



Editorial

Welcome to issue 61 of AMERC News - *which doubles as Circular 279 and, as such, must be circulated to all GMDSS instructors/examiners by their AMERC centre contact.*

In this issue we have a brief on the most recent **Maritime Consultation Group** (MCG - Page 2) - reflecting relevant items covered in the most recent AMERC Executive Committee (EC) meeting and/or related items. Included here are items on the **revised AMERC Administration Handbook**; confirmation that a **ROC is required prior to undertaking VTS training**; clarification on the **conduct of the OPT pre-sailing checklist**, the **marking scheme for NAVTEX station programming**, and for **selection of satellite for Fleet 77**. Updated information about improved **'live signals' for use with the Transas simulator/Tutor** is also included here – as are the **quarterly statistics for GMDSS examinations**.

Page 3 hosts our usual **'GMDSS Criss-Crossword'** to help stretch delegates' knowledge of **international geography** and the use of **Admiralty List of Radio Signals** (ALRS) publications, including a reminder about the **'Triviaplaza world geography quiz'** identified by Chris Harrison and first introduced in News number 59.

Explanation Please? (Page 4) has a question on **NAVTEX station selection** in the Mediterranean Sea; and another about **the authority of a MRCC to upgrade a vessel's Pan Pan, to a Mayday**, in a MOB situation.

Tales from the Key-Side and Member Profile(s) are again 'resting' – whilst

Maritime Miscellaneous returns (Page 5) with an article about the **Stad Ship Tunnel** in Norway.

Your submissions are always welcome for **Explanation Please? Member Profile, Maritime Misc'** and **Tales from the Key-Side** - and/or anything else you think would be of interest to readers. Further suggestions to help delegates develop their knowledge of international geography would also be welcome.

As usual – my sincere thanks to those of you who've provided feedback, questions, tales and other information for your newsletter.

Sláinte!

Ian W

Mail: gmdss4all@gmail.com

AMERC AGM Closing date for Papers.

The closing date for the submission of papers for the AGM 2017 document is Friday 28th April 2017. The Secretary has already sent an email to Members regarding this. On the off-chance that anyone has overlooked that email and wishes to submit a paper, they should do so no later than 28th April.

The **Maritime Consultation Group** (MCG) meets regularly - currently four times each year – for the AMERC Executive Committee ‘Open Meeting’. MCG membership consists of AMERC Executive Committee (EC) representatives; the AMERC Chief Examiner; the MCA Chief Examiner and/or the MCA Deck & GMDSS Team Leader; the NAC and other AMERC/industry specialists.

The latest meeting was held in London in March 2017. The following items reflect discussions at MCG (full minutes will be circulated appropriately) - and/or associated items that are of interest to Members and training centres. The items are placed according to size - not in any ‘priority’ order.

AMERC Administration Handbook: Members and training centres should have received an email from the Secretary, regarding an updated version of the AMERC Administration Handbook. The main changes are to documentation (books) allowed/required for GMDSS training and examinations.

These latest changes allow the additional option for using ADRS1345 (Admiralty Digital Radio Signals) for training, in lieu of the hard copy versions of ALRS Volumes’ 1, 3, and/or 5 – provided that the quantities available in class meet the requirements stated in the latest version of the Handbook.

Hard copy versions (of ALRS Vol’s 1, 3 and 5) must, however, be used for examinations - not the digital ADRS1345 version.

Noted that ADRS6 may be used for both training and examinations, in lieu of hard copy ALRS Volume 6.

Readers are encouraged to download the latest version of the Handbook to check the requirements.

VTS Training: The MCA has confirmed that a GMDSS ROC (providing Authority To Operate) is required, prior to undertaking the VTS Course.

Operational Performance Test (OPT) – pre-sailing checklist: The pre-sailing checklist (GOC, ROC and LRC) is intended to be mostly candidate-led - with only occasional prompting by the examiner if/when deemed necessary.

OPT – NAVTEX Station/Message selection:

Previous versions of the OPT had the selection of NAVTEX stations as a ‘grey box’ area – meaning that anyone failing to select appropriate station(s) for their voyage would fail that part of the exam. Selection of ‘messages’ was not a grey box area, though candidates might drop points.

The latest OPT has combined the Station and Message selection as a single task. In this latest version of the OPT, the ‘grey box’ only applies to the correct Station selection (as ‘compulsory’ messages will be received regardless of operator selection).

OPT – Fleet 77 Satellite and default LES selection:

In line with the change to NAVTEX marking (above), the Fleet 77 OPT task for selecting satellite will also become a ‘grey box’ area, if a candidate fails to acquire a satellite ‘in sight’ – but choosing the default LES for Routine traffic will not. Centres will be informed when revised exam scripts are available for download.

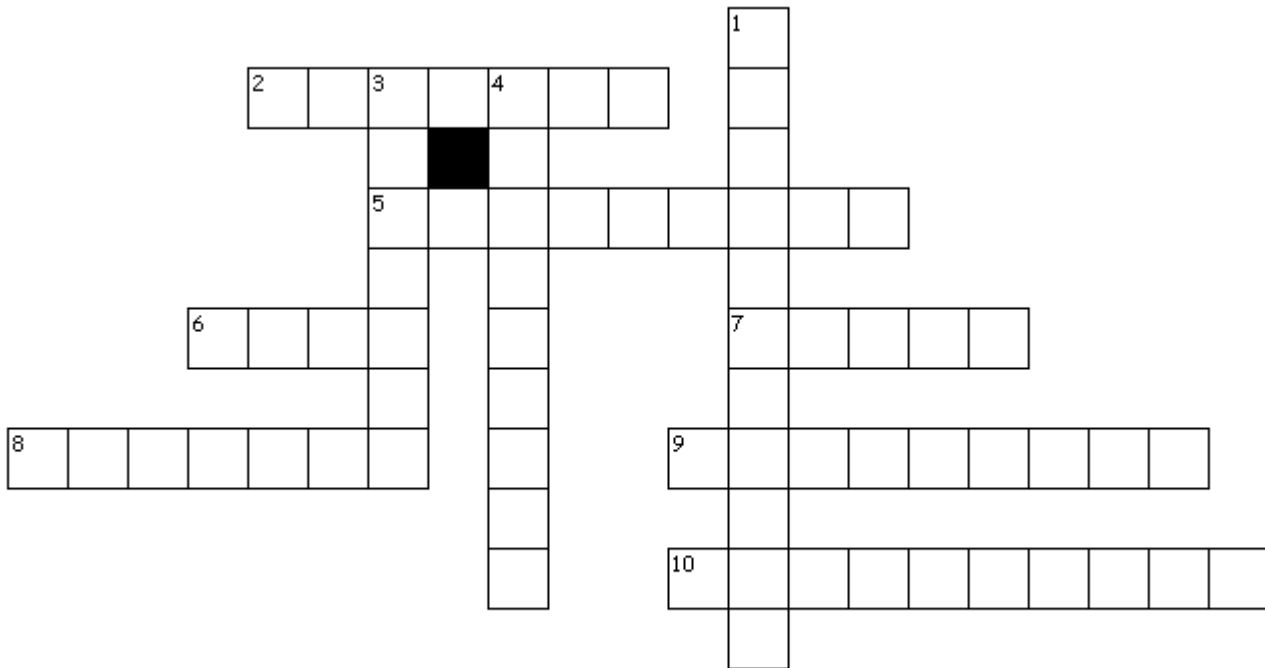
Updated Transas Simulator/Tutor ‘live signal’ Resource:

The ‘Resources’ part of the AMERC website now has updated information on installing the ‘live signal’ facility for Transas Simulators and Tutor packs. The updated files include improved quality signals simulating Mayday; Shannon Volmet; and Fort Collins R/T Time Signal. Centres who have already installed the earlier version are advised to ‘upgrade’ by downloading and installing the new ‘live signals’.

GMDSS Examination Statistics – quarterly report: National Administration Centre (NAC) examination statistics for the period **1st October 2016 – 31st December 2016** are shown below:

EXAMINATION	ENTERED	(1 st time)	PASSED (1 st attempt)	% PASSED 1 ST ATTEMPT
UK GOC	265	(240)	234 (213)	213/240 (>88%)
ALL GOC	512	(466)	460 (421)	421/466 (>90%)
UK ROC	26	(26)	26 (26)	26/26 (100%)
ALL ROC	36	(36)	36 (36)	36/36 (100%)
LRC	44	(44)	44 (44)	44/44 (100%)

GMDSS Criss-Crossword Number 61 - all answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to ALRS/ADRS, *where appropriate*. Readers might also like to test their knowledge of international geography by using the [‘Triviaplaza geography quizzes’](#) website (where you might also find one or more of the answers required below).



Down

- 1. (4,2,2,3) NAVTEX station providing coastal coverage for 9-across.
- 3. (3,4) Portuguese name for the longest waterway in the Iberian Peninsula.
- 4. MMSI for DSC station to the east of 7-across.

Across

- 2. Upstream city on the (8-across) at the limit of navigable waters.
- 5. MMSI for DSC station situated at 1-down.
- 6. River that enters the North Sea at 7-across.
- 7. Germany's third largest North Sea Coast seaport.
- 8. (3,4) Longest river in Spain.
- 9. Spanish province in which (8-across) enters the Med'.
- 10. (4,6) ID letters for the NAVTEX stations providing information for the waters to the west, and north, of 7-across.

Issue 60 answers – with hyperlinks:

DOWN: 1. [RioGuadiana](#); 3 [India](#); 4. [Cadiz](#); 5. [Sierra \(Oops!\)](#); 7. [002241026](#).

ACROSS: 2. [Tianjin](#); 6. [CostaDeLaLuz](#); 8. [Algeciras](#); 9. [002240995](#); 10. [LasPalmas](#).

Explanation Please?

This is the area for questions that may puzzle you – whether you're a trainer without a specific 'radio' background; a seagoing operator who's finding that the 'real world' doesn't seem to be fully in-tune with what you learned in the classroom (or with what you've read in publications – official or otherwise); or because it's not particularly clear why a specific answer to a question on the '[AMERC Quiz](#)' is necessary when it appears that one of the other answers may also appear appropriate. *Note that those of you who have access to our 'EXAMINER'S FORUM' on the AMERC website can open-up and discuss any subject/question that they have an issue with ☺*

Question: With regard to a vessel entering the Mediterranean Sea at Gibraltar, bound for the Balearic Islands - is it necessary to program the NAVTEX receiver for Tarifa (Spain), Bordj el Kiffan (Algeria), and Cabo de la Nao (Valencia - Spain) - or will a lesser number of stations cover the voyage? ALRS Volume III does list, and show on a diagram, which forecast areas are covered by the various VHF stations on the Spanish coast - but doesn't specify which forecast areas are broadcast by their NAVTEX stations.

Answer: According to the [JCOMM web page](#) - Tarifa NAVTEX station provides NAVAREA III (Med) information for forecast areas: Gibraltar Strait, Alboran, Palos and Algeria (in addition to some NAVAREA II coverage). Cabo de la Nao provides forecast information for Alboran, Palos, Algeria, Cabrera, Baleares, Minorque, Lion and Sardaigne. But diagram X4 in the ALRS Vol 5 NAVTEX section shows radio range of the Cabo de la Nao transmitter extending towards, but not all the way to, Gibraltar – so it would be sensible to program both Tarifa and Cabo de la Nao stations initially (even although there is an overlap of forecast area coverage). Once Cabo de la Nao is being well-received, **and** you have passed out of the Gibraltar Strait forecast area, you could remove Tarifa from the programming. Provided you are receiving the information you require from those two (Spanish) stations, there should not normally be any need to program Bordj el Kiffan – though anyone in doubt could program it as a 'belt and braces' until convinced that they are getting everything they need, at which time they could 'de-program' station(s) providing only 'duplicated' information?

Question: A ship in an A3 area, for which our SAR authorities have responsibility, sent out an Urgency broadcast for a MOB. It was received by xxx Radio who forwarded it to the MRCC. The MRCC then instructed xxx Radio to send a MAYDAY RELAY. My question is: are MRCCs allowed to do that when the Master sent an Urgency call?

Answer: Under the GMDSS, the 'controlling station' is normally assumed to be the RCC co-ordinating the rescue (though an On Scene Coordinator/OSC may be appointed) - and, as you say, the incident was within the area of responsibility of your own SAR authorities. In this case I'd assume that the MRCC considered that the person was likely to perish unless 'immediate assistance' was obtained, and chose to upgrade the Pan Pan/Urgency broadcast to Distress/Mayday Relay. It's also conceivable that they might have been considered culpable had they under-estimated the seriousness of the situation, and the MOB was subsequently lost whereas, had that person been recovered, nobody would be complaining about the Urgency being changed to Distress? The Master of the vessel would also, in all probability, be happy to have that elevation taken out of his/her hands?

The IAMSAR Manual lists a number of things to consider in a MOB situation - including (but not limited to) whether the person:

- (i) has been spotted from the bridge (allowing immediate action to be taken);
- (ii) is reported to the bridge by an eyewitness (and action is initiated with some delay); or
- (iii) is reported to the bridge as missing (in which case a much wider search area would be required, along with the assistance of other vessels/rescue units).

Information update [Received from [Michael Moir – Radio Surveyor](#)]: There has been a relaxation on implementation date from 2017 to 2024 for telex frequency changes {[MSC.1/Circ.1460/Rev.1 refers](#)}. Frequencies will then have to be within narrower tolerances. [MGN562](#) seems to say that it is the Radio Operator/Owner who must check prior to any passage that the radio equipment meets current frequency requirements. My instructions are to check at the first survey after the new regulation comes into effect, which would have been this year - but was postponed until 2024. Most of the equipment can be made compliant with a software upgrade. Very old kit will have to be replaced.

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Maritime Miscellaneous: Norwegian Coastal administration will build the world's first ship tunnel

It is now formally stated that [Stad Ship Tunnel](#) is part of the Norwegian National Transport Plan (NTP) in the period of 2018 to 2029. This paves the way for the Norwegian Coastal Administration efforts to build the world's first full-scale ship tunnel.



Tunnel entrance at Moldefjorden. (Illustration: Kystverket/Snøhetta - left)...a designer's image of the proposed structure (right)

In the NTP 2018-2029 the Stad ship tunnel has been granted funding in the first period of the plan (six years). Calculations performed in conjunction with the technical pilot project shows that the ship tunnel has an estimated cost of NOK 2.7 billion. Funding of NOK 1.5 billion is included in the first period of the NTP, 2018 to 2023.

'This is good news, and in line with NCA recommendations as part of the impact assessment. There are still many pieces of the puzzle that needs to be put into place before construction can start, but we have previously stated that the actual construction could be at the earliest in 2019', says project manager for Stad ship tunnel at NCA, Terje Andreassen.

NCA's recommendations were made on the basis of monetized and non-monetized impacts.

The impact assessment and the technical pilot project is part of the pilot project that the NCA shall deliver to the Ministry of Transport and Communication in the spring of 2017. Further, the project will undergo an external quality assurance process (KS2) before the project is presented to the Parliament, who then formally decides on project funding. During a press conference in early March this year, consensus among a majority in Parliament for the realization of the world's first full-scale ship tunnel was presented.

For more information on the Stad Ship Tunnel project - [Here are answers to frequently asked questions](#)

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