

Former *Annual New Zealand Notice to Mariners, No. 3A*, published 1 July 2025 is cancelled. Additions and amendments to the former notice are indicated by sidelines.

Authority: United Kingdom Hydrographic Office

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1. General

- 1.1 This notice describes the organisation by which the Royal Navy (RN) communicates with merchant vessels in periods of peace, tension and conflict. Such messages will normally relate to the safety and security of ships.
- 1.2 Participation in the procedures outlined in this Annual Notice is encouraged. Detailed reporting will be in accordance with Annex A.

2. UK Military / Civil Shipping Relations

- 2.1 Through the Shipping Defence Advisory Committee (SDAC), the UK Ministry of Defence and its partners across Government (specifically the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the Department for Transport (DfT)) maintains regular and frequent dialogue with the UK Shipping Industry, particularly the UK Chamber of Shipping, individual companies and other groups. Within Government, the Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC) provides a cross-Government forum for sharing maritime security information.
- 2.2 The RN Maritime Trade Operations (MTO) organisation provides the operational liaison and interaction between military commanders and the merchant shipping community.
- 2.3 The RN's Maritime Trade Information Centre (MTIC), based in Portsmouth UK provides the hub for the worldwide provision of information pertinent to merchant vessels primarily focused on the Indian Ocean High Risk Area through the administration of the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA). Further details on the UKMTO VRA are provided in Best Management Practices (BMP MS) and UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) Maritime Security Charts (MSCs) Q6099 and Q6111 (see links at paras 3.4 and 5.2 respectively). UKMTO also supports maritime safety and security activity in the English Channel, wider UK EEZ, Gulf of Guinea (see para 2.4) and Mediterranean, (See UKHO MSC Q6110).
- 2.4 The Maritime Domain Awareness Trade-Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GOG) is a UK/French navy partnership providing a virtual reporting mechanism supporting the interregional architecture defined by the Yaoundé code of conduct. The MDAT-GOG supports delivery of a coherent maritime situational awareness picture in the Central and Western Africa maritime space, to inform and support industry and regional responding authorities, contributing to the safety of the mariner. Further details on the MDAT-GOG VRA are provided in BMP MS and UKHO Maritime Security Chart, Q6114. (See link at paras 3.4 and 5.2 respectively).

3. Current Operations

- 3.1 RN MTO directly contributes to freedom of navigation, manoeuvre and trade. The RN maintains a Recognised Maritime Picture (RMP) of military and merchant vessels, that affords military commanders an understanding of all vessels passing through an operational area. This understanding allows military authorities to advise and assist merchant vessels when it is considered appropriate or necessary.
- 3.2 In response to the combined threats of piracy, terrorism and regional instability within the UKMTO VRA, the RN has deployed a team of UKMTO personnel to Dubai to provide direct face-to-face engagement with masters and regional ship operators. The MTIC administers the UKMTO VRA on behalf of Industry, providing maritime safety and security related information to maritime trade and responding authorities to support informed decision making.
- 3.3 In addition to UK national activity, the RN operates with NATO and other coalition partners. For all NATO activity the NATO Shipping Centre (NSC), based in Northwood, is normally focal point for liaison with merchant shipping. In the Gulf of Aden, the Maritime Security Centre Indian Ocean (MSCIO) administers the Group Transit Scheme through the Internationally Recognised Transit Corridor (IRTC) and delivers protection of World Food Programme vessels on behalf of EUNAVFOR. Contact details for both these organisations are provided at Annex B. Mariners should be aware that in response to the highlighted risk in these waters the Maritime Security Transit Corridor (MSTC) is established and incorporates the IRTC, the TSS in the Strait of Bab el Mendeb and West and South of Hanish Al Kubra. UKHO Maritime Security Charts Q6099, Q6111 and The Mariner's Handbook (NP100) contain further information.

- 3.4 BMP MS can be downloaded for free from the publishers at www.witherbyseamanship.com. These publications provide Industry advice and best practice recommendations to masters and operators to protect vessels against attack from a range of maritime security threats within the respective regions. Vessels are encouraged to implement the procedures recommended in BMP MS when operating within the VRA, and to participate in voluntary reporting schemes and dialogue with military authorities in the area through UKMTO and MDAT-GOG respectively.
- 3.5 Industry endorsed Global Counter Piracy Guidance (GCPG) for Companies, Masters and Seafarers is available in soft copy and can be downloaded for free from the publishers www.witherbyseamanship.com. GCPG has been produced to aid shipping companies, masters and mariners to prepare against piracy as well as other maritime security threats.
- 3.6 Interim guidance for UK flagged shipping on the use of armed guards has been published by DfT and is available for free from their website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/interim-guidance-to-uk-flagged-shipping-on-the-use-of-armed-guards-to-defend-against-the-threat-of-piracy-in-exceptional-circumstances>
- 3.7 The International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre (IMB PRC) publishes general advice to masters on their website. See Annex B for contact details.
- 3.8 The World-Wide Navigation Warning Service (WWNWS) may be requested to alert vessels to an area of risk through the promulgation of a Navigation Warning through appropriate NAVAREA Coordinators.

4. Passage Reporting

- 4.1 During periods of tension or conflict vessels within a defined area of operations may be asked to pass information voluntarily using the passage report format at Annex A. This will facilitate informed decision making and planning by regional and military authorities. In return, reporting vessels may receive advice on the security within the area.
- 4.2 Initiation of the voluntary passage report procedure will be by promulgation of a Special Notice Navigation Warning, containing text similar to that below:

Special notice to merchant vessels – A risk to merchant vessels exists in [area]. Vessels within or intending to enter this area should contact their owners or national shipping authorities. Merchant vessels are encouraged to submit a report in accordance with ADMIRALTY Annual Notice to Mariners 3 Annex A to [contact details of military authority] when passing [lat/long] and subsequent daily position report requirements as required.

Note: The text of the Special Notice to merchant vessels message issued by the UK will be amended to reflect the prevailing circumstances.

5. Additional Services

- 5.1 UKMTO provides the primary liaison between military authorities and merchant vessels. This dialogue is supported by the UKHO range of Maritime Security Charts (the Q series of charts) and Security Related Information to Mariners (SRIMs) which provides further details of increased risk, Exclusion Zones, Voluntary Reporting Schemes and other pertinent safety and security advice.
- 5.2 Further details, including the UKHO range of Maritime Security Charts is available at the following website: <https://www.admiralty.co.uk/charts/planning-charts/maritime-security-charts>

Annex A to UK Annual Notices to Mariners No. 3

Merchant Vessel Voluntary Reporting Scheme

During periods of tension or conflict vessels within a defined area of operations may be asked to pass information voluntarily using the passage reports below. This will facilitate informed decision making and planning by regional and military authorities. In return, reporting vessels may receive information on maritime safety and security within the region.

6. Passage Report Format (Format Alpha)

When sending a Passage Report to UK, NATO or other military authorities, the content and format is as follows, unless requested otherwise.

6.1 The initial report should contain the following:

1. Ship name
2. Flag
3. IMO number
4. Satellite Telephone Number
5. Time and position
6. Course
7. Passage speed
8. Freeboard and Draft
9. Cargo
10. Destination and ETA
11. Name and Contact Details of Company Security Officer
12. Nationality and number of Master and Crew
13. Armed/unarmed security team embarked.

6.2 Subsequent reports, vessels are requested to report daily at 0800 UTC:

1. Ship name
2. Callsign and IMO number
3. Time of report in UTC (normally 0800)
4. Ship position
5. Course and speed
6. Any other important information
7. ETA point A/B IRTC if applicable.

6.3 All timings are requested in UTC and the preferred method of communication will be included in the Special Notice Navigation Warning at para 4.2.

6.4 All information provided is treated in strictest commercial confidence.

Annex B To UK Annual Notices to Mariners No. 3

Contact Details for Military Operations

UKMTO:

Tel (Emergency): +44 (0) 2392 222060
Tel (Enquiries): +44 (0) 2392 222065
e-mail (Emergency): watchkeepers@ukmto.org
e-mail (Enquiries): info@ukmto.org
Website: www.ukmto.org

MDAT-GOG:

Tel: +33 298228888
e-mail: watchkeepers@mdat-gog.org
MDAT-GoG Website: <https://gog-mdat.org/home>

NSC:

Tel: +44 (0) 1923 956 574
Fax: +44 (0) 1923 956 575
e-mail: info@shipping.nato.int
NSC Website: www.shipping.nato.int

MSCIO:

Tel: +33 (0) 298 220 220
+33 (0) 298 220 170
Fax: +33 (0) 298 220 171
e-mail: postmaster@mscio.eu
MSCIO Website: www.mscio.eu

IMB PRC:

Tel: +603 2031 0014 (24 Hours Anti-Piracy Helpline)
+603 2078 5763
Fax: +603 2078 5769
e-mail: piracy@icc-ccs.org / imbkl@icc-ccs.org
IMB PRC Website: www.icc-ccs.org