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BETHESDA, Md., May 12 /PRNewswire/ -- Iridium reports that its new-generation global marine satellite communication system, Iridium OpenPort™, has successfully completed sea trials on a number of different vessels, and worldwide commercial rollout is now underway.

"The feedback from beta test platforms has been overwhelmingly positive, and we have a strong backlog of orders from shipowners who recognize the unique value proposition of Iridium OpenPort," said Don Thoma, executive vice president, Marketing, Iridium. "In the current economic climate, shipowners are looking for ways to trim operating costs for ships at sea, and Iridium OpenPort offers a very cost-effective alternative to other broadband satellite systems in terms of hardware, installation and monthly usage costs," Thoma added.

Thoma noted that Iridium OpenPort is the only truly global high-bandwidth marine satellite communication system, with coverage over 100 percent of the Earth's surface, including Polar waters beyond the reach of geostationary satellites.

Frank Coles, President and CEO of Globe Wireless, an Iridium Service Provider, said, "We have conducted exhaustive testing of Iridium OpenPort systems, and we have successful tests on customer ships. The pilot testing we have done showed that the OpenPort system was capable of handing a large volume of data and provided quality voice services. We are now rolling out systems to our customer's ships, who are seeing significant reductions in voice and data costs."

Zodiac Shipping Agencies Ltd., one of the first shipping companies to sign up for Iridium OpenPort, conducted sea trials on two ships in collaboration with Iridium Service Provider, AND Group. The vessels are currently using AND Group's Rapidomail for crew and ship's e-mail. The installations will soon be upgraded to AND's IPSignature package, which offers Internet browsing, company intranet, instant messaging and other functions as well as e-mail, according to Ian Robinson, managing director of AND Group. A Zodiac spokesperson said, "We believe Iridium OpenPort will be a very cost-effective solution for voice and data communications and will produce significant savings in operating costs." Zodiac expects to move forward with more installations across its 125-ship fleet in the coming year.

Peter Dohle Schiffahrts-KG conducted extensive sea trials with an Iridium OpenPort unit on a 1600 teu containership under a service agreement with Vizada, another Iridium Service Provider. Michael Dittmer, fleet IT and communication coordinator for Peter Dohle Schiffahrts-KG, reported that he was "... very happy with the service," which fulfilled his expectations. He expects to install the Iridium OpenPort units on other ships in the Peter Dohle fleet in the near future. "Before implementing this plan fully we need to wait for the full results from the tests, but this is definitely the direction we want to head in, because we completely trust the service," said Dittmer. "The voice quality is 100 percent perfect."

An ocean-going tug within the Argentine navy fleet of ships also relied on Iridium OpenPort as a primary communication medium during a three-month deployment to support Antarctic bases during the Austral summer. The system was installed by Tesacom, an Iridium Service Provider in South America. In areas outside the coverage of all other commercial satellite systems, the Argentine navy turned to Iridium's low-earth orbiting (LEO)-based system, which offers reliable coverage over every square inch of the planet. The ship's commanding officer, Rodrigo Martin Arrigues, said Iridium OpenPort played an important role in achieving the ship's mission, as well as improving morale for the crew during the long period away from home. "When compared to other communication options, Iridium OpenPort gives us much more data speed, a reliable communication system and a much more complete solution," he said. Arrigues noted that the Iridium OpenPort service played an important role in coordinating communications during operations to rescue passengers and crew from a cruise ship that ran aground on the Antarctic Peninsula.

Perhaps the toughest testbed for Iridium OpenPort was the single-handed round-the-world Vendee Globe sailboat race. Iridium Service Provider, SeaMobile Europe, installed Iridium OpenPort terminals on five of the high-performance sailboats. "This was the toughest possible environment to validate the ruggedness of the Iridium OpenPort hardware and the robustness of the network," said Bruno Gicquel, director of Maritime Operations, SeaMobile Europe. "This grueling event puts enormous day-by-day stresses on the boats and equipment, under extremes of hot and cold temperatures, high winds and heavy seas, and the Iridium OpenPort units performed extremely well under these unforgiving conditions."

"Iridium OpenPort is as easy to use as the Internet at home," said Jeremie Beyou, skipper of*Delta-Dore* and Vendee Globe participant. "The greatest feature is that you can stay connected permanently without the need to re-start the modem and antenna every time you want to receive or send an e-mail. The connection speed is good and allows you to make phone calls while surfing the Internet, and the terminal is really easy to install."

Thoma noted Iridium has signed up 15 service partners to distribute the Iridium OpenPort products and service packages worldwide. In many cases, these companies are integrating Iridium OpenPort into their own hardware and

packages worldwide. In many cases, these companies are integrating Iridium OpenPort into their own hardware and software packages to provide a range of voice and IP-based data solutions for customer requirements.

Introduced in mid-2008, Iridium OpenPort provides three independent phone lines and a separate scalable data circuit supporting speeds of 9.6 to 128 kilobytes per second. Data rates can easily be adjusted up or down without any modifications to hardware or software. The low-profile, lightweight antenna array does not require a stabilized pedestal and is therefore less costly to purchase, install and maintain.

About Iridium Satellite LLC

Iridium Satellite LLC (www.iridium.com) is the only mobile satellite service (MSS) company offering coverage over the entire globe. The Iridium constellation of LEO, cross-linked satellites provides critical voice and data services for areas not served by terrestrial communication networks. Iridium's subscriber growth has been driven by increasing demand for reliable, global communications. Iridium serves commercial markets through a worldwide network of hundreds of distributors, and provides services to the U.S. Department of Defense, and other U.S. and international government agencies. The company's customers represent a broad spectrum of industry, including maritime, aeronautical, government/defense, public safety, utilities, oil/gas, mining, forestry, heavy equipment and transportation. Iridium has launched a major development program for its next-generation satellite constellation, Iridium NEXT, which will result in continued and new Iridium MSS offerings. The company is headquartered in Bethesda, Md. and is currently privately held.

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