

## NAUTICAL CHARTING PROJECT IN FIJI

The Fiji Islands are located at the cross road of maritime traffic in the South Pacific Ocean. Thus, the nautical charts covering Fiji waters play an important role for safer navigation of ships in the frequented shipping routes in those waters. However, the northern Lau Islands region in the eastern part of Fiji, through which vessels of both domestic and foreign flags are passing, have been charted mostly with rather outdated hydrographic surveys of late 19th to early 20th centuries. In order to improve such a situation, the Government of the Republic of Fiji requested the Government of Japan to improve nautical charts on a technical cooperation basis using hydrographic data obtained from field survey using modern technique.

In March 1994, an agreement was reached between the Fiji Government and JICA, which is responsible for implementation of the technical cooperation programmes of the Government of Japan, to conduct the Study of the Preparation of Nautical Charts in the Northern Lau Island Region in the Republic of Fiji over a five year programme.

The objectives of the Study are to prepare three nautical charts each on the scale of 1/150,000, and to make recommendations for improvement of hydrographic surveying and nautical charting system in Fiji.

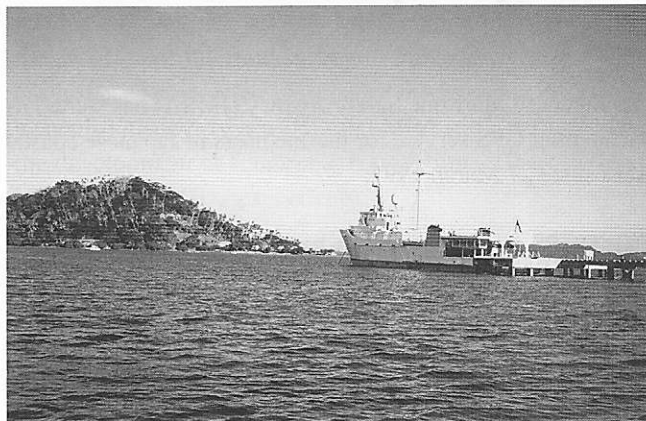
The Aero Asahi Corporation, jointly with Asia Air Survey Company, successfully obtained a contract with JICA in competition to carry out the survey, while the preparation of nautical charts based on the survey results would be carried out by the Hydrographic Department of Japan with Fijian counterpart personnel.

The survey started in July 1994 using R/V TOVUTO (920 tons) and her onboard survey boat BABALE belonging to the Marine Department, Ministry of Infrastructure, Public Works and Transport of the Fiji Government. Since the technology transfer is one of the very important objectives of the Study, Fiji Hydrographic Service provided a sufficient number of counterpart personnel from the Service.

The Northern Lau Islands Region was divided into three areas of survey, totaling 40,400km, and numbered as F52, F53 and F54 from the north, which corresponds to the chart numbers to be produced.



Tide station at Lakeba



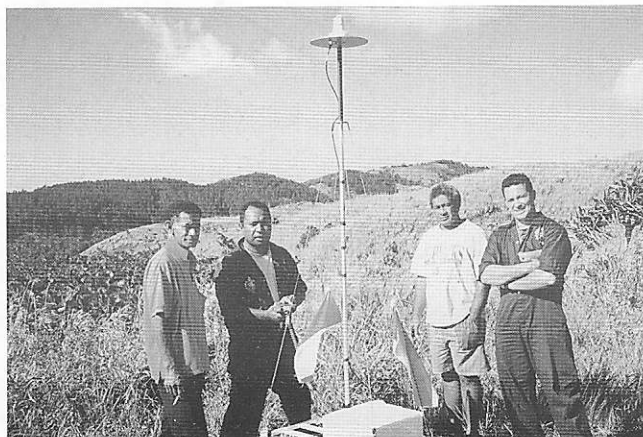
Survey vessel R/V TOVUTO

As for the survey and chart specifications, great care has been exerted to observe the IHO standards as well as those prescribed by the Hydrographic Department of Japan.

The results of the first-year survey were compiled into Fiji Nautical Chart No.52, which was issued in March 1997. It is expected that Chart No.53, compiled from 1996 survey results, will be issued in March 1998 and Chart No.54 in March 1999.

An uncharted shoal with a depth of 11.5 metres was found in the northern entrance to Vetaua Channel in F52 area and named as "Tovuto Shoal". Another uncharted shoal with a depth of 24.7 metres was found to exist in F53 area, which was named as "Cakau-i-Qalitu". Two charted shoals were confirmed non-existent, one each in areas F52 and F53. During the survey in area F54 this year, an uncharted shallow reef has also been found, but its details are yet to be surveyed closely.

It should be commended that the hydrographic surveying and nautical charting overall, has proceeded smoothly due to the friendly relationship and mutual understanding of the surveyores and cartographers of both countries.



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