

Narcotics in Brazilian Ports

REPORT 002

Risk analysis of
vessel vulnerability
in Brazilian ports.



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Overview

On the security crisis in the maritime sector and the risks shipowners face regarding vessels.

Recent Brazilian and international reports converge on the same message: Brazilian ports have become a strategic pressure point for international narcotics trafficking and a direct risk vector for shipowners, charterers and P&I Clubs.

The [Brazilian Federal Court of Accounts \(TCU\)](#) recently identified problems with coordination between agencies, a lack of adequate technology for maritime monitoring, and weaknesses in port security regulations in Brazil.

Given that a significant share of Brazil's cocaine seizures is port-related, and an unknown but substantial volume remains undetected, the key question for any operator calling at Brazilian ports is: Can we afford to approach these ports without an integrated, documented and layered security strategy?

Our view at [DBK9 Integrated Security](#) is clear: in the current threat environment, proactive, standards-aligned security is a core protection of assets, reputation and continuity of trade. With that on mind, our [second risk analysis report](#) brings a three part immersion on this complex scenario shipowners face in Brazilian ports.



40% of the cocaine seized in Brazil is found in ports.

An audit by the Federal Court of Accounts revealed structural vulnerabilities in one of the most critical points of Brazilian logistics chain: the ports. High cargo volumes, complex operations, and multiple stakeholders create fertile ground for organized crime. For shipowners, the operational complexity is rising across entire routes and the risks in port calls are rising.

THE FEDERAL COURT OF ACCOUNTS (TCU)

The Federal Court of Accounts (TCU) is the body responsible for the accounting, financial, budgetary, operational and asset oversight of the Brazilian Federal Government and the entities of its direct and indirect administration. According to the court, recent data shows that approximately 40% of the cocaine seized in Brazil, equivalent to **155 tons**, was found in port areas.

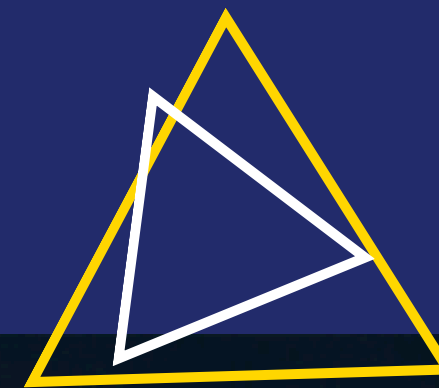
Main problems identified by the TCU:

- Lack of coordination between port, customs, and police agencies.
- Overlapping functions without clear cooperation agreements.
- Weakness in preserving the chain of custody of evidence in investigations.
- Absence of adequate technology for maritime monitoring.



MAIN DATA FROM
MARCH, 2026





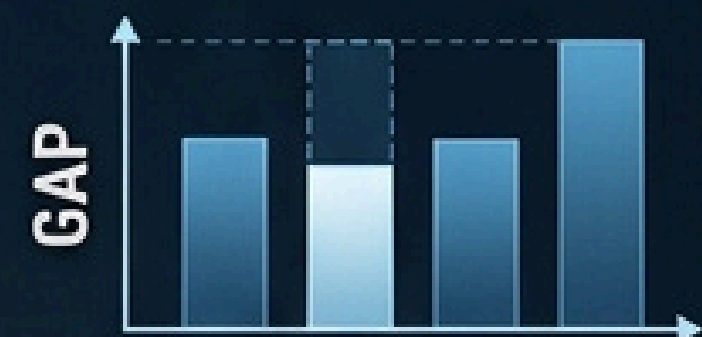
NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING IN BRAZILIAN PORTS: A STRATEGIC RISK ANALYSIS FOR THE MARITIME SECTOR



SECTION 1: STRUCTURAL RISK: A CRITICAL EXPOSURE



TCU REPORT ALARM: ~40% OF ALL COCAINE SEIZED IN BRAZIL LINKED TO PORT ROUTES.



SYSTEMIC WEAKNESSES

- COORDINATION GAPS (CUSTOMS, PF, PORT AUTHORITIES)
- TECHNOLOGY GAPS (LIMITED VTMIS, INTEGRATED MONITORING)
- EXECUTION GAPS (ISPS CODE AS PAPERWORK NOT RISK TOOL)

EXPLOITED BY ORGANIZED CRIME

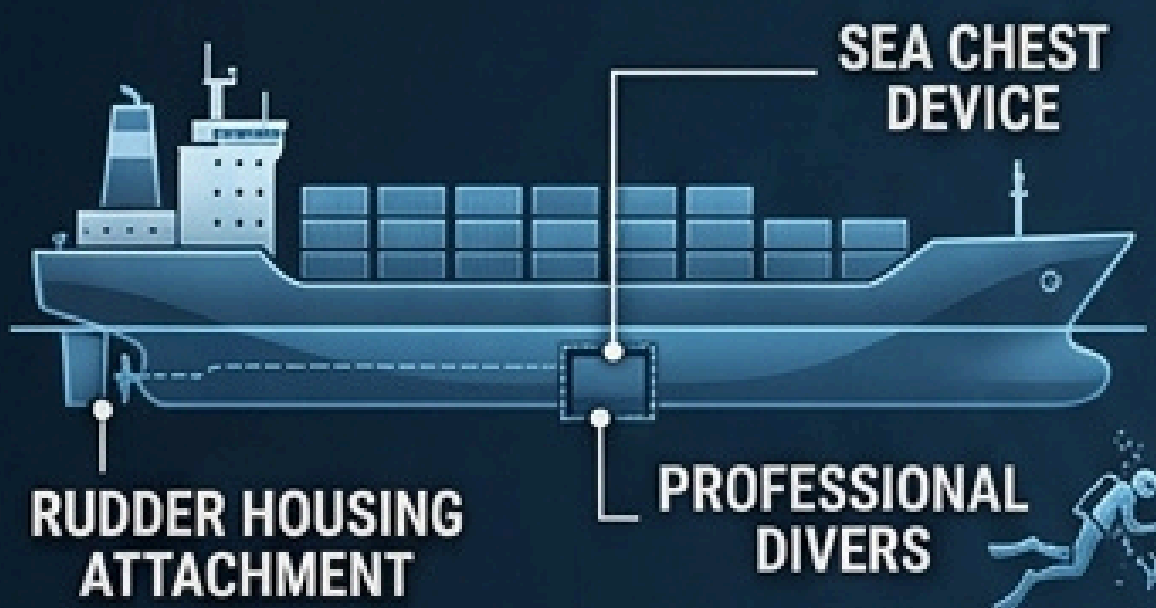
INCREASED OPERATIONAL RISK FOR VESSELS & CHARTERERS



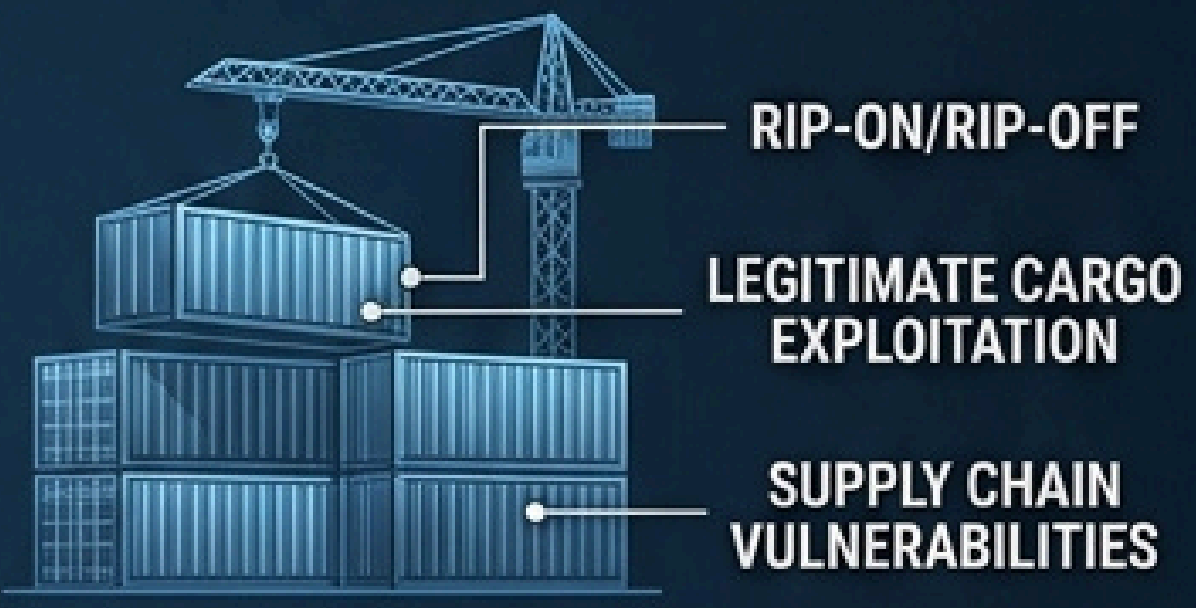
SECTION 2: CONTAMINATION MODUS OPERANDI



HULL & RUDDER



CARGO CONTAMINATION



SECTION 3: THE FINANCIAL RISK: A COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS



REACTIVE COSTS: "THE BAD DAY"

- DELAYS/OFF-HIRE (1-5 days): USD 20K-60K/day
- EMERGENCY UWI & REMOVAL: USD 30K-150K
- DEVIATION/DETENTION: USD 50K-500K+
- LEGAL, INVESTIGATION, REPUTATIONAL IMPACT

TOTAL EXPOSURE: USD >1 MILLION

PREVENTIVE INVESTMENT: "LAYERED PACKAGE"

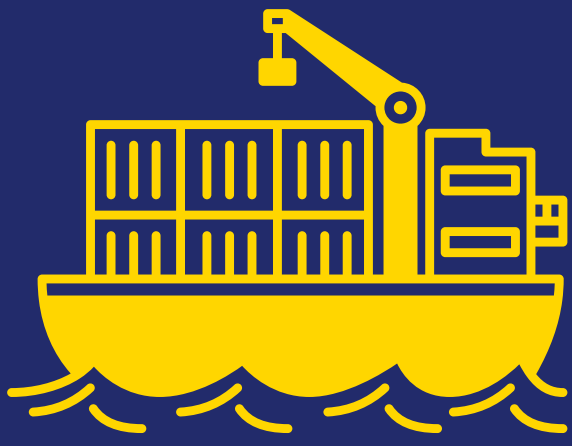
- K9 INSPECTION
- UWI/ROV (where possible)
- CCTV MONITORING
- DECK SECURITY

TYPICAL CALL COST: USD 15K-35K

TENS OF THOUSANDS TO PREVENT VS. HUNDREDS/MILLIONS TO REACT

Breaking down the three section scopes:

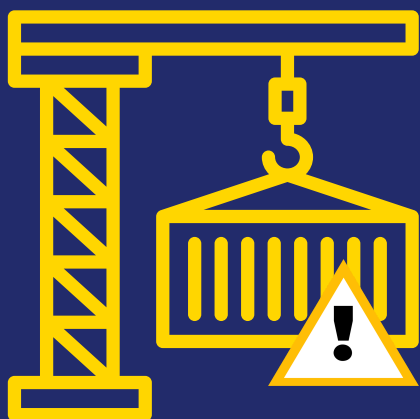
SECTION 1



STRUCTURAL RISK LEADS TO SYSTEMIC WEAKNESSES

As the first graphic shows, around 40% of all cocaine seized in Brazil is linked to port routes. This is why calls at Brazilian ports, especially those in known hotspots, must be treated as **high-impact risk** events rather than routine operations. Criminal groups exploit systemic weaknesses to compromise vessels with drugs.

SECTION 2



CONTAMINATION MODUS OPERANDI

Criminal groups have become increasingly creative in the methods they use to contaminate cargo and vessels. Professional divers, bribery of maritime workers, tampering with container seals, and other **advanced techniques** have made the rapid detection of illegal substances more difficult.

SECTION 3



THE FINANCIAL RISKS VS. PREVENTIVE INVESTMENT

A “bad day” reveals the costs of a security failure, as the financial logic clearly favors **preventive security measures** rather than reacting only after an incident occurs. Shipowners typically face financial and reputational losses following these seizures. Proactive security is not only an operational safeguard but also a sound financial decision.

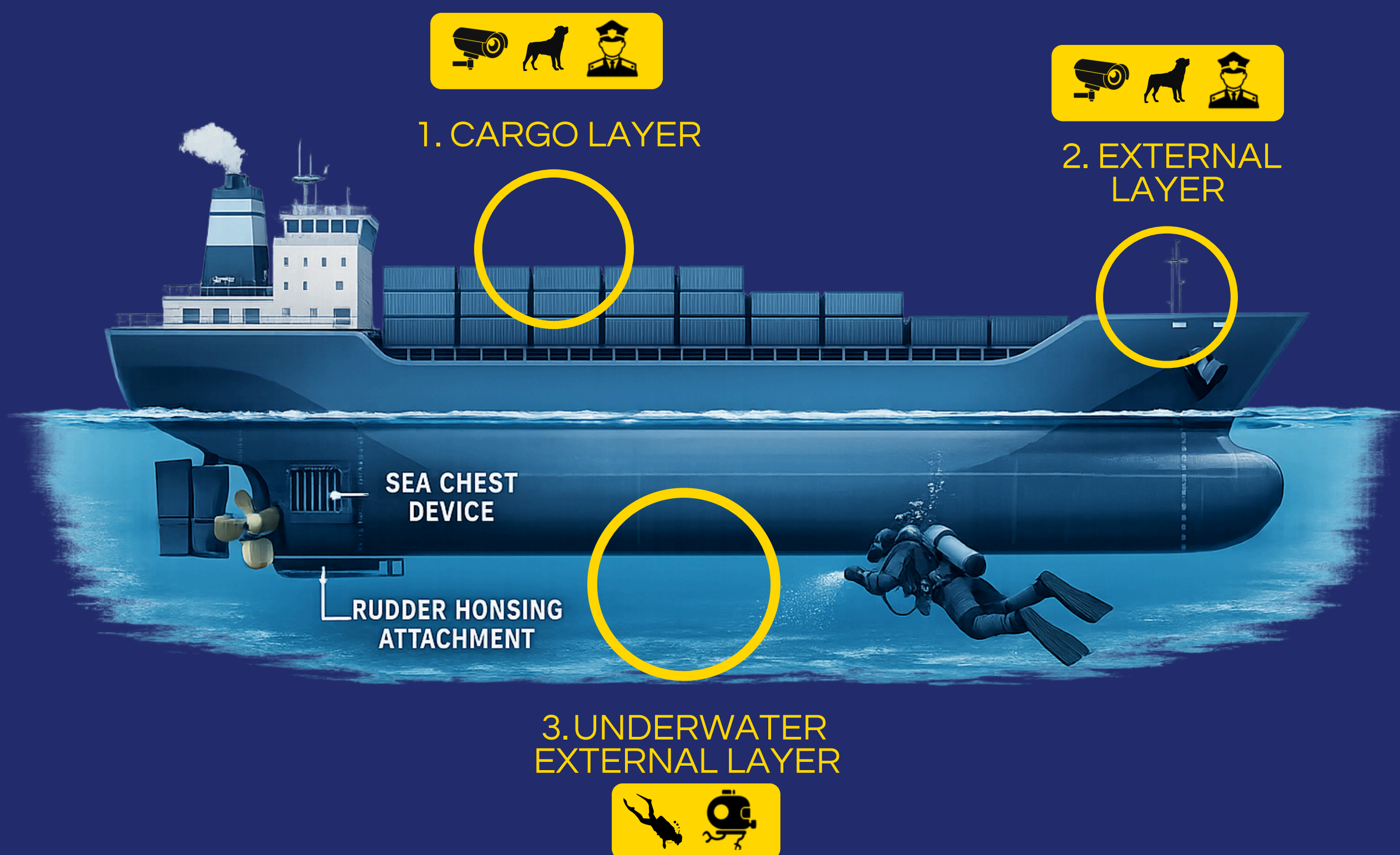


Strategic question for decision-makers

Can we afford to approach these ports without an integrated, documented and layered security strategy?

SECTION 4: Layered security approach

Risk analyses such as these help us understand the different needs of each sector, enabling us to act proactively on behalf of our clients by providing integrated security solutions. All necessary risk-mitigation protocols are part of our operations and include a **three-layer approach**. When these layers are combined and properly documented, operators not only reduce the probability and impact of contamination, but also strengthen their position in discussions with the relevant authorities, terminals, and P&I Clubs.



1. Cargo layer

Container monitoring, **K9** inspection and **CCTV** to detect manipulation and “rip-on/rip-off” attempts.

2. External layer

K9 teams, **CCTV** and **Deck Security** covering access, cargo operations and crew movement.

3. UW external layer

Underwater/ROV inspections targeting hull, propeller and sea chests.



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VESSEL RISK ANALYSIS REPORT 2026

