

DAILY SHIPPING NEWSLETTER



DAILY SHIPPING NEWSLETTER : Saturday 25-08-2001



LOOK FOR THE LATEST
UPDATE OF THE KURSK
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MAMMOET SMIT INTERNATIONAL



While the work at the shipyards in Severodvinsk and Amsterdam is progressing successfully, weather conditions in the area around the Kursk were hindering the activities below water. On 23 August the work was interrupted. However work was resumed in the afternoon of 24 August and the weather forecast for the next few days is favourable

Due to the interruptions during the past several days, it is possible that the start of the actual lifting of the Kursk, which is planned approximately 15 September, may need to be postponed by some days. No certainty can yet be given about a possible delay, since it is also quite possible that the remaining work can be accelerated so that the original planning can be achieved.

Modifications to the hoisting pontoon Giant 4 are meanwhile

nearly finished. The ship is expected to leave Amsterdam on Monday 27 August, according schedule. The journey to the Barents Sea will take approximately two weeks.

At the shipyard in Severodvinsk, the first of two auxiliary pontoons is now ready and has been launched. After the Kursk has been lifted and it arrives in Murmansk, the pontoons will press the Giant/Kursk combination upward to enable it to enter the dry dock. The second pontoon will be launched on Tuesday 28 August.

The AMT Carrier, which holds the sawing equipment for removal of the nose section of the Kursk, is now fully ready in Kirkeness. It is ready to sail to the Kursk as soon as weather conditions allow.

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On the day of its departure for the Barents Sea, the modified hoisting pontoon Giant 4 can be visited by members of the international press.

During a guided tour, there will be ample opportunity to ask questions to a number of technical specialists and to take pictures. The purpose of this invitation is to display the Giant and the modifications made, which will restrict the topics on this occasion to those of a purely technical nature.

The Giant is located at Shipdock Amsterdam BV, TT Vasumweg 131, Amsterdam. The guided tours take place from 1 to 3 pm on Monday 27 August.

EVENTS, INCIDENTS & OPERATIONS



The dead body of an unidentified sub-Saharan African would-be immigrant is lifted up to a Spanish helicopter Thursday, Aug 23, 2001 after Spanish authorities located the bodies of 9 illegal immigrants who drowned when their raft sank as they tried to reach the island of Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, Spain. The 9 bodies were found by Spanish authorities who used helicopters to remove them from the beach. Hundreds of illegal immigrants try to cross to the Canary Islands from the west coast of Africa every year with many drowning on the way

Mombasa takes action on piracy

MOMBASA plans to buy a new patrol boat and re-equip two others to help curb an endemic piracy problem at the Kenyan port, according to Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) MD, Brown Ondego. Speaking yesterday, Ondego said that the KPA had received many reports of people using canoes to steal from anchored ships. Such theft by youths from local areas have earned the port a bad name, he said, adding that the port's management expected better business after eradicating theft, piracy and stowaways. To attract more port users, the KPA also plans to increase its cargo handling capacity and provide more efficient services, he added.

Soviknes Verft delivers PSV

Søviknes Verft AS, the subsidiary of Aker Brattvaag AS, has delivered newbuilding number 133 to Gulf Offshore NS Ltd, Aberdeen.

The christening ceremony for the vessel took place in the Geiranger fjord on 14 July.

The ship is a UT 755-L platform supply vessel designed by Rolls Royce Marine AS. It has a length of 72m and a breadth of 16m and is equipped with an advanced dynamic positioning system, expanded accommodation and a moonpool for launching of remotely operated vehicles.

According to Gulf Offshore the new vessel will replace the Highland Fortress.

Chinese yard to build for Norwegian firm

Jinling Shipyard in China has won an order from Taubatkompamet in Norway for two 5,000dwt multi-function offshore support vessels.

Both vessels are due to be delivered in 2003.

Bluewater adds Navion Munin to fleet

After last month's announcement that it would acquire the Navion operated Floating Production, Storage & Offloading (FPSO) vessel Berge Hugin, Bluewater now has also agreed to buy the FPSO Navion Munin from its current owners.

Delivery will take place on 01 October 1, at which date also the Lufeng Development Company changes hands.

Navion Munin' is owned by Navion, whilst the topsides are owned by Advanced Production Systems (APS). Since December 1997 Navion Munin has been producing oil from China's Lufeng field, with Statoil (Orient) as operator.

Wijsmuller acquisition completed



The sale of Wijsmuller Groep Holding to A/S Em Z Svitzer has been completed.

The sale of the company was first announced on 31 May following the signing of a share purchase agreement in Amsterdam.

A/S Em Z Svitzer is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Danish A P Møller Group.

The combination of the Svitzer and Wijsmuller businesses creates a diverse marine services organisation with operations in 23 countries, with a fleet of 230 vessels and employing more than 1600 people.

Tidewater reports

Tidewater has announced first quarter net earnings for the period ended June 30, 2001, of \$39 million, or \$.69 per share, on revenues of \$190.6 million. For the same quarter last year, net earnings were \$8.2 million, or \$.15 per share, on revenues of \$136.9 million. Net earnings in the immediately preceding quarter ended March 31, 2001, were \$29.3 million, or \$.52 per share, on revenues of \$174.5 million.

Included in earnings for the period ended June 30, 2001, is an increase of \$.03 per share from the early adoption of the recently issued Financial Accounting Standards Board's Statement of Financial Accounting Standards No. 142 covering Goodwill amortisation.

"I am pleased to report that even in the midst of the cloud that has hung over the oil service industry in recent months, Tidewater continues to prove its financial strength by reporting strong earnings," said Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer William C O'Malley.

Tropical storm hits Yucatan

TROPICAL storm Chantal hit land late on Monday just south of Cancun, Mexico. The Mexican government had issued a warning for the Yucatan Peninsula's Gulf coast from the towns of Progreso to Carmen, and a hurricane watch remains in effect between Belize City and Cancun. Possible damage is not easy to estimate, as the strongest winds and heaviest rain will not move onshore for some hours after the initial landfall. As a precaution, Carnival Cruise Lines has diverted all of its Caribbean tours to the port of Veracruz. Pemex said on Monday that the company was ready to evacuate more than 8,000 workers from its oil platforms in the Gulf. More than half of Mexico's oil production comes from the Cantarell oil field, in the state of Campeche and off the coast of Yucatan, so production may be affected. The storm is expected to move North-West across the Yucatan peninsula at 15 kmh, before returning to the Gulf during Tuesday morning.

Fast ferry slump hits Austal

WESTERN Australian fast-ferry builder Austal Ships has seen its profits halved by a world lull in demand for high-speed car/passenger ferries. Austal Ltd reported a net profit for the financial year to end-June of A\$14.5M (\$7.6M), 51.5 per cent down on last year. The decline was attributed to the slow-down in demand and an A\$9.5M foreign exchange loss. Austal told Perth Stock Exchange it would undertake a A\$32.9M equity raising to replenish working capital and reduce debt for new infrastructure. Austal MD Bob McKinnon told Fairplay that a burst of new enquiries, recent sales to Portugal and Egypt and a world-first charter to the US Marine Corp signalled an improved outlook. The equity raising " will place us in a strong financial position to pursue the opportunities opening up in our markets," McKinnon said.

Wijsmuller klaart wrakopruiming in Maleisië

Op zaterdag 11 augustus, exact 1 jaar nadat het schip "Double Brave" zonk als gevolg van een aanvaring nabij Kuching, Oost Maleisië, kwam het achterschip boven het wateroppervlak van de Zuid Chinese Zee uit in de laatste fase van de wrakopruiming. De operatie kende veel moeilijkheden en tegenslagen die volgens de beste Wijsmuller tradities overwonnen moesten worden. Het verhaal begon nadat het vrachtschip, beladen met 4000 ton veldspaat, geramd werd door een bak onder sleep. Het

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duurde een dag voordat de Double Brave geheel gezonken was. Het schip kwam rechtop te liggen en bij hoog water liepen zelfs dek en luiken onder. Na een aanbestedingsprocedure kreeg het kantoor van Wijsmuller Salvage in Singapore (Wijsmuller-Perdana Salvage) het contract om het wrak op te ruimen. Vanwege de moesson die eind oktober begin november aantrekt, was het van groot belang om snel in actie te komen. De operatie ging in September van start. Gebaseerd op plaatselijke inspecties en het advies van scheepsbouwkundigen van Wijsmuller hoofdkantoor in IJmuiden werd een bergingsplan ontwikkeld. Dit plan omvatte onder meer het afsluiten van de luiken, het onder druk zetten van bepaalde compartimenten en het schip opnieuw drijvend maken door water uit de ruimen en machinekamer te pompen. Hiertoe moest uiteraard de schade van de aanvaring worden dichtgemaakt. Ook moesten waterdichte compartimenten worden gerealiseerd op plaatsen die normaliter niet waterdicht zouden zijn. Het werk werd aangevangen met behulp van de Wijsmuller-Perdana sleper "Permaisuri", het bergingsschip "Perdana Sakti" en een platform met kraan en accommodatie. Ondanks de hevige stroming die kon oplopen tot meer dan 7 knopen, verliep het werk volgens plan en zou het schip eind oktober omhoog gebracht kunnen worden. Inmiddels naderde echter de typhoon Sancsane vanuit de Stille Oceaan over de Filippijnen en Taiwan. Door de hierdoor sterke toename van deining op de plaats van het wrak werd binnen enkele uren al het voorbereidende werk van de bergers ongedaan gemaakt enkele dagen voor de daadwerkelijke wrakopruiming zou plaatsvinden. Vanwege de naderende moesson werd besloten de operatie stil te leggen. In maart dit jaar, nadat de moesson weer was afgenomen, is een inspectie team van Wijsmuller de situatie en de toestand van het wrak opnieuw gaan opnemen. Het schip was iets scheef komen te liggen, maar was vooral weggezakt. De romp lag in 5 meter diepe modder, 20 meter onder het water oppervlak. Voor de hernieuwde poging om het schip drijvend te krijgen, moest het bergingsplan dus worden aangepast. Er zou gebruik gemaakt moeten gaan worden van zogenaamde 'caissons' (tanks met drijfvermogen). Daarnaast moest de lading en de ontstane modderlaag verwijderd worden. Het was voorts noodzakelijk dat ruim 1 opnieuw waterdicht werd gemaakt, evenals de machinekamer en hutten. Tevens moest een aantal compartimenten bij de boeg luchtdicht gemaakt worden. De caissons werden binnenin en langs zij de romp bevestigd en een kraan werd ingezet om voor extra stabiliteit te zorgen. De operatie vond plaats bij eb om zo min mogelijk last te hebben van stromingen. Hierdoor wordt duiken vergemakkelijkt en ontstaat minder druk op de romp. Op 8 augustus was eindelijk alles in gereedheid gebracht om als eerste de boeg boven water te laten komen. Nadat de boeg omhoog was gekomen werd het schip gestabiliseerd. De volgende dag kon ook het achterschip omhoog worden gebracht. Helaas bleek een deel van het dek zodanig gecorrodeerd te zijn dat het niet hield. Dit moest verholpen worden waardoor extra tijd nodig was. Het probleem was echter binnen een dag opgelost en 4 caissons werden als extra zekerheid verplaatst. In de nacht van 10 op 11 augustus werd opnieuw een poging ondernomen. In de vroege ochtend kwam het achterschip ook omhoog en brak door het wateroppervlak bij zonsopgang. Het schip werd daarop verder gestabiliseerd en leeggepompt. Daarna kon het eindelijk worden afgeleverd tot grote tevredenheid van eigenaren en de autoriteiten van Oost Maleisië.

SHIPYARD NEWS

Daewoo creditors agree restructure

CREDITORS of Daewoo Shipbuilding (formerly Daewoo HI) have agreed to a debt re-structure plan whereby W560Bn (\$435M) will be paid out by 2004. The move came after an investigation of Daewoo's assets and debts. Sources said the decision was prompted by the fact that large amounts of the loans could not be recovered if the company was declared bankrupt. Creditors were also impressed by Daewoo's intention to pay back 'rolled over' debt amounting to more than W200Bn before maturity in 2002. They have, however, favoured a debt-equity swap rather than reduce interest rates. Under the workout programme, Daewoo would be split into shipbuilding and machinery units while a third entity would assume the superfluous assets of these two.

Swan Hunter unveils oil ship

Swan Hunter hopes to win a second American contract

A Tyneside-built offshore production vessel which will work in the North Sea has been "christened" by Energy Minister Brian Wilson.

Mr Wilson headed a ceremony to mark the naming and near-completion of Global Producer III.

The floating production ship has been built for US firm Kerr-McGee by the Swan Hunter fabrication yard in Wallsend.

The yard hopes to win a second large contract to build another vessel for the Oklahoma City-based energy company.

If Swans is successful it would create 200 more jobs and a guarantee a year's work.

Luke Corbett, chairman and chief executive of Kerr-McGee, was at the Global Producer III inauguration.

A company spokesman said: "Talks have been going on for some time between Swan Hunter and us, about what would be a second order for them.

Next bid

"Discussions are continuing but no decision has been made yet."

Norman Brownell, Swan's commercial manager, said: "Work on the present Kerr-McGee vessel began last November and will finish in September.

"We are bidding for the firm's next contract."

The Global Producer III is a floating production, storage and offtake (FPSO) vessel which will serve the Leadon field - currently the largest development in the UK sector of the North Sea.

As well as completing that job Swan Hunter is also working on a £130m Ministry of Defence contract to build landing vessels.

The yard was in receivership six yards ago but is now a flagship for industry on the Tyne.

'Bright future'

Its bid for new orders comes just weeks after the mothballing of the Cammell Laird yard at Hebburn, on the other side of the river.

Kevin Curran, regional officer for the GMB union, said: "A new contract with Kerr-McGee could mean another 500 jobs which is a very welcome development.

"Despite the bad news at Cammell Laird I have always maintained that the future for the River Tyne is the brightest in the UK."

The total cost of the Global Producer III project for the Leadon field, including building the platform, is £450m.

ROUTE, PORTS & SERVICES

Evergreen to resume Colombo calls



EVERGREEN Marine and Uniglory are to resume five services that were suspended after underwriters imposed hefty war risk hull insurance surcharges on vessels calling at Colombo. The Far East-Med eastbound service will start with the Ever Gentry calling on August 27, the Arabian-Persian Gulf service with the Uni-Patriot calling on September 1 and the round-the-world westbound service with the Ever Decent calling on September 14. The remaining two services are expected to start shortly. Underwriters earlier this week cut the war risk premiums by 75-80 per cent after lobbying by a Sri Lankan team in London. The surcharges were imposed after a Tamil Tiger rebel suicide attack on Sri Lanka's international airport in which four Airbus passenger planes were destroyed last month.

Piraeus strikes deal with MSC

PIRAEUS port and Mediterranean Shipping Co yesterday signed a ten-year co-operation contract, under which the Swiss liner company will increase containers brought to Piraeus by half again in return for service priority and reduced handling rates. MSC, already Piraeus's biggest customer, contributes about 450,000 TEU to the port's total annual 1.15M TEU throughput, and by the end of next month the company intends to introduce its new 6,700 TEU capacity container ships to its Piraeus calls. The deal is seen as a boost to Piraeus's economic prospects just weeks before it launches an IPO as part of its planned partial flotation on the Athens stock market. Meanwhile, there is tension between the port management and dockers' union as a result of the evaluation of the port's assets. The union claims the appraisal figure has been deliberately pitched too low so as to create demand for the port's shares. The union has demanded a re-evaluation of the assets on threat of strike action.

HMM ships more gas

HYUNDAI Merchant Marine (HMM) will transport 5.3M tons of LNG this year, which would represent a 28 per cent increase over last year. A Hyundai spokesman told Fairplay today that turnover from LNG would rise by 26 per cent to W310Bn (\$243M) this year. HMM ships have carried 2.8M tons of LNG to date, and the spokesman said the trend of growing domestic consumption of the product would continue. HMM, which currently operates seven LNG vessels, also plans to invest more in LPG and chemical carriers.

North Sea supply vessel update

Offshore Shipbrokers in Aberdeen says that Shell has met its requirement for two PSVs out of Lowestoft by awarding the contract to District Offshore (DOF).

To fulfil the contract, DOF has purchased Olympic Offshore's newbuilding UT755 whilst the newbuilding UT755 for Ugelstad has been taken on a bareboat charter.

The average charter rate is in the region of £7,700 whilst the BB rate for the Ugelstad vessel is being suggested at NOK 55,000 level.

Shell plans floating LNG terminal

Shell has revealed details of a proposal by Shell Development (Australia) Pty Ltd (SDA) to use the world's first floating liquefied natural gas (FLNG) facility to develop the Greater Sunrise gas fields in the Timor Sea. The facility would be located offshore on a barge, close to the proposed Sunrise drilling

platform.

The company said that the FLMG facility would make use of technology developed by the company in Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO) vessels, offshore oil production, and LNG shipping and LNG plant design.

Port of Los Angeles To Welcome Trio of Aluminum Fireboats

Subsequent to a lengthy bidding process, the Port of Los Angeles will receive a trio of three all-aluminum fireboats, which will be constructed by Kvichak Marine Industries. Measuring 39 ft. (11.8 m) each, the vessels will be designed by Jensen Maritime Consultants of Seattle. The three new vessels, which will be named Fireboat #1, #3 and #5, will be stationed throughout the Port of L.A. and are scheduled to replace three existing vessels that are each more than 35 years old. A 105-ft. (32 m) steel fireboat, currently under construction at Nichols Bros. of Freeland, Wash. will also join the upgraded fleet in 2002. Each having a beam of 14 ft. (4.2 m), the fireboats will be powered by twin Caterpillar 3126B engines, driving 27-in. propellers through Twin Disc MG-507A gears. A third Caterpillar 3126B engine will be installed as a designated fire engine. The designer predicts that the vessels will be able to move at 27-plus knots when fully loaded and a cruising speed of 25 knots. Each vessel will also have a Hale fire pump with a 2,400 gpm capacity and a Stang 925545 fire monitor.

MISC eyes fresh LNG newbuildings



Malaysia International Shipping Corp (MISC) is prepared to invest in additional LNG carrier newbuildings, as it strives to move its lucrative gas carrier business outside its hometown roots.

Speaking in the wake of MISC's first quarter results announcement Wednesday, chairman Hassan Marican said the company could order between four to six LNG newbuildings in the future if it is successful in winning business from gas producers.

He is reported as saying, "Given the expansion of the LNG business worldwide, we have been approached by several LNG producers or potential LNG producers to look into transportation."

Hassan said, "We will not only operate, but also provide shipping for them."

But existing LNG industry players reacted with some disbelief to his comments, and challenged MISC's

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ability to be commercially competitive in the LNG newbuilding arena. "They're dreaming," one gas market specialist said.

MISC prides itself on its 20 years of experience in the industry and of having one of the largest LNG fleets in the world.

The company currently operates 13 existing vessels, and has six newbuildings on order in Japan to serve its MLNG 3 (Tiga) production project.

The existing ships are operated under time-charter contracts with MISC's parent, state oil and gas company Petronas. The spectacularly high charter rates have been the backbone of the shipping company's income now for the last 15 years.

In the last five years MISC has made it clear that it wants to expand its business outside its domestic sphere.

The company was a surprise bidder in Spanish importer Enagas' tender for three LNG newbuildings in 1997.

But MISC's time-charter expectations were way out of synch with fellow bidders. Where other owners were offering rates in the \$60,000 per day range, the Malaysian owner was asking \$90,000 daily, brokers say. The company did not make it on to the 10-group shortlist.

Undaunted, and more recently, MISC fared better in the bidding process for India's Petronet LNG project, which was seeking two newbuildings. The Malaysian giant, teamed with India's Essar Shipping, lost out to the winning Japanese-led consortium at the final hurdle.

The company has also shown its openness for spot trading. In 1999 the company put the 130,000-cbm Tenaga Satu (built 1982) up for business during a slowdown in regular cargo shipments. However, no trade emerged at the time.

Waalhaven verwelkomt splinternieuw containerschip

Rotterdam _ Een beetje trots was directeur A. Strauss van K Line Nederland er wel op, de komst van de Golden Gate Bridge in de Rotterdamse Waalhaven. In de nacht van dinsdag op woensdag arriveerde het spiksplinternieuwe schip voor het eerst in een haven. De Golden Gate Bridge is de eerste van een serie van twaalf nieuwe containerschepen van de Japanse rederij K Line. De schepen gaan zowel in Europa als Amerika lijndiensten varen.

Met een gemiddelde snelheid van 26 knopen koerste de Golden Gate Bridge van Japan naar Rotterdam. „Ongehoord snel," stelde Strauss, die erop wees dat het zeeschip met een lengte van 284 meter en een breedte van 40 meter tot de 'middelgrote jongens' behoort. De capaciteit van de boot bedraagt 5600 containers, op basis van twintigvoets.

De Golden Gate Bridge gaat net als de andere elf schepen varen tussen belangrijke havensteden in Europa en de Verenigde Staten. De schepen worden allen vernoemd naar een brug, zoals the Rotterdam Bridge. Van de twaalf schepen zijn er zeven van Koreaans fabrikaat. Vijf dragen het stempel 'made in Japan'. De rederij wil met de boten van alles en nog wat gaan vervoeren. Of om met Strauss te spreken: K Line mikt op alle markten. Dat maakt het bedrijf minder conjunctuurgevoelig. Als alles volgens plan verloopt, rolt het laatste schip volgend jaar maart van de werf.

De vloot van K Line, een afkorting van Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha, omvat zo'n 275 schepen. Het gros daarvan wordt gehuurd. Ongeveer de helft van de omzet van acht miljard gulden wordt gehaald uit de containerlijnvaart. Daarnaast vervoert de rederij auto's, vloeibaar gas en bulkproducten.

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Tijdens de presentatie gisteren legde Strauss uit waarom K Line gokt op lijndiensten met middelgrote schepen. „Het is als bedrijf natuurlijk leuk om het grootste schip ter wereld te hebben. Maar is het ook praktisch? Een megaschip past bijvoorbeeld niet in een haven als de Waalhaven. Dan moet je uitwijken naar de Maasvlakte, maar vraag ik me dan af: is de klant daar blij mee? Nee, want de vracht moet dan over land naar Rotterdam getransporteerd worden. Heen en terug is dat al gauw zestig kilometer. Dat zijn allemaal extra kosten.”

Hanno

Aan boord van de Golden Gate Bridge werken op dit moment 24 personeelsleden. De kapitein is van Japanse komaf. Strauss heette hem gisteren van harte welkom in Holland. „Real Dutch,” orakelde de topman terwijl hij de Japanner een Delfsblauw wandbord overhandigde. En plots stroomde een Japanse woordenbrei uit de luidsprekers van de intercom. „Wat zegt-ie,” vroeg directeur T. Jansen van containeroverslagbedrijf Hanno lacherig.

Hanno is nauw betrokken bij de plannen van K Line. De rederij laat in Rotterdam jaarlijks zo'n 150.000 containers (TEU) overslaan. Zo'n negentig procent daarvan wordt door Hanno overgeladen. Strauss: „De terminal van Hanno mag dan relatief klein zijn, het bedrijf weet als geen ander hoe je klanten moet binden. Het gaat bij Hanno dan ook niet alleen om zo snel mogelijk lossen.” Volgens Strauss passen de uitgangspunten van het overslagbedrijf goed bij die van K Line. Net als de rederij gelooft Hanno dat kleinschaligheid de service ten goede komt. Strauss liet dan ook minstens vijf keer de term 'small is beautiful' vallen. Ofwel: klein-zijn is ook schitterend. Jansen knikte instemmend.

Niet alleen Jansen, maar ook H. Meijer, havenmeester stad, zei verheugd te zijn met de komst van de Golden Gate Bridge. Volgens hem zijn de Rotterdamse activiteiten van K Line een teken dat het goed gaat met de Waalhaven. Op dit moment wordt het oude havengebied omgetoverd in een concurrerend containercomplex. Zo is de haven onlangs uitgebaggerd tot een diepte van 13,5 meter, waardoor schepen met een diepgang van meer dan twaalf meter in de haven passen. Neveneffect is dat de periode van het getij waarbinnen schepen veilig kunnen binnenkomen is opgerekt. Onderzoekers bekijken nu of de Waalhaven nog verder uitgediept kan worden, zodat ook schepen met een diepgang van veertien meter 'Waalhaven-bestendig' zijn.

NAVY NEWS



Portsmouth, England, Aug. 22, 2001 — The guided missile destroyer *USS Winston S. Churchill* (DDG 81) is greeted with a fly-by from a British WWII *Spitfire* as she enters Portsmouth, England, for an historic first visit. *Churchill* was named for Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill (1874-1965), best known for his courageous leadership as British prime minister during World War II.

Nigeria blasts pirate ships

Warri - The Nigerian navy said it would explode 11 boats worth \$3.6 million in a public display on Thursday after they were seized from pirates terrorising the waterways of the Nigeria Delta.

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Warri naval base executive officer Yusuf Hinna said the demonstration was meant to send a message to the bandits who operate on the Forcados River in Nigeria's southern Delta State taking oil workers hostage and stealing property and oil.

"They are destroying eight barges, two canoes and one motorised boat," Hinna told Reuters. "The total value is about 400 million naira and the operation is based on the orders of the president.

"The first destruction will take place at Bennet Island about two hours south from Warri between 08:00 and 09:00 before heading to the high sea for the rest," Hinna said.

The Warri naval base began exploding boats seized from pirates in April last year. Thursday's demonstration is the third of its kind at the Warri base. The Port Harcourt naval base had a similar exercise a few months ago.

The navy said there has been a noticeable decrease in crime on the waterways since the demonstrations began, but could not immediately give figures.

Pirates often prowl the waterways in the Niger Delta taking expatriate oil workers hostage and holding them for ransom.

Last week the navy arrested six suspected pirates including one man who claimed to be a pastor but was armed with two assault rifles.

Bunkering, where thieves smash open oil pipelines and use shovels to scoop crude oil into barges is also common.

....AT LAST BUT NOT LEAST



A Saudi Arabian Airlines Boeing 747 rests with its nose down into a monsoon drainage ditch at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang, Friday, Aug. 24, 2001. The aircraft lost control on the taxi way Thursday night as it was rolling to the departure gate to board 319 passengers for Jeddah. It veered into the ditch and remained stuck at midday Friday.

Ukrainian Mig-29 interceptors perform above Kiev's center during the Independence Day parade, August 24, 2001. Ukraine marks the tenth anniversary of its independence on Friday.



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