The Bahamas Maritime Authority

Version No.   2.1

Issue Date   24/05/2024

Maritime Security in Red Sea

1.   Purpose

1.1.   This Technical Alert is issued by the Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) to inform ships, Masters, Technical Managers and Owners who have ships wishing to transit the Red Sea that it is now considered an area of regional instability. This has introduced other maritime security threats, which include:

  i.   Deliberate targeting of ships;
  ii.   Collateral damage from regional conflict.

2.   Application

2.1.   This Notice applies to all ships transiting, or intending to transit, the Red Sea area.

2.2.   This Notice should be read in conjunction with Marine Notice 71[1].

3.   Introduction

3.1.   The high-risk area (HRA) for piracy was removed at the beginning of 2023. The Lloyd's Market Association Joint War Committee (JWC) continues to maintain its Listed Area as before.

3.2.   In November 2023, the Bahamas flag car carrier GALAXY LEADER was boarded in the Red Sea by helicopter and captured by armed forces, reportedly connected to the Houthi forces, and remains in their possession.

3.3.   Since January 2024, commercial shipping has been coming under regular attacks from Houthi forces. In response, a grouping of concerned nations supported the establishment of *Operation Prosperity Guardian* to protect the freedom of navigation and the supply chain.

3.4.   Following numerous attacks against shipping and a co-ordinated attack on naval assets, on 11 January 2024 there were air strikes against multiple targets in Yemen. The threat to shipping remains extant and real. https://www.lmalloyds.com/lma/jointwar

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[1] https://www.bahamasmaritime.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/MN071-Piracy-and-Armed-Robbery-Against-Ships.pdf

## 4.   Transiting the Red Sea and Best Management Practice

4.1.   There are currently no restrictions imposed by the government of The Bahamas or The BMA on transiting the Red Sea, however such transits are currently considered extremely high risk.

4.2.   When transits of the Red Sea are necessary, Best Management Practices (BMP) should be followed. The current version of BMP is BMP 5[2]. This version includes details of self-protection measures and a feedback request to masters on the effectiveness of the anti-piracy actions taken by the vessel.

4.3.   Recognising the current risk on transiting the Red Sea as noted in paragraph 4.1, the Company Security Officer / Ship Security Officer may consider implementing ISPS Security Level 3 measures, as outlined in the Ship Security Plan, during such transits.

4.4.   A ship-specific risk assessment should be conducted and aligned with the prevailing circumstances and all crew members sufficiently briefed before the transit.

4.5.   The vessel's course should be charted to keep maximum distance from the Yemeni Coast. Fire and security drills should be conducted, and the Citadel (if present) prepared for use.

4.6.   Most attacks have happened during daylight hours, so consideration should be given to conducting the passage during darkness.

4.7.   The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO - www.ukmto.org) and Maritime Security Centre – Horn of Africa (MSCHOA - http://www.mschoa.org/) websites should be consulted for advice. Vessels can log in here to register a vessel movement with MSCHOA, to access the latest threat assessments, piracy alerts and BMP advice.

4.8.   Merchant vessels can receive a regional maritime security brief from UKMTO (Dubai) by telephone or online. To contact the UKMTO Dubai office please email: dubai-oic@ukmto.org . Please note that any emails received between 13:00UTC on Friday afternoon and 04:00UTC on Monday morning, may not be actioned before 04:00UTC on Monday. For urgent and short notice briefing requirements that fall outside of these times Masters should contact the Duty UKMTO Officer on: +971 (0)50 559 3983 to arrange.

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[2] https://www.lmalloyds.com/CMDownload.aspx?ContentKey=2f3b475c-68ea-4a52-8bd9-2415ebf25206&ContentItemKey=2722b3be-1f02-4649-b33e-c870998f8949

4.9. Contact details for UKMTO, MSCHOA and other contacts are provided in the Annex to this Alert.

4.10. Maintaining vigilance, and reporting to UKMTO and MSCHOA, are fundamental but only part of what prudent owners should do. It is clearly necessary for adequate training and regular practice to be given to crews to enable them to respond effectively when under attack or threat. Low speed and low freeboard remain factors which significantly increase the vulnerability of ships.

4.11. Nothing in BMP detracts from the Master's overriding authority and responsibility to protect their crew, ship and cargo.

4.12. On completion of the transit, compensatory rest for those involved in extra watchkeeping duties should be ensured after crossing 50°E.

5. Maritime Security Transit Corridor

5.1. The Maritime Security Transit Corridor (MSTC) is a military established corridor upon which naval forces focus their presence and surveillance efforts. The MSTC is shown on maritime security chart Q6099 and the figure below and consists of:

  i.   The Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC). The IRTC is not a Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) but an established transit corridor in the Gulf of Aden where naval forces focus their counter piracy patrols. Within the IRTC, group transits and national convoys may be offered.
  ii. The Bab Al Mandeb (BAM) TSS and the TSS West of the Hanish Islands.
  iii. A two-way route directly connecting the IRTC and the BAM TSS.
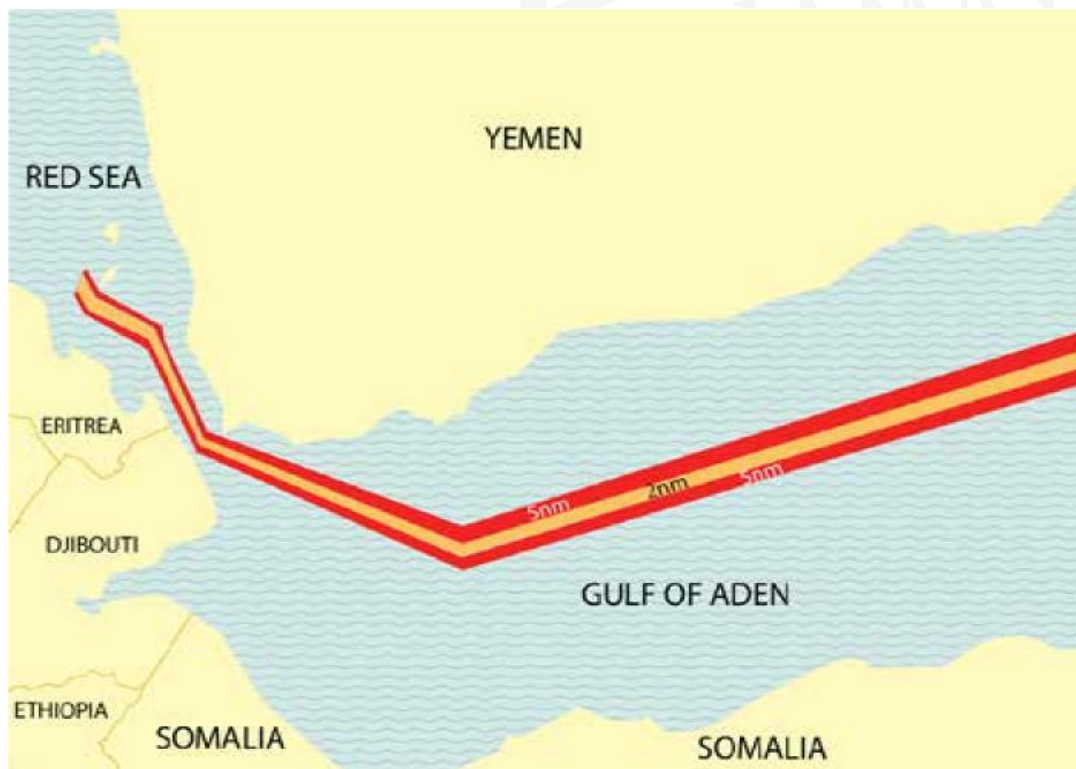
5.2.   It is recommended that ships use the MSTC to benefit from the military presence and surveillance.

6.   Automatic Identification System (AIS) and Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) policy

6.1.   AIS

6.1.1.   The guidelines for the on-board operational use of AIS permits the Master to turn off this equipment in sea areas where there is a threat of piracy and armed robbery. The BMA accepts that the Master may choose to switch this equipment off whilst transiting the Red Sea.

6.1.2.   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 Companies to take into account the current advice issued by the naval forces, as published on the MSCHOA website.

6.2.   LRIT

6.2.1.   In general, LRIT equipment must not be turned off either before entry into a High-Risk Area or during transit of such an area.

6.2.2.   However, noting the strong possibility that LRIT data is being made available to Parties other than SOLAS Contracting States, the BMA has no objection to LRIT (and AIS, SSAS and internet communications) being switched off whilst in transit, particularly when requested to do so by UKMTO, MSCHOA or US Naval Control.

6.2.3.   When the LRIT equipment is switched off, alternative means of positive reporting are to be in place (e.g. manual reports to the Company at 6-hour intervals, increased reporting to MSCHOA, etc.). The times that the LRIT was switched off should be recorded in the Official Log Book.

6.2.4.   In cases where it becomes necessary to switch off or deactivate the LRIT equipment (e.g. for maintenance or repair), the BMA must be informed at the earliest opportunity (lrit@bahamasmaritime.com).

7.   Reporting Attacks

7.1.   In all cases the ship must develop an emergency communication plan to be implemented in the event of an attack. The BMA authorises the use of the Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) programmed to alert the Company Security Officer, as set out in Marine Notice 047[3], as part of this plan.

7.2.   Owners may wish to use commercial services which automatically transmit the SSAS signal directly to the Authorities. The BMA has no objection to the use of these services, provided that the additional recipients of the signal are limited to UKMTO, MSCHOA or forces involved in Operation Prosperity Guardian as appropriate 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.

7.3.   In the event that a Bahamian ship operating in the Red Sea region comes under attack, the BMA should be advised as soon as possible.

7.4.   The initial notification is to be made to the with as much of the following information as possible, and may be made by phone:

   i.   Ships name;
   ii.   IMO number and/or Official number;
   iii.   Geographical location of ship;
   iv.   Cargo, if any;
   v.   Number of persons on board and their nationality/nationalities;
   vi.   Type of event – brief details;
   vii.   Time (UTC) and position of ship at the time of event;
   viii.   Details of damage to the vessel (if any);

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[3] https://www.bahamasmaritime.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/MN047-ISPS-Code-v1.0.pdf

ix.   Current status of voyage (stopped/making way/continuing passage);

x.   If the ship is continuing on its passage – next port of call;

xi.   Any other important information; and

xii.   What assistance required from the BMA/Bahamas government.

7.5.   The information in 7.4 should be followed up by email as soon as practicable to the following email addresses:

i.   BMA - tech@bahamasmaritime.com and

ii.   Bahamas ISPS Compliance Unit – ispscompliance@bahamas.gov.bs

7.6.   At the times when BMA offices are closed, the Emergency Response Officer telephone number is:

<div align="center">

+44 20 3869 8748

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7.7.   In the event of a ship being boarded by naval forces, the Master should follow the Company's reporting protocols and report this to the BMA.

8.   Validity

This Technical Alert is valid until further notice.

9.   Revisions

V1.0 First issue
V2.0 Revised taking into account recent developments and operational feedback
V2.1 Corrected typo in ERO number

Annex: Contact details

Emergency Contacts
UKMTO (United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations)

Email :   watchkeepers@ukmto.org

Tel :   +44 2392 222060

                  +971 50 552 3215

MSCHOA

Email   postmaster@mschoa.org

Tel   +44 (0)1923 958 545

Fax   +44 (0)1923 958 520

Website   www.mschoa.org

USN Naval Control and Guidance to Shipping

Email   CTF55.BWC@me.navy.mil

Tel (24hrs)   + 973-1785-3434

Other useful contacts
NATO Shipping Centre

Email   info@shipping.nato.int

Tel   +44 (0)1923 956 574

Fax   +44 (0)1923 956 575

Website   www.shipping.nato.int

IMB Piracy Reporting Centre

Email   piracy@icc-ccs.org

                  imbkl@icc-ccs.org

Tel   +603 2031 0014 (24hr Helpline)

Fax   +603 2078 5769

Website   www.icc-ccs.org