

A nightmare for Dreambox

LTV AND ALPHA FIGHT PAY-TV HACKERS

By **Paul Malaos**

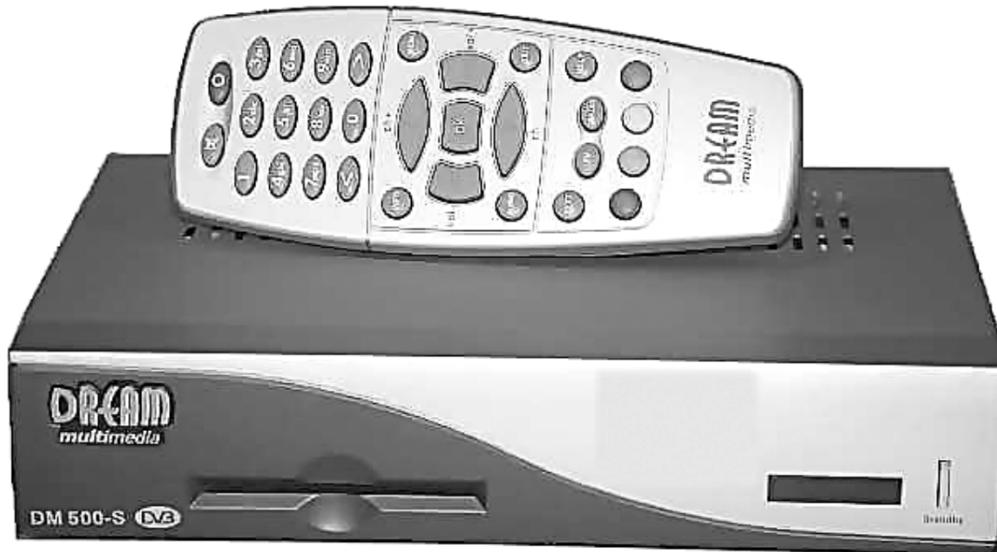
Illegal Dreambox viewers are set to be dealt a heavy blow this month when a contract agreement between TV channels LTV, ALPHA and satellite platform NOVA expires, resulting in a squeeze on local sports coverage.

Authorities have been involved in an ongoing islandwide crackdown against distributors of the cable digital decoder Dreambox since last year, but the loss of the sports channels may prove the strongest blow against Pay-TV hackers yet.

LTV and Alpha, which own the broadcasting rights to a number of Premiership and local football leagues, have so far been available, albeit illegally, to Dreambox users and have been a major selling point for the hackers who install the systems.

Dreambox systems are not able to receive LTV or ALPHA programmes unless they are transmitted via a satellite platform such as NOVA and with potentially hundreds of thousands of euros in potential revenue at stake, pay-TV providers take signal theft very seriously.

General Manager of LTV George Xinaris said the revenue loss the pay television



CONTRACT: LTV has announced it will not renew an agreement with NOVA which expires at the end of June because of revenue loss it faces through satellite signal theft

channel was facing through Dreambox was one of the main reasons for not renewing the contract with NOVA.

"This was certainly a major factor in our decision to not renew the contract," said Xinaris. He added that while people may continue to subscribe to Dreambox they will no longer have illegal access to LTV channels from June 30 when the

satellite broadcast ends.

"We hope that all those who had previously viewed LTV through Dreambox will now decide to subscribe to our channels legally," he added.

Aside from the money TV companies lose out when they secure content which is then broadcast illegally, illegal signal providers are also potentially cost the state hundreds of thou-

sands each year by evading VAT.

The Attorney General last year advised against subscribers of Dreambox being prosecuted, however, tracking down illegal distributors and outlets of the cable digital decoder remains a priority.

As Cypriot football clubs will be playing in the European qualifiers next month the cut

off of local sports coverage is bound to upset a few Dreambox subscribers.

Although Dreambox is used often illegally, it should be noted that the device itself is not an illegal receiving unit but instead the problem lies with illegal software patches and subscriber cards which are developed and distributed by Pay-TV hackers, often for half the price of the originals.

Meanwhile, the end of this month also marks the switch-off date of analogue TV and Cyprus' cross over to digital broadcast.

After the switch on July 1 analog TVs will be incapable of receiving the new broadcasts without the addition of a set-top converter box (STB), unless the TV already has one built-in. The STB is an electronic device that connects to an analog television and must be used in order to allow the TV to receive digital broadcasts.

The Commissioner for Telecommunications and Postal Regulation has formally adopted the MPEG-4 H.264 STB.

It can be purchased in all major electronics retailers around the island and is available in standard definition for analogue TVs and high definition for newer television sets that can support this format.

The SD setbox costs around €50 while the HD costs around €90, although prices may vary according to the retailer.

Larnaca hosts regional marine safety workshop

By **Bev Orton Jennings**

Marine pollution, particularly that generated by harmful anti-fouling systems on ships, came under the microscope at a regional workshop on surveys and inspections organised in Larnaca by the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC).

The event, which related to the International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-Fouling Systems on Ships 2001 (AFS Convention), was organised as part of the Euromed Cooperation on Maritime Safety and Prevention of Pollution from Ships project - better known as the SafeMed II Project.

Funded by the EU, the SafeMed II Project is implemented by REMPEC and reflects the EU's efforts to develop Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the field of maritime safety and security and the prevention of pollution in ships. Senior Programme Officer at REMPEC and SafeMed Project Co-ordinator Jonathan Pace and SafeMed Project Officer (Maritime Safety) Captain Joseph Zerafa told The Cyprus Weekly this week that there are strict rules in place regarding the purchase of anti fouling systems for ships.

In parallel with the International Convention which came into force in 2008, there are EU regulations prohibiting the marketing and selling of anti-fouling systems containing banned sub-

stances.

Zerafa said: "All of us have seen the hulls of boats full of barnacles, weeds and mussels. A special paint was used to prevent them attaching to the hull. The paint used was based on a very toxic TBT compound, which leeches out slowly. This process not only killed the barnacles, damage was also discovered in whales out in the ocean. We now have new paint which does not have the lethal TBT."

Thirty seven participants from 15 countries took part, including Jordan, Spain, Croatia, Morocco, Palestine and Montenegro. The organisers were happy with the turnout.

Pace said: "We were also satisfied with the profile of the participants. Since the workshop was on surveys and inspections related to this particular convention which regulates the anti-fouling systems that can be applied to ships' hulls, we asked countries to nominate people who are actually involved in these inspections. The majority of them were involved, themselves, in the inspections."

Day 1 of the two-day workshop saw experts giving presentations. "In the workshop we give the background information. We run them through the provisions of the Convention and associated guidelines which are there to assist countries to implement the Convention," said Pace.

During the second day, several countries were asked to give presentations. Cyprus representatives delivered a pres-



CLEAN MED: Pace (left) and Zerafa in Larnaca

entation on how they implement and enforce the provisions of the Convention. Pace feels that Cyprus is doing quite well and is quite advanced, pointing out that the Convention applies not only to ships flying the Cyprus flag, but also local boats and foreign ships visiting the island. Time was also given for the participants to exchange views and ideas, while many countries have been party to the Convention for several years, some have only recently implemented it.

"Although the ratification of the Convention has still to gain ground in some areas of the world, more countries are expected to join. With the countries who

have joined there is an improvement vis a vis the protection of the environment," said Pace.

"From surveys done regarding the implementation of this Convention in the European area at least, the results were that it's been well implemented and there are good indications that it's being well enforced. These are positive results, we are on the right track," he added.

The workshop also took stock of the level of implementation of the AFS Convention, with special emphasis on the survey and inspection procedures that are essential for the effective implementation of this Convention.