

Abstract

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SHIP OWNERS ANONYMITY AS SECURITY RISK

Flag States are responsible for ensuring that their vessels act in conformity with applicable rules of international law wherever their vessels are located and consequently Flag States play a particularly important role in ensuring maritime safety, security and the protection of marine environment. Hence, they are required to exercise effective jurisdiction and control in administrative, technical and social matters over ships flying their flag. Unfortunately, there are clear indications that a number of flag States regularly fail to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), and other relevant international instruments and agreements, while some other flag States fail to exercise effective jurisdiction and control over vessels flying their flag. The reasons for that are the various flag states which are known as the open registry states, who market their registry systems to attract ship owners and shipping companies to fly their flags by offering lax registration requirements, procedures and poor control. In addition, they provide various options to attract ship owners, one of them which of this paper concern, the ownership anonymity that expose the marine community to various security and safety threats. The paper is discussing the security threats that might be initiated from the anonymity of ship owners which is given as a positive option by the open registry system. Also, discusses how such an option raises the potential use of vessels in criminal and terrorist acts under the legitimate umbrella of the open registry system and why hiding the owner identity is considered as security breach. ?