

UK P&I CLUB



# LP Bulletin

Friday 01<sup>st</sup> October 2010

## Bulletin 719 - 10/10 - Drug law amendments - Venezuela

**The Association would like to inform Members of the key points raised in recent amendments to Venezuelan drug laws.**

Changes to Venezuelan drug law mean that penalties for those found guilty of transporting drugs have increased from 8 – 10 years to 15 – 25 years and possibly 25 – 30 years for ring leaders or financial backers. Vessels found to be transporting drugs may be seized at the request of the public prosecutor and a vessel may be held for around 3 months in cases where the judge deems there is no evidence. In cases where the prosecutor decides to proceed with a full criminal trial the vessel could be held for a year, or more.

During the period of arrest, the vessels management, maintenance and other functions will be transferred to the National Drug Office, who may employ the vessel in activities set out within the law. If the court decides to release a vessel, she would be returned to her owners. However, if the final judgment demands seizure, the property would pass to the State.

The law does not declare whether the vessel may be released during the criminal trial if a guarantee is posted before a court. Under normal circumstances, local courts would not allow the vessel to be released until a final judgement has been passed.

Judges, prosecutors or experts deemed to be in violation of the law during these proceedings may be punished with between 6 and 8 years in prison.

The Association would advise Members to be extremely cautious when in Venezuelan ports.

Source of information: Loss Prevention Dept  
[lossprevention.ukclub@thomasmiller.com](mailto:lossprevention.ukclub@thomasmiller.com)