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Safety Recommendation:

The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, as the issuing authority for the Irish National Maritime Search and Rescue Framework, should carry out a thorough review of SAR aviation operations in Ireland to ensure that there are appropriate processes, resources and personnel in place to provide effective, continuous, comprehensive and independent oversight of all aspects of these operations

Response:

On 13 June, 2018 the Secretary General of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, writing on behalf of the Minister, informed the Investigation by letter that:

The review is underway and is being conducted by a three-member independent consultancy team whose members have extensive range of experience in the areas of aviation regulation, Search and Rescue requirements, safety oversight, auditing and Search and Rescue operations. It is expected that the review should conclude within two months and a report with recommendations will be published.

The terms of reference for the consultancy team require them to focus in particular on:

- the specific reports, audits and frameworks highlighted in the AAIU's interim statement in relation to oversight arrangements for Search and Rescue (SAR) aviation operations, including any follow-up actions arising from these;
- the practices and procedures in place for oversight of SAR aviation operations within the IAA, as the national aviation regulator and the Irish Coast Guard, as the tasking authority for SAR aviation operations, and any other entities deemed relevant, and benchmark there in terms of their effectiveness, continuity, comprehensiveness and independence against models of best practice internationally (ideally using analogous models of SAR provision);
- the legal basis underpinning the oversight roles related to SAR aviation operations;
- the resourcing of these roles and processes within each organisation.

Based on a thorough review of theses and any other issues determined by the Reviewer as relevant to the AAIU recommendation, the review should:

- identify any gaps or lack of clarity in terms of roles, legal vires, processes, training, resources and/or personnel within these organisations to carry out their oversight of SAR aviation operations;

- make recommendations on practical measures to address these to ensure oversight arrangements for SAR aviation operations in Ireland measure up to international best practice in terms of effectiveness, continuity, comprehensiveness and independence.

In order to meet the requirements of the recommendation in the AAIU's interim statement, the review will need to be completed as a matter of urgency.

On 20 September 2018 the Secretary General of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport provided the Investigation with a copy of a consultants' report which was subsequently published on the DTTAS website on 21 September 2018. The report is available publicly at:

<http://www.dttas.ie/sites/default/files/publications/maritime/english/review-oversight-search-and-rescue-sar-aviation-operations-ireland/20180921aqefinalreportweb.pdf>.

The Investigation notes that the consultants' report contains 12 recommendations.

On the 3 July 2019 the Sec Gen of the DTTAS provided a further response to the AAIU in relation to AAIU Safety Recommendation No IRLD2018003:

In its interim report (No.2018-004), the AAIU called on the Minister for Transport Tourism and Sport to carry out a thorough review of SAR aviation operations in Ireland to ensure that there are appropriate processes, resources and personnel in place to provide effective, continuous, comprehensive and independent oversight of all aspects of these operations.

As notified to you on 24 August 2018, this review was completed and the report was published on 21 September 2018. As you know, the Minister accepted the 12 recommendations and set out a series of actions to follow-up on the report. He also undertook to keep the AAIU updated on developments on a periodic basis.

Please find attached, (see link below) herewith the latest update in the form of a report from the SAR Framework Review Group, including various appendices, notably a new National SAR Plan (to replace the existing National Maritime SAR Framework document).

Apart from those AQE recommendations specific to the terms of reference for the Review of the SAR Framework itself, the report also provides progress updates on the other recommendations arising from the AQE Report.

The Minister has approved the report and the National SAR Plan. He is bringing the report to Cabinet for their information next week.

On the 19/07/2019 the Minister issued a Press release relating to the National SAR Plan and other matters relating to ongoing response to AAIU Safety Recommendations No. IRLD2018003.

[Http://www.dttas.ie/press-releases/2019/minister-ross-publishes-new-national-search-and-rescue-plan-ireland](http://www.dttas.ie/press-releases/2019/minister-ross-publishes-new-national-search-and-rescue-plan-ireland)

AAIU Comment:

The AAIU notes the responses from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and awaits further updates.