

Mostaganem Port Management & Harbour Master Office Staff

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Abstract: *Port efficiency [1 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development Port Management Series. Port Management Case Studies, Volume 1., 20 11 - 2013 Cycle of the Train For Trade Port Training Programme English-speaking Network.] is important for trade facilitation because ports are the main entry and exit points for international trade. In volume terms, nearly 80 per cent of world merchandise transits by sea. For many developing countries, this figure surpasses 90 per cent. Port efficiency therefore has a direct impact on the ability of a country to participate in international trade. It follows that ports serving developing countries must operate efficiently for them to integrate into the world economy effectively. As ports are among the oldest forms of transport infrastructure which have remained in continuous use, and have been a vital part in the social and economic growth of regions, it is necessary to consider, at least briefly, the operational development of one of the Algerian ports in order to understand many of their management facets.*

Keywords: Mostaganem port, Mostaganem port management, The Harbour Master's Office, Staff Members, port- authority & shipping-companies: role and communication process.

1. Introduction

Maritime transport is a rapidly changing industry and, since the Second World War. The purpose of this section is to give a complete picture of the ports industry so that those involved with ports can see their own specific field of interest in perspective and understand how the basic model of the port operates within the maritime transport industry. Seaports are areas where there are facilities for berthing or anchoring ships and where there is the equipment for the transfer of goods from ship to shore or ship to ship. To use more modern jargon, it is a ship/shore interface or a maritime intermodal interface. The aim of this article is to give a universal presentation of the essential elements of ports, covering their administration, management, economics and operation. All worlds' ports are engaged in ensuring Safe Berth. This term in legal definition means: "a berth which, during the relevant period of time, the ship can reach, remain at and depart from without, in the absence of some abnormal occurrence, being exposed to danger which cannot be avoided by good navigation and seamanship"¹. This article exposes Mostaganem port process as a model.

2. Mostaganem Port

Mostaganem port is located in the Gulf of Arzew wit "Latitude" of 35°-56° North and Longitude of 00°- 05° East. Mostaganem port originally called "Mersea El Ghaneim" by the pirates stretched along a narrow beach with rocks and dangers for navigation between the tip of Salamander and that of Kharouba. Between 1848- 1881, thanks to the economic expansion of the region, the first quayside was established in 1848 and its length was later extended from 80 meters to reach 325 meters long in 1881. In 1882, the first development of the port became real; it was directed and declared for use in 1885

Other massive efforts were realized between 1890- 1904 which gave birth to the first basin. In 1941, thanks to the south/west wharf construction another 430 meters of quay were realized by the late 1950s and it gave birth to the second basin. Right after independence, faced with the imperatives of development the port of Mostaganem saw traffic grow and was extended according to the needs of the region. Today, the creation of a third pool has become an absolute necessity for the harbour, the city and its hinterland.

3. Mostaganem Port Management

Mostaganem port is a commercial harbour that is centrally under the control of the Ministry of Transport at the top, and locally under the Direction of Transport and the EPM: Enterprise Portuaire de Mostaganem at the level of the Wilaya of Mostaganem. Previously, the port personnel used to rely officially on Arabic and French; but because managing certain port- activities imply the integration of a global common language in the communicative process; it has also necessitated the formation of qualified and competent port- managers and mastery of English at the National High Maritime College, Bousmail- Tipaza, Algeria: ENESM². The port has lately? In conformity with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), agreed that the staff should communicate in English; henceforth, our role is to find the activities that require such a use, then who among the staff is supposed to use English, and finally how this lingua- franca is being used by the stakeholders at the workplace.

Mostaganem port is commonly used for loading and unloading all sorts of cargo, ranging from provisions to pipelines. Like most ports in Algeria, this harbour is being shared by large transport vessels and fishing boats alike. Apparently, when visiting vessels arrive at Mostaganem

¹PROFESSOR PATRICK M. ALDERTON. Port Management and Operations. M.Phil., Extra Master, Dip. Maths, M.C.I.T. Third Edition, informa London: 2008, 29.

² Ecole Nationale Supérieure Maritime, Bousmail, Tipaza- Algeria, 2010.

port, different members of different functions, responsibilities and activities have to attend the port-management process and the berthing operation to control and check how the tasks are accomplished. The port-managers to whom the communicative process is confined concerns the Harbour's Master, Head of Navigation and Security Department, the Port - officers, the Port-controllers, the Pilots and the Custom- officers whereas the Port- police are no longer required to interact in English despite their presence for inspection. Dealing with this, it is essential to provide an overview first of both the Harbour Master's Office and the jobs assigned to each member concerned with communicating in English.

4. The Harbour Master's Office

Harbour Master's Office is the only department among all the other departments in the whole port company to use English systematically in their communications with the different foreign- comers and rely on its use at about 100%. It is actually the sole tool to facilitate maritime interaction, trade and mainly to avoid any type of ambiguity or misunderstanding so that to ensure first and foremost safety of life at sea (i.e. works, equipment and environment...). The Harbour Master's Office is the principal operative body in the EPM which includes two main stations as indicated in the "organization chart". There is first, the Pilot's and Mooring Station and the Towing Station, then the Security and Navigation Department which is composed of: Three units, sector 1, sector 2, and the Movement Office.

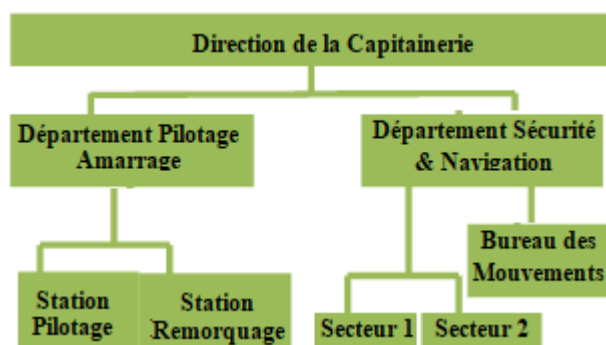


Chart 10: The Harbour Master's Office Organization Chart, Mostaganem Port

Seventy members work in the EPM but only the Master, the Head of Navigation and Security Department, the port-officers, the port- controllers and pilots are concerned with using maritime English. Though not being members of the Harbour Master's Office, other members such as stevedores and shipping or maritime agents need to communicate in English as they are involved in the communicative process, but they in fact do not as will be explained later.

First, the Master's jobs consist mainly of preparing periodic activity- reports and annual budget, coordinating activities of harbour police staff, issuing instructions authorizing departmental actions and evaluating work program of captain and of ships' crew. Secondly, the Head of Navigation and Security Department is engaged in providing assistance to the Harbour's Master in the safe and efficient management of harbour master operations. He helps in manning, controlling, ensuring a clean environment,

inspecting and reporting issues to the Harbour's Master. This is clearly provided about ship's movement in Article 66 which stipulates that:

"When receiving foreign ships the Harbour Master or his second assistant should be present on the vessels' bridge."³

Thirdly, the port- officers are responsible to the Master for the efficient operation and maintenance of the communication equipment and keep of a 24 hours radio watch. There are about four members and all are males. Four others are preparing their BA at ENESM. A large number of the radio- officers' watch- keeping duties are taken up with transmitting and receiving radio messages through the VHF radio which allows both participants to interact verbally. They communicate through this digital selective channel with the ship's masters to facilitate their berthing and anchoring operations in the local port. Their chief role includes directing and guiding speed of ships through radio, providing assistance, managing technical instruments and issuing reports. Article 78 clarifies well the tasks of this category.

"Regulating ship's movement navigating near any states' maritime areas in ports is assured by the port-officer chosen by the port-authority. In this regard, the port-officer is responsible to regulate the entrance, the staying and the leaving of ships depending on the program proposed by the commission of placement"⁴.

Fourthly, regarded as the port- officers' assistants, port-controllers assure under their managers' authority the application of general and particular rules of exploitation and security, the safety and prevention of any work accidents, the rational use of storage as well as the conversation of the environment.

As to the fifth members, pilots are qualified navigators who are taken on board a ship, usually at the entrance to a port. They therefore use their local knowledge to sail the vessel into the harbour.

The stevedores⁵, the sixth category, are responsible for guarding and preserving goods during which ship's are authorized to stay in the port until delivery as stated in Article 22⁶. In addition, they should ensure its reception and recognition.

When a ship arrives at a port, arrangements have to be made to load and unload cargo. The berth has to be arranged with the local harbour's master so that any tugs needed are booked and even payment for these services need to be made. Like in all ports, at Mostaganem port, there are maritime agents who are considered as foreign ship-

³ Algeria, Convention Et Accords Internationaux- Lois Et Décrets, Arrêtés, Décisions, Avis, Communications Et Annonces, Journal Officiel De L a RADP: République Algérienne Démocratique Et Populaire, N° 01 Dimanche 22 Chaoual 1422, 41^é Année correspondant au 6 Janvier 2002, 10.

⁴ Op cit, 11.

⁵ Janson de Saily Lycée, Dictionnaire Gruss de Marine, Editions Maritimes et d'Outres- mer, 1978, 286.

⁶ The Official Newspaper of El Moujahid, 2002, 5.

master's representatives, those generally coming to berth in the port. The maritime agents are then supposed to reserve for berthing schedule from the Harbour Master's Office and have to attend a daily berthing committee so that to get a berthing request or an affectation place for their arriving ships. They usually communicate with the captain and crew about their problems and inquiries: hospital, food, telephone, restaurant, tourism in the town, paying the authority for maneuvering, tugs, boats, ... etc. their aim is to contribute in providing good and appropriate conditions. In Mostaganem there 52 maritime agents and they are generally employed by shipping- companies operating outside the port-company.

The shipping- companies are generally interested in investing in facilities to encourage trade. They also try to ensure that visiting ships are loaded or unloaded as quickly as possible whenever they come into a port. Besides, they check whether these ships are maintained well and regularly surveyed. In doing so, they appoint an agent are assigned such tasks because they possess the skills to ensure that the ship is handled and can get on its way as quickly as possible. Keeping the shipping company about the vessel's arrival at least forty hours before so that the shifting- order is made, signed and sent to allow the ship berth and have an effective place. This is clearly explained in Article 73:

"All ship's owners, shipping- agents or characters must communicate to the port- authority, at least, 48 hours before their port's arrival for from the last port which is situated of about 24 hours".



Chart 11: The Shipping- company & the Port- authority

Being a mediator between all parties as shown in the above diagram, the maritime- agent is supposed to inquire from Mostaganem Port Control staff about the vessel's arrival ETA He should indicate:

- 1) The vessel's name, its flag state, the date and hour of arrival ETA and the forecastle staying period
- 2) The ship's principal characteristics, notably, the tonnage, length, width and the maximum draft at the port's arrival
- 3) The nature of any dangerous cargo
- 4) Sending a rectification message in case the information provided earlier is altered.

In this case, for the success of all those stated activities certain communicative requirements including linguistic competences are needed from the part of all the above mentioned members through the application of IMO code generally referred to as IMO SMCP to undertake the verbal interactive exchanges via radio- communication. As navigational and safety communication from ship to ship, from ship to shore and vice and versa and on board ship have to be precise and unambiguous, there has been an

urgent priority to standardize the language used under the name of maritime English. This is of particular importance in the light of the increasing number of internationally trading vessels with crews speaking many different languages. The SMCP is therefore a special code used all over the world's harbours by which all seafarers are familiar and united with such a specific language to communicate easily and interact perfectly trying simultaneously to avoid risky situations. The IMO has imposed this workable guide that is based on a certain specific vocabulary, sentence-structure including ready- made dialogues and the application of some instructions for each case encountered in a real- life situation. This is greatly embodied in the special alphabet, digits, technical terms and even the message-makers used (see chapter 3). In Mostaganem Harbour Master's Office, both spoken and written modes rely on the use of English as will be displayed later in the recorded conversation and in maintenance repairs and incident reports.

With regard to the verbal exchanges on the bridge, the Harbour Master's Office staff has to be familiar with the IMO SMCP especially the pilot who is supposed to use them in radio- communications. This will be unable the master and the officer in charge of the navigational watch to better understand the communications and their intent. At Mostaganem port, communication by VHF or other dedicated means are established as soon as possible to enable the master to confirm the ship's ETA with the Pilot's Station to furnish relevant information regarding pilot boarding. The initial ETA message to the Pilot Station should include all the information required by local regulations⁷, including:

- 1) Ship's name, call sign, ship's agent;
- 2) Ship's characteristics: length, beam, draught, air draught if relevant, speed, thruster(s);
- 3) Date and time expected at the pilot boarding point;
- 4) Destination, berth (if required, side alongside);
- 5) Other relevant requirements and information.

Though they are also important members in organizing and managing some port operations as well as in facilitating the communicative process, the stevedores and maritime- agents are unfortunately not familiar with the SMCP though they have to use and speak English with those who berth in the port. But as claimed by the staff, it is not a perfect use but just an accumulation of some terms or expressions learnt simply from the other members.

It is noteworthy that all the staff at the Harbour Master Office has to use and master this medium; however, its right acquisition and best application in a real life situation are ensured by training only. Training is necessary so that maritime companies⁸ have the qualified personnel they need for their continuance and progress in an increasingly competitive and global environment. Offering opportunities for training Mostaganem staff to improve English language

⁷ International Maritime Organization. Recommendations on Training and Certification and on Operational Procedures for Maritime Pilots other than Deep-Sea Pilots. Resolution A.960: 23rd Session. Adopted 5 December 2003 (Agenda item 17), A 23/Res.960 5 March 2004.

⁸ The International Safety Management Code. IMO Assembly Resolution A.741(18) - 1993

competence is considered, almost unanimously, as one of the issues of greatest importance for the flourishing professional future of individuals and the development of the country.

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5. Conclusion

Maritime transport⁹ has become an increasingly important element in the organization and reconstructing of the globalizing economy. It is influenced by the complex and dynamic conditions of the world's globalized mechanism. It is also a skilled job at all levels, from master to ratings and it demands that management of maritime companies should take into consideration such dynamic and continuous changing factors, and focus on solving any communicative troubles. This undoubtedly affects productivity, work activity, crew cohesion and personal or professional skills that seafarers must possess in order to carry out the various functions for which they are certificated.

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