

MANAGEMENT OF THE AUTOMATED MUTUAL ASSISTANCE VESSEL RESCUE (AMVER) PROGRAM



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COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 16122.2B

Subj: MANAGEMENT OF THE AUTOMATED MUTUAL ASSISTANCE VESSEL RESCUE
(AMVER) PROGRAM

- Ref: (a) Saving life and property, 14 U.S.C. § 521 and Duty to provide assistance at sea, 46 U.S.C. § 2304
- (b) United States National Search and Rescue Supplement to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual Version 2.0
- (c) The U. S. Coast Guard Addendum to the United States National Search and Rescue Supplement (NSS) to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual (IAMSAR), COMDTINST 16130.2 (Series)
- (d) Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Cyber, and Intelligence (C5I) Sustainment Management Policy, COMDTINST 5230.72 (Series)
- (e) Management of Scientific and Technical Information (STINFO), COMDTINST M5260.6 (Series)
- (f) The Coast Guard Freedom of Information (FOIA) and Privacy Acts Manual, COMDTINST M5260.3 (Series)

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction provides Coast Guard Policy for the management and operation of the Automated Mutual-Assistance Vessel Rescue (AMVER) Program.
2. ACTION. All Coast Guard unit commanders, commanding officers, officers-in-charge, deputy/assistant commandants, chief of headquarter directorates must comply with the policies contained.
3. AUTHORIZED RELEASE. Internet release is authorized.
4. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. The prior version Instruction, COMDTINST M16122.2A is hereby cancelled.
5. DISCUSSION. The purpose of this Instruction is to provide guidance for the effective and efficient administration and operation of the AMVER program to meet the national and international search and rescue (SAR) mandates of saving life and property and rendering assistance to persons in distress at sea as set forth in References (a) through (c). Intended users of this Instruction are all Coast Guard commands using and/or supporting the AMVER system. AMVER is a worldwide voluntary ship reporting system established in

1958, sponsored by the U. S. Coast Guard, and recognized by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). It is a global ship-reporting system used worldwide by SAR authorities to arrange for assistance to persons in distress at sea. With AMVER, Coast Guard and international SAR authorities can identify participating ships in the area of a distress incident and divert the best-suited ship or ships to render the necessary assistance. Participation is open to ships of all maritime flag states. Participating in AMVER does not put ships under any additional obligation to assist in a SAR response beyond that which is required under international law.

6. DISCLAIMER. This guidance is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is intended to provide administrative guidance for Coast Guard personnel and is not intended nor does it impose legally-binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard.
7. MAJOR CHANGES. This Instruction implements updated procedures and information to reflect new C5I policy, the establishment of the C5I Service Center hosting the AMVER system, and additional informational changes to the AMVER program organizational structure.
8. SCOPE AND AUTHORITIES. This Instruction applies to the management, operation, and sustainment of the AMVER system. It is recommended the reader become familiar with the Directives and publications that are listed here in numerical series order.
 - a. United States National Search and Rescue Supplement to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual, Version 2.0
 - b. Communications Manual, COMDTINST M2000.3 (series)
 - c. Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Cyber, and Intelligence (C5I) Sustainment Management Policy, COMDTINST 5230.72 (Series)
 - d. Coast Guard Freedom of Information (FOIA) and Privacy Acts Manual, COMDTINST M5260.3 (Series)
 - e. Management of Scientific and Technical Information (STINFO), COMDTINST M5260.6 (Series)
 - f. U. S. Coast Guard Addendum to the United States National Search and Rescue Supplement (NSS) to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual (IAMSAR), COMDTINST M16130.2 (Series)
9. IMPACT ASSESSMENT. This Instruction provides an update of existing policy. No significant impact is anticipated in the resources required or the responsibilities and duties of personnel as a result of the changes introduced.
10. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS. The Office of Environmental Management, Commandant (CG-47) reviewed this Commandant Instruction and the general policies contained within, and determined that this policy falls under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) categorical exclusion A3. This Commandant Instruction will not result in any substantial change to existing environmental conditions or

violation of any applicable federal, state, or local laws relating to the protection of the environment. It is the responsibility of the action proponent to evaluate all future specific actions resulting from this policy for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), other applicable environmental requirements, and the U.S. Coast Guard Environmental Planning Policy, COMDTINST 5090.1 (series).

11. DISTRIBUTION. No paper distribution will be made of this Instruction. An electronic version will be located in the Coast Guard Directives System Library internally, and if applicable on the Internet at www.dcms.uscg.mil/directives.
12. RECORDS MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS. Records created as a result of this Instruction, regardless of format or media, must be managed in accordance with the records retention schedules located on the Records Resource Center SharePoint site at: <https://uscg.sharepoint-mil.us/sites/cg61/CG611/SitePages/Home.aspx>.
13. POLICY.
 - a. Organization, Authority and Responsibility. In accordance with Reference (c), the AMVER program will be operated under the general policy guidance and operational control of the Office of Search and Rescue (CG-SAR), with the Office of C5I Capabilities (CG-761) serving as the Sponsor's Representative and the Office of C5I Infrastructure (CG-68) serving as the C5I Program Manager. Resource allocation to accomplish the AMVER functions must be coordinated through the C5I Resource Council. Area and District Commanders should provide positive support to make full and proper use of AMVER capabilities. All Coast Guard commands must support and promote AMVER within the limits of their capabilities and scope of duties. Specific roles and responsibilities are provided in paragraph 14 of this Instruction.
 - b. Operations. AMVER supports Coast Guard and international SAR operations worldwide with a centralized database of merchant ship positions. Ship participation is voluntary unless mandated by the flag state, shipping company, or other authority. Participating ships provide information on their SAR capabilities through the AMVER website using the SAR Questionnaire (SAR-Q). The information is updated when changes occur. An initial Voyage Plan message containing the ship's intended track is sent to the AMVER system prior to the vessel's departure. During transit, position updates are sent at least every 48 hours, with any changes in voyage plans sent when the change occurs, and a final arrival report submitted upon reaching port. The AMVER system maintains a dead reckoning (DR) track based on the ship's predicted track. Coast Guard Command Centers, while functioning as Rescue Coordination Centers (RCCs), have direct access to the database. Other SAR agencies, U.S. and foreign, obtain this information by request through a Coast Guard RCC. AMVER information is released only to recognized SAR authorities for SAR or safety-of-life-at-sea purposes. The basic components of AMVER are identified in the following paragraphs.
 - (1) CenterC5I Service Center. The C5I Service Center operates and sustains the database services, software applications, and associated hardware that provides the AMVER system functionality. The AMVER system uses information system applications to

process AMVER reports and provide predicted ship positions and SAR characteristics of participating ships for use in a SAR situation. Data received from ships worldwide is maintained in the AMVER database. The C5I Service Center maintains the information system applications, develops new AMVER software applications, and updates the existing applications to sustain and improve AMVER system performance.

(2) Communications Network.

- (a) This component is comprised of a network of communications service providers which may include communication services companies, vessel management services, vessel tracking systems, and other authorized relay services. Voluntary reports from ships are relayed by the cooperating communications service providers via internet communication protocols for delivery to the C5I Service Center for automated processing and input.
- (b) The communication network also permits rapid dissemination of predicted ship information for use during the response to a person in distress at sea. Included are communication services which are not specifically designed for AMVER purposes, but which have been made available by commercial services, controlling agencies and governments to assist AMVER on a collateral basis.
- (c) As required, other nations are contacted concerning availability of their communication services to participate in AMVER. Accordingly, opportunities for liaison with other nations, which may lead to more effective worldwide communications coverage or increased vessel participation for AMVER, should be pursued.

(3) Message Error Processing. When a received AMVER message cannot be automatically processed by the AMVER system, steps must be taken to correct the message when possible, and the corrected data entered into the AMVER system.

(4) AMVER Education and Promotion. This component of the AMVER system is administered by Commandant (CG-SAR-2) AMVER Maritime Relations (AMR). The main focus of the AMR is to promote and sustain ship participation in the AMVER Program. AMR recruits new ships and administers a variety of support functions such as disseminating AMVER information to shipping interests and SAR authorities throughout the world. Increased vessel participation in AMVER and increased use of AMVER Surface Pictures (SURPICS) by RCCs should result from an effective and enthusiastic AMVER education and promotion program. AMVER education and promotion includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- (a) NOAA Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory. AMVERSEAS is a real-time operational system used in research and commercial vessels worldwide to acquire and distribute oceanographic and meteorological observations. The system assists the Ship Of Opportunity Program (SOOP) and the Voluntary Observing Ship (VOS) program in their effort to provide data to scientists

working in climate research, weather forecast and modeling. The system also generates ship position reports for AMVER to aid in SAR missions at sea.

- (b) Public Information. This includes operating the Amver.com website, the publication of the “AMVER BLOG,” press releases, presentations before maritime gatherings, and other media efforts which may result in favorable publicity for AMVER, thereby increasing vessel participation. Publication and distribution of the AMVER system Ship Reporting Manual in appropriate foreign languages is also part of this effort.
- (c) AMVER Awards. The AMVER Awards program recognizes vessels which regularly participate in the AMVER system. The AMVER Awards program serves a dual role of retaining ships already participating in the program, by way of a tangible expression of appreciation, and assisting in the recruitment of new ships. The presentation of AMVER awards also serves as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy. U.S. diplomatic posts around the world use the occasion to arrange ceremonies or receptions to express appreciation of the U.S. Government to government and industry officials of a host nation for the voluntary participation of its ships. Coast Guard units can use the occasion of AMVER awards in conjunction with maritime exhibitions or professional events to thank ship owners for the support provided by their shipping companies.
 - i. AMVER Award eligibility requirements. AMVER awards are provided to participating ships based on the following criteria:
 - a. A ship with at least 128 days on the AMVER plot and available to render assistance to a person in distress in a calendar year is eligible for an award. A Certificate of Merit will be produced for each ship, embellished with the year of the award and the ship’s name.
 - b. Each company with a ship eligible for an award will receive a Letter of Appreciation.
 - ii. International AMVER awards. The AMR staff will work with cooperating media, shipping companies, and U.S. Embassies to promote and award the following international AMVER awards:
 - a. The International AMVER Assisted Rescue At Sea Award, given annually in London, recognizes outstanding seamanship by the crew of a participating AMVER ship in assisting a person in distress at sea. The award includes a distinctive red AMVER pennant.
 - b. The Safety at Sea International AMVER Award, given annually, recognizes bravery in rescuing a person in distress at sea while promoting crew and survivor safety. The award includes a distinctive green AMVER pennant.

c. The Association for Rescue At Sea AMVER Award, given annually at the Association for Rescue at Sea (AFRAS) ceremony in Washington, D.C., recognizes seamanship, bravery, ship handling, and the degree of effort involved in a particular SAR incident. The award includes a plaque presented by AFRAS.

iii. AMVER Promotion. AMR is often involved in unique short notice marketing opportunities that can support ship recruitment for which costs are not precisely known in advance. Many of these procurements are available only on a sole source basis. AMR is authorized to procure specialty items or services only for the recruitment and retention of ships in the AMVER system. Examples of these procurements include ceremonial or promotional items, advertising in national and international media (print and digital), costs associated in maritime exhibitions (in U.S. and foreign currency), and services for ceremonial events where costs are dependent on actual attendance.

(5) Ships and shipping companies.

(a) The contribution of time and service by voluntary participating ships is the essence of the AMVER system. Often, the success of a SAR operation depends on AMVER ships diverting and rendering timely assistance to a persons in distress.

(b) SAR Mission Coordinators (SMCs) and RCCs must be mindful that ships voluntarily participating in AMVER are on tight logistic schedules. Diverting a ship for SAR can be costly and should be minimized, consistent with SAR mission requirements.

14. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

a. Commandant.

(1) Commandant (CG-SAR), as Sponsor, must:

(a) Define, maintain, evaluate, and articulate AMVER organizational and program goals and requirements.

(b) Develop, establish, and maintain AMVER program doctrine, policies, and associated concepts of operation, including operational or end user operational training requirements.

(c) Coordinate AMVER system management and administration at Headquarters, between the Area and District Commanders, and for AMVER policy matters with other federal agencies, foreign governments, international organizations, and shipping companies.

(d) In coordination with C5I Program Managers and C5I Investment Business Case Managers, seek the necessary resources to fully implement and support the

needed C5I capability and develop acceptance criteria (including expected and measured performance) for the respective C5I system, solution, or service.

- (e) Establish and provide AMR personnel, funding, and resources that will:
- i. Maintain the Commandant (CG-SAR) AMR Office in Battery Park, New York City;
 - ii. Coordinate recruitment, processing, and retention of AMVER program participants;
 - iii. Publish and distribute the AMVER BLOG;
 - iv. Produce and distribute AMVER forms, users manuals, and AMVER questionnaires, including those in foreign languages;
 - v. Provide guidance, training, and materials to Coast Guard units, AMVER boarding officers, and NOAA's Port Metrological officers;
 - vi. Support U.S. and international AMVER awards programs;
 - vii. Represent and promote AMVER at national and international maritime venues;
 - viii. Provide AMVER briefings and information to Coast Guard personnel, U.S. and foreign government officials, and shipping companies;
 - ix. Coordinate local, national, and international press and media coverage of AMVER; and
 - x. Assist as required, and in major SAR operations involving the use of the AMVER system, augment public affairs offices in arranging local media coverage, press contacts, spokespersons, photo coverage, and logistical support.
- (f) Queries concerning the AMVER program by Coast Guard commands, shipping companies, international SAR authorities, and U.S. and foreign government officials can be made through the following AMR contact information:

Telephone: (212) 232-3862
Email: amver@uscg.mil

- (2) Per Reference (d), Commandant (CG-761) will serve as the AMVER Requirements Manager and Sponsor's Representative. The Requirements Manager and Sponsor's Representative must:

- (a) Ensure requirements documentation is maintained and updated.

- (b) Manage the requirements traceability matrix. Ensure traceability between operations, functional and technical requirements are in alignment with existing and emerging enterprise architecture processes.
 - (c) Review requirements requests and validates the requests are assigned appropriately.
 - (d) Document customer satisfaction and other business justification data through regular annual Operational Analyses (OAs).
 - (e) Participate in Post-Implementation Reviews (PIRs) with the C5I Service Center.
 - (f) Define, maintain, evaluate, and articulate organizational mission/business goals and operational requirements for C5I capabilities.
 - (g) Coordinate with the Sponsor to validate functional requirements overseen by the C5I Business Relationship Manager.
- (3) Per Reference (d), Commandant (CG-682 (OIS)) will serve as the C5I Program Manager (PM), and plan, program, budget, and oversee the execution of the AMVER C5I sustainment activities, operating the AMVER system as part of the C5I Service Center's Operational Information Systems Product Line (OISPL). The OIS PM must:
- (a) Conduct a developmental program for improving AMVER services;
 - (b) Conduct any studies required for the AMVER program based on the AMVER database;
 - (c) Maintain statistics pertinent to participation in or use of the AMVER system; and
 - (d) Maintain interfaces to other authorized C5I systems (e.g., Ship Arrival Notification System (SANS) and Search and Rescue Optimal Planning System (SAROPS)) to provide AMVER data.
- b. Area and District Commanders will:
- (1) Be responsible for planning, programming, evaluating and managing the operation and use of the AMVER system within their respective maritime SAR;
 - (2) Promulgate Area and District policy and guidance in support of the operation and promotion of AMVER;
 - (3) As required, provide technical support and representation to assist Commandant (CG-SAR) in promoting and managing the AMVER program (e.g., support presentation of AMVER awards to ships and shipping companies);
 - (4) Recognize ships and shipping companies that respond to requests for assistance generated via AMVER;

- (5) Ensure AMR is notified upon becoming aware of an AMVER-assisted SAR operation developing, in progress, or completed; and
- (6) Ensure SAR Mission Coordinators (SMCs) and RCC personnel are:
 - (a) Proficient in all aspects of the AMVER system, particularly in the use of SURPICS;
 - (b) Provide AMVER information only for the coordination and conduct of SAR operations;
 - (c) Provide to AMR information on SAR cases involving AMVER which might be suitable for public affairs engagement;
 - (d) Include AMR (amver@uscg.mil) as an info addressee on situation reports and message traffic involving AMVER-assisted SAR cases, which will enable AMR to coordinate appropriate press and media coverage, and record the case for consideration for future AMVER awards.

15. AMVER INFORMATION MANAGEMENT.

a. Protection of AMVER Information.

- (1) AMVER participants are assured that the voyage information they provide is treated as proprietary and will be used only for maritime safety purposes. Without this assurance, many masters and owners would not participate in the voluntary AMVER system.
- (2) Per Reference (e), vessel movement information provided to AMVER is considered proprietary commercial information and must be handled as privileged or commercial confidential as unclassified but limited-access information. Refer to paragraph 15.c. below for guidance on the release of AMVER unclassified but limited-access information.
- (3) The Coast Guard must ensure that vessel movement information in the AMVER system is not used to the disadvantage of the vessels involved.
- (4) AMVER information derived from vessel movement reports and the daily vessel arrival data must be released only as prescribed in paragraphs 15.b. and 15.c. The AMVER system does not maintain a historical archive of information.

b. Specific Guidance for Allowed Release of AMVER Information.

- (1) SURPIC. SURPIC plot data and vessel characteristics must be released only to:
 - (a) A recognized SAR authority to support rendering assistance to a person in distress at sea;

- (b) Ships and/or aircraft that require AMVER information in support of an ongoing SAR operation;
 - (c) Air traffic services for precautionary purposes, with the approval of Commandant (CG-SAR) (i.e., extended overwater flight by a Head of State or other VIP); and
 - (d) Pursuant to a FOIA request made in accordance with Reference (f) and reviewed and approved in accordance with paragraph 15.c. below.
- (2) AMVER vessel position and arrival data is authorized to be shared with SANS in support of 33 CFR Subpart C.
 - (3) AMVER information can be made available on a limited basis only to authorities with recognized SAR responsibility. The information is for SAR purposes only and is not intended for use as a general purpose list of ships and their characteristics.
 - (4) Requests for information from AMVER received from commercial medical services will be treated as requests for assistance. When contacted by a commercial medical service, RCC personnel must determine whether or not the assistance of an AMVER participant is needed. If assistance is needed, the RCC must notify the appropriate AMVER vessel and request assistance. The commercial medical service and the vessel requiring aid will be advised by RCC personnel of the action taken. RCC personnel will not tell the commercial medical service the name or call sign of the AMVER participant except when necessary to contribute to successful case completion (e.g., the commercial medical service communicating medical information directly to the assisting vessel).
- c. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests.
- (1) If a request for AMVER unclassified but limited-access information is made which is not authorized under paragraph 15.b., the request must be reviewed by AMR and the appropriate FOIA Officer. Prior to limiting or denying access to any requested information under the FOIA Manual (Reference (f)), the cognizant FOIA Officer will consult with USCG Headquarters, Commandant's (CG-SAR and CG-LII). All non-SURPIC information requests must be referred to Commandant (CG-SAR). A SURPIC generated in support of a SAR case may become part of the case file for that particular case, and as such would be available to appropriate investigative authorities.
 - (2) Per Reference (f), not every request for AMVER information must be handled as a FOIA request. Material that is ordinarily made available to the public as part of the AMVER educational program is available upon request.
 - (3) The Coast Guard is not required to compile or develop a record for answering a public request for information. A request for AMVER statistical records not normally produced, but available through special efforts, should be referred to AMR.

- (4) Whenever doubt exists about whether to release AMVER records, or requests are made for records not covered adequately by this Instruction, the request should be referred to AMR for a determination.

16. FORMS/REPORTS. None.
17. SECTION 508. This Instruction adheres to Accessibility Guidelines and Standards as promulgated by the U.S. Access Board. If changes are needed, please communicate with the Coast Guard Section 508 Program Management Office at Section.508@uscg.mil .
18. REQUEST FOR CHANGES. Units and individuals may formally recommend changes through the chain of command using the Coast Guard Memorandum. Comments and suggestions from users of this Instruction are welcomed. All such correspondence may be emailed to Commandant (CG-SAR) at: Amver.Program@uscg.mil.

/MS. DANA S. TULIS/
U. S. Coast Guard
Director of Incident Management &
Preparedness Policy