BIMCO TRAINING

BIMCO

AGENCY & PORT OPERATIONS
ACADEMY

Panama City
30 November - 4 December 2026

Delivered in collaboration with the Panamanian Maritime Chamber

CÁMARA MARÍTIMA DE PANAMÁ
DESDE 1979

PROGRAMME

DAY 1 — The Agent in the international trade chain

THEME: Role and authority to act on behalf of third parties

Day 1 establishes the Academy's foundation by positioning the port agent within the international trade and transport chain, rather than treating agency as a stand-alone service function. The day focuses on the agent's role and authority to act on behalf of third parties, and the structural tension that arises when agents are expected to manage operational risk without corresponding contractual control.

Starting with the commodity trade chain, we will examine how risk, cost, and control shift between the sale contract, the charter party, and the bill of lading - and where those shifts are often misunderstood in practice. Attention is given to CIF and FOB sales, and to the implicit assumptions made by commercial parties when disputes arise.

The programme then moves to the legal and practical limits of agency authority, addressing appointment, instruction, payment, neutrality, and conflicts of interest. The day concludes by testing contractual design against port and terminal realities, before applying all concepts in a structured case study that mirrors the pressures agents face from shippers, receivers and principals during port operations.

09:00-09:30
Welcome and framing the Academy:
- The role of BIMCO as a practical organisation serving both owners and agents
- The position of the port agent as a contractual and operational interface rather than a purely service-based function
- Framing the problem of agents managing risk without corresponding written contractual authority.

09:30-10:45
The commodity trade chain:
- The practical structure of the commodity trade chain and the roles of key commercial actors
- How Incoterms® and especially CIF and FOB sale terms allocate risk, cost and control in theory and in practice
- Examples of how contractual risks shift in relation to the cargo sale contract, the charter party and a bill of lading.
- Discussion on the implicit expectation and risks when an agent tries to bridge possible operational misalignments between the sale contract and the charter party when there are disputes.

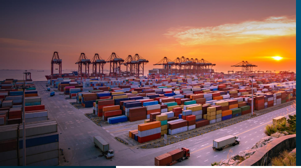
10:45-11:00	*Break*

11:00-12:30
Agency appointment, authority and neutrality:
- The distinction between appointment, instruction and payment in agency relationships
- The scope and limits of an agent's authority, including the risks of implied authority
- Disclosure duties and conflicts of interest arising from multi-principal environments
- Discussion on how agents can maintain neutrality while operating under commercial pressure from multiple stakeholders.

12:30-13:30	*Lunch*

13:30-15:00
Port reality vs contractual design:
- The contrast of charter party assumptions compared with port and terminal realities
- What happens when local regulations and/or terminal rules override the contractual stipulations in the charter party?
- How regional export structures and the influence of local and international traders can impact port operations.

15:00-15:15	*Break*
15:15-16:45	**Case study 1 – The Sale Is Done. The Agent Is Appointed:** ■ Apply Day 1 concepts to a realistic trade, chartering, and agency scenario ■ Identify misaligned expectations across sale contracts, charter parties and agency appointments ■ Test the agent's actual authority against operational demands ■ Anticipate pressure points likely to emerge during port operations and the documentation process.
16:45-17:00	**Day wrap-up**



DAY 2 — Charter parties at the port

THEME: When chartering terms meet operational friction at the port

Day 2 focuses on the point at which chartering terms are tested by port realities, and where the port agent serves as the practical interface between contractual rights and operational constraints. The day examines how charter party provisions – often negotiated far from the port – translate into concrete actions, decisions and risks once a vessel arrives.

The programme begins by identifying charter party clauses under both voyage and time chartering that have immediate operational consequences for agents, including NOR validity, laytime definitions, berth versus port concepts and the treatment of waiting, shifting and congestion. The emphasis is on why agents must understand the underlying charter party, even when they are not contractual parties and how certain clauses, legally and practically, determine who controls terminals and stevedores.

Attention then turns to time, money, and evidence, highlighting the differing commercial priorities of owners and charterers during port operations. We will explore the agent's critical role in creating various evidence – through Statements of Facts, time sheets, and port logs – that may later determine the outcome of laytime, demurrage, or cargo disputes. Reporting discipline is addressed as a core risk-management function, not an administrative exercise.

The day concludes by examining operational limits imposed by draft, weather, labour, infrastructure, and fragmented port governance, before applying these issues in a case study involving congestion, conflicting instructions, and NOR risk.

09:00-10:30

Charter party obligations that directly affect agents:

- Examples of charter party clauses under voyage and time chartering that have immediate operational consequences at the port, and why knowing the terms of the underlying charter party is important for the agent
- How NOR validity, laytime definitions and berth vs. port concepts translate into agent actions
- How shifting, waiting and congestion are treated contractually versus operationally
- Charter party clauses which, in practice, control terminals and stevedores – and how this affects the agent's role.

10:30-10:45	*Break*

10:45-12:30

Time, money and evidence:

- Discussion on the owners' and charterers' commercial priorities during port operations
- The agent's role in creating and maintaining critical evidence for cargo claims
- Examples of how Statements of Facts, time sheets, and port logs are used in laytime and demurrage disputes
- Discussion on the importance of internal reporting discipline as a service and risk-management tool benefiting the principal, rather than an administrative task.

12:30-13:30	*Lunch*

13:30-15:00

Port constraints and operational limits:

- What draft restrictions, weather, labour availability and infrastructure impact contractual performance? Discussion on "Safe Port" concepts
- How fragmented port and terminal governance can disperse control and accountability, creating operational risk that charter parties do not fully anticipate and how the agent may try to navigate conflicting interests
- Develop approaches for managing expectations upstream without creating implied agency commitments.

15:00-15:15	*Break*
15:15-16:45	**Case study 2 – Arrival, NOR and Congestion:** ■ Apply charter party concepts to a congested port arrival scenario ■ Determine appropriate agent actions when berth availability and the owners' instructions conflict ■ Decide what should be formally recorded to protect principals' positions ■ Identify statements and actions that should be avoided to prevent unintended liability.
16:45-17:00	**Day wrap-up**

DAY 3 — Bills of lading and cargo documentation

THEME: When documents drive commercial behaviour and risks

Day 3 examines how cargo documentation – particularly bills of lading – shapes commercial behaviour, allocates risk and creates exposure well beyond the charter party framework. The focus is on the point at which operational decisions at the port crystallise into legal and financial consequences under the commodity sales contract and the charter party.

The day begins by revisiting the three core functions of the bill of lading as receipt, evidence of the contract of carriage and document of title, and by contrasting the "charter party world" with the separate and often unforgiving "bill of lading world". Particular attention is given to the agent's practical involvement in the preparation, signing and release of bills, and to how routine operational assistance can unintentionally create legal exposure.

Attention then shifts to the commercial pressures that drive documentary risk, including demands for clean, backdated or switched bills, the widespread use of letters of indemnity and the interaction between bills of lading and letters of credit. The session also addresses the growing use of electronic bills of lading, and how digital platforms alter timing pressure, control of documents and the agent's role in facilitating documentary flows.

In the afternoon, documentary risk is examined through the lens of different cargo types and regional trade patterns, highlighting why certain trades are particularly sensitive to discrepancies. The day concludes with a high-pressure case study in which cargo condition, banking deadlines, LOIs and e-bill workflows collide. Day 3 reinforces a central message of the Academy: documents do not merely record events – they actively drive risk, behaviour and liability.

09:00-10:30

Bills of lading: function and pressure points:

- Revisit the core legal functions of the bill of lading as receipt, evidence of the contract of carriage and document of title
- Contrast the "charter party world" with the "bill of lading world" and the consequences for agents
- Port agent involvement in the preparation, signing, and release of bills of lading
- Identify where operational customer-friendly assistance can slide into unintended legal exposure for the agent.

10:30-10:45	*Break*

10:45-12:30

Commercial pressure on documentation:

- Discussion on the commercial drivers behind demands for clean, backdated, or switched bills of lading
- The legal and practical risks associated with letters of indemnity in a chartering and documentary context
- Examine how current documentary practices interact with letters of credit and bank/finance procedures
- The emergence of electronic bills of lading (e-bills), and how digital platforms change timing pressure, control and agent involvement
- Discussion on situations where agents must resist commercial pressure to avoid personal or corporate exposure.

12:30-13:30	*Lunch*

13:30-15:00

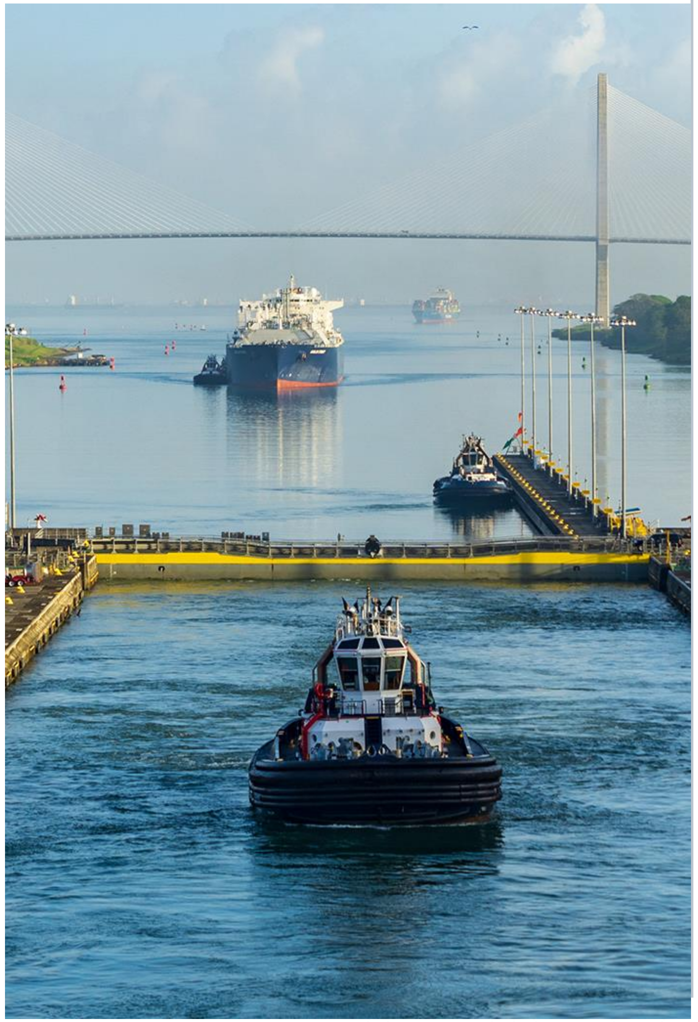
Cargo types, trade patterns and documentary risk:

- Examine how different cargo types create distinct documentary risk profiles
- Assess the sensitivity of agricultural bulk, mineral/mining cargoes and project cargoes to documentary discrepancies
- How regional trading practices amplify pressure on agents during documentation
- How agents may be exposed to claims despite lacking contractual privity under the bill of lading.

15:00-15:15	*Break*
15:15-16:45	**Case study 3 – The Bill of Lading Crisis:** ■ Apply documentary risk principles to a high-pressure port scenario ■ Determine what actions are legally and operationally permissible when the cargo condition is disputed ■ Evaluate the risks associated with LOIs, time pressure, banking requirements and e-bill workflows ■ Develop defensible strategies for protecting the agent while maintaining operational continuity.
16:45-17:00	**Day wrap-up**

DAY 4 — Local tour of Maritime Panama

THEME: Infrastructure, systems and operational reality	
09:00-12:00 **Center for Simulators and Applied Technologies (CSTA), UMIP – Panama:** As part of the five-day programme, participants will visit the Center for Simulators and Applied Technologies (CSTA) at the Universidad Marítima Internacional de Panamá (UMIP) in La Boca, Panama. The visit is designed to complement the Academy's contractual and operational focus by providing insight into how technical, operational and human-factor decisions are trained, tested and evaluated in a controlled environment. The CSTA was inaugurated in 2006 and includes a full-scale engine room simulator based on a post-Panamax container vessel, donated by the COSCO Group. The simulator is an exact replica of the engine room of a large container ship and allows instructors and trainees to prepare machinery for operations, monitor and control systems, diagnose faults and optimise plant performance under realistic operating conditions. In addition to the main engine room simulator, the centre hosts a wide range of specialised laboratories and simulators covering electrical systems, hydraulics, mechatronics, pumps, boilers, navigation, liquid cargo handling, GMDSS communications and ECDIS. These facilities subject participants to realistic visual and auditory conditions, enabling the verification of procedures and decision-making without exposing personnel, vessels or cargo to risk. For participants in the BIMCO Academy on Agency and Port Operations, the visit offers a practical perspective on how shipboard limitations, system failures and operational constraints can shape the decisions that agents must manage ashore.	
12:00-13:00	*Lunch*
13:00-17:00 **Visit to the Panama Canal by boat:** As part of the programme, participants will take part in a boat transit of the Panama Canal, offering a unique opportunity to experience first-hand one of the world's most significant pieces of maritime infrastructure. For anyone working in shipping, the Canal represents a critical junction in global trade, linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and shaping vessel deployment and routing. During the transit, participants will be able to see first hand the scale and complexity of canal operations, including lock transits, traffic management, pilotage, tug assistance and the coordination required to move vessels safely and efficiently through the highly regulated waterway. The visit provides a practical view of the physical constraints, engineering solutions, and operational discipline that underpin daily canal operations. Beyond its technical and operational aspects, the Panama Canal is also a landmark in maritime history and global commerce. Experiencing a transit by boat offers insight that cannot be gained from charts or schedules alone and provides valuable context for understanding why the Canal continues to play a central role in international shipping today.	
18:00	**Dinner for all participants and faculty**



PROGRAMME

DAY 5 — Claims, disputes and the future agent

THEME: The agent as a risk manager and dispute facilitator

Day 5 examines how port agents become involved in cargo claims, delay disputes, and regulatory investigations – and how their conduct can either protect or weaken their principals' positions. The focus is on structured incident handling and professional risk management rather than defensive reaction.

The day begins by analysing how disputes arise in practice: cargo discrepancies, laytime and demurrage disagreements, documentation issues, and regulatory penalties. Participants explore how routine operational involvement can later be scrutinised in arbitration or court proceedings, and why it is essential to distinguish between contractual liability, operational participation and reputational exposure.

Attention then turns to evidence and damage control. The programme highlights what arbitration tribunals, insurers, and P&I correspondents typically examine in disputes, and why accurate records, clear reporting lines and disciplined de-escalation procedures are decisive. Managing incidents early – and documenting decisions based on information available at the time – is a core professional skill.

In the afternoon, the discussion broadens to the evolving role of the port agent in a digital and transparent environment. As documentation systems, e-bills and shared data platforms reshape expectations, agents are increasingly required to demonstrate value through compliance awareness, documentation discipline and structured risk management.

The final case study traces a transaction from a sale contract to a claim file, consolidating the week's themes.

09:00-10:30

How agents become involved in disputes:

- How cargo claims arise from discrepancies in condition, quantity, contamination or documentation
- The agent's role in delay-related disputes, including laytime, demurrage and detention
- Exposure to regulatory penalties, including customs, environmental, port state and safety violations
- How routine operational assistance can evolve into evidentiary scrutiny in arbitration or court proceedings
- The difference between contractual liability, operational involvement and reputational exposure.

10:30-10:45	*Break*

10:45-12:30

Evidence, reporting lines and damage control:

- What arbitrators, courts, insurers and P&I correspondents typically look for in disputed port events
- The importance of contemporaneous records, structured reporting and clear escalation lines
- Statements of Facts, email trails, instructions and internal logs as dispute-critical evidence
- Managing early-stage incidents to prevent escalation into formal claims
- Avoiding hindsight bias: documenting decisions based on information available at the time
- The role of disciplined communication in protecting principals and the agency.

12:30-13:30	*Lunch*

13:30-15:00

The evolving role of the port agent:

- How digitalisation, shared data platforms and transparency requirements reshape agency services
- The implications of e-bills, digital port systems and integrated reporting tools
- Moving beyond "local presence" toward structured risk management and advisory functions
- Demonstrating value through compliance awareness, documentation discipline and expectation management
- Professional positioning in a market where principals demand both efficiency and transparency.

15:00-15:15	*Break*

15:15-16:45

Case study 5 – From Sale Contract to Claim File:

Session Topics: Participants revisit the full transaction examined throughout the week, tracing it from the initial sale structure through port execution to dispute crystallisation.

Focus areas include:

- Identifying where contractual risk allocation failed in practice
- Assessing what the agent controlled, influenced or merely observed
- Determining which issues should have been escalated earlier and to whom
- Evaluating how documentation, communication and neutrality affected the outcome
- Formulating contractual and operational safeguards to reduce future exposure.

16:45-17:00	**Programme conclusion and key takeaways**

SPEAKERS

Haris Zografakis

Haris Zografakis is a partner at Stephenson Harwood, a leading London law firm that was named the Law Firm of the Year at the 2009 British Legal Awards. Over more than fifteen years he has dealt with all aspects of shipping and international trade law, acting both for traders and shipowners, as well as their respective insurers. He has been involved in several arbitrations and cases before the High Court, some of which have been reported: Trafigura v. Kookmin Bank, a seminal case on negative declarations and anti-suit injunctions in the context of oil product trading, arbitration reported as LMLN 22/2007, on jurisdiction issues in a shipyard dispute; the Sabrewing, regarding documentary requirements in the presentation of demurrage claims under tanker charter parties; the Johnny K regarding the question of damages in addition to demurrage and the Northgate, regarding validity of NORs and estoppel. He has lectured in four continents, including events organised by BIMCO, Universities, as well as the International Maritime Organisation and others, and has also been on the editorial board of the Shipping and Transport Law Journal. He is singled out by both main legal directories, Chambers and Legal 500, as a leading individual in his areas of expertise.

Aase Naaman Jensen

Aase Naaman Jensen is heading up Skuld in New York. She joined Skuld in 2008, initially in Copenhagen and later transferred to New York, where she has been handling a broad variety of of both P&I claims and FD&D disputes on behalf of owners, charterers, and traders in all entered segments. Aase is originally a Danish lawyer and has an LLM in US law. Before joining Skuld, Aase worked on the commercial side for Mediterranean Shipping Company in Copenhagen and Oslo.

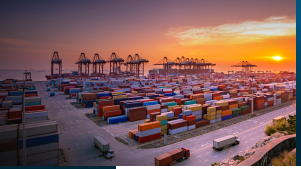
SPEAKERS

Utsav Mathur

Utsav is a Partner, commodity trading, shipping, and offshore energy lawyer based in Norton Rose Fulbright’s Houston office. Utsav’s practice spans disputes (litigation and arbitration), regulatory, and certain transactional work.

Utsav represents energy companies and commodity traders on disputes arising from physical commodity trading activity and any related marine, pipeline or rail transportation activity. He also advises on pre-disputes issues and assists traders in resolving contentious matters prior to initiation of litigation or arbitration. Utsav also acts on charter party disputes, pollution incidents, Rule B and C proceedings, cargo claims, collisions, allisions, and other marine casualties. Utsav routinely assists commodity trading and energy clients avoid disputes and mitigate risks by advising on and negotiating the slate of contracts typically implicated in commodity trading, storage, and transportation activity.
Utsav also assists financial institutions and lenders enforce security interests against vessels through mortgage foreclosure litigation under the Commercial Instruments and Maritime Liens Act.
Utsav has represented energy companies with upstream, midstream, or downstream commercial litigation matters.

In addition, Utsav advises clients on significant offshore energy projects. He has represented developers, contractors, and vessel owners on US offshore wind projects, with particular emphasis on unique Jones Act, Cargo Preference Act, Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, and US general maritime law issues related to such projects. Moreover, he has assisted clients on a variety of other energy infrastructure projects, including the construction of crude oil pipelines, deepwater
ports, FPSO charter/O&M agreements, and LNG-fuelled offshore power generation facilities. He has advised companies on litigation risks related to subsea pipeline construction, relocation, and ruptures. Utsav routinely advocates for clients on matters involving the US Coast Guard, US Customs and Border Protection, and US Maritime Administration. Public companies and private investors also consult Utsav on structuring investments in the US Jones Act shipping market.
Utsav’s exposure to the maritime industry began early in life as he descends from a family of mariners and has spent time at sea.



ORGANISER

Peter Grube

Peter Grube is Training Manager at BIMCO, where he develops and delivers BIMCO courses and seminars worldwide. As part of a long-term succession plan, he stepped down as Head of BIMCO Training in 2025 and continues to contribute to the team in a part-time role, focusing on programme development and delivery.

Peter joined BIMCO's Support & Advice department in 1990 and later became Marketing & Sales Director for membership and products, driving BIMCO's global position as a leading membership and shipping organisation. Before joining BIMCO, he worked at a shipowning office in Copenhagen and as a Sale & Purchase broker in Greece.

He is a graduate of the Danish School for International Marketing & Export, a Chartered Shipbroker (FICS), and holds a Master's in Education and Learning from Roskilde University (RUC).

VENUE

Where will the course be held?

The course venue will be confirmed approximately 8 weeks before the start of the course so we can find a suitable venue for the number of participants.

For more information, please contact:

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