



AWARENESS TO MEMBERS CONCERNING ILLEGAL NARCOTIC TRAFFICKING TO THE USA

The following high-risk areas for illegal trafficking of narcotics are identified as follows:

Dominican Republic (DR) – This is a major transshipment point for cocaine headed to the US from Central and South America, especially Colombia and Mexico. Note that Dominican organized crime has a strong presence in Philadelphia. For the ports of Rio Haina and Puerto Plata, there are recent increases in narcotics found in containers; narcotics may also be attached to the hull, sea chest or rudder area but no recent cases. Note that local authorities may be corrupt.

Colombia – This is a major origination point for narcotics headed to the US, transshipment involving third countries, including the DR. Narcotics is often found in containers and parasitic devices. There are occasional seizures involving smaller amounts including some found in the possession of crew members.

Haiti – This is a transshipment point for cocaine and marijuana headed to the US from the DR and other countries, primarily focused on ships trading to the port of Miami, Florida. Trafficking from Haiti is less focused on containers and more likely to be found in other parts of the ship.

Jamaica – This is a major transshipment country with narcotics with coming mostly from Colombia, Guyana, and Suriname, mainly cocaine. Jamaica is originating country for marijuana and trafficking is mostly done by way of containers or hull attachments.

Costa Rica – This is a transshipment point for narcotics headed to the USA originating in Colombia or by land from Panama. Narcotics are often found in containers and parasitic devices.

Nicaragua – This is a transit point for narcotics coming north with a presence of Colombian and Mexican cartels. Trafficking is mainly done by small boats, submarines, or via land, and less likely to utilize containers or commercial ships.

For vessels loading at the above ports and heading to U.S. discharge ports, it is imperative that your crew understand general drug search protocols and physical search techniques. They must be able to identify basic equipment used in searches and utilize proper search plans and procedures to recognize potential concealment areas.

It is also important for the crew to understand proper collection and handling of evidence. Members are urged to ensure their crews are trained in crime scene or maritime violation identification, notification procedures, assigning an Investigating Officer, identifying evidence, conducting proper collection methods, the development of an Evidence Log, and performing proper evidence storage and transfer to authorities upon arrival in the USA.

Should you require any further information or would like to inquire about a short slide deck presentation we have available for your crew, please contact us.



Guidance in U.S. Ports

In general, drugs flow into the United States and weapons flow out. The threat of illegal drugs being loaded onto your ship in a U.S. port is less, but the threat of illegal weapons being loaded is higher. Weapons are a threat highlighted throughout the ISPS Code.

Guidance for arrival in a U.S. discharge port

Comply with U.S. Coast Guard notice of arrival requirements. Punctual and transparent declarations will 1) provide assurance of the legitimacy of your intentions and 2) ensure U.S. law enforcement officials have all pertinent information with sufficient time to make any necessary preliminary inquiries.

Cooperate with U.S. Coast Guard and/or U.S. Customs and Border Protection for any dockside inspection. Be prepared to present any documentation, provide access to the cargo and all areas of the ship as requested by dockside inspectors. A cooperative and willing crew demonstrates honest intentions to inspectors.

Control the gangway. Allow only authorized personnel to board or depart the vessel upon release by U.S. Coast Guard and/or U.S. Customs and Border Protection. All personnel boarding and departing are subject to search.

Discharge cargo upon authorization. Smuggling organizations may attempt to conceal contraband in cargo scheduled to be discharged first in an attempt to get the contraband off the ship prior to inspectors' arrival.

Guidance for departure preparations from a U.S. Port

While inspection of cargo, especially containers, usually occurs prior to arrival pier side, responsibility for inspection of ship stores and personal items rests with the ship. The following are suggested measures to increase the likelihood of detection of illegal firearms:

Two-person inspection teams increase safety and assure integrity of inspection process.

Metal detection wands are an inexpensive tool to rapidly inspect onboarding personnel and food stores in non-metallic containers.

Control the gangway. Allow only authorized personnel to board or depart the vessel. All personnel boarding and departing are subject to search.

Have shipboard personnel observe security measures such as customs seals, ensure holds are empty prior to loading bulk cargo, cargo loading process.

Ensure extra scrutiny surrounding last-minute changes in loading plan, last-minute personnel changes, last-minute personnel shift changes or situations requiring shifting personnel to duties they normally perform. *This is a prudent measure in any port.*