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Recommendations regarding firing exercises

Submitted by: SWEDEN

1. ACTION REQUIRED

The Commission is requested to note the following and to review the recommendations and take appropriate actions to bring out the recommendations to relevant organisations and authorities.

2. BACKGROUND

Firing exercises are frequently taking place in coastal waters of the Baltic Sea. In many cases national authorities declare the affected area to be “closed to navigation” or “dangerous to shipping”. The exercise areas are consequently quite often forming a hindrance to shipping.

To minimize the impact of these activities on shipping, vessels need to get relevant information timely in a clear and unambiguous way.

3. COMMENTS

Information about firing exercises should preferably be promulgated through a T-notice in NtM in good time before the exercise take place. This enables vessels to consider the activities when making the voyage plan and to add notes about it on paper charts and ENC.

Besides, an increasing number of Hydrographic Offices are including temporary amendments (T-notices) in ER (updates to ENCs) which makes promulgation through NtM even more important.

Navigational warnings regarding firing exercises are however still very common and often quite comprehensive as they may include both coordinates indicating the affected area and a schedule for firings. In the southern Baltic Sea navigational warnings concerning military exercises are estimated to occupy approx. 50% of the time utilized by the Navtex transmitter for service area J (Gislovshammar).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

To avoid overload of the Navtex system, and to make it easier for the mariner to obtain information on firings, Baltic Sea Sub-area co-ordinator have drafted the recommendations below. These recommendations were presented to the Baltic Sea Hydrographic Commission (BSHC) at a meeting in Klaipeda in June 2007. As the recommendations were presumed to be of value also outside the BSHC-area Sweden was requested to present the recommendations at CPRNW 9.

Hydrographic Offices, NAVAREA co-ordinators and national co-ordinators are recommended to:

- encourage relevant authorities to establish designated firing areas, if it does not exist, and henceforth restrict the exercises to these areas
- encourage relevant authorities to make it possible to contact the firing-areas on VHF and/or telephone
- include limits and designations of firing areas on charts and ENC and, if feasible, also include contact information such as VHF-channel, call signal and telephone number to the command of the exercises
- demand the authorities who are responsible for the exercises to send information about coming exercises to the NtM-office, in good time
- include information about firing exercises in NtM as T-notices
- if (when) possible include information about firing exercises in ENC as temporary ER
- if a navigational warnings regarding firing is considered necessary, refer to charted, designated firing-areas rather than listing co-ordinates