

Fighting oil pollution with the help of simulators

Kotka, Tallinn and St Petersburg have launched trilateral cooperation in maritime safety and oil pollution contingency, prevention and response in the Gulf of Finland area.

By 2010, there will be some 6,000 oil tankers with a total of 200 million tons of oil and oil products sailing in the Gulf of Finland. 2005 already was a record-breaking year, as a total of 120 million tons was transported. This increase is caused by the expanding transports of oil from Russian ports and terminals to the EU and worldwide. Several new terminals have been opened with new ones to come.

These figures indicate that we cannot ask whether there will be accidents; we must ask when they will occur. This is a fact that requires preparedness and sustained cooperation of all states, authorities and other stakeholders including non-governmental organisations in the Gulf of Finland region.

Training together

Kotka, St Petersburg and Tallinn are strengthening their oil pollution prevention cooperation with the projects Summeri, Summeri II and GOFMEC, involving the installation of three operationally identical crisis management simulators. With the help of these simulators, the Maritime Academies in Kotka, St Petersburg and Tallinn can train for the same crisis situation, for example responding to an oil spill caused by a collision of ships. The installation of the three simulators is now complete, as Tallinn Crisis Management



Admiral Makarov State Maritime Academy Training Centre.



Kotka CMSC with view of PISCES 2, ECDIS and NaviTrainerPro.

Simulator Centre (CMSC) was opened at the end of January 2006.

These projects are financed among others by the European Regional Development Fund, the Regional Council of Kymenlaakso and the Estonian Ministry of Environment, and supported by the cities of Kotka, St Petersburg and Tallinn.

All CMSCs feature a similar combination of PISCES 2, NaviTrainerPro and VTMS simulators and live AIS information. Each simulator can work either on its own specific topic or be combined with every other simulator as one unit. All the software was provided by Transas, which makes the integration easy.

One of the key objectives is to harmonise pollution incident training and methodology as well as to share expertise and experiences. In addition to oil spill response incidents, the simulators can be used to simulate rescue operations in other maritime incidents such as collisions, groundings, fires, explosions and MOB incidents. All simulators can also be used

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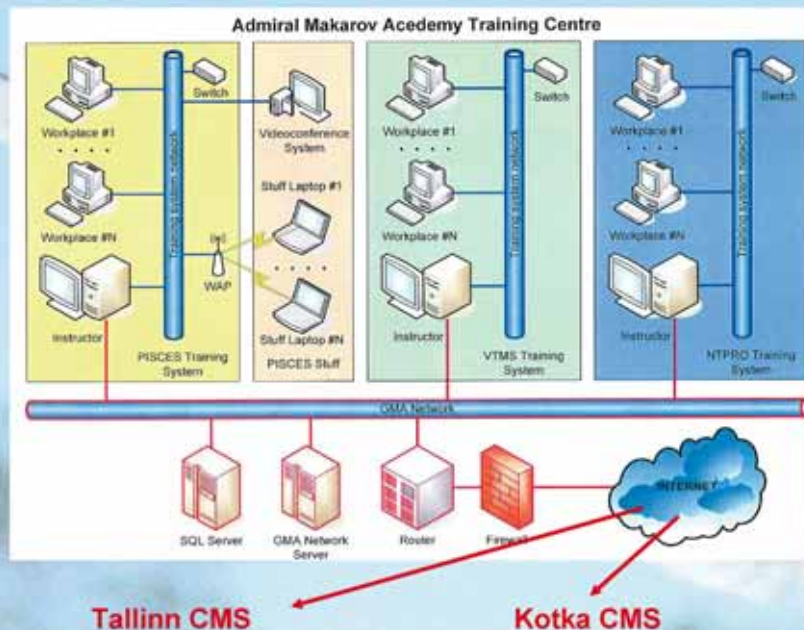
to examine past incidents, provided that the relevant information is available.

Further development to come

In the first stage, bi- or trilateral training will be performed using a video conference communication system.

The second stage will be to communicate and share databases in the Intranet system to be launched via the Internet. This will allow all three CMSCs to work as one unit. Any alteration of a centre's data in one CMSC will automatically update the data of the other two. The database will include a library of all trained and stored scenarios. The Intranet

CMS / OSRS network of each CMSC



Scheme of the operation in second stage of the Summeri, Summeri II and GOFMEC projects.

will be constructed in a manner which allows additional CMSCs to join in the network.

Additions to CMSC

To further increase the capabilities of the CMSCs to work as a command centre in real maritime crisis situations, the projects and Transas as the supplier of software have agreed to enable the interfacing of the simulators with sensitivity area and vulnerable habitat GIS information, waste management plans and geological information system (GIS) and to create an additional program for reporting and documentation.

The last-mentioned program called Work Flow is currently advancing well and is in the testing stage. The software already allows the use of external WAP laptop PCs as on-scene information and feedback units to improve the predictions of actions to be taken. It will also be vital to have an interface to actual, prevailing hydro-meteorological data in the area of the incident.

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