

SEACURUS BULLETIN

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KEEPING SECURE WHEN ASHORE

A MATTER OF PRESTIGE | MAPPING SECURITY RISKS | SEAFARER PROBLEMS



Inside this issue we look at the way ahead for shipping in 2016, some of the serious commercial concerns affecting the industry, along with the potential threats posed to seafarers and maritime professionals as they work in various problem areas globally.

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Welcome

➤ Our monthly bulletin looks back on the key events of the previous month, and January has kicked the year off with a real burst - both in terms of good and not so good news.

Last month has seen a spate of new piracy attacks – both in terms of low level opportunistic hit and runs, but more worryingly, it seems that Nigeria is suffering once more. Reports of a major hijack have rattled many, and with oil revenues dropping there are concerns about the security budget being slashed.

It seems that there is much fear in the air about the potential for terrorists to hit maritime targets – and both in Africa and the Mediterranean, but also around Asia, it seems there are developments which could hint at some concerns ahead. Time to dust off the ship security plans again.

It is not just piracy or terrorism, criminality affects shipping massively – and we look at the potential threats posed to seafarers and maritime professionals as they work in various problem areas globally.

There are also massive business threats too – and the fact that Japanese shipyards seem to be experiencing a spate of suspicious cruise ship fires – could it be that commercial disputes are literally becoming incendiary?

As you will see in our article on the year ahead, there are some serious commercial concerns which need to be tackled. Put simply, less cargo, lower freight rates mean that there are too many ships and too much capacity. So we can expect slower steaming and much more scrapping of ever younger vessels. In times of cheap bunkers it may seem odd to be pulling back on the sticks – but needs must, and given the steep slide on the Baltic exchange, there needs to be urgent action if owners aren't going to go to the wall.

One such response is in the form of greater cooperation. Considering that dry bulk rates have been a disaster for virtually all of the last few years with no respite in sight, experts are now stressing the value of examining what cooperative actions might help return the segment to prosperity. In particular very

creative activities need to be developed to eliminate the overall problem, overcapacity. With limited global growth and no light at the end of the tunnel, simply waiting will not work.

Shipping is of course an industry which works in cycles, but it seems the clever owners are not afraid of pedalling a little to make sure they are accelerating when they hit the bottom – and while that may sound counter intuitive, in working harder and smarter even when the industry is on the slide, well when the good times roll again, as surely they will – those who invest, innovate and push forward are able to emerge faster, smarter, fitter and better. ➤



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WHAT 2016 HOLDS FOR SHIPPING

As you might expect at this time of year, there have been many jostling to share their vision of the year ahead. From brokers to breakers, all have a view of where 2016 is headed.

LOOKING AHEAD

Given the slide of both oil and the Baltic Dry Index (BDI), it seems that the usual pushes and pulls of global demand and supply are shaping shipping.

One of the biggest drivers of trade has been the Chinese appetite for and production of steel – and so the bulk market will be concerned with the news from BIMCO that the global production of steel dropped in 2015 compared to 2014, as China exported its surplus of steel to destinations across the globe.

Going forward, the Chinese steel industry is set to grow its global market share, currently at 50%. Depending on domestic steel consumption in China, use of domestically mined iron ore and profitability in the steel industry, the dry bulk market will be impacted.

BIMCO forecasts coal imports into both India and China will go down in 2016, following the trend of 2015. Volume losses into India in 2015 were not originally predicted. BIMCO expects transported volumes to diminish.

CONSOLIDATING THE MARKET

Consolidation is a feature that can be expected to continue across various different sections of the shipping industry as companies' battle with difficult markets and those with deep pockets see opportunities to grow. Junichero Ikeda, CEO of Mitsui OSK Lines, stated there were "few prospects for recovery". It is a less than cheery prospect.

One of the defining factors of 2015 was the sharp drop in the oil price, which has mixed blessing for shipowners. Certainly it means lower operating costs. Looking into 2016 a combination of weak demand and a continued oversupply of vessels gives very little reason for optimism. Which is why a record Ship Breaking Year is forecast.

Both BIMCO and Clarkson agree that this year will be a record one for shipbreaking volumes. "With an expected tidal wave of tonnage on the horizon, it would appear that the market has still not reached a 'bottom' level. We have already seen about ten Panamax and Capesize units sold for recycling this year, and it looks like 2016 could be another record breaker," shipbroker Clarkson said in a weekly report.

The BIMCO market report states 2016 will see dry bulk vessels, with a capacity of 40m dwt set to be sold for demolition. The market needs a lot less ships to make a few more dollars. As if to prove the point, the scrapping of the 74,000 deadweight tonnage (dwt) Panamax dry bulk vessel "MV Diamond Seas", which was built only 15 years ago, is a sign that all Panamax vessels 10 years or older will be demolished earlier than expected.

FLYING THE FLAG

2016 looks set to be a momentous year for flag States. It seems that finally the Marshall Islands ship registry (RMI Registry) may overhaul Liberia to become the second largest flag in the world after Panama.

The flag, administered by Virginia-headquartered International Registries, Inc (IRI), celebrated becoming the largest flag in Greece in November last year, and they have not sat back.

For IRI, surpassing Liberia is a particularly sweet moment: the company quit managing the Liberian flag in 2000, moving to operate the Marshall Islands. Commented Bill Gallagher, president of IRI, "If growth patterns remain the same, it is anticipated that the RMI Registry will move from the third to the second largest worldwide."

QUALITY CONCERNS AND CUTS

As the depression in shipping continues into 2016, the quality of the global fleet is likely to come under pressure, a leading name in marine insurance warns in an interview.

"We recognise that the current shipping market is challenging, and that shipowners have to be able to earn a return on their considerable investment in vessels," says Ståle Hansen, president and CEO of P&I Club Skuld.

"Because of this," he warns, "some may struggle to keep standards at the level they prefer. Looking ahead, the challenge will be exacerbated if the volume of world trade is insufficient to provide shipowners with adequate income."

With the market already struggling, the idea of increased accidents and incidents leading to claims is a troubling one. But there are signs that companies are cutting corners. The final Crewtoo Seafarer's Happiness

Index for 2015 has claimed that seafarers are expressing concerns that budgets are being cut for spare parts, and that is having an effect on safety.

LIGHT AT THE END

While the light at the end of the tunnel may well be a train, for Maersk they believe it is a sign that they may be emerging from tough times.

According to the big blue, container volumes have picked up already this year after the market suffered from sluggish growth and overcapacity in 2015, according to the chief executive officer of A.P. Moeller-Maersk A/S.

"At the beginning of this year, things look a little bit better," Nils Smedegaard Andersen said in a recent interview. "We do expect the Asia to Europe business to develop better this year."

Maersk's container line, the world's largest, suffered last year from a toxic cocktail of too many vessels just as global trade sagged. While the industry still needs to address overcapacity, the demand side looks better, Andersen said.

IMPORTANT YEAR AHEAD

That we may be seeing some small green shoots (or blue ones) of recovery in some sectors is heart-warming. Especially as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is set to celebrate how important shipping is for the world.

The new theme for 2016's World Maritime Day is "Indispensable shipping" to reflect the impossibility of sustaining world trade without it. Speaking last

month at the launch announcement, the new IMO secretary general Kitack Lim reminded the audience that, "no country, no society, can be self-sufficient – the need to export, to import, to trade, is universal. As a result, shipping – as the only truly cost-effective, energy-efficient and sustainable means of transporting goods and commodities in bulk – has become truly indispensable to the world."

Lim further highlighted the widespread ignorance of seaborne trade and its importance in the global economy. World Maritime Day will be 29 September 2016, so get your party poppers in ready.

NOT THIS YEAR

What we are unlikely to see this year is unmanned ships – while Google, et al are busy trying to bring unmanned cars to our roads, it seems that going without seafarers may be a stretch too far for now.

A recent report from the International Union of Marine Insurers (IUMI) lays out many of the obstacles facing shipping's quest for unmanned vessels. The report by Frédéric Denèfle, insurance director at CESAM & GAREX, and IUMI's legal and liability committee chairman, admits: "Unmanned ships are no longer just a fantasy."

Nevertheless, this technological breakthrough will need huge changes in mindsets and rules from many different bodies, IUMI noted. "The most important pillar for a marine insurer regarding ship security is the quality of crew on board," Denèfle wrote. The concept of an unmanned vessel does not fit with the traditional known approach of the shipowner's legal commitment, they added.

However, with 80% of all accidents supposedly laid at the door of the "human element", perhaps that huge change in mindset is overdue?



MAPPING THE SECURITY RISKS AHEAD



IHS Country Risk recently released a report into what it perceives to be the major risk environments of 2016, and assessed their likely impact and key indicators for change.

NEW COLD WAR

According to the IHS researchers, “The new cold war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the rising threat from the Islamic State, the potential for more protests in Egypt and contract risks in Iran are all risks for businesses operating in the region.”

The report states that in 4 of the 10 risk hot spots for 2016 there are major potential disruptions for trade and shipping – from political, terrorism, security and legal risk perspectives. We look at the key areas which will likely cause security problems for the maritime industry in the year ahead.

PERSIAN GULF

In the Persian Gulf, IHS believes the emergence of Islamic State in Saudi Arabia and a revived terrorist campaign there poses risks of the country being used as a launching pad to expand the group’s activities and recruitment elsewhere in the region, especially in Kuwait and Bahrain. With increased tensions with Iran, it seems that tanker traffic in the region could be threatened.

SUEZ CANAL AND MEDITERRANEAN

There are concerns too for the Suez Canal and traffic passing through. According to the report, Egypt’s military-backed government is wrestling with a string of security and economic challenges – there are risks that protests may emerge, and once again this could impact Suez movements in the year ahead.

In a separate report, it has been claimed there is a “Critical Threat State” now raised for Hijacking & Kidnapping in both the Mediterranean Sea & the Suez Canal. The intelligence suggests that Daesh/ISIS is going to attempt to hijack either a large Cruise Liner or a vessel with the intent on apparently, “using the boat to ram a port”.

There is also information indicating that ISIS may try to “weaponize” any chemicals on-board the vessel to create a “Dirty Bomb” on impact with the Port. In the past bulk carriers carrying fertilizer have been primary targets for such attempts.

NATO is aware of the fact that Daesh wants to create a maritime arm and use the Mediterranean to freely travel along the North African seaboard, target maritime trade and oil platforms, and control the maritime access, according to a senior UK naval officer. “We know they have had ambitions to go off shore, we know they would like to have a maritime arm, just as Al Qaeda had a maritime arm,” UK Vice Admiral Clive Johnstone stated last month.

EUROPE

Europe is not immune from concern for shipping - the record-high influx of refugees continues to place the EU under significant strain, with protests, inter-EU political disputes and a revision of Schengen likely in 2016. A heightened risk of terrorist attacks will add to Europe’s challenging outlook.

Disruption to ground, rail, and marine cargo in the EU and its neighbouring countries as a direct result of the refugee crisis is likely to continue in 2016, causing delays to cargo and disruption to supply chains.

Any doubts as the effects of migration on shipping were clearly seen last month when migrants, refugees and asylum seekers – apparently prompted by a group of UK based anarchists, stormed a cross channel ferry. Around 50 migrants occupied P&O ferry “Spirit of Britain”, with a reported 500 gaining access to the harbour.

This prompted the authorities to close the port of Calais, and with lorries running an almost constant gauntlet of migrants attempting to board them – it seems that this issue will be a presence through the year ahead.

NIGERIA

In West Africa the honeymoon period for Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari appears to be over, and his administration faces a daunting series of security and economic challenges in 2016. Indeed, the former head of Nigerian Merchant Navy Officers and Water Transportation Senior Staff Association, has urgently called on the Government to urgently tackle the increasing cases of sea robbery in the Niger Delta.

Despite President Buhari giving his new security chiefs until December 2015 to eliminate the threat posed by terror group “Boko Haram”, the Islamist militant group has continued to stage regular suicide bombing attacks aimed at causing mass casualties, and the faction, led by Abubakar Shekau, is likely to receive increased support from the Islamic State. Even the supposedly defunct MEND terror group has re-emerged in some guises. The collapse in the oil price means Buhari has greatly reduced resources at his disposal as he attempts to boost fading GDP growth.

With a strong enemy and weakened resources, it seems that security in Nigeria is facing major challenges. Add to this the instability from the “old guard” being ousted when the new President assumed power, and there are some worrying signs of conflict ahead. This is indicated by the arraignment of former Director-General of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Patrick Akpobolokemi, on 13 counts of alleged fraud and theft.

SOMALIA

Perhaps the major concern surrounds the onshore and maritime security environment Somalia. According to the report, the pirates that thrived in Somalia were reliant on the support of regional political leaders. These politicians were willing to provide safe havens for hijacked ships during lengthy ransom negotiations, and played a pivotal role in the process.

There are real concerns that the conditions which led regional politicians to provide that support, namely a

lack of alternative economic opportunities and a threat to their control of their territory, are currently being recreated in the Galmudug region of central Somalia.

Indeed, there are also concerns that Somali pirates have developed a lucrative new racket - acting as armed “escorts” to foreign trawlers that steal the country’s fish. In a striking case of poacher-turned-gamekeeper, the same armed gangs who once preyed on the trawlermen are now acting as their bodyguards, earning huge “protection fees” in return for letting them poach Somalia’s rich fishing stocks.

ASIA

Southeast Asia could see maritime terrorism incidents this year, a leading maritime security expert has said. Kevin Doherty, president of Nexus Consulting, said: “We think 2016 may see its first maritime terrorism attack in a while”, as a number of terrorists are being released from Indonesia after bombings in the early 2000s.

While terrorism may be set to grow in the region, the old problem of piracy keeps reappearing. At the time of writing, the general cargo ship “Jaya Makmur I” had been missing in the Malacca Strait for days.

The ship left the Port Klang in Malaysia and headed on the relatively short transit to North Sumatra, but disappeared from the radars and has no VHF communication. Local authorities have started an investigation and warned all the vessels in vicinity to be cautious for the missing general cargo ship. Among the presumed scenarios by the police are pirates hijacking, or theft of cargo with assistance from the crew.

There has also been reports that pirates are believed to be disguising themselves as marine officers in attempts to fool local authorities and to make it easier to trick their way onto vessels. Marine Police said the imposters have been boarding vessels and extorting cash while also taking valuables. Pirates have reportedly been seen wearing what resembled Indonesian marine police uniforms.



KEEPING SECURE WHEN ASHORE

The recent attack by terrorists on a bus in Saudi Arabia shuttling Saudi Aramco workers to an oil refinery has sparked fears that seafarers could be targeted when they are ashore. A lot of effort goes into protecting vessels, but how much thought goes into protecting the crew, especially ashore? Threats at sea have been well documented, but dangers in port are equally, if not more common.

WISING UP

There are many ports the world over in which seafarers can very easily find themselves in danger. The Caribbean is traditionally seen as one of the more dangerous destinations. In Jamaica and Antigua, for instance, it's not unusual to hear of crew members being robbed, assaulted and even killed. While in the back streets of Barcelona and Marseille, muggings are worryingly commonplace.

So, while seafarers might be well drilled on dangers at sea, they are often not as well informed as they could be in terms of safety ashore, despite its obvious importance.

Liability for employees whilst travelling (i.e. crew members) is currently a hot topic internationally in light of several high-profile air disasters. So there is pressure on employers to act as guardians, ensuring their crew's welfare.

It is vitally important that employers access the latest guidance possible... not only because of their duty of care, but because looking after your people is the right and professional thing to do.

It is not enough to simply consider how things are meant to work out – there needs to be attention given to what can go wrong and how contingency plans can be managed and applied.

POTENTIAL RISKS

Seafarers need to remain clued up on potential hazards, and should be trained and briefed of the ever present dangers in certain countries; simple advice could save the lives of crew should they be unfortunate enough to get into a situation.

There are very few nations or regions in which crime, instability, and terrorism are not a concern

for shipping. Seafarers can often suffer on the rare opportunities they have shore leave, or when leaving or joining a ship.

It is not just seafarers, of course, there are many professionals and employees who would be potentially under threat when entering certain areas.

Even surveyors can be targeted – and the murder of a marine shipping surveyor, killed in Yemen by fraudsters involved in a disputed piracy attack, shows all parts of the shipping chain can be vulnerable.

GOING ASHORE

Going ashore or arriving in a new unfamiliar country to join a vessel is a time of vulnerability – and it is then that seafarers are actually under most threat of attack or of being robbed, duped or taken for a ride.

Wherever seafarers go, there is always some form of threat. In some places there are obvious and well known risks and there are precautions that everyone should take. While elsewhere the problems can be unknown and unexpected.

The International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA) has given this issue a lot of thought, and their “Security Taskforce” has produced guidance on the matter. The thrust of the advice is that wherever employees are going, before leaving, during the journey and while there it is important that both company and personnel alike take necessary measures.

Key to this is to have an update threat profile of the ports or areas visited. All too many ship security plans stop at the gangway – but that is not where the threats are limited to. So it is vital to find out what can go wrong, and what can be done to make sure it doesn't.

NO COMPLACENCY

The feeling of complacency that can kick in once seafarers have left the ship is a danger, and needs to be managed.

Once personnel leave the ship, or before joining there needs to be a means of making people aware, vigilant and wary – without unduly putting people off going ashore.

Perhaps the most potent philosophy is for seafarers to expect the unexpected. Wariness and vigilance are vital when it comes to safety and security.

Accepting that bad things can happen, and being on guard against them is a really fundamental starting point.

Being aware and wary, are parts of a useful defensive mind-set, and this can help massively in potentially dangerous or threatening places.

Even during seemingly harmless interactions “situational awareness” is important. The need to maintain situational awareness extends to every minute personnel finds themselves in unfamiliar, or potentially dangerous conditions.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Whether walking down a street, riding a bus or taxi, or shopping in a crowded market it is important for seafarers to keep their wits about them. This could save their valuables, cash or bag – but maybe even their life.

If you look like you know what you're doing and where you are going you are a lot less likely to be targeted. Confidence is key, it is important that seafarers understand the importance of not appearing to be easy target!

Companies should issue advice and guidance to staff – and they should stress the importance of research, and of understanding the nature of where they are visiting. They need to be aware of the best ways of moving around, and even the security issues related to hotels.

It can be all too easy for personnel to stand out and be all too visible – so this too needs to be considered. Where say oil companies are operating in potentially sensitive areas, then personnel bedecked in logos and company polo shirts may be asking for trouble. There needs to be a common sense approach to personal and personnel security –and it is important that risks are understood and effectively managed.

A MATTER OF PRESTIGE

The decision by Spain's Supreme Court to reverse an earlier verdict acquitting the Greek captain of the tanker "Prestige" is one which has left many across the shipping industry once again bemoaning criminalisation of seafarers.

CAPTAIN SENTENCED

Spain's Supreme Court last month sentenced Apostolos Mangouras, the captain of the "Prestige" tanker, which sank off Spain's northwestern coast in 2002, to two years in prison in a ruling that could have very damaging ramifications for a UK-based insurer.

Mangouras was convicted of recklessness resulting in catastrophic environmental damage, according to a statement by the court, overturning a previous sentence which cleared him of criminal responsibility. The Prestige sinking saw roughly 63,000 tonnes of bunker fuel wash up along the Galicia coast.

The Prestige case found the master guilty despite the unique nature of the case which saw the vessel refused permission to dock by Spanish, Portuguese and French authorities after a storm had damaged one of its fuel tanks. It eventually split in two and sank some 250 miles off the coast.

The new ruling could see damage claims against the captain and the insurer, the London P&I Club, with one prosecutor calling for more than EUR4bn. The decision has been slammed by many across the shipping industry.

VOICES BEING HEARD

Responding to the Spanish Supreme Court's decision to sentence Captain Apostolos Mangouras to two years imprisonment over the spill, ITF seafarers' section chair Dave Heindel commented: "This decision represents the dying gasps of a 14-year-old attempt to deflect blame onto the shoulders of an octogenarian man, who has been cleared in the court of world opinion and by his peers.

Thankfully it is likely to be as unenforceable as it is illogical. This innocent man cannot again be made to sit needlessly in jail."

Mangouras was convicted of recklessness resulting in catastrophic environmental damage.

InterManager called for the court to reverse the decision, as sentence which they felt to be "abhorrent" and "totally unfair". Gerardo Borromeo, president of

InterManager, said he was hugely disappointed by the court ruling and said it set a very worrying precedent as far as the role and responsibility for masters in certain jurisdictions.

While Peter Swift, the former managing director of Intertanko, said the decision was an, "utter travesty of justice". He called for all those who stood together in protest over the previous treatment of this man stand up to be counted again.

INDUSTRY SUPPORT

There are many across shipping who have long felt that Captain Mangouras, far from being a criminal was acting as a professional, skilled and experienced seafarer should. He was trying to save his vessel, in the face of terrible weather, structural failures and failings too in the response from those who should have been assisting.

The effect on the local environment was nothing short of a disaster, and the spilling of oil into the sea and onto pristine beaches is catastrophic – for people,



livelihoods, wildlife and the economy. However, lest we forget two wrongs do not make a right. In seeking to criminalise a master who was seeking to avert the break-up of his vessel, and was desperately seeing refuge, it seems that there has been a cruel backlash against an innocent man.

Maritime pollution poses coastal States a difficult challenge. The political angles, the calls from local media and pressure from affected communities can see knee-jerk reactions, and the finger of blame all too easily and often falls on the ship's crew, particularly the master.

There was always felt to be a cruel irony in the case of the Prestige – when the vessel was initially in trouble, Mangouras desperately sought refuge, and fought to keep the vessel in one piece. The Spanish authorities denied these requests, as did Portugal and France, and sent the vessel out to sea – perhaps thinking that the problem would vanish over the horizon.

DAMNING DECISION

The decision by the Spanish (and other nations) to turn the "Prestige" away, in effect condemned the crippled vessel, adrift in mounting seas, to break up.

With the result that same oil the authorities perhaps thought could be sent away, found its way back. The spill relentlessly returning to the bays and shelter of the shore, the same places which could have saved the vessel, had refuge been granted.

So today we see that Mangouras, a man whose bravery saved his crew in stormy seas, is once more considered a criminal. The shipping industry recognises his skill and dedication, indeed Lloyd's List made Mangouras the "Shipmaster of the Year" in 2004, but what about the wider public?

It is to be hoped people may be able to see through the judgment, to recognise that the unfair, unjust and unjustifiable scapegoating of honest, dedicated, seafarers solves nothing. Sadly though, despite conventions and industry lobbying, the creeping trend of criminalisation will likely continue, and that should be a major concern for all.

EUROPEAN ACTION

Perhaps ironically, coming around the time of this Spanish ruling, the European Commission has presented new EU Operational guidelines for ships in need of assistance.



The guidelines were developed as a Commission initiative in the aftermath of the fatal "MSC Flaminia" accident in summer 2012.

The German-flagged containership "MSC Flaminia" was rocked by a series of explosions in one its cargo holds and a devastating fire while in international waters in the Atlantic Ocean. Three crew died, and the ship suffered severe damage from the fire. Due to the hazard, the ship was stuck at sea for months and denied port access by nearly every possible EU country before Germany finally agreed to accept the ship.

The incident ignited a debate over a "Place of Refuge", where a ship in need of assistance can go to reduce the hazards to navigation, as well as to protect human life and the environment. In the aftermath of the "MSC Flaminia" incident, an expert group was established in 2013 under the chairmanship of the Commission to develop EU Operational Guidelines to complement national plans and apply to situations where it is likely that more than one State may become involved, or where the incident falls outside the jurisdiction of any single Member State.

The EU operational guidelines were drafted to ensure better coordination and exchange of information among competent authorities and industry stakeholders involved in the response to an incident concerning a ship in need of assistance, such as the "MSC Flaminia" in July 2012 and oh yes, the "Prestige".

NEW YEAR, NEW SEAFARER PROBLEMS

With the seemingly relentless rise of “unmanned” ships capturing attention, we could perhaps be forgiven for forgetting that seafarers are still needed. Thankfully new figures suggest that people wanting to go to sea still have faith in maritime careers.

UNEXPECTED RISE

According to figures released last month, UK Seafarer statistics show a slight overall increase of 2% from 2015, rising to 23,380 at the end of June 2015. Despite the ray of hope the slight rise suggests, UK Chamber CEO, Guy Platten, still feels that decisive action will be necessary to ensure future growth.

The figures show: The total number of UK seafarers active at sea was estimated to be 23,380. The number of UK officers remained at 10,930 - largely unchanged from 2014. The total number of UK Ratings rose by 5% to around 8,830 – the first increase in the number of ratings since 2011.

While the present supply of qualified seafarers may have edge higher, unfortunately the same cannot be said for cadets. The number of officer cadets in training remained static at around 2000, with a small increase of new entrants under the SMarT scheme. So there is much work still to be done.

WHO IS A SEAFARER

Given the statistics from the UK, one could be forgiven for asking whether they have included any privately contracted armed security personnel (PCASP) in the figures. The “armed guards” have had something of a rough ride – initially it was thought they would naturally be assumed to be “seafarers”, but others had different ideas.

The result being that many guards have been held in some form of limbo – not universally defined as seafarers, and not being able to access discharge books – so unable to take advantage of benefits, but finding it all too easily to be criminalised when things go awry.

The issue of the guards onboard “Seaman Guard Ohio” are a case in point. The crew of 25 private security personnel and 10 seafarers were jailed for five years by an Indian court last month. This was deemed to be particularly harsh on a group of British guards, who have long been proclaiming their innocence.

Thankfully it has now been announced that the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) is to fund an appeal on behalf of the crew who were sentenced to “rigorous imprisonment” for illegally entering Indian waters with weapons in October 2013.

SEAFARER ABANDONMENT

The company linked to the “Seaman Guard Ohio” case has come in for much vocal criticism. Despite their protestations to the contrary, it does appear the crew were in essence abandoned by their employer. There have been strong allegations that the owner did not pay wages or accommodation, or provide any support.

This is something the company has seemingly been keen to blame on their insurer – but that doesn’t even begin to really capture the truth that employers should not be able to simply turn tail and flee, leaving their own people to face the consequences of their actions.

Abandonment has been a worrying trend in the maritime security sector – and even with a new part of the industry, it is usually seafarers who bear the brunt of the problem – to such an extent that Lloyd’s List Middle East and Indian Subcontinent Awards recently recognised the stoic bravery of one seafarer who had spent two and half years abandoned in port on an anti-piracy vessel.

Filipino seafarer Zaude Paolo Bandivas was named “Seafarer of the Year” at a ceremony held in the Armani Hotel Dubai. The Seafarer of the Year Award recognizes skill, bravery and professionalism displayed on a daily basis. The award celebrates instances of leadership, courage and vision while serving at sea. It is a recognition of seafarers whose tireless dedication is essential for the maritime industry.

STOPPING BULLYING

Even when seafarers are not abandoned, there are a host of issues which face them – and it seems 2016 is a year in which new challenges are being recognised and faced. One such area is mistreatment and victimisation at sea.



International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) have published new guidelines that aim to reduce bullying and harassment at sea. The guidance document gives advice on how to implement company policy on reporting, complaints and grievance procedures related to incidents of bullying and harassment.

Seafarers have the right not to be discriminated against while working onboard vessels, and governments are required by the International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) to ensure their regulations uphold this right.

This mirrors a whole raft of new work areas which are changing the ways in which life at sea is perceived. The charity Human Rights at Sea has been working to promote the rights of everyone – regardless of their race, background and sexual orientation. There is no seafarer who deserves less than the best. That is the clear message.

MAKING A CLEAN CUT

Alas not all have a united view on what seafarers should or shouldn’t be provided with. The NORTH P&I Club recently bemoaned the fact that connected seafarers, with the internet and access to home are experiencing “domestic problems”.

Tony Baker, Loss Prevention Director said, “For some seafarers, having easy access to friends, family and their ongoing domestic problems could lead to increased anxiety compared to the traditional clean break of departure.” Now that may or may not be true – and let’s face it even receiving a letter from home back in the day could set off a chain of woe and misery. Many a seafarer has received a “Dear John (or Janet)” letter and felt their world crumble.

It seems a tad mean spirited, if not patronising to think that seafarers should be denied access that the rest of the world takes for granted, because they may argue with their partner or worry about the gas bill. It is one thing to highlight a problem – we can all do that, but it is harder to find solutions.

Perhaps owners should be working with their people AND their families to help them find the coping mechanisms to deal with physical disconnection, but virtual contact. The answer is not in denying access, it is in changing the culture of their exchanges – making sure that people are equipped not just technically to communicate, but emotionally to deal with the implications. Industry needs to provide the best technical support for seafarers, but also physical and emotional too – wellbeing is a long term commitment – it is not about pulling the plug on our people.

NEWS ROUNDUP

THESE ARE SOME OF THE OTHER STORIES WHICH LEAPT OUT AT US LAST MONTH.

Tailored Training Needs: Demand is growing from shipowners for more non-regulatory training for seafarers and simulators that specifically match their own bridge equipment, according to Transas. “It is fair to say that STCW is not really keeping up with requirements,” Neil Bennett, vice president of Transas Americas, said at its Simulation User Conference in Singapore on Tuesday. Bennett noted there was more demand for non-regulatory training such as DP2 courses. Owners are also increasingly not content to train their seafarers on generic simulators and Bennett said there had been a growth in demand for type specific training.

<http://goo.gl/tDuUAu>

Yacht A Lot of Trouble: The 3,000 gt megayacht “Tatoosh” and her crew stand accused of damaging 14,000 square feet of protected coral reefs in the Cayman Islands due to a dragged anchor, local authorities claim. Divers surveyed the reef last week to determine the extent of the damage, and they reportedly found that 80 percent of the coral in the affected area had been destroyed. A Department of the Environment spokesman told local media that “in addition to assessing the damage and determining the cause of this incident, we are also paying close attention to lessons learned so that we can more effectively prevent these accidents.

<http://goo.gl/YdofkZ>

All Change on Ownership: Many of the dry bulk industry’s largest vessels, such as the Capesize vessel have undergone new ownership, according to Shipping Watch. Companies that specialise in dry bulk, such as Star Bulk Carriers and Scorpio Bulkers, are among some of the sellers. Denmark’s Norden sold ‘Nord-Energy’, which was the last of its Capesize carriers. Amit Mehrotra, an Analyst at Deutsche Bank, said: “For example, there are over 240 dry bulk ships over 100,000 DWT that are 15 years of age or older. “This equates to 47 million on a DWT basis, which is over 15% of the 100,000+ DWT fleet.

<https://goo.gl/6TuR7f>

Salvage Concepts Change: Whether driven by treasure hunting or environmental protection, the days of forgotten wrecks, even at great depths, is past. It seems like every month we see reports of long-lost maritime wrecks being discovered on the ocean bottom and treasures being salvaged from great depths. We also hear regularly of oil being recovered from sunken wrecks. There is now no practical limit to the ability to recover objects from the sea floor, regardless of depth, currents, weather, or other obstacles. The only existing obstacle seems to be financing - and costs are decreasing regularly.

<http://goo.gl/nqjErv>

El Faro Families Settle: The families of 10 crew members who died when the cargo ship El Faro sank near the Bahamas last year have agreed to take \$500,000 each to settle pending lawsuits against the vessel’s owner, TOTE Maritime Puerto Rico. The settlement, filed in a federal court in Florida, covers less than a third of the 33 crew members who perished after the ship went missing Oct. 1 during Hurricane Joaquin. Cases involving the others presumably remain pending. TOTE spokesman Mike Hanson said the agreement is part of the company’s attempt to reach “fair and swift legal settlements for those who may choose them.”

<http://goo.gl/AggS2a>

Regional Piracy Responsibility: All Asean maritime security agencies are duty-bound to look after security not only of their nations’ territorial waters but also the whole region. This view was shared by the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) director-general Datuk Ahmad Puzi Ab Kahar and Thailand’s Royal Navy Region Two commander Phonchai Pinthong. In a media statement issued by MMEA in conjunction with the meeting, both were of the view that information sharing between neighbouring nations could strengthen their respective security.

<http://goo.gl/5oNsSN>

New Tanker Piracy Guide: Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) has published a useful guide against piracy and armed robbery involving oil cargo, for tankers operating in the region. The guide includes check-lists to assist ships to avoid, deter or delay such incidents. A copy of the guide can be accessed through the following link and is bound to make both interesting and useful reading.

<http://goo.gl/3tQSO0>

Box Traffic Falls in Singapore: The container turnover at the port of Singapore fell for the first time since 2009 to a four-year low in 2015, largely led by a slump in Asia-Europe volumes, Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore said. The annual container throughput fell 8.7 percent from the record level in the previous year to 30.9 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units), according to the preliminary data cited by the agency. Rebalancing of volumes across container shipping alliances agreements, and an increase in direct sailing due to lower oil prices also contributed to the decreasing volume at the world’s second-busiest container port, after Shanghai, said the MPA.

<http://goo.gl/j4yj71>

IMO Set to Release Free Training: The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has announced the release of a complete package of training materials on IMO’s energy efficiency requirements, which are now available for free download online. The IMO says the training package will be of interest to those looking to understand chapter 4 in Annex VI of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), as well as the regulations’ technical and operational implications for ship designers, shipbuilders, companies, and seafarers. The training materials cover topics including Climate Change and the Shipping Response, Ship Energy Efficiency.

[http://](http://goo.gl/8Rle4H)

goo.gl/8Rle4H

IMO Calls for Partnerships: The new secretary-general of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Lim Kitack, has called for “strengthened partnerships” in his inaugural address. The Korean, who becomes the eighth IMO boss since its founding, started a four-year term at IMO in London this January 1. “IMO currently faces an array of issues,” Lim said. “My vision,” he added, “is one of strengthened partnerships – between developing and developed countries, between governments and industry, between IMO member states and regions.” Lim said he would also endeavour to strengthen communication between the maritime industry and the general public.

<http://goo.gl/ASFWIZ>

Committing to Piracy Progress: Oceans beyond Piracy (OBP) remains committed to three priority areas that will guide their efforts in the coming year, says a press release from the company. First - a comprehensive solution to maritime piracy requires an inclusive, long-term approach. Second - Seafarers and fishermen are those most affected by violence at sea. We seek increased security for them by improving incident reporting, ensuring basic training for those in high-risk areas, and ensuring post-incident support. Third - Piracy and armed robbery at sea are being addressed, but are not solved. The international community must remain ready for a rapid re-engagement.

<http://goo.gl/hzRsnx>

Terrorist Tanker Hijack: Terrorists have reportedly hijacked a foreign tanker off Bakassi Peninsula in Nigeria. The group boarded the tanker from two fast boats and took control locking the crew in the mess room. The terrorists gave 31 days ultimatum for the local authorities to release Nnamdi Kanu, leader of Indigenous People of Biafra. The ship’s name and nationality was not released, but after hijacking the vessel headed to Nigerian delta in unknown direction. The terrorists threatened that they would blow up the vessel with the seamen onboard if their leader is not released.

<http://goo.gl/IZ1JgP>

Tanker Robbed in Port: In the port of Kandla, India, the Croatian product tanker “Pomer” was boarded by six armed pirates. Thanks to timely action by her crew, the attackers were kept out on deck, where they made off with nuts and firefighting equipment. “The material damage, due to rapid and professional response of the crew, [was limited to] part of the deck fire-fighting equipment and the butterfly nuts on the lids of the tanks,” said Dragutin Pavleti, director of the ship’s operator, Uljanik Plovidba. No crew were injured in the twenty-minute incident, and the pirates fled after taking the deck fixtures. The apparent motive in the attack was robbery.

<http://goo.gl/FgY34R>

Shipping Emissions Need Curbing: The Paris climate agreement’s target of limiting global warming well below 2°C will be impossible without measures to curb shipping’s greenhouse gas emissions, MEPs claim. Including shipping CO2 in the EU’s emissions trading system (ETS) or having the sector contribute to a climate compensation fund were the options on the table, they said. MEPs from four political groups – the conservatives (EPP), the socialists (S&D), the liberals (ALDE) and the left-wing GUE – said the revision of the EU ETS, currently underway, needs to include shipping emissions in the EU 2030 climate target and contribute to meeting the Paris limits.

<http://goo.gl/sQnAcw>

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