

CLIENT ALERT

HM Customs arrest crewmembers following discovery of pornographic images on personal computers during searches of two separate vessels

We have been instructed twice in 24 hours following the arrest and detention of crewmembers on two separate vessels following the discovery of illegal pornographic images/films on the crewmembers' personal laptops and mobile telephones.

On the first vessel one crewmember was arrested and detained and on the second vessel four crewmembers were arrested and detained. Both vessels were in Liverpool. All five crewmembers have been charged, and whilst not yet found guilty, are likely to be deported from the UK.

All the crewmembers originated from the Philippines and all had the same type of material on their laptops and mobile telephones.

It became apparent during our investigations that the images found, whilst clearly illegal in the UK, were said by those crewmembers to be "acceptable" in the Philippines, although we make no judgment on that point.

It is possible that whilst this was a local incident, H M Customs on the back of these arrests may consider there to be a wider problem with crewmembers bringing such images into the UK, this in turn may lead to an increase in Customs searches in the UK, either locally and/or in other UK ports.

The arrest and detention of four crewmembers from one vessel can have serious implications on manning levels and additional searches may also cause delays to the operations of the ship.

We would recommend that your Members ensure that crewmembers onboard their vessels are reminded that the importation and/or possession of illegal pornographic material will not be tolerated by the UK Authorities.

This also highlights the need of having and enforcing an internet policy on board all vessels.

If your Members require urgent assistance in this regard please do not hesitate to contact either:

For incident involving southern UK ports

Maria Pittordis: Tel no: 020 7280 9296 (mobile 07768 112 382)

For incidents involving northern UK ports

David Wareing: Tel no: 0151 600 8257 (mobile 07885 755569)

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