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ISPS too expensive and ineffective, warn shipmanagers

ISMA fears checks on credentials will take too much time, writes David Osler

Section: News

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[Print Article]

THE International Ship and Port Facility Security Code will be costly to implement, and even then full of loopholes, a top shipmanagement representative has charged.

Rajaish Bajpae, president of the International Ship Managers' Association, has issued a statement revealing the findings of a survey of members.

All of the 10-company group seem certain to meet ISPS deadline, it found.

However, many expressed doubts over just how effective the new regulations will prove.

The overwhelming majority believed that effective compliance necessitates additional manning on board, and thus increased costs.

Moreover, there is no provision for compensation for delays in port resulting from delays in security clearance of the crew.

ISMA is calling for an internationally standardised verification procedure.

Members were unanimous in the view that control of access to vessels could represent a flaw in the code.

Immigration, customs and police officials regularly board vessels.

But verification of their bona fides will inevitably prove difficult.

There have been cases of imposters boarding ships wearing official uniforms and carrying genuine-looking but false ID.

"A ship's gangway watchman with basic knowledge would have little or no chance of identifying this threat," said Mr Bajpae.

"No international protocol exists to cover these threats."

With car carriers and ro-ros, many other workers, such as drivers or lashing gangs, also need to access a ship.

Checking their credentials would take a disproportionate amount of time, ISMA members feel.

With vehicles loaded at up to 60 cars an hour, masters also need to have full confidence in car checks carried out by the port facility.

Another problem, again according to a high majority of ISMA participants, is the provision of a secure search area at the gangway in all conditions.

It could become problematical in winter, in gale force winds with rain, or in open chemical or gas berths, for instance. The obvious solution is a portable shelter at the foot of the gangway.

- Maritime security consultants HudsonTrident is launching new software designed to assist company security officers to update marine threat assessments, in line with the requirements of the ISPS Code.

Under the codes, CSOs must at all times have information available to them to undertake risk assessments for any port at which a ship calls.

This capability will be tested when it comes to compliance audit, HudsonTrident warns.

The ThreatLogix software package, which is web-based, acts as a portal to the Aegis Threat Assessment System, developed by Britain's Aegis Defence Services.

Aegis' database highlights ports where there is considered to exist a need for enhanced security measures.

Dominic Armstrong, managing director of Aegis's research and intelligence division, says that the tool is designed to eliminate the need for CSOs to undertake time-consuming and costly data gathering and information analysis.

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**Class societies warn of looming ISPS backlog**

Statistics increase fears that much of world fleet will not meet July 1 deadline, writes David Osler

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[Print Article]

MAJOR classification societies had by the end of March certified less than 5% of the 25,000 ships needing to comply with new maritime anti-terrorism rules by July 1, Lloyd's List has learned.

The figures will inevitably increase fears that many vessels will not make the deadline, a development that could severely impact on world trade.

The US Coast Guard in particular is promising to take a tough line against vessels that do not meet the provisions of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code from day one.

Class sources point out that while less than 1,200 ISPS certificates had been issued to ships by International Association of Classification Society participants as of March 31, governments such as the UK and the US are doing the work themselves.

In addition, Panama — the world's largest flag — is using a non-IACS body for these purposes, and many smaller classes are also getting a share of the pie.

As a result, it is impossible to give a meaningful total for vessels already compliant.

But even on the most optimistic projections, it is clear that the industry has left much of the work until the final trimester, despite having had well over a year to make arrangements.

This may lead to bottleneck periods, with qualified personnel in short supply.

Statistics submitted to the International Maritime Organization show that as of the end of March, the ten IACS classes had issued 1,120 ships with ISPS certification.

On a more optimistic note, 4,585 ship security plans had been approved, which should mean that documents can be issued in relatively short order. And some 9,493 ships had started the ball rolling by contracting for certification.

Security specialist Chris Austen, managing director of Maritime and Underwater Security Consultants, commented: "The industry should be concerned with such low levels.

"They indicate very poor progress and if that is maintained, there is a risk of significant non-compliance.

"The bigger companies will be OK. They've been working at it in a planned way.

"It's the smaller operators that haven't registered this that will be in crisis."

Lloyd's Register insisted that the figures for the end of April — which will be compiled shortly — would be far better.

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Russia takes action over new maritime security rules

The looming July 1 deadline for implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code is focusing minds across the maritime industry. Russia is no exception

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[Print Article]

RUSSIA has always given maritime security a high priority. For example, in April 2000, the Russian Federation government introduced a regulation to approve the federal statute that gave the maritime industry protection from unlawful acts against security of navigation.

Under that regulation, the implementation of management and coordination of protective measures was entrusted to Russian Federation's Maritime Administration, in association with other federal authorities.

Following the adoption in December 2002 of the new Solas Chapter XI-2 and the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code, Russia launched work on its implementation. General management and co-ordination of activities on the introduction of the ISPS Code in Russia has been entrusted to the Maritime Security Service.

Today we may say that the unique job is done. All necessary documents regulating the process of international certification of Russian ships and port facilities have been prepared, together with the recommendations to conduct vulnerability assessments of the maritime installations.

On the top of that, implementation of the whole package of measures has been established.

However, we clearly understand that in the remaining period before the deadline we will face the maximum workload, and every month the volume of work and incoming documents will only increase.

At present the process of considering the initial ship security plans is progressing at full speed. The ISPS Code will be applied to 1,009 ships under the Russian flag.

After security assessments, 34 shipping companies submitted 499 SSPs for consideration, all of which have been approved.

Dealing with port facilities is more complicated, since the security assessment and preparation of security plans is a completely new task.

Taking into account the extremely short notice — and in the absence of trained officers within shipping and stevedoring companies — it was decided to recruit approved expert organisations that satisfied the ministry's requirements to make the security assessments and draw up security plans.

A programme of port facility security assessments and production of security plans is under way in 174 of those facilities.

A training system for all levels of security officers has now been successfully established in Russia's 10 maritime academies. The training is conducted by educational institutions renowned in the maritime world, such as the Admiral Makarov State Maritime Academy in St Petersburg, the Novorossiysk State Maritime Academy, and the Maritime State University of Admiral Nevelskoy in Vladivostok.

To date they have trained a total of 2,750 security officers, made up of 2,245 ship security officers, 159 company security officers, 224 port facility security officers, 90 ISPS inspectors, and 32 maritime security training centre instructors.

Russia's Maritime Security Service in association with the Makarov Academy has developed an electronic version of ship security manuals, used in preparation of security exercises to train crews.

Within the framework of the IMO's Global Programme on Maritime Security, a national seminar and workshop on maritime and port Security was held in St Petersburg on March 22-26, in association with the experts from the IMO Technical Cooperation Division.

Such seminars are being held worldwide in order to make it clear to national maritime authorities — including port administrations, shipping and stevedoring companies — the importance of security measures, and to propose concrete action.

As can be seen, work to ensure protection of ships and port facilities in Russia is being conducted strongly and aggressively.

The Russian maritime authorities are confident that by the deadline of July 1 2004 they will fulfill their international obligations and create a harmonious and reliable national system of maritime security.

Detailed information about the activities of Russia's Maritime Security Service may be found at www.msecurity.ru.

Nikolay Saveliev, is the director of the Maritime Security Service in the Russian Federation's Ministry of Transport and Communications.

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USCG in security checks on all ships

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[Print Article]

THE US Coast Guard will board every ship on its first call at a US harbour on or after July 1 to check on compliance with the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code and the US Maritime Transportation Security Act, writes Rajesh Joshi.

US Coast Guard spokesman Jolie Shifflet said the boardings would be either at sea or at quayside. The decision on when to board would be based on "intelligence" on the ship and on its 96-hour advance notice.

"The coast guard will take additional security precautions or deny entry for non-compliant vessels," she said. "It will track vessels coming from non-compliant ports and may subject such vessels to delays while their security status is verified," the official statement said.

Ms Shifflet said the coast guard had recruited and trained an extra 150 reservists at ports around the US to implement this initiative. These officials would assist the usual contingent, which would continue to perform port state control and safety and environmental inspections.

Ms Shifflet said that in 2003, 7,673 ships called at US harbours making 61,322 individual calls. The coast guard made 11,955 boardings to verify safety and environmental compliance.

She was unsure whether in this process all the 7,673 ships were boarded. But she said not all ships called on the first day of the year, and going by this experience the ISPS boardings should not pose a major obstacle.

Still, she said the coast guard could not guarantee that there would be no delays for normal commerce.

Dennis Bryant, senior counsel at leading law firm Holland & Knight, warned: "Hold on tight — this could be a bumpy ride."

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**Mitropoulos slams ISPS Code complacency**

"I call for raising the defences as high as possible without delay," says IMO secretary-general following damning report, writes Hugh O'Mahony
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[Print Article]

WITH 49 days to go before the provisions of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code are due to become international law, new figures released by the International Maritime Organization suggest that it is increasingly likely that contracting parties will struggle to meet their obligations.

International Maritime Organization secretary general Efthimios Mitropoulos opened the Maritime Safety Commission yesterday, remarking that the co-ordinated attack on the Basra oil terminal three weeks ago provided a stark reminder of the vulnerability of shipping, ports and offshore facilities to terrorist attack.

However, he added that the last month has seen only slight apparent progress in the number of ships in full compliance with the ISPS Code.

A survey in March of 50 governments and 10 international organisations drew responses from 14 governments, representing 32% by tonnage and 25% of the ships in the world merchant fleet. It showed a "disappointing" full compliance rate of 2.6%. Mr Mitropoulos said: "The situation concerning port facilities was not much better."

Updated figures would be published next Monday reporting on 25 governments representing 68% of world tonnage and 52% of the world's merchant fleet. They would show that "the situation had slightly improved" but that, even now, only 4.6% of ships flying their flag had been issued with International Ship Security Certificates.

"I call for raising the defences as high as possible without further delay," said Mr Mitropoulos. "The risks are too high to allow for any complacent attitude."

"The comforting yet complacent argument that some of us may hope never to become victims of a terrorist act is of no value here. With the interdependence of the world's economies today, the chain reaction that such an act may trigger will have a major negative impact on trade and the global economy — we will all be victims, as we would certainly have been if the attack on the Basra oil terminal had not been foiled and we would now suffer the repercussions of the major impact it would have on oil pricing — more than it already has."

Mr Mitropoulos said that the IMO had issued two circulars "urging all concerned to redouble their efforts to ensure compliance".

It became apparent during yesterday's debate that these efforts have so far had only a limited impact. A February circular required governments contracting to Solas to provide a single point of contact to liaise with the IMO on security. To date, only 41 out of the 147 contracting parties have done so, meaning that 106 administrations are not even in a position to obtain a password to enter and update the database held by IMO on ISPS Code status.

The shipping industry itself appears to be making strenuous efforts to comply, however. "More positively and on the basis of recent information provided by IACS, ship security plans have been submitted for approval in respect of over 50% of ships to which the ISPS Code applies," said Mr Mitropoulos.

"This demonstrates that security assessments have been carried out and security plans drawn up in respect of more than half of the international fleet in advance of the July 1 deadline. The companies and seafarers involved have already raised their awareness and some defences have already been put in place against the threat of terrorism."

He added that the International Chamber of Shipping had reported that 28.4% of its members' ships had been issued with certificates, with the equivalent figures for Intercargo being 23%, for IACS 20.4%, and for BIMCO 19%.

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