

## **Ship Security Alert Systems (SSAS)**

There have been reports that recent legislation from the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) on ship security alert systems (SSAS) is not clearly understood by some sectors of the maritime market. The following information provides SSAS-specific detail from Inmarsat's perspective and seeks to address the current misunderstanding.

### **Use of GMDSS and stand-alone CN137-compliant SSAS equipment**

One of the SSAS options agreed by IMO is the use of GMDSS equipment. In order to address this, Inmarsat has specified certain modifications to the Inmarsat C system, by amending the System Definition Manual (SDM) through Change Notice CN137. These changes apply equally to GMDSS-capable versions of mini-C and to stand-alone CN137-compliant equipment for SSAS. Inmarsat C has been a cornerstone of the GMDSS for more than a decade. The first of these modifications is scheduled for early December 2003. The Inmarsat C infrastructure will be fully operational to support Inmarsat C or mini-C covert alerting by the end of December 2003.

The new CN137 modifications are mandatory for all Inmarsat C land earth stations (LEs) and optional for Inmarsat C and mini-C mobile earth stations (MESs). The reason why the MES modifications are optional is two-fold:

1. Some manufacturers may decide not to develop or offer an upgrade to existing models of their Inmarsat C; and
2. Some manufacturers no longer support hardware or software upgrades for older models of Inmarsat C MESs.

If in doubt, please contact the manufacturer or manufacturer's agent for the model of Inmarsat C fitted to your vessel.

The SSAS modifications for GMDSS versions of Inmarsat C and mini-C MESs include provision of two covert buttons, the necessary interconnecting wiring, an interface and a software upgrade. Some manufacturers will also offer a stand-alone SSAS that complies with Inmarsat Change Notice CN137 and uses distress priority P3 alerting.

Covert alerts from the above equipment are sent at Inmarsat Priority Three (P3), which is the same priority as distress. Piracy/Armed Attack alerts are already in use, at priority P3 for GMDSS. The CN137 modifications make the activation covert under such circumstances. All P3 alerts use the Inmarsat C or mini-C MES signalling channel.

Inmarsat priority P3 alerts are free of charge, as already agreed by IMO Assembly Resolution A.707(17). GMDSS distress alerts are delivered to associated RCCs. Delivery of P3 covert alerts, unless specified otherwise by the competent authority, will also be to the RCC associated with the LES that receives the

alert. However, with covert alerts, there is a single, second addressee option. This would be the competent authority designated by the Administration within the host LES country, should the Administration within that country request that covert alerts not be sent to the associated RCC.

It is not possible for covert alerts, sent at priority P3 on GMDSS-capable equipment, to be addressed to any destination other than an RCC or competent authority designated by the Administration.

Any and all charges that may accrue for the subsequent on-forwarding of covert alerts to any destination other than the associated RCC or competent authority are **not** covered by IMO Assembly Resolution A.707(17) and would be a matter for agreement with and between Administrations.

### **Use of non-GMDSS Equipment**

As an alternative to using the GMDSS functionality of Inmarsat C and mini-C, it is also possible to use their messaging capability to provide SSAS capabilities. Such use of Inmarsat C and mini-C for SSAS would be by software applications and would use the messaging channel. This method does not allow for any prioritisation of the covert alert, does not use the GMDSS infrastructure and is not free of charge. It does, however, allow for greater flexibility in addressing, including multiple addressing, of alerts.

Software applications make possible also the use of Inmarsat D+ for SSAS, in similar ways to non-priority use of Inmarsat C and mini-C, including the addressing flexibility. Covert alerting by Inmarsat D+ also does not use the GMDSS infrastructure and normal message charges would similarly apply.

Inmarsat C, mini-C and D+ can all offer more than SSAS; vessel tracking, for example.

### **ISPS and SSAS Deadlines**

Some countries are already stating that International Ship Security Plans (ISSPs) must be in place as early as January 2004. In order to obtain an ISSP, ships will have to have a SSAS either in place or at least be able to show proof that one has been ordered for fitting by the IMO deadline. For most vessels, the latest possible implementation date for SSAS is by the first Safety Radio Survey after 1 July 2004. Some countries, most notably the USA, have stated that ships will not be permitted to enter their waters unless they are in full compliance with the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code by the 1 July 2004 deadline. Inmarsat is not an authority on the ISPS Code and details about ISPS implementation should therefore be obtained from National Administrations