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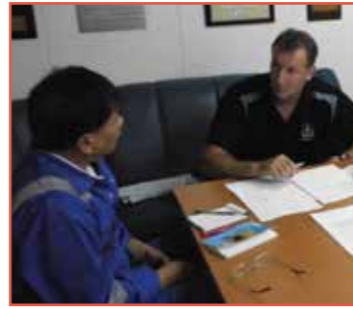


BURST OF PIRATE ACTIVITY

ASSOCIATION CLOSES DOORS | UNHAPPY SEAFARERS | BEHIND THE CORPORATE VEIL



Inside this issue we look at key maritime issues currently shaping shipping. We examine the concerning spike in pirate activity both off West Africa and South East Asia. As the 'Panama Papers' put shipping under scrutiny once again, we look at the demands for transparency.



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Welcome

Welcome once again to the Seacurus Monthly bulletin - where we look back on the news and issues which have shaped shipping.

The past month has seen incredibly concerning spikes in pirate activity – both off West Africa and in SE Asia. With terrorist groups seemingly setting up their own piracy divisions, a rising tide of kidnap, ransom demands and innocent deaths is once more enveloping shipping.

That terror groups should be seeing seafarers and shipping as a soft target is hugely concerning. Perhaps the most worrisome aspect of the latest piracy boom is the innovation, cunning and daring of the pirates.

According to reports from one recently hijacked vessel. The crew did not think anything was amiss when four armed men boarded their vessel in the Celebes Sea. They simply assumed the four men dressed in black uniforms were maritime security officials performing a check. Sadly that was far from the case.

It was only when the boarders spoke in a mix of English and Tagalog that it became clear the men in black were not actually Malaysian security personnel at all, but were in fact kidnappers.

Off Somalia it all seemed so much more straightforward – men in

skiffs could perhaps be fishermen, but when they started attacking you, crews could be sure of who they were. Off the likes of West Africa and Asia, it can be so much harder to even know who the bad guys are. It seems we are headed into some very troubling times ahead.

The timing of this new epidemic in piracy has perhaps not come soon enough for some part of the maritime security industry. Last month the Security Association for the Maritime Industry (SAMI) announced it was closing its doors, and sadly filing for voluntary liquidation.

It seems a shame, but delivering for the shipping industry can be a thankless and difficult task. SAMI was synonymous with the growth of the armed guard business – and that was occasionally a bitter pill for shipping to swallow, dogged by politics, moral questions and even practicalities.

Perhaps the saddest aspect of all this is not merely the loss of another trade association, but the concerns about the vacuum it will leave. It still appears clear that the shipping industry needs to better understand maritime security. While security companies themselves do need an international voice in amongst all the other lobbying and special interests. Sadly with SAMI's demise there will be a void, and it is within such gaps

and knowledge vacuums that rumours, lies and nonsense grow.

It is not just piracy which has been in the news – shipping itself has been caught up in the headlines. The revelations to emerge from the “Panama Papers” leaks have put the issue of transparency at the fore – and shipping has long wrestled with such demands.

With shipping already under pressure to improve its footprint in terms of environmental issues, and towards human rights too, it is now also under pressure to improve the way it runs its business. It will be interesting to see what, if any, changes the leaks bring. Perhaps just a move to a new offshore vehicle and regime?

We hope you enjoy this latest issue of Seacurus Monthly.



Managing Director
Capt. Thomas Brown

BURST OF PIRACY ACTIVITY

The past month has seen incredibly concerning spikes in pirate activity – both off West Africa and in SE Asia. With terrorist groups seemingly setting up their own piracy divisions, a rising tide of kidnap, ransom demands and innocent deaths is once more enveloping shipping.

LATEST ATTACKS

It has been almost difficult to keep abreast of all the attacks which have happened in the past month. Such has been the flurry of activity in African and Asian waters, there are mounting fears of another epidemic.

Unfortunately it is often difficult for the data gathering and reporting agencies to keep abreast – and their reports are naturally looking astern at what has gone, not necessarily capturing the risks of the day.

So the latest figures from the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) International Maritime Bureau (IMB) were not able to highlight the immediate statistical growth, however, they instead deplored the trend they saw at time of analysis – that of the growing violence off the coast of West Africa.

According to the report, 44 seafarers have been captured so far this year off West Africa. While worldwide, IMB recorded 37 piracy and armed robbery incidents in the first quarter of 2016, down from 54 in the same period last year. Three vessels were hijacked and 29 boarded, with 26 crew kidnapped.

NEW PROBLEMS

Indonesia fears piracy on a busy shipping route along its maritime border with the Philippines could hit levels seen in Somalia unless security is tightened, its chief security minister said last month, following a spate of kidnappings.

The route lies on major shipping arteries that analysts say carry \$40 billion worth of cargo each year. It is taken by fully laden supertankers from the Indian Ocean that cannot use the crowded Malacca Strait.

For the first time, concerns over rising maritime attacks by suspected Islamist militants are disrupting coal trade



between the Southeast Asian neighbours, with two Indonesian coal ports suspending shipments to the Philippines.

Up to 18 Indonesians and Malaysians have been taken captive in three attacks on tugboats in Philippine waters along the route by lawless elements suspected of ties to the al-Qaeda linked Abu Sayyaf Group.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Abu Sayyaf is a militant group based in and around Jolo and Basilan islands in the southwestern part of the Philippines. This is where for more than four decades, groups have been engaged in an insurgency for an independent province in the country.

The group is considered very violent, and has long appreciated the value of maritime targets. In 2004 the group was responsible for the Philippines' worst terrorist attack, the bombing of "Superferry 14", which killed 116 people.

Abu Sayyaf, has posted videos on social media pledging allegiance to Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria, in the latest round of hijackings they demanded US\$1.1 million to free the Indonesian crew – which the owner reportedly paid.

NO GO ZONES

The Indonesian Navy initially instructed all commercial vessels to avoid the piracy-prone waters around the southern Philippines, following the spate of kidnappings. While the local navy has also been increasing the intensity of patrols up to the exclusive economic zone border with the Philippines and Malaysia.

This advice was then changed by the Indonesian Transport Minister Ignasius Jonan, he said ships travelling from Indonesia's Borneo to the Philippines should have an armed escort.

The minister stressed that if the vessels fail to have such security guard they should abort the sailing. "It is a call for boosting security. So if there is an escort by an armed ship, the vessels may sail. But if not, it is better not to have the journey,"

While the Indonesians are clearly rattled, they are not the only ones to issue advice. Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Maritime Administrator has issued Ship Security Advisories. The flag is recommending heightened vigilance while transiting off the Southern Philippines following the three kidnapping incidents involving 18 seafarers.

ACTION AND REACTION

Due to increased piracy attacks in the Niger Delta, it has been reported that the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, has directed that vessels sailing into Nigeria would pay double to engage Filipino seafarers.

While Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), has called for a military-led patrol of Nigerian maritime domain in the Gulf of Guinea. Allied to this seemingly reasonable call, there has been something of a knee jerk reaction. The Nigerian Navy has issued an outright ban on outboard engines in excess of 200 horsepower on the country's coastal waters.

A Nigerian Navy spokesperson said, "It has been observed that criminals carry out their activities at sea with the aid of this class of engines, mounted on boats stowed on mother ships". He added that the Navy has

confiscated many small craft – commonly known as "go-fast boats" – with engines above 200 horsepower on suspicion of criminal activity.

It has seemingly been forgotten that two 175hp engines are more powerful than one of 200 – and would remain perfectly legal! So this seems like something of a confused, desperate measure.

EXTORTION CLAIMS

While pirates are ramping up their activities, it seems that maritime security companies are equally promoting their services once more.

One of the more successful security initiatives off Nigeria has been that of "secure anchorages". Areas in which ships are kept safe by bringing them together and patrolling the perimeter and area. This is the modern day equivalent of circling the wagons, and seems to make sense. However, the answer seems to have caused anger in some parts of the Nigerian shipping community.

According to the media, a civil society group in Nigeria has alerted the President to what it alleges is a plan by a UK-based marine security company to extort heavily from foreign shipowners.

In a letter of concern, it alleges that "unwholesome activities" are being perpetrated in various ports along the approaches to the Bonny Channel by the foreign company, Daimon Group Limited. The disagreement relates to a Safe Anchorage Area along the Bonny Channel designed to provide protection for vessels whilst at anchor. Seems with security in West Africa you are damned if you do, and seafarers are damned if you don't.



ASSOCIATION CLOSES DOORS

The recent ramping up of piracy hasn't come quick enough to save some parts of the private maritime security industry. Last month the Security Association for the Maritime Industry (SAMI) announced it was closing its doors.

SECURITY SUCCESS, BUSINESS FAILURE

According to its press release, SAMI felt it has become a victim of its own "success" and has now gone into voluntary liquidation. This was due, the association claims, to a fall in membership.

The press release said, "After 5 distinguished years of representing the private maritime security industry the Directors of the Security Association for the Maritime Industry Ltd (SAMI) have made the decision to put the company into voluntary liquidation".

SAMI was formed when piracy and hijackings off the coast of Somalia prevailed, but since the first members joined in April 2011 much has changed, and both the maritime security industry and their trade association have had to push forward in a rapidly changing business landscape.

Piracy off the coast of Somali and the Horn of Africa has fallen since the organisation was founded, thanks to the carriage of armed guards on-board ship, as well as coordinated efforts from national navies. This has caused SAMI's membership to more than halve from its peak of 180 international company members.

REMAINING VIABLE

The CEO of SAMI, Peter Cook believes the Association's legacy is the increasing competence and professionalism of the private maritime security industry. In a sense of job done, Cook believes, "This is the task SAMI set out to achieve and we have done it".

Having done what it set out to achieve, it seemingly became a question of what now. The law of diminishing returns has also come into play. The maritime security industry has also evolved and consolidated significantly; unfortunately for the association, SAMI membership has fallen and it has seemingly proven ever harder to deliver for those members it retained.

The upheaval and drop off in membership was perhaps not helped by the association going through upheaval internally. The association suffered some high profile departures from the staff and Board in 2014. When the Chief Operating Officer, Maritime Director and Marketing Manager all left, and this would have been hard for any organisation to deal with.

Despite a reduced staff and refining of the business there was no answer in sight.

According to Cook, the Association is no longer financially sustainable in its current configuration. The task of representing the industry in as many influential forums as possible around the world has been an expensive one, and with dwindling members, the model was no longer adding up.

POSITIVE INFLUENCE

It has been widely recognised that SAMI has had a very positive influence on the development of the use of armed guards on board ships in the North-West Indian Ocean.

Thereby, contributing greatly to the protection of many thousands of seafarers from pirate attacks and the horrors and deprivations of being held hostage. Without the task of improving accountability and standards, there would never have been the wide scale use of armed guards.

SAMI believes it also reassured ship owners, charterers and marine insurers of a high standard of professionalism from the Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) providing a measured and proportionate response to deter pirates from attacking ships transiting the High Risk Area.

The use of armed guards at sea was always extremely controversial and divisive – but SAMI did provide a positive, open face for the industry, and built a genuine bridge between the world of security and shipping.

WORDS OF COMFORT

There have been many across the industry who have expressed their praise for the work of the Association, and have regretted the demise of a positive and engaged voice in the industry.

Yordie Wiebes of Shore & Offshore Security, the Chairman of SAMI members' Industry Steering Group (ISG), said:

"SAMI has done a fantastic job in bringing together this new international industry over the past 5 years. It has provided a focal point for the shipping industry and the members alike" Wiebes also stressed though, that it is now time to re-evaluate the role that such an organisation plays in a dynamic maritime security environment."

Neil Roberts, Manager Marine and Aviation, Lloyd's Market Association (LMA) said;

"There is no doubt that SAMI made a positive contribution to the private maritime security industry by helping to establish improved regulation and, in doing so, improved how the industry was perceived. Its pioneering work on floating armouredies will be an enduring legacy".

Captain Thomas Heinan, Deputy Commissioner Maritime Affairs, Republic of the Marshall Islands Registry stated;

"SAMI has been an essential element to the promotion and development of a quality, responsible private maritime security industry through its influence and assistance in the development of industry standards. Now that this goal has been achieved, it is only natural to move on to the next challenge. The Marshall Islands Registry would like to thank SAMI for its role in keeping our fleet safe and secure and helping to bring floating armouredies under regulatory control."

Dr Phillip Belcher, Marine Director, INTERTANKO added;

"SAMI's contribution to ensuring a better regulated space was significant. Through the provision of a single point of contact to this industry, shipowners were able to talk sensibly and proactively at a real time of crisis in the shipping industry. It is a shame that that point of contact is now being lost, but their positive impacts will remain as their legacy."

THANK YOU AND GOODBYE

Peter Cook commented:

"We would like to publically thank all current and past members of the SAMI Secretariat, our associates, affiliates, partners and the members that have contributed so much to the success of the Association and the unique position we have held within the global maritime industry for the past 5 years."

MERGER ANNOUNCED

As if to illustrate the changing times and fortunes of the private maritime security industry, and the impact that the evolution would no doubt have had on SAMI, last month saw the merger of two major players.

It was announced that maritime security risk management providers Port2Port Maritime Security and Neptune Maritime Security have agreed to merge. In a move which has perhaps shown the way forward for many companies.

According to the companies, the combined group will provide significant scale and service advantages to the shipping and offshore industries, as well as improving the global reach of both companies. The merger follows an extensive strategic evaluation process between both companies, where key areas such as operational capability, logistics and quality of service were carefully examined to ensure consistent and enhanced service for existing and new clients.

SEAFARERS UNHAPPY BUNCH

Seafarers do not go to sea for laughs. They are there to make money, or they endure the life because of a lack of decent work in their own countries. Even those harsh truths do not prepare you for the increasing cheerlessness of modern shipping.

GREY CLOUD DESCENDS

Contemporary seafarers are saying that life at sea is, well – depressing, one leading P&I Club has been pondering this, and leaped to a rather surprising conclusion. They blamed access to technology, the internet and phone calls as potential issues on-board.

The Club believes that communication technology can actually compound isolation problems at sea, by reducing social interaction on board. According to the Club connectivity means that rather than chat, play games or watch videos with other crew members, seafarers now retreat to their cabins.

They paint a soulless, disconnected life on-board – one that is dangerously devoid of social interaction, and friendships which used to make life as a seafarer bearable, if not enjoyable. Seafarers are increasingly likely to feel alone and isolated.

No more is shipping a professional of shipmates and friends. At sea this can have potentially worrisome effects – as it weakens the support, mentoring and camaraderie which made seafarers the people they have always been. Until now.

CAUSES AND EFFECTS

The Club is also concerned that seafarers having easy access to family and friends back home can bring problems too. They have expressed concern that issues at home will cause seafarers anxiety, and this can be exacerbated by having easy access to communications but not being able to deal directly with problems.

Being able to hear bad news, but not being able to respond to it – while serving on a ship without any real social and pastoral support on-board paints a very miserable and concerning picture of modern maritime life.

When it comes to accidents, the Club believes it is difficult to attach any root cause blame to underlying emotional issues of seafarers – but it doesn't take too much of a leap of imagination to suppose that distracted, stressed and depressed seafarers are less likely to perform well.

Lack of awareness or reduced concentration are definitely symptoms associated with misery, and so it seems likely that seafarers could well trip or fall, or in a more extreme case be involved in an incident such as a collision, due to modern maritime melancholy.

SOCIAL ANIMALS

If the industry is bemoaning the demise of social interaction on-board, and if distracted and downcast crew are more likely to court disaster, then it seems we should be looking for answers.

Historically seafaring was always an outgoing, spirited, occasionally even raucous career. As seafarers finished their watch, it would be to the bar. While the ship may have floated on water, seafarers often floated on a different liquid altogether.

Rightly it is no longer the bar and alcohol which is the focus. But what of the alternatives? Of course there can still be TV, movies, newspapers video games to enjoy – and it doesn't have to be in isolation, alone in a cabin.

Perhaps it isn't the options which are missing – anyone can organize a weekly or monthly entertainment evening, darts, cards or a quiz; maybe even a BBQ or a table tennis tournament. But are they going too when there is so much work to be done?

ENEMY OF DOWNTIME

It seems that it is the harsh reality of a demanding work environment which is ripping the social fabric on-board. When seafarers do not feel the support around them, or from ashore they will retreat into themselves, or will see succour from those at home.

When they are tired, stressed, and just wanting to get home – why would they want to indulge in matey banter? Perhaps this should not be about decrying technology, but instead, about understanding human nature.

We are keen in shipping in searching for the root cause – so what is making seafarers disengaged? Unfortunately it seems they do so because they cannot be bothered any more, they are losing the ability to



cope. Sadly on too many ships today, the social side of seafaring is gone. The new reality is about killing time, getting the job over with and getting home.

It is not just a case of ditching the video games consoles and sharing times together. To say that is to fail to understand that technology can be fun and provide the necessary entertainment. It is only an issue when people feel down and disconnected – so that is what has to be fixed.

SEWING SOCIAL FABRIC

It is fine to voice concerns about the symptoms of an issue. Yes, seafarers are retreating into isolation. But to blame technology is seemingly to miss the point. The blame is at the door of reduced manning, the blame sits with relentless work schedules, paperwork and a lack of shore leave.

Seafarers are not unique, they are just people who happen to work at sea. If they are tired, fed up, frustrated and wish time away, then they retreat not just into their cabins – but into themselves. That is the problem – and it needs to be fixed.

Lecturing seafarers to get the board games out, or to have a quiz is a little discourteous to say the least, if not insulting. People at sea know how to interact, they are just unable to or are choosing not to. So there is no need to tell them how to forge relationships. There is a need to foster an environment which brings people together.

Across many areas and sectors of shipping, people recognise that a happy crew works more effectively, more efficiently and are more likely to be able to help individuals deal with any issues they may have.

So if we all know that happiness is key – what are we doing about it?

NO QUICK FIX

The P&I Club perspective stresses that the burden should not fall on its members. They state that it is not for anyone ashore to decide who should be responsible for ensuring a decent level of social interaction on board. Nor, do they feel it should be a duty for any particular rank to provide a formal counselling role and increase an already full workload.

This is problematic though, as perhaps it really is time for those ashore to recognise that there is a need to provide the foundations of social interaction on-board. It should be the job for someone on-board to ensure that the foundations are built upon. This is about performance management – which should be a cornerstone of safety, security and operations.

Traditionally it was often the purser or radio officer who would be charged with the role of organising and ensuring shipboard life ticked along. Sadly as they were long ago removed, so too was the mechanism to think about things other than work, and there was the effect that their responsibilities were heaped upon those ranks which remained.

In modern shipping there is a little time for fun – there is little chance to relax, to enjoy the bonds of friendship, and of marine adventures with a network of colleagues and companions. If depression and stress is a risk to seafarers, if it is threatening safety – then it needs to be countered. If we also are universally recognising that “happy crews” are better, then this needs to be fostered. The questions are being asked, and now is the time for answers.

BEHIND THE CORPORATE VEIL

The global shipping industry is having to cope with increasing scrutiny and demands for transparency. With pressure to improve its footprint in terms of environmental issues, and towards human rights too, it is now also under pressure to improve the way it runs its business – while revelations from offshore are not seemingly helping.

SHADED VIEW

Shipping – long viewed as a shady conduit for money transactions – is to the fore in the revelations from the “Panama Papers” – the leaks from a law firm that have exposed the questionable financial offshore movements of many of the world’s elite.

The sensational leak of 11.5m documents from Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca has exposed many famous names as tax dodgers, with much of the media scrutiny focusing on Russian president Vladimir Putin’s billions of dollars that he has stashed around the world. With hundreds of names listed in the papers, shipping’s exposure was always set to be high.

The “Panama Papers” have given a peek behind the industry’s long drawn corporate veil, and the leaks are having wide reaching impact on shipowners and charterers.

The names to emerge have included Greek shipowners perhaps sheltering money as they fret about a possible communist take-over of their homeland, There are American shipowners seeking to avoid the crippling costs of Jones Act compliance, Hong Kong shipowners needing freedom to operate ‘shikumisen’ ships for Japanese principals, while mainland Chinese shipowning entities have gone behind the veil to seek foreign finance for their ships. Owners have poured into the Panama and the Liberian flag, but the general public are waking up.

TRADING ON REPUTATION

Shipping is an industry which has excelled at its trade, but it has done so over centuries by also recognising how to take advantage of the lapses of security, enforcement or awareness of what happens beyond the horizon.

For that reason, it will be very interesting to see whether a new era of corporate transparency emerges in the wake of the “offshore” revelations emerging from Panama.

The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) has taken the opportunity of using the “Panama Papers” to resume its attacks on open ship registries, noting that the only thing they can do to achieve some balance with the scheme of “tax evasion” is to sign agreements that guarantee certain terms and conditions of employment for ship crews.

Secretary General of the ITF, Stephen Cotton says, the exposure generated by the disclosure of documents hacked from the firm Mossack-Fonseca, should serve as an ingredient for countries practicing open registry to change their attitude.

GLOATING ON BROAD STREET

Ramón Fonseca, co-founder of the law firm at the centre of the Panama Papers admits dealing with the fall out of the leaks has been a “brain-squeezing” experience, but insists there is no panic. In shipping circles within Panama they are confident this will all blow over, without any lasting longterm effect. Belisario Porras, president of the Panamanian Association of Maritime Law, does not believe the disclosure of 11.5m documents will mark the beginning of the end for Panama’s place in the offshore financial space.

However, eager to take advantage of Panama’s position, Liberia has been proudly been stressing the relationship it has with Greek shipowners which dates back almost seventy years.

According to the Greek Shipping Co-operation Committee (GSCC), Liberia has cemented its position as the undisputed leading open registry of choice for Greek shipowners. In the year to end-March 2016, the gross tonnage of Greek-controlled ships in the Liberian Registry increased by 995,781 gt. Liberia, with 744 vessels aggregating 54.74m dwt. Second only to Greece itself in terms of the number of Greek-owned ships flying its flag.

Pride comes before a fall – and it would not be hard to imagine some names emerging from Broad Street, Monrovia that would set as many pulses racing as the Panama Papers have.

SECURITY TOO

This is perhaps not solely in issue of taxation, there are concerns to for maritime security – not so much on an operational level – not the impoverished pirates with AK47s – but the corporate raiders who seek to skirt around the rules, and who facilitate extreme examples of maritime crime.

The owners who hide their identities and riches, but who threaten the security of nations, the sea lines of communication and are able to run amok in our global commons with substandard ships obscured behind brass plaques and investment vehicles.

From smuggling, whether people, drugs or contraband, to gun running, even carrying entire dubious cargoes, maritime security in its widest sense rises and falls on the ebb tide of transparency.

During times of turned heads and freedom to operate, then the more dubious owners make headway with their nefarious activities. They ship stolen oil, wildlife, banned substances, as well as the illegal imports mentioned above.

SUPER HIGHWAY OF CRIME

The sea can all too easily become a superhighway of crime, if there is a lack of law enforcement. However that needs to rest on practical, effective and pragmatic means of monitoring and instigating action.

The past few months has seen major hauls of weapons seized from vessels, particularly in the Gulf Region and round into the Red Sea. Weapons which criss-cross the planet, empowering warlords, facilitating organised crime, and bringing populations to their collective knees. Drugs too – there have been a number of major seizures recently. Tonnes of narcotics of all kinds. Cargoes which again can bring misery to many, but immense wealth to a criminal elite.

While such obviously illegal cargoes are a natural concern, it is the more marginally dubious rather than illegal shipments which are more common, and which have a significant impact too. Much of the oil shipped from Nigeria is vulnerable to dubious licensing, ship to ship transfer, and all manner of sharp practice.

It seems that shining a spotlight on who makes what and how must have an effect. It is perhaps to be hoped that society will be able to distinguish between those who simply acted to be as tax efficient as possible, and those who have been hiding under a financial rock, using their invisibility for nefarious deeds and acts.



NEWS ROUNDUP

THESE WERE SOME OF THE STORIES WHICH CAUGHT OUR EYE OVER THE LAST MONTH, AND WHICH FEATURED IN OUR DAILY NEWS BRIEFING.

Seafarer Hearing Loss Leap: Organization (ILO) Minimum Wage for Able Seafarers will remain at its current level of \$ 614 basic pay per month until at least 2018. That equates to approximately 431 GBP, 538 Euros, 808 Australian dollars and 825 Singapore dollars. This follows an ILO Joint Maritime Commission (JMC) meeting held in Geneva last month, comprising representatives of maritime employers co-ordinated by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and seafarers' unions co-ordinated by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). The next ILO Joint Maritime Commission review will be during 2018. <http://goo.gl/aBj4dD>

Seafarers and Social Dangers: The Norwegian Hull Club has issued a warning to seafarers about how journalists and pirates might use their social media postings. The club says that social media platforms such as Facebook, Sina Weibo and Instagram are used to keep in touch with family and friends and also to "snoop around in the lives of more distant acquaintances." However, not everyone fully understands how social media works and that traditional media and journalists use it as a source for information. The club asks seafarers to consider the consequences of their postings - and ask questions of themselves before posting. <http://goo.gl/yo9hgO>

Alarms Need to be On: The importance of keeping a bridge navigational watch alarm system (BNWAS) switched on was highlighted in the recent Safety Digest from the UK's Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB). In the report, there is a case where a coastal general cargo vessel ran aground partially because the officer of the watch fell asleep at his post and the BNWAS was turned off, against industry regulations. It struck a rocky island at 9 knots when the chief officer fell asleep on watch because of fatigue and the lack of any lookout. Another point highlighted by MAIB following the investigation was the small number of crew on board. <http://goo.gl/bL0zvP>

Generator Risk Warning: Club P&I Club is advising its members to be aware of the potentially severe consequences of poorly maintained or overloaded on-board generators being unable to meet the electrical demands of ships at sea. The warning comes in the latest issue of the club's loss prevention newsletter Signals. According to deputy loss prevention director Colin Gillespie, 'Generators have a critical function to play on all ships. They provide electrical power for ever-more complex navigation, communication and safety systems as well as essential on-board services and vital equipment such as cranes, winches and bow thrusters. <http://goo.gl/fgC6Qt>

Communications Distract Bridge Team: Recent maritime accidents have occurred because bridge crew were distracted by communications equipment, or were too reliant on navigation technology. It is clear from accident reports that deck officers must ensure they are not distracted, or too dependent on radar, ECDIS and AIS information, to prevent groundings and collisions. These were the key messages from the latest UK's Marine Accident Investigation Branch report. Over the last six months, it has reported on a number of accidents involving cargo vessels, tankers and passenger ships that have grounded or collided while the officer of the watch was distracted by technology. <http://goo.gl/i45ava>

Stopping Six-On Watches: The International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P) says a recently released paper on the "six-on/six-off" watch system is "little more than an opinion piece", serving the interests of operators in the inland tug and barge industry." The paper, "Enhancing Sleep Efficiency on Vessels in the Tug/Towboat/Barge Industry," is the product of Northwestern University and industry. MM&P claims the study used "Self-serving opinions combined with selected research papers on fatigue and sleep in a very different environment, such as astronauts in space, are used to justify inherently unsafe practices," he adds. <http://goo.gl/D795xp>

P&I Merger Signs: The merger of the UK P&I Club and the Britannia P&I Club is perhaps a sign of the times. Mergers all round! This is the first merger of P&I Clubs that I can recall which is not in effect a take-over of a weakened Club by a stronger one, if we discount the aborted merger of the Britannia and the Standard, a few years back – a deal which was reputedly put together by the managers of both clubs but torpedoed by – legend has it – the board of the Britannia. Neither Club is in a position of weakness, but one might say – at risk of being cold shouldered by both parties – that neither Club is quite in the position that it was a couple of decades back. <http://goo.gl/jUNTjz>

London Boasts of Billions: Maritime London has welcomed the findings of research which show that the UK is the world's leading maritime business services hub. According to the report, UK based companies offering marine insurance, shipbroking, legal services and education contribute £4.4bn to the economy and employ over 10,000 people. An estimated 80-85% of its business comes from outside the UK. The UK's Global Maritime Professional Services: Contribution and Trends report, finds the UK has a 35% share of global marine insurance premiums; 26% of global shipbroking revenue and that 25% of the world's maritime legal partners are based in the UK. <http://goo.gl/Fmk03R>

IMO Cools on Climate Control: The IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 69) meeting this week did not reach agreement on a work plan for developing carbon emissions reporting and regulation. Many industry groups and member states have called for addressing CO2 emissions within the IMOs regulatory authority, and the negotiators at this year's COP21 climate discussions in Paris agreed, leaving shipping's carbon emissions up to IMO. However, at the MEPC meeting this week, a small group of states – advocates pointed to the BRICS nations, notably China – were set against developing any plan for regulating greenhouse gas emissions. <http://goo.gl/Fhm8cI>

Migrant Rescuers Face Charges: Media reports have suggested that volunteer maritime rescuers may be criminalized under legislation previously established to combat people smuggling. Therefore, the independent maritime human rights charity, Human Rights at Sea, has published new independent guidance for volunteer maritime rescuers on the risks of criminalization when facilitating rescues at sea. The free guidance is applicable to ship masters, NGOs and civil society organizations. The guidance examines the current E.U. legislation as volunteer maritime rescuers have expressed concerns about how it might appear to criminalize their humanitarian work. <http://goo.gl/XXBdSu>

Dispute Over Panama Safety: The Panama Canal Authority (ACP) has dismissed a critical safety report on its new locks as "inadmissible", claiming the study did not have all the facts correct. The safety study into the Panama Canal expansion, commissioned by the ITF, was carried out by Brazil's FHM Union. The study, which used simulations, suggests the safety of manoeuvrability is compromised as the locks' dimensions are too small for safe operation (with both gates closed); there are no refuge areas for the tugboats inside the locks, leaving no room for failure; and the bollard pull was deemed insufficient. <http://goo.gl/gZORR2>

EU Exit Rattling Shipping: If Britain votes to leave the European Union, the country's shipping sector faces years of disruption as trade agreements get reworked and currency volatility leads to higher costs at a time when the industry is battling its worst global downturn. Shipping contributes some 10 billion pounds (\$14.2 billion) annually to the UK economy and directly employs 240,000 people in multiple areas including maritime services such as ports, transportation, as well as ship broking and marine insurance. As worsening market conditions bite with a surplus of ships for hire, alarms are sounding over whether Britain will quit the EU in a June 23 referendum. <http://goo.gl/YqP4mN>

Crew Thought Pirates Were Officials: The crew of "MV Massive 6" did not think anything was amiss when four armed men boarded their vessel in the Celebes Sea from Manila to Tawau. As the four men dressed in black uniform rounded them up, they figured it was just a routine check by maritime security officials. They never thought they were at the mercy of some notorious Filipino kidnap-for-ransom gang. They only realised when the boarders spoke in a mix of English and Tagalog that the men in black were not Malaysian security personnel but in fact kidnappers. One of the gunmen then demanded to know their nationalities before taking off with the four Malaysians. <http://goo.gl/R5NOj1>

Fears of New Migrant Route: The European Union fears Mediterranean migrant smuggling gangs are reviving a route from Egypt, officials told Reuters, putting thousands of people to sea in recent months as they face problems in Libya and Turkey. "It's an increasing issue," an EU official said of increased activity after a quiet year among smugglers around Alexandria that has raised particular concerns in Europe about Islamist militants from Sinai using the route to reach Greece or Italy. Departures from Egypt were a tiny part of the million people who arrived in Europe by sea last year; more than 80 percent came from Turkey to Greece, and from Libya. <http://goo.gl/xE2kIT>

Great Expectations Dashed: Cargo interests claiming on their insurance for substantial sums – arising sometimes from common incidents such as theft from shipping containers, and piracy – can have their most confident expectations dashed, experts warned at the spring 2016 seminar of the Association of Average Adjusters. Equally, the detail in standard policy clauses can deliver big shocks to the ledgers of cargo underwriters dealing with even minor damage to goods carried by sea, speakers said during the City event, which was organised in conjunction with the International Underwriting Association. <http://goo.gl/VXsRJj>

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