

# Merchant Marine Circular

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

## MERCHANT MARINE CIRCULAR MMC-124

**To:** Master, Ship-owners, Operators, Company Security Officers, Ship Security Officer, Legal Representatives of Panamanian Flagged Vessels, Recognized Security Organizations (RSO) of Panamanian Flagged Vessel.

**Subject:** Ship Security Assessment (SSA)

**Reference:** Law No. 38 June 4th, 1995 UNCLOS 1982.  
Resolution ADM 140-2003 of May 15th, 2003.  
MMC-126 - Ship Security Officers.  
MMC-123 - International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS CODE).  
MMC-125 - Ship Security Plan (SSP).

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1. The purpose of this Merchant Marine Circular is to communicate that according to the ISPS Code, Part A/8, it is required to all Company Security Officers of Panamanian Flagged vessels to make sure Ship Security Assessments (SSA), are carried out to all the vessels under their responsibility by persons with appropriate skills to evaluate the security of ships in accordance with the ISPS Code.
  2. The Ship Security Assessment (SSA) an essential and integral part of the process of developing and updating the Ship Security Plan on board Panamanian flagged vessels.
  3. The Ship Security Assessment (SSA) shall include an on-scene security survey but is not limited to the following elements:
    - 3.1. Identification of existing security measures, procedures and operations;
    - 3.2. Identification and evaluation of key shipboard operations that it is important to protect;
    - 3.3. Identification of possible threats to the key shipboard operations and the likelihood of their occurrence, in order to establish and prioritize security measures; and
    - 3.4. Identification of weaknesses, including human factors, in the infrastructure, policies and procedures.



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4. The Ships Security Assessment (SSA) shall be documented, reviewed, accepted and retained by the company.
5. Prior to commencing the Ship Security Assessment (SSA), the CSO should ensure that advantage is taken of information available on the assessment of threat for the ports at which the ship will call or at which passengers embark or disembark, and about the port facilities and their protective measures.
  - 5.1. The CSO should study previous reports on similar security needs. Where feasible, the CSO should meet with appropriate persons on the ship and in the port facilities to discuss the purpose and methodology of the assessment. The CSO should follow and specific guidance offered by the Contracting Governments.
6. A Ship Security Assessment (SSA) should address the following elements on board Panamanian Flagged vessels:
  - 6.1. Physical security;
  - 6.2. Structural integrity;
  - 6.3. Personnel protection systems;
  - 6.4. Procedural policies;
  - 6.5. Radio and telecommunication systems, including computer systems and networks;
  - 6.6. Other areas that may, if damaged or used for illicit observation, pose a risk to people, property or operations on board the ship or within a port facility.
7. Those involved in a Ship Security Assessment (SSA) should be able to draw upon expert in assistance regarding to:
  - 7.1. Knowledge of current security threats and patterns;
  - 7.2. Recognition and detection of weapons, dangerous substances and devices;
  - 7.3. Recognition, on a non-discriminatory basis of characteristic and behavioral patterns persons who are likely to threaten security;
  - 7.4. Techniques used to circumvent security incident;
  - 7.5. Methods used to cause a security incident;
  - 7.6. Effects of explosives on ship structures and equipment;
  - 7.7. Ship security;
  - 7.8. Ship/port interface business practices;
  - 7.9. Contingency planning, emergency preparedness and response;

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- 7.10. Physical security;
  - 7.11. Radio and telecommunications systems, including computer systems and networks;
  - 7.12. Marine engineering; and
  - 7.13. Ship and port operations.
8. The CSO should obtain and record the information required conducting an Assessment, including:
- 8.1. The general layout of the ship;
  - 8.2. The location of areas which should have restricted access, such as the bridge, spaces in which the main propulsion or generating machinery, navigation equipment, fire control station, emergency power and communications are located.
  - 8.3. The location and function of each actual or potential access point to the ship;
  - 8.4. Changes in the tide which may have an impact on the vulnerability or security of the ship;
  - 8.5. Cargo spaces and stowage arrangements;
  - 8.6. Locations where the ship's stores and essential maintenance equipment is stores;
  - 8.7. Locations where unaccompanied baggage is stored;
  - 8.8. Emergency and stand-by equipment available to maintain essential services;
  - 8.9. Number of ship's personnel, any existing security duties and any existing training practices of the Company;
  - 8.10. Existing security and safety equipment for the protection of passengers and ship's personnel.
  - 8.11. Scape and evacuation routes and assembly stations which have to be maintained to ensure the orderly and safe emergency evacuation of the ship;
  - 8.12. Existing agreements with private security companies providing ship/waterside security services; and.
  - 8.13. Existing security measures and procedures in effect, including inspection and control procedures, identification systems, surveillance and monitoring equipment, personnel identification documents and communications, alarms, lighting, access control and other appropriate systems.
9. The Ship Security Assessment (SSA) should consider the continuing relevance of the existing security measures and guidance, procedures and operations, under both routine and emergency conditions and should determine security guidance relevant to:

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- 9.1. Restricted areas;
  - 9.2. Response procedures to fire or other emergency conditions;
  - 9.3. The level of supervision of the ship's personnel, passengers, visitors, vendors, repair technicians, dock workers etc;
  - 9.4. The frequency and effectiveness of security patrols;
  - 9.5. Access control systems, including identification systems;
  - 9.6. Security communications systems and procedures;
  - 9.7. Security doors, barriers and lighting; and
  - 9.8. Security and surveillance equipment and systems.
10. The Ship Security Assessment (SSA) should consider the persons, activities, service and operations that it is important to protect. This includes:
- 10.1. The ship's personnel;
  - 10.2. Passengers, visitors, vendors, repair technicians, port facility personnel, etc.
  - 10.3. The capacity to maintain safe navigation and emergency response;
  - 10.4. The cargo, particularly dangerous goods or hazardous substances;
  - 10.5. Ship's stores;
  - 10.6. Any ship security communications equipment and systems; and
  - 10.7. Any ship's security surveillance equipment and systems
11. The Ship Security Assessment (SSA) should consider all possible threats, which may include the following types of security incidents:
- 11.1. Damage to, or destruction of, the ship or port facility, e.g., by explosive devices, arson, sabotage or vandalism;
  - 11.2. Hijacking or seizure of the ship or of persons on board;
  - 11.3. Tampering with cargo, essential ship equipment or systems or ship's stores;
  - 11.4. Unauthorized access or used, including presence of stowaways;
  - 11.5. Smuggling weapons or equipment, including weapons of mass destruction;
  - 11.6. Use of the ship to carry those intending to cause a security incident and/or their equipment;
  - 11.7. Use of the ship itself as a weapon or as a means to cause damage or destruction;
  - 11.8. Attacks from seaward whilst at berth or at anchor; and
  - 11.9. Attacks whilst at sea.

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12. The Ship Security Assessment (SSA) should take into account all possible vulnerabilities, which may include:
  - 12.1. Conflicts between safety and security measures;
  - 12.2. Conflicts between shipboard duties and security assignments;
  - 12.3. Watch keeping duties, number of ship's personnel, and any implications to crew fatigue, alertness and performance;
  - 12.4. Any identified security training deficiencies; and
  - 12.5. Any security equipment and systems, including communication systems.
13. The CSO and Ship Security Officer (SSO) should always have regard to the effect that security measures may have on ship's personnel who will remain on the ship for long periods. When developing security measures, particular consideration should be given to the convenience, comfort and personal privacy of the ship's personnel and their ability to maintain their effectiveness over long periods.
14. Upon completion of the Ship Security Assessment (SSA), a report must be prepared, consisting of a summary of how the assessment was conducted, a description of each vulnerability found during the assessment, and a description of counter measures that could be used to address each vulnerability. The report must be protected from unauthorized access or disclosure.
15. The SSA shall be sent, together with the SSP, to the RSO by a predetermined method to prevent unauthorized disclosure. The RSO shall review the SSA to ensure that each element required by the code is satisfactorily addressed and is used as a reference for the SSP.

## On Scene Security Survey

16. This Administration considers the On Scene Security Survey is an integral part of any Ship Security Assessment (SSA). The on-Scene Security Survey should examine and evaluate existing shipboard protective measures, procedures and operations for:
  - 16.1. Ensuring the performance of all ship security duties;
  - 16.2. Monitoring restricted areas to ensure that only authorized persons have access;
  - 16.3. Controlling access to the ship, including any identification systems;
  - 16.4. Monitoring of deck areas and areas surrounding the ship;



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- 16.5. Controlling the embarkation of persons and their effects (accompanied and unaccompanied baggage and ship's personnel personal effects);
- 16.6. Supervising the handling of cargo and the delivery of ship's stores;
- 16.7. Ensuring that ship security communication, information, and equipment are readily available.

For further assistance, please note below the contact points.

**August, 2023** – CANCELLED.

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

**November, 2014** - New paragraph 16.

**June, 2013** - Changes all throughout the text.

**September, 2013.**

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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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