

# The Dutch connection

“People from all over the world are contacting us,” says Erik de Koning, managing director of Hubel Marine, a leading consultancy firm for ship registration and company formation in the Netherlands. “The Dutch people have a long history for doing business internationally. My father started with Panama in the beginning of the 1980s and he is still involved.”

The firm offers comprehensive services in the registration of ships and companies in a host of countries, guiding the applicants from the early stages of cost comparison between the various open registries, to obtaining the registration documents.

“We do consultancy for many registers,” says Mr de Koning. “However, Panama is the largest registry and the favourite with the shipping industry. In the past, users of the Panama Registry were disappointed with its operation, but the new administration is changing its image and is making a lot of efforts to comply with the needs of the maritime industry. That was needed, as

the other registers were moving ahead.”

Mr de Koning says he visits Panama six times a year in order to offer the services he does.

“Otherwise I can’t feel comfortable advising our clients,” he says.

“A shipowner hasn’t got the time for that, therefore we try to solve issues on their behalf.”

For Mr de Koning, it is all about building strong relationships, “sometimes we can do miracles”, he says with a smile looking at a picture of himself standing next to Panamanian president, Martin Torrijos Espino.



Erik de Koning: pleased that the Panama Registry is improving its image

## PMA prepares for voluntary flag state audit

Panama Maritime Authority administrator Ruben Arosemena and the top directors of the Panama Merchant Marine have met with the flag’s recognised surveyors to lay the groundwork for a voluntary flag state audit at the beginning of 2006.

Panama Merchant Marine general director Fernando Solorzano, deputy director Alfonso Castellero and Mr Arosemena met with members of the International Association of Classification Societies and other Panamanian recognised surveyors in January, in a bid to build closer ties with these organisations and to ensure that they are complying with international regulations ahead of next year’s audit.

“We are looking to strengthen the standards of the Panamanian fleet, concentrating our efforts on reducing ship detentions in national and international ports, to prepare ourselves for the voluntary flag state audit that will be approved in the general assembly of the IMO in November 2005 and will come into affect at the start of 2006,” says Mr Arosemena.



Ruben Arosemena (centre) met with top directors of the Panama Merchant Marine and the flag’s recognised surveyors in January, in a bid to build closer ties