

## **Conflict in Ukraine sparks rise in maritime comms use, at a time when satcom systems are in short supply**

Demand for maritime connectivity has escalated over the past week as seafarers clamour to call home, reports digital communications specialist IEC Telecom.

The company advises that its usage figures for the past month show maritime comms traffic has risen by 30%, most of it over the previous seven days and attributable to extra calls to Ukraine.

According to the 2021 BIMCO/ICS Seafarer Workforce Report, the world fleet employs some 76,442 Ukrainian and 198,123 Russians, accounting for 14.5% of the global workforce.

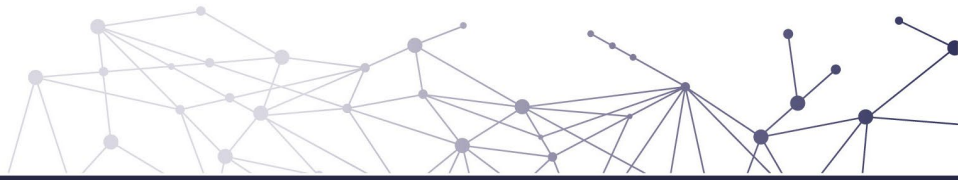
Responding to the increased demand IEC Telecom has significantly reduced the cost of calls to Ukraine – down to just \$0.35 USD per minute – and is offering ship operators a 20% discount on its connectivity ‘scratch cards’ useable on calls anywhere in the world, as well as doubling data services.

Nabil Ben Soussia, Group CCO, President Asia, Middle East and CIS for IEC Telecom, said: “IEC Telecom has been alerted by the situation in Ukraine and its impact on crew at sea who are understandably very worried. We noted the sudden rise in the use of our services and could see clearly that this corresponds with the outbreak of hostilities. IEC Telecom has a long history of helping humanitarian efforts and we want to do all we can to help those affected by what’s happening in Ukraine, which is why we have reduced our rates to enable ship operators to provide more internet and call time to Ukrainian seafarers, many of whom we know have family members in regions where the fighting currently is.”

Crews impacted by the conflict in Ukraine are desperately trying to keep in touch with family and friends as well as seeking up-to-date information, ship operators report. Ships which currently have crew comms systems in place are responding to calls from seafarers to increase bandwidth, speed and availability onboard.

However, for vessels without a satcom system in place they face an additional problem: due to the global shortage of microchips, waiting lists for VSAT systems are currently 3-6 months long.

Mr. Ben Soussia explained that availability of VSAT systems significantly decreased prior to the start of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, due to the global shortage of microchips caused by the pandemic which has created a worldwide problem for a diverse range of producers including car manufacturers, tech businesses and even laptop suppliers. He encouraged ship operators all over the globe to instead consider installing fixed voice terminals, while those stocks last. Operating akin to public phones, these systems immediately secure crew welfare communications.



He reported: "This is an unprecedented situation. As a shipowner you need to act now to secure your crew communications. In an unstable world, what today is helping Ukrainian seafarers keep in touch with home could help your crew tomorrow."

Mr Ben Soussia advised that a voice terminal, such as Thuraya's MarineStar, can be installed by any electrician within a couple of hours and costs the same as a mobile phone to operate. "Don't wait for problems to impact your crew. Put something in place now to ensure you have a welfare communications system onboard your vessel," he advised, warning that high demand could soon impact stocks.

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### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

#### **About IEC Telecom:**

IEC Telecom Group is one of the leading international providers of satellite communications services. Renowned for supplying high quality satcom solutions for more than 25 years, IEC Telecom delivers efficient end-to-end voice and data services when and where it matters most.

We enable digitalisation for the maritime industry as well as remote units on land, where GSM coverage is not available.

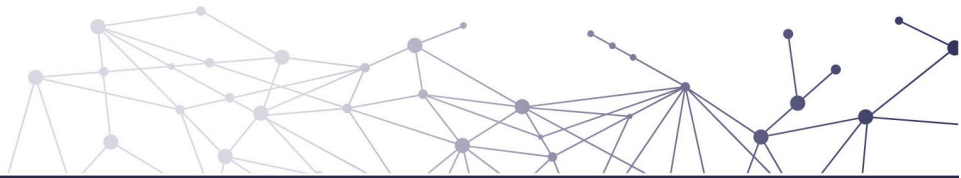
For urban networks, we provide a powerful satellite back up to ensure the business continuity of customer enterprises.

IEC Telecom has long-standing business relationships with all the key satellite operators. As a strategic partner for Inmarsat, Iridium, Thuraya, and Yahsat, we're in the unique position to support organisations with global operations as well as offer a wide variety of plans for area-by-area use to regional customers.

IEC Telecom's integrated approach of in-house design and engineering expertise allows us to develop truly unique solutions that enable full control over customer satellite assets.

Our portfolio includes a wide range of satellite products (from handset to VSAT services), solutions, and value-added services. In addition, we offer 24/7 support for satellite-based solutions during their full lifecycle.

IEC Telecom Group has offices across eight countries: Denmark, France, Kazakhstan, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, Turkey, and UAE.



## **Media Contacts**

**Anastasia Kuzmenko**  
**VP-Marketing & Communications,**  
**IEC Telecom Global**  
**T:** +971 (0) 50 222 59 37  
**E:** [anastasia.kuzmenko@iec-telecom.com](mailto:anastasia.kuzmenko@iec-telecom.com)

**Debra Munford**  
**PR Account Manager**  
**E:** [dmunford@elabor8.co.uk](mailto:dmunford@elabor8.co.uk)  
**T:** +44(0) 1296 682356