



ICAO/IMO JWG ON HARMONIZATION OF
AERONAUTICAL AND MARITIME SAR
14th session
Agenda item 4.5

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SAR OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES, PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES

Development of procedural strategies for the practical provision of SAR services

Information on problems faced by the Swedish Maritime SAR service in a rescue operation

Note by Sweden

SUMMARY

<i>Executive summary:</i>	This document contains information on problems faced by the Swedish Maritime SAR service in a rescue operation. Ten minutes Power Point-presentation will be made at the meeting.
<i>Action to be taken:</i>	Paragraph 2.
<i>Related documents:</i>	IAMSAR Manual, Volume II - Rescue by Aircraft, Volume III - Rendering assistance - Assistance by Aircraft; document COMSAR 11/4, Swedish submission

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 A rescue operation took place in the Baltic Sea on 1 November 2006, in the Swedish search and rescue region. MAYDAY was transmitted on VHF channel 16, by a Swedish RO RO vessel with 14 crew members onboard. The vessel also reported heavy list and the intention to abandon the ship. Prevailing weather in the area was northerly winds of 25 m/s and rough seas about 5-7 m.

1.2 The MAYDAY was received and acknowledged by the Swedish MRCC in Gothenburg. No alert was sent by Digital Selective Calling (DSC) on VHF or MF (GMDSS Area A1) and it took almost 15 minutes until the distress position was confirmed.*

1.3 After the initial contact with the distressed vessel, MRCC lost the VHF contact as the crew left the bridge and continued the communication by a portable VHF station.

* This should also be seen as a background to the Swedish submission, document COMSAR 11/4, Modification of Article 32 of the Radio Regulations on consequential review to the IMO flow chart diagram for DISTRESS CALL procedure, which by COMSAR was forwarded to JWG14 (COMSAR 11/18 Item 4.15).

1.4 Due to the heavy list, the crew could not manage to launch any lifeboats or life rafts. Dressed in survival immersion suits (protection level 6 hrs in 0°C water), they were gathered at the muster station on the starboard side, below the lifeboat in the sheltered compartment astern of the bridge.

1.5 Two rescue helicopters, deployed by MRCC Gothenburg, arrived at scene 45 minutes and 70 minutes respectively after the initial alert. As the ship had a heavy list of 40 degrees and was heaving in the seas, the helicopter crews deemed it to be impossible and too risky for the helicopters and its crew, to evacuate the distressed vessel's crew members by sending down the helicopter crewman to winch them up. Droppable 20 person's life rafts were carried by the helicopters and one of them was dropped into the water.

1.6 During almost four hours, from the arrival of the first helicopter (Sikorsky S76), until the ship was lost from the other vessels radar screens and sunk, up to three helicopters and two merchant vessels were on scene, ready to assist the 14 distressed seamen but no rescue efforts could be made due to the weather conditions.

1.7 After the vessel had sunk, droppable life rafts were launched by the helicopters and the rescue operation to pick up the crew members, who had jumped or fallen into the water, commenced by winching them in the rescue sling together with the helicopters crewmen. After 30 minutes, 12 of the crew members were located and picked up by helicopters.

1.8 Search efforts for the two crew members that still were missing continued. Three hours after the vessel sunk, one of the remaining crew members was found and taken to a nearby hospital, unfortunately with too low body temperature.

1.9 The Swedish MRCC in Gothenburg has expressed the appreciation to the participating Dutch vessels MARNEBORG and LARGO for the very important and valuable efforts on scene as for situation reports and on scene communication.

1.10 As mentioned above, severe difficulties were faced by the helicopters and vessels in their efforts to take onboard the seamen from the distressed vessel.

1.11 It has later been discussed whether alternative methods and/or equipment, used and experienced by other SAR services, would have made it possible under prevailing circumstances to carry out the rescue operation when the vessel was still afloat.

2. ACTION BY THE ICAO/IMO JWG-SAR

2.1 The ICAO/IMO JWG-SAR is invited to discuss the matter, share experiences from similar rescue operations, training objectives and routines and, if appropriate give recommendations and propose amendments to the IAMSAR manual, *Vol II item 6.7 Rescue by Aircraft or Volume III, Section 2, Rendering assistance, Assistance by Aircraft page 2-20—22.*

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