

MAY 2025-AUGUST 2025

PORTSIDE

Caribbean

NO CRUISE PIER *for Cayman Islands*

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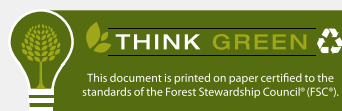
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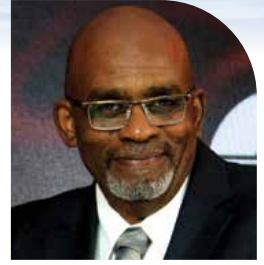
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PORTSIDE
Caribbean

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No Cruise pier for Cayman Islands



On the very last day of April, the people of the Cayman Islands formally rejected ideas and plans to construct a cruise pier in the capital, George Town. For years the subject of public debate and conversation, the construction of a marine structure that would allow literally tens of thousands of passengers, to land and walk the shops and other amenities in the elegant little town every week did not find favour with a significant number of Caymanians.

Tourists to the Cayman Islands and specifically Grand Cayman are generally welcome. Indeed, Grand Cayman with its welcoming population has been a choice destination for visitors from both sides of the Atlantic for decades. And, as such, tourism has been the mainstay of the country's economy '... since Adam was a boy', a biblical reference by an old friend in response to my question as to how long tourists have been coming to the Cayman Islands. The warm Caymanian welcome gradually but noticeably changed over time with the growth in the size of modern cruise ships and the rapid growth in the numbers of 21st Century tourists cruising the world's oceans. Cruising the oceans of the world became more affordable as the size of cruise ships increased.

George Town is a relatively small town. Whereas years long gone when the town could fairly easily accommodate most of the landed passengers from a visiting cruise ship, it became increasingly difficult and even disruptive when more than one cruise ship arrived at the same time. This reality was not unique to Grand Cayman. Indeed, people in many seaport cities across Europe found this 21st Century reality quite a bother. Literally tens of thousands of tourists from recently arrived ships were now crowding city streets, walkways, restaurants and pubs; displacing locals and slowing vehicular traffic in downtown spaces. And so, the question raised in commentary was: *How much tourism is over-tourism?*

Caymanians dealt with this reality over time by accepting, with stoic grace, the economic value of their own discomfort. Traversing George Town streets when massive cruise ships were in port was, to varying degrees, a challenge. Unlike at most cruise ship destinations, massive cruise ships do not anchor at a cruise pier in George Town. Cruise passengers arriving at Grand Cayman do not simply walk off the ship onto dry land. The depth of the water and fragile ecosystems do not allow large ships to come too close to shore. Cruise passengers are ferried from ship to shore and back in small boats.

This reality protects the Cayman Islands environment but it also limits the numbers of passengers who choose to come ashore on arrival in George Town. Many choose to remain on board rather than get into small boat in order to get to land. Also, cruise ships operate on tight schedules and so a ship carrying several thousands of tourists would need to spend long hours in port if most passengers chose to go ashore. But this reality affects merchants and others who earn an income directly from tourism.

For five years and more the people of the Cayman Islands have argued about the pros and cons of building a cruise pier in George Town. The economic benefits were weighed against the negative social implications and the perceived threats to the natural environment, effectively dividing public opinion. The public debate . . . fierce at times . . . was apparently laid to rest on April 30 in a mature and pleasingly democratic manner. In a referendum (held as part of scheduled general elections) those who favoured and fought for the protection of the fragile environment and preservation of Caymanian culture prevailed. The proposed cruise pier project, initially estimated to cost \$200 million but which, some argued, would eventually cost at least three times that amount, was put to rest after years of debate.

[See page 13] •

Mike Jarrett

Founder/Editor-in-Chief



BERTH 6 at BRIDGETOWN opens in SEPTEMBER



Construction of Berth 6 at the Port of Bridgetown is set for completion in September 2025, effectively separating cargo and cruise operations at the Barbados port. The timing of this project is critical, as Barbados anticipates a record number of cruise passengers this year. The projected number of cruise arrivals stands at 850,000.

"This growth puts pressure on the port's capacity... and that's why Berth 6 is absolutely necessary," Minister of Tourism and International Transport Ian Gooding-Edghill said in his report to the Barbados Parliament in March, as quoted by local news media.

The port expansion project, which includes the reclamation of 9.4 acres of land, is expected to cost the Government of Barbados approximately \$100 million. The installation of two electric-powered ship-to-shore gantry cranes – manufactured by Sany and delivered in March – has been completed. Unloading and assembly were carried out by the crane manufacturers in collaboration with Barbados Port Inc.'s terminal operations and engineering teams. The value of new equipment acquired for this significant expansion, including the gantry cranes, has already exceeded \$66 million.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- The Berth 6 Expansion (B6E) project comprises a structure 314 metres long by 25 metres wide (approximately 7,850 m²).
- Berth 6 will extend immediately from Berth 5 northwards at an angle of approximately 90°, running in a west-east direction.
- B6E is designed primarily to accommodate container cargo vessels, thereby allowing the remaining berths to focus on cruise ship traffic. This will enhance operational efficiency and maximise use of the existing port space to meet growing berthing needs and container throughput.
- As part of the project, an upland development package includes the construction of a 25,000 m² (6.2-acre) container stacking hardstand area, complete with essential infrastructure (e.g., lighting, potable water, electrical feeds, drainage, etc.).

“WHY BERTH 6 IS
ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.”



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SAMANÁ

THE CARIBBEAN'S NEWEST CRUISE HUB

...a community responds

With more than a week to go before the end of April 2025, the Dominican Republic was still on track to receive 74 cruise ships – the highest monthly figure to date, as noted by Jean Luis Rodríguez, Director of the Dominican Port Authority (Apordom). As was explained then, most of these vessels will dock in Puerto Plata, but La Romana, Cap Cana and Samaná will also receive cruise ships.

Puerto Duarte de Arroyo Barril (at Samaná Bay) has been undergoing major transformation since March 2024, when construction began to convert the facility into a modern cruise terminal capable of accommodating Oasis-class cruise ships. With terminal capacity to receive and manage four ships at once, Samaná is expected to begin docking cruise ships by the end of 2025. In this regard, construction has been proceeding apace, and recruitment of skilled personnel to work at the new terminal has already started.

In January, at a press conference to discuss progress on the Caribbean's newest cruise port, Governor Teodora Mullix invited residents of the Samaná region to participate in a job fair scheduled for later that month (22 and 23 January). The event marked the first step in recruiting workers to fill some 200 job positions for the first phase of operations. These included roles in Engineering, Security, Construction, Construction Assistance, Administrative Assistance, Maritime Manoeuvring, Boatmen and Divers.

The cruise terminal at Puerto Duarte – the newest cruise destination port in the Caribbean – is expected to make Samaná a must-visit destination in the region. Residents of surrounding communities are, on the whole, positive about the development and its potential to drive sustained economic growth.



MARC EVENS
NICOLEAU

Portside Caribbean recently assigned correspondent Marc Evens Nicoleau to document how local residents feel about the development of the Caribbean's newest cruise ship destination in their community. From his random sampling of residents, he found that they were generally positive about the economic growth and job opportunities the project promises. As he noted: "Those who had a positive view expect economic growth and job opportunities coming from the development. The negatives feared displacement; potential negative environmental impacts; rising prices. The main concerns included housing stability, rent increases, environmental pollution, and eviction. And the biggest hopes included job opportunities, tourism, better roads and infrastructure development."

The following is a summary of his notes from the various interviews he conducted in the community:

Aida Martínez – Resident of Barrio, Samaná for 27 years

- **Employee on the project?** No
- **Attitude to the construction:** Neutral but worried
- **Problems experienced:** Noise, dust, possible displacement of neighbours
- **Expected benefits:** More jobs for locals

Aida, a lifelong resident of Barrio el Barril and owner of a small restaurant in the neighbourhood, expressed mixed feelings about the port development.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC WAS STILL ON TRACK TO RECEIVE 74 CRUISE SHIPS – the highest monthly figure to date

She is particularly concerned about the potential rise in rent and the overall cost of living once the construction is complete. While she recognises that an influx of tourists could benefit small businesses like hers, she fears that “the people of always” will be the ones to profit, while “the people of the street” will continue to struggle.

Samuel Gómez – Resident of Samaná Centre for 35 years

- **Employee on the project?** No
- **Attitude to the construction:** Positive
- **Problems experienced:** Noise from construction
- **Expected benefits:** Economic growth and job stability



Samuel, a father of three who works as a tour salesman, views the cruise terminal development as the greatest opportunity Samaná has seen in decades. He believes it will open up new employment options, particularly for young people. “For those of us inside, it’s a blessing,” he said, “but I understand that for those losing their homes, it’s painful.”

Carmen Rojas – Resident of El Barril for 18 years

- **Employee on the project?** No
- **Attitude to the construction:** Negative
- **Problems experienced:** Eviction, lack of information
- **Expected benefits:** None for her personally

Carmen and her family are being asked to relocate to make way for road expansions linked to the port development. “We’ve lived here for almost two decades, and now they tell us we have to leave. Where are we supposed to go?” she said. Carmen feels the port may bring in revenue, but believes it will primarily benefit investors – not everyday people like her.

José Antonio Pérez – Resident of Barrio for 40 years

- **Employee on the project?** No
- **Attitude to the construction:** Neutral
- **Problems experienced:** Heavy truck traffic
- **Expected benefits:** More tourism, more business opportunities

José Antonio, a retired fisherman, recalls a time when the coastline was much quieter. He says the ongoing construction has led to frequent traffic jams, making it difficult for older residents to get around. “It will help some,” he reflected, “but I’m not sure if it will help us, the ones who have been here forever.”

Marisol Delgado – Resident of Samaná Centre for 12 years

- **Employee on the project?** No
- **Attitude to the construction:** Positive
- **Problems experienced:** Noise
- **Expected benefits:** More tourism, more investment in public spaces



Marisol owns a small café near the main square and is enthusiastic about the cruise port development. She hopes it will attract more visitors and breathe new life into local businesses. “We need this. Samaná is beautiful, but it has been forgotten by the government for too long,” she said.

Ramón Espinal – Resident of El Barril for 50 years

- **Employee on the project?** No
- **Attitude to the construction:** Negative
- **Problems experienced:** Forced relocation, uncertainty
- **Expected benefits:** None

Ramón is furious about having to leave the home he has lived in for five decades. Along with other residents in his neighbourhood, he is organising efforts to demand fair compensation. “They come with papers, numbers, and promises, but they don’t live here. They don’t know what it’s like to start over at my age,” he said.

Miguel Hernández – Resident of Barrio for 30 years

- **Employee on the project?** No
- **Attitude to the construction:** Neutral but concerned
- **Problems experienced:** Noise, road damage
- **Expected benefits:** More opportunities for local workers

Miguel, a moto taxi driver, is concerned about the impact the new port may have on traffic in the area. He hopes the authorities are preparing for the added strain. “We already have problems with potholes and congestion. What happens when thousands of new trucks and tourists come in?” he asked.

Arelis Guzmán – Resident of Barrio el Barril for 15 years

- **Employee on the project?** No
- **Attitude to the construction:** Negative
- **Problems experienced:** Displacement fears
- **Expected benefits:** Yes

Arelis rents a small home near the construction zone and is afraid her landlord may evict her to sell the land. “Nobody is telling us anything. We’re just waiting to see if we wake up one day with a letter saying we have to leave,” she said.

Manuel Rodríguez – Resident of Samaná Centre for 28 years

- **Employee on the project?** Yes (Construction worker)
- **Attitude to the construction:** Positive
- **Problems experienced:** Dust from construction
- **Expected benefits:** Steady jobs

Manuel says this is the best job he has had in years. “It’s hard work, but it pays better than anything else in town,” he shared. He hopes the government will ensure that, once the port is completed, locals will continue to be hired for future work.

Isabel Ramírez – Resident of Barrio for 25 years

- **Employee on the project?** No
- **Attitude to the construction:** Mixed feelings
- **Problems experienced:** Rising rent prices
- **Expected benefits:** More tourism, but fears losing her home

Isabel rents an apartment, and she is concerned about the increasing rent prices. “With all this development, I don’t know if I’ll still be able to afford to live here in five years,” she said. ●

CARIBBEAN NARROWLY ESCAPES U.S. TARIFFS ON CHINA-BUILT VESSELS



CARICOM Private Sector Organization, Chairman, Gervase Warner

The United States government's decision to impose high port fees on China-built vessels sparked widespread fear and concern across the Caribbean. However, following strong representations to Washington, the region was ultimately spared what had appeared to be an impending economic disaster of immense proportions.

The proposed measures would have increased the cost of commercial shipping – including both imports and exports to Caribbean countries – by 50 to 60%, with potentially disastrous economic and social consequences across the entire region.

Under the plan, any China-built vessel entering U.S. ports would have been subject to a fee of up to US\$1.5 million per entry. This tariff would have had a severe, far-reaching impact on exporters to the Caribbean, as many vessels serving the region

were built in China. Shipping lines operating across multiple Caribbean nations would have been forced to raise freight rates, burdening both businesses and consumers.

RATIONALE

The Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) stated that it had “found China’s acts, policies, and practices to be unreasonable and to burden or restrict U.S. commerce.” It went on to announce its intention to impose fees and restrictions on Chinese shipping.

“To obtain the elimination of China’s acts, policies, and practices, and in light of China’s market power over global supply, pricing, and access in the maritime, logistics, and shipbuilding sectors,” USTR noted, “we propose to impose certain fees and restrictions on international maritime transport services related to Chinese ship operators and Chinese-built ships, as well as to promote the transport of U.S. goods on U.S. vessels.”

Caribbean concerns were scheduled to be presented at a public hearing hosted by the USTR in Washington, D.C., on Monday, May 24, 2025.

More than 450 business leaders and executives from across the Caribbean urgently gathered online on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, to discuss the looming economic threats posed by the proposed U.S. measures. The virtual meeting – hosted by the CARICOM Private Sector Organisation (CPSO) – offered Caribbean businesses a platform to discuss the wide-reaching implications and consequences of the U.S. proposal.

In the end, following the region’s forceful representations at the Washington hearing, the Caribbean was spared its worst fears. The relief felt across the region was reflected in post-event correspondence from the Chair of the CARICOM Private Sector Organisation, Gervase Warner. His reflections on the outcome are published here for the record.

CARIBBEAN BUSINESS: A SIGH OF RELIEF

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago – April 19, 2025 – On behalf of the regional private sector, the CARICOM Private Sector Organisation (CPSO) extends its gratitude for the USTR Determination on “China-built vessels,” issued on April 17, 2025. This determination, in effect, exempts Caribbean shipping from the high port fees originally proposed by the United States Trade Representative (USTR).

Had the fees – exceeding US\$1,000,000 per U.S. port call – been applied to vessels serving the region, the cost of shipping between the Caribbean and the United States would have soared. The resulting inflation, shortages, delays, and other supply chain disruptions would have had crippling consequences for the economies and people of CARICOM.

The CPSO recognises this outcome as the result of exemplary leadership and collaboration among several key private sector stakeholders and CARICOM

governments. In particular, we commend the Heads of Government, chaired by Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley. Their swift, coordinated advocacy – evidenced by direct engagement with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and communication to President Donald Trump penned by Prime Minister Mottley – was instrumental in this success.

We also acknowledge the technical leadership of the CPSO Secretariat led by Dr. Patrick Antoine, one of CARICOM’s most capable economists. His team’s submissions and oral testimony were central to the favourable USTR outcome. The CPSO’s coordination efforts were also demonstrated in the unprecedented turnout of over 700 participants from multiple industries and countries at the first virtual coordination call held on 18 March 2025. Two subsequent region-wide consultations further solidified a unified private sector position, showcasing the power of collective action in pursuit of shared objectives.

We appreciate the openness and transparency of the USTR and its panel — comprising representatives from various U.S. government departments — who were receptive to the specific concerns raised by Caribbean stakeholders through CPSO submissions and testimony.

Our strategic partnership with Tropical Shipping, particularly CEO Tim Martin and Jennifer Nugent-Hill (Director on the CPSO-United States Business Council Executive), proved invaluable. We also acknowledge the vital support of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), Seaboard Marine, the Atlantic Council, the Caribbean Shipping Association (CSA), Darwin Telemaque (CEO of the Antigua Port Authority), Gerard Bergasse (Regional Manager, Tropical Shipping), and the Port Management Association of the Caribbean (PMAC).

The positive result was further enabled by seamless coordination from Ambassador Wayne McCook, Assistant Secretary-General — CARICOM Single Market and Trade, and Dr. Wendell Samuel, Acting Assistant Secretary-General — Economic Integration, Innovation and Development.

We were honoured by the contribution of Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, Representative of the United States Virgin Islands, who, despite short notice, participated fully in the CPSO briefing alongside Tropical Shipping and CARICOM Ambassadors. Her timely interventions during the U.S. Ways and Means Committee hearings were a significant factor in the outcome.

Finally, we express our deep appreciation to the Caucus of CARICOM Ambassadors accredited to the United States for their consistent and valued support.

The CPSO, representing the regional private sector, advocated for the following exemptions:

- (i) Short-sea shipping exemption** — Defined as vessels operating within 2,750 nautical miles between the CARICOM/Caribbean and the continental United States. The USTR Determination granted an exemption for vessels within 2,000 nautical miles, which was deemed acceptable to the CPSO.
- (ii) Smaller vessel exemption** — Requested for ships under 55,000 deadweight tons and under 4,999 TEUs. The USTR Determination provided exemptions for vessels under 55,000 deadweight tons and under 4,000 TEUs, which the CPSO accepted.
- (iii) Specialised cargo exemption** — Sought for energy and chemical carriers, which may exceed 55,000 deadweight tons. The USTR Determination proposed exemptions for vessels with individual bulk capacities up to 80,000 deadweight tons, and for specialised or purpose-built vessels transporting chemical substances in bulk or liquid forms. These terms were also acceptable to the CPSO.

GRAND BAHAMA SHIPYARD: NEW DOCK OPENS IN NOVEMBER

Grand Bahama Shipyard aims to deliver its new 357-metre East End drydock in the first week of November 2025. Equipped with four cranes and a 93,500-tonne lifting capacity, the East End will be followed by the Lucayan dock in 2026.

Pier extension work is almost complete, ensuring readiness for the East End's November arrival. The expanded facility is expected to be fully operational by January 2026.

The U.S.\$600 million project includes two world-class floating docks, set to be the largest in the Western Hemisphere, with unmatched lifting capability for a full range of cruise and commercial ships.

Jointly owned by Carnival Corporation and Royal Caribbean Group, with a minority stake held by the Bahamian government, the shipyard will boast the Western Hemisphere's largest lifting capacity. It is designed to accommodate both current and next-generation vessels.

Since 2000, the yard has expanded from a single drydock (27,000 tonnes capacity) to three, reaching 80,000 tonnes by 2009. Plans for further expansion were delayed by the pandemic, but a 2022 order with China's Beihai Shipbuilding Company propelled the project forward.

PORT CANAVERAL: EXPANSION, ENHANCEMENTS, UPGRADES

Port Canaveral is undertaking a major upgrade programme, including expansions at Cruise Terminals 5 and 10 and enhancements at Cruise Terminal 1. This \$500 million, five-year project spans all of the port's operations, with improvements also planned for recreational facilities at Jetty Park.

The Canaveral Port Authority Board of Commissioners has approved design work for the expansion of Cruise Terminal 5. As the port's oldest and smallest terminal, the upgrade will enable it to accommodate larger cruise ships. Commissioners have also approved the upgrade of Cruise Terminal 2's waterside area, currently used for gambling-ship operations but too small for most cruise vessels.

Port Canaveral maintains an ongoing improvement programme to monitor and address both current and long-term needs, such as the Cruise Terminal 5 expansion and the planned enlargement of Cruise Terminal 10.

The Cruise Terminal 5 upgrade will increase the terminal's size by 65%, with construction expected to take 16 months without disrupting operations. Meanwhile, the feasibility study for Cruise Terminal 10's expansion is set for completion in June 2025, allowing the terminal to accommodate ships up to 1,200 ft.

Exterior upgrades to Cruise Terminal 1 will begin in May 2025, featuring new walkways, covered spaces, lighting, and landscaping.

CAYMANIANS VOTE ‘NO’ TO CRUISE PIER



After more than five years of resistance, citizens of the Cayman Islands who opposed the construction of a cruise pier at George Town finally prevailed on April 30, 2025. That day's General Elections gave voters a chance to deliver a decisive verdict on the controversial development.

The proposed U.S.\$200 million cruise pier would have enabled passengers to disembark directly onto shore, eliminating the current practice of ferrying them by tender from anchored ships. The plan included the construction of two piers capable of handling mega cruise ships, along with significant upgrades to the George Town cargo port.

TWO-THIRDS AGAINST

In a referendum held alongside scheduled parliamentary elections, Caymanians delivered a resounding rejection of the cruise pier proposal. More than 64% voted "no" to building cruise piers at George Town, while fewer than 29% supported

the idea. The two-thirds majority likely reflected a broad coalition of environmentalists and residents concerned about their quaint capital being overrun by thousands of cruise tourists each week. They were joined by others swayed by an editorial in the *Cayman Compass*, published two days before the vote, which questioned the escalating costs and economic wisdom of the project.

The Editorial (April 28, 2025) commented: "Reporting in the *Compass* today suggests post-COVID-19 inflation, supply chains riven with uncertainty amid US president Donald Trump's tariffs, and the simple passage of time have pushed the optimistic quote of around \$200 million in 2019 to north of \$300 million. . . . Repaying any bank loans associated with that kind of expenditure could take the project costs close to \$700 million before the construction costs and interest are repaid. . . . we expect that could get even higher before any mega ships are moored up in George Town. . . . Is this the best use of the people's money?"

More than 11,900 Caymanians voted 'no'.

FIRE ON BOARD: CONTAINER SHIP FIRES INCREASE

Container ship fires are once again on the rise, with serious incidents reported in May, July, and August of 2024. Given that most Caribbean seaports are physically located near, or within, major towns – and often right next to capital cities – port managers cannot afford to ignore the very real possibility of such a catastrophe occurring in their own waters.

In 2022, Allianz's *Safety and Shipping Review* recorded 209 fire incidents across 38 ships – the highest number in a decade. Meanwhile, 64 ships – more than one per month on average – were lost to fire over the previous five years. By 2023, according to the Cargo Incident Notification System (CINS), a container cargo fire was occurring roughly every nine days.

The trend continued in 2024. On 26 May, the *Northern Juvenile* caught fire near Singapore. Less than two months later, on 19 July, a fire broke out aboard the *Maersk Frankfurt* off India's west coast, tragically resulting in the death of a seafarer. Then, on 9 August, media outlets worldwide reported massive explosions and a fierce blaze aboard the container ship *YM Mobility* while docked in Ningbo, China. Just two days later, on 11 August, the *MSC CapeTown III*,



a 2,826 TEU vessel, was engulfed by flames at the Jaya Container Terminal (JCT) in the port of Colombo, following an explosion below deck. •

IMPROVING PORT CONGESTION WITH PORT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE



As global trade volumes continue to rise, ports face mounting pressure to handle increasing cargo quantities. Port managers must carefully balance limited resources, labour shortages, equipment malfunctions, and customs clearance delays – all of which can contribute to terminal congestion. If not managed effectively, this can lead to shipment delays, higher operational costs, and reduced customer satisfaction. However, the right port management software can provide significant relief by reducing congestion, enhancing operations, and strengthening the global supply chain.

How port management software mitigates congestion

Port management software tackles congestion through advanced features that streamline operations. Key ways this technology helps reduce congestion include:

Optimising vessel scheduling:

One of the primary contributors to congestion is inefficient vessel scheduling. Port management software integrates scheduling systems, enabling port authorities to better coordinate vessel arrivals and departures. By leveraging real-time data, the software adjusts schedules, minimises delays, and ensures smooth docking procedures. Real-time tracking improves cargo handling efficiency by 15%. Automated scheduling further reduces human error and enhances communication, ensuring high-priority shipments are processed promptly.

Cargo tracking and real-time monitoring:

Port management software utilises real-time data and IoT technology to track cargo movement. By providing customs authorities, shipping companies, and port operators with up-to-date cargo information, the software ensures timely handling and identifies potential delays. Real-time visibility allows port operators to reroute or reschedule cargo, preventing bottlenecks and reducing congestion by up to 20%.

Historical analytics for capacity management:

Analytical data from port management software offers insights into vessel arrivals, cargo volumes, and unloading times. By analysing these trends, port authorities can anticipate peak periods and optimise operations. This enables informed decision-making about vessel schedules and terminal activities, ensuring efficient management of cargo surges, docking spaces, and labour resources.

Enhancing communication and collaboration:

Effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders are crucial to preventing congestion. Port management software seamlessly integrates with external systems like Port Community Systems and Customs Systems such as ASYCUDA through EDI exchange. This integration accelerates communication, ensures all relevant stakeholders have access to real-time data, and improves coordination to minimise delays and bottlenecks.

Port management software tackles congestion through advanced features that streamline operations.

Broader benefits for port operations and the global supply chain

Reducing congestion with port management software provides benefits beyond immediate operational efficiency:

Increased port throughput: By improving cargo flow and reducing wait times, port management software enhances overall throughput. This increased capacity allows ports to accommodate more vessels and cargo, bolstering their role in supporting global supply chains and international trade.

Cost savings: Congestion leads to higher costs from delayed cargo handling, extended vessel wait times, and increased fuel consumption. Streamlining operations with port management software reduces these expenses, resulting in lower shipping rates and more competitive pricing for businesses and consumers.

Enhanced customer satisfaction:

Faster turnaround times and more efficient operations improve shipping schedule predictability. This reliability enhances customer satisfaction for businesses dependent on timely deliveries, increasing the global competitiveness of ports.

Port congestion presents a significant challenge to global trade, but integrating port management software offers an effective solution. By optimising vessel scheduling, improving communication, and leveraging historical data, the software alleviates congestion and enhances efficiency. The benefits extend beyond operational improvements, driving cost savings and improving customer satisfaction.

In today's fast-paced trade environment, ports must embrace innovation to remain competitive. ADVANTUM Port software is one such module that empowers ports to operate more efficiently, eliminate costly delays, and optimise logistics processes end to end. Visit www.advantumpcs.com to learn more.

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CARIBBEAN MARITIME UNIVERSITY

THE WAY AHEAD

The following is the second of a two-part interview by Mike Jarrett with the President of the Caribbean Maritime University, Professor Andrew Spencer.

Ten years before Professor Andrew Spencer set foot on the campus of the Caribbean Maritime University (CMU), his PhD thesis on tourism strategy – completed at Bournemouth University's School of Tourism in the United Kingdom – was formally recognised by the Institute for Travel and Tourism's Education and Training Committee (ITT). The ITT named the Jamaican academic its 2011/2012 PhD Student of the Year.

Holding both BSc and MSc degrees in Tourism Management from the University of the West Indies (UWI), Spencer later became the first UWI academic appointed as a full Professor of Tourism. He served as Director of the Centre for Hotel and Tourism Management (CHTM), UWI Nassau, from 2013 to 2017, and by the time he assumed office at CMU, he had authored over 50 scholarly works, including three books. Beyond academia, he was frequently called upon to consult for regional governments on tourism development and had served on the boards of 12 public entities in Jamaica.

Spencer arrived at CMU in Kingston in September 2022, bringing the drive, passion, and perspective of an educator, coupled with the insight gained from years

immersed in teaching, research, and analysis of the Caribbean's foremost industry: tourism. This fusion of scholarship and experience shaped his early decisions and informed strategies that are already yielding results in the complex evolution of CMU – and, by extension, the wider Caribbean maritime sector.

It was with this backdrop – and in light of CMU's growing role in the region's development – that my one-on-one conversation with Professor Andrew Spencer began in October 2024.

MIKE JARRETT: IT SEEMS THAT THE CMU HAS INCREASINGLY MANAGED TO GET THE RESPECT AND SUPPORT OF THE WIDER MARITIME COMMUNITY, WOULD YOU SAY?

Prof. Andrew Spencer: Since coming here, I'm happy to say that the team and I have been able to seal the deal with Carnival Cruise Lines. We have a solid MOU with them where they're taking 15 students every year – sea time plus employment. We're getting scholarships. They're about to assist us with some of our tech upgrades. Every time there's a Carnival ship in Ocho Rios, we can send a group of students and faculty down there so that they can benefit from understanding the inner workings of these massive vessels.



“ NO UNIVERSITY MAKES ANY SENSE WITHOUT A STRONG GRADUATE SCHOOL. SO, WE DO HAVE A SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH.

Disney is now about to sign with us as well. Royal Caribbean has a partnership with us, and I could go on and on — so that was kind of the nexus for me: bringing the softer side of shipping to the space and making it congeal.

So that's one degree in the Faculty of Shipping and Logistics. But we also have International Shipping. There's the Centre for Security, Counter-Terrorism and Non-Proliferation — which existed on its own at first — is now in this faculty. It offers all the programmes that the port security side will need, but also the police force. So, we have degrees in Digital Forensics, in Cyber Security... it's just an exciting Centre that self-sustains. It's not a burden to the rest of the university; in fact, it returns a surplus to the university each year.

Also in the Faculty of Shipping and Logistics, we have the Bachelor of Science degree in what we used to call Customs, Freight-Forwarding and Immigration. We've rebranded that. So, students who came in September 2024 are now coming into a degree in Border Operations and Management.

MIKE JARRETT: WHY THE CHANGE?

Prof. Andrew Spencer: I think it sums up the elements of that degree, because that degree is an Operations Management degree. And in the same way that our engineers are being gobbled up by manufacturing and by the power companies, we want our Shipping and Logistics students to understand that they can work anywhere in Operations and Processes.

The programme is also managing their expectations, because a student doing that programme will feel that Jamaica Customs must hire them. The reality is: can Customs and Immigration absorb everyone? So, it's a broader programme. But I will tell you that those students are being hired.

MIKE JARRETT: TELL US ABOUT CMU'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS GRADUATES.

Prof. Andrew Spencer: No university makes any sense without a strong graduate school. So, we do have a School of Graduate Studies and Research, with master's degrees in Logistics and Supply Chain Management; Cruise Shipping and Marine Tourism; Engineering and Industrial Systems; and a Master of Science in Logistics Engineering.

Now, let me say this. The pervasive impact of logistics and engineering must not be lost on anyone. Michael Lee-Chin came here recently and hired our top 10 engineers. I am sure there are those who are annoyed at that. But his argument is, he needs more logisticians and engineers because he runs a process business. And because he doesn't have enough process-oriented people — as engineers are — he's ending up with business-minded people who can't take a process through to the end.

When I say that to people, I like to repeat it, because if I said to you 'banking and finance' and 'the CMU', you'd probably roll your eyes — until someone explains that.

So, it's a really big deal and we're very proud of it. And he intends to come back for 10 to 15 top logisticians and engineers every year until he has the right fit for his bank.

Another big development since is our Tracer Study 2024, which indicates that 45% of students get jobs before graduation, 71% are employed in their field of qualification within six months of graduation, and 81% within nine months.

MIKE JARRETT: DOES THE CMU INITIATIVE IN SURINAME, WHICH IS NOT AN ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRY, ALLOW THE UNIVERSITY TO CONTINUE THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?

Prof. Andrew Spencer: Yes. So, we've been talking about the Caribbean expansion. We've been expanding elsewhere. As regards our five-year strategic plan, years one and two were the stability phases. Years three and four will be growth phases; and, year five will be full consolidation of all of that.

So, as we started year three, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the French Maritime Academy; we've also signed an MOU with the Olusegun Agagu University of Science and Technology in Nigeria for a two-plus-two arrangement. They are planning to train a lot of people up to a point and then we look at how we treated the issue of distance and how a few students can come across.

We are about to sign with Shanghai Maritime University, which is one of the top maritime universities in the world. And we're having conversations with Cal Maritime University in California towards a partnership. So, when you talk about expansion, that's what we're talking about. But we can't do that while ignoring the Caribbean. And so that's why we've been thinking seriously about how we establish a presence throughout the rest of the Caribbean.



The CMU brand, to my mind, has been rebuilt. People are focusing on us again. We do get a lot of offers for partnerships and we turn some down. D'you know why? There are two guiding principles for me: Does it fit our strategic plan. . . does it serve us? And, two: Can we, in all honesty, serve that partnership?

Well, I'm not getting into any partnership that will make us deliver shoddy service and not able to hold up our end of the bargain. And so, we ask ourselves questions. And we are very deliberate about it. And because of that we have had to be very judicious in terms of what we sign.

MIKE JARRETT: OF COURSE. OTHERWISE, YOU'RE SETTING FOR A TRAGIC DOWNTURN.

Prof. Andrew Spencer: Absolutely! Absolutely!

MIKE JARRETT: IN THOSE QUIET, 'ALONE WITH YOUR THOUGHTS' MOMENTS WHEN YOU THOUGHT ABOUT TAKING THE JOB AS PRESIDENT OF THE CMU, WHAT OBJECTIVES AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES CAME TO MIND? WHAT DID YOU SEE?

Prof. Andrew Spencer: What did I see? Actually, it's in our strat plan. I saw talented individuals who were not necessarily where they ought to have been on paper. And so we embarked on a plan . . . and we're now almost there. We wanted to have all of our full-time faculty meet minimum qualification requirements, as many of them were practitioners who transitioned from the Institute and never necessarily upgraded their qualification on paper. We've gone through a process of getting individuals upgraded. So, the human resources we started out with . . . 54% to be exact . . . had the required degree levels. Not the knowledge, y'know! We've managed to move that number up to over 80% now, and we will, by year four, have everyone at the minimum required qualification.

In the process of that happening, we have seen a number of PhD programmes being completed in the last year. That process has seen a number of individuals coming through with more technical master's degrees on the side of Marine and Nautical Studies. We've seen more people move up the ranks in terms of how that system operates. We start seeing individuals believing that they can contribute and be the voice of real rigour surrounding policy issues in the Region.

So, what is the long view? What do I see?

I see the Caribbean Maritime University not competing anywhere in the Caribbean. So, we feel proud to say that we are the only institution in the Region on the IMO White List for maritime. We feel proud to say that, at the university level, we're the only institution that exists. So, you have MatPal (Marine Institute) in Guyana; you have LJM (Maritime Academy) in The Bahamas . . . and you have others around. But the idea is, at our level, we are the only ones that exist.

We are no longer content to say that we want to be . . . and I said it when I just came . . . top 20 maritime university in the world.

Now, the struggle for us is that we are unable to find a ranking system for maritime universities. You have the universal ranking systems and you do have a listing of maritime universities. But to find a maritime ranking system is another thing. That's something we'll explore. But we want to be top of mind whenever anyone in Latin America . . . maybe even North America and the Caribbean . . . talks about getting an education in Shipping, in Port Management, in any area to do with the maritime and engineering spaces . . . that we are their automatic go-to . . . much to the point where we become a 'premium' institution of higher learning, so much so that we have to come up with quotas for admissions. •

STOP PRESS: In April 2025, the CMU was accepted into the prestigious International Association of Maritime Universities, ranking us in the top 15% of Maritime Higher Education Institutions globally. This in addition to recent ISO certification, is a testament to the quality of the product.

“ CMU ACCEPTED TO INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MARITIME UNIVERSITIES. ”

Faculty of Engineering and Applied Technology

Entry Requirement: Minimum of five CSEC/GCE O'Level or international equivalent subjects, including Mathematics, English and two technical science subjects.

Programme Name	Description	Objectives	Content	Teaching Methodologies
Bachelor of Engineering in Industrial Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focuses on optimising complex processes. - preparing graduates for supervisory and management roles in rapidly evolving industrial environments. - First two years provides opportunity for Assoc. In Industrial Systems Operations and Maintenance (ADISOM) - Final two years Bachelor of Engineering in Industrial Systems Degree. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To take advantage of computer aided engineering tools to educate a multi-disciplinary engineer. - Candidates are prepared as critical thinkers who can analyse and propose novel solutions to problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Computer Programming - Communication Skills - Engineering Physics - Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning - Industrial Automation - Principles of Thermodynamics - Research Project 	Theoretical and Practical
Bachelor of Engineering in Mechatronics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equips students with a blend of mechanical, electrical, electronics, and computer engineering skills to develop innovative automated systems for modern and future manufacturing environments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To produce graduates in Mechatronic Engineering with sufficient academic background and demand-driven, practical know-how and experience to rise to the challenges of a developing economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engineering Drawing & Designs I - Industrial Engineering Chemistry B - Engineering Mathematics - Automation and Robotics 	
Bachelor of Science in Marine Biotechnology	<p>The programme covers areas in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - marine biology and biotechnology - marine pollution and environmental protection <p>Students are also introduced to the practical areas of marine research.</p>	<p>The intent is to produce a cadre of graduates to provide solutions to problems that are associated with the marine and related environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spanish - Biology – Plants, Animals and Microbes - Scuba Diving - Marine Pollution and Environmental Studies - Maritime Law/Legislation 	

Faculty of Shipping and Logistics

Entry requirements:

Five CSEC/GCE O'Level subjects (including Mathematics and English language)

OR Three CSEC/GCE O'Level subjects with English language and Mathematics and any two CAPE/GCE "A" Level subjects (Levels 1-3)

OR Mature Entry also available

Programme Name	Description	Objectives	Content	Teaching Methodologies
Diploma in Shipping and Logistics	DISL is professional programme designed to develop students' ability to analyse and plan approaches to technical problems in shipping and logistics industry.	To transfer and apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - theoretical concepts - technical and - creative skills to a range of situations in shipping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geography of Ocean Transport - Port Operations - Broking & Chartering Practices 1 - Carriage of Goods by Sea Law - Maritime Law and International Conventions - Project Management - Warehouse and Inventory Management 	Theoretical and Practical
Bachelor of Science in Logistics and Supply Chain Management	The programme is designed to equip students with the critical skills needed to lead and innovate in the fast-paced global logistics and supply chain industries.	Provide practical experience and knowledge in logistics, shipping, and supply chain industries.		
Bachelor of Science in International Shipping	The programme is designed to give a comprehensive understanding of the global shipping industry, focusing on the transportation of cargo and its role in international trade and economic growth.	The intent is to provide students with the knowledge and skills to manage and optimise shipping operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transportation Management - Research Methodology - Logistics and Supply Chain Management 1 - Maritime Security - Customs Law & Regulations 	
Bachelor of Science in Cruise Shipping and Marine Tourism	The programme is designed with a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hospitality - Commercial management - Tourism operations 	The intent is to prepare graduates for operational, supervisory, and managerial roles within cruise shipping and marine tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial Management - Organisational Behaviour and Ethics - Tourism and Hospitality Law - Cruise Shipping Management 	
Bachelor of Science in Border Operations and Management	This programme is designed to aid candidates develop the knowledge and skills necessary to efficient in Protecting the nation's borders as mandated by the various border protection agencies.	The intent is for graduates operate as proficient specialist and practitioners in border operations and management with integrity, confidence and dedication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customs Law & Regulations - Commercial Shipping - Business Law - Immigration Law & Regulations - Investigation for Immigration and Customs Borders 	
Professional Certificate in Fundamentals of Customs Brokerage				

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH:

- Master of Science in Logistics and Supply Chain Management
- Master of Science in Cruise Shipping and marine Tourism
- Master of Engineering in Industrial Systems
- Master of Science in Logistics Engineering
- Master of Science in Security Administration and Management
- Post Graduate Diploma in Logistics and Supply Chain Management
- Post Graduate Diploma in Strategic Counter Terrorism and Management
- Master of Engineering in Industrial Systems
- Doctorate of Philosophy

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- Global Maritime Distress & Safety Systems
- Basic Training For Liquefied Gas Tanker Cargo Operations

Faculty of Marine and Nautical Studies

Entry Requirements:

Programme Name	Description	Objectives	Content	Teaching Methodologies
Marine Transportation, BSc.	The programme is ideally designed for those seeking to become a ship's deck officer . Following the professional subjects of the STCW 1978 Convention	The intent is to train graduates how to: - plan navigation passages - use a variety of navigation instruments - use nautical publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ocean & Offshore Navigation- Seamanship A II (theory)- Seamanship B II (practical)- Ship Manoeuvring & Handling Simulator- Electronic Navigational Systems- Maritime Legislation- Navigation Instruments	Theoretical and Practical
Marine Engineering BEng	The programme is ideally designed for students who want to become a ship's marine engineering officer . Following the professional subjects of the STCW 1978 Convention.	The intent is to train students in: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- marine propulsion machinery- auxiliary systems used on ships- operating systems supported by electrical, electronics and control systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mechanical Engineering- Ship Construction & Stability- Marine Diesel Engines- Maritime Legislation- Engine Room Resource Management- Logistics & Supply Chain Management	
SPECIALISED PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMMES				
Master & Chief Mate	The programme is designed for deck officers who are desirous of upgrading their qualification to become a Chief Officer and then Captain on board merchant trading ships.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Navigation I & II- Watchkeeping & BRM- Ship Maneuvering & Handling; Search & Rescue- Ship Power Plant & Propulsion Systems- Shipboard Operations	
Chief Engineer Officer & Second Engineer Officer	This programme is designed for marine engineer officers who want to upgrade their qualification to become a Second Engineer Officer and then Chief Engineer Officer on board merchant trading ships.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Thermodynamics- Fluid Mechanics- Marine Engineering Maintenance- Automation, Instrumentation & Control Engineering- Naval Architecture	

The Centre for Security Counter Terrorism and Non-Proliferation (CSCTN)

Minimum five CSEC/GCE O'Level including Mathematics and English language or international equivalent.

OR

Minimum three CSEC/GCE O'Level subjects or international equivalent and at least three years' service in a related profession

OR

Mature candidates with over five years' service with JDF/JCF or related profession and a minimum of 240 hours of in-service professional training.

Programme Name	Description	Objectives	Content	Teaching Methodologies
Bachelor of Science Degree in Security Administration and Management	Designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed for entry and middle-level roles in land, sea, and airport security	To develop graduates who can effectively apply their expertise to analyse, innovate, and provide solutions for current and future security challenges across various disciplines.	- Terrorism and Countermeasures - Introduction to Port Facility Security Assessment - Introduction to Security Management - Investigative Techniques - Understanding Crime Scene Investigation - Fundamentals of Risk Management - Surveillance Operations	Theoretical and Practical
Bachelor of Science Degree in Cyber Security and Digital Forensics	This programme is an interdisciplinary course of study that includes major aspects of computer sciences, digital forensics, informational technology, cyber law and ethics.	The objective is to produce graduates who are equipped to respond to the challenges of cybersecurity threats and help organisations protect themselves.	- Natural and Applied Science - Data Science - Crime Scene Management - Quality Assurance for Forensics - Managing Forensic Evidence	
Bachelor of Science Degree in Forensic Sciences	The course is designed with a solid foundation in Forensic Sciences and applications of applied sciences for investigations.	The objective is to improve and increase best practice education and training opportunities in forensic science and prepare candidates the with requisite skillset to solve complex crimes.	- Natural and Applied Science - Data Science - Crime Scene Management - Quality Assurance for Forensics - Managing Forensic Evidence	
Bachelor of Science Degree in Industrial Security Management	Ideally designed for students who wants to collaborate with private and public security counterparts in addressing threats such as industrial accidents, crime, terrorism, and cyber-attacks in the modern industrial sector.	The objective is to equip graduates with the skills and ethical decision-making ability to operate at managerial and supervisory level in a security industrial environment.	- Introduction to Criminology & Sociology - Crimes Against the Business Organization - Information & Intelligence Gathering - Public Private Partnership in Industrial Security - Fraud & Fraud Investigation	
Postgraduate Diploma in Strategic Counter Terrorism	This is a professional course which transfers knowledge and expertise to improve candidates' capabilities in counter terrorism measures.	The objective is to enable graduates to execute their duties in accordance to local and international legislations.	- Global Politics - Security Management - Financing Terrorism - Crowd and Crisis Management - Proliferation of Weapon of Mass Destruction - International Security	

Please note these lists are not exhaustive, particularly for the content of each programme. •

HARMONISING DATA STANDARDS

Sharing software

BY COLIN P YOUNG *



Port costs for handling differences in data formats, standards, and carrier-specific requirements can be costly, affecting efficiency, labour, IT systems, and compliance.

The shipping industry relies heavily on several international standards for the transfer of data to ensure interoperability, efficiency and regulatory compliance.

In this regard, key standards include:

1. Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce, and Transport (EDIFACT) – widely used for electronic data interchange (EDI) in shipping.
2. The International Maritime Organization Compendium on Facilitation and Electronic Business (IMO Compendium) – which mandates the use of standardised digital data exchange for port calls under the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (the FAL Convention) – to prevent unnecessary delays in maritime traffic; to aid co-operation between Governments; and, to secure the highest practicable degree of uniformity in formalities and other procedures.
3. The International Organization for Standardization
4. The United Nations Location Codes (UN/LOCODE) provides standardised codes for ports and logistics hubs.
5. Digital Container Shipping Association (DCSA) Standards – which establish a common framework within the container shipping industry promoting interoperability and efficiency.
6. GS1 Standards – designed to assist identification, capture and sharing information with trading partners.
7. IATA Cargo-XML & Cargo-IMP – used for electronic communication between airlines and other air cargo supply chain stakeholders, such as shippers, freight forwarders, ground-handling agents, and regulators, as well as customs and security agencies.
8. Bureau International des Containers (BIC) Codes – for standardised container numbering and identification.
9. Ship Message Design Group (SMDG) Standards which define EDI messages for stowage planning and terminal operations.
10. Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) Standards.

Modern trends include API-based data exchange (REST/JSON) replacing traditional EDI in some cases and TradeLens (IBM & Maersk) and GSBN (Global Shipping Business Network) which use blockchain for secure document exchange (e-BLs, customs data).

These standards ensure seamless data flow between shipping lines, ports, terminals, customs, and logistics providers, reducing manual errors and improving efficiency. Compliance with IMO (International Maritime Organization), WCO (World Customs Organization), and national regulations are also a key driver.

However, while there are international standards for manifest data, *e.g.*, different shipping lines may use slightly different data sets, formats, or interpretations based on: their internal systems; regional regulations; or, operational preferences. Nevertheless, the core data elements usually align with global standards such as IMO FAL, EDIFACT, and ISO requirements.

Differences may include:

1. Data fields and extensions

- I. Mandatory vs. Optional Fields: Some lines require extra details (*e.g.*, HS Code, Dangerous Goods UN Number, Container Weight Verification).
- II. Custom fields:
 - (a) Maersk may request specific commodity descriptions.
 - (b) MSC might require additional consignee tax IDs.
 - (c) CMA CGM could enforce special reefer cargo settings.

2. Format and Transmission Method

- I. EDIFACT (IFCSUM, CUSCAR) vs. XML (IMO Compendium) vs. Proprietary CSV/Excel Templates.
- II. Some lines accept API-based JSON (*e.g.*, DCSA standards), while others still rely on legacy EDI.

3. Regional Compliance Add-ons

- I. U.S. (AMS): Requires ISF-5/10 data 24 hours before loading.
- II. E.U.: (ENS) Needs Entry Summary Declaration.
- III. China: May require advanced Cargo Track and Trace (CTN) numbers.

4. Container-Specific Requirements

- I. Special cargo (OOG, reefer, DG) may need extra fields.
- II. Some carriers demand VGM (*i.e.*, Verified Gross Mass) in a specific format.

“Caribbean ports can and should work together to standardise data sets utilised across the Region so as to reduce cargo-handling costs and improve vessel and truck turnaround times.”

EXAMPLE: Maersk vs. MSC vs. Hapag-Lloyd

Data Field	Maersk	MSC	Hapag-Lloyd
HS Code	Required	Optional	Required (for some trades)
Shipper Tax ID	Yes (E.U./U.S.)	No	Yes (Brazil/India)
Dangerous Goods	IMDG fields + DG form	Basic UN number	Full DG description
VGM Submission	Via portal/EDI	Email/EDI	Web service API

Differences may be managed by checking the carrier's documentation (e.g., Maersk's "Shipping Instructions Guide"), using EDI/API integrations to automate compliance and leveraging third-party platforms (e.g., INTTRA, GT Nexus) for multi-carrier submissions.

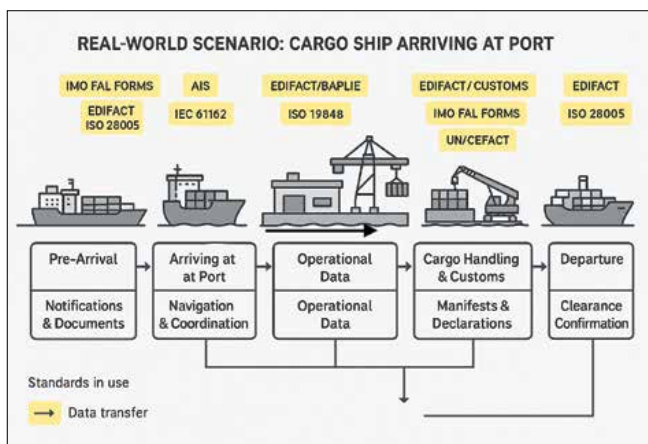


Figure 1: Shipping Data Process

Example of data formats used in cargo handling

COSTS

The costs for ports to handle differences in data formats, standards, and carrier-specific requirements can be significant, affecting efficiency, labour, IT systems, and compliance. Key cost drivers include:

1. Custom EDI/API adaptations for ports to support multiple formats (EDIFACT, XML, JSON, proprietary templates)
2. Manual labour and data re-entry costs to manually reconcile discrepancies
3. Compliance and Penalty Costs due to incorrect/incomplete data
4. Inefficiency and operational delays due to data mismatches increasing vessel turnaround time
5. Increased training and staff overheads to manage different carrier systems

6. Opportunity costs, as a consequence of lost productivity from IT teams fixing data issues instead of optimising operations and reputation damage if delays affect shipping lines' schedules.

Ports in the Caribbean can reduce costs by adopting targeted digitalisation, process optimisation, and collaborative frameworks.

Practical, cost-effective strategies include:

1. Adopting port community systems which provide shared digital platforms for shipping lines, terminals, customs, and truckers
2. Mandate standardised EDI/API submissions through enforcement of IMO FAL/EDIFACT for manifests and alignment with DCSA digital standards
3. Automate customs and terminal processes
4. Centralise cargo tracking (real-time visibility) reducing searches for cargo that cause delays
5. Pool resources with neighbouring ports where small ports, in particular, standalone IT systems are cost prohibitive
6. Train staff and enforce compliance leading to increased ease of adoption of digital systems
7. Leverage low-cost/open-source tools (such as the IMO's maritime single window which was developed in the Caribbean)

Caribbean ports can and should work together to standardise data sets utilised across the Region so as to reduce cargo-handling costs and improve vessel and truck turnaround times. ●

*Colin P. Young, with more than 30 years in port management, functioned as Caribbean representative of the International Maritime Organization.

Shore Power: Plug in or miss the boat

BY DENIECE M. AIKEN*



- **Extreme weather events and deadly heatwaves claim lives in Morocco.**
- **Catastrophic floods sweep across Africa, Europe and the Americas.**
- **Cyclones, fuelled by warming oceans, ravage Asian countries.**
- **Wildfires and tornadoes destroy towns and villages in North America.**

Increasingly catastrophic climate events mark a new chapter on planet Earth – one in which Climate Change (now a Climate Crisis) is already reshaping national economies, physical environments, and daily life. Among the affected sectors is global shipping, which is now facing rising seas, volatile weather, and waterway disruptions – such as the drought-stricken Panama Canal, with about one-third fewer ships able to pass through in the year up to September 2024. New Arctic routes, emerging as ice melts, pose both opportunities and environmental risks.

As the maritime industry faces mounting climate pressures, it must navigate the dual challenge of resilience and emissions reduction. The recent conclusion of the 83rd session of the International Maritime Organization's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 83) propelled heightened awareness within the industry. As the sector accelerates its transition towards net-zero emissions, key strategies like adopting green fuels, retrofitting vessels, and embracing electrification are gaining momentum. Hybrid and fully electric vessels are drawing significant interest in island-dense regions such as the Baltic Sea and the Caribbean. To effectively integrate these vessels, ports need the infrastructure to support them.

Solutions

Shore power solutions involve the installation of infrastructure along the berths in ports, which allows ships to connect to land-based electricity. Vessels can then shut down their engines during port stays, resulting in significant reductions in emissions of greenhouse gases and air pollutants – particularly in urban port areas.

In an effort to encourage swift action towards the use of shore power, recommendations, guidelines, mandatory measures, and regulations have been introduced at global, regional, and local levels. Examples include California's Ocean-Going Vessels at Berth (OGVB) regulation, which has required certain vessel types to use shore power since 2023, and the widely discussed FuelEU Maritime Regulation. The latter mandates the use of on-shore power supply (OPS) or other zero-emission alternatives starting on January 1, 2030 in European Union (EU) ports covered by

the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR), and, as of January 1, 2035, in all EU ports with OPS infrastructure. This new wave of regional regulations is compelling shipping companies to reassess vessel design, fuel strategies, and port call logistics.

The transition to shore power introduces a range of strategic and operational implications for the maritime industry. One of the most immediate challenges is the pressure to modernise fleets, as older vessels must be retrofitted with shore power systems – a costly undertaking. Beyond the technical upgrades, shipowners are increasingly re-evaluating their port call strategies, favouring ports with reliable shore power infrastructure to avoid fuel surcharges, emissions-related fees, and potential penalties. The expanding patchwork of regional regulations also adds a new layer of complexity to global operations. Vessels now need to navigate a diverse set of requirements depending on where they sail, thus complicating both voyage planning and compliance management. This shift is more than a logistical adjustment; it represents a strategic pivot aligned with broader decarbonisation efforts, including stricter fuel standards, the implementation of greenhouse gas pricing, and the growing demand for digital emissions monitoring.

The adoption of shore power presents a mix of challenges and strategic opportunities for ports. Development of the necessary shore-side infrastructure demands substantial capital investment. In addition, port operators must work closely with utility providers to obtain adequate electrical capacity – preferably sourced from renewables – to support the long-term viability and sustainability of shore power systems. Recent widespread power outages in Spain and Portugal, although their exact causes remain unclear, highlight the potential risks. Similar disruptions could occur on a larger scale if power systems are not properly equipped to handle the additional load from shore-powered vessels.

Significant advantages

Despite these hurdles, ports that take the lead in installing shore power stand to benefit from important competitive advantages. They are more likely to be favoured by environmentally conscious shipping lines that seek to reduce emissions and comply with evolving sustainability standards. Early adoption also helps ports to meet regulatory requirements for participation in green corridors and emissions-controlled zones, positioning them as compliant and forward-looking hubs in the global shipping network.

Shore power offers tangible benefits to local communities by significantly reducing air pollution, particularly in densely populated regions or environmentally sensitive areas, thereby improving public health outcomes. Major ports such as Los Angeles, Rotterdam, Tallinn, Helsinki, Marseille, and Shanghai have already emerged as global leaders in shore power deployment. At the same time, many ports in developing regions are striving to catch up, often contending with limited access to financing and unreliable grid infrastructure as they work to modernise and align with global emissions goals.

Caribbean uncertainties

The outlook for shore power in the Caribbean remains uncertain. While countries in the Caribbean are heavily reliant on cruise tourism, they are increasingly subject to global climate policies and emissions regulations. Despite these mounting pressures, shore power infrastructure is still largely absent in the Caribbean.

The Caribbean region faces its own set of challenges due largely to the lack of regional shipping infrastructure. This deficiency hinders economic integration and efficient maritime trading. In contrast, infrastructure supporting cruise tourism is more developed but presents distinct challenges, especially for smaller Caribbean countries. When evaluating the potential for shore power in the Caribbean, it is essential to account for the already limited energy supply. Any implementation strategy must address these constraints and explore how energy capacity can be expanded to meet the substantial power demands of docked ships.

Although progress has been gradual, some Caribbean nations, particularly those in the Dutch Caribbean, have begun laying the groundwork for the introduction of shore power facilities in their ports. Meanwhile, others are still in the early stages of strategising; undertaking needs assessments; and evaluating the technical and financial feasibility of shore power solutions.

The absence of shore power infrastructure in the Caribbean presents several significant risks for the region's economic and environmental resilience. One of the most pressing concerns is the potential decline in cruise business – a major revenue source for many Caribbean countries.

As global regulations on maritime emissions tighten, cruise operators are under increasing pressure to reduce their environmental footprint. This shift is prompting many lines to prioritise ports that allow vessels to plug into cleaner, land-based electricity instead of relying on polluting onboard generators. Ports that fail to meet these expectations risk being bypassed in favour of environmentally compliant destinations.

Shore power is far more than a technical upgrade to port infrastructure. It is a strategic enabler of the maritime sector's climate transition. For regions like the Caribbean, shore power is not just about emissions reduction. It is an essential component of long-term economic resilience, environmental stewardship, and relevance in a rapidly decarbonising global economy. While the road ahead for Caribbean ports is undeniably long and complex, shaped by barriers such as limited financial resources, modest port capacities, unreliable power grids, and multiple development priorities, the global trajectory is clear. If the Caribbean is to keep pace with the world of shipping, it must act with urgency and enlightened vision.

Port authorities and policymakers in the Caribbean are urged to take a proactive stance. Begin with detailed feasibility assessments; engage energy providers early; pursue international partnerships and climate finance opportunities; and develop phased implementation plans tailored to meet local conditions. Shore power is not an optional enhancement. It is a strategic imperative. •

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We are excited to share our anticipation for the 55th Annual General Meeting, Conference, and Exhibition of the Caribbean Shipping Association (CSA). This year, Suriname has the honor of hosting this prestigious event, and our company is proud to serve as the main host.

With the full dedication of our team and the valuable support of other national CSA members, we are committed to ensuring a successful and memorable event. Meanwhile, we continue to work closely with the CSA Secretariat in a spirit of collaboration and coordination.

Beyond the conference, we look forward to introducing you to Suriname's rich cultural diversity, expressed through vibrant music, dance, and exquisite culinary experiences. Additionally, with 93% of our country covered in pristine forests, Suriname offers unparalleled opportunities to experience nature in its purest form. We would love for you to explore these wonders during your stay.

Planning to extend your visit after the conference? Be sure to check out our dedicated tourism website for inspiration at **www.suriname.travel**

Our company is also actively engaged in developing Suriname's cruise tourism potential, further enhancing the country's appeal as a prime destination.

With the further development of the offshore oil and gas industry, Suriname stands at the threshold of an exciting economic transformation, and we are proud to play a role in this progress while maintaining a firm commitment to sustainability. Based on our vision "Becoming your reliable carbon-neutral logistics partner", we are continuously developing various initiatives to achieve the goals we have set and, in so doing, turn our vision into our reality.

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