

海 事 處  
香港統一碼頭道38號  
海港政府大樓

香港郵政總局信箱4155號



**MARINE DEPARTMENT**  
HARBOUR BUILDING  
38 PIER ROAD  
HONG KONG

G.P.O. BOX 4155  
HONG KONG

TELEX NO. 64553  
ANSWERBACK MARHQ HX

網 站 WEB SITE : <http://www.mardep.gov.hk>

本處檔號 OUR REF.: SD/S 800/8

電話號碼 TEL. NO.: (852) 2852 4503

傳真號碼 FAX NO.: (852) 2545 0556

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To: All Masters, Ship Security Officers and Company Security Officers of Hong Kong registered ships

**Security and Quality Advisory No. 11**  
**Smuggling/Stowaway activities using ship's rudder trunk**

This circular letter draws the attention of the concerned parties to possible misappropriation of void space at ship's rudder trunk for smuggling/stowaway activities.

1. The Marine Department (MD) has come to the knowledge that the void space locating at the upper section of the rudder trunk of a vessel can be misappropriated for illegal activities such as smuggling/stowaway. If proved to be the case, vessel could be detained in port and the crew subject to interrogation/prosecution by the local authorities, thus causing criminal liability to the crew and severe disruption to the trading of vessel.
2. In accordance with the Hong Kong legislations, all vessels on the Hong Kong Shipping Register are prohibited from carrying any illegal drugs. It is also noted that under the Merchant Shipping (Registration) Ordinance (Cap.415), if the Director of Marine is not satisfied with the use of a Hong Kong-registered vessel, the Director has the power to close the registration of the vessel.
3. The void space at the open rudder trunk is provided to allow the rudder stock to be able to move from side to side when the rudder is turned to starboard or port. As the void space is large enough for hiding people, it may be accessed from the sea below and used for smuggling / stowaway / illegal activities.
4. The open rudder trunk design exists on many vessels. To prevent unauthorized entry, shipowners are advised to consider fitting permanent barrier (e.g. steel bars or grids) covering the opening to the void space to prevent people from climbing

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up. The ship's crew should also conduct periodical search with the possibility to look down into the rudder trunk from the inspection hatch in the steering gear room.

5. To prevent illegal activities or similar reoccurrences, the ship management company should develop / revise their ship security plan to identify all void spaces available on board as potential "smugglers' cave" and take preventive actions accordingly, including critical and regular patrol/search whenever the ship is of accessible.
6. Attached to this advisory are the photos showing for reference the void space at the rudder trunk.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Y.K. Li', with a stylized flourish at the end.

(Y.K. Li)

Senior Surveyor/Security & Quality Assurance Section  
for Director of Marine

