

## VSTEP seals South American simulator deal

Simulator manufacturer VSTEP has agreed a distribution and training partnership with training provider Centro de Investigación y Entrenamiento Marítimo y Fluvial (CIEMF) of Buenos Aires.

In 2010 CIEMF became the first customer in Latin America to implement the company's

Nautis maritime simulation software on its full mission bridge simulator. The Servicio Integral de Prácticos (SIPSA) subsidiary has become VSTEP's first Latin American training partner, using its high-end simulator to train maritime professionals across Latin America.

VSTEP said it was continuing to expand and consolidate its position in Latin America. It has also grown its international sales network by opening offices in the USA and the UK and is forging partnerships across Europe, Latin America, North America and South East Asia.

# Special limits to liberate Singaporean seafaring

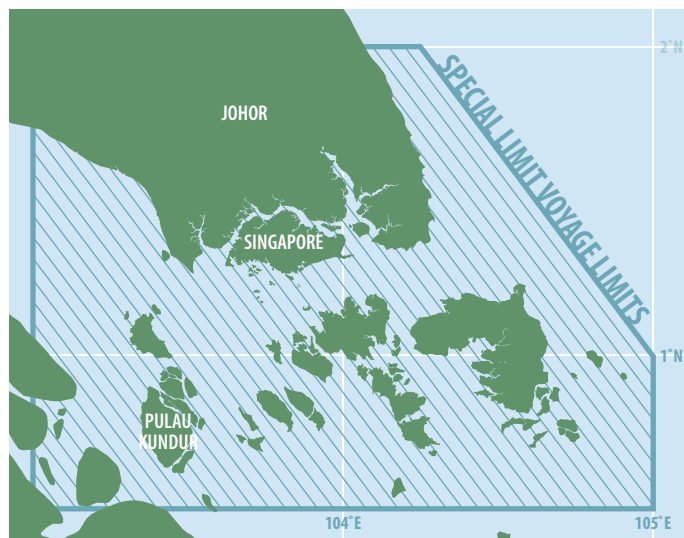
A new programme will offer Singaporean school leavers the chance to train as mates and eventually masters on locally operated craft, including bunker tankers and passenger vessels.

The Certificate of Competency (Special Limits) programme has been launched by the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) in collaboration with the National Trades Union Congress' (NTUC), the Employment and Employability Institute (e2i) and the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA).

"The CoC (Special Limits) allows seafarers the flexibility of serving shorter voyages while it addresses the industry's need for more Singaporeans and permanent residents (PRs) to join the harbour craft industry," said MPA chief executive Lam Yi Young.

The initiative tackles two issues. The Singapore government is anxious to increase the pool of seagoing expertise among its citizens and PRs, as few Singaporeans serve on the country's large national-flag deep-sea fleet. It hopes this programme will appeal to youngsters who want to work at sea but do not want to spend long periods away from home.

There has also been a problem retaining better qualified Indonesian senior officers who historically have operated the bulk of the Singapore-based bunker tanker fleet. Many of these officers have been lured away by the higher wages on the deep-sea international commercial fleet.



▲ The Certificate of Competency (Special Limits) programme will encourage Singaporean seafarers to work in the local maritime industry [ image: MPA ]

The new programme will help potential recruits secure placements with potential employers before they start training. The MPA says the 21-month training programme offers wide theory and practical exposure and will cover hands-on training for practical seamanship, boat-handling and survival techniques. It is organised into three phases: pre-sea induction; on-the-job training; and an exam preparatory course.

The aim of the programme, developed in close consultation with the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA) and the Singapore Maritime Officers' Union, is to train 60 recruits in the next two years.

The Singapore Maritime Academy will be the inaugural training provider, with the first intake due this month. Recruit-

ment began in February, with career briefings followed by interviews for shortlisted candidates. The MPA said most applicants were male, but a few females had attended the briefings.

Trainees start as deck cadets on board vessels operating within port limits. After obtaining the CoC (Special Limits) certificate, they can work on board bunker tankers as chief mate (special limits). After 24-36 months of sea time and with continued good performance, a chief mate can attend further upgrading courses and take examinations to qualify as master (special limits).

The MPA, e2i, WDA and SSA's affiliated bunkering companies will contribute more than S\$2.3M (US\$1.8M) to cover S\$19,000/trainee course fees and provide allowances for the candidates.

## Age is no barrier for UK cadets

UK training college Warsash Maritime Academy (WMA) says there has been an increase in interest in the sea as a career among older potential recruits.

WMA, part of Southampton Solent University, reported that a recent open day attracted a record 750 visitors, with attendees from as far afield as Switzerland and Bermuda.

"Interestingly, 10% of the candidates were aged 30 or over, proving that this is not just a career choice for school and college leavers," a spokesman told SASI. He said WMA already had a number of cadets in their thirties going through training. "Going to sea is now a realistic career change option," he said.

WMA director and dean John Millican said this year's turnout "goes to demonstrate how attractive the sponsorship package is to aspiring cadets and that a career at sea is an increasingly popular choice for young people today."

However, this year's UK recruiting programme has a backdrop of uncertainty about future government financial support through the Support for Maritime Training (SMarT) scheme (see SASI February 2011, p15). Andrew Linington, spokesman for Anglo-Dutch seafarer's union Nautilus, said interest in a career at sea appeared to be "remarkably high" and that open days around the UK nautical colleges had all seen similarly large turnouts.

He said those joining the industry this year should be assured of being able to complete their studies to STCW-level. But he warned that a question mark hung over future years. The union expects to talk to UK shipping minister Mike Penning soon as part of the government review of maritime training funding.