



Ship Type: All Trade Area: West Africa

Bulletin 67 - 10/98 - Custom Fines - Port Gentil - Gabon

We have been made aware of a new twist in the "Customs Fine Game". Two customs officers in the Port of Gentil, working together, recently enticed a crew member into selling them a television set. One of the officers persuaded the crew member to sell him the television set on board. As this customs officer was leaving the ship with the set, the second appeared claiming this to be an illegal act for which the ship would be fined.

A fine did follow - the shipowner being presented with a demand for CFA 40,000,000 (approx US\$66,000).

We are advised that customs officers in this area are "rewarded" by the customs authorities with a 10% remuneration based on the level of any fine. We are unsure as to the amount paid for the television set but clearly 10% of US\$66,000 would have more than covered his initial outlay!

Whilst this matter is complicated by the fact that the crewmember did have several television sets in his cabin, we would strongly advise Members trading to this area to be particularly careful with customs related problems and as far as possible ensure that crews refrain from such practices. If caught, the results are clearly not inexpensive.

Should members have any other examples of such practices we will gladly circulate them.

Source of Information: External through E Foster (S2)