



Westland Cruisers Ensure Daily TV Coverage of Rally with BGAN from Stratos

In late 2007, an intrepid band of business people from The Netherlands embarked on a 7000-km journey from Amsterdam to Dakar to raise money for charity. To ensure daily television publicity for its sponsors, the Westland Cruisers chose BGAN from Stratos to transmit very large video files from the desert each night when they set up camp.

Raising Money for a Worthy Cause

Rene Beukers is a Toyota dealer in the “Westland” of Holland near The Hague. Every year, he and a couple of long-time friends organize some type of fund-raising project for a worthy cause. “We have good jobs and a good life, so we like to do something special, large or small, for charity,” he explains.

In 2007, Beukers and his friends organized a group of 30 local Dutch business people—dubbed the Westland Cruisers—to participate in the Amsterdam-Dakar Challenge, a well-known rally for charity. “Dakar is a holy place for a lot of race car fans,” adds Beukers. The 7000-km Amsterdam-Dakar Challenge involves approximately 300 vehicles following roughly the same route as its more famous

predecessor, the Dakar Rally, a grueling off-road competition that began in 1978 originally from Paris, France to Dakar, Senegal through the deserts of northwest Africa.

“We sent one of our organizers ahead to Gambia, to identify a good project to raise money for,” says Beukers. “There he met a Dutch woman who plans to build a new psychiatric hospital, and needed a lot of money. We decided to donate the money the Westland Cruisers raise from the rally to the hospital so she can realize a dream.”

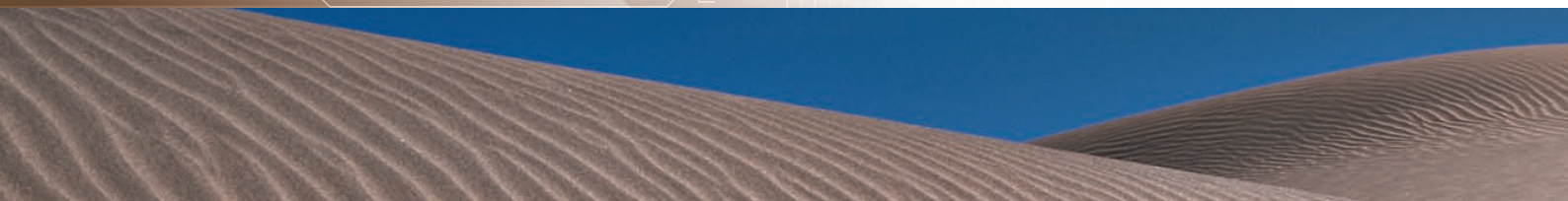

Seeking Portable Satellite Communications

To secure sponsorship for the Westland Cruisers, Beukers approached local businesses and asked them to contribute 3,000

Euros each to cover one day of the rally, which would take about 21 days. “We told our sponsors, ‘We’ll arrange daily television coverage from the desert that will give you a lot of exposure’,” Beukers recalls. “But we didn’t really understand what that would require.”

After obtaining agreement from W.O.S., a local TV station, to air a daily eight- to ten-minute news segment about the Westland Cruisers, Beukers contacted some relatives at Dael who provide satellite communication equipment for the Tour de France. They told him about BGAN (Broadband Global Area Network), a portable broadband satellite system that provides telephony and data transfer over the Internet using a lightweight terminal about the size of a laptop. BGAN from Stratos had recently





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been used by a well-known Dutch TV journalist covering the Dakar Rally, enabling him to transmit files without waiting in line for access to the official press center. VrieService, a distributor and service provider for Stratos in the Netherlands, had provided that system.

"We never heard of BGAN before," says Beukers. "We always wondered how the big news organizations did it. And we thought, 'If they can do it, we can do it.'"

As Alexander de Vries, Director of VrieService, notes, "The only alternative to BGAN would have been VSAT. But that would require a very big antenna, which is difficult to carry through the desert."

"Because this project was for charity," adds Beukers, "we would rather raise more money for the hospital than spend it on a bigger satellite system. So we chose BGAN from Stratos because it was cheaper as well as highly portable."

WESTLAND CRUISERS.NL

Covering the Challenge, Day by Day

The Westland Cruisers set off from Amsterdam on October 27 in 15 renovated Toyota Landcruisers, repainted and covered with their sponsors' logos. They were accompanied by Wim van Wensveen, a professional videographer who shot footage during the day and spent one or two hours editing after they set up camp. The video data file was transmitted over BGAN to Stratos' Land Earth Station in Burum, Netherlands and routed to CAIW, a local cable company, via terrestrial network.

"When we stopped driving each evening, everyone had work to do on a very strict schedule," says Piet Tensen, who headed up communications. "One group of four or five people handled the communications. None of us had prior experience with this type of equipment. But it was very simple to set up." They unpacked the gear, set up the BGAN terminal, hooked up a laptop and portable 220V power supply provided by Dael, and connected to the Internet. First, they emailed numerous photographs taken during the day to PNO Design, which updated their web site.

Did any of the Westland Cruisers use the BGAN for personal communications—either phone calls or email—with family back home? "No," says Beukers, chuckling, "there was no time for that!" Seven drivers did have satellite phones, but they were used only for emergencies.

When the video file was ready, it was compressed before transmission. Normally, files for the eight- to ten-minute news reports were between 1.0 and 1.4 GB prior to compression, and about 200 MB afterward. With data speeds up to 1/2 Mbps, the BGAN unit took four or five hours to transfer the files via FTP. "We usually started about ten o'clock at night and finished around two or three in the morning," explains Tensen. "Then about five or six in the morning, the rally started up again!" Traditional solutions like GAN at 64 Kbps would have taken almost five times as long, and the team would have been unable to complete the file transfers overnight.

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The next day, the file was fine-tuned by VJG, Wensveen's company in the Netherlands, adding a pre-recorded spot for the sponsor of the day, then delivered it to W.O.S. TV. It aired around six or seven in the evening.

According to Alexander de Vries, a special deal was made with Stratos to enable the Westland Cruisers to store and forward such large video files in such a short time span. "Normally, the highest subscription for BGAN from Stratos is 750 MB per month," he says. "But we arranged to let them use all twelve months' worth in one month, paid in advance by the sponsors. It was very convenient."

Fulfilling Promises

"With BGAN from Stratos, we were able to fulfill our promise to our sponsors," concludes Tensen. "Looking back, we feel BGAN was the perfect way to ensure good publicity. The feedback we received was tremendous."

And so was the outcome of the rally. All 15 of the Westland Cruisers' vehicles made it to Dakar in 23 days, despite a few mechanical problems along the way. Afterward, the Toyota Landcruisers were donated to local hospitals in Gambia to transport people who desperately need medical care. And the Westland Cruisers successfully raised 506,319 Euros to support the building of the New Campama Psychiatric Clinic.



Each day, a professional videographer shot footage of the Westland Cruisers' journey to Dakar.



Each night, about 200 MB, compressed down from 1.0 to 1.4 GB, of video data was transmitted to the Netherlands via BGAN from Stratos.

BGAN from Stratos

Using a lightweight satellite terminal, about the size of a laptop PC, BGAN enables users to access e-mail, corporate networks and the Internet, transfer files, transmit live video with audio and make telephone calls, from almost anywhere – including where traditional technologies don't reach. BGAN operates using a new generation of the most advanced communications satellites ever launched. These three Inmarsat I-4 satellites have 16 times the power and capacity of the current Inmarsat I-3 satellite constellation, providing significantly enhanced performance and capability for users.

Key features and benefits

- A range of small, light-weight, highly portable and rapidly deployable terminals
- Ability to communicate from anywhere, even when terrestrial networks are not operational
- High-speed wireless IP data and circuit-switched network
- Shared capacity IP data rates up to 492 kbps
- Streaming IP data rates up to 256 kbps
- Simultaneous voice and data – on different channels
- Optional guaranteed bandwidth
- Support for legacy applications and a platform for new IP-based solutions
- Support for supplementary services, e.g., call hold, call waiting, call forwarding, SMS and voicemail
- Stratos Dashboard™ for BGAN

About the Westland Cruisers

The "Westland Cruisers" is the name chosen by a group of 30 Dutch business people who came together in 2007 to participate in the Amsterdam-Dakar Challenge. The name is a combination of "Westland"—the area of Holland near The Hague where they live and work—plus "Landcruiser", which is the name of the Toyota vehicles used for the Challenge. To view photos and daily news reports (in Dutch) transmitted via BGAN from Stratos covering the Westland Cruisers' 7000-km journey, visit www.westlandcruisers.nl.

About VrieService

VrieService BV (www.vrieservice.nl) specializes in providing satellite telecommunications, and has been a Stratos Channel Partner for over ten years.

About Stratos

Stratos is the world's trusted leader for vital communications. With more than a century of service, Stratos offers the most powerful and extensive portfolio of remote communications solutions including mobile and fixed satellite and microwave services. More than 20,000 customers use Stratos products and industry-leading value-added services to optimize communications performance. Stratos serves U.S. and international government, military, first responder, NGO, oil and gas, industrial, maritime, aeronautical, enterprise, and media users on seven continents and across the world's oceans. For more information visit www.stratosglobal.com.



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