

# Republic of the Marshall Islands

## MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

11495 COMMERCE PARK DRIVE, RESTON, VIRGINIA 20191-1506  
TELEPHONE: +1-703-620-4880 FAX: +1-703-476-8522  
EMAIL: marsec@register-iri.com WEBSITE: www.register-iri.com

### SHIP SECURITY ADVISORY No. 02-24

**To: Owners/Operators, Masters, Company Security Officers, Recognized Security Organizations**

**Subject: THREATS TO SHIPPING IN THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ REGION**

**Date: 9 February 2024**

This Ship Security Advisory should be expeditiously circulated to Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)-flagged vessels that are operating or intend to operate in the:

- Arabian/Persian Gulf;
- Arabian Sea;
- Gulf of Oman (GoO); or
- Strait of Hormuz (SoH).

Heightened military activity and geopolitical tensions in these regions continue to pose serious threats to commercial vessels. Vessels transiting these areas should maintain a heightened level of vigilance.

#### 1.0 Threat and Risk Considerations

##### 1.1 Seizures by Foreign Military Forces or Non-state Actors

- .1 Commercial vessels transiting through the Arabian/Persian Gulf, SoH, and GoO have been boarded and detained/seized by foreign military forces over the past several years. Incidents have included:

2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
RMI-flagged tanker	Panama-flagged tanker RMI-flagged tanker Bahamas-flagged car carrier	Two Greek-flagged tankers	Panama-flagged tanker South Korea-flagged tanker Vietnam-flagged tanker	Dominica-flagged tanker Liberia-flagged tanker	United Kingdom (UK)-flagged tanker

This SSA is evaluated annually by the Administrator and expires one year after its issuance or renewal unless otherwise noted, superseded, or revoked.

- .2 Foreign military forces have utilized small boats and/or helicopters during boarding/seizure operations and have attempted to force merchant vessels into their territorial waters. Harassment and aggressive maneuvers are applied in these types of scenarios.

## 1.2. Other Threat Types

Threats involving mines (sea and limpet), unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), waterborne improvised explosive devices, anti-ship missiles, and small arms fire should not be ruled out in this region, particularly in the GoO and Arabian Sea.

## 2.0 Coalition Forces

- 2.1 Refer to [Appendix A](#) for a list of naval coalition forces, their remits, and contact information.
- 2.2 Vessels should be aware that the United States (US) and other coalition naval forces may conduct maritime awareness calls, queries, and approaches to ensure the safety of vessels transiting the Arabian/Persian Gulf, SoH, Gulf of Oman, and Arabian Sea. If a vessel suspects it is being hailed from a source falsely claiming to be a US or coalition naval vessel, immediately inform United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO).
- 2.3 Vessels operating in these areas are advised to establish contact with both UKMTO and the International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC), and to include both on all updates or incident report emails (see [§5.0](#) on Voluntary Reporting Schemes and [Appendix A](#) for contact details). By including both addresses on each email, awareness will be enhanced without creating an additional reporting burden.
- 2.4 If the vessel has links to a European-led Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASoH) member State (as listed in Appendix A), include EMASoH in all email communications.

## 3.0 Non-coalition Forces

- 3.1 If hailed by non-coalition forces, provide the vessel name and flag State, and affirm that the vessel is proceeding in accordance with international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Master should immediately inform UKMTO, and EMASoH (if applicable). Refer also to [www.imscentinel.com](http://www.imscentinel.com) and [IMSC Bridge Reference Cards](#) for additional guidance and standard responses.

- 3.2 If non-coalition forces seek to board a vessel or persuade it to change course/speed, the ship's Master should decline, noting that the vessel is proceeding in accordance with international law, as reflected in UNCLOS, and immediately inform UKMTO.
- 3.3 If non-coalition forces board a vessel, the vessel should immediately contact UKMTO. The crew should not forcibly resist the boarding party. Refraining from forcible resistance does not imply consent or agreement to that boarding.

#### 4.0 Risk Mitigation Measures

- 4.1 When operating in the area vessels should:
  - .1 Implement **Security Level 2** (or equivalent security measures at port) while transiting the GoO, SoH, or Arabian/Persian Gulf ([flag requirement](#)).
  - .2 Review and implement (as practicable) industry BMP guidelines.<sup>1</sup>
  - .3 Undertake a thorough pre-voyage threat and risk assessment.
  - .4 Review the Ship Security Plan and amend, if necessary, after performing the pre-voyage security threat and risk assessment.
  - .5 Navigate with maximum feasible distance from the coast of Iran.
  - .6 Review the Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF) publication entitled [Loitering Munitions – the Threat to Merchant Ships](#).
  - .7 Conduct security and fire drills/exercises prior to entering areas of increased risk.
  - .8 Maintain a full and vigilant bridge watch for approaching craft.
  - .9 Monitor relevant very high frequency and other communication channels.
  - .10 Follow the advice of coalition military authorities (UKMTO, Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa (MSCHOA), CMF, IMSC, US NAVCENT, and/or EMASoH).
- 4.2 Vessels are not advised to use privately contracted armed security personnel (PCASP) north of Fujairah, UAE.

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<sup>1</sup> *Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* ([BMP5](#)).

- 4.3 In accordance with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Regulation V/34-1, Masters shall not be prevented from using professional judgement to make decisions necessary for safety of life at sea and protection of the marine environment. Master's discretion includes the ability to switch off the vessel's AIS if it is believed that doing so will reduce threats to vessel safety or security (refer to §22 of International Maritime Organization (IMO) Assembly Resolution [A.1106\(29\)](#)).

## 5.0 Voluntary Reporting Schemes

- 5.1 Vessels transiting the [UKMTO VRA](#) are reminded to participate in the UKMTO voluntary reporting scheme:
- .1 Register with [MSCHOA](#) upon entry into the UKMTO VRA.
  - .2 Report vessel position daily to UKMTO using their [position reporting form](#).
- 5.2 In the Gulf of Oman, SoH, and Arabian/Persian Gulf, vessels are reminded to:
- .1 Participate in all available and applicable voluntary reporting schemes to ensure communication is maintained directly with coalition forces in the region.
  - .2 Simultaneously register with both **UKMTO** and **IMSC** 24-hours prior to entering the UKMTO Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA), as defined in [Maritime Security Chart Q6099](#), by sending UKMTO and IMSC, via a single e-mail, the Initial Report from Annex D of [BMP5](#). Include the estimated times of arrival at the Suez Canal, BaM, and SoH in line 10 of the report and add a line 14 for comments as needed (e.g., speed restrictions or other constraints; anticipated time of entering/exiting the SoH Traffic Separation Scheme; an outline of the navigation plan for operating in the SoH and Persian Gulf, etc.). Utilize other reports included in Annex D of BMP5 as necessary.
  - .3 Report the vessel's position daily to UKMTO using their [position reporting form](#).
  - .4 Participate in the [EMASoH voluntary reporting scheme if the vessels has links to EMASoH member States](#) (e.g. owner(s), operator(s), manager(s), charterer(s), cargo, or crew).

## 8.0 Reporting an Incident or Suspicious Activity

- 8.1 For suspicious activity, contact **UKMTO**.
- 8.2 For an incident, immediately activate the Ship Security Alert System and contact US Navy Central Command (US NAVCENT) **Battle Watch** at +973-1785-3879.
- 8.2 All security incidents must be reported to the Administrator at: [marsec@register-iri.com](mailto:marsec@register-iri.com), [dutyofficer@register-iri.com](mailto:dutyofficer@register-iri.com), and/or +1-571-441-1885

## 9.0 Supplemental Information

- 9.1 The [Maritime Global Security](#) website offers industry issued best practices, including industry [BMP](#) guidelines, guidance to mariners by geographic region, and provides contact and subscription information for regional maritime security reporting centers. Industry BMP guidelines, and the Maritime Global Security website should be consulted prior to operating in the above listed geographic areas.
- 9.2 International shipping industry associations have published [transit advice](#) to accompany the coordinates of a new [voluntary transit corridor](#) for merchant ships navigating the SoH region (including the Arabian/Persian Gulf and GoO). Using this transit corridor may enable Coalition Forces to more effectively allocate resources to monitor and assist vessels in the SoH Region.
- 9.3 Refer also to the [Administrator's Maritime Security webpage](#).

**APPENDIX A: COALITION FORCES**

<b>Coalition Force</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<a href="#">EMASoH</a>	<a href="mailto:ctf474-emasoh.vra.fct@def.gouv.fr">ctf474-emasoh.vra.fct@def.gouv.fr</a> +39-0187024 (DIAL 2 FOR ENGLISH) 7566903	EMASoH was established under Operation AGENOR by European nations (including Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Norway).
<a href="#">IMSC</a>	<a href="mailto:m-ba-ims-c-bwc@us.navy.mil">m-ba-ims-c-bwc@us.navy.mil</a> +973-8439-8193	<p>IMSC was established to maintain freedom of navigation, international law, and free flow of commerce to support stability and security of the maritime commons in the Persian/Arabian Gulf, SoH, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, and the BaM.</p> <p>Members of IMSC include Albania, Bahrain, Estonia, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, the United Arab Emirates, UK, and US.</p> <p>For further information and important guidance, review the <a href="#">IMSC brochure</a> and <a href="#">IMSC Bridge Reference Cards</a>.</p>
<a href="#">MSCHOA</a>	<a href="mailto:postmaster@mschoa.org">postmaster@mschoa.org</a> <a href="mailto:jocwatchkeeper@mschoa.org">jocwatchkeeper@mschoa.org</a> +34-956-470-534 +34-661-442-365	MSCHOA is an initiative established by the European Union Naval Forces (EU NAVFOR) in close cooperation with the shipping industry. MSCHOA manages EU NAVFOR's voluntary registration scheme (VRS) for vessels transiting the UKMTO VRA.
<a href="#">UKMTO</a>	<a href="mailto:watchkeepers@ukmto.org">watchkeepers@ukmto.org</a> +44-2392-222060	A list of recent security incidents in the region can be found on the <a href="#">UKMTO website</a> .

<b>Coalition Force</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>	<b>Comments</b>
US NAVCENT NCAGS	<p><b>Primary:</b> +973-1785-0033</p> <p><b>Alternate:</b> <a href="mailto:m-ba-cusnc-ncags@us.navy.mil">m-ba-cusnc-ncags@us.navy.mil</a></p> <p><b>Contingency:</b> +973-3940-4523 (mobile)</p> <p><b>Emergency:</b> <b>(NAVCENT Battle Watch)</b> +973-1785-3879 <a href="mailto:cusnc.bwc@me.navy.mil">cusnc.bwc@me.navy.mil</a></p>	US NAVCENT NCAGS provides a critical interface between the military and merchant shipping, providing information and guidance to assist masters and Company Security Officers with voyage threat and risk assessment.