

UNMANNED SHIPS – SOME LEGAL ISSUES

A TALK BY TOM BIRCH REYNARDSON

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It is likely that before the end of this decade ships similar to the above image will be launched on the high seas. Companies such as Rolls Royce in the UK are developing the technology and building ships which they intend to be used for commercial purposes. In Norway trials are taking place in the fjords.

The regulatory regime which currently exists was designed for ships with the typical compliment of Master and crew on board. In the future, ships may increasingly have no sailors on board. The sailors may be in comfortable high tech units controlling the ships from shore.

Tom Birch Reynardson is a London solicitor with Birch Reynardson & Co and is the Chairman of the CMI International Working Group on Unmanned Ships. The International Working Group has been working with IMO in order to consider how the existing regime will have to be adapted to include unmanned ships.

This talk will examine some of the issues which might arise in relation to unmanned ships and explain how some solutions might be found. Tom will be happy to answer questions on this topic and any other issues which members may wish to raise in relation to the CMI or indeed matters of English law in particular arbitration.