

# GPS Disruptions Likely During Military Exercise

Jamming of GPS in parts of Scotland is likely during Europe's largest military exercise, to be held from 16 to 26 April 2012, the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) has said. Jamming during Joint Warrior last October was suspended after complaints from Western Isles fishermen. Depending on height, the jamming could affect receivers out to ranges of between 10 and 145 NM.

It adds that, for IFR operations, only radio navigation equipment required by the rules for IFR operations should be used. And for VFR, conventional means of navigation - including DR - should always be used. Operators should be prepared for erroneous readings if cross-checking with GPS in the area affected by the jamming.

The jamming will also have some affect on sea- and land-based GPS receivers - but only in comparatively limited areas.

Further jamming will be conducted for up to 3 days in the period 10-21 July 2012 in this case with jamming aircraft orbiting at 10,000 ft along a 50 NM track of 270°T from Kirkwall, starting 10 NM and ending 60 NM to the W of Kirkwall.

The islands council, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, also said satellite TV, mobile phones and internet connectivity were disrupted. The MoD said prior warning would be given of any jamming. The war games and counter terrorism training are held twice a year, in spring and autumn, and involve Nato armies, navies and air forces. Much of the training takes place in Scotland. The Royal Navy has already alerted fishermen to the possibility they will be challenged by helicopters and ships in radio communications as part of the training. Timings of any disruption to civilian users of GPS has still to be confirmed.

Jamming was done during previous exercises, but was suspended last year after the complaints were made. The Royal Navy had issued prior warnings that GPS in parts of Scotland would be disrupted, including in a guide made available to the public the previous month. It gave the locations and timings for the jamming. The Scottish government also confirmed it had received the guide and put it on its website. However, Western Isles fishermen said the first they knew of the jamming was when their equipment went offline.

According to the Royal Navy, the notice has been distributed to coastguard stations, Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency offices and fishing organisations, including the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and Western Isles Fishermen's Federation. Durness Community Council and Aultbea Post Office in the north west Highlands have also been sent the details.

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