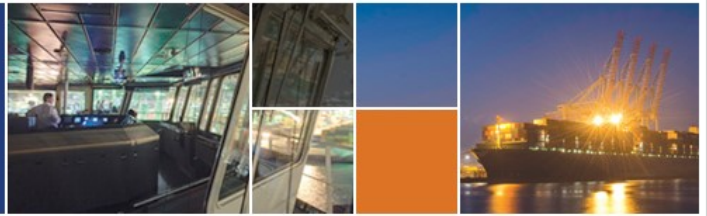




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VENEZUELA: Drugs and Security Concerns

October 2018

Club correspondents Globalpandi of Venezuela have notified the Club of some recent trends in Venezuela. Members are recommended to draw this to the attention of ships trading in this area.

In past Circulars our office has drawn the attention of Members and Clubs about issues affecting the security of crews both on board and ashore, as well as the risks in connection with drug trafficking targeting ships while at Venezuelan waters and ports. Regrettably, two recent events give rise to serious concerns again. Thus, on 8th October 2018, 147.5 kilos of cocaine attached to underwater hull of chemical tanker JOSE PROGRESS, berthed at the port of Jose close to Puerto La Cruz, were found by the National Guard. The ship loaded with some 40,000 tons of methanol was bound for Belgium. It is important to point out that cocaine was found during the underwater inspection, and at the moment 20 crew members are under investigation and the ship detained. Another ship SHI ZI SHAN anchored at Jose area was said to be boarded at late night hour by 4 men who rapidly dominated the crew. Apparently a large amount of money and several electronic equipment were stolen. Unofficial information reveals that these men wore uniforms and introduced themselves as authorities that were going to make an inspection, for which reason the ship gave them the scale. This is certainly a new modus operandi Members and Clubs must be aware of.



Although drugs have been always a source of concerns for ships when calling at Venezuelan ports, it is fair to say that a significant decrease in drugs being placed at ship's rudder or others underwater compartments had been seen in past years; unfortunately, this seems not to be the case anymore and so preventive measures such as underwater inspections (on arrival and departure) and extra-security on board and alongside the ship are highly recommended.

Ashore the situation is not better, exposing crew members to significant risks such as robbery, kidnapping and even murder. Nevertheless, the recent case of the ship SHI ZI SHAN referred to, it is a good example that these risks may also extend to anchorage. Masters should be aware that visits by the authorities do not ordinarily take place at night time, and if this were the case the Master should try to check via VHF radio the legitimacy of the visitors before giving them access.

Members/Clubs are strongly suggested to keep close contact with agents and P&I Correspondents, to make the necessary security arrangements to ensure a safe call, if possible, at any domestic port.

For assistance or further information regarding this topic, please contact the Club or:

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