

Out in Front — Backup Shmackup

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Certain individuals within certain government agencies persevere in their attempts to decommission the Loran-C, now enhanced Loran or eLoran, system. The next pages in this issue focus on this topic of vital concern to the GNSS community. You can also see the, at last count, 918 [public comments received](#) — not more than 850 of them strongly in favor of keeping eLoran. The comment period has been extended to March 30, by the way. I strongly encourage you to express your views at this forum.

Let us examine and refute the possible rationales for those in the Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security, and Federal Aviation Administration to kill this important and proven program.

GPS always knows where I am. Why do I need anything else? Because occasionally I go indoors. Because applications such as road-tolling will require greater accuracy, availability, and integrity in obstructed situations than I do with my fish-finding or LBS. Because every once in a while I dimly recall the words "vulnerability," "terrorist attack," and "Volpe Report."

eLoran can provide the answers, and the very necessary backup to GPS, in all these situations. It is in our best and vital interest to ensure that the world-class standard for position, navigation, and timing has a backup in case of a failure that, as much as we earnestly seek to avoid, we cannot totally prevent.

It's not just deliberate attacks we must plan against. Last month in San Diego, a U.S. Navy ship without proper filters on its L-band equipment took down hundreds of cell towers. Without GPS, the infrastructure could not maintain the highly precise timing necessary to handle traffic. Such disruptions are not routine, but they occur with increasing frequency.

Users won't equip. That depends very much on the user. Consumers won't spring for it, but commercial mariners, airlines, and even private pilots will; they need Loran, they use it, they want it. Just read the Coast Guard docket.

Technology won't be available in time. In some areas, eLoran is available now. GPS III, the satnav solution or partial solution to some of the stated problems, won't come online for a decade or more.

Industry won't build it. Fact of the matter: industry always builds when it sees a market, or even the glimmer of one. The filings strongly evidence such a market.

Langhorne Bond, president of the International Loran Association and former FAA administrator, said "If you believe in the Kellogg-Briand Pact, then you can believe that GPS is sufficient for navigation, and no backup is required."

I had to look it up, too. Signed by the United States, Germany, France, and 59 other countries on August 27, 1928, the treaty provided for "the renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy."

In other words, it outlawed war. In nineteen twenty and frikkin' eight.

Where do we stand today? Can we afford to leave GPS without backup?

You decide. You vote. You write your Congresspeople. After all, your tax dollars support eLoran as well as GPS.