

Forum

‘Conflicts in Inshore Waters’

from Dag Pike

In response to Commander Booth’s paper, ‘Conflicts in Inshore Waters’,¹ the approach taken is very misleading. The assessment he makes suggests that it is the growth in leisure traffic which is causing the current risk situation and there is a strong inference that the leisure traffic needs to be regulated and controlled.

What Commander Booth completely ignores in his assessment is the way in which commercial traffic has expanded in size to the maximum which the approach channels can accommodate. He suggests that leisure craft should keep out of the way of commercial shipping because that shipping cannot manoeuvre adequately in the narrow channels. Surely, if commercial ships are operating to such narrow limits where they cannot take avoiding action according to the Rule of the Road, then this is the problem which should be tackled.

To complain that leisure traffic is interfering with the freedom of commercial traffic when the commercial traffic is reducing its safety margins to very narrow and perhaps unacceptable limits, is getting things out of perspective. Commander Booth should come down from his ivory tower and take a much closer look at the risks commercial traffic is taking in passing through the narrow or shallow waters under his control, rather than conveniently laying the blame at the doorstep of the leisure boats. The leisure boats certainly don’t offer the same risk of environmental damage or pollution as does some commercial shipping.

If Commander Booth is really concerned about safety, how about restricting the size or upgrading the manoeuvrability of commercial vessels which use his congested waters? He talks about a fail-safe domain, and perhaps he should be suggesting that the real risks lie with the commercial vessels which have reduced their safety margins, and not with the leisure craft which might impede them.

REFERENCE

- ¹ Booth, P. S. (1994). Conflicts in inshore waters. *This Journal*, 47, 208.