



Piracy claims more seafarers' lives

THE good news is that the incidence of piracy attacks affecting shipping in 1997 increased by just one - to a total of 229 - compared to the previous year. The bad news is that there was a marked increase in the level of violence associated with these attacks.

More than fifty seafarers were killed last year in piracy attacks, almost double the previous year's total, while the number of those injured also increased. Over four hundred crew members were taken hostage during the course of the year, more than twice the number reported in 1996. Vessels were boarded on 163 occasions.

The statistics are to be found in the recently released annual report of the UK-based International Maritime Bureau, whose executive director Eric Ellen says modern piracy is "violent, bloody and ruthless".

The Club supports the IMB's efforts to stamp out piracy, and is watching with interest the recent proposal by the Asian Shipowners' Forum to set up a mandatory ship reporting system in the Malacca and Singapore Straits, which areas are notorious for piracy attacks.

Fuel for fault

The consequences of oil spills from laden tankers are well reported. The potential threat posed by the ship's fuel, though, is less well appreciated. The consequences of a bunker spill

rate was calculated at 175 tonnes per hour, this should not have given rise to any problems.

The spilled oil covered a 100 m by 3 m area of the weather deck, and that which escaped over the side surrounded



several other vessels. Contractors working around the clock were able to clean the dock and polluted vessels, thereby avoiding any delay claims from these

can be extremely serious, as illustrated by a recent incident involving a member's vessel in the port of Antwerp.

During an operation to load bunkers from a barge, a spill occurred via fore and aft vents in the starboard tanks. A number of the scuppers had not been plugged prior to taking on the bunkers, thereby allowing the oil to escape.

A pumping rate of 150 tonnes per hour had been agreed upon and, although the actual

ships. Even so, the clean-up costs were almost \$100,000. The spill can be largely attributed to negligence of the vessel's crew when checking the amount of bunkers taken on board and in failing to block the scuppers. Also, an emergency stop button on the deck of the barge was not used because no crew member was in attendance on deck.

Members are urged to observe the utmost diligence at all times during bunkering operations.

New COFR bonding facility

A NEW bonding facility has been launched in the United States to help ship operators to obtain Certificates of Financial Responsibility (COFRs) pursuant to OPA 90 and CERCLA.

The facility is primarily intended for dry cargo operators seeking COFRs for vessels of up to 77,000 gross tons

(\$70 million), but it is available in a limited way to small tankers requiring a COFR not exceeding \$21 million (up to 14,000 gross tons).

This US Coast Guard-approved facility is being offered by International Sureties Ltd, a United States-registered bonding agent. It costs \$1,000 per vessel, irrespective of tonnage, and subject to the maximum COFR coverage of \$70 million. Eligibility is dependent on the applicant being entered with a club which is a recognised member of the International Group of P&I Clubs.



Documentary requirements are that operators submit:

- A surety bond guarantee form (Department of Transport US Coast Guard CG-5586-2) together with a schedule of vessels to be covered.

- A letter of indemnity in favour of the bonding companies.

- A cheque payable to International Sureties Ltd

for the bond premium of \$1,000 per vessel and a cheque payable to the United States Coast Guard for the COFR fee of \$80 per vessel together with the operator's completed USCG Form CG-5585.

Members who wish to avail themselves of this facility should obtain documentation from ISL at International Securities Ltd, 210 Baronne Street, Suite 1700, New Orleans, Louisiana 70112, USA. Tel: +1 504 581 6404. Fax: +1 504 581 1876.

It is important that Bilbroughs are kept advised of any such applications.

Congo problems hit shipping

FIGHTING between rival army factions in Matadi, in the Central Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), has led to problems for shipping operating to the area.

The Club has received reports that a vessel discharging at the port of Matadi was recently attacked by armed units, and its cargo of bagged rice plundered.

It is understood that the port continued to operate during the fighting, which was between rival army factions, although discharge of vessels was reportedly suspended on a number of occasions.

An unofficial curfew was imposed at Matadi, during which all civilians were advised to remain indoors. Sources in the area say that crews of vessels in the port would also be well-advised to observe the curfew during periods of unrest, "if only to avoid the risk of a stray bullet from the various factions".

The Club is continuing to monitor the situation in the area, and members receiving instructions from charterers nominating Matadi as a discharge port are strongly advised to contact the Club before concluding fixture negotiations.

Securing and release

THE attention of the Club has been drawn to a number of incidents which suggest that there exists a potentially dangerous level of misunderstanding and confusion involving securing and release arrangements for inflatable liferafts.

There is quite a variety of release and tethering arrangements on the market. Manufacturers' instructions must be closely observed at all times to ensure correct securing arrangements and release capability, but the following are useful guidelines to be noted where appropriate:

- A "weak link" may be necessary in some hydrostatic release systems to ensure that a release liferaft will not be dragged under by a sinking vessel.
- The arrangement of the painter attachment should be such that if the liferaft has to be released manually it is not attached to the vessel by the full strength of the painter system, but by the "weak link".
- A senhouse slip and lashing should be provided between the hydrostatic release and the liferaft's holding-down straps to provide a means of manual release for the liferafts.

- Hydrostatic releases should be installed strictly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, and, at appropriate intervals, should be serviced by an approved servicing station, which will record the date of the service or expiry on the tally plate attached to the unit.

Disposable hydrostatic releases should be clearly marked with expiry dates, and replaced accordingly. Only approved fittings should be used.

Members in doubt about the installation, maintenance and labelling of liferafts should contact the Club for advice.

Back to basics on hatchcovers

SHIPPING can be an exotic industry, but it is often the most routine aspects of day-to-day operations which are brought to the attention of the Club's claims handlers.

Hatchcovers are a good example of this. As our photograph shows, failure to exercise proper diligence with regard to the operation of hatchcovers can be a costly business.

Yet preventing expensive claims can simply be a matter of basic, everyday husbandry.

Hatchcover seals and closing arrangements, for example, should be carefully inspected after each opening. Rubber seals can easily become loose and

fall out. Watch out for signs of faults such as heavy indentation of packing, and damage to compression bars, for example.

Failure to observe proper checks may result in serious damage to ship and cargo



at a later date. Members should adopt prudent measures and maintain at all times diligent hatchcover inspection and maintenance procedures.

This is a fundamental requirement of good shipboard operation, particularly bearing in mind the nature of the weather which may be encountered on the voyage and the value of the cargo to be carried.

Loss prevention appointment

THE London Club has strengthened its loss prevention capability with the recent appointment of Roger Creasy (*pictured right*) as a loss prevention co-ordinator.

Roger sailed for many years as a chief engineer on a variety of ship types in the Merchant Navy. He then moved into shipmanagement, before joining Bilbroughs.

The Club is committed to maintaining a proactive approach to the management of risk, identifying loss prevention initiatives which will work to the benefit of its membership.

Through its loss prevention department it seeks to combine its own expertise and that of its members with the experience gained by the Club's claims executives to help members provide solutions to technical and commercial problems.

A wide variety of work is undertaken to protect members' interests.



The Club is, for example, currently drawing up new instructions/guidelines for the appointment and conduct of steel cargo surveys and hatchcover surveys for ships loading steel.

It is also planned that these surveys, requiring different skills, should be treated independently, according to local expertise.

The Club's loss prevention department will be able to monitor the surveys and ensure that its required standards are being observed at all times.

Alert on New Orleans attacks

THE Club's attention has been drawn to a series of assaults which have been carried out on foreign seamen in New Orleans in the United States.

One recent attack saw two Chinese seamen beaten and robbed in the streets of New Orleans after coming ashore from their vessel. Only days before that, five Filipino crew members were robbed at gunpoint in the city. Last year, a Chinese sailor was shot during a robbery attempt.

Local police say that at least 25 foreign seamen have been robbed in a dozen separate incidents in the past two years.

Members are urged to make sure that crews are alerted to the dangers of going ashore in any port, but particularly when they are in exceptionally vulnerable areas, which New Orleans seems to be at present.

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on behalf of The London Steam-Ship Owners' Mutual Insurance Association by A. Bilbrough & Co Ltd, 50 Leman Street, London E1 8HQ, UK,
Tel: +44 (0)171 772 8000
Fax: +44 (0)171 772 8200
E-mail: comms@a-bilbrough.co.uk
Website: <http://www.lso.com>

EDITED BY

Chris Hewer,
Merlin Corporate Communications,
11 Kingsland Court, Three Bridges Road,
Crawley, West Sussex RH10 1HL, UK.
Tel: +44 (0)1293 55 00 44
Fax: +44 (0)1293 55 04 04
E-mail: wizard@merlinco.com

PRINTED BY

Stuart Vaux Associates,
Chiltern Lodge,
38 Clifton Road,
Amersham, Buckinghamshire,
HP6 5PP, UK.
Tel: +44 (0)1494 726593
Fax: +44 (0)1494 727380