

Piracy calls on Iridium now free of charge

www.iridium.com

As part of its anti-piracy initiative Iridium reports that it has made all calls from ships equipped with its communications terminals to the UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) centre free of charge, effective immediately.

The UKMTO office in Dubai is the primary point of contact between merchant shipping and naval forces patrolling the high piracy risk zone off the Somali coast.

UKMTO has direct communication to all naval assets in the area and plays a key role in coordinating the naval response when pirates board and attack ships.

Under Iridium's calling plan, all calls to the UKMTO +971 number will be connected through the Iridium network free of charge.

"As a service to our important mar-

itime customers, we strongly support the improvement of communications for ships who may encounter piracy," said Dan Mercer, vice president and general manager, Europe, Middle East, Africa & Russia, Iridium.

"Recognising that Iridium can provide a critical communications lifeline in a potentially life-threatening situation, it is our responsibility to support the crew by removing any barriers to free and open communication with authorities."

Iridium notes that it has been working with its partners to outfit an increasing number of ships with 'citadels,' where crews can take refuge and wait safely when pirates board.

A key element in the citadel strategy is a stand-alone, secure communications link to the outside world, so the crew can connect with rescue operations.

Several companies are now offering citadel communication packages with a concealed external satellite antenna and cabling that cannot be easily disabled by the pirates on the ship.

"The anti-piracy patrol zone is so large that naval forces are seldom able to come to the aid of a vessel under attack before the pirates take over the ship," said Michael Capocchi, president and CEO of Beam Communications, one of the companies offering Iridium-based citadel solutions.

"It becomes difficult, if not impossible, for a rescue attempt to be made without endangering the lives of the hostages. This is why it is critically important for military authorities to confirm that all crewmembers are safely barricaded inside the citadel before any attempt can be made to storm the ship."

Integrated FB and VSAT service from Telemar

www.telemar.se

Telemar has launched a new integrated VSAT and FleetBroadband service, named SeaCall Duetto, offering global satellite connectivity for a fixed monthly fee.

The service is managed via the Telemar Office Connect onboard server, which controls selection of the different systems and the transfer of data between ships and shore.

This switching is done automatically, so the user does not have to manually choose the appropriate satellite communications option for their particular location. Various communications optimisation options are also managed by this service.

While the FleetBroadband service will come into effect in areas where Ku-band coverage is unavailable, Telemar says that, in its overall experience testing the new service, the vessels using the system only needed to switch over from the VSAT for a few hours over a period of some months.

Telemar also says that it will soon be offering the Duetto product with a number of additional optional extras, such as its SeaView IPTV@sea and Vision@sea services.

These applications allow crews to view multimedia content from PCs or TVs and allow officers to communicate via video calling through the use of video-on-demand and secured satellite capacity.

Modular maintenance contracts can also be included with the satellite communications package.

Thrane & Thrane launches FB voice distress system

www.thrane.com

Thrane & Thrane has announced the launch of a non-SOLAS voice distress calling system using FleetBroadband, via its 'SAILOR 3771 Alarm Panel FleetBroadband'.

Inmarsat says that the company's recently launched Voice Distress (Non-SOLAS) Calling service provides full priority access in both ship-shore and shore-ship communication in emergency situations, together with pre-emption for distress priority calls initiated by activation of the 'red button'.

The service is able to interrupt non-urgent calls once the distress button has been activated and give full priority to subsequent emergency communications.

A voice distress call from the FleetBroadband system will be connected to an operator at an MRCC (Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre). Each Inmarsat-4 satellite region has a nominated MRCC; RCC Australia, RCC Den Helder (Netherlands) and RCC Norfolk (USA), which assesses the call and directs details to a suitable rescue co-ordination centre closer to the scene of the incident.

The SAILOR 3771 Alarm Panel FleetBroadband has been designed for integration with Thrane & Thrane's SAILOR 150, 250 and 500 FleetBroadband terminals and is the first system in the market to pro-

vide the Inmarsat Voice Distress (Non-SOLAS) calling functionality.

"Inmarsat has, throughout its existence, strived to provide the broadest and most efficient means of enabling the seafarer to make contact with the appropriate authorities in times of distress or trouble," says Peter Blackhurst, head of maritime safety

services, Inmarsat.

"The new voice distress service will enhance safety for any vessel where the option is fitted to its FleetBroadband terminals. We are also working towards bringing the system to the IMO in order to establish it as a full part of GMDSS in the future."



The SAILOR 3771 has a 'red button' which will activate distress calling, with priority and pre-emption, on FleetBroadband

Elektrikom to expand VSAT capacity

www.vsat.eu

www.telenorsbc.com

Telenor Satellite Broadcasting (TSBc) has signed an agreement with maritime VSAT provider Elektrikom for the provision of satellite capacity from its 1°West orbital location.

Utilising capacity on TSBc's IS 10-02 Spot 1, Elektrikom will manage and deliver VSAT services throughout Europe.

"The additional capacity on IS 10-02 Spot 1 will be used for maritime VSAT services, providing shipping vessels, specifically in the Mediterranean, with much needed capacity to support additional broadband communication services, demanded by crew to stay connected at all times, whilst at sea," said Andre Eerland, CEO of Elektrikom.

"This is the first contract we have signed with TSBc and look forward to working with them in the very near future to grow our capacity requirements at 1°West."

TSBc says that its next satellite, THOR 7, due to commence commercial service in 2014, should also expand the satellite services available to maritime customers via its network.

Broadband by Powerline for ships

www.gentay.co.uk

British IT supplier Gentay has launched a wireless network solution for vessels using 'Broadband by Powerline' (BPL) networking technology.

Gentay says it has devised a system for establishing a large, stable combination of a wired and wireless network on board a vessel, using power cables to carry network traffic.

The network system developed by the

company was subsequently tested in collaboration with Wallem Group, and demonstrated during sea trials that the BPL technology was equal to conventional networks with regards to speed, capacity and stability, according to Gentay.

The aim of the technology is to remove certain disadvantages which Gentay has identified in the current wired or wireless network options usually used on board, such as time consumption in installation, and the expense or difficulties of repairing

faulty networks.

"Low cost practical networking solutions will open the door to many applications that will be of great use to the maritime industry but have been unaffordable because of the prohibitive costs of installing the required physical network on board," said Martin Nygate, director of Gentay.

Mr Nygate notes that IP CCTV could be one prime example of an application that could be easily installed and operated using the BPL system.