



**PANAMA MARITIME AUTHORITY**  
**MERCHANT MARINE CIRCULAR MMC-133**

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**To:** Master, Ship-owners, Operators, Company Security Officers, Ship Security Officers, Recognized Security Organizations (RSO's) of Panamanian Flagged Vessel.

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**Subject:** NEW REGULATION FOR THE USE OF THE SHIP SECURITY ALERT SYSTEM (SSAS)

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**Reference:** SOLAS 74', as amended, Regulation XI-2/6  
Resolution MSC. 136 (76) December 11, 2002  
Resolution MSC. 147 (77) May 29, 2003  
MSC/Circ. 1072 June 26, 2003  
MSC/Circ. 1155 May 23, 2005  
MSC.1/Circ.1190 May 30, 2006  
Resolution J.D. No. 028-2003  
Resolution No.106-107-DGMM October 9, 2017

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1. The purpose of this Merchant Marine Circular is to update the instructions and procedures of the Ship Security Alert System (SSAS) according to SOLAS 74', as amended Chapter XI-2 Reg. 6 and the IMO Resolution MSC 136(76) as amended by MSC 147(77), MSC/Circ.1072, MSC/Circ.1155 and MSC.1/Circ.1190. Any deficiency related to the ship security alert system (SSAS), is a failure of compliance with the ISPS Code and the ISM Code.
2. According of Section 9 Part A of the ISPS Code, each ship requires to implement a Ship Security Plan (SSP) approved by its Flag State or by a Recognized Security Organization. The SSP must include but not limited to: ***“Procedures, instructions and guidance on the use of the ship security alert system, including testing, activation, deactivation, resetting, and procedures to limit false alerts”***.
3. All the Panamanian flagged vessels shall be provided with a SSAS, as instructed in the SOLAS 74', as amended (Chapter XI-2 Regulation 6, paragraph #1). The SSAS shall be capable of transmit a security alert to a designated, competent authority when activated in an emergency situation. As the ship security alert system is a requirement of SOLAS 74', as amended Chapter XI-2, it is not considered to be radio equipment; thus not covered by the Safety Radio Survey and the Safety Radio certificate is not affected. Any deficiency in relation to the ship security alert system; however, is a failure of compliance with the ISPS Code and the ISM Code, as mentioned before.
4. Ship-owners or operators are required to notify the RSO prior to installing SSAS equipment. In all cases, the RO responsible for the issue of the Safety Radio Certification shall be responsible for the initial installation, inspection and testing of the SSAS by an approved radio technician.
5. The Company and the Company Security officer (CSO) are requested to continuously verify that the SSAS equipment on board of the Panamanian Flagged vessels have been correctly set to send the security alert or test messages to the Panama Maritime Authority (PMA).

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## Special instructions in HRA

6. The PMA recommends that all Panamanian Flagged vessels with or without armed or unarmed security personnel, and that prior to the entry into the High Risk Area (HRA), the crew should be fully briefed on the preparations and a piracy drill shall be conducted as well. The security drill should be reviewed and all personnel briefed on their duties, including familiarization with the alarm using to identify a piracy attack, these drills must follow all the requirements listed above, indicating that it is a “**Piracy Drill**” or “**SSAS Test**” and must be reported to the aforementioned PMA contacts as well; at the same time the Panamanian Flagged vessels are requested to verify that the SSAS equipment have been correctly set-up and is working properly.
7. These measures should be taken to ensure that the security procedures are working properly along with the recommendations stated in the Best Management Practices [BMP4](#) and the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) established in the Merchant Marine Circulars No. 208 and No.238.

## SSAS TESTING by the Company

8. All the Companies must include the following e-mail addresses as recipient’s address of the SSAS alerts / tests, on board the Panamanian Flagged vessels.
  - [threat@amp.gob.pa](mailto:threat@amp.gob.pa)  
and / or
  - [authorizations@segumar.com](mailto:authorizations@segumar.com)
9. A pre-authorization from Panama Maritime Authority to carry out a **SSAS Test** or **drill**, is not required.
10. **The Panama Maritime Authority will only confirm the SSAS Test messages as requested by the Company or Master. In such cases, the word “TEST” will be clearly noted within the message.**
11. The SSAS messages (alerts / tests) must include at least the following information:
  - Name of ship
  - IMO number
  - Call Sign
  - Maritime Mobile Service Identity Number
  - Date and time in UTC
  - GNSS position of the ship (latitude and longitude)
  - Course and speed
12. **In case that the message received indicates the words SSAS ALERT or SECURITY, the PMA will require a confirmation about the status of the ship and the crew.**
13. When the ship security alert system (SSAS) during a test transmits a false alarm, the Company or the Company Security Officer (CSO) must inform immediately to the Maritime Ships Security Department (PMA) in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

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## NEW REGULATIONS FOR SSAS TEST MESSAGE

According to Resolution No.106-107-DGMM dated October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017 from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 the annual SSAS TEST will be received through the use of an electronic platform for the Supply and Operation of the Ship Identification and Monitoring System. (This resolution will be posted in English once it is translated).

The Company Security officer (CSO) designated by the operators and/or owners, must request from November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017 access to the platform by email to the address [info@panama-ssas.com](mailto:info@panama-ssas.com), along with their access credentials to receive the instructions for the use of the platform.

**The information submitted on the CSO Validation Form received according to MMC 353 and in the CSO online application will pass through directly to the electronic platform in order to obtain the credentials.**

The operators and/or owners of the Panamanian registry vessels through the CSO have the responsibility to schedule, through the platform, the annual tests of SSAS TEST in a period no longer than twelve (12) calendar months. The confirmation message of the annual SSAS TEST should be retained on board as evidence according to paragraph 24 of this MMC.

For ships to enter the Panamanian registry as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, they must schedule the first SSAS TEST through the use of the new platform, which must be verified by their RSO during the initial verification and from that date onwards, every 12 months as mentioned in previous paragraphs. In those cases, please be sure that the Company Security Officer designed by the Company Operator already has the Declaration of Company Security Officer duly endorsement by Panama Maritime Authority (MMC 206) in order to schedule the first SSAS TEST.

Only one annual SSAS TEST is mandatory. In case of vessels that perform more than one test and require a flag confirmation they should not schedule it through the platform, in those cases they also have to use the below SSAS TEST message information and send an email directly to [threat@amp.gob.pa](mailto:threat@amp.gob.pa).

All the Panamanian flagged vessels described in paragraph 3 of the Resolution No.106-107-DGMM must keep the email address [threat@amp.gob.pa](mailto:threat@amp.gob.pa) (main) in their SSAS terminal. The use of [authorizations@segumar.com](mailto:authorizations@segumar.com) is optional.

The vessels that have been granted a Certificate of Exemption from the use of the SSAS in accordance with paragraph 27-29 of this MMC and the Panamanian flagged vessels that are out of service during a calendar year and have a Certificate of Special Registry of Laid-Up are excluded of the present Resolution.

## ANNUAL SSAS TEST MESSAGE

The SSAS TEST messages must include the following information:

1. TESTs must be sent via email, using ASCII, UTF-8 or ANSI encodings to the following address:  
[threat@amp.gob.pa](mailto:threat@amp.gob.pa).

### **Name of vessel**

The name of the vessel must be written in closed capital letters and should appear exactly as it is written in the Navigation Documents.

### **IMO number**

It must contain 7 digits and may be preceded by the word "IMO".

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### **Mobile Maritime Vessel Identifier**

The MMSI must contain 9 digits, which cannot be separated by spaces, dashes or other characters.

### **Call Sign**

It must contain between 4 and 7 digits and must appear exactly as it is written in the ship's registration patent. Do not use spaces, hyphens or other characters other than letters and numbers.

### **Date and time**

The date can be represented in any of the following 3 formats:

- DD-MM-YYYY
- MM-DD-YYYY
- YYYY-MM-DD
- For which "DD" represents the day, "MM" represents the month and "YYYY" represents the year. The separators can be slashes, points or dashes.
- The time can be represented in any of the following 2 formats:
  - HH: MM
  - HH: MM: SS
- For which "HH" is the hour expressed in 24-hour format, "MM" represents the minutes and "SS" represents the seconds. All times must be submitted according to the Coordinated Universal Time (UTC).

### **Coordinates of the position of the vessel at the time of the SSAS test.**

The coordinates can be expressed in degrees, minutes and seconds, degrees and decimals of minutes or in decimals of degrees and additional should indicate the hemisphere.

- Separators between grades, minutes and seconds can be:
  - The symbols for degrees, minutes and seconds (° '")
  - Two points (:)
  - Spaces
- The indicators of the hemispheres for the coordinates, must be expressed in the initial letter of the hemisphere and in English in capital letters:
  - "N" or "S" for latitude
  - "E" or "W" for length
  - The hemisphere can be placed before or after the position coordinates.

### **The heading and speed of the vessel at the time of the TEST shall be detailed as follows:**

- The heading of the vessel shall be expressed in degrees between 0 to 359 and shall be preceded by the words "Heading", "HDG", "Course" or "COG" and may be written in uppercase, lowercase or a combination of both .
- The speed of the ship shall be expressed in knots and shall be preceded by the words "Speed", "SOG" or "Spd" and then indicate one of the following terms "knots", "knts", "kn" or " kt "and may be written in uppercase, lowercase or a combination of both.

### **TEST indicators should contain:**

- Messages must include the word "TEST TEST".
- In case the message received does not contain the words "TEST TEST", the Panama Maritime Authority will request confirmation to the CSO about the status of the ship, the crew and thus, in this way rule out any case of false alarm.

**All RSO's must verify in the initial verification that the SSAS system is working properly, performing a real TEST and sending it to [threat@amp.gob.pa](mailto:threat@amp.gob.pa) in order to confirm receipt.**

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## CONFIRMATION MESSAGE OF THE ANNUAL SSAS TEST

### SUSCCEFUL TEST when:

1. The Maritime Ships Security Department confirms the reception of the same in the date scheduled in the Electronic Platform.
2. The TEST message includes all the information described in the Merchant Marine Circular that will be issued for such purposes.
3. The general ship data such as: name, IMO number, call signs and MMSI numbers are correct, as are the geographic coordinates and date received.

**FAILED TEST:** In the event that the test does not comply with the information above and shall be re-scheduled through the platform in accordance with what is established in the fifth paragraph of this Resolution.

**PENDING TEST:** In the event that the SSAS TEST cannot be carried out, and this must be notified by email to the account [info@panama-ssas.com](mailto:info@panama-ssas.com) 24 hours in advance, the reasons and the new date of programming through the platform.

In cases where the SSAS TEST cannot be performed due to technical problems of the equipment, it should be communicated to the email: [info@panama-ssas.com](mailto:info@panama-ssas.com).

In cases of noncompliance with these regulations the Panama Maritime Authority may impose the following sanctions:

1. The International Ship Security Certificate (ISSC) may be invalidated.
2. Additional audits of the ISPS Code may be authorized to vessels that demonstrate non-compliance with the provisions of this Resolution.

For more information about these new regulations and check the compatibility of the equipment please send an email to [info@panama-ssas.com](mailto:info@panama-ssas.com).

### **Training and Security Drills**

14. The Ship Security Officer, the Company Security Officer and appropriate shore-based personnel shall have knowledge and have received training, taking into account the guidance given in part B of the ISPS Code. 3.5.1.1.
15. Shipboard personnel without designated security duties should receive security-related familiarization training to be able to:
  1. Report a security incident;
  2. know the procedures to follow when they recognize a security threat; and
  3. Take part in security-related emergency and contingency procedures.
16. Security drills must test the proficiency of vessel personnel in assigned security duties at all maritime security levels and the effective implementation of the Ship Security Plan (SSP). They must enable the Ship Security Officer (SSO) to identify any related security deficiencies that need to be addressed.

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17. The SSO must ensure that at least one security drill is conducted **once every three months** to promote the effective implementation of the Ship Security Plan, except:
  1. when a vessel is out of service due to repairs or seasonal suspension of operation provided that in such cases a drill must be conducted within **one week of the vessel's reactivation**, or
  2. if more than 25% of the crew is changed at any one time, with personnel that has not previously participated in any drill on that ship within the last three months, a drill should be conducted **within one week of the change**.
18. Security drills may be held in conjunction with non-security drills where appropriate. The PMA accepts that a Safety Drill, which has a security component within it, can be credited as a Security Drill.
19. Security drills must test individual elements of the SSP, including response to security threats and incidents. Drills should take into account the types of operations of the vessel, vessel personnel changes, and other relevant circumstances.
20. Shipboard drills should cover such scenarios as:
  1. identification and search of unauthorized visitors on board the ship;
  2. recognition of materials that may pose a security threat;
  3. methods to deter attackers from approaching the ship;
  4. recognition of restricted areas; and
  5. mustering for evacuation.

### Security Exercises

21. The Company Security Officer shall ensure the effective coordination and implementation of ship security plans by participating in exercises at appropriate intervals.
22. Exercises should be carried out at least once each calendar year with **no more than 18 months between the exercises**.
23. Exercises should test communications, coordination, resource availability, and response. Exercises may be and not limited:
  1. full scale or live;
  2. table top simulation or seminar; or
  3. combined with other exercises held such as search and rescue or emergency response exercises.

### Records

24. This Administration recommends all Panamanian flagged vessels to keep onboard records of the above indicated testing, drills and exercises according to the period of time indicated in the SSP or the time in the internal procedures of the Company. If is not duly stated in the mentioned documents, then the records must be kept for a period of time equivalent to the duration of the International Ship Security Certificate (5 years). These records must be protected from unauthorized access and may be kept in any format (paper or electronic) and must be available for any Authority that requests it.
25. In this regard, a copy of the radio technician's report, demonstrating compliance with SOLAS 74', as amended Chapter XI-2 Regulation 6 paragraphs #2 to #4 inclusive and MSC.1/Circ.1190, shall be kept on board for use by the RSO at the next scheduled ISPS audit.

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26. At subsequent ISPS verification, the RSO shall examine the records of activities on the SSAS equipment, as specified in the ISPS Code A/10.1.10, witness a complete security alert test and verifying the operational requirements and in the case of a SSAS.

#### **AUTHORIZATIONS FOR EXEMPTION**

27. The PMA has designated the Company (according to the ISM Code definition) as the competent authority to receive alerts, and shall notify to the Maritime Ships Security Department of this Administration in case of any malfunction or set-up of the tracking system.

#### **SSAS MALFUNCTIONING**

28. In case of SSAS malfunctioning, the following documents shall be submitted to the Maritime Ships Security Department to the e-mail address: [isps@amp.gob.pa](mailto:isps@amp.gob.pa) or through any of the SEGUMAR Offices.

- a). An e-mail or a letter issued by the RSO indicating the exact date and place where the vessel will make the repair and programming of the SSAS equipment in accordance with this MMC.

#### **SSAS EQUIPMENT**

29. For those Panamanian flagged vessel operating in coastal voyages or in national jurisdictional waters, an exemption of the SSAS equipment can be requested to the Maritime Ships Security Department and the following documents shall be submitted to the e-mail address: [isps@amp.gob.pa](mailto:isps@amp.gob.pa) or through any of the SEGUMAR Offices:

- a). A confirmation from the RSO stating the alternative methods to achieving an alert on board, and
- b). A formal statement by the Coastal State about vessel's operational area.

It is worth noting that the time of validity of the exemption will be equal to the time of the working license for such national jurisdictional waters.

For those Panamanian flagged vessels operating in international jurisdictional waters or international coastal voyage must follow the national regulations in order to comply with the ISPS Code.

For further assistance and/or inquiries please note the following contact points:

**A. Maritime Ships Security Department (weekdays 08:30-16:30 hrs)**

Phone: +507-501-5037/5085

E-mail address: [threat@amp.gob.pa](mailto:threat@amp.gob.pa)

**B. SEGUMAR Panama (Evenings, Weekends and Holidays)**

Phone: +507-501-5350/48 or +507-501-5032

E-mail address: [authorizations@segumar.com](mailto:authorizations@segumar.com)

*October 2017 – Changes all throughout the text*

*March 2016 – Change in paragraph 6*

*January 2016 – Changes throughout the text*

*October 2015- Changes in paragraph 12 and 13*

*August, 2014 – Changes throughout the text*

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**September, 2013** - Changes in paragraph 7  
**June, 2013** - Changes in paragraph 12  
**May, 2013** – New points 11 and 12  
**March, 2012** - Changes all throughout the text  
**February, 2004**-First issuance

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