

Panama Independence Day

Panama Ship Registry: Celebrating 100 years of maritime tradition and evolution

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On behalf of the government of the Republic of Panama, I would like to extend our warmest congratulations to all Panamanian citizens living in Japan on the occasion of the 114th

Anniversary of our Independence.

I would also like to express our greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as to the noble and friendly people of Japan.

On this memorable occasion, I would like to make some remarks about the evolution of the Panama Ship Registry in the past 100 years.

On Dec. 15, 1917, the government of Panama passed Law 63, creating the Panama Ship Registry, that is, 14 years after Panama became an independent nation in 1903.



First transit of Japanese Neo Panamax vessel
PANAMA CANAL AUTHORITY

Ten years later, in 1927, the government enacted Law 32, creating the Panama company system, which came to complement the ship registry, by providing a framework under which shipping companies would be able to enjoy a flexible management with reasonable corporate tax rates.

These shipping and corporate legal structures were consolidated over the years, and gradually attracted the interest of North American and European companies.

Since the registration of the first foreign vessel, the Belen Quesada, transferred from the Canadian registry in 1919, the Panama Ship Registry grew to become the largest registry in the world in 1993 with 5,564 vessels. Nowadays, and after 24 years, Panama continues to be the No. 1 registry, with a fleet of more than 8,100 ships. How did Panama, a small nation, manage to become the largest registry?

It was a combination of a favorable and flexible company structure, as well as the responsible commitment of the government of Panama to incorporate international maritime standards, adopting and implementing important conventions related to the safety and security of vessels at sea established by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) since Panama became a member in 1958.

In this connection, Panama ratified several major conventions, including the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea in 1974, the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships in 1981, the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers in 1992, the International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage in 1992, the International Conven-

tion on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage in 2001, the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code in 2004, the Maritime Labour Convention in 2009, the Ballast Water Management Convention and Hong Kong Convention last year, among others, showing Panama's leadership at the IMO, which eventually appointed the country to Category A of the organization.

In view of evolving IMO Conventions, the Panama Ship Registry created the SEGUMAR office in New York in 1977 to respond to shipowners with regard to the issuance of all technical certificates. Later, in 2007, the Panama Ship Registry established SEGUMAR Panama, followed by SEGUMAR Tokyo and Piraeus (Greece) in 2010, SEGUMAR Seoul (South Korea) and Singapore in 2012, SEGUMAR Busan (South Korea) in 2014, SEGUMAR Istanbul (Turkey) and Imabari (Ehime Prefecture) in 2015, and SEGUMAR Manila, Dubai and London in 2017.

In addition, in 1998, the government of Panama created the Panama Maritime Authority to unify all maritime competences, developing a greater level of coordination to better manage the maritime sector as well as the increasingly larger Panama fleet.

Since then, the Panama Maritime Authority has obtained certification ISO 9001:2000, in 2008 and submitted itself to voluntary IMO audit, which determined that the Panama Ship Registry has complied with international conventions and codes. Moreover, in 2011, Panama became part of the White List of Paris MOU, in view of the reduction of vessels' detention and the commitment of Panama to eliminate substandard vessels from the registry.

It is also important to point out that the

Panama Ship Registry became a Cooperating Member of the Tokyo MOU, establishing closer contacts and communication with port authorities in the Asia region.

As the Panama Ship Registry marks its 100th anniversary, the Panama Maritime Authority is engaged in the digitization of maritime services to reduce costs and deliver those services faster.

In this connection, we created the System of Automated Application for Seafarers in 2015, and from 2016, all SEGUMAR offices have started to issue several electronic certificates, completing the process by 2018, when all SEGUMAR certificates will be issued electronically.

We believe that all these improvements are very much appreciated by Japanese shipowners, who, throughout the years, have become the No. 1 users of the Panama flag. The Panama Maritime Authority is also very honored to have Japanese shipowners as its best customers in the world.

To celebrate the 100 years of the Panama Ship Registry, and as a token of gratitude to the Japanese shipping community, the administrator of the Panama Maritime Authority held two receptions in Tokyo and Imabari in May this year, as well as an international conference in Panama City in early October, jointly with the IMO.

Likewise, in July, the Embassy of Panama in Japan and Consulate General of Panama in Kobe organized a seminar and cocktail party in the city of Kobe to jointly celebrate 100 years of the Panama Ship Registry and the 150th anniversary of the Port of Kobe.

To close this celebration, the Embassy of Panama in Japan and the Consulate General of Panama in Tokyo will hold a

Panama Maritime Golf Tournament in November with the participation of Japan's major shipping companies.

As we mark 100 years serving global maritime trade, we wish to renew our com-

mitment to continue working closely with the Japanese shipping community, as well as with the Japanese government to maintain safety and security on the seven seas, guaranteeing total freedom of navigation.

Panama continues to be the No. 1 registry, with a fleet of more than 8,100 ships.

AMBASSADOR OF PANAMA
RITTER N. DIAZ

Congratulations
on the 114th Anniversary of
the Independence of
the Republic of Panama

