

Avenue Star Engineers Plead Guilty



JULY 23, 2010

Chief Engineer, Gunduz Avaz, and Second Engineer, Yavuz Mogultay, pled guilty to one count violating the Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships in U.S. District Court near Tampa, FL. According to court documents, both were charged with failing to fully and accurately maintain an Oil Record Book as required by International and U.S. law.

Based on a complaint lodged by several crew members, the U.S. Coast Guard inspected the Malta-flagged ship *M/V Avenue Star*, and discovered oil in the ballast water tank, as well as hoses that had been used to bypass the ship's pollution prevention equipment. As Chief Engineer, Avaz was in charge of the engine room crew and maintaining an accurate Oil Record Book, which is a legally required record of all wastewater discharges. Avaz failed in his duty by directing Mogultay to install a "magic pipe" in order to bypass the oil water separator, thus allowing the *Avenue Star* to discharge wastewater directly overboard. The two attempted to cover up the bypass by falsifying the oil record book, hindering officials from determining whether the ship was being operated properly.

Sentencing for the two has not been set but both face up to six years in prison, and \$250,000 in fines. The ship is owned by Ozone Shipping Ltd. and operated by Atlas Gemi Isletmeciligi Ltd., neither of whom have yet been charged. However, as part of their plea agreements both Avaz and Mogultay have to cooperate fully with the U.S. in the investigation and may be called upon to provide testimony against others in related matters.

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