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U.S. Customs Begins Implementing Sanctions Against Ships Carrying Cargo For Cuba

by Barbara Khol
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On Sept. 12, US Customs authorities refused entry to a Greek-registered ship at California's Long Beach Harbor after discovering that the freighter was carrying Chinese rice destined for Cuba. The action marks the first time US officials have enforced a new regulation introduced by the Treasury Department on April 18, which denies foreign ships entry to US ports if they are doing business with Cuba. The freighter, which sought servicing at the port, was forced to travel on to Mexico. Some government officials were concerned that such restrictions could damage relations with important US allies. In fact, those concerns may have delayed the law's application. The Treasury Department received numerous inquiries about enforcement of the regulation since April, but the new law was not implemented until Sept. 12. The incident is expected to intensify debate in Congress over proposed legislation to tighten trade restrictions even more. The House ways and means committee is now reviewing a bill that would ban all US company subsidiaries from trade with Cuba, and increase penalties against violators of the Trading with the Enemy Act. The committee is expected to vote this month on the "Cuban Democracy Act of 1992." Sen. Bob Graham (D-FL) also plans to introduce a version of the same bill as an amendment to military appropriations legislation. According to Cuban American National Foundation spokespersons, the proposed amendment has 53 co-sponsors. (Source: The Miami Herald, 09/15/92)