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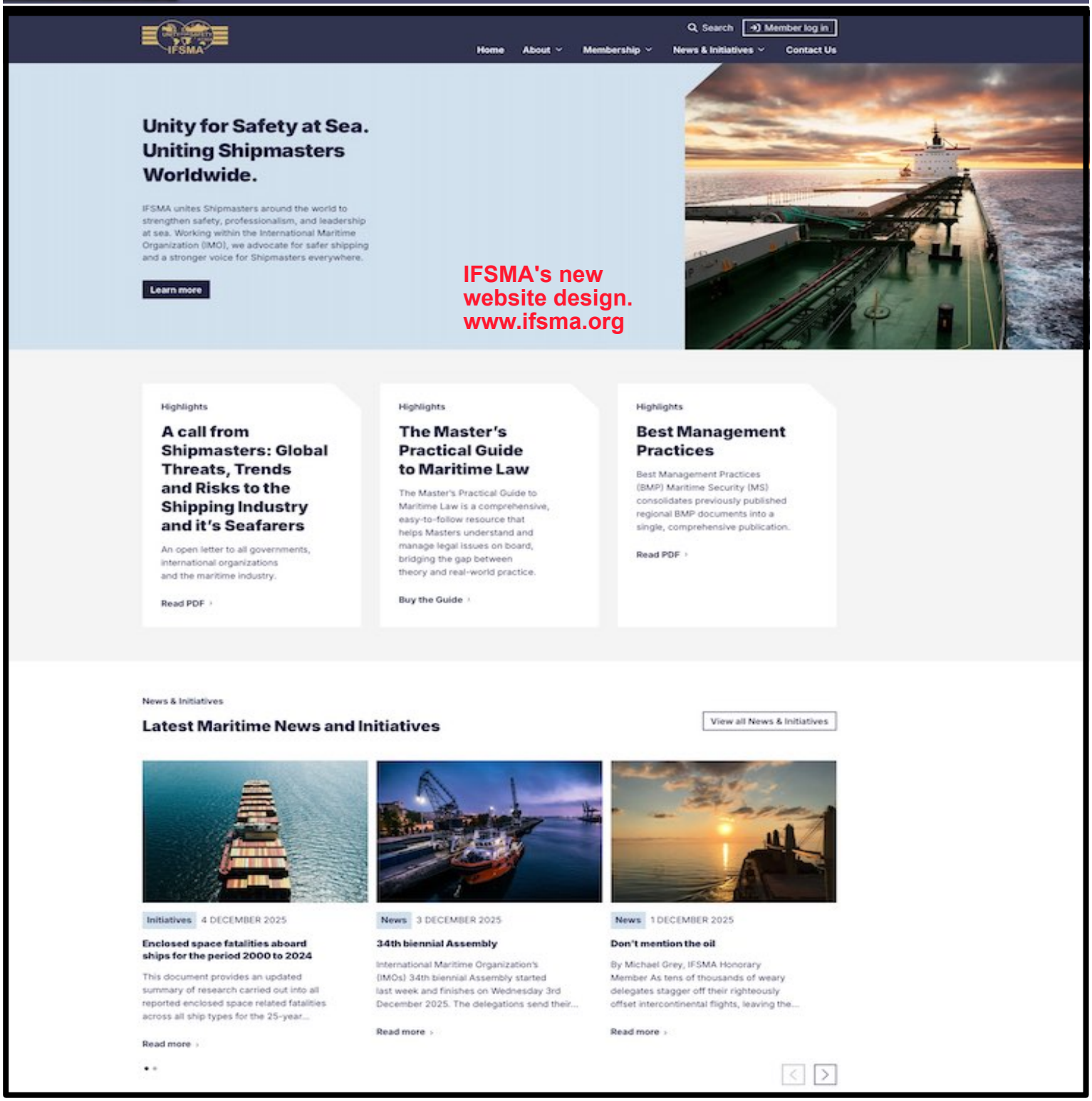
IFSMA NEWSLETTER

The Shipmasters' International Voice



UNITY FOR SAFETY AT SEA
IFSMA

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Contents

Secretary General's Message 2
From the Editor 3
The IMO Digest 3
IMO Assembly adopts new Capacity Development Strategy 3
S-100 products for e-navigation 4
Malaysia 5
One hundred international treaties to protect the ocean 6
Uruguay: upgrade of lights 6
Motorship Award 7
Kota Orkid 8
Past Lives. Michael Grey 9
News from SKULD - Somali piracy 9
UNCLOS 10
Galileo's first Ariane 6 launch 12
Gard on container ship fires 14
The Shipowners' Club 15
Arctic sea ice extent December 2025 16
Gram Car Carriers employs Orca AI fleet-wide 17
Amasus Shipping 17
Dalian Container Terminal 18
New US Arctic Security Cutters 19
Palaemon crewing and ship management 19
Vessel *Cgas Saturn* 20
In the bleak midwinter. Michael Grey 21

Readers are reminded that the opinions expressed in the IFSMA Newsletter are those of the various authors and providers of news and are not necessarily in accord with IFSMA policy.

Secretary General's Message

From all at IFSMA, we wish you a Safe, Healthy, Prosperous and Happy 2026.

This is the time of year when many people make personal New Year Resolutions that are intended to improve their life and the lives of their family and friends. This is also the time of year when we look forward to the challenges and opportunities that the maritime industry may face.

As we reported last month, we continue to see more vessels being targeted as part of geopolitical conflicts and tensions and these acts put the safety of seafarers at risk. The Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization Mr. Arsenio Dominguez, issued a statement on 16 December 2025 on the escalating situation in the Black Sea:

'*As the situation continues to escalate in the Black Sea, I call on all parties to refrain from targeting innocent seafarers, port workers and merchant ships. Shipping should not be used as collateral in geopolitical situations and there is an increased environmental risk developing.*

'*I remain ready to support any negotiation efforts to allow international shipping trade to continue for the benefit of all*'

I also refer you to an article in this Newsletter regarding the Somali Piracy Surge. This article estimates that the Somali pirates can have an operating range of up to 1,000nm from Somalia and this creates a very large area of high-risk.

In addition, there are ongoing concerns regarding the "shadow fleet" whose vessels operate outside the normal regulatory controls and safeguards. This can place seafarers in very difficult situations, especially if they have challenges in finding regular work. Furthermore, working in this fleet can place seafarers at a higher risk of incident.

We will continue to monitor and influence authorities where we see that safety and security of ship captains and seafarers are being jeopardised.

At IFSMA we have upgraded our website. The site contains much of relevance and updated information for our members and seafarers in general. We continue to have a membership - only area where we provide the latest updates on the important work undertaken by the International Maritime Organization and other organizations at a high level.

Keep a lookout for us on LinkedIn and Facebook where we highlight our latest news and updates.
We hope you have a great 2026!

Andy Cook
Secretary General

From the Editor

Our front page for this issue promotes our newly designed website.

Besides the new design and some information gathered from the old website, it includes new functionality and enable us to add news items on a regular basis, such as topical 'News' and 'Initiatives', these may take the form of single posts, short videos, carousel posts and polls. The latter is to obtain your feedback so we can better support you.

Our Facebook page will also offer more posts, similar to the above. As will our LinkedIn page.

Any items may or may not also appear in the monthly Newsletter, and may contain more information for some topics. The Newsletter will continue to be published.

The web addresses for these three internet services may be found at the top of page 2.

Your feedback is welcomed.

The IMO Digest

A summary of some of the news received with grateful thanks from the excellent IMO Media service in recent weeks.

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IMO Assembly adopts new Capacity Development Strategy

Resolutions adopted on the 2026-2027 budget, revised strategic plan and capacity development support for Member States

The 34th session of the Assembly of the IMO concluded in London with the adoption of a new strategy to strengthen Member State compliance with IMO rules, by expanding capacity-development support.

The Capacity Development Strategy was among 22 resolutions adopted by the Assembly, including decisions on the Organization's budget, financial statements, work programme and strategic plan, among others. The Assembly also elected a new Council to serve for the 2026–2027 biennium.

Concluding the meeting, which ran from 24 November to 3 December, IMO Secretary-General Mr Arsenio Dominguez said: '*Everything placed before this Assembly has been achieved, adopted, or approved. You have turned ideas into action and transformed collective ambition into concrete outcomes. Your decisions this week have strengthened the governance and strategic direction of IMO*.'

Capacity Development Strategy

The IMO Capacity Development Strategy establishes a streamlined framework to support all Member States – particularly Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) – in implementing IMO regulations through strengthened national maritime policies and strategies that boost economic growth while protecting the marine environment and promoting sustainable shipping.

IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez welcomed the 'spirit of engagement and cooperation' at the 34th Assembly.

Approved earlier this year by the Technical Cooperation Committee (TC 75), the Strategy aims to:

- Improve effective implementation of IMO instruments.
- Expand the suite of capacity-development offerings.
- Enhance international and regional cooperation and partnerships.
- Improve effective management, coordination and delivery of capacity development and technical cooperation.
- Secure and mobilize sustainable funding and resourcing.

Revised Strategic Plan

The Assembly adopted the revised Strategic Plan for the six-year period 2024 to 2029. including the mission statement, vision statement, overarching principles and strategic directions and updates to the 2026-2027 work programme of IMO organs and the

table of performance indicators. There are eight strategic directions (SDs):

- SD 1: Ensure implementation of IMO instruments supported by capacity development.
- SD 2: Integrate new, emerging and advancing technologies in the regulatory framework.
- SD 3: Respond to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping.
- SD 4: Continue to engage in ocean governance.
- SD 5: Enhance global facilitation, supply chain resilience and security of international trade.
- SD 6: Address the human element.
- SD 7: Ensure the regulatory effectiveness of international shipping.
- SD 8: Ensure organizational effectiveness.

The Assembly further adopted a uniform approach for the application of the Strategic Plan by all IMO organs, with the aim of strengthening planning and reporting procedures to enhance delivery and efficiency.

Results-based budget and work programme

The Assembly adopted the Organization's budget and work programme for 2026 and 2027.

The budget for the 2026-2027 biennium is set at £87,427,000, comprising an appropriation of £43,367,000 for 2026 and an appropriation of £44,060,000 for 2027.

This budget will be financed by contributions of Member States amounting to £76,835,000, comprising of £38,081,000 for 2026 and £38,754,000 for 2027.

Election of members of the IMO Council

A new 40-Member IMO Council for the 2026-2027 biennium was elected on Friday, 28 November.

The newly elected Council met on 3 December for the Council's 136th session, immediately after the conclusion of Assembly, and re-elected Mr Victor Jiménez (Spain) as its Chair, and Mrs Amane Fethallah (Morocco) as Vice-Chair.

Other decisions

The Assembly adopted a number of key resolutions, including on the Framework and Procedures for the second cycle of the IMO Member State Audit Scheme, an Integrated IMO Identification Number Scheme, and agreed to introduce Arabic as a working language of the Assembly.

S-100 products for e-navigation

Black and Caspian Seas States explore

Maritime officials from Black Sea and Caspian Seas States have completed the first workshop in the region on S-100 products, held in Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan from 3-5 December.

IMO, IHO and IALA collaboration

The workshop was co-organized by IMO in collaboration with the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation (IALA) to raise awareness about the development and implementation of the IHO's S-100 Universal Hydrographic Data Model and related S-100 products.

S-100 digital marine data standard

S-100 is the modern standard for digital marine data, designed to improve how ships access and use navigational information. Used in systems such as ECDIS (Electronic Chart Display and Information System), it supports e-navigation by bringing together different types of data, such as depth, currents, tides and weather, into a single, interoperable framework. This helps seafarers make better-informed decisions and enhances safety at sea.

S-100 is a key component of IMO's e-navigation strategy and will soon become mandatory for ships to use. Revised performance standards for ECDIS adopted by the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 106)[1] in 2022 (resolution MSC.530(106))[2] and subsequently updated at in 2024 (MSC 108)[3] have introduced the phased implementation of the S-100 framework, which will be required for all ECDIS equipment installed on or after 1 January 2029.

Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Türkiye and Turkmenistan representation

Eighteen government officials from maritime administrations and hydrographic offices attended the event from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Türkiye and Turkmenistan.

Participants shared updates on the status of the hydrographic, navigational and metrological services in their administrations. They discussed how to address the gaps between current capabilities and forthcoming requirements by supporting the production, dissemination, and management of S-100-compliant navigational data services and products.

Comprehensive understanding of S-100 requirements gained

Participants gained a comprehensive understanding of S-100 requirements, including the development of Electronic Navigational Data Services (ENDS), dissemination of dynamic information such as navigational warnings, weather warnings and route exchange, and the interoperability of data streams essential for ECDIS.

Promoting regional cooperation

The workshop promoted regional cooperation and lays the groundwork for a harmonized compliance framework that supports the development and the implementation of the S-100 products amongst the Black and Caspian Seas littoral States.

[1] https://tinyurl.com/2kc3v5au
[2] https://tinyurl.com/2errkpk6
[3] https://tinyurl.com/3rx4p2c4

Malaysia:

Shipping's green transition

Future maritime leaders study

Maritime students in Malaysia learned first-hand how climate action is reshaping the maritime sector during a youth event held in Johor Bahru on 8 December.

Broad representation

The event, jointly organized by IMO's GreenVoyage2050 programme[1], the Malaysian Maritime Department (MMD)[2] and the Netherlands Maritime University College (NMUC)[3], brought together more than sixty university students and thirty maritime lecturers to discuss how shipping and ports are responding to global decarbonisation efforts and how young professionals can contribute to these efforts.

Focus here was on emerging career pathways and training requirements linked to low- and zero-emission fuels, port operations, digital solutions and sustainable maritime services. Participants also discussed Malaysia's role as a key maritime and logistics hub and the need for a skilled workforce to support the transition in line with the IMO 2023 GHG Strategy.

A pilot's view

A key feature was a dialogue with Captain Emanuel, one of Malaysia's pioneering women Pilot Harbour Masters from the Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP). She offered insights into her daily responsibilities, leadership experience and the evolving skills required as the sector moves toward lower-emission operations.

Advice

Captain Emanuel told participants: '*If you have a dream to work in the maritime sector, find role models, stay curious and keep working towards it. The industry is changing, and there is space for more women and young people to shape its future*.'

Her participation underscored the importance of visible role models in attracting more women to maritime careers.

Prof. Dato' Sri Dr Captain Razali Yaacob, Founder & Executive Chairman from the Netherlands Maritime University College added: '*Connecting students with practitioners and current sustainability challenges helps them see the breadth of opportunities available in maritime careers today and the important role they can play in shaping the sector's future*.'

This event was part of GreenVoyage2050's wider efforts to promote awareness, inclusivity and capacity-building in maritime decarbonisation, ensuring young people are equipped to support the global transition to sustainable shipping.

About GreenVoyage2050 Programme

GreenVoyage2050 is an IMO technical cooperation programme supporting developing countries in reducing GHG emissions from shipping, in line with the 2023 IMO GHG Strategy[4]. Now in its second phase (2024-2030), the programme assists partner countries in developing National Action Plans (NAPs) and implementing pilot projects to test GHG-reduction solutions.

European governmental support

Funded by the Governments of Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway the programme continues to expand with new partner countries each year.

[1] **https://greenvoyage2050.imo.org/**
[2] **https://www.marine.gov.my/jlm/en/**
[3] **https://www.nmuc.edu.my/**
[4] **https://tinyurl.com/y73rty6r**

One hundred international treaties to protect the ocean

On 17 December IMO announced that key instruments that protect the marine environment – the Ballast Water Management Convention and the Anti-Fouling Systems Convention – had recently achieved the milestone of one hundred ratifications.

On 27 November, the Solomon Islands became the 100th State Party to the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM Convention)[1] when it deposited its instrument of accession, in the margins of the 34th session of the IMO Assembly.

Equatorial Guinea deposited its instruments of accession for both the BWM Convention and the International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-Fouling Systems on Ships (AFS Convention)[2] on 3 December, also in the margins of the 34th Assembly, becoming the 100th State Party to the AFS Convention and bringing the number of Parties to the BWM Convention to 101.

With the recent ratifications, the mandatory regulations for ballast water management now apply to 93.73% of world merchant shipping by tonnage, while those for anti-fouling systems now cover 95.77% of world merchant shipping by tonnage.

Regulations to protect the marine environment

The Ballast Water Management Convention[3], adopted in 2004 and in force since 2017, prevents the spread of harmful aquatic organisms to new environments via ships' ballast water. Regulations require ships to manage their ballast water and sediments through ship-specific plans, including operational practices, record-keeping and certification, to achieve a mandatory discharge standard.

The Anti-Fouling Systems Convention[4], adopted in 2001 and in force since 2008, prohibits the use of anti-fouling paints that contain certain harmful substances (used on ships to prevent organisms such as algae and molluscs from attaching themselves to the hull), which can harm marine life and ecosystems.

These conventions are among more than fifty international treaties, conventions and protocols that form the basis of the IMO's global maritime framework to support safe, efficient and environmentally-sound international shipping.

1 https://tinyurl.com/5n949pjk
2 https://tinyurl.com/y9vhmrv9
3 https://tinyurl.com/msuwuu3y
4 https://tinyurl.com/y9vhmrv9

Uruguay: upgrade of lights

Punta Brava and Santa Maria Lighthouses

On 1 December it was reported that SERBA (the Lighting and Buoyage Service of the *Servicio De Iluminacion Y Balizamiento De La Armada Nacional*, the Navy of Uruguay had renewed the light source of two historic lighthouses: Cape Santa María Lighthouse and Punta Brava, also known as Punta Carretas Lighthouse.

The project aimed to preserve the original Fresnel* lens systems and rotation mechanisms while ensuring greater efficiency and reliability. To achieve this a MESEMAR type MLL1000 LED lamp was selected, specifically designed to modernize historic lighthouses without altering their original optics.

These lighthouses, built in the 19th century, are symbols of Uruguay's historical, commercial and cultural past and continue to be key seamarks for maritime safety and coastal navigation.

Challenges

As well as modernizing the light source of historic lighthouses more than a century and a half old without modifying the Fresnel lenses or original optic drives there was a need to improve energy efficiency and reduce maintenance compared to requirements with traditional halogen or discharge lamps.

At the same time engineers had to ensure optimal and uniform luminous performance to maintain navigational safety in areas with hazards such as sandbanks and strong currents.

Additionally, there was a need to integrate a system compatible with modern and renewable power sources (AC, solar, or wind) into historic structures.

The MLL1000 is a high-efficiency LED lamp designed to integrate into historical glass optics, such as the first- and fourth-order Fresnel lenses of Cape Santa María and Punta Brava Lighthouses. Its main advantages include preservation of the original focal point, ensuring beam accuracy and light character.

Superior energy efficiency reduces consumption and maintenance needs.

A long service life of up to 200,000 hours is claimed with stable luminous output.

The optical system creates a 360º virtual light source using a single LED diode, providing uniformity and constant luminous power.

Historical background

Cape Santa Maria

Location La Paloma, Uruguay.
Constructed 15 October 1874
Light character One white flash every 60 seconds
Range 20.5 nautical miles

The lighthouse stands on Cape Santa María, a rocky headland overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Its strategic location responds to the extended coastline and the presence of sandbanks and rock outcrops that pose a danger to navigation. The lighthouse was built in response to the numerous shipwrecks that once plagued the area, prior to the establishment of this aid to navigation.

The original project was awarded in 1870 to the company Faros del Río de la Plata Dax y Gelly y Obes. By 1872, the tower had reached roughly 30metres when a violent storm brought it crashing down. Undeterred, it was rebuilt and proudly inaugurated on 1 September 1874.

Equipped with a first-order Fresnel lens manufactured by the French company Sautter-Lemonier, the lighthouse initially used oil as its light source, later transitioning to a petroleum vapour burner. In 1936 it was electrified, while maintaining its original optics and rotating mechanisms. Today, it stands as a symbol of the historical and cultural heritage of Rocha and was declared a National Historic Monument in 1976.

Punta Brava / Punta Carretas

Location Montevideo, Uruguay.
Constructed 1 October 1876
Light character White and red flashes every 10 seconds
Range 15 nautical miles

The Punta Brava Lighthouse, also known as the Punta Carretas Lighthouse, stands on the coast of Montevideo, at a strategic point near the entrance to the Río de la Plata, whose maritime area has currents and sandbanks that pose risks to

navigation. The lighthouse was built in response to the need to improve the safety

of the maritime routes near the Uruguayan capital and prevent the risk of shipwreck.

This lighthouse was built and commissioned in 1876. Its cylindrical structure, made of carved stone, is 19 metres high and topped by a lantern combining red and white stripes.

The Punta Brava lighthouse is equipped with a 4th order Fresnel lens from the British company Chance Brothers. Since 1948, the lighthouse has alternated its flashes between white and red every 10 seconds, setting it apart from other lighthouses and beacons in the area. It was connected to the electrical grid in 1962.

This upgrade has enabled the preservation of the fourth-order Fresnel lens while enhancing energy efficiency, reducing maintenance requirements, and ensuring optimal, uniform, light output.

*per Augustin-Jean Fresnel 1788-1827. For more see here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fresnel_lens

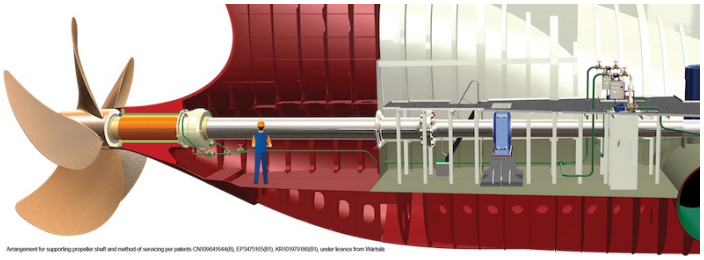
Editorial note

Text and illustrations here are based on material kindly provided by Mediterráneo Señales Maritimas SL of Spain (www.mesemar.com).

Motorship Award

Thordon Bearings-T-Boss® sterntubeless ship design

Thordon Bearings has won the 2025 Motorship Award for T-BOSS® the ship design which replaces a traditional sterntube with a space that allows inspection and maintenance of a seawater lubricated bearing and seal arrangement inside the ship.



The award, presented at the Motorship Propulsion & Future Fuels Conference in Hamburg, Germany, on 25 November, recognizes innovative partnerships that result in low-emissions maritime solutions.

T-BOSS, the Thordon - Blue Ocean Stern Space, was developed by a consortium of maritime partners consisting of ABS, Thordon Bearings, Wärtsilä Shaft Line Solutions, CSSC-SDARI (Shanghai Merchant Ship Design & Research Institute), and the National Technical University of Athens, it is reported.

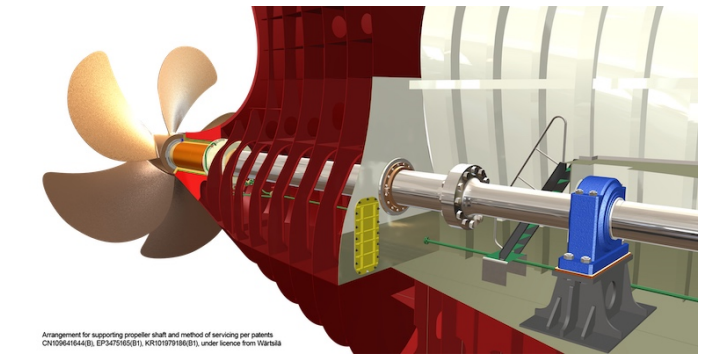
This innovative solution replaces the conventional sterntube and cooling tank with a dry chamber housing a single seawater-lubricated, non-metallic Thordon COMPAC bearing. In addition to minimizing shipbuilding costs with the removal of the sterntube and oil sealing system, the design significantly reduces operating expenditure.

Comment

Martin Linder, Merchant Fleet Business Development Manager Northern Europe, Thordon Bearings commented: '*It is an honour to accept this prestigious award on behalf of Thordon Bearings and the wider consortium.*

'*By combining the traditional principles of seawater lubrication with modern design, T-BOSS establishes a new solution to help ship owners and builders eliminate oil discharges into our oceans*.'

Accessed through an opening in the bulkhead and large enough for an engineer or surveyor to stand up in, the new space allows inspection and maintenance to take place without withdrawing the shaft or the vessel entering drydock, significantly reducing maintenance costs.



A shorter shaftline also means increased cargo capacity or engine room space to include a shaft generator, which not only enhances profitability but also minimizes fuel consumption and emissions per capacity tonne-mile for improved Energy Efficiency Design Index – EEDI – ratings.

Using seawater as its lubricant means that Thordon's COMPAC bearing eliminates the pollution risks and costs associated with emergency oil seal repairs, while the lower friction results in further fuel and emissions savings. It is reported that operational ship data suggests that reduced fuel consumption and OPEX combined with higher vessel utilization could add up to gains of more than US$1 million over a ship's lifespan.

Picture caption

Computer generated images of the space that allows inspection and maintenance of a seawater lubricated bearing and seal arrangement inside the ship.

To learn more about the project readers are invited to use the link here: www.thordonbearings.com

Kota Orkid

PIL's fourth 8,200 TEU LNG dual-fuel container ship

Pacific International Lines (PIL) announced at the end of October a major milestone in its green fleet transformation with the naming of *Kota Orkid*, the fourth in its series of 8,200 TEU LNG dual-fuel 'O' Class container vessels.

The vessel was named by Lady Sponsor Mrs Annie Yap, wife of PIL Board Director Mr Yap Chee Keong, at the Yangzijiang Shipbuilding yard in Jiangsu, China.

Inspired by Singapore's national flower, *Kota Orkid* embodies the values of resilience, elegance, and progress – qualities that reflect both PIL's heritage and its forward-looking vision.

Strengthening fleet capacity

Kota Orkid has joined her sister 'O' Class ships – *Kota Oasis*, *Kota Ocean*, and *Kota Odyssey* – on PIL's South West Africa Service (SWS), enhancing connectivity between Asia and West Africa.

With this addition, PIL strengthens its service capacity and flexibility, reinforcing its commitment to reliable and efficient global trade.

Comment

Speaking at the naming ceremony, Mr S.S. Teo, Executive Chairman of PIL said: '*The naming of our eighth newbuild vessel in the last one year is another step forward in our fleet expansion and renewal strategy.*

'*As we grow our LNG-powered fleet, we are not only investing in capacity and technology but also in greener shipping. This vessel will play a key role in enhancing our service offerings and delivering greater value to our customers*.'

Mr Lars Kastrup, CEO of PIL, added: '*Kota Orkid demonstrates how PIL's fleet is becoming cleaner, smarter, and more efficient. As we embrace greener fuels, and leverage advanced technology and digital systems, we ensure that PIL remains sustainable, resilient and future-focused to meet the evolving demands of global trade with agility and innovation*.'

Driving innovation and sustainability

Kota Orkid is PIL's eighth LNG-powered vessel delivered to date. Alongside the four 'O' Class vessels delivered this year, PIL has also received four 14,000 TEU LNG dual-fuel vessels since 2024. The company has another 12 LNG dual-fuel vessels on order, including five 13,000 TEU and seven 9,000 TEU ships, scheduled for delivery in the coming years.

These vessels are equipped with advanced engines that significantly reduce methane emissions and offer the flexibility to run on bio-methane fuels. Their hydrodynamic hull designs and advanced anti-fouling coatings also contribute to superior fuel efficiency.

With *Kota Orkid*, PIL is progressing steadily towards a more sustainable and technologically advanced fleet. The company remains committed to delivering innovative solutions that meet the evolving demands of global trade while reducing its carbon footprint.

Past Lives

By Michael Grey, IFSMA Honorary Member

At a certain time in one's life, you begin to appreciate a good obituary. Not necessarily of a life well lived, as there can be much interest in learning about the life of a thorough blackguard, or someone whose stars have never been altogether in the ascendant.

The late author John Winton wrote naval obituaries for many years in the Daily Telegraph and as a former submarine engineer was a past master at disinterring, with equal expertise, the lives of Sea Lords and officers who never made it to a brass hat. He, figuratively speaking, knew where all the bodies were buried in a naval career, of how one fatal decision, or an excessive glass of gin, a single fiercely expressed opinion or a grudge going back to teenage years, brutally ended a flight into the naval firmament.

It is still a pleasure to "read between the lines" in any obituary, civil or military, where you discern that some deceased person who had been respected for his strict discipline had been somebody you never wanted to sail with twice. This past rainy December weekend has offered a plethora of interesting obituaries, with the very final issue of the "Dog Watch" which has been for the last century, the magazine of the Old Worcester association. HMS Worcester, it might be recalled, was the famous training ship that sat at her moorings in the Thames and prepared many generations of teenagers for a life at sea. It has been some fifty years since, along with several other establishments facing the melt-down of the British merchant marine, she ceased to exist, but old loyalties and friendships made, live on.

Reading a series of OW obituaries, one after another, it struck me just what interesting lives that they had led after they had gone off to sea in shipping companies and during their subsequent careers. The first book written by the celebrated maritime historian Peter Padfield was entitled "The Sea is a Magic Carpet" and that simple phrase summed up just what a good preparation it is for life in general. There was a huge variety in the lives lived by these people. Some had long careers afloat and in shipping management, while others came ashore to a whole variety of different ways of making a living.

There were merchant bankers, airline captains, restaurant and pub proprietors, accountants, pilots and harbourmasters, pioneers in the container revolution, shipbrokers; the list went on and on. The one common feature in almost all of these varied and sometimes very long lives, was something of a sad reflection of our British maritime industry; just about every shipping company that accepted these young would-be officers has long disappeared. And there were famous names here, because those training ships tended to send their youngsters to the crème de la crème of maritime enterprise. With very few exceptions, they have all gone. Just the other day somebody asked me why these companies just faded away, when sea transport itself has flourished, as have plenty of others.

Why was there no British Maersk, Evergreen, MSC, giant Japanese, or mighty Greeks or Bergesen Worldwide. Why did these famous names that are no more, just give up the will to live in the latter half of the 20th Century? There are plenty of explanations, some sympathetic and alluding to the geo-political earthquakes of the 1970s and the capital intensity of scale economics and technical change. Others are downright cruel, suggesting that the breed of university-educated, "merchant princes" all obsessed with taking hitherto private enterprises public and in thrall to the City of London had a lot to do with the extinction of some very famous names.

This generation lacked the resilience of its forebears, operating in a cyclical, derived-demand sector and found it easier to sell ships than invest in them, because that is what those who traded in shares liked. And then, there was nothing left to sell. Perhaps it was the weekend reading, but we perhaps should not conclude on an altogether gloomy note. Another OW (although happily still flourishing in his Australian home) is Captain Peter Hay, for many years a Barrier Reef pilot, who has just published a book about his own fascinating and varied career. The title "From Icebergs to Crocodiles" sums it up rather well, taking in a life that has seen adventures in conventional cargo liners, Antarctic research vessels, rackety coasters in the rivers of New Guinea and much more. One felt much more positive, even in the December rain, after reading that.

This article was first published in *The Maritime Advocate Online* No 897 of 12 December 2025 and appears here by kind permission of the author and of the editor.

Michael Grey is a former editor of *Lloyd's List*.

News from SKULD - Somali piracy

Somali piracy surge: Update & guidance

After several years of relative calm, piracy activity off Somalia has flared again since late October, with coordinated pirate action groups operating far offshore in the Somali Basin and adjacent Indian

Ocean. The most serious event occurred on 6 November 2025, when the Malta flagged tanker HELLAS APHRODITE was fired upon and boarded approximately 560 nm southeast of Eyl. The crew followed contingency procedures and remained secured in the citadel. On the afternoon of 7 November, EU NAVFOR Operation ATALANTA forces, led by ESPS VICTORIA, executed a coordinated show of force; the pirates abandoned the tanker, and all 24 crew members were confirmed safe and uninjured. Authorities assessed the surrounding area's threat level as critical and commenced an intensive search for the mothership dhow, believed to be supporting long range attacks. Subsequently, ATALANTA reported taking control of the dhow with support from regional partners, further disrupting the group's operations.

Current threat picture mid-December

Industry analysis and official reporting indicate that pirates have retained the capability to operate 300–600 nm offshore, and under favourable conditions, up to ~800–1,000 nm.

This resurgence follows notable cases over 2023–2024 (including MV RUEN and MV ABDULLAH) and is occurring amid periods when regional naval assets are committed elsewhere (e.g., Red Sea tasking), creating windows of opportunity for long range operations. The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) has also highlighted a broader rise in incidents across 2025 and continues to stress the importance of crew safety and the need for consistent reporting.

What MISTO and BMP MS mean for voyage planning

The Maritime Industry Security Threat Overview (MISTO, 26 Nov 2025) provides a consolidated, factual description of prevailing maritime threats, including Somali pirates in the Northwest Indian Ocean, framed in terms of capability, intent, and opportunity. MISTO is designed to be read in conjunction with BMP Maritime Security (March 2025), which replaces earlier regional BMP guidance with a global threat and risk framework.

In practical terms, operators should ensure that voyage specific risk assessments explicitly consider the current Somali Basin threat picture, confirm the ship's hardening and watchkeeping posture, and formalise UKMTO/MSCIO registration and daily reporting. BMP MS also provides structured guidance for incident response and post incident procedures, including evidence preservation that can be material to later claims defence.

AIS policy remains a company and flag state decision. U.S. MARAD currently advises U.S.-flagged vessels to turn off AIS in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Somali Basin unless safety considerations dictate otherwise, while recommending AIS use in the Persian Gulf. Non-U.S. operators should follow flag state and company policy, balancing deconfliction needs with targeting risk.

Regardless of AIS or other security settings, vessels should ensure they have multiple reliable communication options and consistently report their position and status to the relevant authorities during high-risk transits.

Editorial note:

Text here is based on material kindly provided by Ruby Hassan, Vice President, Global Head of Claims Transformation SKULD, and reproduced here by kind permission © SKULD

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P.O. Box 1376 Vika, NO-0114 Oslo, Norway.
www.skuld.com

Here is a link to marine security advice in respect of the OCIMF Focused Inspection Campaign (FIC) currently in force: https://tinyurl.com/4sdm3kt2

This campaign, which began on 1 October 2025, will run for at least six months and will include an emphasis on maritime security preparedness.

For more on the Joint Maritime Information Centre and further guidance readers are invited to see here: https://tinyurl.com/bddbad89

UNCLOS

80th session of the UN General Assembly

President Heidar: The Tribunal's annual address

Judge Tomas Heidar, President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), addressed the 80th session of the UN General Assembly on 9 December, during its discussion of agenda item 75, ***Oceans and the Law of the Sea***.

In his address, President Heidar provided delegates with a review of the ongoing judicial work of the Tribunal and the two contentious cases currently pending before it, The mt *Heroic Idun* (No. 2) Case (Marshall Islands/Equatorial Guinea) and The *Zheng He* Case (Luxembourg v. Mexico).

President Heidar also referred to the advisory jurisdiction of the Tribunal and the continuing acknowledgment of its Advisory Opinion on climate change and the ocean, noting that this underscored '*the value of the Tribunal's contribution to clarifying States' obligations in the context of one of the most pressing global challenges of our time*'. President Heidar closed his statement with a summary of the ongoing capacity-building activities at the Tribunal, its internship and fellowship programmes, the IFLOS Summer Academy and both the regional and the Legal Advisers' workshop series.

On 8 December 2025, President Heidar and Registrar Hinrichs Oyarce met the Legal Counsel of the UN, Ms Elinor Hammarskjöld. During the meeting, the President extended an invitation to Ms Hammarskjöld to visit the Tribunal in the coming year for the

celebrations which will be held to mark the Tribunal's thirtieth anniversary.

The statement of the President is to be found in full here:

'*Madam President, Distinguished delegates,*

'*It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly at its eightieth session, on behalf of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, as the Assembly considers the agenda item* Oceans and the law of the sea*. At the outset, wish to convey my sincere congratulations to you, Madam President, on your election as President of the General Assembly, and to extend my best wishes for every success throughout your term of office.*

'*I am also pleased to note that, on 20 September 2025, Kyrgyzstan acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (the "Convention"), becoming the 171st State Party to the Convention. This development further underscores the universal and unified character of the Convention, which, as the General Assembly has emphasized in its resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea, sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.*

'*In my statement today, I would first like to report on recent developments concerning the judicial work of the Tribunal. At present, two cases are on the Tribunal's docket: The mt* Heroic Idun *(No. 2) Case (Marshall Islands/Equatorial Guinea), which is pending before a special chamber of the Tribunal, and The* Zheng He *Case (Luxembourg v. Mexico), which is pending before the full Tribunal.*

'*With regard to The mt* Heroic Idun *(No. 2) Case, it may be recalled that, following the conclusion of a special agreement between the Marshall Islands and Equatorial Guinea to transfer the Annex VII arbitral proceedings under the Convention to a special chamber of the Tribunal, a chamber of five judges was constituted on 27 April 2023 to deal with the case. This is the eighth instance in which States Parties have agreed to transfer arbitral proceedings either to the Tribunal or to a special chamber of the Tribunal.*

'*After the Parties submitted two rounds of written pleadings, the hearing in the case was held from 6 to 14 October 2025. Thereafter, the Special Chamber withdrew to deliberate on the case. The date for the reading of the judgment will be announced in due course.*

'*Turning to the second pending case, The* Zheng He *Case, it may be recalled that proceedings were instituted by Luxembourg against Mexico on 4 June 2024 on the basis of declarations made by the two Parties under article 287 of the Convention, choosing the Tribunal as a means for the settlement of disputes concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention.*

'*I also recall that, in this case, on 27 July 2024, the Tribunal delivered its Order on a request submitted by Luxembourg for the prescription of provisional measures under article 290, paragraph 1, of the Convention. In that Order, the Tribunal found that "the circumstances, as they now present themselves to the Tribunal, are not such as to require the exercise of its powers to prescribe provisional measures" in the present case.*

'*Thereafter, by an Order issued on 8 August 2024 in my capacity as President of the Tribunal, time limits were fixed for the filing of the Memorial of Luxembourg and the Counter-Memorial of Mexico. Subsequently, by another Order dated 3 February 2025, those time limits were extended following a joint request submitted by the Parties. Luxembourg filed its Memorial within the extended time limit. Most recently, following another joint request submitted by the Parties, an Order was issued on 30 October 2025 extending the time limit for the filing of the Counter Memorial of Mexico to 15 December 2025. The Order reserves the subsequent procedure for further decision.*

'*The two cases presently on the Tribunal's docket, which I have just updated you on, are of a contentious nature. However, as you are aware, the Tribunal's The* Zheng He *Case (Luxembourg v. Mexico), Order, 27 July 2024, ITLOS Reports 2024, p. 243, para. 149. jurisdiction also includes an advisory function. In this regard, I would like to recall briefly the Advisory Opinion delivered on 21 May 2024 by the Tribunal in response to a request from the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law. As the content of the Tribunal's Advisory Opinion was already brought to the attention of the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session, I will not revisit its details here today. I wish, however, to note that, since that time, the value of the Advisory Opinion has continued to be recognized by States and other actors.*

'*Most recently, upon the request of the General Assembly, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivered its Advisory Opinion on Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change on 23 July 2025. In that Opinion, the ICJ made a general acknowledgment of the Tribunal's case law, stating that "since its establishment, [the Tribunal] has developed a considerable body of jurisprudence on [the Convention], both in contentious and advisory*

proceedings."2 The ICJ held that, "in so far as it is called upon to interpret the Convention, it should ascribe great weight to the interpretation adopted by the Tribunal."3 Following this approach, in the section of its Advisory Opinion devoted to the law of the sea, the ICJ referred to and echoed, on multiple occasions, the interpretation adopted by the Tribunal.

'*The continuing acknowledgment of the Tribunal's Advisory Opinion highlights its significance as the first occasion on which an international court or tribunal has considered questions regarding the obligations of States Parties under the Convention in relation to climate change. It also underscores the value of the Tribunal's contribution to clarifying those obligations in the context of one of the most pressing global challenges of our time.*

'*Another recent and relevant development that I wish to mention is the imminent entry into force, on 17 January 2026, of the Agreement under the Convention on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (the BBNJ Agreement). In this connection, Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change, Advisory Opinion of 23 July 2025 (not yet reported), para. 338. 3Ibid.*

'*I wish to recall that article 60 of the BBNJ Agreement stipulates that disputes concerning the interpretation or application of the Agreement shall be settled in accordance with the provisions on the settlement of disputes contained in Part XV of the Convention. Accordingly, the Tribunal remains one of the means that parties may select for the settlement of their disputes. Furthermore, article 47, paragraph 7, of the BBNJ Agreement provides that the Conference of the Parties may decide to request the Tribunal to give an advisory opinion on a legal question concerning the conformity with the Agreement of a proposal before the Conference on any matter within its competence. In this regard, I wish to reiterate that the Tribunal stands ready to contribute, within its mandate, to the effective implementation of this landmark agreement.*

'*Let me now to turn to the Tribunal's capacity-building activities, which play an important role in promoting the understanding of dispute settlement under the Convention, and in particular the role and work of the Tribunal. I wish to take this opportunity to provide a brief update on these activities.*

'*The Tribunal has continued to organize regional workshops designed to strengthen capacity in the law of the sea. I am pleased to report that the seventeenth regional workshop was held in May this year in Hanoi, Viet Nam, with the participation of representatives of 14 States from the region. The Tribunal expresses its appreciation to Viet Nam for its support in hosting the event and to the Korea Maritime Institute, whose funding made its organization possible.*

'*In September this year, the Tribunal hosted the fourth Workshop for Legal Advisers, aimed at familiarizing legal advisers with the dispute-settlement mechanism under the Convention and providing insight into the Tribunal's procedures and practice. The fourth Workshop, designed for legal advisers from African States, was attended by participants from 28 States from the region. The Tribunal is grateful to the Republic of Korea for sponsoring and assisting in the organization of this event. In addition, the annual Summer Academy, organized by the International Foundation for the Law of the Sea, was once again held on the premises of the Tribunal in July and August. The 2025 session brought together 41 participants from 35 States for an intensive series of courses on the law of the sea and maritime law.*

'*The Tribunal furthermore continues to contribute to the development of current and future generations through its training and capacity-building programmes. With the support of the Nippon Foundation, it is currently conducting the nineteenth edition of its nine-month capacity-building and training programme on dispute settlement under the Convention. In addition, in 2025, 18 interns gained practical experience through the Tribunal's internship programme. Financial assistance to interns from developing countries is provided through a trust fund established by the Tribunal with contributions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China and the Korea Maritime Institute. The Tribunal expresses its gratitude for this continued support.*

'*This brings me to the end of my address. Before closing, I wish to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General, the Legal Counsel, and the Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, as well as his staff, for their continued cooperation and support. As always, the Tribunal stands ready to assist States Parties in the discharge of its mandate under the Convention.*

'*I thank you for your kind attention.*'

Galileo's first Ariane 6 launch

Strengthening European resilience

Round the clock continual navigation services

Constellation soon to be 29 satellites

On 17 December, two Galileo satellites lifted off from Europe's Spaceport in French Guiana aboard an Ariane 6 rocket. This marked the 14th launch for Europe's Galileo constellation, reinforcing Europe's satellite navigation capabilities, resilience and autonomy.

The satellites, designated SAT 33 and SAT 34, were launched at 0601 CET and separated from the launcher after a flight of just under four hours. At 1051 CET, the launch was declared successful, after acquisition of signal, and the confirmation that both satellites are healthy with their solar arrays deployed.

Currently undergoing in-orbit testing

At the time of writing, late December, the satellites were undergoing early operations and in-orbit testing as they are prepared to join the Galileo constellation in medium Earth orbit, at approximately 23,222 km. In about three months, with the addition of the new

satellites, the Galileo constellation will have 29 active satellites, ensuring even greater coverage and reliability.

One of the most comprehensive satellite navigation systems

Since entering service in 2016, the Galileo programme has continued to advance, introducing new capabilities to make it one of the most comprehensive satellite navigation systems of the world. Among these, the High Accuracy Service, operational since 2023, provides dedicated receivers with horizontal accuracy down to 20 cm and vertical accuracy of 40 cm.

Round the clock continual navigation services

This launch has added extra satellites to an already robust constellation, further strengthening the system's ability to guarantee round the clock continual navigation services for billions of users worldwide.

This marks Galileo's first launch on the Ariane 6 rocket and the fifth launch of Europe's heavy-lift launcher. Two additional launches are planned for the near future, each carrying two Galileo first generation satellites.

Comment

Josef Aschbacher, ESA's Director General, commented: '*The year 2025 marks three decades of European navigation programmes and the successful launch of two new Galileo satellites is another proud and well-earned moment in that legacy. I am extremely proud of ESA's role in carrying out the launch with Arianespace and for its leadership in the procurement and preparation of the satellites on behalf of the European Commission.*

Picture credit: ©ESA-CNES-ARIANESPACE-Arianegroup/Optiqie video du CSG – S. Martin

'*Galileo stands as the world's most accurate global navigation satellite system – and today we have increased its reliability and robustness. Its successful launch aboard Ariane 6 from Europe's Spaceport in Kourou reaffirms not only Europe's ambition, but also its industrial capability to design, build, launch and operate critical space infrastructure autonomously.*

'*Today, Europe is more resilient than it was yesterday, and I salute all the engineers, scientists and support staff that have made this success possible*.'

Francisco-Javier Benedicto Ruiz, ESA's Director of Navigation, added: '*I would like to congratulate the entire team for this flawless launch, which marks 20 years of cooperation with Arianespace and Europe's spaceport.*

'*Today's launch reflects the outstanding partnership with the European Commission and EUSPA, as well as our industry partners OHB and Arianespace, to make it possible to deliver the best navigation system for our citizens, economy and security. We are two launches away from completing Galileo's first-generation fleet, a milestone that closes one chapter and opens another*.

'*Soon, we will be adding Galileo Second Generation satellites which will deliver even more robust and reliable positioning, navigation, and timing services. They will integrate seamlessly with the current fleet to form Europe's largest satellite constellation and provide essential services worldwide*.

In conclusion ESA's director of Space Transportation, Toni Tolker-Nielsen reflected: '*Ariane 6 in its two-booster configuration was designed with Galileo in mind, and we now look forward to two more Galileo first-generation launches.*

'*This mission marks a remarkable close to 2025 for Europe: the fifth Ariane 6 launch overall and the first to deliver two large satellites in a single flight. It builds on Ariane's proud legacy with Galileo – Ariane 5 placed twelve satellites in orbit across three missions – and now Ariane 6 firmly establishes itself as the reference launcher for Galileo*.'

About Galileo

Galileo is the world's most precise satellite navigation system, serving over five billion smartphone users around the globe since entering Open Service in 2016. All smartphones sold in the European Single Market are now guaranteed Galileo-enabled. In addition, Galileo is making a difference across the fields of rail, maritime, agriculture, financial timing services and rescue operations.

A flagship programme of the EU, Galileo is managed and funded by the European Commission. Since its inception, ESA leads the design, development and qualification of the space and ground systems, as well as procuring launches. ESA is also entrusted with research and development activities for the future of Galileo within the EU programme Horizon Europe. The EU Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA) acts as the service provider, overseeing the market and application needs and closing the loop with users.

About Ariane 6

Ariane 6 is Europe's heavy-lift launcher and a key element of ESA's efforts to ensure autonomous access to space for Europe's citizens. Its modular and

versatile design allows it to launch all types of missions, from low-Earth orbit to deep space.

Ariane 6 is designed and built by ArianeGroup. It has three main components each working in stages to escape Earth's gravity and take satellites to orbit: two or four boosters, and a core and upper stage. For this launch, the rocket will be in its two-booster configuration.

The core stage and the boosters provide thrust for the first phase of flight. The core stage is powered by the Vulcain 2.1 engine (fuelled by liquid oxygen and hydrogen), with the main thrust at liftoff provided by the P120C boosters. The upper stage is powered by the re-ignitable Vinci engine, also fuelled by liquid oxygen and hydrogen. The upper stage fired two times to reach the required orbit for this mission.

After separation of the Galileo satellites, the Ariane 6 upper stage moved to a stable graveyard orbit far away from operational satellites.

Gard on container ship fires

Container fires continue with increasingly severe consequences

Gard has seen a worrying increase in fatalities and serious injuries from container ship fires in 2025. An important article published by Gard on 16 December considers what is driving the fires and the continuing efforts to address them.

When the topic of container ship fires was last reviewed Gard noted for the approximate 250 million container shipments a year, everything goes well most of the time. Nevertheless, when a single container fire does occur, the consequences can be increasingly severe.

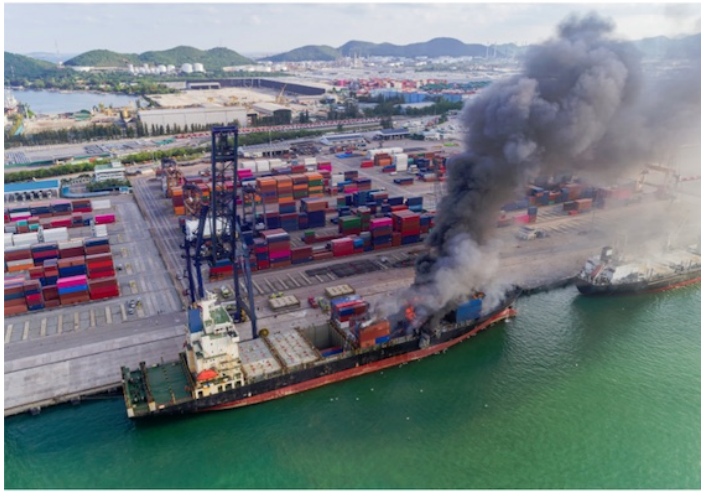


Illustration per Gard ©.

The container sector is not the only one suffering from cargo fires – vehicle fires on car carriers and ro-ro ships, scrap and coal fires on bulk carriers are other examples.

In the article by Gard the author focused on container ship fires, because in 2025 fatalities and serious injuries reached double figures. This is based on a review of nearly twenty fire incidents in Gard's claim records so far in 2025. The tragic consequence for people appears to arise mainly from responding to fires which raises serious considerations for the safety of tackling container fires onboard.

Why the focus

There are also other reasons to focus on container fires:

- The environmental footprint from fires burning for weeks, cargo lost overboard and the processing of tens of thousands of tonnes of fire debris and contaminated firefighting water; with ships themselves sometimes ending up as a wreck.
- Hundreds of millions of dollars for salvage and port of refuge services, extra cargo handling, waste processing and ship repairs; as well as losses in respect of damaged and delayed cargo and lost vessel use.

Lithium-ion batteries the main cause

Whilst investigations continue, lithium-ion batteries appear to be the main cause of container fires on Gard's books this year. This accords with growing numbers of cases identified by CINS from last year and cargoes of concern listed by the Cargo Integrity Group.

Fires involving lithium-ion batteries can be self-sustaining and may involve explosion of flammable vapour clouds, increasing the risks for responders. Even if they are not the source of a fire, when lithium batteries are involved, containing and extinguishing a fire will likely be made more difficult.

Conclusion

Container ship fires started to noticeably escalate in the 1990s when the largest containerships were around 8,000 TEU. At that time, in Gard's experience, the most common cargos causing fire were calcium hypochlorite and barbeque coal.

Today the ships are up to 24,000 TEU and lithium-ion batteries now appear to be a significant threat. With lithium-ion batteries now a fixture of global trade, the risk of high severity fires is unlikely to abate soon.

While industry efforts on many fronts continue to address the problem, the

challenge is not only to prevent the next blaze, but to safely contain it before the

cost in lives and livelihood climbs higher still.

To see the full Gard article at six pages readers are invited use the link here: https://tinyurl.com/6zyvx47c

Editorial note: The information provided in the article is intended for general information only.

Gard's annual report for 2024 is available here: https://tinyurl.com/4bj6z7mj

The Shipowners' Club

Case Study: A Fatal Fall from Height

Investigating Lapses in Safety Procedure

The Shipowners' Club has issued a new Loss Prevention case study that examines a fatal fall from height on board a vessel, which resulted in a loss of life. The study highlights a series of lapses in safety procedures that contributed to this incident, including communication breakdown, lack of Permit-to-Work system, lack of supervision, missed radar activation protocols and improper use of PPE.

The case study provides practical risk mitigation guidance to assist Members in preventing similar incidents from occurring.

Readers are invited to read the full case study and are encouraged to share it within their wider maritime network to support ongoing safety awareness and training.

A Fatal Fall from Height

An unfortunate incident occurred on board a general cargo vessel, resulting in the death of a shore technician after they fell from a height while replacing an antenna on the main mast.

The incident

At the time of the incident, the vessel was undergoing repairs in dry dock. In addition to the vessel crew, two superintendents (Superintendents A & B) were also on board.

Superintendent A had arranged for a shore technician to replace the VHF antenna, and the day before the scheduled replacement, Superintendent A informed the Master, Chief Engineer (C/E), and Chief Officer (C/O) of the planned work. The Second Officer (2/O), responsible for the navigational equipment, was not on board the vessel at that time.

The next day, at approximately 1330, two technicians boarded the vessel and met with Superintendent A.

The 2/O, who was in a voyage preparation meeting in the conference room (vessel departure was scheduled for the following day), was instructed by Superintendent A to provide safety harnesses to the shore technicians. However, no further information was provided by Superintendent A to the 2/O regarding the scope of the work.

At 1420, the 2/O provided safety harnesses to the technicians. No discussions were held on the scope or nature of the work and the 2/O remained unaware of the antenna replacement work scheduled on the main mast.

Earlier at 1400, the 2/O was separately instructed by Superintendent B to check on the navigational equipment in preparation of the voyage, which the 2/O agreed to carry out after the voyage preparation meeting.

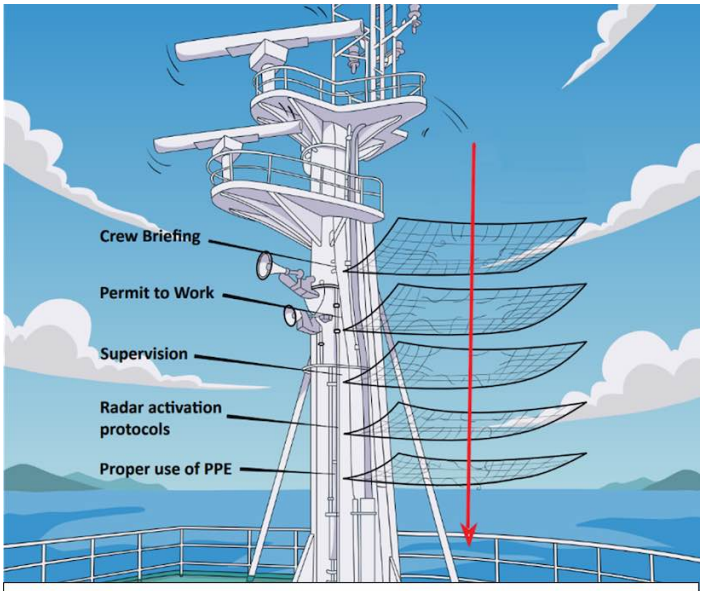


Illustration of missed safety barriers – How multiple lapses aligned to cause the incident. Each "safety net" symbolises a critical defence layer

Text and illustrations © The Shipowners' Club.

At 1450, the 2/O arrived on the bridge to begin an inspection of the navigational equipment. Shortly after switching on the S-band radar, they heard a loud thud outside the bridge. Upon investigation, they discovered, and realised, that a technician had been working on the radar mast and had been struck by the rotating radar scanner which resulted in a fall of approximately eight meters from the mast to the compass deck.

The technician sustained serious injury and was immediately sent ashore to the hospital for treatment. Unfortunately, the technician succumbed to their injuries and passed away in the hospital later that evening.

Observations

The subsequent investigation showed that the incident occurred due to multiple procedural lapses as follows:

1. Communication breakdown

The 2/O was unaware of the planned VHF antenna replacement, as the job schedule was not communicated by Superintendent A, the Master, or the C/O.

There was a lack of coordination. Superintendent B was aware of the scheduled jobs for the day; however, they did not alert the 2/O while instructing the 2/O to check on the navigational equipment.

The 2/O did not clarify the job scope of the technicians when they requested the safety harness.

Technicians were not briefed on the safety protocols prior to the task.

2. No Permit-to-Work in place

There was no Permit-to-Work system in place for this job. The working aloft checklist was not completed, and as a result the radar system was not isolated prior to the task and no warning signs were posted on the radar units prohibiting them from being switched on.

3. Lack of supervision

There was no supervision by the vessel crew of the task being performed by the shore technician.

4. Radar activation protocol

Prior to radar activation, as a basic practice and in accordance with manufacturer guidelines, the scanner must be visually checked for any obstructions, such as fouled flag lanyards. If the scanner-clearance protocol had been followed, the person working aloft may have been detected.

5. Improper use of PPE

While the technician was wearing the safety harness, they did not secure it to a strong point and therefore could not prevent themselves from falling when they were struck by the scanner.

Recommendations

1. Undertake toolbox talks and risk assessments

Toolbox talks are to be held before the commencement of the day's tasks. Ensure all relevant personnel are informed of the proposed work plans. Risk Assessment to be conducted, and the tasks that require permits and supervision by the vessel's crew to be identified beforehand.

2. Implement a formal Permit-to-Work system and lock-out protocol

The Permit-to-Work system should also be implemented for works carried out by third-party / shore technicians. Such technicians should be briefed on the safety protocols prior to any task. Compliance with lock-out / tag-out protocols as needed, including physical locks or "do not use" signage, where appropriate.

3. Designate responsible officers

Designated responsible officers should be appointed during docking maintenance to ensure oversight of all planned works and to ensure compliance with safety procedures. On board safety cannot be delegated to external parties therefore this also applies to work being carried out by third-party / shore technicians.

4. Notice on the radar unit

A notice should be placed on the radar unit in the wheelhouse reminding the user to ensure the scanner is clear of any obstruction before starting the radar.

5. Training on proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Crew should receive proper training, and contractors should be briefed on correct PPE usage, with reminders given before each task to reinforce the importance of using the equipment correctly.

The Shipowners' Club hopes that lessons can be learnt from this case to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future. With this in mind, it encourages its Members to circulate this report widely amongst their fleets and shore side personnel.

Editorial note:

We at IFSMA are most grateful to staff at The Shipowners' Club for kindly bringing this case study to our attention and are pleased to place the facts before our members.

Arctic sea ice extent December 2025

EUMETSAT reports

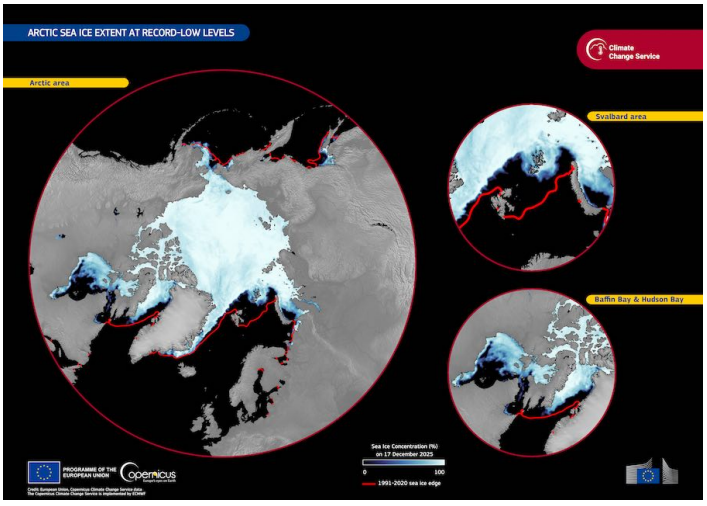
After reaching the second-lowest extent[1] on record in November 2025, sea ice extent in the Arctic remained unusually low into December.

Data from the EUMETSAT Ocean and Sea Ice Satellite Application Facility (OSI SAF) show[2] that, at the beginning of December 2025, Arctic sea ice extent was the lowest observed for this time of year.

On 17 December, the extent was estimated[3] at around 11.4 million square kilometres, still significantly below the long-term average.

Copernicus Climate Change Service

Our illustration, produced with data from the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), shows the Arctic sea ice extent on 17 December 2025 in light blue. **The red line indicates the average sea ice extent** in December for 1991–2020, clearly illustrating the current lack of sea ice in the areas around eastern Svalbard and in the north-eastern Canadian sector, including Baffin Bay and northern Hudson Bay.



Identifying trends

Reliable satellite monitoring is essential for tracking sea ice on a global scale. The long-term data records delivered by C3S allow scientists to identify trends, calculate anomalies, and assess the impacts of climate change on polar environments, providing a robust scientific basis for climate research and informed decision-making.

EUMETSAT Polar System – Sterna

The EUMETSAT Council has made substantial steps towards the final approval of the EUMETSAT Polar System – Sterna (EPS-Sterna), a constellation of polar-orbiting microsatellites that will provide microwave measurements of atmospheric temperature, humidity and clouds at unprecedented frequency – some of the most critical variables for accurate weather forecasting.

This was reported by EUMETSAT (www.eumetsat.int) on 26 November.

[1] https://tinyurl.com/2zxmczbu
[2] https://tinyurl.com/yc83y58b
[3] https://tinyurl.com/mr6excn3

Credit: European Union Copernicus Climate Change Service Data©

Gram Car Carriers employs Orca AI fleet-wide

Elevating navigational safety and performance

It was reported from London on 16 December that Orca AI has signed a multi-year agreement with Gram Car Carriers (GCC), the world's third-largest tonnage provider of Pure Car and Truck Carriers (PCTCs) and part of the MSC Group, to deploy its AI-powered navigational safety and fleet analytics platform across GCC's global fleet of 22 owned-vessels.

Gram Car Carriers' 6,700-car-capacity Viking Destiny (built 2017)

Gram Car Carriers' 6,700-car-capacity Viking Destiny, built 2017.

Building on the success of Orca AI's existing collaboration with MSC, the partnership marks a key expansion of the group's digital transformation reinforcing GCC's commitment to operational safety, compliance and efficiency.

Apparently the union is structured as a collaborative alliance rather than a conventional supplier contract, featuring joint business reviews, shared learnings and co-developed improvements.

Orca's SeaPod acts as an AI-powered watchkeeper that detects, classifies and tracks nearby vessels and objects, providing real-time risk alerts that enhance navigational awareness – an essential advantage for vehicle carriers operating on tight schedules and complex routes.

FleetView provides fleetwide transparency, giving management teams a detailed view of bridge behaviour, near-miss trends and policy compliance.

Together, these capabilities support customers in building an evidence-based safety culture where objective insights replace subjective reporting, strengthening accountability, decision-making and crew training.

Orca AI provided for the world's first commercial autonomous voyage in 2022, in partnership with Designing the Future of Full Autonomous Ships (DFFAS) and The Nippon Foundation.

With HQ in London Orca also supplies Maran Tankers, MSC, Seaspan and NYK, with more than 1,300 vessels using the platform.

Amasus Shipping:

bound4blue eSAILs® second general cargo ship installation

Wind propulsion provider bound4blue and Amasus Shipping have completed the installation of a 22-metre eSAIL® on the general cargo vessel *Fluvius Tavy* at Astander Shipyard in Santander, Spain.

This project marks the companies' second installation, reinforcing both the scalability of suction sail technology and the growing confidence of shipowners in wind propulsion as a mainstream decarbonisation solution. This advance was reported from Barcelona on 17 December.

The latest adoption of bound4blue's autonomous suction sails follows a previous installation on board Amasus' *Eems Traveller*, where two 17-metre eSAILs® became the first of their kind to be fitted on a general cargo vessel.

Since then, the DNV Type Approved technology has also been retrofitted to vessels operated by other forward-thinking owners such as Odfjell, Louis Dreyfus Armateurs and Eastern Pacific Shipping, with fuel and emissions savings already proven and independently validated in operation.

22-metre eSAIL® installed on Fluvius Tavy (Source: bound4blue)

On Fluvius Tavy the 22-metre eSAIL® installation. (Source: bound4blue ©)

Trusted formula

In the words of José Miguel Bermúdez, CEO and Co-founder of bound4blue:'*Our collaboration with Amasus continues to demonstrate that wind propulsion is gaining broader acceptance as a practical, profitable, and, crucially, a proven solution for an industry in transition*.

'*This installation is particularly noteworthy as it is the largest suction sail ever fitted to a general cargo vessel and, following a previous installation on the Eems Traveller, a very clear endorsement of the value Amasus sees in our technology. We're delighted to help forward-thinking owners and partners, like Amasus, turn their sustainability ambitions into profitable results*.'

Bermúdez adds that the new project is forecasted to '*deliver significant double-digit reductions in vessel fuel consumption and CO_2 emissions*.'

Easy does it

The retrofit was completed in a single visit to Astander, with all preparatory and installation work carried out within the vessel's scheduled maintenance period. Structural and electrical adaptations were made to the deck to accommodate the sail's foundations, after which the fully pre-commissioned unit, manufactured in Spain by Haizea-Tecnoaranda, was lifted into place in a streamlined, plug-and-play process.

Amasus said of the project: '*The decision to install a second eSAIL® reflects how satisfied we are with the performance and how smoothly it has integrated into our day-to-day operations.*

'*Our experience with bound4blue's suction sails highlights their suitability for short-sea general cargo vessels like ours. We're happy to continue working with bound4blue and would like to thank their team, as well as the yard, for another seamless and efficient Amasus installation. We're now looking forward to seeing the fuel and emissions savings this new installation will deliver*.'

Tailored flexibility

bound4blue's autonomous eSAILs® work by drawing air across an aerodynamically optimised surface to generate lift up to seven times greater than conventional rigid sails of a comparable size.

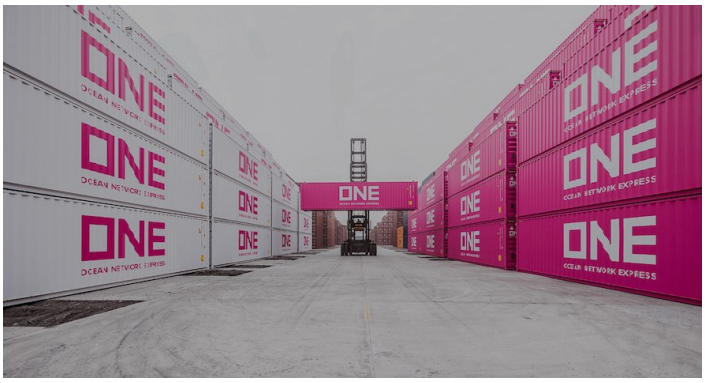
It is reported that the fully autonomous technology can be easily tailored for individual vessel configurations and a broad range of segments, including tankers, bulk carriers, Ro-Ros, cruise vessels, ferries, and gas carriers, amongst others. Alongside Amasus, other leading shipowners such as Eastern Pacific Shipping, Odfjell and Louis Dreyfus Company, have recently completed installations.

Dalian Container Terminal

ONE secures minority stake

Ocean Network Express (ONE) announced from Singapore on 23 December the signing of an agreement to acquire a minority stake in Dalian Container Terminal (DCT) in Dalian, China.

Located in the largest foreign container trade hub in Northeast China, DCT is one of the biggest dedicated container terminals in the region. The terminal has an annual capacity of 6.6 million TEU. The facility features fourteen container berths with a total quay length of 4,390 metres and is equipped with modern equipment and deep drafts to accommodate large container vessels.



Hiroki Tsujii, Global Chief Officer of ONE's Product and Network division, commented: '*This acquisition of a minority stake aligns with our strategy of ensuring access at key regional ports.*

'*The ownership stake allows us to collaborate with DCT and contribute to its continued infrastructure development and green terminal initiatives, further supporting Dalian's role as a key gateway for international trade in Northeast China*.'

ONE) operates a fleet of over 260 vessels with a capacity exceeding two million TEUs. Through its extensive global network, ONE provides container shipping services to over 120 countries.

New Red Sea service

On 16 December ONE announced the launch of its new RCS (Red-Sea China Service), designed to provide enhanced connectivity between China and the Red Sea.

This new service has been introduced to meet the demand between China and Red-Sea ports, allowing the group to better serve its customers with optimized network coverage and reliable shipping services.

The Route is: Shanghai ➜ Qingdao ➜ Nansha ➜ Shekou ➜ Jeddah ➜ Sokhna ➜ Aqaba ➜ Jeddah ➜ Shanghai ➜ Qingdao.

Adriatic service

Two days later on 18 December ONE announced enhancement of its Adriatic Service 1 (AD1) offering improved connectivity and coverage.

Current Rotation: Koper ➜ Venice ➜ Damietta ➜ Koper.

New Rotation: Koper ➜ Venice ➜ Ancona* ➜ Aliaga ➜ Piraeus ➜ Damietta ➜Koper

*Ancona call will be added from February 2026

New US Arctic Security Cutters

Coast Guard awards contracts

On 29 December the USCG announced from Washington the award of two contracts to build up to six Arctic Security Cutter (ASC) icebreakers between the US and Finland in a major step forward for America's national security.

Finnish & US construction

Contracts were awarded the week previous to Rauma Marine Constructions Oy of Rauma, Finland, and Bollinger Shipyards Lockport, L.L.C. of Lockport, Louisiana, and are the result of President Donald Trump and Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem's visionary international agreements with Finland and the historic investments authorized in the President's One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

Computer generated image by Rauma Maritime Constructions ©
Per www.rmcfinland.fi with grateful thanks.

Responding to crises in the region

The Arctic Security Cutters will defend US sovereignty, secure critical shipping lanes, protect energy and mineral resources, and counter adversaries' presence in the Arctic region. They will enable the Coast Guard to control, secure and defend US Alaskan borders, facilitate maritime commerce vital to economic prosperity and strategic mobility, and respond to crises and contingencies in the region.

Comment

Admiral Kevin E Lunday, Acting Commandant of the Coast Guard commented: '*These awards represent decisive action to guarantee American security in the Arctic. The Arctic Security Cutters will deliver the essential capability to uphold US sovereignty against adversaries' aggressive economic and military actions in the Arctic. These cutters will ensure the Coast Guard's ability to control, secure, and defend our northern border and maritime approaches – without question*.'

Two plus four

The contract with Rauma Marine Constructions Oy includes up to two ASCs to be built in Finland, with delivery of the first vessel expected in 2028. The contract with Bollinger Shipyards Lockport, LLC. includes up to four ASCs to be built in the United States, with delivery of the first domestically built cutter expected in 2029. This plan is designed to take immediate advantage of the Finnish partners' icebreaker expertise while coordinating the on-shoring of that expertise in the United States in the long run.

Acquisition of ASCs continues the USCG's modernization through Force Design 2028, an initiative introduced by Secretary Noem to transform the Coast Guard into a more agile, capable and responsive fighting force.

Palaemon crewing and ship management

Maritime Security Report: 22–29 December 2025

Palaemon Marine has a team of extensive industry experience focused on safety, quality and innovation. providing crewing and ship management services to principals around the world. The company also provides job opportunities to Pakistani and Malaysian officers.

A range of comprehensive ship security services designed to safeguard vessels in high-risk waters is available. These range from pre-voyage risk assessments to onboard training, AI-powered fleet monitoring, and fully managed logistics. Services include everything a vessel's crew could need to stay protected, prepared, and confident at sea.

Ship and crew management

Palaemon Marine Services has been in the shipping field for over twenty years, specializing in ship management and crew management. In today's modern and technical world, ship owners and managers require high quality and well-trained sea staff to meet the requirements of today's shipping.

These companies face challenges. One is high costs. Another is inefficient and unprofessional seagoing staff who may not meet the ongoing safety and quality standards demanded by the shipping industry.

For these reasons Palaemon uses a highly trained and experienced staff and procedures set in place for the stringent screening of seafarers to increase efficiency, decreases costs and handle crewing services effectively and efficiently.

Palaemon Marine Services provide officers and rating not only for merchant vessels but also for the FPSOs, offshore vessels and barges and have a network and its representative set in place to provide crew of almost any nationality as required by the owners or managers.

Maritime security incidents

A reporting period in December saw seven significant maritime security incidents across the Red Sea, Black Sea, Southeast Asia, the Arabian Gulf, and the Caribbean Sea.

These incidents ranged from state seizures and missile strikes to armed robberies and piracy, underlining the persistent and evolving risks facing commercial shipping at the end of 2025.

According to Palaemon incidents recorded reflected a convergence of state-driven enforcement actions, conflict spillover, and criminal maritime activity.

Listing trends here Palaemon pointed out that Iran continued its campaign against fuel smuggling with the seizure of a tanker and detention of crew in the Arabian Gulf.

Russia and Ukraine exchanged strikes on port infrastructure in the Black Sea, damaging civilian vessels as collateral.

Palaemon specialises in providing anti-piracy barriers for installation in vessels.
Illustration per www.palaemonmaritime.com ©

In Southeast Asia armed robberies continued in the Singapore Strait and Indonesia waters, including a bold boarding involving nine perpetrators.

Meanwhile, the United States Coast Guard remains in active pursuit of an Iranian "dark fleet" tanker in the Caribbean, raising the risk of escalation in international waters.

Houthi leadership publicly stated that further confrontation with Israel and the US is inevitable, signalling preparation for a renewed phase of activity. This rhetoric significantly raises the probability of future attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden in the coming weeks.

Operational impact

In retrospect maritime risk in these regions remains high. Operators may consider avoiding transit where possible. Enhanced watchkeeping, vessel hardening, and armed security remain critical

Maritime Security Report

In order to see Palaemon's *Maritime Security Report: 22–29 December 2025* readers are invited to use the link here: https://tinyurl.com/4eyzmrtz

Vessel *Cgas Saturn*

Gulf of Guinea attack by pirates; crew taken

Happy outcome

On 3 December Christiania Gas report from its Copenhagen HQ that early in the day following an attack by pirates in the Gulf of Guinea nine crewmembers had been taken from its LPG tanker *Cgas Saturn* (Portuguese-flag, 75.00 metres loa, built 2003).

Four other seafarers of the vessel remained safe on board. One of the four sustained light injuries and received medical care onboard. The same report indicated that the vessel proceeded to safe waters.

Concern and priority

Christiania Gas was naturally greatly concerned about the attack on its vessel and seafarers. The company's main priority was immediately to establish contact with the missing crew to secure their earliest and safe release. An emergency response team liaised with all relevant authorities who were notified immediately after the incident. The company remained in close contact with the seafarers' families to support them at an extremely difficult time.

Establishing contact

Two days later, on 5 December, Christiania Gas reported that it was continuing its efforts to establish contact with those holding its nine seafarers that had been taken off and to secure the crew members' earliest and safe release.

Four other seafarers from the ship remained on board and were able to navigate her to a safe berth in port in West Africa. It is understood that the one crew injured during the attack was receiving medical care in a shoreside hospital.

Release

On 29 December Christiania Gas reported the good news that all nine of its seafarers abducted from *Cgas Saturn* in the Gulf of Guinea on 3 December had been released and were safe. Meanwhile the men had been in contact with their families and were being repatriated to their countries of origin to be reunited with them.

Christiana Gas indicated that the recent period following the taking of the crew had been an extremely difficult one for all concerned, in particular for the nine seafarers and their families. The company went on to extend its gratitude and deep respect to the ship's crew and their loved ones for the strength, trust and patience they had shown during this time of great uncertainty. Christian Gas ended its statement to report that its seafarers had undergone full medical checks and were being provided with psychological support

In conclusion Christiana Gas extended thanks to its professional advisors, the international authorities, experts, partners and all those who had helped to resolve the situation, and for their support to next of kin over these days.

In the bleak midwinter

By Michael Grey, IFSMA Honorary Member,

There is not a great deal to cheer about as we stumble, haltingly, into the uncertainty of 2026. True, the major carriers are cautiously resurrecting their Suez transits, although there are precious few guarantees that what faction currently runs Houthi High Command will not decide to indulge in some target practice, to test their latest shipment of Iranian missiles.

Meanwhile, the other High Commands in the respective lines are trying to compute what the sudden shrinkage in East-West miles steamed will do to the freight rates, in the short to medium term. The eastern shipbuilders continue to churn out slots by the tens of thousands, as if demand will continue unabated. One cannot blame them. When some owner comes along wanting half a dozen 24,000teu monsters, you surely do not ask him whether he really needs them, but joyfully offer a few further options and ask only about the preferred paint scheme.

Somebody was suggesting that the next few months will see "peak Trump," as the shock of what will emerge next from the US president's fertile imagination has rather subsided. Seizures of large tankers along with their cargo, the imposition of tariffs, visa restrictions to people who have engaged POTUS' wrath, and even unexpected barrages of missiles into other countries, have rather lost the power to shock. We no longer ask "what on earth will he do next?" quite so often. That itself, you might suggest, could carry its own dangers. Domination of the headlines is said to be compulsive for such personalities. But one has to be apprehensive about the growing lawlessness at sea, with the activities of the dark fleet, despite all the attempts to constrain its activities through legal sanctions.

The ships change their identities at the drop of a hat, facilitated by flag states, which think all their birthdays have come at once, and home ports that cannot be tracked down by experienced geographers. Now, we understand, the operators of these Kremlin-controlled vessels do not even bother with these niceties. With the skill of accomplished car criminals, adept at switching number plates and "cloning" stolen vehicles, our dark fleet drivers now clone the identity of scrapped vessels, manipulate their electronic signatures and position, almost at will.

Bear in mind that these are mostly large ships, long in the tooth, carrying a great deal of oil and of questionable maintenance standards, there is every reason to be quite frightened about the potential for awful incidents, with the doubtful insurance cover and technical oversight, of which we can know little. And perhaps worst of all is the way that all the international mechanisms which have been carefully constructed by IMO, other international, legal, and technical institutions, over the last half century, to raise standards and protect the environment, have been put into reverse. And what we hear very little of is the situation of those manning the units of sanctioned vessels which have been constituted as the dark fleet. Who are they and who is responsible for them? When they join a ship, do they even know that the vessel is sanctioned.

As the "poor bloody infantry" who certainly do not get answers to any questions they might ask, you can guarantee that their curiosity will be discouraged. They will mostly be just anonymous seafarers, hired in the disgracefully casual fashion that still survives in the frontiers of our industry and grateful to have work. There have been credible reports of Russian military detachments having been identified by those monitoring dark fleet movements in the Baltic and elsewhere.
A report in Baird Maritime last week revealed a story of non-Russian seafarers being forcibly replaced by Russians aboard a sanctioned gas carrier. But one suspects that aboard most of these ships, even their senior officers have little knowledge of who controls their ships and owns the cargo in the tanks. Those of a certain age will have memories of the "tanker war" in the Arabian Gulf of the 80s, when the heroic aviators of both Iran and Iraq were dropping bombs onto any ships they saw in their sights.

There were tales of crews aboard some of these ships (whose owners were making a packet) being told that they were bound for somewhere far from the hostilities, their first intimation that something was wrong being an Exocet through the messroom bulkhead. Today, it could be the alarming sight of Pete Hegseth's "shoot first and ask questions afterwards" teams rappelling onto the foredeck. But that's life afloat. Remember the words of the old hymn; "From rock and tempest, fire and foe, protect them where so ere they go." A Happy New Year.

Michael Grey is former editor of *Lloyd's List*.

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