

ELECTRONIC AIDS HELP PROVE COMPLIANCE WITH THE ISPS CODE

SYSTEMS integration company DataTrac Ltd is offering a solution to the potential confusion that different interpretations of the ISPS Code by ships and ports may cause.

The company believes that the levels of frustration felt by the marine industry

in complying with the Code will be insignificant compared with some 'Catch-22' problems in its enforcement.

DataTrac points out that ships' security plans are confidential — open only to the flag state — and therefore the statement 'I am in compliance with my plan' will have very little substance.

The lack of definite rules of engagement between the port and the ship is fraught with potential for confusion, says DataTrac. Add to this the considerable power available to the port, to which the ship is subject, and the

scene is set for argument, delays and — at worst — refusal of entry.

DataTrac says its Securitrac systems can provide evidence of compliance in the 10 areas of recording required in Part A of the Code without any need to key data into a computer.

Its Module One ISPS Code Document Management was created as a database solution and is being adapted to include digital pen data capture, right, to provide clear evidence that basic compliance is in place.

The second Module — Proof of

Presence for Security Rounds — uses contact memory tags. These are colour coded to security levels and placed at the points around the ship that are to be included in security rounds at each level. These points are loaded into the reader and as the location is visited a quick tap on the tag gives proof of attendance, with the time and date recorded against the name of the person completing the round.

The electronic data collected is transparently non-forgable and easily exported for evidence.

◉ More information: www.dataTrac.com



news extra: security

ROYAL PLEA FOR RIGHTS

Seafarers should not suffer by 'over-zealous' rules, says Princess

CALLS to protect seafarers' rights to shore leave have been given royal support — with a plea from the Princess Royal for crew members not to be penalised by 'over-zealous interpretation' of the new maritime security rules.

The Princess is president of the Mission to Seafarers, and in an address to the society's annual meeting in London last month she voiced concern that ships' crews could suffer as a result of the security clampdown.

'It would be hard to over-estimate the importance to seafarers of shore leave after weeks cooped up at sea, even if it is just for a few hours,' she told the AGM. 'But in some places the opportunity to get ashore is being denied them. This is particularly the case in the US where, perhaps not surprisingly bearing in mind recent events, security is particularly tight.'

The Princess highlighted the recent case involving a Russian seafarer who spent a night in a US jail and was then deported for making a telephone call from a phone box 20 metres from his ship before his papers had been checked.

'Hopefully this is an extreme case, nonetheless, many crews on ships berthing in US ports are not



Speaking up for seafarers: the Princess Royal last month

PICTURE: ANDREW DUNSMORE/PICTURE PARTNERSHIP

allowed ashore,' she pointed out. The Princess said it is a sad fact of life that increased security is

needed in today's world 'and shipping is no different from other areas of life and work'. However,

she said governments, flag states, port and immigration authorities and shipping companies needed to work to make sure that seafarers do not get penalised by an over-zealous interpretation of the new rules.

'It would be sad indeed if the people we depend on, and who give up so much in the way of an ordinary family life, to bring us so many of our daily needs were to have their lives made even harder,' she added.

The Princess said efforts were being made to ensure that the ISPS Code does not also affect the Mission's work by limiting ship visits from ashore. 'As it is, for many seafarers access to a chaplain is vitally important for their well-being, and in some cases it is literally a lifeline,' she pointed out.

Her comments were echoed by the Mission's secretary-general, Canon Bill Christianson, who said it is clear that the Code will restrict shore leave and limit access to ships in some places.

'There is no doubt that the new measures will have an effect on seafarers, further isolating them from the community ashore, making the Mission's presence in ports and on ships more important than ever,' he added.

Code could be a paper exercise NUMAST warns

SEAFARERS are being penalised, not supported, by the introduction of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, NUMAST warned last month.

Speaking at the European Maritime Industries Forum, senior national secretary Allan Graveson said the Code was placing more duties and responsibilities on already overloaded officers, with no increase in crewing levels.

'There has been little investment in technology or human resources,' he pointed out. 'We have little more than yet another paper exercise that no doubtsatisfies the inspectors, be they from flag states, port states, or the ISM Code.'

Speaking on behalf of the European Transport Workers' Federation, Mr Graveson said it was hoped the Code could go some way to combating the ongoing menace of piracy and armed attacks on shipping by requiring improved protection of ships and seafarers.

But he also warned that shipping may be getting the treatment that it deserves because of the way the industry is shrouded

in a veil of secrecy, where ownership may not be known, hidden securely behind brass plate flag states and, in many cases, there is no link between the owner and the seafarer with the extensive use of manning agents who troll around for the cheapest crews, often of unknown origin and quality.

Mr Graveson said the actions of the United States, in particular, in denying the basic human rights of seafarers will do little to aid the war on terror. 'It is well known from countries that it is necessary to win the hearts and minds of those that can help you,' he stressed.

He urged the EU to confront the dominance of the US and its imposition of unnecessary measures on world shipping and seafarers.

However, he also warned that port security across Europe is of varying quality and in some cases, non-existent. 'This raises the question as to who should pay, user or taxpayer. Is it not the role of the state to protect its citizens?' he asked. 'Seafarers and ships need to be safe, but access is vital.'

Maritime meltdown averted

FEARS of a 'maritime meltdown' caused by widespread failure to meet the deadline for the International Ship and Port facilities Security Code seem to have proved groundless.

A last-gasp rush to get ISPS certification saw some 86% of the world fleet and 69% of ports win

security plan approval before 1 July and the first week of inspections in the US saw only 3.25% of ships being subjected to control measures.

Shipping companies reported 'little noticeable disruption to world trade' in the aftermath of the introduction of the rules.

International Maritime Organisation secretary-general Eftihimos Mitropoulos welcomed 'the major effort made by governments and the shipping and port industries to improve maritime security' in the weeks and months leading up to the deadline.

'I think we now have to look on the positive side and remember that the prime objective of this work has been to increase awareness of the real and present threat of terrorism, explain the implications of the ISPS Code and how best to implement it and, in so doing, raise the shipping industry's defences to protect it and seaborne trade from any act of terrorism,' he added.

The IMO chief said that while just 56% of the world fleet had secured International Ship Security Certificates by the deadline, the 'tremendous work' carried out in the lead-up to 1 July meant that the industry had managed to raise awareness and heighten vigilance.

And he added: 'Throughout the implementation period, IMO has repeatedly urged governments and the industry to take

steps to increase awareness of the potential dangers and to encourage ships' crews to be vigilant and alert to any security threat they may encounter.

'Great emphasis has been placed on the entry-into-force date, but the real challenge is to ensure that, now that date has passed, we do not allow ourselves to relax and adopt any complacent attitude.'

Reports from shipowner groups showed varying degrees of compliance with the Code on 1 July. The cruise sector said it had managed 100% certification, compared with 80% in the bulk carrier sector, 72% for tankers and 99% for chemical carriers.

The International Chamber of Shipping urged governments and port state control authorities to 'temper rigour with rationality' during the early days of the new regime and said ships should not be penalised for failures by ports.

Secretary-general Chris Horrocks said owners had been disappointed by flag state delays in issuing ISPS certification and said there were continuing concerns over port security.

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