



Ship Type: All Trade Area: Yemen

Bulletin 377 - 08/04 - Problems with Imported Packaged Timber Cargoes - Yemen

We have been advised of several problems involving ships discharging packaged timber in Yemen from the Far East. There are apparently two main areas of dispute:

- 1) Cubic measurement of the cargo is under-declared. The timber is presented in packaged format with 'spacers' between the layers of boards within the bundles and with a bearer strapped to the underside. The cubic measurement of the timber is declared as the net amount of timber, ignoring the lost space within the bundles. Dependent on the thickness of the boards within the package, the difference or space lost can be up to 38%.
- 2) Condition of the timber. Packaged timber is collected within the various ports in Malaysia and stored for months at a time in the open or on barges subjecting the timber to the various elements. Loading usually occurs at stream berths and therefore becomes wetted in parts by salt or brackish water. Within the bundles there is always evidence of the accumulation of mould and fungus caused by the prevailing temperatures and humidity. The formation of mould and fungus is exacerbated in the ideal conditions of closed holds en route to Yemen. Insect activity has also been observed within the bundles after opening in Yemen.

Masters on loading have made remarks on mate's receipts and written notices to load port agents as due to time restrictions at the time of sailing, masters are obliged to provide agents with the authority to sign Bills of Lading on their behalf, in accordance with remarks on the Mate's Receipts. Shippers then pressure load port agents to issue clean Bills of Lading by providing an undertaking to settle any claims which may be made at the discharge ports (letter of indemnity). The shippers' undertaking is not usually made available to the master or discharge port agents and the receivers generally make claims against the ship for alleged damages to their cargo. Such letters of indemnity are likely to be worthless and may in any event prejudice Club cover.

Masters should ensure that the condition of cargo prior to loading, and the dryness of the holds are recorded in writing and with photos. Most ships now carry a digital camera onboard and many images should be taken of the condition of the packages ensuring that the end coloured marks and stencilled marks are clearly visible.

Securing of deck cargo by load port stevedores is usually by wires with bulldog grips and turnbuckles. Angles are not used to protect the corners and edges of the bundles resulting in the upper boards being severely scored and damaged. Masters should make due protest to stevedores at the load ports. Unless the master has taken action at the load port, there is little that can be done in defence of claims as clean Bills of Lading would be presented.

We advise Members of the above situation and recommend they inform their ships' masters accordingly.

Source of information: David Mockett
Surveyor, Yemen