

Merchant Marine Circular

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

MERCHANT MARINE CIRCULAR MMC-228

- To:** Ship-owners / Operators, Company Security Officers, Legal Representatives of Panama Flagged Vessels, Panamanian Merchant Marine Consulates and Recognized Organizations (ROs).
- Subject:** Use of Armed Security Personnel on board Panama Flagged Vessels **(online application)**.
- Reference:** Resolution No. 106-13-DGMM of March 8th, 2012.
Resolution No. 106-85-DGMM of December 17th, 2014.
MMC-208 - Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) and Compliance with the Best Management Practices (BMP).
MMC-243 - Authorization for Private Maritime Security Companies (PMS)
MMC-245 - Authorized Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC) transiting High Risk Areas (online application).
MMC-197 - Long-Range Identification and Tracking of Ships (LRIT).

1. The purpose of this Merchant Marine Circular is to inform all parties concerned with Panamanian flagged vessels that the Maritime Safety Committee, at its 89th Session approved the Interim recommendation regarding the use of Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) on board ships in the high risk area as per the MSC.1/Circ.1405/Rev.2, MSC.1/Circ.1406/Rev.3 and MSC.1/Circ.1443 (for reference visit Maritime Security link, IMO Documents).

2. The use of PCASP should not be considered as an alternative to Best Management Practices (BMP) and other protective measures. It is recommended that BMP be applied throughout the High Risk Area (HRA) and in the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) and be considered as the first, minimum, preventative option. Placing armed guards on board as a means to secure and protect the ship and its crew should only be considered after a risk assessment has been carried out.

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3. The Administration urges Panamanian vessels transiting high-risk areas, to use the necessary security measures and raise their level of warning according to the Ship Security Plan. Ships, who intend to hire the services of Private security firms, should provide the crew with the necessary training and information about the risks of having an armed team onboard.

4. Definitions:

4.1 High Risk Area: An area as defined in the BMP unless otherwise defined by the flag State.

4.2. Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC): Private contractors employed to provide Security Personnel, both armed and unarmed, on board for protection against piracy.

4.3 Authorized Private Maritime Security Companies: Private contractors duly recognized by this Administration and which are duly listed in the MMC-245.

4.4 Team Leader: Person responsible for all aspects of the security team members and who takes care of the storage and handling of fire arms and ammunitions.

4.5 Bilateral Agreement: These are contractual agreements between the Ship Operator/Owner and the PMSC, stating terms and conditions of the security services.

5. The General Directorate of Merchant Marine authorizes to carry armed personnel onboard according to the MSC.1/Circ.1405/Rev.2 and MSC.1/Circ.1406/Rev.3. Only for cases in which a Port Authority requires so, this Administration will issue an authorization after receiving the following documentation through the website link: <http://certificates.amp.gob.pa/certificates>:

- a- Bilateral Agreement signed by the parties with the company stamp.
- b- Passport copies of the guards that will embark the vessel for the specific transit.



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c- For weapons Annex, you must attach Annex A of the contract or a company document that describes the weapons, the number of the series and the amount of ammunition.

Unless a Port Authority requires so, the Authorized Private Maritime Security Companies listed in the MMC-245, can proceed without the need of an authorization issued by the Flag State.

6. In cases where the security company embarks eight (8) or more weapons per transit, the request to carry armed personnel onboard must have the approval of the owners, operators and/or charterers through an email of authorization stating that such number of weapons will remain onboard during the specific transit.

7. Starting from April 1st, 2019, any ship calling at Port that requires the presence of the Navy Authorization on board, will be available to apply on the following website link: <http://certificates.amp.gob.pa/certificates>. We recommend using Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Opera and Safari to get access in the online platform.

8. The privately contracted armed security personnel authorized by the General Directorate of Merchant Marine has to be enrolled in Panama flag vessels as supernumerary in order to avoid any problem with the port and coastal state.

9. **Starting from December 15th, 2021** all the Private Maritime Security Companies already recognized with PMA authorization per transit or not must submit the enclosed PCASP Report, (for reference see Annex) duly filled and signed with details of their service before the security teams disembark from the vessel through the following website link: <https://certificates.amp.gob.pa/certificates/FrmPiracyReport.aspx>

10. All ship-owners and ship-operators when entering into a contract with a PMSC should ensure compliance with the MSC.1/Circ.1405/Rev.2.

11. All Panamanian flagged vessels are hereby requested to maintain a wide communication with the Administration and to liaise with the International Contact Centers according to the BMP4 in order to counter piracy in the High Risk Areas of the Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and any other Region of High Risk, as determined by this administration.



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12. All inquiries concerning international correspondence must be sent to the Maritime Ship Security Department to asp@amp.gob.pa, or through any of the Segumar offices worldwide.

April, 2023 – CANCELLED. This circular is superseded and compiled by the circular MMC-245.

December, 2021 – Modification of paragraph 9.

December, 2020 – Change of PMA phone number.

December, 2019 – Inclusion of new point c in paragraph and modification of paragraph 7.

September, 2019 - Update of reference MSC.1/Circ.1406/Rev.3

June, 2019 - Including in paragraph 1 reference to Maritime Security Link, IMO Documents, and paragraph 7 and 9 the Navy Authorization letter and the PCSAP Report as annex.

March, 2019 – Update of the paragraph (7)

September, 2016 - Change in paragraph (5) and paragraph (7).

April, 2015- Change in paragraph 5 point (a) and new paragraph (6)

February, 2015 – New paragraph (6)

January, 2015 - Update of new Resolutions and change in Paragraph 2.

December, 2014 – Change in Paragraph 2. And various changes throughout the entire document.

May, 2013 – Changes in point 1, 3 and reference.

June, 2012 – new hyperlinks in paragraph 1.

May, 2012 – updated form: PCASP (hyperlink of point 5).

January, 2012 – a new point 5 and hyperlink were included; e-mail addresses were updated.

October, 2011 – update of hyperlinks and numbers of MSC.1/Circ.1405/Rev.1 and MSC.1/Circ.1406/Rev.

August, 2011.

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

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Website: <https://panamashipregistry.com/circulars/>