

Behind Liberian tankers high accident rates

By Carla Rapaport*

HONGKONG (PNS) Behind the recent rash of oil tanker accidents in US waters lies a system of shipping registration that has given the tiny African nation of Liberia the largest merchant fleet in the world—and that may be a significant cause of accidents at sea.

Liberia, along with Panama and a few other small nations, flies a "flag of convenience." Ship owners from around the world register fleets there to escape the taxes, union wage scales and often strict regulations and inspections in their home countries.

Three-quarters of the Liberian ships are Greek or American-owned. And some of the best ships in the world, including those of almost every major U. S. oil company, are among them.

But according to recent statistics from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)—made up of Japan, the U.S. and Western European nations—ships flying flags of convenience were lost at nearly four times the rate of those from OECD nations during the ten years prior to 1973.

An investigation in Hongkong last spring for the first time shed light on one of the major reasons: lax standards that have routinely allowed unqualified seamen to become officers on Liberian and Panamanian ships.

Investigators discovered that while only 25 percent of the ocean-going traffic in the Hongkong area in 1975 flew flags of convenience, they accounted for 75 percent of all ships that sank or seriously faltered.

Last February and March the Hong-

Kong Marine Department uncovered 108 cases of illegal recruitment and decided to begin spot checks on seamen's certificates on ships berthing there.

They estimate that close to one-quarter of those seeking the 25,000 sea jobs Hongkong offers each year are involved in certificate forgeries and illegal recruitment. Prices for forgeries range from \$200 for a seaman's license to \$3000 for a captain's certificate, according to Hongkong government sources.

But even more threatening than simple forgery was the discovery of a scheme whereby Panamanian licenses were altered—changed, for example, from seaman to officer—and then exchanged for valid Liberian certificates at the higher grade.

According to Hongkong Marine Department officials, Panama and Liberia long ago decided to accept each other's seamen's certificates in even exchange. They also accept certificates from other countries, though none of the major maritime nations return the favor.

One convicted ship-broker in Hongkong testified that he had simply written in higher grades—elevating one sailor from pump-man to chief engineer, for example—on Panamanian certificates. He then photocopied them and sent the copies to the Liberian Maritime Administration in New York for the equivalent Liberian certificates, which were in turn used by sailors to get "genuine" Panamanian licenses.

The Liberian government flatly denied that it accepted Panamanian seamen's licenses as a basis for issuing Liberian licenses. But Hongkong government officials say such exchanges have been routine for years, an assessment that is

confirmed by international shipping registration officials.

The Liberians also claimed that 33 license applications made by the ship-broker who testified in Hongkong had been rejected by them between January 1975 and April 1976 because forgery was suspected. But Hongkong authorities say they were never told of the suspected forgeries, though notification could have helped them stop the practice.

The prosecutors in Hongkong lay part of the blame for the widespread forgeries on the UN Inter-Governmental Consultative Maritime Organization (IMCO). One of their briefs charged that the IMCO, the international body that regulates shipping, had failed "to agree on minimum international standards of training and examination for purposes of issuing certificates of competency."

The IMCO is not planning to formally discuss the standardization issue until 1978, but if they do eventually decide to move on it they will have their work cut out. Standards for certification of seamen differ sharply from country to country.

While Britain requires a rigorous series of oral and written exams taken after several years in training school, Liberia gives a multiple choice test. And in Taiwan, the exam is heavily weighted with political questions.

Standards for promotion from rank to rank and for officer certification likewise vary widely.

(*Editor's Note: Carla Rapaport, who writes regularly for Pacific New Service and the Far Eastern Economic Review, is also a television reporter and news editor in Hongkong.

IQ tests: Looking for 1949 norm

By Jack Saunders*

(PNS) The winnowing process that eventually selects those who will be doctors, lawyers and politicians starts early with IQ tests.

Many think the widely used Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children—known as WISC—is a test that can wisk minority children into society's dustbin before they reach puberty.

Given orally to children between ages five and 15, the point is to see how close the tested children come to answers given by 2,200 white youngsters in 1949. Children who answer as that "norm" group did are deemed intelligent.

For example: "What would you do if a fellow much smaller than you started a fight?"

The child who answers that as encouraged by the typical middle class Sunday school—turn one's cheek and "walk away"—gets maximum point for intelligence.

A kid reared in a subculture where no one admits walking away from a fight indicates a lack of intelligence.

Studies show the WISC test more unreliable than the SAT. In 1964, 99 psychologists gave the same WISC test to a single youngster. That child's scores ranged from 63 to 117—from idiocy to intelligence.

Jane Mercer, a University of California at Riverside sociologist, found during the 1960's that IQ tests were branding as

"retarded" twice as many black children and four times as many Mexican-American youngsters as experts could account for according to normal proportions of the population.

"The tests," she says, "were drawing items from the mainstream of Anglo culture. Intelligence was defined as the ability to speak English and an acquaintance with Anglo culture."

Federal courts since have ordered the re-testing of 22,000 Mexican-American students in California classified as "mentally retarded" on the basis of the English language IQ tests.

Those who have been retested in Spanish show some improvement. Nevertheless, the white middle class background that even the translated questions demand continues to drag scores down.

A 1974 federal law now requires that schools taking federal money use tests that are "not racially or culturally discriminatory."

Efforts to comply are not far advanced in most states. California has set up a board of minority experts to review all tests formulated by the state.

In testimony before the California State Board of Education in December, Mercer recommended a new system of several tests to replace the single IQ test.

Testers using her method would interview a child's parents and give tests that

show how the child learns outside the school.

"If we can determine that a child is coping well in the neighborhood," she says, "and getting along well with friends, learning how to go to the store, traveling around the city, then we have evidence of learning ability. We can say the child is not retarded. Then it's the school's job to supply the Anglo culture."

Knowing nothing about students except their family backgrounds, the Mercer research group is able to predict which students will test poorly. With some accuracy they are able to say what fraction of the low showing is due to nothing more than family background.

Using that kind of analysis Mercer is now helping refine a sort of handicapped system that will allow educators to calculate an adjusted IQ by taking cultural background and income out of the picture.

The system is being tried with some success in Pueblo, Colorado.

"The testing industry thrives," says the Berkeley School of Education's Leo Ruth, "on our naivete about standardized tests and the illusion of certainty where none exists."

Trouble is, the results can stick.

(*Editor's Note: Jack Saunders is a technical writer at the Lawrence Livermore Radiation Laboratory.)

PCC teaches industrial security

A new curriculum for those interested in the field of industrial retail security starts during winter term at Portland Community College.

John Koroloff, government services department chairman, conducted a survey into career possibilities in this area because law enforcement possibilities have become so competitive.

"The industrial retail security area provides an alternative for those interested in criminal justice," Koroloff said. "Law enforcement has really become competitive. Some places now require a four year college degree for entry."

Koroloff's survey indicated for every sworn police officer there are two security people in the private sector. He

estimates there are nearly 5000 security positions in the metropolitan area.

The survey went to the 100 largest corporations in the metropolitan area as well as members of the American Association for Industrial Security.

Those going into the security field have slightly different educational needs than those in the criminal justice area, according to Koroloff. "For security personnel the emphasis is on crime prevention and asset protection rather than apprehension of offenders," he said.

Koroloff indicated the security role could be defined as "anticipation, recognition and appraisal of organizational risks and the initiation of action to remove or reduce it."

That description of the security role was put together by an advisory committee used in the designing of the curriculum for the new program at PCC. The twelve members of that advisory committee represent a cross section of security personnel in the metropolitan area.

Among those serving are Bill Admire, Portland Security; Bud Lewis, ESCO Corporation; Myron Warren, Tektronix, Inc; Bard Purcell, First National Bank; Jack Crawford, Lake Oswego; Larry Lundborg, Lundborg Control Service; Richard Dehaan and Ladd Hunt, Schnitzer Industries.

Also on the advisory committee are Gerald Edwards, Washington Square; Captain Ed Hasting, Lloyd Center; Frank Baum, Wallace Security, and John Meyer, Good Samaritan Hospital.

The use of advisory committees helps the college plan educational offerings that will really be relevant when the person moves on the job situation, Koroloff said. "Traditionally security has been a discipline without any educational background," he explained.


Koroloff drew from some existing courses in criminal justice as well as management-supervisory to design the security certificate program. "The survey indicated a special need for supervisory training in the field," he explained.

"It is possible to get skill acquisition for both criminal justice and industrial security," Koroloff continued. The student who uses the industrial security courses as electives for the criminal justice program will end up with a certificate in security, as well as the associate of arts degree in criminal justice.

Those working for the security certificate will take introductory law courses, technical report writing, supervision principles, psychology and oral communications as well as introductory courses in fire protection and criminal investigation.

Koroloff said classes will be offered both day and night. Students may enroll for either full or part time work. Other management courses are also available.

Registration for classes occurs during the first week of January and classes are slated to begin January 4.



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