

Shipping company, crew member indicted for vessel pollution

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

WASHINGTON - Greek-based shipping company Kassian Maritime Navigation Agency Ltd. and a crew member of the M/V North Princess, an ocean-going bulk cargo ship traveling to ports in the United States, were charged in a three-count indictment related to the operations of the ship, the Justice Department announced today.

Kassian Maritime is charged with illegal dumping of bilge and waste water in violation of the Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships (APPS), making false statements to U.S. Coast Guard inspectors, and obstruction of justice in relation to the Coast Guard's inspection of the North Princess. The ship's Second Engineer, Spyridon Markou, is also charged with obstruction of justice with regard to the ship's inspection.

Engine room operations on board large oceangoing vessels such as the North Princess generate large amounts of waste oil. U.S. law requires that all overboard discharges of waste oil be recorded in an oil record book, a required log which is regularly inspected by the Coast Guard.

According to the indictment, on or about Nov. 20, 2006, the North Princess arrived in port in Jacksonville, Fla, and was boarded by Coast Guard officials who conducted an inspection to determine the vessel's compliance with environmental laws. The Coast Guard's inspection uncovered evidence that Kassian Maritime, acting through its agents and employees, made false statements and used false documents during the course of the Coast Guard's inspection. The indictment also alleges that the shipping company failed to maintain an accurate oil record book of all disposals of oil residue and discharges overboard, in violation of federal law.

Second Engineer Markou is also charged in the indictment with obstructing the inspection by providing false information to the Coast Guard regarding the ship's use of an illegal bypass pipe, also referred to as a "magic pipe," that was used to transfer oil-contaminated waste overboard.

If convicted, Kassian Maritime faces up to \$500,000 in fines and other possible penalties. Markou faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison for the obstruction of justice charge.

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