

Narrator: You're listening to the Quarterdeck, with Benjamin Strong and Coast Guard Admiral Jim Watson.

[musical interlude]

Benjamin: Hi! It's Ben Strong from Amver.com. Welcome back to another edition of the Quarterdeck. I'm joined by my co-host, Admiral Jim Watson. Admiral Watson, how are you, Sir?

Admiral Watson: Just fine, Ben. It's good to hear from you again.

Benjamin: Great to be with you, and it's good to be back sharing the things that we have with the maritime community. We're recording just a few days after Shipping 2011, the Connecticut Maritime Association's North American Shipping Conference. Again, over 2,000 people in attendance. Coast Guard Admiral Cook was on hand. Certainly, the Commandant was there to speak at the WISTA Award Luncheon, and other Coast Guard people were there as well. As you know, Admiral Watson, from attending in the past, pretty much anybody who is anybody in shipping attends CMA.

Admiral Watson: That's a great event, Ben. I'm real glad that you were there. I understand you had some great conversations with the people in the industry. My colleague, Admiral Cook, I think really addressed the piracy issues and some of the other issues that are affecting the industry. So I'm interested in what your take aways were.

Benjamin: I would have to say if there was a dominant theme at CMA this year was definitely a piracy issue. There was a significant presentation on piracy; Admiral Cook was on a panel with that. Mr. Douglas Stevenson from the Seamen's Church Institute was on that panel. Clay Maitland from the Marshall Islands Registry was there as well. A lot of times, I think people, there's a misconception perhaps that, as the United States Coast Guard, that we limit our sphere of responsibility to our coast, and that's not necessarily the case, particularly as it relates to piracy, is it, Admiral?

Admiral Watson: Not at all. The wake up call was the Maersk Alabama Case, which of course, involved a US flag vessel with US merchant mariners was on there. But we're interested in piracy just because it is an international crime. It definitely affects all of us who depend on maritime transportation system. Our economy is very dependent on international trade, most of which goes on ships. So, we're dealing with the situation in Somalia right now, which happens to be a very highly trafficked area in the global marine transportation system.

So, the United States is taking actions, and the Coast Guard in particular, I think has stepped out right after the Maersk Alabama case with a modifications to maritime security directives that were in place for shipwards security measures as well as engagements with other agencies in the federal government as well as our activities at IMO and with international shipping associations.

Benjamin: Thank you. It's good timing that Admiral Cook was able to present at CMA, because just a few days or a week prior, he gave testimony about piracy as well. Thank you for mentioning the Maritime Security directives because, if I recall correctly, and if I can [unintelligible] by reminding our listeners, Amver is certainly just a search and rescue system. The folks that we reach out to and that we talk just the commercial maritime sector. So I would say piracy and the ability to be found at sea are probably equally as important.

So, if you're listening and you think, "Gosh, what is the Coast Guard Amver program talking about

piracy?" We certainly don't go out and hunt pirates and we don't dabble in maritime security, but we recognize that our listeners, the merchant fleets, the crews that are out there are equally as affected by piracy as any other maritime disasters. So, that's why we're taking some time today to talk about piracy, which really is dominating the front page of the maritime newspapers, shocks the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal. But the Maritime Security directives, Admiral, and you had a hand in crafting some of those, really go back to 2006, but have been revised in order to deal with, like you said, the Maersk Alabama incident and instance that may arise today.

Admiral Watson: Yes, Ben. Just to give you a little history, Maritime Security Directives are a tool that became a useful item after the passage of the Maritime Transportation Security Act in, I think, 2003-2004 time frame. It was recognized that there are high risk waters even before the recent really scourge piracy in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden region. Mariners have, unfortunately, the crimes against them and activities that range from piracy to just armed robbery and theft in a lot of areas of the world. The 2006 version of the MARSEC Directive, which is a security-sensitive document by the way, just provides guidelines for ship or security officers in securing the safety of the crew on board a US flagship.

It addressed typical crime prevention things that you could do aboard ship. You know, lining access control at the bow, basically, knowing where these high risk waters are and taking extra precautions with extra watches. When the Maersk Alabama incident occurred, we realized that this really up [unintelligible]. You're talking about armed pirates, people that are firing RPG weapons at the ship, actually coming aboard with the intent of actually taking the crew as hostage and bringing the ship into a Somali port. We revised that MARSEC Directive with some specific guidelines for those high risk waters in the vicinity of Somalia and the Indian Ocean there, south of Oman, and north of Madagascar.

It did include a controversial provision that security guards would be required, it did not specify that they need to be armed, as an armed security force. The intent was, that we felt the situation there was more than you can expect the navigation crew, the normal crew, to deal with in terms of providing the extra watch that would be needed to detect the pirates and then providing the means to thwart their attempts to get aboard. The document does require that US flagships put up special plans together if they intend to transit those waters and have that plan approved by the Coast Guard Marine Safety Center.

Providing armed guards is one way to meet that requirement. There are a number of ways, and there've been some real innovative ways to, as I said, detect and deter piracy events. There's no have to do things other than to submit a plan and convince the Marine Safety Center than it meets the overall objectives of defending our ships against pirates.

Benjamin: It sounds like it's a pretty comprehensive document, but not the only document that's available to mariners. As you said, this is, and we'll talk a little bit before the show, but we discussed that this is kind of just one node or one point, one resource that's available specifically to ship security officers. But there are a host of other things that the Coast Guard has done in relation to piracy including taking the lead in the forming of a piracy action team, providing port security advisories. You mentioned PSA, sport security advisories. For the things that we're able to, we'll provide a link in the show notes to these resources and documents that we have available, either through the Coast Guard or through the Maritime Administration.

But Admiral, I want to touch on one thing that you mentioned, and that was the use of armed guards, because if there was a controversial point at CMA, it was certainly the debate on using armed guards

on vessels to combat piracy. It was Giles Noakes from BIMCO that really came out criticizing that, and encourage the implementation of the best management practices that are both under development. As I mentioned, some of those practices are available on the Maritime Administration's website, which we'll, again, include in the show notes.

But, the piracy action team, that's not just the Coast Guard, isn't it, Admiral?

Admiral Watson: Absolutely not. The Coast Guard is a participant in an interagency piracy action team. It also includes the Department of State, the Secretary of the Defense Department, the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US Department of Defense, the Department of Transportation specifically Marine Administration, the Office of Naval Intelligence, Department of Commerce, Department of Justice, the US Military Sealift Command, and some other agencies that are bringing to the table, not only their expertise and interest in defending ships, maintaining the safety at sea in the high risk waters, but also providing information. How can we help captains at sea by providing them as much information as we can through, not just US means, but through international means so that they can route around suspected high risk piracy areas or speed up or go at the right time of the year. There's definitely a difference when you go through those waters in the Indian Ocean in the winter versus in the summer and so on and also night and day.

Benjamin: We should mention, most people, at least folks in the maritime community, in fact, I would say, probably, if everybody would really saw how piracy hit home when sadly, we had several American yachtsmen that were murdered by Somali pirates despite efforts of rescue crews to try to get them. These advisories that were perhaps geared for the commercial maritime fleet now include warnings to, not commercial mariners, but also folks that may just be pleasure-yachters and pleasure cruisers going through that particular area.

Admiral Watson: That's right. There has been just general notice to mariners that has been disseminated. We work very closely with the US Maritime Administration to get that word out. That was a tragic incident, and unfortunately, it occurred not during the original piracy attempt, but actually, like you said, during the rescue attempt. I think that points to the fact that it's much better to deter the pirates or to defend your ship against them if they're trying to board the vessel. It's much, much better in the situation to have a good defense than to depend on a rescue. There's been a very low success actually in recovering hostages from these ships other than to pay the ransom. Yet, we've had really high success when best management practices are used. Actually, for these ships that are actually hiring armed security guards for making that transit, there's been 100% success in not being pirated.

Benjamin: For the recreational boater that may be listening, because we do have people in the recreational boating community that are interested in Amver. A best practice might simply be to avoid those waters all together. If there are three, four, or five people on a pleasure craft are probably no match for the fire power and the tenacity that these pirates are demonstrating. That follows in line with the notice to mariners that when out, it's probably best for them to avoid these waters all together.

Admiral Watson: Yes, that's what the notice said. So that's really what we're advising, and the same might even apply to smaller commercial vessels. If you have what we call a low free board and you're making slow speeds, you become a very easy target, unfortunately, in those waters.

Benjamin: Unfortunately, I don't think these incidents of pirate tax will be going down any time soon. So, as information changes and as best practices continue to develop, I would encourage mariners to look towards either the Coast Guard or the Maritime Administration or any number of international

maritime safety organizations for what those practices are. The pirates seem adept at changing their tactics and it's our responsibility to change our safety practices as the situation evolves. It all boils down to safety at sea and that's what Amver is about and those are the aims that we have is to keep our maritime partners safe.

Admiral Watson: I think it's very commendable that you have actually broadened out despite your focus, obviously, being to rescue mariners who are involved with purely a safety of life issue to typically weather conditions or something happening to the ship itself. In the United States, I think the US Coast Guard are encouraged that we're being supported by the US Congress with legislation and the International Maritime by the UN resolutions. I think that we're motivated and dedicated to trying to reduce the loss of ships to piracy and the hostage-taking that's been going on.

Unfortunately, I think, we're still a long way before we can turn the corner, despite all of the naval ships patrolling that area. For the large part, compliance with best management practices by international shipping and with the Maritime Security Directive for the US shipping. So, we're just going to have to keep working as a team, and I think it is an issue that Amver, in particular, can continue to help with.

Benjamin: We're happy to share the message, whether it be on our blog or through a podcast like this. I know the US Coast Guard shares its message through its blog and its other ways of distributing the message. Actually, I think that's probably a good segue, because one of the other topics that came up at CMA was the message in how do shipping companies and other share their message, and one of those is through social media. This podcast is a tool in that social sphere, and social media for shipping was one panel discussion that was given by MTI. I took some time to talk with Brett Keill from the Maritime Executive who really kind of branched out using LinkedIn, which is a tool for any type of professional. Specifically, he created a group within LinkedIn which is kind of, for lack of a better term, a Facebook for professionals. But he created the Maritime Executive Group in LinkedIn for maritime professionals to share some of their thoughts, things that they may be promoting, talk about issues such as the Jones Act of Piracy or social media.

If we can take a break for a minute, I'm going to share a short interview I did with Brett. When we come back, we'll talk perhaps a little bit about social media in the shipping community and then some of the things that we're looking at for the future. So, we'll take a short break, share this interview with Brett Keill that we did at CMA Shipping 2011. Admiral Watson and I will be back with our take on social media in shipping.

Benjamin: Hi! It's Ben Strong from Amver.com, I'm joined now by Brett Keil who's here at the CMA Shipping 2011. Brett will talk a little bit about social media in shipping. How are you doing, Brett?

Brett: I'm doing great. Good to see you, Ben.

Benjamin: Good to see you as well. You're probably best known, well, maybe not best known, for your work with the Maritime Executive Magazine. One of your social media efforts is the Maritime Executive Group on LinkedIn. You'd become pretty proficient with social media. Tell me a little bit about your social media group that you have.

Brett: We started back in 2007. It was an effort to build our circulation – you're short staff, new company, just launched a magazine in tough times. We didn't have the wherewithal to hire somebody to find a bunch of new people read our magazine. Also, the LinkedIn site had just began, so I saw a lot of people I know, not in the maritime actually utilizing the site. A lot of graduate students, professionals

using it as a network, so I thought, “What a great way to get in front of my clientele.” So I randomly start searching, saw a handful of my clients and people that we’ve written about on the covers, invited them to connect. They were open to connecting and it gave me the idea to start a group. Protect their name, form a group where we can have viable discussions, we can discuss articles. Good for branding for us, but really just to get the word out, what’s going on in the maritime community, and build our circulation, and it’s been strong.

Benjamin: That’s great. For the folks who may not know what LinkedIn is, LinkedIn is an Internet clearing house is probably the wrong word.

Brett: It’s like Facebook for business, I would say.

Benjamin: Exactly. Facebook for business.

Brett: It’s mainly just a way to get in front of people quickly, people know who you’re dealing with.

Benjamin: The Maritime Executive Group that you put together isn’t just for subscribers of Maritime Executive Magazine. How many people do you have in the group now?

Brett: Close to 12,000.

Benjamin: Amazing!

Brett: I haven’t checked in a few weeks, but we get on an average of about 30 a day showing up, sometimes more, sometimes up to about 50. When we published an article about LinkedIn and we got a big spike, but usually, it’s about 30 on average. It’s been just slow and steady for the last four years.

Benjamin: Are these US readers or are these international?

Brett: More and more foreign. In the old days, back in 2007-2008.

Benjamin: In social media, that is the old days, isn’t it?

Brett: Yes. Being that America is pretty much always companies, American companies, whether Facebook and LinkedIn, Twitter first. Now I see it picking up a lot of steam in Europe. Asia is still a little more reluctant and the Middle East, but they’re on there, there’s a lot of people. We ran into a problem with social media in the Far East because they don’t allow Facebook, that’s one. Twitter, with the recent events in Yemen and Egypt, a lot of these countries are cracking down on Twitter feeds, but LinkedIn is still going strong.

Benjamin: That’s great. Have you found, because I know that Maritime Executive has its own Twitter account, would you say that your LinkedIn group is probably one of the more powerful maritime social media groups out there? I mean, with 12,000 people, it’s pretty influential.

Brett: There’s two top ones - there’s the Maritime Group, which is set up by a guy named Gapare. It’s a myriad of pleasure craft and commercials because he comes from a yachting background. He started a few months before I started, so he’s always...it’s funny, we both kind of grow organically the same way. He’s always about 500 to 12,000 ahead of us, and it’s the same reasons. We’re not really soliciting, we just take the people that come in. But he has a lot of yachting and boating articles that opens up a whole

other audience.

Benjamin: Interesting. Now, we were talking a little bit before hand, what would you say is the most interesting or controversial topic? It's not just a network of people, but people can post topics, questions, stories, anything kind of maritime-related. But what would you say is the most viral thing that you've got on the group?

Brett: There are two that are hot - one is the Jones Act. Anytime you mention the word Jones Act, everybody's got an opinion. Good, bad, indifference, everybody likes to chime in on that. A gentleman named Lance Lemcool from Horizon Shipbuilding, a US shipyard, posted that we should end the Jones Act. So that was very ironic to have somebody like that small shipyard in the Gulf of Mexico posting that. You can only imagine the response that came out of that. Another recent one that's been going viral, the last time I checked he had about 400 comments, but the recent one that's got over a hundred comments I just posted a week or so ago, has to do with shooting pirates. A lot of mariners and even ship owners would like to shoot these pirates, just kill them. Other people have said, "That's not right. Human rights are more involved in this than the pirates." So that's gone very viral.

Benjamin: But it's certainly a forum to post the debate and then for people to weigh in one way or another.

Brett: Definitely, and you get all walks of life. The royalty of shipping down to the people sailing ,actually dealing with these issues.

Benjamin: That's great. So you found that social media has been good for you, how would you say social media as being embraced by the entire maritime sector?

Brett: The older generation, they're skeptical about it, just like online banking and everything else. A lot of magazines are not active on it, it's too transparent for them. It threatens them because that's their whole model. That's their audience, they don't want to reveal. We will get it a different way, like for transparent, you see all these people in trade shows anyway, there's no reason to hide that. The beauty of it is we could show people that don't go to trade shows that read our magazine, that's our target reader. The fleet superintendent in a foreign country, a guy working in Romania, from Germany, or a regional expat in Brazil or a US guy working on a pipeline in Alaska. Those are the kinds of people we want to target, and they spend the most time on social media, whether they're held up in their hotel room or on a cabin of a boat, they've nothing to do with their time other than reach out to their family and then go on these kinds of sites.

Benjamin: Sure. It's good that you've got that breath of the maritime sector from either owner down to able-bodied seamen or deckhand. With 12,000 and growing, you'd certainly got a corner on the social media market. Brett, I want to thank you very much for spending some time with us. I'll include the link in the show notes so people want to check out the Maritime Executive Group on LinkedIn, they can join LinkedIn and take a look at that.

Brett: I appreciate that, thanks again.

Benjamin: Thanks again.

And we're back after a short interview with Brett Keill and the Maritime Executive Group. It's interesting that his particular group, Admiral, on LinkedIn, he's got 12,000 members that either are

what we call lurking or listening and watching or contributing. He said the most discussed topic was the Jones Act. But, I don't think social media and shipping is going to go away. What are your thoughts? Do you think you'll see more shipping companies entering the social media world?

Admiral Watson: I think that's occurring across the world in general. So I would be very surprised if the marine industry, the maritime community were to avoid it. It's almost unavoidable, it's the way to get your news, it's the way to be a part of policy making and influencing policy makers. I think it's wonderful that you have 2,000 people come to something like the conference in Connecticut, at that CMA host. But heck, if you got 12,000 people that are involved just with one site there on LinkedIn, that's many, many more people that can enjoy the same sort of access to the same kinds of people, which I think it's what it's all about.

Benjamin: That's interesting. I know that the Seatrade Organization, they do a cruise ship exhibition down in Miami, just recently started a virtual trade show for the cruise industry. So the mega yacht and cruise industry has recognized that perhaps looking at the economy the way it is and travel budgets and things that there are tools available to reach out to customers and constituents and either get opinions or share information and they actually run, I believe, they're now in their second year of a virtual trade show. I would suspect that, as the technology improves, and it does so quickly, that even government outreach or as we're doing here with the podcast, our interaction with the maritime community, will continue to evolve in the social space.

Admiral Watson: I think it definitely will. Certainly, we have so few flag officers, for example, in the US Coast Guard. Other agencies have really, very few people that are spread very, very thin that represent these agencies or executive bodies in industry or in government. They can't be every place all the time, so here's an opportunity to use technology to let people understand that there's this great desire to have a dialog, there's a great desire for us to be seen as people as opposed to buildings or pieces of paper. I think that this is a great way to go about doing it.

Benjamin: That's a good point. As we mentioned in our first podcast, and I'll reiterate here, the podcast, the way that we share information with all of you is not meant to just be Admiral Watson and I having a pleasant conversation amongst ourselves. Certainly, if there's something that you, the listener or the reader or somebody who's out in the maritime community, wants us to discuss or if you've got a question for us, we know sometimes it takes a while to build an audience. But just leave your question or your suggestion in the comment section, and Admiral Watson and I will look at that and we'll see if we can answer it or if we can expand on a particular topic you'd like us to cover.

A lot of things are coming up in the future, I'll be at the Arctic Shipping Summit in Helsinki in April and hope to be able to bring some things back about the environment, in Arctic shipping and the role that Amver can play in Arctic shipping and bring that back. May will bring more shipping and we'll have an Amver Award ceremony in Oslo, Norway, and I'm sure we'll have an opportunity to both interview people and learn what's on the minds of the maritime sector.

Admiral Watson, any changes coming up or travels with you or forums that you maybe participating in?

Admiral Watson: I'll be up in New York for the New York Marine Society in a couple of weeks. I'm actually going up to the Great Lakes this week and looking forward to that, with the Coast Guard Auxiliary and ice breaking, buoy tender up there. Then down the road a little bit, in mid-April, I'll be at the Cruise Lines International Association. I think that's going to be down in Broward County, near Fort Lauderdale. I try to get around and I certainly look forward to doing more podcasts in between.

Benjamin: If any of you are going to be either in Helsinki or Tampa or the Great Lakes or anywhere that Admiral Watson and I will be traveling, we invite you come up and say hello to us. Let us know your thoughts, either in person or in the comments section of the podcast. Reach out to us because that's what we're here for, to share the maritime safety, search and rescue, Amver and Coast Guard story with you. Admiral Watson, if I don't see you on the road or see you before hand, I look forward to connecting with you again, having another discussion. Hopefully, we'll have some input from the field. But in the meantime, we'll talk to you again soon.

Admiral Watson: Okay, Ben. You take care.

Narrator: You have been listening to the Quarterdeck. Learn more about the Amver program at [Amver.com](http://Amver.com). The Quarterdeck theme song is called Botany Bay by the Blaggards, available at [MusicAlley.com](http://MusicAlley.com) or follow the link in our show notes.