

## 32<sup>nd</sup> IFSMA AGA

### EUROPEAN COAST GUARD

For several years already, there have been voices, mostly in France, pleading for the creation of an ECG. Members of the EU Commission (Borg, Blaauw...), politicians and representatives of the maritime sectors, including shipmasters. All those proposals fall short of a clear definition of what the proposed ECG should be.

There are many sorts of coast-guards throughout the world, all different.

For a new one, one can imagine, for example, to paint on the sides of french patrol boats, **COAST-GUARD** in big letters, without changing anything in the organisation controlling them.

One can imagine, also, creation of a new force, comparable to USCG, and of new legal and administrative system to go with it.

Obviously, there are big differences between those two concepts.





There is another remark to make. Due to technological advances, it is unnecessary to give chase to a merchant ship in order to know its whereabouts. Thanks to reporting, AIS, radar coverage, VTS., TSS, LRIT, GMDSS, EQUASIS ...etc and telecommunications, a Traffic Control Centre knows at any time all ships in its control zone, their identifications, destinations, cargos and all other characteristics. It can communicate with the master whether to get more information or to give him some interception instructions.

In addition to this, owing to international treaties, regulations and MOUs, a ship in violation has nowhere to shelter. Consequently, as observes M. VALLAT, EMSA's President, patrol boats could be spared and other mode of surveillance developed.

**USCG (us coast guard)**

Let us recall that USCG, which is in the background of most proposals, is a military force of one country only, of one constitution, one legal system, one language, one defence etc. Since its foundation in 18<sup>th</sup> century, it absorbed other public services and its activities today are manifold (see on the Web). There are not only patrol boats but all functions concerning the control of maritime activities, its administration, PSC, immigration, anti-terrorism defence, aids to navigation, floating ice control, SAR, military training, property protection ( US\$ 2,792 p/day), environment protection etc...



**European coast guards (current situation) :**

Due to lack of unification of EU concerning constitution, legal and defence systems, social structure etc... not forgetting language differences, actual coast guard administrations vary from one state to another. For example, in Greece they belong to the Merchant Navy, in Italy to the Customs, in Spain to the force of Gendarmes, in France and in Portugal to the Defence, in Germany to 17 regional authorities...

All this administrations, consequently, function under measures decided by each of the 19 coastal states of the UE, measures which differ from one state to another.

**NORWAY**



**No miraculous solution**

Many proposals place in an ECG hopes which have no foundation. For example:

ECG = end of pollutions

No, obviously. Ships are controlled by PSC in ports. In this respect ERIKA and PRESTIGE were in order. An eventual ECG would not prevent the disaster. The mighty USCG does not stop all pollutions from ships.

ECG = more jobs

No, obviously. At best, an administration will replace another. Most probably, an administration will be added to another and increase public expenses.

ECG = Merchant Navy

No, obviously. It must be an armed force, were it only to counter immigration, terrorist attacks and recalcitrant ships. In France, there are hopes of an Academy installed in Brest and of shipmasters having a role to play. This is fairy tale; in the EU of 25 states, France, as any other individual state, would have little weight.



**Conclusion**

What will come out of the feasibility study, decided by the EU Parliament and Council of Ministers to be presented in 2006 ?

Certainly not a coast guard comparable to the USCG. Prior to this, it would be necessary to unify our defence, justice, laws, administrations etc, not forgetting the social and language problems.

So, one can imagine, on the one hand a minimal solution, as outlined at the beginning of this article. The term "COASTGUARD" is adopted and painted in huge letters on all existing patrol boats in EU, as it is the case already in Germany (Küsten-Wache). Then, a coordination centre is set up somewhere to harmonize legislation in the EU its evolution.

On the other hand, one can imagine that the project is deemed unfeasible. After all, a decentralized organization, of a manageable size, may be more efficient than a large international body.

Let us make, as conclusion, another remark. For many years, nearly all measures taken by our governments in the field of marine safety penalize the crew and particularly the captain. Sanctions, controls, inspections, prosecutions...(more measures are in the making in Brussels) In case of accident or incident, his authority is contested instead of being respected.



These measures do not promote the profession of shipmaster, on the contrary. Merchant Navy needs rather encouragement if it is to grow.

As for the pollution, we suggest for ports (at least in France) to have facilities for ships to discharge their residues without loss of time or money, or even better, to make some money on it as in China. This would be the end of pollutions.

Recently, a British ship called in Brest, only to discharge her residues. These had to be sent by land to Rotterdam for treatment. The cost of this, with harbour dues and pilotage, charged to the ship was in the region of 80,000 Euros...!

**TURKEY**



**GERMANY**



**THANK YOU**

Patrick Vigneron-Larosa

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