

SABATINO PIZZOLANTE

Circular for P & I Clubs

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North of England (through Globalpandi), Steamship Mutual, American Club (through Globalpandi), Nordisk Defence Club, British Marine Managers (through Globalpandi), Charterers Mutual Assurance Association Limited, Axa Corporate Solutions (through Globalpandi), Through Transport Club (TTC), ITIC, Raets P&I and InterCoastal P&I.

MV “Carol” refloated and the Orinoco River clear for sailing

After several days the Venezuelan authorities have finally managed to refloat the mv “Carol” of flag of Singapore, which run aground between miles 169.0 and 169.5 of the Orinoco River when leaving, preventing the traffic through the navigation channels for more than eight days.

Consequently, according to authorities at least thirteen ships were anchored within the river, as well as seven were tied up to the different berths located alongside the river, virtually trapped while refloating operations took place. Despite this the President of the national governmental entity in charge of channel maintenance, Instituto Nacional de Canalizaciones (INC), Capt. Wolfgang Lopez Carrasquel, assured that the channel of navigation of the Orinoco is in its better conditions in the last 10 years, although he confirmed that in the first three months of the year, 12 groundings have registered, pointing towards a human error in the case of the recent grounding, taking into account that the “channel is in ideal conditions”.

Refloating operations became difficult due to the fact that the propeller and the helm were buried in a sandbank, being needed the joint action of tugboats and dredgers, together with the lightening of the grounded ship. In the meantime, several ships were said to be awaiting for entering the river either to load or discharge.

It is important to point out that in an interview to the President of INC by the “Correo del Caroni”, local newspaper in the Bolivar State, stated that the accident of mv “Carol” was not attributable to the condition of the navigation channel or to

lack of maintenance, instead he underlined a “human mistake” as possible cause of the accident.

He was also asked about the plans for the maintenance of the navigation channel, to which Capt. López Carrasquel indicated that for the year 2005-2006, a program was implemented for the recovery of the depth of initial design, with a cost of near 50 million dollars and the removal of near 26 million cubic meters of sediments of the Orinoco river; during the interview to the President of INC, he stressed that some 800 ships sails throughout the river annually, what means that taking into account 25 to 30 groundings on average, the river is 95% safe, insisting on human faults as the reason for such groundings.

Besides, and according to statistical data held by the INC in the last 4.3 years, some 141 groundings have registered out of 3,200 ships using the navigation channel, although it would appear that there is agreement that groundings are increasing, taking into account that in the first three months of 2007, 12 groundings are recorded, whereas unofficial sources suggest that the figure reaches eighteen ships.

Should you need any assistance or further information regarding the topic stated above, please feel free to contact:

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