

Digital Ship

June/July 2009

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Globe launches Inmarsat to OpenPort swap scheme

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Globe Wireless has announced a new programme whereby customers deactivating Inmarsat-B, Mini-M or Fleet 33 terminals by September 30, 2009 will be eligible to receive a free Iridium OpenPort terminal.

As part of these deals Globe says that it is also offering an Unlimited E-mail Option, which will allow users to send as many e-mails as they wish for a fixed monthly fee over the terminal, combining the Iridium OpenPort capabilities with Globe's worldwide Digital HF network.

"Iridium OpenPort can dramatically reduce costs and improve performance for data connectivity," said Frank Coles, president and CEO of Globe Wireless.

"To put it in perspective, data on Iridium OpenPort is one tenth the cost of Mini-M. Voice calling is nearly half of Mini-M rates. The cost of data on Fleet 33 using both MPDS and the 9.6Kbps data channel is very expensive. Iridium

OpenPort voice is half the cost, and data can be up to one fifth the cost of Fleet 33."

"For crew calling users, the (programme) makes perfect sense. Iridium OpenPort crew calling is much cheaper than Inmarsat, with these rates available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Further, since Iridium OpenPort also allows three simultaneous phone calls, the crew does not have to queue to use the phone."

Mr Coles also says that ship operators could save thousands of dollars per year by switching from Inmarsat-B terminals to the Iridium system, and notes that the company will make provisions for those who rely on the systems for GMDSS.

"The voice and data rates on B are high, even if the customer is using High Speed Data connections," he said.

"Combining the savings on repair costs and airtime, we believe owners can save between \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year. If customers use the Inmarsat-B for the ship's GMDSS compliance, Globe Wireless can bundle an Inmarsat-C GMDSS terminal into the package."

Mr Coles says that Inmarsat's satellite repositioning programme, completed at the end of February, has also influenced the decision to offer this deal to Fleet 33 users.

"Inmarsat has changed the direction of Fleet 33 with the adjustments to the satellite systems," he said. "The original plans to provide a global service for Fleet 33 changed, and the system will remain spot beam."

"Fleet 33 terminals are relatively new, however, the ongoing operating costs of these terminals will result in continuous high monthly communications costs, with severe functional limitations."

The launch of these offers follows on from Globe's recent completion of its testing programme for Iridium OpenPort. The company had delayed in providing OpenPort terminals to customers since its launch, saying that it needed to complete an extensive evaluation programme before bringing it to market.

"We have given the Iridium OpenPort system a vigorous shakedown," said Mr

Coles. "Globe Wireless ran Iridium OpenPort through a full battery of performance and environmental tests to confirm Iridium OpenPort ruggedness for the harsh marine environment, including stress testing to verify the robustness during high traffic loading conditions."

"We did this testing to ensure that any equipment we install aboard our customer's ships would be reliable - we are aware of how difficult it is to re-visit ships to fix defective equipment. As a result, we believe we are able to provide our customers with a reliable, fully tested product."

"The Iridium engineering team has successfully resolved all beta testing and production ramp-up issues. We are now moving forward with deliveries of Iridium OpenPort through our direct channels to fulfil the large backlog of orders from our customers around the world."

The terminal will also be available with a new GlobeSecure firewall system, developed to operate with OpenPort.