

Report on Mare Forum USA 2006

By the conference chairman

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The Mare Forum, an organization dedicated to review of topical issues affecting the international maritime industry held a conference in New York City on Nov. 8-9, 2006. Over one hundred forty persons participated. The topic of discussion was Maritime Transportation of Energy.

The forum was conducted in six panel sessions with vigorous debate after each session. The following is a synthesis of the major points:

- The energy transport industry is growing as populations increase in various parts of the world and authorities implement policy shifts and adjustments to raise the lifestyle of citizens. Current movements of energy by the maritime community, e.g. coal, crude oil, products and LNG/LPG will shift to accommodate the needs. All types of energy will increase and the maritime industry has the flexibility to meet these changing demands.
- The infrastructure needed to handle energy movements is in need of repair. Multiple uses of the waterways, including use for residences, are putting a strain on the port infrastructure. Citing of additional facilities and steps to increase the efficiency of existing facilities needs immediate study.
- Sea-going personnel are well trained but are increasingly skeptical of having a career at sea. Reasons for this include the current style which includes shorter port time and effects of security precautions resulting in lack of access to shore leave.
- The focus of the industry on safety and environmental protection is having a very positive effect. While the transport of energy is growing markedly with demand, the gross number of incidents has decreased and is on a continuing downward trend. The magnitude of the incidents that do occur is also decreasing. While a cause for

congratulations to the industry, there is concern with ensuring that the trends continue, see issues on seafarers and infrastructure noted herein.

- IMO should consider development of a standardizing training requirement for environmental protection to ensure an adequate education baseline for seafarers and other personnel in the industry responsible for environment protection programs and processes. For seafarers, this should include all officers and all ratings.
- Industry should redouble its efforts to find a way to educate the public on the service provided by the industry to the current lifestyles enjoyed by the public. The international organizations representing the industry, e.g. ICS, BIMCO, Intertanko, Intercargo, have taken some steps although they are encouraged to continue discussions on how to better coordinate this effort among the industry.
- There is a need for both private and public capital in funding the industry. As growth and development take place, private capital can bridge the gap between when a company decides to grow and when it achieves public status. The risks are known by both private and public participants although private capital places a greater value on shipping.
- A major concern was discussed concerning the effects of enforcement of environmental protection requirements which include criminal sanctions for seafarers and large monetary fines for companies. Seafarers have to be re-educated about the importance of compliance and companies have to address the role of shore staff that interact with seafarers so that the need for strict compliance is a company policy appreciated and complied with by all.
