you know.
INT: You kind of just batted it off.
RES: Yes, it makes me a bit frustrated because if someone did that to me in South Africa I’d obviously return the favour but yes, you’re not allowed to.
INT: You’re not allowed to, why because you’re not allowed to defend yourself?
RES: Yes, in the contract it says you’re not allowed to strike a master.
INT: Okay, and does it say in the contract that a master’s allowed to strike you?
RES: Not that I know of no.
INT: Okay, okay. Have you ever seen or witnessed [Staff Member B] physically abuse [Witness A]?
RES: Yes, we were sitting on the boat the one day and [Witness A’s] a very, he doesn’t get angry quick and then he started, I think he hit [Witness A], I can’t remember but it was quite physical and then [Witness A] was getting angry, like I could see and then I tried to tell [Witness A] just chill, it’s fine calm down you know.
INT: Okay, we’ve heard accounts of you guys being made to work late into the night, sometimes all the way through into the morning and then starting work again. Is that your experience?
RES: Yes, I think like two nights ago we worked until four in the morning.
INT: And did you then go to bed or?
RES: I actually had rounds so I had two hours of sleep then I had to go to a small boat to start my day’s work.
INT: Right, so two hours sleep in what sort of timeframe, 24 hours?
RES: I’d say about 22.
INT: Okay. We’ve also heard accounts of the company monitoring you through a particular app, does this mean anything to you?
RES: The SEG app. I’m not 100% sure if it’s true but my captain did tell me stories of how they’ve listened to him on the phone and how he’s only said stuff over the phone while no one’s around and then they come the next day and they like tell him about what he said on the phone.
INT: Your captain?
RES: My captain, yes.

INT: So, who's your captain?

RES: He left actually a few days ago, it was [Staff Member E] [unclear 00:08:06], yes and he told me instances like he phoned his dad to go to the doctor the one day and the Dr's name was, I can't remember his name but the next day the director [Staff Member A] called him and said don't go to that doctor, come to my doctor.

INT: XXXX is?

RES: The director of the company.

INT: Okay, do you know the director's [Staff Member A] surname?

RES: [Name].

INT: Okay, okay and you have this particular app downloaded to your phone then do you?

RES: Yes.

INT: And what's the app's name again?

RES: SEG.

INT: SEG.

RES: Yes, it stands for [name].

INT: Okay, so it's the initials of the director, okay. And do you know anything else about this app, where it's made or where -

RES: [Staff Member A] made it and I know that everything that gets done on the boat you have to update to the app, so the app is to keep check that you're doing the boats maintenance, it's on time, you're not taking break or you're not going over time and you have to fill in all your log hours of rest.

INT: Okay, so it's a record of your work?

RES: Yes, it's basically a record app.

INT: Okay, okay but so far as you're aware it doesn't monitor you, you've never been told that it actually monitors you by the members of staff?

RES: Well they've told us that they can read our WhatsApp messages.

INT: Who's told you that?

RES: I think it was our junior fleet captains, Staff Member E I'm not sure what his surname is and Staff Member D, they've told us that but I don't know if it's true or not.

INT: Okay, okay. Going back to the beginning of your cadetship, I believe you started in May this year. What was your experience of the previous location where you were accommodated?

RES: The barracks.

[00:10:14]

INT: The barracks?

RES: Yes.

INT: Okay. What was your experience there?

RES: Well, so when we got here we had hell week which understandable was really difficult.

INT: That's known as hell week?
RES: Yes.

INT: Who calls it hell week?
RES: Everyone calls it hell week, yes it's like -

INT: So, staff members?
RES: Staff members, cadets and it was actually enjoyable, I didn't mind it that much and I had the mindset of that it's only a week and then we're back and the barracks are like the barracks because there's your own space, you get there you can like the rooms are very like fancy so I really enjoyed the barracks, yes.

INT: Okay, so you didn't find the barracks a particularly daunting experience or daunting time?
RES: There was a jungle gym next to the barracks where when you get in trouble or something you have to go and do an obstacle course which is known as the jungle gym but I actually started enjoying the jungle gym, yes closer to the end of our barracks stay.

INT: Okay, so when you get into trouble what do you mean by that?
RES: For example, I remember we were late to update stuff and the captain he kept on asking us to update but we weren't able to do it in time and then we all had to run up to the barracks and I think we had to do two rounds of the jungle gym and sometimes we had to hand, I can't remember what the reasons were but sometimes you just make mistakes and then you know.

INT: Okay, so everyone is made to do -
RES: Do the jungle gym, sometimes we had to hang, sometimes we just did the normal like circuit, like pull ups.

INT: So, it could be the actions of one person but everyone has to -
RES: Yes, so like as a team, everything is a team effort.

INT: Everything's a team effort okay. And would you describe this as a form of punishment or?
RES: Oh it was definitely a punishment.

INT: It was definitely a punishment, yes it wasn't administered in good nature?
RES: During hell week I think it was good natured because the junior fleet captain he'd make, I wouldn't say jokes out of it but he'd make it fun but yes, sometimes as punishment then you know it's serious.

INT: Okay, and how often would you say that you're punished as an individual or as a group? is it daily, weekly?
RES: It was, some weeks will go and we'll not get punished and then other we'll get punished like three, four days in a row yes, either by doing like handstands or working late or just getting more work, yes.

INT: Okay, how would you describe your relationship with the members of staff here?
RES: Some are good, some are different, like the one day I feel like I can talk to him and the next day I feel like don't even look at them.

INT: Would you describe them as friends?
RES: No, no, I don't think you can be friends with the people above you. I'm friends with other cadets yes, but even when my master was here I don't feel like he was my friend, like after work I could chill with him but even after work I'd have to watch what I say because I feel like if I say something wrong I can get in trouble.
INT: Okay, okay. [Witness A] obviously felt that his experience was such that he didn't want to stay any longer, have you ever felt the need to leave here?

RES: Definitely, I get those days where I'm thinking this is tough and I would go home but you know it's not possible.

INT: Why do you say it's not possible?

RES: There's a big payment you have to make if you want to leave.

INT: So, is that what's stopping you?

RES: Well on those days yes, but then on other days I wake up and I'm like no I can do this it's not actually that bad, the outcome is good but then like I said everyone gets those days where you're just like no I'm missing home, I feel like I've made a mistake, yes. I've never felt like I've made a mistake but I've definitely felt like going back.

INT: Okay, you were made to, sorry you provided a statement to the company shortly after [Witness A] left, do you recall the contents of that statement?

RES: I remember the first statement I made, it was saying I can't remember what the first one said but it was too short so then we were busy spray shining the boat and then they called me back and said I have to make it longer and my wording has to be better. So, then I went back and I re-did it and it basically said, what did it say, I can't remember the exact words but I said we don't get abused but the training is a bit physical at some points of the cadetship.

INT: So, who told you that you had to write this statement?

RES: [Staff Member D], our fleet captain, junior fleet captain.

INT: Okay.

RES: I think he got orders from above the -

INT: Who do you think?

RES: It might have been [Staff Member A] or [Staff Member B] or [Staff Member C], one of those three.

INT: Okay, and were you aware that everyone was asked to, or told -

RES: Yes, it was a meeting in the morning and he said we all have to do these statements.

INT: Did you have a choice whether to write that statement or not?

RES: No, I think we had to all write the statements, yes because he called us all and then he read all our statements out loud.

INT: So if you didn't want to write a statement -

RES: No I think you had to write it.

INT: Okay, okay. Is there anything else that you'd like to tell me about the time here, whether you know it's been something you've experienced personally on your person as it were, or whether you've witnessed an incident, is there anything else that you'd like to tell me now?

RES: No, I think I've pretty much said all, I am used to like physical contact so I think sometimes I don't really see the difference between when they're just like play physical and then serious physical, so it might come across as if they're being angry physically or joking, I can get them mixed up but the whole cadetship is physical, I mean even the cadets we get a bit physical with each other because we're like living together but yes it's like hard to see sometimes if it's like joke or if its serious.

INT: Okay, all right [Witness E] thank you very much for your time.
3. Witness C

Date Transcribed: 11th December 2021
Interviewer(s): NGO Investigator
Respondent(s): Witness C

INT: Okay [Witness C], thank you very much for meeting with me tonight. Just for the record please can you confirm your name, date of birth and place of birth?

RES: My name is [Witness C], I was born on the XX June 200x, I was born in XXXX.

INT: South Africa.

RES: South Africa.

INT: Okay, thank you. And could you also confirm for the recording, the purpose of the recording, that you’re conducting this interview under your own free will and that no coercion has taken place?

RES: [Witness C] I am conducting -

INT: No, you don’t need to repeat exactly what I’ve said, if you could just confirm.

RES: Yes, I confirm this is under my own free will.

INT: Okay, thank you. Okay, so [Witness C] you’re aware that [Witness A] has reported instances of abuse physical, verbal, mental, experienced by himself during his cadetship with Meridian Limited, Meridian Adventure Limited. He’s obviously come to Human Rights at Sea to hopefully sort of address the issue and as part of that process we’re interviewing guys such as yourself who are on the cadetship to find out a little bit more and corroborate to a degree what [Witness A] and other cadets have told us. So, if you could sort of tell me if you’ve experienced personally, on your person, any form of physical abuse or verbal or mental during your time with Meridian Adventure Limited?

RES: Okay, yes obviously I definitely have experienced verbal, physical and mental abuse here. Some cases where it was just way overboard, it shouldn’t have happened. I’ve been hit, I’ve been thrown, I’ve been screamed at, I’ve been kicked on the floor, a lot of this has happened, a lot of it was during training and the first couple of months I’ve been here.

INT: Okay, can we think about specific instances where you’ve been physically abused?

RES: So, during training, sailing training one of the times I was hit across the head for not taking up on the mainsheet fast enough, I’ve been -

INT: Who hit you on the head?
RES: [Name], [Staff Member B].

INT: [Staff Member B], okay. How did he hit you? With his hand?
RES: With his hand, yes.

INT: So, did he punch you or slap you or?
RES: In the moment, I’m not, I can’t remember but in the moment yes just in the moment and I can’t really remember what happened just from the shock of that happened.

INT: Did others witness that?
RES: Yes, it happened plenty of times with all my crew, everyone’s been hit, one of the guys has been thrown almost off the boat.

INT: Okay, well let’s continue to focus on instances of physical abuse on your person and then we’ll go into other instances that you’ve witnessed.
RES: Okay, well I’ve been, he’s slapped us quite a few times, slapped me quite a few times -
INT: This is staff Member B [still?]
RES: Yes.
INT: Okay.
RES: He’s hit me over the back of the head for very small stuff that did not require that abuse which because the situation wasn’t dangerous at all it was just very uncalled for and most of, yes just some of the instances he would hit his, no hit me in the face, he’d give us a slap, he’d hit you in the chest, the one day I didn’t shave so he just gave me a gut shot which was fucking hard and -

INT: So he punched you in the gut, yes?
RES: Yes, he punched me in the gut.
INT: Okay.
RES: But yes, that’s most of the physical abuse that I’ve experienced, from him yes.
INT: From him, have you been physically abused by any other member of staff? Or if not physically, verbally, mentally?
RES: Yes a lot of verbal, a lot of screaming, the other day we were standing in the cockpit and getting absolutely screamed at in our faces about five centimetres away from us, basically spitting in our faces that’s how -
INT: Who was doing this?
RES: This was [Staff Member D], this is what he did and but yes, it’s too many verbal abuses to recall, basically yes, it happens all the time, it doesn’t stop, there’s always screaming, there’s always shouting, yes.

INT: And moving away from yourself then, what instances of physical, verbal or mental abuse have you witnessed on other cadets?
RES: Okay, so first one was on [Witness A], we were servicing winches -
INT: This is [Witness A], yes?
RES: This is [Witness A]. We were servicing winches, [Witness A] I think he didn’t notice something, it wasn’t a big deal and then [Staff Member B] slapped him flipping hard and then [Witness A] looked -
INT: Where did he slap him?
RES: In the face.

INT: Okay.

RES: And then straight after that he slapped him again in the face hard, and then another instance was with [Witness I], we were sailing and [Witness I] didn't do something fast enough so then [Staff Member B] grabbed him by his jacket and shook him around like this and then he threw him and he landed like horizontally on the side of the [unclear 00:06:06] which was flipping dangerous and he hit the non-skid with his face first when this happened.

INT: So you saw this happen?

RES: Yes, this happened in front of our whole team.

INT: Okay.

RES: Then -

INT: What was [Staff Member B's] reaction when he knew that everyone had seen what he had just done?

RES: Acted like nothing happened, I mean I can't believe that happened, that was one of the most hectic things because he almost went off the boat, I mean it was on that boat right there, that one in the green and yellow.

INT: Okay, yes I see.

RES: And then, I've also experienced him hitting people with [Witness E], you've saw him, he didn't put the winch handle into the winch if I recall correctly, and then [Staff Member B] just started like full on just hitting him with his fists closed and kneeing him while this was happening.

INT: Repeatedly?

RES: Yes. And our whole crew, our whole team saw it as well, this happened in front of all of us and then another time most of this happened during sailing, sail training.

INT: When you say the whole team, so how many of you would have witnessed this?

RES: Eight, no well eight including him.

INT: Okay, okay.

RES: And then -

INT: Could you recall who was part of that team at the time?

RES: It is me, [Witness C], [Witness I], [Witness A], [NON-INTERVIEWED CADET], [Witness H], [Witness E] and [Witness D] and [Witness F].

INT: Okay, okay. Have you ever witnessed any other member of staff being physically or verbally abusive to any other cadets?

RES: Yes I have, I have seen other staff being verbally abusive to other cadets such as the Director [Staff Member A].

INT: [Staff Member A]?

RES: [Name].

INT: [Name], okay.

RES: Yes, he has been very, very abusive, well verbally abusive and mentally abusive towards everyone in our cadetship.
INT: How often do you see [Staff Member A]?
RES: We don’t see him often, we used to during guest service but not anymore.

INT: Is he local here?
RES: He lives all around, he is local yes, I think I’m not 100% sure, I can’t quote myself on that one.

INT: Okay, okay.
RES: But yes, I have seen him screaming in people’s faces, he’s given us countless nights of long hours of exercise where you just can’t move anymore after it for the smallest things. I’ve watched [Staff Member C], [Staff Member C] has -

INT: What’s [Staff Member C’s] full name?
RES: [Name], I’ve seen him screaming in other people’s faces, calling them stupid, idiots, cunts, all of this which was, has been for very small stuff as well, the smallest things just the things they say and shit is out of control, I can’t believe a human can say that to another.

INT: Were you aware of this abusive environment that existed with Meridian Adventure Limited before you started your cadetship?
RES: I was told that Meridian Adventure was hectic, I was told -

INT: Who told you this?
RES: [CADET].

INT: Who’s [CADET]?
RES: He’s a previous T1[X]. He was here -

INT: Sorry, previous T1[X], can you explain what that means?
[00:10:00]
RES: So he was part of an intake, so now I’m Txx, he was part of the T1[X] which was an intake of cadets which came in two years ago and they just left recently.

INT: Okay, so you knew [CADET] back in South Africa did you?
RES: Yes, he went to my school.

INT: Okay, so he had provided you with some information as to the culture that existed here?
RES: That is was hectic, [Staff Member C] also said that it gets hectic here on the phone.

INT: What did you understand by the term hectic?
RES: I didn’t know it was going to be like this, I didn’t know there was going to be physical and verbal abuse.

INT: Would you have come had you known that?
RES: No I don’t think I would have come if I knew it was going to be like this, no.

INT: So, [Witness A] obviously felt that it was so bad for him that he needed to get away, is it something that you’ve considered doing?
RES: I have considered leaving, especially some long nights but I don’t think that it would be the best thing for me to leave.

INT: What makes you say that?
RES: Because I’ve spent a lot of money getting here and I don’t want to let my parents down and I just want to get through this and then I can show that I have something for it, I mean a Yacht masters which I’ve always wanted but yes, I just want to help my parents and not want them to, I don’t want to rely on my parents anymore so.

INT: Okay, some of the guys have mentioned an app that all the cadets are asked to download when they start their cadetship. Can you tell me what you know about this app?

RES: It’s called SEG, apparently it tracks everything, they can see your WhatsApp’s, they can see your emails, all that stuff, I mean the other day [Staff Member C] said over the radio to [Witness H] that he must delete some of his chats because they’re not appropriate or something, I can’t remember -

INT: So, this is [Staff Member C] a member of staff speaking to [Witness H] who is a cadet?

RES: Yes, I’m not sure if it was a joke or what but I have heard instances where they’ve brought up stuff that no one said to any management and it’s just been mentioned over the phone, or yes, it’s just been mentioned over the phone. It’s quite a dodgy app, I don’t trust it but I just got a new phone so I don’t have it on my phone.

INT: Okay, and the fact that you don’t have it on your new phone, no one has raised that as an issue?

RES: No, I just got my phone yesterday.

INT: Right, okay so you will be required to download the app will you?

RES: Yes, I have to get it tomorrow. They were saying [Witness F] got my old phone and I got a new phone, [Witness F] has to get the app tomorrow, I don’t think they know that I have a new phone.

INT: Okay, so who’s told you that you have to get the app tomorrow?

RES: [Staff Member B].

INT: [Staff Member B], okay. So he’s still here training you from time-to-time?

RES: Yes.

INT: Okay, but you were never told that the app was a means of monitoring your telephone usage, your messaging, you’ve never been told that?

RES: Negative, nothing.

INT: Okay, it’s just hearsay or rather word of mouth amongst the guys and members of staff like XXXX telling you?

RES: Yes.

INT: Okay. Okay, is there anything else that you’d like to tell me about any of your experiences here or anything that you’ve witnessed, just use this opportunity to say anything you want?

RES: I haven’t, I’ve just heard of a lot of stuff that’s happened around here that people have witnessed, like a lot of the stuff that happens with our T, the cadets in our T which its becoming a normal habit, I mean if you get a hit or a slap it’s just like oh we just like brush it off now, and when we’re screamed at it’s nothing because we’re so used to it here.

INT: Do you feel like the -

RES: Environment.

INT: - the treatment and environment that you live in, the treatment you’ve experienced has been normalised to some extent or?
RES: I don’t think, I think it’s actually got worse, yes well we’ve gotten used to it and I fear that they think it’s fine if they just scream and shout and hit and all this stuff at us.

INT: Because no one has challenged it?

RES: Yes, no one gives a reaction anymore because everyone is just like oh if you react to this then you’re going to get in big shit or something like that.

INT: So, you don’t think people react because they’re afraid of getting into further trouble?

RES: Yes, that is the main reason no one reacts.

INT: And why do you think that no one else other than [Witness A] has sought to leave and escape that abuse?

RES: Mostly because they have our passports which they’ve taken which it did say in the employment documentation that they were going to take our passports and keep them in a safe, but yes I think a few of us have tried to leave, like if we received our passports one day, the guys were making plans on they’re going to leave but I think honestly if they get caught it’s just going to be absolute hell, like.

INT: What do you believe the consequences would be if you were caught?

RES: Well probably a lot of late nights where you don’t sleep, a lot of getting mistreated by getting shouted at, mentally abused.

INT: Do you believe that you are allowed to leave if you want?

RES: Well no, actually I think they tried, if you can pay the full amount then yes because they can’t go against that but what they did with [Witness H], they said in the contract it says you can pay monthly and what they did with [Witness H] is that he wanted to leave on a monthly basis and they said that he has to pay the full amount right now which -

INT: So this is a clause in the contract that states you have to pay money in order to terminate your contract, is that right?

RES: Yes, yes it is.

INT: And you feel that is one of the major aspects of peoples experience here that is sort of stopping them from -

RES: Yes, definitely that’s the reason why people don’t leave, yes that’s 100% the reason. I mean I think it would just probably be like maybe one or two guys left here if you didn’t have to pay, but all of us are still here, yes.

INT: Okay [Witness C] listen, unless you have any more questions for me, that essentially wraps up what I have to ask you.

RES: Okay.

INT: Are you happy to close the interview here?

RES: Yes, yes.

INT: All right listen, thanks very much for your time I’m very grateful.

RES: Thank you so much.

Audio ends: [00:17:43]
**4. Witness F**

Date Transcribed: 11th December 2021  
Interviewer(s): NGO Investigator  
Respondent(s): Witness F

**INT:** Okay [Witness F] thank you very much for coming here to speak to me now. Just for the record could you please state your name, your date of birth and place of birth?

**RES:** Okay, [Witness F], born on XXXX and born in XXXX, South Africa.

**INT:** Thank you very much. Can you also confirm for the purposes of the recording that you’re undertaking this interview under your own free will and that there is no coercion as to the fact of your involvement in this interview?

**RES:** Yes, no it’s 100% freewill.

**INT:** Thank you. Okay [Witness F], so you will be aware that [Witness A] has been in touch with Human Rights at Sea and that I am out here in Turkey to speak to individuals such as yourself on the cadetship programme for Meridian Adventure Limited. [Witness A] has alleged various instances of abuse be that physical, mental, verbal, on his person but also in witness of such abuses on others. Firstly, can you tell me if you personally have ever been a victim of abuse by Meridian Adventure Limited?

**RES:** I personally have not been a victim of abuse.

**INT:** Okay.

**RES:** I had some pushing and shoving but I wouldn’t classify it as abuse.

**INT:** Okay, so you’ve been pushed and shoved by members of staff but you wouldn’t categorise it as abuse?

**RES:** More hard love.

**INT:** Hard love, okay, okay. Would you like to elaborate on those particular instances where you might be pushed or shoved?

**RES:** So, it happens more during training or happens pretty much only during training where if you’re not able to perform the task correctly or confidently then they might get a bit physical but I haven’t seen anything that’s extremely outrageous but yes.

**INT:** Okay, so you’ve never experienced any of your fellow cadets being physically abused or verbally abused or let me put it differently, you used the term hard love, have you ever experienced your fellow cadets sort of being subject to this hard love that you have?

**RES:** Yes I definitely have.

**INT:** Okay, can you specify some of those sort of instances?

**RES:** Well, during some of our training as I said when people haven’t been able to perform a task they will get a punch to the ribs or get moved aside violently.

**INT:** Okay, can you be more specific, can you say who that was? So which cadet, maybe what member of staff?

**RES:** It has happened to I know for fact [Witness A], [Witness E], and [Witness D].

**INT:** So, [Witness A], [Witness E] and [Witness D]?
RES: Yes, and there's has all been done by [Staff Member B].

INT: [Name], is that [Staff Member B]?
RES: Staff Member B, our sailing instructor.

INT: Okay. So, you've witnessed those three cadets being physically assaulted by, or as you put it subject to hard love, tough love?
RES: Yes.

INT: Okay, okay. So, the other guys you know who I've spoken to clearly see this as a form of abuse, physical abuse and you view it differently, you've used the term hard love, why do you think your view is different to theirs?
RES: I don't really understand what their view of abuse is, we haven't had a proper discussion about it but for me it's more he might get physical but it's to bring across a point of what we need to be doing right and I know it may not be the correct and legal way of doing things but I also see it as it is a good motivation to actually put your head down and work.

INT: Okay, okay. Some of the guys have mentioned instances where they've been thrown across a boat, so they mentioned an instance where [Witness I] was thrown by [Staff Member B] over a boat, were you there when that happened?
RES: Yes, I was present when that happened, I didn't see the physical throwing but I did see [Witness I] lying on the floor with grazes on his face.

INT: Okay, and do you think that's acceptable?
RES: No, I do not. It might not have been his intention but to that extent I don't think that was acceptable.

INT: Okay. I've been told that everyone is asked to download a particular app when they start their cadetship, can you tell me what you know about that app please?
RES: So, the app is the app created by the company called SEG.

INT: SEG?
RES: Yes.

INT: And you know what SEG stands for?
RES: [Name] [Staff Member A].

INT: Okay, [Staff Member A] is the director?
RES: Director, yes. Through this app the company is able to give us full contact of what tasks need to be done, it's a basic ground for contact in between cadets and all of management.

INT: Okay, so it's used for communication purposes?
RES: Yes, communication purposes. I have heard the rumours of them being able to track messages and gain access to your phone through it but I don't know how much of that's true and how much is just rumours but there is talk about it.

INT: Okay, do you know who, do you recall who told you this?
RES: I know [Staff Member E] [unclear 00:07:01] was the first person I heard mention it.

INT: [Staff Member E], is he a cadet or was he a member of staff?
RES: He was a master that is now resigned.

INT: Okay, okay. So, he suggested to you that there was a means of tracking your messaging?
RES: Yes, and then after that I heard it from a couple of other people but I don’t know if that was just rumour being passed on or what.

INT: Okay, do you know where the app is made or how it’s made?

RES: I do not.

INT: No, and you’re not aware of anyone who does know any more about that particular process of app development?

RES: No, I know the app is found on a site called App Centre where you can download all the updates but I don’t know much about it.

INT: How do you access the site App Centre?

RES: They send us links via email.

INT: Okay, so it’s not available through open source?

RES: Not that I’m aware of.

INT: Okay, okay. Speaking to some of the guys, they’ve described instances where you’ve been kept awake throughout the night and started work early the following day, does that sort of sound right to you? Is that your experience of your time here with Meridian?

RES: Yes, that it is very true, we do experience lots of cases of working late as punishment or as Meridian calls it rewarding us, so if you do make an error they do tend to give you all-nighters where you’ll work late hours and start at the same time the next morning.

INT: And how do you feel when you’re made to work through the night and start work early the next day?

RES: Oh, I mean it’s obviously not nice, but you do get used to it.

INT: Yes, okay, okay. All right [Witness F] thank you very much indeed. It’s very cold I appreciate so we should wrap things up but is there anything else that you’d like to tell me, ask me, whilst we have the opportunity?

RES: Nothing in particular, except that I’d like to be made anonymous until a point that I might have to come out with my name but I’d like to be asked permission of that before.

INT: Absolutely, yes absolutely, that’s before we use anyone’s name we’ll be asking you guys individually explicitly you know whether you consent or not but thank you for participating in this opportunity to meet, it’s very helpful. I’ll just finish off with one other question, [Witness A] obviously felt that his experience here was such that he needed to leave, have other people, have other cadets felt the same sort of desire to leave as far as you are aware?

[00:10:43]

RES: As far as I’m aware yes, I do know of people in the past who have left the cadet by fleeing, I don’t personally know them, I’ve heard of them.

INT: Okay, but what about the guys that you’re training with now, has anyone sort of indicated their desire to leave?

RES: Yes, there has been two people who have tried to leave by going to the company and they kind of ran into dead ends by the company wanting to make them pay an absurd amount of money but we did sign onto that in the contract.

INT: Right, so it’s this clause in the contract that states that you must pay a certain amount of money if you want to get out of the contract?
RES: Yes, depending on how long you’ve been here.

INT: So, was that the main reason for them remaining here and fulfilling their contract?

RES: Yes.

INT: So it’s that financial sort of burden that sort of prevents them from leaving?

RES: Yes, very much.

INT: Okay, okay [Witness F] well I don’t have any further questions for you so as I say it’s very cold so we’ll wrap up now. Thank you once again, very grateful.

RES: Okay.

Audio ends: [00:12:02]

5. Witness L

Date Transcribed: 26th January 2022
Interviewer(s): NGO Investigator
Respondent(s): [Witness L] (RES)
[ Witness M] (RES2)

INT: Okay er, [Witness L] and [Witness M] um, if I could just ask you to confirm your consent to this er, recording um, [Witness L] if you’d like to go first.

RES: I confirm to the recording.

INT: Thank you, and [Witness M].

RES2: Yes, I consent to the er, recording.

INT: Thank you very much. Okay um, for the purposes of the interview and our records, can you please provide your name, date of birth and place of birth? If we start with you, [Witness L].

RES: XXXX, XXX 19XX, XXXXX, South Africa.

INT: Thank you very much, and [Witness M].

RES2: Okay er, the XX of December 19XX, XXXX, Zimbabwe.

INT: Thank you, and can I just finally confirm that we’re er, you’re both here today er, voluntarily we, and that your participation is, is not in any way er, a sort of reflection of any coercion or duress.

RES2: Yes, I agree.

RES: Yes, I confirm to that.

RES2: That, yep, I confirm.

INT: Okay, thank you very much. S, s, okay as we’ve er, identified we’re having this er, meeting today er, because of the experience of [Witness A] er, on the Meridian Adventure Ltd Cadetship Programme. Um, and through his mother, Chantelle Adams um, we’ve been introduced to yourself. Er, first, firstly to you I believe, [Witness M] er, and then secondly to [Witness L] um, the individual that took part in the, the Meridian Cadetship Programme. So, if I could ask you, [Witness L] er, when you first started that er, that cadetship with Meridian?
When I first started was I believe June 20XX if I’m not mistaken.

Okay.

Around June.

And how did you become aware of that er, cadetship opportunity?

Er, an older friend of mine had said to me, he was also in the yachting business and he had said to me, “Hey, er, I’ve come across this opportunity for younger blokes that wanna get into the yachting industry. Um, and it looks really good.” So, I sent it over to one of my mates who I was in high school with, one of my bets mates and we both applied at the same time and we hoped to get in and we did.

Okay, great. Had your, your friend conducted or er, taken part in that cadetship previously?

No, no he had not.

He had not, no.

Okay, he’d just heard about it and, and thought it might be something that you’d be interested in.

Yeah, yeah he basically just sent us like, sent me a link saying, “Hey, check this out,” kind of thing.

Okay, and did you, did you know anything about the Meridian Cadetship Programme before you er, just embarked on that, that, that cadetship? So, did you, did you speak to anyone who’d conducted that, that cadetship previously?

No, we, we knew nothing about Meridian at all before getting there. And we, the only, the only information I got from it was their website and the emails that we exchanged and the interviews that we had, and that’s all the information I ever got.

Okay.

About Meridian.

Yeah, you did an, you did an interview with them and they um, also phoned me and interviewed me.

Okay, and do you remember who, who in particular interviewed you and, and who spoke?

I don’t, I don’t remember his name er, but he was, he was a younger bloke.

[name].

[name], I think [name] yeah, that sounds familiar, I could go through my old emails and find the name [unclear 00:04:18].

Okay, okay so, you would yeah, you’d be able to find his name if we needed it, okay. So, you believe his first name is [name] but you’re, you’re not too sure what the surname is, is that?

I think actually, it was [NGO Investigator] but we can confirm that later.

Sorry, [NGO Investigator], no that’s me.

[NGO Investigator].

That’s [laughs].

I’m [NGO Investigator].

That’s you talking to [NGO Investigator], [Witness L].

[Laughs].
INT: [Laughs].
RES: Sorry, [NGO Investigator].
INT: No, no problem, no problem.
RES: [Unclear 00:04:45] well, I'll look for that later.
INT: [Laughs] no, um, yeah.
RES2: [Laughs].
INT: Look, look later and er, if, if we need to er, confirm who that individual is we can er, we can do that. Okay, so you'd been interviewed er, and this individual has also spoken to you, [Witness M] um.
RES2: Yes.
INT: And what, what did they tell you about the, what the process er, what did they tell you about the cadetship?
RES2: Um, so they told is that the cadetship was much like being um, in the army so, that they were going to be very strict on the boys. Um, and that it would be a difficult process but that at the end of it they were going to come out um, they would be able to captain a, a ship er, a boat, a yacht rather. Um, and they would have all these qualifications um, at the end of the cadetship. So, we d, we were, we did know that it was going to be difficult, we um, they didn’t hide, hide it from us that they were going to be, it was going to be tough. Um, we just didn’t realise how tough it was going to be.
INT: And did they provide you with any sort of information regarding the, the sort of military style or nature of the, of the training?
RES2: So, he did, he did say to us that he came from a military background and that he would be training the boys in such a way. He, he did make.
INT: This, this is [Name] is it?
RES2: Yeah.
INT: Okay, so.
RES2: He did say it wasn’t going to be easy so, we weren’t under any illusions that it was going to be easy, we knew it was going to be hard work.
INT: Okay, and do you, what nationality er, was [Name] or is [Name]?
RES2: So we didn’t know at the time.
RES: [Unclear 00:06:42].
RES2: But when [Witness L] was going through his difficulties and we were trying to then get [Witness L] home, my brother came on board and was helping me. And he then phoned [Name] and it turned out that he was Zimbabwean.
INT: Okay, so, had, had he spent time in the Zimbabwean army or?
RES2: No, he wouldn’t have, he was too young for that there's a, yeah, well he was an older man but when the Zimbabwean army was functioning he would have been too young.
INT: Right, okay so did he, did he imply what er, what army he was a member of, having?
RES2: No, no I never, no, I can, I can ask my brother, maybe he might remember.
INT: Okay, all right well, if we need to we can come back to that. Okay, so you've received this correspondence from [Name] and he's given you an overview. And he has expressly referenced
that this sort of army/military er, style of training and that it would be difficult. Um, what um, what sort of timeframe between that interview process and, and you starting the cadetship er, are we looking at?

RES2: So, it was fairly quick um, [Witness L] had to do something called an STCW I think um, I might have the acronym wrong. And then he had to go um, to a doctor and get that whole um, medical.

INT: Yeah.

RES2: Um, but it was within a month hey, [Witness L]?

RES: Yeah, ‘cos we applied when I was finishing up Matric so, we applied around the end of January, December time. Um, and then I believe we were meant to leave we yeah, it was around that same time, around ‘cos I was finishing Matric so, I was finishing my Matric exams. And then we were meant to leave quite early and then the February I think it got delayed until the next month.

INT: Okay.

RES2: But you said you went in June; we’ll have to look at dates and [laughs].

INT: Yeah, yeah it doesn’t matter we, we can work out the er, sort of timeline.

RES2: Timeframe.

INT: Yeah, indeed. Um, but just yeah, if we can sort of er, have a, a rough idea as to you know, when and er, when and what happened.

RES2: Yeah.

INT: Um, okay so, you’ve left South Africa, [Witness L] er, and where have you flown to?

RES: We went to Istanbul, Turkey I believe and we waited around there for the rest of the cadets to arrive and for the taxi to, I Can’t remember the, the port town. But we went to some Turkish port.

INT: Okay um, maybe s, this is where you sort of undertook the, the cadetship or were you just briefly at this, this port town?

RES: That’s where I spent all of my time while I was there.

INT: Okay so, do you, do you remember the name of the, the port town that you conducted your cadetship?

RES: No, I don’t.

INT: No, would you have a record of that?

RES: Hm, maybe but er, er, I wouldn’t guarantee it.

INT: Okay, maybe somewhere in the information that they provided you that there’ll be a name of that.

RES2: We can a, we can ask his friend who he went with, he’ll remember.

INT: Okay, okay so you’ve um, you’ve got to that port town and, and do you wanna just provide me now with er, a summary of your, your, your experience, your initial sort of few weeks there?

RES: The you know what the, the first, we got there and it was a very quick realisation for the rest of us er, five boys what we had gotten ourselves into. I mean I’d shaved my head er, before going to Turkey because I knew what they expected, they wanted us to look the part. And some of the boys obviously, hadn’t, they weren’t expecting that and those guys that hadn’t were.
INT: You'd been told that you'd have to shave your head had you?
RES: Well, they hadn't said, they didn't tell us that beforehand but I knew, I expected that um.
INT: Okay.
RES: And then the boys that got there they were instantly kind of er, pointed out and said, "Hey, tonight you're cutting your hair." And it was very, it wasn't just like, "Hey, go and cut your hair guys," it was like a very stern, "Hey. Get your ass in gear. You're working with the company now okay, let's get started," type of thing. So, that evening when we got, we got to the port quite late um, so there wasn't much of an introduction as the sun was going down. Um, we went to the hotel that they had put us up in and we went and cut our hair and that was the first day. And the following day we were expected to get there quite early, it was like 04:00, 04:30 in the morning we were expected to be on the docks ready dressed in our clothes and um, just waiting for instructions. So, we got there and that's when it kind of started but the realisation of what we were in was quite fast.

INT: Okay.
RES: Um, just by the way that the captain carried himself, how he spoke to us and er, how aggressive he was towards us.
INT: Okay so, you mentioned how aggressive he was towards you um, and, and, and how he spoke to you. Er, how would you, how would you explain that, or how would you describe the language that er, that he would use to er, to communicate?
RES: Um, well you know how you see on movies how like drill sergeants are like?
INT: Yeah.
RES: Speaking to, trainers, it was very much like that, just swearing at us, just like, kind of just like putting us in our place type of thing. But er, yeah just swearing at us, calling us names and whatnot.
INT: Okay, okay and they, the sort of er, the next sort of week or so what, what happened there? Were, were you sort of inducted and provided with sort of briefings, how, how did that?
RES: Um, well over the next week or two there was much of the same um, he was a, a hard ass and he spoke to us very aggressively. Um, and instantly we were afraid of him er, from the get-go all of us were in fear of this man. Um, I remember my mate.
INT: Do you remember the man's name?
RES: Sorry?
INT: Do you remember this man's name?
RES: The captain?
INT: Yeah.
RES: Um, [pause] I spoke to my friend the other day and we couldn't remember but we do think it was, it was [name, Captain [name]].
RES2: Yes.
RES: Was it [name]?
RES2: It was [name].
INT: Okay.
RES: Yeah, um, which I know w, w, it, almost instantly we were afraid of him. Um, and I remember my friend, he dropped a from or a knife when we were eating lunch ‘cos we ate lunch on, on the, on the boat. He dropped his knife and fork on the, on the wooden floors, I can’t remember what wood but obviously, some expensive wood. And just the, the look of fear in my friend’s face like it looked like he was afraid of death like he was so terrified that he had dropped his fork the floor and caused damage to the boat. Which I suppose you know, it’s an expensive boat and it’s not ours so, we’re just working there. Um, and yeah there was a bit of a screaming match with, from the captain um, you know, arguing, swearing this and that. Um, and ordering us to fix it and that just carried on throughout. We were there every morning um, up until late afternoon. And just the, the main takeaway was the emotional and verbal abuse, I mean he wasn’t physically abusive um, up until that point.

INT: Yeah.

RES: But just the constant barraging of breaking us down and calling us these names and like kind of pitting us against each other. Um, I remember I couldn’t tie a certain knot um, and he made the, the rest of the guys, they were all, they had to do personal er, physical torture. He used to put like planks and push ups and while I was kind of trying to get the knot right. And there wasn’t any, he wasn’t coming up to me and saying, “Hey, this is how you should do it, let me show you how to do the knot.” It was, “No, let him figure out it himself while the rest of the guys are out there to er, working out basically, doing push ups and sit ups and stuff.” And then went on for about an hour in the rain and then that evening all five guys came to speak to me like, “Hey man, you really messed it up for us today. Like we’re in pain because you couldn’t tie a knot,” type of thing.

INT: Yes.

RES: So, the, from the get go we all were against each other especially the one boy, and I still, I still feel bad about this [unclear 00:15:49].

INT: Who, so this?

RES: And he was.

INT: This created division straight away in, within the, within the cadetship didn’t it?

RES: Yes, yes, almost instantly and er, the, the one boy from day one, all of us were against him. Because he was the most qualified in sailing, he was a sailor, he is a sailor. And, but he was a bit, I wouldn’t say daft or anything but he was just kind of doing his own thing. Like he knew what was going on and he had to learn stuff the same um, and every. And he would mess up a lot, he wasn’t perfect and ‘cos you’re all learning and he would mess up a lot. And within that first week, two weeks he was targeted I would say by the captain, he was the captain’s focus. So, it kind of let off heat from the rest of us that we could relax for those first two weeks. Like if I messed up or something it would go unnoticed but if he messed up he’d get gunned. And every time he messed up it’d cause punishment for the rest of the group. So, you know if he messes up we’re going for like a two mile run or something, doing push ups, doing sit ups whatever the case may be.

INT: So, there’s, there was.

RES: So, we were against him.

INT: Yes, those collective punishments, is that, was that right?

RES: Yeah, yeah exactly.

INT: So, you would be punished as a group for, for the mistakes of, of one individual for example.
RES: Yes.
INT: Okay, and, and that took place throughout the time that you were conducting your cadetship or just for the initial period?
RES: Well, I was only there for a month or so and it was the whole time.
INT: Okay, okay, okay so, you er, you said earlier that for the initial period it was mainly sort of verbal aggression. Um, did it ever get physical?
RES: Um, it did so, it was only, there was a lot of threats to get physical, there was a lot of that like getting up in our faces. And I, I remember he said the one time he said, he said to the engineer er, on, on, on the boat, he said, “Hey, go get my boxing gloves, I'm gonna fight these kids.” He was like just like really like in your face like he wanted to fight us and obviously, you know, we're, we're terrified of this guy so, we were shaking in our boots and just like got our heads down and stuff.
INT: Where was, where was this er, captain from?
RES: That's the Zimbabwean captain.
INT: This is [name] the Zimbabwean captain, okay.
RES: Yes, yes, that's still him, that's still him.
INT: So, so, so both.
RES: Er.
INT: The individuals are from Zimbabwe at the moment the, the first individual, [name] who interviewed you, he was from Zimbabwe.
RES2: Oh, no oh, sorry I don't think, I don't think [name] was from Zimbabwe the, the initial interviewer, I think he was British.
INT: [name], [name].
RES2: Hey, [Witness L]?
RES: Might have been.
RES2: Yeah.
RES2: I mean he said [unclear 00:18:52] he could have been British, could have been South African, I have, I have no idea.
INT: Okay er, and just to, just to clarify then was, was it [name] who had the military experience?
RES: No, no, no sorry.
RES2: So, um, both but I think [name] was the one er, [Witness L] you would know you, you were there.
RES: Well, we only spoke to [name] over interview and over email but when we, and I expected for [name] to be my captain. As soon as we landed and as soon as we got to the docks it was [name] who was the captain. But it was a bit of a surprise because I actually enjoyed speaking to, to [name].
INT: Right.
RES: And he seemed like a nice fella, [unclear 00:19:35].
RES2: He er, weren't you, did he not hit you?
INT: [00:19:44]
RES: Yeah, he did, he did so, we had sailed from one port in Turkey to another port in Turkey to do a dry dock, we were fixing one of the other boats. And this is like about I'd say our third week there and then we spent a couple of days there, the dry dock was over and we were heading back. And very,
the wind was intense, there was a very er, gnarly beginning to, it was our first show of what sailing would be and it was a [unclear 00:20:19] crazy. And he's busy, we had, by that time four other cadets had joined us and those cadets were in about their ninth month, one year into the programme. So, they were all, they, they were almost finished and they were to finish up their, their cadetship. And they joined us to finish their time with [name]. Um, so we had two of them on, on our, on the boat that I was in and two of them on the other boat. And we had, and [name] was busy steering the boat, sailing the boat and he the, he had the two more experienced cadets, the older cadets they were sailing, they were manning the, the sails. And he had us, us younger guys, us younger cadets watching them and we were on top of the. []

INT: How many of you, how many of you were there, how many of, of the cadets in your intake?
RES: We were, we split in half so, there's, there were three of us on boat, three of us on the other boat um, us younger guys, three younger guys on, on our boat, three younger guys on the other boat.

INT: Okay.
RES: And we were just, just watching, just seeing what was happening, it was very cool, first time real sailing and the same winds so, it was a good experience. Um, and then it started to pick up and it got a bit stressful, I could see [name] was kind of having a tough time er, instructing these guys to sail. It got a bit hectic, everyone was on, was on edge and he [unclear 00:21:50] he said, I can't remember what he, exactly what he said. But he said, "I need you to lock," something. 'Cos there's a, it's a very nice boat, there were all these fancy buttons and this whole control panel. And he said, "Go lock," this thing, I can't remember what it was.

INT: Yeah.
RES: And I, you know in those sorts of situations er, you kind of freeze up you know, your brain doesn't think er, as well as it should. And there's like two dozen, three dozen buttons in front of me, I just couldn't find what he wanted me to do. And I mean he hadn't taught us how to use this machine in the past you know, it was kind of like.

INT: You, you'd never been taught hat to do, what he was asking.
RES: No, no, no nothing at all, he just told me this, just lock something so, I, I go and I'm looking for all these buttons and I can't find it. And, then a couple of seconds go by, maybe five, six seconds go by and he comes over and he just hits me in the face two times. And he grabs me by the scruff of my neck and he pushes my face toward, like inside the control panel. And he says, "It's this button, it's this f-ing button, it's the one with the picture of a lock on it." In retrospect of course, it was a picture of, with the little lock on it but when you're in a situation like that.

INT: Of course.
RES: For the first time you're not thinking straight, you don't, don't, there's 1,000 buttons I don't know. Um, so he, he hits me, he sends me down um.

INT: He's punched?
RES: And all.

INT: He's punched you twice and he's grabbed the back of your neck.
RES: Yeah.

INT: And forced your head down on the control panel; and.
RES: Yes.

INT: Pointed out the, the relevant button or whatever it was that he was asking you to do.
RES: Yes.

INT: Okay.

RES: And it, it you know, a hit is a hit and I'd gone down and then my, he sent us all down to um, lay down so we didn’t get seasick ‘cos it was quite hectic waters. So, I go down to where the young, us younger guys are and my mate says to me, “Hey man, what happened upstairs?” ‘Cos I don’t want to say anything, I don’t want to cause any trouble. And he says, “Hey man, what happened to you,” so there was obviously a [name] on my face that wads noticeable enough for someone to instantly recognise and say something has happened to his face. And I mean that wasn’t the only time it happened um, another time we were also on top of the boat um, with the sails up and [unclear 00:24:13] whatnot. Um, and he said to us.

INT: That was your first proper sailing experience with, with.

RES: Yeah.

INT: With the company, okay. And you were assaulted on that, that sort of maiden voyage er, for, for want of a better term, okay.

RES: Yeah.

INT: So, there, there was another time you now, he assaulted you, is that right?

RES: Yes.

INT: Do you want to tell me about that time?

RES: Er, yes of course um, the second time we were also upstairs er, with er, steering [unclear 00:24:47] main part. Um, and he’d said to us like, “Go downstairs boys go study your books,” we had books to study. And he had drilled into us that the crew members can’t walk on the stairs, the crew members don’t walk on the steps, we don’t use that, that’s for guests and the captain only. The crew members must slide down the side of the boat okay, cool and I’d you know, try and remember that, that stuck in my head. And I go and I slide down and then I see two of my mates, they walk down the stairs. And I’m a bit confused, I wonder why they walked down the stairs, I must have missed something. So, then they say, “Hey man, the captain is calling you, better go up and see him,” and I said, “Oh no, I’ve done something wrong.” So, I go up and I, and he just, he hits me again, more of a slap, he slaps me. Um, and he says, “Look, you don’t slide down the boats now.” And I was like okay, all right so, I’ve been hit again and I go and I speak to my mates. And they explain to me, “No, you can slide down er, normally meant to slide down but when the masts are up you don’t slide down, when the masts are up you walk down the stairs.” So, yeah I messed up, I made a mistake but he still hit me across the face for making a mistake like that.

INT: So, did he slap you or punch you?

RES: That was more of a slap, that wasn’t a punch.

INT: Okay.

RES: And I can just, I can remember one other instance, not of physical er, anything like that, another instance when, when we were going towards. Now the, the physicalness happened going back to our original harbour. But going towards the other harbour where we did the dry dock we were busy studying in our books. And we had all partnered up with the older crew, crew members and I had this one guy and we were busy studying. And he said, “All right everybody, go to this page and you have to study that,” we said all right. And then he looks at me and he says, “Oh, you’re on the, the wrong page,” and then another barrage of verbal abuse. And he gets on the phone and he calls somebody and he says to the guy, “Hey, when we arrive in this port in Turkey like have a
taxi ready for [Witness L]. We’re sending him home, he’s out of here like I don’t want him a part of this crew anymore, he’s done. This is the last chance,” type of thing. And he then goes and puts me in the hull of the ship in the, in the bottom, inside the kitchen he opened up the, the hull and put me inside the hull. And there was a little er, a bung to stop the water and my job was to watch the bung. And that was for the entirety of the rest of the trip, I had to sit in the hull as punishment for what I’d done. And you know when you hear news like that er, don’t know really how to handle it. You’ve just been kicked out of this elite programme; you’ve lost this massive opportunity. So, a lot of emotions are going through my head and I get my phone and I start messaging my mum, I start speaking to my mum. And I say, “Hey, you know this is what’s happened, I think I’m getting kicked out of this thing.” And you know, my mother is upset, upset, I’m upset, it’s just not a nice time and I was there for the entirety of the trip.

Um, and then later on when that’s all over maybe even the following day or something it comes to light that the phone call was a fake phone call. He hadn’t actually called anyone at all, it was just kind of a bluff type of thing. Which I mean it sounds silly to think oh, how could you fall for a bluff on the phone? But he made it so real that I truly believed I was getting kicked out of this thing. He was on the phone, he was s, like talking and everything, it was all, it was a hoax, it was a lie. There was no taxi waiting for me, I wasn’t leaving, he was just doing that to intimidate me, make me scared or I, I don’t know. But I believed that I, I truly believed I was leaving.

INT: S, [Witness M] maybe it’s a good time er, perhaps for you to say a little bit about that telephone call er, that you received from [Witness L] when he was made to er, to stay in the hull of the vessel. Do, do you recall that telephone call?

RES2: Well, it was terrible because I knew that he was um, locked down there, he couldn’t get out um, he was telling me how cold he was. Um, it’s terrible for a mother to hear that your son is being locked um, down in the, in this, in the hull. And um, yeah, I just didn’t know what to do, I didn’t know how to get him out of there. If I had to pay um, a huge amount of money to get him home so, I was trying to get money ’cos I’m, I’ve decided that I’m gonna get him home.

[00:29:53]

INT: Yeah.

RES2: And um. I had to try and get money to get him to come home, it was a terrible time in our lives. Um, especially those er, I think you, how long were you, you there for a good like day or so, locked downstairs hey, [Witness L] in the hull?

RES: It was the, it was the whole trip, it was the whole trip from one port to the next.

RES2: Yeah so, was it like a day or two?

RES: No, no it was, it was, it was a, the majority of a day.

RES2: A day, yeah so, that, that whole day was, it was horrendous I did, I didn’t know how I was gonna get my son home, how I was gonna get him off the boat. Because they had taken their um, passports so, he couldn’t even [pause] go to a. I was telling him, “Just go to an airport and we will get you the money and you can buy a ticket and you can get home.” And he was saying, “Mum, but I don’t even have my passport, I can’t get to an airport, I can’t buy myself a ticket, I don’t have a passport.” And he was locked in a hull [laughs].

INT: Yeah, indeed okay. Um, okay so, he’s obviously, the captain, [name] is, has bluffed this threat, we’re throwing you off the course. But during the course of that telephone call you, you’ve decided that you, you want to go home regardless, is that right?
RES: Um.
RES2: Yes, we'd decided as a family that we would get him home.
INT: Okay, is it, are you happy with that, [Witness L]?
RES: Um, I think for me it was more, it was a hard decision. Because when you, when you speak to someone, you speak to your family saying, “Hey, I want to leave,” not everybody can understand the full severity of what's going on. So, you know how you feel and you know what's happening in the moaning in the time and you tell your family, you tell your friends. And I remember talking to my father and him saying, “Hey man, this is a missed opportunity, you should stay,” type of thing. And then even my uncle is saying to me, “Hey, you should stay, it's a missed opportunity,” this, that and the next thing. So, for me it was a lot, it was a, I wanted to stay. But then in the back of my mind knowing hey, if you stay an extra month you’re doubling the amount of money you have to pay back to this company. Because there was something like $100 a day if you don't finish the course, it's a one and a half, one and a half year course.
RES2: Yes, it's a, yes that, that.
RES: $100 a day if you don't finish it.
INT: Okay, so that, that er, burden of having to pay to get yourself off the course was something that was at the forefront of your mind. Um, is it, is it um, a sort of contractual term that was communicated to you before, before you left to, to start the cadetship? Or was it just verbally?
RES: No, it was made, it was made very clear.
RES2: No, no, no.
RES: That you would get [unclear 00:33:03] yeah, you go mum.
RES2: Yeah, it was a contract that they signed.
INT: Okay.
RES2: So, the longer they so, the longer they stayed the more expensive it was if they w, if they wanted to leave before the cadetship was over.
INT: Yeah.
RES2: So, if they finished the cadetship we wouldn't have to pay anything but if they carried on with the cadetship and then left halfway through we would have to pay that time that they had been there.
INT: I see um, would you happen to have a copy of that?
RES2: So, it was, it was, I will look for it, I’m sure we do.
INT: Okay, okay so, um, [Witness L] will you um, explain then what happened next? So, you, you've had this experience of being made to sit in the hull for almost through an entire day. Er, you've obviously, spoken to your mother um, and between you er, and other members of family you've come to a decision to leave the cadetship. Er, can you, can you explain what happened next?
RES: Yes um, so eventually we came to the decision that going back to SA would be the best choice. And I went early morning um, er, as we did every morning to clean the boats, that was like our early morning training to clean, go clean the boats. And I just kind of went onto the side and I spoke to [name], the captain. And I said, “Hey, I would like to leave um, I think this is, I think I need to leave.” And then me saying that he called all of us together and sat us all down and then said, “Hey, um, you know we're gonna be travelling to all these crazy countries. We're gonna be having a great time, we're gonna meet lots of girls, gonna get drunk and it's gonna be awesome and you're going
to finish your training.” Kind of sweetening the deal saying, “Hey, you’re gonna go scuba diving with er, stingrays and go out on jet skis.”

INT: So, he totally changed his man, his behaviour.

RES: Totally, totally, he seemed like a human, he seemed like.

RES2: Yes, but in the mean.

RES: Like he was a real genuine person.

INT: Go on, [Witness M].

RES2: But in the meantime my brother had phoned him and um, had spoken to him.

INT: Okay.

RES2: And he, he yeah so, my brother phoned him because of everything that had happened, confronted him about what he, on the telephone about what he had done to [Witness L]. And he um, made out that it was all [Witness L], [Witness L], [Witness L] was er, a bad egg, that he needed to um, set straight, make you know. And he was going to make a man of [Witness L].

INT: Right.

RES2: Those were his words.

INT: And, and, and how did your brother react to that, to hearing?

RES2: Um, I think he sweet talked my brother.

RES: [Overtalking 00:36:08] yeah, he did.

RES2: He um, yeah he may, [Witness L] wasn’t an angel at school [laughs] and we, he had been difficult. So, um, we did feel that maybe he was maybe exaggerating what had happened to him. At the time we felt that.

INT: Yeah.

RES2: And um, we felt that maybe he should carry on um, after our conversation with um, [name] that he must carry on and um, maybe Am, [name] could have, could help him, yeah.

INT: But so.

RES2: So, then we decided that he would stay longer.

INT: Okay, so this is, this is after or b sorry, before the, the incident in the hull?

RES2: N, yeah, this is after the instances, after he’s been hit, after he’s been locked in the hull.

INT: Okay.

RES2: [name] made it sound like it wasn’t as bad as [Witness L] had made it out to be.

INT: I see.

RES2: No, we, we were, we weren’t really in much contact with [Witness L] so, we weren’t sure, we didn’t know.

INT: Okay.

RES2: That it was as bad.

INT: So, a decision had been made amongst yourselves that, that you would leave the cadetship. But then your brother spoke to [name], the captain and [name] the captain persuaded your brother and you that perhaps it wasn’t [name] that was at fault. It may well have been

RES2: Yeah.

INT: So, you then decided that you, that [Witness L] stays on the course.

RES2: [Witness L] yes, he told us that it was yes.

INT: Okay so, um, going now back to, to you [Witness L], you're, you're sat down as a group being spoken to by, by [name]. Um, you're being sweet talked as you say, do you want to take it from there?

RES: Um, yes so, he spoke to us, he gave us these promises of how it would be and you know, you kind of fall for it, you kind of take his word. And it's strange because he was such a horrible person but in those moments you could see like er, a father figure. That you could've, could put your trust in and respect and say, "Hey, this isn't so, this isn't as bad as I may make it out to be." Um, so in those moments it was very cool, felt like a nice guy. And then half an hour later you would be being barraged with mental attacks saying how stupid you are and this and that and [unclear 00:38:57]. So, it's a very short lived sweet moment.

Um, and yeah, I just remember, I remember hoping that now we'd come to a decision that hey, maybe I shouldn't go home. And I just remember every single day going back and saying, "Hey, I really hope tomorrow is a better day, I really hope tomorrow is a better day." And you'd wake up in the morning, you'd get to the boat and 10 minutes later it wasn't a better day, the day was ruined from the get-go, from what he would say to you. So, it just, it just became like a vicious cycle for a couple of days, hoping for something to change and it never did.

INT: Okay, okay so, were there any further instances of physical abuse?

RES: No, not after that, he never hit me again um, just, just verbal and emotional [overtalking 00:39:55]

RES2: Er, [Witness L] the, t wasn't the last straw he um.

[00:39:58]

RES: Yes, sorry mum?

RES2: Wasn't the last straw he made you [unclear 00:40:04]?

RES: He made me what, sorry?

RES2: [Pause] remember when he made you stand outside at attention for, when was that?

RES: I remember that, I do that yes, that happened as well. He er, I don't know, I'd done something wrong um and he made me.

RES2: In the freezing cold.

RES: Yeah, he made he get off the boat and I had to stand at attention er, on the line. And I was there for a good couple of hours and I wasn't allowed to eat food and my, my cadet mates weren't allowed to speak to me. Am, and I remember [laughs] my best mate then smuggled me a piece of bread that I'd been there for so long. And he did that knowing full well that he could get punished for what he had done. Um, but I was there for a while and it was cold. Um, and I remember er, it went into to, it went into the late evening and he, he spoke to me and I can't remember exactly what he said but I was there for a good long time. And yeah, you're right, I think that was the night where er, I came to a realisation that I'd better go. Because I think he actually maybe even pushed it onto me um, after that.

INT: Okay so.

RES2: Yeah, and that's when you phoned and you said you couldn't take it anymore.
RES: Yeah.

INT: Okay, and can, what was the procedure for, for leaving the, cadetship programme then? How, how did you go about it?

RES: Um, well I filled in a, a, along with the sailor, the guy who had experience sailing er, I think we had come to the agreement together that we would both leave. Er, so then for the second time we went together, we spoke to him together and said we'd both like to leave. Um, and then from there he just was kind of pissed off with us type of thing. And was very, I don't know the word but just he wouldn't give us the time of day anymore. Just didn't care you know, just whatever, get them out of my face type of thing. Um, and we wanted to leave as soon as possible but he said, “No, you have to finish a week, you have to finish a week, at least a week of continuing with the course.” So, we did and that week was probably the worst week in terms of physical labour. He he didn't speak to us anymore, from that moment he didn't speak to us, he didn't do anything to us. So, we had him out of our hair and he wasn't talking to us, he wasn't shouting at us, great. Then he would just delegate the older crew members to tell us what to do. But w, all that week we did the most intensive labour I've ever done in my life. We got like the shittiest jobs on the boat you know um.

INT: You, you, you and the other person wanting to leave, okay.

RES: Yes, yes and it w, it was so physical.

INT: [Overtalking 00:43:16] remainder of the course.

RES: Yes.

INT: Okay.

RES: Yes, we were excluded from them um, and we did the work jobs, just us two, we were forced to do those jobs while the other guys carried on with their thing. And it was like some sort of I don’t know, strange behaviour that we hadn't done anything cool or fun other than the sailing. But as soon as we wanted to leave he got the jets, not the jet skis but the er, rubber duckies out. And the other four guys went on the rubber duckies and were, were learning how to use rubber duckies while we were desalting the bottom of the boat. You know, just to er, er kind of rub it in as to, “Hey guys, look what you’re missing out on. You’re busy cleaning salt and we’re on a rubber duckie,” kind of thing.

INT: Yeah.

RES: And that, that was the whole, the whole week was like that.

INT: Okay, okay so, you've then, you've, you've flown back to SA at that you know for the, that following week. And [Witness M], at what point have you had to front up the money?

RES: Before I left.

RES2: Er, I had to pay them before they would release him and that's why they weren't releasing him straight away. Um, because I was battling to get hold of the money to pay back. Um, and then as soon as I transferred the money they gave him his ticket and he was on his way home. But they kept him until I paid the last yeah, it was until I paid it up.

INT: So, he was essentially being held captive until you.

RES2: Yeah.

INT: Paid the money.

RES2: Was being, he was being held until I paid.

INT: Because they wouldn't release his passport.
RES2: Yeah.

INT: Is that right?

RES2: [Pause].

INT: Hi, [Witness M] can you hear us?

RES2: Yeah, they held onto his passport for home.

INT: Sorry, the line is just a little bit difficult.

RES2: [Pause].

INT: Can you hear me, [Witness L]?

RES: I can hear you more than I, yeah everything is fine on my side.

INT: Okay, so you weren’t allowed to leave until er, your mum had paid the sum of money. Do you remember how much she, she had to pay?

RES2: It was, I think it was [exhale] [pause].

RES: She’s cut out again.

INT: Yeah, [Witness M] just to let you know.

RES: Um.

INT: The line is very difficult for you.

RES2: [Pause] sorry [laughs].

INT: Hi [laughs] you all right, no problem okay, that’s better.

RES2: I think my I, my internet went funny um, it was about 25,000 Rand.

INT: 25,000 Rand, okay.

RES2: Rand.

INT: Okay, and do you re, remember who you had to pay that to, who were you, who were you in correspondence with, in order to transfer that money?

RES2: So, then again it was um, at, the [name], [name] again so, [name] seemed to be the man that was in control of finances and that kind of thing.

INT: Okay, okay.

RES2: But we’ll double check the name for you though [laughs].

INT: Yeah, and, and do you remember um, where the, the bank account that you had to transfer that money to was er, was based?

RES2: Yeah, so it wasn’t, it was an overseas bank account and it wasn’t, it wasn’t a Turkish bank account. Um, and it [exhale] it was, it was an American bank account.

INT: Okay.

RES2: If I remember correctly.

INT: Okay, but you’d probably be able to find a record of that transaction.

RES2: Yes, I will yes.

INT: Yes, okay um, I just have a few questions, [Witness L] were you ever asked to download a particular app for a mobile phone when you were conducting the cadetship programme?
RES: No, not that I’m aware of, no I don’t think so. Um, we were expected to take our measurements in full um, the one evening and send them out but I don’t think there was an app related to that.

INT: Okay, and does the name [Staff Member A] mean anything to you?

RES: Yes.

INT: How have you come across that name?

RES: He’s the, he’s, he was, he was a bit of a legend amongst the crew members, he’s the owner.

INT: Okay, so did you ever have any correspondence with him during, during the, the sort of period leading up the start of your cadetship or, or during your cadetship?

RES: I had spoken to him once on the phone, I never met him um, but my, I had left early, my other crew members did meet him.

INT: Okay.

RES: Um, and his story.

INT: But you knew he was the owner but otherwise you didn’t have any, any information about him or any correspondence with him other than that telephone call. Do you remember what you spoke, spoke to him about?

RES: It was about me leaving.

INT: Okay.

RES: He had spoken to me about leaving, it was the night when I was standing outside er, on my own standing outside the boat.

INT: And do you remember what, what, what you discussed with him er, obviously it, he was.

RES: It was kind.

INT: You leaving but what, what?

RES: Yeah, it was kind of just like I don’t know, I can’t, I can’t even remember on.

INT: Okay.

RES2: Was he trying to get you to stay?

RES: It wasn’t like he was trying to get me stay, it wasn’t like he was trying to get me to go but just kind of like, “Oh, you know this useless bastard,” type of thing.

INT: Did he, did he use those words did he, did he swear, swear at you?

RES: I’m you know, I can’t, I can’t confirm that he did.

INT: Yeah.

RES: But he probably did because it was just, that’s what it was like the entire time was just swearing and what not.

INT: Okay.

RES: But I, I can’t confirm that he did.

INT: Yeah, okay um, we’ve obviously discussed instances where you’ve er, been the victim of physical abuse. During your time there did you witness other cadets er, receiving similar treatment, physical abuse?
RES: Yeah, yeah I did er, I mean I, I was forced to hit my mate, my mate messed up and, and instead of, instead of [name] the captain hitting him he said, “[Witness L], go hit your mate across the face.” And it wasn’t like a jokey thing either, it was like a very serious like, “Go hit him.” So, I hit him and he said, “No, that’s not hard enough,” so I hit him again he said, “No, that’s not hard enough.” So, then I hit him and he said, “Oh, that’s enough,” um, I remember that quite clearly. And um, I can’t think of any other times when he hit anybody else, I mean maybe he did and I wasn’t there but I can’t say.

INT: Yeah, okay um, does the er, does the term “hell week” mean anything to you in the context of the cadetship, no? Does the er, term “jungle gym” mean anything to you?

RES: No.

INT: Okay, okay so, I think that concludes my er, my questions er, for you um, do you have any questions for me, either, either of you?

RES: The only thing that I can ask is if, in the future you, you speak to other cadets and get um, their opinion or their story on what happened I’d be more than willing to get in contact with them. At the moment I only have one contact of my best mate um, but with enough effort I could speak to the others and get [unclear 00:52:01] as well.

INT: Okay, all right yeah, thank you that would be very, very helpful.

RES: [Unclear 00:52:04] the, the other guy’s story was also quite horrible um, he had to have surgery because of what happened. Not, not because of what [name] had done but because of neglect of what [name] had done. He was the one that, just to put the story short er, he had said, “Hey my fingers is infected, I need to go to the doctor.” And he said, “No, forget about it.” He said, “Hey, my finger is infected, I need to go to the doctor,” and that went on for about a week. Until his finger was the size of a sausage and they put him in a Turkish hospital and he had surgery and he left soon afterwards. And I’m [overtalking 00:52:44].

INT: And he s, he was a fellow cadet on, on the same intake as you was he?

RES: Yes, the same intake he left short, shortly after I left er, it was the two of us that left, me and the sailor man, sailor dude, we left at the same time. About a week, two weeks later my best mate left, shortly after that, that guy got his finger infected, went and had surgery. And because of neglect and they didn’t care he left as well. That leaves two of them and if I’m not mistaken, I might be, but I’m almost positive that the last, the second to last guy left. So, out of six of us sorry, am I remembering that right, five of us, four had left, No, I’m not sorry, out of six of us five had left, one stayed out of that intake and his name was Henk.

INT: His name was?

RES: XXXX.

INT: XXXX, okay.

RES: XXXX yeah, he stayed on the sole purpose, sole reason sorry that he could not afford to leave. He, I remember him saying to me, he said, “[Witness L], I’m jealous that you are leaving, I don’t want to be here either.”

RES2: Yeah.

RES: And he couldn’t go because his family just didn’t have the money to take him out.

RES2: Yes, I was in contact with his mother well, his aunt actually, I don’t think he, he didn’t live with his mother, he lived with his aunt. And they couldn’t afford to buy him out.
INT: Okay, and um, are you still in correspondence with XXXX in any, in any way, social media?

RES: I've messaged him maybe about three times since it happened and [unclear 00:54:35].

RES2: I have his aunt's number.

INT: Okay, all right um, obviously there are er, a few sort of items that we discussed that may need er, confirming. And if, if we need to sort of follow up on those items er, are you happy for me to get back in touch with you?

RES2: Yes.

RES: Of course.

INT: Yeah, okay thank you very much indeed. Um, okay so unless you have any questions for me that, that will essentially conclude our er, our, our meeting, our interview. Um, I'm very grateful for your participation um, it's clearly er, a very harrowing experience that you've er, gone through. So, it, it can't be nice to you know, sort of mem er, bring back all the, that er, that time to memory. So, er again, thank you for your er, your willingness to take part in this it's er, it's very helpful.

RES2: Thank you very much, sorry our memory it's er, it's been a while so our memories are a bit vague [laughs].

INT: And it's not something you want to remember either is it um?

RES2: No, well that's the thing, as soon as it was over we kind of put it behind us so, er, yeah it hasn't been nice bringing it up again [laughs]. Especially for me because we sent him there, it was it decision to send him there. So, it's, it's not nice as a mother to know that you sent him to this place where he was abused and then didn't believe him when he said that something bad was happening to him.

INT: Yeah.

RES2: And we made him stay on so, it, it yeah [laughs].

INT: [Overtalking 00:56:09] no, it's er, it's very difficult.

RES: I would just like to um, say, out one note on the whole memory aspect is that it was, for me personally it wasn't something that happened and then it was over. It was this constant reliving, every night when you go to bed you'd think of what's happened before. And you'd just regret what happened, feel these emotions about what happened and say oh, how could I have done this differently? What have I, what if I had done this? And it just, even now, even three years later I will still some nights still lie in bed and just have these memories of what happened and you know.

RES2: Yeah.

RES: And even, I know it sounds a bit strange but even when I see boats on TVs and movies and stuff, I just feel frustration, I feel angry when I see boats. And I you know, I just, it just brings back everything, it just brings back frustration seeing boats. Because I know, I know what my experience was like and I know that other people have gone on boats and had the best times of their life. It just kind of brings up this resentment, frustration, anger but yeah.

INT: No, thank you, [Witness L] that's er, that's a very um, compelling er, description that you've provided um, there, yeah. Cannot, cannot underestimate that, that sort of long term sort of mental er, health effect that this will have had on you. So, er, so again, thank you for, for taking part. Um, what er, essentially we will do now is er, we will review this um, account of yours and, and the evidence that you've provided. Er, and, and put that against you know, what we already have er, to sort of build our, our, our case effectively. Um, and this, this
will from a report um, that won't er, won't be sort of naming any particular individuals. So, that you know the, there's complete anonymity for yourselves. Um, and, and clearly any er, any areas that require your consent we'll, we'll, we'll come to you specifically and ask for that. So, er, you can rest assured that nothing you say or, or, or have provided will be shared with anyone else but, but ourselves. Er, and you know there are strict er, guidelines and, and regulations that we adhere to in respect of data protection. Er, so er, I hope that sort of er, assures you of er, of the confidentiality aspect of the, of the way this will be managed. But if you have any concerns then I can provide you with er, with further information.

RES2: Thank you.
INT: Okay all right well, thank you both once again and er, I'll be in touch to er, to just update you as to you know, how we've er, progressed with our, with our, our investigation.
RES2: Thanks, thank you so much, thanks [NGO Investigator].
INT: Okay.
RES: Thank you very much, [NGO Investigator].
INT: Do feel free to contact me with any questions you have at any stage if er, if you, you know think of something.
RES2: Sure.
INT: All right.
RES2: Thank you, thank you.
INT: Okay, thank you very much.
RES: Thank you very much.
RES2: Bye, bye.
INT: Cheers.
RES: Cheers, bye.
RES2: Bye.
INT: Bye.

[Audio ends: 0:59:38]
Annex 3 – Meridian Adventure Limited Response to Disclosure Request

Dear Mr Hammond

We refer to your email of 29 December 2021 and write in response to your questions regarding Meridian Adventure Limited ("Meridian Adventure") and the cadet training program.

Meridian Adventure is a professional organisation committed to the highest professional standards. Meridian Adventure has in place an On-Board Complaints Procedure to deal with grievances as well as professional policies and procedures that cadets and crew are required to follow (including the Standard Operating Procedures and a Code of Conduct). The cadets and crew are trained to follow the procedures and adhere to professional standards prior to the commencement of the cadet training program and throughout, and any complaints and grievances are taken extremely seriously.

Meridian Adventure will revisit the professional policies and procedures currently in place and further training will be provided to all cadets and crew members.

We enclose with this letter, and for ease of reference, a paginated bundle of supporting documents that is referred to throughout.

1. Clarification of the roles, responsibilities, and formal training qualifications of named Meridian Adventure staff.
   a. 
   Role: Director
   Responsibilities: [Redacted] participates in delivering large group guest services programs in Raja Ampat and other locations in the Pacific. Whilst [Redacted] was the founder of the cadet program, he is not actively involved in the day-to-day cadet training activities.
   Qualifications: Master of Yachts
   b. 
   Role: Crew Member
   Responsibilities: [Redacted] is responsible for delivering guests services and for rig and sail maintenance. [Redacted] delivers the Sail Training Module and learning material in the classroom and delivers real life sailing exposure on board 10m monohull sail training vessels, and 18m catamarans. [Redacted] is mandated to deliver a set number of days sailing experience at a pace that the cadets can adopt, thereafter they obtain further experience via the boats that they are assigned to under the guidance of that vessel's team. Once the cadets have acquired the necessary sea miles, they attend a professional sail training school to obtain their internationally recognized certification for sailing, including their VHF Radio Operator Certificate, IYT Master of Yacht Limited Certificate, and IYT Master of Yacht Unlimited Certificate.
   Qualifications: RYA/MCA Yachtmaster Offshore
c. 

**Role:** Fleet Manager

**Responsibilities:** [redacted] is responsible for overseeing all operations. [redacted] is onsite and available to the cadets and crew in Turkey. His focus during the last 24 months has been developing an eLearning system to better deliver knowledge to cadets and crew. [redacted] has been working with a professional eLearning company that employs specialists that take the learning material and construct new ways to deliver it interactively so that retention and the learning experience is enhanced.

**Qualifications:** Master of Yachts Limited 200 Tons Sail

d. 

**Role:** Crew Member

**Responsibilities:** As the skipper assigned to one of the vessels in the fleet, [redacted] is responsible for the safe operation, maintenance, and management of his vessel as well as delivering guest services. In addition to being a crew member, [redacted] is also responsible for delivering the 18-day vessel specific engineering orientation module and learning material. [redacted] does not have any formal engineering qualifications however, he is intimately familiar with the vessels and their systems, and follows a structured module to deliver orientation, exposure, and awareness of the vessel systems. The cadets’ exposure to more technical engineering matters is conducted by one of Meridian Adventure’s qualified engineers.

**Qualification:** Master of Yachts Unlimited 200 Tons

e. 

**Role:** Crew Member

**Responsibilities:** As the skipper assigned to one of the vessels in the fleet, [redacted] is responsible for the safe operation, maintenance, and management of his vessel as well as delivering guest services. In addition to being a crew member, [redacted] is also responsible for delivering the 5-day vessel specific orientation of the operational and safety management software system and the benefits and use thereof.

**Qualification:** Master of Yachts Unlimited 200 Tons

f. 

**Role:** Crew Member (left Meridian Adventure effective 27 November 2021).

**Responsibilities:** While [redacted] was employed by Meridian Adventure, he was the skipper assigned to one of the vessels in the fleet and was responsible for the safe operation, maintenance, and management of his vessel as well as delivering guest services. In addition to being a crew member, he was responsible for delivering the learning material for the 10-day vessel specific deck module, which includes orientation of all deck operational drills and deck related maintenance activities.

**Qualification:** Master of Yachts Unlimited 200 Tons

g. 

**Role:** Crew Member

**Responsibilities:** As the skipper assigned to one of the vessels in the fleet, [redacted] is responsible for the safe operation, maintenance, and management of his vessel as well as delivering guest services. In addition to being a crew member, [redacted] is also responsible for
delivering the 5-day vessel specific safety orientation module, which includes the location of all Life Saving Appliances and Fire Fighting Equipment.

Qualification: Master of Yachts Unlimited 200 Tons

h. Role: Administrative Assistant

Responsibilities: General office administration, receipt capturing and following up on administrative matters as assigned.

2. Clarification of all Meridian Adventure staff formal military training qualifications and experience relating to the cadet training regime (described by witnesses as a military-style training).

2.1 Whilst, for example, all the male Turkish crew members would have done compulsory Turkish military service after their schooling, and other crew members may or may not have served in the military, the cadet training is not a military training programme nor is it explicitly modelled on a military regime nor are cadets assessed on the basis of military protocols. As such, there are no military training qualifications or experience relating to the cadet training program that are applied by the Meridian Adventure team. The Meridian Adventure team are, however, expected to be professional, disciplined, rigorous and thorough.

2.2 Meridian Adventure has a fleet of eight 18m catamarans and one monohull that are manned with crew, along with two unmanned 10m sailing monohulls, and some tenders. Some of the vessels are based in Indonesia and the rest in Turkey. The cadet program was created as a system to train crew to run and maintain these vessels on the premise that after investing in them for 21 months, the cadets can choose to work on these vessels as crew members for 3 to 4 years before moving on in their careers.

2.3 The program is structured to train and develop the cadets into crew able to run and maintain Meridian Adventure owned vessels. Wherever it is found that a group of cadets needs more time to grasp modules, the module timetable can be adjusted to suit the group. After the cadets graduate, they are offered positions on Meridian Adventure vessels, or are assisted with finding jobs in the luxury yacht industry.

2.4 The cadet program begins with a week where the incoming new cadets go through all the required documentation and orientations. From this point onwards training modules are delivered to them, usually in a classroom at first, and then in practice on board the vessels.

2.5 Once all training modules have been delivered (depending on the group usually within three months) the cadets are assigned to a vessel with a qualified skipper and crew, to get exposure to all aspects of operating a small craft. During this time, they gain experience and exposure in all aspects of operating a small vessel (a 62 ft catamaran), as well as the opportunity to complete their company specific training record books and gain the required sea time, making them eligible to complete their certification with Xone Yachting. Xone Yachting is the third-party training provider that delivers professional, certified training using their instructors at its facility in Göcek, Turkey. Upon successful completion of this professional training, the candidates are issued with their internationally recognized certifications (all fully funded by Meridian Adventure).

2.6 INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATIONS ACHIEVED:

PADI Open Water Diver Certificate
VHF Radio Operator Certificate
IYT Master of Yacht Limited Certificate
IYT Master of Yacht Unlimited Certificate
2.7 MERIDIAN ADVENTURE SAIL ACCREDITATIONS ACHIEVED ON COMPLETION OF THE 18 MONTH CADET PROGRAM:

Certificate of Competency in Safety
Certificate of Competency in Service & Galley
Certificate of Competency in Sailing, Navigation, Spars & Rigging
Certificate of Competency in Deck & Interior
Certificate of Competency in Engineering
Certificate of Competency in Guest Services

2.8 Please note that the accreditations above are based on the 18 months exposure as a crew member with a team. The cadets are constantly monitored and assessed using a self-assessment tool kit, plus peer-to-peer assessments. The final assessments are conducted by the Fleet Captain at the end of the program.

2.9 After achieving their internationally recognized certifications, cadets who decide to continue with Meridian Adventure are issued with offers of employment to run one of Meridian Adventure owned vessels under 24 meters, alternatively they are given the required references from the team to be placed on a vessel in the luxury yacht industry.

3. Clarification of the written policy for the details of the cadet training regime disclosed to cadets prior to, and on joining.

3.1 The cadets apply to the cadet program online via the website, even if they are referred by previous crew, they are still asked to make application via the website.

3.2 Cadets are interviewed by the Fleet Captain following a three-step interview process and very detailed information about the cadet program is shared with them.

3.3 The first interview is a basic questioning process to determine potential fit for the program, followed by a detailed description of what is expected, and an outline of the program. The candidates are then given a few days to absorb the information and create a list of questions and/or concerns to be addressed.

3.4 The second interview deals with these questions and/or concerns and is followed by another round of questions. These questions are geared towards making sure the candidate understands what they should expect, and what is covered in the duration of the program. After the second interview, the candidates are sent an information package, which includes the Cadet in Training Seafarer Employment Agreement (pg. 86), and the Addendum (pg. 90) for them to read and seek guidance on. If the candidates are under the age of 21, the information is also shared with the candidate’s parent/legal guardian.

3.5 The third interview is purposed towards clarifying all information in the Agreement and addendum and making sure that the candidates understand all the information. At this stage nothing is signed or agreed upon contractually.

3.6 During the interview stage, it is explained to candidates verbally and in writing, that there will be 3 months of dedicated training. The dedicated training takes the form of information modules delivered in a structured way, both in a classroom and in practice on a vessel, after which the cadets are assigned to a vessel as a team member and do 18 months practical cadetship with an experienced team on board a vessel (every effort is made to swap vessel every 3 months, so the cadets gain different exposures).

3.7 The cadet program is designed and intended to provide cadets with all the required learning material and practical experience to build their skills and confidence.

3.8 Once all successful candidates for the upcoming intake have been through this selection process, they are sent an offer to join the program, which contains all necessary documentation including.
3.9 Before any of the aforementioned documents are signed, a phone call is conducted with the candidates (and the parent/legal guardian) to ensure that they (and the parent/legal guardian) understand the documentation and have been given an opportunity to question or query anything of concern. Only then does the contract process start. This information is shared with the candidates well before their arrival (the process is completed at least one month prior to arrival and ideally up to three months prior).

3.10 As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, prior to arrival the cadets have had to quarantine for up to 14 days. During their quarantine period they are sent study material to prepare them for the first week of their orientation. They are also sent the SOPs and CoC to review again.

3.11 Upon arrival cadets do a week of land-based orientation that covers, amongst many other things, all the learning material that they will be exposed to, plus the Company's policies and notices, which includes the Onboard Complaints Procedure (pg. 21).

4. Clarification of the personal and professional values and standards expected during cadet training, and the policy for its dissemination for cadet awareness.

4.1 The personal and professional values and standards expected of the cadets are detailed in the SOPs and CoC (pg. 1), which (as set out above) is shared with the cadets during the interview process, again on arrival and is always available to them in their Library on the Safety Management application.

5. Clarification of the personal and professional values and standards expected of the Meridian Adventure staff.

5.1 The personal and professional values and standards expected of the Meridian Adventure crew are detailed in the SOPs and CoC (pg. 1).

6. Clarification of the need, requirement, oversight, and safety provisions for the “Hell Week” described by witnesses on initial commencement of cadet training.

6.1 The first week of attendance is a land-based orientation that covers the SOPs, CoC (pg. 1), the Program, plus the policies and procedures, including the On Board Complaints Procedure (pg. 21). During this time cadets are orientated with their hotel room accommodation, surroundings, introduced to the team (and fellow cadets), and provided with their toiletries and uniforms etc.

6.2 During this week, the cadets are required to learn the SOP’s, COC’s and Program. Between study sessions, or during breaks, cadets do physical activity such as running or circuits in the outdoor gym, which is designed to improve their fitness and strength.

6.3 The purpose of this week is to prepare the cadets, giving them an overview of the cadet training program and to provide them with an understanding of what to expect. Cadets are supervised during study and fitness sessions by at least one permanent crew member.

7. Clarification of the minimum and maximum duration of periods of training, including duration of assured rest periods, and policy for tracking all periods of out-of-hours work.

7.1 Although the cadets are not “at sea” and live ashore at the hotel, or on board the vessels, which return to the marina at the end of the day, our benchmark with regards to the minimum and
maximum hours of work/training and duration of rest periods are as per MLC Regulation 2.3 defined as follows:

"Maximum Hours of Work
No more than 14 hours in any 24-hour period
No more than 72 hours in any seven-day period"

"Minimum Hours of Rest
At least 10 hours of rest in a 24-hour period
At least 77 hours rest in any seven-day period"

7.2 As per Section 3.6. of the SOPs and CoC (pg. 7), the cadets are required to record their hours daily using the "Record of Rest" application provided to them to download on their mobile device for ease of access.

8. Clarification of the policy for the reasons for, duration(s), and safety systems in place for cadet individual and collective punishment(s).

8.1 There is no policy for individual and collective punishment. Meridian Adventure is committed to team achievement and team success. Not achieving a standard or requirement is not punished, rather the cadets are given the opportunity to do it again correctly. This is a big emphasis and the opportunity to do it again correctly is provided to the team, not an individual. The duration depends on the task and the cadets are supervised by at least one of the crew.

9. Clarification of the policy for addressing and remediating for incidents of physical and mental abuse by staff towards cadets.

9.1 Meridian Adventure is committed to identifying and eliminating any incidents of physical or mental abuse, as per the Bullying and Harassment Policy (pg. 22). The cadets and crew are made aware of and are encouraged to use the On Board Complaints Procedure (pg. 21). All complaints, grievances, and breaches of the MLC 2006 are fully investigated, and the parties involved are addressed or disciplined appropriately. As a result of the allegations raised by HRAS, Meridian Adventure has appointed an independent third party to carry out confidential interviews and has also introduced an anonymous questionnaire, which the cadets and crew are encouraged to respond to weekly. This questionnaire serves to identify incidents while they are fresh so that they can be dealt with swiftly.

10. Clarification of all safety provisions and standards for cadets when they are required, as part of their professional training, to enter the water in and around the vicinity of all vessels, marine structures, or other locations.

10.1 Immersion suit training - donning and familiarisation with immersion suits – The cadets are required to don the suits and enter the water to experience the suits. They are supervised by at least one of the crew during this training.

10.2 PADI Open Water Diver Certificate – This training is delivered by a third-party vendor. The closed water training is conducted in a swimming pool, and the open water training is conducted in the ocean for their open water scuba dives. They are supervised by one of the third-party instructors during this training.

10.3 Stern Tie Drill for Small Craft (pg. 23) – There is a set drill that the cadets are trained on. The drill includes donning a mask, snorkel, and fins. A set procedure is followed, and they are supervised during the training and execution of the drill.

10.4 Water Sports Experience – The cadets and crew get to experience a number of water sports activities that are typically offered in the luxury yacht industry, including Fliteboard’s, Jet Boots, Rescue Tender Driving, Wake Surfing and Sea Bobs. A professional licensed Turkey-based watersports entity and its team of six persons deliver these experiences while delivering their
services to other paying guests. The manager is a licensed lifeguard and is well known to the crew and cadets as he delivers the service training module to them during their training period.

10.5 Guest Experiences - Cadets and crew are also required to swim with guests on guest experiences, deploying water sports equipment such as Fliteboard’s, or in general while guests are in and around the anchored vessel/s. There is always a person on watch.

11. Clarification of all reasons, maximum time periods immersed, and maximum distances swum for all periods of water entry, including oversight policies, safety provisions, and cadet pre-briefings as to requirement for them to enter the water.

11.1 For immersion suit training, cadets are briefed on the requirement to don the suits and jump in the water aft of the vessel/s, which are typically alongside in the marina. They are briefed to form a holding circle to experience the suits, then get out, wash the suits, and stow them after drying. There is always a person ashore and on board watching the exercise, as with any practiced drill. All cadets are required to be STCW certified prior to joining, so this is not the first time they are exposed to this training.

11.2 For the PADI diving training there is a confined water swimming distance that is set by PADI. Third party licensed instructors conduct the training, deliver the certification, and supervise the safety of this course.

11.3 For Stern Tie Drill for Small Craft – There are two possible drills, one is by tender transfer and another via swimming the line ashore. For the swimming drill, there is a set procedure and checklist to be followed, which includes a spotter and line handler on board. The maximum swimming distance is no more than 20 meters and the maximum time for the drill is 5 minutes. Stern tie of small craft in the Aegean is a significant feature of the guest cruising experience. See drill procedure attached (pg. 23).

11.4 During the Stern Tie Drill training the cadets swimming abilities are assessed. In many cases some of the cadets’ abilities are not up to standard and basic school level training is given, in water, to bring the level of swimming up to at least high school level. Treading water and swimming from the vessel to the shoreline (20 meters) are the exercises they are required to perform to strengthen their abilities and build confidence. Training will generally last between 20 to 30 minutes at a time.

11.5 Swimming at anchor while on standby for service, is totally at the discretion of the teams onboard. The policy repeatedly communicated is that someone must always be on anchor watch, and while they are on anchor watch, they are also responsible for watching any swimmers in the water.

12. Clarification of the technical scope, reasons, and role of the SEG App, and the details of the disclosure of associated data protection policies under EU Law provided to cadets for the App’s use on their personal phones.

12.1 The SEG APP (as the crew call it) is a an operational and safety management software application used by the cadets and crew for the professional management of different administrative tasks. In addition to the full desktop suite available to them, there are six mobile modules that are available for them to use on their phones, instead of having to go to a computer to use the desktop version. These mobile apps are listed below:

12.1.1 WL Mobile App: is an application that carries all the crew personal details required for the crew list, crew effects list, employment contract, uniform sizes etc.. The app automatically updates the crew list on a vessel as soon as the crew member is assigned to the vessel. It also allows the crew member to monitor the validity dates of his/her certificates and holds copies of their signed contracts, which they can review at any time. Reassignment to another vessel results in automatic update of crew lists etc..
12.1.2 Maintenance Activity Plan Mobile App: is an application used to track and manage all routine maintenance activity items for a vessel. It is a routine maintenance productivity and planning tool, that lists each task and what is required, when it is due, how many people are required to do the task, and typically how long it takes to achieve with the prescribed number of team members.

12.1.3 Record Of Rest Mobile App: this application is provided for the crew to use to manage their hours of work and rest, and alerts them to when the plan does not fit with the MLC requirements.

12.1.4 Sea Time Mobile App: this application is provided for the crew to record their seetime; namely bridge watch keeping time, time at anchor, time on the dock and standby time.

12.1.5 Safety Application Mobile App: this application provides the crew with the step-by-step checklists for all safety and emergency procedures. It also includes the domestic inspection checklist. This application also gives the crew access to a full library of all the training manuals, policies, procedures, and SOP’s and CoC.

12.1.6 Operational Checklists: this application provides the crew with the step-by-step procedure for each of the operational drills. In other words, step-by-step checklists for the set drill procedures.

12.2 These applications (amongst other training material) are purposed to show them the full scale of International Safety Management (ISM) for vessels larger than 24 meters. The applications are provided to the cadets at no cost to assist the cadets and crew with their training, and to make them aware that while they are learning on and operating less than 24-meter vessels where ISM is voluntary, they should always aim to operate to the highest standard.

12.3 The applications are deleted from their mobile devices when they leave Meridian Adventure and none of their personal data is collected or shared. When the cadets are assigned to a vessel and sign their “offer of employment”, it includes the following statement: “By signing this document, I consent to the sharing of my personal data (Name / D.O.B / Address / Contact Details / Salary / Qualifications / Experience etc.) with the Owner, their Representatives, Meridian Adventure and the Manager.” The terms and conditions and GDPR policy statement are on the applications.

13. Clarification of the systems and oversight processes for cadets seeking medical treatment, and disclosure of the details of all reported cadet medical incidents and/or accidents in the past 36 months.

13.1 Cadets and crew are provided with medical insurance and are introduced to this cover in their first week of orientation. They are provided with their medical insurance card and encouraged to keep it in their wallet and carry it with them whenever they go ashore / to town / or out and about in general and know that it can and must be used if required. A procedure guide details the procedure to be followed for medical events, as well as the insurance claims (see the Medical Expenses & Insurance Claims Procedure Guide, pg. 27).

13.2 The process for medical treatment is covered under “Section 3.8 HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS” in the SOP’s and CoC (pg. 8). Cadets are encouraged to report any illness or injury, no matter how small. There are two local crew members assigned to arranging transport for cadets and crew for personal errands as needed, and in the case of anything medically related they can assist in taking the person requiring treatment to the hospital, or pharmacy and staying with them to assist with translation if necessary.

13.3 In addition to the above there is a general first aid kit on board each catamaran for minor injuries (such as minor cuts, scratches and infected pimpls). All cadets and crew have access to these kits and they are restocked monthly, or as required. The skipper on each vessel is required to inform the Fleet Captain if the kit is used, and what it was used for.

13.4 For the past 36 months, the medical incidents and/or accidents known to us are the following:
13.4.1 Medical Incident: Ear Injury (15 May 2019)

This incident of a cadet being hit by one of the crew was immediately reported to [redacted] by the crew member who hit the cadet. The crew member apologised to the cadet immediately after the incident occurred. Following the incident, [redacted] dismissed the crew member responsible.

13.4.2 Accident: Broken Toe (9 August 2021)

This accident occurred during a Muster drill, when one of the cadets kicked the small toe on his right foot against a stanchion and broke it. The cadet was taken to the hospital where he was treated and given pain medication. The cadet rested with his leg raised for two days as recommended by the doctor and returned to training. On the third day he was restricted to light tasks until the cast was removed.

13.4.3 Accident: Warehouse Door (5 October 2021)

This accident occurred when the large rolling door at the storage warehouse failed and collapsed on three of the cadets and one of the hotel’s watersports team members who were attempting to fix it. All four were immediately taken to hospital for treatment and found to have minor cuts, bruising and muscle strain. The cadets were given a week of rest, following the attending doctor’s recommendation of 2 days’ rest.

13.5 A simple log is used to keep record of all medical related subjects, see attached document named “Medical Log 2018 – 2021” (pg. 85 - the names have been removed for confidentiality).

13.6 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdowns and to limit the risk of infection during the height of the pandemic, the local hospitals discouraged attendance for minor medical incidents such as minor cuts and scratches, ingrown hairs, and infected pimples. During this period, Meridian Adventure sought to treat and closely monitor minor illnesses and injuries without taking the cadets to the hospital, unless professional medical treatment was deemed necessary. It is company policy for all medical events, no matter how minor, to be taken for medical assessment.

14. Clarification as to the policy and reasons for removing and retaining cadets’ personal identity documents.

14.1 The cadets and crews’ personal identity documents are not removed and withheld, at times, for the reason set out below the cadets and crew choose to leave their identity documents in the control of Meridian Adventure, its vessels and/or the hotel accommodation as required by the Turkish Authorities:

14.1.1 When cadets and crew are on board a vessel for either an interstate or international passage their passports are kept in the “GRAB BAG” on the vessel that they are assigned to. All cadets and crew are briefed on where the bag is kept (which is in the main salon next to the navigation console). The “GRAB BAG” is a waterproof bag designed to protect the contents and one the crew is charged with the responsibility of grabbing this bag should something happen to the vessel, therefore ensuring important documents such as passports, are not lost or damaged.

14.1.2 Cadets and crew occasionally interchange between vessels depending on vessel movements in order for everyone to gain equal exposure and experience (especially since the Covid-19 pandemic). When cadets and crew change vessels, the crew lists are updated accordingly, and the passports are relocated. Each vessel has a transit log, which is maintained by the Turkish Authorities, and on a regular basis these transit logs are validated against crew lists and passports. Therefore, it is convenient for the identity documents to be safely stored in a central location. The cadets and crew are able to retrieve their documents at any point.
14.1.3 When the cadets are not accommodated on board a vessel, they are provided with dedicated accommodation ashore. The ashore accommodation used to house the cadets belongs to a hotel company, which like any hotel in Turkey holds the passports (or copies of the passports) to be inspected by visiting authorities in accordance with Turkish tourism rules. These documents are available to the cadets and crew at any time they need them. Cadets and crew often request their passports when they want to buy a phone sim card or have personal errands to do and are able to do so. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, cadets and crew were advised against taking their passports with them when they went out to party due to incidents of passports being lost and the resulting logistical challenges, costs and loss of time and resources required to have passports replaced.

15. **Clarification as to the reasons for cadets leaving the training programme having to sign non-disclosure agreements.**

15.1 All cadets are required to sign Confidentiality Agreements on joining the cadet training program. These agreements serve to protect the owners and guests of the vessels, and company information. This is standard industry practice, particularly in the luxury yachting industry where clients expect confidentiality to be observed.

15.2 The cadets are not asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement on leaving the cadet training program however, the employment settlement document signed by the cadets and crew, includes a simple statement reminding them of their Confidentiality Agreement.

16. **Disclosure of standard cadet training contracts for 2019, 2020 and 2021 in unedited and original form.**

16.1 The following documents in their unedited and original form are attached:

16.1.1 Cadet in Training Seafarer Employment Agreement (pg. 86)

16.1.2 Addendum to Cadet in Training SEA (pg. 90)

16.1.3 Addendum to SEA Cadet Under 21 (pg. 96).

We trust this response answers the questions you have raised but if there is anything further you require at this time, please feel free to contact us.
Who We Are

BACKGROUND

Human Rights at Sea was established in April 2014. It was founded as an initiative to explore issues of maritime human rights development, review associated policies and legislation, and to undertake independent investigation of abuses at sea. It rapidly grew beyond all expectations and for reasons of governance it became a registered charity under the UK Charity Commission in 2015.

Today, the charity is an established, regulated and independent registered non-profit organisation based on the south coast of the United Kingdom. It undertakes Research, Advocacy, Investigation and Lobbying specifically for human rights issues in the maritime environment, including contributing to support for the human element that underpins the global maritime and fishing industries.

The charity works internationally with all individuals, commercial and maritime community organisations that have similar objectives as ourselves, including all the principal maritime welfare organisations.

OUR MISSION

To explicitly raise awareness, implementation and accountability of human rights provisions throughout the maritime environment, especially where they are currently absent, ignored or being abused.

STAY IN CONTACT

We welcome any questions, comments or suggestions. Please send your feedback to:
Human Rights at Sea, VBS Langstone Technology Park, Langstone Road, Havant. PO9 1SA. UK

Email: enquiries@humanrightsatsea.org

www.humanrightsatsea.org

As an independent charity, Human Rights at Sea relies on public donations, commercial philanthropy and grant support to continue delivering its work globally.

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