

SEACURUS BULLETIN

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PIRACY CONTINUES TO PERSIST

ACCIDENTS KEEP HAPPENING | CONTAINER SHIPPING HOGS HEADLINES | CRIMINALISING SHIP DEFICIENCIES



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> Welcome once more to another issue of Seacurus Monthly, a look at the major issues which have emerged in the past month and which are likely to shape the industry moving forward.

Inside this issues, we assess how accidents keep happening, and ask how can change be brought about? We also analyse the latest piracy and maritime security incidents. Nigeria has seen a worrying rise in hijackings last month – and while experts predicted that a lower oil price would deter pirates, it seems to have simply spurred them to look at non-petro targets.

Last month saw an impassioned plea from a ship's welfare chaplain, who was sick of seeing terrible things onboard ship, but without any punishment being meted out to those responsible. The question was asked as to when deficiencies on ships cross the threshold from being a civil wrong to a criminal offence?

This question is one that the shipping industry, port state authorities and law enforcement agencies must seriously consider when it comes to the welfare of seafarers.

We also bring you the latest guidance for the shipping industry on the terrifying and rapid rise of the Zika virus. Seafarers are particularly vulnerable, given

Welcome

the places they visit – and the ITF has been warning of the consequences of coming into contact with infected mosquitoes.

We have also seen new developments with regards to the ongoing tanker ban saga in Nigeria. The Norwegian maritime insurer Gard has released an alert over a revised "Letter of Comfort" regarding the banning of tankers in Nigerian waters, which has been issued by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Gard says the revised letter "addresses some earlier concerns" but suggests "problems remain."

It has been a busy month for container vessels with a number managing to get themselves in all manner of trouble. We look at the spate of accidents, incidents, groundings and collisions, and ponder what has gone wrong.

Elsewhere in the industry, the UK is to hold a referendum on European Union membership in June this year, and the battle lines are being drawn. The UK Chamber has even joined the debate, and CEO Guy Platten believes that while the EU is making little effort to stay competitive, the campaigns for Britain to leave lack a "clear, detailed alternative," for its businesses.

Business hates uncertainty, so it seems that increasingly shipping is seeing that it may be better served

within the EU, rather than outside. Mind you, given how quick it is to change flag, perhaps there are no real concerns.

Talk of changing flags brings us nicely to the latest industry infographic showing "Top 10 Shipowning Nations by Value" (USD Millions). The Top Ten in descending order are Greece, Japan, China, Germany, Singapore, USA, Norway, S Korea, Denmark and UK. You can see a fancy infographic from Vessels Values here <http://goo.gl/O2Zjga>

While allied to this assessment of the movers and shakers, there has recently been the annual overview of the performance of the world's ship registers by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), last month they published the Shipping Industry Flag State Performance Table for 2015/2016. You can see more detail on the report here <http://goo.gl/Ubt1bI>



Managing Director

Capt. Thomas Brown

ACCIDENTS KEEP HAPPENING

In an industry which is so safety and standards focused, we often seem to lose sight of the reasons behind shipping casualties – perhaps it is time to start looking at problems in a different way?

SEEING ACCIDENTS

The unfortunate incident of the car carrier “Modern Express”, recently adrift in the Bay of Biscay, shows that even in these days of ever more considerate management of vessel operations, accidents still can and will happen.

The definition of an accident includes the implication that the event was unforeseen and unforeseeable. But is this really the case? Analysis by data scientists working for the company Democrata Maritime, shows that the “Modern Express”, on this particular voyage, was statistically considerably more likely to suffer an insurance-claimable incident than the average.

Comparing voyages, ship types, ages, flags and a number of other data points over time and by voyage, Democrata Maritime showed that this voyage for this ship had an incident probability of 0.0008 compared to a standard risk of 0.0003.

SMALL NUMBERS, BIG EFFECT

These might seem like very small numbers, but the statistical difference is significant – and QED, the vessel ran into trouble.

According to Geoff Roberts, CEO of Democrata Maritime, this type of incident, while unfortunate, is not necessarily unpredictable in terms of probability. Algorithmic models exist which help the shipping and insurance industry to more accurately measure and insure against such risks.

In short, it is now possible to spot the warning signs of an accident at sea – and to potentially spot it before the worst does happen. Any movie fan would perhaps call this some form of “Minority Report” style approach to safety.

SPOT THE PROBLEMS

In the movie, Tom Cruise, plays a member of a special police unit which is able to arrest murderers

before they commit their crimes. The “PreCrime” police department, apprehends criminals based on foreknowledge provided by three psychics.

While few in shipping can claim to be psychic – it is clear that the past is a very reliable predictor for the future. While it may be difficult to predict a casualty or accident with certainty it is possible to identify characteristics or patterns of behaviour that can be used to assess risks and manage potentially dangerous situations in a more rigorous way.

The warning signs are always there – but the problem is we only see them with hindsight – and that is of little use. So any way of perhaps pragmatically assessing risk and then responding to it could be hugely significant and useful. Saving lives, the environment and money – these are things that could make a difference.

DEPRESSING READING

The sad fact is that even in an industry which is so regulated and managed, accidents keep happening. Mark Williams, a director of West of England P&I Club recently addressed the Nautical Institute in Cyprus – and his presentation revealed some shocking statistics which have emerged from this one insurer. According to Williams, the club has seen:

- 700 falls from height reported annually. Which means that almost twice daily seafarers or those working on ships are managing to fall over. Something which should be stopped.
- 800 back injuries, costing about US\$30 million a year.
- 600 injuries from flying objects, costing about US\$8 million per year.
- Line handling accidents, which cost on average more than US\$1 million a year.



As if to illustrate what can go wrong, there has been a rash of tragic accidents in the past month which show how dangerous life at sea can be, and of the vulnerabilities of crew.

Last month a 21-year-old man died after falling 25ft down the hatch of a cargo vessel berthed at a Rosneath shipyard. While in another incident, one crew member died and two were hospitalised after they inhaled poisonous fumes while cleaning cargo tanks on board the 7,704 dwt Palmali-managed 2007-built chemical tanker “Araz River”.

WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

The answer as to why these sorry figures are seemingly repeated year in, year out? Well, Williams believes that inadequate training and supervision are often the causes in personnel injury cases.

Despite the fact that the concept of modern “seamanship” is all about risk assessment, safety meetings and minutes, drills, incident and accident reports, near misses, and appraisals – we are resolutely failing to address the reality that accidents keep happening.

It seems that in a post-ISM Code world we are no better at preventing accidents, we are just better at reporting them.

Williams believes that there are too many lost opportunities when it comes to finding out what really happened and then closing out problems in a proper and effective manner.

REPORTS ARE WORTHLESS

The Club, according to Williams, considers that much of the information produced in accidents reports is worthless. Poorly prepared accident reports,

incorrect root cause analysis, and a failure to deal with long term “bad habits” make sure that accidents simply won’t go away.

The fact that we are failing to stem the rising tide of accidents and incidents, means that we are missing the opportunities to improve. Something which is seemingly related to the fact that seafarers and managers ashore do not have the right skills to identify problems and issues, nor to highlight solutions.

Perhaps, again, this is where the data has to be able to find answers where human frailties cannot? By stepping back from the subjective, and by solely crunching objective data – we can perhaps develop a proper system for managing risk.

AVOIDING INSANITY

Without a step change, we will simply see the same old problems blighting the industry ad infinitum. Einstein once said, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

By sending seafarers out to sea with the same weaknesses, on ships with the same problems inbuilt, and using equipment with the same inherent problems – then we are doing the same thing, over and over again. So unless insanity is prevalent, then we have to see that this will only bring the same results.

Results which see crew killed, vessels lost, cargoes damaged and the reputation of shipping besmirched. It is time then, surely, to begin looking at things differently, and of seeking to spot the problems using foresight, not shrugging in hindsight.

PIRACY CONTINUES TO PERSIST

Piracy and armed robbery is persisting at levels close to those in 2014, despite reductions in the number of ships hijacked and crew captured.

LATEST DATA

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) International Maritime Bureau's (IMB) annual piracy report shows a record of 246 incidents in 2015, one more than in 2014.

The number of vessels boarded rose 11% to 203, one ship was fired at, and a further 27 attacks were thwarted. Armed with guns or knives, pirates killed one seafarer and injured at least 14. Kidnapping - where crew are taken away and held for ransom - doubled from nine in 2014 to 19 in 2015, all the result of five attacks off Nigeria.

A total of 15 vessels were hijacked in 2015, down from 21 in 2014, while 271 hostages were held on their ships, compared with 442 in 2014. No hijackings were reported in the last quarter of 2015. IMB says one key factor in this recent global reduction was the drop in attacks against small fuel tankers around South East Asia's coasts, the last of which occurred in August 2015.

SOUTH EAST ASIAN GANGS

"IMB particularly commends the robust actions taken by the Indonesian and Malaysian authorities in the arrest and prosecution of two gangs that hijacked tankers. We also applaud the subsequent arrest of some of the alleged masterminds," said Pottengal Mukundan, Director of IMB.

However Mr Mukundan urged shipmasters to maintain strict anti-piracy and robbery watches. South East Asia still accounts for most of the world's incidents. Almost 55% of the region's attacks were against vessels underway compared to 37% in 2014. Most were aimed at low-level theft. IMB cites this rise on moving vessels as a cause for concern as it increases potential risks to the vessels and their crew.

The IMB report was also corroborated by the local anti-piracy watchdog ReCAAP. Which last month revealed an increase in piracy and armed robbery attacks against ships in Asia. According to ReCAAP, a total of nine incidents of armed robbery against ships were reported in Asia in January. Five were reported in the Gulf of Kutch, Kandla, and one in Visakhapatnam, India and other incidents were reported at Tianjin outer anchorage, China, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

NIGERIA OIL AND KIDNAPPINGS

Nigeria is a hotspot for violent piracy and armed robbery. Though many attacks are believed to go unrecorded, IMB received reports of 14 incidents, with nine vessels boarded. In the first of these, ten pirates armed with AK47 rifles boarded and hijacked a tanker and took all nine crewmembers hostage. They then transferred the fuel oil cargo into another vessel, which was taken away by two of the attackers. The Ghanaian navy dispatched a naval vessel to investigate as the tanker moved into its waters, then arrested the pirates on board.

Last month Bourbon Offshore confirmed the abduction of crew members from their vessel off Nigeria. The company said its vessel "Bourbon Liberty 251" came under attack Tuesday while off the coast of Nigeria. Two crew members are believed to have been abducted.

While the product tanker "Maximus" (ex-name: SP Brussels) was also taken by Nigerian pirates. This was seen as highlighting the growing risk of piracy in the region. Those of you with a good memory may recall that Maximus has had rather a torrid time. Under her previous name, she was hijacked twice – in 2012 and 2014.

West Africa also saw some surreal piracy action last month, as in a bizarre twist of fate, a U.S. led naval training exercise actually managed to capture a group of pirates. The pirates had taken over an oil tanker and immediately the exercise turned into a full on rescue mission. Navies tracked the hijacked tanker through waters off five countries before Nigerian naval forces stormed aboard amid a shootout that killed one of the pirates.

Last month also saw the hijacking of a Maersk Line-managed containership off the Nigerian coast. Singapore's Maritime and Port Authority (MPA) issued a statement that it received a report that the Singapore-registered containership "Safmarine Kuramo" was hijacked off the coast of Nigeria. Nigerian authorities secured the release of the vessel around 5 hours later. The vessel, which is owned by Maersk Group's Safmarine and managed by Maersk Line, was heading to Port Onne, Nigeria from Point Noire, Congo.

SOMALIA STILL RISKY

No Somali-based attacks were reported in 2015. Following a new 55% reduction in the industry-defined High Risk Area, IMB warns vessels transiting the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean to stay particularly vigilant.

The IMB explained: "Somalia remains a fragile state, and the potential for an attack remains high. It will only take one successful hijacking to undo all that has been done, and rekindle this criminal activity."

ATTACKS ELSEWHERE

Incidents in Vietnam surged from seven in 2014 to 27 in 2015. The main cause is low-level theft against vessels anchored in Vietnam, with 15 reports from around the port of Vung Tau alone.

In China four incidents were recorded in December 2015, the first in a long time. These include three thefts of bunker diesel oil from large bulk carriers off Tianjin, and one failed attempt to do the same.

Meanwhile, low-level incidents in Bangladesh dropped to 11 in 2015, from 21 in 2014.

NEW THREATS

According to a report last month, it is not necessarily the old traditional types of piracy which should be of concern – it is believed that pirates and smugglers on the high seas are embracing technology by using drones, satellite tracking and submarines to plan their daring raids.

With technology constantly improving and becoming more affordable, analysts have warned that pirates and traffickers could potentially develop their own drone air force.

Rather than just trying to outrun naval ships, pirates and drug smugglers may increasingly turn to GPS to track vessels, approach their targets using homemade submarines and use drones for surveillance. The warnings come from a report which outlines the future challenges facing those who fight illegal maritime activity.





CRIMINALISING SHIP DEFICIENCIES

When do deficiencies on ships cross the threshold from being a civil wrong to a criminal offence?

This question is one that the shipping industry, port state authorities and law enforcement agencies must seriously consider when it comes to the welfare of seafarers.

TACKLING REALITY GAP

Reverend Roger Stone from seafarers' charity Apostleship of the Sea (AoS) has rolled up the sleeves on his high-viz cassock to tackle what he feels is the reality gap in dealing with safety issues.

He wants to see action taken on deficiencies that clearly contravene health and safety regulations and human and statutory rights, and believes that those responsible should be punished and held to account.

Stone claims to have seen dreadful deficiencies on board ships, examples include galleys without food or drinking water, food unfit for human consumption, filthy shower and toilet areas, galleys with insect infestation, crew being forced to work without sufficient rest hours.

BEGGING THE QUESTION

Which begs the question, at what point does the level of deficiencies on ships cross the threshold from being a civil wrong to a criminal offence?

Stone, the AoS port chaplain for the south coast ports in England believes the shipping industry, port state authorities and law enforcement agencies must seriously consider this issue when it comes to the welfare of seafarers,

While port state authorities have the power to detain a ship for deficiencies, Stone has urged for more serious penalties to be handed out. "Surely there must be a point when what is a civil offence becomes a criminal one, especially in cases where abuse and modern slavery is suspected," said Stone.

He added, "It is therefore so important if someone sees something wrong, that they don't keep it to themselves but share information with the authorities so that appropriate action can be taken without delay; so any deficiencies can be remedied and if there is anybody in trouble they can be helped immediately and not just put on a record or a database for next time."

BATTLING CONVENTION

Maritime conventions and legislation, such as the ISM Code and MLC have been painted as a panacea for safety, quality and social issues within shipping – however, it seems that they are not working.

There are still accidents, there are still companies which turn a blind eye to what goes on onboard, and there are seafarers suffering. So it seems that the good Reverend has a point. Perhaps it is time to develop a response in which deficiencies do trigger an enhanced response, and where companies fall down on their commitments – perhaps there is scope to ensure that any discrepancies or non-conformities are cross referenced against criminal legislation and even human rights provisions.

Under such an enhanced regime, failings would trigger an appropriate response which is cross referenced against criminal law, and whether there are wider social or human rights transgressions.

Where abuses are identified, then inspectors or ship visitors should be confident and comfortable in escalating the case and responding to the needs of those onboard. While the guilty parties should face proper and effective levels of sanction and deterrent.

SUBSTANDARD VESSELS

There are so many examples of sub-standard vessels still trading, and seafarers onboard are all too often denied basic rights such as access to food and are forced to work without pay.

Recent cases have even highlighted the fact that crew members have been found to have malnutrition. Which surely cannot be allowed or left to go unpunished on any level.

If, in cases such as this, the owners and operators only receive fines and detention of the vessel – perhaps there is a gap in the escalation to a criminal charge of human rights abuse?

WHO'S RULES

The problem is, of course, that denial of entry or detention of the vessel are the only real workable

sanctions available. The idea that owners, many of whom will be well concealed behind layer upon layer of corporate veil, can be found and brought to account is perhaps sadly naïve.

Even office staff and executives ashore are not likely to be easily brought to justice – working through remote jurisdictions, often far removed from the ports their vessels visit – it is unlikely that anyone would knowingly or willingly visit a port if they felt they could face criminal charges.

Which brings us perhaps to the owners' agents – if action is taken against deficiencies that clearly contravene health and safety regulations and human and statutory rights, and if those responsible should be punished and held to account – is there a danger that regimes may lash out at the closest people they can find?

Would masters find themselves as scapegoats for the failings onboard, and could they be criminalised?

FRESH THINKING

Sadly it seems that while common sense would suggest that deficiencies should indeed warrant a proper and full response, then we have to be careful in what we wish for.

Port States who are under pressure to comply with demands on them, could well make hair trigger decisions, and seafarers could find themselves in a double jeopardy – suffering at the hands of failing owners, but then caught up in a draconian punishment system.

So it seems that an alternative route is needed – one which supports seafarers, and which can provide sufficient deterrent to ensure compliance. Quite what the mechanism should be, is up for debate – but the questions have been asked, and Reverend Stone is right, there needs to be a change.

The underbelly of shipping contains shipowners who have become addicted to doing things as cheaply as possible – but this cannot be allowed to continue.

Such owners place lives at risk, and make life intolerable for their unfortunate crews – but as with any addiction, it needs a forced intervention. We need to drive positive change, which can force responsibility, accountability and transparency – it is likely that this will have to be driven by other parts of the industry, whether by insurers, charterers, or even consumers.

SEAFARER ZIKA GUIDANCE

Given the frightening and rapid rise of the Zika virus, seafarers are being warned of the consequences of coming into contact with infected mosquitoes.

NEW ADVICE

The ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) has issued an information factsheet in a bid to help seafarers around the world to protect themselves from the Zika virus.

The virus, caused by the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito, is currently circulating in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific. There have also been reported cases of the virus being spread through blood transfusion and sexual contact.

The Zika virus disease usually causes a mild fever, skin rash and conjunctivitis for a period of two to seven days but it is particularly dangerous for women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, and has been linked to genetic birth defects. There is no specific treatment or vaccine currently available.

PROTECTING CREWS

ITF maritime coordinator Jacqueline Smith said: "Our business is helping to protect the health and safety of seafarers. They are a particularly vulnerable group to this type of disease because they are in transit a lot of the time and there are a number of major trade routes passing through areas impacted by the Zika virus."

"The reality for seafarers is that if they're going to be able to take any precautions against contracting the virus – things like sleeping under mosquito nets, using repellent, wearing light covering clothing, covering water containers – they need to prepare in advance, before they are at sea for a number or weeks or even months."

KEY FACTS

- Zika virus disease is caused by the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito – the same mosquito that spreads dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever.
- People with Zika virus disease usually have a mild fever, skin rash and conjunctivitis (red eyes) for 2-7 days.
- There is no specific treatment or vaccine currently available.
- The best way to prevent the disease is by protecting yourself against mosquito bites.
- The virus occurs in tropical areas with large mosquito populations, and is known to circulate in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific.
- Based on available evidence, the World Health Organisation is not recommending travel or trade restrictions related to Zika virus disease.

You can also keep yourself informed by visiting the World Health Organization (WHO) website:
www.who.int/emergencies/zika-virus/en/

HEALTH RISKS

- For most people, the symptoms are mild but little is yet known about the complications of the disease.
- The highest health risk appears to be to women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, as the virus may be linked to an increase in babies born with microcephaly (small heads due to abnormal brain development) in Brazil.
- Spread of the virus through blood transfusion and sexual contact have been reported.

SYMPTOMS

- The incubation period (the time from exposure to symptoms) of Zika is likely to be a few days.
- The symptoms – which include fever, skin rashes, conjunctivitis (red eyes), muscle and joint pain, tiredness and headache – are similar to other infections, such as dengue.
- The symptoms are usually mild and normally last for 2-7 days.
- Alert the ship's master or medical officer if you think you have symptoms of Zika virus.

TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment for Zika virus disease. Treatment is for the symptoms only. If you get infected by the Zika virus:

- Take plenty of rest.
- Drink enough fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Treat pain and fever with common medicines.
- If your symptoms worsen, alert the ship's master and seek medical care and advice from the ship's medical officer.

ADVICE TO WOMEN SEAFARERS

There is additional advice for female seafarers who are pregnant or are planning to become pregnant. Until more is known about the potential link between Zika virus in pregnant women and microcephaly in their newborn babies, if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, you should take extra care to protect yourself from mosquito bites.

- If you are pregnant and suspect that you may have Zika virus disease, consult the ship's medical officer for close monitoring during your pregnancy, or seek medical advice in port.
- Some countries have advised women to consider postponing planned pregnancies. The ITF will continue to monitor the situation and keep inspectors and seafarers up-to-date with developments as and when appropriate.

PREVENTION

The best way to prevent Zika – and other diseases that are transmitted by mosquitoes – is by preventing mosquito bites when docked or ashore in one of the affected countries:

- Use insect repellent.
- Wear clothes (preferably light-coloured) that cover as much of the body as possible.
- Use physical barriers such as screens, closed doors and windows.
- Sleep under mosquito nets.
- Empty, clean or cover containers that hold water – such as buckets – so that places where mosquitoes can breed are removed.
- During outbreaks, health authorities may advise that spraying of insecticides be carried out.
- Insecticides recommended by the WHO Pesticide Evaluation Scheme may also be used as larvicides to treat relatively large water containers.
- If you have Zika, prevent mosquito bites during the first week of infection as the virus can be found in the blood and spread to other people through mosquito bites.

CONTAINER SHIPPING HOGS HEADLINES

It has been a busy month for container vessels with a number managing to get themselves in all manner of trouble. Some are even calling into question the safety of ultra large box ships.

Last month saw a spate of accidents, collisions and allisions involving container vessels.

"APL VANDA"

The 150,000-tonne container ship "APL Vanda" had to be grounded in the Solent after it lost power. The vessel was eventually towed into Southampton port after it was forced to carry out a "controlled grounding" at Bramble Bank. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) said no damage or pollution had been reported.

"CSCL INDIAN OCEAN"

This is the second major container ship grounding in over a week in February, after the 18,890 TEU, 400 m long "CSCL Indian Ocean" suffered the same fate as it ran hard aground on the river Elbe. The vessel was headed towards the Eurogate terminal at the Port of Hamburg when it ran into difficulty, with local media speculating it was down to either a power outage onboard or a navigational error.

The grounding of the China Shipping vessel caused some ship traffic to build up. Five tugs were deployed to help the stricken Hong Kong-flagged ship. No leak was been reported. Critics claim that with the supersizing of containerships the fairway of the Elbe has become too narrow.

"MV DELPHINUS"

While the container ship "Delphinus" last month blacked out and lost propulsion power in Yucatan Channel near Cuba. The vessel suffered engine failure during a voyage from Tomas de Castilla, Guatemala to Port Everglades, Florida and was forced to anchor off Cuba's westernmost tip.

"MV XETHA BHUM"

In a rather incredible turn of events in Bangkok, a container ship smashed into a busy tourist promenade. In astonishing video footage tourists are seen fleeing for their lives as the ship crashes through a concrete walkway in Bangkok.

The out-of-control container ship had just left the port in Thailand when poor weather and strong currents ran it aground on the Chao Phraya River. Incredibly, a surveillance camera recorded the entire incident, including the moment a bystander flees when they see the ship is about to crash. The local coast guard reported no civilian injuries, while none of the ship's crew were injured.

The container ship suffered several hull breaches below the waterline, but still managed to stay afloat until two coast guard tugboats returned it to Bangkok Port for full inspection and repairs.

"MV OLF"

The box trade disasters and mayhem didn't stop there. After it was reported the container ship "MV Olf" was arrested by Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency for accident in Singapore Strait.

The vessel was detained by patrol boat of local authorities and escorted to anchorage on 2.7 nautical miles off the coast. The vessel was suspected of being involved in a hit and run accident in Singapore Strait off Batu Ayam in Malaysia. It was reported the vessel was in collision with two tankers "Tina 7" and "Straits 3". The container ship fled the scene of the accident.



WEIGHING PROGRESS

While the operational aspects of container shipping may require some looking at, there are other technical and legislative pressures which are being brought to bear, as the clock tick ever closer to the new box weighing requirements.

While some places may be wary about weighing, the same cannot seemingly be said for DP World's two UK container terminals at London Gateway and Southampton.

These ports are to offer shippers container weighing services – to overcome what it said could be "a significant logistics barrier for UK exports". From 1 July an amendment to the SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea) regulations will require the named shipper on a bill of lading to provide the VGM [verified gross mass] of a container prior to it being loaded onto a ship. DP World said that after "extensive consultations" with the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) it would implement "scalable solutions to weigh containers shortly after arrival in the port and provide the VGM".

While the UK's biggest container port at Felixstowe confirmed that it too would be offering a weighing service to shippers. Stephen Abraham, Felixstowe chief operating officer, said: "We have met with many customers and from their feedback it is clear that there is still a lot of uncertainty amongst exporters about the new rules."

He said the new rules had "the potential to cause significant disruption to export supply chains", and to help avoid this the port had decided to provide the service.

CONCERN STILL EXIST

There have been no similar announcements from Tilbury, Liverpool or from the regional ports in the UK that provide export feeder spokes to the major hubs of Antwerp and Rotterdam. However, they are expected to bow to the pressure from supply chain stakeholders and provide a VGM solution or risk losing business to the ports that do offer the facility.

However, in many ports in the 170 countries that are signatories to the UN IMO SOLAS amendment, there has been an alarming lack of similar initiatives, and there could be chaotic start to the mandatory weighing law in the summer.

Indeed, a number of major ports are reportedly nervous about potential knock on effects. Indeed shippers, freight forwarders and other links in the local logistics chain have been out spoken as they look to head off another potential roadblock in containerized goods movement through Port Metro Vancouver (PMV).

"If we don't get it right," said Bonnie Gee, Chamber of Shipping of British Columbia (CSBC) vice-president, "there is the potential for delays in moving containers and definitely things coming in by rail."

NEWS ROUNDUP

THESE ARE SOME OF THE OTHER MAJOR STORIES WHICH CAUGHT OUR EYE LAST MONTH.

Communications Breakdowns: Breakdowns in communications between members of a bridge team are still major contributing factors to ship collisions and other incidents. It is down to shipowners, managers and operators to ensure their bridge crew work as a team and in collaboration with pilots, port authorities and masters of surrounding ships to minimise risks. Training on simulators is important for teaching teamwork and communications, but still too few owners invest in this. Miscommunication was highlighted as a key contributor in insurance claims by the UK P&I Club.

<http://goo.gl/pbm2Sv>

LR Tackles Cyber Risks: Lloyd's Register's new guidance provides the shipping industry with a route map to understanding the implications of digital technology. As a trusted provider of safety assurance to the marine industry, LR is ready to help all stakeholders in the cyber-enabled ship market ensure that Information and communications technology (ICT) is deployed safely. This is the first edition of LR's guidance to clients on cyber-enabled ships.

<http://goo.gl/nLPQt9>

Libya No Go Zone: It seems that Libya, the African country which holds the largest oil and gas reserves in the continent will remain "off the radar" shipping-wise, as oil exports remain a dangerous "game" for any tanker owner looking to work in this part of the world. However, it's worth noting that, as shipbroker Gibson noted that February 15th marked the fifth anniversary of the start of the Libyan revolution, which ended in the overthrow of the Muammar Gaddafi's regime after 42 years of rule. Since the overthrow of the regime in 2011, the National Oil Corporation (NOC), remains one of Libya's few functioning institutions.

<http://goo.gl/oDN5Wv>

Owners Must Adapt to Survive: Basil Karatzas, CEO of Karatzas Marine Advisors, suggests shipowners need to adapt to the altered market conditions. They say there is never a boring day in shipping, but, at present, we suspect that there are a few people who could do with just a tad less excitement in this industry. The overall shipping market, as encapsulated in the Baltic Dry Index, has been on a race to the bottom. Volatility is the shipping industry's daily seascape, and bad days in shipping are nothing unheard of. Shipping always has turned around in style, and it will happen again. However, this may be the time for shipowners to think strategically.

<http://goo.gl/jVtGI0>

Owners in Employee Talks: The International Chamber of Shipping, as the Secretariat for the Shipowner Group at the International Labour Organization, co-ordinated employers' representatives from over 20 national shipowners' associations at the second meeting of the Special Tripartite Committee (STC) for the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, held in Geneva from 8 to 10 February 2016. The STC agreed to a Shipowner Group proposal to harmonise provisions related to the renewal of Maritime Labour Certificates after shipowners concerns about difficulties with port State control as a result of any delay in issuance of the renewed Maritime Labour Certificate.

<http://goo.gl/w51OSa>

NATO Tackling Migrants: NATO ships are on their way to the Aegean Sea to help Turkey and Greece crack down on criminal networks smuggling refugees into Europe, the alliance's top commander said on Thursday. Hours after NATO defence ministers agreed to use their maritime force in the eastern Mediterranean to help combat traffickers, Supreme Allied Commander Gen. Philip Breedlove said he was working quickly to design the mission. "We are sailing the ships in the appropriate direction," Breedlove told a news conference, and the mission plan would be refined during the time they were en route. "That's about 24 hours," he said.

<http://goo.gl/YeOL68>

Fake Trader and The Massive Scam: A court last month heard salacious details of the conman who managed to fleece Dutch shipping line Allseas out of \$105m posing as the Pope's banker. Luis Nobre, one of a gang of conmen claiming to be international financiers with access to a secret trading platform in the Vatican, was found guilty on different fraud-related crimes at a UK court hearing yesterday. The trial has overrun by three months. Prosecutor David Durose said: "Allseas were seeking to raise capital in order to fund the building of a new ship and had available the enormous sum of EUR100m to invest" Ultimately the 'A1' trader they used was seemingly anything but.

<http://goo.gl/79hT9a>

Less Than a Big Mac Price for Mercator: \$2.16. That's the nominal US dollar sum India's Mercator has sold its dry bulk subsidiary for in Singapore at a time where the Baltic Dry Index stood at an all-time low of 291 points. The 9m shares in the Mittal family controlled Singapore subsidiary were sold today with three entities paying \$1 each for the firm, which announced it was entering judicial management last month. The deal still has to be cleared by the Singapore Exchange. Singapore's Bellerophon Holdings, MIB Investments, and Wroclaw Holdings will also be taking on \$147.2m of debts and six owned ships plus one on charter.

<http://goo.gl/IIEeFW>

US Waves Goodbye to Paper Charts: The U.S. Coast Guard published guidance February 5th that allows mariners to use electronic charts and publications instead of paper charts, maps and publications. The Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular, NVIC 01-16 establishes uniform guidance on what is now considered equivalent to chart and publication carriage requirements. Combining the suite of electronic charts from the U.S. hydrographic authorities and the Electronic Charting System (ECS) standards published this past summer by the Radio Technical Commission for Maritime Services, the Coast Guard believes official electronic charts provide mariners with a substitute.

<http://goo.gl/XsUSLM>

Asking Seafarers for Guidance: Shipping has not been especially good at asking the users of its assets – the seafarers – how to improve designs. This could change with news today that the Nautical Institute and CIRM, the principal international association for marine electronics companies, have launched a joint initiative to improve the usability of navigation and communication technology onboard ships. David Patriako, director of projects for The Nautical Institute, "As a design concept goes, this all makes perfect sense. Many mariners are keen to offer feedback into the design process but struggle to identify how to."

<http://goo.gl/pOzpKP>

Modern Express Illegal Timber Claim: The troubled and abandoned car carrier Modern Express was loaded with illegal cargo. Gabon Ministry of Economy, checked the cargo and export documents and found out that the cargo vessel was loaded with logs, but not sawn timber. According to Gabon laws the export of logs is prohibited and the exporter declared that the vessel was loaded with 4089 tons of sawn timber. After the cargo shift and the accident with car carrier Modern Express in Bay of Biscay it was understood that the ship was loaded with the prohibited material and participating in illegal traffic. The Gabon Ministry of Economy will liaise with Spain in an investigation.

<http://goo.gl/XZh7pf>

Call for UK Flag Reform: The UK Chamber of Shipping (CoS) President Tom Boardley called for "real, tangible reform" of the UK Ship Register. "We need a Ship Register that we can be proud of," he said. "We need standards to be maintained but levels of customer service to improve substantially. We need an MCA (Maritime & Coastguard Agency) that actively courts business." By joining the UK flag there would be knock-on benefits in greater employment of UK seafarers and use of UK-based maritime services, added Boardley, who is also EVP of Lloyd's Register.

<http://goo.gl/MNJ6Ot>

Owners Warned on Certification: The transitional period for the 2010 amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW 2010) comes to an end on 1 January 2017. To prevent last minute certification 'logjams', and potential difficulties during Port State Control inspections next year, it is important that maritime employers liaise closely with maritime administrations, says the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS). With less than a year to go before the end of this major transition, ICS and its member national associations are urging shipping companies to check maritime administrations are fully prepared.

<http://goo.gl/W4Z7xj>

Cooperation Not Competition: Evolutionary biologists and sociologists tell us that individuals can better themselves with respect to other group members by competing, but that a group as a whole benefits by cooperation among its members. Considering that dry bulk rates have been a disaster for virtually all of the last few years with no respite in sight, it is worth 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.

<http://goo.gl/sQnAcw>

Fears of New Migrant Route: The European Union fears Mediterranean migrant smuggling gangs are reviving a route from Egypt, officials told Reuters, putting thousands of people to sea in recent months as they face problems in Libya and Turkey. "It's an increasing issue," an EU official said of increased activity after a quiet year among smugglers around Alexandria that has raised particular concerns in Europe about Islamist militants from Sinai using the route to reach Greece or Italy. Departures from Egypt were a tiny part of the million people who arrived in Europe by sea last year; more than 80 percent came from Turkey to Greece, and from Libya.

<http://goo.gl/xE2klt>

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