

Loss Prevention Bulletin

Ship Type: All

Trade Area: Far East/USA

Bulletin 123 - 01/00 - Chinese Stowaways - Canada/USA

Loss Prevention Bulletin 118 - issued in November, 1999, and entitled "**Smuggling of Chinese Citizens**" alerted members to the highly organized criminal scheme to smuggle Chinese citizens aboard ships that were under bareboat charter. These ships were actually modified by the charterers to accommodate large groups of illegal immigrants.

Since late October of 1999, and especially within the past 3 weeks, it is evident that another method of illegal entry to the United States is being attempted. Smaller groups of Chinese citizens are reportedly stowing away on large container ships bound for the U.S. West Coast ports. Two recent incidents involving the Club's Members' ships will illustrate.

On January 2, 2000, at Vancouver, B.C. 25 stowaways were discovered in two 40 foot soft-top containers (seals intact) which were aboard a heavily laden container ship which had just arrived from Kaoshiung. The containers, loaded in Hong Kong, were stowed directly beneath hatch covers that were covered with 3 tiers of 40 foot units. Access was therefore impossible. Seattle was the original port of discharge. The stowaways were prepared for the voyage with portable toilets, food, clothing and their own ladder to climb out of the unit at discharge.

On January 10, 2000, in a tragic development, 3 of 18 stowaways died during a stormy voyage across the North Pacific. Again, a heavily laden containership was involved, sailing from Hong Kong to Seattle via Kaoshiung. A 40 foot container (seal intact) was positioned below deck so that again access was not possible. These stowaways were in much worse condition than those discovered in Vancouver.

There have also been reports of similar stowaway incidents in Long Beach and Seattle. The bulk of the illegal migrants reportedly originate from the Chinese province of Fujian/ Fukien.

At the moment the Club is aware of nine incidents, seven of which have been discovered within the last 10 days. In total some 300 illegal immigrants have been found.

To help combat this disturbing new pattern of illegal migration the Club, in conjunction with several other Clubs, has instructed Signum Services (its investigative arm) to see what can be done to protect Members' interests. It is hoped by working with local interests and Government bodies this new method of illegal immigration can be curtailed.

The Managers will report as soon as possible any findings/recommendations.

In the meantime members should be aware of the scale of the problem presently being faced.

Please contact the Club for up to date details.

Source of information : John Ferrie (San Francisco Office)