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TAMPA BAY Business Journal

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Casino ship arrested in Tampa

Tampa Bay Business Journal - 4:50 PM EDT Friday by [Larry Halstead](#)

Plans to operate another casino ship in international waters off Pinellas County appear to have crapped out.

U.S. federal marshals arrested the ship, Casino Royale, Friday afternoon at **Tampa Bay Shipbuilding and Repair Co.**

National Liquidators, a boat liquidation company based in Fort Lauderdale, is now in custody of the ship as a substitute custodian for the marshals.

The arrest, resulting from a petition by the ship's crew, is over alleged unpaid wages.

Calls to **Ocean's 21 LLC**, owner of the ship, were pending return.

The dispute was supposedly settled last month when Ocean's 21 agreed to pay \$230,000 in back wages to the ship's crew. It's unclear whether that payment was made as promised or if the latest charges reflect unpaid wages since late September.

Casino Royale has a checkered past, having been arrested and sold at auction last year in Fort Lauderdale. That dispute was also over crew wages, said Mark Browne, spokesman for National Liquidators. It was then known as St. Tropez.

The 397-foot ship was supposed to be outfitted as a floating casino and was nearly ready for operations, Browne said. But this latest snag threatens to sink the operation before it starts.

If the ship's owners and the crew cannot work out a satisfactory settlement in federal court, the judge can order the ship to again be sold at auction to the highest bidder. Either way, the ship probably won't be on the waters any time soon.

Browne said disputes like this usually take three to four months minimum to resolve.

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October 27, 2006

Cruise ship "arrested" in dispute over unpaid wages

Tampa, Florida — The cruise ship *Casino Royale* was "arrested" by the U.S. Marshals Office today in a suit employees brought to recover back wages totalling more than \$230,000.

U.S. District Court in Tampa ordered National Maritime Services Inc. to take charge of the ship, which will remain in its berth at the Port of Tampa until the dispute is resolved, said NMS spokesman Mark Brown.

There are only 19 employees still aboard the 400-ton cruise ship. That number may decline if NMS determines fewer hands are necessary to maintain the vessel, he said.

The owner of the ship, Ocean's 21 LLC of Treasure Island, now has to tell the court how it plans to pay the back wages. If it fails to, or the court disagrees, the ship could be sold at auction and the proceeds used to paid the debt. Ocean's 21 LLC brought the ship to Tampa for repairs last April, and hoped to operate a floating casino in the Gulf of Mexico outside of waters regulated by the state of Florida.

Attempts by Tampa Bay's 10 News to get comment from Ocean's 12 LLC were not successful.