



Ship Type: All Trade Area: USA

Bulletin 501 - 12/06 - Ship Security Campaign - Houston, USA

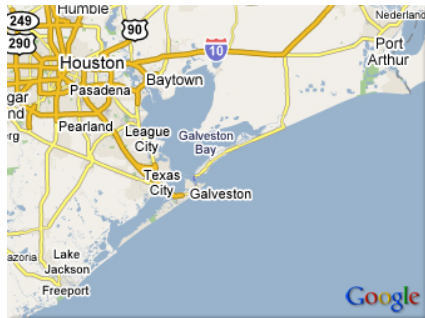
The United States Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) special operations team based in the Port of Houston are conducting a major enforcement campaign to encourage ship's compliance with their security plans, and will arrest violators.

The purpose of the campaign, which is expected to last for several months, is to ensure ships fully comply with their security plans for the whole duration of their stay at Texas ports.



Ships calling at the Port of Houston generally demonstrate a good level of compliance with their vessel security plans but there is a distinct tendency for ships to relax security vigilance after normal cargo operations cease.

It is thought that ship's staff feel safe in US ports because there is little threat of stowaways, smuggling or other incidents, but the team report instances where they have walked aboard vessels and made their way to the masters cabin unnoticed and unchallenged.



According to the CBP unit, porous vessel security after dark is a serious problem, which they have noted and seek to penalize. They issue citations for regulatory violations and arrest violators.

Based in Houston, the team also deploy East to Beaumont, Orange, Port Arthur, and Port Neches, and West to Freeport.

To counter the problem, and improve performance, the unit intends to exert a major enforcement exercise during the next few months. They will conduct night time surveillance of ships in and around the Port of Houston and will challenge and issue penalty citations to ships with security breaches.

The degree of interest in port safety and security issues varies remarkably from port to port in the United States, as it does elsewhere. An uneventful call in one port is no guaranty of a similarly smooth encounter in another. No matter what their experience elsewhere, Members should anticipate a very high level of scrutiny from CBP and Coast Guard at Texas ports, particularly the Port of Houston, and surrounding areas.

Members are encouraged to ensure that their ships officers are fully conversant with details of their ship security plans, and maintain proper security watches twenty-four hours each day. Non-compliance with the ship security plan may lead to serious financial penalties.

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