

/// The *Abeille Bourbon* salvage tug

The sea's version of the Saint-Bernard with a 4G connection

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Thierry Choquet
Commanding officer
of the *Abeille Bourbon*



The *Abeille Bourbon* is an emblematic vessel.

Providing assistance, salvage and pollution remediation, this tug (abbreviated RIAS in French) from the BOURBON group is chartered by the French Navy and remains on call 365-days a year with two, 12-strong merchant navy crews that work alternate months. The vessel carries out emergency missions along the Atlantic Coast, particularly in the Ushant shipping lane, a maritime motorway that has approximately 120 ships passing through it every day.

Abeille Bourbon is one of the four high sea salvage tugs in France, a fleet including the *Abeille Languedoc* in Boulogne, *Abeille Liberté* in Cherbourg and *Abeille Flandre* in Toulon. The *Abeille Bourbon* is the most modern tow vessel

in Europe in its category. It is 80 meters long, 16.5 meters wide and can reach a speed of 19.5 knots. It has a tractive power of 200 tons-force.

Whenever winds over 25 knots are forecast, the *Abeille Bourbon* casts off from Brest and heads to the Ushant shipping lane to quickly provide emergency assistance to vessels under distress. Depending on the direction and strength of the wind; the tug will head to one of its temporary mooring areas near the Stiff lighthouse on Ushant, in Camaret Bay or at the entrance to the Goulet de Brest in the Anse de Bertheaume (Plougonvelin). Wherever it is located, the tug can respond and weigh anchor within 40 minutes of receiving an alert.



It carries out two types of rescue missions: at the request of a private shipowner or by order of the Atlantic Maritime Prefect to provide emergency services in a potentially dangerous situation. **In 2016, the *Abeille Bourbon* was called out seven times.** One intervention, for the chemical tanker *Besiktas Orient*, was filmed by the First Mate, Adrien Feltz, at the Maritime Prefect's request in February 2016:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZxSnykp-i4>

Today, this type of video can be shot live on the tug using an Internet connection using the on-board high-speed modem: NeptuLink_{by MVG}.

What is NeptuLink_{by MVG}?

NeptuLink_{by MVG} delivers high-speed Internet connectivity (100 Mbps) up to 20 nautical miles (~37km) offshore. It's specifically designed with harsh maritime conditions in mind and suitable for all vessel types, including the salvage tugs. The streamlined design takes into account the specific characteristics of wave propagation over the sea in

order to maintain optimal communication regardless of the pitching and rolling motions on board. It also has a built-in Dual SIM capability that allows users traveling between different countries to choose the best network to avoid roaming costs.



The five Abeilles were won over by the quality of NeptuLink_{by MVG}

MVG, the company that produces and markets NeptuLink_{by MVG}, was first contacted by the *Jason* in La Seyne sur Mer in April 2015 to carry out tests, and then again directly by the *Abeille Liberté* in Cherbourg for another test when the first version of the NeptuLink_{by MVG} was launched in June 2015. The tests were so successful that they led to a decision by Bourbon's Procurement Manager to equip all five of the Abeilles vessels. Each of the five vessels ordered a NeptuLink_{by MVG} system in November 2015.

Simple and easy to install Internet access at sea

Before the deployment of NeptuLink_{by MVG}, *Abeille Bourbon* used a 3G system to send messages, which avoided having to use a costly satellite system. The signal was weak and data processing was slow.

After installing NeptuLink_{by MVG}, the *Abeille Bourbon* upgraded to 4G speed, which is much faster. The system is installed on the boat's exterior so that signal strength isn't affected by the boat's metal hull. An Ethernet cable connects the 4G antenna to the vessel's routers.

“NeptuLink_{by MVG} was simple to set up and deploy because we didn’t have to put the boat in the dock to install the system”, affirms Thierry Choquet, commanding officer of the *Abeille Bourbon*. “It is worth pointing out though that the choice of a telecom operator for your maritime area is important”.

// Daily professional and private use

The *Abeille Bourbon* is an exceptional vessel, and is the only boat of the five to be equipped with a second NeptuLink_{by MVG} box.

At sea, the first box is reserved for professional communication. Linked to this are: the access gateway computer, the commanding officer’s computer, the head mechanic’s computer and the PC Machine.

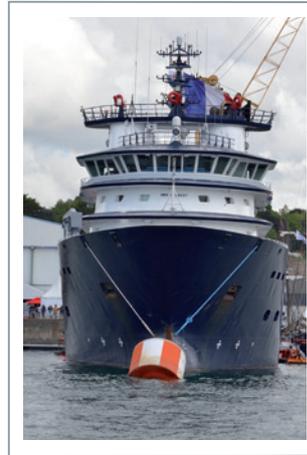
The second modem, set up in summer 2016 and funded by the company’s work committee, is for the crew’s private communication and leisure use. This is connected to the vessel’s Wi-Fi routers with the Internet plugs on-board reserved for sending private messages and accessing the Internet.

The NeptuLink_{by MVG} systems are used on a practical, daily basis in both the professional and private sphere. While the crew may not download films or upload photos and videos of operations on-board the vessel for contractual reasons, the Maritime Prefect can allow these rules to be overturned in special cases, particularly in the context of a rescue.

“Everything is simpler with NeptuLink_{by MVG}”, explains Adrien Feltz. “We can communicate more easily with Headquarters, and it makes our work a lot more efficient. We also have a better quality of life personally. In our profession, waiting is a large part of our day. We spend a third of our life at sea each year, and this is in the cold, damp winter conditions of the Ushant area. In these conditions, having email and Internet on-board isn’t just useful but it makes life much more comfortable”.

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// About the Abeilles



The Abeilles (e.g. *Les Abeilles International*), established at Le Havre in 1864, is a French shipping company specializing in tug services. It is a branch of the BOURBON Group. The company focuses today on high seas salvage tugs. The bulk of its activity is protecting the French coastline with its high and specialized pollution control units, char-

tered by the French Navy. The company is a member of the International Salvage Union (ISU) which is a group of companies dedicated to rescue and assistance at sea. It was called out to prevent the wreckage of the *Erika*, the *Levoli Sun*, and the *TK Bremen*. It employs roughly 140 workers (in 2014).

// About BOURBON

BOURBON has emerged as a leading force in marine services for the offshore oil and gas industry and offers a wide range of marine and subsea services including offshore oil, gas and wind fields. This versatility of services is based on a wide range of the latest generation ships employing more than 9,500 highly-skilled professionals. The group works closely across its 37 operational branches with its clients to ensure that the highest standards of service and safety are met in its operations everywhere in the world. BOURBON comprises two activities (Marine Services and Subsea Services) and works to protect the French coast for the French Navy. In 2016, BOURBON achieved a revenue of €1.1026 Billion, operating a fleet of 514 vessels. Classified by ICB (Industry Classification Benchmark) in the “Oil Services” sector, BOURBON is listed for trading on Euronext Paris, Compartment B. BOURBON CONTACTS.

/ About Microwave Vision (MVG)

Since its creation in 1986, the Microwave Vision Group (MVG) has developed a unique know-how which allows us to visualize electromagnetic waves. These waves are at the heart of our day-to-day lives:

Smartphones, computers, tablets, cars, trains, airplanes - none of these devices and vehicles would work without them. Year after year, the Group perfects and puts on the market systems that make these waves visible. They enable our clients to measure their antenna during the development phases of their products. The Group's mission is to extend this unique know-how to all sectors to which it can provide strong added value. MVG is based in 10 countries and 90% of its business is through exports. The Group has over 350 employees and builds loyalty with a clientele of large international accounts. It registered a revenue of €66 million in 2016. MVG benefits from BPI "Innovative Company" certification and is eligible for the PEA-PME share account.

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