



Beware of custom fines in Senegal

Ship operators continue to be fined for alleged inaccuracies when filing customs declarations at Senegalese ports, with the port of Dakar a particular hotspot. The grounds on which fines are levied have become increasingly diverse and the fines' monetary value can be substantial.

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For more than a decade there has been a persistent issue of ships incurring fines at Senegal's ports. The Senegalese Customs Authorities are known for paying close attention to the details in each ship's custom declarations and stores lists - and for imposing very strict penalties for any discrepancies identified, as permitted under its Customs Code.

Our local correspondents have repeatedly warned the industry about customs related challenges in Senegalese ports. In 2021, [BUDD Group](#) highlighted that the situation in the port of Dakar had become progressively more difficult, that the grounds on which fines were levied had become increasingly diverse and the amounts of the fines themselves had increased substantially. In December 2022, [ETIC SAS](#) reported that the number of cases of ships being fined for alleged misdeclarations was on the rise and emphasized the importance of completing the customs documents with the utmost care. And now, in February 2023, Budd Group once more raises awareness of the challenging situation in the port of Dakar, specifically cautioning vessels carrying bagged or bulk cargoes about the risk of being detained due to discrepancies between cargo quantities recorded at the weighbridge and in the cargo manifest.

Over the past ten years reports have included incidents of fines being imposed for:

- differences between declared fuel oil quantities and sounding made by custom officers attending onboard;
- failure to declare the quantity of “used oil”, i.e., to include fuel oil contained within piping, lube oil contained in the engine sump tank and pumps, hydraulic oil in pressure tanks for windlass and winches, etc.
- failure to declare the amount of carbon dioxide (CO2) and foam concentrate contained within the vessel's fixed fire extinguishing systems;
- differences between declared store inventories and calculations made by custom officers during own inventory inspections;
- attaching “unofficial” documents to the customs declaration, even if their purpose was to clarify details stated in the official declaration;
- spelling mistakes in crew lists when identified by immigration authorities;
- failure to have the bunker declaration form completed by the time the customs officers arrived in the master's cabin; as well as
- deficits in cargo discharged as compared to the cargo manifest, particularly for bulk and bagged cargoes.

ETIC SAS also advises that Customs Authorities at the port of Dakar are particularly exacting when it comes to ships' cargo manifests. For example, if a cargo manifest refers to several different discharge ports, Customs will require a separate manifest sheet that describes only the cargo that is to be discharged in Dakar.

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An overview of BUDD's detailed recommendations on how to avoid fines when calling at Senegalese ports is available in its [Newsletter of 24 February 2023](#). We recommend that ship operators forward a copy of this, and ETIC SAS' [ETIC_SAS_Senegal_custom_fines_6Dec2022.pdf](#), to all ships likely to call at Senegalese ports.

In summary, the correspondents advise masters of ships destined for Senegalese ports, and the port of Dakar in particular, to:

- Contact the ship's local agent well in advance of arrival to ascertain the customs and immigration regulations in force in Senegal at that given time and the documentation required.
- Prepare all the required documents in advance, before arriving in port, and ensure that all is in order.
- Check that all consumables on board, including food, paint, chemicals, crew personal effects, bunkers and lube oil, fire extinguishing medium, etc. have been accurately listed in the proper declaration form. The accuracy of all numbers is crucial!
- Keep all the required documents and declarations in one single file and ask the agent to verify the documents before remittance to the authorities. Note that it may be necessary to delay the lowering of the gangway to prevent authority representatives from coming onboard until all documents have been properly completed and carefully checked.
- Meet with the authority representatives in person and ensure that the agent is present onboard at the time when the authority representatives board the ship.

In case of any doubt, e.g. if requested to sign an unfamiliar document or language and cultural differences make communication difficult, ask for the agent's and/or the P&I correspondent's assistance.

We are grateful to ETIC SAS and BUDD for providing the above information.