



# SPECIALISED CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

*A unique organisation dealing with maritime crime for our Members*

SIGNUM  
IS MANAGED  
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## A UNIQUE COMPANY



Signum Services are the in-house investigation department at Thomas Miller & Co and operate as part of the UK P&I Club. Signum offers a unique and bespoke investigation service for the benefit of the Members.

Its prime task is to ensure an immediate, confidential and professional response when undertaking investigations concerning maritime related crime matters. The company has been in existence for over 60 years and has accumulated a wealth of knowledge and experience in this field.

Signum has two investigators who have a worldwide remit to enquire into any criminal activity affecting Club Members. The investigators are former senior detectives from the Metropolitan Police's Criminal Investigation Department at New Scotland Yard. The team maintains extensive contacts in global law enforcement, the intelligence services and with military special forces. Together, they have over 70 years' experience in solving crime and have served on police squads dealing with homicide, organised crime, armed robbery, kidnap, fraud and transport crime.

Their qualifications enable them to enquire into any incident that may involve criminality. During their time at Signum have been called upon to investigate murder, arson, fraud – including cybercrime, rape, stowaways, criminal damage, container and general cargo crime, port organised crime, and every conceivable type of theft.

Signum is a unique body in the world of maritime crime investigation.





## A TYPICAL INVESTIGATION

A typical Signum investigation may involve a container of high value cargo that has gone missing somewhere along its six or seven thousand mile journey across the world.



*Signum's extensive experience responding to criminal attacks against shipowner's assets and personnel has covered every sector of the marine industry and nearly all major ports*

The initial request for assistance usually comes from one of the Club's claims executives or direct from the Member. The problem is identified and available documents are collated and studied.

Preliminary enquires will be made. Sometimes Signum will call upon the assistance of the Club's network of correspondents or the Member's local agent. On other occasions, the investigator may contact law enforcement colleagues from one of the international professional bodies of which they are members. Arrangements will be made to interview everyone involved in the handling or movement of the cargo. Local correspondents sometimes provide office facilities, and work closely with the investigator. They may also obtain assistance from the state, town or port police, or from Customs and Excise officers.

The investigator must be sensitive to the interests of the Member. For example, if an investigation at a port involves common problems experienced by different Members, each Member will be treated as a separate client and the confidentiality of their interests respected accordingly.

Upon completion of the investigation, Signum will produce a detailed confidential report. The cause of the problems and findings will be explained to the Member and he will be advised of preventive action that should be taken to avoid any recurrence. Signum work closely with the UK P&I Club Loss Prevention department, and where appropriate, will include advice for the benefit of all the Members.

Signum's extensive experience responding to criminal attacks against shipowner's assets and personnel has covered every sector of the marine industry and nearly all major ports. In recent years, the team have responded to many incidents, often at short notice.

## CASE STUDIES

### US\$2 million copper heist with links to organised crime, solved by the Signum team

Signum were asked to investigate a case in which 12 containers of copper wire, valued in excess of US\$2 million, had been purchased by an American businessman from a company in Manila, Philippines. The victim had been present during the stuffing of the copper into the containers and had followed the truck to the port where he assumed the container had been left for loading.

When the containers arrived at their destination it was discovered that the cargo had been substituted for bags of worthless sand.

The Signum investigator travelled to Manila and interviewed shipping line staff and port officials. Further enquires were undertaken in the suburbs of Manila, which entailed visiting various scrap yards and warehouses where the containers were stuffed.

As a result of the investigation, and from analyses of weights and times, Signum were able to prove that the truck had diverted immediately prior to entering the port gates and taken to another location where the cargo had been substituted. Furthermore, the investigator was able to identify the culprits, who, it transpired, were part of an organised crime gang who had been active in committing similar multimillion dollar frauds for several years. As a result of the investigation, the UK P&I Club was able to defend the claim.

This is one of many high value copper fraud cases successfully investigated by Signum Services in recent years. In every case, the investigator has proved that no copper was actually shipped in the containers, and assisted Members to avoid paying multi-million dollar fraudulent claims. Signum investigators leave no stone unturned to uncover all the facts and gain the truth.



*When the containers arrived at their destination it was discovered that the cargo had been substituted for bags of worthless sand*



*Copper millberry wire*



## Drugs on board – Venezuela – Culprit identified and crew released in good time

A vessel belonging to a Member was searched by the authorities whilst at a port in Venezuela. A large quantity of cocaine was discovered hidden high inside the ship's funnel. As a consequence, the entire crew on 14 were arrested under armed guard, and the ship detained.

Signum investigators were dispatched at short notice and were able to board the vessel whilst at anchor some two miles offshore. They examined the scene of the drug find and the layout of the ship. Over several days, each member of the crew was interviewed at length. This finally resulted in one of the engine crew confessing that he had been responsible for bringing the drugs on board. He provided a full explanation of his involvement in major organised drug smuggling operation.

The culprit admitted the crime and was subsequently sentenced to a period of 14 years imprisonment in Venezuela. As a result of Signum's investigation, the remaining crewmembers were exonerated and the vessel released.



*The Venezuelan National Guard and Customs display the seizure of the drugs found on the vessel.*



*Chief Engineer assisting the Signum investigator with enquiries.*

## Cargo thefts from the Far East to India



Signum were called upon to investigate a large number of thefts reported to be occurring from containers being shipped from the Far East to India. The investigator deduced that the thefts were all occurring within the confines of the import terminal of a large Indian port.

As a result of the investigation, seven men were apprehended in the act of committing a theft, and admitted responsibility for all of the previous matters.

The investigator discovered that the method used was to break into the imported containers and smuggle the stolen cargo, usually flat screen televisions, out of the terminal by hiding them in the space under the truck chassis and exit undetected.



*The underside of the truck chassis where the TVs were smuggled out of the terminal*

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## People smuggling – North Africa



*...the rear portion of the container had been altered and a false wall fitted across the width.*

People smuggling is an appalling crime, and one that often ends in extreme tragedy for those unfortunate enough to have to put themselves in the hands of very unscrupulous criminal gangs.

In this case, suspicion arose concerning a container shipped from the Far East via Casablanca to Barcelona, and Signum were asked to investigate. Enquiries revealed that the rear portion of the container had been altered and a false wall fitted across the width.

This meant that to the casual observer, the appearance of the inside looked like a normal empty 40' container. A closer inspection revealed a false section. This concealed a small compartment no more than 2 foot wide that would allow several people to hide inside.

At first, it was unclear where the occupants had entered the container, with some suggestions that they had been inside for some time, possibly from the Far East. Examination of the waste inside the container revealed a baker's bag and empty water bottles from an address in Casablanca. The location was identified, which led to the investigator discovering the actual premises where the container had been altered, allowing those involved to be held to account. Following Signum recommendations, new procedures were put in place to physically enter, check, measure and seal every empty container on the quayside before placing on board a vessel.

## SEAL TAMPERING



Virtually all container cargo thefts will involve the tampering of the seal and doors. Signum have experienced, witnessed and investigated every conceivable criminal attempt to remove seals.

The traditional method of sealing a container stuffed with cargo is with a bolt seal. This is placed on the locking handle of the right side door. Additional locking devices are often placed across the doors to improve security. The bolt seals can only be removed with the use of bolt croppers, angle grinders or similar tools.

The most common attempt to remove seals is the removal of rivets on the door handles, which allows the door to be opened whilst the seal remains intact. Cargo can be stolen and the door closed with the rivet temporary replaced. The theft will often go unnoticed until the container reaches its final destination. It is important to examine doors, rivets and seals carefully to identify any signs of tampering.

## CYBERCRIME

The menace of cybercrime is now a huge issue for all businesses and the maritime shipping industry is an attractive target for internet related fraud due to the global nature of this type of commerce.

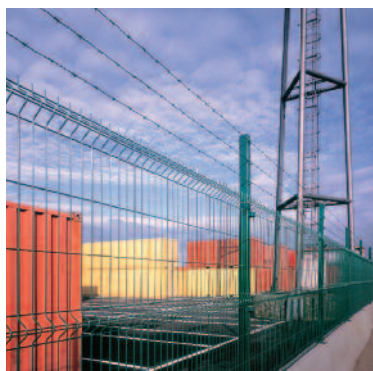
Signum have dealt with numerous cyber frauds in recent years. In the main, these tend to be payment diversion thefts whereby a shipping agent will be duped by a fake email into paying money into the criminal's bank account.

Signum have had some notable success in combatting such crimes, particularly where UK-based banks are concerned, and their investigations, in tandem with the police, have culminated in apprehending the individuals involved, and lengthy prison sentences being handed out to those found guilty.





## SECURITY SURVEYS



Signum often carries out security surveys of terminals and warehouses for Members. Their long experience of dealing with criminals tells them how, why and where premises are vulnerable.

Upon request, an investigator will attend to examine physical security of premises and, equally importantly assess the effectiveness of the security procedures adopted in that location. Experience has shown that in many cases crime can be prevented by:

- Thoroughly vetting staff
- Good physical protection of premises including CCTV
- Good security procedures which are properly enforced

## ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE



The areas that Signum can assist with include the following. We are available to discuss and advise on any problem that a Member may face:

**Homicide or suspicious death**

**Suicides**

**Assaults**

**Sexual assaults**

**Criminal damage**

**Arson**

**Drug smuggling**

**Internet enabled crime (cyber crime)**

**Fraud**

**Forged bills of lading or other documents**

**Cargo theft**

**Other theft**

**Fraudulent injury claims by passengers or crew**

**Surveillance**

**Forensic examination**

**Asset tracing**

**Missing persons**

**Corruption**

**Security seal testing**

**Company background profiles**

**Money laundering**

**Ship tracking**

**Port security**

## WHO WE ARE



### **Michael Carroll**

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Mike Carroll joined Signum Services after retiring from the Metropolitan Police in November 2006. He was a career detective for 30 years, serving in various departments at New Scotland Yard. He specialised in serious and organised crime investigations including armed robberies.



### **David Thompson**

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David Thompson joined Signum Services in January 2013 following his retirement from the Metropolitan Police. In his 30 year career as a detective, David specialised in the investigation of serious and complex crimes and served at various locations throughout London and at New Scotland Yard.

## CONTACT SIGNUM

Signum have been very successful in the detection and prevention of crime against Members. A call to any of the Club's offices will ensure an immediate, confidential and professional investigation which could save much time and money. Signum services also undertake enquires for other in-house businesses including TT Club, ITIC and War Risks.

For further information, please contact:

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