

Circular 286/ 2023

To: Vessel Owners, Managers, Masters, Officers, Deputy Registrars, Surveyors and Other Interested Parties

Subject: Additional Security Measures consequent to security situation and the risk of collateral damage in the waters of Gulf of Aden, Bab el Mandeb and Red Sea and Yemeni Ports.

Date: 08th December 2023

Summary

Yemen's overall security situation is fragile due to the country's civil war. Special entry conditions still apply to vessels calling at **Yemeni ports** and it is advisable to regularly confirm a port's status and condition with local sources of information. Furthermore, **is recommended that all vessels exercise increased caution when operating in the Southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden region.**

The ongoing war in Yemen and recent developments in the region negatively impact the **maritime security** situation in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Based on the Houthi's statements and operational pattern it is assumed that the threat to shipping in Bab el Mandeb and southern parts of the Red Sea is **mainly aimed at vessels that can be affiliated with Israel**. It is nevertheless worth noting that there may be a risk of wrong intelligence or wrong target selection, which in the worst case could hit random vessels.

Geopolitical **tensions** in the Southern Red Sea **have increased since the commencement of the Israel-Gaza** conflict and this is particularly **relevant for assets with links to Israel transiting the region**. The recent attack on a commercial vessel in the Red Sea demonstrated the Yemeni Houthis' capability to disrupt merchant shipping, however, the situation in the Yemeni ports remains unchanged despite current developments.

The Houthi insurgents have the capability to conduct attacks against maritime targets along the entire Yemeni coastline, and this remains the most serious threat against merchant shipping in the area. There is also a general sea **mine threat south of Hodeidah along the coast of Yemen in the southern part of the Red Sea that may affect merchant vessels.**

RAISED SECURITY LEVEL:

- The maritime security level, **MARSEC/ISPS level, in Yemeni territorial waters in the Red Sea is 2**. It is worth noting that the geographical area that has an elevated level also includes Saudi territorial waters from the border between Yemen and Saudi-Arabia and further north of Jazan.
- The current maritime security level in the Gulf of Aden is MARSEC/ISPS-level 1.



Maritime Cook Islands guidance for vessel making calls in the above areas:

- Undertake a new ship- and voyage-specific threat risk assessment before entering any region where there has been an incident, or the threat has changed.
- After the risk assessment, review the Ship’s Security Plan.
- Maintain a full and vigilant bridge watch for vessels at anchor.
- Vessels anchored outside these areas must assess the risk of collateral damage and take necessary precautions.
- Implement deck patrols.
- Implement a waterborne security patrol.
- Maintain a strict communications watch and establish communication with all vessels coming close.
- Ensure strict boarding controls are in place.
- Only lower accommodation gangways or ladders when necessary.
- Rig outboard lighting where possible, particularly over the stern and rig/use searchlights if available.
- Report any suspicious activity immediately to the port
- Monitor relevant VHF and other communication channels.
- Check all fire-fighting equipment is available for immediate use. Make sure the emergency fire pump is available if any maintenance is being undertaken.
- **Keep the Automatic Information System (AIS) on.** There is no need to complete the field stating the last or next port of call.
- Stay vigilant and maintain a high degree of situational awareness, both **underway and at port.**

Port entry conditions triggered by the ongoing conflict

Shipping companies or owners shipping commercial goods or services, including bilateral assistance not channelled through a UN agency or a recognised international humanitarian organisation, to ports not under the direct control of the Government of Yemen must obtain prior clearance from the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM).

Vessels calling at ports that are under the control of the Government of Yemen must continue to apply for entry permissions through the Yemeni Ministry of Transportation and follow the instructions provided by the local authorities.

Recommendations

Given the current situation in Yemen, the overall security situation in the country is fragile. While the conflict has primarily been land based, maritime security in certain coastal areas off Yemen and in the Southern Red Sea has been affected by the conflict and direct or collateral damage to merchant vessels operating in the region cannot be ruled out. **Ship operators are therefore advised to:**

- Warn their vessels' crews of the volatility of the situation and carry out an assessment of the risks involved prior to entering **Yemeni waters**.
- Make frequent checks with local sources of information, e.g. vessel's agent, etc., to obtain the most up to date and reliable operational and security information available at any given time.
- Take all necessary precautions to ensure compliance with the authorities' current port control measures and the safety of the vessel and its crew, including the above vessel port clearance procedures.
- Clarify the status of a port's services well before arrival as availability of cranes, fuel, manpower, etc. may be reduced.

CSO and SSO are encouraged to follow developments closely, using reliable sources.

The raised security level will be valid until 31st March 2024. Necessary updates will be published on our website.

For further information or clarification please contact the Technical Department technical@maritimecookislands.com