

13th CHRIS MEETING
17-19 September 2001, Athens, Greece

COMITE INTERNATIONAL RADIO-MARITIME (CIRM)

ENC Encryption

*Letter dated 24 May 2001 from Capt. C. Cobley, Secretary General of CIRM,
to the IHB Directing Committee*

Dear Sir,

I am writing on behalf of CIRM members involved in Electronic Chart Systems. As you know, CIRM represents the interests of the Marine Electronics Industry internationally, and our membership includes all the manufacturers of ECDIS systems currently type-approved to comply with IMO performance standards.

At the CIRM 108th Technical Committee meeting the manufacturers of ECDIS, Electronic Chart Systems and Chart Radars expressed their concern over the subject of data encryption, and have asked me to write to you to seek the urgent support of IHO for the adoption of an international standard.

The S-57 standard has been widely adopted as the official ENC data format. Encryption, either of, or within, this standard has been discussed widely, mainly to allow commercial protection of Hydrographic Office data. Meanwhile, as you know, the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office and the Norwegian Mapping Agency have formed an organization called PRIMAR. This was created along the lines of a Regional ENC Coordination Centre (RENC) to distribute data from Northern Europe. The current membership of PRIMAR includes Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the UK.

From the initiation of the PRIMAR organization they announced that distributed data would be encrypted. This caused much debate and, due to the lack of an internationally agreed encryption method, PRIMAR produced their own standard. This standard has now been adopted by several manufacturers, indeed six of the seven CIRM members who already have Type Approved systems, have already adopted the PRIMAR encryption method. The seventh member has announced that they will include it in their next software release. We understand that this encryption scheme has been offered to the IHO for adoption internationally.

The concern of industry is the lack of an internationally agreed standard which, it is feared, could lead in the extreme, to the adoption of individual standards by each Hydrographic Office or RENC. This would have significant consequences for the industry, requiring considerable additional development work and investment by manufacturers, which would inevitably increase the price of ECDIS, ECS and Chart Radar equipment to the users.

We therefore urge IHO to support the adoption of a single encryption scheme for international application, and strongly recommend that the PRIMAR scheme be adopted for this purpose.

It would be very helpful to know what the current situation is on this matter, and what IHO's intentions are. Our members would of course be only too happy to assist with the work of developing an international standard, and to provide technical advice as necessary.

Capt. C. Cobley
Secretary-General CIRM
24 May 2001
