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Volume 2 | Number 11 | July 2018

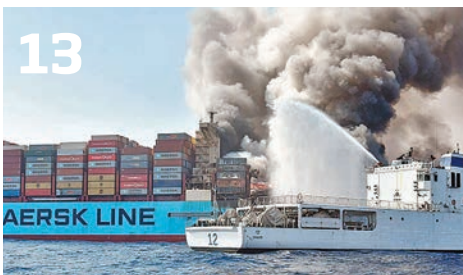


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Irresponsible open registers provide shelter to crooks

After the end of WW2, the largest merchant fleet was under the British flag and there existed a close link between shipowners, crew and flag.

Over the years, this gradually changed. Owners started changing flag to get the benefit of a cheaper cost of operation. Some countries ended up with more ships in their registry – far in excess of their trade requirements. This was the first stage of open registers.

In time, competition grew amongst open registers. Some of them reduced taxes to attract more ships. Some introduced tonnage tax, and most allowed recognised organizations/classification societies to conduct statutory survey and certification.

Another element was the development of labour-supplying or crew-supplying countries, creating new competition for crew training and manning of ships.

When the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas 1982 (UNCLOS-82) came into being, many land-locked countries took the opportunity to develop their own shipping. All these changes eventually made international shipping what it is today. It has broken all monopolies and indeed become a global business. It is good for shipping, provided standards are maintained.

However, one last change is a matter of concern for all of us. Recently some countries have been placing their flag and register with the highest bidder. They have isolated the registry from the rest of the duties and functions of the administration.

No wonder during the last IMO Assembly we saw delegates from Mongolia, Cambodia, Comoros and Palau asking each other about the number of ships they have in their

registers. They have no clue, because they sold it to highest bidder. Some briefcase businessmen from abroad are playing around with their name and fame. These operators are not parties to any international treaties. They have no obligation and no responsibility. The only function they have is to register ship and make money. This is what we call the flag of convenience.

Good shipowners and operators would never register their ships in such registers. It is mostly those who engage in illegal trade and perhaps carry contraband items. Often, innocent seafarers become the victim of circumstances when ships are abandoned. It is happening more because of existence of such registers that provide shelter to crooks.

The time has come for the world community to find some legal and procedural means to stop this ‘sale of flag to the highest bidder’.

The administration of a flag state must be located within the country. It must be operated by a department or agency of the government with full regard to treaties and conventions signed by the country.

Registry of ships is just one of many functions of the administration and it cannot be separated out. The process of registration establishes jurisdiction, and the administration must exercise its full jurisdiction and control to ensure compliance with internationally-agreed standards. It is time for experts in the IMO and ILO to find a way forward – perhaps drafting one final comprehensive convention on this matter. As an interim measure, I would request all banks, insurance and other financial institutions to stop providing services to ships operating under those fraudulent flags.

This is by no means against the open registers. But putting flags on auction

‘Open registers can be good for shipping if standards are maintained’



Workers install member state flags at the International Maritime Organisation's headquarters ahead of World Maritime Day
Image: IMO

must stop. It is polluting the world of shipping and causing more misery to seafarers. I would like to call on the ITF, church institutes, Human Rights at Sea and all other similar organisations to join hands and stop the briefcase businessmen operating registers from outside the country.

Fazlur Chowdhury

HAVE YOUR SAY

Last month we asked:

Do you think that the shipping industry should be given more time to comply with the 2020 sulphur cap deadline?
Poll results are pictured below.



In brief

Missing crewman: the International Transport Workers' Federation has called for an Australian Federal Police investigation into the disappearance of a Filipino seafarer from a Dutch-owned ship a week before it arrived in the port of Townsville. The crewman went missing from the Singapore-flagged livestock carrier Galloway Express in the Flores Sea, north of Timor, while the Vroon-owned vessel was en route to Australia.

Russian alarm: the Russian Maritime Transport Workers' Union has expressed concern over an increase in employer attacks on independent unions and criticised the Ministry of Labour for trying to avoid resolving disputes. The latest case involves staff affected by the liquidation of the Kerch Strait ferry line OOO Morskaya Direktsia.

Tanker auctioned: the Shanghai Maritime Court has sold the Singapore-flagged tanker Amba Bhakti, which was abandoned by the Indian owner Varun in 2016. The court ruled that the crew has priority to obtain payment from the sale proceeds.

UAE ban: the United Arab Emirates has banned ships belonging to Fujairah-based Venous Ship Management & Operation from operating and anchoring in the country's ports and waters following repeated cases of seafarer abandonment.

Norway tax: Norway is seeking to boost seafarer employment and training after securing official approval for its plan to extend tax and social security refunds to shipping companies employing EEA crews.

FRANCE

Anger at Brittany's new 'FoC' ferry

French seafaring unions have called for the resignation of the managing director of Brittany Ferries as president of the country's shipowners' association in an increasingly bitter row over the company's use of a non-French vessel for a new service.

Brittany has confirmed that it has chartered a ferry from Stena RoRo to operate the route between Cork, Roscoff and Santander. The service is due to begin on 1 May and the vessel, to be named Connemara, will be transferred

to the Cyprus register. It will operate with 'Community seafarers' not including French nationals.

The CFDT and CGT unions are angry that the ship will be managed by Northern Marine rather than in-house like the rest of the Brittany fleet. They have called for the company to provide details about the ferry's operational costs and demanded that managing director Jean-Marc Roué resign as president of AdF, the operators' association. **i**



▲ Britannica Hav is righted in the port of Le Havre
Image: Eric Hourii

FRANCE

CHANNEL COLLISION

French and Belgian authorities are investigating the cause of a collision between a Maltese-flagged general cargoship and a fishing vessel in the Channel.

Seven crew members from the 1,521gt Britannica Hav were rescued when the Norwegian-owned vessel took on water and capsized after being holed in the collision with the Belgian-registered trawler Deborah.

The capsized vessel remained afloat and was towed to the port of Le Havre by the emergency towing vessel Abeille Liberté. The Taklift 4 crane was used to refloat the ship to enable inspections to be carried out to determine its fate. **i**

TRADE WAR THREAT TO SHIPS

World maritime trade could sink to levels last seen in the 1930s depression if countries continue to adopt increasingly protectionist policies, the Global Shippers' Alliance (GSA) has warned. Red tape and import tariffs are posing a major threat to the global economy, it said, and unless leaders put a stop to trade disputes there will be a growing risk of damaging retaliatory measures. **i**

INDIA

Flag threat by owners

Indian shipowners have threatened to flag out if their government relaxes rules giving domestic operators the 'right of first refusal' for carrying cargoes around the country's coast.

Warning that the country's shipping industry is at a crossroads, the Indian National Shipowners' Association (INSA) said local operators are finding it increasingly tough to compete with foreign ships.

Removing the right for Indian owners to match the lowest rate offered by foreign-flagged operators in tenders issued by state-run firms would also remove any remaining incentive to run vessels on the national register, INSA added. It claims Indian operators are unable to compete with foreign ships on domestic voyages as a result of higher taxes, costlier bunker fuel, and the mandatory requirement to employ more crew.

INSA CEO Anil Devli said flagging out would lead to job losses for Indian seafarers, as the Association's 42 member companies employ only national crews and provide free training for domestic cadets.

The owners have called for a consistent national policy environment for shipping, arguing that many other countries have strict flag controls on the carriage of cargoes in their waters. **i**



FINLAND

FERRY FIRST FOR WIND ASSISTANCE

The Finnish-flagged ferry Viking Grace, pictured above, has claimed the title of being the only passenger ship in the world equipped with a Rotor Sail to harness wind power for propulsion.

Developed by Helsinki-based Norsepower Oy, the 24m tall automated Rotor Sail is a spinning

cylinder that uses the Magnus effect to help propel a ship. It is expected to cut the 57,565gt ferry's fuel consumption by as much as 900 tonnes annually.

Viking Grace, which operates between Finland and Sweden, already has strong green credentials, as it runs on LNG fuel. **i**

ITALY

Unions fear for jobs as Italy falls short on STCW and MLC

Italy is coming under pressure from maritime unions and the European Commission to sort out 'an unacceptable muddle' surrounding the way it deals with seafarer certification.

The Italian maritime union Filt-CGIL describes the authorities' slowness in renewing essential certificates as a 'bureaucratic mess' that is putting seafarers' jobs at risk, and has requested an urgent meeting with the transport ministry.

The problems have been raised in the European Parliament, with Italian MEP Laura Ferrara highlighting concerns that the gap between international regulations and the stricter standards imposed by Italian legislation is making it extremely complicated for the country's seafarers to update and renew their certificates. 'What are essentially bureaucratic problems are preventing workers from continuing in their profession as normal, despite their long experience,' she said.

European transport commissioner Violeta Bulc said the Commission has initiated an infringement procedure against Italy as a

result of 'outstanding deficiencies' in the application of a directive covering maritime education and training programmes – including problems with course design, review and approval; recognition of certificates; certification and endorsement for engineer officers at management level; and requirements for certification.

Filt-CGIL said there is a very real risk that thousands of Italian seafarers could lose their jobs as a consequence of problems with the issue of internationally-approved sea safety certificates. It says the transport ministry's slowness in organising and approving national courses is creating serious difficulties. 'It is unacceptable that many seafarers have already paid €1,000 for an update course or €2,000 for a basic certificate and are still waiting,' the union added.

The Commission has also accused Italy of failing to provide full information on what steps it has taken to implement the EU directive on the Maritime Labour Convention and has warned that it may refer the case to the European Court of Justice. **i**

In brief

Portuguese aid: the European Commission has approved Portugal's plans for a new tonnage tax scheme, designed to attract ships to the country's register. Brussels also gave official backing to an associated package of measures to exempt seafarers from income tax and to pay lower social security contributions when they are serving on ships covered by the scheme.

Security warning: leading ferry operators, including P&O, Brittany Ferries, DFDS and Stena Line are opposing French plans for onboard security screening of ferry passengers between vehicle decks and accommodation areas. The operators' association Interferry warned that the move could increase the risk of accidents and inhibit effective evacuation.

DFDS deal: DFDS has revealed details of a €950m deal to acquire the Turkish ferry operator U.N. Ro-Ro as part of its plans to expand its route network across the Mediterranean. The acquisition is likely to be completed by the summer.

Indian boost: India and South Korea have signed an agreement on the mutual recognition of certificates of competency, which could enable Indian seafarers to gain jobs on more than 500 foreign-going South Korean ships.

Dieppe appeal: the Transmanche Ferries Users' Group, TUG Horizon Association, has urged the Seine-Maritime district council to add an extra return service on the Dieppe-Newhaven ferry link during the summer season.

In brief

Italian action: Italy's three maritime unions called a 24-hour strike of seafarers and port workers to protest about cargo handling safety following three deaths in the country's ports so far this year. They called for a meeting with the transport minister to discuss concerns over plans to reform port operations.

Social sale: a merchant ship involved in a fatal collision with a French fishing vessel in 2007 has been sold for scrap in an auction ordered by the Brest court. The Ocean Jasper was sold for €4,070 and the proceeds have gone to the French maritime social security body, ENIM.

Tender row: Corsica Ferries has filed a court case against rival operators La Méridionale and the liquidated SNCM, demanding 'several tens of millions of euros' compensation for claims that it was illegally excluded from a tender for the France-Corsica public service ferries contract.

Cruise target: Marseilles has reached its 2018 goal of beating Venice as the Mediterranean's fourth-ranking cruise port, chalking up a 13% year-on-year passenger growth over 2017. The port expects 513 cruise calls this year, up from 444 in 2017.

Ukraine award: V.Ships Ukraine has won employer of the year in the country's Maritime Rating awards, in recognition of its employment of almost 6,500 Ukrainian seafarers and more than 550 cadets.

Fatigue call: French unions have called for urgent talks after a survey of seafarers showed high levels of fatigue, depression, stress and sexual harassment.

SINGAPORE

Unions back skills plan

Seafaring unions in Singapore have signed an agreement with owners and government agencies which aims to develop the island state as a global maritime training hub.

The memorandum of understanding signed by the Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU), Singapore Organisation of Seamen (SOS), the Maritime & Port Authority of Singapore (MPA), the Singapore Shipping Association and the Singapore Maritime Employers Federation also aims to develop courses to deliver 'future-ready' seafarers.

Backed with an additional S\$100m (€63m) of government support, the initiative has been put together to identify future skills needs and to enhance training courses to meet the industry's changing demands, as well as reducing the age profile of staff in Singapore's maritime cluster.

'With advances in ship technology, it is

important for the industry to identify new competencies and skills required for seafarers to operate smarter ships, but also to identify enhancements to the current training syllabus and build on Singapore's strength as a maritime training hub,' said MPA CEO Andrew Tan.

'The face of ports, shipping and the maritime industry is changing with the advent of automation, new technologies and business models,' he added. 'This MOU reflects a strong commitment by the government, industry and unions working together to identify the skill gaps, and to train and upskill the maritime workforce for the future economy.'

As well as additional funding, Singapore has also introduced a new specialist diploma course in marine superintendency, developed in a bid to increase technical skills and to facilitate sea-to-shore transition for experienced seafarers. **i**



THAILAND

THAI TRAINING BOOMS

A maritime training facility based in Thailand has reported 'astonishing' growth in demand for its courses following approval from the UK Maritime & Coastguard Agency in 2015.

Anthony Gould, CEO of the Galileo Maritime Academy, said: 'Over the last three years international professional seafarers coming to Thailand for advanced refresher and other MCA courses in approved marine engineering, efficient deckhand, medical care, disaster prevention and management, vessel stability, security and rescue training, have increased by more than 100% each year.'

Over the past 12 months, seafarers from countries including the UK, US, Australia, Canada, Sweden, Norway and France have travelled to attend MCA courses at the centre, which recently opened a new survival craft and fast rescue boat training facility in Phuket (above), along with students from Thailand, Malaysia, India, Hong Kong and Indonesia. **i**

ITALY

Ferry crew face charges

Criminal charges are expected to follow after the conclusion last month of a year-long investigation into a fire onboard an Italian-flagged ferry in which more than 30 people died and 64 were injured.

The public prosecutor has been examining allegations of negligence, culpable homicide and safety violations arising from the incident in December 2014 involving the ro-pax ferry Norman Atlantic.

As many as 30 individuals – including the ship's master and 26 crew members – together with the Visemar and Anek Lines companies are facing prosecution as a result of the inquiry.

Investigations determined that the blaze began on a refrigerated lorry on the vehicle deck, with a defective fire-fighting system, a delayed alarm and a 'chaotic' evacuation being blamed for the high death toll. **i**



NORWAY

'EMISSION-FREE' FERRY BEGINS WORK

A Norwegian shipping firm has taken delivery of what it claims to be the first passenger vessel of its kind to offer completely emission-free transport in the country's fjords.

The all-electric catamaran Future of the Fjords, above, has been put into operation on the service between Flåm and Gudvangen, carrying up to 400

passengers at speeds of up to 16 knots.

Powered by two 450kW electric motors, the 469dwt vessel can 'refuel' in 20 minutes, using a specially designed floating 'power dock' housing a 2.4 MWh battery pack which charges steadily throughout the day via connection to the local grid network. **i**

PANAMA

Protests over crewing cutbacks on canal tugs

Nautilus has protested to the Panamanian Embassy in London over cuts that could compromise safety in the Panama Canal.

In a letter to Panama's ambassador to the UK, general secretary Mark Dickinson said he was concerned about a recent move to reduce the number of deckhands serving on tugs assisting ships in the new Neopanamax locks.

The decision to remove one of three deckhands serving on lead tugs in the expanded locks was made by the Panama Canal Authority (ACP) with no consultation with the tug crews, and has been condemned by the International Transport Workers' Federation. ACP also threatened to dismiss tug captains who protested against the move.

Mr Dickinson said the developments raise concerns over the health and safety of individual seafarers, as well as for the safety of shipping transiting the waterway. The reduced crewing adds to stress and fatigue, he pointed out, and compromises safety during potentially dangerous operations to

handle towing lines and operate winches.

'Any accident in the locks has the potential to create significant economic damage, as well as possible environmental hazards should a dangerous cargo or ship fuel be spilled,' he wrote. 'The volume of traffic now using the expanded waterway is extremely high and disruption to vessel traffic would have serious wider consequences to international trade.'

Calling for the Panamanian government to ensure that ACP enters into 'constructive dialogue' with maritime unions, Mr Dickinson added: 'For the safety of all ships and all seafarers passing through the Canal, it is essential that operational standards are maintained at the highest levels.'

In response to the union protests, the government agency in Panama charged with investigating ethics violations and corruption has announced it will launch an inquiry into ACP's treatment of the tug masters. **i**

INDONESIA

MASTER FACES JAIL AS ANCHOR CAUSES SPILL

The Chinese master of a Panama-flagged bulk carrier is facing up to 14 years in jail after being accused of causing a massive oil spill by damaging an undersea pipeline with his ship's anchor.

The 82,000dwt Ever Judger was arrested by Indonesian authorities after an initial investigation concluded that the ship's anchor had ruptured a pipeline, leading to a leak of 40,000 barrels of crude oil and a fire in which five fishermen died. **i**

In brief

Space deaths: another two seafarers have died in an enclosed space accident. They were among four crew members from the Hong Kong-flagged bulk carrier Feng Hui Hai who were taken to hospital after the master reported that they had been overcome by gas while the vessel was at an anchorage, waiting to discharge a cargo of coal at the Indian port of Naviakhi.

Brittany protest: French seafarer unions staged a protest in the port of Brest last month as the Cyprus-flagged ro-pax ferry Connemara made its first voyage from the Irish port of Cork. Unions have warned of industrial action over the company's use of a foreign-flagged ship, crewed with 'low-cost' seafarers.

Danish record: the Danish merchant fleet has grown beyond 20m gt mark for the first time ever. Industry minister Brian Mikkelsen said the milestone reflected moves to make the country's ship register more competitive, including the removal of registration fees earlier this year.

Greek strike: Greek seafarers staged a 24-hour strike last month in protest over plans to open up the country's cabotage trades to foreign-flagged ships. They also highlighted concerns over pay and pensions and called for action to cut unemployment in the industry.

Jobs boost: the Naples-based Grimaldi group has pledged to recruit 1,000 Italian seafarers as part of a US\$2bn fleet upgrade which will involve the delivery of 20 new vessels, including ro-rors of 'revolutionary' design that will be emission-free while in port.

In brief

Carnival deal: the French national merchant navy officers' training academy (ENSM) has signed a cooperation agreement with Carnival Maritime to provide seetime to eight dual-purpose cadets per year in the Costa and AIDA fleets. Jean-Philippe Chateil, head of the FOMM-CGT officers' union, commented: 'French operators have access to state aid but insufficient berths are available for cadets and young officers being trained at ENSM.'

Cabotage cut: India's government has scrapped cabotage rules and opened up its coastal trades to allow foreign-flagged operators to carry export-import containers for transshipment and empty containers for re-positioning on local routes without conditions.

Wage row: Italian seafaring unions have accused the leading Mediterranean ferry operator, Moby-Tirrenia, of illegally operating four ships on cabotage routes with non-Italian labour paid below the official minimum wage. Moby said the vessels were chartered in whilst it awaits the delivery of four new ferries.

Bunker boom: the number of LNG bunkering vessels has risen from one at the beginning of 2017 to six in early 2018, and is forecast to increase to 30 operating worldwide in next five years, according to the industry group SEA\LNG.

Saudi delivery: Saudi Arabia's national carrier Bahri has taken delivery of Amad, the last in a series of 10 VLCCs ordered from South Korea in 2015. The 300,000dwt vessel is Bahri's 46th VLCC, bringing its total fleet to 93 ships.

PANAMA

ITF warns on canal cuts

Further concerns over safety in the Panama Canal have been raised by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) after evidence emerged of plans to make additional cuts in the crewing of tugs operating in the waterway.

The ITF said it was alarmed by the Panama Canal Authority (ACP) proposals to remove an additional captain from the vessels only a few months after a reduction in the number of deckhands serving on the tugs assisting ships in the Neopanamax locks.

The ACP told the tug crews' union, UCOC, that the plans – which will cut the complement to the minimum manning established by the

Panama Maritime Authority – will, together with other unspecified changes, provide the captains with an improved working schedule and potentially reduce the demand to perform overtime. The ITF has documented that overtime regularly exceeds normal working hours, with some captains forced to work more than 16 hours a day.

The ITF said it was concerned by the authority's failure to enter into a dialogue to enable the UCOC's members to provide their expert advice on how to improve the transit operations, including respect of workers' rights, and called for ACP to re-evaluate the way it conducts its industrial relations. **i**



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

DEAL TO PROTECT CREWS

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Federal Transport Authority (FTA) have signed a ground-breaking agreement which aims to protect the rights of all seafarers serving on ships in the country's waters.

The memorandum of understanding – which is the first of its kind between a government authority and the ITF – comes after a series of incidents in which crew members have been abandoned on ships in the area.

It covers processes for joint consultation, cooperation and coordination to find solutions to address seafarer abandonment cases in UAE waters.

ITF general secretary Stephen Cotton said: 'This is a significant opportunity to work with our partners in the UAE to bring seafarers' and workers' safety to forefront of the conversation. This agreement is just the beginning and will hopefully pave the way for similar agreements in other territories.' **i**

FRANCE

Protests at 'FoC' ferry

French seafarer unions have given a 'red card' to Brittany Ferries following the launch of a new service using a chartered flag of convenience vessel.

The CGT and CFDT unions have staged a series of protests over the use of the Cyprus-registered Connemara to run the new route linking Ireland, France and Spain. It is the first time the company has not operated a French-flagged and French-crewed ship.

The 27,414gt vessel is crewed by Lithuanian, Latvian, Romanian, Polish and Estonian seafarers and the unions have raised concern over their pay rates and working hours.

The unions have also warned about the condition of the vessel, pointing to a June port state control inspection in Cork which found 26 deficiencies – including problems with abandon-ship drills, fire-fighting systems, life-saving appliances and the establishment of a working language onboard.

The company has denied it has a 'de-flagging strategy'. **i**

A white banner with the text 'SOS MEDITERRANEE' in blue and 'Search and Rescue' in black, with a red circle and slash over a search icon. Below the banner, a group of people are sitting on the deck of a ship.

SOS MEDITERRANEE

Search and Rescue

▲ Rescued migrants wait to disembark from the NGO rescue vessel Aquarius Image: Reuters

MEDITERRANEAN

Concern as Italy bans migrant rescue vessel

Italy is undermining long-held principles governing safety of life at sea and is putting seafarers at risk by refusing to allow a vessel carrying 629 migrants to enter its ports, Nautilus International has warned.

The Union says Italy's decision to refuse permission for the rescue vessel Aquarius to disembark people picked up from the sea off the coast of Libya sets a worrying precedent that could leave seafarers exposed to serious health and safety problems, as well as the risk of violence.

Aquarius is operated by the charities SOS Méditerranée and Médecins Sans Frontières. It was bound for Sicily when both Italy and Malta refused to allow it to offload the 629 people it had rescued – even though some of them needed hospital treatment and the vessel has capacity for just 550 people.

'Merchant ships and NGOs have been meeting their obligations to go to the aid of people in distress at sea, and the scale of this problem is such that countries must uphold

their responsibilities under international law by providing a place of safety to disembark those who are rescued,' said general secretary Mark Dickinson.

'If those principles are not respected, we could face the horrific prospect of "pariah" ships being banned from country after country – with conditions onboard rapidly deteriorating,' he warned.

Statistics show that merchant ships have rescued more than 50,000 people in the Mediterranean over the past three years. Mr Dickinson warned that the safety and security of vessels could be compromised if countries do not abide by Search and Rescue Convention requirements.

He said Nautilus supports the International Chamber of Shipping's call for 'a joined-up strategy and the funds to really address the causes of migration' rather than relying on NGOs and the shipping industry as a sticking plaster for a humanitarian catastrophe. **i**

ITALY

FERRY BOSS 'ASHAMED' AT JOBS SHORTAGE

Leading Italian shipowner Vincenzo Onorato says he is 'ashamed' that 50,000 Italian seafarers are unemployed as a result of the use of lower-cost foreign crews.

Mr Onorato, president of the Moby Line and Tirrenia ferry firms, said that too many Italian operators are continuing to hire cheaper non-EU crews even though they

could benefit from tax breaks for employing Italian seafarers.

Mr Onorato – whose companies employ 5,000 Italian seafarers – said the fight against unemployment remains a major battle and government moves to improve the financial incentives for employing Italian crews have taken too long. **t**

In brief

US fine: the Japanese shipping company Nitta Kisen has been fined US\$1m after being convicted of obstructing justice and falsification of an oil record book to cover up intentional oil pollution from the bulk carrier Atlantic Oasis. The ship's chief engineer was fined \$5,500 and placed on probation for a year after the court heard that a 'magic pipe' by-pass system had been discovered during an inspection last year.

Singapore smoke: the Maritime & Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) has warned shipmasters that they could face fines of up to S\$5,000 for failing to 'take all necessary measures to prevent their vessels from emitting excessive soot, ash, or dark smoke from engine exhaust and/or ancillary shipboard machineries throughout the duration of vessel stay in port'.

Commission warning: the European Commission has warned Italy and Portugal that they may be taken to the European Court of Justice if they continue to fail to transpose EU rules on seafarers' rights to decent working conditions and information and consultation into their national legislation.

Thai training: 90 cadets from Thailand have graduated from a special training scheme operated through a collaboration between the Singapore Maritime Officers' Union and the Thai Seafarers' Association.

Kuwait expansion: plans have been announced to more than double the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company's fleet from its current total of 28 to 60 ships. Expansion will focus on product carriers.

◀ Norwegian teams put oil spill containment booms in place following a ship grounding Picture: Reuters



BE PREPARED

How many coastal states could cope with a major oil spill in their waters? Leading salvage experts have highlighted concerns over declining skills and expertise in dealing with clean-up operations. **ANDREW LININGTON** reports...

F

orty years after the massive Amoco Cadiz oil spill off the coast of France, salvage experts have raised worrying questions about the resources in place to deal with such an incident today.

The Liberian-flagged tanker ran aground off the coast of Brittany on 16 March 1978 following steering gear failure. The ship's entire cargo of 223,000 tonnes of crude oil and 4,000 tonnes of bunker fuel was lost, polluting some 320km of the French coastline.

Speakers at this year's International Salvage Union (ISU) members' conference heard that there has been a dramatic reduction in such accidents since the 1970s, thanks to stricter regulations and improved operating standards.

Matthew Sommerville, chairman of the IMarEST marine pollution special interest group, told the meeting that the marked reduction in the rate of spills has resulted in a degraded depth of knowledge on how to handle them – with considerably fewer opportunities to refine clean-up skills and technology.

'The responders today are also much more likely to be university graduates than mariners,' he added, 'and because

people don't come from a seagoing background, they don't always understand what is being done.'

Craig English, from Briggs Marine & Environmental Services, said there has been more than 60 years of marine pollution regulation – but the rules are often reactive, and it is now time to adopt some proactive regulation.

'We have moved a long way from the first oil pollution convention in 1954, which was very narrow in scope,' he explained. 'The Torrey Canyon showed the need for it to be broadened, with the MARPOL protocol after the Amoco Cadiz and the OPA 90 regulations after the Exxon Valdez.'

Hydrocarbon demand will continue for at least another decade, Mr English added, and so the risk of spills will continue. 'The statistics show that ships are much safer and oil spills are fewer,' he pointed out. 'However, this poses a problem with less experience in dealing with them.'

He said there is a strong case for responder immunity to stop cases in which incident responders have been arrested and fined. 'It is wrong that people doing the right thing can be criminalised,' he added. 'It is challenging enough to work in this sector without

the prospect of incarceration being dangled over them.’

As well as a decline in skills, Mr English said there is also a challenge to investment in clean-up resources, such as the response vessel that Briggs Marine used to operate in the North Sea during the 1980s. ‘The equipment is getting older and the investment is getting lower, as it is not much of a business model now,’ he added.

He warned that the growth in Arctic shipping services is stoking the need for new rules. Response plans need to be drafted for dealing with spills in ice – which is very different from working in water.

Last year actually saw a significant increase in the number of incidents in which ISU members provided services to vessels. The organisation’s annual pollution prevention survey showed that there were 252 services to vessels, compared with 213 in 2016.

The report also shows that during 2017, ISU members – which include most of the major salvage firms – dealt with casualties involving some 3.4m tonnes of pollutants, up from 2.6m tonnes in the previous year.

The 2017 data also showed a significant increase in the number of containers involved in salvage cases – rising from 21,244TEU in 2016 to 45,655TEU last year. The ISU said this reflects the increasing size of vessels, and noted how even a small increase in the number of boxship salvage cases can add significantly to the TEU total.

Bunker fuel, at 135,995 tonnes, showed a significant increase on 2016’s figure of 89,492 tonnes.

The ISU said its members were involved in 25 wreck removal jobs last year, 49 Lloyd’s Open Form contracts and 42 standard towage contracts, along with 78 incidents handled on a day rate basis.

Incident numbers may have fallen, but it only takes one to cause an environmental disaster




Pictured above is the winning entry in the International Salvage Union’s photographic competition – showing an ultra-large containership aground in the Scheldt river in August last year. The 150,853gt vessel was refloated by ISU member Multiship Towage & Salvage, which submitted the image.

‘After saving life, protection of the marine environment is the priority in all salvage operations,’ said ISU president Charo Coll. ‘The results of this survey demonstrate clearly how our members’ services have helped to protect the marine environment from potential damage.

‘The ISU does not suggest that all of these potential pollutants were at imminent risk of going into the sea,’ she added. ‘Some cases will have been benign, but others will have carried a real environmental threat.

‘It only takes one major incident to cause an environmental disaster, so it is worth considering what might have occurred in some of these cases if there had not been a professional salvor available and willing to intervene,’ she continued. ‘Our members have undoubtedly helped to prevent the environmental and financial consequences of a significant pollution event.’

The ISU said that between 1994 and the end of 2017, its members provided services to casualty vessels carrying 28.2m tonnes of potential pollutants – an average of more than 1m tonnes a year. 

PROFESSIONAL PRAISE FOR RESPECTED SOSREP

The International Salvage Union has awarded honorary life membership to Hugh Shaw, the former Secretary of State’s Representative for Marine Salvage and Intervention (SOSREP) in the UK.

Mr Shaw – who began his career with Mobil Shipping Company in 1974 – spent more than 30 years working for the UK Coastguard. In his role as SOSREP, between 2008 and 2017, he was involved in a wide range of incidents including the grounding of the oil rig Transocean Winner, the grounding of the car carrier Hoegh Osaka and the containership MSC Napoli.

Presenting the award, ISU president Charo Coll

said Mr Shaw had been an international champion on issues such as the importance of places of refuge for stricken ships. ‘Hugh has been a great supporter of the worldwide salvage industry and a friend of ISU for many years,’ she added. ‘His record as UK SOSREP – carefully and wisely managing hundreds of incidents – speaks for itself. His work has been recognised by the Queen with the award of the OBE. The fact that the general public do not know Mr Shaw shows how effective he has been: one mis-managed case and he would be very well known for the wrong reasons.’



The Greenpeace vessel Beluga has been shadowing the floating nuclear power station Akademik Lomonosov on its journey to the far east of Russia

Don't forget Chernobyl, warn environmental campaigners

Concerns expressed over lax regulatory oversight of first waterborne nuclear power station

Crew members on a German-flagged Greenpeace vessel have been leading protests against a waterborne nuclear power plant – dubbed a potential ‘floating Chernobyl’ – which was towed to the Russian Arctic from the port of St Petersburg last month.

The environmental group's vessel Beluga II shadowed the 21,500gt floating power station Akademik Lomonosov as tugs towed it to Murmansk, where it will take on nuclear fuel and undergo tests before being taken through the Northern Sea Route to begin operations off the port of Pevek in the far eastern region of Chukotka next year.

Akademik Lomonosov is equipped with two 35MW nuclear reactors and is planned as the first in a series of seven floating power plants designed to supply electricity to remote regions. Owned by Russia's state-run nuclear energy company Rosatom, the vessel has taken more than a decade to build, at a reported cost of anything between US\$232m and US\$740m.

As well as housing two reactors, Akademik Lomonosov is equipped with two steam-turbine plants and facilities for transmitting power to onshore structures, as well as storage space for spent fuel and radioactive waste.

Baltic states and environmental groups have voiced concerns over the programme – warning that it presents ‘a shockingly obvious threat to a fragile environment which is

already under enormous pressure from climate change’. They called for an international study into the environmental impact to be carried out before the reactors are loaded with fuel and tested.

‘There is a lot to be concerned about in the case of the Lomonosov itself,’ said Greenpeace nuclear expert Jan Haverkamp. ‘It has been built without independent regulatory oversight using a hole in the law. The safety systems onboard are comparable to what they have on ice-breakers, but they're not as strong as what we have on land in nuclear power stations.’

Mr Haverkamp said the risks of the project have not been properly assessed. ‘Contrary to claims regarding safety, the flat-bottomed hull and the floating nuclear power plant's lack of self-propulsion make it particularly vulnerable to tsunamis and cyclones,’ he pointed out.

‘They're going to be pretty near the coast and if, say, a cable breaks when they are anchored and they go into the rocks, then that will complicate things – at a minimum.’

Despite the concerns, Rosatom has denied there are safety risks and has said that its new vessel will be one of the world's safest nuclear facilities. The company says the floating power plants can generate enough power for a town

of up to 200,000 people and will help the environment by replacing coal-fired power stations and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

‘Floating nuclear power plants would enable electricity and heat supply to the most remote regions, boosting growth and sustainable development,’ said Vitaly Trutnev, the director of the Rosatom subsidiary that runs the Lomonosov.

‘Building upon three hundreds of reactor-years of safe operation of units powering ice-breakers, the vessel features the most cutting-edge safety and security systems and is designed with the greatest margin of safety that exceeds all possible threats.’

Greenpeace strongly disputes Rosatom's safety assurances, however. And having spent a long period tailing and protesting the vessel's launch, the environmental group is concerned that Russia is in talks with more than a dozen countries – including China, Algeria and Indonesia – on the possibility of establishing similar plants in other parts of the world.

‘My hope is that the international community takes note of what's happening in Russia and that discussions can take place about what these installations mean going into the future,’ Mr Haverkamp concluded. **i**

Akademik Lomonosov has two 35 MW nuclear reactors and storage space for nuclear waste

Crowd-sourced safety information

The UK P&I Club has teamed up with a specialist IT firm to create a 'crowd-sourced' system to provide comprehensive and timely safety updates to its members.

The Club said it hopes its partnership with the geospatial intelligence company Geollect will create 'the most extensive incident and information resource within the P&I industry'.

The initiative uses data collated from satellite imagery, social media updates, intelligence and geospatial data, together with the Club's own information, to provide an interactive map

showing incidents and alerts around the world.

The system lists collision areas, live incident reporting, latest piracy reports and infrastructure repairs to port areas, and users can zoom in to ports and locations for more detailed information.

'We believe there is a compelling need within maritime risk to modernise and fuse disparate reporting mechanisms,' said UK Club senior loss prevention executive George Devereese. 'This is just the start, and we will look to members to let us know what other information will be useful.' **i**



▲ Emergency vessels tackle the blaze onboard Maersk Honam Image: Indian Coast Guard

CONTAINER CRACKDOWN CALL

A leading marine insurer has called for tough action to combat 'the criminality of misdeclaration' of the hazardous cargoes in containers.

TT Club risk management director Peregrine Storrs-Fox said the recent blaze onboard the Singapore-flagged Maersk Honam – in which five seafarers were killed – had highlighted the scale of the dangers.

'There is currently a serious fire aboard a containership roughly every 60 days,' he wrote in Lloyd's Loading List. 'While these incidents take painstaking forensic investigation in order to identify the root cause, a fundamental focus must

be on the criminality of cargo misdeclaration.'

Mr Storrs-Fox said there is 'too much evidence that dangerous cargoes are misdeclared due to a premeditated attempt to avoid the added costs and complexity that accrue from transporting such consignments by land or sea in compliance with regulations'.

Nautilus and the International Union of Marine Insurance have also called for improved fire-fighting requirements for containerships, with questions over the current standards of fire detection equipment and the effectiveness of CO2 systems. **i**

Tanker crew were not qualified

A bunker tanker which ran aground off Canada last year was being operated by a master and chief engineer who were not qualified for their roles, an investigation discovered.

The Panama-flagged Arca 1 grounded near Sydney, Nova Scotia, after it lost 50% of its propulsion power following the failure of a clutch and began drifting in heavy weather.

A Transportation Safety Board of Canada (TSB) report blamed the incident on inadequate vessel maintenance and 'inconsistent' voyage planning, together with crewing issues.

'As a result of some crew members performing roles for which they were not qualified, certain critical tasks were not carried out, and others were performed ineffectively,' the report added. **i**

Poor lookout blamed for collision

A gas carrier which collided with a tanker off the coast of India was not keeping a proper lookout, an accident investigation has concluded.

The Isle of Man-flagged BW Maple was in breach of collision prevention regulations by using a cadet as the lookout – a task he was not formally qualified to undertake, a report on the incident states.

The 47,386gt gas carrier and the Indian-flagged tanker Dawn Kanchipuram were both damaged in the collision, which occurred off the port of Ennore in January 2017.

The Isle of Man flag state report also noted that the BW Maple's bridge team had not been adequately briefed on a change in the passage plan for the ship's outbound pilotage. Bridge team manning had been reduced at a critical time as the chief officer escorted the pilot from the ship, it added.

The report urges BW Fleet Management to review its safety management system and calls for Kamanjar port authorities to review their procedures and practices for directing inbound and outbound vessel traffic. **i**

MCA agrees to review of ETVs

The UK government has agreed to carry out a review of emergency towing vessel cover in the Channel.

In a move welcomed by Nautilus, transport minister Baroness Sugg said the Maritime & Coastguard Agency will examine the full range of emergency response assets available in the Dover Strait, including reassessing the need for a dedicated towing capability.

The review was recommended by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch following an investigation into a collision between a general cargoship and a barge off the coast of Kent. **i**

Call for IMO to review governance

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) needs to improve its systems of governance to reduce the risk of conflicts of interest, a new report has warned.

Preliminary findings from a study by the anti-corruption organisation Transparency International suggest that private shipping industry interests could have undue influence over the policy-making process at the IMO.

The report – which is based on an analysis of the IMO's transparency, accountability and integrity – says that big flag states such as Panama, Liberia, the Marshall Islands, Malta and the Bahamas have a 'potentially exaggerated weight' within the UN agency, and the mechanism by which states with larger tonnage have an advantage in the policy-making process 'is potentially open to abuse'.

Transparency International said that governments are able to appoint employees of corporations – including shipping companies – to their delegations, and they can determine their government's position on IMO policy. In recent committee meetings, trade associations have outnumbered civil society organisations by a ratio of almost five to one and labour organisations by three to one, the report noted.

'A guiding principle of the UN system is that member states must represent citizens' interests,' said Transparency International vice-chair Rueben Lifuka. 'At the IMO, this could end up being undermined by corporate participation in the place of nation states.'

The report urges the IMO to take a series of measures to improve transparency and to ensure its decision-making processes better reflect the public interest – including by establishing 'a meaningful link between ships and their country of registry' and reducing the influence of tonnage in the ratification process. **i**

L'Austral docks in the port of Dunedin following the grounding in January 2017
Image: NZ Transport Accident Investigation Commission



ECDIS shortfalls led to contact incident

Shortcomings in electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS) training have been blamed for another accident – this time involving the grounding of a 10,944gt passengership in an exclusion zone off New Zealand last year.

The French-flagged L'Austral struck an uncharted rock after drifting into a 'no-go' area off New Zealand's sub-Antarctic islands while picking up rigid inflatable boats which had been used for passenger excursions. The ship was holed, but water ingress was confined to one void space.

At the time of the accident, the bridge was manned by the master and a navigating officer – one fewer than required – and New Zealand's Transport Accident Investigation Commission (TAIC) concluded that the

master's attention had been focused on the recovery of the boats, and he had failed to notice the ship had entered the 300m unauthorised zone.

Investigators said ECDIS safety parameters – including the shallow contour – had not been adequately configured. 'Although ECDIS was designated as the ship's primary navigation system, it was not being used as such and not being used to its full potential,' the report notes.

Crew members were not fully familiar with the capabilities and limitations of the equipment and were not making best use of it, TAIC said. It called for the ship's owners to review the ECDIS procedures on all ships in the fleet and to ensure that bridge resource management and voyage planning meets IMO requirements. **i**

Projects aim to cut onboard administrative workloads

The Port of Rotterdam is pioneering a new electronic ETA exchange system, which aims to cut shipboard workloads and improve operational efficiency.

Developed as part of the EU-funded Sea Traffic Management (STM) project, the system enables some 300 vessels taking part in the validation work to share their voyage plan schedules with the port authorities direct from their ECDIS navigation systems.

When the port authority adjusts the planned time of arrival the update is automatically transmitted to the ship and displayed as a text message onboard,

cutting the need for manual communications.

Meanwhile, the shipowners' organisation BIMCO has announced a new package for tagging information that is claimed to offer an 80% reduction in the administrative workload for shipmasters linked to port calls, and it is urging the industry to adopt the standard.

The Marine Reporting Model enables masters to type in all the required information for port clearance just once, with the system using tags to ensure that transmitted data ends up in the correct 'box' at the receiving end. **i**



WELL HANDLED?

A new ICS survey shows that bridge teams are fairly happy with the standards of pilotage on their ships. But the body representing pilots worldwide is worried about continued pressures on services in many countries...

Ship masters and officers have given a vote of confidence in the standard of pilotage services in more than 470 ports in 123 different countries, a new report has revealed.

However, the survey has also identified some key concerns with pilotage safety – communication difficulties between pilots and bridge teams in particular – and it proposes the development of an internationally standardised approach to the master-pilot information exchange (MPX).



The International Chamber of Shipping research showed that **84%** of masters and bridge teams were satisfied with the conduct of the pilots they encounter

The report has been produced by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and is based on feedback from almost 900 shipmasters and officers, who were questioned about the quality of pilotage, towage and mooring services during port calls around the world.

The results – which have been presented to the International Maritime Organisation – showed that 84% of masters and bridge teams were satisfied with the conduct of the pilot, 82% satisfied with the conduct of the pilotage, 72% satisfied with the use of electronic

navigation aids, and 78% satisfied with towage and mooring services.

ICS senior marine adviser Matthew Williams said the survey had addressed questions about the rising costs of obligatory pilotage and electronic charts, and whether the need for one of them reduces the need for the other. It also sought to evaluate the extent to which established best practice is being followed. The ICS has set an objective that wherever there is liberalisation of pilotage services, the highest safety levels and professionalism should be maintained, aided by clearly-defined areas of responsibility.

Although the ICS described the results as largely positive, it did highlight a number of safety-related issues – pointing out that communication difficulties between pilots and bridge teams are 'a commonly reported concern worldwide'. The quality of English used by pilots was a general concern in a number of countries, it added.

‘It is understandable that communications between the pilot, towage and mooring personnel are often conducted in a local language, the report adds. ‘However, this practice places a burden on the pilot (that may interfere with the pilot’s primary role) to translate orders and actions during towing and mooring.’

The survey found that while the MPX and associated checklists are being used effectively, the volume and form of information exchanged is inconsistent – varying from an entirely verbal exchange to a comprehensive briefing supported by checklists and passage plans.

The report points to the need for a globally standardised approach to MPX, emphasising the visual presentation of the pilot’s plan for the pilotage and discouraging reliance on a purely verbal exchange of information.

The ICS received 36 reports of incidents where pilots had failed to follow appropriate procedures or use appropriate personal protective equipment – particularly lifejackets – when embarking, and this was a problem noted in ports in 16 countries.

Some concerns were raised about last-minute requests to change pilot boarding arrangements, as well as the lack of suitable pilot vessels in some areas – with reports of tug rescue boats and small dinghies

● ● ● IMPA strongly opposes the involvement of private interests in what it believes should be a public service

being used. There were also concerns about the level of pilot familiarity with the latest propulsion technologies – particularly electronically-controlled engines – and that some pilots are not familiar with electronic charts and are unwilling to use ECDIS during pilotage.

The findings of the ICS research were welcomed by Nick Cutmore, secretary general of the International Maritime Pilots’ Association (IMPA). ‘We note the report’s endorsement of the quality of pilotage services,’ he said. However, he acknowledged: ‘It does highlight some areas which we are striving to address, such as the master-pilot exchange.’

The survey comes at a time when pressure to liberalise pilotage services around the world remains high. ‘It’s like a cancer – you kill it in one place, and it pops up somewhere else,’ Mr Cutmore said. ‘What gets lost in this are unified standards of training and certification, and in some cases, pilotage is being used

to subsidise loss-making activities in some ports or to increase the bottom line in others.’

IMPA strongly opposes liberalisation and the involvement of private interests in what it believes should be a public service. ‘The involvement of liberalisation is such that costs go up and safety goes down,’ Mr Cutmore added. ‘That’s not opinion, it’s fact.’

Chris Adams, of Steamship Mutual, said the London-based P&I club is compiling a new, updated report on claims involving pilotage accidents from members. An earlier report documented an increase in claims and liability for members following accidents in which pilots were involved and where increased competition was a factor.

Countries where services have come under pressure include Argentina, Australia, and Denmark. Danish pilotage costs have gone up some 50% since liberalisation, says IMPA. This began when the monopoly of the state-owned operation DanPilot was broken in 2006 and it was extended in 2014 to bring in competition for transit pilotage services. In Argentina – where liberalisation was introduced in 1997 – costs in Buenos Aires are around double the level in Uruguay, just 60km away on the other side of the Rio de la Plata.

Mr Cutmore says IMPA is disturbed by the ‘laissez-faire’ attitude of Australia towards pilotage in the Great Barrier Reef. ‘If it is as successful as it has been claimed, why has it not been adopted by constituent states in their ports?’ he asked.

However, IMPA has recently been pleased to hear that the Danish government has decided to cease competition in pilotage in 2020. ‘It’s very rare for a government to put its hands up and admit to making a mistake, but they realised that it was impacting on the viability of their ports and acting as a disincentive to trade,’ Mr Cutmore said. ‘The 50% increase in costs is their figure – not ours.’ 

A pilot disembarks from a ship in the Malaysian port of Bintulu
Image: Bintulu Port Holdings Berhad



▶ A boarding team from the Spanish EU Naval Force warship ESPS Rayo intercepts a suspicious skiff
Image: EU Naval Force



THE RISKS REMAIN

A new study of global maritime piracy has revealed new threats to ships and their crews – and has prompted warnings for seafarers to remain vigilant against potential attacks...

S eafarers and shipowners have been warned against relaxing their counter-piracy precautions following new evidence showing that the risk of attack remains high in many parts of the world.

The eighth annual Oceans Beyond Piracy (OBP) report, produced by the US-based One Earth Future (OEF) organisation, reveals that more than 5,000 seafarers were affected by a total of 321 piracy incidents around the world last year, with 17 crew members killed in Asia and two killed off West Africa.

The report notes a big increase in incidents in Latin

America and the Caribbean, and it says that ‘persistently high’ levels of attacks off West Africa have made the Gulf of Guinea the most dangerous region in Africa for seafarers.

It also warns that while attacks declined in Asia for the third year in a row, incidents off the Horn of Africa doubled last year, and conflict in Yemen is exposing ships and their crews to a growing threat in the Red Sea.

Maisie Pigeon, the report’s lead author, said a flurry of incidents off Somalia over the past year ‘clearly demonstrates that pirate groups retain their ability to organise and implement attacks against ships transiting the region’. However, OBP said it did not believe that there is evidence to show ‘the re-emergence of large-scale piracy in the Horn of Africa’.

The report said the number of incidents off East Africa increased to 54 last year, with the ‘short surge’ of hijackings in the first quarter – including the first involving a merchant ship for five years – in part resulting from ‘lessened adherence to ship self-protection measures’ and a reduction in the levels of naval force deployment in the region.

OBP researchers found a 13% reduction in the use of private security teams on ships off East Africa last year and experts at the meeting said there has been a marked fall in the number of ships using armed guards in high-risk areas – down to less than half of vessels

Incidents off the Horn of Africa **doubled** last year, according to the new Oceans Beyond Piracy analysis

transiting the Gulf of Aden and only 15% to 20% of those in the Indian Ocean.

However, Simon Church, of the Maritime Security Centre-Horn of Africa, said levels of compliance with Best Management Practices (BMP) remain 'fairly good considering the perception of risk is not what it was'.

Alan Cole, head of the United Nations Office of Drugs & Crime maritime programme, said armed guards on merchant ships are the most effective deterrent. 'Pirates have told us that if they see private security onboard they will back off and not attack.'

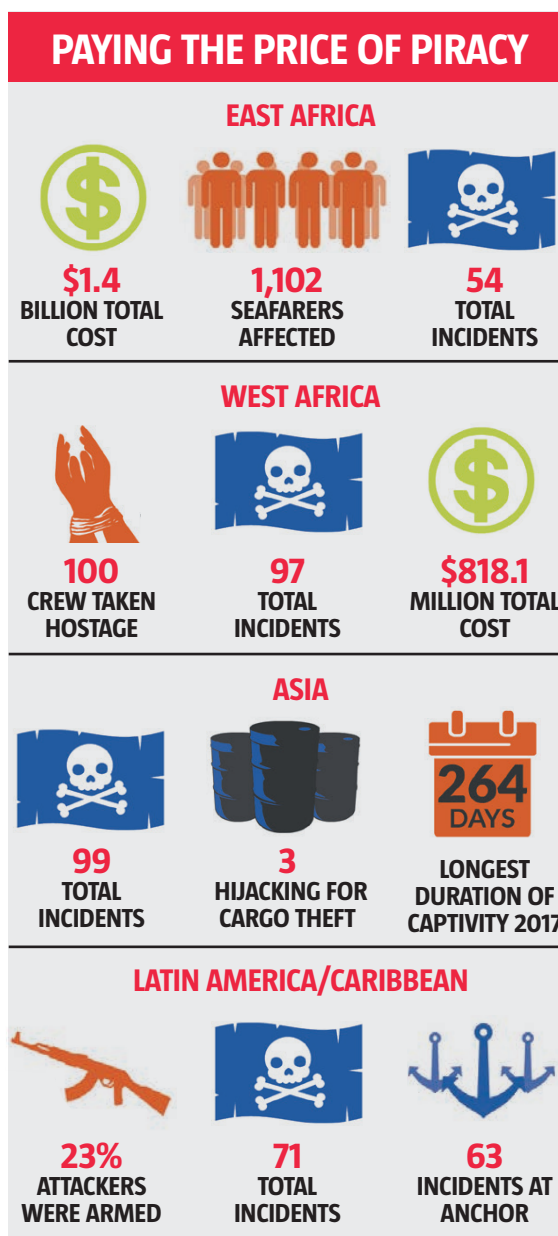
OBP researchers estimate global economic costs of piracy at more than US\$2.2bn last year, with international naval activities off East Africa totalling almost \$200m and owners spending more than \$500,000 on maritime security services.

The OBP report notes that four dhows and a bunker tanker were hijacked off Somalia in the first half of 2017, but points out that 'the success rate of these hijackings in terms of ransom payments was low due to the interception of pirate groups on land by local authorities; the implementation of BMP4 by crews; as well as the successful capture of pirates by naval forces.'

Major Tom Mobbs, head of intelligence and security with the EU Naval Force counter-piracy operation, said the threat not only continues off Somalia, but there is also a growing risk of mines and improved explosive devices for vessels in the southern Red Sea. The coalition presence in the area is being stepped up as a result of incidents off Yemen which appear to be targeting ships with links to Saudi Arabia, he added.

Recent incidents include a missile attack on the Gibraltar-flagged supply ship VOS Theai – operating on charter to the United Nations World Food Programme – as well as the Turkish-flagged bulk carrier Ince Inebolu, and a Saudi-flagged tanker off Hodeidah, Yemen.

'There are now a wide range of threats to shipping near the Horn of Africa that have been complicated by the conflict and instability in Yemen,' said Intertanko marine director Phil Belcher.



'We are advising our members to consider a more comprehensive security assessment to take into account other threats beyond traditional piracy emanating from the regional conflict in Yemen.'

EU Navfor's Operation Atalanta remit is being extended beyond 2018, for a further two years, although the command centre is to shift from the UK as a result of Brexit, the meeting heard.

Ms Pigeon said that while violent acts of piracy had declined overall, incidents off West Africa have become increasingly violent – affecting more than 1,700 seafarers last year, and with a total of 317 kidnappings – mainly involving masters and officers.

Incidents in the Latin America and Caribbean region had increased by 160%, she added, with the opportunistic nature of attacks illustrated by the fact that most involve robbery from ships at anchor. Many of the 71 incidents occurred off Venezuela, with 42 of the incidents involving yachts and 16 involving tankers.

A 23% reduction in incidents in SE Asia was put down to the success of trilateral patrols introduced by authorities in the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia following a spate of very violent robberies, kidnappings and hijacks in previous years, she said. Kidnap-for-ransom incidents in the region decreased by 80% over the year.

OBP said more should be done to tackle the root causes of piracy around the world, warning that the problem is a 'crime of opportunity' which is often linked to the fishing industry – with illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing wrecking local fleets in many countries and leading unemployed fishermen to be recruited into piracy, as well as being frequent victims of attacks and kidnapping in areas such as Bangladesh and the Gulf of Guinea.

Mr Cole said maritime crime has a hugely destabilising effect on many countries, and a long-term, comprehensive approach is needed to address it. However, OBP warned that this will only work if there are strong and stable governments with the ability to deny safe havens to pirates and to prosecute those caught carrying out attacks. 

CHINA

CONNECTIONS

The world's most populous country has become a significant maritime nation, with thousands of ships now trading to its ports each year. But its welfare services for visiting seafarers have failed to match this growth. Nautilus International is backing a new project which seeks to put this right...

China has chalked up spectacular growth in seaborne trade over the past couple of decades – and its ports are now visited by around half a million ships and as many as 10m seafarers a year.

But port-based welfare facilities for visiting crews have struggled to keep pace with this remarkable expansion. Indeed, a new report reveals, there has been a notable reduction in seafarer centres in China over this period.

The report summarises the preliminary results of research carried out by Southampton Solent University's China Centre (Maritime), funded by the ITF Seafarers' Trust and supported by Nautilus and the International Seafarers' Welfare Assistance Network.

Last month Nautilus general secretary Mark Dickinson joined other union officials, academics, welfare organisations and Chinese government officials at a conference to discuss the findings and consider ways of improving welfare support for the growing number of seafarers on ships visiting Chinese ports.

Project leader Professor Minghua Zhao said China's traditional international seafarers' clubs

have almost ceased to exist as a consequence of economic reforms and the withdrawal of state support, together with the sweeping changes that have affected shipping operations. 'Where can seafarers turn for help when they visit Chinese ports?' she asked. 'New facilities are urgently needed in the new, large mega-ports which are located far from city centres.'

The report points out that port-based welfare services are vital for seafarers' health and wellbeing. However, it notes, in China – as in many other parts of the world – the expansion of existing ports and the development of new and larger ports, far from city centres, has had 'a profound effect' on seafarers. In the new 'vast and remote' ports, there are few or no facilities for visiting crew, and the remaining older seafarer centres are now many miles away.

● ● ●
Faith and volunteer groups may be the way to fill the port welfare gap left by the withdrawal of state support

Researchers questioned 300 seafarers on their expectations and experiences when visiting Chinese ports. They found that crew members placed particular importance on the ability to get access to communications, transport to shops and seafarer centres, and leisure, health and social services.

However, the report says seafarers had very mixed experiences – some telling of good shopping, transport, leisure and social services, but others complaining of a lack of services, no information about services, and being over-charged for services. 'This gap between what seafarers need and what they have really received deserves serious attention and action needs to be taken in order to better meet seafarers' needs for welfare provisions,' it adds.

More than 26% of the seafarers reported feeling lonely all of the time or quite often, and the report points to the vital role played by seafarer centres in helping to counter such problems. Dr Gaochao He, one of the researchers, said they had found 'a strong indication that most seafarers want a place specifically dedicated for their needs' – and many crews had cited the positive experiences of the support and services provided in



Nautilus general secretary Mark Dickinson joins his predecessor, Brian Orrell, and Chinese port welfare research project leader Professor Minghua Zhao

Chinese port welfare researchers visit a ship as part of their project

visiting crew members. Peter Tomlin, chief executive of the UK Merchant Navy Welfare Board, said he had recently visited Shanghai as part of the International Port Welfare Partnership Programme, which is aiming to help establish at least 30 new seafarer welfare boards around the world. There is an immense amount of interest in the initiative, he added, and there are hopes that it can take off in China.

Xiaodong Zhang, from the maritime section of the Chinese embassy in the UK, acknowledged that there has been a 'dramatic decline' in seafarer centres in Chinese ports, with faster vessel turn-rounds reducing the time available for crews to get ashore. He suggested mobile centres may offer an answer – and the report highlights the 'best practice' example of the 'semi-mobile' seafarers' club in the port of Qingdao. This uses 10 containers that house a wide range of facilities, including free wi-fi services,

ports such as Hamburg, Felixstowe and Immingham.

The report says that, despite the structural difficulties, 'some remarkable people have tried hard in innovative ways to provide port-based welfare services to seafarers in Chinese ports'. It also points out that initiatives such as China's new Silk Road at Sea programme and the country's ratification of the Maritime Labour Convention have opened up new opportunities for developing facilities for visiting crews.

Researchers said there is strong support from Chinese unions and shipowners for action to improve seafarer welfare services, but new and 'smart' ways of securing funding need to be found to fill the gap left by the withdrawal of state support. Traditionally, the report points out, Chinese seafarer centres have not been run by religious groups or other non-governmental organisations, and it suggests that faith and volunteer groups could be encouraged to find ways of delivering such services.

The report recommends that port-based welfare services in China should be 'revitalised' with more support from the government. China ratified the MLC in November 2015, but Dr Pengfei Zhang, from Southampton Solent University's China Centre, said there were different opinions on how much the country has done to effectively implement it. Dr Lijun Tang, from Plymouth University, said a lot of work needs to be done to convince



China that it should be providing port-based welfare services, and there should be some concerted political engagement on the issues.

Mr Dickinson told the meeting the research had shown the importance of collaboration in identifying needs and providing good services and support for seafarers. The concept of reciprocal support is important, he pointed out, and as China has ratified the Maritime Labour Convention it has legal obligations towards the care and protection of

The mobile seafarers' centre in the port of Qingdao has been created with disused containers refurbished into a bar, computer room, reading room, and shops

computer rooms, a reading room, a gym, a bar and shops.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations to 'revitalise' China's port welfare services with more support from the government, industry, trade unions and other sources. The study stresses the need for innovative approaches to funding and services – and it suggests that China should consider introducing a levy for visiting ships, which has been used successfully in some other countries.



CAUSE FOR ALARM

What you do when your technology is in trouble? A committee of Nautilus members heard last month how some onboard systems are still worryingly fragile – even as the industry moves inexorably towards autonomous shipping...

Nautilus professional and technical officer David Appleton kicked off the latest meeting of the Nautilus Professional and Technical Committee by reporting on the work being done at the International Maritime Organisation to examine the regulatory issues associated with ‘smart ships’. He noted that while major advances are being made in shipboard technology and remote monitoring of systems, satellite coverage is still not yet capable of enabling any remote system to function reliably worldwide.

‘It feels to me as if the industry is rushing towards this like a bunch of lemmings and it will go right over the

cliff edge,’ said committee member Captain Jessica Tyson. ‘It does not seem to be driven by demand, but more by someone thinking it is a bright idea. There is no doubt we are going down that route – we already have semi-automated vessels – but who is it actually benefiting?’

She warned that the limitations of some systems need to be recognised. ‘Radar doesn’t always pick up everything and there are some times when you can see things that it can’t,’ she pointed out. ‘And if all of that goes down, are we still going to have the basic skills

that it is all based around?’

Henk Eijkenaar said he supported the Union’s approach in not opposing technology but seeking to ensure that it is not

introduced in a damaging way. ‘There should be a balance that recognises the limitations of technology and gets a balance between humans and machines,’

he argued. Tom Cardy said there needs to be a better focus on the user-friendliness of equipment. ‘Look at the number of alarms going off all the time,’ he pointed out. ‘The kind of automation that would be useful would be

For more on the GPS jamming incident in Port Said, go to www.bridgedeck.org and search for Alliance Fairfax

something that did analysis and interrogation of the alarms to ease the stress and pressure on the seafarers.'

The meeting heard of a recent incident involving GPS interference in the vicinity of Port Said, Egypt, which had resulted in ships losing signals for bridge navigation and communication equipment. The US-flagged car carrier Alliance Fairfax was one of the vessels affected – suffering severe jamming just before managing to anchor safely by visual means.

'With the jamming of GPS signals, all the bridge equipment was in alarm mode, which was the most distracting aspect of the loss of the GPS,' noted the Alliance Fairfax's master Captain Larry Aasheim in a safety report issued by the US-based Masters, Mates & Pilots union. 'Radar presentation failed due to GPS speed input for the display. ECDIS had ship position jumping all over the screen. I had ship's speed at times in excess of 80 knots.'

'We were anchoring at night, which made it difficult to determine if all ships in the anchorage were actually anchored,' he added. '

As I was turning into my anchorage, the vessel abeam of me just got underway, which was of great concern, but we were able

● ● ● **'We must recognise the limitations of these systems and make sure we retain the basic skills we need if they all go down'**

to communicate and had no danger of collision. My anchorage was in the middle of six ships at anchor, which made it simple to determine my anchorage visually.

'My recommendation would be to put the speed input to radars to log speed versus GPS speed until this problem gets rectified,' Capt Aasheim suggested. 'With the speed input from the log for the radar, the presentation would remain steady and not add to the confusion with the other sensors failing.'

Second mate Erik Stark added that the jamming had resulted in audible and visual alarms from equipment including GPS receivers, the 10cm and 3cm radars, the AIS transceiver, both ECDIS display units, both Sat C transceivers, the GMDSS MF/HF transceiver, both VHF DSC radios, and the VDR.

As a result of their experience, the Alliance Fairfax crew offered the following recommendations in the report:

- When the GPS receivers begin to lose signal reception, place the ECDIS's Position Sensors in DR mode, both Primary and Secondary. Also, change the Speed over Ground sensor from GPS to DLOG (Log Speed). DR mode is

better than GPS mode, when the ENC chart jumps all over the screen. Also, if the Speed over Ground is not changed from GPS to DLOG, the DR position will degrade quickly from faulty speed input (such as the 80-knot own-ship GPS speed that we experienced)


- If in DR mode, frequent position updates are necessary. From experience, especially at night, the Port Said Breakwater tip is the most easily located amongst all of the other radar clutter. Also, a radar range and bearing can be inserted quickly on the ECDIS, when compared to entering multiple LOPs

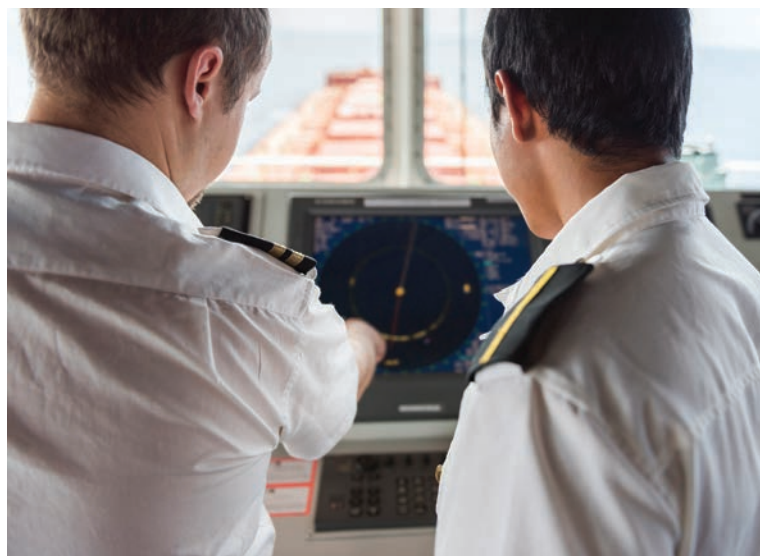
- Put the radars in DR mode, and make sure that the speed is water-sourced (Log Speed). Be sure to disable AIS radar overlay. The other vessels' AIS data is also being compromised, so the faulty AIS information only adds to the confusion

- Consider shutting off the AIS completely. If own-ship data is compromised, it is not helping other vessels. Shutting down the AIS while manoeuvring towards the anchorage also eliminates a source of alarm noise. It can be powered back on after anchoring

- Consider shutting off other sources of alarm noise, such as the GMDSS console. When manoeuvring in traffic off of Port Said, the GMDSS contributes nothing but alarms, when the GPS signal is down. The console can be powered up after anchoring

- Consider having an extra mate on the bridge, with a deck cadet (if available), just for the purpose of silencing alarms, updating the ECDIS position manually and handling radio communications

- If the schedule permits, anchor early at Port Said, during daylight hours. With daylight, manoeuvring by visual means is easier, especially if dealing with the distraction of GPS alarms. It is easier to see which vessels are moving, or not moving, during daylight hours. 



◀ As the Port Said incident revealed, GPS jamming can cause other bridge technology to fail

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