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ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka, an island located in the South Asian region, is categorized as a country with a high probability of natural disaster-prone. However, being an island nation, Sri Lanka claims for a vast sea area which comprises with an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and bears the responsibility of providing SAR services within the Sri Lankan Search and Rescue Region extend up to a maximum of 680 Nm conquering the South East of Indian Ocean. Congestion in both aviation and maritime traffic throughout the Sea Line of Communication (SLOC) in South of Sri Lanka and Colombo Flight Information Region (FIR) places an additional risk of maritime disasters and eventualities. Being a signatory to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) accepts the responsibility for the provisioning of SAR services as per the situation demands, in a circumstance within Sri Lanka's area of responsibility. In the view of enabling the efficient SAR service, GoSL has published these obligations through the National Disaster Management Act and Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP) to the government and non-government organizations as a measure of providing the required directives. Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) has to play a decisive role in this context as it becomes the first respondent which has the unique capabilities of height, speed and reach. However, in the present context, SLAF helicopters are encountering difficulties due to lack of equipment and expertise which creates a capability gap for conducting SAR operations during the night and adverse weather period over land and the sea in the SRR. Therefore, SLAF needs to reassess its air assets and capabilities while upgrading the helicopter fleet to meet future unforeseen challenges for SAR operations. To conduct the research primary data was collected from professionals in SLAF, SAR related officials in different organizations and secondary data from research articles, doctraines, government publications, websites and journals. Collected data were analysed according to the Thematic method and presented final recommendations for uplift the current status of SAR helicopter capabilities in Sri Lanka.

Key words : Search and Rescue, Adverse disasters, Search and Rescue Region, Sea Line of Communication, Helicopter operations.

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