

ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA
ANNUAL AWARD CEREMONY - 2003

On 7 October, 2003 in Washington, D. C., the Association for Rescue at Sea (AFRAS), will award its AMVER plaque to the captain and crew of the Japanese-flagged ship M/V AUTOMOBIL ACE for exceptional humanitarian service in a rescue at sea during an extremely well executed and complex rescue in August of 2002. The AMVER Safety Network is a voluntary, worldwide ship reporting system, which is operated by the United States Coast Guard and involves ships from over 140 nations.

The award ceremony and reception will be co-hosted by The Honorable Howard Coble, co-Chairman, U.S. Congressional Coast Guard Caucus.

On 12 August 2002, USCG Group San Francisco received a report from the sailing vessel MINTAKA relaying a request for medevac of a 56-year old male in urgent need of medical attention on board the 36-foot sloop ALCYONE. Due to the location the Group passed the case on to Command Center, which in turn passed it on to AMVER, who identified, contacted and diverted the 800-foot vehicle carrier M/V AUTOMOBIL ACE, 7 hours away, to assist. At the same time, USCG Cutter STEADFAST, along with an embarked CG helicopter, steamed at best speed to meet the AMVER ship and provide transport to land.

AUTOMOBIL ACE arrived on scene and embarked the patient plus the master of the S/V, a 67-year old male who was also in need of medical attention. The ship then diverted and rendezvoused with STEADFAST approximately 400 NM off the California shore. After several hours of coordination, the command center made arrangements for the 85th Special Operations Wing from Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico, to conduct a para-rescue delivery to stabilize the two patients.

The four USAF Para-Jumpers (PJ's) dropped from a C-130 aircraft alongside the merchant vessel and used an inflatable boat to transit to the ship. After the paramedics stabilized both patients, the cutter and the merchant ship accomplished a difficult evacuation of both the patients and the PJ's, including one of the patients requiring hoist by litter. The two were then airlifted to a waiting ambulance which delivered them to the Stanford University Hospital.

AFRAS salutes the captain and crew of M/V AUTOMOBIL ACE for responding in the tradition of AMVER and for coordinating such an extensive

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and successful rescue. AFRAS would also like to note that during the course of this rescue, Mr. Zaw Win Lwin of Myanmar, the Bosun of M/V AUTOMOBIL ACE was killed as a result of a head injury suffered while recovering the inflatable boat. Our sincere sympathies to the family, friends and co-workers of Mr. Lwin.