



# More than 16 tons of drugs were seized in the Port of Santos in 2022.

## Introduction

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More than 16 tons of drugs were seized in the Port of Santos in 2022. All narcotics were intercepted in actions carried out by the Federal Police and the Federal Revenue Service at the Santos pier. Despite the significant volume of illicit items hidden in containers or vessels, there are preventive measures to avoid contamination of ships with these products.

According to a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Santos is considered one of the main distribution points for cocaine, by sea, in the world. Located on the coast of São Paulo, the port appears on a list of four locations that stand out in the global maritime drug trade, along with Buenaventura and Cartagena in Colombia, and Guayaquil, in Ecuador.

In many cases, drugs were found inside containers, in holds, in ship compartments or attached to hulls, bows, rudder stock, and other spaces on vessels.

According to the Federal Revenue in the Port of Santos, in 2022, more than 600 kilos of cocaine were found in the sea chest of vessels. Divers were responsible for locating the narcotics. In addition, more than 14.5 tons of the drug are in the shipments, hidden. Another 293 kilos were found hidden in the structures of refrigerated containers.

The expressive volumes of drug seizures at the Port of Santos can be explained by the amount of cargo handled and the connection with more than 600 ports in 125 countries. Five states representing 67% of Brazil's GDP are in its area of influence.

Santos is the most important foreign trade route in Brazil. Almost 27% of the country's trade balance (US\$ 112.3 billion) passes through the port. It is also the 39th largest container port on the Lloyd's Top 100 list (the second largest in Latin America and the only Brazilian on the list).



The Port of Santos' Map

## TRAFFIC EXPANSION

The same document reveals that smaller ports located in the northern part of the Brazilian territory are assuming an increasingly important role as warehouses for the transatlantic cocaine trade, mainly for shipments destined for Europe. The reason, according to the entity, is that traffickers are resorting to these alternatives due to increased inspection.

The document also shows that Brazil is cited as the main

exporter of cocaine outside the American continent, even ahead of Colombia, one of the three largest producers of the drug in the world, along with Bolivia and Peru.

Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador are identified as the main exit points for cocaine arriving in Europe. From 2015 to 2021, 70% of cocaine seized in Africa and 46% of shipments seized in Asia left the American continent through Brazil. In 2020 and 2021, the country accounted for 72% of the cocaine found by Asian authorities.

## Background

This circular aim to highlight procedures to be adopted by shipowners operating in Brazilian waters, following meetings with CESPOTOS SP/FEDERAL POLICE, due to the increase of smuggling of narcotics on board vessels.

These procedures aim to protect the crew, to reduce the risk of attempts of loading illicit products, as well as to meet with local authorities' requirements on the combat against the international drug trafficking.

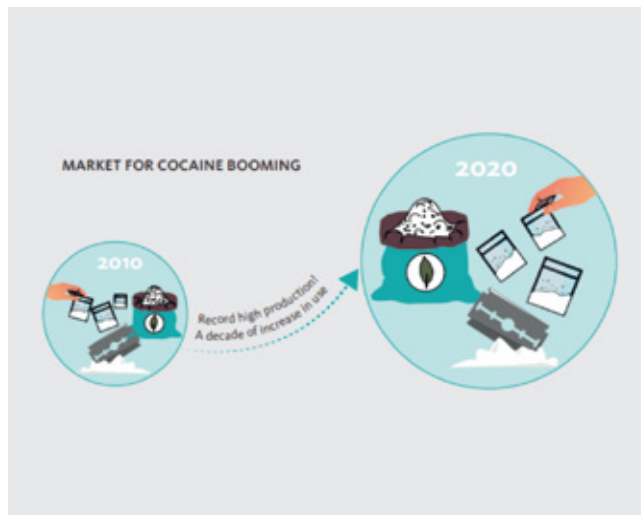
The Global cocaine production reached record levels, reaching 1,982 tons from 2020. The paths outlined by trafficking are determined by the places of production and consumption, and Brazil is on the route of cocaine trafficking from South America to Africa and Europe.

An increased flow of cocaine into the western border states shortly after the onset of COVID-19 seems to have been enabled, at least in part, by traffickers increasingly resorting to clandestine flights to transport cocaine into Brazil, likely in order to compensate for disruptions in established landbased or waterborne cross-border channels into Brazil or Paraguay says the CoE Brazil - Centre of Excellence for Illicit Drug Supply Reduction.



## Drug Seizures in Brazil and at The Port of Santos

The United Nation’s Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) reported that most of the cocaine traffic around the world is done by sea.



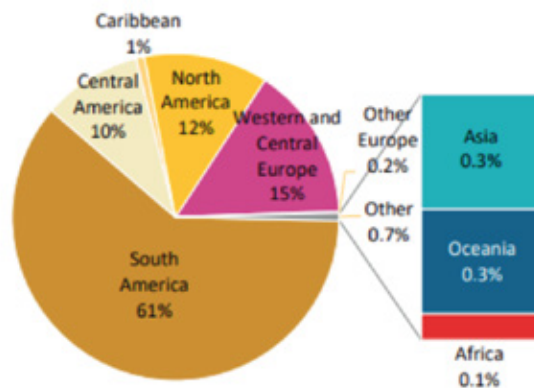
The 2022 World Drug report issued by UNODC demonstrates that the global quantity of cocaine seized in 2020, on a breakdown by Country, showed that Colombia was in 1st place with 41%, followed by the United States of America with 11%, Ecuador at 6,5 % and Brazil with 6,4%.

The UNODC report also shows that in 2020, the major departure country for shipments of cocaine at the global level, as reported by Member States to UNODC, was Colombia (23 mentions), followed by Brazil (21 mentions). Countries outside the Americas most frequently mentioned Brazil as the cocaine departure country, followed by Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, suggesting that Brazil is an important transit area for cocaine shipped outside of Latin America.

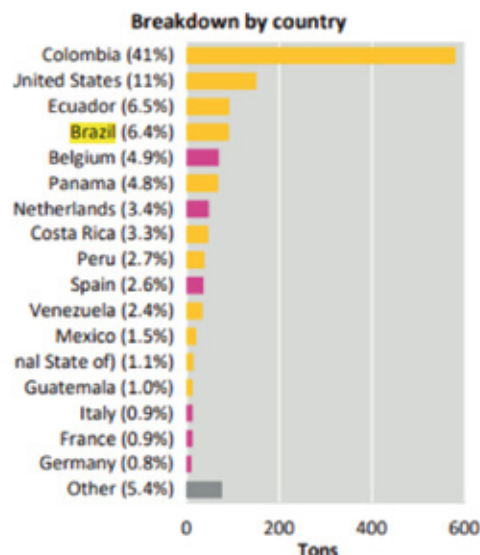
The Pacific seaports of Buenaventura, Colombia, Guayaquil, Ecuador, and the Atlantic seaports of Cartagena, Colombia, and the port of Santos in Brazil are crucial departure points for shipping cocaine. Some mention the Brazilian's smaller ports that crop up, with growing importance for cocaine shipments to Europe in recent years, as traffickers attempt to avoid improved controls and surveillance capacity implemented at the port of Santos. The Ports of Recife, Natal and Fortaleza unveil an increase in cocaine seized.

There was a record high in global cocaine seizures due to trafficking in cocaine continuing to increase in 2020 despite the COVID-19 pandemic, and global quantities of cocaine seized increased by 4.5 per cent, to a new record high of 1,424 tons. The major volume of the cocaine seized worldwide occurs in the Americas, which accounted for 83 per cent of the global quantity intercepted in 2020, the majority being seized in South America(61%). The total quantity of cocaine seized in South America increased by 13 per cent between 2019 and 2020 , with most countries in the subregion, including Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia and Peru, reporting increases.

## GLOBAL QUANTITY OF COCAINE SEIZED, BY REGION AND SUBREGION, 2020



## GLOBAL QUANTITY OF COCAINE SEIZED, BY COUNTRY, 2020



Source: UNODC 2022 report

Trafficking by sea, mainly in shipping containers, is growing, accounting for nearly 90 per cent of cocaine seized globally in 2021.

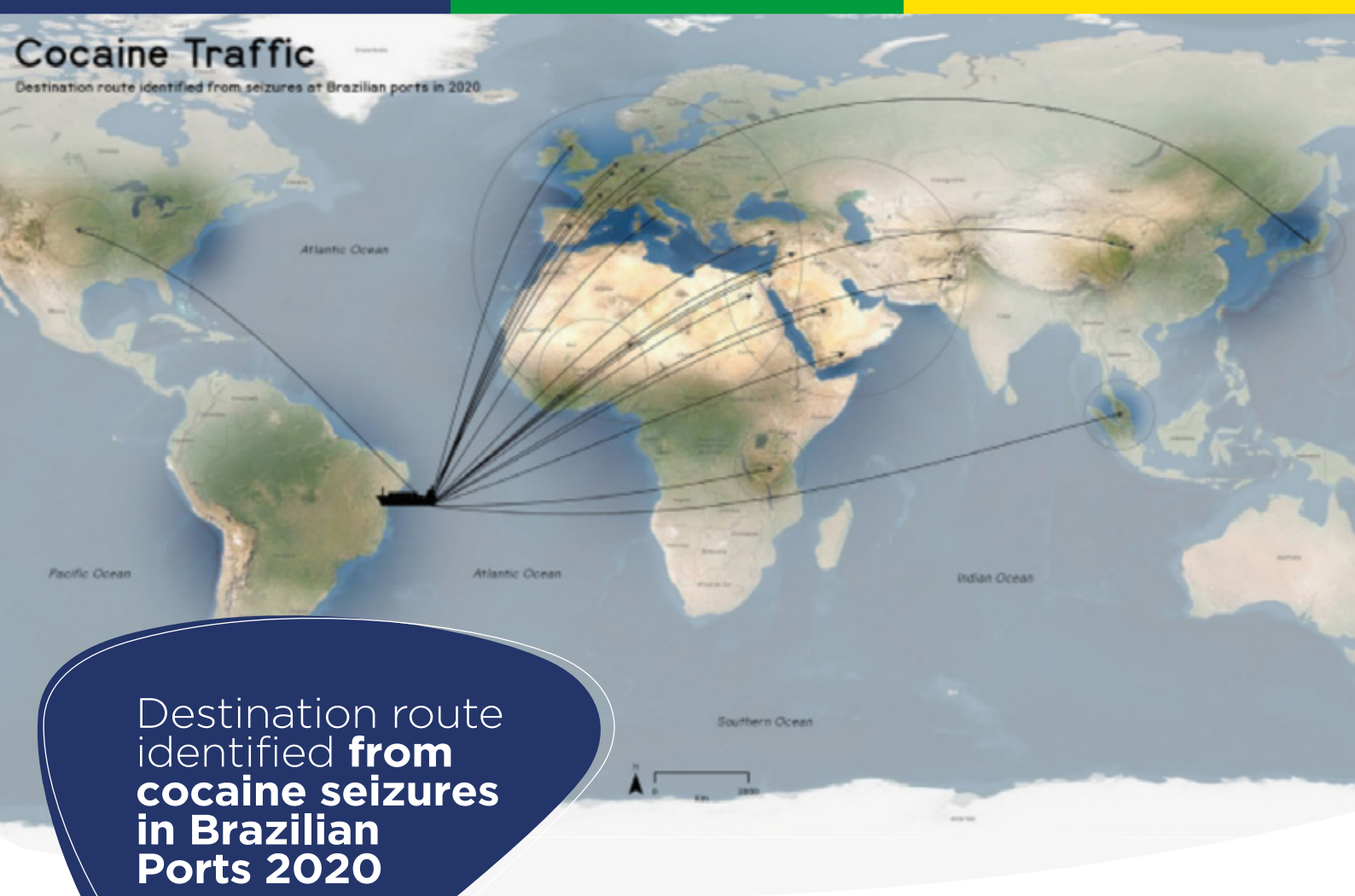
## BRAZILIAN PORTS AND NEW STRATEGY

World seizure data suggest that trafficking is expanding to other regions outside the two main markets, North America and Europe, with increased levels of trafficking to Africa and Asia.

The Brazilian cocaine seizure data confirm this new strategy. There was a change in the pattern of destinations in 2020, according to the Centre of Excellence for Illicit Drug Supply Reduction(CoE Brazil). The cocaine seizures enable the identification of the intention to diversify routes to the east coast of Central Africa, West Asia, Southeast Asia and, to a lesser extent, North America.

# Cocaine Traffic

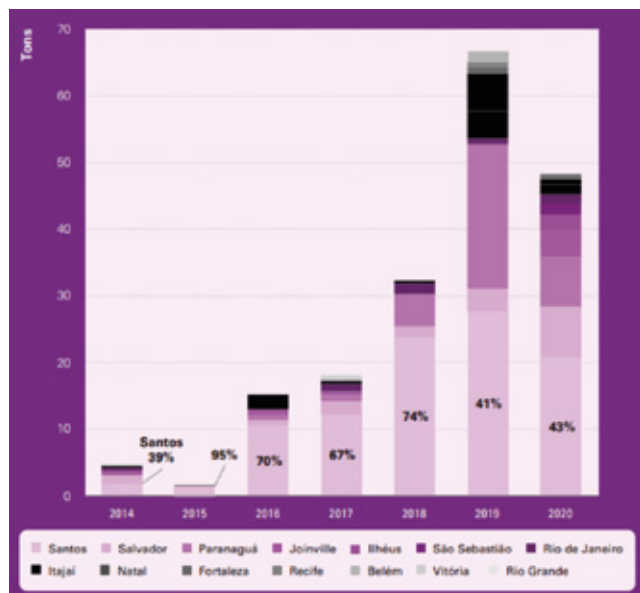
Destination route identified from seizures at Brazilian ports in 2020



Destination route identified from cocaine seizures in Brazilian Ports 2020

Map Figure: prepared by: CoE Brazil – Centre of Excellence for Illicit Drug Supply Reduction. Source: Brazilian Federal Police.

## DIVERSIFICATION OF COCAINE TRAFFICKING THROUGH BRAZILIAN PORTS



Source: Policia Federal, Brazil.

In recent years, according to CoE Brazil, Drug Trafficking Organizations have diversified the routes and ports used for trafficking of cocaine through and out of Brazil beyond the long-standing use of large ports, seeking to exploit smaller

ports on the northeastern and the southern coast of Brazil, where there is less capacity for inspection. The diversification had been observed before the pandemic but became particularly prominent during its course, and was especially visible in terms of the destination countries of cocaine trafficked from Brazilian ports.

## THE TABLE BELOW SHOWS THE SEIZURE OF COCAINE IN PORTS ACCORDING TO QUANTITY, IN KILOGRAMS, IN 2019 AND 2020.

Port	2019	Percentage (%)	2020	Percentage (%)
BELÉM	1,462.0	2.2		0.0
FORTALEZA	930.0	1.4	673.0	1.4
ILHÉUS		0.0	2,188.5	4.5
ITAJAÍ	4,133.0	6.2	1,364.0	2.8
JOINVILLE	235.0	0.4	4,315.4	8.9
NATAL	5,645.6	8.5	943.0	2.0
PARANAGUÁ	21,554.0	32.3	7,401.2	15.3
RECIFE	808.2	1.2		0.0
RIO DE JANEIRO	755.5	1.1	1,482.0	3.1
RIO GRANDE	22.3	0.0		0.0
SALVADOR	3,383.0	5.1	7,499.1	15.5
SANTOS	27,667.3	41.4	20,874.4	43.3
SÃO SEBASTIÃO		0	1,524.5	3.2
VITÓRIA	175.0	0.3		0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>66,770.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>48,265.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

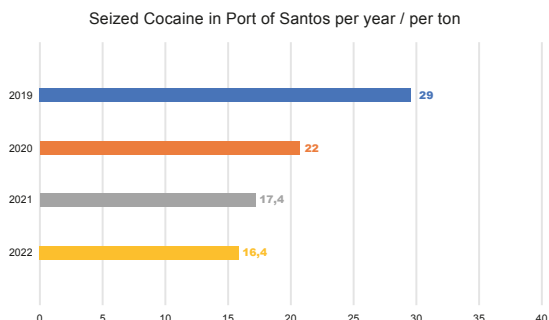
Figure : prepared by: CoE Brazil – Centre of Excellence for Illicit Drug Supply Reduction. Source: Brazilian Federal Police.

Many cases were spotted at the Brazilian ports, related to narcotics found inside containers, ships holds and compartments or attached to the hull, inside the sea chest, bow thruster or in rudder stock, and other spaces of the vessels.

On November 4, 2022, the Brazilian Federal Police seized 2.75 tonnes of cocaine at the Port of Vila do Conde (Barcarena) in the state of Pará (North of Brazil). Investigations point that the drug was bound for the European city of Sines, in Portugal. The drug was hidden in a container, camouflaged inside bags of soybean meal. This was the largest-ever cocaine seizure recorded in a port.

During 2022, five occurrences of hidden drugs were recorded in the sea chest of ships in the port of Santos, totaling 611 kg of drugs.

**THE BELOW GRAPHIC, WITH FIGURES FROM THE BRAZILIAN FEDERAL POLICE AND BRAZILIAN FEDERAL REVENUE, SHOWS THE VOLUME OF COCAINE SEIZED IN THE PORT OF SANTOS IN THE LAST 4 YEARS:**



**STRATEGIES USED BY DRUG DEALERS**

The modus operandi of drug traffickers is almost the same in different ports. The most common strategies or methods used by them are:

Introduce bags with drugs in the sea chests or attach them to the hull, rudders, anchors, propellers, and vents of the vessel using divers while the ship is docked or at anchor.

Hiding relatively small amounts of drugs in remote locations on board (e.g. cabins, funnels, decks, storerooms or engine rooms).



Place illegal substances inside sealed containers before loading. One of the most common methods currently used by drug traffickers is to break container seals and hide drugs inside the cargo, replacing the seals (this method involves some level of collaboration from terminal operators or freight forwarders). In this case, refrigerators are the most often used.

Burying packages of drugs inside the bulk cargo. This method allows large amounts of illegal substances to shift at any time, usually within the cargo.

Especially in the Port of Santos, with an anchorage area out of the Port, small boats can approach the ships that are in the anchorage. The same can happen with ships moored in the port, which due to their size and geographical characteristics with very small auxiliary waterways, turn it difficult for the police to monitor activities in the port channel.



**HIDING PLACES ON OTHER VESSELS**

-  **12. Store Room**  
A ship's sail store room is out of bounds for most, but traffickers have found a way to use it to their advantage.
-  **13. Fishing Nets**  
Fishing Nets have been used to bring drugs aboard ahead of departure.

insightcrime.org

February 2021

Source: InSight Crime investigations and open media sources

From Colombia Drug Smuggling Report March 2022

## **PREVENT MEASURES IN SANTOS AND IN OTHER BRAZILIAN PORTS**

As a result of problems faced, companies operating in Brazil are taking preventive measures. The procedures are recommended in berthed, at anchorage and during cargo operations at the port.

### **CORRECT IDENTIFICATION**

During port operations, the Brazilian authorities stress the importance of correct identification of visitors, exercising accurate identification of all entrants, inserting the full name, identification number and company name at the vessel's log. It is also important to confirm the motivation of the visit, since there are occurrences of people accessing vessels at times not consistent with the desired service, or for services already performed by others.

The correct identification is fundamental for the investigation work of those involved in drug trafficking, due to the use of workers co-opted by criminals to access narcotics by the gangway, as well as to hoisting volumes by the seaside.

### **REPORT ANY SIGN OF CONTAMINATION**

The crew should also be aware of attempts to load drugs during cargo operations, with the possibility of loading attempts through ship loaders. Any sign of contamination, identified visually or by noise caused in the loader, should be reported to the terminal with immediate paralyzing of the loading operation to confirm the possible contamination. The vessel must advise Port authorities to perform appropriate actions to remove contaminant volumes.

### **CAMERA MONITORING SYSTEMS**

The deployment of CCTV monitoring systems is another preventive measure highly recommended by the authorities to control access to the vessel and its compartments, including the deck and the storage rooms. The monitoring system inhibits the action of criminals and assists the authorities in identifying the bandits.

The proper identification of the ship's visitors and the use of cameras also increase the security barriers and improve the ISPS Code system.

It is highly recommended that the monitoring devices are positioned in protected places to avoid damage or shutdown by criminals. Similarly, data must be preserved in safe storage in the internal compartments of the ship.

### **CONTAINERS INSPECTIONS**

Upon entering the terminal, the container may be submitted to a scanner inspection on a random system. The container

may be selected for inspection depending on variables such as the shipper, the type of cargo and its destination. Europe is one of the destinations that most raises the alert, as it is one of the main markets for international drug trafficking.

Although part of the arrests has been performed on board vessels, owners are not facing criminal investigations as the authorities have an understanding that the substances are smuggled by criminals, not connected to the vessel operations, with few cases in which the crew was reported to be involved.

Most of the narcotics arrests are the result of containers being scanned, use of sniffer dogs and anonymous denunciations.

### **POLICE'S REPORT**

In most of the cases where narcotics are found during operations, the police are called on board and the substances removed, with the vessels sailing without relevant delays.

At this point we highlight the importance of reporting any suspicious fact on board to the authorities, to agents and to the P&I correspondent, collaborating with the authorities on the work against drug trafficking.

Although the authorities are making a strong effort to increase the combat against drug trafficking, the volume of illegal substances not seized is still high, with reports of narcotics being found at the destination ports, which depending on the local legislation, is bringing judicial matters to owners, ship and cargo agents.

### **OTHER MEASURES**

Other measures can be taken to enhance the security on board. Some are basic as proper illumination on deck, permanent vigilance on the gangway, keeping accurate records of visitors' activities on board, and a constant lookout at holds.

The same procedures are recommended during cargo operations at the port, where in addition to deck monitoring and small vessels approaches, the access to ship compartments should be closed, especially to storage rooms.

Therefore, active surveillance on deck and of possible attempts of foreign vessels' approaches should be applied, reporting any suspicious movement to the official channels of communication by radio or telephone. The ship's accesses and compartments must remain closed and monitored throughout the stay in anchorage.

The use of ship approach detection systems throughout the stay in Brazilian waters is suggested.

Services providers can also be provided by third parties, such as sealing of the cargo holds by an independent surveyor as well as performing underwater inspections, in case of any suspicion of drug trafficking. Security guards can also be arranged to increase the watch during cargo operations.

# Types of Contamination



## CONTAINERS



## SHIP'S HULLS AND COMPARTMENTS



## UNDERWATER COMPARTMENTS

### CONTAINERS

The most used means by smugglers is the insertion of drugs in containers, taking advantage to insert the illegal products before boarding the ships.

The Brazilian customs system determines that containers are stored in a fiscal control area (bonded terminals) for the export procedure. For security purposes, scanners are used for the inspection of containers, but due to the large volume of containers, only part of the units are inspected.

In addition to random inspections, due to increased seizures, the cargoes and destinations most targeted by criminals are being scanted. An example of cargo is coffee, the characteristic of the cargoes that "masks" the smell of the drug, besides being a product with the export destination to the ports of Europe and the United States, targets of destination of drugs. Customs and the Federal Police also use sniffer dogs and the intelligence system to track contaminated units.

When "contaminated" containers are identified on board, they are discharged, and the vessels receive authorization to sail.

### SHIP'S HULLS AND COMPARTMENTS

There is a large volume of drug seizures inserted in the ship's porings and compartments. Drugs are usually packed in suitcases or plastic packaging.

The entry on board can take place through visitors carrying the product or by lifting carried out by third parties on board, from small vessels by the seaside.

Boarding can also take place via ship loader, mainly in bulk carriers, during the shipment of products such as sugar and soybeans.

Several cases showed volumes found in compartments such as storage rooms.

Once the presence of illicit products on board, the federal police will come to seize the material, with the ship cleared to continue its voyage.

When "contaminated" containers are identified on board, they are unloaded, and the vessels receive authorization to sail.

### UNDERWATER COMPARTMENTS

Another modality used by criminals is the use of compartments below the water level, such as the sea chest, using divers who usually use the nighttime to access the ship.

Once the presence of illicit products on board is identified, the federal police will appear on board to seize the material, with the ship cleared to continue its voyage.

### PORT ACCESS CONTROL SYSTEM

Once berthed, the vessel receives visits from shipping agents, experts, stevedores, terminal staff, ship chandlers and other individuals who may need to provide any service related to the operations or directly to the vessel.

To have access to the port these individuals must be previously registered in the ISPS Code system of the port authority, in addition, a second digital authorization for entry specifically to the proposed ship is required.

Brazilian ports have a combined system of granted terminals, private terminals and public berths. In the private terminals, in addition to the port authority ISPS Code accreditation, the terminal can also perform access control to the quay. This can also occur in granted terminals, where the pier is also under the responsibility of the terminal.

In the berths controlled by the port authority, there are access gates with biometric control and reading of the access card. Eventually, an inspection of backpacks and other luggage carried by the entrants may also occur, but this does not occur frequently.

Vehicles authorized to access the quay, including those used for supply and spare parts, should be inspected prior to access to the port area, but this is also not often achieved.

At the public berths, it is common to have one single gate allowing access to multiple berths, opening the possibility of individuals boarding other vessels, beyond the ship authorized to be visited.



# INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP WITH BRAZILIAN AUTHORITIES PROJECT CRIMJUST



A partnership between Interpol, the UNODC Corruption and Economic Crime Branch and the UNODC Research and Trend Analysis Branch aims to support countries along the supply chains of trafficked goods. The idea is to use a comprehensive, integrated approach and go beyond illicit apprehension to carry out processes or proceeds from criminal actions aimed at interrupting activities.

This is CRIMJUST, funded by the European Union (EU), the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and the Portuguese government. In total, 12 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean and West Africa joined the

action. Among them are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama and Peru, besides Cape Verde, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau and Nigeria.

In this context, Interpol acts in investigative support, facilitating cross-border investigations, providing access to secure communication channels for exchanging information, and analytical data support; international meetings to review case studies and share research-related information.

Operational activities, which include targeting operations and addressing the operational overcome challenges, are also on the list, as is conducting training courses.

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