

Continuing Professional Development Certificate

Unmanned Ships and their International Regulation

Date: Wednesday 29 March 2017

Time: 1.15pm - 2.00pm

Speaker: Robert Veal, Research Fellow, Tutor in Law, Institute of Maritime Law, University of Southampton

In this IIL lecture Robert Veal outlined the purposes of this lecture were firstly, to understand how unmanned ships will integrate into the existing international regulatory framework for shipping; and secondly, to the extent that unmanned ships fall within the framework, to consider the extent to which they can comply with its obligations. Robert noted that unmanned craft were now more commonplace than ever in our seas and the prospect of full-sized unmanned ships was now a realistic prospect. He explained that the existing IMO regulatory framework applied largely to “ships” and thus consideration must be given as to whether unmanned craft were, indeed, “ships” as defined internationally. Furthermore, if unmanned ships fell within the framework we must consider the basic state obligations in respect of flag ships, especially as regards to safety of life at sea, collision avoidance and crewing requirements. Robert also briefly covered whether the manning requirements in SOLAS serve to render unmanned operations illegal and whether unmanned ships can comply with the COLREGS, especially look out requirements. Finally he discussed the training requirements for a new generation of shore-side ship controllers.

By the end of this lecture members would have gained an insight into:

- Whether unmanned ships constitute “ships” so as to fall within the current regulatory framework
- The extent to which unmanned ships can comply with the requirements of the existing framework
- What changes need to be made to the existing legal framework to integrate unmanned ships and how can this be best achieved.



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