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Revised questionnaire aims to boost shipping industry vetting
With the aim of building a comprehensive and efficient tanker vetting standard for the shipping industry, an all-encompassing ship questionnaire originally launched by independent tanker association Intertanko in 1988--known as Questionnaire 88 or "Q88"--was revised in early August to include more technical data which will become publicly available to the industry as of early September, Fritz Heidenreich, President of Q88.com, said Monday in an interview. According to Heidenreich, who assisted Intertanko and its working group in the Q88 revision, a few important aspects in the revision include added tanker information regarding the newly enforced International Maritime Organization security code--known as the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS)--as well as vessel history of major vetting acceptances. Q88.com is expected to be the most informative source and quickest method of gaining certain technical data on tankers which are registered on the Q88 website, www.Q88.com, Heidenreich said.

Speeding up process is foreseen
The revised Q88 form will increase transparency in the tanker market by providing more technical information on tankers than previously available to the industry, Heidenreich said. Vetting questionnaires are typically used to help charterers and shipbrokers in their decision-making processes by providing a list of vessel particulars and specific information about each individual tanker. Various tanker chartering companies have, throughout the years, developed and used vetting questionnaires of their own. Q88 was created with the aim to consolidate most of these company-created questionnaires in order to develop a more efficient, and central database for the industry to use. Heidenreich said Q88.com was a way to help "revolutionize the industry." "We believed that a questionnaire system might have some merit.... Owners can go in [to the website] and speed up the [data flow and ship chartering] process...to minutes, versus hours," Heidenreich said.

Goal is to boost subscriber base
"We are trying to build it into a standard because, frankly, there is no good source of public technical [ship] information out there," said Heidenreich. One of the site's major near-term goals is to expand its subscriber base in order to increase the number of tankers in the Q88 database. Nearly 2,000 tankers have been registered on Q88.com to date, and about 1,200 companies are registered to use the site and to update their ships' data, said Heidenreich. Currently, the subscriber base includes only tankers, and not dry bulk ships. According to a recent statement from Intertanko regarding Q88, some 6,000 Q88's are downloaded from Q88.com per month. Q88.com is owned by Heidenreich Innovations, a shipping information technology company of US-based tanker company Heidmar, Inc. Intertanko has 242 members, whose combined fleet comprises more than 2,160 tankers totalling 160-mil dwt, which is 70% of the world's independent tanker fleet above 10,000dwt. Independent tanker owners operate nearly 80% of the world's tanker fleet.