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21 March 2006
N83/NAVOCEANO

MEMORANDUM

From: Eric L. Villalobos,
SOUTHCOM Regional Coordinator
CODE N83/NAVOCEANO

SUBJ: TRIP REPORT FOR PARTICIPATION AS HYDROGRAPHIC TECHNICAL ADVISOR REPRESENTING THE CAPACITY BUILDING COMMITTEE (CBC) OF THE MESO-AMERICAN & CARIBBEAN HYDROGRAPHIC COMMISSION (MACHC) IN SUPPORT OF THE HYDROGRAPHIC COMPONENT OF THE GULF OF HONDURAS PROJECT.

1. The purpose of this trip was to serve as Hydrographic Technical Advisor to Honduras, Guatemala, Belize, and COCATRAM (Central American Commission on Maritime Transport: executing agency) for the Electronic Chart Working Group (ECWG) Task Group 1 CBC in support of the Hydrographic Component of the Environmental Protection and Maritime Transport Pollution Control in the Gulf of Honduras (GoH) Project. The meetings took place from the 22nd – 27th August 2005 in Guatemala and Honduras and from the 13 – 16 March 2006 in Belize and Nicaragua.

2. Composition of US Delegation, in support of IHO MACHC CBC:

- Kathryn Ries, Deputy Director, Office of Coast Survey, NOAA (Belize and Nicaragua only)
- Dr. Lee Alexander, MACHC ECWG GIS Consultant, UNH (Belize only)
- Mr. Eric L. Villalobos, SOUTHCOM Regional Coordinator, N83, NAVOCEANO (all countries)

3. Main Composition of VIPs at meetings:

Guatemala:

- CAPT Randolpho Leonel Chacón, Director, Maritime Department, Navy
- CDR Tyrone Hidalgo, Chief Hydrographer, Maritime Department, Navy
- Maria Isabel Fernández, Executive Director, National Ports Commission
- Juan Antonio Lopéz, Director, Consulting/Projects Department, National Ports Commission
- Jorge Mario González, Director, National Geographic Institute
- Marcos Osmundo Sutuc, Chief, Cartographic Division, National Geographic Institute
- Antenor Gordillo Leiva, Chief, Hydrographic Division, National Ports Authority Quetzal

Honduras:

- Allan Molina, Chief Engineer, Technical Division, Empresa Nacional Portuaria (ENP: National Ports Authority)
- Iván Gonzáles Mairena, Assistant Chief, Technical Division, ENP
- Carlos Portillo, Chief, Hydrographic Division, ENP
- All Hydrographic Department employees, ENP

Belize:

- Ministers of Works Transport & Communication, Natural Resources & Environment, Tourism, Defense, and Fisheries
- Maj. Lloyd Jones, Ports Commissioner, Belize Ports Authority (BPA)

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- Maj. Gilbert Swaso, Operations Manager, BPA

Nicaragua:

- Juan Manelia, Operations, COCATRAM
- Eira NG, Program Executing Manager, Gulf of Honduras Project

4. Background:

The Environmental Protection and Maritime Transport Pollution Control in the GoH Project RS-X1009 is a GEF-funded initiative to help finance: 1. building the regional capacity for maritime and land-based prevention and pollution control in Central America, including the establishment of regional institutional arrangements for coordinated pollution prevention and control in the GoH; 2. building the information base and developing a Strategic Action Plan for the GoH; 3. enhancing navigational safety in shipping lanes, with activities focusing on improving hydrographic and oceanographic cooperation in the region in order to prevent and prepare for potential grounding and spills related to shipping operations; 4. and improving environmental management in the regional network of five ports within the GoH.¹

The development objective of the project is to reverse the degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems within the GoH through prevention of maritime transport-related pollution in the major ports and navigation lanes, improving navigational safety to avoid groundings and spills, and reducing land-based inputs to the adjacent coastal and marine areas within the GoH. The global objective is the implementation of a regionally coordinated strategic action plan for the GoH that will result in enhanced protection of international waters. The GoH encompasses a tri-national body of coastal and marine waters, including portions of the exclusive economic zones of Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. The Project Area for the proposed GEF operation includes the GoH as well as the watersheds of Belize, Guatemala and Honduras, with rivers flowing into the Gulf.²

The Meso-American and Caribbean Sea Hydrographic Commission (MACHC) is an IHO regional consultative and technical body established in 1994 to support regional safety in navigation and Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) as well as the protection of the maritime environment. Its task is to ensure that adequate and timely hydrographic information for regional safety of navigation and other purpose is available through international cooperation. This aids regional Member States (MS) to tackle specific needs/topics, such as: Capacity Building, IHO compliant data acquisition/processing, Q/A issues, data production/distribution/services, as well as Technical Subject Matter Expert (SME) exchanges to share working experiences among MS. As such, the ECWG/Task Group 1 CBC of the MACHC is active in assisting all countries with hydrographic/cartographic technical support as requested/needed.

5. Discussion Highlights:

- Presented the “Why Hydrography?” brief.
- The importance of hydrography for safety of navigation and SOLAS (mainly nautical charting products for egress/ingress operations, UKC, shorter navigation routes, promulgate Notice to Mariners, and standardized charting) as well as its importance with respect to other coastal oceanographic processes (i.e. currents, tides, meteorology, etc.) to aid Coastal Zone Management and Environmental Protection, among others.

¹ Project Document: BELIZE, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND MARITIME TRANSPORT POLLUTION CONTROL IN THE GULF OF HONDURAS (RS-X1009)

² Ibid

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- **Served as Hydrographic Technical Advisor, assisting all countries in the pre-survey planning of the hydrographic component, identifying the Technical Specifications as well as formulating an estimated budget for the execution of the field operations. This will serve as the preamble to the official Plan of Execution document to be presented to COCATRAM, the Executing Agency in charge of the managing the project.**
- **All the information collected during the survey operations will be used to update existing nautical charts in the region to improve the safety of navigation as well as to create/update oceanographic models to aid in the protection of the marine environment.**
- **Discussed S-55 of the IHO and guided each country in defining all their respective S-55 entries.**
- **Discussed NAVOCEANO training programs (CAT A, CAT B, NMTT) as another set of tools for the countries to develop their hydrographic capabilities.**

6. Summary

The visits were very productive in outlining the importance of hydrography at the decision-making level within each country. The countries understand that their support at all levels of their respective agencies is essential to execute successfully all hydrographic survey operations in support of the 3rd Component of the GoH Project.

Technical Specifications and budget estimates for the execution of the Hydrographic Component are now finalized and ready for inclusion in the official Plan of Execution document of the GoH Project, to be submitted by all countries on or before the next MACHC meeting of September 2006, in Acapulco, México.

7. Actions

No actions required. Recommend the continued support of IHO activities in the region, allowing us to maintain US Navy presence as well as maintaining open lines of communications, especially when external funding is available to support such activities.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Eric L. Villalobos
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