

COUNTRY REPORT: MAURITANIA

INTRODUCTION.

1. International. Mauritania is not an IHO member, but applied for becoming member in the late 80's. Two third of the IHO Member States had voted in favor of this candidature at the beginning of the 90's but since then Mauritania has not ratified the IHO Convention. Mauritania participates in the EA_tHC Conferences as an Associate Member. Mauritania is a member of MOWCA, PMAWCA, but not of IALA. Mauritania has acceded to the SOLAS and UNCLOS conventions, but not the SAR Convention.
2. Preliminary Liaison. The visit of the WAAT was prepared by the French Defence Attaché services (Colonel Raymond) and the Services for Cooperation and Cultural Action of the French Embassy (in particular Mr Grannec, French advisor to the Mauritanian Director for Merchant Fleet) in close liaison with the Direction de la Marine Mauritanienne (Navy).
3. Points of Contact. Up-dates to the IHO Yearbook:
 - a. Name and rank of the Director or Head / Nom et grade du directeur: Capitaine de Vaisseau Mohammed Abderrahmane Ould YAHYA, Directeur de la Marine Nationale.
 - b. N° of Charts published / Nombre de cartes publiées: 8 (cartes du SHOM (France) n° 5480 5915 5993 6083 6113 7386 7387 7568 correspondant à 3 cartes INT 1951 1952 1991).
 - c. Maritime Authority / Autorité Maritime : M le Ministre de la Marine Marchande.
 - d. Lighthouse Authority / Service des Phares et Balises : Ports Autonomes de Nouadhibou and Nouakchott for the channels to these harbours. Marine Marchande elsewhere.
 - e. Processing of nautical information / Traitement de l'information nautique: No firm organization.
 - f. Land cartography / Cartographie terrestre : Ministère de l'Équipement / Service Topographique.
 - g. Harbour surveying / Hydrographie portuaire : PA of Nouakchott for this harbour only: SNIM (Société Nationale Industrielle et Minière) for the approaches to Nouadhibou mineral terminal.
 - h. Wrecks / épaves : Ministère des Pêches.
 - i. Tides: no permanent observatory.

DESCRIPTION OF MARITIME ACTIVITIES.

4. National Maritime Affairs. Decree 67/98 of 17 June 1998 gives to the Ministère des Pêches et de l'Économie Maritime (MPEM) important responsibilities for safety of navigation such as:
 - a. Maritime safety
 - b. Maritime signals and buoyage
 - c. Management of port infrastructure and of the wrecks
 - d. SAR coordination and meteorological information broadcasting
 - e. Maritime environment protection

Several other functions have been transferred to MPEM like the surveillance of fishing which is conducted from MPEM ships operated by Navy crews.

5. In practice few entities outside MPEM are active in the maritime safety domain: two examples:
 - the port authorities of Nouadhibou and Nouakchott who are responsible for maintaining buoyage within the port limits, are under the authority of MPEM.
 - the Navy is of course independent of MPEM: they are in charge of the inventory of wrecks but their activity is limited to the neighbourhood of Nouadhibou¹.
6. All the authorities met by the WAAT and in particular the army chief of staff (Colonel Mohammed Lemine Ould N'Diyane), the General Director of Merchant Marine (M Cheikh Ould Khaled) and the Minister of MPEM (M Hamedou Ould Hamedou) expressed the desire to see Mauritania conform to all the international conventions concerning the safety of navigation (SOLAS, STCW, as well as MARPOL, FIPOL, etc.) and to see these provisions transposed into national law. Mauritania also has contact with IMO on the subjects of SAR and Aids to Navigation (follow on of a report of Administrateur Général des Affaires Maritimes Leclerc).
7. Trade and Maritime Traffic. No original statistics on shipping transit and port calls, nor national report on maritime activities were available. There are 3 main harbours:
 - a. Port Autonome of Nouadhibou, with a yearly capacity of 17 million tons. The activities are both commercial and fishing, and the harbour is also the naval base for the main part of the Navy.
 - b. Port Autonome of Nouakchott, with a yearly capacity of 16 million tons, is a deep water port for handling general cargo, cement, containers, and refined oil.
 - c. Mineral terminal of Cansado (Nouadhibou - central), mainly used and maintained by the SNIM, with a yearly capacity of 14 million tons, and an oil terminal (importing for the Nouadhibou refinery which feeds also Nouakchott) with a capacity of 40 million tons.
8. Through Routes. The N-S traffic is important between 18°W and 20°W, but no statistics were available.
9. Transshipment. Cargo ships import goods in Nouakchott which are then transferred by road to Mali.
10. Coasting and Local Trade. There is very little coastal and local trade: just a small sea link (including passengers) with Las Palmas was mentioned.
11. Offshore Supply and Support. For the time being, no offshore oil production or ore exploitation.
12. Tourism - Cruise Liners. No cruise liners.
13. Tourism - Small Craft. No real tourism traffic is observed.
14. Fisheries. Fishing represents 50% of the Mauritanian exports, and octopus catches represent 60% of the fishing revenues. National fishermen are mainly craftsmen operating with pirogues from the huge beaches between Nouadhibou and Nouakchott (more than 4000 pirogues are mentioned). Industrial fishing involves Mauritanian fishermen based mainly in Nouadhibou and foreign fishermen. About 400 industrial fishing vessels (Korea, Japan and EU) are working with Mauritanian EEZ. The control is operated by Mauritania from two ocean-going ships, one aircraft, several patrol boats and 4 coastal radars with radio capacities (Cap-Blanc, Cap Timeris, Nouakchott, Catboule). There is also a European project intending to use the future Galileo satellite system to control the fishermen and another radar could be installed in the southern part of Mauritania. EU and Mauritania have signed an agreement in 1996 allowing 150 European fishing vessels (120 are Spanish) to operate in Mauritanian waters. The income is important (€2 millions directly to the Mauritanian treasury, and €4 millions devoted to marine development

¹ Wrecks are not listed for the area between the entrance channel to Nouadhibou and Cap Timeris to the south: however they are known to be numerous and dangerous to navigation, causing coastal traffic to divert well to seaward to avoid unsafe areas.

projects). However, the impact on fish stocks is a concern (since the beginning of the 90's, the National center for oceanographic research observes a worrying diminution of the stocks), and the consequences on the activity of Mauritanian fishermen are often tragic.

15. Responsibility for Safety of Navigation. Responsibilities in this area are poorly defined, particularly outside of port limits. According to the decree 67/98, responsibility relies mainly with MPEM, however, as already mentioned, there are several actors in this field, and for the time being some ambiguity remains concerning in particular the relationships between the Ports, Navy and MPEM. As an example, the buoys are maintained by the port authorities, but when the fairway buoy marking the entrance to Nouadhibou recently moved off station the Navy was tasked to return it because "they were used to do that". However, the Navy is not funded or formally tasked to do this. Meanwhile visiting ships pay a levy for the maintenance of buoyage but it is unclear how these revenues are spent.
16. Defence Force Responsibilities. Navy is not directly involved in hydrographic matters, but do assist with surveillance of the EEZ by providing crews for MPEM vessels. The Navy would like to build a "gendarmarie maritime" (coastguards) in order to control the EEZ (source: commander Iseikou Ould Elwely, Head of the Navy base of Nouadhibou).
17. Coastal Zone Management and Environmental Protection. Mauritania expressed concern about environment and coastal changes. The annual north-south transport of sediment along the coast is estimated to be 290 million tons and causes a problem at all of Mauritania's coastal port developments. The Park of Banc d'Arguin (6000 km² sea area) is recognized by UNESCO as part of the 'common heritage of mankind'. This environmentally sensitive and unsurveyed area lies close south of Nouadhibou and would suffer greatly if there was any major pollution caused by a maritime accident at the port.
18. The national centre for oceanographic research (IMROP) has two relatively new ships (donated by Japan in 1997) : one of 36m length for the management of living resources, and a catamaran of 17m for shallow water operations.
19. A Geographic Information System for waters of Mauritania, Cape Verde and Guinea (Conakry) has been financed by EU and FAO. It could help the DATAR (Direction de l'Aménagement du Territoire) in its role concerning national and regional development planning.

CAPACITY ANALYSIS.

20. Status of surveys within the National Maritime Zone. Published French charts of Mauritanian waters are mostly based upon surveys carried out before the early 60's. There is no regular updates from Mauritians, but when surveys are made available to the charting authority, the charts have been maintained accordingly (eg NINFERMA surveys of 1973 taken into account in chart 5915). Some areas, notably in the vicinity of the Bank d'Arguin are unsurveyed and contain uncharted dangers to navigation. As a result these inshore areas must be avoided by coastal traffic.
21. Collection and Circulation of Nautical Information. There is currently no centralized organization for the collection and circulation of nautical information. Unfortunately there is known to be a lot of this information of immediate interest to mariners which has not been properly collated or forwarded to SHOM for up-dating the published charts or dissemination via GMDSS. For example, all lighthouses, except for two (one being unofficial), and almost all light buoys² are known to be out of order; a considerable³ number of wrecks are present in and around Nouadhibou; depths less than those charted have been reported by vessels. From a practical point of view this means that ships arrive in Mauritania without critical safety information concerning

² The buoys at Nouadhibou were installed with the help of Germany at the beginning of the 90's. They are now completely out of order due to vandalism and lack maintenance.

³ A list giving the name and the approximate position of 68 wrecks near Nouadhibou (19 of them being in the mooring areas) was provided. But a figure of more than 150 wrecks in that area has been mentioned.

the status of the buoys and lights, the existence of well known dangers or temporary hazards like drifting containers

22. The possibility to use the Safety Net service of Inmarsat via the Navarea coordinator in an interim phase before Navtex capacity is locally implemented, has not been followed by Mauritania in spite of a formal proposal by SHOM. Therefore there is no dissemination of nautical information except via the pilots and via local notices to mariners promulgated by the autonomous harbours (not sent to SHOM).
23. SAR provisions: although Mauritania has not signed the international conventions concerning SAR, they are very keen on marine environment protection⁴ and on reducing the risk and effects of a maritime accident. The coastal radar stations could help in a future organization of a SAR capacity, which seems to be the responsibility of the Director of Merchant Marine. The implementation of a primary center in Nouakchott, with two secondary centers (one in the North and one in the South), is currently under study. The Florence Conference on SAR (2000) was mentioned, but there seems to be little progress in reaching a regional solution.
24. Survey Capability. The WAAT was not able to see or assess any survey capability during the short visit. It is understood that a small survey capacity exists at Nouakchott port de l'Amitié and likewise at Nouadhibou (which would also have concern for the Baie des Lévriers and Banc d'Arguin, where the navigation is currently forbidden). Whatever the local capacity may be it was obvious that insufficient information is being provided to adequately maintain the published chart.
25. The Navy has trained two surveyors (cat A?) and two marine cartographers in Spain, and two surveyors (cat B) in France. But these skills are likely to have faded because the personnel have not been able to put them into practice. The Navy has an 18m launch that could be suitable for surveying operations but so far it has not been used for this purpose. The Navy received some surplus surveying equipment from the UK some time ago, but it has yet to be set to work and its reliability must be questioned.
26. The MPEM has two oceanographic survey ships which have obvious potential as surveying platforms: the smaller ship is not well suited to its oceanographic task and perhaps could help with inshore hydrographic surveys (although this possibility could not be discussed with the oceanographic research centre during the WAAT visit).
27. The Mauritanian company BSA is the regional distributor of satellite images. The use of remote-sensing is most certainly a good solution for many coastal monitoring issues (see ESA/SHOM/UKHO Cacao project for the west African coasts).
28. Independent Chart Production Capability. The Service Topographique is officially responsible for all kind of cartography. In practice they work on topographic maps and are not involved in marine charting.
29. SHOM assumes the primary charting responsibility for Mauritania's waters, and can continue this task provided that nautical information is regularly made available. At this stage of development it is not considered necessary or feasible for Mauritania to set up its own marine cartographic unit.

PROPOSALS FOR CO-ORDINATION AND CAPABILITY BUILDING.

30. National Hydrographic Committee. (see suggested TORs and tasks in the main part of the report). There is no high-level coordinating body for hydrographic matters in Mauritania. The MPEM would appear to be the most logical organization to play a leading role in this respect, together with the port authorities and Navy. Importantly, such a Committee needs to be officially

⁴ Just before the visit of WAAT a seminar on the impact of oil activity on protection of the environment took place in Mauritania, and resolutions highlighted the need for better knowledge of the coastal environment.

recognized by the Government as part of its response to meeting national responsibilities under IMO instruments like the SOLAS convention or GMDSS organization.

31. MSI Organisation and GMDSS. For the time being, there is no real MSI organisation nor GMDSS operations. The existing method is to pass important information to ships on arrival via the pilot. Within GMDSS several technical means are used for passing MSI to mariners. For ocean-going ships, the navigational warnings should be made available on INMARSAT (SafetyNET) via the NAVAREA II coordinator: although it was noted that no input has been received from Mauritania for many years. For ships sailing through Mauritanian waters or approaching Mauritanian harbours, NAVTEX should be the optimum solution; but this infrastructure does not exist at the moment. However, since the concerned ships are part of international shipping, they will have INMARSAT facilities onboard, hence the same information could be passed on SafetyNET via the NAVAREA II co-ordinator. This requires the MSI to be made available to the NAVAREA coordinator via telephone/fax/e-mail. For local coastal warnings, the only practical solution is to use VHF through the port radio stations. The situation should be fully reviewed whilst maintaining the important role of the pilots in any future organization.
32. No NtMs nor nautical publication (List of Lights, sailing directions, etc.) are issued by Mauritania. These publications are published and maintained by SHOM.
33. Hydrographic Capability. It was not possible to properly assess Mauritania's hydrographic capacity during the WAAT visit. There were some trained personnel within the Navy but it was suspected that skills will have faded due to a lack of practice since training. The ports seem to make use of commercial expertise when surveying tasks are required and there is little evidence of an indigenous surveying capability. In view of the importance of the maritime sphere to Mauritania and the lack of MSI and adequate charting for safe navigation into and out of Mauritania's ports it is considered very important that Mauritania embarks on a plan to build up a national hydrographic unit. This unit should be able to advise on all hydrographic matters, identify priorities for work, undertake this work or oversee commercial surveys where they are carried out.

PROPOSALS FOR ASSISTANCE.

34. Training. There is no immediate need for training additional qualified surveyors. As long as they have not the opportunity to practice their skills, the new taught surveyors would just have theoretical capacities, not usable for improving the security of navigation in Mauritanian waters. When new equipment is purchased for the survey and when a national plan is established, it will be important to ensure appropriate and synchronized training is also provided.
35. Equipment. A list of basic equipment to be acquired has been established by the Mauritanian authorities from which sonar, chart publishing software and tools, as well as survey launches do not seem a priority in light of the present national needs and capacities.
36. Funding. Levies paid by ships calling in Mauritanian ports for the provision of safe passage and maintenance of aids to navigation should be re-allocated for the corresponding works, and the setting up of a national hydrographic unit and national MSI organisation could be funded by revenues from EU fishing licenses part devoted to marine development projects.

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS.

37. Clarify the roles of the different actors involved in nautical information, and in particular define the entity in charge of collecting the nautical information at a national level. This responsibility consists of being the focus point toward which all the hydrographic information (single observations as well as thorough surveys) is sent. The Navy is well placed to take this responsibility - it is installed all along the Mauritanian coasts, operates the radar watch stations, uses adequate communication systems and has the required qualified personnel for validating and

sorting the relevant Maritime Safety Information. This clarification could possibly be done via a National Hydrographic Committee. The MPEM would appear to be the most logical organization to play a leading role in the creation of such a Committee, together with the port authorities and Navy. This committee could also help identify the individual areas of responsibility and list the critical hydrographic and nautical information needed for safety in Mauritanian ports and coastal waters.

Action : Mauritania with advice from France/IHB

38. As a result of the above action, validate the points of contact list for the IHO Year book given in paragraph 3 above and forward to IHB.

Action : Mauritania

39. Provision of Hydrographic Services in accordance with SOLAS. France can continue to issue nautical publications, charts and up-dates, on behalf of Mauritania. The provision of MSI and the capacity to conduct surveys according to local priorities will support the safety of navigation in Mauritanian waters. An agreement between the States of France and Mauritania could provide an unambiguous statement regarding Mauritania's commitment to meet SOLAS regulations.

Action: Mauritania & France

40. Effective and timely promulgation of Hydrographic Information.

- a. It is urgent to report existing known dangers to navigation – particularly wrecks, extinguished lights, off-station or defective buoys and shoal soundings in critical areas such as ports and their approaches. This information should be passed to SHOM for appropriate NtM and/or charting action.

Action: Mauritania

- b. An organization for the collection and dissemination of MSI needs to be instituted as soon as possible, with a link being established with the NAVAREA II co-ordinator at EPSHOM, Brest, for the distribution of urgent MSI on INMARSAT SafetyNET.

Action: Mauritania & EPSHOM

41. Encouragement of Development of Hydrographic Capability.

- a. Equipment and Training. Suitable survey platforms should be identified for embarking portable surveying equipment (including the catamaran of IMROP, the 18m Navy launch and work boats in Nouadhibou and Nouakchott). France/IHB can provide advice as necessary on portable equipment and training packages needed for meeting the priority need for developing an inshore survey capability.

Action: Mauritania and France/IHB

- b. Funding. Funding for the development of a hydrographic unit might be obtained from the budget set aside for maritime projects within the overall EU fishing license revenues. A project aimed at improving the safety of navigation by the formation of a hydrographic service, updating coastal surveys⁵, and improving the distribution of MSI as required by the new SOLAS regulation, should gain favourable consideration.

Action: Mauritania and France/IHB

⁵ Outsourcing some surveys is always a possibility if there are national capacities to specify, control, accept and maintain them.