



Welcome

Welcome once again to another issue of the Seacurus Monthly Bulletin – we are celebrating something of a landmark in this issue, as we pleased and proud to finally be able to report on the passing of key proposals for amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention (2006) (MLC) which will turn the tide on seafarer abandonment.

As a specialist marine insurance intermediary Seacurus has worked for many years to promote such action. We have welcomed the agreement to include in the Maritime Labour Convention unpaid crew wages in the event of abandonment, and have called for the earliest possible implementation of draft proposals to amend the Convention accordingly.

Agreement was reached between shipowners, governments, seafarers, NGOs and other organisations meeting at the special Tripartite Committee of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) headquarters in Geneva last month. At the meeting, all parties were willing to see abandonment provisions included in the Convention. Draft amendments were duly finalised and accepted almost unanimously.

These developments should be welcomed wholeheartedly by those at the sharp end when dealing with the all too familiar problems of crew neglect, and by all parties in the maritime industry. Now this decision has been taken, it is in everybody's interest to press ahead without delay. Any attempt at unreasonable delay in implementing the MLC amendments should be strongly resisted.

The requirement for cover will be mandatory on all shipowners, thereby eliminating any uncertainty. Moreover, such cover already exists in the form of the CrewSEACURE policy created last year by Seacurus. This provides indemnification in the event of the financial default of seafarers' employers, and offers recompense in respect of unpaid crew wages.

Content

MLC Amendments: Industry welcomes key proposals for amendments to the MLC and calls for rapid implementation.

Seacurus Partner wins Queen's Award for Enterprise: Thomas Miller Claims Management (TMCM) has won a prestigious Enterprise award.

More Piracy Action: April saw one piracy group nearly bagged themselves a "mothership", one seafarer died and others were implicated in possible barratry.

Shipping's Cyber Blind Spot: According to research concerns are mounting that the shipping industry is highly vulnerable to sabotage by computer hackers.

Focus on Port Risks: The problem of cargo theft is a real menace, while terror alerts can have massive implications too, not just in ports but across society.

Human Rights at Sea: The United Nations (UN) guiding principles on business and human rights are being applied to shipping in a new initiative.

Monthly News Round-up: The most important stories from across the past month.

The policy will enable all employers of seafarers to meet their regulatory obligations under MLC 2006. The cover is available now, and it is affordable. So not only are we seeing positive change for seafarers, the tools to enact it are already in place.

In this spirit of positivism, and with optimism we have turned a corner for the entire shipping industry, we hope you enjoy the latest issue of Seacurus monthly.



Captain Thomas Brown
Managing Director –
Seacurus Limited

Seacurus calls for speedy implementation of MLC amendments



Two key proposals for amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention (2006) (MLC) were passed with overwhelming support at the Geneva meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO), last month, and have been welcomed wholeheartedly by those at the sharp end when dealing with the all too familiar problem of crew abandonment. The misery caused when vessels and crews are deserted by their failed or failing owners spreads over thousands of miles and hundreds of families and are a disgrace in the modern world of merchant maritime transport.

At the meeting the proposals, which now go forward to the next ILO International Labour Conference in June for formal adoption, received the support of all but one government with a final tally of 8,890 votes for, none against and 143 abstentions.

The amendments were developed over nearly a decade by a Joint Working Group established by the ILO and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 1998 and will strengthen the 2006 Convention. They establish mandatory requirements that shipowners have financial security to cover abandonment, as well as death or long-term disability of seafarers due to occupational injury and hazard.

Under the new provisions, ships will be required to carry certificates or other documents to establish that financial security exists to protect seafarers working on board. Failure to provide this protection may mean that a ship can be detained in a port. As of March 2014, the ILO's Abandonment of Seafarers Database listed 159 abandoned merchant ships, some dating back to 2006 and still unresolved.

Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry, Director of the ILO Labour Standards Department, said: "These legal standards will provide relief and peace of mind to abandoned seafarers and their families wherever they may be. In addition, by adopting these amendments to the Convention, shipowners and governments are also strengthening its provisions aimed at ensuring a level-playing field for quality shipping around the world. The new measures will guarantee that seafarers are not abandoned, alone and legally adrift for months on end, without pay, adequate food and water and away from home. They also clearly make flag States responsible for ensuring that adequate financial security exists to cover the cost of abandonment, and claims for death and long-term disability due to occupational injury and hazards."

The International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) was quick to praise the decision. Dave Heindel, chair of the ITF seafarers' section stated: "The MLC has entered a new generation today. We have always known that abandonment would be the priority for this stage two of the MLC, but to see that problem so widely recognised and marked for action has been inspiring."

The Mission to Seafarers also professed itself very pleased with the outcome. The Mission attended the Special Tripartite Committee meeting and week-long sessions to debate the proposed amendment and says it fully expects the Conference to recognise the essential importance of this strengthening of the MLC. The Revd. Canon Ken Peters, Director of Justice and Public Affairs paid tribute to the desire of the social partners, shipowners and seafarers to work together to find practical solutions, saying:

"The consensus that has formed around the protection of seafarers is significant and pleasing. It shows that Governments, shipowners and seafarers representatives realise that seafarers must not be left without repatriation. The Mission to Seafarers will continue to organise the provision of the basic necessities of life, such as food and drinking water, to those that are relying on us, knowing that repatriation is in sight and seafarers will not be left abandoned indefinitely with only our help to survive.

The ILO itself believes that these 'concrete steps' toward a fairer deal for the disenfranchised in the seafaring community represent not only a milestone for merchant shipping but an example to other industries worldwide. ILO Director-General Guy Ryder commented:

"The adoption of the Maritime Labour Convention in 2006 was an historical milestone that heralded a new era in the maritime sector. This latest step, building on international tripartite cooperation, is a very significant and inspiring example for other economic sectors. When they come into force, these measures will ensure the welfare of the world's seafarers and their families if the seafarers are abandoned, or if death or long-term disability occurs as the result of occupational injury, illness or hazard. These steps will certainly help improve working and living conditions for seafarers, doing what is right for the women and men in this sector who play a central role in keeping the real economy going with some 90% of world trade carried on ships."

InterManager, the international trade association for the ship management industry, also welcomed the new measures against abandonment. InterManager Secretary General, Captain Kuba Szymanski, said: "InterManager welcomes this protection for seafarers. As a percentage of the total international fleet, the number of ships abandoned is a very small amount. However, the tremendous effort demonstrated at this Special Tripartite Meeting, to resolve this weak link in the coverage of the Convention, sends a very clear and important message to the world: that we very much care for our global maritime professionals, our seafarers, who are the heart and soul of a ship."

Thomas Miller Claims Management wins Queen's Award for Enterprise

THOMAS MILLER CLAIMS MANAGEMENT

The Seacurus CrewSEACURE policy of insurance uses Thomas Miller Claims Management (TMCM) as a retained independent claims service, as such we were delighted to note the company has won a Queen's Award for Enterprise in the International Trade category.

The award recognises outstanding achievements by UK companies and reflects our success in developing a compelling business model that meets the specific needs of our growing international client base.

TMCM's unique risk management consultancy provides claims handling, adjusting and operational support services to its clients in the marine, transport and general commercial business sectors.

The company began trading in 2007 and has grown overseas sales earnings 153% over the last three years, with exports having risen from 44% of total turnover to 78%.

Peter Jackson, CEO of TMCM, says: "The Queen's Awards for Enterprise are widely recognised as the UK's most prestigious awards for business performance. Winning a Queen's Award in the International Trade category is a testament to the very high standards set by the firm and achieved by colleagues.

It also reflects the continuing confidence our clients place in us in what has been a difficult few years financially for businesses. We believe that our success in attracting clients internationally results from our commitment to listening to them, then harnessing our unique blend of skills and experience to solve their particular problems worldwide."

Previously known as the Queen's Awards for Industry, the first awards were given in 1966. They are awarded to companies or individuals who are outstanding in their field.

The TCMC service is based in Newcastle upon Tyne in the United Kingdom. By outsourcing claims management to TCMC, transport providers can better address such issues as rising financial costs, shortages of qualified staff and the growing complexity of retained risk.

TCMC's team of specialists can handle a wide range of claims, from routine customer complaints to high-value litigation, while providing emergency response anywhere in the world. Jackson previously led the Thomas Miller team response for managing the U.K. P&I Club's crew and passenger shipping claims. While the company's co-founder, Patrick Bond, is also a P&I veteran who has worked as a claims consultant with an emphasis on handling emergencies and claims negotiations.

We congratulate them on their most deserved and excellent success.

More Piracy Action

April was a busy month for piracy issues – one piracy group nearly bagged themselves a “mothership” from which to launch attacks, while an attack of Nigeria went badly wrong with seafarers caught in a fire fight. Over in the Malacca Straits two vessels were attacked and cargoes stolen – and “kidnapped” crew members have been implicated in the crime.

This tragic accident saw one seafarer killed following an armed attack on a Medaillon Reederei tanker off West Africa.

Two pirates were also killed during a firefight with armed security guards on board the 7,600-dwt “SP Brussels” (built 2007).

The pirates hit the vessel at 23:00 local time as the ship sailed from Port Harcourt to Lagos. The crew retreated to the citadel but two were unable to reach the safe room.

During a search of the vessel the security team found the body of one seafarer. A second with minor injuries was also found hiding on the ship.

Seventeen crew members and two armed guards were on board the tanker when the pirates struck. “Following crossfire with armed guards on board SP Brussels two of the attackers have died,” a company statement said.

This is not the first time the “SP Brussels” has been the victim of a pirate attack in the area. In December 2012 five seafarers were snatched from the vessel but later returned in good health.

According to reports from Nigerian sources, it is understood the guards used were locally sourced – and as such the pirates may not have known there was any armed protection onboard. Usually vessels using armed guards use non-Nigerian nationals as “advisors”, and it is believed that most pirate groups often know when there are guards embarked.

While off Somalia there was a stark reminder that the threat of piracy still exists.

When six armed pirates abandoned a dhow they had captured after spotting an approaching European Union Naval Forces (EU NAVFOR) Spanish maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft, EU NAVFOR many hailed it a success. Actually in a wider context it highlights a massive failure.

After all this time, investment and hope – pirates are still active, and were seeking a “mother ship” to further fuel their ambitions further out in the shipping lanes.



The master of the dhow told officials from EU NAVOR flagship FGS Brandenburg that the pirates came aboard and ordered his crew to sail towards the Gulf of Aden, where they planned to use the dhow as a platform from which to launch attacks on other smaller boats.

The pirates abandoned the vessel when they saw the EU NAVFOR ship and aircraft approach, taking with them electronic equipment and personal items from the crew.

“This event confirms that the piracy threat is still very real,” said EU Force Commander Rear Admiral Jürgen zur Mühlen. Before boasting that, “The deterrence and swift action by EU Naval Force has once again denied freedom of action to pirates.”

While the Admiral should be rightly proud of the naval success, it shows once more that while the actions at sea are holding the pirates at bay it seems clear that things are not changing enough ashore. For all the initiatives to get people working, to develop sustainable fishing or to lock up piracy offenders, it seems the lure of lawlessness in the oceans and the desire for one more hijack ransom pay-day is proving tough to resist.

This case should spur more action, and should be the wake-up call to show that all the back slapping and false hope is nothing more than a distraction – piracy is still a threat because Somalis are still willing and able to act as pirates. Until that changes, seafarers, cargoes and shipping is still at real risk.

It has emerged that the three top officers of the tanker “Naniwa Maru 1”, which attacked by pirates last month, are believed to be working in cooperation with the pirates. The master, chief officer and chief engineer, all Indonesians, were found missing when the pirates fled after siphoning off 2,500 tonnes of the vessel’s cargo of 4,344 tonnes of diesel and were thought to have been kidnapped. After it was found that the passports, personal belongings and clothing of the master, Farizal, chief engineer Mohammad Alfian and chief officer Ariyandri Alhafsyah were also missing from their cabins, Malaysian Police now suspect foul play.

While the tanker hijack in the Strait of Malacca gains attention, there are growing concerns for maritime security in the area. Over half of reported piracy and maritime security incidents are in East Asia, mainly Southeast Asia, where such attacks have been steadily ticking upwards over the past few years. More worrying is that violent attacks like the one on the Singaporean tanker are becoming more common. Since the late 1980s, Southeast Asia has been one of the world’s piracy “hot spots,” but incidents have traditionally consisted of simple theft-night-time raids where pirates leave before confronting a ship’s crew.

Shipping's Cyber Blind Spot

According to research by Reuters, concerns are mounting that the shipping industry is highly vulnerable to sabotage by computer hackers.

The in-depth report on the issue notes: "In this internet age, as more devices are hooked up online, so they become more vulnerable to attack. As industries like maritime and energy connect ships, containers and rigs to computer networks, they expose weaknesses that hackers can exploit."

According to Reuters: "Hackers recently shut down a floating oil rig by tilting it, while another rig was so riddled with computer malware that it took 19 days to make it seaworthy again...and hackers infiltrated computers connected to the Belgian port of Antwerp, located specific containers, made off with their smuggled drugs and deleted the records."

It seems the problems are confounded by the facts that shipboard staff are not computer security experts, and there is a lack of appreciation as to the scale and threat posed by such problems.



Given the nature of the threat, the true extent of shipping's cyber vulnerabilities remains uncertain. However, some experts fear terrorists could use high-powered jammers to disrupt the global navigation satellite system (GNSS) and Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) reception, and there are risks that terrorists could introduce a virus into the coding of vessel systems.

The implications of cyber-attack are great and growing, and concern over the impact of jamming the GNSS is growing. David Last, an Emeritus Professor of Bangor University in the U.K. and a well-known authority on criminal use of GPS jammers has said, "GPS is so embedded in the transportation, manufacturing industries and economies of our societies that the risk is high".

Thankfully technology to counter the threat of GPS jamming has been successfully demonstrated in recent trials. A prototype resilient PNT (positioning, navigation and timing) system used alternative technology to transmit mission-critical data in the event of GPS loss or failure. The trials were successfully completed last year, and give hope that for continued navigational safety and surety.

The prototype system was integrated into the bridge of the vessel and monitored the performance of independent PNT sources in order to provide the 'best' available. As such, when GPS was deliberately jammed, the system switched automatically to provide Enhanced Loran (eLoran) derived PNT information to the connected bridge systems, allowing them to maintain operation and enabling the mariner to continue to navigate safely and efficiently.

Government agencies are naturally hesitant to discuss how they detect or dissuade jamming equipment, or how next-generation GPS satellites will be improved to make jamming more difficult. While jamming or deliberate tampering may pose some degree of threat for vessels, more concerning are the elements of remote system access, and the potential vulnerability to viruses which such contact can bring.

It is apparent then that security experts are increasingly concerned about the effect of cyber security on shipping - and are increasingly recognising that poorly defended computer systems pose huge risks to the industry. There are increasing concerns that criminals, pirates and ominously, terrorists may catch on.

This is a serious issue, and one which could be likely to be on the agenda for governments, companies and seafarers alike. The United States has launched a new study on cyber-security in the maritime domain which will identify the extent to which cyber-security threats are an active concern within the maritime environment; whether current laws and regulations recognize and address such cyber-security threats; and what steps U.S. federal and non-federal stakeholders have taken to identify and mitigate maritime-related cyber threats.

GPS security issues are not solely related to technological protection – there have been instances such as the grounding of the cruise ship “Royal Majesty” which should be a warning to all navigators of the dangers of relying on one source of information.

The ship went aground whilst on a cruise with over 1,000 passengers onboard. The GPS had reverted to Dead Reckoning (DR) Mode after an antenna cable had parted and so ceased giving an accurate fix. In spite of being in coastal waters, the watch officers placed over-reliance on the information given to them by the automated features of the integrated bridge system, with predictable consequences.

While this was not deemed to be a suspicious or malicious act it highlights that a terrorist could be so minded to induce deliberate sabotage by simply cutting a wire. Navigation and ship manoeuvring are susceptible, and steps must be taken to manage this security and safety issue.

While jamming or deliberate tampering may pose some degree of threat for vessels, more concerning are the elements of remote system access, and the potential vulnerability to viruses which such contact can bring.

As crews get smaller and ships get bigger, they increasingly rely on automation and remote monitoring, meaning key components, including navigational systems, can be hacked. A recent study found more than 100,000 shipboard devices - from traffic signal equipment to oil and gas monitors - were connected to the internet . “The lines get blurry, and all industries and all technologies need to focus more on security,” said one of the authors of the study. Ships have no cyber security professionals aboard, and so the problems will only worsen over time, until there are new guidelines and certification.

Port infrastructure too is not immune to such problems, as more major ports and terminals become automated. Increasingly cranes, access control, administration and cargo movement are all controlled remotely and so the threats and risks of cyber security become exponentially heightened.



Focus on Port Risks

It can sometimes be easy to think of maritime security as some distant concept which only impacts far away shores. In truth the threats facing shipping and the very concept of maritime security impact much closer to home. Indeed the problem of cargo theft is a real menace, while terror alerts can have massive implications too.

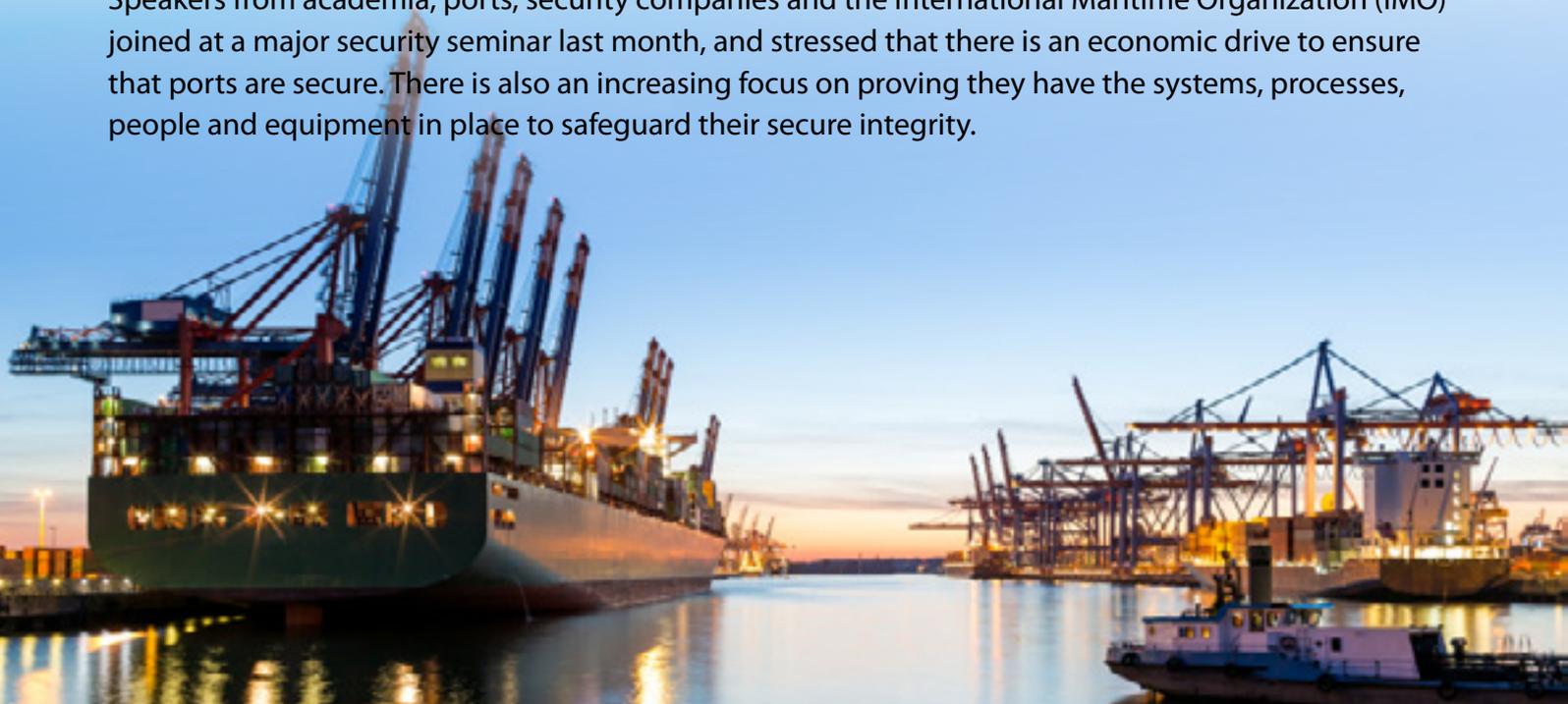
Across most developed nations the major supermarket chains have begun to base key logistic infrastructure in ports. This can bring certain advantages, but if their distribution were to be hit, the fallout could be felt across the land.

A raising of Security Alert to Level 3 for instance could bring the port and distribution to a stand-still, which in turn could lead to panic buying and empty shops.

Nations are being dependent on ports in ways never before envisaged, and this is a very real security issue and it is not just the UK. Many other nations have their own comparable ports and issues to manage. In short, ports and shipping have a massive impact on the security of our society, trade and industry.

The risks and threats posed to ports, impact the users, investors and clients too. So it is imperative that the right actions are taken.

Speakers from academia, ports, security companies and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) joined at a major security seminar last month, and stressed that there is an economic drive to ensure that ports are secure. There is also an increasing focus on proving they have the systems, processes, people and equipment in place to safeguard their secure integrity.



Ports are the crucial interface between land and sea, and at the most basic level they have to be legally operated and compliant. They also have to provide safe and secure location for the ship to berth, effective and efficient cargo handling and efficient integration of the land transportation system to move cargoes to and from the port.

The more cargo, and the more types of cargo, the more difficult such challenges are. While it was hoped that the ISPS Code would have provided the structure, systems and management processes to assist, it seems that after 10 years of ISPS Code there is still disparity in global implementation.

Sascha Pristrom of the IMO Maritime Security Section looked at the problems of the past decade and the challenges which still remain. According to Pristrom, IMO security measures have been implemented to differing degrees on port facilities and ships worldwide. Alas in some countries the legal framework has not been established to give IMO's security measures full effect, while others lack a functioning maritime security oversight mechanism. Unfortunately the objectives, of the ISPS Code have not been met fully by all ships and port facilities.

All in all there is still much to do to fully embrace even the static, traditional view of ports. In a world in which rapid technological and commercial change is a constant, it seems that ports are evolving before even the legislation can keep up.

Dr Risto Talas, spoke of the rise of so-called "port-centric logistics" and the change in the relationships between consumers, society and shipping and the ports they use. Indeed ports are at the cutting edge of technological developments driving ever more efficient trade. As they evolve so too do the maritime security threats and ports are having to meet tough new challenges, all while embracing intelligence, data and innovation.

He believes there is a degree of ignorance – as the current patterns of (inland) distribution centre locations ignore the fact that most of the freight that passes through them first transits through a port. The first point of vulnerability is the port, but so too is the first opportunity to shape distribution patterns.

It is therefore logical, according to Talas, to site such distribution centres not at some inland motorway hub, but at ports. Such an evolution to a port-centric distribution approach can deliver some key advantages, but they can come at a cost if security is not a sufficiently high priority.

With the second round of renewals of ISPS Port Facility Security Plans it seems that there needs to be a reassessment of the way in which some security issues are managed. Indeed, according to Talas, consideration should be given to the changing role of ports in future PFSPs, especially given the increasing reliance of retailers on ports. There is a feeling that ports are changing, and that must be reflected in the ways they and the threats facing them are perceived.

Having heard from the legislators and an academic view, Captain John Dalby of Marine Risk Management set out the cold hard numbers and the vast scale of the potential problems facing ports. With 8 billion tonnes of cargo carried annually it was seen that the opportunities are vast too. With maritime trade using 4,000 ports, 55,000 merchant vessels, representing 150 Flag States and manned by 1.5 million seafarers of different nationalities, cultures and beliefs. The scale is truly mammoth, and from an operational perspective Dalby stressed that ports' are all too often the soft underbelly and pose a severe vulnerability for shipping.

In addressing this problem, Michael White, Chairman of the International Professional Security Association (IPSA), then questioned whether the ISPS Code was actually fit for purpose in the 21st Century.

While the code offers a good starting point for security around ports, does it really push and promote ongoing investment development which is vital to ensure that security is to the fore? Indeed, under ISPS is port security actually taken as seriously it should be?

Port security is a serious issue on a global scale – and has to be managed properly and effectively. Laws have to be enacted and adhered too, while the investments made have to be reasoned and deliver successes.

For all the sophisticated fences, lighting, alarms and number plate recognition systems (NPRS), there is still room today for cunning thieves, violent bandits, lucky opportunists and determined terrorists. We need to ensure that all are dealt with, and that ports are not viewed as a “soft underbelly” in the shipping chain.

Ports are constantly changing; they are modernising, investing and growing. This means that there are challenges, but vast opportunities too. From the SAMI perspective, there is a clear role for private maritime security to provide capability, expertise and technological support. While for the IMO, there needs to be better adherence and application of laws. Academics believe there has to be a greater understanding, with more research into the evolution of ports. While for the seafarers visiting them, they want to know they are safe when visiting the port, but free too to access shoreleave and facilities.

There is much to balance in the port security equation, but thankfully events such as this which bring together such a diverse collection of thought leaders, then progress is possible and ports can be made safer and more secure.

Human Rights at Sea

The United Nations (UN) guiding principles on business and human rights lay out the State's duty to protect individuals against human rights abuses by third parties, the corporate responsibility to respect human rights in their operations, and the need for greater access to remedy for victims of rights abuses.

It is perhaps interesting, and also concerning to note that these principles have not ever really been managed in a shipping context. Some critics suggest that the "Open Registries" model while being good at facilitating trade, is not really fit for purpose in a sense of wider State responsibilities.



Maritime law firm 9 Bedford Row International (9BRi) and a range of industry stakeholders have launched an independent initiative Human Rights at Sea (HRAS). The founding principle is the concept that, "Human rights apply at sea as equally as they do on land," will make information on human rights available online as well as acting as a lobbying platform.

David Hammond, Barrister-at-Law and Founder of HRAS, emphasised the work-in-progress nature of the initiative, its independent status and its collaborative nature. "High standards reflecting human rights protections, assurance and accountability should be part of everyday business. They also go to assuring market reputation and brand protection in neither ignoring, nor paying lip service to human rights matters," said Hammond.

Within the maritime industry the initiative aims to raise the profile, awareness implementation and accountability for human rights protections. It will also push for human rights integration into state, business and individual working practices.

The initiative provides a new platform for maritime human rights discussions, lobbying, voluntarily applied commercial documentation developing the daily use, policies for and understand of human rights. It will also develop a maritime position in relation to the 2011 UN Guiding Principles for business

and human rights, otherwise known as the "Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework", which has yet to be undertaken.

The project has finally gone live after more than six months development and engagement with the international shipping community, government representatives, maritime associations, insurers,

The HRAS Vision has four elements:

- **Increased global awareness of the explicit requirement for protection of, respect for, and provision of remedies in relation to human rights at sea.**
- **Continued international development of effective, enforceable and accountable remedies for human rights abuses at sea.**
- **Independent and effective state, business and individual lobbying in support of the concept of human rights at sea.**
- **Global awareness of the UN Guiding Principles for business and human rights in the maritime environment and throughout the maritime industry based upon the HRAS initiative.**

It reflects the fact that the HRAS initiative is not going to be a short-term project, but rather, since the review it has been extended in scope and timeline to between 10-15 years, in order to achieve the above Vision.

If this issue is of particular interest, we would like to inform readers of a Webinar which will examine the applicability of the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights to the maritime industry. Speakers will address the unique operating environment of the maritime industry and recently developed standards for private maritime security provision.

The founder of Human Rights at Sea will be on hand to introduce his new initiative to translate the UN Guiding Principles into the maritime context. This is being held on May 13, 2014 1830-2030 GMT / 1330-1530 EST (US).

The webinar is free, to register please see <http://goo.gl/qf7Rlc>

Monthly News Roundup

MARITIME LABOUR CONVENTION AND SEAFARER NEWS

Great Expectations: Do we expect too much from shipmasters when the worst thing they can possibly imagine occurs? It is possibly a dangerous time to be asking such a question as the world looks with horror at the terrible events with the ferry Sewol in the Yellow Sea, but it is really quite relevant. What sort of preparation does any senior officer have for the operationally unthinkable, which might make him or her more resilient and able to cope with such a calamity? And not just coping, but exercising firm, decisive leadership? <http://goo.gl/HU6441>



Bunker Fraud: The chief engineer of a crude oil tanker has been found guilty of shortchanging his ship of 200 metric tonnes of bunker fuel, according to a joint statement by Singapore's Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) and Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA). The accused, Pittis Stavros of Greek national, was the chief engineer of oil tanker Sakura Princess, which was chartered by V8 Pool Inc to deliver a load of cargo. Stavros saw an opportunity for a lucrative business when arrangements were made for 500 metric tonnes of bunker fuel to be supplied to Sakura Princess, according to the CPIB and MPA joint statement. <http://goo.gl/2Ykl2Y>

Endangered Financiers: One of the world's powerhouses of shipping is set to fade, says a leading Hamburg financier. Tobias Koenig. He believes that thanks to the demise of the KG system the number of shipowners in Germany is likely to drop from 2012's figure of around 400 to just 40 in 2016. Koenig, says "The German capital markets are totally defunct. The once successful KG system is still a no-go and it will stay like this for many years to come," he says. <http://goo.gl/5tiJvw>

Crew Dangers: Rupert Connor, president of Luxury Yacht Group, has spoken on the dangers of seafarers giving up too much information to recruitment companies and where this could land crew should they not have done their research. What Connor believes is more concerning is crewmembers' willingness to sign up with an agency with little or no research beforehand, not questioning to whom they are giving their details. <http://goo.gl/Lj14Pe>

Financial Fears: A growing number of container carriers are in danger of approaching bankruptcy. According to a new study by AlixPartners, the container shipping industry as a whole stands closer to outright failure than any time since 2010. And the risk grows more serious each year. There have long been cycles of boom and bust, but “things are different now”, said AlixPartners. The traditional cycles are out of whack, the industry is experiencing “a new normal.” <http://goo.gl/0DsZgl>

Flag Growth: Greeks control the largest merchant fleet ever as total carrying capacity has hit an all-time high and the flow of new tonnage into Greek hands is set to continue. The capacity of the fleet controlled by the country’s owners has now virtually doubled since the millennium. The 3,901 vessels of over 1,000 gt controlled by Greek interests was a massive 291m dwt as we entered March and rising. In the same month of 2000, the 3,584 ships in Greek hands had a capacity of 151m dwt, then an all-time high. At the beginning of March the fleet was up 224 ships and 25.5m dwt on 2013, the largest year-on-year rise since 2008 according to LR. <http://goo.gl/Hxk2vE>

Welfare Awards: The winners of the 2014 International Seafarers’ Welfare Awards were announced this week during a high profile ceremony hosted by Secretary General of the International Labour Organisation, Mr Guy Ryder at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland. The winners are, Judges Special Award : Ms Apinya Tajit, Thailand, Shipping Company of the Year: Wallem Ship Management, Port of the Year: Port of Antwerp, Belgium, Seafarer Centre of the Year: Flying Angel Club, Fremantle, Australia, Welfare Personality of the Year Award: Fr Paul Noel, Durban, South Africa. Congratulations to all. <http://goo.gl/URwcW2>

Medical Success: The UK P&I Club’s Pre-Employment Medical Examination Program for assessing the fitness of prospective seafarers, has just completed its 300,000th examination. For the past 18 years, the PEME Program has provided crew with a first rate health check before going to sea while protecting shipowners from claims arising from medical conditions existing prior to employment. It is the leading loss prevention initiative managed by the UK P&I Club, and is the most extensive and comprehensive program of its kind. It has long proved itself by reducing the volume and level of claims, saving huge sums for shipowners and P&I insurers. <http://goo.gl/REG3mg>

More than Commodities: “Seafarers are more than just a commodity... I wanted a chance to prove that,” says Henrik Uth of the Survey Association, adding that the best thing an owner can do is make the most of the insight gained by experienced crew. “We have to get smarter about how we learn,” he says, “There are still far too many big incidents, and we need to do more than react afterward.” Further, he’s aware of a common, knee jerk reaction that comes down to “fire the captain and the problem is solved”. He points out: “Instead of just blaming the crew you need to peel the layers off and be aware that they may have been under pressure from shore” he says. <http://goo.gl/SpH2ML>

MLC Pensions: Nautilus International is set to tell the International Labour Organisation (ILO) that seafarers would like to see a commitment to pension provision included in a future revision of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC). Nautilus officials are joining maritime nations and representatives from around the world, meeting in Geneva this week to consider amendments to the MLC including the provision of financial protection against the abandonment of seafarers.

<http://goo.gl/IVxAol>

Stalled Progress: Last month's MEPC 66 meeting at IMO headquarters claimed to have made progress towards encouraging states to ratify the ballast water management convention, but there are some who are still not happy. The meeting agreed to a Norwegian proposal to conduct a study on treatment systems with the aim of gaining experience on how systems are performing. It is this operational aspect that continues to be the source of disagreement. While the Review Group on Ballast Water Management (a sub-group of MEPC) discussed a proposal put forth by industry representatives to amend the G8 guidelines this is not enough for some. <http://goo.gl/cpVlIA>

Slavery Rescue: Brazilian police last month claimed to have "rescued" 11 crew members working in "slave-like conditions" on an Italian cruise ship. The operation was carried out the north-eastern city of Salvador, where the MSC Magnifica had docked for the day with more than 3,000 passengers. Brazilian officials say the 11 crew members were forced to work up to 16 hours a day. Some were alleged to have been victims of sexual harassment. Italian cruise operator MSC Crociere has adamantly rejected the allegations. "MSC Crociere is in full compliance with national and international labour regulations" it said in a statement. <http://goo.gl/JnmpSh>

Slavery Denials: MSC has denied allegations that staff were forced to work for up to 16 hours a day, after "MSC Magnifica", was boarded by officials from the Brazilian Labour Ministry in Salvador, where it had docked for a day. Some staff had also reported allegations of sexual harassment, according to a report by the BBC. But MSC Cruises rejected the labour ministry's claims and said its four ships operating in Brazil had passed intensive and repeated inspections by the ministry. It said it is fully complying with Brazilian and international labour regulations. Further criticism of the cruise industry has come in a report published by academics at Leeds Met Uni. <http://goo.gl/wM38FP>

Murder Suspect: A Chinese seafarer has been accused of stabbing a shipmate and throwing him from a Sinotrans bulker "Great Talent" off Australia. The seafarer has denied the accusation. The news of the missing seafarer emerged last week when a search and rescue operation was launched to find missing Sun Peng, 29. He disappeared while the ship was moored off Weipa in northern Queensland waters. The accused had reportedly argued with the suspected victim on the night he went missing after having been very drunk. The accused had initially admitted the crime but then he claimed he was too drunk to remember the details. <http://goo.gl/esOZLb>

Food for Thought: A survey of officers and crew by a leading tanker owner suggests catering and galley staff throughout the industry may be in urgent need of training, according to Seagull. Training provider draws attention to the survey undertaken by Finaval S.p.A, a leading tanker owner, focusing on knowledge and understanding of food hygiene and food handling best practice. Surprisingly, catering is the staffing group identified as 'the least informed about the subject matter for the majority of questions, or is certainly not the most informed,' the survey says. MLC has explicit rules covering food and catering so this could have wider implications. <http://goo.gl/qa740g>

PIRACY AND MARITIME SECURITY NEWS

Piracy Recap: The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combat Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) has released a quarterly report, showing significant improvement of piracy incidents occurred in Asia. Overall, 28 incidents were reported in the first three months of 2014. Of these, 70% involved pirates or robbers operating in groups of one to six men and only three cases reportedly having more than nine pirates involved in the attacks. The organization noticed that the severity of the attacks have dropped over the five-year period and there has been a decline in very significant (CAT 1) and moderately significant (CAT 2) incidents. <http://goo.gl/toV800>

Asylum Concerns: Dutch Politicians have deemed it unacceptable if three Somali men convicted of piracy were to be given refugee status in the Netherlands. 'These troublemakers should be thrown out of the country as quickly as possible,' MP Malik Azmani said. The pirates have been released from jail but will not be deported because their applications for asylum are still being processed. The situation is too bizarre for words, Azmani said. 'First you shoot at Dutch soldiers and then you request asylum here,' he is quoted as saying. 'It is unacceptable that these criminals want to remain here.' The three are part of a group of nine Somali pirates jailed in 2011. <http://goo.gl/EZDEU2>

Medal Dishonour: Hundreds of Royal Marines who tackled gangs of gun-toting Somali pirates on the high seas have been barred from wearing their medals after defence chiefs ruled that their missions were not risky enough. The Marines confronted pirates armed with AK-47 assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades in a series of daring engagements, blowing up their boats and seizing lethal weapons. The brave squaddies spent months on patrol before returning to the UK, where they received a NATO medal recognising the success of their counter-piracy operations. But top brass have ruled they cannot wear the gong on their uniforms. <http://goo.gl/EyINvz>

Guardcon Praise: The Standard Club has praised Bimco's adaptation of its Guardcon contract for use in security arrangements off West Africa. Standard Club Atlantic Syndicate director Sam Kendall-Marsden said that the contract would "provide certainty" as well as making it "simpler and quicker" for shipowners hiring Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSCs) for anti-piracy detail in West Africa. "The International Group clubs participated in drafting the original Bimco Guardcon contract," Kendall-Marsden explained. "It has become the industry-standard for the employment of private maritime security companies, harmonising terms of engagement." <http://goo.gl/dFct3a>

Jail Breakers: The Somali government is investigating how a second jail break was attempted in its pirate prison, after weapons were made available to some inmates serving long sentences at the Hargeisa prison. Authorities also confirmed that one custodial guard was killed while two others are nursing injuries sustained during the mafia like escape attempt by five inmates serving long sentences for Terrorism and Piracy. The botched escape attempt by inmates at the Hargeisa prison saw a guard killed after the inmates who were armed with a pistol shot their way out of their maximum security cell during a lunch break. <http://goo.gl/98cqQJ>

Understanding Piracy: While privation is often portrayed as a leading spur for illicit maritime activities, analyst Karsten von Hoesslin contends that groups operating in Southeast Asia exhibit "more sophistication and structural coordination, reflecting the existence of organizations that go well beyond opportunistic marauders seeking to merely compensate for economic hardship." In 2012 von Hoesslin noted such syndicates active in the Philippines, conducting kidnapping and robbery (K&R) operations, with robbery and hijacking organizations plentiful in Indonesia's Anambas Islands and Riau Islands Archipelago. They do it because they can and it pays. <http://goo.gl/6LHHpA>

Canal Wall: Local media in Egypt report that the military is halfway to completing rock walls around both the southern entrance of the Suez Canal as well as in the north around Ismailia and Port Said. Major General Mohamed Ali Shams Eddin, commander of the canal's southern entrance security troops, said that the southern wall is composed of rocks and that it is being built on the eastern and western banks of the canal. Eddin said it will be 65 km long. <http://goo.gl/305PtS>

ID Cards: Somali fishermen have been issued with official ID cards to help distinguish them from pirates, BBC reported. At least 2,000 such cards have been handed out to fishermen in the Puntland region of Somalia in the last two months, the Ministry for Fisheries and Marine Resources tells Radio Ergo. One fisherman in Bossasso says he feels less afraid of being mistaken for a pirate when he is out at sea. "We used to suffer a lot because we have been mistaken often for pirates," says Muse Abdalla Isse. "We have been mistakenly shot at or arrested by the forces [European Union naval forces in Somali waters]." About 4,000 fishermen have been. <http://goo.gl/IMnFmX>

Piracy Drill: More than 2,500 crew members, passengers and onshore employees participated in a crisis management drill onboard MSC Cruises' MSC Lirica as she sailed off the coast of Oman on 31 March. Designed to test threat assessments and the onshore and onboard emergency procedures, the simulated piracy attack involved several individuals firing guns while attempting to board the vessel from a skiff. Following established guidelines, the ship's master raised the alarm and the crew implemented evasive procedures to prevent the pirates boarding the ship. They also worked with onshore personnel and the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre. <http://goo.gl/EQg8S3>

UN Deaths: A security guard working for the government of Puntland shot dead two men working as consultants for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, officials said. The men were killed shortly after arriving at Galkayo Airport, about 580 kilometers (360 miles) northeast of Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, from neighboring Kenya, Nur Gelle, a police official at the airport, said in a phone interview. One of the men was killed instantly, while the other died after being rushed to the hospital, he said. <http://goo.gl/SySNZi>

Jail Break: While politicians were busy talking up the new local prisons, pirates were plotting escape. Puntland security officials say 15 convicted pirates transferred from Seychelles escaped from the central jail in the port town of Bosasso. The convicted pirates managed to escape using their clothes tied up as a rope which made the 15 men to jump over the wall before the prison guards could see them. The police confirmed 13 of the escaped men were re-arrested and were retaken back to their prison rooms while two are still missing. <http://goo.gl/BFyUCP>

Fresh Attacks: A worrying new piracy trend has started to emerge. The Strait of Bab el-Mandeb, a key chokepoint in international shipping which connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, is now witnessing an upsurge of reports of possible pirate activity. The Strait is a busy waterway for freight and more than 3.4 million barrels of oil per day pass through Bab el-Mandeb, which translates from the Arabic as 'Gate of Tears' due to it being 18 miles wide at its narrowest point and tricky to navigate. These factors combine to make the slow moving vessels vulnerable to would be pirates as well shipping accidents and terrorist attacks. <http://goo.gl/J9Fvnx>

Tackling Stowaways: Ports need to further strengthen their capacities for surveillance and access control, in order to reduce the incidence of stowaways, participants at a regional seminar on stowaways in West and Central Africa agreed. The IMO Regional Seminar on Stowaways in West and Central Africa: Analysis of the current situation and measures to reduce their number was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. More than 50 participants, including security and immigration officials from the 12 most frequent ports of embarkation of stowaways. The Nautical Institute launched a major new publication on stowaways as attention turns to this problem. <http://goo.gl/SohJEb>

Criminalisation Concerns: Concerns have been raised over a worrying trend which has seen various government authorities criminalising maritime security operatives. These developments have been condemned in the strongest possible terms by the industry's trade body, The Security Association for the Maritime Industry (SAMI). Across piracy afflicted areas, both in the Indian Ocean and off West Africa, there are increasing concerns that innocent maritime security operatives are being targeted, wrongly arrested and criminalised. It is deplorable that such individuals are being made to suffer the indignity, uncertainty and distress of arrest and incarceration. <http://goo.gl/irUFSd>