

# Merchant Marine Circular

Panama Maritime Authority  
General Directorate of Merchant Marine  
Department of Control and Compliance

## MERCHANT MARINE CIRCULAR MMC-208

- To:** Master, Ship-owners, Operators, Company Security Officers, Ship Security Officers, Panamanian Merchant Marine Consulates Legal Representative of Panama Flagged Vessels, Recognized Organizations (RO's) and Recognized Security Organizations (RSO's) of Panama Flagged Vessel.
- Subject:** Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) and Compliance with the Best Management Practices (BMP).
- Reference:** IMO Resolution - A.1026 (26) adopted on 2 December 2009.  
IMO MSC.1/Circ.1339 - Best Management Practices for Protection against Somalia Based Piracy.  
IMO SN.1/Circular.281 - Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC), August 03, 2009.  
MMC-230 - High Risk Areas (HRA) and precautionary zones.

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1. The purpose of this Merchant Marine Circular is to inform all parties related with the Panamanian flagged vessels, about the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC), the Best Management Practices (BMP), the Ship's Reports, and the Contact Points of Coordinating Authorities whereby the ships entitled to fly the Panamanian flag may request advice or assistance when sailing in waters off the coast of Somalia and to which can report any security concerns about other ships, movements and/or communications in the area.

2. **Definitions:**

**2.1** Piracy is defined in the article No.101 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 82') as follows: Piracy consists of any of the following acts:

**(a)** any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft, and directed:

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- (i) on the high seas, against another ship or aircraft, or against persons or property on board such ship or aircraft;
- (ii) against a ship, aircraft, persons or property in a place outside the jurisdiction of any State.

(b) any act of voluntary participation in the operation of a ship or of an aircraft with knowledge of facts making it a pirate ship or aircraft.

(c) any act of inciting or of intentionally facilitating an act described in sub-paragraph (1) or

**2.2** Armed robbery against ships is defined in the Code of Practice for the Investigation of Crimes of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships (resolution A.1025(26), Annex, paragraph 2.2), as follows:

*“Armed robbery against ships means any of the following act: (a) any illegal act of violence or detention or any act of depredation, or threat thereof, other than an act of “piracy”, committed for private ends and directed against a ship or against persons or property on board such ships, within a State’s internal waters, archipelagic waters and territorial sea; (b) any act of inciting or of intentionally facilitating an act described above.”*

### **3. Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC):**

**3.1** All the Panamanian flagged vessels are requested to use the IRTC, which includes the creation of separate eastbound and westbound transit lanes. Each lane will be 5 nautical miles wide and will be separated by a 2 nautical miles buffer zone.

**3.2** As the IRTC is subject to changes by the military Authorities, according to prevailing circumstances, the Panamanian flagged vessels are urged to obtain updated information from the Maritime Security Centre – Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) on the website address <http://www.mschoa.org> or from the NAV-warnings promulgated for that area.

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## 4. Best Management Practices (BMP):

**4.1** All the Panamanian flagged vessels are requested, prior to transit or leaving a port within the region, to follow the BMP and to contact the local information centers to get updated instructions on transit and reporting.

**4.2** It is anticipated that the BMP will be periodically updated based upon operational experience and lessons learned. The Panamanian flagged vessels are urged to keep to the latest version of the BMP and verify it with the designated information centers when approaching to the Gulf of Aden (GoA) and the Somali Basin.

**4.3** Panamanian Flagged Vessels operating within the World Food Program (WFP) in the GoA and the Somali basin, shall implement as far practicable, the BMP.

**4.4** Statistics have shown that following the BMP, including suggested routing advisories, considerably lessened the incidence of pirate attacks. These measures also help the Naval Forces in the area to protect the vessels in transit.

**4.5** The Panama Maritime Administration (PMA) if deems it necessary and in order to safeguard the safety and security of the ship and the crew, may request the presence of trained and armed guards for the protection of ships flying the Panama flag.

## 5. Report:

**5.1** This Administration recognizes that an essential part of preventing, deterring and suppressing attacks from pirates, is the prompt reporting to the proper authorities and organizations involved, both during and post incident. In this sense, all the Panama flagged vessels shall:

**5.1.1** Report to UKMTO Dubai while operating in the area, and increase the periodicity of report when navigating in known high risk areas and further report when passing A or B on the IRTC.

**5.1.2** Report to UKMTO Dubai and the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC) any sighted suspect mother pirate ships.

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**5.1.3** Report to UKMTO Dubai (immediately) when a pirate attack is imminent.

**5.2** After an incident, the company shall inform the Administration, as instructed in the MMC-231.

## **6. Additional Security Measures:**

**6.1** All the Panamanian flagged vessels transiting through High Risk Areas (HRA), have to raise the Security Level according to their Ship Security Plan (SSP).

**6.2** The Panama Maritime Authority recommends that all the crew of the Panamanian Flagged vessels, and that prior to the entry into the High Risk Area (HRA), should be fully briefed on the preparations and a piracy drill shall be conducted as well, as instructed in the MMC-230.

**6.3** The Panamanian Flagged vessels are requested to verify that the SSAS equipment have been correctly set-up and is working properly through a SSAS Test, which must be reported to the PMA contacts, as instructed in the MMC-133.

**6.4** If any additional security measures are required (other than BMP), shall be approved by the Panama Maritime Authority.

## **7. The below documentation for your reference regarding this subject matter:**

- IMO Resolution - A.1026 (26) adopted on 2 December 2009.
- IMO SN.1/Circular.281 - Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC).
- Anti-Piracy Planning Chart - 66090 – Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea.
- IMO MSC.1/Circ.1339 - Best Management Practices for Protection against Somalia Based Piracy.
- MSCHOA official document – “Why is it necessary to report vessel positions to UKMTO and to register vessel movements to MSCHOA?”
- MSCHOA Registration Points (Geographical positions).
- IMB Piracy Reporting Centre (PRC) Contact Info.

For further assistance and/or inquiries please note the following contact points:





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**A. Maritime Ships Security Department** (weekdays 08:30-16:30 hrs) Phone: +507-501-5037/5085 E-mail address: [asp@amp.gob.pa](mailto:asp@amp.gob.pa)

**B. SEGUMAR Panama** (Evenings, Weekends and Holidays) Phone: +507-501-5350/48 or +507-501-5032 E-mail address: [authorizations@segumar.com](mailto:authorizations@segumar.com)

**April, 2023** – CANCELLED. The circular MMC-230 supersedes and compiles this circular.

**December, 2020** – Change of PMA phone numbers.

**July, 2018** – Removal of the text [click here](#).

**January, 2018** - Update of mail.

**November, 2015** - Changes through the whole text.

**November, 2011** - Update of hyperlink.

**March, 2011.**

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Inquiries concerning the subject of this Merchant Marine Circular or any other request should be directed to:

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Directorate General of Merchant Marine  
Panama Maritime Authority

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