

# LP Bulletin

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## Bulletin 714 - 08/10 - Stowaways - Nigeria

**The Association has recently handled a case where a number of stowaways were detected onboard a vessel that had sailed from Nigeria.**

In line with prudent practice, the vessel in question had installed a set of bars in the rudder trunk to prevent stowaways from accessing the vessel through this area. Following loading operations in Port Harcourt the vessel sailed for Brazil with a cargo of cement. Once the vessel was about 350 miles out, the crew discovered 5 stowaways hiding in the rudder trunk.



The picture above shows where the stowaways had cut through the bars intended to keep them out. This incident serves as a reminder of how determined some stowaways are to board a vessel. Prior to departure all areas should be searched, even those that appear fairly secure. The Association has recently produced a checklist that can be found below.

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# Stowaway checklist

## Steps to help prevent stowaways

- **Prior to and during a ship's call at any port**, it will be necessary to ensure all relevant sections of the ISPS Code are implemented particularly regarding the ship's gangway and dock areas. All access points should be secured.
- **Ensure there is always a member of the ship's crew manning the gangway** who is closely monitoring all persons embarking and disembarking. Additional precautions such as CCTV should also be used where available.
- **On ro-ro vessels the ramp should be monitored at all times** and any access points on deck should be locked so that the vessel cannot be penetrated.
- **Agents should obtain and provide the ship with a list from the stevedore company** that clearly identifies the number of stevedores working on the ship. It is essential that stevedores only embark and disembark by the ship's gangway and their movements are constantly monitored whilst onboard.
- **All visitors that are expected on the ship should be known to the ship's master**, the crew member assigned to gangway watch duty and the agents, with their expected time of arrival and clear details of their intended business onboard. All visitors should be instructed to report to the crew member assigned to gangway watch duties in the first instance.
- **Be vigilant for any persons who may be trying to board the ship** by mooring ropes or small boats at the waters edge. This is particularly important when the ship is berthed at night.
- **It is essential that the ship is searched prior to departure**, including all dark and difficult to access areas. This should include areas that are thought to be locked/secured. Empty bays on container vessels and empty holds on bulk/general cargo vessels should be searched. In some circumstances it may be prudent to engage an external search company to assist with a search prior to the ship's departure.

# Steps to be taken in the event a stowaway is found

**Once the presence of a stowaway has been detected it is important to inform the owners and the port agents.** It is also essential to inform the P&I Club immediately so they can liaise with the local Club correspondent, who will assist with the necessary processes for disembarking.

**It is the responsibility of the agent to advise the local authorities of the stowaway's presence.**

If the nationality of the stowaway is known or suspected, then arrangements should be made for the stowaway to be taken to the relevant embassy to confirm their identity, in an attempt to procure emergency travel documentation.

**It can be very useful to search the area where the stowaway was found** for any additional information which may be of assistance, such as concealed documents.

**Ensure that the stowaway's clothing has been searched** to confirm he does not possess any items that may be a danger to himself or others.

**The stowaway must be photographed and interviewed** in an attempt to ascertain and document the following information:

- Port of embarkation.
- Details of documents held, if any.
- Name.
- Date and place of birth.
- Address.
- Nationality.

NB. It should be remembered however, that stowaways frequently lie about their identities to delay their disembarkation, and if masters suspect this to be the case they should report as such.

**Once the above information has been obtained, it should be reported to the Club and/or the local correspondent,** who will then provide a comprehensive stowaway questionnaire for completion. These questionnaires are often specific to the alleged nationality of the stowaway and can help ascertain if it is correct.

**While the stowaway remains onboard, he should be fed and allowed access to basic items** such as a bed and toilet. The stowaway should not be made to work at any time and should not be signed onto the ships articles.

**It will be necessary for the stowaway to be kept secure at all times.** If there is more than one stowaway, they should be secured separately, where possible.