

Italy moves towards armed guards on ships



D'Amico's 2008-built tanker *Mare Oriens*: Italian-flagged vessels may be allowed armed guards if the decree is converted into law.

Dietmar Hasenpusch

THE Italian government is working alongside opposition parties on a decree to allow Italian-flagged merchant ships to have armed guards on board, Lloyd's List has learned, writes *Julian Macqueen*.

Under Italian law a decree comes into effect immediately and lasts for 60 days, during

which time it has to be converted into law.

Italian shipowners' association Confitarma first raised the issue with the government a year ago. Since then, however, pirate threats to shipping have escalated.

"The theatre [for the pirates] has completely changed and can

no longer be handled by convoys," said Confitarma chairman Paolo d'Amico.

He added that the association has calculated that, on average, there are three Italian-flagged ships a day in the danger zone.

"Practically every Italian shipping company — except ferries

— has been affected [by piracy]," he said.

Mr d'Amico could not say when the decree might be issued.

The Italian move follows similar legal wranglings on the issue in the UK, the Netherlands and Germany. ■

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