



ITU strengthens Emergency Telecommunications in 2018 in the Americas

September 10 was an important date. The node HROCO in Honduras entered into operations.

Since then, three more nodes have started operations: On October 9, TIOBCR in Costa Rica; on November 6, HI8COE in Dominican Republic; on November 8, TGOEND in Guatemala; and on November 28, YN1SN in Nicaragua.

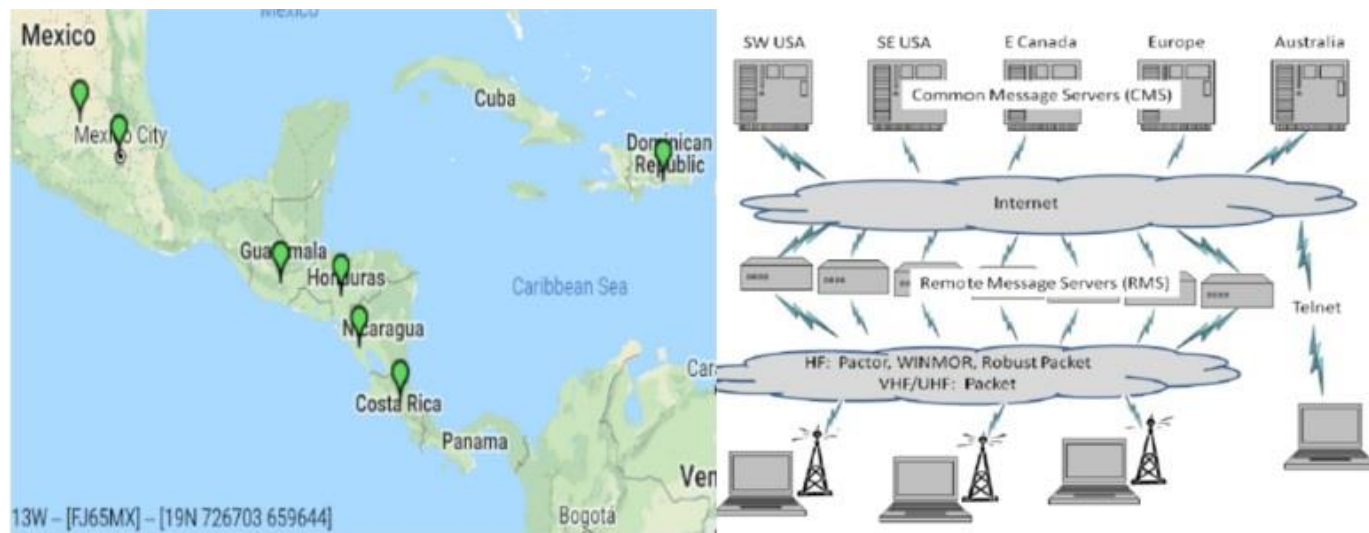


Figure 1 RMS nodes installed in beneficiary countries and possible coverage and Winlink network scheme

All 5 nodes are part of the Alternate Emergency Telecommunications network. The network is implementing the Winlink solution (www.winlink.org).

Winlink is a technology solution created and maintained by radio amateur. It has a proven record helping during emergencies. As recently as 2017, Winlink was extensively used in the aftermath of the high impact hurricane season in the Caribbean and also after the earthquake in Mexico.

As many good ideas, the idea of [ITU](#) and [IARU](#) to increase emergency telecommunications capabilities using Winlink ignited from a conversation during a CITELE meeting in August 2017 between Rodrigo Robles, Emergency Telecommunications focal point for the Americas from ITU and César Pío Santos HR2P, IARU Region 2 Emergency Coordinator.

This idea and its corresponding project counted from the beginning with the decisive support of Brahima Sanou, BDT Director and Bruno Ramos, Regional Director for the Americas Regional Office. Emergency Telecommunications has been a priority for many years in the Americas Region. In [WTDC 2017](#), it was consensus as a regional initiative for 2019-2022.



Rodrigo Robles and César Pío Santos



Oscar León (CITEL), Allan Ruiz (COMTELCA), Bernadette Lewis (CTU) and Brahima Sanou (DBT Director ITU) signing the letter of intent

ITU signed a [letter of intention](#) with CITEL, COMTELCA and CTU during the last WTDC in Buenos Aires in 2017. Right after, ITU designed the project “Proyecto piloto para el uso de las TIC para situaciones de emergencia y desastres en la región de las Américas” (Pilot Project for the use of ICT in emergency and disaster situations in the Americas region) and signed it with the 7 beneficiary countries (COMTELCA members): Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and Dominican Republic.

At the beginning of 2018, ITU started its implementation with the cooperation of IARU, particularly of the [“Federación Mexicana de Radio Experimentadores” \(FMRE\)](#). Mike Burton XE2/N6KZB, Jonathan Remba XE1BRX and Alfonso Tamez XE2O have been key to the success of the project.



Mike Burton



Alfonso Tamez



Jonathan Remba

COMTELCA has been key in the implementation of the project, collaborating with equipment specifications, coordinating with Administrations and bringing the Central American Integration System for natural disaster prevention, mitigation and response (CEPREDENAC) to the table, a sub-regional organization, also part of SICA, whose members are the governmental agencies responsible of the response to disasters.

Governments have also played an important role in the project implementation because it has required to establish a good coordination among authorities of telecommunications, authorities responsible to respond to emergencies and



radio-amateur associations. Governments have also complemented some equipment and made preliminary work for the installation and start of operations.

The project consisted in the promotion of national partnerships among relevant entities, the procurement of the equipment needed to establish RMS nodes in every country, delivering training and increasing awareness on Winlink use at the national level.

Events with authorities in...



HONDURAS



COSTA RICA



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



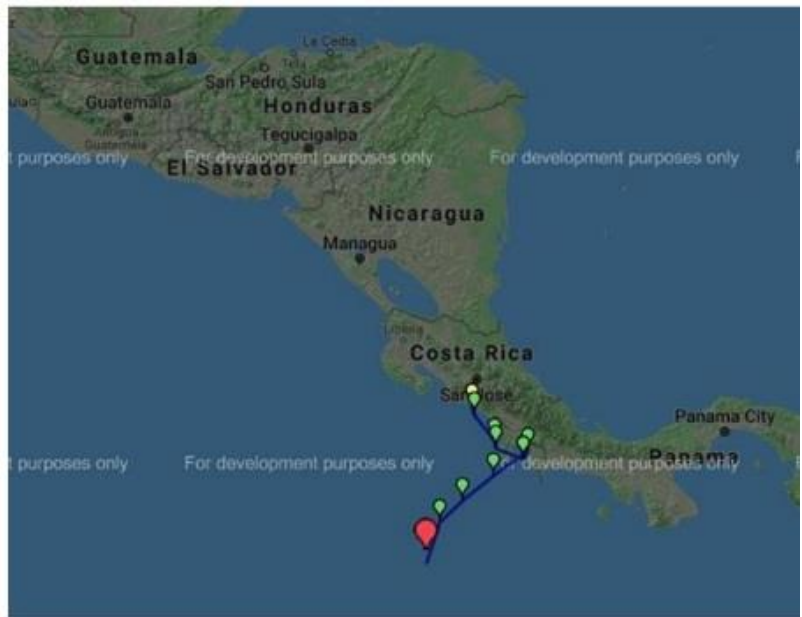
GUATEMALA



NICARAGUA



RMS node HR0COP in operation



Vessel sailing Central America and using both the Honduras and Costa Rica gateways on Pactor 4.
Many important emails sent and received by him.

Within the project, ITU, IARU and FMRE have helped in starting RMS node operations in 5 countries and they will continue to work in putting into operations the other 2 nodes.

We at ITU commit to continue working for the success of the project in all beneficiary countries and counting with the cooperation of IARU and FMRE to take this Alternate Emergency Telecommunications Network to the whole Americas region.