

TRAINING COURSE

on

AIRBORNE MARINE POLLUTION SURVEILLANCE

Introduction

Most EU coastal member states have established routine airborne marine pollution surveillance. These programmes are based on a dedicated aircraft with a suite of sensors which can detect, identify and quantify oil pollution of the sea whether discharged deliberately or by accident. The sensors are also used to identify the vessels which illegally discharge oil into the sea.

The Commission of the European Communities give high priority to protection of the marine environment in the seas bordering the member states. Therefore, it sponsored a training course on airborne marine pollution surveillance. It was organised by BMS International, Denmark and offered to all the coastal member states, Norway and Iceland. The course was held for 26 persons from 12 countries during the week 3 – 7 December 2001 at the Environmental Agency in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Objective

While the sensor technology used for airborne marine pollution surveillance has been known since the ninetenseventies and eighties, it has undergone significant improvements till today. In addition, new data management systems have appeared on the market as well as better interpretation techniques have been developed. Therefore, even experienced system operators could benefit from participation in the course to update their knowledge. At the same time, the course was an opportunity to exchange experiences with colleagues from other countries.

Countries without an airborne pollution surveillance program could benefit from the course by being introduced to the technology. Thus, managers and other decision makers could obtain sufficient information to assess which surveillance equipment would best suit their objectives and budget when their country would be ready to implement such a programme.

Finally, it is important that the pilots flying pollution surveillance understand all the aspects of the mission to support the system operators in obtaining the best possible results during surveillance sorties.

Therefore, more specifically, the objectives of the course were to:

- present the latest technology in airborne pollution surveillance to system operators, pilots, managers and administrative decision makers.
- provide up-to-date information about aircraft, sensors and operational aspects for representatives from countries that have no surveillance programme but is considering to establish one in the future.
- to inform the participants about other applications of the sensors than oil pollution detection and mapping, such as detection of other pollutants than oil,

search and rescue operations, fishery inspection missions, ship traffic monitoring, etc.

Impact for the Future

In spite of a significant spread in experience among the participants, the course was well received according to a questionnaire filled in by all attendants upon completion of the course. The blend between theory and practical (hands on) instructions gave everyone an opportunity to try their skills and pose questions in a wider forum.

Generally, the attendees found the compendium, the oral instructions and lectures, and the discussion relevant and conforming with the course programme.

Ideally, the course should enable the participants to go back to their bases and pass this latest information to their colleagues. This may or may not happen.

Therefore, it is recommended that this type of course, including the latest developments, is offered to the member states every two years for other surveillance crews and managers.

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