FLAGSHIP

NEWS FROM THE LIBERIAN REGISTRY

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Registering the value of casualty statistics

STATISTICS can be misleading. They can also be imaginatively interpreted for individual strategic advantage. But, in shipping at least, there are some statistics that bear close scrutiny, and which offer a health-check on the state and culture of the industry they document. Furthermore, they may help provide an insight into individual sectors of the industry, including ship registries. The marine and casualty statistics produced by the International Underwriting Association of London (formerly the ILU) are a case in point.

Captain John P. DeLeonardis, Senior VP Maritime Operations and Safety

With reference to vessels confirmed by insurers as sunk, irretrievably lost, effectively destroyed or determined to be constructive total losses, the IUA tracks the performance of the flag state registries. Thirty-nine countries have been identified with tonnage loss ratios above the world average over the five-year period from 1995 to 1999, and twenty-eight over the same period on the basis of their average number of losses. Liberia is notably absent from both lists.

The most recent IUA figures relating to 1999 show that the number of total losses involving vessels of 500 gross tons and above was 130. This is ten lower than the previous year. But the amount of tonnage involved was up, from 858,000 gross tons to 922,000 gross tons.

Interestingly, the IUA notes that bulk shipping — both liquid and dry cargo — had a better record than non-bulk shipping over the ten-year period 1989 to 1999. It also says it will be monitoring the situation to see whether the introduction of the ISM code will serve to reduce this disparity.

Liberia, of course, is a strong supporter of the ISM Code. In addition to the 1,264 Liberian-registered vessels, which are now ISM-certificated as required by the code, there are a number of other vessels which have already been certificated well in advance of their 2002 deadline.

The IUA statistics relating to the effect of age on average tonnage losses over a ten-year period up to 1999 show that experience is similar for all types of vessels in their first ten years, but then deteriorates differently, according to tonnage type. Tanker losses, for example, deteriorate in the 15-to-19-year age group, and dry bulk carriers reach a notable peak in deterioration in the 20-to-24-year range.

It is evident, however, that the overwhelming majority of total losses are from the oldest age groups. Liberia has a young fleet compared to that of many other open and national registries.

The IUA statistics provide invaluable indicators for underwriters to be used in conjunction with other relevant data when assessing risk. They also show that it is fundamentally wrong to continue blindly equating the term “flag of convenience” with substandard operation. While a number of such flags are featured in the statistics, others are conspicuous by their absence. The IUA statistics help establish the true parameters for making a distinction between quality open registers and consistently substandard flags.

The statistics confirm the ongoing effectiveness and excellence of the Liberian flag state administration’s maritime safety program. They help to confirm that Liberia supports the registration of well-operated, safe, modern vessels whose operating records will stand favorable comparison with those of vessels entered with other open and national registries around the world.

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LISCR ready to issue STCW95 licences and certifications

THE Seafarers Certification and Documentation Department at LISCR is ready. It is expected that the long-awaited IMO White List will be published at the 73rd Marine Safety Committee meeting at IMO on November 27, 2000, and LISCR is planning to issue STCW95 officer certificates at the beginning of January 2001. Applications for the STCW95 licences (form RLM-105) will be accepted as early as December 2000 for this renewal process.

Applicants from white-listed countries:

Seafarers in this category must complete form RLM-105 (available at www.liscr.com or from your local Liberian authorised agent) and include with the application a copy of their national STCW95 certificate. A new five-year Liberian STCW95 licence will be issued.

Applicants from non-white-listed countries:

Applicants wanting Liberian STCW95 officer certificates who do not have national STCW95 certifications are able to qualify under the Liberian Certification System. They may have to pass a written examination as part of the assessment process. Applicants will also have to show satisfactory completion of the STCW95 required training courses as listed below.

- For navigational officers at the operational level, this includes STCW95 Basic Training, GMDSS, ARPA, First Aid Provider, Proficient in Survival Craft, Bridge Resource Management and Advanced Fire Fighting.
- At the management level, this includes the previously mentioned courses, plus Medical Care Person in Charge certification.
- For engineering officers, this includes STCW95 Basic Training, First Aid Provider, Advanced Fire Fighting, and Proficient in Survival Craft certification.

Liberia to introduce *SEA*farers Electronic Application

LISCR will soon announce the implementation of a computer-based electronic application system for seafarer certifications. We are presently beta-testing our software system whereby applications, including digitised photos, will be sent to us electronically. This system will shortly be inaugurated for applications in respect of Seafarer's Identification and Record Books and Special Qualification Certificates. We will add the ability to apply for officer certificates online in early 2001.

This service will be a great benefit to seafarers, shipowners and crewing managers alike. In our philosophy of using the advantages of IT and bringing the registry business into the 21st century, the *SEA*farers Electronic Application system will reduce both application process time and postage and handling costs. Furthermore, the system will help to ensure the integrity of Liberian certifications. Please stay tuned for further information.

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Yang Ming expanding

YANG Ming Line is a big owner/operator which is getting bigger. And, as it expands, its relationship with the Liberian Registry is set to grow also.

Taiwan-based Yang Ming owns/ operates about sixty vessels, mostly containerships for its worldwide service routes, but also three tankers and three panamax bulkers. Most of these vessels fly the Taiwanese flag, but ten are Liberian-registered. And, as David C H Liu, senior vice-president of Yang Ming's marine department, explains, "We are planning to put more vessels under the Liberian flag."

Yang Ming has placed orders for seven post-panamax containerships, five with Hyundai in Korea, and two with China Ship Building Corporation in Taiwan. All will be delivered before May 2001. Meanwhile, plans are being finalised for five new sisterships.

David, who has more than thirty years' experience in the marine industry, explains, "The factors that influence our choice of register are very simple - reputation, flexibility, efficiency, safety and smooth operation. Not only does the Liberian flag have a very good reputation for safety and reliability, but it also builds a high degree of flexibility into its dealing with owners.

"We have an excellent relationship with LISCR, and especially with William Wu", a LISCR executive vp based in the Hong Kong office, responsible for the entire Far East region. "What we like about LISCR is its speed of response, and its ability to provide 24-hours-a-day service. As an owner, we have to be able to respond without delay to any situation which affects our crews, our ships, or the cargo they are carrying. LISCR helps us do that.

"Of course cost is an important part of ship registration. Ship registers have to be alive to owners' needs in a very competitive market. But being able to operate our ships safely and efficiently is even more important than cost. Liberia gets the balance just right."

Internet tonnage tax calculator launched

THE Liberian Registry has improved shipowner access to its services still further with the introduction of an instant online tonnage tax calculator. For new ship registrations, owners can now obtain immediate confirmation of the amount of tonnage tax payable by entering the net tonnage of their vessels into a special calculator on the LISCR website. The website can be accessed at www.liscr.com

At the touch of a button, the calculator will also show a range of other information if applicable - including annual safety inspection, registration, administration and certification fees.

Further improvements to the LISCR website include a new facility for approved inspectors to update their online details, thus ensuring that the most efficient lines of communication are available at all times to the registry and its customers.

These electronic innovations are part of the Liberian Registry's commitment to an ongoing programme of improved access and lower costs for shipowners, whilst maintaining the highest standards of quality with which the registry is synonymous.

The Liberian Registry recently cut its annual tonnage taxes by 75 per cent to $0.10 per net ton, and waived registration fees for vessels entering the flag until June 30, 2001. Later this year, it will be possible to record Liberian mortgages in London, for the first time ever. And online registration of vessels is expected to be available early next year.

"We want owners to have the best, for less," says Yoram Cohen, ceo of LISCR. "We shall continue to improve service while maintaining quality at the highest level, and we shall continue to bring down costs. At the same time, a one-to-one personal service will always be available to those owners who want it."

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Fee waiver extended

DUE to a highly successful response, the Liberian Registry has decided to extend the waiver on initial registration fees through until June 30, 2001.

Royal Caribbean International's newest ship, *"Explorer of the Seas"*, was delivered on September 28, 2000 at Kvaerner Masa Yards in Turku, Finland. The latest ship in Royal Caribbean's fleet to fly the Liberian flag, it is a 142,000 gt vessel with capacity for 3,114 passengers. This state-of-the-art passengership has an indoor ice-skating rink, outdoor inline skating track and rock climbing wall, three pools, six whirlpools and a mini-golf course. In addition, it will be the first cruiseship to have an oceanographic and atmospheric laboratory on board. *"Explorer of the Seas"* is the second ship of Royal Caribbean's Voyager Class. *"Voyager of the Seas"* was the first of the series, introduced in November 1999. The third in the series, *"Adventurer of the Seas"*, is expected to debut in October 2001.

New appointments

SCOTT Bergeron has joined LISCR as Chief Operating Officer - Maritime Services. Based in Virginia, Scott takes over from **Jerry Smith**, who oversaw the establishment of LISCR and the transition of the Liberian Registry to LISCR's management.

Jerry will remain with LISCR as Maritime Policy Advisor, with special responsibility for relations with IMO and other international organisations. "Helping to set up LISCR and assuming the task of managing the Liberian Registry has been a huge challenge," says Jerry. "It is a good time for me to go back to what I like doing best, which is speaking out for the interests of the Liberian Registry and the owners who use it."

Scott Bergeron, who was previously Quality Manager for Laurin Maritime, brings to LISCR a background in ship survey, having worked in this area for both the US Coast Guard and Det Norske Veritas. Most importantly, he has a background in commercial vessel operations and ownership.

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LIBERIAN-born **LINDA Fawaz** joined the LISCR customer relations team as their marketing executive in July. Linda was educated in Montreux, Switzerland, where she learned French. She also speaks fluent Arabic, her father being Lebanese, and English, her mother's native tongue. She holds a degree in international business from Marymount University.

Linda is looking forward to promoting the many advantages of the Liberian Registry, and is currently busy explaining the new digital seaman application procedures and other hi-tech solutions available to owners of Liberian-registered vessels. She will be launching a clients' suggestions box in the new year.

As befits someone with an international upbringing and outlook, Linda relishes the opportunity to broaden her knowledge of global maritime affairs.

Yoram Cohen, ceo of LISCR, recognises that shipowners and managers are increasingly turning to talented, hi-tech young people who are transforming the industry. He wants the Liberian Registry to identify with what he calls "this new generation of space-age shipmanagers". Linda is an important part of that plan.

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On the register

THE guarantee of first-class service to all existing clients of the Liberian Corporate Register was an essential goal for LISCR. This has been achieved, not least because of the efforts of the staff of the corporate department.

Regular users of the register recognise the familiar names and voices of Sylvetta Valentine, Elizabeth Goralski and Sylvia Hurtado in Vienna. Jill Keohane *(above, right)* heads the team, bringing European experience of the issues critical to running effective corporate registry services, as well as experience as a professional user of those services. Cheryse Pryor and Akram Jaouni complete the team.

The Yorkshire accents of Catherine Dreyer *(above, left)* welcome callers to LISCR's Zurich offices, where Cath runs the office with Florine Derradji and Charlotte Schubiger, adding fluent French and German, as well as ease of access during European working hours. Cath's arrival at LISCR has been appreciated by her clients, who know they can expect efficient and personal service.

The next objective is new services. Legislation will be enacted before the end of the year to introduce a variety of alternative vehicles to help LISCR's professional clients provide an even better service to their own clients. Amendments to the Business Corporation Act will produce a number of minor changes needed to make it a more flexible tool for practitioners.

Same-day service continues to be the byword of LISCR. Legislation has been drafted to support the developments in technology that will be offered to clients who wish to make use of them, particularly electronic document creation, transmission and storage, and secure electronic signatures.

The Liberian Corporate Register is at the cutting edge of service to the professional community, and the staff of LISCR Corporate Department is dedicated to meeting the challenge.

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