

Republic of the Marshall Islands

MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

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SHIP SECURITY ADVISORY NO. 07-19

To: Owners/Operators, Masters, Company Security Officers, Recognized Security Organizations

Subject: TANKER ATTACKS IN THE GULF OF OMAN

Date: 14 June 2019

Operators of Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) flagged vessels transiting the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, and Gulf of Oman are requested to circulate this Ship Security Advisory (SSA) to their ships by the most expeditious means possible. This SSA should be considered complimentary to RMI SSA [#05-19](#).

Incident Details

In the early morning hours of 13 June 2019, two tankers were attacked while underway approximately 50 km apart in the Gulf of Oman while navigating South-East within the Traffic Separation Scheme. The FRONT ALTAIR (RMI) and the KOKUKA COURAGEOUS (Panama) both sustained severe damage from the resulting explosions, causing the crew of both vessels to abandon ship.

The crew of FRONT ALTAIR were rescued by the container ship HYUNDAI DUBAI (RMI) and subsequently taken ashore to Bandar Jask by Iranian authorities. The crew from KOKUNA COURAGEOUS were reportedly rescued by United States Naval forces. The fire on the FRONT ALTAIR was successfully extinguished before nightfall and the vessel remains afloat.

Assessment and Analysis

Investigations are ongoing in both incidents. Details of the nature of the explosions have not been confirmed and no group has claimed responsibility. These incidents come almost exactly one month after four vessels were attacked near United Arab Emirates territorial waters off Fujairah.

Risk Mitigation Measures

Tensions in the Strait of Hormuz region are extremely high. Shipowners are advised to exercise extreme caution and highly recommend their vessels to take precautions as described below when operating in the area.

RMI flagged commercial vessels bound for the Strait of Hormuz in either direction are encouraged to contact the US Navy 5th Fleet Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping Watch at least two days prior to transit at: CUSNC.NCAGS_BW@ME.NAVY.MIL or +973-3904-9583.

This SSA expires one (1) year after its issuance, unless otherwise noted, extended, superseded, or revoked.

Recommended precautions for ships in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, and Gulf of Oman:

- Implement security measures equivalent to Ship Security Level 2.
- Tankers in ballast condition should purge cargo tanks of hydrocarbons prior to entering the region to reduce the risk of explosion.
- Undertake a new ship and voyage-specific threat assessment before entering any region where there has been an incident or if the threat has changed.
- After performing the risk assessment, review the Ship Security Plan and amend if necessary.
- Review section 2 of *Best Management Practice 5th Edition (BMP5)*, which outlines threats.
- Maintain a full and vigilant bridge watch.
- Maintain a strict 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, provided they do not interfere with keeping a safe lookout, particularly over the stern, and rig/use searchlights if available.
- 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) and Long-Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) systems on. There is no need to complete the field stating the last or next port of call.

Visual check of the hull:

- Undertake a visual search from the deck, all around the vessel to check for anything attached to the hull of the vessel. Particular attention should be paid to the hull at the waterline.
- Conduct regular rounds of the upper deck.
- If a vessel detects anything unusual attached to the hull, then it should contact the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations ([UKMTO Dubai](#)) or Combined Maritime Forces ([CMF Bahrain](#)) and the flag State immediately (see *Contact Information* below). All crew should be evacuated from the immediate area and mustered in a safe place.
- Vessels should follow the advice of the military authorities.

Additional measures Operators may wish to take if alerted to suspicious activity whilst at anchor include:

- Rotate the propeller continuously or at short, irregular intervals.
- Operate bow and stern thrusters at zero (0) thrust.
- Turn the rudder frequently.
- Switch the echo sounder to transmit counter/combat swimmer/diver threat.

See [NATO ATP2 doctrine](#) for further details.

Download: [*BMP5: Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea.*](#)

[OCIMF's Ship Security: Hull Vulnerability Study](#) is also a useful reference.

NATO ATP2: [NCAGS' Guide to Owners, Operators, Masters and Officers Edition A Version 1, Annex D to Chp 4](#)

Contact Information

RMI flagged vessels are advised to report any incidents immediately to [Combined Maritime Forces](#) (CMF) Bahrain on VHF Channel 16, the U.S. Navy 5th Fleet Battle Watch via phone at +**973-1785-3879** or by email at CUSNC.BWC@ME.NAVY.MIL.

UKMTO may also be contacted in the event of a security incident or suspicious activity at +**442392 222060** or watchkeepers@ukmto.org

All security incident and suspicious activities must be reported by RMI-flagged commercial vessels to the RMI Maritime Administrator at dutyofficer@register-iri.com and shipsecurity@register-iri.com.

Supplemental information may also be found on the [RMI Maritime Security web page](#).