

Officials divert vessels, cargo to Point Lisas Port as warship docks in PoS



The USS Gravely, with the 22nd US Marine Expeditionary Unit, is assisted by local tugboats as it berths at the Port of Port-of-Spain, yesterday. PHOTO BY ANISTO ALVES

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Measures have been implemented to help alleviate delays that are expected to be caused by the presence of USS Gravely at the Port of Port-of-Spain this week.

The measures, including the temporary optional redirection and processing of vessels and cargo at the Port of Point Lisas, were announced in a joint press release from the Customs and Excise Division, the Port Authority of T&T (PATT) and the Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation Limited (Plipdeco) which coincided with the arrival of the United States (US) guided missile destroyer yesterday morning.

It said, “This measure ensures that Shipping Lines, Agents and Shippers who choose to utilise this option for customers to receive their cargo as anticipated.”

It said that the organisations were collaborating to ensure the seamless berthing, cargo handling, and documentation processes if the option is utilised.

“Be advised that the Port of Port-of-Spain has forwarded all relevant information to the Port of Point Lisas, and interested agents have been provided their vessel details and are now included in the vessel schedule at the Port of Point Lisas,” it said.

It also said that accommodations had been made for the transfer of transshipment containers, which are currently waiting to be exported from the Port-of-Spain Port to Point Lisas.

“The Port of Point Lisas has extended its gate hours operations to accommodate all requests for service,” it said.

It noted that customs officers had been deployed to support additional inspection and clearance operations at both ports during the period.

“The teams have worked closely to ensure the efficient accommodation of all vessels and to maintain the integrity of cargo flows across both ports,” it said.

Speaking with Guardian Media hours before the announcement was made, T&T Manufacturers’ Association (TTMA) president Dale Parson predicted potential delays due to the vessel’s visit and called on port officials to take some of the steps that were eventually implemented.

While he suggested the option of redirection to the Point Lisas Port, he questioned whether it (Point Lisas) could accommodate the additional capacity, even temporarily.

He also noted that port users with existing arrangements with the Port-of-Spain Port would have to incur additional fees associated with the transfer of containers and usage of the Point Lisas Port.

“Even if redirected, I don’t think Point Lisas can handle the volume with one crane operational,” he said.

Parson also recommended that the Port-of-Spain Port consider waiving the costs associated with storing shipping containers that cannot be cleared or exported during the period.

“Any port rent that would have been accrued because of imports sitting there or exports not being able to go out should be borne by the port,” he said.

In a brief telephone interview, Downtown Owners and Merchants Association (DOMA) president Gregory Aboud noted that he and his members did not have any immediate concerns over delays on the port.

Praising the recent work of port and customs officials, Aboud said that operations at the Port-of-Spain Port had improved drastically over the past few months in time for the upcoming Christmas season.

“We are in the midst of something very major taking place, and we need to be a little cautious, in my opinion, on what the impact is going to be,” Aboud said.

“We are not really hearing the biting type of complaints we heard in 2024 when action on the port created havoc and chaos for the country,” he added.

Aboud also dismissed concerns over potential additional costs associated with shipping delays.

“In truth and in fact if a vessel is delayed in coming into the port no demurrage can apply and in the same way if a container is returned to the port and it cannot be loaded on a outgoing vessel no demurrage can apply because as soon as the empty or full container is returned to the port the demurrage ceases immediately because the container has been returned to the ship’s possession,” he said.

The USS Gravelly is scheduled to remain at the port until Thursday. During the visit, the 22nd US

Marine Expeditionary Unit is expected to conduct joint training exercises with the T&T Defence Force (TTDF).