

INTENSIVE RESEARCH INTO SPEEDBOATS



One of the high speed boats presented at the HSBO forum.

Photo: Ullman Dynamics

Research into developing new fast boats is increasingly concentrating on meeting the challenges and needs of the maritime special forces. The reason is that the operators must carry out their tasks at all times, regardless of weather, sea conditions, temperature and safety etc. This also means that the focus of the HSBO – High Speed Boat Operations Forum – at the former Eriksberg shipyard outside Gothenburg, must also centre on solving the most demanding problems.

■ Tor Husby

The day before the HSBO forum opened, NATO's research group "Human Impact Exposure on board High Speed Boats" organised its meeting, which attracted participants from far and near. The research shows that impact-induced damages to boats and personnel are on the rise. They are not coming down. Impacts from lateral forces cause four times more damage than vertical forces. The injuries also include various traumas to the personnel, ranging from minimally traumatic brain damages to severely traumatic brain injuries resulting in death, says Johan Ullman, Sweden's Grand Old Man in this sector. Ullman began 30 years ago to develop padded seats for military users, and remains to this day a world leader in the field, technically as well as scientifically.

International magnet

Judging by the participation at this summer's HSBO forum, the international attraction is everything one could wish for. The final reckoning included 370 participants from

29 countries, with 26 boats on the lake. The speedboats came from Australia and the USA, Greece and Spain, Iceland and Turkey. Norway was among other things represented by the first electric speedboat. The number of participants could easily have topped 500. But as usual, it was impossible to accommodate all the applicants. The auditorium where the lectures were held was filled to capacity every day from morning to night. The restaurant at the far end of the pier where the lunches are held, also had a finite number of seats.

– Applying a ceiling to the number of participants gives us opportunities to prioritise among those who contribute with relevant expertise, thereby keeping a high level of quality at all stages. Compared to previous years, the level of the scientific presentations was higher than ever. This is because more research than before is now taking place in Western countries, not least in the medical field, but also because HSBO has become known worldwide as the only congress that brings together doctors, researchers and end users with boat builders, naval architects and logistics/purchasing managers, and which

also provides the opportunity for practical evaluation of new speedboats, powertrains, and equipment, explains Johan Ullman.

Exchange of experience

Johan Ullman adds that many believe that this opportunity for special operators from different countries to exchange their experiences is invaluable for boat builders and ship architects alike. The logistics organizations that are going to buy boats can on this day get a very good picture of what is available from new boats, and what works best according to the users' needs. Such things will save them a lot of time and resources.

HSBO fulfils a great need that cannot be filled anywhere else in the world. It has the necessary logistical conditions assembled in one compact place – a hotel with space for 350 guests, a harbour restaurant for the same participants, as well as berths for the boats. For Ullman Dynamics, contact with the end users is the most important thing in order to get their input on which direction to go in order to develop even better seats. At the end of the day, it is for them that HSBO was created. ■■