

Suez Canal Security Alert

The US Coast Guard recently issued 'Marine Safety Information Bulletin 04-14' (MSI 04-14), which details a number of incidents in which threats and an alleged act of sabotage were perpetrated by Suez Canal Port Authority workers against the crews of ships which refused to provide them with cigarettes during their transit, informs The Standard P&I Club.

Whilst the provision of cigarettes as a gratuity to Suez Canal workers is a well-known custom, threats and acts of sabotage are a new development. In the alleged incidents crew were threatened with harm and a fire was set onboard. To date no action has been taken in connection with these incidents due to the length of time elapsed between the alleged events and their reporting.

Members should ensure that vessels transiting the canal are advised of these developments and that vigilance is maintained throughout the passage. MSI 04-14 advises a number of precautions which may be taken to help minimise the risk of such an incident occurring and provide a level of accountability for Suez Canal Port Authority workers, they include:

1. Logging of all employees in the gangway log with full name and ID number if possible
2. Take a picture of each port employee before allowing them onboard
3. Immediately notify the Suez Canal Port Authority through the pilot and via radio
4. Notify the ship's local shipping agency to request assistance

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