

# Merchant Marine Circular

Panama Maritime Authority  
General Directorate of Merchant Marine  
Control and Compliance Department

## MERCHANT MARINE CIRCULAR MMC-230

- To:** Masters, Ship-owners, Operators, Company Security Officers, Ship Security Officers, Panamanian Merchant Marine Consulates, Legal Representative of Panamanian Flagged Vessels, Recognized Organizations (RO's) and Recognized Security Organizations (RSO's) of Panama Flag Vessels.
- Subject:** High Risk Areas (HRA) and precautionary zones.
- Reference:** Law No. 38 June 4th, 1995 UNCLOS 1982.  
MMC-208 - Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) and Compliance with the Best Management Practices (BMP).  
MMC-228 - Use of Armed Security Personnel on board Panama Flagged Vessels (**online application**).  
MMC-231 - Piracy Reports  
MMC-327 - Security Measures sailing in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG).  
MMC-358 - Security Measures in Nigerian waters.

1. The purpose of this Merchant Marine Circular is to inform about the recently amendment of the High Risk Area (HRA) description in Section 2 of BMP4 that will be effective from 1 December 2015.

2. For the purpose of BMP the High Risk Area is an area bounded by:

|                                    |                  |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| In the Red Sea northern limit      | Latitude 15° N   |
| In the Gulf of Oman northern limit | Latitude 22° N   |
| Eastern limit:                     | Longitude 065° E |
| Southern Limit:                    | Latitude 5° S    |

3. The current HRA should be reduced in area to reflect the recent experience of ships in the Indian Ocean as well as available data provided by military headquarters.

4. **Starting on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019**, the new coordinates of the HRA are:  
In the Indian Ocean a line linking from the territorial waters off the coast of East Africa at Latitude 05° 00'S to 050°00'E:

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Then to positions:

|               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Lat: 00° 00'N | Long: 055° 00'E |
| Lat: 10° 00'N | Long: 060° 00'E |
| Lat: 14° 00'N | Long: 060° 00'E |

Then a bearing 310° to the territorial waters of the Arabian Peninsula.

5. The High Risk Area (HRA) is an area within the UKMTO designated as the Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA) where it is considered there is a higher risk of piracy and within which self-protective measures are most likely to be required.

6. According to the Merchant Marine Circular MMC-228, the Panama Maritime Authority defined HRA in point 4.1 ***“An area as defined in the BMP unless otherwise defined by the Flag State”***.

7. For this reason and taking in consideration the last incidents reports of the Panamanian flagged vessels, the following areas are considered to continue to suffer attacks and robberies. Given the aforementioned, this Administration will also consider the following, as High Risk Areas:

## S.E. ASIA AND THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

**Indonesia:** Belawan, Dumai, Karimun Kecil/Besar, Pulau Nipah, Pulau Takong Kecil, Jakarta /Tanjung Priok, Muara Berau, Pulau Bintan, **Batam** and **Taboneo**.

Malacca Strait

**Malaysia:** Tanjung Piai, **Bandar Penawar** and **Johor**.

**Philippines:** **Celebes Sea**, Sibutu Island, Tawi Tawi, Sulu Sea and Eastern Sabah.

## S.E. ASIA AND THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT (cont.)

**Singapore Straits**

Thailand

South China

Sea Vietnam:

Vung Tau

**Bangladesh:** Chittagong, kutubdia and **Chittagong Anchorage**.

**India:** Kandla, Kochi, Visakhapatnam and **East of Alang**

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## AFRICA AND RED SEA

Somalia waters – Eastern and Northeastern Coast.

Ghana: Takoradi

**Angola: Luanda**

Guinea: Gulf of Guinea, Conakry

Egypt

**Benin: Cotonou**

Gulf of Aden

**Gabon: Libreville**

**Ivory Coast: Abidjan**

Conakry

Sierra Leone

Leone

Kenya

Liberia

**Mozambique: Mocimboa Da Praia Nigeria:**

**Lagos / Bayelsa / Brass / Bonny**

**Island / Port Harcourt**

Red Sea

The Congo: Pointe Noire and Northern Somali Coast in the Gulf of Aden and Southern Red Sea in The Bab El Mandeb

**Togo: Lome**

**Sao Tome and Principe: Sao Tome Island**

## SOUTH, CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN WATERS

**Colombia:**

**Cartagena**

**Haiti: Port Au**

**Prince** Jamaica

Venezuela: Puerto Jose, Puerto La

Cruz **Brazil:** Macapa and **Sao**

**Francisco Do Sul** Guyana

**Peru, Callao**

**Anchorage**

Dominican Republic

Ports

Ecuadorian Ports

**Mexico: Gulf of Mexico, Gulf of Campeche, Tabasco, Puerto Dos Bocas**

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8. All the Panamanian Flagged Vessels transiting through any of the above mentioned areas have to raise their Security Level according to their Ship Security Plan.
9. In the year 2020 a high number of incidents (attempt of boarding, boarding and robbery) were reported in the below listed ports and anchorages, reason why the Panama Maritime Authority encourages to all the Ship-owners/Operators and Masters to take the proper maritime security measurements in order to reduce and deter the risks associated.

| No. | Country               | Port/Anchorage  |
|-----|-----------------------|---|
| 1   | Indonesia             | Batam / Muara Berau / Taboneo   |
| 2   | Malasya               | Bandar Penawar, Johor.  |
| 3.  | Philippines           | Celebes Sea, Sibutu Island, Tawi Tawi, Sulu Sea and Eastern Sabah, Manila |
| 4.  | Singapore             | Singapore Straits   |
| 5.  | Thailand              | Kosichang Anchorage   |
| 6.  | Vietnam               | Southern Vietnam  |
| 7.  | Bangladesh            | Chittagong Anchorage  |
| 8.  | India                 | East of Alang   |
| 9.  | Brasil                | Sao Francisco Do Sul, Macapa  |
| 10. | Colombia              | Cartagena   |
| 11. | Ecuador               | Guayaquil   |
| 12. | Haiti                 | Port au Prince  |
| 13. | Mexico                | Puerto Dos Bocas, Campeche, Tabasco and Ciudad del Carmen                 |
| 14. | Peru                  | Callao Anchorage  |
| 15. | Angola                | Luanda  |
| 16. | Benin                 | Cotonou   |
| 17. | Equatorial Guinea     | Conakry   |
| 18. | Gabon                 | Libreville  |
| 19. | Ghana                 | Takoradi  |
| 20. | Ivory Coast           | Abidjan   |
| 21. | Mozambique            | Mocimboa Da Praia   |
| 22. | Nigeria               | Lagos / Bayelsa / Brass / Off Brass Bonny Island, / Port Harcourt         |
| 23. | Sao Tome and Principe | Sao Tome Island   |
| 24. | The Congo             | Point Noire.  |
| 25. | Togo                  | Lome / Off Lome   |

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10. In this sense, we remind all our users that MMC-195 and 197, states that all Panamanian flagged vessels, under SOLAS V/19-1 regulations are required to comply with LRIT requirement. The LRIT System must work properly as the ships are transiting High Risk Areas. This ensures the possibility to track vessels and will allow detecting any unexpected change of course or any other suspicious situation.

11. The Panama Maritime Authority encourages all our Ship-owners/Operators, Company Security Officers, Legal Representatives of Panamanian Flagged Vessels to have as a First Option, the use of the Best Management Practices (BMP), and the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC); MMC No.208.

12. All Panamanian flagged vessels are requested prior to transit, or leaving a port within the region, to follow the latest Best Management Practices (BMP) and to contact the local information centers for up to date instructions or transit and reporting.

13. The use of PCASP should not be considered as an alternative to Best Management Practices (BMP) and other protective measures. It is recommended that BMP be applied

14. Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) and be considered as the first, minimum, preventative option. Placing armed guards on board as a means to secure and protect the ship and its crew should only be considered after a risk assessment has been carried out.

15. Panama flagged vessels operating within the World Food Program in the Gulf of Aden (GoA) and Somali Basin shall implement as far practicable the BMP.

16. The incidents of vessels transiting the **Celebes – Sulu Seas** continue to be reported to the IMB Piracy reporting Centre. Most incidents are targeted towards vessels approaching / entering the **Sibutu Channel**, which is probably the only safe and navigable channel joining the **Celebes Sea to the Sulu Sea**. This Channel is also the shortest, north/south route from and to Australia and the Southern Indonesian Islands. The vessels targeted are; bulk carriers, general cargo ships, fishing vessels, tankers and tugs and barges – all of which do not have excessive speed capabilities or freeboards when loaded.

To reduce the risk, the IMB is advising owners and charterers to consider the recommendations in IMO circular 1334 as well as the Risk Assessment and vessel hardening procedures given in the Best Management Practices. Depending on the risk assessment, consideration could be given to routing west of Kalimantan and straight into the South China Sea thus avoiding the **Celebes / Sulu Sea** all together. The IMB appreciates that this will increase sailing time and thus costs, but we recommend this as a possible safer route.

17. All Panamanian flagged vessels transiting in the Gulf of Guinea must to remain at least 250 NM from the coast at all times, or until the vessel can transit to commence cargo operations at a berth or safe anchorage.

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**18.** The Panama Maritime Authority encourage all Operators, CSO and Owners of Panamanian flag vessels, to contact the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) Piracy Reporting Center 24/7, in case of any incident of piracy or armed robbery that occurs in any part of the country world.

The information received is important in order to be able to alert the response agencies in the region to take action as well as raise awareness for other ships in the vicinity by broadcasting via Inmarsat Safety Net Service.

## **IMB**

### **Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC)**

Tel: +(60 3) 2078 5763 / 2031 0287 / 2031 3106

**24 Hrs ANTI PIRACY HELPLINE: + 60 3 2031 0014 (Manned 24 Hrs everyday)**

Fax: + 60 3 2078 5769

General E-mail: [imbkl@icc-ccs.org](mailto:imbkl@icc-ccs.org)

Piracy E-mail: [piracy@icc-ccs.org](mailto:piracy@icc-ccs.org)

**Also, we exhorted the Captains of the vessels that the above information from the Piracy Report Center be placed in areas where there is communication such as the bridge, the engine room, citadel, among others.**

**19.** The goal of the Panama Maritime Authority is to give the Panamanian Flagged vessels and the Maritime Industry the certainty of our interest in achieving a safer and secure transit through these High Risk Areas.

The contact details are as follows:

## **PIRACY REPORTING CENTRE**

### **PANAMA**

Phone: +507 301 5748

Fax +507 301 5749

Email:

[activations@absolutemaritime.com](mailto:activations@absolutemaritime.com)

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# Merchant Marine Circular

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## NATO SHIPPING CENTRE

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## INTERPOL

Phone: +33 472 44 76 76

Email: [os-ccc@interpol.int](mailto:os-ccc@interpol.int)

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## Marine Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GoG)

Brest, France and Portsmouth,  
England. Phone: +33 (0) 2 98 22  
88 88

E-mail addresses: [watchkeepers@mdat-gog.org](mailto:watchkeepers@mdat-gog.org) Website: N/A

## CRESMAC

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## Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)

Naval Transmitting Station

Sohna Road, Sector - 33, Gurugram -  
122 001 Email: [ifc-ior.gurugram@navy.gov.in](mailto:ifc-ior.gurugram@navy.gov.in)

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Website: <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/ifc-ior/index.html>

**January, 2021** – Modification in paragraph 7 (Africa and Red Sea), 9 point 3, 9, 11, 22 and 25.

**November, 2020** – Change in paragraph 9.

**July, 2020** - Update HRA

**June, 2020** – Change of PMA phone numbers.

**April, 2020** – Update HRA and modification in paragraph #9

**June, 2019** – Exclusion of paragraph #13 and update of paragraph #16

**May, 2019** – Updated HRA and Inclusion of new paragraph.

**November 2018**- Updated HRA, modification in paragraph 12, inclusion of paragraph 16

**August 2018** – New Contacts

**May 2017** – Update of paragraph #8

**January 2017** – Inclusion of new paragraph #8 and inclusion of information of contact of MDAT-GoG.

**December 2016** – Update of the subject, addition of paragraph #13 and correction of phone number in Panama contact point.

**May, 2016** – Correction in Africa and Red Sea places.

**December, 2015**- Inclusion of new paragraphs

**August, 2014** – changes all throughout the circular

**April, 2012** – Update of emails

**February, 2012** – inclusion of new paragraph (point 2)

**September, 2011**



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Inquiries concerning the subject of this Merchant Marine Circular or any other request should be forward to:

Maritime Ships Security Department  
General Directorate of Merchant Marine  
Panama Maritime Authority

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