



Hybrid Ferry
New hybrid
ferry to operate
Baltic service
2-3

Crews as
commodities
Falling oil prices
increase in kidnap
6-7



Tonnage tax
Union questions
long-awaited
plan
10-11



the global seafarer

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German cruiseship company lays claim to a dual-fuel 'first'

Pictured making a maiden call to the UK port of Southampton last month is the Italian-flagged AIDAprima, which has staked a claim as the world's first dual-fuel cruiseship.

The largest vessel in the Carnival group's Aida Cruises fleet, the 125,572gt AIDAprima was built in Japan by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) and will be followed by a sistership, AIDAperla. Tailored to the German market, the ships can carry up to 3,300 passengers and more than 900 crew.

AIDAprima incorporates a wide range of 'green' features, including a specially-designed hull form and the Mitsubishi Air Lubrication System — an under-hull air bubbling system that reduces frictional resistance in the water.

The ship has three MaK 12M43C diesel engines and a single 12M46DF dual-fuel derivative that enables LNG operation while the vessel is in port.

The vessel also features a three-step onboard system for exhaust after-treatment which treats NOx with a catalyser, SOx with scrubbers and reduces particulate matter, soot and fuel residues in a filter system — cutting emissions of such substances by between 85% to 99%.

The propulsion system will include two new ABB Azipod XO azimuthing podded propulsors, each rated at 14MW, increasing hydrodynamic efficiency.

With a home port of Hamburg, AIDAprima will operate seven-day cruises throughout western Europe.

Picture: Gary Davies/Maritime Photographic

Officer famine set to rise to 147,500

Owners warned against complacency as study predicts rising gap between supply and demand

➔ Nautilus is urging the shipping industry to act on the findings of a new study which warns that the global shortage of deck and engineer officers is set to grow over the next decade.

Research into worldwide supply and demand for seafarers published by the shipowner organisations the International Chamber of Shipping and BIMCO last month estimates the current shortfall in officer numbers at 16,500 — and warns that it could rise to 92,000 by 2020.

The study — which is the latest in a series published at five-yearly intervals since 1990 — forecasts that the shortage of officers could soar to over 147,000, based on current trends, and it calls for 'concerted efforts and measures to address key manpower issues'.

The report notes that training has increased over the past five years and owners have also managed to improve retention rates, meaning that the number of

officers has risen by around 24% in this period, following a 34% increase between 2000 and 2005.

Researchers found that differences in working patterns mean that the industry's demand for officers is now outstripping demand for ratings. The number of ratings has risen by just 1% since 2010, and the study suggests there is a global surplus of around 119,000 at present.

While the 2.1% gap between officer supply and demand is described as 'manageable' at present, researchers found evidence of particular problems in recruiting chief engineers and second engineers, as well as officers qualified to serve on chemical tankers and gas carriers.

They said evidence that the labour market is in a healthy state came from a survey of seafarers, which found that almost 25% believed they could find a new job at sea within one month and almost 45% within one to three months. More than 50% said

they were happy or very happy with life at sea, and more than 70% said they expected to work at sea for between five to 20 years.

Presenting the results at the International Maritime Organisation, BIMCO chief marine technical officer Aron Sørensen said they are based on detailed feedback from 45 different flag states, shipping companies, crewing agencies and maritime colleges and he was confident they represent 'the best possible estimates available'.

The study shows that China has overtaken the Philippines as the number one seafarer supply nation, and that there has been further decline in the proportion coming from OECD countries.

It assesses a wide range of factors which influence seafarer supply and demand — including fleet growth, manning levels, and wastage rates — to present a range of scenarios for the next decade.

Stewart Inglis, senior advisor with the ICS, described the current officer shortage

as 'modest' — but warned that demand looks set to rise by 12% over the next five years and by a further 8% between 2020 and 2025. 'This could turn a manageable shortage into a more serious shortage,' he stressed.

'The industry should not expect an abundant supply of qualified officers in the future without considerable efforts to promote careers at sea, to enhance training worldwide and to retain qualified personnel,' Mr Inglis added.

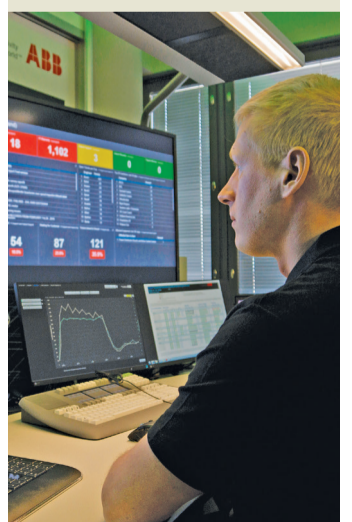
Nautilus general secretary Mark Dickinson commented: 'This is a very welcome report which underlines the huge challenges faced by the industry in maintaining an adequate quantity — and quality — of officers for the world merchant fleet. It is imperative that owners take note and invest in the high calibre personnel that they need for safe and efficient ship operations.'

➔ Full report — see pages 22-23.

Inside

📌 **Fear for seafarers**
Flag-out fears for
Italian seafarers
— page 8

📌 **Cabotage call**
Australian union
in cabotage call
— page 11



📌 **Networks**
Embracing the new
nautical networks
— page 12

INTERNATIONAL

shortreports

MAERSK CUTS: French unions have expressed concern after Maersk France announced plans to cut a further 33 staff from its 200-strong workforce. Management said it would 'minimise the consequences' for those losing jobs with redundancy arrangements 'beyond the strict legal framework' — but the FOMM-CGT officers' union described the announcement as a further blow for French maritime jobs.

SAFMARINE PROBE: investigations were launched last month into the causes of a collision between the containerhips Safmarine Meru and the German-owned Northern Jasper off the coast of China. The 4,650TEU Safmarine vessel had to be towed to the port of Ningbo after the 22 crew were evacuated when a fire broke out following the collision.

STCW MOVE: Costa Rica has announced plans to comply with the STCW convention in a drive to improve safety and boost employment. Transport minister Carlos Villalta said the move would give the country better control over its shipping industry, enhance training and skills, and create jobs with internationally recognised certificates for young people.

FRENCH ROW: the French maritime officers' union FOMM-CGT has backed protests against controversial changes to the national labour code. FOMM-CGT general secretary Jean-Philippe Chateil said the action was important to halt social dumping and continuing job losses in the shipping industry, and to maintain high standard ferry services.

SPLIETHOFF DEAL: the Amsterdam-based dry cargo operator Spliethoff has taken control of the 126-year-old Finnish ro-ro operator Bore. All activities of the Bore business will transfer to Spliethoff, including all of Bore's employees and its fleet of nine ro-ro vessels, which operate in the Mediterranean, North and Baltic Seas, and the Caribbean.

NO SALE: French authorities have failed to find a buyer for a merchant ship that was abandoned by its owners following a fatal collision with a fishing vessel in August 2007. A court in the port of Brest was unsuccessful in its attempt to sell the Kiribati-flagged Ocean Jasper for scrap at an asking price of €50,000.

BUILDER CUTS: the South Korean shipbuilder Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI) is slashing its workforce by 10% as part of a cost-cutting plan being imposed following a 63.2% fall in shipbuilding orders and a 75% year-on-year drop in its offshore and engineering business.

PIRATES JAILED: seven Somali citizens have been convicted of murdering a French yacht skipper and kidnapping his wife in the Gulf of Aden in 2011. The accused were sentenced to six to 15 years in prison, lower than the 16 to 22 years requested by the prosecutor.

DIEPPE DECLINE: the French port of Dieppe has reported an 11.6% year-on-year decline in traffic in the first quarter of 2016.

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Safety row over Panama Canal

Waterway authority hits back as ITF-commissioned study raises concerns

Concerns over safety in the expanded Panama Canal have been raised in a research report commissioned by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

The ITF said the independent study was carried out by Brazil's Fundação Homem de Mar (FHM) after worries raised by local unions over the refusal of the Panama Canal Authority (ACP) to discuss training and technical and construction issues which led to delays in the operation of the new locks.

FHM researchers said simulation exercises based on a neo-panamax vessel and two tugs showed that the safety of manoeuvrability was compromised as a result of such factors as:

the locks' dimensions being too small for safe operation (with both gates closed)

there being no refuge areas for tugs inside the locks
the bollard pull and power of the tugs being insufficient for certain conditions

It recommended that a complete risk analysis on the manoeuvrability of vessels transiting the locks and said special training should be carried out.

'I wish I could report that the study gave the new locks the all-clear. Sadly, I can't,' said ITF general secretary Steve Cotton. 'Instead we face a situation where those working on the canal, and those passing through it, are potentially at risk. That will have to change.'

The ACP dismissed the study's findings as 'inadmissible' and argued in a statement that the claims made in the document were not based on mathematical models and did not include data from physical navigation tests.

The authority claimed that the authors of the study 'have not sailed the Panama Canal, and are not suitable for it' — an allegation rejected by FHM, which said its expert staff included captains, merchant marine officers and naval architects.

The FHM simulation model was based on ACP's original plan to use one forward tug and one aft tug, manoeuvring a neo-panamax size vessel.

The ACP said it had spent almost 10 years evaluating the design and operation of the locks, concluding that it would be right to use up to four tugs to support transiting ships.

Mr Cotton said the ITF stood by the FHM report and reiterated its call for ACP to engage positively 'to ensure that the canal is safe for those working on it and those passing through it' — pointing out that it had been seeking talks

on the issues since December 2013.

'The issues identified in this study will not be a surprise to workers on the canal,' he added.

'Unfortunately, their expertise and experience have up to now been snubbed. Thankfully they're still on offer.'

'Those who'll be working these locks have to be brought into the process while there's still time to fix the defects.'

'We share our affiliated unions' concerns and we can assure that the ITF and its canal affiliates want the new canal to be safe and to work,' Mr Cotton stressed.

'The Panama Canal is crucial for the international maritime industry. We offer our full support to make this important maritime route safe for all those who transit it or work on it, and for a positive engagement between unions and the ACP.'

New hybrid ferry to operate Baltic service

Pictured right is the new hybrid ferry Berlin, which is set to come into service for the German-Danish ferry operator Scandlines this month.

The 24,000gt vessel is the first of two €140m passenger ferries being built for the company and will operate on the route between the German port of Rostock and Gedser in Denmark.

Berlin, which can carry up to 1,300 passengers and 460 cars or 96 lorries, features low emission and fuel-saving diesel-electric hybrid propulsion that utilises an energy storage system which can provide up to 6,000kW of the 15,800kW of power needed. The ship is also equipped with four AEC Marine closed-loop scrubbers.



New Zealand reprieve for older certificates

Authorities in New Zealand have moved to allow seafarers to continue using certificates with such names as Master Small Home Trade Ship, Master River Ship, and Second and Third Class Steam Engineer under a new certification framework.

Maritime New Zealand (MNZ) said it was proposing to allow seafarers with some older tickets to continue using them under its new SeaCert scheme, which started to be phased in during 2014. The older tickets are no longer issued and are a legacy of several previous maritime regulatory regimes. It was originally intended that they would move to new SeaCert certificates — which would involve a cost and

mean the certificates would have to be renewed every five years.

'We're suggesting that some older certificates could be "ring-fenced" — meaning that the seafarers holding them could carry on doing what they are doing without the need to replace the certificate,' said MNZ director Keith Manch. 'For a lot of seafarers, there is quite rightly a lot of pride in having these tickets.'

Mr Manch said MNZ is asking all seafarers holding such tickets to register with the authority. Around 1,400 have already registered, including a number well into their sixth decade in the industry, who are still active and wish to continue using their

qualifications while they are in good health.

Consultation is also underway on a range of other adjustments to the SeaCert system, and a series of public meetings explaining the changes is being held around the country.

'We are trying to make it as straightforward as possible for seafarers to continue working with the introduction of SeaCert — and for as little cost to them as possible,' Mr Manch said. 'Different parts of the industry have expressed a variety of views about possible changes, and we now want to get out and hear from seafarers and industry groups around the country.'

Unions warn on US slump

US seafaring unions have warned politicians that the continued decline of the national merchant fleet and the number of US seafarers is posing a growing threat to defence strategies.

In a presentation to a Senate sub-committee, Masters Mates & Pilots' union chief of staff Klaus Luhta said shortages of US-flag ships and seafarers are undermining the ability to provide the commercial seafight capacity required by the department of defence.

Recent figures show that the number of US-flagged deepsea ships have declined from 106 in 2011 to 78 at the end of February this year, and that there are now fewer than 11,250 qualified US seafarers available to crew commercial or government-owned seafight ships.

Hurtigruten orders 'expedition' ships



The Norwegian operator Hurtigruten has placed the biggest order in its 120-year history — for up to four new 'expedition' cruise vessels

To be built by the Kleven Verft yard in Ulsteinvik, Norway, the ships have been specially designed by Rolls-Royce for operations in Antarctic and Arctic waters, and will be equipped with advanced environmentally-friendly technology to reduce emissions. The order covers two ships with delivery starting in 2018, along with options for two more.

'This is a milestone for us and an expression of our confidence in the growth of the global market for adventure tourism,' said Hurtigruten CEO Daniel Skjeldam.

Anger over bid to beat Brazil strike

ITF accuses state-owned oil firm of threatening masters and crews in dispute

The International Transport Workers' Federation has strongly condemned attempts to undermine a strike by Brazilian seafarers serving with the state-owned oil company Petrobras.

ITF officials complained that company representatives had warned crew members on tankers and offshore vessels operated by its Transpetro subsidiary that military personnel could be used against strikers, and that ship masters had been ordered to deny union leaders access to vessels.

The ITF wrote to Guy Ryder, the director-general of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), calling for urgent intervention with the government of Brazil, warning that the company's moves

to 'intimidate and threaten' striking seafarers were in breach of national and international rules upholding the principle of freedom of association.

The strike had been called after members of seafaring unions affiliated to the CONTTMAF federation overwhelming voted to escalate industrial action following the breakdown of collective bargaining agreement negotiations that began last year.

Unions say they are seeking to resist discriminatory practices that potentially undermine the national flag identity of the company's offshore and cabotage fleet, and to strengthen health and safety mechanisms in order to set up a level playing field with other companies hired by it and its subsidiary companies.

CONTTMAF president Severino Almeida, who also heads the SINDMAR maritime officers' union, said the unions had worked hard to promote the development of the Transpetro fleet and were determined to ensure that Brazilian crews would 'continue to be the backbone of the industry'.

He explained: 'Employment stability is already included in collective agreements signed between Petrobras and other unions. The system of working one period onboard and the same period of shore leave (the "one-by-one" system) is already current practice in all other private shipping companies operating in the Brazilian offshore industry hired by Petrobras and its subsidiary companies.'

'This system is there to pre-

vent accidents caused by fatigue,' he pointed out. The fact that all other private companies operating in the Brazilian offshore and cabotage sectors, apart from Petrobras subsidiaries, offer it not only creates unfair competition but increases risk.

CONTTMAF decided to suspend the action after three days to allow a vote to take place on a possible agreement which had been worked out during conciliatory hearings in the country's supreme labour court.

ITF general secretary Steve Cotton commented: 'We congratulate all the seafarers who, despite the intimidation, stood up to be counted and we are happy that an apparently acceptable agreement is being reached which gives them what they deserve.'



OSVs help Singapore drive to raise awareness of shipping

Two offshore support vessels — the Gibraltar-flagged VOS Prince and the Singapore-registered Pacific Legacy — hosted an estimated 4,000 visitors last month in an initiative designed to raise public awareness of the shipping industry in Singapore.

The two vessels were moored at the Vivacity Waterfront Promenade

for two days as part of the OSV@Vivo programme spearheaded by the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA) to showcase the offshore marine sector and to highlight career opportunities in the industry.

This initiative was supported by more than 20 companies and held in conjunction with Singapore Maritime Week.

Norwegian support scheme is approved

European authorities have approved a Norwegian state aid scheme that helps to subsidise the cost of owners employing the country's seafarers.

The European Free Trade Association Surveillance (EFTA Surv) Authority said it had decided the measures — which refund income tax and social security contributions paid on behalf of crew employed on Norwegian-registered vessels — were justified.

The tax refund scheme was introduced by the Norwegian government as a temporary measure in 1993 and made permanent in 1994. It applies to certain categories of ships on the Norwegian mainland register and the Norwegian international ship register (NIS).

EFTA Surv last conducted a review of the scheme in 2006, and the latest

decision extends this approval for an additional 10 years. It said the support was justified because the maritime transport industry in Norway — and in other European Economic Area member states — faces aggressive competition from vessels registered in third countries 'which do not take much care to observe social and safety rules in force at international level'.

The Swedish seafarers' union Seko says there is no question of the TAP scheme foregoing the temporary hiring of foreign crews being scrapped when the country's long-awaited tonnage tax scheme comes into effect in July. Seko leader Kenny Reinhold said the measure, agreed between unions and owners in 1998, had helped to safeguard conditions on Swedish-flagged ships and would still be needed after tonnage tax is introduced.

shortreports

ITALIAN CRACKDOWN: the Italian Senate has given the green light to controversial plans to restrict tax breaks only to ships operating with Italian or European Union crews. The three maritime unions and the ferry operators' organisation Federlinea welcomed the move, which aims to ensure that tonnage tax and international register subsidies only go to owners using Italian or EU crews, but the shipowners' association Confitarma claimed that its members will be forced to flag out, putting thousands of jobs at risk.

MEGA MOVE: French containership operator CMA CGM has ended its attempt to run a trans-Pacific service between Asia and US west coast ports using its 18,000TEU vessel Benjamin Franklin. The 178,288gt vessel became the biggest boxship to visit a US port when it docked in Los Angeles in December, but the company says it will now be redeployed on the FAL 1 service between Asia and northern Europe, even though trials runs to the ports of Los Angeles, Oakland and Seattle had been declared a success.

TANKER MYSTERY: Liberian authorities launched an investigation last month after a small product tanker washed up on its shores with no crew onboard. The 1,400dwt Tamaya 1 was found on a beach with extensive damage to much of its accommodation and the bridge. The Panama Maritime Authority said it had cancelled the ship's registration in October last year, when it was sold to Nigerian owners.

WRECK REMOVAL: the Dutch shipping company Flinterstar has signed a contract with a consortium of three Belgian salvage companies to remove the wreck of its general cargo ship Flinterstar, which sank off the coast of Zeebrugge in October 2015 following a collision with the LNG tanker Al Oraiq. It is anticipated the wreck removal operation will be completed this summer — weather permitting.

CORSICA LINK: a new ferry company, MCM-Corsica Linea, has begun operations following the liquidation of the Marseilles-based operator SNCM. The company employs 870 full-time seafaring and land-based staff on the 'lifeline' services between Marseilles and Corsica and aims to carry as many as 500,000 passengers this year, up from 350,000 before the collapse of SNCM.

VENICE PLAN: authorities in Venice are considering plans to create a new port to protect the historic city from damage by visiting cruiseships. The ministry of the environment is considering proposals to build a 940m facility outside the Lido entrance to the lagoon, which would be capable of handling up to five ships and 24,000 passengers a day.

CUBAN FIRST: the Bermuda-flagged Adonia has become the first cruiseship in nearly 40 years to make a voyage between the US and Cuba. Operated by the Carnival subsidiary Fathom, the 30,277gt vessel is to cruises twice a month between Miami and Havana. More than a dozen other operators have also announced plans to run US-Cuba cruises.

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Seafarer skills shortage: the evidence

Shipowners have stepped up their recruitment and training efforts in response to repeated warnings of a growing global shortage of officers — but they may still not have done enough to prevent a potential ninefold increase in the gap between supply and demand over the next decade.

That's the stark conclusion of the 2015 Manpower Report, published last month by the owners' organisations BIMCO and the International Chamber of Shipping. The long-awaited study — the latest in a series produced at five-yearly intervals since 1990 — estimates the current worldwide shortage of officers to be 16,500 and predicts that it could rise to 92,000 by 2020 and to 147,500 by 2025.

Researchers found that the number of seafarers has increased by 24% over the past five years, meaning that there is now a total of 774,000 officers and 875,000 ratings — compared with 466,000 officers and 721,000 ratings in 2005.

However, despite the additional training and improved retention rates, the global demand for officers is outstripping supply by just over 2%. In contrast, the worldwide surplus of 119,000 ratings equates to almost 16% of total supply.

The findings are based on data supplied by flag states, 52 shipping companies in 45 countries, 75 maritime colleges, and a range of seafarer unions. They also draw from feedback given by around 1,600 seafarers from 62 different countries.

Researchers found that 20% of shipping companies experience 'major' or 'substantial' recruitment difficulties, while 58% report few or no problems. 'This suggests that the majority view was, generally across most ranks and roles, and irrespective of nationalities, any recruitment difficulties were manageable,' the report states.

“Companies said some training was poor and seafarers were being promoted too fast”

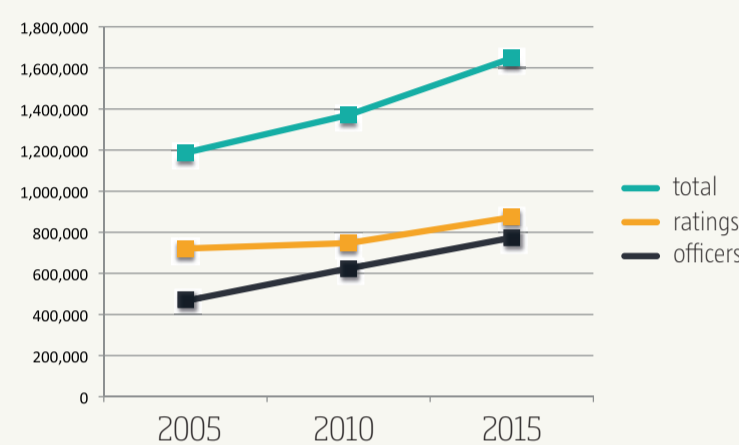
Feedback from shipping companies showed that the most significant recruitment problems involved management level officers — and senior engineer officer positions in particular.

The report says recruitment of operational level deck officers has become easier since 2010, although there are variations between different countries. Companies complained that it was difficult to find sufficient management level deck officers in such countries as the Netherlands, the UK, the Philippines, India and Ukraine. They also reported difficulties in recruiting operational level deck officers in the Netherlands, the Philippines and Ukraine, as well as management level engineer officers in Greece, India, Japan and the Netherlands.

The most acute recruitment problems were reported by companies operating LPG carriers — half of which complained of substantial or major difficulties in

Is the shipping industry recruiting and training enough seafarers? A major new study by owners' organisations BIMCO and the International Chamber of Shipping has sought to find out...

Estimated global supply of seafarers (2005-2015)



Regional share of global seafarer supply

Region	2010	2015
OECD	29%	24%
Eastern Europe	20%	16%
Africa & Latin America	8%	15%
Far East	29%	31%
Indian sub-continent	13%	13%

China has taken over from the Philippines as the world's largest supplier of seafarers

Year	Supply	Demand	Shortage	Shortage %
2015	774,000	790,500	16,500	2.1%
2020	789,500	881,500	92,000	11.7%
2025	805,000	952,500	147,500	18.3%

Top 10 reasons for seafarers to remain with their current employer

- 1 timely wage payments
- 2 promotion and career opportunities
- 3 'happy ships'
- 4 good training
- 5 good shore staff
- 6 good food
- 7 good internet access
- 8 family benefits
- 9 regular shore leave
- 10 seniority pay

finding suitable officers. Owners of LNG carriers and chemical tankers also complained of higher than average recruitment difficulties.

Asked what they are doing to combat such problems, almost two-thirds of companies said they are increasing recruitment in shortage roles, and 62% have used 'reward structures' to increase retention. Just over half have changed the nationality of their crews to make it easier to find seafarers, and 20% have made no changes at all.

The researchers said they had found little evidence that companies are routinely asking seafarers to extend tour lengths or cut short their leave in response to supply problems.

Operators told them that China, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and India are the five most important seafarer supply nations.

The report underlines the steady decline in the proportion of the world's seafarers originating from

developed nations. In 2005, 28% of officers and 24% of ratings came from OECD countries, compared with 25% of officers and just 14% of ratings last year. Over the same period, the Far East has increased its share of the world officer supply from 28% to 39% and the proportion of ratings from 31% to 55%.

Researchers found a significantly higher proportion of European and US nationals at the officer management level (more than 40%) — compared with only 12% of

Filipinos and just over 25% of Chinese seafarers at this level.

The study uses a range of different factors to project future seafarer demand trends, and it notes that the global demand for officers has now overtaken the demand for ratings — largely as a result of changes to operational manning levels and onboard requirements.

Data supplied by companies employing just over 81,000 officers and 10,700 officer trainees showed a marked improvement in training levels — with the ratio of officers to cadets narrowing from 20 to one in 2005 to 7.6 to one last year.

Companies reported a 32% increase in deck officer trainees between 2010 and 2015 and a 34% increase in engineer officer trainees over the same period.

And while the study also highlights positive figures filed by maritime colleges from 32 countries, with 40% reporting an increase in officer cadet numbers over the past five years, it warns that they may not be able to supply the required quantity and quality of seafarers in the years ahead — pointing to such concerns as:

- the proportion of cadets who fail to complete their training courses
- the number of newly-qualified officers who can only find seagoing work as a rating
- difficulties for trainees in securing pre-qualification seafarers
- problems faced by some colleges in providing adequate facilities, instruction and experience to trainees
- a lack of quality and competence among some newly-qualified seafarers

One in five colleges said that 75% or more of their officer trainees may be expected to find work only as a rating after gaining their OOW certificate, and the report concludes that there is evidence indicating 'the annual intake of officer trainees may exceed the realistic prospect of their employment as officers upon qualification'.

More than half of the colleges reported major or substantial difficulties in finding berths for officer trainees to complete their seafarers' requirements and only 12% said they had no problems at all.

Further concerns were raised by some companies who complained of the inadequate quality of maritime training and education, of seafarers being promoted too fast in a bid to compensate for officer shortages, and the challenges posed by the evolving requirements of technological developments and changing ship operations.

The report notes that some of these concerns are not new. But it also warns: 'The industry must continue to place the utmost importance on seafarer recruitment and training and the quality of seafarers employed onboard ships. This is essential to the safety and efficiency of international shipping, and it will also have implications for the standard of shore-based management and support of the world merchant fleet in the future.'

Researchers examined the levels of seafarer turnover across different ranks and concluded that wastage rates have improved from previous reports, with turnover levels reflecting 'the mobility of seafarers in the current maritime labour market' and 'not too far removed from a

healthy labour market situation'.

Nearly 70% of seafarers reckoned that they would be able to find a new job at sea within the space of three months, and 25% considered that they could get a new seagoing position in less than one month.

The majority of seafarers said they were happy or very happy in their job — only 9% described themselves as unhappy and just 4% as very unhappy.

Nearly half the seafarers indicated that they expect to continue working at sea for another five to 10 years. The research team said the feedback suggested that the average length of a seagoing career is between five and 20 years.

Seafarers were asked to list the factors which encourage them to stay with their current employer — with timely wage payments, promotion opportunities and 'happy ships' coming out as the most important elements.

However, the researchers said the survey results indicated that conditions for many seafarers have stayed broadly the same over the past two years. Almost two-thirds said their tour lengths had not changed in this period, while 16% reported a decrease. Some 38% of seafarers said their basic pay had risen over the past two years, and 13% said it had fallen.

Just over half said onboard conditions such as food and accommodation had improved, against 25% who considered they had deteriorated, and just over 30% had experienced improved internet access.

In forecasting the future supply-demand trends, the researchers estimated that the annual wastage rate for officers will run at 2.4%, that the ratio between officer trainees and qualified officers will continue at one to every 7.6, and that 85% of cadets will complete their training and gain an operational level STCW certificate.

Based on anticipated growth of the world merchant fleet and the different ship types, the study forecasts that demand for officers will rise by 12% over the next five years and by a further 8% between 2020 and 2025.

The report warns that this raises the prospect of the future supply-demand balance for officers increasing from a 'manageable 2.1% shortage of officers in 2015, to a more serious 11.7% shortage in 2020 and an 18.3% shortage by 2025'.

Variables such as a slowdown in global seaborne trade, reductions in manning levels and increased wastage are used to offer a range of alternative scenarios for future supply and demand.

However, the report concludes, the most likely scenario is one which the world fleet will grow and demand for seafarers will rise — continuing the trend of an overall shortage of officers, despite additional training.

The current maritime manpower situation and future outlook indicate that the industry and relevant stakeholders should not expect there to be an abundant supply of qualified and competent seafarers in the future without concerted efforts and measures to address key manpower issues,' the study warns. 'It is crucial to promote careers at sea, enhance maritime training education and training worldwide, address the retention of seafarers, and to continue monitoring the global supply and demand for seafarers on a regular basis.'

Nautilus: research shows impact of past training cuts

Nautilus has welcomed the publication of the BIMCO/ICS Manpower Report and says governments and shipowners need to respond to the findings.

'The study has confirmed what everyone has suspected: even though there has been an increase in training, it is still not enough to make good the damage caused by previous neglect and to cope with the growth of the merchant fleet as global seaborne trade continues to rise,' said general secretary Mark Dickinson.

'Even though shipping is a highly cyclical industry, there is a fundamental need to have long-term policies in place for recruitment, retention and training,' he added. 'Training budgets can often be the first casualty when times are tough, but cutting back can create problems down the line when demand picks up.'

'In this context, it is particularly interesting to see that the research has addressed quality as well as quantity,' Mr Dickinson said.

'It is good to see the report calling for the industry not to skimp on standards and warning that cutting corners on training will have serious implications for safety and efficiency and for the quality of shore-based management in the future.'

'There is also a wealth of material in the report to illustrate the simple steps that shipowners can take to retain their seafarers — not rocket science, but there are still many employers who need to be reminded of the things that their crews value,' he added.

'It is disappointing to see a further decline in the proportion of the world seafaring labour force that originates from traditional maritime nations. OECD governments need to think very carefully about the potential impact this will have on their maritime clusters and shipping-related infrastructures,' he warned. 'The strategic approach being taken by Singapore to develop its maritime expertise with the aim of building its cluster offers a positive example that other countries need to consider.'



Quality boost for Ukraine training

The International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) have agreed to invest US\$3m in Ukrainian marine training.

The donation is being made from the Seafarers' Employment Promotion Fund (SEPF), which is jointly administered by the two organisations and sourced from collective bargaining agreements that they have negotiated.

The \$3m donation will help to support the work of the Kherson State Maritime Academy (KSMA) and the National University 'Odessa Maritime Academy' (NU-OMA) — and has gone towards a full mission Transas DP offshore simulator, GMDSS simulator suite, desktop engine room simulator and a full mission engine room simulator at the KSMA, followed by

the inauguration of a full mission Kongsberg engine room simulator at the NU-OMA.

Phase two of the investment will consist of developments to the boat station and fire ground of the Kherson Maritime Specialised Training Centre and an engine room simulator upgrade in the Odessa Maritime Training Centre.

IMEC CEO Francesco Gargiulo commented: 'Training budgets have been significantly reduced in the current economic downturn that the shipping industry is experiencing. However, across IMEC's 224 member companies, Ukraine is the third most utilised country in terms of officers' employment. It was therefore important to invest in the country, to ensure the sustainability of future quality officers.'

Singapore scheme recruits land-based engineers to retrain as ship's officers

Singapore has launched a major new initiative intended to combat an 'acute' shortage of engineer officers — with a \$51.2m (€770,000) scheme to subsidise training costs.

The Tripartite Engineering Training Award (TETA) programme covers 90% of the costs of the three-year course to gain a Class 5 certificate of competency, and also provides placements with shipping companies to gain the required seafarers' experience.

The scheme is a joint initiative being run by the Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU) in collaboration with the Island State's Workforce Development Agency (WDA), the

National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), and the Employment and Employability Institute.

It also has the backing of the Maritime & Port Authority (MPA), the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA) and a number of shipping companies.

The pilot scheme has nine Singaporeans signed up, and SMOU hopes to increase this to 20 next year. The cadets undertake nine months of pre-sea training, before 15 months of seafarers' experience, followed by a further seven months of study at the Singapore Maritime Academy before sitting the exams.

The cadets — who are usually mature

students with some minimum engineering experience or qualifications — pay 10% of the training course fees and receive an allowance worth almost €900 a month.

The SMOU is funding 10% of the scheme and it says the TETA programme is the latest in a series of initiatives which aim to attract Singaporeans to switch to a seafaring career through continuous education and training (CET).

'Over the years, we have noticed the manpower issues, in particular the dwindling number of Singaporean seafaring officers and marine engineers willing to embark on this career,' said SMOU general secretary Mary Liew.

'Therefore, we initiated various programmes with the help of our tripartite partners that adopt the CET route, to give Singaporeans a second opportunity to choose seafaring as a career.'

'It has not been an easy path because our selection process is stringent, but seeing lives being changed for the better has been highly encouraging for all of us involved,' she added.

Singapore's manpower minister Lim Swee Say told the TETA launch event: 'Seafarers form a key segment of our maritime workforce. With an increasing use of technology, we must equip our seafarers with a higher level of knowledge and skills, and attract more to join this sector.'



PIRACY

PIRACY

Crews as commodities

Far from the jolly depictions contrived by Hollywood, pirates have operated across some of the world's waters in a ruthless manner for many years, putting seafarers at risk of serious injury and — in worst-case scenarios — torture and death from their actions.

In recent times, attacks have been concentrated in the Gulf of Aden, Somali Basin and Indian Ocean. But whilst media reports have widely focused on the activities of Somali pirates, the US-based research body Oceans Beyond Piracy (OBP) is warning that piracy has seen a shift in its focus, and not in a positive manner.

Its recent report, looking back at activity in 2015, notes how cargo theft and hijack have been put on the back-burner while a new emphasis has been put on a different kind of prize — the kidnap and ransom of seafarers.

OBP also describes how the Gulf of Guinea — which includes the waters around the Nigerian coastline — has become the most dangerous region for seafarers. A rise in violence across the year and an increase in kidnap-for-ransom in the latter part of 2015 spell a troubling trend for seafarers in the region.

The OBP report reveals that 1,225 seafarers were subjected to piracy attacks during 2015, of which 44 were kidnapped for a variety of durations. More than 20 people were killed during those attacks or in subsequent captivity — a result, OBP claims, which is due to the mindset of the

Falling oil prices may be driving an increase in seafarer kidnap cases, a new report has warned. **STEVEN KENNEDY** heard from the authors, and met a former ship's officer who is now helping the victims of piracy...



Matt Walje presenting Oceans Beyond Piracy's 2015 report. Picture:OBP

pirates operating in the area.

'The trend that we've seen in the Gulf of Guinea region over 2015 is a shift away from hijacking and cargo theft to kidnapping for ransom,' explained Matt Walje, OBP project manager for trends analysis.

'Gulf of Guinea piracy tends to be extremely violent; more so than across the other regions,' he

added. 'During 2015, 44 seafarers were kidnapped and 23 individuals were killed by pirates. Most of the individuals were killed within Nigerian territorial waters, and most were on passenger vessels operating at sea or fishing vessels.'

'They [the hostages] were generally held for three to four weeks, and reports that have come out recently for those hostages

released say that they have been treated very badly. They have seen significant levels of abuse and mock executions. The human cost here suggests there is an extreme callousness on the part of Nigerian pirates — particularly when dealing with seafarers,' he said.

Sadly it appears to be a trend that shows no signs of slowing

down. Piracy has, in recent years, centred on hijacking vessels for the value of goods and cargo. However, with the international economic slump, the value of goods such as oil appears to have made that method of piracy a cost-inefficient model. In turn, pirates have turned their attention to the value placed on human life.

'The shift away from hijack and cargo theft has happened for a couple of reasons,' said Mr Walje. 'One of those reasons is a change in the patrolling habits of local maritime security institutions. Increased patrols in territorial waters — and surrounding oil production structures — have made it more difficult for pirates to hijack for cargo. These attacks require time. They have to take the vessel to a safe area and syphon the fuel off, which can take several days.'

'Kidnapping for ransom, however, involves, at most, a few hours if they are able to board a vessel, identify a few crew members to kidnap and then take them off shore for negotiations.'

'The other issue is that the oil price has dropped, which changes the risk-to-reward ratio. The risk is higher, you're more likely to get convicted and the fuel is worth less so it's no longer economically viable,' he added.

Despite this, 2015 report showed some positive results — including a slight decrease over the year in the number of piracy incidents reported in the Gulf of Guinea, 54 incidents in 2015 compared with 67 in 2014. Less encouragingly, though, none of these incidents ended in a prosecution in the region.

Part of the problem that those trying to tackle piracy issues face is the lack of support received from the legal services of the coastal states. In many cases, bureaucracy and corruption within the internal mechanisms governing those coastal regions mean that getting a conviction to stick is a near impossibility.

Just arresting the pirates is a problem, as very few suspects are ever detained for piracy-related crimes.

With the absence of prosecutions, OBP says seafarers have little incentive to report the crimes — especially as many of them continue to work in the region following a piracy incident and may have to face their attackers again. This contributes to chronic under-reporting, further exacerbating endemic maritime insecurity.

Speaking at the launch of the report, BIMCO chief security officer Giles Noakes said that more needs to be done when it comes to the legal finish of piracy cases. 'The price of oil is very low and hijack is not a very good business model — therefore, kidnapping from, in particular, west Africa is on the rise,' he explained.

'Having 23 people killed last year is a lot of people killed from piracy,' he added. 'Nowhere near that number of people died from piracy in the last five years in the western Indian Ocean. It is a

coastal state problem.

'One of the most important things is the legal finish; the arrest and prosecution of pirates. If you do not arrest and prosecute pirates they will see this as an opportunity to always continue and you'll never be able to deter, and eventually defeat, piracy altogether.'

Intertanko marine director Dr Phil Belcher backed this view. For crimes of piracy committed at sea within a country's territorial waters, the law should be as enforceable as if the same crime happened ashore — something which he says coastal states are having a hard time coming to terms with.

'One of the issues that exist in the Gulf of Guinea is the lack of legal infrastructure and understanding how to apply the law properly to prosecute these individuals,' he explained. 'An incident that occurred within territorial waters theoretically should be the same as if it occurred on land.'

'A robbery onboard ship shouldn't be prosecuted any differently to a robbery of a warehouse. Unfortunately there is not a lot of understanding of how exactly to carry that over into maritime law,' he concluded.

The fear is that the ransom model of piracy is now spreading rapidly to other regions where progress has been made subduing the threat — such as the Somali coastline and the Gulf of Aden.

In total, 108 seafarers were held hostage by pirates at some point over the course of 2015 in

“Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is the most violent but Somalia hasn't gone away”

this region, with several recent hijackings potentially signalling a return of the ransom-model threat.

Somali piracy has previously been described as unique among piracy 'business models' worldwide because of the level of community support that it has enjoyed in the past and the ability of the pirates to hold crews and their vessels for months — or even years — in safe havens just off the coast during ransom negotiations.

The hijack-for-ransom model developed significantly in the early 2000s and became the primary model by 2005, when the number of such incidents jumped from two to 14 in a single year. By 2010, pirates were able to attack vessels over 1,000nm from the Somali coast.

Fortunately, anti-piracy work in the area and the presence of



Perpetrators of the MT Orkim Harmony hijacking, captured by the Vietnamese coastguard. Picture:ReCAAP

naval vessels has reduced the piracy risk over recent years, culminating in the reduction of the High Risk Area (HRA) in December 2015. However, there is evidence to suggest that, far from piracy being eradicated in the region around Somalia, it has instead lain dormant, and 41 hostages still remain in pirate hands — 26 of whom have been held for over 1,500 days following the hijacking of the Naham 3 in October 2012.



Chirag Bahri, regional director of MPHRP

It's not a good news story for the region, although work to try to rescue the hostages is ongoing.

Chirag Bahri, who is the current regional director for south Asia of the Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme (MPHRP), spent around eight months being held hostage and tortured when his vessel was boarded by Somali pirates back in May 2010.

Speaking at a recent MPHRP briefing, he explained the psychological and physical effects of being held for ransom by pirates and how the lack of sufficient legal justice has allowed one of those who caused him, and his crew mates, so much pain to now be living free in Germany. 'There were 22 of us as crew and I was a second engineer. There were six pirates,' said Mr Bahri. 'They didn't allow us to go down



Siraj and Jaber, Iranian dhows hijacked by Somali pirates in March 2015. Picture:EUNAVFOR

to the engine room alone. They allowed us under restrictions. Somebody would take you down and you were made to tell the Somali pirate where we were going in the engine room. We then couldn't come out of the engine room without calling them up and saying we wanted to go up or go outside to do some adjustments.

'It's so difficult, as you can't do anything. They always had a fear in them that we were the ones who were trying to do something to call the navy or do some mysterious act to overpower them because everyone else was sitting in front of them on the bridge. We were the ones going up and down so they felt we had a chance to do something.'

'They started to do a lot of torture on us. There was only one Somali amongst them who was responsible for all the torture. His nickname was Budigaa — meaning a person with short legs — and he was only 12 years old! This guy was always believing in torture. He used to beat us up because he thought we were hiding food somewhere or calling the company to say please don't pay the money as we're really happy living our lives here.'

'We had a lot of torture. My genitals were tied up and we were tied up on the open hot deck for many hours. People were kept in the meat room at minus 18 degrees for 40 minutes naked and then ice was also put inside their undergarments.'

'Budigaa was a great mind to come up with this. He made life hell. My left hand could not be used. You can squeeze it and I cannot feel it because of so much torture. My neck also became very sore and I could not move it easily. But I had to work. I had to maintain my engines.'

In similar fashion to the outcomes reported by OBP, Budigaa has been able to avoid justice. In his case it was a loophole in a European country's court system that led to his release after he arrived looking for asylum.

'Budigaa was arrested by Ger-

man police earlier last year. Sadly, because of his age at the time of the hijacking, in Germany a child cannot be booked under crime meaning he has been allowed to roam free,' Mr Bahri explained.

'Budigaa is very smart, cunning, a big liar and is very dangerous to society. Due to this loophole he is free now and living a lavish life in Germany at the cost of taxpayers' money. That cannot be right.'

After returning from captivity in January 2011, Mr Bahri became actively involved in welfare work for seafarers and their families, working hard to raise awareness of piracy and its effect on those left at home when seafarers are kidnapped.

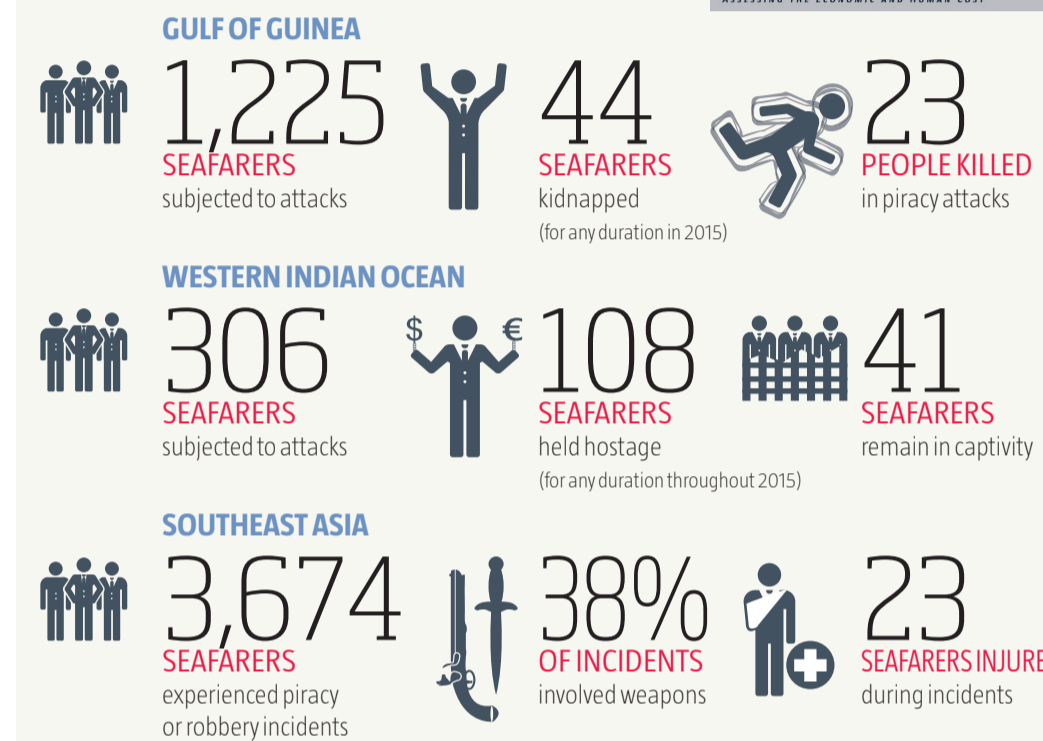
If the trend for increasing hostage-taking continues, as OBP's reports suggest, and seafarers prove to be the ultimate prize of these pirates, then Mr Bahri's work could prove invaluable for those left at home during a period of captivity and then in the rehabilitation of those returning to their families after their ordeals.

'We have assisted the families, met with them at their homes and arranged counselling sessions. We are in touch with those families on a day-to-day basis,' he explained.

'I have examples where families have not been able to pay the bills because their husbands have been in captivity and they do not know how to do it. It means their electricity bills, their phone bills and other bills are not getting paid, their connections are getting cut off and their bank accounts are being seized. We are stepping in and making every effort to help them so they can retain their normal living standards.'

'When the seafarers return back from captivity, we try to help them restructure their lives because what we feel is that the seafarers need good support from the shipping world as well as from their families. We try to be there for them.'

The human cost



THE STATE OF MARITIME PIRACY 2015

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INTERNATIONAL

shortreports

US DETENTIONS: the US Coast Guard has reported a 42% increase in the number of ships failing port state control inspections. Figures released last month showed the proportion of ships having to be detained rose from 1.5% to 2.3% last year. The USCG said it had removed 13 flag states from its Qualship 21 list of high performing registries and it also referred 15 ships for criminal charges during 2015 — a three-year high.

NO TRIAL: French prosecutors have decided not to hold a criminal trial over a 2012 collision between a Turkish tanker and a trawler that killed the fishing vessel's skipper, stating that they had no jurisdiction in the case. A report on the accident, which involved the 6,300dwt Lady Ozge and the trawler Pere Milo, found that navigational failings onboard both vessels were to blame.

MASTER ARRESTED: the master of the Dutch-flagged general cargo ship Abis Bergen was arrested last month when he failed a breath test after the vessel ran aground while departing the German port of Rostock. Police said the captain was facing charges of endangering shipping traffic while under the influence of alcohol and had been ordered to pay a €6,000 bail bond.

CAENRISE: the French port of Caen-Ouistreham has marked 30 years of cross-Channel crossings with a 6% rise in freight traffic — its second best result since 2010. Passenger loads increased 2.5% to 991,750, due mainly to Brittany Ferries crossings to England and Ireland. The port is also developing its cruise business, with the aim of receiving 15 calls by 2017 — up from five last year.

ITALIAN ALARM: seafaring unions have expressed concern about the absence of a new agreement covering employment conditions following the privatisation of a regional ferry firm. A majority stake in the former Tirrenia subsidiary Siremar, which operates between Sicily and other Italian islands, was sold to Ustica Lines.

FATAL BLAST: three men died following an explosion and fire onboard the inland navigation tanker Julius Rütgers at the Meidericher shipyard in Germany last month. Initial reports suggested a leftover gas mixture in the tanks ignited when the vessel was being loaded.

IDLE RECORD: the volume of laid-up global containership capacity has reached a record high of 1.57m TEU, according to a report from the industry analyst Alphaliner. It said the 352 laid-up vessels, as of 11 March, accounted for 7.8% of the world containership fleet.

BALTIC BAR: plans for a new NOx emission control area for shipping in the Baltic Sea have been agreed by coastal states and the European Union. The proposals are set to be submitted to the International Maritime Organisation in October this year.

CUBAN CRUISES: Carnival Corporation will launch its first US-Cuba cruises on 1 May, using its new subsidiary Fathom's flagship Adonia to operate bi-weekly seven-night trips from Miami to Havana, Cienfuegos and Santiago de Cuba.

PILOT PROTEST: maritime pilots, mechanics and tug masters called off a strike in the port of Limassol last month after the Cyprus parliament fast-tracked measures to protect jobs and conditions when the port is privatised.

www.irishseafarerstax.ie

Flag-out fears for Italian seafarers

Owners warn of mass exodus if crew nationality restrictions are brought in

by Jeff Apter

Italy's maritime unions fear that hundreds of seafaring jobs could be lost if the country's government goes ahead with controversial proposed changes to the Italian second register and tonnage tax scheme.

Owners have threatened mass flagging-out if politicians approve new rules to restrict the use of foreign crew on Italian ships qualifying for tax breaks and subsidies under the international register and tonnage tax provisions.

They have warned that as many as 600 ships — representing around 80% of the Italian fleet — could be re-registered if the

proposals are approved. Unions fear this could put as many as 20,000 jobs at risk.

The Italian owners' organisation Confitarma said the rule changes would remove the incentive to use the country's international register and tonnage tax scheme and result in the 'massacre' of the Italian-based shipping industry, which is the second largest in Europe in terms of owned vessels.

Confitarma president Emanuele Grimaldi said the restrictions — which have been tabled in two amendments being put before parliament — would reduce the fleet flying the Italian flag to ships in the cabotage trades or running services between Italian islands and the mainland.

These amendments were perhaps designed with the objective of increasing Italian employment, but will in fact have the opposite result, he warned. 'We would lose in addition to almost all of the vessels flying the Italian flag all the Italian maritime employment now used on international routes.'

Confitarma said the Italian international register had been created in 1998 to keep the Italian flag competitive with registers such as Panama, Liberia and Malta. The owners say it has helped to ensure a doubling of investment under the Italian flag during the past decade — with more than 1,500 ships now on the register.

Mr Grimaldi said that crew

nationality restrictions would make the Italian flag too costly — and would also be impossible to enforce because there are not enough Italian officers to fill all the posts on the ships owned in the country.

Owners would be forced to flag out and relocate their offices abroad. Confitarma claimed, and this could mean the loss of 13,000 of the 23,000 jobs for Italian and EU seafarers on Italian-flagged ships.

The new rules have been tabled by Italian senator Roberto Cociancich, who is supported by a group of Italian ferry operators, including Moby Lines and Tirrenia, who insist that all subsidies should go only to operators employing Italian or EU seafarers.



Scrubbed up

French operator Brittany Ferries has completed a €60m project to install exhaust scrubbers on six of its ships.

The 40,859gt Pont Aven is the last vessel to be equipped with the systems, which remove sulphur and reduce particulate content in exhaust emissions, with the work being carried out at the Gdansk yard in Poland.

The programme took 18 months to undertake and Mike Bevens, Brittany Ferries group commercial director, said the 'significant investment' reflected the company's commitment to respect the environment in which it operates.

Picture: Gary Davies/Maritime Photographic

US urged to maintain aid for fleet

US politicians have been urged to continue the financial and regulatory support for the country's merchant fleet during a series of Congressional hearings on the maritime industry.

US Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Paul Zukunft told the House Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee that the repeal of the 1920 Jones Act regulations reserving coastal trades to domestic-flagged and crewed

ships would 'cut to the heart of that industrial base'.

And US Maritime Administrator Chip Jaenichen said the Jones Act underpins a \$36bn industry which supports 110,000 US jobs. But, he warned, cuts in the number of defence and aid-related cargoes being sent on US ships are feeding through to reduced numbers of US seafarers.

'I'm concerned about the number of mariners that are available to fully man the government reserve sealift

fleet in a time of either conflict or in humanitarian crisis if we fully had to activate them,' he added.

Mr Jaenichen said the US will require around 70,000 new seafarers by 2022 — but at present only 900 a year are graduating from the Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York, and the six state maritime academies.

General Darren McDew, head of US Transportation Command, told a second hearing that he was disturbed

about the impact of the decline in the US-flagged deepsea fleet and the associated reduction in the number of US seafarers on defence department sealift requirements.

US unions are backing calls for the government to maintain funding for the Maritime Security Programme, which provides some \$300m support for up to 60 'commercially viable, military useful, privately-owned US-flag vessels and crews operating in international trade'.

Cyprus introduces subsidy scheme for officer cadets

The Cyprus government has launched a scheme to subsidise deck and engineer cadet training onboard ships flying the Cyprus flag or operated under the country's tonnage tax system.

The scheme will provide a monthly subsidy of €600 for each cadet and a contribution of €250 to the cost of basic training and ship security

awareness training for the graduates or students of universities.

The support is limited to 60 graduates or students of merchant marine academies and five graduates or students of universities each year, and employers are required to contribute at least €200 per month to each cadet officer's salary.

To qualify for funding under the scheme, cadets must be a permanent resident of Cyprus, have a good standard of Greek and English language, and be a graduate or student of a recognised merchant marine academy or a marine engineering, mechanical engineering or naval architecture university faculty.



Pictured making a maiden call to the UK port of Southampton last month is the Panama-flagged containership NYK Blue Jay — the first in a series of 10 new 'cutting edge' energy-efficient vessels.

One of the largest containerships to have been built in Japan, the 144,285gt NYK Blue Jay is operating between Asia and Europe and has a 14,000TEU capacity. Powered by a dual-rated Wärtsilä X82 engine,

the ship's 'green' features include a highly hydrodynamic hull form that improves cargo-loading efficiency by minimising engine room space.

Picture: Gary Davies/Maritime Photographic

Engineer cleared of waste charges

US appeal court rules that masters have responsibility for oil record book

A chief engineer was wrongfully charged and convicted of failing to maintain an oil record book onboard a foreign-flagged merchant ship, a US appeal court has ruled.

Three judges in the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals argued that the US government had failed to prove beyond reasonable doubt that Greek chief engineer Mathaios Fafalios was the 'master or other person in charge' with legal responsibility to maintain the record book.

Mr Fafalios had been sentenced to a year of probation in February 2015 after he was found guilty of failing to maintain an oil record book, obstruction of justice and witness tampering.

Prosecutors said that the chief engineer had been serving onboard the bulk carrier Trident Navigator in December 2013 when he ordered crew onboard his vessel to pump oily bilge water directly into the ocean in international waters. Mr Fafalios had noticed the bilge tank was almost full and feared that the bilge water could damage engine components before it could be filtered properly through the oily water separator.

He was taken to court after a whistleblower contacted the US Coast Guard when the ship arrived in the port of New Orleans.

The appeal court upheld his claim for acquittal on the charge of failing to maintain an oil record book while in US waters, noting

that the regulations under which he was prosecuted mention only the 'master' of the ship as the individual 'responsible' for maintaining the oil record book. The court found that this 'plainly indicates that the responsibility does not extend to others on the vessel'.

However, the judges stressed that chief engineers can be prosecuted for failure to sign an oil record book when that failure occurs on US-flagged vessels or in US waters, or for aiding and abetting the failure to maintain an accurate record book and for making false statements to a Coast Guard investigator.

Norwegian company DSD Shipping has been ordered to pay \$2.5m after a court in Alabama ruled that its tanker Stavanger

Blossom had illegally discharged oily water off the US coast between 2010 and 2014.

The ship's chief engineer and second engineer were both sentenced to six months in prison and the fourth engineer was jailed for two months in charges of obstructing justice, violating the Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships and tampering with witnesses.

The South Korean operator Doora Shipping has been ordered to pay a total of \$950,000 for failure to maintain an accurate oil record book and making false statements to the US Coast Guard about dumping oil contaminated bilge water from the Vanuatu-flagged tanker B. Sky earlier this year.

Picture: Eric Hourli



Pictured left is the 84,000 cu m LNG carrier Champlain which was recently delivered to Geogas Maritime, the French wing of Switzerland-based Geogas Trading. Built by Hyundai Samho in South Korea, Champlain is the biggest French-flagged LNG carrier. The 47,791gt Bureau Veritas-classed vessel will soon be joined by a sistership, Pointis, and both will operate with French officers and Romanian crew.

Picture: Eric Hourli

Indian union bids to block foreign crews

The National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI) is campaigning against moves by the country's shipowners to get government approval for the use of foreign crew on domestic vessels.

It has urged the country's shipping ministry to block the owners' plans, warning that there are already

significant levels of unemployment among Indian seafarers.

'The priority of the Indian government should be to boost employment opportunities for Indian maritime workforce,' said NUSI general secretary Abdulgani Serang. 'Why should we allow foreign seafarers to work on Indian ships?'

The union argues that any shortage of seafarers for domestic services could be addressed by allowing Indian seafarers with foreign certificates to serve on Indian-flagged ships.

NUSI has also urged the Indian government to introduce mandatory registration for crewing agencies, warning that many seafarers are

currently being exploited on false promises of employment.

The union has also called on the government to meet its Maritime Labour Convention requirements by allocating land for seafarer welfare centres at every port in India, with funding to be raised through a nominal charge on visiting vessels.

shortreports

FRENCH AID: French shipowners have welcomed their government's decision to introduce a 'net wage' system for seafarers — meaning that they no longer have to pay social security and pension contributions for the crews of French-flagged vessels, including those on the RIF second register. Unions are less enthusiastic about the measures introduced in the long-awaited maritime bill, which are expected to come into effect on 1 July. They argue that tax breaks have been given to the operators without any clear commitment to a dedicated fleet, jobs or training.

PIRATE SENTENCED: the Somali pirate leader Mohamed Abdi Hassan has been sentenced in absentia to 20 years in prison for his involvement in the hijacking of the Belgian dredger Pompei in April 2009. The 10 crew members were held hostage for two months until a €2m ransom was paid. The Somali 'pirate king' was also convicted of torture and ordered to pay €20,000 compensation to the vessel's Dutch master.

SAFMARINE DEAL: the Rotterdam-based operator NileDutch has acquired Safmarine MPV's Europe-West Africa services and operations. NileDutch said it will continue Safmarine's services with direct calls from numerous ports providing a full range of cargoes, including containers, break-bulk, neo-bulk, project modules and oil and gas-related freight 'to the most challenging destinations in West Africa'.

PONANT ORDER: Ponant, the only French cruise company, has signed a letter of intention with Fincantieri's Norway-based subsidiary Vard for four 128m ice-class passenger ships. The vessels will operate with 110 crew and accommodate 180 passengers. They will enable Ponant to expand its operations to areas including the Orinoco River, Costa Rica, Papua New Guinea and the Indian Ocean.

PANAMA START: the US\$5.3bn Panama Canal expansion project is set to be officially inaugurated on 26 June following a series of operational tests in May. However, the Panama Canal Authority (ACP) cautioned that draft restrictions may have to be imposed on ships using the waterway as a consequence of a drought.

GREEK GROWTH: the number of Greek-owned merchant ships increased by 35 over the past year, to a total of 4,092 vessels, according to a report from the Greek Shipping Cooperation Committee. The figures reveal that the number of ships under the Greek flag fell by 30 to 809 vessels in the same period.

PILOTAGE WIN: Antwerp river pilots belonging to the BvL union have won a claim for higher payments for handling ships over 339m. Management at the port agreed to make the increased premiums after the pilots moved to take industrial action last month.

EFFLUENT FINE: a Panamanian-flagged general cargo ship has been fined ISL6,000 (€1,400) after it discharged effluent into the sea while anchored at the Port of Haifa, Israel's Ministry of Environmental Protection said.

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NORWEGIAN CAMPAIGN: Norwegian maritime unions are upping their campaign to defend jobs, pay and conditions in the country's waters. They met with more than 50 politicians to press the case for measures to combat social dumping and to ensure that Norwegian pay rates are applied in domestic shipping operations. The unions estimate there are over 30,000 Norwegian seafarers in a maritime industry generating some NOK18 bn (£15bn) a year.

NIGERIAN CABOTAGE: Nigeria's transport minister Rotimi Amaechi has promised action to protect the country's coastal shipping industry and to provide more jobs for local seafarers. Implementing the proposed Cabotage Act will help to support a national shipping fleet and provide vital seafaring for as many as 2,000 Nigerian seafarers, he added.

BULKER BASH: a Panama-flagged bulk carrier was reported to have destroyed 2.4 hectares of coral reef after running aground in the Philippines last month. Crew members onboard the 50,472dwt Belle Rose told authorities that they had been seeking to avoid a collision with fishing vessels when the ship ran aground near Malapascua Island.

TANKER GIANT: China COSCO Shipping has created the world's largest oil tanker fleet, in terms of both ship numbers and deadweight tonnage, following the merger of two operations. COSCO shipping Energy Transportation has a fleet of 105 oil tankers totalling more than 17m dwt.

TANKER GROUNDS: a major salvage operation was launched in Uruguay last month after the 44,651dwt tanker Siteam Anja ran aground following the loss of power in bad weather. The Marshall Islands-flagged vessel, which was carrying vegetable oil, suffered a blackout before hitting rocks off Lobos Island, Uruguay.

COMPANY COLLAPSE: the Lithuanian Shipping Company has been declared bankrupt, and its creditors were meeting last month to discuss the sale of its two remaining vessels. The company has assets of €31m and debts of around €22.5m, including €1.54m owed to employees.

MALAYSIAN SPILL: authorities in Malaysia launched a major clean-up operation last month after a fuel spill from the 9,900dwt product tanker Nautica Maharani off Penang. Authorities said initial investigations had shown the discharge was accidental.

CONCESSION CUT: Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is proposing to withdraw the income tax concessions available for the country's seafarers. It says the move is being considered as part of budget plans to introduce equal tax treatment.



The 71,543gt ro-ro cargo ship Grande Lagos is pictured above becoming the first vessel to use the new Kieldrecht Lock in the Belgian port of Antwerp following its official opening last month. With a length of 500m, a width of 68m and an operational depth of 17.8m, the lock has claimed the title of the largest in the world. Built at a cost of €382m, it is designed to accommodate the largest ships in the world, and to speed up entry into the Waasland harbour. The project took almost five years to complete and is being followed by the Saefinghedok scheme to build a new tidal dock on the left bank of the Scheldt river.

Tonnage tax for Sweden in 2017

Union questions whether long-awaited plan will end national fleet's slump

by Andrew Draper

Swedish seafaring unions have cast doubts about the effectiveness of plans to introduce a long-awaited tonnage tax scheme next year.

The Swedish merchant fleet has slumped to just 319 ships of 3.1m gt — the lowest level since 1970. Although the total number of vessels in the commercial fleet rose to a new high in 2015, the number under the Swedish flag fell for the ninth year in a row.

The new tonnage tax scheme is set to be introduced on 20 July, taking full effect in 2017, after finance minister Magdalena Andersson published details in the spring budget to a parliament that has already indicated its support for the package.

The government expects more Swedish-flag vessels as a result of the tax, although the SBF officers' union has expressed scepticism

as to whether this will actually happen.

The government estimates that the tax will cost almost SEK45m (£4.8m) a year in lost tax revenue and that this shortfall will be made up by adding interest to the accumulated excess depreciation charged to those owners joining the voluntary system.

General subsidies to Swedish shipping — such as tax breaks and employers' social security contributions — will also be reduced, according to SBF. It says this element in particular has been badly received by the industry and may deter flagging in.

Swedish Transport Administration figures also highlight a decline in the number of days employees spend at sea. The back-drop is a severe shortage of Swedish officers and an education system that falls short, says SBF.

In a report to its 2016 congress, held in June, the union states

that while the quality of training at sea and in the classroom has improved, what is available on vessels at sea could be better.

'Not all officers appointed as instructors onboard have adequate education for this,' it states. 'On many vessels, the workload is so great that there is no room for educating the students. It often also depends on the individual instructor's interest in whether the vessel-based education should be worthwhile.'

'The quality of education onboard vessels has improved, but it is indisputable that the officers on duty are considerably less experienced than those who have gone "the long way".'

SBF said it was also concerned to receive reports that some seafarer trainees have experienced sexual harassment and/or bullying.

It has teamed up with the SEKO union, owners and student rep-

resentatives to develop an action plan against this.

Two Swedish universities offer maritime degrees: Chalmers in Gothenburg and Linneuniversitetet in Kalmar. Courses at both are approved by the European Maritime Safety Agency and are above international minimum requirements.

'It's important that the high standards are maintained and that efforts are made to raise the level so that Swedish officers gain greater expertise in their work,' SBF adds. 'Every effort to worsen the education must be countered.'

'There is a great need, however, to examine the content of maritime education courses,' the union argues. 'Certain elements are outdated and must be adapted to modern shipping. The union should establish a requirement specification that is continually checked as renewed requirements are made.'

Protests over seismic cuts

Pictured right are French seafarers protesting outside the head office of the seismic shipping company CCG over a controversial restructuring plan including job cuts and flagging out.

The company has already withdrawn five ships from the French flag, leaving five chartered vessels operating under other registers. Michel Haquart, from the SNGG-CGT union branch at CCG, said 310 specialist French jobs are earmarked

to go — including 82 officers, 73 maritime support technicians and 19 experts who sail on CCG vessels.

Mr Haquart said CCG is a victim of oil companies who have frozen their exploration budgets, putting intolerable pressure on prices and leading the world's seismic research companies to operate at a loss.

The consequences for CCG employees are dramatic, he added, as the group is the only company of its type in France.



Costa master loses appeal

An Italian appeal court has upheld the 16-year jail term imposed on the master of the cruise ship Costa Concordia last year.

Captain Francesco Schettino had appealed against his conviction of multiple manslaughter, causing a maritime accident and abandoning ship before all passengers and crew had been evacuated when the ship grounded in January 2012.

Capt Schettino is the only person to have been given a prison sentence as a result of the accident, in which 32 passengers and crew died. While his lawyers were seeking his acquittal, the

prosecutor was asking for the sentence to be extended to 27 years and three months.

Capt Schettino's lawyers argued that the accident was primarily the consequence of organisational failings for which Costa Cruises, the ship's Indonesian helmsman and the Italian coastguard should have shared the blame.

Costa Cruises avoided potential criminal charges by accepting partial responsibility and agreeing to pay a €1m fine. Five other seafarers and shore staff received non-custodial sentences after concluding plea

bargains. As well as being sentenced to 16 years and one month in jail, Capt Schettino was also barred from serving as a ship master for five years. He has yet to serve any time in prison and can make one final appeal to Italy's highest court.

European Ship Masters' Associations president Captain Hubert Ardillon said that without minimising Capt Schettino's responsibility, it was not right that he was the only person to be brought to trial. 'Other responsible, but not-guilty, people were nowhere to be seen,' he pointed out.

Greece fights EU state aid scheme challenge

The Greek government has formally dismissed a European Commission demand to revise the country's tonnage tax scheme to comply with EU state aid rules.

In a letter sent to Commission

officials, Greece said it rejected the claim that its tonnage tax scheme amounted to preferential treatment that distorts EU competition.

The Union of Greek Shipowners (UGS) said the government had

provided 'solid legal grounds defending the legitimacy of the Greek shipping taxation regime and stressing that the Greek shipping industry is an important part of the national identity.'

Hunger strike wins pay rise

A week-long hunger strike by seafarers serving with the Shipping Corporation of India ended last month after the country's largest shipping company agreed to implement a 30% pay increase which had been secured in talks last year.

Around 200 seafarers staged the hunger strike, which brought 16 of the 69 ships in the state-owned fleet to a standstill for almost a week. The pay increase — which was agreed at the country's National Maritime Board — should have taken effect in March last year, but SCL had failed to apply it.

The National Union of Seafarers of India welcomed the company's decision to implement the increase and backdate the additional wages. The union had warned that the national agreement was binding on the company and had been brought into effect by other Indian-flagged operators.

Bulker trials expanded Panama Canal

The 114,248dwt post-panamax bulk carrier Baroque is pictured becoming the first ship to pass through the Panama Canal's new locks, kicking off a series of trial runs two weeks before the official opening of the expanded waterway.

Officials said the Maltese-flagged vessel — which was chartered for the tests by the Panama Canal Authority — had simulated a southbound transit through the new Agua Clara locks with no problems.

Concerns over the safety of the new locks have been raised in research published by the International Transport Workers' Federation.

The US\$5.25bn expansion project aims to double the canal's capacity and speed up vessel transit times. Picture: Reuters



Australian union in cabotage call

Government urged to act after inquiry report on flag of convenience threat

Australian seafarer unions have urged their government to act after a Senate inquiry found 'compelling evidence' about the way the domestic shipping industry is being undermined by flag of convenience operations.

An interim report published in late May examined the increased presence of FoC vessels in the country's waters and reviewed the progress being made since the 1992 'ships of shame' report on maritime safety.

The inquiry heard that there had been a 78% increase in the use of FoC ships in Australian trades since 2002 — raising fears that it could 'compromise Australia's economic interests, the health of our labour market and skills base, as well as reducing work opportunities for our Australians in the maritime sector'.

While safety standards had improved significantly since the 1992 report, the Senate committee said there was evidence that FoCs posed an unfair competitive threat, with problems such as poor employment conditions, low wages and exploited foreign crews.

The inquiry also raised concerns about evidence showing 'insufficient oversight of FoC vessels and crews operating in Australian waters — citing the example of three suspicious deaths onboard the Panama-flagged bulk carrier Sage Sagittarius in 2012, and highlighting the difficulties of enforcing standards on visiting vessels and of checking for problems such as fatigue.

The inquiry heard that the number of Australian-registered ships had fallen to just 15 and the report concludes that a healthy national-flag fleet, crewed by Australian seafarers, 'should be an essential part of our national



The AIMPE says the Antigua & Barbuda-flagged bulk carrier ICS Silver Lining, pictured above, has made 190 'temporary licence' voyages under the Coastal Trading Act since 2013. Picture: Martin Byrne

infrastructure'. It warns that the continued decline of the country's shipping industry 'should be of great concern' — posing economic, environmental and security threats.

The report calls for the government to take immediate action to tighten up the licensing system for foreign ships operating in Australian waters and suggests that it should follow the US example of ensuring that cabotage trades are restricted to national-flag ships crewed by domestic seafarers.

Martin Byrne, of the Australian Institute of Marine & Power Engineers, told the Telegraph that the Senate appeared to have accepted

that tighter regulation of FoCs will fix the problem. But, he argued, AIMPE's evidence to the inquiry had shown that the 2012 Coastal Trading Act reforms had failed and a new approach is needed.

The number of major trading vessels registered in Australia has dwindled to 11 ships,' Mr Byrne pointed out. 'The 2012 legislation attempted to create an artificial competitive arrangement between the Australian flag ships and the FoC alternative ships. That arrangement has failed because of a simple fact — Australian shipowners have withdrawn their ships. When no Australian flag ship is available then the FoC

ship's application for a temporary licence to participate in the coastal trade is automatically granted.

'AIMPE believes an Australian shipping industry is an industry with Australian ships operated by Australian seafarers,' he added.

The union wants Australia to adopt a cabotage protection system to require oil companies to use local shipping in Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone. Some two-thirds of the ships presently working in this sector are FoCs or registered in low-tax countries, AIMPE says, and Australia should follow Indonesia in legislating to protect its offshore operations.

New bulker detained for ECDIS failures

A brand new bulk carrier was detained in Australia after an inspection revealed that the crew did not know how to operate the electronic chart display and information system.

Officials at the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) said the Panama-flagged African

Alke was held in Brisbane after port state control checks showed a lack of onboard familiarisation training in the use of ECDIS.

The 33,412dwt vessel was released following two days under detention after the managers flew in an expert from Singapore to ensure that the crew were trained to an

appropriate standard. 'Only in this industry would you find a new multi-million-dollar asset entrusted to persons not trained in the use of what is essential safety equipment but is vital in contributing to the success of the business,' said Nautilus senior national secretary Allan Graveson.

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DANISH BLUE: the Danish government has set up a working group to 'future proof' the competitiveness of the country's maritime sector, which it calls Blue Denmark. The team — including shipowner and seafarer representatives — will examine barriers and challenges to growth and will make recommendations for change when it reports in 2017. Industry minister Troels Lund Poulsen says the industry is still grappling with the after-effects of the 2008 financial crisis, but he sees potential in new technologies, digitalisation and energy efficiency.

NEW REGISTER: shipowners now have another flag to choose from following the launch last month of the St Lucia Open Ship Registry. Christopher Alexander, the island's maritime affairs director, said the process to establish the register had not been easy but it was expected to lead to such economic benefits as jobs for seafarers, increased revenue from taxes and fees, and the provision of legal and other maritime services.

STRANDED SEAFARERS: 18 Filipino seafarers serving onboard a Panama-flagged bulk carrier had to rely on charity donations for a month after officials in Venice refused to allow the ship to berth because of unpaid bills. The 75,000dwt DST Oslo was due to deliver a cargo of soya beans, but authorities arrested the vessel after allegations of \$460,000 owed to a fuel supplier.

NEW TSS: the French ecology and sea ministry has announced that the International Maritime Organisation has agreed plans to create the country's first maritime traffic separation zone in 30 years. The 8nm long, two-lane Italian and French Corsica Canal maritime security and environmental protection area will be officially established on 1 December 2016.

HOME BIDS: ten candidates have made offers to acquire the management of AGISM, France's network of seven seafarers' homes, following the organisation's bankruptcy. The identity and proposals of the candidates have not yet been revealed, but two or three offers seek to take over the entire network while others are for single units or groups of homes.

CONCESSION CUT: Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is proposing to withdraw the income tax concessions available for the country's seafarers. It says the move is being considered as part of budget plans to introduce equal tax treatment.

DOUBLE VISION: the St Kitts & Nevis International Ship Registry is planning to double the size of its fleet over the next five years, de-list substandard tonnage and move to the port state control 'whitelist'.

CRUISE FIRST: Russia's JSC United Shipbuilding Corporation (USC) has revealed plans to build the country's first cruise vessel for more than 60 years. The 141m long vessel is due to be delivered in 2019.

SOVCOMFLOT SALE: the Russian operator Sovcomflot has reported a 9.2% increase in net profit, bringing its planned privatisation closer.

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The shipping industry is in the midst of a revolution as important as the transition from sail to steam — with a ‘mega-trend’ to use technology in a way that is already starting to revolutionise the way in which vessels are operated and seafarers work.

That’s the view of experts with the power and automation company ABB, which has taken a fresh step towards turning the talk about ‘drone’ ships into reality by opening a new centre that remotely monitors a wide range of vessels and their critical systems.

Based in the Port of Helsinki in Finland, the new ABB Integrated Operations Centre (IOC) collects key data via satellite link from sensors and software onboard a mix of passenger ships, container vessels and specialist tonnage operating in ice-bound areas.

The new centre is the second in a series being set up around the world by ABB to capitalise on the dramatic leaps in the levels of connectivity between ship and shore by harvesting important operational data from ships.

The IOCs combine data from the ABB monitoring software, which is sent to the cloud automatically, with manually collected data from condition-monitoring surveys and feasibility studies. The combined data is used to provide analysis of performance and energy efficiency, as well as remote diagnostics, trouble-shooting and support with planned maintenance.

‘The shipping industry is often said to be very conservative, but I don’t think that is the case any more,’ says Richard Windischhofer, who heads the ABB integrated operations programme. ‘It is really good to see the level of interest in new technology, and it has now reached a critical mass.’

He believes that the huge investments being made in maritime satellite communications have paved the way to the introduction of the ‘internet of things’ — networking physical objects embedded with electronics, software, and sensors to collect and exchange data — within the shipping industry. Reliable and predictable levels of communications capacity make the process much more secure — even with a daily flow of information to the IOCs amounting to between 10 and 20 megabytes — and a fraction of the bandwidth used for crew communications.

‘It is simply more efficient and safe to support the engineer onboard than reacting to a problem,’ Dr Windischhofer explains. ‘Shipowners are being much more proactive nowadays and are monitoring the performance of a whole fleet from shore.’

Last month’s launch of the Helsinki IOC follows the establishment last year of a similar facility in Billingsstad, Norway, which provides services to more than 100 ships operating in the oil and gas sector, and another centre in the Netherlands, which is responsible for voyage and operational monitoring of around 400 ships.

Further centres are due to open later this year in Singapore, Italy and the United States, providing a global network.

The IOCs collect equipment and performance data from ships, enabling analysis of such things as fuel consumption and engine performance, as well as offering dynamic guidance on the safest and most fuel-efficient

Embracing the new nautical networks

Seafarers shouldn’t fear the growth of remote monitoring of their ships, but should instead see it as a way to make their work more efficient and productive. So say experts who have just opened a new shore-based centre to oversee the operations of more than 100 vessels around the world...



Richard Windischhofer, head of the ABB integrated operations programme

route, and condition monitoring of onboard technology such as Azipod units. They monitor the key parameters which will have direct impact on critical equipment and could lead either to downtime or to a significant loss in efficiency — and, it is claimed, sometimes spot problems before the crew can.

“We are there to help crews, not replace them”

Palemia Field, ABB

‘This is just the first step,’ Dr Windischhofer promises. ‘There is huge potential for the future here. We are already monitoring more than 600 vessels and this can give a complete overview of fleet operations.’

The improved condition monitoring capability can help to cut costs and save time by providing

detailed documentation of maintenance work ahead of major surveys and dry-docking, he says.

Remote diagnostics also enable shore-based experts to spot problems at an early stage and — by giving guidance to enable crew to fix them onboard — may often avert the need to send service engineers out to ships.

While there is a rising tide of predictions about the imminence of autonomous ships, ABB says its IOCs are more about providing support to seafarers than replacing them or eroding the authority of the master and chief engineer.

‘We are providing advice and information to make the best decisions possible,’ Dr Windischhofer stresses. ‘It is a dialogue between the people onboard and the experts ashore, and the decision rests with the customer. It is like a peer relationship and provides tools that enable you to say things with confidence.’

Rather than cutting out crew, technology can be used to improve their efficiency by helping them to focus on the most productive tasks, he suggests. Further gains can be made by improving the interface between seafarers and systems, or overhauling the design of engine control rooms, he adds.

However, Dr Windischhofer admits, the wealth of information generated by collecting data from critical systems, power plants and external factors creates a powerful tool for interpreting factors such as excessive wear and tear, or to compare fuel consumption between different ships in the same fleet.

As an example, such analysis has been used to identify energy inefficiencies on a ro-pax ferry caused by poor trim and incorrect power plant operations.

ABB is also integrating its IOCs with a growing number of companies, such as the Carnival operations centre in Hamburg which is responsible for 26 ships in the

Costa and Aida fleets.

While the core function of the Carnival centre is crisis support, the data it has collected has been used to identify operational efficiencies that are said to have made the two fleets the most fuel-efficient in the group.

ABB says it recognises the importance of involving seafarers in the new systems, and former engineer officer Palemia Field, programme manager for ABB’s passenger and cargo integrated operations, has been helping to train crew to get the most out of the technology. Using simulators to replicate situations such as generator problems or system failures and to resolve them with support from ashore not only improves situational awareness but also raises their ability to deal with emergencies, he explains.

‘There can be a certain element of pride in their ship and their ways of working, but if we can help the crew to do the maintenance or the repairs themselves they will understand that we are there to help them and not replace them,’ Mr Field adds.

Dr Windischhofer contends that embracing the technology and the support it can provide may help to improve the nature of work at sea and enable owners to recruit and retain the highly skilled seafarers they need to operate with such systems. Adopting such processes may help shipping to aspire to aviation standards of safety, he adds.

The exponential increases in shipboard technology and shore-based support systems are already transforming the work of seafarers and raise such questions as whether the chief engineer of the near future needs to be a mechanical engineer or a technical officer with IT expertise, he notes.

Some people might not be on the ship any more, but may be working shore-side with responsibility for 15 to 20 ships, Dr Windischhofer suggests. ‘Overall, I think there will still be a need for the industry to make more investment in competence.’

He forecasts that many more revolutionary changes are on the way, with the depth of data being delivered offering huge scope for further analysis to find better ways of working. On some ships, there are up to 11,000 data points and — at present — less than 10% of these are being actively used. ‘The future is here,’ he says, ‘and we are just at the beginning.’



The new ABB Integrated Operations Centre in Helsinki