

# NATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE PLAN

## OF THE

### UNITED STATES

#### POLICY

1. It is the policy of the signatory Federal departments and agencies to provide a *National Search and Rescue Plan of the United States* (referred to as the “Plan”) for coordinating search and rescue (SAR) services to meet domestic needs and international commitments. Implementing guidance for this Plan is provided in the *International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual*, the *National Search and Rescue Supplement (NSS) to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual*, and other relevant directives of the Participants in this Plan.

#### PURPOSE

2. This Plan continues, by interagency agreement, the effective use of all available resources in all types of SAR operations to enable the United States to satisfy its humanitarian, national, and international commitments and obligations.
3. The *National Search and Rescue Plan of the United States (2007)* is superseded by this Plan.

#### TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

4. The following terms and definitions are used in this Plan.<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Catastrophic Incident: Any natural or manmade incident, including terrorism, that results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale, or government functions.
  - b. Incident Command System (ICS): a management system designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure. ICS is a subcomponent of the National Incident Management System.
  - c. Mass Rescue Operation (MRO): SAR services characterized by the need for immediate response to large numbers of persons in distress, such that the capabilities normally available to SAR authorities are inadequate.
  - d. National Incident Management System (NIMS): A systematic, proactive approach to guide departments and agencies at all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work together seamlessly and manage incidents

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<sup>1</sup> Additional terms and definitions are available in the IAMSAR Manual and the NSS.

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involving all threats and hazards – regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity – in order to reduce loss of life, property damage, and harm to the environment.

- e. National Response Framework (NRF): A guide establishing a comprehensive, national, all-hazards approach to domestic incident response. It intends to capture specific authorities and best practices for managing incidents ranging from the serious but purely local, to large-scale terrorist attacks or catastrophic natural disasters.
- f. National Search and Rescue Committee (NSARC): Federal committee comprising the Departments of Homeland Security, Defense, Transportation, Interior, Commerce, and State, the Federal Communications Commission, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Established to oversee the NSP and act as a coordinating forum for national SAR matters.
- g. Rescue: An operation to retrieve persons in distress, provide for their initial medical or other needs, and deliver them to a place of safety.
- h. Rescue Coordination Center (RCC): A unit, recognized by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), or other cognizant international body, responsible for promoting efficient organization of SAR services and for coordinating the conduct of SAR operations within a SAR Region (SRR).
- i. Rescue Sub-Center (RSC): A unit subordinate to an RCC established to complement the latter according to particular provisions of the responsible authorities.
- j. Search: An operation using available personnel and facilities to locate persons in distress.
- k. Search and Rescue Coordinator (SC): As defined in the IAMSAR Manual, one or more persons or agencies within an Administration with overall responsibility for establishing and providing SAR services, and ensuring that planning for those services is properly coordinated.
- l. Search and Rescue Facility: Any mobile resource, including designated search and rescue units, used to conduct search and rescue operations.
- m. Search and Rescue Region (SRR): An area of defined dimensions, associated with a rescue coordination center, within which search and rescue services are provided.
- n. Search and Rescue Service: The performance of distress monitoring, communication, coordination and SAR functions, including provision of medical advice, initial medical assistance, or medical evacuation, through the use of public and private resources, including cooperating aircraft, vessels and other craft and installations.
- o. U.S. Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking (SARSAT): The interagency cooperation among the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Defense's U.S. Air Force (USAF), Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and National Aeronautics and Space

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Administration (NASA) to support the International Cospas-Sarsat Programme and to provide the capability to receive and process distress alerts from distress radio beacons via satellite accurately, to determine these alerts' locations, and to relay this information to U.S. and foreign SAR authorities expeditiously, in order to facilitate the timely rescue of persons in the U.S. SAR regions and around the world.

- p. Urban Search and Rescue (US&R): The location, rescue (extrication), and initial medical stabilization of survivors trapped in confined spaces.

### OBJECTIVES

- 5. Knowing the importance of cooperation in providing expeditious and effective SAR services, the Participants seek to:
  - a. Provide a U.S. Plan for coordinating SAR services to meet domestic needs and international commitments and to document related national policies;
  - b. Support lifesaving provisions of IMO's *International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue* (SAR Convention), ICAO's *Convention on International Civil Aviation* (Chicago Convention), certain international agreements to which the United States is a party, and similar international instruments;
  - c. Provide an overall Plan for coordination of SAR operations, effective use of available SAR resources, mutual assistance, and efforts to improve such cooperation and services;
  - d. Integrate available SAR resources into a cooperative network for greater protection of life and property and to ensure greater efficiency and economy; and
  - e. Enable the United States to satisfy its humanitarian, national, and international commitments and obligations.
- 6. This Plan is further intended to:
  - a. Provide national guidance for the development of SAR-related systems;
  - b. Describe its Participants and their roles in a pro-lifesaving context;
  - c. Recognize lead Federal agencies for the types of operations covered by this Plan, and describe SAR responsibilities within the U.S. and international SAR systems;
  - d. Account for saving property, but on a secondary basis to the conduct of SAR operations;
  - e. Account for all operations up to and including providing initial assistance (food, clothing, medical, etc.) to SAR survivors and delivering them to a place of safety; and
  - f. Have, as a primary concept, cooperation for overall and continual development, coordination, and improvement of SAR services.

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### SCOPE

7. It is intended that this Plan not conflict in any way with the SAR responsibilities agreed to by contracting States of the SAR and Chicago Conventions, or other international instruments to which the United States is, or may become, a party or participant.
8. No provisions of this Plan or any supporting plan are to be construed in such a way as to contravene responsibilities and legal authorities of the United States or of any Participant as defined by statutes, executive orders, or international instruments, or of established responsibilities of other departments, agencies, and organizations that regularly assist persons in distress.
9. This Plan is solely intended to provide guidance to the Participants. State, Tribal, Territorial/Insular Area (STTIA) authorities should normally retain SAR responsibilities within their jurisdictions for incidents primarily local or intrastate in character. In such cases, appropriate agreements are generally made between Federal SC(s) and the relevant authority.

### NATIONAL SAR COMMITTEE

10. The NSARC is responsible for the provisions of this Plan, consistent with applicable laws and Executive orders, and coordinates and provides guidance for its implementation.

### PARTICIPANTS

11. The Participants to this Plan are the NSARC member departments and agencies:
  - a. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) carries out responsibilities to protect against and respond to hazards and distress situations affecting the nation and its people;
    - (1) The USCG develops, establishes, maintains, and operates SAR resources for the promotion of safety on, under, and over waters subject to U.S. jurisdiction as well as waters beyond the territorial sea of any country. The USCG has specialized expertise, facilities, and equipment for responding to maritime distress and other situations; and
    - (2) The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) coordinates the Federal response under the guidelines of the NRF and oversees the National US&R Response System.
  - b. The Department of Transportation (DOT) carries out broad responsibilities in transportation safety;
    - (1) The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) establishes and enforces flight safety regulations and operates the air traffic control, navigation, and flight service facilities that are available to assist in SAR operations; and
    - (2) The Maritime Administration (MARAD) maintains a fleet of ready reserve vessels for government use in contingencies and supports and promotes commercial

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maritime safety with regard to vessels, equipment, and mariners. MARAD advocates efficient maritime intermodal commerce through enhanced security.

- c. Department of Defense (DoD) components have unique capabilities, specialized expertise, and facilities and other resources that are used to conduct personnel recovery missions and support a wide spectrum of military and civil support operations. It is DoD policy that these resources may be used for SAR needs to the fullest extent practicable on a non-interference basis with primary military duties according to applicable national directives, plans, guidelines, and agreements. Within DoD, Commander, U.S. Northern Command (CDRUSNORTHCOM) is designated as a Federal SAR Coordinator and provides, coordinates, and uses resources for the efficient organization and conduct of SAR services, including SAR operations within DoD's assigned SRRs;
  - d. The Department of Commerce (DOC) participates in and supports SAR operations through NOAA. NOAA provides satellite services for detecting and locating persons in distress. NOAA is the lead Federal Agency for the U.S. Sarsat Program and associated international Programs, including the International Cospas-Sarsat Programme. NOAA also provides nautical and aeronautical charting; information on tides and tidal currents; marine environmental forecasts; and warnings for the high seas as well as coastal waters and inland waterways, as well as environmental data used for search planning for SAR operations;
  - e. The Department of the Interior (DOI)/National Park Service (NPS) provides SAR services on lands and waters administered by NPS, may assist STTIA and local authorities with emergency response operations outside NPS jurisdiction, and supports response operations during catastrophic incidents;
  - f. The Department of State (DOS) is responsible for the foreign affairs and international relations of the United States. DOS provides oversight, as well as direct and indirect support, for U.S. departments, agencies, and delegations that work on SAR in the international arena, including where another country's interests are involved;
  - g. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) promulgates rules and regulations for interstate and foreign commerce by wire and radio for promoting safety of life and property, and supports SAR geo-location through its long-range direction finding network; and
  - h. NASA supports SAR objectives through research and development or application of technology for search, rescue, survival, and recovery systems and equipment, such as location tracking systems, transmitters, receivers, and antennas capable of locating aircraft, ships, spacecraft, or persons in distress. Additionally, NASA has aircraft, spacecraft, and worldwide tracking, data acquisition, and communications networks that can assist in SAR operations.
12. A Federal department or agency that is not a Participant may become a Participant in accordance with the procedures set forth in the *U.S. National Search and Rescue Committee Interagency Agreement*.

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### SAR SERVICES SUPPORTED BY THIS PLAN

13. This Plan includes the following types of SAR services:

- a. Maritime (involving the search for and rescue of persons in distress from a water environment);
- b. Aeronautical (involving the search for aircraft overdue, missing, or in distress and SAR assistance in the vicinity of airports);
- c. Land (including SAR operations associated with environments such as remote areas, swift water, caves, and mountains, etc.);
- d. Collapsed structure/US&R (including military support to US&R);
- e. Utilization of specialized personnel, resources, and equipment to identify affected areas, ascertain conditions on scene, and search for persons in distress;
- f. Provision of initial assistance at or near the scene of a distress situation (e.g., initial medical assistance or advice, medical evacuation, provision of needed shelter, food, or clothing to survivors, emotional support, and humanitarian services);
- g. Delivery of survivors to a place of safety (where the survivor's safety of life is no longer threatened, basic human needs (e.g., food, shelter, and medical needs) can be met, and transportation arrangements can be made for the survivor's next or final destination);
- h. Saving of property when accomplished in conjunction with the conduct of SAR operations;
- i. MROs;
- j. Catastrophic Incident SAR (CISAR) in support of the NRF's Emergency Support Function (ESF) #9, Search and Rescue (including follow-on life-sustaining support to survivors in the disaster area);
- k. Recovery of human remains when accomplished in conjunction with the conduct of SAR operations (with minimal risk to SAR responders); and
- l. Search for and rescue of personnel of a spacecraft.<sup>2</sup>

14. This Plan does *not* cover:

- a. Air ambulance services that did not result from the conduct of a SAR operation;

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<sup>2</sup> For example, as a party to the *Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space* (Rescue and Return Agreement), the United States is obliged to immediately take all possible steps to rescue and render all necessary assistance to personnel of a spacecraft who, owing to accident, distress, emergency, or unintended landing, land within U.S. jurisdiction or on the high seas.

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- b. Military personnel recovery operations, such as combat SAR or other types of recovery by military operations to remove military or civilian personnel from harm's way;
- c. Salvage operations;
- d. Assistance in cases of civil disturbance, insurrection, or other emergencies that endanger life or property or disrupt the usual process of government; and
- e. Operations and coordination in addition to those covered by this Plan that might be carried out concurrently with SAR operations on scene, such as could occur during the response to a catastrophic incident.

### FEDERAL SAR COORDINATORS

- 15. The Federal SCs, designated below, have overall responsibility for establishing RCCs as necessary, and for providing or arranging for SAR services within the U.S. SRRs:
  - a. CDRUSNORTHCOM: Recognized Federal SC for the U.S. aeronautical SRR corresponding to the continental United States and Alaska; and
  - b. USCG: Recognized Federal SC for all other U.S. aeronautical and maritime SRRs. This includes the State of Hawaii as well as waters over which the United States has jurisdiction, such as navigable waters of the United States.

### OTHER SAR RESPONSIBILITIES

- 16. National Park Service: NPS provides emergency services on lands and waters administered by NPS, assists visitors within NPS units, and aids authorities in neighboring jurisdictions. SAR operations, including emergency medical aid, are conducted in a wide variety of environments such as remote, rural, and roadless areas; lakes, rivers, and oceans; and deserts, mountains, and caves; and often require extended response times and the use of specialized equipment. NPS works closely with STTIA and local authorities and volunteer SAR organizations and is proficient in the use of the incident command system.
- 17. Federal Emergency Management Agency: FEMA oversees the National US&R Response System.
- 18. Critical SAR support: Implementation of the U.S. national SAR system and support of the global SAR plan includes other critical support functions conducted by DOS, NASA, NOAA, FCC, and other entities. Although this Plan primarily concerns matters directly related to SAR operations, the importance of international engagement in support of U.S. citizens abroad; negotiation and implementation of bilateral and regional SAR instruments with other countries; U.S. involvement in IMO, ICAO, and other international and regional fora; research and development in support of space-based distress alerting and to improve SAR capabilities and procedures; providing weather data for search planning; U.S. SARSAT system management and operation; and regulatory support cannot be overstated. Close cooperation and mutual support among all the Participants in this Plan are vital to conducting effective SAR operations and to the U.S. imperative to save lives on land and sea.

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19. Other Assistance: The Participants in this Plan are encouraged to support each other, as well as other Federal, STTIA, and local SAR authorities, for the conduct of SAR operations in accordance with applicable legal authority.
20. Catastrophic Incidents: Participants are encouraged to use their SAR capabilities to support ESF #9 SAR operations. ESF #9 details the overall coordination for the Federal provisioning of lifesaving assistance to STTIA and local SAR authorities when there is an actual or anticipated request for Federal SAR assistance.<sup>3</sup>
  - a. During incidents or potential incidents requiring a unified SAR response, Federal SAR responsibilities reside with the ESF #9 primary agencies that provide timely and specialized SAR capabilities;
  - b. Primary and support agencies are listed in the ESF #9 Annex.
  - c. FEMA is the ESF #9 Coordinating Agency responsible for both day-to-day and response ESF #9 coordination activities;
  - d. With the activation of ESF #9 Federal SAR support, Federal SCs need to ensure that SAR facilities not involved in the response are available to conduct other SAR operations that may occur concurrently.
21. STTIA and local SAR authority responsibilities: Outside the above listed Federal SC and SAR support responsibilities, STTIA and local SAR authorities are responsible for land-based SAR and should designate a person or agency to be “SAR Coordinator” within their respective jurisdictions. STTIA and local SAR authorities will always be integral stakeholders of the U.S. national SAR system and are critical in providing effective SAR services.

### INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION

22. DOS has designated certain Federal departments and agencies responsible for SAR under this Plan to represent the United States, with appropriate interagency coordination, in the following international fora:<sup>4</sup>
  - a. USCG leads and coordinates national participation in IMO’s international and regional SAR and safety-related initiatives;
  - b. FAA leads and coordinates national participation in ICAO’s international and regional SAR and safety-related initiatives;

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<sup>3</sup> The NRF and ESF #9 are the coordination structures for a Federal SAR response, including to a catastrophic incident. This Plan covers all types of aeronautical, maritime, and land-based SAR operations, whether conducted independently or also within the NRF. If SAR operations are carried out within the NRF, this Plan becomes an NRF supporting plan by integrating matters relating to coordination and conduct of disaster response operations. When ESF #9 is activated, other SAR operations in the affected area will continue to be covered by this Plan; the only difference is that the SAR services will be coordinated with the Incident Command organization on scene.

<sup>4</sup> This Plan merely reflects previous such designations and is not itself the mechanism for those designations.



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- c. NOAA leads and coordinates national participation in the International Cospas-Sarsat Programme; and
- d. Based upon invitations from ICAO and IMO, respectively, the USAF intends to provide an aeronautical SAR expert and the USCG intends to provide a maritime SAR expert to serve as members of the ICAO-IMO Joint Working Group on SAR.

### **SAR SUPPORT OUTSIDE THE U.S. SAR REGIONS**

- 23. Federal SCs, as well as other U.S. authorities, may support SAR operations anywhere in the world, consistent with their expertise, capabilities, and legal authority. This is in the interest of all U.S. citizens who travel or live abroad and advances U.S. humanitarian goals and international cooperation. As well, it is consistent with the principles of:
  - a. Assisting persons in distress without regard to nationality or status of such a person or the circumstances in which that person is found; and
  - b. Using all available resources for the coordination and conduct of SAR operations.
- 24. Consistent with international law, U.S. SAR facilities, in a position to render timely and effective assistance, may enter into or over the territorial sea or archipelagic waters of another country for the purpose of rendering assistance to persons in distress when:
  - a. There is reasonable certainty (based on the best available information regardless of source) that a person is in distress from the perils of the sea;
  - b. The position of the person or persons is reasonably well known; and
  - c. The SAR facility is in position to render timely and effective assistance.
- 25. Participants, consistent with their capabilities and legal authority, should support another country's SAR operations in its territorial sea in accordance with international law and in waters that are beyond recognized U.S. aeronautical and maritime SRRs and beyond the territorial sea of any country. As appropriate, and within their capabilities, DoD combatant commanders should provide such support within their respective geographic areas of responsibility.
- 26. In carrying out SAR support with other nations (e.g., training, exercises, and liaison activities), each Participant should coordinate its activities with other Participants having SAR expertise with respect to the support concerned.
- 27. To the extent the Participants have the legal authority to do so, they may maintain liaison and cooperate with authorities of other nations that have comparable responsibilities for providing SAR services. Such cooperation should be carried out in coordination with the U.S. Federal SCs and with other SAR authorities that might be affected, as appropriate. When such coordination deals substantially with matters relating to the conduct of SAR operations, it should normally include USCG Headquarters, Office of Search and Rescue, in order to ensure consistency with international SAR instruments, the IAMSAR Manual, and

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other international guidance relevant to implementing such instruments. Where such cooperation may involve significant foreign affairs interests, timely coordination with DOS is important.

28. Participants should not normally accept an SC or RCC role for SAR operations for SRRs for which another country is responsible. However, the Participants may provide and support SAR operations in such areas when:
  - a. Assistance is requested (normally this should be in accordance with RCC-to-RCC procedures prescribed in the IAMSAR Manual);
  - b. U.S. citizens are involved; or
  - c. U.S. SAR facilities become aware of a distress situation to which no other suitable facilities are responding, or where other available SAR services appear to be inadequate.
29. For distress situations in waters beyond the territorial sea of any country or in international airspace where no SRR exists for which an RCC is responsible, or where it appears that the responsible RCC is not responding in a suitable manner, U.S. RCCs or SAR facilities may assist as appropriate.
30. International SAR instruments are intended to facilitate the provision of suitable SAR services globally to assist persons in distress. In support of these instruments, situations may arise in which U.S. SAR resources are requested to supplement SAR capabilities outside the U.S. SRRs, as well as to support other countries' development of their SAR capabilities by providing training or other support. Participants are encouraged to take advantage of such situations as appropriate.
31. When assisting foreign SAR authorities, or other departments, agencies, and organizations that support these SAR authorities, Participants should ensure that:
  - a. They have appropriate legal authority and expertise to do so;
  - b. Assistance is consistent with any applicable international instruments;
  - c. Applicable procedures set forth in the IAMSAR Manual, the NSS, and other relevant directives are followed;
  - d. Such efforts are carried out in consultation with other Participants as appropriate; and
  - e. The SAR authorities assisted are responsible for the SAR functions in that country.
32. Policies on rendering SAR assistance in foreign territories or territorial seas must balance concerns for saving lives, sovereignty, and national security. Provisions for entry into territory or territorial seas, as necessary, should be consistent with international law and applicable international SAR instruments.
33. When any Participant to this Plan is addressing SAR-related inquiries or proposals from

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foreign SAR authorities, or when hosting or attending international SAR meetings, care should be taken that other interested U.S. departments, agencies, and organizations are consulted and involved as appropriate.

### INTERNATIONAL SAR INSTRUMENTS

34. Bilateral or multilateral SAR agreements and arrangements between the United States and foreign countries, or between U.S. departments, agencies, or organizations and foreign SAR authorities, may be of practical value by:
  - a. Assisting in the fulfillment of U.S. domestic and international obligations and commitments;
  - b. Promoting the effective use of all available resources in the conduct of SAR operations;
  - c. Ensuring effective integration of U.S. SAR services within the international SAR system;
  - d. Building mutual commitment to cooperate and support the conduct of SAR operations;
  - e. Resolving conflicting SAR procedures and sensitive matters in advance of time-critical distress situations; and
  - f. Identifying types of cooperative matters and efforts that may enhance or support the conduct of SAR operations (e.g., access to medical or fueling facilities, training and exercises, meetings, information exchanges, use of communications capabilities, and joint research and development projects).
35. Negotiation and conclusion of SAR instruments is to be consistent with international and domestic SAR principles, policies, and law, and with U.S. law and practice and DOS guidance concerning the negotiation and conclusion of international agreements and arrangements, including as reflected in the relevant Circular 175 grant of authority for legally binding international agreements. Negotiation and conclusion of SAR instruments should consider:
  - a. Which U.S. Government authorities, departments, agencies, or organizations concerned should be involved with the instrument;
  - b. Which types of SAR services (e.g., aeronautical and/or maritime) and/or SAR support functions should be included within the scope of the instrument;
  - c. Establishment of lines of delimitation separating aeronautical and maritime SRRs;
  - d. Whether other preexisting instruments should be superseded, modified, or otherwise accounted for in preparation of a new SAR instrument; and
  - e. Relevant guidance provided in the SAR and Chicago Conventions, the IAMSAR Manual, the NSS, and other pertinent directives.

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36. Participants that develop any SAR instrument should ensure that such efforts are coordinated with other interested Participants prior to initiating negotiations.

### U.S. SAR REGIONS

37. SRRs are established to ensure provision of adequate land-based communications infrastructure, efficient distress alert routing, and proper operational coordination to effectively support SAR operations.
38. SRRs should be contiguous and, as far as practicable, not overlap.
39. Establishment of SRRs is intended to effect an understanding concerning where the U.S. and foreign SAR authorities have accepted responsibility for coordinating or providing SAR services. The existence of SRR limits should not be viewed as a basis to restrict, delay, or limit in any way prompt and effective action to relieve persons in distress.
40. U.S. aeronautical and maritime SRRs are established in accordance with the SAR and Chicago Conventions. Specific information concerning the U.S. SRRs can be found in the NSS.
41. As provided in the SAR and Chicago Conventions, the U.S. aeronautical and maritime SRRs should be harmonized to the extent practicable with countries having contiguous SRRs with the United States.
42. As affirmed in the SAR and Chicago Conventions, the delimitation of SRRs is not related to and shall not prejudice the delimitation of any boundary between the United States and any other country.
43. As defined in the SAR and Chicago Conventions, one RCC is associated with each internationally recognized SRR. Comprehensive IMO and ICAO standards and guidance pertinent to these RCCs have been developed and may be found in relevant international conventions, instruments, the IAMSAR Manual, and other publications that should be held and used by U.S. RCCs.
44. SCs, as designated in this Plan, are responsible for arranging SAR services and establishing RCCs for their respective SRRs. The U.S. national SAR system becomes integrated into the international SAR system by establishing recognized SRRs and RCCs that comply with international standards. SCs arrange and provide for all SAR services covered by this Plan within their respective SRR.
45. An SRR may be subdivided as long as the delimitation of the sub-regions coincides with the SRR limits. Where this is not practicable, changes to the SRR limits should be coordinated with any affected country, and for aeronautical or maritime SRRs, the changes need to be recognized by ICAO or IMO, respectively, in accordance with requirements of those Organizations.

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### MUTUAL ASSISTANCE

46. The Participants are encouraged to cooperate as follows:
- a. Provide mutual department or agency support by providing SAR facilities and support services as appropriate for SAR operations;
  - b. Make and respond to requests for operational assistance between U.S. and international RCCs, RSCs, and Incident Command organizations as capabilities allow;
  - c. Develop procedures, communications, and databases appropriate for coordination of SAR facilities responding to persons in distress and for coordination between the RCCs, RSCs, and/or Incident Command organizations;
  - d. Normally follow applicable IMO, ICAO, and other relevant international guidance regarding operational procedures and communications; and
  - e. In areas where more than one SAR authority may respond to persons in distress, agreed procedures should be in place that balance concerns for the conduct of SAR operations and jurisdiction.
47. Participants may enter into other collaborative efforts with each other, including:
- a. Mutual visits, information exchanges, and cooperative projects in support of the conduct of SAR operations;
  - b. The conduct of joint training and exercises;
  - c. Cooperation in development of procedures, techniques, equipment, and SAR facilities;
  - d. Establishment of groups subordinate to NSARC as a means for more in-depth focus on matters of common concern; and
  - e. Carrying out cooperative efforts similar to those indicated above on an international level, in coordination with DOS as it considers appropriate.

### CHARGING FOR SAR SERVICES

48. Each Participant should fund its own activities in relation to this Plan unless otherwise provided for by law or arranged by the Participants in advance, and not allow cost reimbursement to delay response to any person in distress.<sup>5</sup>
49. Unless required by law, SAR services provided to persons in distress should be without subsequent cost-recovery from the persons assisted.

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<sup>5</sup> In some cases, SAR operations may be reimbursed under provisions of the Stafford Act when ESF #9 is activated. Such funding provisions are beyond the scope of this Plan and should not adversely affect the commencement or conduct of needed SAR operations.

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50. Consistent with international practice, generally, when a nation requests help from another nation to assist persons in distress, if such help is provided, it should be accomplished voluntarily; the United States should neither request nor pay reimbursement costs for such assistance.

### GENERAL TERMS

51. No provision of this Plan or any supporting plan is to be construed as an obstruction to prompt and effective action by any department, agency, or individual to assist persons in distress.
52. Cooperative arrangements between the Participants with other Federal departments and agencies, STTIA and local SAR authorities, volunteer organizations, and industry stakeholders should provide for the fullest practicable mutual cooperation in the conduct of SAR operations, consistent with the willingness and ability of such departments and agencies to support, and for such coordination by the responsible RCC, RSC, and/or Incident Command organization as may be necessary and practicable.
53. The Participants do not compel STTIA and local SAR authorities or volunteer organizations to conform to this Plan. Mutual cooperation and coordination of SAR operations should be pursued through prior cooperative arrangements, liaison, and consultation (e.g., STTIA agreements with Air Force and Alaska RCCs (AFRCC/AKRCC)).
54. Participants coordinating SAR operations should, consistent with applicable domestic and international law and policy, organize their SAR facilities through suitable arrangements into a basic network to assist persons in distress.
55. Participants intend to keep political, economic, jurisdictional, or other such factors secondary when coordinating and conducting SAR operations.
56. Consistency and harmonization should be fostered wherever practicable through plans, procedures, equipment, agreements, training, terminology, etc., for the conduct of SAR operations, taking into account terms and definitions adopted internationally as much as possible.
57. Terminology and definitions used in the U.S. SAR system should be consistent with the terminology and definitions in the SAR and Chicago Conventions and the IAMSAR Manual.
58. If a distress situation appears to exist or may exist, it should be assumed that a distress situation does actually exist until known differently.
59. Generally, cost-effective safety, regulatory, or diplomatic measures that tend to minimize the need for U.S. services will be supported.
60. Close cooperation should be established between services and organizations that may support improvements in SAR operations in areas such as operations, planning, training, exercises, communications, and research and development.

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61. Recognizing the critical importance of reduced response time in successful SAR operations, a continual focus should be maintained on developing and implementing means to reduce the time required for:
  - a. Receiving distress alerts and information associated with distress situations;
  - b. Planning and coordinating SAR operations;
  - c. SAR facility transits and searches;
  - d. Rescues; and
  - e. Providing immediate assistance (e.g., medical assistance), as appropriate.
62. Federal SCs and other SAR authorities should be generally familiar with the SAR Convention, Chicago Convention (in particular Annex 12 – Search and Rescue), the IAMSAR Manual, the NSS, and other primary directives or applicable information.
63. Customary international law, international instruments relevant to SAR, the IAMSAR Manual, and domestic law and policy serve as the framework for coordination of SAR operations, and especially SAR operations involving multiple countries, organizations, and jurisdictions.
64. SAR operational responsibilities are generally associated with the internationally recognized U.S. aeronautical and maritime SRRs. Consistent with this Plan, Federal SCs are assigned primary responsibility for coordinating SAR operations within each SRR with other departments, agencies, and organizations providing support, as appropriate. However, in some specific sub-areas, other Federal SAR authorities may be responsible (e.g., U.S. national park units and military bases).
65. Local cooperative arrangements within the United States should be made in advance between SAR authorities and air traffic and airport authorities for close coordination in handling aircraft emergencies.
66. Distress situations involving airborne aircraft should normally be coordinated by the SAR authority responsible for the SRR concerned once the distressed aircraft is down; cooperation between the SAR authority and air traffic service authority should continue while the aircraft remains airborne.
67. Land SAR services may include aeronautical SAR operations. Participants' involvement in such operations may be governed by arrangements between the Federal SC, STTIA, and local SAR authorities. Participants should support such operations, as appropriate.

### **COORDINATION OF SAR OPERATIONS**

68. Each department or agency responsible for SAR operations under this Plan intends to:
  - a. Keep information readily available on the status and availability of SAR facilities or

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- other resources that may be required for SAR operations; and
- b. Keep each other fully and promptly informed of SAR operations of mutual interest or that may involve the use of SAR facilities of another Participant;
69. Federal SCs delegate to their RCCs the authority to:
- a. Request SAR assistance via other U.S. and foreign RCCs/RSCs;
  - b. Promptly respond to requests for SAR assistance from other U.S. and foreign RCCs/RSCs; and
  - c. Coordinate entry into the United States of foreign SAR facilities. Such coordination and entry:
    - (1) Should involve appropriate U.S. authorities (e.g., customs, immigration, and health) as well as the proper authorities of the nation or SAR facility involved with the entry; and
    - (2) May include appropriate overflight or landing of SAR aircraft and similar accommodation of surface (land or water) SAR facilities for the purpose of fueling, medical, delivery of survivors to a place of safety, and other appropriate and available operational support as circumstances dictate.
70. The use of any SAR facilities committed to support a SAR operation should normally be coordinated and, as appropriate, directed by the responsible RCC/RSC/Incident Command organization consistent with this Plan's provisions.
71. On-scene coordination may be delegated to any appropriate SAR facility participating in a particular incident under the cognizance of the SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC) or Incident Commander.
72. Federal SCs should arrange for the receipt of distress alerts originating from within their respective SRRs and ensure that every RCC/RSC can communicate with persons in distress, SAR facilities, and other RCCs/RSCs/Incident Command organizations.

### NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

73. Under NIMS, ICS is adopted for use within the United States to command, control, and coordinate an emergency response. When SAR operations are conducted in situations where ICS has been implemented, one or more representatives of the SMC should be assigned to work with the Operations Section of the Incident Command organization. Coordination procedures of this Plan should continue to be used under NIMS.

### MILITARY ROLES AND MILITARY/CIVILIAN RELATIONSHIPS

74. Arrangements between Federal military and civil departments and agencies should provide for the fullest practicable cooperation, consistent with statutory responsibilities, authorities,



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and assigned SAR functions.

75. Cooperative arrangements involving DoD commands should provide for the fullest practicable use of their facilities for SAR on a non-interference basis with primary military duties, consistent with statutory responsibilities, authorities, and assigned department and agency functions.
76. Participants with operational responsibilities should develop plans and procedures for effective use of all available SAR facilities and for contingencies to continue SAR operations if military forces are withdrawn because of another emergency or a change in military missions.

### RESOURCES

77. Participants intend to use all available resources in the conduct of SAR operations. STTIA and local SAR authorities, volunteer organizations, and industry stakeholders have facilities that contribute to the effectiveness of the U.S. national SAR system that should be considered in the planning and conduct of SAR operations.
78. To help identify, locate, and quantify primary SAR facilities, Participants may designate facilities that meet international standards for equipment and personnel training as “SAR units” (SRUs). Such SAR facilities do not need to be dedicated exclusively to the conduct of SAR operations and should not preclude the use of other available resources.
79. Recognizing the critical role of communications in receiving distress information and coordinating a response that can involve multiple organizations and jurisdictions, the Participants should work to develop suitable SAR provisions for:
  - a. Interoperability;
  - b. Means of sending and receiving distress alert information;
  - c. Means of identification;
  - d. Effective provisions for equipment registration and continual access to registration data by SAR authorities;
  - e. Rapid, automatic, and direct routing of emergency communications;
  - f. System reliability; and
  - g. Preemptive or priority processing of distress communications.

### TECHNICAL AND SUPPORT SERVICES

80. The Participants intend to:
  - a. Apply the most effective systems to save the most lives at the least operational risk and cost; and

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- b. Foster innovation in technical, administrative, and information systems to improve the ability of the Participants to carry out their SAR responsibilities.
81. Each Participant's managerial, operational, and support personnel intend to maximize SAR operational effectiveness.
82. Priority goals of the Participants with operational roles include:
- a. Making distress alerts and associated data available to operational personnel as quickly, comprehensively, and reliably as possible;
  - b. The provisioning of communications systems that are reliable, simple, problem-free, interoperable, and as functionally effective as possible;
  - c. Enabling operational personnel to be as effective in the planning and conduct of SAR operations as possible; and
  - d. Ensuring SAR personnel are provided quality training, equipment, procedures, facilities, information, and other tools necessary to conduct SAR operations in a consistent, highly professional, and effective manner.
83. Participants should:
- a. Encourage development and proficiency in SAR techniques and procedures by other departments and agencies participating in SAR, and assist these other departments and agencies as appropriate;
  - b. Encourage continued development of STTIA and local SAR authorities and facilities as appropriate; and
  - c. Enter into cooperative arrangements with STTIA and local SAR authorities, SAR volunteers, private organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and industry stakeholders to provide for the fullest practicable cooperation in the coordination and conduct of SAR operations consistent with their capabilities and resources.

### AMENDMENT OR TERMINATION

84. Amendment or termination of this Plan is to be in accordance with the procedures set forth in the *United States National Search and Rescue Committee Interagency Agreement*.