



Ship Type: All

Trade Area: Russia - Black Sea Ports

Bulletin 77 - 01/99 - Regulation Infringements/Drug Smuggling - Russian Black Sea Ports

We have been advised by our correspondents in Novorossiisk that Members should be particularly aware of the local customs authority's increased attention to drug infringements in the Russian Black Sea area.

All vessels, on arrival, are required to present a drugs list to the customs officers. Masters should particularly ensure that a remark regarding the medicinal drugs on board should be made in the General Declaration. In several recent cases we understand that ships have been faced with situations where, after a few days of customs formalities, the customs authorities cannot find the ship's "Drug List". The masters have not been able to advise to whom they gave the list nor prove that one had been given. It is therefore important that masters keep copies and if possible get signatures for receipt. In other cases Drugs Lists have been given to the authorities but masters have put on the General Declaration the remark "no drugs". This has resulted in a drug law violation and fines.

It is also the practice for special customs representatives to come on board during cargo operations to check the declaration and presence of drugs on board the ship. Usually the master's safe and medical locker are checked to ensure that everything has been declared. Minor discrepancies are invariably found. When this happens the Customs Authorities will take action against the master on the charge of smuggling drugs, under Order No 580 of the State Customs Committee and Russian Drugs Law.

Experience shows that in most cases the master and/or his senior officers get detained shortly before the ship's departure. As the customs law stipulates that the authorities have 15 days in which to complete their investigations, this can cause inordinately long delays to the ship.

Although in most cases the investigation results in no criminal charges being laid against the master, and any fine rarely exceeds \$50, the time lost by the ship will be much more expensive - either through delay or as the result of replacement of the detained crew.

The following recommendations in respect of the above have been supplied by our local correspondent :-

- 1 Pay special attention to preparing the Drug List and the General Declaration before the ship's arrival at Russian ports.
- 2 Before arrival at Russian ports carefully check the ship's medical locker and ensure it is in accordance with the International Medical Guide for Ships (World Health Organisation or similar official reference work) and declare them.
- 3 Ensure that inward port formalities are strictly adhered to and records are kept of documents presented and to whom. If possible get the authority's signature as a receipt.
- 4 If the master is unsure of procedures/ protocol in connection with the drugs declaration he should not hesitate to ask questions of the authorities.
- 5 All controlled medical substances should be kept in the master's safe during the whole period of
- 6 If undeclared drugs are found on board the ship by the crew after inward formalities, the drugs should be declared within 24 hours from the time of arrival.
- 7 If the customs drugs department officers come on board the vessel, the master should present the drugs from the ships safe for checking on first demand.

- 8 Inspection of the ship's medical locker should be carried by customs officers only in the presence of a senior ships officer.
- 9 If any problems occur, do not hesitate to contact the Club's correspondent

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