

Isle of Man Ship Registry Manx Shipping Notice



Use of Private Contracted Armed Security Personnel in the Former High Risk Area

Ref. MSN 045 (Rev.2)
Issued: 21/12/2022

1. Introduction

This MSN is to advise clients of the Isle of Man Ship Registry of the Policy regarding the use of Private Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) onboard Isle of Man registered vessels when transiting the former High Risk Area ('FHRA').

For the sake of this policy, the former FHRA is defined as:

Somalia, the North West Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden - An area bounded by Suez, the Strait of Hormuz to the North (26°N), 10°S and 78°E.

2. Removal of the Indian Ocean High Risk Area

The Shipping Industry announced the removal of the HRA from 1st January 2023 following a significantly improved piracy situation, with no attacks having taken place since 2018 at the time of publication of this notice.

Despite this change, the Ship Registry recognises that due to the historical background of the area, owners/operators may still wish to carry PCASP when transiting FHRA. The Ship Registry will therefore accept the use of PCASP through this area subject to the same exceptional circumstances and conditions that previously applied when the HRA was in effect, these are detailed below.

3. Policy

The policy of the Ship Registry is that it has no objection to vessel owners, managers, operators, and/or Masters taking appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of their vessels and crew in exceptional circumstances.

The Ship Registry defines exceptional circumstances as:

- When the ship is transiting the high seas through the FHRA;
- The latest [Best Management Practices](#) (BMP) is being followed fully, but on its own, is not deemed by the shipping company and the ship's master as sufficient to protect against acts of piracy; and
- The use of armed guards is assessed to reduce the risk to the lives and wellbeing of those onboard the ship.

The optional use of an armed security detail and how this may be facilitated is a decision for the vessel owner, manager or operator to make after thoroughly assessing the piracy related risks in the FHRA where the vessel will be operating, as well as the potential risks and benefits of available anti-piracy related countermeasures. The Ship Registry will not accept a situation



where PCASP are used as an excuse to ignore the highly effective self-protection measures of BMP.

The Isle of Man currently has no legislation to prohibit or to permit the use of PCASP. However, it does have the legal authority and ability to remove vessels from the register if it is found that vessel owners, managers or operators are not complying with the requirements of this policy, which must be followed at all times. Inspection for compliance with this policy will be undertaken at each vessel audit under the ISPS Code and at company audits under the ISM Code.

One consequence of carrying armed guards may be that an excess of persons onboard, above the limits for lifesaving appliances and accommodation are carried. The Ship Registry would not normally tolerate such excess numbers. However, in recognition of the risk of piracy within the FHRA, we will consider on a case by case basis where there is no reasonable alternative, allowing the carriage of excess persons for voyages through the FHRA, subject to additional safeguards which would provide adequate, although not full compliance. Formal applications must be made in writing through marine.survey@gov.im.

4. Other Considerations

The UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA) is larger as it includes the Arabian Gulf (Refer to Maritime Security Chart [Q6099](#)). It should be noted that as a separate area to the former industry HRA, the VRA is still in effect and operators are encouraged to report their positions whilst operating in the area.

In the past, attacks have taken place at most extremities of the former HRA, including at 78°E. The possibility remains that they could take place further out. It should be noted that attacks have extended as far south as into the Mozambique Channel and below 10°S; it is therefore recommended that a high state of vigilance should be maintained even south of the southerly limit of the former HRA.

It is imperative that owners, operators and Masters assess areas of risk based on the latest available information from the Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa (MSCHOA), the NATO Shipping Centre (NSC) and the International Maritime Bureau (IMB). Vessels must be prepared to alter course at short notice to avoid pirate activity when information is provided by NAV Warnings and/or naval/military forces.

5. Local Requirements for Security Personnel

The Ship Registry is aware that in certain ports and countries around the world, local regulations may require the carriage of military or otherwise armed security forces. It should be noted that the Ship Registry considers such security personnel to be a separate and distinct category of armed guards to PCASP and has no objection to a vessel undertaking any measures required to comply with local regulations.

In such instances, the Ship Registry does not need to be informed nor provide a letter of non-objection for their use. The vessel should still conduct a risk assessment to account for additional security personnel on board and must contact the Registry where carriage of such personnel will result in an excess of persons on board.



6. Relevant Legislation

In terms of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 (the Act) a PCASP onboard an Isle of Man registered vessel is a seaman ("seaman" includes every person (except masters and pilots) employed or engaged in any capacity onboard any ship) and as such Section 282 of that Act will apply.

Section 282 of the Act makes any act in relation to property or person done in or at any place (ashore or afloat) outside the Isle of Man by any Master or seaman who at the time of the act is employed in a Isle of Man ship, which if the act had been committed in the Isle of Man would be an offence under the law of the Isle of Man will be treated as an offence and be treated for the purposes of jurisdiction and trial, as if it had been done within the jurisdiction of the appropriate Court in the Isle of Man.

For example, if a PCASP were to shoot, whether accidentally or not, another person whilst being onboard an Isle of Man registered vessel then the incident would be treated as a shooting on the Isle of Man and as such, a criminal investigation and potentially a trial, may be the outcome.

Other Merchant Shipping legislation applicable to Isle of Man ships may also apportion liability in such cases to the vessel owner, manager, operator and Master and should all be taken into account in the risk assessment.

It should be noted that the Manx firearms legislation with regard to the certification of firearms does not apply on Isle of Man registered vessels and as such, there is no legal requirement to be certificated. However, local, Port or Coastal State legislation may require some form of certification and this should be complied with.

Concerning the Maritime Labour Convention, it has been agreed through the MLC working group that PCASP are not considered seafarers (in respect of the MLC only) and the provisions of MLC do not apply to PCASP whilst on board the vessel.

7. Risk Assessment for Use of PMSCs and PCASP

A risk assessment for the use of PMSCs and their PCASP is to be made for each instance of use. A generic risk assessment may be acceptable but it should be reviewed on each occasion, documented, and retained for inspection. This risk assessment must be made in accordance with the latest revision of MSC.1/Circ.1405 – 'The revised interim guidance regarding the use of PCASP in the HRA'

Risk assessments should include and document at least the following factors and considerations:

- a) Vessel and crew security, safety and protection;
- b) Whether all practical means of self-protection have been effectively implemented in advance;
- c) The potential misuse of firearms resulting in bodily injury or death;
- d) The potential for unforeseen accidents;
- e) Liability issues, including those related to use of force;



- f) The potential for escalation of the situation at hand;
- g) Compliance with international requirements, applicable Isle of Man regulations and this policy; and
- h) Careful consideration of any supplemental guidance on PMSC selection promulgated by the Ship Registry.

The risk assessment may require the inclusion of consultation with labour representatives, port officials, charterers, legal counsel and insurance underwriters as appropriate. It is also important that the Master of the ship be included in the decision making process.

8. Vetting and Selection of Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC)

Vessel owners, operators and managers should employ the same amount of due diligence as they would in employing any other form of maritime contractor, and must also expect the PMSC to demonstrate its professional capability to carry out the proposed task.

The PMSC should, as a minimum show compliance with the requirements of the latest version of MSC.1/Circ. 1443 – ‘The interim guidance to PMSC’, and also be certificated to, or be actively working towards certification with, ISO 28007. Alternatively, a national body acceptable to the Ship Registry should certificate the PMSC, a list of acceptable national bodies is provided in **Annex A**.

The PMSC should provide as a minimum documentary evidence that includes:

- a) Maritime (as opposed to land-based) experience;
- b) Having written procedures on management including team-leading skills, chain of authority, change in command (in the event, for example, of incapacity of the team leader), responsibilities in life saving, Code of Conduct, Rules for the Use of Force;
- c) Understanding of applicable laws (Flag State, Port State, Coastal State) with respect to carriage and use of firearms;
- d) Written testimonials/references from previous clients in the maritime industry;
- e) Documentary evidence that firearms are procured, transported, embarked and disembarked legally;
- f) Understanding of the local piracy threat, military operations in the area, and the means to maintain current knowledge;
- g) Understanding of BMP, and in particular, ship protection measures;
- h) Having access to competent maritime legal advice on a 24/7 basis given the complexity of applicable laws concerning the carriage and use of firearms;
- i) Documented processes for post incident actions to support any investigations or prosecutions should a formal investigation be required; and
- j) Copies of ISO 28007 certification or national approvals.

As with all contractors, the quality of the service provided depends largely on the quality and experience of the individuals that make up the onboard PCASP team; the quality of the selection and vetting of that team is essential. The PMSC should demonstrate that they have



verifiable, written internal policies and procedures for determining suitability of their employees (PCASP).

The guidelines provided in the latest revision to IMO MSC.1/Circ.1405 must be closely followed. An agreement entered into for the use of PCASP should contain, as an absolute minimum, provisions for the use of force in compliance with established Rules of the Use of Force (RUF) and within applicable laws.

9. Reporting the Use of PMSC/PCASP

Should a vessel owner, manager or operator decide to use PCASPs, this decision **must** be reported to the Ship Registry with details on the chosen PMSC to be engaged to supply PCASPs for the vessel's transit through the FHRA. This information is to be sent to marine.security@gov.im in the form of an e-mail, itemising the following information –

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The vessel's name2. The PMSC used3. Nationality of the PCASPs onboard4. The pick-up and drop-off points of the PCASPs |
|---|

The Ship Registry will retain this information on file in the event of an incident.

10. Letters of Authorisation or Non-Objection

Some Port State Competent Authorities are requiring that the vessel's Master be in possession of a Letter of Non-Objection or Authorisation from the Flag State to have firearms, ammunition and related support equipment onboard. It should be noted that there is no requirement from the Ship Registry for the vessel to be in possession of such a letter and these should only be requested where required by a Port State Authority.

The Ship Registry will only issue a letter of Non-Objection on receipt of the appropriate application from the vessel owner, manager or operator.

Vessel owners, managers and operators when in need of such a letter **must** make the request sufficiently in advance of need to allow the Ship Registry to issue the letter in a timely manner. All such requests **must** be addressed to marine.security@gov.im using the form in **Annex B**, requests to other addresses or in other formats will not be accepted.

11. Reporting of Incidents

All piracy incidents must be reported to the Ship Registry whether PCASP are onboard a vessel or not using the format provided in Annex C. These incident reports will be forwarded to the IMO and will be used to collate information on current pirate activity.

It should be noted that failure to notify incidents to the Ship Registry and therefore on to the IMO may result in a downward trend in reported incidents. The potential outcome of a downward trend is that naval force support may be withdrawn from the area. As such, the importance of reporting all piracy incidents cannot be overstressed.

Where the PCASP may have taken action during an incident this should be reported immediately to marine.security@gov.im using the form in **Annex C**.



12. Ship Security Plan (SSP)

When carrying out a risk assessment of their vessel(s) to determine the likelihood and consequences of, a piracy attack, an armed attack, hijacking or act of terrorism, vessel owners, operators, managers and Masters must identify and incorporate prevention, mitigation and recovery measures, including any consideration being given to the use of PCASP in their SSPs, taking into consideration the guidance contained in the latest revisions of MSC.1/Circ.1506, MCS.1/Circ.1405 and MSC-FAL.1/Circ.2 along with the BMP Guidelines.

The SSP should re-iterate in the strongest terms that the Master is in command of the vessel and as such retains the overriding authority onboard. Clearly defined vessel specific governance procedures must be used when PCASP are onboard, including the conduct of exercises, list of duties, conduct, behaviour of PCASP and documentation requirements.

In addition to this, any voyage specific governance procedures should be documented. All documentation is to be made available for audit by the Ship Registry as required. Inclusions, specifically concerning the use of PCSAPs, in SSPs are not required to be approved by the Ship Registry; however, SSPs must contain information as required above. If not found during an ISPS audit, the omission will be taken as a failure to comply with this policy.

13. Use of Best Management Practices

The Ship Registry advises that the use of PCASP is not to be considered as a substitute for the active implementation of the most current recommended BMP and will not be acceptable as such.

Registering with the MSCHOA (<http://www.mschoa.org/>+44 (0) 1923 958545) and reporting to the UKMTO (ukmto@eim.ae/+971 505 523 215) is most important before entering the FHRA. Each vessel must be registered with the MSCHOA for every intended transit of the FHRA and continue to provide daily reports of the vessel position/course/speed to UKMTO while in the FHRA.

When registering with the MSCHOA and initially reporting to the UKMTO, they must also be advised when PCASP are aboard a commercial vessel.

14. Reference Documents

Documents referred to in this notice are the latest versions of

- [Best Management Practices](#) for Somali Based Piracy, Suggested Planning and Operational Practices for Ship Operators, and Masters of Ships Transiting the High Risk Area, (BMP);
- Maritime Security Chart [Q6099](#)
- [IMO MSC.1/Circ.1405, Rev.2](#), Revised Interim Guidance to Shipowners, Ship Operators, and Shipmasters on the Use of Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel on Board Ships in the High Risk Area;
- [IMO MSC.1/Circ.1443](#) - Interim Guidance to Private Maritime Security Companies Providing Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel on board Ships in the High Risk Area;



- [IMO MSC.1/Circ.1506](#) - Piracy and armed robbery against ships in waters off the coast of Somalia
- [IMO MSC-FAL.1/Circ.2](#) - Questionnaire on Information on Port and Coastal State Requirements Related to Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel on board Ships; and
- ISO 28007-1:2015, Ships and marine technology – Guidelines for Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC) providing privately contracted armed security personnel (PCASP) on board ships.

Most regulations and notices are available on the Isle of Man Government website: www.iomshipregistry.com or by contacting marine.survey@gov.im

Annex A - National Licensing bodies for Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC) accepted by the Isle of Man Ship Registry

The following national bodies are acceptable to the Ship Registry as an alternative to the PMSC having accreditation to ISO 28007:

- Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control. (Bundesamt für Wirtschaft und Ausfuhrkontrolle) (Germany).
- Ministry of the Interior (Federale Overheidsdienst Binnenlandse Zaken (IBZ)) (Belgium).



Annex B



**INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR THE ISSUE OF A LETTER OF NON-OBJECTION
FROM THE ISLE OF MAN SHIP REGISTRY**

Ship Name:	Name of Master:
Name of Private Maritime Security Company (PMSC):	
Names and Nationalities of individual PCASP Team Members:	Passport Numbers of individual PCASP Team Members:
Details of Licensed Owner of Firearms:	Details of National Licensing Agency:
Individual weapon types (Make and Model):	Individual weapon serial numbers:
Ammunition carried (calibre and number of rounds):	
Description of Additional Kit (if provided):	
Location/Date of embarkation	Location/Date of disembarkation
Vessel itinerary during PCASP team embarkation:	



**ACTS OF PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY ALLEGEDLY COMMITTED AGAINST SHIPS
REPORTED BY MEMBER STATES OR INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN
CONSULTATIVE STATUS.**

IMO Number:	
Name:	
Type of ship:	
Flag:	
Gross Tonnage:	
Date:	
Time:	
Position of the incident:*	
Details of the incident:	
Consequences for crew, ship, cargo:	
Action taken by the Master and the crew:	
Was the incident reported to the Coastal Authority:	
If so, to whom:	
Reporting State or international organisation:	
Action taken by the Coastal State:	

*The position given should be as accurate as possible including latitude and longitude co-ordinates or as bearing and distance from a conspicuous landmark.

Form S013 26/03/2013

