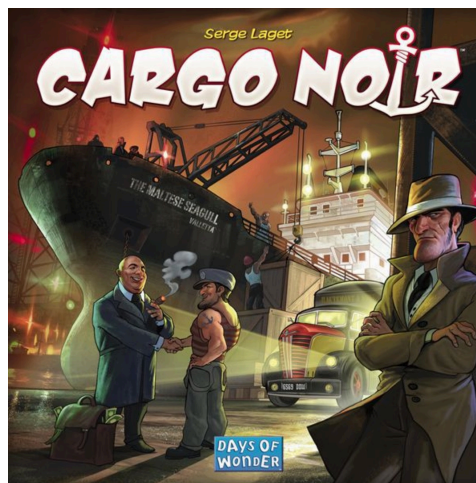


## Cargo Noir: A variant

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Cargo Noir was released by Days of Wonder in 2011. The artwork is gorgeous and the game's title promises a strong noir smuggling adventure theme. The game is rated only 6.5 on BGG, and hits its target family (8+) audience. The main game mechanics are worker (ship) placement, bidding (for goods at ports) and set collecting (goods) to exchange for cards that score victory points at the end. Some cards offer you a little help during the game.



I have had a copy of Cargo Noir on my shelf for 9 years having been tempted by the gorgeous artwork and the theme. It's remained in my collection since its release in 2011 despite not living up to the theme for me. I could not bring myself to part with a game whose components promise so much. I had always intended to have a go at remixing the game a little to see if I could help the theme come through a little more. The current pandemic has presented me with the opportunity.

The game variant described below uses the original components from Cargo Noir plus:

- 5 x pawns in each of the 5 player colours (I use meeples),
- One further black pawn to represent The Mob,
- A 'first player' for the round token to replace the 'Primus' ship used for this in the original game. The Primus ship which has a different role in this variant).

The game uses most of the rules from the original game but loses the bidding mechanic and adds bribery, influence, gangsters, and coastguards. Some goods also have their individual uses to smooth the way in a world where you trust no one and seem to owe something to everyone. All you

can do is to chart your course, shift the goods, avoid the syndicates and make the best of the situations in which you find yourself.

## **Cargo Noir remix v1.1**

The game ends when the round marker reaches the appropriate end for the number of players (same as original game). The winner is the person with the most victory points (and coins if there is a tie).

In this remix you are the skipper of a ship working for one of the five 'Families'. You work for one family but you are also in debt to one of the others. Interest on this debt is due every time you meet the skipper working for the Family you owe. You will also be collecting payments from the skipper who owes the family you work for.

Your job is to help the family make money from trading in contraband and launder this money by converting it into legitimate assets such as Bars, Nightclubs and Villas. The Family will also earn money from the Bars and Nightclubs you will establish in ports around the world. This all sounds simple but trading may depend on your influence, The Mob will be out to control your activities and syndicates will want to close you down.

### **Setting up the game**

This is the same as described in the Cargo Noir rulebook for different numbers of players. The following additions are added to the setup:

Each player is given five pawns in the same colour as their ships. These will be used as gangsters who represent a Family's influence at a port. A further black pawn is placed in New York. This represents The Mob whose reach touches everything that goes in and out of that port.

The 'Primus' ship is placed in Hong Kong. This ship represents the coastguards who patrol the ports. If they search your ship and find your goods, at best they may take a bribe to look the other way; at worst they will confiscate your goods and impose a fine.

## Order of play

1. Replenish the empty spaces in each port including the Macao Black Market with goods tiles.

2. Players chart their course by placing ship tokens at each of the places they plan to visit. In this version of the game players have only one ship that travels the 'troubled waters'. Each of their three ship tokens represents a destination along the journey of each round. The five 'Family sheets' (player mats) show the cargo on a player's ship.

3. Determine the destination port of the coastguards for the round and move the 'Primus' ship there. Remove any Uranium, Weapons, Gold and cigars from the port.

Search ships in that port and remove any Uranium, Weapons, Gold and cigars from them. If you have influence at the port the coastguards may not look so carefully. If you offer cigars they might look the other way altogether.

4. Receive 2 coins for each ship token at the Macao Casino.

5. Starting with the port containing the coastguard ship ('Primus') and taking each port in turn clockwise resolve ship actions as follows:

[Pay creditors, pay The Mob if in New York, determine player order, trade coins for goods].

6. Resolve Macao Black Market actions [Pay creditors, determine player order, trade by swapping goods].

7. Starting with the player with the 1<sup>st</sup> players token for the round, trade cargo for resource and asset cards and coins.

8. Withdraw ship tokens and move the 1<sup>st</sup> player token one place clockwise to the player on the left of the current holder. Move the round marker on one space forward. Start the next round (back to '1' above).

## Each phase in more detail

### Replenishing empty dockside spaces in each port

Draw goods tiles from the bag and fill spaces for each port clockwise starting with the port containing the coastguards (Primus ship).

If a **Uranium** consignment is placed in New York The Mob immediately removes the uranium, which is replaced by another tile drawn from the bag. These measures are an attempt to keep control of the port and stop leaky uranium trade from damaging business. The Mob also eliminates all the gangsters there. Return all gangster(influence tokens) to their owners.

If two **Uranium** goods tiles are placed in **any** one port, all the goods tiles for that port are returned to the bag not to be replaced\*. The port has no goods to offer this round. Too much leaky uranium is too great a hazard and all potentially contaminated goods are removed. If this happens when replenishing the spaces in the Macao Black Market treat each of the two rows in the market separately, only removing the row containing the two Uranium consignments.

*\*This will never happen in New York because of the actions of the Mob.*

### Placing ship tokens



Starting with the player with the 1<sup>st</sup> player token, and proceeding clockwise, each player places one ship at any port or one of the two Macao locations. This is repeated until all players have placed all their ships. It is possible for a player to place more than one ship at a port (but only one at a time).

The number of Families with ship tokens at any one port (that is, number of different colours of ship tokens) at any one port is as follows:

5 player game = 4 colours

4 player game = 3 colours

2 and 3 player game = 2 colours

## The Coastguards



Each round coastguards search one of the ports.

To determine the destination of the coastguards draw 5 goods from the bag. Lay them on the table and move the ship **clockwise** as follows:

If there are **no duplications** move the Primus ship **one space**.

If the highest duplication is a **two of a kind** move the ship **two spaces**.

If the highest duplication is a **three of a kind** move the ship **3 spaces**.

If the highest duplication is a **four of a kind** move the ship **4 spaces**

If all **five** goods are the same move the ship **5 spaces**.

A wild card always becomes the same goods as the highest duplication extending it by one (*for example a two of a kind to a three of a kind*).

Return all the goods drawn to the bag and give it a shake.



At the new location to be inspected by the coastguards they will search for and remove any **Gold, Weapons, Uranium** and **Cigars** from the dockside spaces in the port and then search all the ships in port looking for all goods unless you bribe them not to with the offer of cigars.

If you have cigars on your ship or in your warehouse you may give one of your cigar consignments to the coastguards and they will forget about the searching your cargo (discard one cigar consignment from your ship's hold or warehouse back to the bag). If you don't bribe them and they find your cigars they will take them anyway.

If you don't have cigars to bribe the coastguards they will search your ship (and any warehouses you have).

## Deciding the success of the coastguards' search

Another player draws a number of goods from the bag equal to the total number of storage spaces you have (six if you only have a ship and two extra for each warehouse you own). If any of these goods match the goods you have you are penalised as follows:

For any number of consignments of **Weapons, Gold, and Uranium** found (tiles drawn from the bag) the skipper pays one fine of a half the coins they have (rounded up - 3 coins held =  $3/2$  rounded up = 2). **The goods are also confiscated.** The fine covers all the consignments of these types of goods found not a separate fine for each one. *For example if a consignment of Gold is found the fine is half the coins held. If further in the search a consignment of weapons or uranium or another consignment of gold is also found, the fine does not increase. It remains half the coins held but all consignments found are confiscated.*

**Cigars** are confiscated without a fine because coastguards have their own racket supplying them to the black market. They won't acknowledge they found them. You'll just find an empty space in the cargo hold.

For all **other types of goods**, (alcohol, cars, jewels, art) separate fines of 1 coin per consignment are imposed but the skipper keeps the goods. They are not confiscated.

If a **wild card** tile is drawn it only matches with other wildcard tokens in the ships cargo and also results in a fine of 1 coin.

For each type of goods the coastguards will only discover the number of consignments drawn from the bag. So if a ship has 4 consignments of gold and the coastguards draw only one gold tile, only one gold consignment is found and confiscated. The other 3 remain hidden.

If a player has any number of '**influence**'\* tokens at the port being searched, the coastguards only draw half the number of tiles from the bag in their search (for example, only 3 for a ship plus only one for each warehouse). \*see 'Influence' section below.

If a fine can't be paid because the skipper does not have enough money the skipper must hand over remaining cargo to the value of the fine (1

consignment for each coin owed). The skipper decides which goods to hand over.

Fines imposed by coastguards are paid smallest first. That is, 1 coin fines are paid before a fine of a 'half of all the coins a skipper has'.

In the situation where a skipper has no coins and the coastguards are demanding half of all coins held, the skipper hands over half of all goods remaining after confiscations. The skipper decides which.

**Once coastguards have searched a ship and its warehouses they won't search it again in the same round.**

## **Resolving Ship Actions**

Ship actions are resolved port by port, starting with the Macao Casino followed by the port occupied by the Coastguards. From here each port is resolved in clockwise order finishing with the Macao Black Market.

### **Macao Casino**

For each ship token at the casino the owner receives 2 gold coins. (More than one ship token of the same colour simply means the ship stayed longer and the owner's winning streak lasted longer).

## **Resolving the Eight Ports around the edge**

The first action at any port is to pay interest (1 coin) on debts owed by skippers to the Families represented at the port. If the blue skipper's debt is to the yellow Family and the yellow skipper is at the same port then blue skipper must pay 1 coin to the yellow skipper (see 'debt' below).

Any skipper, whose Family own Dive Bars or Night Clubs at the location of the port collects 2 coins per business \*. Once debt payments and revenue payments have been made, players are asked if they want to play resource cards to eliminate or install gangsters at the port (\*see 'resource cards' later). Starting with the player with the **1<sup>st</sup> player token for the round** and moving clockwise skippers at the port make their decisions. After all players at the port have had a chance to play cards the order of trading is determined.

The trading order at the port is decided based on four factors:

1. The number of ship tokens a player has at the port
2. The Influence a player has at the port
3. The Weapons a player has in their cargo (ship and warehouses)
4. The debt relationships between them and other players at the port.

The order of trading is determined as follows:

1. The first player to make their trade will be the one with the most ships in the port.
2. If there is a tie, the player with the most influence in the port goes first. See 'Influence' below.
3. If there is still a tie, the player with most weapons in their cargo goes first. Players with more weapons in their cargo assert their priority.
4. If there is still a tie the player who has another player' in debt to their organisation will go before that player. (For example 'blue' and 'red' are in the same port. Red is in debt to the 'blue' Family so 'blue ' gets to trade first).

If a tie still remains, the tied players must negotiate a solution. Coins and goods may be offered between the parties to resolve the tie.. If a successful negotiation can't be concluded the players involved leave empty handed.

## **Debtors and Creditors (Loan Sharks)**

In the world of *Cargo Noir* you do all you can to keep your head above water. You captain your ship around the world looking for the best opportunities to make enough money to at least keep the boat afloat and the loan sharks at bay. Everyone is in debt to one of the five 'Families'. The 'Families' are criminal organisations that control the movement of contraband goods and the lives of all of those caught up in it. The Families own you and you're in deep. You owe your life to one and your money to another.

Caught in the middle, you pay your debts to the family you owe and you collect debts on behalf of the family you work for. They both know they own you and the truth is, so do you.



At the start to the game you choose a 'Family' player mat. This is the organisation you work for. You are the skipper of a ship trading and transporting goods on their behalf. Look to your right and note the family there. This is the family to whom you owe big money. Each time your ship is in a port with a ship belonging to this family you must pay interest on your loan. Give their skipper a coin.

Look to the person on you left. This is the skipper who is debt to your employers. Each time you are in a port with this skipper's ship collect a coin.

These debt payments are collected before each port is resolved.

If the interest on a debt (1 coin) can't be paid because the skipper in debt has no money the skipper collecting the debt chooses one the debtor's goods from their cargo. If the debtor has no cargo they must flee the port placing their ship token back on their player mat.

## **Influence**

Players can acquire influence at a port after trading there in **Uranium**, **Weapons** or **Gold**. After the trade a gangster (pawn) of the player's colour **may** be placed at the port (this includes the Macao Black Market). More than one player may have influence at a port. The number of gangsters a player has at a port may decide the player order when resolving the ship actions in a port in the future. Once placed, gangsters cannot be moved unless they are eliminated by a syndicate.

Gangsters can also be placed at a port by using a 'Cronies', 'Bank', 'Paparazzi' or 'Militia' card when visiting the port. Each card can only be used once per round (the card is turned sideways to show it has been used). Gangsters can be removed ('made to disappear') using 'Syndicate' cards. Each card can only be used once in a round (the card is turned sideways to show it has been used). See the 'Cards' descriptions later.

If when all the players have completed a trade in priority order, there are still goods tiles left on the dockside, players repeat the process starting with the skipper 1<sup>st</sup> in the player order until all the tiles are gone or all players have passed (in which case any remaining tiles are left on the dockside for the next round).

There may be cases where there are not enough tiles at a port for all players there. Players at the end of the priority list may leave empty handed. This will become apparent when the priority order is determined. Players may negotiate their way up the priority list by offering (only to the captain in the next position higher up the list.) coins or goods from their cargo hold in return.

'Syndicate' resource cards enable a skipper who leaves a port empty handed to collect 2 coins from the central store.

Each port is resolved clockwise until the port containing coastguards is reached. The final port to be resolved is the Macao Black Market.

## Trading in New York

The port of New York is controlled by The Mob. Any skipper entering the port to trade must pay 1 coin to The Mob. Discard a coin to the central reserve. All other debt and trade payments are the same as the other seven ports around the edge of the board. Gangsters can be placed in the same way and influence works in the same way.

Dive Bars and Night Clubs can be opened wherever there are gangsters (see **Resource Cards** for details). The New York underworld is a volatile melting pot of syndicates running rackets through bribery and coercion. The Mob keeps some kind of control and clamps down on events big enough to disturb the status quo.



If a **Uranium** consignment appears on the dock during the replenishing of goods at the start of a round, The Mob reacts swiftly and eliminates all gangsters (return them and any businesses they were overseeing to their Families). Remove the Uranium and replace it with another tile from the bag. Trade then resumes as usual.

## **Resolving the ship actions at the Macao Black Market**

To trade in the Macao market requires **Uranium** or **Weapons** or **Gold** or **Cigars**.

Once debt payments have been made and any resource cards played the order of trading is determined as for the other ports.

The differences from trading in other ports is that in the Macao Black Market players only get one opportunity to trade goods each visit and all players are guaranteed the chance to trade.

In priority order players may do one of two things when trading in the Macao Black Markets:

1. Exchange a Uranium, Weapons, Gold or Cigars goods tile from their cargo for TWO goods tiles from the market. This will create a space in the market, which is filled by a new tile from the bag before the next captain trades goods.

OR

2. In exchange for their Uranium, Weapons, Gold or Cigars tile choose to take two tiles randomly from the bag. These cannot be returned. Once drawn the deal is sealed.

As with other ports any trade involving **Weapons**, **Uranium** or **Gold** permit a player to place a gangster influence token at the market.

## **Acquiring Resource and Asset cards at the end of a round**

Once all the ports have been resolved players may exchange the value of the sets of goods they have in their cargo holds and warehouses for resource and asset cards which also double as Victory Points.

Resource cards (Additional Ship, Warehouses, Syndicates, corrupt organisations) will contribute victory points at the end of the game as well as help players realise their ambitions during their voyages.

Some Asset cards will earn players money (Dive Bars and Night Clubs) others are entirely about laundering money for the respectability of victory points (Villas and Yachts).

The returns for sets of contraband are the same as the original game and tables are illustrated at the bottom of each player mat.

Each resource and asset card can be bought for the cost indicated by the red number\*. Payments can be made with contraband (the value of sets to be traded) or a combination of contraband and **up to two coins**. [This is different from the original game]. Change is given in coins if the sets traded exceed the cost of the cards bought. [This is also different from the original game].

*For example if a player trades in 3 tiles of the same goods. This has a value of 9. A coin can be added to make the 10 required to buy a Warehouse. If 4 tiles of the same goods are traded this is worth 16 so the player can buy a warehouse and take coins as change or an additional ship and receive 1 coin change.*

**The cost and victory point value of some cards are different from those on the original card.** These cards are:

- *Dive Bars,*
- *Nightclubs,*
- *Corruption cards (Cronies, Militia, Bank & Paparazzi).*

The cards above cost **10\$** and are worth **10 Victory Points** at the end of the game

All other cards used retain their original cost and victory points.

**Resource and Asset cards not used in this game**

Cards **not used** in this remix are:

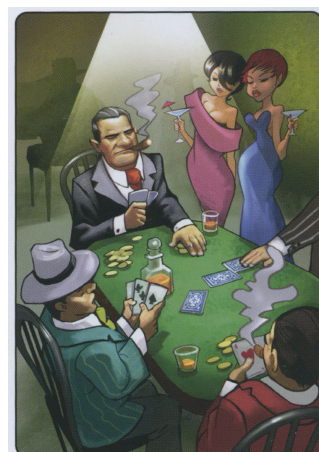
- The 'Principality' card;
- Any 'Additional ship' cards beyond the number of players. Each player can only have a maximum of 4 ship tokens, so only a number of Additional Ship cards equal to the number of players is required.

## Resource and Asset Cards described in detail

**Warehouses** - enable more storage of contraband and the capacity to build larger and more valuable sets of goods (but beware more storage capacity leads to more thorough searching by coastguards).

**Additional Ship** (token) - This card creates the opportunity to make one more stop on the voyage each round to get more contraband or money or more opportunity to double up on a port (stay longer and so be higher up in the order of trading). Each player can have a maximum of 4 ship tokens).

**Dive Bars and Night Clubs** - When a Dive bar or a Night Club is acquired it is immediately assigned to a location where the family has a gangster proving influence at its port. Place the card at the side of the board next to its location (e.g. Rio) and move the gangster from the port to the card. The gangster is still providing influence over the port whilst overseeing the bar. There must be a gangster for each Dive Bar or Night Club at a location.



A player receives 2 coins for each of their Dive Bars and/or Nightclubs located at a port they are visiting. The coins are paid to the skipper before the player order for trading at the port is determined.

The total number of Night Clubs and Dive bars at a location cannot exceed the number of goods tile spaces at the locations docks. *For example Rio may have 3 establishments Panama may only have 2.*

If the gangster overseeing a Dive Bar or Night Club it is eliminated by a syndicate or The Mob, the Dive Bar or Night Club is closed down

If a Dive Bar or Night Club is closed down the card is returned to its owner. It can become operational again in a **future round** by assigning it when the skipper is at a location containing one of the Family's gangsters.

**Syndicates** - A syndicate allows a skipper leaving a port empty handed to take two coins from the central coin store (see text on the card).

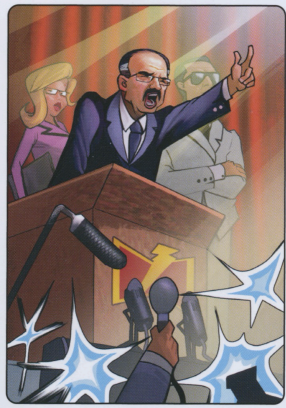
A syndicate can also be employed to eliminate a number of gangsters at a port before deciding the trading order there. The Family must hold a syndicate card and **pay 1 coin for each gangster to be removed.**



After removing a Family's gangster at a port, their influence token is given back to them. If the token was supporting one of the Family's bars or nightclubs give them the card back too. The bar/nightclub is closed down.

Each Syndicate card can only be used for activity at one port per round. They will lay low until reactivated. Rotate the card through 90 degrees to show the syndicate is inactive. The card is still worth 5 Victory Points. A syndicate can be restored back to operational status by retaining a ship token instead of deploying it at the start of a round.

**'Cronies', 'Paparazzi', 'Militia', 'Bank'** - These cards represent corrupt political, media, military and financial forces. These corrupt organisations can be called upon by controlling Families no more than once in a round to install a Family gangster in a port to provide influence. Before deciding the trading order at a port place a Gangster (influence token) at the port. Rotate the corruption card just used by 90 degrees. A corrupt organisation can be restored back to operational status by retaining a ship token instead of deploying it at the start of a round.



### **Using Syndicates, Cronies, Paparazzi, Militia, or Bank?**

These cards can be used **before the player order is determined** at a port. Each skipper at the port (starting with the skipper with the **'1<sup>st</sup> Player' token for round** - if present and going clockwise) is given the opportunity to install a gangster with a corrupt organisation card and/or remove existing gangsters with a syndicate card. A player can remove gangsters at the port from any Family (including their own). Gangsters

cannot be moved from one port to another unless removed by removed by a syndicate or The Mob. Syndicates remove the influence of gangsters. The four corrupt organisation cards install influence. Influence has two benefits: less thorough coastguard inspections and a better chance of being high in the order of trading at a port.

## Types of Contraband and their uses



There are 19 tiles for each of 8 types of contraband used in this Cargo Noir variant. I excluded the Ivory because though true to the theme I find it hard to include when animals are approaching extinction because of ivory poaching.

Four of the 8 contraband types serve only as categories for set collection (**Art, Cars, Jewellery, Alcohol**).

The other four types of contraband have additional roles and rules.

### **Uranium, Weapons, Gold and Cigars:**

- Are confiscated if found by coastguards.
- Are the only goods that be used to trade in the Macao Black Market

### **Uranium, Weapons and Gold**

- Enable a player to place an influence token at a port if using them in them in a transaction there.

**Uranium** cannot be stored in multiple consignments in the same locations. As soon as a second Uranium consignment is added to a dock, or a skipper's cargo hold (including warehouses) all items in the location including the Uranium are removed and discarded to the bag.

**Cigars** cost nothing to acquire and can be used to bribe coastguards and trade at the Macao Black Market.

**Weapons** are used to decide player order for trading at a port only if skippers are tied on the numbers of ship tokens at the port and the number of gangsters at the port.

**All types of contraband** can be collected together in sets to create value that can be exchanged for resources and victory points. With the exception of Cigars they all cost one coin or a straight swap with a tile already in a ship's cargo hold.

At the Macao Black Market, two tiles in the market can be swapped for one Gold, Uranium, Weapons or Cigars tile from a skipper's cargo.

Or

Two tiles can be drawn randomly from the bag in exchange for one Gold, Uranium, Weapons or Cigars tile from a skipper's cargo.

## Starting a new round

- Ship tokens are returned to their skippers.
- The round marker is moved forward one space.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> Player marker moves one place clockwise to create a new first player for the new round.

The winner is the skipper with the highest victory points after the required rounds (see board for player number/round number info).

There is a reasonable probability of a tie, in which case the victory goes to the skipper with the most coins amongst the tied players.

## FAQs

If I am 3rd in the player order for trading at a port and the skippers before me are tied and can't negotiate a resolution to who goes first, do I also walk away with nothing? **Answer - No.** The skippers tied who failed to come to an agreement lose out and you get to trade as usual.

If I use my 'Syndicate' card to claim two gold coins after leaving a port without a trade do I have to turn it through 90 degrees and reactivate later? **Answer - No.** This use of a Syndicate card does not affect the status of the card. **However**, if your Syndicate is already inactive, you cannot claim the two coins if you leave a port without a trade.