The 55th session of the IMO Sub-Committee on Safety of Navigation

A report by Kim Fisher, Chairman of The Royal Institute of Navigation’s Maritime Traffic & Navigation Group

5th August 2009

NAV55 was held at the end of July with a new Chairman, Mike Sollosi of the United States Coast Guard. The previous Chairman, Kees Polderman, who had served for 11 years stood down at the previous meeting.

Changes to SOLAS were developed to introduce a new requirement for an annual test of AIS. This, if it is accepted, will come into force in 2012.

Guidelines for Integrated Bridge Systems and performance standards for Bridge Alert Management were finalised and work began on revising the performance standards for VDRs to take advantage of the increased availability of memory over the past 12 years.

Discussions concerning e-Navigation were largely concerned with developing the user needs. It was concluded that there was a need for a correspondence group to develop the work which will be co-ordinated by Norway. It was considered that more radio spectrum may be needed to support e-Navigation but it was not possible to estimate the quantity required at this stage. It is therefore now too late to make proposals to the ITU World Radiocommunications Conference of 2011 and any proposals will need to be directed to the Conference of 2016.

The work of the correspondence group set up to review pilot transfer arrangements was studied and resulted in proposed modifications to SOLAS V/23 and resolution A.889(21). The new arrangements prohibit the use of mechanical pilot hoists and provide more stringent requirements for the construction and approval of ladders.

The work of the correspondence group set up to review binary messages for AIS was studied and resulted in a Circular containing the details for 15 message types. Binary messages allow computers to communicate using spare capacity in the AIS data stream.

Work was completed on a resolution on assuring safety during demonstrations, protests or confrontations on the high seas. However
little progress was made on the issue of safety zones larger than 500m around structures in the EEZ, so a correspondence group was set up under the co-ordination of the UK.

A proposal from STW to phase out the need for the signalling lamp and training in the use of Morse code was not accepted by NAV. It was considered that mariners should at least learn the letter codes of the International Code of Signals even if they did not otherwise have proficiency in the transmission/reception of Morse code.

New traffic separation schemes were agreed at Aldergrund, Slupsk Bank and Gotland Island (together with a new two way route) in the southern Baltic Sea and in the southwest coast of Crimea in the Black Sea. Amendments to existing traffic separation schemes were agreed off Cape Roca and off Cape S Vicente and in the Gulf of Finland off Kalbadaggrund Lighthouse, off Porkkala Lighthouse and off Hankoniemi Peninsula. Areas to be avoided were agreed together with two mandatory no anchoring areas off the Neptune deepwater port in the United States. A new deep water route was agreed to the new Jazan Economic City Port in the southern Red Sea and amendments agreed to the deep water route to IJmuiden. Amendments were agreed to the GIBREP (Gibraltar) and WETREP (Western European PSSA) mandatory ship reporting systems. The issue was again raised of why, now that ships have AIS and LRIT, there is a need for reporting systems. This however again fell on deaf ears.

An Internationally Recognised Transit Corridor was agreed for ships transiting the Gulf of Aden.

The report of NAV55 will be considered by MSC next June as there will not be a meeting of MSC in December as there will be a meeting of the Assembly. The next meeting of NAV is planned for the end of July 2010.