

Security compliance shows continued improvement

Both ships and port facilities are now approaching complete compliance with the new IMO security measures developed to protect international shipping from the threat of terrorism, which came into effect on 1st July.

According to the latest figures available to the IMO Secretariat from reports received by Governments, 89.5 per cent of over 9000 declared port facilities now have their Port Facility Security Plans (PFSPs) approved, a figure which shows considerable improvement from the 69 per cent reported on the 1 July 2004 entry-into-force date of the new regulatory regime.

Equally, the information available from industry sources on International Ship Security Certificates (ISSCs) issued for ships which have to comply with the new regulatory regime, indicates that the compliance rate is now well beyond the 90 per cent mark, which compares favourably with the 86 per cent of approved ship security plans reported on 1 July 2004.

The far-reaching international maritime security measures now in force were developed and adopted by IMO in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States. The security measures, which include the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code), are in the form of amendments to the 1974 Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention and are aimed at enhancing maritime security on board ships and at ship/port interface areas. They were adopted by a Conference on Maritime Security in December 2002 and represent the first ever internationally agreed regulatory framework addressing the crucial issue of maritime security.

Despite the overall optimism over implementation, there remain regional pockets in which progress has not been as rapid as might be hoped. The statistics suggest Africa is falling behind other continents in complying with the new regulations, with just over half of the 30 countries in Africa to which the Code applies reporting approved port security measures. Countries in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have also been slow to implement the measures.

While the IMO Secretariat continues to monitor compliance with the requirements of the new SOLAS chapter XI-2 and with the ISPS Code, work is also on-going to help those countries that experience difficulty in implementing the new security measures. In January 2002, IMO inaugurated a US\$2.5 million Global Programme on Maritime and Port Security. Worldwide activities under this programme have included seminars and workshops at regional and national level and more than 3,200 people have so far been trained throughout the developing regions.

While the initial work in the Programme focussed on raising awareness of maritime security threats, this has now been adapted to place more emphasis on specific operational measures which need to be taken to safeguard the security of passengers and crews. In this context, a "Train-the-Trainer" programme has been developed by IMO to assist Governments to strengthen their maritime security implementation through the provision of trained instructors capable of delivering quality training using the relevant IMO Model Courses. The Train-the-Trainer programme gets underway in the second half of the 2004 and will be targeted at instructors from national institutions responsible for maritime security training.