NATIONAL GMDSS IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of August 9, 2007 Meeting

The Summary Record. This summary record is provided for information and will be posted on the Task Force portion of the Coast Guard web site at www.navcen.uscg.gov/marcomms/ (click GMDSS, then GMDSS Task Force). The summary record is also distributed to all Task Force members to serve as a Newsletter summarizing GMDSS developments and other issues in marine telecommunications.

The GMDSS Task Force met at the RTCM Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. The documents listed below were distributed and copies of all are available on the website:

Task Force Report on MMSI Policy to the Coast Guard, FCC, and RTCM
Task Force Petition to the FCC on MMSI Policy and Procedures
Summary Record of the 10 May 2007 Task Force meeting
Draft Task Force Press Release on MMSI & GPS for Users of VHF-DSC
Draft Task Force Comment on the Coast Guard's HF Weather Broadcasting

1. Brief Meeting of the MMSI Policy ad hoc group: The MMSI ad hoc group convened briefly and concluded that there was no problem of duplication of MMSI numbers on vessels with Inmarsat services. Since all other issues had been dealt with, the ad hoc group did not schedule further meetings pending new developments.

2. Summary Record of May 10, 2007 Meeting: The Summary Record of the May 10, 2007 meeting which had been distributed earlier, was noted without correction.

3. The Coast Guard Reports:

a. New Coast Guard Contract with RTCM will Support Task Force. Joe Hersey reported that the Coast Guard had entered into final negotiations with the RTCM for award of a contract to support the ongoing activities of the GMDSS Task Force. The new contract for a period of 1 year also has options for several following years. This information was enthusiastically applauded by the members. The RTCM was thanked for having picked up interim sponsorship of the Task Force after an earlier support contract through a private consulting firm was not renewed for fiscal year 2007.

b. Upgrade of MF Coastal Network to DSC for Sea Area A2. Dave Fowler gave a detailed report on the Coast Guard's program to complete the necessary upgrades to the coastal MF watch. Because of the high cost of restoring the MF antenna systems and replacing aging transmitters, Dave is doing a life cycle cost analysis including a review of distress cases which used MF alerting. The preliminary results based on lives saved seem to justify going ahead with further development of the business case. The options in the study were to complete the upgrades as planned, upgrade with a modified equipment suite at lower cost, and discontinue plans to have a complete coastal watch on

the MF safety band. There would be a number of problems with the option to discontinue the MF watch including the fact that many small commercial vessels are required to have MF alerting capability which is in accordance with GMDSS planning principles. If the option to discontinue MF operations should be chosen, regulatory action would be needed to specify alternative systems such as Inmarsat or domestic satellite systems with appropriate features for small commercial vessels.

c. Automated HF Radio Test Call Facilities. Russ Levin reported that the Coast Guard has activated an Automated Digital Selective Calling Answering System (ADSCAS) facility for responding to HF-DSC test calls which would be answered on 4 MHz only. This project is in response to a determination that 75-80% of the DSC calls received were for test purposes. The HF Test Call Facilities have been installed at 4 locations, the Atlantic Area Master Station at Chesapeake, VA, the Pacific Area Master Station at Pt. Reyes, CA, and at Communications Stations Honolulu and Kodiak.

d. Status Report on Rescue 21 VHF–DSC for Sea Area A1. LCDR James Marquez of the Rescue 21 Program, provided a briefing on the retrofitting of Automated Test Call facilities in the Rescue 21 network. The Test Call facilities will be implemented in all operational sites by September and will be included in all other sites as they become operational. Since the international standards for the Test Call facility were developed recently, many of the VHF-DSC radios on vessels may not yet have the capability to test automatically. Some of the newer radios do have the capability and some manufacturers may be able to provide software updates to activate the capability in older radios. Boating organizations with Newsletters are urged to alert users to the availability of automatic testing and NMEA will be invited to survey manufacturers of VHF-DSC radios relative to software upgrades.

e. Current Status of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS). Jorge Arroyo reported on the status of AIS implementation. The following are highlights:

1). The long awaited promulgation of regulations providing for expansion of AIS carriage to over 17,000 additional vessels is still pending but should be forthcoming in the fall of 2007 with a revised timeline.

2). The Nationwide AIS (NAIS) acquisition is in full swing with the deployment of a shore-side network of receivers at critical ports and waterways.By the end of fiscal year 2007, the Coast Guard anticipates adding 90 new receivers to the existing network of 90 VTS and R&D sites.

3). Coast Guard vessels are outfitted for AIS and the Navy has embraced the use of AIS on its vessels including those of the Military Sealift Command (MSC). It is expected that NOAA vessels and those of the Army Corps of Engineers will also participate.

4). The Corps of Engineers has had good results with using a doppler system to calculate real time current information at the approaches to their locks and broadcasting

the data using AIS. The Coast Guard is working with NOAA to do something similar with their Physical Oceanographic Real Time System (PORTS).

5). The Coast Guard has type approved 4 Class B AIS units to date and another is being processed for approval. All require FCC approval prior to sale. The FCC published a Notice seeking comment on their Class B approval process but final action is pending.

6). Senate Bill 1892, the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2007, mandates that the Coast Guard and others provide a status report on AIS Rules no later than 90 days after enactment.

f. IMO Initiative for Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT). There were no new developments to report on the status of the LRIT Program

g. Coast Guard Response to Task Force Recommendations on MMSI Policy. The Coast Guard has reviewed the recommendations and plans to make access to the master MMSI database available to the MMSI Registration Agents for validation. There has, however, been no decision yet on whether to move towards making the MMSI portion of the database accessible to the public. There has also been no action yet to follow up with the ITU on why they apparently do not publish the expanded vessel descriptive information requested by the IMO to improve Search and Rescue.

4. **The FCC Reports:** Tim Maguire reported for the FCC, the following are highlights of his report:

a. Pending FCC Rulemaking Issues. There have been no new Reports or Notices of Further Rulemaking on Part 80 released since the last meeting but some have been awaiting clearance at the Federal Register for the better part of a year.

b. Pending approval of AIS Class B Units. The Coast Guard has approved 4 AIS Class B Units and those same units are expected to receive routine FCC approval but they will try to expedite final action.

c. FCC Response to Task Force Petition and Recommendations on MMSI Policy. The FCC has not yet taken a position on the Task Force recommendations. With respect to the Petition, the FCC will probably put it out for Public Comment.

5. **The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Report on the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS).** Eric Barton provided a presentation on the VMS which included the following highlights:

a. NMFS Monitors about 3700 Fishing Vessels for Law Enforcement. The VMS systems specified for compliance are all satellite based and have the capability to transmit position reports automatically at specified intervals. They can also handle catch reports and vessel business and personal messages. All have both transmit and receive capability. NMFS is moving toward a standardized national protocol rather than the

previous arrangement which delegated selection of VMS systems to regional authorities. The system could be expanded to handle up to 100,000 vessels. Similar VMS monitoring programs are in place in numerous other coastal administrations throughout the world.

b. Optional Satellite Systems for VMS Compliance. NMFS reimburses the fishing vessels for the cost of the least expensive approved system and pays for the transmission of NMFS required reports. Vessels may use the system for business or personal communications but they pay the applicable charges. All of the approved systems can send distress alerts and receive messages from shore. The communications systems involved operate 24x7 but the various service desks may not be continuously monitored. The four communications systems currently approved for VMS are as follows:

1). Boatracs
2). Thrane & Thrane (essentially Inmarsat C)
3). Skymate
4). Faria (a service using Iridium)

c. NMFS and Coast Guard Utilize VMS Data Cooperatively. NMFS is very careful to preserve the privacy of the data to assure the fishing vessels that their competitors will not have access to the data. The Vessel reports are shared with the Coast Guard which provides both aerial and cutter surveillance of the fishing fleets and this is especially effective in planning patrol flights etc. The VMS systems reports are also available to the Coast Guard for Search and Rescue assistance when needed.

6. The RTCM Report: RTCM President Bob Markle reported that the section of the RTCM website, www.rtcm.org, dealing with required equipment to comply with SOLAS regulations for Navigation and Radio Safety equipment has recently been updated. In addition, a section had been added dealing with LRIT requirements. The 2008 RTCM Assembly will be at the Catamaran Hotel in San Diego, California May 4-10, 2008.

7. GMDSS Modernization Initiative. Ed Gilbert reported as follows:

a. Review of GMDSS Functional Requirements. The Task Force is planning to take a fresh look at the functional requirements adopted for GMDSS noting that those requirements were established 25 years ago and that some of the requirements such as MF and VHF Public Correspondence are no longer available.

b. Task Force will Monitor Developments in E Navigation. A new initiative which the Task Force is following closely is termed “E Navigation” and encompasses a variety of integrated digital applications including electronic chart displays and an enhanced Loran service termed E Loran. The International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) is developing a ‘vision’ for E Navigation and two IMO Subcommittees (Radionavigation and Communications, Search & Rescue) have established work programs including a Correspondence Group to work between

sessions. An E Navigation Conference scheduled for Seattle in mid November has previously been billed as an AIS Conference.

8. **<u>Reports and Issues: The Recreational Vessel Group Report.</u>** Elaine Dickinson led the discussion for the Recreational Vessel Group which included the following highlights:

a. Recreational Vessel Summit held in Washington 19 June 2007. The Coast Guard and the Department of Homeland Security hosted a summit meeting in Washington to take input from recreational vessel advocates on how these vessels can assist the Coast Guard and the Department in enhancing the Coast Guard's maritime Domain Awareness program. Many of the statements offered by boating organizations stated that they saw no merit in establishing a national licensing program. In this regard it was noted that 40 states already have a mandatory Safe Boating Course for new operators. The Task Force will monitor developments in this program.

b. Coast Guard Collecting State Registration Data for a Master Vessel Identification System (VIS). The Coast Guard indicated that they were compiling state vessel registration data into a master database termed the Vessel Identification System. The VIS should be on line in 6 to 8 months for Coast Guard use. State Boating Law Administrators would also have access to the data

c. A National MMSI Number Suggested for Reporting Suspicious Activity. One suggestion at the meeting was to set up a special national Coast Guard MMSI number for submitting such reports using a Coast Guard working channel rather than one in the public domain. Coast Guard AIS authorities will be requested to examine this suggestion for feasibility.

d. Many Non-recreational Vessels Signing Up for Free MMSI Registrations. BOATUS noted that they were getting a large number of applications from non-federal government agencies and light commercial craft for MMSI Numbers for their boats. This is not precluded by the Coast Guard/FCC agreement which lets them register any vessels not requiring an FCC Station License. Since this has the potential to become a burden to the registration agents, it was agreed to pursue other groups which might take this on for their own members. The American Waterway Operators (AWO) was a suggested organization for light commercial vessels and an appropriate Law Enforcement Association might take on the program for State and Local government agencies.

e. Draft Press Release Approved on Need to Register for MMSI Number and Connect GPS Receiver. The Draft Press Release directed to Boating Safety Organizations was approved by the Task Force. The Press Release points out the need for users of VHF-DSC Radios to register for MMSI numbers in order to activate the automated Distress features of DSC. It further notes the importance of connecting the Radio to a GPS or Loran receiver so that an accurate position can be automatically transmitted along with the distress alert. Wide dissemination by Boating Safety

Organizations and Boating Magazines is hoped for. The Press Release will also be placed on the website.

f. USCG Auxiliary Monitoring Program Supports Coast Guard Communications. The Auxiliary Radio Monitoring Program termed AUXMON has been operating successfully on both coasts in support of Coast Guard Communications Services. A dedicated group of volunteers with the proper radio equipment monitors scheduled broadcasts and reports any distortions or irregular transmissions. They have a close working relationship with Coast Guard personnel at all Communications Stations and are performing a valuable service for the Coast Guard which would otherwise be hard pressed to monitor all of its broadcasts.

9. Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Service Agents & Manufacturers Group: There were two new issues of interest to this group:

a. Reports of incompatibility between SC-101 Radios and other VHF-DSC Radios. There have been some reports of incompatibility between VHF-DSC Radios adhering to the international standard and those built to the RTCM SC-101 domestic standard. The problem is due to international frequency stability standards adopted after the RTCM 101 specification was developed. At least one manufacturer of SC-101 Radios, Uniden, has announced that free software updates are available for their radios by calling 1-800-648-4923 or sending an email to SC101upgrade@uniden.com. NMEA will be invited to survey other manufacturers of SC-101 radios to see if they have a comparable software fix available.

b. Survey of Manufacturers of VHF-DSC Radios to Determine Availability of Automated Test Call Capability. As noted in item 3.d. above, There is considerable interest in being able to test VHF-DSC radios with a new Test Call Facility being retrofitted into all Rescue 21 sites. Since the standard has only recently been developed, many older VHF-DSC radios may lack the capability but NMEA will be invited to survey manufacturers to ascertain the availability of backfitting a test call capability.

10. Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Commercial Vessel Group: There were two discussions of interest to this group as follows:

a. Task Force to Review Radio Safety Requirements for Small Fishing Vessels. At the next meeting the Task Force will be invited to consider whether to undertake an initiative to review the carriage requirements of safety radio equipment for small fishing vessels. Fishing vessels over 300 tons are regulated by the FCC which requires full GMDSS compliance. Fishing vessels below 300 tons are regulated by the Coast Guard.

b. Task Force Approves Draft Comment to Coast Guard on HF Broadcasts. The Task Force approved the draft comment to the Coast Guard on their High Frequency (HF) Weather Broadcasting Program. The response is due by 24 August and will also be placed on the Task Force website.

11. **Reports and Issues: the GMDSS Training Group:** Two issues of interest to this group were discussed as follows:

a. Liaison with the Coast Guard National Maritime Center (NMC) on Handling of Changes to the GMDSS Question Pools. The Task Force's recommended changes to the GMDSS Question Pools are submitted to both the FCC and the NMC for approval. The FCC uses a Public Notice procedure before approving the revised questions. The NMC accepts the changes without taking any action. Our goal is to have the NMC tell the Training Institutions that changes have been accepted and that they may be used for GMDSS Examinations. While the Task Force has been invited to notify the Training Institutions, we feel that the notice should preferably come from the NMC.

b. Recertification of Deck Officers for GMDSS Revisited. The Chairman of the Training Group, Owen Anderson, asked that this issue be reviewed at the meeting. While FCC GMDSS Operator Licenses are good for life, the Coast Guard also certifies Deck Officers as having met the qualifications including successfully completing a 2 week resident training course. Many of these certifications were issued 5 years ago and questions have been raised as to whether recertification would require refresher training or be granted automatically. The Coast Guard's policy has been to recertify those deck officers serving aboard ship but not those who have not been serving at sea. The IMO's Standards of Training and Watch Committee reviewed the issue recently and despite some support for requiring recertification, left it optional with Administrations. The U.S. position going in to that Conference was not to require recertification. Under the circumstances, the consensus of members attending was not to try to reopen the issue.

12. **The Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force:** The Task Force agreed to meet next at the Amelia Island Plantation near Jacksonville, Florida during the Annual Convention of the National Marine Electronics Association on the morning of 19 October 2007. A Draft Agenda for the October meeting is attached.

GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

9 August 2007

1. Monitor FCC continuing action to update GMDSS Rules (TF)
2. Recommend actions to reduce false alerts in GMDSS systems (TF)
3. Monitor Coast Guard Port State GMDSS inspection program (TF)
4. Monitor MSI broadcasting programs for compliance with GMDSS Standards (TF)
5. Review GMDSS Internet Web Sites and update Task Force portion of USCG site (TF)
6. Support SOLAS Working Group planning for IMO COMSAR meetings (TF)
7. Advocate Canadian coordination to extend GMDSS services to the Great Lakes (TF)
8. Review GMDSS concepts and make modernization recommendations (TF)
9. Advocate regulatory action to require VHF or EPIRBs for all vessels offshore (TF)
10. Advocate overhaul of FCC policy and practice on MMSI assignments (TF)
11. Monitor non-GMDSS systems: AIS, LRIT, SSAS, VDR, VMS, & E-Navigation (TF)
12. Advocate intership calling on HF GMDSS channels (CV)
13. Recommend training programs for non-mandatory users of GMDSS systems (RV)

14. Encourage GMDSS handbooks and Internet and video training aids (RV)
15. Recommend Class ‘D’ VHF-DSC as superior to RTCM SC-101 format (RV)
16. Advocate FCC enable R/Vs keep existing MMSI when applying for Station Lic. (RV)
17. Encourage Mfgrs. to upgrade GMDSS explanations in equipment manuals (SA)
18. Recommend to FCC clarifications to their List of Approved GMDSS Equipment (SA)
19. Monitor guidelines for GMDSS equipment maintenance & maintainer standards (SA)
20. Recommend proper interconnection of GPS receivers with DSC Radios (SA)
21. Maintain GMDSS Question Pools for FCC and Coast Guard Examinations (TR)

Key to cognizant groups:
(TF) Task Force
(CV) Commercial Vessel Task Group
(RV) Recreational Vessel Task Group
(SA) Service Agents and Manufacturers Task Group
(TR) Training Task Group

Attachment: Draft Agenda for Task Force Meeting 19 October 2007 in Amelia Island FL

Please refer questions and proposals to Captain Jack Fuechsel at 703-527-0484 or gmdss@comcast.net If you have an Internet server with spam filters, please authorize receipt of messages from gmdss@comcast.net

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