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16 February 2011

To: All Masters, Ship Security Officers, Company Security Officers of Hong Kong registered ships, Hong Kong Shipowners, Hong Kong Ship Managers and Hong Kong Ship Operators

Security and Quality Advisory No. 14
Placing Security Personnel on Board HK Registered Ships

This letter supersedes the Security & Quality Advisory No. 4.

The Marine Department received a number of enquiries regarding placing security personnel on board Hong Kong registered ships as a result of the recent increase of pirate attacks in areas outside the Gulf of Aden in Somali Basin, Indian Ocean and Red Sea where naval convoy protection cannot be obtained. The consolidated answers for these enquiries are provided below for your information:

(a) Chinese Naval Vessels Escort Arrangement

Hong Kong registered ships are strongly advised to join the Chinese naval convoy escort. Registration with the Chinese convoys through Marine Department (MD) is available for passage through the Gulf of Aden. On very vulnerable ships armed Chinese naval officers may be offered to board vessel and we recommend the Master to accept such protection.

(b) The Best Management Practice (BMP)

We recommend ship owners fully follow the BMP requirements at all time when within known piracy areas including alerting the Maritime Security Centre – Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) irrespective of the freeboard or speed of the ship.

(c) Security Personnel on board HK registered ships

The Marine Department encourages the carriage of experienced security consultants to assist in following BMP requirements as these are welcomed by the crew and give confidence to all onboard in case of pirate attacks. The security consultants should be signed on as supernumeraries and provided with sufficient life saving appliances and accommodation. Under such circumstance, there is no need

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to register them with the police as security guards.

(d) Possession of weapons onboard HK registered ships

The Marine Department does not encourage the carriage of weapons on board any Hong Kong registered ship as we believe their use will lead to an escalation of situation and a greater risk to the crew. However where ships are passing through known piracy areas with no naval protection and it is felt to be in the best interest of crew and ship safety and security to carry weapons then we recommend that:

- i) a thorough due diligence is done on the security consultants, as there is no established organization to vet such companies;
- ii) the lawyers have been consulted on the legal situation and liabilities if innocents are injured through the use of such weapons;
- iii) all other parties involved in the voyage such as insurance, charterers etc. are in agreement;
- iv) the line of command and rules of engagement are clearly understood and conform with legal advice;
- v) the crew are fully briefed and consulted before placing such weapons on board and
- vi) the weapons are possessed by the Master, or by a person who is authorized by the owner or person in charge of the vessel to have such possession.

Upon receipt of the request from ship owners with the points above addressed, a letter for the carriage of weapons on board Hong Kong registered ships for protection of life or property will be issued by this Department. Furthermore, we are of the view that confidentiality regarding this matter is beneficial to the safety of ship and crew involved.



(Y.K. LI)

Senior Surveyor/Security & Quality Assurance Section
for Director of Marine