



International Civil Aviation Organization

ICAO/IMO JWG-SAR/14-IP/2
15/08/07

INFORMATION PAPER

ICAO/IMO JOINT WORKING GROUP ON HARMONIZATION OF AERONAUTICAL AND MARITIME SEARCH AND RESCUE (ICAO/IMO JWG-SAR)

FOURTEENTH MEETING

Saint Gilles les Bains, La Réunion, France, 10 to 14 September 2007

Agenda Item 9: Any other business

SAR OPERATIONS BY MERCHANT SHIPS

(Presented by United States)

INFORMATION PAPER

SUMMARY

The ICAO/IMO JWG-SAR/13 discussed issues pertaining to SAR operations by merchant ships. Two issues, “means to recover people from the water or from survival craft” and “continued use of Ship Reporting Systems” were of particular note. Information is provided to remind the JWG that the discussions were timely and the issues are still relevant.

Action by the ICAO/IMO JWG is in paragraph 3.

REFERENCES

ICAO/IMO JWG-SAR/13 Report
ICAO/IMO JWG 14/2-WP/4

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The ICAO/IMO JWG 13 Report included discussion on issues pertaining to SAR operations by merchant ships. Two issues, “means to recover people from the water or from survival craft” and “continued use of Ship Reporting Systems” were of particular note. Both topics are closely associated since merchant vessels are often the first responders to get on scene of a distress incident at sea (for aircraft and vessel incidents). However, merchant vessels are “SAR facilities” – a craft of opportunity for quick response. They are not “SAR Units” which are expected to have equipment suitable for the

expeditious conduct of SAR operations. The concept of “means to recover” was meant to address part of this concern. The eleventh meeting of IMO’s COMSAR Sub-Committee (COMSAR 11) supported the JWG’s views on both of these matters. The COMSAR 11 report agreed with the JWG’s views of the continuing importance of the development of requirements to carry a recovery system; and, as stated in ICAO/IMO JWG 14/2-WP/4, supported recommendation 7 of the JWG 13 Report in that IMO should encourage the continued use of Ship Reporting Systems (SRS) providing more detailed information in addition to the Long-range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) system.

1.2 Both the *International Convention on Maritime SAR* and the *Convention on International Civil Aviation*, Annex 12 – *Search and Rescue* (Recommendation 4.1.4) have provisions for use of SRSs. However, IMO recently adopted a requirement for LRIT in which ships at sea are to report their positions at six-hour intervals and the information is to be available to the SAR services. Since LRIT infrastructure is not yet in place and many of its business rules are not established, its true impact for SAR is not yet known.

1.3 Recent SAR cases highlight the significance of the JWG foresight regarding the value of ship reporting systems and concerns about “means to recover” persons in water. Both topics are still relevant within the IMO decision-making process and meetings.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 On 12 July 2007 JRCC Alameda (US) received a request from the South Korean Coast Guard for assistance with the Motor Vessel ORCHID SUN sinking in the Persian Gulf with 22 people on board. Through the Amver ship reporting system, the Motor Vessel MEGAH CEMENT (from the Philippines) was determined to be near the scene of the distress and was requested to respond. This ship rescued 5 exhausted and injured survivors by means of a cargo net. Ten other survivors were recovered by various commercial ships. The color photographs (on the next page) of the survivors being recovered by the MEGAH CEMENT give a sense of what survivors endure at sea. The on-scene conditions could not have been much better – daylight, warm, and calm seas – any mariner knows those weather conditions are not the normal distress situation. However, the crew’s physical condition is more typical as shown in the photographs. The present “means to recover” is also typical.

2.2 On 10 July 2007 JRSC Guam (US) received a distress alert from the 406 MHz beacon registered to the 420-foot, Panamanian-flagged motor vessel HAI TONG 7. The vessel was traveling from Papua New Guinea to China with 22 Chinese crew members and a cargo of logs. Heavy weather from Typhoon Man-yi caused the load to shift and sink the vessel. Merchant vessels located by the Amver system were the first to respond and get on scene. The 10 merchant ships recovered all 13 survivors and 3 deceased and some continued to search for several days before the effort was suspended with 6 people still missing. There were several reports of the great difficulty these ships had in getting the survivors and some of their own crew back on board the assisting ship. No dramatic photographs are provided of this incident but it does provide reminders of the difficulties in rescuing people at sea and the growing significance of recovering the victims, even when known to be deceased.

2.3 These incidents involved the Amver system but similar experiences could easily involve another SRS such as the ones operated by Australia, Brazil, Chile, Japan, India or South Africa or some other national system which could be used for SAR. The pictures of the recovery techniques are most revealing.

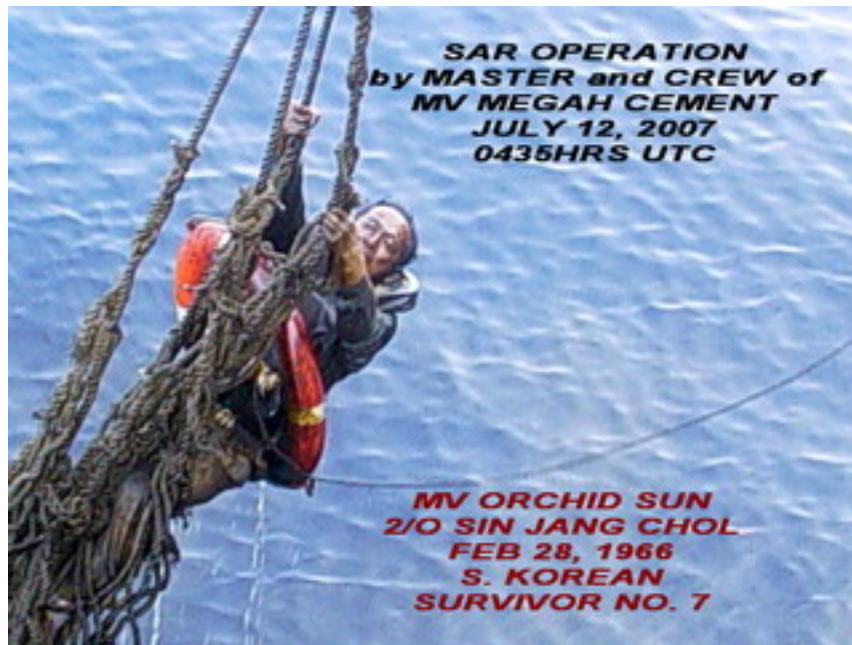
3. ACTION REQUIRED BY THE ICAO/IMO JWG

- 3.1 The ICAO/IMO JWG is invited to note the information provided.

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