



IMPLEMENTING A MASK CALLSIGN MASKING SCHEME

Purpose

To advise SOT and VOS Focal Points of the initial and recurring obligations for a country implementing a **MASK** callsign masking scheme.

Background

2. At SOT-IV, Geneva 2007, there was considerable debate regarding callsign masking for the VOS and the methods by which this could be achieved. A long-term solution dependent on BUFR for message dissemination on the GTS, and utilising an encrypted callsign formed from random data elements in the message, gained widespread support. This solution however cannot be implemented until 2013 when BUFR is mandatory. In the short- to medium-term two schemes were ultimately endorsed as follows:
 - a. **SHIP**: where the true ITU callsign (**REAL**) is replaced by the generic callsign **SHIP**. This can either be done on the ship, or by the NMS prior to distributing the BBXX on the GTS. NMS replacing **REAL** with **SHIP** prior to distributing the BBXX on the GTS are required to have systems in place that will make the original (**REAL**) data available for monitoring purposes in near real-time to the monitoring centres, or
 - b. **MASK**: where the true ITU callsign (**REAL**) is replaced in the BBXX sent from the ship by an alternative and unique callsign (**MASK**) provided by the NMS. NMS implementing this method are required to provide JCOMMOPS with a regularly updated list of their ships using **MASK**.
3. Japan and the USA have adopted the **SHIP** scheme and are working towards fulfilling their obligations to make the original (**REAL**) data available in near real-time.
4. Some other countries have introduced, or are considering introducing a **MASK** scheme. The remainder of this document is for countries implementing a **MASK** scheme.

Initial Obligations

5. Countries considering introducing a **MASK** scheme must first provide the details of their proposed scheme to the *SOT Task Team on Callsign Masking* < sot-tt-masking@jcommops.org >. The Task Team will review the scheme to ensure that it does not conflict with:
 - a. The official callsign series allocated by the ITU to another country;
 - b. The **MASK** scheme of another country; or

- c. Any other known WMO numbering scheme.
6. If the Task Team discovers any concerns with the proposal, the submitting country will be invited to review its proposal and re-submit it to the Task Team.

Recurring Obligations

7. Countries implementing a **MASK** scheme shall provide JCOMMOPS < mask2real@jcommops.org > with a regularly updated list of ships involved in their national **MASK** scheme. This includes updating the list of ships if there are changes to the assigned **MASK** of a ship, or ships. The list shall be submitted as follows:

a. **Ship starts using MASK or is assigned a new MASK:**

The list shall be submitted immediately. The list shall contain all active **MASK** ships including the new ship or new **MASK** that prompted the submission;

b. **Ship stops using MASK or changes its MASK:**

The list shall be submitted immediately. The list shall contain all active **MASK** ships and also the de-listed ship or former **MASK** that prompted the submission with its corresponding **MASK** end-date (refer to requirements in para. 9); and

c. **Quarterly:**

All active **MASK** ships if there are nil additions or deletions from the last submitted list.

8. It is recommended that the quarterly submission to JCOMMOPS is made at the same time as the quarterly WMO No. 47 (Pub47) update to WMO, i.e. by the 15th day of January, April, July and October.
9. The following details shall be provided in accordance with the scheduling outlined in para. 7:

Country-of-Recruitment	(1)	The country that recruited the vessel for the VOS.
Report-Date	(1)	The date when the current report was prepared.
nmsID	(2)	Unique identification number assigned by the NMS (if applicable).
MASK	(1)	The unique masked callsign provided to the ship by the NMS.
REAL	(1)	The official ITU callsign of the ship.
IMOn	(2)	The number assigned by the IMO to the hull of the ship (if applicable).
Start-Date	(1)	The commencement date of using MASK on the ship in question, and reported in YYYYMMDD format.
End-Date	(3)	The final date of using MASK on the ship in question (if applicable), and reported in YYYYMMDD format.

(1) Mandatory in every report | (2) Either or both | (3) Required only when **MASK** on the ship ends

10. The callsign list submitted to JCOMMOPS shall be a semi-colon delimited text file (**.CSV**) consisting of one ship per line comprising the details described above and formatted as follows:

Country-of-Recruitment;Report-Date;nmsID;MASK;REAL;IMOn;Start-Date;End-Date;

11. If a non-mandatory element is not available it shall be omitted, but the trailing semi-colon must be retained.

e.g. **AU;20080326;;ABC1234;DEFG;9123456;200800325;;**

12. Submissions to WMO No. 47 shall continue to list ships with **REAL**.

Action

13. That (1) you note the above, and (2) VOS Focal Points in countries implementing a **MASK** callsign masking scheme observe the initial and recurring obligations contained herein.

Graeme Ball

Chair, JCOMM Ship Observations Team (SOT)
Chair, SOT Task Team on Callsign Masking

11 April 2008