



Welcome to the Seacurus Monthly – in which we take a deeper look at some of the key events, stories and happenings in the past month.

It seems that there has been a lot of maritime security and piracy related goings on of late – with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), its parent the United Nations and even the Oil Charterers International Maritime Forum (OCIMF) becoming involved in some major new initiatives.

Allied to these, there has been some progress in the development of internationally accepted standards for armed security guards, and a new training scheme from Videotel aimed at shipowners, company security officers and masters who are charged with the responsibility of selecting and working with them.

The developments of the past month have encompassed much of the piracy problems – both East and West of Africa, and with new schemes which promise better information sharing, reporting and legal action, there are some signs of an outbreak of joined up thinking across the industry.

Elsewhere in our usual areas of interest, we have seen further reaction to the recent amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC2006) – a soon to be published survey, which we were given a sneak preview of, has found that an astonishing 76% of seafarer respondents will be paying an active interest in the insurance or security facilities that their employer shipowners have in place.

This shows that there is a revolution slowly dawning – the democratisation of information, knowledge and awareness is making its way up the gangway, and seafarers are increasingly savvy and knowledgeable not only about what should be in place, but also what they are willing to accept.

The same can be said of a major new survey into “Crew Communications 2014” – seafarers continue to crave cost effective access to communications, the internet, voice and video calls, and they are willing to work for those who give them what they want.



Captain Thomas Brown
Managing Director –
Seacurus Limited

Seafarers are standing up for their rights, but not in a militant sense, they are simply viewing their skills as a valuable commodity, one that is worthy of the right rewards. Being part of a connected community, demanding to know what insurance an owner has, these may seem like small ultimatums, but it seems to be ones which could shape shipping into the future.

While we also had a very important visitor to our Gateshead office, thanks to the important role Seacurus has played in providing protection for seafarers.

As ever, we hope you enjoy this issue.

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Crew Communications: The 2014 survey has thrown up some fascinating insight into seafarers and the ways in which they currently connect to family and friends.

IMO Update: The IMO's Committee on Maritime Safety (MSC) held its 93rd Session (MSC 93) from 14-23 May and adopted a number of convention amendments.

IMO on Maritime Security: In addition a significant focus was given to maritime security and piracy issues, with some important changes.

UN On Piracy: The Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) met in New York and progress was made in the struggle against pirates globally.

West Africa: The new Maritime Trade Information Sharing Centre - Gulf of Guinea (MTISC-GoG) is seen as key to security the region, we assess its impact.

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

Minister Visits Seacurus

During a recent tour of north east England, Lord Livingston, the UK's Minister for Trade and Investment, visited the Gateshead headquarters of Seacurus which, in April 2013, launched CrewSEACURE, the first ever insurance policy designed exclusively to protect the rights of seafarers when ships are abandoned at sea.

Seacurus has a well-established relationship with UK Trade & Investment (UKTI), having received expert advice and support from its Passport to Export scheme which helped the company to develop 99% of its insurance premium income from overseas markets. As such, Seacurus was selected as one of only three companies in the north east of England to meet with the minister.

Commenting on the visit, Thomas Brown, Managing Director of Seacurus, said: "I am delighted to have had the opportunity to meet with Lord Livingston and to discuss with him our work with the international shipping industry to deliver bespoke insurance solutions.

"While Seacurus is a relatively small organisation, our market expertise, willingness to innovate and commitment to serving the marine sector has enabled us to secure a prominent position in the global market, to deliver important marine insurance solutions that tackle difficult modern day problems such as piracy and seafarer abandonment. The recent acquisition of our company by the Barbican Insurance Group can only serve to enhance our global reach."

During the visit, Lord Livingston heard about recent international regulatory developments affecting the rights of seafarers in cases of abandonment. Commenting on these discussions, Mr Brown said: "Such regulatory developments have a positive effect on the welfare of 1.2 million seafarers serving at sea today and Seacurus is leading the development of bespoke insurance solutions to address the specific needs of the Maritime Labour Convention in this regard.



Lord Livingston far left Captain Thomas Brown far right

"We are proud to be a part of the UK-based insurance industry that has a long history of world-leading innovation. Through CrewSEACURE, we have provided the shipping industry with a cost-effective means of meeting all its financial security obligations under the Maritime Labour Convention, and we hope that it will become an integral part of the industry's efforts to protect its seafarers."

Crew Communications

The Crew Communications survey 2014 has thrown up some fascinating insight into seafarers and the ways in which they currently connect to family and friends ashore. Perhaps even more importantly it has also given voice to their wants and needs into the future, as connectivity begins to drive their recruitment choices...no internet could mean no crew!!!

Overall it seems that access to crew communications is an improving picture, but despite improvements it isn't good enough – there are also clear concerns that crew are getting ripped off for access ashore.

The report states that failings or weaknesses in the provision of crew communication access do not just disadvantage the seafarers, but they are beginning to pose a major lost opportunity for shipowners and operators too.

The survey found that today almost 40% of crew are provided Internet access on board, a statistic by which the industry should be encouraged. Even more significant is that 50% of that crew is given access free of charge by ship operators. But the variation amongst different sectors is striking.



Despite the MLC2006 mandate the Container, Bulk and General Cargo trades are still a cause for concern. It is in these sectors where levels of connectivity provision are poorest, indeed a good deal of the 6% of crew who never have access to crew communications work on these vessel types. So it seems like it is time to step up their game.

It isn't solely on the dangers of noncompliance that operators should focus, but in the opportunities for improved operations, efficiency and margin. In order to comply with MLC 2006 what is required is a definition of what constitutes 'reasonable' access and 'reasonable' cost. Only 56% of crew state they have access to crew communications either always or most of the time, and it could be argued that this figure must be far higher if the industry is to achieve anywhere near 'reasonable'.

Certainly, according to the reports' authors, the demands of seafarers could not be classed as unreasonable. The survey debunks the idea that crew are clamouring for high-bandwidth streaming

of movies and music or online shopping experiences common ashore. Perhaps they recognise that this is a dream too far at the moment.

Crew are a highly IT literate workforce which understands all too well how expensive connectivity is at sea and which spends most of its money on telephone voice calling. Despite being the most popular service amongst seafarers, telephone voice calling is only provided free by 6% of operators. As a result this IT literate workforce is solving the problem by using Internet access for VOIP and video chat, as alternatives to expensive satellite telephone voice calling.

On average crew are spending \$134 per month at sea on crew communications, but drill down into exactly what crew are paying for an email, a minute of voice calling, or a megabyte of data and things become less clear. In short, seafarers in most cases have very little idea how pricing for crew communications works, or what they are actually paying. This is part of a wider issue of over-complexity.

A reduction in complexity and increased transparency are both required when it comes to pricing for crew communications services, and not just because of the benefit to seafarers. 36% of respondents expect their expenditure on crew communications to increase in the next 12 months; complex pricing structures can act as a brake on others doing the same so it is in the interests of communications suppliers to remove them.

But whereas crew are fairly positive about the cost of communications onboard ship, they are unhappy about the amount they have to pay ashore. Of the 25% of those who use crew welfare facilities the overwhelming majority do so to use communications, but still expenditure on communications ashore is higher than at sea.

This seems to run counter intuitively, and suggests that seafarers are being taken advantage of. Crew are rightly frustrated that the place where connectivity is cheapest is costing them more than the deep ocean, and have identified simple solutions they'd welcome such as global roaming SIM cards—something which is so common in other industries. But the most important thing which crew want to see in the future is free port WiFi, something which would transform their communications expenditure.

In fact when looking at what crew want in future, seafarers overwhelmingly want a cost effective way to speak to, and see, their loved ones. The focus for crew is on reducing the costs of their favourite type of communication—voice calling or video chat.

Providing communications for crew is good business sense for owners. While there may be some cost attached, actually the improvements in crew retention and recruitment can be hugely significant. As to the question of whether access to crew communications affects the choice of employer? Well now there's a definitive unequivocal "yes" from crew. A huge 69% of respondents stated that access

to communications influences their recruitment decisions. We are not talking low skilled people either, this issue affects the best officers in the business, those with higher IT skills, those who understand the increasingly complex technological operation of equipment and machinery on board.

In short, access to communications is a major issue to precisely the kind of employees ship operators should be looking for, or that they should be looking to keep.

It is not solely about recruitment and retention though. Where communications are provided, the savvy operators have enabled not just happier crew, but according to respondents, a safer, more knowledgeable, and more productive workforce.

The survey shows that in general crew believe that access to crew communications has impacted safety and operations on board positively. The ability to access everything from world and regional news to medical and company information on any one of the multiple technology/ communications devices crew are taking on board is changing things subtly but irrevocably. Trends such as Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) are as strong in shipping as anywhere else: they could, and should, be leveraged to the advantage of operators, and the benefit of seafarers.

One of the most important findings of the survey speaks to the obvious question which all the demands for services raises: how do we pay for them? There is no question that seafarers want live audio or video communications, and they want to have them as frequently as possible, but in order to deliver that maritime communications suppliers, ship operators, ports, welfare organisations and wider stakeholders need to begin looking at new business models.

There is no doubt that access to crew communications continues to improve, but interestingly crew themselves don't overwhelmingly recognise that. 50% of crew believe that access has not improved in the past two years, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. This perception is perhaps a function of the fact that land-based connectivity is accelerating at such a pace that, despite its improvements, shipping continues to be left behind.

It is to be hoped that this clear evidence from seafarers of the additional benefits delivered by improving crew communications— not just with family and friends, but with colleagues and company—will encourage more to see the potential.

The overwhelming message from this survey is that crew want to speak to, or see their loved ones on video, regularly and affordably. Addressing that one wish would mean a massive positive change in the lives of seafarers. The industry has the technology to enable that. And increasingly not simply a moral and regulatory, but a commercial imperative to deliver it.

Full details can be found at <http://www.futurenavitics.com/crewcomms14/>

IMO Maritime Safety Committee Update



The IMO's Committee on Maritime Safety (MSC) held its 93rd Session (MSC 93) from 14-23 May. 104 Member States attended the meeting to hear the Secretary General state that in the past two and a half years, 2,932 lives have been lost in domestic shipping accidents across the world.

SOLAS, his highest priority for revision in this its Centenary year, is however not currently applicable to domestic voyages which are within the purview of relevant member governments. Following the COSTA CONCORDIA grounding on 13 January 2012, he promised that the IMO would shortly provide a definitive statement on the incident as the Italian authorities have now finished their entire findings on the cause of the incident.

The MSC saw the adoption of a number of amendments to mandatory instruments, and some major new developments across a range of issues. Which included:

Container Weighing: The MSC approved changes to SOLAS convention that will require verification of container weights as a condition for loading packed export containers aboard ships. "Misdeclared container weights" have been a long-standing problem for the transportation industry and for governments as they present safety hazards for ships, their crews, and other cargo on board, workers in the port facilities handling containers, and on roads. Misdeclaration of container weights also gives rise to Customs concerns.

The approved changes to the Convention will enter into force in July 2016 upon final adoption by the MSC in November 2014. In order to assist supply chain participants' and SOLAS Contracting Governments' implementation of the container weight verification requirement, MSC also issued a MSC Circular with implementation guidelines.

Goal based new ship construction standards: Future work on further development of the Goal-Based Standards Safety-level Approach (GBS-SLA) regarding development of safety objectives as well as functional requirements for the approval of alternative designs and arrangements for regulations of SOLAS chapter III on life-saving appliances was summarised by Germany. The relevant outcome of SSE 1 deliberations will be considered subsequently by the GBS Working Group.

Passenger ship safety: The Italian delegation stated that they had provided all available information on the investigation of the "Costa Concordia" accident and were not planning to provide anything further unless expressly requested to do so by the Committee.

Training and Watchkeeping: Approved the draft MSC-MEPC Circular on Guidelines for the reactivation of the Safety Management Certificate following an operational interruption of the SMS due to lay-up; and approved the draft MSC-MEPC Circular addressing Guidance on safety when transferring persons at sea;

Safety of Navigation: The Committee adopted two new traffic separation schemes:

- “On the Pacific coast of Panama”; and
- “At the approaches to Puerto Cristobal”.

Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping: The Committee considered urgent issues emanating from the first session of HTW during which it endorsed STCW.7/Circ.21 on Advice for port State control officers, recognised organisations and recognised security organisations on action to be taken where seafarers do not carry requisite certification. Training and certification requirements for ship security officers and seafarers with designated duties were also endorsed as advised in a separate Circular. Nine further “competent persons” nominated by three STCW Parties were approved and will be added to the current list of 173 competent persons.

MOL COMFORT: In an interim investigation report of the accident by a Japanese government (MLIT) committee, two recommendations were made:

- That a safety inspection on the bottom shell plates to the extent possible should be conducted in order to verify the presence of buckling deformation; and,
- Verification of the actual weight of container cargoes provided by the shipper be carried out in order to reduce uncertainty related to the still water bending moments of large containerships.

Place of refuge: INTERTANKO made a statement regarding the chemical tanker “Maritime Maisie” which suffered major structural damage on 29 December 2013. Despite repeated requests, a place of refuge was not granted until 14 April 2014 even though the vessel’s structure suffered progressive deterioration. Reference was made to Assembly resolution A.949(23) on places of refuge which argues the case for places of refuse but which also acknowledges that the State has no obligation to act.

Responding, the delegation of Japan answered that the coastal States indeed have the right to make the final decision on whether to accept or refuse such a request, taking into consideration the threat to public safety. In this instance, the Government’s concern about such potential damage caused by toxic gas (assessed to be a risk arising from the residual cargo) was the over-riding factor, hence MARITIME MAISIE’s protracted wait for a place of refuge.

There were a number of other important areas covered, such as a new Polar Code, Implementation of the IMSBC Code and work on out of specification marine fuels. In addition to the various safety, legal and construction elements of the IMO MSC93 deliberations, a significant focus was given to maritime security and piracy issues.

IMO on Maritime Security



In addition to the various safety, legal and construction elements of the IMO MSC93 deliberations, a significant focus was given to maritime security and piracy issues.

Security Regulation: From the pure maritime security perspective, the Committee concluded that further work on “Guidelines for the Development of National Security Legislation” is necessary to advise how the provisions can be incorporated better into national legislation. This would give full and complete effect to SOLAS chapter XI-2 and the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code.

Piracy and armed robbery against ships: The Committee noted that the number of worldwide piracy attacks has decreased and that no SOLAS ships have been hijacked in the western Indian Ocean area since May 2012. However the situation in the Gulf of Guinea has not improved as 9 ships were reported hijacked in 2012 and another 9 in 2013; indeed, BIMCO argued that there is a general upwards trend in the Gulf and the number of kidnappings of crews is growing to an unacceptable level.

The delegations of Cameroon, Angola and Ghana provided additional information to assist in the Committees deliberations during which the Secretary General of IMO thanked those Member States that had provided donations to the West and Central Africa Maritime Security Trust Fund. He further stressed the need to establish a national and port security regime in each country, assisted by the ITCP, and in this respect a Maritime Trade Information Sharing Centre in Accra, Ghana, recently established with the assistance of OCIMF is noteworthy.

With regard to interim guidelines on measures relating to the welfare of seafarers and their families developed by WG3 of the Contract Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, it was decided to forward these to ILO as many of the aspects described fall directly under ILO’s purview and are complementary to the MLC2006.

Private armed security: MSC90 (in 2012) had initially decided that ISO would be best placed to develop standards on Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC) and issued interim guidance to private maritime security companies providing privately contracted armed security personnel (PCASP) on board ships in the High Risk Area, which includes guidance on rules of the use of force.

Following subsequent development of the ISO Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 28007, PMSCs can now be certified to this voluntary standard, thus facilitating uniform international implementation.

Following an extensive discussion, the Committee reaffirmed its support for ISO PAS 28007, and encouraged Member States to submit documents to its next session on how best to reflect the value of 28007 in IMO's guidance on the use of PCASP.

The delay in fully accepting the standard for PMSCs is unfortunate, but one which will hopefully be remedied in November.

While still currently voluntary, the ISO Standard is nonetheless a very welcome and important differentiator when it comes to choosing armed guarding providers. However there had been concern that there was a lag in getting companies passed and certified. Indeed for a period, there were only two accredited certifying bodies – LRQA and MSS Global.

These have now been joined by RTI Ltd, which has successfully been granted "certifying body" status by the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS). This means the company is now accredited under the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) framework to provide assurance assessment and accredited certification for maritime security (ISO 28000 with ISO PAS 28007).

As part of RTI's own certification efforts the company had been working with a number of private maritime security providers, and these are now awarded 'accredited certification' status thanks to RTI's success.

The newly certified ISO/PAS 28007:2012 companies are Alphard Maritime, Bowline, Control Risks and Securewest. The certification success now affords each a competitive edge in the provision of armed guarding services on board ships.

RTI sees ISO 28007 as the gold standard as far as the provision of protection onboard vessels, and so this is a significant milestone for RTI. However, the company believes this success could now be a catalyst for industry wide acceptance of the new ISO standard for armed guards.

There have been concerns voiced as the maritime security industry has been seemingly failing to get a message through to shipowners about the importance of new standards and certification. A recent survey highlighted that more than half of shipowners were not yet demanding ISO/PAS 28007 certified companies.

This seeming apathy, allied with the delay at the IMO, are of real concern. RTI believes it vital that parties to work collectively to ensure that shipowners recognise the value of certification and are compelled to only work with companies who comply.

Progress now seemingly hinges on three possible outcomes; will shipowners choose to demand their providers have ISO/PAS 28007? Will they be compelled to use it? Or will they simply ignore it and continue with an ad-hoc system of in-house vetting and word of mouth?

High Risk Area: Despite a request by the delegation of Oman to remove the Sea of Oman from the High Risk Area as defined in BMP4, ICS informed the committee that information received from naval forces indicates a continued risk of piracy in these waters and it has been agreed, for the time being, to keep the geographical limits of the HRA as they are.

Seafarers and Piracy: The United Nations Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) has developed "Interim Guidelines on Measures Relating to the Welfare of Seafarers and their Families Affected by Piracy off the Coast of Somalia".

These interim Guidelines were submitted by multiple non-governmental organisations to the 93rd Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) of the IMO so that it may become available as a reference framework in dealing with the welfare of seafarers affected by piracy in other parts of the world.

The Guidelines are a document of a declaratory nature without binding force. There is a strong hope, however, that they will serve as a significant first step toward forming a reference in dealing with seafarer welfare problems.

The Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) held its Sixteenth Plenary Session at the

UN On Piracy

UN Headquarters in New York on 14 May 2014 under the Chairmanship of the European Union.

As a tribute to two UN employees who were sadly gunned down as they investigated piracy payments in Somalia, the Plenary was dedicated to the memory of Mr. Clément Gorissen and Mr. Simon Davies. It was noted that as they were working for UNODC, their deaths are a tragedy not only for their families, their friends, their colleagues and the United Nations family, but also for the people of Somalia who so badly need the kind of assistance that they were providing.



The UN Contact Group had been developed to contain a number of working groups – and these were numerically titled. Now, however, seemingly with an eye to giving greater clarity on their roles, the groups have been renamed:

1. **WG1** has been renamed the Working Group on Capacity Building and will be co-chaired by the UK and the Indian Ocean Commission.
2. **WG2** has been transformed into the 'Legal Forum of the CGPCS'. The legal network will be preserved as a virtual legal forum of legal experts. The Legal Forum is not a WG but will report to the Plenary. The Legal Forum can meet on an ad-hoc basis, if and when required. Portugal and Mauritius will co-chair the Legal Forum of the CGPCS.
3. **WG3** has been renamed 'Maritime Counter-Piracy and Mitigation Operations'. This WG will bring, amongst others, the shipping industry, navies and seafarers organisations together. This WG will be co-chaired by Japan, Seychelles and the United Arab Emirates.
4. **Working Group 4 (WG4)**, chaired by Egypt, focuses on the public diplomacy aspects of combating piracy off the coast of Somalia. It aims to raise awareness of the dangers of piracy and highlight best practices to eradicate this criminal activity.
5. **WG5** has been renamed 'Disrupting Pirate Networks Ashore'. The WG will continue to focus on financial flows tracking and arresting piracy kingpins. The WG will aim to become more technical/operational by incorporating specific expertise within the WG. The law enforcement expertise will be concentrated within a dedicated, autonomous Task Force. Italy remains the chair; a co-chair from the region is invited.

The CGPCS was also informed that the mandate of NATO's multinational naval presence has been extended until 2016. The EU's naval presence may be extended until 2016 pending formal decision by the relevant decision making bodies.

It was noted that progress has been made on containing piracy at sea but the trend is potentially reversible without the continued deterrence and disruption effects of international navies, the self-protection by the shipping industry, and until such time as capacity-building efforts ashore have sufficient effect.

Criminal investigation and prosecution of apprehended pirates continues to be a priority for the CGPCS. The importance of continuing to support national prosecutions and incarceration in the region, including in Somalia when possible, cannot be underestimated, and the CGPCS commended the work of the UNODC Maritime Crime Programme in that regard.

Building on the work of over the past two years, a Law Enforcement Task Force (LETF) was set up with the aim of enhancing international law enforcement cooperation to prosecute pirate leaders and piracy financiers.

The Task Force, coordinated by the US Department of Justice, will operate independently and focus on information and evidence sharing and prosecution of kingpins and financiers. The Task Force intends to welcome the participation of nations committed to prosecuting pirate leaders and financiers or holding evidence that will directly contribute to the effort.

The LETF will hold its first meeting in the fall of 2014 and will report on progress at the next Plenary Session. Welcoming the initiative, 'Disrupting Pirate Networks Ashore' (WG5) invited countries to facilitate the participation of prosecutors and investigators involved in combating piracy to the LETF and stands ready to support the LETF including by promoting Somali cooperation in facilitating the arrest and prosecution of pirate kingpins.

WG5 heard reports on the World Bank project on Pirate Trails, the INTERPOL Global Maritime Piracy Database, the evolution of REFLECS 3 (formerly RAPPICC) and took note with satisfaction that UNODC will continue its work on enhancing capabilities to counter illicit financial flows in countries of the region. Capacity building to combat illicit financial flows is also necessary.

The CGPCS also urges the immediate release of the remaining innocent seafarers currently being held captive in Somalia.

The CGPCS noted that approximately 50 seafarers are still being held hostage in Somalia. All have been held hostage for more than two years, some for more than four years. The CGPCS calls upon all its stakeholders to redouble their efforts to secure their immediate release.

Gulf of Guinea Information



The Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF) recently provided a briefing on a new development the Maritime Trade Information Sharing Centre - Gulf of Guinea (MTISC-GoG). Speaking at a recent event in London, Captain David Cotterell, Director at OCIMF provided an overview of the project and a vision for the future.

The Gulf of Guinea (GoG) – the coastal zone stretching from Senegal to Angola – provides an economic lifeline to coastal and landlocked West African countries, and is of strategic importance to the rest of the world. Safe passage to ports in the region and security within its waters are vital for global energy production, as Nigeria and Angola are among the world's 10 biggest crude oil exporters; for West Africa's fishing industry, which provides sustenance and employment for a large swathe of the West African population; and for the prevention of the trafficking of narcotics, people and weapons into Europe and into fragile regions that are vulnerable to destabilization.

The focus off West Africa, and in the Gulf of Guinea, is not solely about piracy. The criminality, insecurity and violence are spread far wider than just one problem, and so the solutions need to be wider in scope and context too. The threats in the Gulf of Guinea manifest in a variety of ways. The territorial

waters and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of Nigeria, Benin and Togo are considered areas at greatest risk of piracy, oil theft, unregulated fishing and trafficking of counterfeit items, people, narcotics and weapons.

Information Sharing

An important focus remains protecting mariners. Understanding what seafarers want and need is a major part of this approach. There have been concerns voiced by OCIMF of “information overload” - off East Africa it was stated that 6-hourly alerts and warnings were coming off the Wheelhouse printer in “9-foot long swathes of paper”.

It has been stated that sophisticated shipping companies struggle to deal with the profusion of maritime security information, and seafarers are left struggling to ensure that vital messages are not lost in the background noise. Instead they must have access to the information they need, in a form which can be understood and at the earliest possible time.

In developing the centre it was felt that mariners transiting or trading in the waters off Africa’s western seaboard currently lacked a single point of contact. There was no means of providing them with some key support, such as:

- Advice and guidance on the latest maritime security situation.
- Explanations of regional patterns of life.
- Where they could formally report incidents or suspicious activity.

It was felt there was a need for “a Centre that talks to ships”. There are so many issues to manage in the region, and it was felt that a dedicated focal point was necessary. The problems include:

- Limited information sharing and inter-agency cooperation
- Economies and livelihoods dependent on fishing
- Intelligence-led and well-armed organised criminal groups
- Low level awareness of regional patterns of life
- Functioning democratic states and regional organisations
- No single point of contact for mariners to seek guidance
- 20 Countries, multiple languages and cultures
- Variable law enforcement, judicial and naval capabilities
- International capacity-building projects and defence engagement

The centre based at the Regional Maritime University in Accra, Ghana has now been equipped and manned.

Code of Conduct

MTISC-GoG will contribute to implementation of The Code of Conduct concerning the repression of piracy, armed robbery against ships, and illicit maritime activity in west and central Africa, and which was adopted formally in June 2013.

These resolutions encouraged States to develop a comprehensive regional strategy and framework to counter piracy and armed robbery, including information sharing and operational coordination mechanisms in the region, and to build on existing initiatives.

Signatories to the Code intend to co-operate to the fullest possible extent, with a view towards:

- Sharing and reporting relevant information;
- Interdicting ships and/or aircraft suspected of engaging in illegal activities at sea;
- Ensuring that persons committing or attempting to commit illegal activities at sea are apprehended and prosecuted; and
- Facilitating proper care, treatment, and repatriation for seafarers, fishermen, other shipboard personnel and passengers subject to illegal activities at sea, particularly those who have been subjected to violence.

Successful implementation of the Code of Conduct is expected to stimulate economic development in the member states, develop sustainable fisheries and promote the development of the maritime sector. Indeed, the centre is an important element of achieving such success.

How it will Work

Inputs: MTISC-GoG relies on a number of inputs, these are then refined and useful/useable data is output to vessels. The inputs include:

Automatic Identification System (AIS)
Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT)
Voluntary Reporting from Shipping
Remote Sensing
Commercial Open Source

The voluntary reporting from shipping angle is an interesting one, and as such as led to the establishment of a "voluntary reporting area". Which is now marked on a new "Maritime Security Chart: West Africa" - this is produced by the UK Hydrographic Office, and copies were distributed to attendees.

Currently there has been no formal Nigerian Navy involvement, OCIMF was pleased to stress the Nigerian Navy have reported incidents to the centre as soon as an incident has occurred. This type of support and interaction is key, and will hopefully be a catalyst for higher level engagement.

Outputs: As highlighted, information dissemination is a key underlying concept for MTISC-GoG, and the outputs include:

- Navigation Warnings and Satellite Communications
- Maritime Security Guidance
- Interactive Website
- Maritime Security Planning Chart
- INTERPOL & Merchant Navy Liaison

In the event of a security incident MTISC-GoG will be able to warn vessels in the vicinity either directly by using a satellite telephone or making use of Navigation Warnings. The centre will be able to liaise directly with the affected vessel's Master and provide guidance, but will have no operational control of naval vessels.

Although the centre operates on an unclassified level it is acknowledged that the information it will be managing is very sensitive will be treated as such. Security of information and vetting of staff is therefore critical to the credibility of the centre, and is being treated as a priority.

The MTISC-GoG is now open and is manned 24hrs a day following the start of operations at the centre the number of reports from vessels entering the VRA is steadily increasing. On the day prior to the briefing it was announced that 40 ships had registered with the centre, and this is expected to grow.

Future Steps

It was stressed at the event that the centre relies on the interaction with vessels, and it is hoped that as the existence and work of the centre is widely disseminated, then this will drive greater involvement by ever more shipping companies across a wider segment of the industry.

Now the centre is operational, the focus of the work has evolved slightly towards establishing Regional Ownership and Leadership of MTISC-GoG

The centre will have an establish Board of Directors, including representation from regional organisations, IMO, INTERPOL. This will be supported by a Work Group of technical experts. While there will also be work ongoing to ensure the centre is continuing to work in support of the Code of Conduct. A dedicated website is due to launch imminently – **www.mtisc-gog.org**

Monthly News Roundup

MARITIME LABOUR CONVENTION AND SEAFARER NEWS

Owner Hunted: South Korea offers \$500,000 reward for tips about missing billionaire Sewol ferry owner Yoo Byung-eun. South Korea has boosted to US\$500,000 a reward for tips about the mysterious billionaire who the authorities believe owns a ferry that sank last month, police said Monday. Meanwhile, five employees at the ship's operator have been indicted. The reward comes as officials struggle to find Yoo Byung-eun on allegations of tax evasion, embezzlement and professional negligence. <http://goo.gl/aiXJfR>



Crew Investment: Spending on training and developing higher levels of competency in one's crew should be seen as an investment with pretty good long-term returns, says the president of InterManager, the association of leading international shipmanagers. Gerardo Borromeo, who is the ceo of Philippine Transmarine Carriers (PTC), says that a key tool that is helpful in guiding discussions between owners and shipmanagers, particularly during tough business environments, is the use of shipping KPIs. One such performance index that strikes at the heart of cost control is developing higher retention rates among crew. <http://goo.gl/DBrydz>

Brought to Book: Two officials of the Philippine Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) face charges after allegedly suspiciously awarding a major contract to a printing firm for the supply of seaman's books to the agency. It is alleged that Marina awarded the contract despite the company's seeming "incapability to print and supply 200,000 copies of seafarer's books". It has been almost three months since the company committed to deliver 20% of the seaman's books. However, no deliveries have yet been made – which is impacting Filipino seafarers. <http://goo.gl/CZvfkF>

Strait Talking: The Straits of Malacca and Singapore remain some of the busiest and most important shipping lanes in the world. It is a vital sea line of communication, carrying about one third of the world's traded goods and used by ships voyaging from West to East. The pamphlet entitled 'Safe Passage: The Straits of Singapore and Malacca' is the result of an initiative pursued within the Co-operative Mechanism, a framework established in 2007 which the littoral states of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore and users of the straits. <http://goo.gl/QoF6Ma>

Rough Treatment: The United States effectively treats foreign seafarers more harshly than any other group that enters the country without breaking the law. The general rule is that all persons who are not U.S. nationals or permanent residents must have a visa to enter the United States. Persons desiring to become U.S. citizens or permanent residents must obtain an immigrant visa. However most merchant mariners do not go through the time and expense required to obtain such a visa, which means that they are liable for a civil penalty if they go ashore for any reason. Despite the problems there is no lobby group in Washington for foreign seafarers. <http://goo.gl/LdiVTw>

Greek Power: Greek ship owners control 46.72% of the EU fleet based on dwt tonnage, a token of the size of the country's maritime industry, despite the challenging conditions in global shipping. As such, Greece has remained the No1 maritime nation globally, controlling a total of 3,669 vessels (over 1,000 GT), which make up for the 16.16% of the global fleet, in terms of deadweight tonnage. This according Mr. Theodoros Veniamis, President of the Union of Greek Shipowners (UGS), the vast majority of the fleet is been managed by companies based in Greece. As a result, shipping is responsible for about 7% of the country's GDP. <http://goo.gl/U030Th>

Outside Box: Developing effective safety cultures onboard involves thinking outside the box and away from established practice, according to Martin Hernqvist, head of The Swedish Club Academy, the body set up to deliver The Maritime Resource Management programme (MRM), speaking at the Manning and Training Conference in Copenhagen. "It is only through a genuine change in attitudes that behaviour can be changed and a demonstrable improvement in a company's safety culture made," said Mr Hernqvist. "If attitudes are poor it doesn't matter what technical skills and knowledge a company has in place as it will not see the change in behaviour."

<http://goo.gl/SUY4RN>

EU Threats: The EU has stated that a number of deficiencies highlighted during the audit and monitoring of maritime schools in the Philippines have yet to be fully addressed and a new July deadline has been put in place. The 28-member EU asked Manila to "provide by end of July 2014 the necessary evidence to demonstrate that all outstanding deficiencies have been resolved and that they have fully implemented the requirements of the STCW convention." It was referring to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers. Failure to resolve any remaining issue may result in the loss of EU recognition. <http://goo.gl/fEXBv7>

Social Welfare: John Guy, author and maritime advisor, has criticised the work of academics looking into the social welfare of seafarers. Speaking about a book by Professor Helen Sampson, Director of the Seafarers International Research Centre at Cardiff University. He says, "It seems she has won a sociology prize for finding out that seafarers' wives get fed up of them being at home for too long." The judges who read the work said they were struck by the ghastly nature of seafaring, and Professor Sampson makes a song and dance about noise and vibration on ships she has sailed on. <http://goo.gl/CdgS5I>

Shock on Ore: Shipowners, charters and traders have been warned to check iron ore export cargoes from Mexico are "legally safe" due to the involvement of drug cartels in the country's mining industry. "The commodity boom of the last decade has seen a number of countries challenged by illegal and unlawful activities with relation to mining and export of raw materials," P&I club Skuld said in a circular. A Mexican drug cartel has taken control of several mines. <http://goo.gl/0S3Cyp>

Negative Equity: A warning has been issued which states shipowners could face being saddled with 'negative equity' in the insurance aftermath of disasters at sea, according to Keith Jones the outgoing chairman of the Association of Average Adjusters (AAA) at its London AGM, reports UK shipping trade association Maritime London. Jones listed a potential series of pitfalls awaiting shipping companies when a 'constructive total loss' (CTL) is declared. He urged owners to be wary. <http://goo.gl/1Ta86w>

Virtual Buoys: The US Coast Guard is testing 25 electronic aids to navigation (eATON) to augment existing physical aids and mark unique and potentially hazardous navigation features in the San Francisco Bay Area. Commonly referred to as "virtual" buoys, the eATON are being transmitted through the Coast Guard's Nationwide Automatic Identification System (NAIS) for display on ships' electronic charting systems and radars. This is an important initiative for future technology. <http://goo.gl/V7rDMg>

Liability Cover: Canadian politicians have debated a bill that would, make ship owners strictly liable for damage caused by hazardous or noxious substances and require them to maintain insurance for such losses. "The proposed amendments to the Marine Liability Act will fill an important gap in the current liability and compensation regime for ships, because they protect Canadians against the financial consequences of hazardous and noxious substances and spills from ships," Transport Minister Lisa Raitt said. "They will also ensure that shipowners carry the appropriate amount of compulsory insurance for the risks associated with the cargoes they carry." <http://goo.gl/IM5hqP>

Tanker Escape: A ship whose crew were slapped with an arrest warrant slipped out of Maltese waters unchallenged because no patrol boats were available to intercept it. The incident happened last week when the Malta army's maritime section was busy monitoring EU membership anniversary celebrations in Grand Harbour and a fire work display. The oil tanker, "MT Atlantik" turned off all radio communication when Transport Malta ordered it to drop anchor after the court issued a warrant of seizure, and the government has launched an inquiry. The arrest was ordered because of a dispute over the ownership of the vessel. <http://goo.gl/jF1auc>

Ice Theory: Academics at the University of Sheffield have dispelled a long-held theory that the Titanic was unlucky for sailing in a year with an exceptional number of icebergs and say the risk of icebergs is actually higher now. Previously it had been suggested that the seas which sank the famous cruise ship had an exceptional number of icebergs caused by lunar or solar effects. But academics at the University have shown the ship wasn't as unlucky as previously thought. Using data on iceberg locations dating back to 1913 – recorded to help prevent a repeat of the Titanic – they have shown that 1912 was a significant ice year but not extreme. <http://goo.gl/Wverm2>

PIRACY AND MARITIME SECURITY NEWS

Case Concludes: The Liberian Registry has concluded its investigation into the pirate-hijacking of the product tanker "Kerala" off Luanda, Angola, on 18 January 2014. The Liberian investigation is based on evidence gathered by an INTERPOL-led multinational Incident Response Team as well as findings of its own investigative efforts. The Liberian Administration is currently in the process of publishing its report into the hijacking of the Liberian-flagged vessel, but has confirmed it was not a "hoax". Liberia requested the attendance of the INTERPOL in Tema, Ghana, the port of refuge to which the Kerala was directed following the disembarkation of the pirates. <http://goo.gl/tPDCjJ>

Guard Awareness: It is easy to forget that the use of Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSCs) has only become commonplace in the last few years and that the selection and deployment of armed guards is still an unknown quantity for many operators and crew. In response to this, Videotel has made a new addition to its armoury of training materials with the creation of a brand new programme – Working with Maritime Security Guards – which has been developed in conjunction with the Security Association for the Maritime Industry (SAMI), BIMCO and Steamship Mutual, the training programme had its launch on board the HQS Wellington this week. <http://goo.gl/46b1zJ>

Reduced Spend: There has been a sharp reduction in maritime security spending (for anti-piracy measures) to shipping companies in half (to about \$3 billion). While some see that as a relief, there are concerns that such reduced commitment to security could be the prelude to renewed hijackings. The problems in Somalia have not really changed, and so the root causes of piracy still exist. By relaxing counter measures without instituting governance, law and control ashore seems like a template for problems. Many experts have warned against complacency, but it seems the message is not getting through. <http://goo.gl/HfYhdE>

Piracy Suppression: As efforts to further contain Somali piracy evolve, some are proposing to apply the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA Convention) to piracy. Although the Convention was aimed at terrorism, some have argued that several of its provisions could be used to improve anti-piracy efforts. The Convention purports to be directed at unlawful acts that are directed “against the safety of maritime navigation,... [and that] jeopardize the safety of persons and property...” Although piracy would seem to fit these criteria, there seems to be no current efforts to pursue this proposal. <http://goo.gl/Ar9GBF>

Alert Concerns: Ship security alert systems are a statutory requirement, but conforming only to the minimum standards undermines their practical value when ships are under threat. Fortunately, with a little thought and application, ship security alert systems can be vastly more effective. What is the point of a Ship Security Alert System (SSAS)? Since 2006, when all ships were required to have installed ship security alert systems, shipping has been subjected to a significant rise in serious organised crime and in so many cases crews have either not activated the SSAS, or when they have done so, it has been disabled apparently by the vessels’ assailants. <http://goo.gl/dwnqss>

Security Strategy: The UK government has published for the first time a cross-department maritime security strategy, designed to advance and protect national interests at home and overseas in the maritime environment. The strategy outlines, for the first time, the UK’s approach to delivering maritime security at home and internationally, setting out how the UK organizes and uses its extensive national capabilities to identify, assess and address maritime security challenges. <http://goo.gl/VEoMHh>

Tackling Crime: The shipping industry and coastal countries in West Africa should increase levels of training and cooperation to prevent maritime crime from spreading in the region, says leading maritime security company GoAGT. For the last five years, increasing instability in the Sahel and Sahara region has been a source of growing concern for the world’s governments. Western onlookers have worried that the weakness of state control in the area would allow al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb a foothold. <http://goo.gl/W5agV3>

Regulation Matters: There has been a lot of talk about regulating the private maritime security industry. So far, however, nobody has asked ship-owners or captains about the performance of armed guards onboard and the effect their presence has on the crew. With our groundbreaking survey, we want to find out more about the bigger picture, writes academic Dirk Siebels. The reports indicate positive relationships, but they wish to open the scope of the study. <http://goo.gl/yQNJBX>

Financial Costs: Oceans Beyond Piracy has released its latest report on the financial costs of piracy. According to the report, there is satisfaction on progress against Somali piracy, but piracy in West Africa was on the rise and concern is increasing too. The Oceans beyond Piracy report put the total cost of Somali piracy - by far the largest single threat to international shipping in recent years - at only \$3.2 billion in 2013. There was criticism that only a tiny proportion of the money spent on Somali piracy was being used for permanent solutions onshore, the pirates' launching pad for attacks on passing ships, the report said. <http://goo.gl/ovMBXO>

Poverty Remains: As an illustration of the problems still facing Somalia, and the fact that the root causes of piracy still remain, it has been reported that more than 50,000 malnourished children in Somalia are at "death's door" less than three years after a famine. The report comes from a group of aid agencies and is entitled "Risk of Relapse", in which it is stated that action needed to be taken to stop the country slipping back into a state of acute crisis. It said nearly a third of the population needed aid. The report claims that an additional \$822m was needed to meet funding needs for the year. <http://goo.gl/f9lggM>

Dangerous Waters: Indonesian beaches are known to be gorgeous, but what lies beyond those pretty shores has become a cause for concern as ever pirates appear to be lurking in Indonesian waters each year. "The World's Most Dangerous Waters" was a title given to Indonesian seas on the piracy subject, according to a Forbes report. This is due to a rising pirate attacks in Indonesian waters. Indonesian seas are suffering a rapid rise in piracy, and the nation had the dubious distinction of being the global leader in sea piracy with 25 incidents out of 66 worldwide in the first quarter of 2013. <http://goo.gl/3osNIS>

Threat Infographic: Threats to supply-chain security change constantly, but regular monitoring of disruptions can help build a complete picture of how to counteract them. BSI estimates that global cargo theft resulted in losses of \$22.4 billion worldwide in 2013, basically flat compared with the previous year. However, cargo theft remains a challenge for global importers, especially those with high-value and liquid goods, BSI said. Countries that BSI rated as "high" or "severe" for cargo theft continued to see large numbers of thefts and "significant" losses in 2013, including Italy, Mexico, Russia and South Africa, which saw many violent cargo theft incidents. <http://goo.gl/IXzAof>

Criminalisation Concerns: Concerns have been raised over a worrying trend which it says has seen various government authorities criminalising maritime security operatives. The Security Association for the Maritime Industry (SAMI) said that in piracy afflicted areas, both in the Indian Ocean and off West Africa, there are increasing concerns that innocent maritime security operatives are being criminalised. Peter Cook, CEO, SAMI, said: "We are deeply concerned and strongly condemn this creeping trend of criminalisation. Maritime security professionals should not be used as makeweights in political disputes, nor be seen as scapegoats in commercial quarrels." <http://goo.gl/H2hgqb>

Dangerous Thinking: BIMCO warns that it's dangerous to think that the pirates have gone away. Head of Security Giles Noakes says, "The combination of the navies, the use of armed guards, and BMP had some effect on reducing the amount of pirate action," he says. "But the threat of piracy is still out there." The real solution to the piracy problem therefore lies onshore. And the shipping industry is finally beginning to realise just that. One of the latest projects, Fair Fishing, on which Clipper partner and former CEO Per Gullestrup is a board member, has a goal of creating a sustainable fishing sector at the Somali port city of Berbera. <http://goo.gl/7FC3PD>