



The SENTINEL Watch

IMSC Monthly Security Update - March 2021



IMSC Update

Welcome to the March 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.

On February 23rd, IMSC held our second Industry Stakeholders Virtual Conference. Thank you to our guest speakers and attendees who helped make the Stakeholders Conference a success. We appreciate your feedback and hope to see you at our next event.

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

Security Events

- MV HELIOS RAY sustained an explosion in the Gulf of Oman resulting in multiple holes in the freeboard hull
- Arabian Gulf/Gulf of Oman threat is LOW-MODERATE
- Southern Red Sea/BAM threat is LOW-MODERATE

Security Update

On February 26, 2021, numerous news outlets reported that MV HELIOS RAY, a Bahamas-flagged vehicle carrier, sustained an external hull explosion in the Gulf of Oman approximately 44 NM north of Muscat, Oman, at approximately 2040 UTC on February 25, 2021. The crew was unharmed, however, the vessel sustained two 1-1.5 meter holes in its port side and two holes in its starboard side just above the waterline. The cause of the HELIOS RAY explosion is under investigation, but analysts speculate the damage is consistent with limpet mines based on the similarity to the damage suffered by MV KOKUKA COURAGEOUS during an Iranian limpet mine attack in June 2019. Of note, MV HELIOS RAY's ship manager and ship owner have address locations in Israel. Due to this explosion and the seizure of M/T HANKUK CHEMI in January 2021, the threat within the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman remains unchanged at LOW-MODERATE for IMSC flagged vessels. See [UKMTO ADVISORY NOTICE 002/FEB/2021](#).

The threat within the Red Sea and Bab-el-Mandeb Strait (BAM) also remains unchanged for IMSC flagged vessels at LOW-MODERATE based on significant Houthi-Saudi Arabia kinetic engagements largely outside of the maritime environment, with the higher evaluation being for areas within 100nm of the Yemen coast or outside the Traffic Separation Scheme. Within this MODERATE Yemen threat zone, the main risk is criminal in nature as well as mis-calculation by local Houthi elements. Local and international media periodically report that Arab coalition forces have intercepted and destroyed land-based Houthi missiles fired from Yemen toward Saudi Arabia.

IMSC supported Exercise Spartan Rescue and led Exercise Sentinel Shield to rehearse live-action partner nation responses to malign maritime activity as well as tactical unit table-top rehearsals and four command center exercises.

Warships and aircraft continue to provide overwatch to merchant vessels throughout the IMSC area of operation. Vessels transiting the area can expect to hear IMSC conducting Maritime Awareness Calls (MAC) on a regular basis. IMSC warships broadcast over 900 MAC calls in February to deter malign activity while reassuring 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

Stakeholders Conference

Thank you to all our guest speakers, attendees and industry partners who helped make our Stakeholders Conference on 23 February so successful. The event featured speakers from United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), U.S. Naval Forces Central Command's Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) and maritime risk managers Den Norske Krigsforsikring for Skib Intelligence & Operations Centre (DNK IOC).

You can read a summary of the event on the news section of our website ([click here for link](#)). We'll be announcing our next conference to take place in Q3 2021 in due course. To help make the next conference even better, please fill out our post-conference survey ([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"

Surveillance **Vigilance** **Assurance**