



VITSAN

MÜMESSİLLİK VE MÜŞAVİRLİK A.Ş.

P & I CLUB CORRESPONDENTS

Subject: Notice regarding the increasing risks of narcotic smuggling and combating narcotics in Turkiye

“CIRCULAR TO ALL P&I CLUBS”

Dear Sirs/Madams,

There are more narcotics and consumption of these narcotics in the whole world and in Turkiye more than ever before. As a result, narcotic smuggling risk in all world and Turkiye has increased in recent years. In response, Turkish authorities have intensified their efforts in counter-narcotic operations. Government officials frequently make public statements through the media, affirming their commitment to further increasing these operations in the ongoing fight against narcotics. Therefore, we would like to provide a brief guidance for the P&I Clubs and their Members regarding the latest cases, what the Owner vessels encounter and matters develops in case a contraband detected on board.

It is well known in the shipping industry that the most common route used by smugglers for their illegal activities is merchant shipping. Despite all the efforts made by the stakeholders, highly organized smugglers find ways to adapt to penetrate vessels and ports to continue their illegal activities. South American ports, in particular Brazil, Ecuador, Panama and Colombia, are the ports most used by smugglers. Most of these illicit goods are destined for European ports, particularly Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, France, Italy and Romania. Turkiye is also one of the countries with a strategic geopolitical location in terms of drug smuggling. We have seen an increase in smuggling activities in the ports of Iskenderun, Mersin, Istanbul and Zonguldak.

We have seen the following methods used by smugglers:-

- a) Hiding drugs in containers
- b) Attaching drugs to the hull of vessels using magnets or other devices
- c) Placing drugs in the vessel's sea chests
- d) Placing drugs to vessel's rudder or propeller
- e) Placing drugs in the anchor chain/chain locker

The police officers usually act upon intelligence and conduct a search on board the vessel. This search may cause delay on the vessel's schedule. However, there usually no arrest of the vessel at the end of searches and the vessel can depart without any problem. If any contraband is found on board the vessel, the crew members are likely to suffer as it is common practice in Turkish jurisdiction to consider crew members as suspects of the crime. It is therefore important for crew members to be aware of this risk, as it is their freedom that is at stake. We have not experienced any proceedings against the shore personnel.

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If the narcotics are found in containers. This is a low-risk modality and we usually see that the crew is released after the exchange of statements.

However, the other methods (above items B to E), which we usually encounter on bulk carriers, reflect a high risk and threats to the crew members are more complex, as the crew members are exposed to criminal proceedings that can take years, during which they may be detained or banned from leaving Türkiye. This results in high legal expenses and other costs for the Owners.



In view of the above, we suggest the following preventive measures for the Owners/Managers to consider:-

- Informing crew members of the risks and making them aware of the importance of strictly following SMS procedures.
- Constant patrolling of the vessel by crew members.
- All visitors should be carefully noted.
- Vessel search check list should be filled out with utmost diligence.
- Dog search is also a good preventive action.
- The crew members should be vigilant while they heaving up the anchor and lookout for any foreign objects.
- We suggest using (or at least testing) both sea chests by shifting to another during voyage.
- We suggest underwater inspection.

Submitted for your kind info as guidance purpose only.

Please contact us if you have any further queries and if you / your members need our assistance, we are always at your disposal.

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Best regards,

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