

**REGIONAL ALERT EXERCISE**

**"MEDIPOLEX 99"**

**7 December 1999**

**R E P O R T**

**DECEMBER 1999**

## REGIONAL ALERT EXERCISE "MEDIPOLEX 99"

7 December 1999

### REPORT

#### INTRODUCTION

1. Emergency Protocol to the Barcelona Convention stipulates that Mediterranean coastal States, Parties to the Protocol, should maintain a communication system for transmission of reports on accidents and other urgent information concerning pollution of the Mediterranean Sea. Annex I to the Protocol outlines the contents of pollution reports that should be exchanged by the Parties or between the Parties and the Regional Centre.
2. Contracting Parties committed themselves to inform each other, either directly or through the Regional Centre on:
  - all accidents causing or likely to cause pollution of the sea by oil and other harmful substances;
  - the presence, characteristics and extent of spillage's of oil or other harmful substances at sea which are likely to present a serious and imminent threat to the marine environment or to the coasts or related interests of one or more of the Parties;
  - their assessments and any pollution response actions, taken or planned;
  - the evolution of the situation.

In addition, each Party that needs assistance in dealing with marine pollution emergencies may request such assistance from other Parties either directly or through the Centre.

3. In order to facilitate rapid transmission of pollution reports and requests for assistance standard pollution reporting formats have been developed and used in different parts of the world.
4. POLREP pollution reporting system, recommended by the International Maritime Organization with a view to harmonizing reporting of pollution accidents, has been recommended for use in the Mediterranean by the Contracting Parties to the Emergency Protocol to the Barcelona Convention. The use of POLREP system was emphasized again, as a recommendation, by the Eleventh Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, held in Malta, 27-30 October 1999.
5. Function (F) of REMPEC (Annex to Resolution 7 on the establishment of a Regional Oil-Combating Centre for the Mediterranean Sea, as amended by the Sixth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties, Athens, 6 October 1989, UNEP(OCA)/MED IG.1/5, Annex V, Appendix I) requires that the Centre develops and maintains a regional Communications/Information System appropriate to the needs of States being served by the Centre.
6. In order to ensure that the current communication system functions properly the Centre periodically test communications with the Parties, as well as alerting and pollution reporting procedures adopted within the Mediterranean region.
7. In conformity with the above summarized obligations and principles, REMPEC organized a communication and alert exercise on 7 December 1999.

## OBJECTIVES

8. Objectives of the exercise, which was given the name "MEDIPOLEX 99", were as follows:
  - a) to test communication between REMPEC and national authorities responsible for pollution response;
  - b) to test communications between REMPEC and AMC's (MPRESS);
  - c) to practice the use of POLREP;
  - d) to establish what type of information could be obtained from AMC's;
  - e) to obtain (if possible) computer model forecasts of "spilled oil" movement and fate.
9. "MEDIPOLEX 99" was designed to involve competent national authorities of all Contracting Parties to the Emergency Protocol, as well as, **for the first time**, meteorological services within the Mediterranean region that are included in the WMO-MPERSS network.
10. MPERSS (Marine Pollution Emergency Response Support System) was set up by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) with a view to providing in a globally co-ordinated way, the meteorological and related oceanographic support required for marine pollution emergency operations on the high seas.
11. In order to ensure global coverage of the system, the world oceans have been divided in 15 marine pollution incident areas (MPI areas). Certain meteorological services accepted responsibilities to ensure that regional meteorological information is issued to support pollution response operations in each designated MPI area. The Mediterranean region has been designated as MPI area III, and MPERSS services in the area are provided by Météo France and Hellenic National Meteorological Service, for the western and eastern sections of the Mediterranean respectively.

## SCENARIO

12. In order to make the exercise as realistic as possible REMPEC prepared a scenario describing an accident in international waters south-west of Sardinia, that could potentially affect interests of some of the Contracting Parties.
13. The scenario involved an explosion on board a laden oil tanker of approximately 100,000 DWT en route from Suez Canal to Marseille Fos. The accident occurred in position lat 38° 20'N, long 007° 20'E and caused damage to two cargo tanks and a spillage of 10,000 metric tonnes of Arabian Light crude oil.
14. Details of the accident were planned to be transmitted, using POLREP reporting system, to competent national authorities of all Contracting Parties to the Emergency Protocol, and to two relevant meteorological services designated as Area Meteorological Co-ordinators (AMC) within the MPERSS in the Mediterranean.
15. At the national level, initial POLREPs were addressed to national centres or contact points responsible for receiving reports on marine pollution accidents. In case of countries that have not yet designated such centres/contact points initial POLREPs were sent to their respective national Operational Focal Points.
16. The list of competent national authorities and MPERSS AMCs to which the initial messages were sent is given in **ANNEX 1**.

17. A copy of the initial POLREP message (REMPEC/DARK OCEAN/1) transmitted to the participants in the exercise is given in **ANNEX 2**.
18. Competent national authorities were only requested to acknowledge receipt of POLREP.
19. MPERSS AMCs were requested to transmit indicated meteorological and oceanographic data to the national authorities of countries that were closest to the place of accidents (Algeria, France, Italy, Spain and Tunisia) and to REMPEC.
20. AMCs were also requested to provide, if available, computer model generated forecasts of movement and fate of spilled oil.
21. All messages sent by REMPEC were prepared in English and in French.
22. MEDIPOLEX 99 was scheduled for Tuesday, 7 December 1999. In order to ensure that the conditions correspond as much as possible to a real emergency, **neither national authorities nor the participating meteorological services were informed in advance that the exercise was going to take place.**

### THE EXERCISE

23. MEDIPOLEX 99 exercise started as planned at 08.00 on Tuesday, 7 December 1999. All messages from REMPEC were sent by fax.
24. **TABLE 1** shows times, as recorded by the Centre's fax machine, when the initial POLREP messages (REMPEC/DARK OCEAN/1, see ANNEX 1) were transmitted to the various addressees. All times are local times in Malta (UTC+1).

**TABLE 1: Times of sending (by REMPEC) the initial POLREP message**

No.	COUNTRY or MPERSS AMC	TIME
1.	FRANCE	08.05
2.	<i>METEO FRANCE (AMC)</i>	08.09
3.	MONACO	08.14
4.	ITALY	08.16
5.	SPAIN	08.21
6.	TUNISIA	08.26
7.	ALGERIA	08.29
8.	MOROCCO	08.32
9.	<i>HELLENIC NATIONAL METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE (AMC)</i>	08.39
10.	EUROPEAN COMMISSION (for EU)	08.41
11.	GREECE	08.57
12.	MALTA	09.00
13.	CROATIA	09.02
14.	BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	09.05
15.	SLOVENIA	09.09
16.	TURKEY	09.13
17.	LEBANON	09.15
18.	CYPRUS	09.18
19.	EGYPT	09.20
20.	ISRAEL	09.22
21.	SYRIA	09.25
22.	ALBANIA	-
23.	LIBYAN AJ	-

25. Most of the messages were successfully transmitted after only one dialling attempt and in 6 (six) cases the number had to be dialled twice.
26. The only 2 (two) messages that could not be transmitted after numerous attempts were addressed to Albania and to Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. In case of Albania there was no answer from the fax machine although the link was established, and in the case of Libyan AJ it was not possible to get through to the fax number of the national Operational Focal Point.
27. REMPEC subsequently received a total of 21 (twenty-one) replies from 17 (seventeen) different interlocutors. **TABLE 2** indicates origin, time and type of reply to the initial POLREP message.

**TABLE 2: Replies to the initial POLREP message (received by REMPEC)**

No.	COUNTRY or MPERSS AMC	TIME	TYPE
1.	<i>METEO FRANCE (AMC)</i>	08.47	Acknowledgement
2.	EUROPEAN COMMISSION (for EU)	09.35	Acknowledgement
3.	MONACO	09.40	Acknowledgement
4.	FRANCE	09.47	Acknowledgement, Advice that other competent national authorities were informed, Brief information on weather conditions
5.	GREECE	10.03	Acknowledgement, Offer of assistance
6.	CROATIA	10.05	Acknowledgement, Advice that other competent national authorities were informed, Offer of assistance
7.	<i>METEO FRANCE (AMC)</i>	10.29	Meteorological information, Weather forecast, Oil drift forecast
8.	ISRAEL	10.37	Acknowledgement, Offer of assistance
9.	EGYPT	11.03	Acknowledgement, Offer of assistance
10.	CYPRUS	11.12	Acknowledgement, Offer of assistance
11.	SLOVENIA	11.27	Acknowledgement (from national reporting centre)
12.	<i>HELLENIC NATIONAL METEO. SERVICE (AMC)</i>	11.31	Meteo and oceanographic information, Weather forecasts
13.	CROATIA	11.46	Request for additional information
14.	MALTA	11.49	Acknowledgement
15.	<i>METEO FRANCE (AMC)</i>	12.20	Acknowledgement of second REMPEC's fax message
16.	SLOVENIA	12.36	Acknowledgement (from Operational Focal Point)
17.	MOROCCO	13.05	Acknowledgement
18.	TUNISIA	13.10	Acknowledgement, Request for additional information
19.	TURKEY	17.22	Acknowledgement
20.	SPAIN	11.21*	Acknowledgement, Information on correct contact numbers
21.	BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA	12.56*	Acknowledgement, Offer of assistance

\* These two replies were received on **Wednesday, 8 December 1999**.

28. Most of the replies received at REMPEC were sent by fax, however one country (**Malta**) acknowledged receipt by phone prior to sending fax message, one country (**Morocco**) sent the message by telex and another (**Croatia**) requested additional information using e-mail.
29. The times that elapsed between the sending by REMPEC of the initial POLREP and the receipt by REMPEC of the first reply from the respective Contracting Party or MPERSS AMC are presented in **TABLE 3**.

**TABLE 3: Interval between sending initial POLREPs and receiving replies**

COUNTRY or MPERSS AMC	DELAY
ALBANIA	(original POLREP not sent)
ALGERIA	No reply
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	27 hours 51 minutes
CROATIA	1 hour 3 minutes
CYPRUS	1 hour 54 minutes
EGYPT	1 hours 43 minutes
EUROPEAN COMMISSION (for EU)	54 minutes
FRANCE	1 hour 42 minutes
GREECE	1 hour 6 minutes
ISRAEL	1 hour 15 minutes
ITALY	No reply
LEBANON	No reply
LIBYA	(original POLREP not sent)
MALTA	2 hours 49 minutes
MONACO	1 hour 26 minutes
MOROCCO	4 hours 33 minutes
SLOVENIA	2 hours 18 minutes
SPAIN	27 hours*
SYRIA	No reply
TUNISIA	4 hours 44 minutes
TURKEY	8 hours 9 minutes
<i>METEO FRANCE</i>	38 minutes
<i>HELLENIC NATIONAL METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES</i>	2 hours 52 minutes

\* Following the receipt of reply from **Spain**, it was discovered that REMPEC inadvertently sent the initial POLREP to a wrong fax number in the Spanish national centre for receiving reports on accidents. This explains delayed reply from Spanish authorities.

30. After receiving replies from the Contracting Parties REMPEC sent second series of messages (REMPEC/DARK OCEAN/2). These were sent to acknowledge receipt of the reply and to inform those Parties who offered their assistance that there was no need for it. A sample of the second message sent by REMPEC to national authorities is given in **ANNEX 3**. Where appropriate, the message included additional information for the Parties who requested it.
31. REMPEC also acknowledged receipt of requested meteorological and oceanographic data and forecasts from the two MPERSS Area Meteorological Co-ordinators.
32. The exercise was scheduled to be terminated at 16.30 on 7 December 1999. The third message (REMPEC/DARK OCEAN/3), indicating the end of exercise, was transmitted by REMPEC to all Contracting Parties and MPERSS AMCs between 16.30 and 17.28. A copy of the "end exercise" message is attached in **ANNEX 4**.
33. The "end exercise" message was not sent to Albania and Libyan AJ, to whom the initial message that triggered the exercise (REMPEC/DARK OCEAN/1) could not be transmitted.

34. Two "end exercise" messages were sent to Greece and Slovenia, since the replies that REMPEC received from these two countries indicated that messages originally sent to national centres for receiving reports on accidents were subsequently duly forwarded to their Operational Focal Points. Accordingly, both these correspondents were informed that the exercise had been terminated.
35. It was not possible to transmit the "end exercise" message to Algeria, although various attempts to send it were made on 7 and also on 8 December 1999. It was noted that the connection was established, however there was no reply from the dialled fax machine.
36. With the exception of Algeria, no other communication problems were encountered by REMPEC when sending these messages and all of them were transmitted after the first attempt.

### **COMMENTS**

37. Out of total 23 addressees (21 Contracting Parties and 2 MPERSS AMCs) planned to be involved in the MEDIPOLEX 99 exercise, REMPEC succeeded in transmitting various messages to 21 correspondents (19 Contracting Parties and 2 MPERSS AMCs). The only two interlocutors that could not be reached were Albania and Libyan AJ.
38. 15 (fifteen) Contracting Parties (79% of those to whom the initial POLREP was sent) and both MPERSS AMCs replied to REMPEC as requested, while the remaining 4 (four) countries did not respond. The reasons why these countries did not actively participate in the exercise were not known.
39. High percentage of the Contracting Parties that took an active part in the exercise indicates that the communication system, established in the Mediterranean for use in case of marine pollution emergencies (for reporting accidents, requesting assistance, providing meteorological support to spill response operations at high seas), can be considered as functional and efficient.
40. It needs to be emphasized that all messages were sent to the Contracting Parties using only fax numbers indicated in the Section 1 of Part B of the Regional Information System. No attempts were made to use other contact numbers (telephone or fax) to verify whether the initial messages were received or to urge national authorities to reply.
41. In addition, this was the **first regional alert exercise held without sending previous notice** to inform the Contracting Parties that the exercise would be organized.
42. Improvement in the quality and reliability of the public communications network in the Mediterranean was evident, and REMPEC had no problems in establishing connection with any of the interlocutors except one (c.f. paragraph 26).
43. It was noted that approximately one hour and twenty minutes were required to transmit 21 initial messages (less than 4 minutes per messages, including dialling and printing of transmission reports and dialling numbers that did not respond). During that period REMPEC's fax was almost permanently engaged, and although more than 50% of replies were received by REMPEC in less than 2 (two) hours after the start of the exercise, it is probable that some correspondents had problems in reaching REMPEC. On the other hand, throughout the duration of the exercise the Centre's fax was used almost exclusively for sending and receiving messages related to the exercise.
44. Testing the use of POLREP reporting format was not the primary goal of the exercise, however replies received by REMPEC indicate that the original message, formulated in accordance with POLREP rules, was clearly understood by all those concerned.
45. All national authorities that replied to the initial message acknowledged the receipt of it as requested. Moreover, a number of participating countries also indicated that they were considering the possibility to offer assistance if the need be.

46. Only two replies received by REMPEC (from **Monaco** and from the Operational Focal Point of **Slovenia**) started with the standard introductory part of the POLREP message (address, date/time group, identification, serial number), while other correspondents formulated their replies not using the recommended format. With a view to keeping the accurate record of message traffic in case of a real pollution accident, it would be very useful if all exchanged messages were properly identified.
47. In a number of messages received from national authorities various mistakes were found in records transmitted/printed automatically by their respective fax machines. The typical ones included: no identification of the sender/receiver of the message, wrong fax number identification including wrong country code, area code, or fax number, wrong time, wrong date/month/year, etc. It is recalled that such records, printed automatically by fax machines, might be of paramount importance in compiling chronological account of major pollution incidents.
48. Specific objectives of MEDIPOLEX 99 were related to testing, for the first time, the communications with AMCs included in the MPERSS in the Mediterranean region (MPI area III), and verifying the type of assistance that could be obtained from them.
49. The outcome of the exercise confirmed that both meteorological services, acting as AMCs in the Mediterranean i.e. Meteo France and Hellenic National Meteorological Service respectively, were able to promptly provide requested meteorological information and weather forecasts. In addition, Meteo France was also able to provide the forecast of oil slick movement and fate, generated by their computer model. Hellenic National Meteorological Service informed REMPEC that information on currents, water temperature and forecasts of oil spill movement were not yet available.
50. Initial results of co-operation with the MPERSS network in the Mediterranean proved to be very encouraging and could significantly contribute to the strengthening of the regional preparedness and response system.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

51. With a view to further increasing the reliability of the **regional Communications/Information System**, it is recommended that the competent national authorities of the Contracting Parties:
  - **revise the list of addresses and contact (fax) numbers** for use when reporting marine pollution accidents (cf. list given in **ANNEX 1**), and to inform REMPEC of any changes that occurred or that might improve the functioning of the system.
  - always **acknowledge receipt** of any **message related to accidents** in the region, regardless of whether the accident may or may not affect their territorial waters, coasts or other interests.
  - always **acknowledge receipt** of any **message related to** alert or communication **exercises** organized in the region, either by REMPEC or by another Party.
  - always use standard **POLREP style** when formulating their messages, in particular as regards the introductory part of the message that should contain address, date/time group, identification and serial number. Detailed **instructions** concerning the formulation of messages according to POLREP pollution reporting system are included in Section 1, Part B of the Regional Information System (**RIS/B/1**), and regularly distributed by REMPEC to the competent national authorities of the Contracting Parties.
  - **program/adjust fax machines** used in their offices (identification of the sender/receiver, answer-back, complete fax number, date and time), in order to have correct records transmitted/printed automatically by fax machines when sending/receiving messages.



52. In order to make available to the Contracting Parties various services (including spill drift forecasting) provided by MPERSS Area Meteorological Co-ordinators in the Mediterranean region and to facilitate access to reliable meteorological and oceanographic information, the co-operation between REMPEC and the WHO on one hand, and with individual AMCs on the other should be intensified.
53. As regards REMPEC communication capabilities for use in case of emergencies, it is recommended to install in the operations room of the Centre another fax machine dedicated only to sending messages.

## ANNEX 1

### LIST OF COMPETENT NATIONAL AUTHORITIES AND AMCs

ALBANIA	FPO	+355 (42) 228 92
ALGERIA	NRC	+213 (2) 66 43 78
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	FPO	+387 (71) 20 79 49
CROATIA	NRC	+385 (51) 21 26 96
CYPRUS	NRC	+357 (2) 77 59 55
EGYPT	NRC	+20 (2) 525 64 94
EU	NRC	+32 (2) 296 06 25
FRANCE	NRC	+33 (4) 94 27 11 49
GREECE	NRC	+30 (1) 411 72 86 <sup>(1)</sup>
ISRAEL	NRC	+972 (4) 862 35 24
ITALY	NRC	+39 (06) 57 22 34 70
LEBANON	NRC	+961 (1) 371 643
LIBYA	NRC	+218 (21) 333 80 98/7
MALTA	FPO	+356 (-) 66 01 08
MONACO	NRC	+377 (-) 93 15 37 15
MOROCCO	NRC	+212 (2) 27 33 40
SLOVENIA	NRC	+386 (61) 17 13 281
SPAIN	NRC	+34 (91) 596 49 09 <sup>(2)</sup>
SYRIA	NRC	+963 (41) 47 58 05
TUNISIA	FPO	+216 (1) 70 24 31
TURKEY	NRC	+90 (312) 417 28 45
METEO FRANCE	-	+33 (5) 61 07 85 38 <sup>(3)</sup>
HELLENIC NATIONAL METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES	-	+30 (1) 962 89 52

(1) after dialling the indicated number the officer on duty indicated that fax number to be used is +30 (1) 413 23 98

(2) this number was mistakenly dialled instead of correct number +34 (91) 596 14 40

(3) when acknowledging receipt Meteo France advised to utilize number +30 (5) 61 07 84 84

FPO National Operational Focal Point

NRC National Centre or contact point (operational 24 hours/a day) responsible for receiving reports on marine pollution accidents.

**ANNEX 2**

**INITIAL MESSAGE (REMPEC/DARK OCEAN/1)**

**TELEFAX TRANSMISSION**

<b>TO/A:</b>	<b>DATE:</b>
	<b>REF:</b> RP/DD/mb
<b>FAX NO:</b>	<b>PAGES:</b> 2 (two)
<b>FROM/DE:</b> REMPEC, Malta.	<b>CLEARED BY/ APPROUVE PAR:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b> MEDIPOLEX 99 - Regional exercise	

**EXERCISE**

**EXERCISE**

**EXERCISE**

From: REMPEC

To:

070800LT (UTC +1) December

EXERCISE  
POLREP BARCELONA CONVENTION  
REMPEC/DARK OCEAN/1

1. 070700 LT (UTC +1) December
2. lat 38°20' N; long 007°20' E
3. Explosion on board tanker, oil spill
4. Crude oil, estimated 10,000 metric tonnes
42. Arabian light, API 31.8, viscosity 15.6 cSt at 15°C, pour point between -34 and -28°C
43. MT DARK OCEAN, Liberian flag, built 1987, 102 765 DWT, call sign XYZ789, sustained an explosion, two cargo tanks damaged above water line, causing the spillage of part of their cargo. Remaining cargo now transferred to other tanks on board. Tanker proceeding to Fos oil port under her own power, speed 3 knots.

49. Master of MT DARK OCEAN  
52. ALB, DZA, BIH, CRT, CYP, EU, EGY, FRA, ISR, ITA, LBN, LBY, MLT, MCO, MAR, SLO, ESP, SYR, TUN, TUR and MPRESS AMC for MPI area III  
81. MPRESS AMC (Area Meteorological Co-ordinator) for MPI area III is requested to provide real time information on: - surface winds  
-waves  
-currents  
-water temperature  
-air temperature

in the area of the accident.

84. AMC requested to transmit the information to DZA, FRA, ITA, SPA, TUN and REMPEC  
88. AMC also requested to provide, if available, computer model forecast of spilled oil movement and fate for the next 24 and 48 hours.  
99. Acknowledge.

**EXERCISE**

**EXERCISE**

**EXERCISE**

Thanking you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Roberto PATRUNO  
Director, REMPEC

**ANNEX 3**

**THE SECOND MESSAGE (REMPEC/DARK OCEAN/2)**

**TELEFAX TRANSMISSION**

<b>TO/A:</b>	<b>DATE:</b>
	<b>REF:</b> RP/DD/mb/
<b>FAX NO:</b>	<b>PAGES:</b> 1 (one)
<b>FROM/DE:</b> REMPEC, Malta.	<b>CLEARED BY/ APPROUVE PAR:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b> MEDIPOLEX 99 - Regional exercise	

**EXERCISE**

**EXERCISE**

**EXERCISE**

From: REMPEC

To:

071115LT (UTC +1) December

EXERCISE  
POLREP BARCELONA CONVENTION  
REMPEC/DARK OCEAN/2

We acknowledge receipt and thank you for your reply.

No assistance required from .....

Thanks and regards

Yours sincerely

Roberto PATRUNO  
Director

**EXERCISE**

**EXERCISE**

**EXERCISE**

**ANNEX 4**

**"END EXERCISE" MESSAGE (REMPEC/DARK OCEAN/3)**

**TELEFAX TRANSMISSION**

<b>TO/A:</b>	<b>DATE:</b>
	<b>REF:</b> RP/DD/mb/
<b>FAX NO:</b>	<b>PAGES:</b> 1 (one)
<b>FROM/DE:</b> REMPEC, Malta.	<b>CLEARED BY/ APPROUVE PAR:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b> MEDIPOLEX 99 - Regional exercise	

**END EXERCISE**

**END EXERCISE**

**END EXERCISE**

From: REMPEC

To:

071630LT (UTC +1) December

EXERCISE  
POLREP BARCELONA CONVENTION  
REMPEC/DARK OCEAN/3

We thank you for your co-operation.

Roberto PATRUNO  
Director, REMPEC

**END EXERCISE**

**END EXERCISE**

**END EXERCISE**