



Policiales

An unknown poison killed two dockworkers
Team of fire experts found "nothing unusual" in the
cargo hold.

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La muerte de dos jóvenes trabajadores conmovió al mundo portuario de Montevideo. Foto: L. Mainé

Fire and Navy technicians investigate which chemical product killed two workers inside the cargo hold of a Panamanian freighter. It is known that they died intoxicated. The ammonia was already discarded but the Fire detectors did not register anything anomalous.

The incident occurred at Pier C of the Port of Montevideo. At around 6:00 a.m. yesterday, a group of Uruguayan stevedores was loading pine logs for export when two of them vanished.

The deceased workers, Leonardo Segredo (23) and Julio Miró (27) worked for the Tamibel outsourcing company. There was another intoxicated stevedore, as well as a member of the Filipino crew who was left in a coma. Both were interned in the sanatorium of the Banco de Seguros and in the British Hospital.

The ship arrived in Montevideo at 4:00 hours yesterday, from the port of Concepción del Uruguay (Argentina). It has four cargo holds. The accident occurred within one of them. After the incident, a team of Firemen specializing in chemical products came to the site with equipment for gas detection. However, the crew could not detect "anything unusual" in the place, according to the spokesperson of the Fire Department, Mariela Vivone, told El País.

"When it came down to the hold it was made with special equipment and gas detectors, no known gas was detected, the presence of ammonia was discarded, a product that is usually used in fishing vessels," said Vivone.

The crew member of Filipino origin, working for the Panamanian shipping company American Bulker, entered the hold with a mask and an oxygen tank to evacuate his colleagues. When the mask was removed, he also fell. A fourth worker, of Uruguayan origin did the same and also fainted, according to the chief of public relations of the Navy, Marcelo Etchevers.

"We are investigating how this accident occurred in one of the four cargo holds of the ship, which is the responsibility of the Prefecture of Montevideo with support from the Intelligence Division and Drug Trafficking and Firefighting Technique," the minister said.

Homicide prosecutor, Mirta Morales, was present in the place and ordered a series of expert reports to different departments of the Navy and Firemen. In addition, the prosecutor ordered that autopsies be performed on the bodies of the victims and that the ship does not leave the berth until the various forensic examinations are completed, Morales said yesterday in El País.

It is expected that people who are interned will give a statement. At the moment no arrests. "We do not know what happened, it may have been an accident at work, a human fault or something else," said the prosecutor.

Union sources in the port sector argue that a chemical called "phosphine" could have been used.

Port unions of Argentina have denounced their use in shipments of different products. In any case, until now it has not been proven which toxic produced the fatal accident.

Hypothesis.

On the afternoon of yesterday, the directory of the National Ports Administration (ANP) quoted the captain of the Port of Montevideo to learn first-hand the details of the fatal incident. At the meeting, different hypotheses were handled as probable cause of the accident.

In the first instance, it was resolved to find out if there was a fumigation of the cargo in Concepción del Uruguay. It is striking that one has been applied to half the load and in a warehouse. It also seeks to know if the person who applied the product did not notify the Port of Montevideo or if those responsible for the cargo ship failed to do the corresponding aeration of the warehouse.

Another possibility that is handled is that in a previous trip has been left remains of a chemical in that hold. It is known that about 55 days ago the vessel was in African ports. On this day the board of the ANP returns to meet.

Repercussions

A group of technicians from the Ministry of Labor joined the investigation. Minister Ernesto Murro was appalled by the accident and confirmed that work is being done on the incident.

"This impacts us, we were arriving at the end of the year with a very low number of fatal accidents," he said at a press conference. After the accident, the port union (Supra) decided to start a strike of activities that will culminate at 3:00 p.m. today. The Supra considers that the death of the workers was "avoidable".

Unionized workers announced that they will maintain union guards in the security areas and that for the duration of the general strike the only access through which they can enter the Port of Montevideo is the one on Yacaré Street.

In a statement released yesterday, the Supra said repudiate the position of companies that refuse to discuss safety standards with the union.

For his part, the Secretary General of the Pit-Cnt, Marcelo Abdala, demanded that a "thorough investigation be carried out to determine if the Corporate Responsibility Law is applicable."