

Press Release

July 23, 2008

It is with shock and dismay that the Council of American Master Mariners witnesses the latest display of criminalization of Masters and seafarers by the world's courts. Despite overwhelming evidence showing his innocence, the Greek courts have found Captain Kristo Laptalo, master of the *CORAL SEA*, guilty of transporting drugs found hidden in his cargo. With this type of ruling, every master or officer of a container or cargo vessel will find him or herself subject to conviction simply for accepting cargo onboard with bills of lading stating simple "said to contain." This ruling opens the door to further abuse of international seafarers by stating that even if they are not aware of the contents of the container, or cargo they load onboard, they are subject to conviction and jail for the carriage.

The Council of American Master Mariners would urge every shipping company, and maritime nation to strongly protest the action taken by the Greek court. If this type of criminalization is allowed to continue, the world's shipping companies will not find that they have a shortage of officers and masters, they will find that they don't have anyone willing to take the risk of conviction.



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