

FLAGSHIP

NEWS FROM THE LIBERIAN REGISTRY

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Let the record speak

A number of criteria are regularly employed - sometimes fairly, sometimes not - to rank ship registers. But the one benchmark which should be inviolable is safety.

Whatever commercial imperatives drive whatever part of shipping, safety must always come first. And shipping today is monitored and regulated in such a way that the performance of all its component parts should be more transparent than at any time in the history of the industry.

Port state control is an enormous power for good in terms of ship safety. Liberia is a committed supporter of PSC regimes and reviews, such as the Paris and Tokyo Memorandums of Understanding. Indeed, these records show that Liberia is the largest quality flag in the world, and it has consistently appeared on the white lists of all port state control regimes.

The Liberian Registry is also a strong supporter of the US Coast Guard's Qualship 21 initiative, and this remains the case despite the fact that it has not been designated a Qualship 21 register for the current year. Liberia believes that the USCG's use of detentions divided by the 'distinct vessel arrivals' for the detention ratio makes for an impure statistic, the use of which makes it very difficult for large flags with a great number of US port calls - Liberia, for example - to achieve the stringent Qualship standards.

That said, Liberia is very proud to have achieved Qualship recognition last year, and fully supports the US Coast Guard's initiative to reward the owners and operators of quality ships. Liberian-flag ships that have already received Qualship recognition will retain it for a period of two years. We are confident that Liberian vessels currently in the Qualship programme will be able to maintain their

designation beyond 2007, and that new vessels will become eligible again in the first half of 2008.

Liberia's starting point on port state control is that one detention is one too many. Every ship register should operate with the aim of having no detentions at all. We all recognise that errors will happen and it is how we respond to those errors that will in the long run define our overall success. But of course all responsible ship registers support the proper implementation of prescribed standards of safety by well-qualified PSC inspectors, by properly trained and suitably motivated Designated Persons Aboard, and by vigilant flag state overseers.

For its part, Liberia is an active partner with its clients in designing, reviewing and implementing management systems intended to create controls that support safe operation and to minimise the risk of detentions. When a PSC detention does arise, Liberia investigates the incident, determines the legitimacy of the allegation and, if warranted, appeals the detention. And, if the detention is warranted, the registry aggressively pursues remedial action in search of the root cause of any failure.

Liberia will continue to pursue excellence in this vital area, and is confident that all its industry partners - including shipowners and operators, crews, and PSC itself - will recognise that a high level of collaboration and co-operation is needed to achieve this.



The "Breeze", a double-hulled oil/chemical tanker delivered on July 9, 2007, by KY Heavy Industries Shipyard at Mokpo, South Korea, for management by Unibros Shipping Corp of Greece, is one of a significant number of newbuildings flying the Liberian flag.

IN THIS ISSUE

IMO agrees new codes

New agent for Cyprus

Seafarer fatigue

Marine investigation course

Rescue off Azores



IMO agrees new codes

IMO has agreed a new draft casualty investigation code and a new code of good practice for port state control officers.

The 15th session of IMO's Sub-Committee on Flag State Implementation (FSI) in June agreed the new draft code covering International Standards and Recommended Practices for a Safety Investigation into a Marine Casualty or Marine Incident. The current code for investigation of marine casualties and incidents is not mandatory, which has caused inconsistencies in its implementation.

FSI recommended that the new draft code be made mandatory through amendments to SOLAS Chapter XI-1 and be sent to the Maritime Safety Committee meeting for approval and adoption. The new code is intended to facilitate co-operation and to enhance the quality of investigation for the benefit of flag states, coastal states, IMO and the shipping industry in general.

Of particular note is the addition of a new chapter on fair treatment of seafarers, which was supported by Liberia. The addition recognises the need for special protection for seafarers during the investigation of a marine casualty or marine incident. Under a

new chapter entitled "Obtaining Evidence from Seafarers", seafarers' human rights must be upheld, at all times.

Seafarers from whom evidence is sought must be informed of the nature and basis of the investigation and informed about, or allowed access to, legal advice regarding any potential risk that they may incriminate themselves in any proceedings subsequent to the investigation, and any right not to self-incriminate or to remain silent.

Seafarers will also be allowed to return to their ship, or be repatriated at the earliest possible opportunity. It is of the utmost importance that shipowners and managers properly address these issues with the seafarers who operate their vessels.

The new code of good practice for port state control officers (PSCO) agreed by FSI provides guidelines covering the standards of integrity, professionalism and transparency which regional PSC regimes expect of all port state control officers. The objective is for PSCO to act within the law and in a fair, open, impartial and consistent manner. The code will be sent to the Maritime Safety Committee in October 2007 for approval.

New special agent for Cyprus



LISCR has appointed Bernt Gienskey as its special agent in Cyprus. A former oceangoing navigation officer with more than seven years' experience sailing with Hamburg-Amerika Linie, Hamburg Sud and

Otto M Mueller, Bernt Gienskey also has extensive experience in the shipping industry ashore. This has included terms as Technical Fleet Manager with Columbia Shipmanagement, General Manager of Acomarit, Technical Director and Quality Manager at C F Ahrenkiel, and Crew Manager of Interorient Navigation, in Cyprus. In addition, he has worked as a shipping executive in Germany and the Philippines, and since September 2003 has been Managing Director of the crew management firm I C Shipmanagement in Cyprus.

Bernt Gienskey says, "I am greatly looking forward to working closely with the Cyprus shipping community as a representative of the world's leading open registry."

LISCR marine accident investigation course

LISCR'S Maritime Services Department has added a new training module in marine accident investigations. As a result, professional mariners who receive training to become Liberian ISM and ISPS auditors may also qualify to receive training in the principles of marine accident investigation. The eight-hour module will provide prospective investigators with the fundamental skills needed to conduct accident investigations on behalf of the Liberian Registry.

Bob Ford, a former master with US-flag companies Sea-Land Service Inc and Central Gulf Lines, will be teaching a one-day course in basic marine accident investigations. Bob spent five years as an investigator at the US National Transportation Safety Board and was Investigator In Charge (IIC) for a number of high-profile accidents, including the allision of the Staten Island Ferry *Andrew J Baberi*. As Quality Manager of the Liberian Registry, Bob was the investigator for the March 2007 grounding of the bulk carrier *Montrose* in the Chesapeake Bay.

There are many similarities between conducting an investigation and auditing, but there are also many differences. Prospective investigators will be evaluated prior to being enrolled in the class. They will be assigned an accident scenario and asked to provide a written analysis.

The module will provide training that will include the legal requirements for accident investigation, interviewing techniques, on-scene procedures, and preparation of investigative reports. Investigators assigned to high-profile accidents may face challenges that can deflect attention from the focus of the investigation. Media presence and legal barriers are just two aspects that will be addressed in the class, which will be assigned past accidents to analyse, using the techniques taught.



Liberian vessel commended for lifesaving rescue off Azores

The master and crew of the Liberian-registered, Unicom-managed gas carrier *SCF Tomsk* have been commended by the Deputy Commissioner of Maritime Affairs, Liberia, for their professionalism in rescuing all 42 people from an open boat off the Azores in June this year.

The vessel was under way from Providence, Rhode Island, to the Cape Verde Islands when a fibreglass-hulled boat was spotted on the port bow. The *SCF Tomsk* did not receive a distress signal, but the people in the boat waved their hands and indicated that they wanted drinking water, which the *SCF Tomsk* launched into the sea, to be retrieved by the men on the boat.

The boat was subsequently moored alongside the *SCF Tomsk*, whereupon its occupants were taken on board the Liberian-flag ship, with the help of the crew, and transferred to the accommodation block, there to

be fed and cared for, and their identities established. Sadly, one of the men died as a result of the exposure to very bad conditions experienced on board the small boat.

Once the survivors had been safely accommodated, the master ordered the vessel to proceed at full speed towards Isla St Vincent, Port Mindalo, where all survivors were transferred to another vessel for onward repatriation, and the *SCF Tomsk* thereafter proceeded on its way to the Cape Verde Islands.

The Deputy Commissioner of Maritime Affairs for the Republic of Liberia said, "The dedication and professional actions displayed by the master and the crew of the *SCF Tomsk* reflect great credit upon themselves, Unicom Management Services (Cyprus) Ltd, and the Liberian Registry, and are in keeping with the highest maritime traditions of saving lives at sea".



SEA wins Seatrade accolade

The Liberian Registry was the only flag state featured among the twelve candidates shortlisted for the 2007 Seatrade Awards. The finalists were selected from over 300 highly regarded entries by an independent judging panel chaired by IMO Secretary-General Efthimios Mitropoulos.

The Registry was selected for its Seafarers' Electronic Application system (SEA) in 'Category IV - New IT Applications for the Shipping Industry', which Inmarsat-sponsored award recognises "innovative approaches to ship operational management leveraging technology and the net". The SEA System is a web-based application designed to facilitate the secure application process for seafarers' credentials,

Combating seafarer fatigue

Fatigue management in the transportation industry is a challenge, because the industry operates on a twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week basis. For the maritime industry in particular, night-time operations are a way of life.

The issue of fatigue in marine transportation workers has been on the shipping industry's radar scope now for over a decade and is one of the Liberian Registry's focal points for safety improvements. At the invitation of the International Maritime Health Association (IMHA), Silke Wagenseil of LISCR's Hamburg office represented Liberia at the recent International Symposium on Maritime Health in Esbjerg, Denmark.

The IMHA has been working with IMO and the ILO to further develop medical standards, as well as advising on fatigue and habitability issues. The symposium had as its focus 'Equity in Maritime Health and Safety – development through research, co-operation and education'. It included a keynote address on 'Fatigue', followed by a session on 'health effects and risks of duty at sea'.

The Liberian Registry welcomes the opportunity to work in a progressive participative environment where it can present a practical perspective based on collective experience. And it is actively supporting research in the use of quantitative tools to help measure fatigue.

such as officer's certificates of competency and seafarer identification books in accordance with the STCW Convention. Authorised users can access the web-based application from almost anywhere in the world. The web server can host multiple instances of the application, which allows for the distribution of workload, real time quality assurance and, when needed, direct online intervention.



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On the register



Tommy Ngo was born in Vietnam and came to the United States in 1991 to study accountancy at George Mason University in Northern Virginia.

He joined LISCR in 2001, having previously worked for four years in the personnel support detachment at the US Department of Defence. Today, he is the Accounting Manager for LISCR, a position he has held for the past two years.

Tommy thoroughly enjoys his work, in which he is in charge of accounts reconciliation, and generally overseeing the provision of accounting and administrative support services for the corporate registry, marine operations and seafarers departments at LISCR, handling payments from shipowners and agents.

Tommy is enthusiastic about the ship registry business, and proud to be working for such a professional organisation as LISCR.

He says, "The ship registration market continues to get bigger and bigger. So it is incumbent on those who manage ship registries to develop new, improved ways of dealing with the administrative and accounting side of things, which make things easier for the client.

"LISCR continues to review and upgrade these parts of its operation, and has achieved a high level of sophistication and efficiency in this regard. Of course, our clients are generally good payers, so that helps!

"But it is important to develop new initiatives - such as the collections department which we opened in June this year - which help things run more smoothly for our clients and which also help LISCR to manage their accounts."

When he isn't counting money, Tommy is something of an outdoors man. He enjoys sailing, camping and fishing, and all outdoor pursuits generally. He especially enjoys hunting, and speaks enthusiastically in this regard about his trips to Maryland.

He also enjoys spending time with his wife and fifteen-month-old son, doing the things that families like to do.

