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QNI Mission Statement

QNI is an independent newsletter dedicated to promoting genuine emergency communications preparedness.

Our newsletter is independently published and distributed free of charge to the Amateur Radio and emergency management community. The opinions contained herein do not reflect the policies or opinions of any particular net or emergency communications organization.

Our mission is to provide a forum for EMCOMM volunteers throughout North America. We operate on the premise that Amateur Radio public service volunteers should be, first and foremost, communicators and technicians.

If you share this vision, please support QNI. Submit your news and articles for publication.

When I was first licensed as a radio amateur over 40 years ago, I looked to the American Radio Relay League with profound respect. Here was an honorable organization, with a rich history and tradition of promoting an activity that was both a hobby and a community service.

Over the years, I enjoyed reading various histories of radio, including many old issues of “QST” magazine and such classic works as “Two Hundred Meters and Down.” In my eyes, the ARRL was a first rate organization operated of, by and for the radio amateur.

In recent years, however, I have developed serious doubts about not just the ARRL, but some of my fellow radio amateurs. Far too many of us appear to no longer be fair minded. ARRL policy seems to favor some operating interests over others. Leadership positions aren’t being sought for altruistic purposes, but rather to promote a hidden agenda or to fill a void in the office-seeker’s ego. Power and control issues seem to dominate the agenda of too many. Sniping, trolling and negativism on web pages seem to be centered on personal attacks rather than constructive debate.

Our avocation should be fraternal in spirit. It should be centered on building consensus and cooperation. It should be about inclusiveness and diversity. Yet,
experience now suggests otherwise.

Perhaps unpleasant politics is the normal state of man. However, such politics are still disillusioning and the politics of the Amateur Radio Service have largely eroded my remaining faith in the hobby.

This issue of “QNI” is, unfortunately, dominated by politics and the outcome of these issues will determine not just my personal future in the hobby, but perhaps the future of both NTS and the ARRL.

I have now resigned my membership in the American Radio Relay League. It is my sincere hope that radio amateurs can once again work together in a constructive and fraternal spirit….but I am not holding my breath.

Success Brings Controversy
By James Wades, WB8SIW

Preface:
In advance of reading this article, please note the following:

• The author was involved in the events outlined in this article.
• The information and time-line are reconstructed from his personal records. There may be slight variations in dates
• Hundreds of e-mails and documents were reviewed to construct this article. Obviously, it is impractical to publish all of these. As such, the author had to select those that he felt offered an objective view of events.
• While every attempt was made to provide a reasonably objective view, the fact that the author was involved in these events should be taken into account by the reader.
• Kate Hutton, K6HTN has not been included in the preparation of this issue of “QNI.” I have excluded her to protect her from the politics and leave her in a position that she can carry on publication if I am excluded from future participation in NTS .

Exposition:
For several decades now, the National Traffic System has largely operated on its own. Devoid of funding and largely ignored at the policy level, the NTS was left to survive on its own for years. Consider these facts:

• NTS topics were absent for decades from the QST Public Service column.
• Few meaningful feature articles about NTS were published in QST.
• The old “QCD” newsletter was eliminated.
• The STM position was made optional.
• The NTS was zero-funded.
• NTS was systematically excluded from various ARRL public service initiatives.

….and more.
In a sense, one might argue that the marginalization of NTS is the product of assent, rather than specific contempt. Over time, radio amateurs came to believe that long-haul messaging capability was no longer relevant. ARES began to focus primarily on the support of local emergency management agencies. Amateur Radio “EMCOMM” activities also began to evolve from a technical and radio operations activity to an emergency services volunteer activity in which the radio art and technology was a secondary, value-added feature.

Despite the marginalization of NTS, numerous men and women kept the faith and did their best to maintain and enhance the NTS program despite an environment that could described as “benign neglect” at best, or “purposeful exclusion” at worst.

Recently, a number of active NTS members decided the time had come to make one final push to restore NTS. A tremendous amount of volunteer effort was invested in the program. For example:

- The “Radiograms” e-mail reflector was created.
- Several active STMs and Area Staff Chairmen emerged to push a modernization agenda.
- NTSD was promoted to increase participation and interest.
- The “QNI” newsletter was created.
- New e-mail reflectors emerged to serve the NTS community.

Interest in traffic handling began to rise again. Important NTS issues were confronted in meaningful and constructive ways. People started to take notice, including, for better or worse, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Suddenly, it seems FEMA was very interested in NTS because of its universal radiogram format; its systematic, nationwide procedures and its dispersed long-haul High Frequency resources. Unfortunately, this interest likely had the unintended consequence of exposing the myth of NTS obsolescence. An organization once thought to be obsolete by the elites within the ARRL was suddenly of value.

**FEMA Contacts the NTS Eastern Area Staff Chairman – The Journey to Trouble Begins**

On May 28, 2015, a representative of FEMA’s Disaster Emergency Communications Division contacted Mr. Joe Ames, W3JY, NTS Eastern Area Staff Chairman and Eastern Pennsylvania Section Manager with questions about NTS and its operations. Mr. Ames immediately notified his colleagues within the Central and Pacific Areas. He then drafted a brief email describing NTS and its capabilities. The e-mail is reproduced below:

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From: ##########
Sent: Thursday, May 28, 2015 9:36 AM
To: w3jy@delcoares.org
Subject: National Traffic System

Mr. Ames,

I am reaching out to you on behalf of FEMA concerning the possibility or potential of involvement by ARRL resources in supporting an exercise that will be conducted by FEMA in the future. And perhaps building upon that exercise a relationship that could be utilized to support future catastrophic events from a communications perspective. In particular, let me provide you with a hypothetical scenario: Situation – a cyberattack takes down the nations primary PSTN. The FEMA Administrator needs to get a message to each of his ten Regional Administrators. What are the possibilities of a radio gram being originated in the National Capital Region and being sent through the NTS and area networks to the regional networks and to an end user that would deliver the message to the FEMA Regional Office for consumption. And of course we understand the first and last mile of this message traffic is the most problematic. Whom would I or a designated FEMA representative deliver a paper message to, that would start the “By RF Only” process and who
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ultimately would deliver that message? Obviously we understand that we are asking a lot and would understand if you opted not to participate. I would like to discuss further with you the possibilities for this endeavor at your convenience.

v/r

########################################################################
Deputy Director
Disaster Emergency Communications Division
Federal Emergency

During early discussions amongst NTS Area Leadership, a reasonable assumption was made that the FEMA inquiry had been made with the knowledge of ARRL headquarters. Furthermore, inquiries from served agencies are a regular occurrence at all levels within the ARRL Field Organization. For example, ARRL Emergency Coordinators, Section Emergency Coordinators and Section Managers regularly interact with served agency officials. These field service volunteers, both elected and appointed, explain Amateur Radio capabilities, participate in exercise design and execution, and the like. As such, it was the opinion of the NTS Area Staff Chairs that this inquiry was similar in mechanics and purpose and typical of “another day at the office.”

On that same day, May 28, 2015, Mr. Ames drafted the following response to the initial FEMA inquiry:

From: Joe Ames W3JY SM/EPAARRL [mailto:w3jy@delcoares.org]
Sent: Thursday, May 28, 2015 11:58 AM
To: ##########
Cc: w3jy@arrl.org
Subject: RE: National Traffic System

Mr ##########

Thank you for your inquiry and I’m glad to answer your questions before the afternoon’s commitments take me away from the office.

First of all, let me say that I’m delighted to talk with you on the telephone or in person to discuss these requirements in detail. If you would like to suggest something convenient we’ll do our best to accommodate. But in general, such a communication could be originated in any of several ways using our existing organization, whether our traditional voice or Morse radio nets or, more likely, our modern, Internet-independent “NTS Digital” network. NTSD is a fulltime system of automated “mailbox operations” that can be accessed directly by high frequency radio, with the same equipment used by SHARES and MARS.

Many of our NTSD stations offer local VHF access which is very convenient if available in one’s locality. NTSD is a hybrid network, something like a “hierarchical mesh” network with built in redundancy and capability for binary attachments, although we don’t advertise that feature out of consideration of our fellow operators and our finite spectrum. None the less, it’s there when needed, an inherent capability.

Naturally, the endpoint question could be answered by ensuring FEMA or state/local EMA personnel are also amateur radio operators with NTS credentials. Should the Presidential War Powers Act be invoked, the FCC’s RACES regulations would kick in and permit direct amateur to federal communication.

As you can see, NTS retains and even improves on our Cold War era FCDA mission and retains that capability in readiness even now, when cell phones and cheap Internet keep us from being “cool”;)

Our people dedicate significant chunks of their time and family budgets to maintain the system for the very case you describe. To us, it’s a matter of national service.

Attached please find a presentation made to Pennsylvania EMA executives as part of their ACS program’s steering
committee. It will give you a good picture of the ARRL’s section level communication strategy, capabilities, and how it links to the NTS to form a cohesive whole.

Please let me know a convenient time to discuss your questions in detail. Feel free to email or simply call me at the number below.

Sincerely,

Joe Ames

The email response from NTS leadership interested FEMA and they requested a conference call during which they could ask questions and learn more about NTS. Mr. Ames (W3JY), Mr. Al Nollmeyer (W3YVQ), and Mr. James Wades (WB8SIW) agreed to speak with FEMA

On June 11, 2015, a conference call was held. These three NTS leadership officials explained how NTS functioned and outlined such topics as:

- Network Topology
- Accountability and network management tools associated with the radiogram format.
- Philosophy of NTS as an EMCOMM resource, including factors such as dispersal, decentralization, flexibility and survivability.

At this time, NO commitments were made, nor were any agreements entered into. Area staff simply treated this as an educational/technical session and an attempt by FEMA officials to better understand Amateur Radio capabilities.

On June 24, 2015, a second conference call was held at the request of FEMA. At this time, the conversation began to evolve from a simple explanation of what NTS is and how it works, into a more detailed discussion of NTS capabilities. In particular, FEMA disclosed that it was investigating long-haul messaging resources for possible use during a major “grid-down” event.

NTS leadership simply assumed that this amounted to research and furthermore, the assumption was made that NTS was likely just one of many resources, which FEMA wanted to learn about. It was generally understood that standard emergency management practice requires an agency to investigate and incorporate as many resources as possible into its knowledge base and response planning. Again, no commitments were made and no agreements were entered into.

As discussions further evolved, FEMA expressed an interest in obtaining situational awareness messages from dispersed Amateur Radio assets in the field, describing HF radio as “the weapon of choice.” NTS agreed that this could be done and several ideas were discussed. Again, no commitments were made and no agreements were entered into.

It should be noted that these discussions were viewed within the context of the FEMA/ARRL Memorandum of Agreement. That is; an agreement was already in place between the two agencies at the policy level, with NTS staff was simply providing technical expertise in conformance with the MOA in much the same way an engineer or manufacturer’s representative interacts with a client. No contract is being signed. No promises were made, but “product features” and possible product “applications” were discussed.

Furthermore, the FEMA MOA with ARRL is simply the framework for a mutual understanding to cooperate and coordinate. Short of any explicit, prohibitive MOA terms (or ARRL implementing policy binding upon the membership), it has no legal effect. The “point of contact” provision is not stated in exclusionary terms. See: http://www.arrl.org/served-agencies-and-partners

On July 7, 2015, another conference call was held with FEMA. FEMA officials were now expressing a strong interest in the National Traffic System. Primary discussions involved the radiogram format and strategies for collecting
situational reports via HF radio. Mr. Wades suggested several possible models for doing so, which were based on standard emergency management and military practices. Again, no commitments were made and no agreements were signed.

In response to this call, the three NTS Area Chairmen prepared a brief document describing NTS and which expressed their desire to cooperate with FEMA in a constructive manner. Again, it was understood that this was a technical relationship, authorized under the usual ARRL-FEMA Memorandum of Agreement. The Letter follows:

July 10, 2015
Mr #########
Disaster Emergency Communications Division
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20472

Re: Telephone Conference of July 7, 2015
National Traffic System – FEMA

Dear Mr #########, 

On behalf of the National Traffic System’s leadership team and our two-thousand volunteer operators, thank you for reaching out to NTS to learn about our survivable, interoperable, radio messaging network and how it might contribute to our nation’s disaster response preparations. We are pleased Tuesday’s presentation to your team was well received and we are excited by your invitation to develop direct cooperation between FEMA and the NTS.

NTS is sponsored by the ARRL which enjoys a long-standing relationship with FEMA. We desire to build on the foundation established by the memorandum of agreement, signed one year ago next week, by ARRL president Dr Craigie and FEMA administrator Mr Fugate.

NTS uses HF radio spectrum for medium and long-haul communications across the continental US and Canada, even into Europe. We interface with local networks using VHF and UHF frequencies, providing local connectivity to government agencies and NGO relief operations. Moreover, we know you are aware NTS utilizes a variety of frequency-agile modes and methods, including digital systems, to provide emergency connectivity in times of communication blackout.

Specifically, FEMA expressed interest in using the universal Radiogram format, which contains the basic elements of the IC-213 memo form, while incorporating the essential network management and routing information you require. You also requested “last-mile” Radio-email connectivity for emergency backup and are interested in our NTS Communications Emergency Response Team concept (NCERT) to supplement existing NTS infrastructure and its high level of accountability and quality control, afforded by our standardized network procedures.

NTS will work with FEMA to develop standard guidelines to define the extent and nature of our support to FEMA, as well as state and local emergency management agencies. We are delighted by your suggestion of table top exercise, within the next few weeks, and will arrange it with your team.

Finally, we envision a formal memorandum of agreement or understanding between NTS and FEMA, outlining our cooperation and setting goals for the development of a beneficial relationship.

On behalf of the entire NTS, we look forward to continuing this discussion.

Sincerely,
Again, here you can see reference to the FEMA-ARRL Memorandum of Agreement, which NTS Area Staff believed they were working under. Consider the following sections of the FEMA-ARRL Memorandum of Agreement Section IV(B) on page 5, which outlines FEMA’s responsibilities under the MOA:

5. Consider ARRL resources and capabilities as it relates to ESF #6 catastrophic planning and ESF #15 External Affairs, which includes all sectors of the whole community, and to emphasize realistic planning and communications for the potential for complex disaster scenarios.

6. Encourage interaction with the ARRL Section Managers and other appropriate ARRL Field Organizations Officials, in an effort to establish cooperative relationships and closer ties with ARRL Field Organization volunteers.

7. Encourage use of Amateur Radio resources in the development, exercise, and execution of emergency operating plans and exercises.

8. Coordinate with ARRL staff and participate in ARRL emergency management working groups, public policy forums, presentations, and other events at ARRL as resources allow and as appropriate and in compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act, Pub. L. No. 92-462 (codified at 5 U.S.C. App.).

In particular, the reader’s attention is directed to Paragraph 6, which “encourages interaction with the ARRL Section Managers and other appropriate ARRL Field Organization Officials, in an effort to establish cooperative relationships and closer ties with the ARRL Field Organization volunteers.”

At approximately this time, knowing that the FEMA discussions were leading toward a more concrete arrangement, took steps to notify appropriate ARRL officials. This led to the ARRL Programs and Services Committee expressing concern about our discussions with FEMA, which we had assumed heretofore that they were aware of.

On July 24, the following e-mail was received from the Program and Services Committee:

From: Brian Mileshosky [n5zgt@swcp.com]
Sent: Friday, July 24, 2015 6:40 PM
To: 'Steve Phillips'; 'Griffin, Robert, K6YR'; 'Ames, Joe W3JY'
Cc: Craigie, Kay (President); k1zz@arrl.org; Corey, Michael, K11U
Subject: NTS/FEMA meeting, presentation

Joe, Steve, and Robert –

ARRL’s Programs and Services Committee met at ARRL headquarters on Thursday 16 July with Mike Corey as well as several other Board members and officers, and discussed NTS leaderships’ 07 July 2015 teleconference

With good intentions to promote the service of NTS and, thereby, the ARRL, contact was established with FEMA (no matter which side initiated it) without prior coordination with appropriate ARRL officials. This has put us in a very awkward situation since NTS is an ARRL program and, as such, is accountable to ARRL’s Board of Directors. It allowed the League’s designated responsible point of contact with FEMA (Mike Corey) to be blindsided. It suggested an agreement that the ARRL, for legal or ethical reasons, could not support without prior review. It placed us in a position where we might need to countermand an agreement, or parts thereof, that is unacceptable to the League because of legal or organizational conditions that the initiators were not aware of. That would make our organization look really bad in the view of partnering agencies. While I in no way want to impugn your intentions or loyalty, this situation is one that needs to be avoided in the future for the good of the ARRL and ham radio in general.

Mike Corey is ARRL’s only authorized point of contact to FEMA as per the ARRL-FEMA Memorandum of Agreement. According to his office, nobody from within the NTS program informed Mike of this meeting, proposal, or signed follow-up letter or engaged in any coordination with him. Mike saw, for the very first time, the proposal and signed follow-up letter during the PSC meeting when copies of both were circulated to all in attendance. His only indication that a meeting had occurred at all was when he was contacted by FEMA, four days after the meeting had occurred. Mike was unable to provide explanation to his FEMA counterpart when asked.

Needless to say, regardless of this meeting and proposal’s best intentions or outcome, the lack of communication and coordination could have (and may have) put ARRL into an awkward and embarrassing situation with a key national partner. There appears to be no reason why there could not have been communication with Mike’s office, or with any senior ARRL official in the event of his absence, between or before July 2 and 10.

PSC has instructed Mike Corey’s office to closely review the proposal discussed with FEMA as well as the commitments and vision expressed in NTS’s signed follow-up letter, flag portions that may present any concern organizationally, and identify others that ARRL may be able to assist with or provide complementary ideas. In the meantime, and going forward, per ARRL’s MOA with FEMA as well as ARRL Bylaw 31, NTS leadership and its designees are requested to coordinate all future FEMA engagements (meetings, presentations, proposals, etc.) with Mike Corey’s office as far in advance as practical.

ARRL appreciates the efforts and dedication of NTS, its leadership, and its volunteers. However, it is essential that authorized League officials be made aware of and participate in the advance coordination of all activities involving ARRL’s national partners. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

73,
Brian N5ZGT
Chairman, ARRL Programs and Services Committee

CC: N3KN, K1ZZ, K11U, PSC Committee

It is here that the first information about P&SC objections emerges. It should be noted that no phone calls or other in-person discussions preceded this e-mail. No one called Mr. Ames or any of the NTS Area Staff Chairman to obtain insights or to express concerns about the nature of the FEMA-NTS Relationship. Such normal investigatory steps, which are common to a well-run business were taken.

The e-mail also clearly discloses the reality that NTS was not keeping the discussions with FEMA secret. For example, the e-mail from Mr. Brian Mileoshosky of the P&SC clearly states that information about the FEMA discussions had
been received by the Programs and Services Committee. This confirms the fact that nothing was being done in secrecy and information was being shared in good faith.

Furthermore, the reference to Mike Corey as defined point of contact for FEMA is both significant and instructive because interaction between agencies or organizations operates at two levels, these being:

- The policy level
- The operations and technical level

An example of this difference occurs every day in both government and industry. Higher level representatives of organizations create broad policy or enter into contracts designed to achieve particular goals, while those at the operations or technical level interact on a daily basis to solve problems and carry out specific activities, which are permitted by policy or contract.

Because the MOA permits interaction and coordination between FEMA and ARRL Field Organization officials, of which a Section Manager and NTS Area Staff Chair would be classified, the differentiation between a “policy” level point of contact in the form of Mr. Corey and “operational and planning” points of contact in the form of Field Services Officials seemed obvious.

One could further argue that by the standards defined by the P&SC in its correspondence of July 24, 2015; any interaction between a Section Manager, ARES Section Emergency Coordinator, or ARES Emergency Coordinator and a FEMA representative at the local, state, region or Federal level would be grounds for discipline.

On July 24, 2015, NTS Area Staff issued a memo to the broader NTS leadership officially discussing the nature of the NTS-FEMA discussions. You will note that the letter introduces the concerns of the Programs and Services Committee. The memo reads as follows:

Fellow Area Staff members:

As some of you may have heard, FEMA’s Disaster Emergency Communications Division (“DECD”) contacted Eastern Area NTS Chairman Joe Ames W3JY this past March, to learn more about NTS’s HF capabilities and whether we could assist them in an upcoming exercise they were planning. The original referral was internal within FEMA, from an executive in their Philadelphia regional office, a member of the EPA Section, where Joe serves as Section Manager.

We originally thought FEMA was referred to us by ARRL Headquarters staff, although we later learned that was not the case. During the course of our initial discussion, we learned FEMA’s administrator, Mr. Fugate, asked the director of the DECD specifically to learn about NTS. To say we were pleased and flattered is to understate our reaction. We also learned they were dissatisfied, to a certain extent, with prior efforts at cooperation with radio amateurs, finding it difficult to learn specific information, understand operational methods, points of contact and other problems, which stem from the decentralized nature of ARES programs, which tend to be focused primarily on local communications requirements.

We used the initial conversation as the basis for a subsequent conference call to explain NTS’s capabilities, our professional organizational structure, and how we might interface with them for their particular coordination needs. The real-time reaction during the call itself, which was extended almost an hour past its scheduled length, was enthusiastically supportive.

NTS was exactly what FEMA needed and they were delighted we were offering it right now, today, as part of our normal work. Our presentation highlighted all the good work NTS does. It puts real teeth into our ORS credential and makes the STM a very important job in the ARRL communication strategy.

We believe NTS cooperation with FEMA, especially given the respect they’ve demonstrated for our operations, capabilities, and tradition, fulfills George Hart’s original vision for the ARRL Field Organization as he designed it,
right down to his specifications for the RACES program and the Federal Civil Defense Administration, FEMA’s immediate predecessor.

Imagine our surprise a few days later when the ARRL Program and Services Committee (P&SC) demanded an explanation and copies of the materials presented to FEMA. Because this request came at the last minute, two days before their July 16 meeting in Newington, there was simply not enough time to compose a proper reply, schedule a trip, or even conduct a conference call to address their apparent concerns.

As it happens, ARRL Vice Director Bob Famiglio K3RF, an ARRL volunteer counsel and former traffic handler himself, agreed to present the documents P&SC requested and speak to our recent activity from our perspective as our messenger to P&SC. Bob is an enthusiastic supporter of the NTS mission and has served as an unofficial NTS sounding board for some while. In short, he was glad to stand in our stead at the P&SC meeting on July 16.

Bob gave a wonderful presentation to the P&SC on behalf of NTS. We were, however, distressed but not surprised to learn quite a few P&SC members have no practical understanding of NTS, our operations and governance, or our traditional commitment to continual improvement and modernization. The negative response of some on the committee probably explains the difficulty we’ve had with the P&SC over the past several years, particularly with respect to the Emergency Communications Advisory Committee (ECAC) process.

This lack of knowledge and experience with NTS also likely explains our ejection from the new “ARES Manual” and our relegation to the dark recesses of the ARRL website. It also goes far in explaining our conspicuous absence from the ARRL’s two signed agreements with FEMA in 2003 and 2014 respectively. Nonetheless, we are happy to report that we have made significant progress informing P&SC members about NTS and how we work. We have stressed the fact that we enjoy a professional governance structure – meaning “YOU” our dedicated and loyal Area Staff members, NM, STM, ADC, ORS, DRS, NCS, BPL and PSHR honorees, and ordinary net members – a team that is second to none. You are the very heart of the ARRL Field Organization.

So at this point, P&SC appears to have moved from being openly hostile to NTS to somewhat “less hostile”. As of today, we don’t know much more except they are supposedly writing some kind of communiqué to NTS, alleged to be sent this week, the content and tone of which is unknown. As soon as it is delivered and we are made aware of its contents, we will pass it to you for your review and commentary, along with the response of the combined NTS Area Chairmen. In the meantime, we respectfully ask that you limit the distribution of this information to senior NTS leadership. Misuse or carelessness with this information could exacerbate an already delicate political situation or needlessly motivate the political enemies of NTS.

We hope this brief summary addresses your many questions even as we hope you will be patient until this communiqué is received. As of today, we have not heard anything more from FEMA but that does not necessarily indicate anything about their interest in NTS as we are small fry in the scheme of things.

NOTE: The documents we prepared for FEMA are not confidential but we do wish to restrict their distribution during our talks. However, we can make available some of the material without risking our position and, once basic agreement on a relationship is achieved we will publish the results for your review and input. We ask that you treat it all with discretion and not disclose or discuss them outside NTS.

We will try to answer your questions to the best of our ability with the understanding nothing has been decided one way or the other.

Robert E Griffin
Chairman
NTS Pacific Area Staff

Stephen R Phillips
Chairman
NTS Central Area Staff

Joseph A Ames Jr
Chairman
NTS Eastern Area Staff
On July 28, 2015, a formal response to the Programs and Services Committee was required. Therefore, the following letter was drafted:

Mr. Brian Mileshosky, Chairperson  
Programs & Services Committee  
American Radio Relay League, Inc.  
225 Main Street  
Newington, Connecticut 06111

Dear Mr. Mileshosky,

The Area Staff Chairs received, considered and have authorized this joint reply to your July 24 email sent on behalf of your Committee. Thank you for the Committee’s appropriate willingness to communicate directly with the NTS leadership. We are hopeful that a candid and transparent relationship will ensue.

FEMA Contact. The Committee expresses concern about the lack of prior notice to the MoA point-of-contact or other "appropriate" ARRL officials about direct interaction between FEMA and NTS. This expression may be well intentioned, but the assertion that the initial contact with FEMA was inappropriate, "no matter which side initiated it," is, in our view, at best a biased rationalization. The issue of who initiated contact is absolutely central to resolving this concern. Your email response seems to imply that facts regarding the initiation of contact are somehow unproven. To the contrary, the facts are well documented.

In addition, your Committee appears to assume that there was an attempt on the part of NTS to somehow obscure its actions, yet the reality is that contact was initiated by FEMA staff acting under the direction of its supervisors.

As with all professional environments, individuals tend to rely on proven and reliable associates. This situation was no exception. A FEMA staff member who already had an "on the ground" working relationship with an NTS Eastern Area Staff official simply reached out to a trusted associate for guidance.

Nature of Contact. The nature and purpose of the discussion are also important. The initial discussions with FEMA were only exploratory in nature. The telephone calls in question might be viewed as a preliminary discussion, much like a sales engineer taking an initial telephone call from a customer who wishes to determine if a product or service will meet his needs.

Only experienced NTS management staff members have the operational and technical knowledge needed to answer the technical questions presented by FEMA. These questions required specific expertise in areas involving network topography, message throughput, network interoperability, frequency management, operational procedures and message formats. These exploratory inquiries from FEMA were prerequisites that had to be shared before FEMA could even determine if it was appropriate to pursue an official working relationship with NTS through the ARRL MoA. While NTS offered a theoretical framework for potential exercise participation, the document’s intent, as we communicated clearly to FEMA’s officials as the basis of our interaction, was as a starting point for discussions and was hardly a circumvention as your Committee appears to imply.

In this case, it is also essential to remember that responsibility for the action of initiating contact cannot be divorced from the issue of governmental agency authority. Neither NTS staff nor the ARRL can dictate FEMA action, notwithstanding the MoA to which the Committee refers; nor would it be appropriate for NTS management to rebuff such inquiries. There was no attempt on the part of NTS to somehow obscure its actions by failing to inform Mr. Corey because it had not yet been determined whether exercise participation was practical or even possible.

The proposition that all contact must be through Mr. Mike Corey as the point-of-contact with FEMA is grave in its portent. While we assume Mr. Corey has a firm grip on his duties, there nonetheless remains considerable doubt as to whether Mr. Corey would have been qualified to answer the questions FEMA posed during this initial, exploratory phase. Consider the following:

To the best of our knowledge, Mr. Corey has never held any leadership position or field appointment within the NTS.
While acting in his capacity as an ARRL employee, Mr. Corey has never reached out to the NTS Area Staff to introduce himself, inquire about the status of NTS or NTSD, its current operations, or to otherwise inquire about the status of NTS programs.

While acting in his capacity as an ARRL employee, Mr. Corey has never reached out to the NTS Area Staff to explore methods by which NTS could be integrated into any emergency planning activities.

During his tenure with ARRL Headquarters, Mr. Corey has never directly inquired into the many steps NTS has taken to modernize its capabilities and enhance its capacity to provide nationwide, survivable messaging capability using modern, automated digital methods.

NTS management was not included as a stakeholder in any meaningful way during the development of the new "ARES Manual," or the development to date of any national emergency communications guidelines affecting national network operations (if any exist).

The arbitrary discontinuation of the *Public Service Communications Manual* and the deletion of its traditional *Introduction* and *Forward* which describe the organizational relationship and cooperation between ARES, NTS, and HQ, leaves NTS without portfolio and places our “official” mission in limbo, a fact that has not gone unnoticed by ARES leaders nationally.

Mr. Corey and your Committee have clearly circulated misinformation regarding the nature of the relationship between the IC213 message format and the Radiogram format -- a situation causing confusion and harm to the NTS mission.

The Derogation of NTS: Since the retirement of George Hart W1NJM, ARRL’s first and only Communications Manager, the disposal of his files and archives, and the subsequent “zero-budgeting” of NTS, ARRL as an entity marginalized NTS and its capabilities in the emergency communications planning process. NTS survives today only through the dedication of its operators.

Clearly, ARRL’s recent history belies a false assumption that long-haul messaging capability is not needed. Recently, this has been evident by the purposeful exclusion, if not outright contempt of NTS, expressed through the actions of the Committee and Mr. Corey, and as illustrated above. Ironically, it is this very environment that motivated FEMA to approach NTS.

We also wish to express our discomfort with what appears to be little more than an attempt by your Committee to use the situation to subordinate NTS initiative as an unauthorized action in a chain of authority. Any "awkward" situation or embarrassment (as expressed in your email) stems not from the measured and responsible actions of NTS management, but rather from the dilemma created by your Committee in effectively misapplying the FEMA MoA to shut down cooperation between responsible NTS leadership officials and FEMA representatives.

In a volunteer organization, authority is predicated on cooperation and respect. Unfortunately, for some time now, NTS has not been granted even the minimum courtesy of inclusion in the normative policy-development and program-planning process offered a stakeholder. We find it ironic that the Committee insists that NTS respond and communicate at times when it is in the interest of the Committee (or support staff), while the same courtesy is not afforded NTS management when the NTS program would have been well served. Successful relations in such organizations rest on inclusiveness and mutual trust.

It is the sincere desire of NTS, its management and its volunteers to work in an effective and cooperative manner with the ARRL Board of Directors and your Committee. Such a relationship calls for a seat at the table and the respect and courtesy typically granted to a peer. Despite considerable investment in modernization, automation and improved participant-training and development, NTS and its operators have been largely disenfranchised by the Committee and others at the policy and resource allocation level. It is our position that NTS has earned and should expect the same level of courtesy and consideration afforded other operating interests within the ARRL family, including the ARES program, contesting and other operating activities.

While we are sensitive to your concerns and wish to be responsive to the Committee's role, the three Area Staff Chairs view the July 24 email as not only misguided, but somewhat reflective of the on-going derogation of NTS based largely on a failure to understand its history, management structure, mission or capabilities.
At all times, NTS acted responsibly, professionally and honorably. We ask only for mutuality in this regard. It is our desire this episode will lead directly to a literal “seat at the table” in Newington, with formal recognition of NTS as the lineal descendants of the Founders and their mission to organize and improve amateur radio traffic handing in service to our country.

Respectfully,

for the National Traffic System:

Robert E. Griffin, Esq. Steven R. Phillips MSEE Joseph A. Ames, Jr. MBA, MS

CC: (in alphabetical order)
Mr. Thomas Abernathy
Dr. Kay Craigie
Robert Famiglio, Esq
Mr. James Fenstermaker
Mr. David Norris
Mr. Richard Norton
Mr. David Patton
Mr. Doug Rehman
Richard Roderick, Esq
Mr. David Sumner
Mr. Arthur Zygielbaum
NTS Eastern Area Staff
NTS Central Area Staff
NTS Pacific Area Staff

On August 8, 2015, David Sumner, CEO of the ARRL exchanged e-mails with Mr. Ames, in which Mr. Sumner took a rather conciliatory tone. The result was half hour telephone call between Mr. Ames, the point of contact for the NTS Area Chairs and Mr. Sumner. Mr. Ames followed up by memorializing the conversation and informing NTS Area Staff members of the nature of the conversation:

From: nts-epa@yahoogroups.com on behalf of ‘Joe Ames W3JY SM/EPA’ w3jy@[nts-epa@yahoogroups.com] arrl.org [nts-epa]
Sent: Wednesday, August 12, 2015 5:41 PM
To: nNtTs-so-pEsA@Sy@ahyaoohoogorogrupusp.cso.cmom; NTS-EAN@yahoogroups.com; nts-epa@yahoogroups.com;
Subject: [nts-epa] A phone call with Newington

All,

I had a “more than an hour” long call with Newington. It was scheduled for 30 minutes. Chatham House Rules were in effect – no personal attributions.

ARRL is supportive of NTS, the CEO once held a TCC Kilo sked, back in the day and remembers the time when neighbors would come to the door asking for a Radiogram to be sent to a distant relative. There is general agreement NTS has a rightful place in ARRL, it is a long standing core program with contemporary applicability and value. There is a desire to acknowledge NTS is suffering inadvertent “benign neglect” because, frankly, it operates so well ARRL never had to pay attention to it. Communications broke down some while ago to everyone’s regret. It is hoped that will never happen again.

As an example of the Board’s goodwill to NTS, an example was given of the Board’s explicit consideration of NTSD in their discussion of the realignment of the HF digital bands and hopes the frequency shift will help alleviate interference on 40m. Recommending an increase in automatic subbandwidth was discussed but thought to be too much to undertake in that effort. The P4 character rate issue was also thought to be beneficial to NTS digital operations although it provoked a firestorm from irate members, contra expectations.

There are many hurt feelings among NTS operators who have labored long and without recognition, and that paying
token, but due, honor would go a long way in alleviating them.

NTS should not stir things up, although that was an effective means of bringing this important subject to the attention of ARRL leadership. This brouhaha created an opportunity to resolve our problems to everyone’s benefit, meaning NTS and P&SC. We agreed to be future looking rather than analyzing the past.

NTS not only deserves a place at the table but could serve as a model of national ARRL membership engagement, as the benefits of traffic handling transcend passing traffic. How this would happen must be explored at a later time.

FEMA was discussed in some detail. It is hoped the logjam will be cleared sooner than later, on terms NTS finds acceptable and fair, and which preserves FEMA’s good opinion of ARRL.

The ARRL Board will act if and when and how they see fit but today’s message was “received and understood.” Some board members simply do not like NTS, others do. We have some internal sales and marketing to do. QST would welcome a nicely written, tightly focused article on NTS and especially NTSD, which is little understood by anyone at HQ.

Joseph A Ames Jr MBA, MS
Amateur Radio Station W3JY
The American Radio Relay League, Inc.
Section Manager for Eastern Pennsylvania
Chairman, NTS Eastern Area Staff

On September 18, 2015, Mr. Ames, acting in his capacity as NTS Eastern Area Staff Chair, had a one-hour personal meeting with the then ARRL CEO, Dave Sumner. He memorialized the conversation in this memo to NTS Staff:

TO: NTS national leadership
FROM: Joe Ames NTS EAS
SUBJECT: Meeting with Dave Sumner at ARRL HQ
DATE: September 18, 2015

I met with Dave Sumner today for an hour or a little more around five o’clock. He reiterated that he personally is supportive of NTS and believes we have legitimate gripes. He said he really doesn’t like being in the middle of this mess.

He thinks everyone is more or less calmed down about FEMA and their exercise plans are not (and never really were) a problem but it was taken to be one because of a sense, by some board members, of a “violation of protocol”. My reply was, “What protocol? I never heard anything from anyone about a protocol”. I amplified that I’ve been a business operator more than 30 years and never once had to “check with mommy” before making a deal, even a big one, and besides no one made a deal with anyone in the first place. He acknowledged this point. This was good because it seems the board is finally making sense and not acting emotionally/irrationally.

I did tell Sumner I really am concerned hearing gossip and threats about me second, third and fourth hand. So-called directors should not to be meddling with NTS operations. In any case, they should just call me instead of secret plots and schemes.

Mileshosky will call me after Pope Francis is out of Philly. I told him “No demands. Half our guys will quit on the spot if there is one more demand.” “He won’t be making any” was the reply. Mileshosky’s intention is to find some way forward and make this happen. My reply was that it was smart to float and trial balloon matters before talking to the whole team, so expectations could have time to come around, first. Sumner said that was exactly right.

Sumner reiterated we have boosters on P&SC.

Sumner explained “zero budgeting” from his perspective. Apparently the NTS travel budget fell into a “use it or lose it” pattern and the ARRL finance guy at the time believed the NTS chairmen were arranging meetings to spend the budget, but without any real value in meeting. So it was removed as a cost-cutting in the budget.
Supposedly, the new policy was “If NTS needs travel money for a meeting with a real business purpose, call us and we’ll provide funding.” I have no way to verify this of course. It seems reasonable on the face of it but is at the same time it doesn’t jive with the stories from our guys. Take it for what it’s worth: we supposedly have money available for meetings if we ask for it.

I explained why NTS was so upset with ECAC – including the other members’ blatant disrespect of Chuck. He said he knows you Chuck but had no idea.

I explained our reply was detailed and painstaking and it was ignored and how, after the abusive treatment we received, it was actually pretty professionally detached and a good response. He agreed that, in that context, it makes sense and should have been answered, not ignored.

I explained the ARES manual fiasco was done under secrecy orders re NTS. He said he did not know this.

I explained killing Public Service Communications [Manual] killed the only actual authority for NTS and relegated us to jetsom. He agreed it was, at least insulting. I agreed I could understand why, in their minds, they didn’t want to deal with a loose cannon NTS but pointed out again that was their flawed and erroneous perception – not the ground truth. He conceded. TAKE AWAY SUMMARY:

Sumner agreed with all this and said, under these circumstances, we certainly had legitimate grievances. Supposedly, Mileskosky recognizes that he screwed up; did not understand the context of the PSC-NTS relationship; and failed to manage his “effort to bring NTS back into ARRL” as he put it. But Sumner insists that Brian is actually trying his best to help NTS and never intended for things to happen as they did.

Re attacks on Bob Famiglio: I told him I did not appreciate the talk from certain directors saying Bob should be censured for advocating on NTS behalf, when in fact it was decent and honorable – and because NTS was being unfairly treated without a voice to reply or defend ourselves. Sumner agreed. In fact, he told me he personally told the directors involved to stop it. It was ridiculous. It was the one time, he told me, he took an open stand against a director. Apparently, other directors said the same thing.

BOTTOM LINE: as Sumner and I agreed earlier, we can agree to let bygones be bygones but NTS MUST BE RESPECTED AND MUST BE SHOWN REPECT. He agreed.

Fingers crossed for a good call with Mileskosky in a few weeks

It should be noted that there is a considerable “back story” to some of the discussion points in the meeting notes, which is somewhat outside the scope of this expository article. Briefly, the following information applies:

The former “Public Service Communications Manual” was eliminated and a new ARES Manual was created, which made no reference to NTS. This was done without any input from elected NTS leadership officials.

NTS leadership officials objected to this exclusion from the ARES manual, but again, no one-on-one discussions, telephone calls or other meaningful dialogue resulted.

The Programs and Services Committee then directed NTS to create a new, separate “NTS Manual,” which incorporated the ICS-213 format and other requirements. Numerous Area Staff level individuals spent months developing a new manual, which was submitted by the short deadline required by the P&SC. Despite this rush; as of this date, the manual has not been published, nor has any meaningful dialogue taken place regarding concerns, required editing or the like. No one has called any of the NTS Area Staff Chairs or others to discuss the manual or its content.

Perhaps the most important point here relates to communications. As the reader can likely determine for himself, during the preceding period, any communications between the Programs and Services Committee and NTS Area Staff is extremely limited and, when it does occur, it is essentially in the form of “top-down” directives. No telephone calls or actual “discussion” takes place. Without a place at the P&SC table, senior NTS leadership is essentially neutered at the policy level.

On December 16, 2015, an e-mail is received from FEMA, which requests our participation in the “Cascadia Rising”
exercise. Little takes place due to the Holiday Season.

**On January 26, 2016,** a conference call is held during which FEMA requests that NTS originate several inject messages from the simulated disaster area in Washington State and Oregon back to the National Response Coordinating Center.

James Wades, who has professional experience designing and evaluating large scale emergency management exercises created an extemporaneous model of how NTS might be used to perform this task. The basic concept agreed to called for FEMA staff to select several events from the Master Event Scenario List, which could be injected into the exercise in the form of situational awareness reports. Mr. Wades also laid out a general plan for exercise mechanics, which obtained enthusiastic approval from FEMA employees.

Over the succeeding months, numerous e-mails are exchanged until March of 2016 when plans evolve into a simple “proof-of-concept” exercise to run in parallel with Cascadia Rising. The purpose of the exercise would be to simply prove that NTS has the capacity to carry record message traffic from the Pacific Northwest to the FEMA NRCC in time of emergency.

During this interim time period, NTS Area Staff had been keeping Mr. Corey and others informed of their activities. A letter was also sent to Jim Pace and Bonnie Altus, Pacific Area Division Director and Vice Director informing them of the upcoming NTS exercise and asking that they make their personnel aware of this. The text of the letter is as follows.

**OFFICE OF THE VICE DIRECTOR - ATLANTIC DIVISION**
Robert B. Famiglio K3RF EMAIL: K3RF@ARRL.ORG
Vice Director, Atlantic Division www.QRZ.com/db/K3RF
P.O. BOX 9, MEDIA, DELAWARE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA 19063
610-359-7300

February 19, 2016
Northwestern Division Director Northwestern Division Vice Director
Jim Pace, K7CEX Bonnie Altus, AB7ZQ
P.O. Box 1602 7770 Harmony Rd
Centralia, WA 98531 Sheridan, OR 97378
k7ce@arrl.org ab7zq@arrl.org

Dear Northwestern Division Colleagues:

You may know I provide pro bono counsel to the NTS in various projects they undertake. NTS has received a formal invitation from FEMA to participate in the emergency preparedness exercise entitled “Cascadia Rising” in June. Though the invitation was just sent out, I do not know whether it was forwarded to you.

I understand so far that the “mission” for NTS will be to pass long distance radiogram traffic from the simulated disaster area to FEMA in Washington DC. This would be in contrast to any ARES activity in the drill, that communications being tactical in nature. Pacific area chairman Rob Griffin K6YR, also SM for Santa Barbara, will be the executive in charge of NTS activity. Jim Wades WB8SIW will be the exercise leader and will be on-site for some of the exercise and its run up.

Would you be kind enough to introduce Rob and Jim to your SMs in Washington and Oregon? NTS wishes to enjoy a close and professional working relationship. You may have known about this but if not, I thought it important to give you a heads up. This is an important development for our NTS.

/s/ Robert B. Famiglio
Bob Famiglio, K3RF
Vice Director, ARRL Atlantic Division
610-359-7300
As one can see from this e-mail, Mr. Corey is also in the loop:

From: Joe Ames, W3JY  
To: Robert, WT, Michael [Corey], Steve, me, k3rf

Mike,

Last week, we requested vice director Mr. Famiglio contact Mr. Pace and Mrs. Altus as a courtesy on behalf of NTS. A copy of his letter was also sent to Mr. Abernathy and is attached for your convenience.

NTS is settling on our strategy and looks forward to contacting our ARRL colleagues as soon as we have something tangible to present, perhaps as soon as next week. It is our desire to socialize our involvement most collegially, taking pains to avoid misunderstanding and confusion, especially given yesterday’s communiqué from Monte Simpson.

VY 73 DE W3JY

Joe

Joseph A. Ames Jr MBA, MS  
Amateur Radio Station W3JY

The American Radio Relay League, Inc.  
Section Manager for Eastern Pennsylvania  
Chairman, NTS Eastern Area Staff

w3jy@arrl.org · cell 610.715.3501  
www.epa-arrl.org Twitter @EpaARRL

------------------------------------------------------------------

Here is Mr. Corey’s response:

From: Corey, Michael, KI1U [mailto:KI1U@arrl.org]  
Sent: Friday, February 26, 2016 11:51 AM  
To: Ames, Joe, W3JY (SM, EPA)  
Subject: RE: NTS participation in Cascadia Rising

Joe,

Thanks for the update. Moving ahead with this I ask that NTS coordinate with WWA section staff as I know they are heavily involved with this exercise.

Mike, KI1U

Note Mr. Corey’s reply. There is no admonition to cease the exercise design process. He only asks that NTS coordinate with Western Washington Section staff. It is also reported that Mr. Corey never telephoned anyone on NTS Area Staff at this time (or any time).

During this time, Mr. Wades forms an exercise design team consisting of the NTS Area Staff Chairs, the ADCs and selected individuals from TCC and other functions. In an attempt to work out the mechanics of exercise design, FEMA officials in Washington arrange for Mr. Wades and Mr. Ames to participate in a conference call with FEMA Region Ten employees and various ARES officials from the Pacific Division.
On April 14, 2016, the FEMA conference call is held. During the call, it is found that Mr. Monte Simpson is in charge of the Amateur Radio response and some friction instantly develops. Mr. Wades brokers a solution to which FEMA officials and the radio amateurs present agree. Instead of transmitting situational awareness messages, the NTS would redesign the exercise to only measure NTS performance in terms of connectivity, accuracy and timeliness. Message content would consist of simulated five letter cipher groups, which could facilitate the accuracy scoring of controlled inject messages distributed in the field for origination, against the final product delivered to the NRCC. This would fully isolate the NTS activity from ARES and limit any potential operational confusion at the state level. This solution also eliminated interaction with local ARES, the goal being to eliminate political tension.

Within 48-hours, Monte Simpson, the Washington State Section Manager, State RACES Officer (and several other appointments) sends a terse e-mail to Mr. Wades in response to a request for frequency information for inclusion in a frequency matrix. This simple inquiry results in an e-mail exchange, which culminates in this e-mail from Mr. Simpson:

Mr. Wades,

Thank you very much for taking the time to explain your position I appreciate it. I accept and honor your explanation that you are working on behalf of FEMA to help them move their traffic. However, when you tell the STM to plan on going to EOCs to carry on a certain tasks and ARES/RACES isn't included you have in my opinion over stepped your bounds. You have attempted to change the culture of how amateur radio has supported its stakeholders in the Western Washington Section. Bluntly put, NTS is engaged in empire building and I am bothered by it.

As for NTS' role in Cascadia Rising 2016 there is no role for them in Washington State as it stands at this time. The ARES/RACES/ACS team has worked diligently during the past 20 months to take on this exercise and this includes developing forms to meet their needs. ARES/RACES/ACS communicators have been moving traffic via WINLINK and adapted it to best meet the needs of our customers. Myself and the other ESF2 co lead, Mike Chaplin, NC7Q, couldn't be more proud of the hams that have worked hard to use data as the main method of moving disaster/emergency communications.

Overnight I did determine a role for NTS and I'll discuss it with the two STMs when the communications planning, aside from infrastructure, occurs at the section level.

I will support you in NTS' effort to provide the best service possible to FEMA. I do need for NTS to leave messaging within the State of Washington to the EC/ROs, DEC/RRCs and SEC/DSROs. They are the ARRL and EMA appointed volunteers who have been entrusted to pass traffic in Washington State

I am concerned that this food fight could easily cause total distrust of the hardworking volunteers in the Amateur Radio Service. I've seen a county EMA director tell hams I'm tired of your bickering so she developed her own radio group. ARES and RACES in that county have not recovered from that situation nearly 20 years ago. So rather than spending energy and time on who is going to do what at Cascadia Rising 2016 I suggest we decide how ARES/RACES and NTS is going to work together to show our stakeholders we're one team with one goal. Perhaps the person NTS reports to could contact Steve Ewald to develop a course of action to avoid future misunderstandings between ARES and NTS.

In order to place this e-mail in proper context, the reader should be aware of a couple of points:

- During the prior 18-months leading up to the exercise, Mr. Simpson and his associates apparently NEVER included NTS in any of their planning.
- One will note that, upon learning that FEMA had an interest in NTS, Mr. Simpson “overnight….did determine a role for NTS.”
- One will also note Mr. Simspson’s comments: “Bluntly put, NTS is engaged in empire building and I am bothered by it.”
- It was FEMA that asked NTS to have a representative at the EOCs and NTS had already stated that this could only be done if there was no conflict with existing ARES assets.
The wise man will quickly read between the lines and identify the classic power and control issues that so regularly hamper or destroy Amateur Radio EMCOMM operations. NTS had already agreed to redesign the exercise to eliminate any and ALL interaction between Washington State ARES and AUXCOMM, yet this still wasn’t good enough for Mr. Simpson.

Several days after this conference call with Mr. Simpson and FEMA officials in Region Ten, Mr. Wades proposed to FEMA officials in Washington, D.C. that Washington State be eliminated from the proof-of-concept exercise and instead, NTS would include Alaska and Northern California. They reluctantly agreed to this proposal in order to avoid being immersed in petty Amateur Radio politics.

It then became necessary to redesign the exercise. With just six weeks or so now available to fully develop the exercise, the design team developed a first-rate, professional grade exercise. No further communications were heard from Headquarters with the exception of interaction at the Dayton Hamvention. At Dayton, several interesting things happen:

- An EMCOMM forum was held. A variety of EMCOMM entities were invited to the forum, which was moderated by Mr. Corey. NTS is excluded from the forum despite the fact that several non-ARRL entities are included. NTS officials are not even invited to attend as observers.
- NTS presents its own forum entitled “Cascadia Rising, Revitalizing the National Messaging Layer.” This forum was intended to use Cascadia Rising to revitalize interest in NTS amongst the rank-and-file radio amateur. However, NTS absence from the prior EMCOMM forum likely sent the message to many that NTS was a low-value asset.
- NTS volunteers, including Mr. Ames staffed a booth within the ARRL display area. During this time, no one made an attempt to reach out to NTS to discuss concerns about the FEMA relationship. No substantive talks were had, formally or informally despite the fact that Mr. Corey and various P&SC members were in the same room and despite the fact that many of us took time to introduce ourselves to ARRL officials.
- ARRL CEO Gallagher visited with Mr. Ames, but despite asking various questions about general ARES topics, no personal request to cease participation in the FEMA exercise occurred.

**On June 8 and 9, 2016,** the NTS activated for the Cascadia Rising exercise and acquitted itself well. After the exercise, the evaluation process began, which took approximately a month to complete.

In the interim, the ARRL issued one of several press releases mentioning the participation of various Amateur Radio groups in Cascadia Rising, but it failed to mention the National Traffic System in any of these bulletins. As a matter of fact, the ARRL, both before the event and as late as July 21, 2016 has issued a string of press releases, which have all purposefully excluded mention of the NTS.

NTS Area Staff discussed this situation and concluded that the exclusion was likely purposeful and therefore, NTS Area Staff, in frustration, issued its own press release based on a small sample of exercise results:

**For Immediate Release**

11 June 2016

**National Traffic System Supports FEMA’s Cascadia Rising**

The ARRL’s National Traffic System debuted its new National Response Plan this past week during FEMA’s *Cascadia Rising* exercise. At the invitation of FEMA’s Disaster Emergency Communications Directorate, more than forty NTS members in the U.S. and Canada demonstrated the ability to relay situational awareness from a simulated disaster area covering the States of Alaska, Idaho, Northern California, Oregon and Washington to their National Response Coordinating Center at Washington, D.C.

Methods used during this proof-of-concept demonstration project included the NTSD digital network as well as traditional radiotelephone and radiotelegraph networks. All message traffic was transmitted and delivered over RF-only circuits using the
universal radiogram format, selected for its proven network management tools and enhanced accountability standards.

The exercise proved the value of consistent, internationally adopted, standard procedures, practiced through regular traffic handling assignments. Some observers compared NTS radiotelegraph nets to the best of military and commercial operations. Transcontinental Corps ops displayed professionalism and skill operating CW under poor propagation conditions. An initial review of TCC traffic shows near perfect accuracy (>99%) with the random, five character groups used for message texts. Coast-to-coast traverse time averaged less than fifteen minutes. One message was relayed in less than one minute.

_Cascadia Rising_ will be the first of many exercises with FEMA designed to enhance the ability of NTS to provide efficient and reliable disaster communications services, especially vital situational awareness in the early moments of a communications failure. NTS enjoys a culture of continual improvement and lessons learned from _Cascadia Rising_ will be used to improve the National Response Plan and provide a basis of comparison for system performance.

Radio Amateurs interested in participating in NTS should check-in to a Section or local NTS net or contact their ARRL Section Traffic Manager. [http://www.arrl.org/sections](http://www.arrl.org/sections).

Additional information about NTS and Cascadia Rising may be found at [https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/NTS-CR/info](https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/NTS-CR/info).

Contact:
Mr Joseph A Ames Jr, Chairman
ARRL NTS Eastern Area Staff
w3jy@arrl.org

**On June 21, 2016**, the ARRL issues the following press release while simultaneously terminating Mr. Ames as both ARRL Section Manager for Eastern Pennsylvania and NTS Eastern Area Staff Chair.

**06/21/2016**

The Executive Committee of the ARRL Board of Directors has relieved ARRL Eastern Pennsylvania Section Manager Joe Ames, W3JY, of his appointments in the ARRL Field Organization, including his position as Chairman of the ARRL National Traffic System™ (NTS™) Eastern Area. The vote came as a result of a June 16 recommendation from the ARRL Programs and Services Committee, which oversees NTS. In addition, the Executive Committee voted to declare the Eastern Pennsylvania Section Manager position vacant, effective immediately.

The decision by the Executive Committee results from a determination that Ames unilaterally and repeatedly communicated with officials of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on behalf of NTS, making commitments on behalf of ARRL without authority and in violation of the rules and regulations of the ARRL Field Organization. Those actions were contrary to the terms of the _Memorandum of Agreement_ between FEMA and ARRL, which states clearly that ARRL Headquarters staff will be the single point of contact between FEMA and ARRL. There is no independent relationship between NTS and FEMA; the ARRL/FEMA _Memorandum of Agreement_ is the operative document.

In August 2015, then-ARRL CEO David Sumner, K1ZZ, wrote to Ames and instructed him that, unless otherwise authorized by ARRL, any communication with FEMA with respect to NTS is to be conducted through ARRL authorized representatives. ARRL learned that Ames repeatedly acted contrary to Sumner’s directive, which led to the decision to cancel Ames’s Field Organization appointments and to declare the office of the Section Manager for Eastern Pennsylvania vacant.

In accordance with ARRL bylaws, and after consulting with ARRL Atlantic Division Director Tom Abernethy, W3TOM, the appointment of a new Eastern Pennsylvania Section Manager will be made by ARRL Field Services and Radiosport Manager Dave Patton, NN1N. The NTS Eastern Area Chair vacancy will be filled by appointment made by the ARRL Programs and Services Committee, the committee that oversees NTS.

NTS was formally created by ARRL in 1949. It continues the long-standing tradition of formal message handling via Amateur Radio, an integral component of the Amateur Radio Service. NTS would not be possible without the thousands of volunteers who keep the distribution network running.
In the case of the NTS Eastern Area Staff Chair position, the League appointed Mr. Bud Hippisley, W2RU to take the EAS Chair position. A couple of facts about Mr. Hippesley should be noted here:

- Mr. Hippisley never called Mr. Ames for his side of the story before accepting the appointment.
- Mr. Hippisley never called the other NTS Area Staff Chairmen for their version of the story before accepting the appointment.
- Mr. Hippisley never called Mr. Wades, who supervised the design, execution and evaluation of the exercise for his insights or opinions.

As a matter of fact, Bud Hippisley calls no one! Apparently, the ARRL has a phobia about telephones.

It is also interesting to note that the dismissal of Mr. Ames appeared to be timed to destroy any positive impact of NTS success in the Cascadia Rising exercise. At a time when NTS could have used coverage of its participation in the exercise, and its related success, to recruit and retain members, the ARRL essentially tossed the proverbial “hand grenade into the room.”

The result of these actions was to push NTS into disarray and turn a positive, highly constructive event into a collective disaster designed to push NTS back into marginalization.

On July 11, 2016, the full Cascadia Rising Evaluation Report was completed by Mr. Wades. The entire exercise was produced at his own expense. The money spent on the exercise could have purchased a new HF transceiver for Mr. Wades. Yet, no reimbursement from the ARRL was received, even when requested for some of the mailing costs. Nonetheless, bound and printed copies of the exercise results were submitted to both the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Mr. Corey of the ARRL, providing complete analysis and metrics associated with the NTS operation.

On July 15, 2015, Mr. Tom Gallagher, CEO of the ARRL issued the following letter to selected members of the NTS:

Greetings from ARRL HQ:

As CEO of ARRL, I have reviewed some recent correspondence among yourselves (of which Steve Ewald, WV1X of my staff was a copy recipient) pertaining to elections for Eastern Area NTS Chair. It is now time to introduce a few facts in your discussion that I earnestly believe you would be wise to consider in future planning.

1. NTS is not a stand-alone organization. It is a program of the American Radio Relay League. Policy for NTS and all other segments of the ARRL field organization is established exclusively by ARRL’s Programs and Services Committee; its Board of Directors; and between Board meetings, its Executive Committee. There is no dispute about this; it is clear from ARRL’s Rules and Regulations of the Field Organization which have the same effect as ARRL Bylaws. Section 1 of those rules states as follows:

   The League maintains a Section level Field Organization whose programs provide opportunities for volunteers to further the objectives of the ARRL, provide assistance to fellow radio amateurs, and promote amateur radio’s service to the American public. Principal areas of responsibility of the Field Organization are emergency communications, message traffic relay, technical activity / problem-solving, volunteer monitoring, government relations, public relations in the general community, information services for amateurs, and cooperation with affiliated clubs.

   NTS is a program of the ARRL Field Organization because it is a program for promotion and conduct of “message traffic relay”.

   2. Section 11 of those same rules states that “(a)ny Field Organization appointment may be canceled by the Executive Committee whenever it appears to be in the best interest of the ARRL to do so.” It was on this basis that the
appointment of the former Eastern Area Chair of NTS was canceled by the ARRL Executive Committee. The executive committee’s authority to do this is not a subject for debate. Therefore, any role within NTS that is presently held by an individual is cancelable, unilaterally, by the Executive Committee of ARRL in the event such action is determined to be in the best interest of ARRL.

3. ARRL’s Executive Committee terminated the appointment of the former NTS Eastern Area Chair and ARRL’s Programs and Services Committee appointed Bud Hippisley, W2RU to that position. To the extent that the terms of reference of NTS may conflict with the Rules and Regulations of the ARRL Field Organization relative to this process, the latter governs and prevails, inasmuch as those rules have the effect of bylaws of the organization. At no time did ARRL’s Board of Directors ever cede control of NTS or the appointment process relative to ARRL’s field organization to any group of individuals.

4. Most importantly, ARRL has been meeting actively with FEMA’s leadership including the Administrator and the Deputy Administrator on several occasions recently including an in-person meeting in Washington, pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding between ARRL and FEMA. You may not be aware of this because there is no evidence that NTS has ever enjoyed administrator-level access at FEMA. We are discussing with FEMA a new plan for the integration of NTS (and ARES and RACES) into a new comprehensive national-level emergency communications plan. The development of this plan and the integration of NTS have a very, very short fuse. On the order of four months. You (other than Mr. Wades who unilaterally chose to terminate his ARRL membership effective June 23, 2016) can choose to be a part of this process and work with us on the plan. Alternatively, you can choose not to. As volunteers, you control your own schedules. We genuinely welcome your participation in this planning process. However, we are proceeding with FEMA either way—with or without your participation. If you choose to not participate with us, it seems to me that you cannot persuasively claim that your interests include advancing NTS—because your failure to participate will contradict that claim.

5. I urge you to stop the ego-fueled divisiveness that pervades discourse on this topic. We have taken steps that we believe to be in the best interests of NTS and in the best interests of ARRL. We will continue to do so. We welcome your continued involvement and spirit of volunteerism—provided that it is accompanied by an attitude of good faith cooperation. If not, then please get out of the way, because the opportunities for NTS and all of the dedicated traffic handlers involved with it are here and now, the opportunities are compelling, and we intend to take advantage of them. And if you choose to get out of the way, you will not be permitted to continue to hold yourself out as a participant in NTS; to use the name; or to act in any capacity for NTS or for ARRL, as it may relate to a program that ARRL has fostered for well more than 60 years.

Personally, I remain fully committed to the integration of NTS into the new, enlarged, national plan. I made this point several times to the former Eastern Area Chair when we met together, on my initiative, at Dayton. It seems to me that your choice here is either “welcome back, glad to have you with us” or alternatively, “many thanks for your prior service.” I leave that choice to you, jointly or individually.

73, Tom Gallagher NY2RF
Chief Executive Officer
The American Radio Relay League, Inc.

One will note that League Headquarters has taken over the FEMA relationship. However, several interesting facts apply:

- The NTS Area Staff Chairs are not involved in the future planning alluded to in the letter. As a matter of fact; this was confirmed in telephone conversations between the NTS Central and Pacific Area Staff Chairmen and Mr. Rick Roderick, President of the ARRL.
- It is interesting that the League has a sudden interest in NTS, despite ignoring it for decades before FEMA appears on the scene.

On July 16, 2016, the ARRL Board of Directors votes to unilaterally change the NTS Terms of Reference to eliminate the right of NTS members to elect their Area Staff Chairpersons. While this is permitted under the by-laws of the League, it is done without consulting any of the Area Staff Chairs or others involved in senior NTS management. It appears the telephone phobia has become pathological.
On July 18, 2016, ARRL President Rick Roderick finally picks-up the telephone and calls the remaining NTS Area Staff Chairs to inform them that they now served only at the pleasure of the ARRL President. Both of the remaining Area Chairs were informed that their appointments were terminated and they were then asked if they would accept the appointment again as a manager reporting directly to the President. Mr. Griffin, the Pacific Area Staff Chairman declined.

Steve Phillips, the Central Area Staff Chair, asked Mr. Roderick about exactly what the ARRL had in mind for the NTS. He was told that they did not know just yet. Mr. Phillips asked if, as the appointed chair, he would be permitted to take part in the plans yet to be made. He was told, “no,” and furthermore, he was told that the ARRL would define the functions and the Area Chairs would be told what to do.

Mr. Phillips said that he was very happy to work WITH the ARRL on matters concerning the NTS, but he did not want to work FOR the ARRL, being told what to do and when, regardless of whether or not he agreed with it or thought it would work. This led to a lecture about how the ARRL was the boss and nobody else could question that authority.

Mr. Phillips told Mr. Roderick he would think about it some more but did not either accept or decline the appointment. However, it was clear that if he did not accept the appointment, he was no longer the chair.

After thinking about it, and losing lots of sleep in the process, Mr. Phillips decided he could not in good conscience accept an appointment for a position where the responsibilities were not defined and where he would have no voice in helping to form the way forward. He thus declined the offer of the position. He also tried to help Mr. Roderick understand where he was coming from and offered to remain friendly and assist NTS but not blindly follow orders.

Here is what Mr. Phillips wrote:

Hello Rick,

I appreciate your offer. After careful consideration (yes, I lost a lot of sleep over it last night), I am sorry to have to decline. I know Rob has already done so.

It is truly a shame that things had to come to this. I remain friendly and wish to be helpful, but I cannot participate under the conditions you laid out last night. I offer the work I have done the last 3 years to whoever you choose as the new chair. But I am afraid you have a great misconception about what the area chair does. The primary purpose is to HELP the rest of the staff with problems and issues that may arise, not dictate policy to them. In fact, the staff is a democratically driven entity where all the staff has a vote on any changes that are proposed. The chair can make suggestions or recommendations, but they do not take effect without a consensus of the rest of the staff.

Using heavy-handed techniques is NOT the way to motivate a group of unpaid volunteers who give of their time and talent freely. You may have to learn this the hard way.

You may also not realize that NTS consists of 2 major segments. The lower level delivery and origination nets reside at the state or section level. They consist of section and local nets. You can liken them to the ARES organization[s], although at a state level rather than county as most ARES groups organize. These nets are under the cognizance of the Section Managers and the appointed Section Traffic Managers. The area staff has NO authority or cognizance over them, although recommendations and suggestions can be made. Each section/local net's operation is determined by their manager, in cooperation with the STM.

The area staff level is the transcontinental routing mechanism, moving messages between sections via liaisons sent by the section nets to the region nets, which are the lowest level of the area staff. It is this level that most interested FEMA, in particular for their Situation Awareness messages from disaster areas back to the FEMA HQ. NTS volunteers participated as a proof-of-concept for this service during the Cascadia Rising exercise. If you have not seen the resulting report, I am sure you soon will. It was overwhelmingly successful in terms of accuracy and messages received as well as timeliness.

Note that there are 2 major cycles of nets operating at the higher levels denoted cycle 2 (daytime SSB for the most part) and cycle 4 (nighttime CW and SSB nets). All of these nets, as well as the lower level section and local nets, are documented for the Central Area in a while paper that I wrote, which you can get at:
On July 19, 2016, numerous NTS members engage in a spontaneous “wild cat” strike and shut down their operations.

Conclusion:

The reader is left to make up his own mind about this narrative. It is the result of a review of literally hundreds of e-mails and documents combined with the author’s recollections. Every effort was made to ensure the dates and temporal context is accurate.

Suffice to say; in the interest of full disclosure, the author was involved in this chain of events from the beginning and the reader should take this into account.

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The dispute between NTS and the ARRL Board of Directors is undoubtedly complex. One could advance several theories to explain the general animosity toward NTS, which has been on “slow boil” for several decades now. However, it seems safe to assume that one or more of several factors have been driving the marginalization of NTS:

- Some believe that traditional modes and methods are no longer necessary. Up until FEMA expressed interest in NTS, this attitude included a dismissal of the requirement for long-haul, high frequency communications.

- Some believe that Amateur Radio must re-invent itself in the image of the Internet, Yet, they conveniently overlooking the fact that a group of volunteers lacks the trillions of dollars needed to replicate the investment of commercial telecommunications common-carriers.

- A scarcity mentality may afflict those who have a high level of investment in emergency communications activities. Seeing their day-to-day relevancy slip away and desperate to retain a sense of purpose, some will simply fight for access to, and control of, a diminishing resource, which, in this case, is customers.

We will, of course, never know the thinking of the various ARRL officials who felt it necessary to take action to change their relationship with the National Traffic System. However, we do know several facts:

- Little, if any attempt was made to communicate with the NTS Area Staff Chairmen on a collegial basis. The evidence seems to indicate that the ARRL Board of Directors and the Programs and Services Committee members are all suffering from a severe telephone phobia.

- The fact that no one reached out personally to the individuals involved with the Cascadia Rising exercise leads one to question whether the ARRL Leadership acted in good faith. Direct, personal communications is always the first step in dispute resolution because direct interpersonal communications tend to humanize the individual(s) with whom one has differences.

- One cannot ignore history. Decades of exclusion from policy making and a consistent marginalization by the parent organization and its official organ, “QST,” tend to create long-held resentments. Those who walk into leadership positions have a duty to consider the political environment in which they operate.

No one disputes that the ARRL Board of Directors has the right to change the NTS Terms of Reference. The Corporate By-Laws certainly supersede the TOR. However, the real question to ask is this:

*Should the Board of Directors act without input from their constituency?*
This may depend largely on one’s perspective, but the reader should consider this perspective:

- The ARRL is a membership-based organization, not a private foundation or a privately held company. While one may argue that the Board of Directors can cancel any appointment they choose or modify the NTS Terms of Reference at will, the fact remains that NTS has traditionally elected its Area Staff Chairs. A long-standing precedent such as this should be carefully considered in a representative, membership-based organization.

- *The ARRL is owned by its members.* This is an important distinction. Members are not employees, but by law, essentially "shareholders" in the organization. Along with ownership comes certain rights and privileges, which include the right to both transparency and to consultation before important decisions are made. The members involved in NTS were not consulted in advance of any of these decisions. *No opinions or ideas were sought.*

- *The ARRL operates on a representative governance model.* By definition, ethical practices require consultation with those who are represented. Because no hearings, polling, or other investigation was conducted, which considered input from those supposedly being represented, the Board of Directors essentially abrogated its duty to properly represent the membership before making its decision.

- Operating interests within the League might be viewed as constituencies. In other words, contesters, ARES volunteers, experimenters, CW operators, RTTY operators, AM phone enthusiasts, and so on all have unique operating interests, which occasionally conflict and likewise, which occasionally overlap. Professional management of a representative, membership-based non-profit demands that policy makers attempt to balance all of these interests. When one of these groups is systematically excluded from the affairs of the organization or derogated for decades, the Board of Directors has been negligent in its duty.

- If the ARRL Board of Directors or Programs and Service Committee were uncomfortable with the actions of Mr. Ames or the NTS leadership in general, they certainly could have started with a few simple telephone calls. Consider these facts:
  - No one ever called Mr. Ames, the NTS Eastern Area Staff Chair to address concerns or to seek a reasonable resolution.
  - No one ever called either Mr. Griffin, the NTS Pacific Area Staff Chair or Mr. Phillips, the Central Area Staff Chair for their insights, opinions, or suggestions. As a matter of fact, I am told that no one on the Programs and Services Committee has ever reached out to Mr. Griffin despite his 20-years as the elected Pacific Area Staff Chairman....not a single phone call.
  - No good faith attempt was made to ask one of the other individuals involved in the FEMA exercise to intercede on behalf of the Programs and Services Committee.
  - I personally supervised the design, execution and evaluation of the NTS component of the Cascadia Rising Exercise. No one ever attempted to reach out to me for a third party opinion. No one ever asked me to intervene in an attempt to seek reasonable compromise. Furthermore, it is not like I was unknown to the Board of Directors. For example, one ARRL Director has known me since I was 18 years old. Did he pick up the phone and call me? No! Did he send me an email? No. Again...just silence.
  - Were any appointees or other leadership officials in the EPA ARRL Section consulted before Mr. Ames was terminated? While I can’t say for sure; as far as I can determine, the phone never rang in Eastern Pennsylvania. No e-mails were sent. No opinions or assessments were sought.

Now...let's consider an analogous situation, such as a professional business environment:
Executives normally don't go from "zero to sixty" and instantly fire an employee. Professional human resources procedures demand that certain “good faith” steps are taken before employee termination. This may include calling an employee in to hear his side of the story or to discuss a problem. Perhaps intermediate disciplinary steps are taken. In some organizations, such as union shops, the employee is entitled to a hearing.

Sure...the law may even state that employment is "at will," but the executive who fails to recognize that a human being and his family is involved in the relationship is hardly worthy of respect. Likewise, the executive who has no concern for the reputation of a man is also unworthy of respect. Here, as in other cases, the “letter of the law” departs from “the spirit of the law.”

Let’s also not forget that these unilateral actions impacted ELECTED officials. Sure; the letter of the law may allow for termination or even a change from elected status to appointed status; but the act of termination and the abrogation of the NTS Terms of Reference is a very serious action, which amounts to a form of disenfranchisement for a large group of ARRL members. Consider:

- In the case of the termination of Mr. Ames, one might argue that two groups of ARRL members were disenfranchised; these being the NTS Eastern Area Net members and the EPA Section Members.

- In the case of the other two NTS Areas, the entire NTS community was also disenfranchised by the Board.

Again; the problem rests not so much with the termination or the change in the NTS Terms of Reference, but with the fact that all of these decisions were made behind closed doors, without member input and were obviously timed to create political upheaval and damage NTS. Here, the letter of the law again departs from the spirit of the law.

Furthermore, one could argue that NTS and the EPA Section were denied due process. Why? The Board of Directors, the Programs and Services Committee and the Executive Committee had a duty to conduct a reasonable investigation before terminating elected officials. A reasonable investigation involves wearing out some real or virtual “shoe leather” by interviewing those involved in a program or activity and by seeking ALL available evidence before making a very important decision. In doing so, one ensures that stakeholders have a say in the decisions of their organization without undermining the authority of executives. Again, the “telephone phobia” presents itself.

On a philosophical level, it should be obvious to the thinking man that plenty of dishonorable people operate within the letter of the law. Consider collections attorneys, pay-day loan operations that charge 1000 percent interest, pornographers and so forth. Many questionable activities are permitted by law, but such activities are not a credit to the individual, who conducts these activities. Just because corporate rules allow an action, doesn’t mean an action is honorable or performed in good faith. The League obviously doesn’t operate at the former level, but ethics remain important.

Ultimately, the League is not so much condemned by what it said or what it did, but by what it failed to do. The lack of interest in negotiation and compromise; the failure to engage in a collegial approach in which others are treated as peers and the refusal to simply pick-up the telephone to investigate the situation in good faith all lead to a difficult conclusion.

The ARRL Board of Directors, the Programs and Services Committee and the Executive Committee are, in my opinion, devoid of any type of fraternal spirit. The evidence indicates that the leadership sees themselves as innately superior to the rank-and-file member. The lack of empathy for less powerful operating interests (constituencies) within the ARRL “family” appears as arrogance and pompousness whether deserved or not. ARRL Directors are not demigods... they are OUR elected representatives.

Personally, I have decided to resign my ARRL membership. For my fellow NTS members; I offer the following advice:

I have been involved in NTS for forty years. Many of us have invested countless hours trying to preserve and promote a program we believe in and, despite our best efforts, we have received no meaningful support from the American Radio Relay League. At best, we have been ignored. Now, when there is genuine interest in NTS from an important served agency, the League suddenly has an investment in the NTS program. I believe it is safe to assume that this
sudden interest has little to do with NTS and absolutely everything to do with personal prestige and access to served agency resources and status. The Board of Directors and the Programs and Services Committee simply used the letter of the law to force a long marginalized and despised program back into its cage. They likely see NTS as a usurper of their own perceived brilliance and vision for the future of the Amateur Radio Service.

I realize now that the ARRL is neither my friend nor a friend of NTS. I am now convinced that the ARRL is not a friend to any smaller operating interests outside of dominant radio-sport constituency and a few other selected interests.

If insanity is defined as “repeating the same behavior again and again while nonetheless expecting different results,” then NTS members are insane to expect the ARRL to suddenly treat them as a peer. It seems to me that we can simply expect more of the same treatment.

73, James Wades, WB8SIW

Joe Ames, W3JY, Former EPA Section Manager and NTS Eastern Area Staff Chairman Files Suit against the ARRL

By James Wades, WB8SIW

On June 21, The American Radio Relay League issued the following press release, which was distributed Worldwide by various Amateur Radio news sources:

06/21/2016

The Executive Committee of the ARRL Board of Directors has relieved ARRL Eastern Pennsylvania Section Manager Joe Ames, W3JY, of his appointments in the ARRL Field Organization, including his position as Chairman of the ARRL National Traffic System™ (NTS™) Eastern Area. The vote came as a result of a June 16 recommendation from the ARRL Programs and Services Committee, which oversees NTS. In addition, the Executive Committee voted to declare the Eastern Pennsylvania Section Manager position vacant, effective immediately.

The decision by the Executive Committee results from a determination that Ames unilaterally and repeatedly communicated with officials of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on behalf of NTS, making commitments on behalf of ARRL without authority and in violation of the rules and regulations of the ARRL Field Organization. Those actions were contrary to the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between FEMA and ARRL, which states clearly that ARRL Headquarters staff will be the single point of contact between FEMA and ARRL. There is no independent relationship between NTS and FEMA; the ARRL/FEMA Memorandum of Understanding is the operative document.

In August 2015, then-ARRL CEO David Sumner, K1ZZ, wrote to Ames and instructed him that, unless otherwise authorized by ARRL, any communication with FEMA with respect to NTS is to be conducted through ARRL authorized representatives. ARRL learned that Ames repeatedly acted contrary to Sumner’s directive, which led to the decision to cancel Ames’s Field Organization appointments and to declare the office of the Section Manager for Eastern Pennsylvania vacant.

In accordance with ARRL bylaws, and after consulting with ARRL Atlantic Division Director Tom Abernethy, W3TOM, the appointment of a new Eastern Pennsylvania Section Manager will be made by ARRL Field Services and Radiosport Manager Dave Patton, NN1N. The NTS Eastern Area Chair vacancy will be filled by appointment made by the ARRL Programs and Services Committee, the committee that oversees NTS.

NTS was formally created by ARRL in 1949. It continues the long-standing tradition of formal message handling via Amateur Radio, an integral component of the Amateur Radio Service. NTS would not be possible without the thousands of volunteers who keep the distribution network running.
On July 5, 2016 Mr. Ames filed suit in US Federal Court, Eastern District of Pennsylvania. The basic complaint reads as follows:

“Plaintiff is suing for the defamation caused directly by the publication of the false and misleading article entitled ‘ARRL Executive Committee Removes NTS Eastern Area Chair, Eastern Pennsylvania Section Manager.’ The article was posted to ARRL’s website as a publication and was seen and heard by many of its 165,000 members worldwide and by third parties throughout the web. The events of the article have further been reprinted and rebroadcasted by numerous third parties.”

We will not publish the exhibits in “QNI,” for two reasons:

1. The complaint and exhibits are simply too numerous to publish in our newsletter
2. It would be unwise to bias the case in a manner, which would harm either plaintiff or defendant.

Some editorial observations about the case are in order however:

- It is interesting to observe that some of the Amateur Radio press was more than willing to reprint and rebroadcast the ARRL press release containing the accusations against Mr. Ames.
- It is also interesting to observe that NONE of these same Amateur Radio press outlets were willing to report on the fact that Mr. Ames is attempting to defend his reputation.

No one is asking the Amateur Radio press to take sides. No one is asking the Amateur Radio press to investigate the issue and suggest who is right or wrong. However, does it not seem reasonable that if one broadcasts or prints a news story containing accusations against a man, then the only objective response is to broadcast or print news of the fact that that same man is attempting to defend himself and his reputation?

A Red Flag:

The printing and broadcasting of the ARRL press release announcing the termination of Mr. Ames may have been appropriate, but the fact that no one engaged in the ethical course of offering an opposing story in an effort to provide balance should be disturbing. It leads one to ask questions such as:

- What else are we not hearing in reference to other Amateur Radio issues? Is there a conscious bias, which is designed to promote some operating interests over others?
- What connections are there between those who run high-profile Amateur Radio news sources and various national Amateur Radio associations? Do these connections introduce bias?
- Is there outright manipulation of the Amateur Radio press? Are certain individuals with power and status influencing those who have taken it upon themselves to play the role of “journalist”?
- What “lies of omission” are present in the information we tend to accept without question?

Finally, if one is going to broadcast a story containing accusations about misconduct or a man’s personal wrong-doing, then one also has a moral duty to allow that man to defend himself. By this measure the Amateur Radio news outlets who had broadcast the ARRL press release were incredibly negligent when they failed to investigate the other side of the story or at least follow-up with news of the lawsuit.
THE FUTURE OF “QNI”

A Personal Note from the Editor and Publisher:

The coming months will likely determine whether QNI remains in publication and if so, in what form.

Two people are largely engaged in the publication of QNI; myself as Editor and Publisher and Kate Hutton as Assistant Editor.

At the present time, I am uncertain about both my future in Amateur Radio. Recent events have been, to say the least, demoralizing.

I have already discussed turning the publication over to Kate Hutton, who has expressed a desire to continue publication in some form.

At the present time, no decision has been made. Like the future of NTS ® program, the future of our newsletter is rather uncertain.

I would like to thank those who have expressed support for the continuation of the newsletter as well as those who have encouraged me to stay with the Amateur Radio Service.

In the meantime, let’s hope that something constructive emerges from the current controversy.

Is it time to take a break and listen to a ball game on the radio?

LET’S KEEP OUR TRAFFIC NETS APOLITICAL

One of the beauties of traffic handling has always been its emphasis on quiet professionalism. Over the years, our traffic networks have been largely devoid of politics and infighting. While your Editor is often fond of saying “two people are a relationship and three or more are politics,” most serious EMCOMM volunteers try to avoid destructive political situations.

Regardless of what choices the rank-and-file traffic handler makes in the coming weeks, let’s move forward with a desire to again isolate ourselves from the politics, power and control issues and hidden agendas. Let’s do what’s necessary to get back to being “quiet professionals.”