NAVALMARTIN

Main Observations:

The first widespread misconception on the islands is that the sunk yacht would pay for its own salvage with the residual value tied in the hull.

The second misconception is that the wreck will pay for its own dismantling process with the residual value tied in the salvageable equipment.

The fact is that people come out to buy wrecks as-is/where-is for US$10k in average and these present a real risk to the future users.

Wreck removal assets:

USVI:

The main vector for the removal of the wrecks is the federalisation of the salvage work by FEMA. Yachts and wrecks were inventoried and ticketed by the USCH from week 5 which incentivised the removal effort by UW.

Whilst there are two RMG barges in the areas, most of the fleet needed to be refloated which consists of privately owned yachts scattered around St John, Compass Point marina and Redhook Bay.

USVI commercial dive have managed to re-float a number of those yachts with small diving equipment. Large barges found themselves to be underutilised in these locations.

Tortola:

The key operators there have been Chris Juredin of BVI Commercial dive, Kevin Rowlett and a short presence by Resolve with two Meridian Barges / Crane with a broken wire.

Whilst expediency has been achieved in Nanny Cay and Maya cove, much of the floating CTL / repairable need a decision with respect to removal.

Tortola is a special hotspot as in only host 1400 beds in hotels and otherwise boats 7000 berths afloat. And much of the new yachts are destined there to jump start the local tourism.

The choke points are tied with the decision to expatriate the damage yachts off island, the ability to obtain the paperwork's to process the TL and the burden of nursing more than one hundred patched yachts in wet storage.

Virgin Gorda:

This is an island with a high density VIP residency. The marina in Spanish town was at a stand still for almost 8 weeks after the hurricane. Yachts are now being par-buckled but there is still much work to be done including grounded commercial vessel. Resolve and Husky salvage have achieved great inroads with the removal of the commercial tonnage aground.

Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour boatyard hired a road crane to sort out the yachts which were not tethered down, (appx 150 yachts).

St Maarten:

Ardent have had a 130t crane and 340'*75' materials barge in Oyster Pond for 3 weeks removing and re-floating much of the yachts of a Charter operator. The barge is currently in Antigua offloading 16 cats and mono-hulls, including repairable and TL.

A quasi monopoly is in place with respect to wreck removal in Simpson bay/ Cole bay (the lagoon) where a local 50t barge and a dive spread is in operation. Local hindrance and political instability is intense.

Repair facilities:

General:

The going rate for a 45-50' damage yacht to travel to Europe has plummeted to well under 20kUSD. As such, the option to repatriate yachts on a yacht carrier is attractive. However, the builders have showed that their priority is for constructing new yachts to replace the TL as opposed to willingness to repair the repairable and thus attract the liability on the repairs. As such, it is likely that the repairable yachts will be repaired for most cases in the Caribbean or nearby.

The lead time for a 5m by 5m cockpit hard top for a catamaran is currently over 12 weeks and growing.

Tortola/St Maarten:

The repair facilities are adequate for the procurement of bolt-on replacement parts only.

Even Nanny Cay which is better equipped than most affected sites does not offer tenting facilities for suitable GRP repairs.

Much if not all of the patching work I have examined so far in Tortola and St Maarten will need to be re-done on account of climate condition and very high glass to resin contents with bubbles and voids. Patches are considered temporary. Conditions are generally inadequate for curing of West System type resins.

Cored Sandwich panel yachts (mostly catamarans) are maintained afloat pending further surveys. It is my opinion that these should not be repaired if the core has been infiltrated over large areas.

There is a general lack of suitable experience in complex GRP hull repairs which leads in the temptation by fleet managers and local refinishing agents to undertake the repair works with the available resources. I am firmly convinced that substandard repairs will be the fruit of the work undertaken in inadequate condition or under inappropriate supervision.

Antigua:

North Sound Marine offers a broad array of key assets:

Availability to store and repairs yachts in a clean covered environment (shed)

The yard is up and ready for work

Yachts can be dismantled or repaired.

Will need further manning after 50 repairable yachts.

St Barth:

St Barth was hard hit and the tidal surge was particularly high.

JML (Lorient) has been extremely prompt in the process of sorting out their site and executing patch repairs and engine repairs. It is an outdoor yard with a small shed for mechanical works.

The Chantier naval JBS in Gustavia is under-manned but otherwise well-equipped and with a shed that can repair up to 10 repairable typical charter yachts. Currently is under-manned.

Rigs can be erected in situ from unprocessed parts delivered on site as a pop-up rig hub. A saving of circa 15-30% can be achieved by avoiding the disassembly and packaging that comes with the constriction of mast in a remote country.

Regardless of the contractors and site, all repairs should be carried out in accordance with the relevant international standards and under the supervision and liability of a technical coordinator. The outcome should be certifiable by a recognised technical authority and insurable.

Conclusion:

As a point of conclusion, we have seen an exodus of salvors and equipment due political and local interference:

MMC, SOMARA, RESOLVE and St. Kitts Marine Works have had to leave St Maarten whilst only 50% of the wrecks have been moved to date.

There seem to be an overarching desire to see the repairs being performed on-islands with facilities which are not fully operational or not designed for such.

On the sites, there is little evidence that insurance market has considered the likely consequence of inadequate repair programmes in under-supervised condition with inadequate climate control protocols.