Republic of the Marshall Islands

MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

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SHIP SECURITY ADVISORY No. 01-26

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

Subject: THREATS TO SHIPPING IN THE RED SEA REGION

Date: 15 January 2026

This Ship Security Advisory (SSA) supersedes SSA No. 01-25 and should be expeditiously circulated to Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)-flagged vessels that are operating or intend to operate in the:

- Arabian Sea;
- Bab-el-Mandeb (BeM);
- Gulf of Aden (GoA);
- Eastern Mediterranean Sea (EMED);
- Northwestern Indian Ocean; or
- Red Sea.

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

1.0 Updates

1.1 With the Israel/Hamas ceasefire still intact and no Houthi attacks since early July 2025, the RMI Maritime Administrator (the "Administrator") has lowered the required security level for RMI-flagged vessels transiting the High-Threat Zone (HTZ), which includes the Southern Red Sea (SRS), BeM, and GoA. See §2.0 for full ship security level details.

1.2 §3.2 has been updated to clarify Houthi targeting criteria.

2.0 Ship Security Level

2.1 Security Level 2

RMI-flagged vessels are required to operate at **Ship Security Level 2** (or equivalent security measures at port) in the Red Sea, BeM, and GoA (*flag requirement*).

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Maritime Administrator (the "Administrator") and expires one year after its issuance or renewal unless otherwise noted, superseded, or revoked.

2.2 Israel-affiliated Vessels

Vessels with direct or indirect links to Israel (see Houthi targeting criteria in §3.2) should be on heightened alert in the HTZ. Should the Israel/Hamas ceasefire end abruptly, the Houthis may decide to resume attacks on merchant ships without warning. Therefore, it is recommended that Israel-affiliated vessels implement measures equivalent to Ship Security Level 3 while transiting the HTZ.

3.0 Threat and Risk Considerations

3.1 Current Threat Level

.1 Merchant shipping remains at risk of attack by Houthi forces. The two most recent attacks in July 2025 reflect the Houthis concentrating targeting in the SRS. It is unknown if Houthi targeting will expand to the BeM and GoA, as previously demonstrated. As such, these areas, along with the SRS, continue to present an elevated level of threat, particularly for vessels that meet the Houthi targeting criteria outlined in §3.2.

.2 While less likely, attacks may also be attempted in the Northern Red Sea (NRS), Arabian Sea, Northwestern Indian Ocean, and EMED. All merchant vessels are advised to remain vigilant in these areas.

3.2 Houthi Targeting Criteria

.1 The Houthis originally claimed that they were only targeting vessels with links[1] to Israel, the United States (US), and the United Kingdom (UK), or trading at Israeli ports. However, there is also the potential for collateral damage from unintended strikes to any ship transiting the region. Although some incidents have targeted specific merchant vessels due to their association with certain countries, cargoes, individuals, or companies, the potential remains for miscalculation or misidentification that could lead to aggressive actions against any merchant vessel.

.2 The Houthi definition of "Israeli ship" may include any vessel within an owner's wider fleet, including sister vessels, time-chartered assets, and vessels under a common beneficial owner or technical management, that have called at an Israeli port. Therefore, a vessel may have never called in Israel but could still be targeted based on affiliated vessels that have. The timeframe for historical Israeli port calls is unclear.

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[1] This includes vessel owners, operators, managers, charterers, cargo, and sister ships that have called in Israel.

3.3   Threat Types

3.3.1   The Houthis have demonstrated the ability to harass, interdict, and attack commercial shipping with coordinated multi-platform assault capabilities. The group can track and monitor merchant ships using platforms such as coastal radar, naval vessels, patrol boats, repurposed commercial vessels, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Their demonstrated capabilities and tactics include:

.1   small boat operations involving small arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs);

.2   helicopter assaults and vessel seizure;

.3   UAVs;

.4   unmanned surface vehicles (USVs);

.5   cruise and anti-ship ballistic missiles; and

.6   naval mines.

4.0   Coalition Forces

4.1   Joint Maritime Information Center (JMIC) Advice

.1   Conduct a comprehensive audit of any Israeli port calls within their fleet, including those of sister vessels, time-chartered vessels, and vessels under common beneficial ownership or technical management.

.2   Evaluate a ship's digital footprint, including automatic identification system (AIS) transmission logs, vessel-tracking platforms, and public maritime databases, for any historical linkage that could be interpreted by Houthi-affiliated actors as grounds for targeting.

.3   Reinforce cybersecurity and information control protocols, particularly concerning voyage routing, port call data, and affiliations that may be available through open-source intelligence (OSINT) methods.

4.2   Contact Information

Refer to *Global Maritime Security Contacts* (MARSEC-210) for a list of relevant naval coalition forces and contact information.

4.3   High-Threat Area (HTA) Definition

Coalition forces have advised that they regard the threat of attack on merchant ships to be greatest in the Red Sea between latitudes 12°N and 16°N. This is considered the HTA.

4.4   Threat Range

While most attacks have occurred in the HTA, Houthi forces have demonstrated an ability to target and attack ships in the GoA as far as 315 kilometers (km) from the Yemeni coast. However, anti-ship ballistic missiles have a maximum estimated range of 1700km.

(Source: JMIC)

4.5   Transit Advice

International shipping industry associations have published interim transit advice for the SRS, BeM, and GoA.

4.6   AIS

4.6.1   Coalition forces strongly advise that ships switch off the AIS while transiting the HTA, unless the vessel's Master assesses that doing so would compromise the safety of the vessel.

        .1   Vessels with AIS switched off should provide position reports to United Kingdom Marine Trade Operations (UKMTO), US Navy Central Command (US NAVCENT), and Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) every two hours to ensure coalition military forces are aware of their presence and can assist in the event of an incident. Switching off AIS alone may not fully prevent detection as vessels are tracked by multiple sources.

.2   In accordance with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 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 assessed that doing so will reduce threats to vessel safety or security (refer to §22 of International Maritime Organization Assembly Resolution A.1106(29)).

5.0   Non-coalition Forces

5.1   Masquerading Threats

The Houthis are known to masquerade as legitimate foreign military forces to compel merchant vessels to reduce speed or alter course into territorial waters.

5.2   Very High Frequency (VHF) Communications

5.2.1   Coalition forces have advised that if hailed via VHF by the "Yemeni Navy" and instructed to change speed or alter course, the recommendations are to:

.1   ignore the call and continue passage, if safe to do so;

.2   contact coalition warships on VHF Channel 16, inform them of your position, situation, state your intentions, and seek advice; and

.3   report the incident to UKMTO.

6.0   Mitigation Measures

6.1   When operating in the SRS, BeM, or GoA vessels should:

.1   conduct a thorough audit of all Israeli port calls within an owner's wider fleet, including those made by sister vessels, time-chartered assets, and vessels under common beneficial ownership or technical management;

.2   conduct a review of the digital footprint of the ship, encompassing AIS transmission logs, vessel-tracking platforms, and public maritime databases to ensure no links to Israel are present;

.3   review the Ship Security Plan and amend, if necessary, after performing the pre-voyage security threat and risk assessment;

.4   review industry best management practice ([BMP](#))[2] guidelines;

.5   undertake a thorough pre-voyage threat and risk assessment;

.6   navigate with maximum feasible distance from the coast of Yemen;

.7   review the Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF) publications entitled *Loitering Munitions – the Threat to Merchant Ships* and *Ship Security: Hull Vulnerability Study;*

.8   review Chapter 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Shipping Centre's (NSC's) *ATP-02.1 NCAGS Guide to Owners, Operators, Masters and Officers;*

.9   conduct security and fire drills / exercises prior to entering areas of increased risk including specific drills for coordinated multi-platform attacks;

.10   maintain a full and vigilant bridge watch for coordinated attacks involving multiple tactics (small boats, RPGs, UAVs, USVs, and missiles);

.11   monitor relevant VHF and other communication channels;

.12   follow the advice of coalition military authorities ([UKMTO](#), Maritime Security Centre Indian Ocean ([MSCIO](#)), JMIC, European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR), Combined Maritime Forces ([CMF](#)), and US NAVCENT); and

.13   consider requesting protection from EUNAVFOR Operation ASPIDES assets by following the instructions published [here](#).

6.2   Private Armed Security Considerations

.1   For vessels using privately contracted armed security personnel, rules for the use of force should be carefully reviewed with the private maritime security company. A clear distinction must be made between suspected attackers with small arms and military forces with more advanced weaponry.

.2   Engagement with military forces is not advised as it may result in significant escalation. Security teams should also have contingency plans for USV deterrence, crew evacuation, and anti-boarding procedures.

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[2] *BMP Maritime Security* ([BMP MS](#)) / *Maritime Security Threat Overview* ([MISTO](#)).

7.0   Voluntary Reporting Scheme (VRS)

7.1   Mandatory Participation

Vessels transiting the UKMTO Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA) are reminded to participate in the UKMTO VRS: Register and report to UKMTO (see Reporting Formats).

8.0   Reporting an Incident or Suspicious Activity

8.1   Suspicious Activity

For suspicious activity, contact **UKMTO** immediately. Report any approaching small boats, drones, or unusual activity near the vessel.

8.2   Emergency Incidents

For an emergency incident, immediately activate the Ship Security Alert System and contact **US NAVCENT Battle Watch** at: +973-1785-3879. In case of coordinated attacks, maintain communications with coalition forces and request immediate assistance.

8.3   Mandatory Reporting

All security incidents and suspicious activity must be reported to the Administrator at: marsec@register-iri.com, dutyofficer@register-iri.com, and/or +1-571-441-1885.

9.0   Supplemental Information

9.1   Industry Resources

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 any voyage.

9.2   Current Intelligence

The latest security incident information, bulletins, and advice from relevant coalition military forces (including CMF Operation PROSPERITY GUARDIAN and EUNAVFOR Operation ASPIDES) are posted on the UKMTO and MSCIO websites.

9.3   JMIC

The JMIC has been established to share accurate and timely information relating to the Houthi attacks on merchant vessels. Multiple military stakeholders participate in JMIC to fuse open-source, unclassified information into a messaging service. JMIC products are posted on the UKMTO website.

9.4   Bridge Emergency Reference Cards

9.4.1   The JMIC has published *Bridge Emergency Reference Cards for the Middle East* region. The bridge cards are available in printable and digital reading formats:

        .1   Printable Format

        .2   Digital Format

9.5   Additional Resources

Refer to the Administrator's Maritime Security webpage.

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