

Chilean Navy set to pick up Martin

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THE Chilean navy has been given the go-ahead to take John Martin off Bertie Reed's Grinaker tomorrow — ending more than a week of frustration for the solo sailor whose Allied Bank struck a chunk of ice and was scuttled in the Southern Ocean.

This was confirmed late last night by the chairman of the Defence Force Sailing Association, Captain Piet Potgieter.

"We are not sure of the exact time but at this stage a rendezvous has been set for a point 200 miles west of Puerto Williams at 56 S and 75 W."

The Chilean vessel would leave to pick up Martin from either Punte Arenas or Puerto Williams several hundred kilometres farther south. The Navy attaché could not say what type of vessel would be used in the operation, Captain Potgieter said.

FRIDAY ARRIVAL

"At this stage the transfer is planned for tomorrow or Friday, depending on the weather," he said. It would take the vessel about 10 hours to reach Grinaker, which meant Martin could be ashore as early as Friday.

Peter Dunning, race organiser, said from Newport that light winds had considerably slowed the third stage of the race. Grinaker was lying ninth, with Isabelle Autissier (Ecureuil PC) about two miles ahead of the South African and BBV Expo about 20 miles ahead of Autissier.

This is the order of the first nine: Generali Concorde, Groupe Sceta, Innkeeper, Duracell, Credit Agricole, Alba Regia, BBV Expo, Ecureuil PC and Grinaker.