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Google move on 'drone' shipping

Agreement with Rolls-Royce is a 'step change' for smart ships, says Nautilus

→ Nautilus has described an agreement between Rolls-Royce and Google as 'a monumental step change' in the development of 'smart ships'.

Under the deal between the marine engineering and equipment firm and the internet giant, Google will develop its artificial

intelligence (AI) systems for practical shipboard applications.

The agreement enables Rolls-Royce to use Google's Cloud Machine Learning Engine to further train its AI-based object classification system for detecting, identifying and tracking the wide range of objects that a vessel can

encounter at sea.

The two companies claim that Google's 'intelligent awareness systems' are quicker and better than humans in making predictive analysis and will help to improve safety on existing and future ships.

They plan to fuse data from a

range of sensors with information from existing ship systems, such as AIS and radar. Data from other sources, including global databases, will also have a role.

'Intelligent awareness systems will make vessels safer, easier and more efficient to operate, by providing crew with an enhanced

understanding of their vessel's surroundings,' Rolls-Royce stated.

Details of the agreement were discussed at the Nautilus UK branch symposium on autonomous shipping last month, and general secretary Mark Dickinson told members that he believed it represented a radical step forward in the evolution of 'smart' vessels. 'Bringing in a player like Google takes this to another level altogether, and raises a whole new set of questions,' he added.

Karno Tenovuo, Rolls-Royce senior vice-president, commented: 'While intelligent awareness systems will help to facilitate an autonomous future, they can benefit maritime businesses right now — making vessels and their crews safer and more efficient.'

'By working with Google Cloud we can make these systems better faster, saving lives,' he promised.

Machine learning is defined

as a field of computer science that gives computers the ability to learn and improve from experience without being explicitly programmed. It utilises algorithms, tools and techniques that mimic human learning to solve specific problems and analyses existing data sets with the objective of learning to recognise patterns in training data and to make predictions from previously unseen data.

The Google Cloud Machine Learning Engine uses the same neural net-based machine intelligence software which powers many of its products, such as image and voice search.

In the longer term, Rolls-Royce and Google say they plan to undertake joint research on unsupervised and multimodal learning.

They will also test whether speech recognition and synthesis are viable solutions for human-machine interfaces in marine applications.

Report calls for ECDIS overhaul

Vessel ran aground when electronic charts showed a water depth of 112m

→ An incident in which a ship was written off after running aground in waters where the electronic chart indicated a depth of 112m has sparked a call for top-level action to tackle ECDIS-related safety risks.

The Dutch-flagged general cargo ship Nova Cura was declared a total loss after the double bottom tanks were breached and the engine room and bow thruster room were flooded when the vessel hit rocks at Lamnas Reef, to the north of the Greek island of Lesbos.

The Dutch Safety Board discovered that the ship's original route between two Turkish ports had been changed to enable a container destined for Lisbon to be loaded at a different port.

The master had plotted the new route in the ship's electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS) and had moved a waypoint in the area of the grounding further south after the chief mate suggested the original one was too close to shallow water.

At the point where Nova Cura grounded, the ECDIS indicated the water depth to be 112m and the shallow water to be about 0.2nm



The Dutch ship Nova Cura aground off the Greek island of Lesbos last year. Picture: Onderzoeksraad

north of the vessel.

Accident investigators noted that the paper and electronic charts for the area had been designated Catzoc U because the reliability of the data used — which dated back to 1967 — had not been determined.

They found that the Greek charts incorrectly stated the position of Lamnas Reef — and that Nova Cura had grounded in a spot more than 400m south of the charted shallow area.

The accident site was shown correctly on UKHO paper charts, the Dutch Safety Board discovered, but there were discrepancies between the Greek and Turkish ENC's for the area.

Investigators said the master and second mate were unaware of the Catzoc of the ENC being used. The ECDIS layer displaying categories can be enabled or disabled, the report notes, and it is 'vitaly important' that officers check Catzocs when planning or altering

routes.

The Safety Board also found that passage planning taking proper account of sector lights had not been carried out in the voyage preparations — and the report stresses the need for masters and officers to enable the relevant ECDIS sector when plotting their routes.

'It is striking that the sector boundaries do not extend to the danger they are covering,' the report adds. 'This is contrary to

the sector boundaries on paper charts and is why the sector lights on paper charts work more intuitively than on the ENC's.'

The report raises concerns that ECDIS may give 'much more information that the user is able to process' and foster a false sense of security. It says future developments should address training issues and ways to make the use of systems more intuitive.

'ECDIS is a relatively new, state-of-the-art navigation system which may create the impression that it guarantees highly accurate navigation,' the report adds. 'This can lead to the crew overestimating the reliability of the information at their disposal or even neglecting to check it.'

The report recommends that the International Hydrographic Organisation imposes conditions on the age and reliability of data used to compile ENC's and seek to reduce the number of Catzoc U charts. And it also calls for the International Maritime Organisation to catalogue and evaluate the inherent safety risks associated with ECDIS, and to produce more extensive guidelines for the layout of ECDIS default views and menus, as well as the proper use of available information.

Nautilus senior national secretary Allan Graveson said the report was important, but added: 'The recommendation that is missing is that in addition to "generic training", "specialised training" should be undertaken rather than the cheaper option of "familiarisation training".'

'Electronic charting and on-board instrumentation should align, and knowledge and understanding of officers be at a level to the principles of navigation, when fully taught, with respect to terrestrial and celestial navigation.'

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FRENCH AID: French operators have hailed their government's last-minute decision to maintain the social security concessions for seafarers introduced by the previous administration last year. Edouard Philippe, the new prime minister, said maintaining the tax break preserves France's maritime industry, its competitiveness and almost 9,000 jobs on 300 vessels. AdF, the owners' association, welcomed the government's turnaround, having called the proposed withdrawal of support as incompatible with EU rules.

VENETIAN BAN: the Italian government has announced plans to ban big cruiseships from the centre of Venice in an attempt to prevent damage to the city's historic buildings. Under the rules, which are due to take effect in 2020, vessels over 55,000gt will be required to use a new route to a terminal at the port of Marghera from where passengers will be ferried to Venice in tenders or coaches.

ITALIAN ALARM: Mario Mattioli, the newly elected chairman of the Italian owners' association Confitarma, has expressed concern about shortfalls in the supply of Italian and other European officers. He said the human factor is more important than ever before, and called for the modernisation of training facilities to make shipping a more attractive career option.

INDIAN FIRST: India's prime minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated what is claimed to be the country's first ro-ro ferry service. The Gujarat Maritime Board project cuts travelling time between the ports of Gogha and Dahej from seven hours to under three hours, using the fast ferry Island Jade which can carry up to 250 passengers and as many as 150 vehicles.

PIRATES THWARTED: an officer onboard a BW Group chemical and products tanker foiled an attack by pirates in the South China Sea. Five robbers, armed with long knives, were discovered by the officer while the Singapore-flagged BW Myna was at anchor. The emergency alarm was raised and the incident was reported to the Singapore Navy.

TEN LOST: a major search and rescue operation was launched off Turkey last month after a general cargoship sank with 10 crew onboard. The 3,000dwt Bilal Bal went down near Istanbul while carrying a cargo of cast iron between the ports of Bursa and Zonguldak.

PIRACY SUPPORT: Japan is set to build four coast guard radar stations on islands in the Sulu and Celebes Seas to help the Philippines combat an increase in pirate attacks on merchant ships in the region.

PORT RECORD: the US port of Los Angeles has claimed a new world record for cargo handling in a single vessel port call when 24,846TEU was loaded off and on the Danish-flagged Maersk Evora last month.

FIRE VICTIM: the Dutch-flagged containership Maersk Pembroke has been sold for recycling to a yard in Turkey as a result of damage caused by an engine room fire in August.

Arctic shipping risks 'growing'

Alarm raised as official figures reveal 20% of ships flout safety regulations

Environmental groups have voiced alarm at the number of ships breaching navigational rules in the increasingly busy Northern Sea Route (NSR) through the Arctic.

Figures released by Russian authorities show that as many as 20% of vessels passing through the NSR this summer contravened the regulations — at a time when reducing ice cover is forecast to result in a doubling of shipping movements over the next year.

During the first 10 months of 2017, the Russian Northern Sea Route Administration recorded 88 violations of its navigational

rules, committed by 84 vessels. The breaches included failure to notify authorities when entering and exiting the route, deviations from approved routes or entering the route without permission.

Nearly half the breaches involved ships operating in ice conditions that exceed vessel specifications. 'I am particularly concerned about the operations beyond vessel capability, as these represent a very serious risk,' Dr Simon Walmsley, marine manager with the environmental organisation WWF International, told High North News.

Concerns about safety in the region have been highlighted by a number of accidents, including

the collision in March between the Danish bulk carrier Nordic Barents and the nuclear icebreaker Vaygach in the Kara Sea.

More than two-thirds of the vessels violating the rules were flying the Russian flag, and environmental groups have raised questions about what penalties, if any, these ships would face. There have also been suggestions that the Arctic region should be covered by a special port state control regime to ensure compliance with Polar Code standards.

Sergey Frank, chief executive of the Russian shipping company Sovcomflot, has called on the country's government to

strengthen navigational and hydrographic support systems, boost the readiness of rescue services and improve the reliability of navigational and communications aids in the NSR. He has also called for a ban on substandard ships and crews operating in the region.

'This is a real cause for concern and a lesson for all Arctic coastal states that capabilities need to increase if these are to become regular routes,' Dr Walmsley added. 'The fact that rules are not being adhered to already is a huge cause for concern and particularly on ice operations, which was the exact reason the Polar Code was developed.'

Second ship joins Dream Cruises fleet



Pictured left leaving the Meyer Werft shipyard in Bremerhaven is the new 151,300gt cruiseship World Dream, built for the Asian shipping company Dream Cruises.

The Bahamas-flagged vessel is the second in the Dream Cruises fleet and has been specially designed for the growing Asian cruise market and will be based in Hong Kong, running voyages to China, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Of 335m loa, World Dream can accommodate up to 3,376 passengers and will operate with up to 2,016 crew.

Equipped with three 12V and two 14V MAN diesel engines with a combined output of 76,800kW, the vessel has a service speed of 23 knots and carries a small submarine that can take four passengers down to depths of up to 200m.

Italian unions hit out at fresh STCW delays

Italian seafarers have hit out at the country's continued failure to bring its maritime qualifications into line with the international Standards of Training Certification & Watchkeeping (STCW) 'Manila amendments' which came into effect a year ago.

The Italian transport ministry has extended the deadline for updating certificates in accordance with the new STCW requirements until the end of January 2018 — and the unions expect that the process could be further extended until June 2018 to

enable certification to be completed.

Captain Claudio Tomei, head of the national secretariat representing deck and engine officers and deepsea masters, said the problems did not come as a surprise. STCW certificate renewal had been top of the agenda for high-level meetings at the transport ministry in November 2016 attended by all unions and operators just weeks before the certification cut-off date, he pointed out.

'That was a year ago, but certification still has not been completed despite the government

pledge that it would give urgent attention to the need for all seafarers to obtain adjustment of the certificates of competence in accordance with international law and the European Commission's latest findings,' he added.

Capt Tomei expressed 'moderate optimism' that any further delays and bureaucracy will not result in job losses for officers. 'Union pressure on the government has been successful, but we must continue to ensure such a situation is not repeated in the future,' he added.

Protests over foreign ships in Canada

Canadian seafarers have staged protests against the use of 'strike-breaking' low-cost foreign crews on tankers operating in the country's waters.

They condemned the Algoma Tankers company over its use of two foreign-flagged and foreign-crewed tankers in the country's cabotage trades.

Officers belonging to the Canadian Merchant Services Guild held six days of strike action at the end of October after contract negotiations broke down, before the company announced a 'tentative' agreement with the union to end the dispute.

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UAE AGREEMENT: the International Transport Workers' Federation has secured an agreement to work with the Federal Transport Authority in the United Arab Emirates to tackle the growing number of seafarer abandonment cases in local waters. ITF seafarers' section chair David Heindel said he was 'heartened' by the agreement, which includes increased cooperation and moves to secure UAE ratification of the Maritime Labour Convention.

SALVAGE DELAY: salvage work on a Maltese-flagged containership which ran aground on a reef in the South Pacific in July was still underway last month as a result of delays caused by bad weather and big swells. The 2,194TEU Malta flagged Kea Trader grounded on Durand Reef off New Caledonia and the owners, Lomar Shipping, say damage assessments show that the almost new vessel ship is beyond repair.

STOWAWAYS DETAINED: the Uruguayan Navy detained four stowaways who threatened crew members onboard the Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier Friederike off the country's coast last month. The men boarded the 57,400dwt vessel while it was in the Nigerian port of Lagos and were arrested after the Greek-owned ship was escorted into the port of Montenegro when the master sent a distress call.

CADET CALL: Giovanni Lettich, president of the Italian College of Deepsea Captains & Engineerroom Officers, has called for cadets' fees to be paid by the state in a bid to improve retention rates. Speaking at the Genoa Nautical Institute, Mr Lettich said cadets have to pay as much as €1,200 to obtain their first certificate, and while some 1,600 cadets graduate annually, fewer than 30% go on to maritime careers.

AID APPROVED: European Union competition authorities have approved the extension of the Belgian tonnage tax scheme until 2022 after the country gave assurances that it will open it up to all ships flying a European flag. The European Commission said the measures would ensure higher social, environmental and safety standards.

BRITTANY FALL: French operator Brittany Ferries has reported a 5% fall in cross-Channel passenger numbers and has blamed Brexit and currency exchange fluctuations for the slump. However, the company recorded a 5% increase in passengers and a 4% rise in freight volumes on its services between Ireland and Spain.

BIGGEST BULKER: the China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation has launched what is claimed to be the world's biggest bulk carrier — the 400,000dwt Ore Tianjin, which is due to go into service in April 2018 carrying iron ore between China and Brazil.

UAE BAN: the United Arab Emirates transport authority has banned ships flagged by the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) from its ports and waters. It said all certificates for ships and seafarers issued by the FSM were fraudulent.



Oman Ship Management officers meet

More than 100 seafarers and shore staff serving with the expanding Oman Ship Management Company (OSMC) have taken part in a major conference in India to enable crew members to share best practices and expand their knowledge of the industry.

Held in Mumbai, the two-day OSMC officers' conference discussed issues including current

and future trends in shipping, regulatory developments, and practical problem-solving at sea. The meeting's agenda also covered human resources management, oil pollution, technical faults and breakdowns, and included presentations from Shell on resilience and dealing with crises at sea, and from Captain Tony Field, of Lloyd's Register, on fuel oil testing.

OSMC is a subsidiary of the Oman Shipping Company (OSC), which currently operates a fleet of more than 50 VLCCs, LNG carriers, product tankers, multi-purpose vessels, bulk carriers and containerships

OSMC chief operating officer Captain David Stockley said the annual officers' conference provides a platform for seafarers to have in-depth discussions with senior management. 'We have strong experience in technical management and have formed effective working structures to enhance the link between vessels and offshore support through crew, operation and HSE departments,' he added. 'This event is a clear testimony of company's commitment to continually enhancing the safety culture.'

CMA CGM warns over asbestos

Union warns after deadly substance is found in parts on nine French ships

by Jeff Apter

French maritime unions have raised concerns after the Marseilles-based containership operator CMA CGM told its seafaring workforce that asbestos has been detected onboard at least nine of its French-flagged vessels.

The company said the substance had been found in variable quantities in various joints, gauges, winch brake linings and other equipment and fittings during a 'proactive campaign of analysis' in the summer.

'These parts come from some suppliers who did not respect our specifications,' it told announced. 'An internal investigation is underway.'

CMA CGM said it had also

launched a comprehensive plan of action to inspect the entire fleet and to change parts containing asbestos by the end of the year.

The company said it also plans to 'identify those responsible for the presence of asbestos on board ships during building and prosecute them'.

The findings related to nine ships — Fidelio, Fort Saint-Georges, Fort Saint-Louis, Fort Sainte-Marie, Jules Verne, Medea, Norma, Otello, Tosca — all under the French RIF international register and operated by French officers. The ships were built in South Korea, China and Taiwan between 2003 and 2006.

CMA CGM said it had strict policies to ensure the safety of its seafarers and would address the issues with transparency. 'The use

or presence of asbestos aboard CMA CGM vessels is strictly prohibited, both for new construction and for supply contracts, in accordance with international regulations,' it stated.

'The group is extremely vigilant and rigorous, and has taken all necessary measures to ensure the safety of its seafarers, beyond regulatory compliance,' it added.

However, the CFDT maritime union's Normandy branch voiced concern over the announcement and urged the company to undertake an immediate inquiry to assess the risks of exposure faced by seafarers. It demanded an urgent assessment of the asbestos dust samples from the workshops, machine rooms and other areas throughout the fleet.

The union said it considered

that if the steps taken by the company are inadequate to guarantee seafarer health, it would launch a judicial procedure to ensure crews have the right to withdraw their services on contaminated ships.

Nautilus deputy general secretary Marcel van den Broek commented: 'Asbestos history never ceases to repeat itself. Nautilus has warned about this repeatedly, especially during the asbestos campaign triggered when thousands of packings containing asbestos were discovered on the newbuild Dutch tanker Caroline Essberger. We have not only warned about asbestos in newbuilds, but also about asbestos that finds its way onboard the vessel over time through stores deliveries or periods at repair yards.'

UK firm reviews Panama Canal locks safety

A British-based maritime consultancy has carried out a 'pivotal' assessment review of tug operations in the Panama Canal's new third set of NeoPanamax locks.

In response to the work carried out by The Maritime Group (TMG International), the Panama Canal Authority (ACP) is considering modifications to its procedures and changes to optimise its schedules.

The TMG project examined health, safety, environment and quality (HSEQ) procedures and included interviews and meetings with stakeholders, observations carried out onboard ships and tugs

transiting both the new and the old locks, and visits to ACP's training facilities.

Experts involved in the review included former Port of London Authority chief pilot Captain John Freestone and Captain Orlando Allard, ex chief pilot of the Panama Canal.

TMG managing director Captain Malcolm Parrott said: 'Our findings will contribute to a quicker, more efficient and safer operation on the canal for the benefit of ACP's shipping company, military and leisure customers as well as their employees and suppliers,' he added.'



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COLLISION 'PREVENTABLE': two senior US Navy officers have been relieved of their duties after the US Navy determined that a collision between the guided-missile destroyer John S McCain and the products tanker Alnic MC in the Malacca Straits in August was 'preventable'. The Navy said the commanding officer had 'exercised poor judgement and the executive officer exercised poor leadership of the ship's training programme'.

AID CHARTER: the US government has chartered the Panama-flagged cruiseship Carnival Fascination for four months to support relief efforts in the hurricane-battered Caribbean. The Federal Emergency Management Agency will use the 70,367gt vessel to accommodate aid workers in the port of St Croix in the US Virgin Islands.

DRINK ARRESTS: the Russian master and chief officer of the Faroe Islands-flagged general cargoship Atlantic were arrested after the ship ran aground off the Swedish coast last month. Coastguard officials said the watchkeeper had fallen asleep and both men were found to be over the alcohol limit.

BOX BOOM: a German-owned containership company launched earlier this year has added three feeder ships to its fleet. Based in Norway, MPC Container Ships now has a fleet of 23 vessels and says it plans to eventually operate up to 100 ships.

DRUGS FIND: the Maltese-flagged containership Dimitris C was detained in the Peruvian port of Ilo last month after 120 bricks of cocaine were found during an inspection of the vessel. Crew members were detained but later released without charge.

PIRATES THWARTED: two Iranian warships prevented pirates from hijacking a merchant ship in the Gulf of Aden last month. The unnamed vessel had sent out a distress message after coming under attack near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

CORSICA CONNECTION: the Italian operator Corsica Ferries is launching a new service linking France with Spain's Balearic Islands. The twice-weekly service from Toulon to Alcudia on the NE coast of Mallorca is due to open in April next year.

SAFETY SYSTEM: two French engineer officers inspired by lessons learnt from the 2012 Costa Concordia disaster have patented a system that aims to improve vessel stability after an accident by preventing water ingress.

VARUN BAN: the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has banned ships operated by the Indian company Varun from operating in its waters for following 'repeated cases of seafarer abandonment' in the country's ports.

DEATH PROBE: Australian authorities are investigating an incident in which a Chinese crewman died after being electrocuted on the bulk carrier Efficiency OL in the port of Bunbury.



Heavy-lift ships switched back to German register

The German shipping company SAL Heavy Lift is switching six of its ships back to the national register, starting with the 15,026gt Svenja, pictured left.

The company — which has been using the Antigua & Barbuda flag for the vessels — described the move as 'a logical consequence' following an internal review of fleet management processes. It also noted that 'top-level maritime training in Germany can

only be sustained with seafarers employed under the German flag'. SAL's director of ship management Sebastian Westphal said there were many benefits to be gained from the move. 'We are very proud to return to the German flag,' he added. 'The German flag stands for quality, safety and compliance, and these are core values in SAL, so the German flag and our corporate objectives goes well in hand.'

Union warns of coastal threats

Government plans 'could give even more Australian trade to foreign ships'

→ The Australian Institute of Marine & Power Engineers (AIMPE) has pledged its opposition to a fresh move to open up the country's shipping trades to foreign vessels.

Federal secretary Martin Byrne described the Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping) Bill as 'another attempt to further deregulate maritime operations in Australia'.

He warned that the Bill would have a major negative impact on the country's remaining maritime employment base — making it much easier for foreign shipping operators to gain an even greater share of the Australian coastal shipping market.

Similar measures introduced in 2012 have resulted in the loss of Australian seafarers from ships including Pioneer, Alexander Spirit, Lindesay Clark, Hughli Spirit, British Loyalty, Tandara Spirit, Portland, British Fidelity, CSL Melbourne and CSL Thevenard, he added.



AIMPE warns that offshore support vessels such as the Australian-crewed Siem Thiima could be under threat if the country's coastal trading rules are relaxed further

Mr Byrne said some of these vessels have come back on the coast with foreign crews under the 'temporary licence' scheme, whose provisions have been exploited by foreign shipping interests to an extraordinary extent. 'Some ships have had over 300 voyages on temporary licences,' he added. 'This not a temporary arrangement, this is a long-term business model

designed to avoid taxes and reduce crewing costs, and the latest Bill would continue the trend and could see more of the few remaining vessels replaced by this operating model.'

Mr Byrne said the new Bill could open the way for the offshore oil and gas industry to gain access to the temporary licence system for functions such as supply boat operations and would

also remove the obligation for applicants for temporary licences to consult industry stakeholders.

AIMPE is urging MPs to amend the Shipping Registration Act to require that all commercial vessels regularly operating in Australia's EEZ to be registered in Australia, excluding international trading vessels. Such a policy is applied to all aircraft operating in the country, the union points out.

US seafarers hit back at new attack on Jones Act

US maritime unions are heading off a fresh attempt to undermine the Jones Act rules to protect the country's shipping industry.

The latest attack on the regulations followed President Donald Trump's decision to temporarily waive its restrictions on the use of foreign ships in domestic trades as part of the operations to provide emergency supplies to Puerto Rico following devastating hurricane damage.

Senator John McCain — a long-time opponent of the 1920 law — took the opportunity to introduce fast-track legislation to permanently exempt Puerto Rico from its provisions.

But the US Maritime Labor Alliance of six unions hit back at claims that the Jones Act prevented the rapid delivery of aid cargoes. 'There is no shortage of US-flag tonnage available to serve the island,' they said. 'The emergency in Puerto Rico is caused by lack of the ability to distribute critical supplies, food, medicine, water and fuel to local communities from the ports where these supplies are located.'

The unions argued that the Jones Act does not prohibit foreign vessels from transporting supplies to Puerto Rico — and that nearly two-thirds of the vessels which visit the island are not US-registered.

The unions said they do not oppose Jones Act waivers in emergencies when there have not been enough US-flag ships available. However, they noted, 15 US-flagged vessels regularly serve Puerto Rico and have been bringing in more supplies than can be distributed ashore. 'Other US-flag commercial vessels are available and over 60 government-owned reserve cargo vessels can be called into action and fully operational with 72 hours,' the unions pointed out.

The US union federation AFL-CIO warned that repealing the Jones Act would decimate the country's merchant shipping industry.

Greek clean-up ends in court

The master of a Greek-flagged chemical tanker has been given a two-year suspended prison sentence after investigators claimed his ship was being used to smuggle fuel during a pollution clean-up operation.

The 2,520dwt Lassea was being used to recover fuel oil pumped up from the Greek tanker Agia Zoni II, which sank off Piraeus on 10 September. The captain and chief engineer were arrested after officials found significant quantities of an undocumented 'petroleum mixture' in Lassea's ballast tanks. The men claimed that the oil mixture had leaked into their ballast tanks during the salvage operations. The master was convicted and the engineer was found not guilty.

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Migrants protest crew abandoned

ITF condemns far-right group over 'clown car' attempts to block rescue ships

→ The International Transport Workers' Federation has hit out at a far-right group which abandoned the crew of a ship it chartered to confront refugees and send them 'back to Africa'.

The Defend Europe group had been using the Mongolian-flagged research vessel C Star to block search and rescue vessels operated by humanitarian organisations in the Mediterranean.

But the organisation was forced to end its crowd-funded mission after a series of problems — including breakdowns, failure to produce an acceptable crew list, allegations of people smuggling, and attempts to prevent the ship refuelling in several ports.

The ITF intervened after the eight Sri Lankan crew of the vessel were abandoned unpaid in Barcelona by its charterers. The local ITF inspector said the seafarers were hoping for payment and repatriation, and any reports that they had claimed asylum were false.

ITF seafarers' section chair David Heindel commented: 'Oh, the irony. This group charters a British-owned, Mongolian flag of convenience ship, with a Sri Lankan crew to protest migration



The British-owned research vessel C Star starting its abortive mission to disrupt migrant rescue ships

into Europe. Then abandons the crew in Europe.

'This so-called mission began as a farce, played out as a farce, and now it's ended as a farce,' he added. 'Famously, the C Star was spurned at almost every stop it tried to make by local citizens and governments.'

'The ship has reportedly both been investigated on suspicion of people smuggling and had to call for help from one of the NGO search and rescue vessels it was supposedly blocking.'

Mr Heindel concluded: 'This

vessel has been like a clown car on water: overcrowded, comical, and, just like the "mission" it was on, the doors quickly fell off. Sadly, it's no surprise that the overgrown schoolboys behind it all have now abandoned the crew and left them to be looked after by the organisations they aimed to castigate: the Red Cross, the Spanish Coast Guard and the local maritime authorities.'

The ITF worked with local port state control authorities to provide the crew with food, water and fuel. Once the ship was allowed

to berth in Spain, the crew were looked after by the Red Cross and ITF, in cooperation with the port authorities.

'As is normal practice, we have been in contact with the ship owner and reminded him of his obligations to pay and repatriate the men,' the ITF added.

'He assures us that he shares our concern for the crew and is working to ensure that this happens. We will continue to assist the crew and also monitor the situation to ensure that this does happen.'

Norwegian crews find work

• The number of unemployed Norwegian seafarers is down 40% in the last six months, with an upturn in the offshore sector being cited as the reason.

But in neighbouring Sweden there is a very different picture — with a 25% reduction in the number of officers serving on Swedish vessels between 2011 and 2016.

Norwegian analyst Pareto said the country's offshore market is

recovering after three tough years, aided by mergers, acquisitions, vessel lay-ups and cost-cutting. It forecasts an upturn in the price of oil and predicts that investment in oil production will increase by up to 10% next year.

Data from the government agency NAV showed 706 unemployed Norwegian seafarers as at 1 September, down from 911 in November last year. However, the officers' union NSOF says

unemployment among seafarers in the offshore sector, where many vessels are laid up, is remaining stubbornly high.

In Sweden, however, there is little to cheer about and the introduction of tonnage tax has yet to provide the panacea hoped for to revive the national fleet. The SBF officers' union says while all officers were affected negatively jobs-wise between 2011 and 2016, the worst hit included

navigators, engineers and catering managers. Counted by days at sea, onboard officers dipped from 460,000 days per year to 282,000 — a fall of 39%.

SBF says employers are hoping that the number of Swedish-flagged vessels will increase in time, thanks to the introduction of tonnage tax and other tax changes — although the union doubts whether vessels that have left the register will return.

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SINGAPORE SURVEY: the littoral nations of Singapore and Malacca Straits have signed an agreement to conduct a new hydrographic survey of the busy waterway. Data collected in a project being run by Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, with support from Japan, will cover areas of the traffic separation scheme that are less than 30m deep to create largescale, up-to-date navigational charts of the area, which saw close to 84,000 vessel transits in 2016.

MALARIA DEATHS: two seafarers serving on a Liberian-flagged bulk carrier died in a hospital ashore after being evacuated from their vessel with symptoms of malaria. The two men were flown ashore by helicopter after the master of the 33,261dwt Agios Fanourios requested urgent assistance while the vessel was off the east coast of South Africa while sailing from Abijan to Durban.

SPEEDING FINE: the Canadian Coast Guard vessel Sir William Alexander has been fined C\$6,000 (€4,068) for alleged non-compliance with a temporary 10 knot speed limit aimed at preventing whale deaths in the western part of the Gulf of St Lawrence. The penalty is the third to be imposed since the limit was introduced in August in a bid to protect right whales.

DIGITAL PILOTAGE: Finland's transport ministry is preparing legislation to enable remote and autonomous piloting of ships in the country's waters. The national pilotage company Finnpiilot is joining the One Sea project to create a functional electronic pilotage concept that aims to 'move pilotage beyond rope ladders to the digital age'.

TAKEOVER BID: a commando-style operation to take a partially-built cable-laying ship from the bankrupt La Naval Shipyard in Bilbao, Spain, failed last month when police prevented attempts by two Dutch tugs to tow the 20,000dwt vessel away. The 161m vessel, ordered by the Dutch firm Tideway, was due to be delivered in the spring.

BULKER SINKS: 11 Indian seafarers were feared dead last month after the Hong Kong-flagged bulk carrier Emerald Star sank in the Philippines in heavy weather. The 57,367dwt vessel was carrying a nickel ore cargo from Indonesia to China and 16 other crew members were rescued by two ships which responded to the distress call.

FRENCH ORDERS: the French shipping firm CMA CGM has confirmed an order for nine 22,000TEU boxships to be built by two Chinese yards and due to enter service from the end of 2019. The French officers' union FOMM-CGT said it hoped that the orders would give a boost to the French flag and seafaring jobs.

ESTONIAN AID: Estonia is the latest country to consider introducing a tonnage tax scheme to support its merchant fleet. The government has drawn up proposals to offer owners a choice between paying 20% corporate tax on earnings from their ships or a flat fee based on the volume of tonnage on the country's register.

New Moroccan service set to rival lorry transport



• The French shipping firm CMA CGM is using the Bahamas-flagged vessel Comanav Aknoul, left, to launch a new ro-ro container shipping service linking the south of Europe with Morocco — claiming it will prove a cheaper and greener alternative to using lorries.

The company's Morocco Express 1/2/3 service connects the ports of Casablanca and Tangiers with Marseille, Port-Vendres and Genoa carrying between 65 to 180 trailers.

CMA CGM said using ships would provide a competitive alternative to road transport transiting through Spain, reducing CO2 emissions by 43% compared with lorries, with less risk of delay and accidents on the way.

Picture: Eric Hour

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INTERNATIONAL

BP boss calls for diversity

Shipping must become more inclusive, meeting is told

→ The shipping industry needs to do much more if it is to become truly diverse and inclusive, the chief executive of BP Shipping said last month.

Speaking to the Marine Society & Sea Cadets' annual court, Susan Dio said the industry is starting to change its diversity profile — but a lot more work has to be done to develop a broad talent pool.

'Shipping is still falling short on creating fully diverse teams,' she told the meeting at Trinity House in London. 'We have all the right policies and all the right procedures in place to ensure diversity and inclusion, but changing to create a diverse and inclusive culture onboard ships is not just a challenge for us but for the entire industry.'

Ms Dio — whose son is a seafarer in the US merchant marine — said the maritime sector is suffering from a shortage of talent and needs to widen its recruitment base. The shipping industry needs to further develop its work with schools and colleges to raise awareness of its important role and the careers it

offers, she added.

'One such pool is female talent,' Ms Dio pointed out. '20% of the cadets that we have in BP are female, which is high for the industry, and in shore-based roles it is running at 26%. That's not good enough.'

Ms Dio said BP employs more than 1,250 seafarers and is in the process of expanding its fleet with six new dual-fuel LNG tankers due to come into service in 2018 and 2019.

The company takes on 80 cadets a year from the UK, India and Singapore, she said, and had also started taking graduate trainees to enhance its range of personnel.

Ten BP officers are presently on the company's accelerated development programme, which includes studies through the Open University (OU). One of these — **Liam Hyland** — was awarded this year's Marine Society/OU award for outstanding achievement in his studies for a degree in leadership and management.

Other awards presented at the annual court included the John William Slater Award for outstanding achievement — presented to



BP Shipping CEO Susan Dio presents the Nautilus JW Slater Award to David Slater and Carla Rockson, from the Marine Society, on behalf of this year's outstanding achievement award winner Kevin Lennon

Kevin Lennon, a rating who qualified as an officer in August this year after gaining a scholarship

from the Nautilus Slater Fund. The Middlesex University Award for outstanding achieve-

ment and the Marine Society's Lifelong Learning Award were both presented to **Gordon Foot**,

presently serving on an offshore construction vessel off the west coast of Africa.

Owners' crew costs fell 0.4% last year

Report points to 'challenging markets' as a key factor in pegging pay down

→ Shipowners' crew-operating costs fell by 0.4% last year, according to a new report from the international accountancy specialists Moore Stephens.

The maritime consultancy's annual OpCost study revealed that total annual operating costs in the industry declined by an average of 1.1% during 2017 — making it the fifth successive year in which owners' bills have declined.

The benchmarking study noted that crew costs had fallen 1.2% in 2015 — in sharp contrast to 2008, when they increased by an average of 21%.

The Moore Stephens report came only a couple of weeks after the annual Manning Report published by the global shipping consultancy Drewry revealed that pay rates for officers in some sectors have gone into reverse in the past year, with wages declined by average of around 1%.

Drewry said the pressures on pay — which have caused increases to stagnate since the global slump began in 2009 —

could continue for a further five years.

Moore Stephens partner Richard Greiner said he believed the 'continuing challenging shipping markets are doubtless a significant factor' in the reducing level of crew costs.

The OpCost report shows a variety of different prevailing rates for crew costs in different sectors of the industry — with tankers, overall, recording a 1.8% fall and bulk carrier crew costs down by 0.6% overall. However, the study found containership crew costs had risen by 1.1% following a fall of 3.3% in 2015.

The analysis showed that all the main categories of owners' costs — stores, repairs and maintenance, and insurance — fell during 2016, for the second year in a row.

But Mr Greiner warned that this trend is unlikely to continue much longer, with owners now facing the costs of investment in ballast water management equipment, compliance with low-sulphur rules and initiatives to combat cyber-crime.

Boxships 'set to get even bigger'

Study says 50,000 TEU vessels could be in service within next half-century

→ Autonomous container ships of up to 50,000 TEU capacity could be a reality within the next 50 years, a new report has predicted.

Published by the consultancy group McKinsey, the study is a reprise of work it carried out 50 years ago for the British Transport Docks Board (BTDB) to assess the potential impact of 'a recent development from the United States: container boxes'.

The new report charts the dramatic growth of container shipping over the past 50 years, but notes that this has slowed since the financial crisis and also cautions that innovations such as advanced robotics and 3D printing may have a further negative impact on trade volumes.

It also says the trend to 'super-sized' containerships may be checked by diminishing economies of scale, physical constraints in waterways, and infrastructure issues in ports.

However, McKinsey argues, even pessimistic forecasts do not predict a decline in trade and the volume of trade in 2067 could be anything between two and five times greater than today. The report also suggests that short-haul intra-regional traffic will increase as converging global incomes, automation and robotics cause manufacturing and production centres to shift.

'On balance, we do not view 20,000 TEUs as the natural end point for containerships — 50,000 TEU ones are not unthinkable in the next half-century,' the report adds. 'However, progress

will probably be much slower than it was in the past decade: overcapacity means that new ordering will be slower over the next five to ten years. Lower slot costs materialise only when demand fills up larger ships, which hasn't happened recently. But if demand catches up with supply, as it may well do in the early 2020s, the logic of scale will once again drive orders for bigger and bigger ships.'

McKinsey also forecasts further consolidation of container shipping companies — potentially reducing the market to just three or four major lines by 2067.

The report says there is scope for major efficiency gains from increased use of digital technology and increased unification, with a proposed 'box of boxes' to enable 20 or more

containers to be unloaded together. Autonomous ships will also mean reduced fuel and crewing costs, it adds, while 'smarter' systems could dramatically reduce the number of containerships which arrive more than 12 hours behind schedule — currently some 48%.

McKinsey said the future for the industry may appear daunting, but it urged operators to be bold.

'The shipping industry was built on the vision of strong leaders who dared to sail through the storms,' the report notes. 'Although it now once again faces a period of disruption — this time from digital technologies — there is a path forward for companies willing and able to seize the day.'

A leading firm of maritime lawyers is warning shipping companies of the need for proactive measures to reduce the impact of cyber-attacks. **STEVEN KENNEDY** found out why they are worried...

! You can see why the shipping industry is starting to take cyber-crime seriously. The NotPetya cyber-attack earlier this year has cost Maersk as much as US\$300m, and maritime legal and insurance firms are becoming increasingly worried about the scale of the threat.

'The most alarming concern that I have for the shipping industry when it comes to cyber-security is the apparent lack of understanding, or acceptance, of the extent of the risk that cyber-crime poses,' says Rory Macfarlane, a partner with the maritime law firm Ince & Co. 'In my opinion, too many owners and operators still evaluate the threat to their business in terms of a targeted attack that leads to a ship being taken over as part of a criminal masterplan. Although the industry cannot ignore the threat posed to its physical assets, the reality is rather different.'

Mr Macfarlane says attacks are growing in both frequency and severity — and this trend is set to continue. 'When it comes to future threats, the rapid expansion of the Internet of Things is a further catalyst to increased risk,' he warns. 'Aligned to this is the fact that new technology — and new cyber-security challenges — evolve faster than our ability to put adequate precautions in place to protect our businesses.'

'Whilst advances in technol-

IMO plan to boost port state control

! Plans to strengthen the global port state control (PSC) system through greater collaboration and information sharing have been agreed at an International Maritime Organisation (IMO) meeting.

Delegates from PSC authorities around the world held a three-day workshop at the IMO's London headquarters and looked at ways to harmonise their work to tackle substandard shipping more effectively.

They recommended that PSC regimes should consider developing and maintaining a coordinated list of under-performing ships. The meeting also proposed the development of a common platform for exchanging information, as well as the development of joint working policies.



Some shipping companies have mistakenly assessed their risk of cyber-attack as low, without considering the whole supply chain, warns Rory Macfarlane. Picture: Thinkstock



Rory Macfarlane, a partner with the maritime law firm Ince & Co

ogy can deliver significant benefits for shipping operations, it comes at a price. Shipping cannot embrace the benefits without addressing the costs. The rate of growth, coupled with a lack of understanding, means that technological advances are often introduced without the cyber-security implications being fully considered. Regulations, best practice and training are struggling to keep up,' he points out.

'As new technologies emerge to streamline operations, cut costs and increase efficiencies, evolving and expanding cyber-threats also emerge,' Mr Macfarlane adds. 'It is imperative that shipping companies act to mitigate their cyber-risk now, before they become the next victim of a major breach.'

Ince & Co is an international commercial law firm, with most of its work in five global sectors: shipping, aviation, energy, insurance, and international trade. The company notes that the growth of automation is increasing the cyber-security threat not just onboard ships but in port and terminal operations, and elsewhere in the business. 'Shipping companies must understand that in a digitalised and connected market, they are only as strong as their weakest link,' Mr Macfarlane stresses. 'They need to consider not just the security of their ships and shore-based operations, but every link in their supply chain.'

The law firm says the maritime sector must develop comprehensive security and response plans as soon as possible. These should set out all

the steps that will be taken in the event of a cyber-breach. 'In the world of cyber-prevention, by far the best form of defence against cyber-crime lies in a concerted, top-down effort on planning and prevention,' Mr Macfarlane points out.

'The first step towards protection is to recognise where your key vulnerabilities lie. This involves a cyber-security assessment covering which threats are most likely to be interested in your business, as well what is it that you have that makes you attractive to them. Then appoint a board level cyber-security officer to oversee the creation and implementation of a layered cyber-security plan to address those threats,' he says.

Ince & Co has been working with the cyber-security team at Navigant to offer a cyber 'health-check' — to give companies a written assessment of their IT policies and procedures, employee protocols, regulatory and contractual obligations, insurance cover against losses following a cyber-attack, and evaluate cyber-response plans.

These plans should also include practising the response through drills to test the readiness and resilience of ships, crew and the shore-based business to a cyber-security incident, the company advises.

Where do seafarers fit into this? And would they face prosecution if they were the ones whose actions led to criminal software infecting a ship's systems?

'For negligent acts, there ought to be no criminal liability for the crew,' Mr Macfarlane says. 'Most, if not all, maritime nations

have some form of criminal legislation that can be triggered if the conduct of the crew — usually the master — endangers the safety of human life at sea. The conduct will usually need to be reckless or wilful, rather than just simple negligence. In some jurisdictions, criminal sanctions can apply where there is damage to property or to the environment, but the general consensus is that these sanctions should be financial unless the conduct is wilful, or intentional, and the damage is significant.'

! New cyber-security regulations, such as the general Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the UK or the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance in Hong Kong, do not generally, as yet, criminalise acts leading to cyber breach and losses, he notes.

However, criminal offences may exist under domestic legislation. 'For example, the draft Data Protection Bill in the UK, which will implement the GDPR, includes a number of offences such as obtaining personal data without the consent of the data controller,' he explains. 'Fines imposed on conviction for these offences would be criminal in nature. However, in such a scenario to be guilty the crew member would have to be the cyber-attacker.'

Why has the shipping industry been slow to react, when the risks are so high? 'There is a tendency for people and organisations, no matter which market they operate within, to believe that a cyber-attack will not happen to them,' Mr Macfarlane

says. 'This view is often enhanced by the erroneous belief that maintaining a firewall provides adequate protection.'

'In my view, there are two additional but interlinked factors relevant to the maritime sector which have further contributed to a slow reaction to the cyber-threat,' he adds. 'Owners and operators mistakenly under-evaluating their cyber threat by focusing on the risk to their ships, rather than the risk to their shore-based business, and the tough and enduring shipping market. It means there is a reluctance to invest in cyber-security protocols if they have already assessed their cyber-risk as low.'

However, he believes, the 'crippling impact' of the NotPetya attack on Maersk Line this year has begun to change this, and companies are recognising that with good quality proactive work and a regularly updated and monitored cyber security system in place, they will give themselves a fighting chance of not being the next Maersk.

'A cyber-attack on your business is inevitable,' Mr Macfarlane warns. 'But this resulting in a severe cyber-breach is not. If you wait until you are the victim of a cyber-breach before thinking about how to respond, you're already too late. Our key message to the industry is that the best form of defence against cyber-risk is through proactive planning and preparation. Understand where your vulnerabilities lie in your systems and processes, and put in place a robust layered cyber-security plan to address those gaps.'