
News



Commander Paul Thorne, USCG chief of foreign vessel and offshore activities (left), presents the Qualship 21 award to Angelo Mouzouropoulos.

Lloyd's List**Belize safety drive reaps reward from USCG**

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BELIZE has been recognised as a "Qualship 21" flag state by the US Coast Guard, simultaneously removing itself from the targeted list for port state control in the US, writes Rajesh Joshi in New York.

Commander Paul Thorne, the USCG's chief of foreign vessel and offshore activities, described this turnround as "unprecedented" as he awarded Belize the citation at a ceremony in Washington.

Angelo Mouzouropoulos, director-general of the International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize, or Immarbe, which runs the administration, said Belize hoped to follow this achievement by getting on to the white lists compiled by the Paris and Tokyo Memoranda of Understanding on port state control by 2008.

Belize's first goal of leaving the so-called US black list was achieved after the flag state did not incur any detentions in the US during 2003, 2004 and 2005. Its US Coast Guard three-year rolling detention ratio fell from 23.08% in 2001 to 0% in 2005.

Belize was among only nine of 168 flag states worldwide holding the USCG qualification and the only one in Central America, Mr Mouzouropoulos said. He described the feat as a "team effort" by Immarbe officials worldwide, including its 182 general safety inspectors, together with the commitment and support of the national government.

Qualship 21 stands for Quality Shipping for the 21st Century. Inspired by the Dutch Green Award, the US programme promises qualified participants name recognition as well as reduced port state control inspection frequency.

The cut-off for inclusion in Qualship 21 is a three-year running detention rate of 1% or less, based on a minimum of 10 US arrivals a year. Fewer than 10% of all foreign-flagged ships calling in the US have earned recognition, Cmdr Thorne said.

One of the eligibility requirements for a ship to become a Qualship is for its flag state also to meet eligibility requirements.

Cmdr Thorne said he had been keeping an eye on Belize since he assumed his position in 2004 because Mr Mouzouropoulos had met his predecessor and made promises about how the flag state would not only remove itself from the "targeted list" — entities that receive special inspection attention for having above-average rolling detentions — but also make the Qualship list.

Performance improved through 2004 and 2005 and he was not surprised at the computations, he said. "This is a remarkable achievement worthy of recognition," he added.