

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

THE RED CROSS AND ITS EMERGENCY RADIOCOMMUNICATIONS

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies sent a letter, on January 5, 1965, to all National Red Cross, Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun Societies. We quote hereunder the text thereof and remind readers that this letter was announced in the preceding issue of the International Review

On February 17th, 1960, we informed you of the recommendation made by the Administrative Radio Conference, held in Geneva, in 1959. A copy is attached hereto for your ready reference.

This recommendation concerns the establishment of an autonomous radiocommunication system among the National Societies themselves and with the international institutions of the Red Cross, for cases where normal communication facilities are disrupted or do not exist. It invites the Administration of the countries, Members of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to cooperate in the establishment of such a network.

Since that time some Societies have conveyed to us news of the progress they have achieved in organizing their own radiocommunication networks on the national level. It does indeed appear that in several countries Societies have recourse, more and more, to this means of communication whenever critical situations arise, in particular in the event of catastrophes, natural disasters or large-scale emergency relief programs.

In order to co-ordinate specific actions on the international level and to act efficiently and rapidly in case of need, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS) had to be equipped with a radiocommunication center which could be used for direct contact with the Societies.

The Swiss telecommunication Administration has granted a license to install and operate the ICRC station in Geneva, on the basis of operation in accordance with Recommendation No. 34 of the Administrative Radio Conference, Geneva, 1959.

During a crisis in 1962, the ICRC, which was confronted with new and difficult tasks, decided to establish and operate a radio-communication station at its headquarters. Since the end of 1963 this station has been operational ; it is staffed by experienced and fully qualified professionals.

The installation and operation by the ICRC of a field hospital in the heart of the Yemen desert, which for almost a year has cared for about 16,000 wounded and sick, have clearly shown how essential direct radiocommunications are between the scene of action, the supply centers, the delegations, and the headquarters of the ICRC.

Since December 1963, the ICRC's mobile radio units at Uqhd and Jeddah and its station in Geneva have been exchanging daily a large number of communications. All those who have participated in this relief action consider that the rapid and dependable communications made possible by the emergency network set up by the ICRC have largely contributed towards its efficiency.

It is now an established principle that any important international action undertaken by the Red Cross should rely in particular on direct radiocommunications as the only means of co-ordinating dispatch of relief teams to wherever they are required and of giving them constant support.

Under the terms of the license the ICRC is authorized to handle all Red Cross emergency messages whenever the Red Cross is called upon to take action in the event of disaster, catastrophe or in any similar emergency, and when the public telecommunications network experiences difficulties in handling the traffic due to overload, damages, interruptions or lack of direct circuits to the place of the event.

The ICRC will handle the LRCS communications whenever the latter coordinates actions on behalf of the Societies. At the moment the two international institutions of the Red Cross are completing technical arrangements concerning the procedure to be adopted for relaying communications to and from the LRCS.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

The International Committee of the Red Cross has been authorized to operate its Geneva Radio Station for the purposes set forth. The main technical characteristics of this station are as follows :

<i>Call sign :</i>	<i>HBC 88</i>
<i>Location :</i>	<i>ICRC, 7, avenue de la Paix, Geneva</i>
<i>Class of transmission :</i>	<i>3A3A 0,1A1</i>
<i>Power delivered to the antenna (peak envelope power) :</i>	<i>800 watts</i>
<i>Assigned frequencies :</i>	<i>3 801.5 kc/s</i> <i>6 998.5 kc/s</i> <i>13 998.5 kc/s</i> <i>20 998.5 kc/s</i> <i>29 701.5 kc/s</i>

And for exceptional use, frequencies in the amateur bands :
3 500 . . . to 3 800 kc/s
7 000 . . . to 7 100 kc/s
14 000 . . . to 14 350 kc/s
21 000 . . . to 21 450 kc/s
28 000 . . . to 29 700 kc/s

For the establishment of an International Red Cross emergency radiocommunication network, the normal working frequencies have been assigned to the station by the Swiss telecommunication Administration. After consultation with the ITU, the frequencies have been notified to the International Frequency Registration Board (IFRB) of the ITU for communicating with Yemen. Notification of the stations which should transmit on those same frequencies for reception at Geneva should be made through the Telecommunication Administrations in whose area the terminal transmitting stations are located. In time of emergency it is hoped that the national telecommunication Administrations will be in a position to ensure our use of these frequencies without interference.

A programme of test transmissions by which the equipment and procedures can be checked will be established. When emergen-

cies occur which require the exceptional use of additional bands, the amateur bands will be used according to the arrangements existing in the countries concerned.

The setting up of a radio station in Geneva, where both international institutions of the Red Cross have their headquarters, is a major step towards the establishment of a world-wide Red Cross emergency radiocommunication network. The ICRC and the LRCS are convinced that the National Societies will now cooperate with them to bring into being the Red Cross international radiocommunication system.

The necessary radiocommunication facilities should therefore be available to each Society, in co-operation with the national telecommunication Administration concerned, so that it may establish direct contact with the international institutions of the Red Cross and possibly with other Societies, in case of need. One or more of the following solutions might be considered by each National Society :

1. by acquiring the necessary transmitting and receiving equipment and by recruiting operating personnel. As this is the most expensive solution, it can only be considered if the expected traffic on the national emergency network is sufficient to justify the expense ;
2. by special arrangement with a competent official national institution so that the necessary radio services may be used in case of emergency ;
3. by arrangement with the national amateur radio association. Amateur radio stations which are so authorized have often handled emergency traffic and have shown an earnest desire to help the Red Cross in its humanitarian work.

Each of the three solutions outlined above has been applied successfully by various Societies in order to meet their own national radiocommunication requirements.

As regards (1) above, the National Societies are asked to approach their national telecommunication Authorities for an authorization to establish and operate a radio station. It is hoped

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

that such authorization will include the use of the required normal working frequencies and permission to operate in the amateur bands, under exceptional emergency conditions. In reference to (2) and (3) above, it is believed that the necessary formalities can be made, if not already done, by the owners and operators of the radio stations. The Societies can be of great help in rendering direct support and moral guarantees to the undertaking.

In any case, it is now hoped that each Society will be able to obtain the approval of the national authorities concerned to establish a radiocommunication system under the conditions provided for by Recommendation No. 34 of the Administrative Radio Conference of 1959. The world-wide success of such a network will greatly depend on the success in obtaining the reservation for that purpose of the frequencies assigned to the Geneva station of the Red Cross international radio network.

In order to take into account the Societies' achievements in planning the emergency Red Cross International Radio Network, the ICRC and the LRCS earnestly wish to receive as soon as possible complete information on Red Cross radiocommunication facilities and arrangements in each country.

The radio service of the headquarters of the ICRC is ready to organize and co-ordinate the establishment of the emergency network on an international level. All correspondence concerning the present notice should be sent to :

Radio Service

International Committee of the Red Cross

7, avenue de la Paix

1211 Geneva, Switzerland

This Service is ready to supply National Societies with any information and assistance they may need.

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies would therefore be grateful if the Societies would inform the authorities concerned in their countries of the project described above.

* * *

ANNEXE

Recommendation No. 34

Relating to the Use of Radiotelegraph and Radiotelephone Links
by Red Cross Organizations

The Administrative Radio Conference, Geneva, 1959, considering

- a) *that the world-wide relief work of the Red Cross Organizations is of increasing importance particularly in the event of disasters, catastrophes, etc.;*
- b) *that in such circumstances normal communication facilities are frequently overloaded, damaged or even completely interrupted;*
- c) *that it is necessary to facilitate by all possible measures the rapid intervention of the Red Cross, national and international;*
- d) *that rapid and independent contact is essential to the intervention of the National Red Cross Societies (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun);*
- e) *that for international relief work it is necessary that the National Red Cross Societies involved be able to communicate with each other as well as with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies;*

recommends

1. *that administrations take account of the possible need of the Red Cross for rapid communication by radio when normal communication facilities are disrupted;*
2. *that administrations study the possibility of assigning, for this purpose, at the upper or lower limits of the amateur bands, one or more common frequencies to stations of the Red Cross;*
3. *that the next Administrative Radio Conference should consider whether any further action is necessary.*