



INFORMATION BULLETIN No. 181

Guidance for Ships Operating in or Near the Gulf of Oman, Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf

Guidance and Instructions to the Ship Owners, Technical Managers, Operators and Masters of the Bahamas Flag ships

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This Bulletin provides guidance on maritime safety and security matters to Bahamian ships when navigating in the region of Gulf of Oman, Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf.

2. Application

- 2.1. This Bulletin applies to all Bahamian ships operating in or near, or transiting through, the Gulf of Oman, Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf.



3. Background

- 3.1. All parties will be aware of the political situation in the Middle East and recent attacks on merchant shipping.
- 3.2. The Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) has been monitoring and evaluating current developments and is providing this guidance to assist stakeholders.

4. Guidance

- 4.1. The current security level for The Bahamas and Bahamian ships is Security Level 1.
- 4.2. All ships are, however, permitted to implement additional security measures for the duration of their transit in the region without actually increasing the security level, except where an increased security level is required by the coastal State(s). Any change to a higher security level than that set by The Bahamas is to be communicated to the BMA as per paragraph 11.6 of [BMA Information Bulletin No.70](#).
- 4.3. The Company¹ should carry out a detailed and thorough risk assessment to cover all foreseeable security events and it is recommended that the **ship's** insurers are consulted before committing to any commercial activity in the region.
- 4.4. Bahamian ships should be aware that regional navies may conduct maritime exercises and may call or approach the ship. It is recommended that, in addition to the continuous watch on international distress frequency Channel 16 VHF (156.8 MHz), appropriate local radio frequencies should also be monitored.
- 4.5. It is recommended that, prior to departure from a port in the Gulf of Oman, Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf region, consideration be given to undertaking an underwater hull inspection if the Master or Ship Security Officer has any reason to suspect that unauthorised diving activity may have taken place.

¹ The "Company" is the entity responsible for the management of the ship in accordance with the ISM Code. For ships which the ISM Code is not applicable, the Company is the Managing Owner in accordance with Section 52 of the Bahamas Merchant Shipping Act

- 4.6. During the voyage, whilst at anchor and whilst alongside at ports in the region, additional lookouts should be posted and be aware of the possibility of sea mines or flying objects (drones) which could cause harm to the ship, crew, cargo or marine environment.
 - 4.7. If the ship is confronted by any Coastal naval forces in the region, the Master should communicate the ship's name, IMO number, flag, last port of call, next port of call and cargo information (if asked) and maintain the position that they are exercising navigation rights in accordance with International law².
 - 4.8. If naval forces attempt to board the ship, the Master and crew should not resist the boarding party and should cooperate with them as far as possible, to avoid any unintended consequences or unintended events.
 - 4.9. This guidance does not supersede the requirements of the international **Conventions, the Company's own** safety and security procedures and requirements, or other BMA Bulletins or Bahamian regulations.
 - 4.10. This guidance also does not supersede the Master's **overriding** authority and responsibility with respect to the safety and security of his/her ship under the relevant international Conventions.
 - 4.11. This Bulletin will be updated as further information becomes available.
5. Reporting
- 5.1. In the event of a ship being boarded by naval forces, the Master should follow the Company's **reporting protocols**.
 - 5.2. The BMA should also be advised without delay –
 - i. if the ship is boarded by naval forces; and/or
 - ii. if the ship encounters a major security threat or incident.

² United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) - Subject to this Convention, ships of all States, whether coastal or land-locked, enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea (Art. 17)

5.3. This notification is to be made to the Emergency Response Officer on the BMA emergency telephone number **+44 7977 471 220** with as much of the following information as possible:

- 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);
- 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.

5.4. The information in 5.3 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

6. Revision History

Rev.1 (17 January 2020) – Revised details in para 5.4 for ISPS compliance unit

Rev.0 (25 June 2019) – First issue