

PRESS RELEASE

FISHERIES, MARINE UNIT, MIASL AT MARITIME RESCUE CONFERENCE

The 3rd Caribbean Search and Rescue (CSAR) conference saw 84 participants from 24 nations gather in Miami from Jun 8 to 10 to discuss the conduct of Maritime Search & Rescue (SAR) operations in the region. The conference was hosted by the Coast Guard Auxiliary International Affairs Directorate in conjunction with the U.S. Southern Command and the U.S. Coast Guard. In addition to private and public sector representatives from the English, Dutch, French and Spanish islands and Central America, representatives from the US and UK attended sessions covering search and rescue techniques, leadership development, and establishing a marketing and outreach program. They shared ideas in sessions on local control of SAR operations and risk management. All the attendees participated in a table-top SAR exercise, and watched amateur video footage of tragic rescue mishaps.

According to Commodore Everette Tucker, Director of the International Affairs Directorate, the purpose of the conference was to “enhance the security, stability, and safety of life on the sea in the Caribbean Region through the establishment and/or strengthening of government affiliated volunteer maritime search and rescue (SAR) organizations and the strengthening of existing volunteer SAR organizations. It was also to institute boating safety education and public awareness programs, and to develop maritime domain awareness programs.”

One of the high points of the conference was an on-the-water demonstration of towing procedures by Auxiliary vessels, followed by a helicopter demonstration in which a diver was dropped and retrieved. That was finished by a “chase” of an Auxiliary boat by a CG rigid hull inflatable boat (RHIB).

The Fisheries Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture joined the Marine Police Unit and the Marine Industries Association of St. Lucia (MIASL) for the first time at a CSAR conference, in recognition that the fishing community here is perhaps the biggest beneficiary of maritime rescue activity on an ongoing basis. Sergeant Christopher Alexander of the Marine Police Unit, Mr. Rufus George of the Fisheries Unit and Keats Compton of the MIASL made up the St. Lucia contingent. According to Compton, discussions are ongoing between the Commissioner of Police, Marine Police Unit and the MIASL on the structure that the local volunteer Search & Rescue entity will adopt. Compton is keen to stress that the volunteer entity, which does not yet have a name, will not be an arm of the marine unit, and that its focus will always be on safety of life at sea, encouraging safe boating practices such as the wearing of life jackets, acquisition and use of vhf radios and other basic safety gear. He also expects that there will be heightened activity at sea in the run-up to the Cricket World Cup, and that as a result there will probably be a greater demand than usual for a functioning SAR capability.

Finally, as the hurricane season progresses, the MIASL wishes to encourage the boating and fishing communities to observe safe boating practices, information on which may be obtained from the US Coast Guard Auxiliary website at www.uscgaux.org. Hurricane tracking is also available at www.weather.com/newscenter/tropical/index.html.

Contact: Keats Compton
President
MIASL
484-3646
Email: keats@miasl.org