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A Future With eLoran

Radionavigation is a global business with a global footprint and the U.S. Global Positioning System (GPS) has been the jewel in the crown for nearly a generation. The U.S. has established such a level of trust in its operation of GPS that governments, service providers, and users worldwide have included it in their critical infrastructure, safety-critical, and mass-market applications, and have decommissioned many other aids to navigation. In making decisions on GPS and other systems, the international community takes careful note of the U.S. Federal Radionavigation Plan (FRP): "the official source of U.S. radionavigation policy and planning".

All radionavigation systems, including GPS, have their weaknesses. On February 7, 2008, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that it would begin implementing Enhanced Loran (eLoran), an enhanced and modernized version of Loran-C, as the U.S. national backup system. This independent, positioning, navigation, timing, and data delivery system would mitigate the safety, security, or economic effects of a loss of GPS for critical infrastructure applications, especially those that require precise time and frequency. The 2008 U.S. FRP, released by the new administration in February 2009, states that this decision was based on the findings of the U.S. Institute for Defense Analysis' Independent Assessment Team and endorsed at the March 2008 meeting of the U.S. National Space-based PNT Executive Committee.

The international community and the International Loran Association (ILA) applauded the February 2008 U.S. decision. It was well timed to take advantage of European developments that had demonstrated the exceptional value-for-money and high performance of minimally-manned eLoran stations. The U.S. DHS announcement stimulated investment decisions and eLoran development activities worldwide.

In our rapidly changing and connected world, the ILA notes that the proposal by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to terminate Loran-C within a week of the publication of the 2008 FRP only makes sense when the termination of the Loran-C program is part of the transition to an eLoran program. Additionally, it should be recognized that a significant part of the existing modernized Loran-C infrastructure can be used for an efficient transition to eLoran. If this is the intent of the OMB statement, then the ILA encourages this development and awaits a plan for its implementation.

As an international Association, the ILA believes that a U.S. decision in 2009 to transition to eLoran will have a positive effect worldwide, will build industrial capability, and will drive creativity and innovation. As numerous studies have shown, the greatest benefit option for Loran-C service providers is to transition to eLoran. The ILA stands ready to support governments, service providers, and users worldwide in that decision-making process.



Notes to Editors

1. The International Loran Association (ILA) advocates the use of enhanced or eLoran as a back-up for and complement to global navigation satellite systems (GNSS) in multiple navigation and timing applications as well as the integration of eLoran and GNSS systems to improve the safety and security of individuals and nations. The ILA fosters the international growth of eLoran as the most complementary, only multimodal, and most cost effective backup to GNSS systems, and promotes coordination between nations and institutions to increase cooperative activities, to establish uniform standards, and to optimize benefits to all users.

Through its annual meetings and ongoing activities, the ILA functions as an international forum for the exchange of ideas and information regarding eLoran and its integration with GNSS. The ILA also serves as a repository of information documenting those individuals and efforts that have contributed to the evolution of eLoran. The ILA began in 1971 and its members are from user, industry, and government groups throughout the world.

2. Enhanced Loran (eLoran) is a Loran system that incorporates the latest receiver, antenna, and transmission system technology to enable Loran to serve as a backup and complement to global navigation satellite systems (GNSS) for navigation and timing. This new technology provides substantially enhanced performance beyond what was possible with Loran-C, eLoran's predecessor. For example, it is now possible to obtain absolute accuracies of 8-20 meters using eLoran for harbor entrance and approach. Similarly, eLoran can function as an independent, highly accurate source of universal time coordinated (UTC). An eLoran transmission infrastructure is now being installed in the United States, and a variation of eLoran is now operational in northwest Europe. It is expected that there will be a global evolution towards eLoran, and users can anticipate integrated eLoran/GNSS receivers in the near future for a variety of applications. Users of Loran-C can continue to utilize their equipment, but will not receive the performance benefits of eLoran.
3. The U.S. Federal Radionavigation Plan is the official source of radionavigation policy and planning for the U.S. Federal Government. It includes the introduction, policies, radionavigation system user requirements, system descriptions, and operating plans for a number of radionavigation systems including the Global Positioning System and its augmentations, and Long-Range Navigation (Loran).