



The SENTINEL Watch

IMSC Monthly Security Update - February 2021



IMSC Update

Welcome to the February edition of the International Maritime Security Construct update, 'The SENTINEL Watch'. 'The SENTINEL Watch' provides the merchant shipping industry with an update on IMSC initiatives and maritime security incidents within the Middle East Region.

We look forward to hosting the second IMSC Industry Stakeholders Virtual Conference on Tuesday February 23rd at 1100 UTC and hope all invitees will be able to attend.

Our new website, imscsentinel.com, is now live and will be continually updated with our latest news and guidance.

Security Events

- Iran seized a South Korean-flagged product tanker HANKUK CHEMI near the Strait of Hormuz on January 4, 2021, amid tensions between Tehran and Seoul over Iranian funds frozen in South Korean banks.
- Saudi led forces thwarted a Houthi WBIED in the Southern Red Sea reported January 22nd.

Security Update

On January 4, 2021, M/T HANKUK CHEMI, a South Korean-flagged product tanker carrying 7200 tons of ethanol, and crew were seized and detained by Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) due to claimed maritime pollution in the Arabian Gulf. Pollution is unlikely to be the real reason for the vessel's detention; Given the timing, the more likely reason is to enhance Iranian political leverage in ongoing negotiations to release Iranian funds frozen in South Korean banks due to U.S. sanctions. This incident illustrated one of the main threats to merchant shipping within the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman. Seoul has indicated a willingness to work with IMSC, but has not requested assistance from the organization. Finally, UKMTO issued advisory [001/JAN/2021](#) on January 4th and USDOT MARAD issued advisory [2021-001](#) on January 7th.

The threat within the Red Sea and Bab-el-Mandeb Strait remains unchanged for the merchant shipping industry. On January 22nd, Reuters reported that Saudi led coalition forces thwarted two Houthi attacks. First, Saudi led forces destroyed an explosive-laden boat in the Southern Red Sea. Second, Saudi led forces destroyed an explosive-laden drone launched from Yemen by Houthis towards Saudi Arabia.

Iran conducted multiple military training exercises, including a large-scale IRGC naval exercise and short-range missile drills in the Gulf of Oman with minimal impact to merchant shipping. However, several iterations of the exercises coincided with the one-year mark of the death of Qasem Soleimani on January 3, 2020, and the seizure of M/T HANKUK CHEMI on January 4, 2021, was timed just before the arrival of a previously scheduled delegation of Korean negotiators.

Warships continue to provide overwatch to merchant vessels throughout the IMSC area of operation. Vessels transiting the area can expect to hear IMSC warships conducting Maritime Awareness Calls (MAC) on a regular basis. IMSC warships broadcasted over 1000 MAC calls in January to reassure mariners in the region.

Masters are encouraged to report incidents to IMSC via UKMTO. Ship Owners, Operators, and Masters are advised to follow guidance in accordance with BMP 5 and national authorities and review the guidance and responses contained within the IMSC Bridge Cards.

Surveillance

Vigilance

Assurance



The SENTINEL Watch

Updated Version of the IMSC Bridge Cards

We're working with our industry partners to distribute updated copies of our IMSC Bridge Cards to ships in the region.

The IMSC Bridge Cards are a useful safety aide memoire for mariners and have been updated to include advice on Limpet Mines, Floating Mines as well as Suspicious Vessels and useful contact details.

The latest version can be found on our website:
imscsentinel.com/guidance

"Show Us Your Bridge Card" Competition

Tag us in a photo on social media with your bridge card for a chance to win IMSC CTF Sentinel merchandise.

Twitter @IMSC_Sentinel: ([click here for link](#))
Facebook @IMSCSENTINEL: ([click here for link](#))
LinkedIn IMSC: ([click here for link](#))

Full details of the competition can be found at:
imscsentinel.com/bridgecards

23 Feb - Industry Stakeholders Conference

It's less than 4 weeks until our online Industry Stakeholders Conference. Make sure you secure your place by registering at imscsentinel.com/conference by February 16th.

Our guest speakers will include UKTMO, NCAGS and maritime risk managers Den Norske Krigsforsikring for Skib Intelligence & Operations Centre (DNK IOC).

Media Update

- Exercise SENTINEL SHIELD: ([click here for link](#))
- See this month's Top Tweet: ([click here for link](#))
- Twitter @IMSC_Sentinel: ([click here for link](#))
- Facebook @IMSCSENTINEL: ([click here for link](#))
- LinkedIn: IMSC: ([click here for link](#))

Reporting

In the event of a security incident, follow reporting guidance in accordance with BMP 5, Section 7 ([click here for link](#)) and national authority.

When operating in the Middle East region, merchant shipping is encouraged to report through UKMTO, Telephone **+44 2392 222 060** or email watchkeepers@ukmto.org

In addition to the guidance provided in BMP5, merchant shipping is encouraged to report the following to UKMTO as detailed in the IMSC Bridge Cards:

- Threatening or harassing conduct directed at a merchant vessel.
- Threatening or harassing language transmitted on VHF.
- Boarding or search of a vessel without a valid legal pretext.
- Unnecessary manoeuvring in unsafe proximity of a merchant vessel.
- Intentional close manoeuvring so as to restrict a vessel's ability to manoeuvre without lawful justification.
- Aircraft operating at an unsafe altitude or distance that results in a threat to a merchant vessel.
- Unprofessional or inappropriate queries - Queries that include asking questions beyond flagged state, port of departure and port of arrival. Including questions relating to:
 - Whether warships or aircraft are operating in the area.
 - Asking unnecessarily probing questions about the crew or cargo.
- Sighting of suspicious floating objects (possible mine or waterborne improvised explosive device) in the area.
- On receiving a distress call from another Merchant Vessel that reports being harassed or attacked.

* If you would like to be added to our distribution list, Email <IMSC.MTO@me.navy.mil> with the subject "SENTINEL Watch Distribution List"

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