



## CIRCULAR MCO – 002-2024

February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024

**FROM** | MCO HEAD OFFICE – TECHNICAL DEPARTMENT  
**TO** | SURVEYORS/ MANAGEMENTS/ OWNERS/ OPERATORS  
**SUBJECT** | RECOMMENDATION TO AVOID YEMEN, RED SEA, GULF OF ADEN, PERSIAN AND THEIR APPROACHES

Dear all,

By this means we would like to draw your attention to the recent recommendation by the Panama Maritime Administration for all Panama flagged vessels to take all security measures and avoid as much as possible transits through the Red Sea and increased caution via the Strait of Bab al Mandeb.

Such recommendations are based on missiles launched by the Yemen based Ansar Allah movement towards Israeli territory, situation that has been increasing for the past couple of months causing serious threats to commercial vessels that transit the area.

Attacks from rebel movements are characterized by the use of strategically placed sea mines, missiles and remotely controlled improvised explosive devices in the Red Sea with the help of coastal radars, warships and patrol vessels as well as UAV's to monitor passing merchant ships.

We strongly advice all Panama Flag Registry vessels transiting: the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Strait of Hormuz (SoH), Bab-al-Mandeb (BaM), Gulf of Oman and their accesses to implement the security level 3 or equivalent port security measures in those areas and maintain communication at all times with UKMTO and the Central Command of the USA Naval Forces. Also, we recommend the following:

- Review BMP5 at all times
- Evaluate the ship's route, particularly proximity to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Iranian Navy assets, controlled sites and the coasts of Yemen, attempting to navigate as far away as possible from these areas.
- It is recommended to maintain complete surveillance on the bridge.
- Transit through the Red Sea, Bab-al-Mandeb (BaM) and Strait of Hormuz (SoH), at night to avoid detection and maintain communication with maritime security centers at all times.
- Remain alert at all times; At night, small and slow boats without a wake are difficult to detect on radar. Don't stop if threatened and present a challenging target through proactive maneuvers.
- Maintain strict surveillance of communications and establish communication with all approaching vessels. Do not allow small boats to approach or dock. Use a reflector to identify yourself at night.
- Consistently and thoroughly conduct a threat risk assessment before traveling and entering any region where there has been an incident or the threat has changed.
- After a risk assessment, review the Vessel Protection Plan, and if necessary, modify it to secure the vessel, crew and cargo.



- Follow the BIMCO and INTERTANKO recommendations regarding transiting the conflicted areas.
- Vessels using privately contracted armed security personnel (PCASP) are advised to re-evaluate use of force standards with their private maritime security company and avoid any type of confrontation with military forces, as it may result in a significant escalation. The use of PCASP is not recommended as a risk mitigation measure in the northern Gulf of Oman (north of Fujairah, UAE), Strait of Hormuz (SoH), or the Arabian/Persian Gulf.
- Guarantee strict boarding controls.
- Go down hallways or accommodation stairs only when necessary.
- Install exterior lights wherever possible, as long as they do not interfere with maintaining a safe lookout, especially aft, and install/use searchlights if available.
- Monitor relevant VHF and other communication channels.
- Check all firefighting equipment available for immediate use. Make sure the emergency fire pump is available if any maintenance is performed.
- Conduct fire and safety drills/exercises before entering higher risk areas.

All vessels hoisting the Panama flag before, during and after transiting the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Persian and their approaches must keep the automatic identification system (AIS) and LRIT on except in those cases in which the captain consider that the safety of the vessel could be compromised or when a safety incident is imminent. In accordance with the provisions of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), VHF Channel 16 must also be monitored and communication maintained at all times with the naval forces in the area and with the Panama Maritime Administration, and report any incident or suspicious activity as soon as possible. In case the Captains/S.S.O. and the companies decide and consider the shutdown of the aforementioned equipment, they must notify and report the status of the ship and its crew every 4 hours via email to **nardila@amp.gob.pa** and **isps@amp.gob.pa**

All Panama Flag Registry vessels trading in these areas are expected to comply with international requirements related to position reporting, and the Panama Maritime Authority may sanction violations of such provisions in accordance with national legislation, if they do not formally report through LRIT and AIS to our Administration at the appropriate time.

Please refer to the below contact points for the UKMTO and the Central Command of the USA Naval Forces:

- UKMTO  
**watchkeepers@ukmto.org**  
Emergency numbers: +44 (0) 239 222 2060 / +971 50 552 2315
- United States Naval Forces Central Command (USNAVCENT)  
Naval Co-operation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS)  
**cusnc.ncags\_bw@me.navy.mil**  
+973 3904 9583 / +973 1785 1023 / 1024 / 2983 / 0084
- USNAVCENT Maritime Operations Center (NAVCENT MOC)  
+973 1785 3879 / +973 1785 4577 (fleet watch)

Should you have any further questions, don't hesitate to contact us.

Best regards,

  
 Capt. Gustavo Vaz  
**Technical Department**  
**MACOSNAR Corporation**




