

Bulletin 457 - 03/06 - Further Stowaway Incidents - Brazil

UK Club Loss Prevention Bulletin 141 advised of preventative measures to assist ship operators and their masters in reducing cases of stowaways. This was followed by Loss Prevention Bulletin 367 issued in June 2004, informing of cases concerning stowaways hiding in ships' rudder housing, specifically with ships coming from African ports in ballast to load sugar in Brazil.

After another recent incident involving stowaways using a ship's rudder housing as a hiding place, the Club, once again, wishes to alert ship operators to this problem.

In the most recent case, the ship in question sailed in ballast from Monrovia, Liberia to Santos, Brazil, a 7-8 day sea voyage. When the boat carrying the agent and officers from the Santos Port Health Authority arrived at the ship, a total of 20 stowaways came out of their hiding place in the ship's rudder trunk housing. As often in such cases, none of the stowaways carried any means of identification and all appeared to be economic migrants.



The Brazilian Federal police adhere to strict procedures for ships arriving at Brazilian ports with stowaways on board. Stowaways will be medically examined and blood and urine samples taken for the testing for malaria, since this is mandatory for stowaways arriving without Yellow Fever Vaccination Certificates. If malaria is found to be present, then the ship will not be granted free pratique and will be placed in quarantine for a 6-10 day period until the Authorities are satisfied that all is in order. A fine will also be levied for bringing stowaways into the country without the required Yellow Fever Vaccination Certificates.

Once ashore, the stowaways will be provided with medical treatment if required. After being interviewed by Federal Police, the stowaways will then be taken to and kept under guard at a local hotel. All of these expenses, plus the clothing and feeding of the stowaways as well as any additional medical treatment they may require during their stay in Brazil, falls to owners' account.



In this particular case, emergency travel documentation for the stowaways had to be obtained from outside of Brazil, since there is no Liberian Embassy or Consulate in Brazil. With the assistance of the Club's South African correspondents, the stowaways were documented for repatriation. In some cases, this can take several months to achieve, since stowaways often provide misleading information concerning their nationality, etc.

When documentation was finally obtained, the stowaways were repatriated from Santos via Johannesburg (South Africa) to Dakar (Senegal) and onto Monrovia, Liberia. Again, this process can take time since no more than two stowaways are allowed by the domestic airlines on each flight. Each stowaway must be accompanied by a minimum of two guards, while strict documentation rules are applied by the airlines. Once travel documents are issued, the South African Consulate requires 10 days advance notice to approve repatriation on the nominated flight to Johannesburg. It should be borne in mind that the pilot of an aircraft carrying stowaways always has the final say on whether the repatriation goes ahead on his flight on that day.

In this case, Brazilian escorts handed the stowaways over to their South African counterparts at Johannesburg for the latter to escort them to Dakar where they were placed on flights to Monrovia. Expenses were high.

It is not uncommon for the repatriation of each stowaway from Brazil to Africa to cost in the region of USD20,000 - USD25,000.



Therefore, the Club strongly recommends that crews carry out thorough stowaway searches particularly of hard to reach positions on the ship (like the rudder trunk housing). If stowaways can hide in such an area, then there is also a possibility that drugs could be hidden and moved from country to country in this area of the ship.

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