

SOLAS for security

Maritime security has been an important issue for the shipping industry since September 11 and the recent Limburg incident. Several amendments to SOLAS concerning maritime security were adopted at a diplomatic Conference held at IMO headquarters in December 2002

Maritime security has gone before all else in recent months. Shortly after September 11, 2001, the US began to pour time and money into the drafting of a set of maritime security measures, and as expected, they were adopted at a Diplomatic Conference which took place in December 2002. The provisions, which have been added as an amendment to the Safety of Life at Sea Convention of 1974 (SOLAS), will come into force in July 2004 .

The outstanding feature of these new measures is the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS), which consists of a Part A which is mandatory and a Part B which is optional and describes in more detail how ports and owners might go about implementing Part A of the Code.

The ISPS is based on a risk management approach to maritime security, and as a result, is focused on mitigating the potential risk of a terrorist attack or other breaches of security. The Code lays out safety criteria for ships and ports in a roughly parallel manner. Owners are required to put into place ship security plans; ship security officers; company security officers; and certain onboard equipment. Similarly, ports are required to put into place port facility security plans; port facility security officers; and certain security equipment. Both ships and ports must monitor and control access; monitor the activities of people and cargo; and ensure security communications are readily available. The means and manner of implementing these measures will be determined on an individual basis by the responsible administrations or contracting governments.

Security on the ship

Under the ISPS Code, tanker owners, along with owners of other vessel types, will be required to designate and train a company security officer, who will be responsible for ensuring that a ship security assessment is carried out for each vessel and that ship security plans are prepared and submitted to the approving Administration and implemented onboard each vessel. According to the Code, the ship security plan should clearly lay out the safety measures, physical and operational, that the ship should take in order to operate at security level 1, i.e. 'normal' security. The plan should also contain provisions for raising operations to levels 2 ('medium' security) and 3 ('high' security). Ships will be required to carry an International Ship Security Certificate indicating compliance with the new Code, to be issued by a Recognised Security Organisation (RSO). It is envisioned that class will step into the role of RSO, as an extension of its Recognised Organisation (RO) duties on behalf of flag.

Further changes to SOLAS

Further changes to SOLAS include the following:

- Chapter V (Safety of Navigation): The timetable for the implementation of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) has been accelerated; ships, other than passenger ships and tankers, between 300 and 50,000 gt will be required to fit AIS no later than the first safety equipment survey after July 1, 2004 or by December 31, 2004, whichever comes first.
- Chapter XI-1 (Maritime Security): Ships' identification numbers must be permanently marked in a visible place either on the ship's hull or superstructure; each ship must carry a Continuous Synopsis Record (CSRs),

detailing its history, including information such as ship name, flag, identification number and name of registered owner.

- Chapter XI-2 (Maritime Security): This includes the ISPS, as described above, and also includes a requirement for all ships to have ship security alarm systems installed onboard and a regulation which supports the master's right to exercise his professional judgment over decisions pertaining to the security of his vessel.