MEMORANDUM

TO : All Manning Agencies

SUBJECT: Inclusion of AIDS in PDOS for Seamen

In view of the reported widespread incidence of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in all seaports, all manning agencies are hereby enjoined to include a discussion of AIDS - its nature, causes, effects and prevention in the pre-departure orientation seminar given to departing seamen.

The attached booklet on AIDS which is published by the Center for Seafarer's Rights can serve as very good reference material and all private manning agencies are advised to reproduce and distribute copies to their seamen, either in English or Tagalog.

For compliance.

Tomas D. Achacoso
Administrator

01 July 1988

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What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is a very serious, contagious disease which destroys the body's natural defense mechanism against infection from bacteria, fungi, and viruses. The disease is caused by a virus found in blood and semen, but which may also appear in saliva, tears, and urine.

How does AIDS spread?

AIDS is passed on by sexual contact with a disease carrier. Many men and women who have the virus in their bodies are not themselves sick, but they can pass the disease on to other people. The disease may also be spread through blood; for example, through syringes or hypodermic needles which have previously been used by/for infected persons without being sterilized afterwards.

Who can be infected with AIDS?

Anyone may be infected with AIDS. So far AIDS has chiefly been found in homosexual and bisexual males (men having intercourse with persons of both sexes); addicts taking drugs by injection; and persons with sexual contacts in Africa, notably Kenya, Tanzania, and the countries along the Gulf of Guinea from Guinea to Angola; as well as Haiti. The infection has also spread to prostitutes in all seaports.

How infectious is AIDS?

AIDS is not as infectious as the common cold or influenza, for example. Few people have the disease; many more carry it. The AIDS virus does not spread in ordinary daily association with disease carriers, by handshakes or other casual physical contact with them. In other words:

- There is no danger of infection if you use tableware and cutlery which have been used by infected persons.
- There is no danger of infection if you visit public swimming pools/baths, restaurants, gym halls, etc.
- Infection cannot be spread through the air or food.
- You will not become infected from using public toilets.
- It is not believed that infection can be spread through insect bites.

What are the symptoms?

No one symptom can in itself determine whether a person suffers from AIDS. All the symptoms may be present in a large number of other diseases. Several of the symptoms may conversely be absent in patients with AIDS. However, you are advised to consult a doctor for any of the following symptoms:

- Pronounced and protracted feeling of fatigue and ill health
- Long-lasting high temperature (weeks to months)
- Unintentional weight loss of more than 10%.
- Pronounced nightly perspiration
- Prolonged coughing, possibly accompanied by difficulty in breath-
ing (symptoms of pneumonia).
- Pronounced and long-lasting fungus infections.
- Swollen lymph glands in several parts of the body.
- Newly-developed tumors of the skin.

These symptoms may, as mentioned, be present in a number of diseases which have nothing to do with AIDS.

How do you avoid being infected?

The safest thing to do, of course, is not to have sexual intercourse with prostitutes. If you do visit prostitutes, the risk of being infected will be reduced if you:

- Use a CONDOM, which will usually also protect you against other vener-
eal diseases.
- Omit the kinds of sexual relations that produce scratches or may trans-
mit blood from one person to another, including anal sex.

If you are on shore leave and have sexual contact, make sure that you have a few condoms in your pocket for safety's sake, and USE THEM.

If possible, avoid receiving blood or medicine by injection in countries where the health services are not too well-developed. If you consult a doctor in countries where the standard of hygiene is poor, it is recommended that you bring your own disposable syringe from the ship's medicine cabinet.

Tattooing should be avoided, unless you can be sure that the tattooer's equipment is scrupulously clean.

Can AIDS be treated?

At the moment there is no cure for AIDS. The disease is fatal. It is, however, possible to treat some of the conditions from which AIDS patients suffer. After treatment, patients can attend to their work for a period of time.

There is not as yet any vaccine against AIDS. Vaccination will not be possible within the next few years.

(Reproduced from booklet on AIDS published by the Center for Seafarer's Rights)