



Ship Type: All Trade Area: NSW, Australia

Bulletin 243 - 04/02 - Crew Repatriation Problems - USA

It has been observed during several of our recent Ship Inspections that US Immigration officials are not allowing off-signing crew members to leave the vessel.

A few examples are highlighted:

CORPUS CHRISTI

No one was permitted to disembark from the vessel, as there is no international airport. Some crew due to leave the vessel had valid visas, but were not allowed to travel home.

FREEPORT

Again, no disembarkation was allowed, even though on-signers were allowed to join the vessel. Immigration officials would not allow offsigners without valid visas to leave the vessel. The master advised that with a valid visa, Greek nationals would have been allowed to disembark.

NEW ORLEANS

Turkish nationals were not allowed to disembark the vessel, with or without visas. However, this may have been due to the fact that four people had absconded from the vessel earlier in April in Norfolk. On a different vessel, the Indian master and his wife were allowed to disembark, even though the wife's visa had expired. Fines were subsequently imposed on the vessel.

It appears that immigration policy is not being applied uniformly in all states. Members are advised to ensure that all crew due to disembark are in possession of valid US visas. They should also be specially aware of the safety implications of the ship's Safety Equipment Certificate, especially the lifeboat capacity and the number of personnel on board.

Source of Information: UK Club Ship Inspection Dept