

Loss Prevention Bulletin

Stowaways

The issue of stowaways is one which has existed ever since vessels began to trade. Although the number of people attempting to gain free passage to another country has varied significantly over the years, the problem still remains.

In the twelve month period to the end of 2012 the Club handled 51 stowaway cases involving 125 persons. The total incurred value was approximately \$1 million and the number of stowaways involved in each incident typically ranged from 1 to 8. However, in one particular case 22 stowaways were found among a cargo of lumber. Although most hid within the deck stow, 2 stowaways concealed themselves inside a cargo hold also containing lumber and suffocated during the voyage due to the oxygen depleting properties of the logs.

Some attempts may also involve a considerable degree of planning. A potential stowaway in China called a ship operator pretending to be a freight forwarder and requested details of a vessel that would deliver his cargo to the USA in the shortest possible time. He then boarded the ship dressed as a stevedore and hid inside a container. Unfortunately for the stowaway the vessel was scheduled to call at other ports in China before crossing the Pacific and the container he had chosen was discharged before the ship left the Chinese coast. He was found after terminal staff heard him banging on the container wall and asking to be let out.

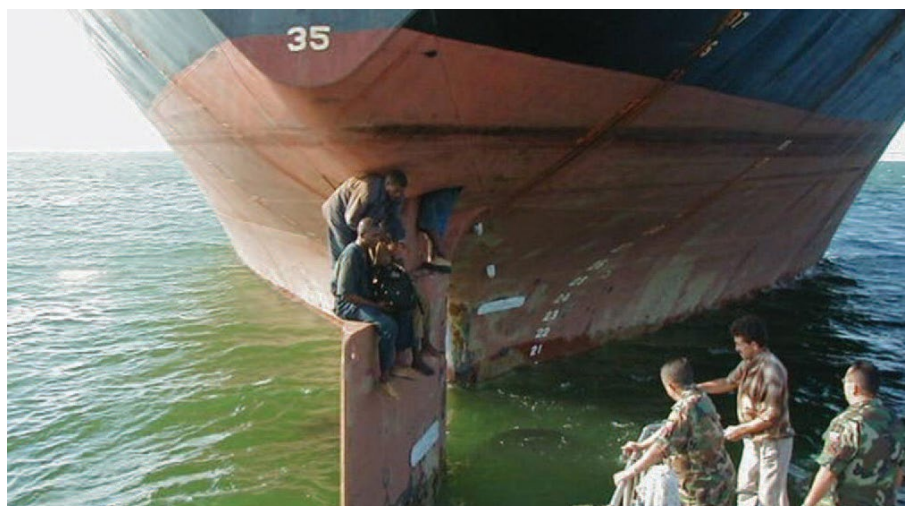
Similarly, the same stowaway was found aboard vessels operated by two different Members within the space of two months. On each occasion the stowaway was hired as part of a port security team arranged by the charterers but found somewhere to hide prior to departure.

Stowaways are expensive to process and repatriate, and it is often necessary to employ escorts to accompany them in transit when they are finally sent home. Vessels may also be delayed and fined. Moreover, it can be difficult to find countries willing to allow stowaways to disembark, particularly if they have no identification documents.

To reduce the risk, appropriate measures are required to discourage stowaways from boarding. Also, should potential stowaways manage to overcome such safeguards, to find and land them before the ship sails. Although Safety Management Systems or Ship Security Plans will generally include procedures for preventing stowaway attempts and conducting searches, the details should be reviewed periodically to ensure that they remain effective. This Bulletin has been issued to assist Members when carrying out such a review.

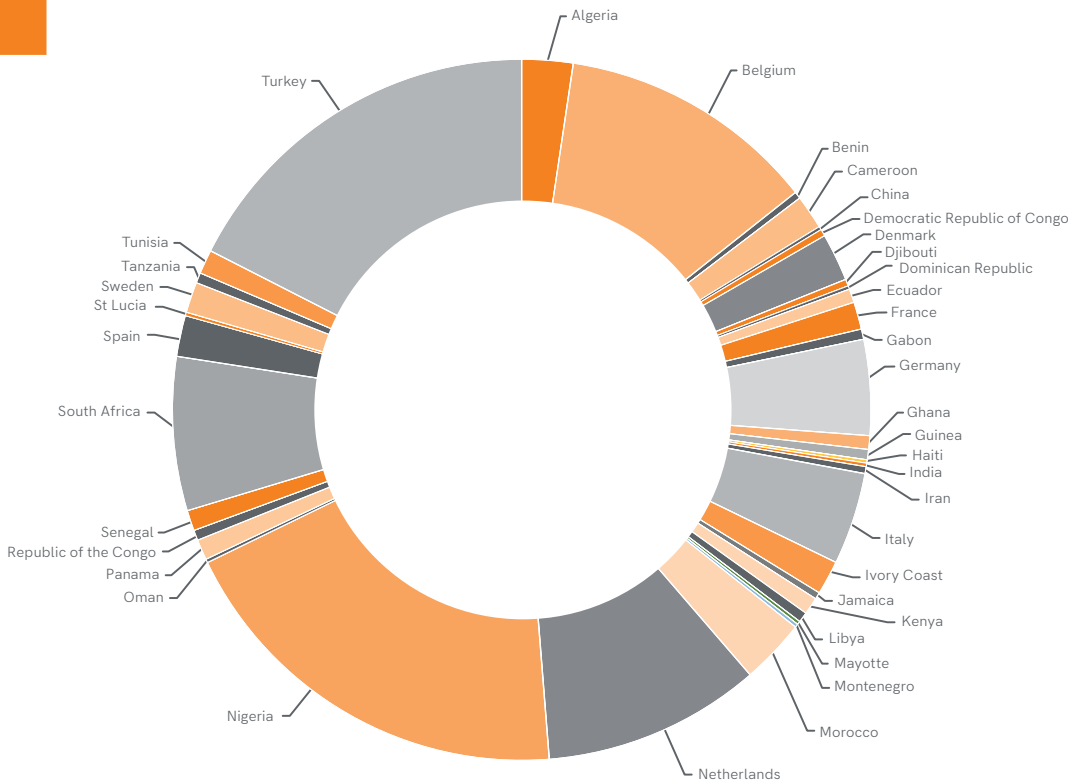
High risk stowaway areas

In 2010 the International Group of P&I Clubs carried out research which, based on claims experience, identified the top ten ports world-wide in terms of stowaway boardings. All of these ports were in Africa. In addition, IMO conducted a similar study using submissions received from flag states which highlighted certain ports in Belgium, particularly Zeebrugge, as attracting a large number of potential stowaways, many of whom were economic refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2013 the International Group of P&I Clubs published further stowaway data based on claims experience, which showed that the ports of embarkation, nationality of stowaways and the number of stowaways had not substantially changed since the publication of the earlier research in 2010.



Above: Void spaces around rudder stocks are a popular hiding place for stowaways

Total number of stowaways found by country of boarding Figures as at 13 July 2020



Country	Stowaways
Algeria	15
Belgium	76
Benin	2
Cameroon	10
China	1
Democratic Republic of Congo	2
Denmark	14
Djibouti	2
Dominican Republic	1
Ecuador	4
France	8
Gabon	3
Germany	28
Ghana	4
Guinea	3
Haiti	1
India	1
Iran	2
Italy	27
Ivory Coast	10
Jamaica	2
Kenya	5
Libya	3
Mayotte	1
Montenegro	1
Morocco	19
Netherlands	64
Nigeria	121
Oman	1
Panama	6
Republic of the Congo	3
Senegal	6
South Africa	45
Spain	12
St Lucia	1
Sweden	9
Tanzania	3
Tunisia	7
Turkey	111
Total number of Stowaways	634

It can be seen that the majority of cases involved stowaways boarding vessels in African countries, with only 4 out of 51 incidents occurring elsewhere (Bangladesh, Belgium and China). The countries with the highest frequency of boardings were Nigeria and South Africa with 9 cases each, followed by Morocco and the Ivory Coast with 5 cases. When reviewing the same information by the number of people involved, 22 stowaways boarded vessels in South Africa and Liberia respectively. However, the figure for Liberia is derived from a single incident. The number of stowaways boarding in Nigeria, Ivory Coast and Morocco was also relatively high.

Given these findings, vessels should be particularly vigilant when calling at ports in Africa. However, it should not be forgotten that stowaways may also board vessels in Central America, the equatorial regions of South America, the Caribbean, Europe and elsewhere.

Measures to discourage and prevent stowaways from boarding a vessel

General considerations

- Do not rely purely on the ability of the port authorities or terminal security staff to prevent unauthorised persons from entering the port area. Although the port may have ISPS Code procedures in place, a determined stowaway may find a way to overcome such measures, and in some countries security staff or other officials may be willing to accept bribes from potential stowaways trying to gain access to the quayside. Crews should also be alert to the possibility of local security guards on board the ship trying to stow away, ensuring that all such personnel disembark just prior to departure.

- Before arriving at a high risk port the Master should warn the crew about the possibility of stowaway attempts. Watch keepers should be briefed to report anything unusual including suspicious behaviour, seals attached to windows, ports, doors or containers which are no longer intact, seals that appear to have been tampered with and access arrangements that may have been breached. Frequent patrols should be carried out at random and it may also be worthwhile restricting deck work to make it easier to spot unauthorised personnel.



Above: Open topped containers can be easily accessed by stowaways

- In ports where there is a strong likelihood of stowaways trying to board, local security guards may be employed as an additional precaution and to help with the stowaway search prior to departure unless the vessel's port agent or local P&I correspondent consider that their presence may be counter-productive. The use of guard dogs may also prompt potential stowaways to seek a softer target, and dogs may also prove to be useful when searching confined areas.
- The Company Security Officer (CSO) should provide the Master with the latest information regarding the stowaway risk in each port, and the port agent or local P&I correspondent may be contacted for further advice.
- The ship should be equipped with sufficient securing tape, wire, padlocks, stickers and seals (container door seals are very useful) to indicate that spaces have been inspected and subsequently sealed shut.
- If the ship is due to call at a port where stowaways have been known to hide inside the rudder compartment, consideration may be given to fitting the base of the rudder trunk void space with a strong metal grill, ensuring that such a barrier does not impede the rudder stock from moving freely across its entire range. The grill should be securely fitted, preferably by welding it in place, and be of robust construction as there have been instances where stowaways have managed to cut through thin metal bars with a hacksaw to gain access to this space.
- Outside doors on all decks including the funnel deck and the poop should be locked and sealed. Such doors may include cargo hold access arrangements, mast houses, store rooms, electrical compartments and machinery rooms. However, accommodation and machinery space doors must be capable of being opened from the inside in the event of an emergency.
- External access to the accommodation and the entrance to the machinery space should be restricted to one door only.
- All cabins and storerooms within the accommodation and machinery spaces should be locked. Portholes and windows should be closed and secured if accessible from deck.
- Misleading information may sometimes be used to deter potential stowaways. For example, a port or country of limited appeal may be displayed on the ship's sailing board. Inaccurate signs may be posted or false announcements may be made stating that all holds will be fumigated upon completion of cargo operations.
- Decks should always be well lit at night. Cluster lights may also be placed over the ship's side to illuminate the surrounding water.
- It should be borne in mind that vulnerable cargoes such as bagged products, logs, empty containers and trailers may increase the risk of stowaway attempts. In one case a large number of stowaways managed to escape detection by moving from one part of a log stow to another when the ship was searched by the crew.
- While at anchor, a roving patrol should check the main deck, forecabin and poop deck at regular intervals. Roving patrols may also be carried out immediately after sailing until such time as the vessel is full away on passage.
- If stowaways are found prior to departure, or while the vessel is still within the territorial waters of the country of boarding, or while in another port in the same country, it is often possible to land them at minimal cost. It is therefore essential that any stowaways on board are found and landed before the vessel leaves port or the territorial waters of that country as the financial consequences of failing to do so may be significant.



Above: A purpose built compartment was found housing forty stowaways inside this curtain sided trailer



Above: Several stowaways were found hiding in the chain locker after the crew noticed the canvas spurling pipe cover had been cut open

- If a stowaway is discovered, another full search should be carried out as it is not unusual to find more.
- Members may wish to consider incorporating BIMCO's Stowaway Clause into a time charter party to clarify the allocation of responsibility between charterers and owners for costs incurred as a result of stowaways having been found on board.

Boarding Methods

The most common boarding methods are summarised below:

- Climbing up the mooring ropes from the quay. In many of the Club's recent cases the stowaways indicated that this is precisely what they did.
- Swimming or using a small boat to reach the seaward side of the vessel and climbing aboard using ropes or hooks.
- Climbing up the anchor cable from the water.
- Taking advantage of ladders and ropes left hanging over the ship's side, such as pilot ladders, Jacob's ladders and manropes.

- Pretending to be a stevedore. Although stevedores in some ports are required to wear special clothing with branded overalls and helmets, crews should be mindful stowaways may try to dress in a similar manner and carry fake stevedore identification cards.
- Targeting vessels with ro-ro ramps or cargo side doors, recognising that it is not easy for the crew to police these areas effectively when open for cargo operations.
- Hiding inside containers or trailers before they are loaded, regardless of whether or not they contain cargo, perhaps using an accomplice to close the doors and repair the seal. Stowaways have also been found in void spaces formed within the stow inside containers or behind false bulkheads, usually indicating that the attempt was organised by a third party. Open top containers, particularly covered ones, often attract potential stowaways.
- Swimming or using a small boat to climb on top of the rudder and enter the void space above.

To discourage and prevent stowaway attempts, the following practical measures may be considered. The more difficult it is for unauthorised persons to board and the more visible the deterrents, the more likely that potential stowaways will look for a softer target.

While alongside in port

- The mooring areas should be monitored closely, particularly at night. Rat guards should be securely fitted to all lines to make access more difficult, and additional lights should be rigged over the side to deter potential stowaways during the hours of darkness and make them easier to spot.
- Any overboard rope ladders such as pilot ladders, Jacob's ladders and manropes should be hauled up and secured.



Above: Even a substantial metal grill did not dissuade a number of stowaways who cut through the bars to gain access to this rudder trunk void space

- The crew should keep a vigilant gangway watch, maintaining a written record of everyone who boards and leaves the ship. Only authorised persons should be allowed on board and identification documents should be scrutinised carefully. Prior to each shift the stevedoring company should be asked how many stevedores have been assigned to the vessel. A headcount should be taken when the stevedores arrive as potential stowaways may try to mingle among them. Another headcount should be taken when they leave, adjusted to take account of any stevedores who may have boarded or departed in the interim.
- If the vessel has a low freeboard the crew should watch out for persons attempting to step across from the quay on to the main deck in order to bypass the vessel's security arrangements.
- Crew members should monitor all other access points such as ramps and side doors whilst they are open. When not in use such access points should be closed and secured.
- Where practicable, and if permitted by the port authority, consideration should be given to lifting the accommodation ladder or gangway at night. However, the duty watchman should remain at hand to lower the ladder if required. Crewmembers finding the ladder raised when going ashore or returning to the ship should wait until it is lowered; many seafarers have been injured or lost after falling into the water while attempting to board or disembark by other means.
- The outboard side of the hull and overboard forward and aft should be illuminated, particularly in the vicinity of mooring lines. Additional lights should be rigged if necessary. Such areas should also be checked for the presence of small craft during routine patrols.

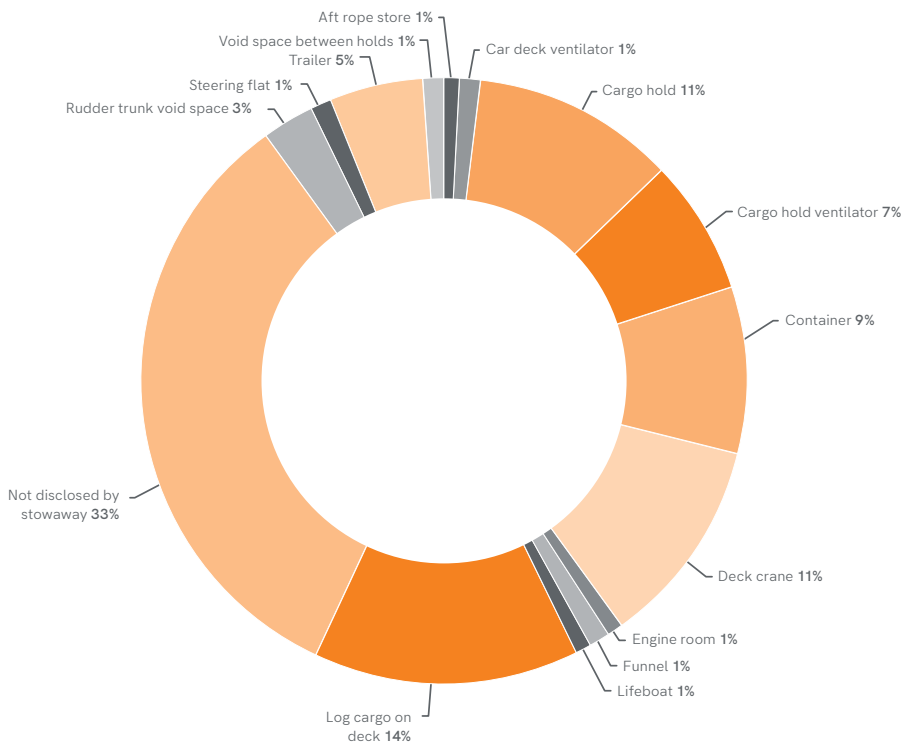
While at anchor

- Maintain a good visual and radar watch for approaching small craft.
- Illuminate areas over the side as far as practicable.
- If an approaching small craft is spotted at night, use the Aldis lamp as a searchlight to check what they are doing.
- Illuminate the main deck and all possible boarding points.
- Stow and secure all overboard rope ladders such as pilot ladders, Jacob's ladders and manropes.
- If it is necessary to rig the accommodation ladder for boarding purposes, hoist it well clear of the water when not in use.
- Fit covers over the hawse pipes and consider operating the anchor wash system as a further deterrent.
- Check that there are no boats made fast to the anchor cable when carrying out routine patrols.
- So far as manning levels and compliance with statutory hours of rest regulations allow, ensure that roving watchmen carry out regular deck patrols, ideally in teams of two. They should be provided with radios to contact the bridge in the event of any concerns.

Stowaway searches

If a stowaway manages to circumvent such precautions, the last line of defence is a thorough search of all parts of the vessel before sailing. Stowaways found while the vessel is in port, in a subsequent port in the same country or within the territorial waters of the country of embarkation are generally regarded as trespassers. In such circumstances it is usually possible to return them ashore at minimal cost and with little or no delay. A comprehensive stowaway search should therefore be carried before the vessel leaves the berth

2012 - Stowaway hiding places



or anchorage. If possible, a further search should be carried out before the vessel leaves territorial waters as it is not unusual for stowaways to emerge soon after departure to find food or water or a more comfortable place to hide.

When conducting a stowaway search:

- If the vessel has been berthed or anchored in a high risk area, ensure that the search is particularly thorough. In such cases consideration should also be given to carrying out a second stowaway search after departure but before leaving territorial waters, if necessary standing off the port in order to do so.
- Close attention should be paid to the areas where stowaways commonly hide such as rudder trunk void spaces, funnel casings, hold vent shafts, chain lockers,

deck cargo, lifeboats, empty containers and open top containers. Vulnerable trailers and any loaded containers found with broken seals should also be checked. If the vessel is equipped with cargo cranes, the search should include the inside of the cabs and pedestals, the winch beds and the upper reaches of the cranes in the vicinity of the vents.

- Stowaway searches should be carried out in a systematic manner. A ship-specific check list should be used for this purpose, splitting the vessel into different search areas. For example, if three key areas are defined, all sections may be searched simultaneously by allocating a small team to each one. In addition to making best use of the time available, such a system may reduce the risk of stowaways moving from one area to another

during a search to avoid being found. It is also essential that all interested parties recognise the need for a thorough stowaway search after cargo operations have been completed and that sufficient time is allowed for this important task, particularly in high risk ports.

- Areas which were previously inspected, locked and sealed whilst in port should be opened and checked prior to departure as stowaways have been known to overcome such arrangements; in a recent case two stowaways managed to bypass a locked metal gate in an underdeck passageway on a container vessel by sliding through a 17 cm gap in a cable run in the web frame adjacent to the gate. Upon completion of the search the spaces should be relocked and re-sealed.
- When entering spaces such as chain lockers, duct keels, holds containing oxygen-depleting or toxic cargoes and adjacent compartments, the vessel's procedures for entering enclosed spaces as set out in the Safety Management System must always be followed.
- If available, the use of search dogs may be considered. In South Africa, Jack Russell dogs have proved to be very effective in finding stowaways, particularly in areas with limited access.
- Making misleading broadcasts, such as entering cargo holds with a loud hailer to announce falsely that the space is about to be fumigated or flooded with carbon dioxide, has sometimes produced successful results.

- In ports where stowaways have been known to hide inside containers standing on the quay awaiting shipment, a probe attached to a carbon dioxide detector may be pushed through one of the air vents in the container wall. A high carbon dioxide reading may indicate that someone is inside.
- The Master should confirm that a thorough stowaway search has been carried out by entering a remark to this effect in the official log book.

In order to mitigate any penalties that may be imposed following a successful stowaway attempt, all shipboard stowaway searches made prior to and after departure, including details of the areas checked and all other precautions taken by the ship to prevent stowaways from boarding, should be recorded in writing. Such details may include accommodation/gangway watch arrangements, the employment of private security guards, identity checks, security rounds, accommodation entrance restrictions, illumination arrangements and the securing and sealing of access doors, cabins, storerooms and holds.

Action to take if stowaways are found at sea

If one or more stowaways are found after sailing, another search should be carried out immediately as it is not uncommon for other stowaways to be hiding elsewhere. Then:

- The Master should contact the shipowner without delay. The Club should be informed immediately thereafter to report the number of stowaways found, the ship's position, details of any cargo on board and the vessel's itinerary. This will allow the Club to consider the best options which may include returning to the previous port or

diverting to another port en route. To ensure that a potential window of opportunity is not lost, speed of notification is vital. Material such as interview information, copies of any identification papers, other significant documentation, photographs of the stowaways and details of their belongings may be forwarded later.

- The shipowner should also inform the vessel's flag state.
- Each stowaway should be interviewed individually to try and ascertain as much of the following information as possible for forwarding to the relevant authorities;
 - a) Name
 - b) Gender
 - c) Date and place of birth
 - d) Nationality and country of residence
 - e) Address
 - f) Name and contact details of next of kin
 - g) Port, date and time of boarding
 - h) Means of access to the vessel
 - i) Place of hiding
 - j) Intended destination
 - k) Reasons for stowing away

- If possible, the interview should also include a range of additional questions. A checklist based on IMO Resolution A.871(20) is contained in the Annex to this Bulletin which, as far as practicable, should be completed for each stowaway at the earliest opportunity.
- It should be remembered that stowaways may hide or destroy their identity papers and withhold information about their country of birth to try and avoid being repatriated. If the Master suspects that the stowaway is not being truthful, further questions may be asked in an effort to determine the stowaway's real nationality. Any identity papers presented or found should be retained in the Master's custody.
- Stowaways should be treated firmly but humanely. Under no circumstances should they be mistreated.



Above: Stowaways emerging from the void space around the rudder stock

- Each stowaway should be searched for identification papers, personal belongings, weapons and drugs.
- The area where the stowaway was found or concealed should be searched for hidden identification papers, personal belongings, weapons and drugs.
- When not under close supervision, stowaways should be confined to a safe and secure area. A spare cabin may prove to be suitable, but any portholes should be fully secured to prevent escape.
- As far as space and facilities allow, each stowaway should be allocated a separate secure cabin with access to sanitary facilities. Cabins should be simply furnished and any items that may be used by a stowaway to harm themselves or others should be removed.
- Stowaways should be provided with food and water, and medical care if required. They should be also familiarised with basic shipboard safety and emergency routines.
- Stowaways should not be allowed to carry out manual work on board, even if they wish to do so. However, they may be requested to keep their accommodation clean and tidy. They should not be signed on ships' articles.
- Crewmembers should be cautioned against socialising with the stowaways or granting them special favours. They should also be warned that assisting stowaways or helping them escape at a future port may contravene the immigration laws of that country and that they may be prosecuted by the local authorities for doing so.
- Stowaways may sometimes allege that they were mistreated or harmed while on board to try and elicit sympathy from immigration officials or in an effort to postpone or avoid repatriation.

This may result in the local police investigating the allegations, possibly resulting in delay. Should supporting evidence be found, the vessel may be fined and criminal charges may be brought against the crewmember(s) concerned, possibly leading to imprisonment. Crewmembers should therefore be courteous but firm when dealing with stowaways and must not engage in unacceptable behaviour of any kind.

Repatriating Stowaways

After all interested parties have been notified, the Club will consider the most appropriate course of action, liaising with local Club correspondents as necessary. Once a port of disembarkation has been agreed, the Master will be advised of the repatriation arrangements that have been made.

In some ports the vessel may not be permitted to sail until the stowaways have left the country or have been repatriated successfully.

Repatriating stowaways is seldom easy. Some countries may not allow stowaways to disembark if they do not possess identification papers, and others may not grant such permission even if the stowaways have valid travel documents. In such cases it will be necessary for the stowaways to remain on board and, depending on the country, the local authorities may order the shipowner to employ security guards to ensure that they do not escape. However, if a vessel is trading to the same ports on a regular basis it may be possible for the stowaways to remain on board until the ship reaches the place where they embarked.

Vessels should not call at unscheduled ports to land stowaways unless instructed to do so by the shipowner after liaising with the Club, and only after any contractual issues have been discussed and agreed. In such an event it will also be necessary to obtain permission from the relevant authorities in the country concerned. This does not prevent a vessel from calling at an unscheduled port due to serious safety or security concerns, or if a stowaway falls ill and requires urgent medical attention.

Additional information on stowaway issues can be found in the following IMO documents:

Resolution A.871(20) - Guidelines on the Allocation of Responsibilities to Seek the Successful Resolution of Stowaway Cases.

Resolution FAL.11(37) (FAL – Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic) & **Resolution MSC.312(88)** - Revised Guidelines on the Prevention of Access by Stowaways and the Allocation of Responsibilities to Seek the Successful Resolution of Stowaway Cases.


Please note that the guidance contained in this Loss Prevention Bulletin is intended to supplement but not replace a company's existing stowaway prevention procedures or the action to take if stowaways are found after departure.

Members requiring further advice should contact the **Loss Prevention department**.

July 2020

Stowaway Questionnaire

Ship Details	
Ship's name	
IMO number	
Callsign	
Flag	
Port of registry	
Company	
Company address	
Agent in next port	
Agent address	
Satcom number	
Name of Master	



Photograph
of Stowaway

Stowaway Details	
1. Date and time found	
2. Place where found	
3. Port and country of boarding	
4. Time spent in country of boarding	
5. Date and time of boarding	
6. Intended destination	
7. Intended final destination (if different)	
8. Reasons for boarding the ship	
9. Does the stowaway claim to be a refugee?	
10. Surname	
11. Given name(s)	
12. Name by which known	
13. Religion	
14. Gender	
15. Date of birth	
16. Place of birth	
17. Nationality (as claimed)	
18. Type of identification document (if any)	
19. Passport - number	
20. Passport - when issued	
21. Passport - where issued	
22. Passport - date of expiry	
23. Passport - issued by	

Stowaway Details (continued)

24. Identity Card - number	
25. Identity Card - when issued	
26. Identity Card - where issued	
27. Identity Card - date of expiry	
28. Identity Card - issued by	
29. Seaman's Book - number	
30. Seaman's Book - when issued	
31. Seaman's Book - where issued	
32. Seaman's Book - date of expiry	
33. Seaman's Book - issued by	
34. Emergency Passport - number	
35. Emergency Passport - when issued	
36. Emergency Passport - where issued	
37. Emergency Passport - date of expiry	
38. Emergency Passport - issued by	
39. Home address	
40. Country of domicile	
41. Profession(s)	
42. Employer(s) details	
43. Address in country of boarding	
44. Height (cm)	
45. Weight (kg)	
46. Complexion	
47. Colour of eyes	
48. Colour of hair	
49. Form of head / face	
50. Marks / scars / tattoos	
51. First language (ie mother tongue)	
52. Second language	
53. Third language	
54. Marital status	
55. Name of spouse	
56. Nationality of spouse	
57. Address of spouse	
58. Name of parents	
59. Nationality of parents	
60. Address of parents	

Stowaway Details (continued)

If the Master suspects that the nationality claimed by the stowaway may not be accurate, asking some or all of the following questions may determine whether or not the stowaway is familiar with details about that country that a national might be expected to know:

61. Capital city	
62. Description of flag	
63. Currency	
64. Principal languages spoken	
65. Name of leader / ruler	
66. Names of principal political parties	
67. Names of principal tribes	
68. Principal religions	
69. Famous sports stars	

Other Details

70. Method of boarding including the place(s) where the stowaway hid, why they chose this particular ship and whether they have stowed away before.

71. Details of any assistance provided by individuals or organisations ashore or by members of the crew. If such assistance was provided, was any payment made?

72. Inventory of the stowaway's possessions:

73. Other information such as names and addresses of colleagues, community leaders (eg mayor, tribal chief) or contacts at destination:

Other Details (continued)

74. Statement made by the stowaway:

75. Statement made by the Master including any comments regarding the credibility of the information provided by the stowaway:

76. Date(s) of interview(s)

Stowaway's signature	Master's signature
Date:	Date: