

Long range identification and tracking (LRIT)

The Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) at its 81st session in May 2006 adopted new regulations for the LRIT together with associated performance standards and functional requirements.

The new regulation on LRIT is included in SOLAS chapter V on Safety of Navigation, through which LRIT will be introduced as a mandatory requirement for the following ships on international voyages: passenger ships, including high-speed craft; cargo ships, including high-speed craft, of 300 gross tonnage and upwards; and mobile offshore drilling units.

The SOLAS regulation on LRIT establishes a multilateral agreement for sharing LRIT information for security and search and rescue purposes, amongst SOLAS Contracting Governments, in order to meet the maritime security needs and other concerns of such Governments. It maintains the right of flag States to protect information about the ships entitled to fly their flag, where appropriate, while allowing coastal States access to information about ships navigating off their coasts. The SOLAS regulation on LRIT does not create or affirm any new rights of States over ships beyond those existing in international law, particularly, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), nor does it alter or affect the rights, jurisdiction, duties and obligations of States in connection with UNCLOS.

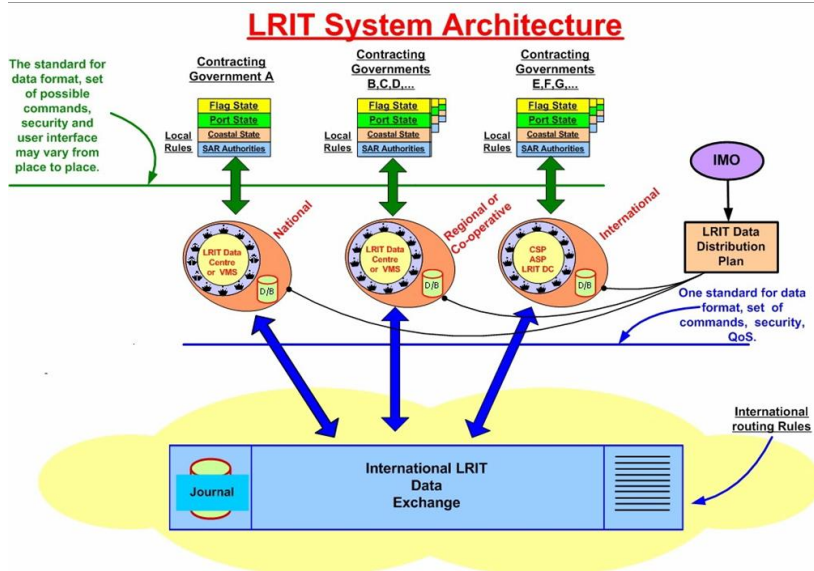
The LRIT information ships will be required to transmit include the ship's identity, location and date and time of the position. There will be no interface between LRIT and AIS. One of the more important distinctions between LRIT and AIS, apart from the obvious one of range, is that, whereas AIS is a broadcast system, data derived through LRIT will be available only to the recipients who are entitled to receive such information and safeguards concerning the confidentiality of those data have been built into the regulatory provisions. SOLAS Contracting Governments will be entitled to receive information about ships navigating within a distance not exceeding 1000 nautical miles off their coast.

The regulation is expected to enter into force on 1 January 2008 and will apply to ships constructed on or after 31 December 2008 with a phased-in implementation schedule for ships constructed before 31 December 2008. LRIT is intended too be operational with respect to the transmission of LRIT information by ships as from 31 December 2008. There is an exemption for ships operating exclusively in sea area A1 from the requirement to transmit LRIT information, since such ships are already fitted with AIS. It also identifies which authorities may have access to LRIT information.

The MSC also adopted *performance standards and functional requirements for LRIT* and an MSC resolution on *Arrangements for the timely establishment of the long range identification and tracking system*.

LRIT system

The LRIT system consists of the shipborne LRIT information transmitting equipment, the Communication Service Provider(s), the Application Service Provider(s), the LRIT Data Centre(s), including any related Vessel Monitoring System(s), the LRIT Data Distribution Plan and the International LRIT Data Exchange. Certain aspects of the performance of the LRIT system are reviewed or audited by an LRIT Co-ordinator acting on behalf of all Contracting Governments.



LRIT information is provided to Contracting Governments and Search and rescue services entitled to receive the information, upon request, through a system of National, Regional, Co operative and International LRIT Data Centres, using where necessary, the LRIT International Data Exchange.

Each Administration should provide to the LRIT Data Centre it has selected, a list of the ships entitled to fly its flag, which are required to transmit LRIT information, together with other salient details and should update, without undue delay, such lists as and when changes occur. Ships should only transmit the LRIT information to the LRIT Data Centre selected by their Administration.

The obligations of ships to transmit LRIT information and the rights and obligations of Contracting Governments and of Search and rescue services to receive LRIT information are established in regulation V/19-1 of the 1974 SOLAS Convention.

Background

Proposals for long-range identification and tracking of ships, as a means of enhancing maritime security, were discussed during the development of the special measures to enhance maritime security which were [adopted by the 2002 SOLAS Conference](#). However, in view of the complexities involved it was recognized at an early stage that it would not be practically possible to complete the work by December 2002, so as to include appropriate provisions in the comprehensive maritime security measures which entered into force on 1 July 2004.

As a result the 2002 SOLAS Conference, in order to address the matter and plan the further work on the issue, adopted Conference resolution 3 on **Further work by the International Maritime Organization pertaining to the enhancement of maritime security** and Conference resolution 10 on **Early implementation of long-range ship's identification and tracking**.

Conference resolution 3 included an invitation to IMO to "carry out, as a matter of urgency, an impact assessment of the proposals to implement the long-range identification and tracking of ships and, if found necessary, develop and adopt appropriate performance standards and guidelines for long-range ship identification and tracking systems."

Conference resolution 10 contains three elements. Firstly it urges SOLAS Contracting Governments to take, as a matter of high priority, any action needed at national level to give effect to implementing and beginning the long-range identification and tracking of ships. Secondly it invites SOLAS Contracting Government to encourage ships entitled to fly the flag of their State to take the necessary measures so that they are prepared to respond automatically to Inmarsat C polling, or to other available systems. And last but not least it requests SOLAS Contracting Governments to consider all aspects related to the introduction of long-range identification and tracking of ships, including its potential for misuse as an aid to ship targeting and the need for confidentiality in respect of the information so gathered.

The Maritime Safety Committee ([MSC](#)), at its 76th session in December 2002, referred the consideration of the matter to the Sub-Committee on Safety of Navigation ([NAV](#)) and to the Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications, Search and Rescue ([COMSAR](#)).

On the basis of the discussions which took place during the deliberation of the special measures to enhance maritime security, NAV considered the issue during its 49th session in July 2003 and the outcome of its work, in this respect, was considered by COMSAR during its 8th session in February 2004.

The MSC at its 78th session in May-June 2004 agreed in principle with the draft requirements for LRIT developed by COMSAR in February 2004 based on the work done by NAV.

At the MSC's 80th session, in May 2005, the Working Group on Maritime Security held extensive discussions relating to proposed draft amendments to SOLAS to include a new regulation on long-range identification and tracking of ships (LRIT).

The Committee noted that there were still a number of outstanding technical issues to be resolved and agreed that an intersessional working group should meet ahead of the 10th session of the COMSAR Sub-Committee in early 2006 so that COMSAR 10 would be able to finalize the work. The COMSAR correspondence group on LRIT was also tasked with considering a number of technical issues, so as to enable COMSAR 10 to complete its own work on LRIT.

The Committee also authorized the convening of an MSC intersessional working group on LRIT, for the purpose of developing draft SOLAS amendments on LRIT to be circulated with a view to consideration and adoption at MSC 81.

As indicated above, Conference resolution 3 invites the IMO to carry out an impact assessment of the proposal for the introduction of LRIT. The MSC, at its 78th session, considered the issue and agreed that, currently, there was insufficient data in order to be able to carry out an impact assessment.

The MSC intersessional working group on LRIT (MSC/ISWG/LRIT) met in October 2005 and COMSAR 10 in March 2006 further developed the draft amendments to SOLAS.

MSC 81 in May 2006 adopted the regulation and performance standard.

Further information

[Maritime security](#)

[GMDSS and SAR](#)

[INFORMATION RESOURCES ON INTERNATIONAL MARITIME SECURITY AND ISPS CODE](#)