



**Marine Notice Nr. 05/ 2022, 04/10/2022**

**Subject: “Navigation in the Black Sea Region and Sea of Azov in View of the Escalating Situation – Key Updates.”**

**Summary:** The current Maritime Notice reports on key updates on the escalating situation in the Black Sea region and the Sea of Azov, due to the geopolitical conflict and provides structured operational guidance to G-B I.S.R. vessels operating in the region.

**Background**

1. Due to the ongoing security situation in and around the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) and territorial waters of the Ukraine and the Russian Federation in the Black Sea and the Azov Sea, Ukraine has set security level 3 in the sea and rivers ports of Ukraine.
2. The ongoing armed conflict presents a serious and immediate threat to the safety and security of crews and vessels operating in the region. IMO is continuing to liaise closely with all key stakeholders in the region to contribute to efforts to address the safety and security of seafarers and shipping. Many ships have employed local ship keepers to replace crew, and some ships have gone into cold lay-up, with no crew remaining onboard. This creates a complex and continually changing picture, made more complex by the challenges of communicating with ships in some locations.

**IMO recent initiatives**

3. The IMO Secretariat continues to work with littoral states to encourage and improve regional information sharing and promulgation of information to shipping to aid the safety of navigation and security of shipping. With regards to humanitarian support for maritime personnel, the IMO Secretariat has been facilitating discussions with Ukrainian ports administrations, charities and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to support port workers and seafarers directly impacted by the crisis. In July 2022 the IMO welcomed the signing of the initiative to establish a humanitarian maritime corridor to allow ships to export critical cargoes of grain and foodstuffs from Ukraine.

**U.N. Black Sea Grain Initiative**

4. On 22 Jul 2022 the Republic of Türkiye, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United Nations signed the Initiative on the safe export of grain, foodstuffs and fertilizers, including ammonia, from the Ukrainian ports. The Initiative is based on agreements of parties of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974, as amended, (SOLAS), Regulations XI-2/11 and the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code), Part B, paragraph 4.26, as a condition for entry to and departure from Ukrainian ports. The purpose of this Initiative, as indicated above, is to facilitate the safe navigation for the export of grain, foodstuffs and fertilizers, from the Ukrainian Ports stated in the Initiative as the Ports of Odesa, Chernomorsk and Yuzhny (the Ukrainian ports).
5. Ukrainian pilots would guide ships along safe channels in its territorial waters. Monitored by a Joint Coordination Center based in Istanbul, the ships would then transit the Black Sea to Turkey’s Bosphorus strait and proceed to world markets. The first ship to depart under the Black Sea Grain Initiative left Odesa on 1 August 2022. As of 4 October 2022, 268 voyages from Ukrainian ports have carried 6,120,248 metric tons of grains and other foodstuffs. The operations within the Initiative are being coordinated by the Joint

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Coordination Centre (JCC) in Istanbul. In particular the Joint Coordination Centre, recently established in Istanbul, with representatives from Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and Türkiye, under United Nations auspices, will coordinate the safe passage of ships of all flags, in accordance with the objectives of the UN initiative.

### **Vessels Routing Under the Initiative**

6. The Initiative protects a route between the Turkish Inspection Area and the Ukrainian Ports. The route is divided into several segments, each of which is subject to different levels of control under the ISPS Code, and different levels of protection under the Initiative. The Joint Coordination Center (JCC) announced a new route for merchant vessels going in and departing from the three Ukrainian ports of Odesa, Chornomorsk, Pivdennyi/Yuzhny under the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The new route is 320 nautical miles long and connects the three Ukrainian ports with the inspection areas inside Turkish territorial waters.

7. To avoid the danger of floating mines or misidentification in the zone of military activities, vessels must plan their transit of the Maritime Humanitarian Corridor during maximum daylight hours, that is, between 0500 and 2100. All vessels transiting the High Seas Corridor must remain in the corridor at all times. Vessels shall display the appropriate lights or day shapes for a vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver (COLREG Rule 27) while transiting in the corridor. Vessels transiting at nighttime or in restricted visibility should illuminate their deck lighting. Shipping companies that decide to move their ships based on business activity and procedures must apply to the Ukrainian port authorities and follow the complete instructions of the "BLACK SEA GRAIN INITIATIVE – JOINT COORDINATION CENTRE PROCEDURES FOR MERCHANT VESSEL". The Joint Coordination Center will authorize the movement of ships in and out of the Black Sea based on such requests.

### **Port situation**

8. Without prejudice to par. 4 to 7, the Sea of Azov is closed to commercial vessels, enforced by Russian naval forces at the Kerch Strait. Access to the north-western part of the Black Sea, north of 45° 21' parallel, is prohibited by the Russian Navy. All Ukrainian ports are reported closed for operation. As per IMO Circular Letter No.4518, the Ukrainian government has advised that all ports are now at MARSEC level 3 and are "closed for entry and exit".

9. Combat in or near Ukrainian ports, with strikes against port infrastructure, may occur, with crews and vessels in Ukrainian ports being prone to collateral damage. There are reports of commercial vessels that have sustained damage due to shelling. Operation of all Russian ports based in the Black Sea is continuing in a routine manner, although their ISPS Security Level may have been raised. If cargo operations at Russian ports in the Black Sea are absolutely necessary, it is recommended that a Declaration of Security is first carried out with the Port Facility Security Officer (PFSO).

### **Guidance for vessels registered with G-B I.S.R.**

10. Shipmasters of vessels registered with G-B I.S.R. and potentially trading in the area, are strongly advised to contact local agents for the latest advisories. Company Security Officers (CSOs) and Ship Security Officers (SSOs) should obtain security level information prior to entering ports through the appropriate Port Authorities. Ships should comply with the Port Facility security level if it is higher than the security level set onboard.

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- 11.** G-B I.S.R. commercial vessels are advised to avoid to the extend possible any transit or operation within the EEZ of Ukraine or Russia within the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. Masters and operators of Guinea-Bissau flagged ships that operate or that may operate in this area are strongly advised to evaluate the local security circumstances to determine whether their continued presence/or proceeding to ports in the area is safe.
- 12.** Given that the Ship Security level for vessels within the EEZ of Ukraine or Russia within the Black Sea is set to Security Level 3, it is recommended that journeys to the Black Sea are carefully considered and planned based on an assessment of the escalating security situation. Commercial operations within the EEZs of Turkey, Georgia, Bulgaria and Romania remain unaffected at this time.
- 13.** Due to the current situation in the areas of the Black Sea, Sea of Azov and its surroundings, the G-B I.S.R. Administration recommends all registered vessels to raise the level of security according to the Ship's Security Plan and to take extreme measures of safety and security for both the ship and its crew. It is also recommended a/ to exercise caution and be on high alert in the area, b/ to stay in close contact with national and local maritime authorities and c/ to stay well informed about navigation warnings and keep well clear of these areas as well as warships and military crafts.
- 14.** Operators and Masters should ensure that any planned operations or voyages do not take the vessel into any area, or engage in any activity, that would expose her to the risk of ongoing military operations. Vessels operating in these areas may encounter GPS interference, AIS spoofing, and/or other communications jamming. Vessels should ensure they are broadcasting on AIS (except when the Master believes that continuing to operate AIS might compromise the safety or security of the ship or when a security incident is imminent) and clearly state their intentions across VHF, consistent with provisions of the International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), and monitor VHF Channel 16.
- 15.** The G-B I.S.R. strongly encourage to follow the operational recommendations listed below:
- 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.
  - Review section 2 of BMP5 (<https://on-shore.mschoa.org/reference-documents/bmp5/>), which outlines non-piracy threats.
  - Maintain a full and vigilant bridge watches.
  - Maintain a strict communication watch and establish communication with all vessels coming close.
  - Ensure strict boarding controls in place.
  - Monitoring Channel 16 t VHF and other communication channels.
  - Keep the Automatic Information System (AIS) and LRIT working properly, in order to be able to continuously send positions of the vessels.
  - Masters of ships navigating in the western parts of the Black Sea are recommended to make their crews aware of this potential threat, avoiding floating objects, keep the forward area of the vessel clear of crew, and use effective look-outs. All detections should be reported to the area authorities.
- 16.** Russia's Federation recent adoption of several decrees imposing prohibitions and restrictions on the export of goods from Russia may increase the risk of vessels with a connection to Western European states being detained and confiscated in Russian Federation ports.

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17. This is a dynamic situation and changes may occur at any time. Owners, Operators, Company Security Officers, and Masters are suggested to monitor the developments and to liaise closely with local port agents and P&I correspondents for the latest information on facility conditions, dangerous sea areas, and temporary port closures and navigational restrictions.

For the Guinea-Bissau International Ships Registry

**Authorized Signatory:**

**Office of the General Ships Registrar**



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