



**PANAMA MARITIME AUTHORITY**  
**MERCHANT MARINE CIRCULAR MMC-230**

PanCanal Building  
Albrook, Panama City  
Republic of Panama  
Tel: (507) 501-5355  
[mmc@amp.gob.pa](mailto:mmc@amp.gob.pa)

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**To:** Ship-owners/Operators, Company Security Officers, Legal Representatives of Panamanian Flagged Vessels, Panamanian Merchant Marine Consulates and Recognized Organizations (ROs).

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**Subject:** High Risk Areas (HRA) and precautionary zones.

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**Reference:** MMC-208  
MMC-228  
MMC-231  
MMC-327

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1. The purpose of this Merchant Marine Circular is to inform about the recently amendment of the High Risk Area (HRA) description in Section 2 of BMP4 that will be effective from 1 December 2015.

2. For the purpose of BMP the High Risk Area is an area bounded by:

In the Red Sea northern limit	Latitude 15° N
In the Gulf of Oman northern limit	Latitude 22° N
Eastern limit:	Longitude 065° E
Southern Limit:	Latitude 5° S

3. The current HRA should be reduced in area to reflect the recent experience of ships in the Indian Ocean as well as available data provided by military headquarters.

4. The High Risk Area (HRA) is an area within the UKMTO designated as the Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA) where it is considered there is a higher risk of piracy and within which self-protective measures are most likely to be required. Please refer to the [Annex](#) information.

5. According to the Merchant Marine Circular MMC-228, the Panama Maritime Authority defined HRA in point 4.1 ***“An area as defined in the BMP unless otherwise defined by the Flag State”***.

6. For this reason and taking in consideration the last incidents reports of the Panamanian flagged vessels, the following areas are considered to continue to suffer attacks and robberies. Given the aforementioned, this Administration will also consider the following, as High Risk Areas:

**S.E. ASIA AND THE INDIAN SUB CONTINENT**

Indonesia: Belawan, Dumai, Karimun Kecil/Besar, Pulau Nipah, Pulau Takong Kecil, Jakarta /Tanjung Priok, Muara Berau, Pulau Bintan

Malacca Strait

Malaysia: Tanjung Piai

Philippines: Batangas

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## **S.E. ASIA AND THE INDIAN SUB CONTINENT (cont.)**

Singapore Straits  
Thailand  
South China Sea  
Vietnam: Vung Tau  
Bangladesh: Chittagong  
India: Kandla, Kochi, Visakhapatnam

## **AFRICA AND RED SEA**

Somalia waters –Eastern and Northeastern Coast.  
Ghana  
Angola  
Guinea  
Cameroon  
Egypt  
Benin  
Gulf of Aden  
Gabon  
Ivory Coast  
Conakry  
Sierra Leone  
Kenya  
Liberia  
Mozambique  
Nigeria: Lagos  
Red Sea  
The Congo: Pointe Noire and Northern Somali Coast in the Gulf of Aden and Southern Red Sea in  
The Bab El Mandeb  
Togo: Lome

## **SOUTH, CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN WATERS**

Colombia  
Haiti  
Jamaica  
Venezuela  
Brazil  
Guyana  
Peru  
Dominican Republic Ports  
Ecuadorian Ports

7. All the Panamanian Flagged Vessels transiting through any of the above mentioned areas have to raise their Security Level according to their Ship Security Plan.

8. In the year of 2016 (January to December) and First Quarter of 2017 a high number of incidents (attempt of boarding, boarding and robbery) were reported in the below listed ports and anchorages, reason why the Panama Maritime Authority encourages to all the Ship-owners/Operators and Masters to take the proper maritime security measurements in order to reduce and deter the risks associated.

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No.	Country	Port/Anchorage
1	Bangladesh	Takoradi, Chittagong, Kutubia
2	Indonesia	Batam/Kabil
3		Muara Berau/Samarinda
4		Taboneo
5		Lubuk Gaung/Dumai
6	Peru	Callao
7	Philippines	Davao, Batangas
8	Venezuela	Puerto Jose

9. In this sense, we remind all our users that MMC 195 and 197, states that all Panamanian flagged vessels, under SOLAS V/19-1 regulations are required to comply with LRIT requirement. The LRIT System must work properly as the ships are transiting High Risk Areas. This ensures the possibility to track vessels and will allow detecting any unexpected change of course or any other suspicious situation.

10. The Panama Maritime Authority encourages all our Ship-owners/Operators, Company Security Officers, Legal Representatives of Panamanian Flagged Vessels to have as a First Option, the use of the Best Management Practices (BMP), and the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC); MMC No.208.

11. All Panamanian flagged vessels are requested prior to transit, or leaving a port within the region, to follow the latest Best Management Practices (BMP) and to contact the local information centers for up to date instructions or transit and reporting.

12. 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.

13. Panama flagged vessels operating within the World Food Program in the Gulf of Aden (GoA) and Somali Basin shall implement as far practicable the BMP.

14. In the recent months of this year 2016 seven incidents have been reported to the IMB Piracy reporting Centre on vessels transiting the **Celebes – Sulu Seas**. Most incidents are targeted towards vessels approaching / entering the **Sibutu Channel**, which is probably the only safe and navigable channel joining the **Celebes Sea to the Sulu Sea**. This Channel is also the shortest, north/south route from and to Australia and the Southern Indonesian Islands. The vessels targeted are; bulk carriers, general cargo ships, fishing vessels, tankers and tugs and barges – all of which do not have excessive speed capabilities or freeboards when loaded.

To reduce the risk, the IMB is advising owners and charterers to consider the recommendations in IMO circular 1334 as well as the Risk Assessment and vessel hardening procedures given in the Best Management Practices (Ver. 4). Depending on the risk assessment, consideration could be given to routing west of Kalimantan and straight into the South China Sea thus avoiding the

**Celebes / Sulu Sea** all together. The IMB appreciates that this will increase sailing time and thus costs, but recommends this as a possible safer route.

15. The goal of the Panama Maritime Authority is to give the Panamanian Flagged vessels and the Maritime Industry the certainty of our interest in achieving a safer and secure transit through these High Risk Areas.

The contact details are as follows:

**PIRACY REPORTING CENTRE**

**PANAMA**

Phone: +507 301 5748  
Fax +507 301 5749  
Email: [activations@absolutemaritime.com](mailto:activations@absolutemaritime.com)  
Phone: +507 501 5020  
Email: [threat@amp.gob.pa](mailto:threat@amp.gob.pa)

**UKMTO**

Phone: +971 50 552 3215 Email: [UKMTO@aim.ae](mailto:UKMTO@aim.ae)

**MSCHOA**

Phone: +44 (0) 1923 958545  
Fax: +44 (0) 1923 958520  
Email: [postmaster@mschoa.org](mailto:postmaster@mschoa.org)  
Website: [www.mschoa.org](http://www.mschoa.org)

**NATO SHIPPING CENTRE**

Phone: +44 1923 956574, Fax: +44 1923 956575  
Email: [info@ahipping.nato.int](mailto:info@ahipping.nato.int)

**MARLO**

Phone: +973 3940 1395 +973 1785 3925, Fax: +973 1785 3930  
Email: [marlo.bahrain@me.navy.mil](mailto:marlo.bahrain@me.navy.mil)  
Website: [www.cusnc.navy.mil/marlo/](http://www.cusnc.navy.mil/marlo/)

**INTERPOL**

Phone: +33 472 44 76 76  
Email: [os-ccc@interpol.int](mailto:os-ccc@interpol.int)  
Website: [www.interpol.int](http://www.interpol.int)

**IMB**

Phone: +60 3 2031 0014  
Fax: +60 3 2078 5769  
Telex: MA34199 IMBPC1  
Email: [piracy@icc-ccs.org](mailto:piracy@icc-ccs.org) / [IMBKL@icc-ccs.org](mailto:IMBKL@icc-ccs.org)

**Marine Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GoG)**

Brest, France and Portsmouth, England.  
Phone: +33 (0) 2 98 22 88 88  
E-mail addresses: [watchkeepers@mdat-gog.org](mailto:watchkeepers@mdat-gog.org)  
Website: N/A

May 2017 – Update of paragraph #8

January 2017 – Inclusion of new paragraph #8 and inclusion of information of contact of MDAT-GoG.

December 2016 – Update of the subject, addition of paragraph #13 and correction of phone number in Panama contact point.

May, 2016 – Correction in Africa and Red Sea places.

December, 2015- Inclusion of new paragraphs

August, 2014 – changes all throughout the circular

April, 2012 – Update of emails

February, 2012 – inclusion of new paragraph (point 2)

September, 2011

**Inquiries concerning the subject of this Circular or any request should be directed to:**

**Maritime Ships Security Department**

**Directorate General of Merchant Marine**

**Panama Maritime Authority**

**Phone: (507) 501-4224 / 5037**

**Fax: (507) 501-5401**

**Email: [nardila@amp.gob.pa](mailto:nardila@amp.gob.pa) / [taranda@amp.gob.pa](mailto:taranda@amp.gob.pa)**

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