

OUR VIEW

It is important that drug trafficking is addressed at all levels internationally, such as UN (IMO, UNODC) and EU level.

To ensure more efficient and timely actions against all elements of contraband trafficking there is a need for an international maritime security reporting centre, where authorities, shipowners, operators, charterers, ports and other industry stakeholders can share relevant reports and data. This should be hosted either by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) or the World Customs Organization (WCO).

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) should undertake a revision of its "Revised Guidelines for the prevention and suppression of the smuggling of drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals on ships engaged in international maritime traffic" to ensure it is updated to the latest threat from drug trafficking organizations.

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Contraband trafficking

Merchant ships may unknowingly be used for contraband trafficking of different types of illegal goods, such as endangered species, wildlife products and illegal drugs. Drug smuggling in particular poses significant challenges for the affected seafarers and shipowners, while also presenting severe security threats from drug trafficking organisations.



While cooperation exists between the shipping industry, national customs/ border control authorities, and the World Customs Organization, instances have occurred where innocent seafarers and companies were unfairly held responsible for drugs aboard their ships. This can result in ship detentions, crew arrests, and the potential for substantial fines or asset confiscation, including the ship itself. Innocent seafarers, port workers and companies should not be held responsible for contraband, and unjustified confiscation of ships targeted by smugglers is not acceptable.

Drug routes are global and criminal organizations use various methods to transport drugs at sea, exploiting all types of cargo ships as well as tankers. Cocaine for instance, is commonly hidden within maritime shipping containers, with occasional attempts to conceal narcotics

within vessels i.e. through threats and bribing of the crew. This means that seafarers and shipping line employees can come under immense pressure from cartels. The primary routes for cocaine to the EU are assumed to be the ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam. In addition, criminals may try to infiltrate crew and port infrastructure, either by monetary rewards or threats.

As part of the European Ports Alliance Public Private Partnership, Danish Shipping will work actively to ensure that operational best practices are developed. While handling the illegal drug trade is primarily a task for the authorities, Danish Shipping advises member companies to exercise upmost care in preventing contraband on board. This includes implementing systems to screen agents, customers, and all shipping documents and declarations.

Danish Shipping welcomes EU initiatives such as the “EU Roadmap to fight Drug Trafficking and Organised Crime” and “EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025”.

However, due to the complex issue of drug trafficking, the issue should be anchored in one responsible entity that is tasked with overall coordination.

The EU should support initiatives improving port security in Latin America. Euro-pol could also play an important role in strengthening police cooperation in Latin America.

The new EU Import Control System 2 (ICS2) must protect against security and safety threats from goods entering the EU, provide clarity on compliance liability, while facilitating frictionless cross-border trade.

Specifically on preventing drug trafficking, members and authorities should also focus on screening and monitoring of employees with access to sensitive shipping data, and national authorities should make screening of port employees mandatory in key ports.



FACTS

- According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Global Report on Cocaine 2023:
 - 89 % of the cocaine quantities seized in 2021 was trafficked by sea. Smugglers’ use of shipping containers seems to be on the rise.
 - Global cocaine manufacture more than doubled in output between 2014 to 2020, from approximately 900 tons to almost 2,000 tons.
 - The number of cocaine users globally between 2014 to 2020 has raised from approximately 18 million to 21.5 million and is projected to grow to more than 25 million by 2030.
- UNODC and the World Customs Organization (WCO) launched in 2004 a joint Container Control Programme (CCP) to build capacity in countries seeking to improve risk management, supply chain security, and trade facilitation in seaports, airports and land border crossings to prevent the cross-border movement of illicit goods.
- In 2006/2007 The International Maritime Organization (IMO) issued “Revised Guidelines for the Prevention and Suppression of the Smuggling of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursor Chemicals on Ships engaged in International Maritime Traffic”, that can be found at IMO’s webpage.