RICHARD MONTADO

Richard Montado, Maritime Administrator at the Gibraltar Maritime Administration (GMA), holds the diverse role of managing and ensuring maritime standards are kept within the international legal framework, whilst driving the commercial aspects of the registry.

What are your main responsibilities as Maritime Administrator at the GMA?

The Maritime Administrator heads the GMA, a government department within HM Government of Gibraltar. I oversee all technical, administrative and financial aspects of the organisation.

The GMA is primarily a regulator, ensuring that international maritime standards are being maintained, enforcing this whenever necessary. It also has a commercial role with its two registries and is in competition with other international registries.

Under the authority of the UK Maritime & Coastguard Agency (with whom we have an MoU) as well as HM Government of Gibraltar, the GMA has three roles under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), namely as a Flag State, Port State and Coastal State agency on behalf of the UK. The core functions of the GMA are in respect of maritime safety, ship security, environmental protection, and the facilitation of international trade. For local applications, some of the above functions are carried out in conjunction with the Gibraltar Port Authority.

How has your experience prepared you for your role?

The role of Maritime Administrator was traditionally taken up by a former marine surveyor in previous years, and had a predominantly technical role.

Over the last ten years, it has evolved into a more managerial position, with a greater demand on interpretation of international law and marketing. I have been involved with maritime and environmental matters for more than eighteen years, including a secondment at the UK Maritime & Coastguard Agency and academic qualifications from the IMO’s World Maritime University in Sweden.

Over the years, I have accrued a knowledge and experience in public international law matters as well as the eccentricities of management in a public sector environment.

Please describe the benefits of vessel registration in Gibraltar.

Gibraltar is a British registry that is “white-listed” worldwide, which means that our fleet has an excellent technical reputation, leading to fewer delays, with additional protection for mortgage lenders. Gibraltar is also outside the EU Customs Union and VAT is not applicable, leading to an attractive financial package.

The UK (British) flag is the eighth-largest in the world by tonnage. Gibraltar is a medium-sized social standards of foreign-flagged ships engaging within our jurisdiction. The GMA acts as the UK representative in this respect and we inspect vessels on a daily basis in what is one of the world’s busiest anchorage ports.

What are the main challenges of the GMA?

Our vision is to have Gibraltar as a “centre of maritime excellence”. In order to do this, we are putting in place facilities and regulatory frameworks that allow the best fleet technical performance but business friendly and accessible at the same time.

Finding the balance between upholding higher-than-required standards with continuing fleet growth is our main challenge. We do not want to be the most prestigious small registry in the world. Listening to our current and future clients is the key; we have a personal engagement with ship owners and other stakeholders.

How do you see “Brexit” affecting Gibraltar?

We do not know what the impact will be in the future. I can say that it is “business as usual” for the time being. Should the final “Brexit” package result in the Gibraltar Ship Registry losing its EU status, then we will have to adjust our package accordingly.

I can confirm that we are looking to diversify our portfolio anyway and exploring the possibility of a presence in other markets such as the Far East and North America.

What role does the GMA play in protecting the interests of seafarers?

The GMA acts as the UK representative in this respect and we inspect vessels on a daily basis in what is one of the world’s busiest anchorage ports.

Further afield, we have an excellent relationship with international seafarers’ trade unions and are a committed party to the Maritime Labour Convention; we have assisted with the repatriation and payment of crew on our ships. On the domestic side, we are proactive in managing our local cadet training programmes and other marine qualifications.

What is your memorable shipping experience and favourite ship?

I come from an administrative / legislative background, nevertheless, I have had a number of memorable experiences. Probably the highlight of which is attending IMO sessions as part of the UK delegation.

It was a great honour to represent Gibraltar at such a level, meeting contemporaries from around the world, who share the same passion for the shipping industry and have the influence to change international policy in this regard.

I have seen and registered many ships over the last eighteen years. I will never forget the sight of the “Red Seagull”, a VLCC that was registered in Gibraltar many years back. With a deadweight of more than 400,000, she was certainly noticeable.