

DAILY COLLECTION OF MARITIME PRESS CLIPPINGS 2005 – 216



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The **MULTRATUG 15** seen here during the LEKKO DAY in Terneuzen

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EVENTS, INCIDENTS & OPERATIONS



The **SMITWIJS LONDON** departed with the **PRIDE NORTH AMERICA** from Angola bound for Offshore Egypt

Photo : Koert Maes ©

RAAF set to fight piracy from the air

AUSTRALIAN warplanes could soon be flying patrols to help secure the world's busiest shipping lane, Southeast Asia's pirate-infested Malacca Strait.

Navy chief Russ Shalders has offered to provide RAAF aircraft for joint patrols of the piracy hotspot amid concerns that al-Qa'ida-sponsored regional terror groups have infiltrated local piracy gangs.

"We would be very happy to help in terms of providing experience in air patrolling," said Vice-Admiral Admiral Shalders, who is in Malaysia for a two-week joint defence exercise.

But he said Australia needed a formal request from the Malaysian Government before any official offer could be made. New Zealand made a similar offer of assistance during Exercise Bersama Lima, wargames that began last Thursday in which Malaysia, Singapore and Britain are also participating.

The foreign-surveillance proposal comes after Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand last week began the first-ever joint piracy air patrols over the congested waterway, where violent and well-organised piracy gangs have operated for decades.

The offers were made in response to rising international concerns and pressure from Australia, the US and Japan about maritime security and terrorism threats along the 960km-long waterway.

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About 50,000 ships carrying a quarter of the world's trade and half its oil pass through the dangerous Malacca Strait each year. The area, which recorded 38 attacks on ships last year, was placed on a par with Iraq as a high-risk region for war and terrorism by the Lloyd's of London insurance market in July.

Jemaah Islamiah, the Philippines-based Abu Sayyaf and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) have all been linked to piracy attacks in the area. A spokesman for Defence Minister Robert Hill was unable to clarify if Australia had made or received any formal offer to join the air patrols.

But Senator Hill indicated last month that he was pushing for closer regional surveillance and intelligence-sharing in the Malacca Strait. In a major departure from attitudes a year ago, the three Asian nations with jurisdiction over the Malacca Strait indicated last week that they would consider any foreign offers to help secure the vital waterway from piracy and maritime terrorism.

Malaysian and Indonesian leaders last year flatly rejected a similar offer by the US to monitor and patrol the area. Australia is supporting Malaysia's bid to join the UN's International Maritime Organisation, which is responsible for overseeing global merchant shipping.

Piracy survivors have reported that highly organised and violent criminal gangs with corporate structures have operated with impunity in the Malacca Strait, hijacking ships, stealing valuable cargoes, and killing crews or demanding ransoms.

The so-called "Eyes in the Sky" air patrols began last week, more than a year after the first co-ordinated piracy sea patrols started. The initiative followed decades of political inertia that prevented effective monitoring of the longstanding problem of piracy.

There were 127 piracy attacks recorded around the world in the first six months of this year, a third of which occurred in Indonesian waters.

Ship Collision Blamed for Gasoline Leakage in Shanghai

Two ships on the Huangpu River collided with each other, causing a leakage of 50 tons of gasoline, at 11:40 AM Saturday in Shanghai, according to sources with the Shanghai municipal maritime bureau.

Chaoyangping No.8, a 3,000 ton-class tanker loaded with gasoline, collided with another 3,000 ton ship carrying rolled steel, at the water space near the Jungong road pier of the Huangpu River, and the fourth and fifth cabins on the right side of the oil tanker "**Chaoyangping No.8**" were broken with two holes, and 50 tons of gasoline spilled into the river, with the formation of a 100-meter by 220-meter smeary spill on the river.

Another ship was also affected. Emergency efforts were taken by the Shanghai maritime bureau, and all nearby ships evacuated, and all the gasoline on the accident ship unloaded. An investigation is underway for the cause of the accident.

Storm in Saurashtra

Three fishermen died and over 400 went missing following a storm in the coastal areas of Porbandar and Veraval in Saurashtra region of Gujarat as the district authorities warned people against venturing into the sea.

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The Fishermen's Association here said that the bodies of the three dead have been fished out but over 400 are still missing in the storm in the past two days.

The bodies of the three of them have been recovered, President of Boat Owners' Association, Jeevanbhai Jungi said adding that as per information received through wireless message, two fishermen died due to drowning while the third one succumbed to injuries sustained after being hit by a metal part of the boat.

Help of the Coast Guards have been sought to locate the missing persons, Jungi said adding that two ships and a helicopter have been pressed into service to locate the boats, which were believed to be somewhere in Okha-Jakhau port area.

Earlier their association had said that at least 440 fishermen went missing in the storm. The meteorological department said a depression, that had formed over the coastal region, has subsided into a a low pressure area.

Philippine ferry fire brought under control, all 525 passengers safe

Fire broke out inside the engine room of a Philippine ferry before dawn on Monday, but the blaze was quickly put out and all 525 passengers on board are safe, coast guard and navy officials said.

The MV **Our Lady of Fatima** was cruising from the southern city of Ozamis to Cebu in the central Philippines when the fire broke out near Dumaguete city, 630 kilometers (390 miles) southeast of Manila, said Chief Petty Officer Vicente Ruba of the Cebu coast guard.

He said the blaze was quickly extinguished and the ship was able to continue with one engine. He said a vessel was en route to escort the ferry to Cebu.

It was not clear how the fire started, he said, adding that a probe would be conducted.

"The fire was quickly contained by the crew and there was no need for assistance or a rescue operation," navy spokesman Cmdr. Geronomo Malabanan said.

Last month, a bomb hidden in a cardboard box aboard a ferry docked in the southern Philippines killed four people and wounded 26 others. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo blamed terrorists, with officials accusing the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf group.

The Abu Sayyaf claimed responsibility for the country's worst terror attack last year, when a bomb explosion aboard a ferry leaving Manila caused a fire that killed 116 people.

Govt's tanker stance seen as reef threat

The Federal Government has been accused of jeopardising the Great Barrier Reef by refusing to ban single-hulled tankers until 2010.

The Greens says the single-hull tankers are most likely to create oil spills and destroy marine protected areas.

Senator Christine Milne says the Government is not keen on an accelerated phase-out because of the cost.

"Oil spills remain a constant threat to the Great Barrier Reef and that's been recognised by the International Maritime Organisation which has been looking at the issue of single-hulled tankers for some years and the current situation is that they should be phased out by 2010," she said.

"I'm moving to have them phased out by the end of this year."

Hijacked aid ship reaches Somalia

Somali pirates took a hijacked U.N.-chartered ship to port on Monday in what appeared to be the ending of a nearly three-month standoff in the Indian Ocean.

In the most high-profile of a spree of attacks on ships off the lawless Horn of African nation, gunmen on June 27 seized the Kenyan MV Semlow with 10 crew members and 850 tonnes of food aid sent by the U.N. World Food Programme.

After lengthy negotiations and a broken deal in August, they finally brought the ship into El Maan port, north of the capital Mogadishu, on Monday morning, WFP confirmed.

"We can confirm that the Semlow has docked in the port of El Maan," WFP spokeswoman Rene McGuffin said in Nairobi.

Under an accord struck with the militiamen who took the boat, the rice was to be offloaded for distribution by Somalia's fledgling new government, after which the crew would sail the MV Semlow back to the Kenyan port of Mombasa.

Inayet Kudrati, a director of Mombasa-based Motaku Shipping Agency which leased the boat, said the eight Kenyan crew members, Sri Lankan captain and Tanzanian engineer should be back in Mombasa in about a week.

"I feel very overjoyed the incident has come to an end. We are happy the vessel has docked in a commercial port now and soon they will be released," Kudrati said. WFP said it was the first time in its history that a ship carrying relief food was hijacked.

The militiamen had initially demanded a \$500,000 ransom, then demanded the rice for their home area in northern Somalia, before agreeing to a face-saving deal whereby the new Transitional Federal Government (TFG) would distribute the aid.

The TFG is the 14th attempt to re-establish central government in Somalia after warlords ousted dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991.

Search on for Dbn yacht

A South African Airforce helicopter on Monday resumed its search for the Durban yacht Moquini and its six-crew members reported missing on Friday.

Jacques Smit, search mission co-ordinator at the Maritime Rescue Co-Ordination Centre in Cape Town, said: "We are searching southwest of Madagascar on Monday.

"There's no hard or fast rule how long we'll continue or when we should call it off because for now we're still positive." He said they had commissioned the C130 Hercules airforce aircraft, which had been searching the Indian Ocean from Madagascar since last week.

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The Moquini was participating in the Mauritius to Durban yacht race when it lost contact with the race organisers last week.

Smit said their counterparts in Argentina, via satellite, initially picked up a 460-megahertz emergency beacon from the Moquini. He said: "It was probably the first station available to pick up the signal.

"They knew who it was because the beacon is registered and those receiving it can get information of the vessel, the crew and a possible contact person.

"When they saw it was out of their range they contacted us." Smit said his centre then contacted the airforce that sent out an aircraft from the Waterkloof base in Pretoria.

Meanwhile, race organiser Dave Claxton said the inability to get in touch with skipper Graham Cochrane and his crew members, Mark Dickerson, Sheldon Dickerson, Kurt Ostendorf, Neil Tocknell and teenager Michael Goolam had "obviously put a damper on the race".

He said other participants had been told of the Moquini's disappearance and they were all looking out and sending out radio signals in an effort to find the missing yacht.

Claxton said the family members of the missing crew "are under a lot of strain, but there is an excellent support system and we get together often and talk it through".

He said it was the first time in the history of the race that an air search had to be conducted for a yacht, although a crew member fell overboard and went missing a few years ago.

Skipper lost at sea after trawler sinks



The skipper of a Saldanha Bay trawler has been lost at sea after his boat capsized and sank north of Robben Island on Sunday night.

Photo : Jim McLagan ©

Eight crewmen were rescued from the cold Atlantic, and two of them are in the Christiaan Barnard Hospital. A search for the missing skipper was called off after survivors reported that they had seen him go down with the boat while trapped in the wheelhouse.

But Craig Lambinon, National Sea Rescue Institute spokesperson, said the NSRI and CHC Hiline rescue helicopter had gone out early on Monday to search for the skipper.

The survivors spent an hour in the water before help arrived in the form of another fishing vessel.

17 Mainland Crew Rescued from Sinking Ship

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Hong Kong's Government Flying Service rescued all 17 crew members of a Chinese mainland vessel that sank 100 kilometers southwest of Hong Kong on Sunday morning.

Upon receiving the signal for help, the Flying Service immediately dispatched two helicopters to the site. All the 17 crew on board were rescued and sent to Chek Lop Kok Airport, local media said.

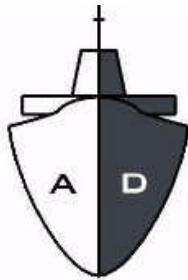
They were then sent to hospital for a medical examination. It was reported that all of them are in good condition.

The Flying Service was called in after another mainland vessel sank in the midst of trying to effect a rescue operation. Three members of crew from the would-be rescue vessel were also saved by the Flying Service.

NAVY NEWS

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Canadian warships leave U.S. Gulf Coast

Three Canadian warships that were in the U.S. Gulf Coast as part of Canada's hurricane aid mission are on their way home, less than a week after they arrived in the region.

The **HMCS Athabaskan**, **HMCS Ville de Quebec** and **HMCS Toronto** left Biloxi, Miss., on Sunday morning, while the Canadian coast guard ship Sir William Alexander and other personnel stayed behind.

The three warships arrived in Pensacola, Fla., last Monday, where they dropped off humanitarian supplies before heading to Biloxi. In Biloxi, a small city of about 50,000, Canadian sailors went ashore and were used largely as manual labour.

They spent their time cleaning up and repairing public buildings such as schools, hospitals and a navy retirement home, all damaged when hurricane Katrina devastated the region two weeks earlier.

When the three warships and the coast guard cutter were deployed, navy officials said the mission could last as long as a month.

But a navy spokesman said Sunday that the ships and personnel were called back because they were no longer needed in the region.

"No one ever said that they would be there for that exact time frame," Mike Bonin said in Halifax.

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"They were there as long as they were needed to be there. There's no sense for them to be there if there's no requirement for the ships to be down south."

On Thursday, a U.S. official had said the Canadian mission would be gearing down because civilian agencies and workers would soon be able to take over. There were other signs the mission wouldn't be as extensive as first thought.

On Wednesday, the coast guard ship was told not to unload all of its relief supplies when it was in Pensacola, since some of the items such as tents were no longer required.

And by the second and third day that the sailors were on the ground in Biloxi, they seemed to be running out of things to do. Canadian navy officials weren't sure when the ships would return to port in Halifax, saying it will depend on the weather and how fast the ships travel along the U.S. East Coast. The **Sir William Alexander**, several Canadian dive teams and a group of structural engineers were to remain in the area for an unspecified amount of time.

The dive teams were expected to continue clearing debris from the region's waterways so commercial traffic can access the area's ports.

The **Sir William Alexander** had been re-establishing buoys and other navigational aides in the waters off Biloxi and Gulfport. Bonin said the coast guard ship could also assist in heavy lifting, since it is equipped with a large crane.

"They're going to do any tasks that are requested of them," he said. The coast guard cutter and the three warships carrying 1,000 personnel left Halifax harbour on Sept. 6.

The deployment was part of Canada's hurricane aid mission, dubbed Operation Unison.

SHIPYARD NEWS

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Boustead buys 30% stake in PSC- Naval Dockyard

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Malaysia's property and palm oil plantation firm Boustead Holdings has bought a 30 per cent stake in PSC-Naval Dockyard, a ship-builder involved in a troubled naval deal, a report said on Saturday.

Boustead bought the stake for RM166.5 million (US\$44.16 million) from Limaran Logistics on Friday, the company said in a statement to the stock exchange, Bursa Malaysia.

The purchase came after Boustead recently paid RM25 million to increase its stake in PSC Industries, the ship-builder's parent company, to 32.72 per cent, the Star newspaper reported.

PSC Naval Dockyard in 1998 signed a RM24 billion contract to build 27 offshore patrol vessels over 10 years for the Malaysian navy, together with foreign partners led by Germany's ThyssenKrupp.

But the order has been plagued by technical problems and delays, and PSC-Naval Dockyard has reportedly sought another RM1.8 billion from the government to complete the vessels.

Malaysia's opposition has urged a probe into the delays, saying the government had already invested RM2.5 billion in a project that could turn into 'the biggest financial scandal in Malaysia's history'.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has vowed to sort out the deal.

Boustead Holdings is 70 per cent owned by the armed forces pension fund Lembaga Tabung Angkatan Tentera.

MIS builds vessel for Petronas

Sharjah-based Maritime Industrial Services (MIS) has launched a floating production storage and offloading vessel (FPSO) from its recently-expanded yard within Port Khalid.

The vessel now heads for Turkmenistan to be deployed in the Caspian Sea by Malaysia's Petronas Carigali.

Monaco-based Single Buoy Mooring (SBM), the company which commissioned the design of the vessel, awarded MIS the construction contract of the FSO in November last year, said a company statement.

MIS completed the project from laying the keel in February to its launch within a seven-month period, it said. The principle dimensions of the vessel are 116 metres by 16.4 metres with a depth of 9.8 metres and a gross registered weight of over 5,000 tonnes.

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Megaships bound to multiply



ABOARD THE **MSC TEXAS** Capt. Axel Bartel watches silently from the ninth deck, 122 feet above the water, as an enormous red crane opposite him methodically lifts a rectangular container from his megaship's deep and open hold.

Here at the Port of Long Beach, the unloading of thousands of

containers affords the captain and his crew a bit of rest, a welcome relief after the 12-day voyage to Southern California from Yantian, China.

The **MSC Texas** is no ordinary boat. Designed to carry 8,238 20-foot containers, it's one of a new breed of giant container ships built to help satisfy the cravings of U.S. consumers for clothes, electronics and other goods made in China.

"In the next few years, all these ports will be overrun by these ships," said Bartel, a 55-year-old veteran of the seas from Bingen, Germany. Just how massive are these vessels? Imagine something that can carry enough containers to fill a 1 million-square-foot shopping center — or five Wal-Mart Supercenters — with toys and other products piled 8 feet high.

The latest symbols of globalization's might, megaships such as the **MSC Texas** began calling on West Coast ports last year.

Though their numbers remain small, they are expected to quickly multiply because they make international shipping more economical. As a result, they could help drive the surge of imports from China even higher.

The \$85 million **MSC Texas** is only 36 feet shorter than the world's largest cruise ship, the 1,132-foot-long **Queen Mary 2**.

That kind of heft enables the carrier to exceed what today's largest ships can move by more than 2,000 containers. The more containers, the lower the cost to transport each one.

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On this trip, the **MSC Texas** is unloading \$500 million worth of electronics, furniture and other items from Hong Kong and its neighboring cities. Then it will head north to Oakland, Calif., to drop off 300 containers before returning with mostly empty boxes to Southern China.

Inside the ship's massive hold, containers lie stacked nine levels deep. On deck, multicolored steel boxes sit in neat rows, rising six containers high into the air.

Equipped with a 12-cylinder engine, the biggest one at the moment, the year-old vessel consumes 20 tons more fuel per day than the next-biggest carrier. But it operates with the same size crew, 23 seamen, and at the same speed, 25 knots, as its less-imposing brethren.

Though many marvel at its size, the **MSC Texas** doesn't represent the limits of what shipbuilders can do. On the horizon are ocean carriers that are 25 percent bigger, capable of hauling 10,000 20-foot containers.

Yet size poses challenges of its own. It takes 15 to 20 minutes to bring the MSC Texas to a standstill, which adds almost half an hour to every manoeuvre.

The ship, which is steered automatically by computers and guided by radar, can only be brought into the port during daylight when the wind falls below 10 knots. And the carrier just barely clears the Long Beach port's 155-foot-tall Gerald Desmond Bridge.

So gigantic are these ships that only three U.S. ports — Long Beach, Oakland and Seattle — can handle them. They can't even fit into the Panama Canal. Just as major airports are scrambling to alter their facilities so they can service the new Airbus A380 superjumbo jet, ports around the world are rushing to build longer berths and larger terminals to make room for the megaships.

At the Port of Los Angeles, engineers have been dredging its 45-foot-deep channels, extending them 8 feet lower. Down the street, executives at the Port of Long Beach envision filling in some basins to create larger piers from smaller ones. Other initiatives to accommodate the huge carriers include widening the port's channels and building a taller Desmond Bridge.

"We do like megaships, but there's operational issues in having that much cargo at once," said Art Wong, a Long Beach spokesman.

The megaships take four to five days to unload instead of two to three. And they require the use of taller, bigger cranes than those found at most ports.

The flood of cargo is already forcing major railroads like BNSF Railway to make adjustments, such as running longer trains on nonstop routes across the West.

"The ships are a challenge because they are new," said Frederick Malesa, BNSF's vice president of international intermodal. Practical as they may be, megaships like the **MSC Texas** also boast creature comforts.

The South Korean-built carrier doesn't leave port without its gourmet chefs from the Philippines. In their off hours, the mostly Filipino crew can enjoy a fresh-water swimming pool and sauna, a weight room and ping-pong table. There's also an officers' break room and a pharmacy.

Satellite phones, computers with e-mail access and two fax machines help lessen the sense of isolation triggered by long periods at sea. And guests can stay in special cabins.

But one of the most cherished benefits has nothing to do with amenities. "You feel much safer on a big ship," Bartel confided, as the clanking noises on the pier echoed far below him.

COSCO unit plans 6b yuan shipyards

COSCO Shipbuilding Industry, the shipyard arm of state-owned China Ocean Shipping Group, plans to spend as much as 6 billion yuan (HK\$5.76 billion) over the next few years to boost its production capacity sevenfold amid a global boom in ship construction.

COSCO Shipbuilding Industry, the shipyard arm of state-owned China Ocean Shipping Group, plans to spend as much as 6 billion yuan (HK\$5.76 billion) over the next few years to boost its production capacity sevenfold amid a global boom in ship construction.

The company has applied to the National Development and Reform Commission to spend 4 billion yuan to build a new yard in Dalian, Liaoning province, with an annual capacity of 2.5 million deadweight tonnes, COSCO Shipbuilding managing director Song Dawei said.

Last month, the company won NDRC approval to add capacity at its existing yard in Nantong, Jiangsu province. "We hope the Dalian project can get the approval from the NDRC next year," Song said, adding the project will further the government's goal of revitalizing the flagging economy of northeast China.

Shipbuilding capacity at Dalian, which has a long history in the industry, is set to reach 2.7 million dwt this year, climbing to 10 million dwt in 2020, according to a long-range plan for development of the old port city.

COSCO Shipbuilding hopes foreign firms will become involved in the project, since they can bring advanced technology and management to bear, Song said, though no deals have been finalized. The company has long worked with foreign investors.

Its Nantong yard is managed by Nantong COSCO KHI Ship Engineering, a 50-50 Sino-Japanese joint venture set up in 1999 by COSCO and Japan's Kawasaki Heavy Industries, with a total investment of US\$240 million (HK\$1.87 billion). Last year, the Nantong yard built more than 700,000 dwt of vessels, generating net profit of about 200 million yuan, Song said.

He said NACKS has received NDRC permission to build a new shipyard in Nantong for a total investment of 2 billion yuan, with completion expected in 2008. About 40 percent of the money will be internally generated and the rest will come from bank loans.

Upon completion, NACKS' annual production capacity will increase by 1.54 million dwt to more than 2 million dwt. It will be able to build ships with a capacity of 10,000 TEUs (20-foot equivalent units), the world's biggest, and car carriers able to haul 5,000 vehicles. The yard will also build large oil tankers.

"We have secured orders worth more than US\$1 billion and are fully booked until 2008," Song said.

He said NACKS aims ultimately to build new ship types, such as 300,000 tonne bulk carriers and liquefied natural gas tankers. China, which is ranked third, is expanding shipbuilding capacity to cope with growing overseas demand, with the ultimate goal of becoming the world's biggest shipbuilder, Song said.

With most top global yards having full order books until 2008, the mainland raised its share of new orders by 2 percentage points to 17 percent last year. Five years ago, Korea had a 49 percent share, compared with 33 percent for Japan and 6 percent for China.

The mainland's 600 mostly state-owned shipyards built vessels with 8.5 million dwt last year and they expect to increase output to 10 million dwt this year, accounting for 14 percent of the market, Song said.

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Despite concern among analysts that the market for container ships is peaking, he is confident the mainland's rapidly expanding trade will continue to provide the company with opportunities to grow.

"China needs to import over 200 million tonnes of iron ore and 100 million tonnes of oil every year. Bulk carriers and oil tankers still have great demand," he said. "We [plan] to increase our annual production capacity to five million dwt by the end of 2008, from 700,000 dwt last year. By 2012, our annual production will increase further to eight million to 10 million dwt, with profit of over one billion yuan."

With two units of the COSCO group - COSCO Pacific and China COSCO - having already sold shares in Hong Kong, "we'll also list our shipbuilding business ... in the future, [though] it is not an urgent thing," Song said. He hopes the unit will launch an initial public offering before the end of 2008.

MOVEMENTS

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The **INDUS** departed with the **Terre Marique** (below) from Pembroke Dock bound for Hull
Photo's : Chris Jones ©

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The **BOA KING** departed with the Jack Up **NOBLE AL WHITE** from Keppel-Verolme September 17th.
Photo : Frits Janse ©

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The **WHITE SWAN** seen here arriving in the Port of Antwerp, – Photo : Piet Sinke ©

The **WHITE SWAN** is built in 1989 as the **T.WENDA** at the Linina in Gdansk yard for the Polish Ocean Line, in 1991 she was renamed in **TRIESTE**, in 1996 she got the name **NUOVA NIPPONICA** and in 1999 **LT NIPPONICA** until November 1999 when she got the name **ASIA JADE** until January 2002 when she was renamed again, now in **ZIM HAMBURG I** and the same year during September she got the name **WHITE SWAN** and the present owner is Zodiac Maritime, United Kingdom and can carry 1939 TEU.

Note of the editor :

The **WHITE SWAN** is having 1 sistership which is named at present **KESTREL I**, this ship was named **PELICAN I** during 2002 when she collided and grounded on the Westerscheldt River during July 2002.



Photo : Willy van de Velde ©



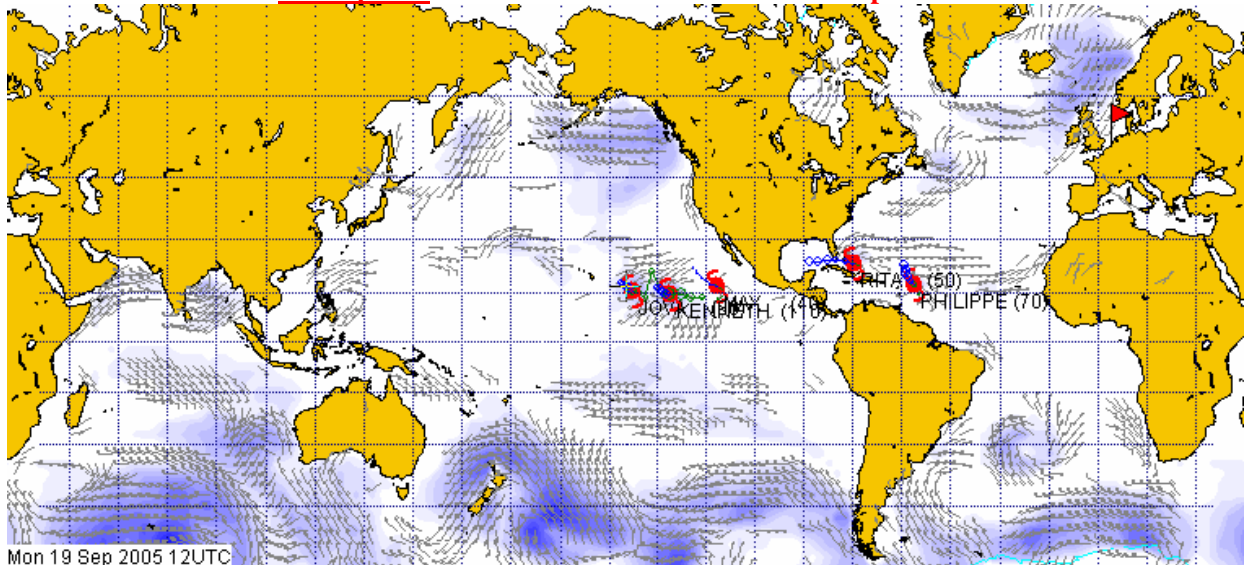
BIGLIFT's **DA QIANG** arrived at OTP Walker on the Tyne Sunday PM
Photo : Kevin Blair ©

MARINE WEATHER

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PHOTO OF THE DAY

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The **ANDREW K** is operating in the Port of Houston
Photo : Zane Johnston ©

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SLEPERS VAN DE WERVEN

Na de succesvolle actuele exposities over de berging van de Russische onderzeeboot *Kursk* en de autocarrier *Tricolor* hebben de samenstellers van tentoonstellingen in het **Nationaal Sleepvaart Museum** te Maassluis met betrekking tot de nieuwe wisseltentoonstelling gekozen voor een onderwerp, waarin maritieme historie een belangrijke rol vervult. Hoewel, zo érg ver hoeven we niet in de geschiedenis terug te gaan om de basis te vinden van deze expositie, die onder de titel "Slepers van de werven" vanaf zaterdag 24 september a.s. te zien zal zijn.

Het uitgangspunt van de tentoonstelling is een belangrijk onderdeel van de Nederlandse scheepsbouw, namelijk de sleepboten die in dienst of in eigendom van de werven assisteerden bij op- en afhellingen en bij tewaterlatingen.

Met name dat laatste aspect: het in de vaart hebben en houden van eigen slepers is voor veel werven van groot belang geweest. Het betekende vaak weliswaar een behoorlijke investering ineens, maar op termijn een vermindering van de lasten. Immers, men behoefde niet langer voor allerlei kleine werfactiviteiten een beroep te doen op de per karwei of per uur te betalen reguliere sleepdiensten en bij tewaterlatingen wisten de bemanningen van de eigen sleepboten exact de eigenaardigheden van de wateren rondom de werf en de neigingen van de lege, hoog op het water liggende casco's, hetgeen de procedures vaak vergemakkelijkten. Soms hadden die bemanningsleden slechts een deeltaak aan hun sleepactiviteiten, hetgeen in verband met de kosten niet onbelangrijk was.

Welke werven hadden eigen sleepboten? Dat waren er eigenlijk teveel om in dit korte bestek op te noemen. Er is in de expositie niet naar volledigheid gestreefd, niettemin zijn er weinig scheepswerven in het overzicht weggelaten. In deze beschrijving halen we een paar saillante voorbeelden aan. De Rotterdamse Droogdok Maatschappij, de laatste jaren helaas nogal eens negatief in het nieuws, had vooral na de Tweede Wereldoorlog een vrij grote vloot van opvallende werfsleepboten. Met hun dikke rode schoorstenen, getooid met zwart-witte banden, geplaatst vóór en deels zelfs in het houten stuurhuis, waren ze een karakteristieke verschijning in het Rotterdamse havengebied. Voor die constructie werd destijds gekozen met het oog op een beter uitzicht naar achteren, Bijkomend voordeel was dat er geen verwarming in de stuurhut nodig was. De schoorsteen gaf voldoende warmte af. Alle RDM-slepers droegen de naam *Dockyard* met een Romeins cijfer erachter. Ze waren voor een groot deel in de periode 1940-1946 op de eigen werf gebouwd, toen er vanwege de oorlog nauwelijks schepen werden gerepareerd of van de helling kwamen. Ook de werf Wilton-Fijenoord beschikte tot ongeveer 15 jaar geleden over een vloot eigen sleepboten. Namen als *Drydock*, *Engineering*, *Slipway* en later bijvoorbeeld *G.M. Roentgen* lieten er voor de kenners weinig onduidelijkheid over bestaan van welk bedrijf de slepers met de gele schoorstenen nu wel afkomstig waren. Vanaf de jaren zestig beschikte ook de werf Verolme over eigen motorsleepboten, die zelfs zeegaand waren. De *Cornelis van der Lee* en de *Paul Benzon* werden op de eigen werf gebouwd en te water gelaten in aanwezigheid van de markante scheepsbouwer Cornelis Verolme zelf. Het museum heeft van die plechtigheid foto's kunnen bemachtigen. Een oud gezagvoerder van een van deze Verolme-slepers was zo vriendelijk een fraai model van "zijn" reeds geruime tijd geleden naar het buitenland verkochte sleepboot tijdelijk in bruikleen af te staan.

Havenbedrijf Vlaardingen Oost, Scheepswerf De Nieuwe Waterweg, Scheepswerf Van Brink en Niehuis van den Berg, al deze deels verdwenen werven hadden eigen sleepboten, waar in de expositie aandacht aan wordt besteed. De Amsterdamse scheepsbouwsector komt uiteraard eveneens aan bod. De Nederlandse Dok en Scheepsbouw Maatschappij, kortweg NDSM, ontstaan in 1946, had eigen slepers, die onder de naam *Shipdock* met een Romeins cijfer erachter, voeren. Ook de inmiddels helaas verdwenen Amsterdamse Droogdok Maatschappij had eigen slepers, die de naam *Droogdok* met een cijfer erachter droegen. De Koninklijke Maatschappij De Schelde in Vlissingen was van oudsher bekend om zijn *De Nolle* en *Rammekens*, maar prefereerde later zijn sleepboten de naam *Scheldepoot* mee te geven met een nummer erachter.

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Een heleboel werfsleepboten zijn, al dan niet met hun werven, inmiddels verdwenen. De vaderlandse scheepsbouw heeft een lange periode van harde saneringen achter de rug, waardoor tewaterlatingen van conventionele vrachtschepen schaars zijn geworden en dus, financieel gezien, het beste door reguliere sleepdiensten kunnen worden begeleid. De werven die al dan niet in combinatie met andere het hoofd boven water hebben kunnen houden hebben zich gespecialiseerd in het bouwen van technisch zeer geavanceerde vaartuigen als (hoe kan het anders) high-tech sleepboten, patrouillevaartuigen, baggervvaartuigen en oorlogsbodems. Nog slechts een zeer klein aantal werven, te tellen op de vingers van één hand heeft een eigen sleepboot varen. Daarbij horen Damen Shipyards in Gorinchem en Koninklijke Niestern Sander te Delfzijl. Een stevig aantal voormalige werfsleepboten heeft intussen een andere eigenaar gevonden en natuurlijk licht het Nationaal Sleepvaart Museum u in haar tentoonstelling daarover in.

Het verschijnsel "werfsleepboten" behoort dus bijna tot het verleden. Goed dat er een maritiem museum is dat daar aandacht aan besteedt. Videopresentaties, foto's en scheepsmodellen brengen herinneringen terug uit een andere tijd, waarin de grote scheepsbouw in ons land floreerde, maar ook aan alle andere aspecten van de sleepvaart en heden en verleden. U bent welkom in het Nationaal Sleepvaart Museum te Maassluis, Hoogstraat 1-3, op iedere dag geopend van 14.00 tot 17.00 uur, behalve op maandag. De expositie duurt tot en met 23 april van het volgend jaar.

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