



The Bahamas Maritime Authority

BMA INFORMATION BULLETIN No. 119

PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS IN WATERS OFF THE COAST OF SOMALIA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN

Guidance and Instructions for Ship-owners, Managers, Masters, Bahamas Recognised Organisations and Bahamas Approved Nautical Inspectors

Note: This Bulletin is to be read in conjunction with IMO Assembly Resolution A.1026(26); IMO Circulars MSC/Circ.1334, 1390 and 1405, SN/Circ.281 and any subsequent amendments; Bahamas Information Bulletins 70, 125 and 128; and Anti-Piracy Planning Chart Q6099¹

General

1. Piracy and armed robbery continues to be a significant threat to maritime transport in the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea, and the Somali Basin area of the Indian Ocean. In addition the threat of pirate activity must be taken into account for the Red Sea and a significant part of the wider Indian Ocean as pirates use previously hijacked larger vessels as mother ships to extend their operations eastwards. This Bulletin provides information and instruction to all Owners and Managers of Bahamas vessels in order to minimise the risk of Bahamas ships being hijacked and their crews being held for ransom in this area.
2. Owners and Managers will be aware that the situation in this region may change rapidly and the methods of the pirates and armed robbers continue to develop and become more sophisticated. Consequently the information sources listed in the annex below should be regularly consulted and emergency plans updated accordingly.

Vessel protection and assistance schemes

3. An international joint naval presence in these regions provides protection and support to ships of all nationalities in these waters. However, protection and assistance is only practicable if the co-ordinators of these forces are fully aware of the identity, location and intended course of ships. Therefore the BMA **requires** that all Bahamian vessels register with the naval coordinators at Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) at least four (4) days prior to entry into the risk area as it is defined by them.

¹ <http://www.ukho.gov.uk/ProductsandServices/PaperCharts/Documents/Q6099.pdf>

Registration and position reporting procedures

4. The registration form for vessels is found on the secure portion of the website of the MSCHOA at www.mschoa.org. The UK Maritime Trade Operations Office (UKMTO) can also be contacted for advice (see Annex).

It should be noted that the MSCHOA registration form includes provision to advise of the presence of firearms on board. It is vital that the military forces understand what they may be faced with in the event of an intervention and therefore Bahamas ships must communicate this information to them.

5. Owners and Companies are reminded that the correct procedure for vessels is to register with the MSCHOA **and** provide an initial report to UKMTO, followed by daily position reports and intended movements to UKMTO only. Routine position reports **must not** be sent to MSCHOA.
6. The BMA is provided with a daily report of Bahamas ships operating inside the area of risk and will communicate with the CSO of any vessel which is identified to have failed to register with MSCHOA and/or failed to provide an initial or daily report to UKMTO.

Implementation of anti-piracy measures

7. All Bahamas vessels must implement anti-piracy measures wherever there is a known risk. Internationally agreed measures, as drawn up by a number of Industry bodies, have been published as the “Best Management Practices” and these are promulgated by the International Maritime Organisation. These will be updated in light of experience gained and links to the latest version can be found on the websites listed in the Annex below.
8. Owners and managers are reminded that ISM Code 1.2.3.1 requires that guidelines recommended by the Administration must be taken into account, and also that paragraph 8.1 of the Code requires that procedures are established to respond to potential emergency situations. Therefore Owners and Managers must take account of the “Best Management Practices” when considering the anti-piracy measures which are relevant to the particular vessel under consideration.

Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) Policy

9. The guidelines for the on-board operational use of AIS – Assembly Resolution A.917(22), as amended, permits the Master to turn off this equipment in sea areas where there is a threat of piracy and armed robbery. However, in cases where an attack is expected, or suspicious activity is noticed, the AIS should be turned on as soon as possible. The BMA also requires Owners and Managers to take into account the current advice issued by the naval forces as published on the MSCHOA website.

Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) Policy

10. This equipment must not be turned off either before entry into the risk area or during transit of the area. To ensure that Bahamas vessels are implementing Best Management Practice the BMA, and the military forces, use LRIT data to monitor compliance with the reporting scheme and verification of ships’ positions.

Alerting/reporting pirate attacks

11. In all cases the ship must develop an Emergency Communication Plan to be implemented in the event of an attack. The Bahamas authorises the use of the Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) programmed to alert the Company Security Officer, as set out in BMA Bulletin 70, as part of this plan.
12. Owners may wish to use commercial services, now available, which automatically transmits the SSAS signal directly to the military forces. The Bahamas has no objection to the use of these services provided that the additional recipients of the signal are limited to UKMTO and MSCHOA and that a suitable filter is applied to ensure that SSAS alerts which occur outside the piracy risk area are not sent to these recipients.
13. In the event that a Master of a Bahamas vessel feels a threat of piracy or armed robbery is developing or if the vessel comes under attack the primary 24 hour point of contact is the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) in Dubai as follows:

UKMTO Dubai

Email: ukmto@eim.ae
Telephone: +971 50 552 3215
Fax: +971 4 306 5710
Telex: (51) 210473

14. Reports of threats or attacks using the standardised report form² should also be forwarded to other recipients shown on the MSCHOA website, and the BMA, at the earliest practicable opportunity.

Reporting suspicious activities

15. An important feature of the service provided by MSCHOA is the broadcasting of advice on suspected pirate “mother-ships” or other suspicious activities. In order to assist in this Masters of Bahamas vessels are requested to provide UKMTO and the International Maritime Bureau with reports of any suspicious activity or vessels they may observe in or around the area of risk and the BMA must be copied in on any such communication.

Reporting pirate attacks or suspicious activities

16. The BMA is required to make a report to IMO on any piracy activity and any communications with UKMTO or MSCHOA must be copied to:

The Bahamas Maritime Authority
120 Old Broad Street
London
EC2N 1AR
United Kingdom

Email: piracy@bahamasmaritime.com

² http://www.mschoa.org/Secure/Pages/IncidentReport_temp.aspx

Phone: +44 20 7562 1300
Fax: +44 20 7614 0680

At the times when Offices are closed and in the case of a genuine emergency, the Emergency Response Officer's mobile telephone number is:

+44 (0)7977 471 220

Pre- and post-piracy planning

17. Owners and operators of Bahamas ships are reminded of their obligation under the Merchant Shipping (Health and Safety – General Duties) Regulations 1984, inter alia, to provide and maintain an environment on board that is, so far as is reasonably practical, safe and without risk to health. Full implementation of Best Management Practices (BMP) as they are appropriate to the ship in question is therefore encouraged and must be fully considered in the light of the on-going risk to shipping on the region.
18. However, in considering the overall health and welfare of crew members The Bahamas also draws the attention of all owners and operators of Bahamas ships to the current development of post-piracy care guidelines by the Seamans Church Institute (<http://seamenschurch.org/law-advocacy/piracy-trauma-study>) and the Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Program (<http://www.mphrp.org/>). The use of the guidelines is strongly recommended for contingency-planning when preparing crews for the possibility of piracy attacks, and dealing with their consequences.

Annex

Sources of Advice and Information

The Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa (MSCHOA)

17. The EU Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Coordination Centre tasked to safeguard merchant shipping operating in the region by preventing and deterring acts of piracy in the Gulf of Aden, off the Horn of Africa and in the Somali Basin. This site provides information and guidance for the shipping community³.

Website: www.mschoa.org

Email: postmaster@mschoa.org

Tel: +44 (0) 1923 958547 +44 (0) 1923 958700

Fax: +44 (0) 1923 958520

The UK Maritime Trade Operations Office (UKMTO)

18. The UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) office in Dubai acts as the primary point of contact for merchant vessels and liaison with military forces in the region. UKMTO Dubai also administers the Voluntary Reporting Scheme, under which merchant vessels are encouraged to send regular reports, providing their position/course/speed and ETA at their next port whilst transiting the region currently bounded by Suez, 78°E and 10°S. UKMTO Dubai subsequently tracks vessels and the positional information is passed to Combined Military Force and EU headquarters. Emerging and relevant information affecting commercial traffic can then be passed directly to ships, rather than by company offices, improving responsiveness to any incident and saving time³

Email: ukmto@eim.ae

The NATO Shipping Centre (NSC)

19. The NATO Counter Piracy Operation Ocean Shield commenced on 17 August 2009 with the following military tasks:

- Deter, disrupt and protect against pirate attacks, rendering assistance to ships in extremis as required.
- Actively seek suspected pirates and prevent their continued activity through detention, seizure of vessels and property, and the delivery of suspects and evidence to designated law enforcement authorities, in accordance with NATO agreements.
- Facilitate and support the development of regional states' capacity to conduct effective counter-piracy operations, in coordination with other related international efforts.
- Coordinate NATO operations and initiatives with coalition maritime forces, EU naval forces, and other non-NATO forces conducting counter piracy operations off the Horn of Africa.

Their website at www.shipping.nato.int provides details of convoy schedules through the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC).

³ Source: www.mschoa.org

Website: www.shipping.nato.int/
Email : info@shipping.nato.int
Tel: +44 (0) 1923 956574
Fax: +44 (0) 1923 956575

The International Maritime Bureau

20. The main objective of the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC) is to be the first point of contact for the shipmaster to report an actual or attempted attack or even suspicious movements thus initiating the process of response. The PRC raises awareness within the shipping industry, which includes the shipmaster, ship-owner, insurance companies, traders, etc, of the areas of high risk associated with piratical attacks or specific ports and anchorages associated with armed robberies on board ships. They work closely with various governments and law enforcement agencies, and are involved in information sharing in an attempt to reduce and ultimately eradicate piracy³.

Website: www.icc-ccs.org
Email: piracy@icc-ccs.org / imbkl@icc-ccs.org
Tel: + 60 3 2078 5763
Fax: + 60 3 2078 5769
Telex: MA34199 IMBPCI

24 Hours Anti Piracy helpline Tel: + 60 3 2031 0014
