

Paper for Consideration by IRCC and HSSC

[Relevance of information overlay services and their status in the global IHO ENC programme]

<i>Submitted by:</i>	FRANCE
<i>Executive Summary:</i>	Based on an exploratory assessment of the UK Admiralty Information Overlay (AIO) service made by SHOM in 2013, this paper introduces a discussion on the relevance and eventually the improvement of information overlay services to avoid any potential issues or uncertainties in terms of safety of navigation.
<i>Related Documents:</i>	IHO CL 51/2013
<i>Related Projects:</i>	WEND-WG and DQWG programmes of work, revision of S-66

Introduction / Background

The Admiralty Information Overlay (AIO) service is produced and distributed by the UKHO exclusively through the Admiralty vector chart service (AVCS), as an additional layer (S-57 format) to ENCs, usable only on compatible equipment. The AIO *"contains all Admiralty Temporary & Preliminary Notices to Mariners (T&P NtMs) and provides additional preliminary information that is specific to ENCs, such as reported navigational hazards that have been incorporated on paper charts but have not yet been included in ENCs"* (as explained in AIO user guide on <https://www.ukho.gov.uk/ProductsandServices/ElectronicCharts/Documents/AVCS/Admiralty-Information-Overlay-User-Guide-v1-0.pdf>).

SHOM has conducted an exploratory assessment study on a few AIOs related to ENCs issued by France, and also by other nations, and has detected some anomalies. Moreover, when the AIOs report differences between ENCs and official paper charts, which could introduce a doubt for the navigator, it raises the question whether these differences could or should be solved preferably by a better cooperation between ENC producers, RENCs and service providers.

Analysis/Discussion

The examination of AIOs related to French ENCs shows that:

- Not all temporary and preliminary SHOM notices to mariners (NtM) appear as AIOs
- Some AIOs don't correspond to SHOM NtM.

Concerning AIOs related to ENCs from other countries, it is reported:

- Some contradictions with ENCs already corrected from T&P NtMs by the ENC Producer
- Some AIOs which might be different from the latest T or P NtM.

The assessment study was obviously carried out on a very limited number of AIOs (14 in relation to French ENCs and 31 to other ENCs produced by other countries). It must be noted that the permanent control of all overlay information added on French ENCs would be a very heavy task. Although there is no doubt on the fact that the AIO service offered by the UKHO for AVCS is intended for the interest of the navigators, the assessment study however highlights some issues which could, at least, create doubts for navigators on the reliability of official charts and more specifically on the global quality of the IHO ENC service.

53 Member States of the IHO produce ENC's, 41 of them issuing T&P NMs on their paper charts. For the 30 which normally issue ENC revisions to cover their T&P NMs (and 6 more have intend to do it before 2015), it seems to SHOM that information overlays should not be necessary. When they exist, the reason should be highlighted, as, if the information is not redundant with the content of the ENC, it could be understood as information detained by the service provider that the ENC producer is not informed, of or does not agree with.

In the case of an information overlay reporting navigational hazards that have been incorporated on derived paper charts but are not included in the original ENC's, it could be difficult for the navigator to determine which of the two products gives the right information. It seems to SHOM that the difference should be solved in advance, as far as possible, in relation with the relevant hydrographic office (HO), by a better cooperation with producers who are responsible for the quality of their ENC's.

So far, although delivered by an official HO, AIO is not recognized by the IHO or IMO as an official product compliant with IHO standards to be used for safety of navigation.

If the IHO considers that it offers a real advantage for the safety of navigation that could not be achieved by a better application of rules already existing or by improving them, its use should be encouraged by IHO (and therefore it would be necessary to set up a programme of work about its content, representation, delivery, etc., and perhaps acting to make it mandatory). In addition, it should be interoperable with all type-approved systems. Finally, coastal States being responsible of the nautical information delivered to the navigators in the waters under their jurisdiction, they should be informed as soon as possible of this additional information.

On the other hand, if the IHO considers that the assessment shows that risk and confusion exceed the advantages expected in the provision of information overlay services, it seems to SHOM that a minimum set of procedures should be applied and agreed between the HO operating the AVCS service and the IHO ENC Producers, so it is not necessary to add information overlays for the safety of navigation in this service.

SHOM is ready to provide the UKHO, the IHB and the other IHO ENC Producers with the report of the AIO assessment study.

Conclusions and recommendations

The relevance and the quality of the Admiralty Information Overlay service is becoming a matter of concern for the IHO ENC Producers as this service challenges the quality of the official ENC's. Priority should be given to ensure that the mariners do not face ambiguities in the global official IHO ENC Service. Stakeholders (HOs, End-User Service Providers, mariners, ECDIS manufacturers), should be invited to consider at a larger scale whether or not information overlay services should be either improved or generalized to become an IHO standard or at the end abandoned as soon as all T&P NtM are coded in ENC's.

In this regard, it is reminded that in accordance with SOLAS, V/9-3, that *"...Contracting Governments undertake to ensure the greatest possible uniformity in charts and nautical publications and to take into account, whenever possible, relevant international resolutions and recommendations"*.

France is in the view that as soon as guidance is provided by the IRCC and HSSC, this assessment should be included in the DQWM and/or WEND-WG programme of work to define a position and a

way ahead about the provision of information overlay services and further provide service providers and ENC Producers/RENCs with recommendations and directions.

Justification and Impacts

The recommendation is justified by the risk that the benefits of information overlay services could sometimes and in some areas be offset by the potential issues they introduce, creating mistrust of navigators about official ENCs and the IHO as a whole. As a consequence, final users might raise the problem at IMO level and could promote the right to use private sector seamless and coherent navigational products, which for the moment are produced by *authorized Hydrographic Office or on the authority of a Government*, as it is stated in SOLAS V/2.

The impact of the recommendation could go further than AIOs, concerning all HOs and RENCs which might have to establish another set of guidelines or standard or technical resolutions to improve their cooperation in order to propose more coherent ENCs and paper charts.

The subject is considered by France of a medium priority, to be considered in a short/medium term.

Action Required of IRCC and HSSC

The IRCC and HSSC are invited to endorse the recommendation and decide actions accordingly.