

## **2.4 RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE COMMAND STRUCTURE, OPERATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR JOINT COMBATING OPERATIONS**

### **2.4.1 The Contracting Parties**

RECALLING the provision of Article 7 of the Agreement for Co-operation in Dealing with Pollution of the North Sea by Oil and Other Harmful Substances, 1983 (Bonn Agreement) concerning assistance to a Contracting Party by other Contracting Parties called upon,

TAKING into consideration that assistance could be rendered in the form of strike teams consisting of personnel, one or more ships, and / or reconnaissance aircraft, equipment for confinement, recovery and on-scene storage of Harmful Substances under national command,

BEING AWARE of the difficult practical and organisational problems that arise from joint combating operations involving strike teams from several countries and the need for radio communications in joint combating operations at sea,

NOTING that joint operations necessitate a clear and simplified command structure agreed upon beforehand,

NOTING that States have over the years extended their jurisdiction at sea through the establishment of exclusive economic zones (or equivalent zones) in which they have the obligation to protect the marine environment in their EEZ, and that most Bonn Agreement zones of responsibility have been realigned to the EEZ borders,

NOTING that in order to avoid disturbance and jamming in a joint operation, there is a strong need for different radio communication frequencies on the one hand between the Operational Control ashore and the Supreme On-Scene Commander/Co-ordinator (SOSC) and, on the other hand, between the SOSC and participating National On-Scene Commanders/Co-ordinators (NOSC) as well as between the different NOSCs and their respective team units,

RECOMMEND that:

#### **In terms of operational cooperation:**

- a. The organisational structure in joint operations should contain two main co-ordination and command levels, namely Operational Control ashore (e.g. from an incident Command Post) and Tactical Command on the scene of operations.
- b. The Operational control should be exercised by the country that has asked for assistance (lead country) which normally is the country that is (mainly) affected by a spill and within whose zone the operation takes place.
- c. Each country exercises control in its marine areas of jurisdiction (territorial sea and EEZ). Although in principle neighbouring countries have the right, in accordance with international law and in case their marine and coastal areas/interests are threatened by a spill, to intervene in the EEZ of the (lead) country where that spill is located, the countries should endeavour to co-operate to the best of their abilities and response operations should be performed in full co-ordination with the lead country. In line with these principles, parties to the Bonn Agreement may conclude joint contingency/intervention plans prior to an incident, at the sub-regional level or covering transboundary areas (and several have already; see Chapter 12 on sub-regional plans).
- d. Change of Operational Control and tactical Command might, when practical and agreed between the parties concerned, take place when the main body of a combating operation moves from one area of jurisdiction to another.

- e. Liaison officers from participating countries should be integrated in the staff of the Operational Control to secure the necessary knowledge of rendered national resources.
- f. The overall Tactical Command is laid upon a designated Supreme On-Scene Commander/Co-ordinator (SOSC) from the lead country.
- g. Strike teams provided by assisting/intervening countries should normally operate under the command of a National On-Scene Commander/Co-ordinator (NOSC).
- h. The NOSC operates under the command/co-ordination of the SOSC.
- i. For practical and organisational reasons, not more than three countries should be engaged in one and the same limited area within a combating operation, except in exceptional cases.

**With regard to communication:**

- j. Concerning the communications between the Operational Control ashore and the SOSC (which is the concern of the lead country of the operation), consideration should be given to the possibility of using SATCOM, WIFI; e-mail, telefax, GSM, e-telex
- k. Communication between the SOSC and the NOSCs should be performed on one or, if needed, more of the international VHF-channels 10, 67 and 73.
- l. The vessels from which the SOSC operates should have at least two VHF-stations on board with a standby function on channel 16.
- m. Communications between a NOSC and the strike team units should be performed on special domestic (internal) frequencies.
- n. Communication between SOSC/NOSC and between aircraft should be performed on special frequencies, see the Aerial Surveillance Handbook.
- o. The working language between OSCs from different countries should be English.
- p. The broad aspects of the radio communication problems in joint oil combating operations at sea should be presented to the telecommunications authority in each country for information and internal consideration.

#### **2.4.1.1 Supplementary Operational Guidelines**

With the aim of further facilitating the operational co-operation in joint combating operations, the following guidelines have been agreed upon.

#### **2.4.1.2 General Principles**

The general principles for the command structure for combating operations are given in Annex 1 of this chapter.

#### **2.4.1.3 Lead Country**

The Contracting Party who has asked for assistance and/or in whose area of jurisdiction the (main body of) a marine pollution is situated should, unless otherwise agreed, be in charge of the joint operations (lead country). To that effect the lead country should *inter alia*:

- give administrative, operational and logistic support to assisting foreign units;
- give clearly defined tasks to all units;
- organise the practical co-operation between units from different countries;
- keep all units well-informed of the overall situation; and

- keep a firm contact with the command organisations of the assisting/involved countries in order to ensure that assisting/involved foreign units can be transferred to national command if so necessitated.

Operationally self-contained foreign units should, to the largest extent, be given separate tasks within defined geographical areas. The execution of the task will normally be carried out under the command of the appropriate NOSC who will be in close radio contact with the SOSC from the lead country.

If the assistance is rendered in the form of equipment or units not operationally self-contained, it is the responsibility of the lead country's operational control or tactical command to integrate the equipment or units in the combating operation.

#### **2.4.1.4 Transfer of Operational Control and Tactical Command**

If the main body of the pollution in question passes the borderline of a neighbouring country's zone the operational control and tactical command (lead country) will normally be transferred to the country whose zone is affected by the main body of the pollution.

The timing of the shift of operational control and tactical command should be negotiated between the two countries in question, giving due regard to the overall picture and any possible trends in its development.

The countries in question will further have to settle the number of units and the amount of equipment that could be placed at the disposal of the new lead country and how the combating operation should be continued.

#### **2.4.1.5 Liaison Officers**

In combating situations where two or more Contracting Parties are, or could be, involved, the Contracting Parties in question should be entitled to send two liaison officers as a maximum to the respective national centres responsible for combating operations.

The exchange of the liaison officers is independent of whether the combating operation is carried out on a purely national basis, by means of rendered equipment or by strike teams from other Contracting Parties.

The liaison officers should be given the opportunity to give advice and statements during meetings in matters concerning the actual combating and the disposal of resources, etc, when the matter in question concerns their own country's territory.

The liaison officers are placed under the same obligations of discretion as imposed on the centre's own national staff but are not limited as to the substance to be reported to their own national authorities.

The liaison officers are under no administrative obligations from the host country except those established by the host country for the functioning of the centre itself. The liaison officers will thus have to arrange for their own accommodation, meals, etc.

The liaison officers should be given access to all necessary communication means such as telephone, telefax, telex and email to a reasonable extent if available.

The functions of the liaison officers should be two-way so that their home country should be able to channel its opinions and wishes through the liaison officers. In cases involving joint operations or rendered equipment, this two-way function will be of great importance.

In relation to the undertaking of surveillance activities with fixed wing aircraft, helicopters and satellite surveillance, the liaison officers should co-ordinate the surveillance activities with their national authorities in order to avoid costly duplication (see also Aerial Operations Handbook).

If two countries affected by the same pollution choose not to exchange liaison officers, they should as a rule exchange daily situation reports.

If more than one Contracting Party is involved in a response operation assisting an affected Contracting Party, those Contracting Parties could decide to coordinate the liaison function. One liaison officer could then act on behalf of more than one Contracting Party.

#### **2.4.1.6 Command of Different Strike Teams**

When needed, units from different strike teams can temporarily be put at the disposal and command of another NOSC.

#### **2.4.1.7 Notes and Supplementary Guidelines concerning communication**

With the aim of further facilitating Radio Communications in joint combating operations, the following guidelines have been agreed upon. (See Annex 2 of this chapter).

#### **2.4.1.8 Communication Between the Operational Control and the SOSC (1st Level)**

The operational control is exercised normally by the country within whose zone the operation takes place (lead country) and its physical location will normally be ashore – mostly at a Coastguard Centre (MRCC) or at the incident Command Post.

It is the responsibility of the lead country to establish and maintain the communication between the operational control and the SOSC.

Depending on the facilities and internal organisation within the lead country, the communication could be established either directly from the operational control to the SOSC via e-telex; e-mail, fax, radio telephone, SATCOM/WiFi, or between the coast radio station and the SOSC.

To facilitate the communication between the operational control and the SOSC the possibility of using e-mail and/or telefax via mobile radiotelephone or e-telex as the best means of communication between these two command levels should be considered.

#### **2.4.1.9 Communication Between the SOSC and the NOSC (2nd Level)**

In accordance with 2.1.k, the communication between the SOSC and the NOSC should be performed on one or if needed more of the international maritime VHF channels 10, 67 and 73.

To this end, the vessel from which the SOSC operates should, as a rule, have at least two maritime VHF stations on board with a stand-by function on channel 16.

It is the responsibility of the lead country to obtain the permission from the national telecommunication authorities to use the maritime VHF channels 10, 67 and 73 for combating operations at sea which could be given either as a general authorisation to use the frequencies during combating operations and combating exercises or as a separate authorisation for each combating operation and combating exercise. As channels 10, 67 and 73 are not established for exclusive use in combating operations but could also be used for inter-ship communications, port operations service and ship movement service there exists a risk that the communication on these frequencies between authorities engaged in a combating operation could be seriously hampered by other traffic not relevant to the ongoing operation.

Under such circumstances the national telecommunications authorities should be consulted to advise on how non-combating traffic could be minimised or completely eliminated.

It should further be noted that the first radio contact between the SOSC and NOSC should be made on channel 16 unless otherwise agreed.

#### **2.4.1.10 Communication Between NOSC's**

Under circumstances where one NOSC and his strike teams operate geographically close to another NOSC and his strike teams, a need may arise for direct communication between the NOSC's in respect of navigation, manoeuvring and other operational matters.

In order to restrict the number of VHF channels in use, the communication between NOSC's should be performed on the same VHF channel as used for communication between the NOSC's and the SOSC.

If more VHF channels are used for communication between the SOSC and the NOSC's, a communication plan should be established in such a way that NOSC's and their strike teams operating geographically close to other NOSC's and their strike teams should be allocated to the same VHF channel for communication with the SOSC.

#### **2.4.1.11 Communication Between the NOSC's and their Strike Teams (3rd Level)**

In accordance with 2.1.k, the communication between a NOSC and his strike team units should be performed on special domestic (internal) frequencies.

For communication between NOSC and aircraft reference is made to the Aerial Surveillance Handbook.

Before deciding on the domestic frequencies, a NOSC from a country other than the lead country should check with the SOSC that the frequencies in question do not interfere with other frequencies used on the scene of action.

#### **2.4.1.12 Communication between Strike Teams**

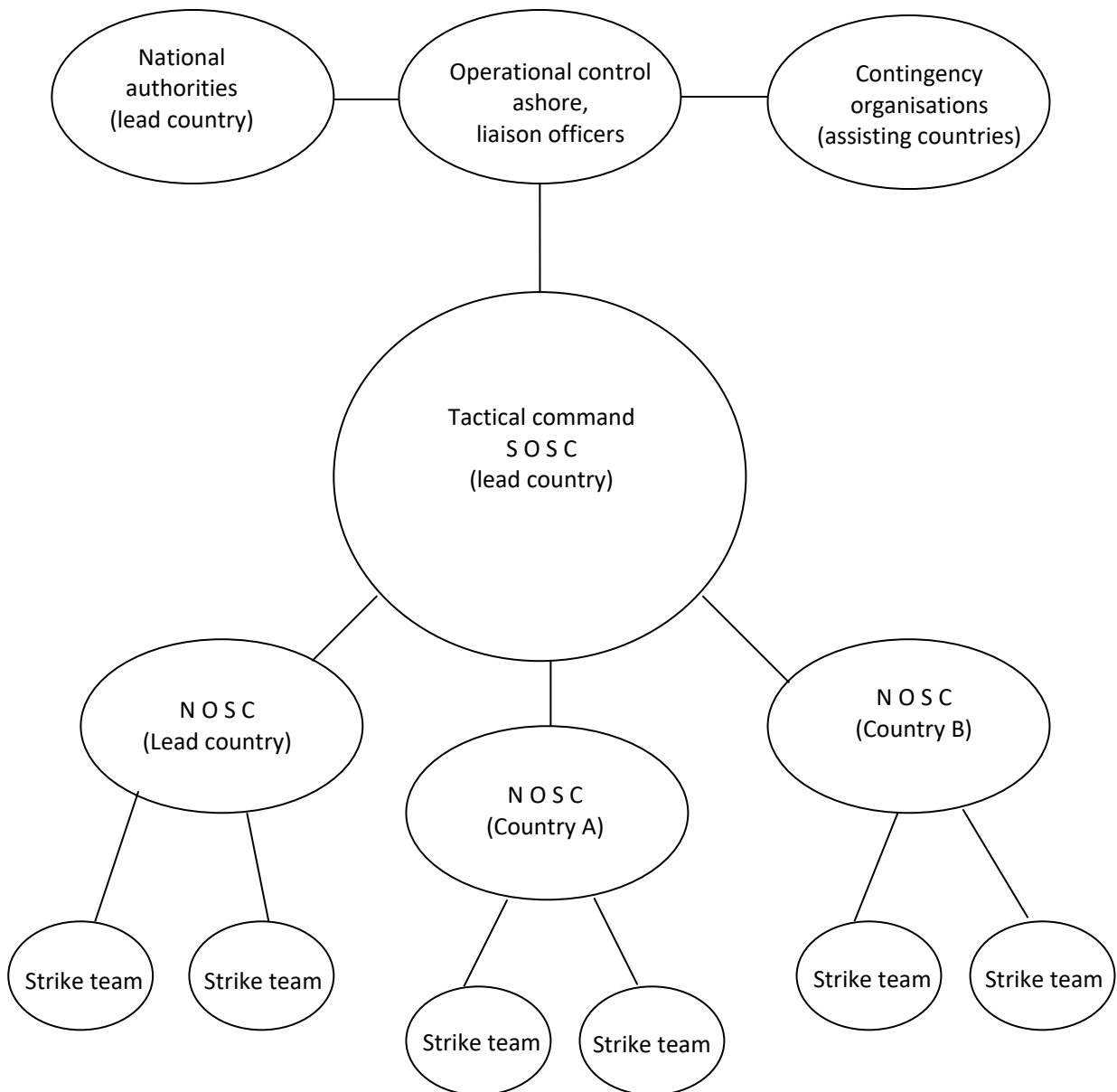
It is anticipated that if need arises for communication between strike teams under the same NOSC, this communication will be carried out on the same domestic frequencies as used for communication with the NOSC or on a special domestic frequency selected for internal communication between strike teams.

Due to the use of domestic frequencies between the NOSC's and their strike teams, direct communication between strike teams from NOSC's of different nationality cannot normally be expected.

For communication between aircraft, reference is made to the Aerial Surveillance Handbook (Part 1 Chapter 9).

**Annex 1 to Chapter 2.4 on Recommended Command Structures and Communication**

**BONN AGREEMENT COMMAND STRUCTURE FOR JOINT COMBATING OPERATIONS**



**Annex 2 to Chapter 2.4 on Recommended Command Structures and Communication**  
**BONN AGREEMENT COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR JOINT COMBATING OPERATIONS**

