

'Lost' Rio yacht reported safe

From ROGER WILLIAMS
in SAS Protea

AN INTENSIVE air-sea search lasting four days and covering an area of 15 023 square nautical miles between Ilha da Trindade and the Brazilian mainland was called off early yesterday when a Brazilian tug reported having sighted the Italian yacht Awa.

The yacht, which radioed a mayday distress signal on Friday and which has not been in radio contact since, was seen by the tug sailing along the coast towards the Cape-to-Rio finishing line.

The tug, Triatua, said the Awa had apparently had mast and rigging trouble. It was trying to establish why the mayday call was made, as this is used internationally only in times of grave distress, when lives are in danger.

After the mayday was heard on Friday the two guardships, Protea and Gastao Moutinho, sped to the area west of Trindade which had been indicated by Awa in her terse message. The two vessels spent the entire weekend on carefully-plotted box searches, which were extended southward after a Cape-to-Rio t a i l e n d e r reported seeing a red, solid object about one metre long in the sea. Awa has a bright red hull and it was feared she might have been holed and sunk.

Earlier in the race another Italian yacht, Criloa, which has an all-women crew, gave cause for concern when it was reported that radio "hams" in Italy and South Africa had picked up an SOS message from her. The Italian "ham" even gave the name of the girl in Criloa — Christiana Sandrini — who he said had radioed the SOS.

Although out of radio contact, Criloa has since been seen several times, sailing normally towards Rio.