

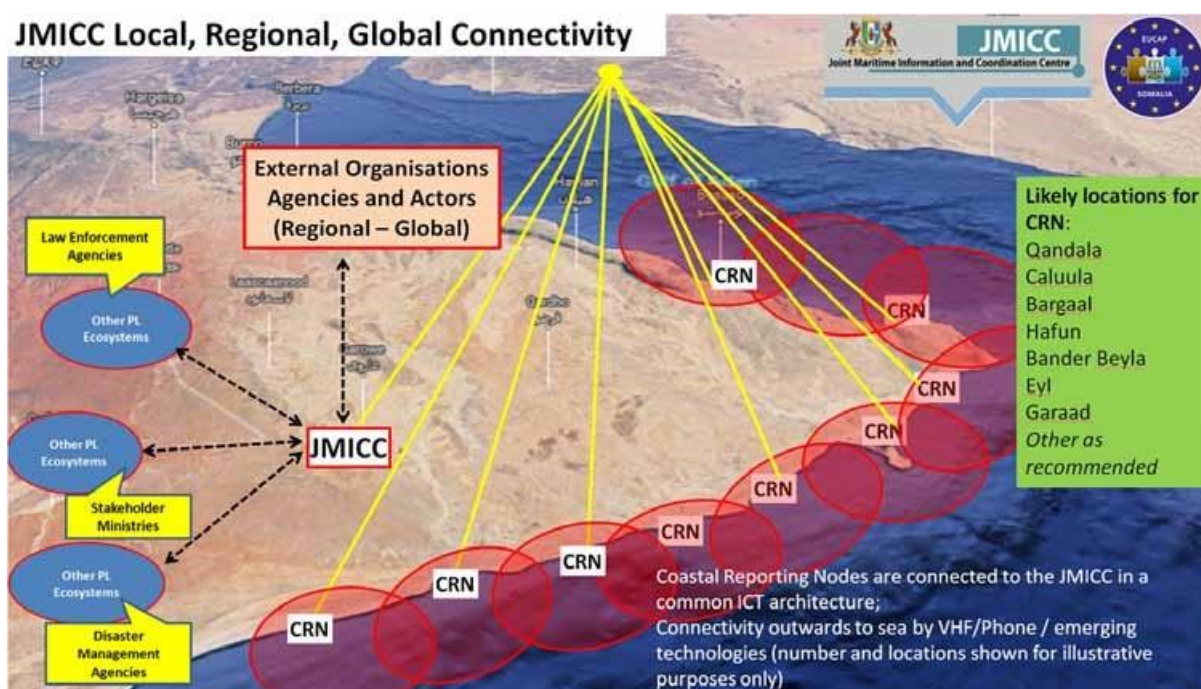
The Joint Maritime Information and Coordination Centre in Puntland, Somalia

In Garowe, the capital of Puntland State of Somalia in the north-eastern region of Somalia, **the Joint Maritime Information and Coordination Centre (JMICC)** is working hard to achieve the status of Initial Operational Capability by the end of 2020.

The JMICC is a new Puntland State Agency, established with the assistance of the European Union Mission ‘**EUCAP Somalia**’. Its main purpose is to support the government exercising Maritime Governance over its maritime space.

Given the enormous extent of that maritime space, Puntland having a coastline of 1600 kilometers, and the current paucity of capable and equipped sea going patrol vessels this is not an easy task. That is where the JMICC must step in, assist, and advise on the best response options to deal with maritime crime, accidents, incidents and/or emergencies; and all within the Rule of Law and taking into account international regulations and conventions.

In many ways, the JMICC is an “offset strategy” for the current lack of indigenous maritime law enforcement capabilities available: through careful analysis, the sparse capabilities available will be directed and employed in the most efficient and effective manner. In case local capabilities are not able or not suitable to respond, the JMICC can reach out to international navies operating in the area.



DAILY COLLECTION OF MARITIME PRESS CLIPPINGS 2019 – 331

Besides providing advice to the Government and responsible ministries, the JMICC also acts as a ‘testbed’ for the future Puntland Situation Centre. The insights and experiences gained over the next years will greatly assist in the design of the Situation Centre and all its procedural aspects. In other words, the JMICC is evolving into an inter-agency organization bringing all required agencies under a single roof.

Of note is that two Dutchmen play a particular role within the JMICC: **Mr Guled Ahmed**, a Somali-Dutchman living in Vlaardingen is the Acting Director; and **Mr Marco Hekkens**, a former Dutch Marine Colonel living in Maassluis is the principal mentor and project manager. This brings a unique formula to the teaching and training process in the JMICC by combining local knowledge, cultural understanding and government relations with the required technical and international knowledge and experiences needed to operate the JMICC and future Situation Centre.

Presently the focus of work is rapidly expanding the reach of the JMICC in ‘land-locked’ Garowe by connecting it to so-called Coastal Reporting Nodes at strategic locations along the rugged and remote coastal areas of Puntland. Key locations will be the port of Bosasso, Eyl and Garaad (the latter two under construction); and locations along the Gulf of Aden and the tip of the Horn of Africa. Once connected (via internet), it will allow a daily flow of relevant information to the JMICC and other Coastal Reporting Nodes; and vice versa. Such information will primarily focus on safety and security matters but it will equally contain information on humanitarian aspects such as the effects of serious flooding, drought and migration. The task of the JMICC is to analyze and fuse all received information in a timely manner, and assist the government in achieving a good understanding of the situation in Puntland waters and along the coast areas.

The ambition is to equip these Coastal Reporting Nodes gradually with new communication and surveillance techniques to extend their reach further out to sea but also along the inland coastal areas. It will come as no surprise that achieving the vision requires funding support from as many different channels as possible. Therefore, and in addition to their primary responsibilities, the two Dutchmen actively engage with potential sponsors discussing modalities for support. These can be financial or material by donating equipment, or sponsoring study trips and even training courses abroad.

Another way of looking at the JMICC is by seeing it as critical enabler and catalyst for future major infrastructural development (such as ports and on-land offshore supporting infrastructures and possible future short-sea transportation hubs) and resource generation through the exploitation of the vast ‘Blue Economy’ potential. It sits at the nexus of security and development: enhancing productivity, sustaining economic recovery, boosting inclusive growth and promoting poverty reduction in Somalia.

With the establishment of the JMICC, Puntland has made a significant step towards improving maritime security through a better utilization of all information available. That said, much more is required to teach and train the staff in the JMICC and the Coastal Reporting Nodes on procedures, analysis and generally achieving a solid understanding of all that is ‘maritime’ and maritime and marine related. The daily Maasmond Maritime Shipping News Clippings is a great publication to achieve exactly that! More information will be available on the JMICC website www.jmicc.so

Source: JMICC PPI