



Antigua and Barbuda  
Maritime Administration

SOLAS Circular  
No. 2013 - 003  
Rev 2  
7 March 2023

**SUBJECT: Piracy and Armed Robbery**

**REFERENCE:**

- a) *MSC.1/Circ/1406 Rev 3 - Revised Interim Recommendations for Flag States regarding the use of Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel on board ships in the High-Risk Area.*
- b) *MSC.1405 Rev 2 - Revised interim guidance to shipowners, ship operators and shipmasters on the use of privately contracted armed security personnel on board ships in the High-Risk Area.*
- c) *MSC.1408-Rev 1 - Revised interim recommendations for Port and Coastal States regarding the use of Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel on board ships in the High-Risk Area.*
- d) *MSC.1334 - Piracy and armed robbery against ships - Guidance to shipowners and ship operators, shipmasters and crews on preventing and suppressing acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships.*
- e) *MSC.1/Circ.1601/Rev1 – Revised Industry Counter Piracy Guidance (Annex1 -Global Counter Piracy Guidance for Companies, Masters and Seafarers)*

**TO:** Ship-owners, operators, masters and officers of Antigua and Barbuda flagged ships, and recognized organizations.

**1. PURPOSE**

This Circular provides information on the interpretation and guidance on the regulatory regime and industry best practices, along with the expectations and requirements of the Administration in respect of piracy and armed robbery against ships and their crew.

**2. APPLICATION**

This Circular applies to all Antigua and Barbuda flagged ships.

**3. BACKGROUND**

The threat of piracy and armed robbery at sea against ships and their crew remains of serious concern. The Administration fully endorses the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) efforts to counteract this threat and the guidance it has provided to contracting Governments, shipowners, ship operators, and shipmasters on counter-piracy efforts; and is particularly guided by the provisions of *MSC.1/Circ.1406/Rev.3*.

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has signed an agreement with the European Union to allow military Vessel Protection Detachments (VPDs) to board Antigua and Barbuda flagged vessels when they are chartered by the World Food Programme as well as vessels that are particularly vulnerable to acts of piracy based on an applicable risk assessment.

#### **4. OBLIGATIONS AND GUIDANCE/RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **1. Indian Ocean High-Risk Area (HRA)**

1. Effective 01 January 2023, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), INTERCARGO, INTERTANKO, Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF), Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) and International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA), collaboratively removed this area, as shown on *UKHO Chart Q6099*, from the shipping industry's list of HRAs. The IMO was informed that this decision was based on what was deemed as a reduction in the piracy situation in the area over a significant period.
2. Notwithstanding this reclassification, the Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA) administered by UKMTO remains in effect; and ships entering the VRA are encouraged to report to the UKMTO and register with the Maritime Security Centre for the Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) in accordance with industry Best Management Practices (BMP).
3. The shipping industry will continue to monitor maritime security threats in the region through the dynamic approach to the provision of security guidance developed by the industry, for the industry, to make owners, operators, charterers and seafarers aware of where identified threats may be encountered, allowing them to risk assess their voyages and take such mitigation measures as are appropriate.
4. Ship operators are asked to instruct their masters, ship security officers, and crew to maintain familiarity with the BMP, as revised, and all other relevant IMO Circulars dealing with the issue of piracy, and to continue to undertake threat and risk assessment when navigating this area.
5. When operating outside the territorial seas or ports within the previously defined HRA, Masters of Antigua and Barbuda flagged vessels shall operate at a security level that corresponds to the threat deduced from the most current risk assessment.

##### **2. UKMTO**

1. The UKMTO acts as the primary point of contact for merchant ships and their Company Security Officers (CSOs), providing liaison with military forces in the region. UKMTO offers regular information to ships and a weekly report summarizing the previous week's activity.
2. All ships on entering the UKMTO Voluntary Reporting Area are encouraged to provide reports using the prescribed forms available at [www.ukmto.org](http://www.ukmto.org). Tel: +44 2392 222060.

3. UKMTO is also able to offer Masters and CSOs the opportunity to conduct drills and exercises to support their passage planning in the region. This service can be accessed on the dedicated exercise line +44(0)2392 222060.

### **3. MSCHOA**

1. The MSCHOA is the planning and coordination centre for the EU naval Forces (EU NAVFOR). The MSCHOA encourages companies to register their ships' movement before entering the HRA and if participating in the group transit system via their website [www.mschoa.org](http://www.mschoa.org). A downloadable form is also available, or one can be requested from [postmaster@mschoa.org](mailto:postmaster@mschoa.org).
2. The MSCHOA Vessel Registration Area is highlighted on the UKHO Chart Q6099.

### **4. Employment of Armed Security Personnel**

1. While the laws of Antigua and Barbuda do not explicitly prohibit the employment of Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) on board Antigua and Barbuda flagged ships, the Administration supports the IMO's position that the use of PCASP should not be considered as an alternative to best management practices and other protective measures.
2. Further, the Administration also recognises that ship owners, ship operators and ship masters have the right, and the responsibility, to take or execute any decision which is necessary for the safety and security of the vessel and its crew.
3. The Administration recommends that shipowners should only consider the option of placing armed guards (PCASP) on board if a risk assessment indicates that this is the best way to ensure the safety of the seafarers on board the ship. In conducting the risk assessment ship owners, ship operators and ship masters may wish to refer to either of the following sources for valuable intelligence on pirate activities, in addition to the Useful Contacts as outlined in Annex A of BMP:
  1. US. Navy, Office of Naval Intelligence Worldwide Threat to Shipping (WTS) Reports – Appendix A: Piracy and Armed robbery at Sea Statistics and Trends at [www.oni.navy.mil](http://www.oni.navy.mil)
  2. The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) Piracy Report Center at [www.icc-ccs.org](http://www.icc-ccs.org)
4. In choosing a contractor to provide PCASP, ship operators should be guided by the provisions of MSC.1405/Rev.2 entitled: "Revised interim guidance to shipowners, ship operators, and shipmasters on the use of privately contracted armed security personnel on board ships in the high-risk area. The use of firearms on vessels carrying dangerous cargoes should also be given special consideration with appropriate mitigating measures identified and established.

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5. Ship operators and ship masters should also take note of MSC.1/Circ.1408-Rev1 on the Revised interim recommendations to port and coastal States regarding the use of Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel on board ships in the High-Risk Area. This document provides guidance and information on the responses of coastal and port states to the carriage of PCASP on ships in the area.
  6. It is incumbent on the ship owner/operator to ensure that PCASP are given the same safety protection as the crew, therefore sufficient Life Saving Appliances (LSA) should be provided for all persons on board. In case of any shortfall in lifeboat capacity for the total number of persons on board when the PCASP are on board, an application should be made to the Administration in good time explaining the circumstances for the consideration of applicable Temporary permission.

## **5. Command and Control of PCASPs**

1. All ship owners/operators should, when entering into a contract with a Private Maritime Security Company (PMSC), ensure that there is a clearly defined and documented command and control structure linking the ship owner/operator, the Master, the ship's officers, and the PCASP team leader. It is recommended that documented procedures be established and implemented on board to cover safety briefings to the PCASP and secure measures for the stowage of firearms.
2. The documented command and control structure should have a clear statement that indicates that the Master remains in command and always retains the overriding authority.
3. The master on board an Antigua and Barbuda flagged ship should also report the presence of PCASP, firearms and security related equipment embarked on board when reporting in to MSCHOA and UKMTO.

## **6. Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea**

### **1. Best Management Practices**

1. This Administration endorses the Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security off the Coast of West Africa including the Gulf of Guinea, (BMP-West Africa), and advises all involved in operating Antigua and Barbuda flagged ships navigating the HRA to, as far as practicable, implement the prescribed anti-piracy measures.
2. Ship operators are asked to instruct their masters, ship security officers and crew to be familiar with the BMP West Africa, as revised, in order to access the services provided.

### **2. Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade - Gulf of Guinea**

1. The Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GoG) is a cooperation centre between the Royal Navy (UKMTO) and the French Navy (MICA-Center) in support of the Yaounde Process.

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2. MDAT-GoG is designed to contribute to maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea and aims to maintain coherent maritime situational awareness in the central and western African Maritime areas, with the ability to inform and support the industry.
  3. The MDAT-GOG has a voluntary reporting scheme and Masters and Owners are strongly encouraged to report to MDAT-GOG when within the Voluntary Reporting Area (VAR). In so doing they will receive updates on activity within the area and improve their military situational awareness and their ability to respond in the event of an incident.
  4. MDAT-GOG can be contacted at [watchkeepers@mdat-gog.org](mailto:watchkeepers@mdat-gog.org) or by telephone at +33(0)2 98 228888 and offers regular information to ships on its website <http://gog-mdat.org>. Additional information on threats and specific recommendations for vessels can be accessed on the NATO Shipping Website at <http://shipping.nato.int/nsc/operations/global-maritime-risk/west-africa-gulf-of-guinea>.
  5. MDAT-GOG can offer Masters and CSOs the opportunity to conduct drills and exercises to support their passage planning in the region. This service can be accessed on the dedicated exercise line at +33 298 221302.

### **3. The Use of Armed Guards – Gulf of Guinea**

1. Due regard should be taken in the employment of PCASP in the Gulf of Guinea as they are normally prohibited from operating within the territorial waters of the coastal states in the region. Current information suggests that some coastal states can make available armed escort vessels while others may permit certain companies to employ government police and military personnel onboard private escort vessels. Private teams may not be possible in this area.
2. A ship operator who wishes to embark an armed team in the Gulf of Guinea area should check local requirements carefully. The Administration will support owners as far as possible, and any application to permit armed teams should be made early and with as much information as possible.

### **4. Flag State Reporting Requirements**

1. Ship owners and ship operators are, as soon as practicable, to provide a report on all incidents of piracy attacks on Antigua and Barbuda ships to this Administration in accordance with the Flag State Notification Procedures as set out in [Miscellaneous Circular 2021-002](#)

#### **Issued by**

Antigua and Barbuda  
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