January 2002, Israeli forces captured a Tongan-registered general cargo ship in the Red Sea laden with 50 tons of arms. The Israeli authorities claimed that the vessel, Karine A, was on route to Yasser Arafat’s Palestinian Authority. June 2002, French authorities, suspecting cocaine smuggling, seized the Cambodian-registered vessel, Winner. The vessel was on route to Yasser Arafat’s Palestine Authority. From just a handful a few years ago, authorities have caught scores of them trafficking narcotic substances, hauling toxic waste, fishing illegally and operating unsafe. Taking the question into account, is there a relationship between criminal activities and vessel registration? The answer relates to the nature of the regulatory environments present in different flag states. The differing forms and strengths of regulations put in place and enforced by flag states give the shipowner differing levels to which they may put themselves at a distance from the flag state control and self-regulate their operations. This is the differing levels of regulation in which the kind of illegal activity are given their conditions of existence, i.e. the potential for the shipowner to operate as they wish in the absence of effective state power. When a shipowner elects to register their vessel under a specific flag they become located within a particular regulatory environment. Through this act of vessel registration, the shipowner is covered by a number of rights and obligations. Due to the practice of international law concerning ship registration, the flag state is afforded the opportunity to define these rights and duties in any manner they see fit, from the authoritarian to the liberal, and the shipowners may choose which environment they feel is most amenable to vessel operation. Taking the perspective of someone wishing to undertake criminal activity, it is possible to see these registers as enabling device to produce extensive layers of corporate secrecy sacrificing mundane productions, retailers any relationship between them and the vessel, and have no interference from the state concerning the operations of the vessel. Human intention and action being what it is, for those pursuing illegal activity such registers are entirely suited to their ends. Now, it would be incorrect to claim that these vessel registers are entirely suited to criminal activity, nor is it restricted to it. Instead, the open register system enables those wishing to engage in criminal activities with a ready-made system that they can use to their advantage. In essence these opaque structures of vessel ownership, low requirements for the incorporation of offshore business entities, limited registration requirement and the absence of effective monitoring procedures produce an environment which could be attractive to those engaged in illegal activities. However, it could also be seen as a deregulated environment in which the flag state and engage in a range of illegal activities in the absence of directed state control. This system creates the conditions for a range of criminal activity as it does for running a lean effective business within the boundaries of the law. The Israeli authorities attempted to prevent the occurrence of illegal activities conducted by and through vessels under the flag of a country is prone to significant difficulties. The Norwegian government has been targeted by which at-risk vessels may be identified and a variety of legislative and operational actions may be taken to prevent the occurrence of such activity. It is clear that a replacement, filling in for a regulatory system that enables it. Addressing the issue of criminal activity is an onerous task. In terms of drug trafficking, another report notes that “licit drug traffickers use vessels registered under flags that offer a convenient registry”. A Wall Street Journal article from September 2002 assesses the Bolivian flag as follows: “As the fleet of vessels flying Bolivian’s flag has expanded to more than 300 from just a handful a few years ago, authorities have caught scores of them trafficking narcotic substances, hauling toxic waste, fishing illegally and operating unsafe.” This is the existence of “many compliant corporations; register their vessel under multiple dummy incorporation; and self-regulate their operations to effectively hide their identity while engaged in such activities”. THE SIRC-registered vessel, Winner, was charged with drug trafficking, another report notes that “licit drug traffickers use vessels registered under flags that offer a convenient registry”. 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