



Office of  
Deputy Commissioner  
of Maritime Affairs

**THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**  
**LIBERIA MARITIME AUTHORITY**

22980 Indian Creek Drive,  
Suite 200  
Dulles, Virginia 20166, USA  
Tel: +1 703 790 3434  
Fax: +1 703 790 5655  
Email: [security@lisr.com](mailto:security@lisr.com)  
Web: [www.lisr.com](http://www.lisr.com)

**April 29, 2021**

**MARITIME SECURITY ADVISORY – 02/2021**

**SUBJECT: Interim Guidance on the use of Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel on Board Ships in the Gulf of Guinea**

**To: Owners/Operators/Company Security Officers/Masters:**

Piracy and armed robbery (hereafter referred to as piracy) in the Gulf of Guinea region is an established criminal activity and is of increasing concern to the maritime sector with recent attacks becoming more widespread and violent. Although piracy in the Gulf of Guinea region in many ways differs from that of Somalia based piracy, large sections of the Best Management Practices already developed by industry to help protect against Somalia based piracy are also valid in the Gulf of Guinea region.

Considering the utmost priority of the Liberian flag Administration is the safety and security of ships in its fleet, and the seafarers manning these ships, shipowners may employ the use of privately contracted armed security personnel (PCASP) to secure their ships transiting and operating in the Gulf of Guinea, when situation allows. Prior to making the decision to employ PCASP to secure ships operating in the Gulf of Guinea, a proper security risk assessment should be conducted, taking into consideration the capabilities of such PCASP in protecting the ship employing necessary counter measures in case of a security incident, and effective selection criteria, liability, command and control, management and use of weapons and ammunition, rules for the use of force and instructions regarding reporting and record keeping.

Due diligence must be taken as well with regards to knowing and determining any local laws and regulations imposed by any coastal State government in the Gulf of Guinea on the authority to use PCASP, and the carriage of weapons in the region. The procedures provided by Maritime Security Advisory 03/2011, and the Liberian Guidelines for Contracting PMSC and PCASP remains implemented in case your company decides to employ the use of PCASP in Gulf of Guinea.

Intelligence reports received shows that in 2020, pirates and armed robbers operated off nine countries in the Gulf of Guinea (Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, San Tome and Principe, and Gabon) targeting a variety of vessels to include tankers, container ships, general cargo vessels, fishing vessels, passenger vessels, and numerous vessels supporting oil drilling/production. Unlike piracy in the Gulf of Aden or in other high risk areas in the world, and based on the pattern of attacks, pirates in the Gulf of Guinea have been seen and proven to be more flexible in their operations, with the expanse of their area of operations, is difficult to predict a precise area where they will attack, and has been observed to fight back when threatened.

This Administration continue to require that vessels raise their Security Level equivalent to Level II when operating in or transiting West African waters, defined by the following boundaries:

FROM	TO
(Southernmost Tip of Cape Blanc*) *20-45N 17-00W	20-45N 20-00W

20-45N 20-00W	10-00N 20-00W
10-00N 20-00W	00-00N/S 09-45W
00-00N/S 09-45W	00-00N/S 00-00E/W
00-00N/S 00-00E/W	10-00S 10-00E
10-00S 10-00E	7-15S 10-00E
17-15S 10-00E	**17-15S 11-45E (Angola / Namibia border**)

Security Level equivalent to Level II is required to ensure higher vigilance and tighter controls to protect against possible acts of piracy, illegal boarding and stowaways. Upon change of Security Level Masters should report to the Administration via email to [security@liscr.com](mailto:security@liscr.com).

Liberian ships, anchoring, transiting, or operating in this region must continue to implement the procedures in their approved Ship Security Plan. The current process of implementing enhanced security procedures for ships operating on this region, including compliance with the recommendations of the *“Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security Off the Coast of West Africa including the Gulf of Guinea”* (BMP-West Africa) and the *“Guidelines for Owners, Operators and Masters for protection against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea region”* (Version 2, June 2016) are still considered as the most effective tool in protecting any ships from piracy attacks. Copies of these documents are available for download at <https://www.liscr.com/maritime/Piracy>,

Owners, operators and Masters are urged to always register with Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade-Gulf of Guinea (MDAT- GoG) upon their vessel entering its voluntary reporting area and to report suspicious activity and incidents of piracy and armed robbery in a timely manner by contacting the MDAT- GoG by phone at +33 (02) 98 22 88 88, or by email to [watchkeepers@mdat-gog.org](mailto:watchkeepers@mdat-gog.org).

All details for registration and reporting are contained on UKHO security chart Q 6114 and CS Carte de sûreté maritime 8801. As further, Owners, operators and Masters are encouraged to visit the new MDAT- GoG website at <https://gog-mdat.org> for more information.

Owners, operators and Masters of vessels operating in the Gulf of Guinea are urged to also report incidents of piracy and armed robbery or threats thereof and suspicious activity to:

1. The nearest RCC,
2. The flag State – Email: [security@liscr.com](mailto:security@liscr.com); Phone: + 1 703 251-2490, ask for Maritime Security; AOH Phone: + 1 703 963 6216 to contact the Duty Officer; AOH Email: [dutyofficer@liscr.com](mailto:dutyofficer@liscr.com)
3. The IMB Piracy Reporting Centre - by Phone + 60 3 2031 0014 or by Email to: [imbkl@iccces.org](mailto:imbkl@iccces.org). For more information, please contact the Security Department at telephone: + 1 703 251-2490; Email [security@liscr.com](mailto:security@liscr.com); or visit <https://www.liscr.com/maritime/Piracy>.

Once it has been determined to embark armed guards on board a Liberian flagged vessel, the Administration requires the following:

1. Procedures of the PCASP shall be addressed within the Ship Security Plan (SSP) in the form of an appendix. Confirmation that all requirements have been met along with a copy

of the appendix to the SSP should be sent via email to the Administration at ([security@liscr.com](mailto:security@liscr.com)) prior to embarkation of the PCASP. The appendix should include at least the following features:

- Procedures pertaining to application of additional anti-piracy measures
  - Watch keeping and vigilance
  - Communication procedures with the PCASP
  - Use of defensive measures
  - Use of passive/non-lethal devices
  - Authority of the Master (PCASP embarked on the vessel are at all times subject to the overriding authority of the vessel's Master)
  - Activation of PCASP and the risk of escalation
2. Appropriate measure must be taken to verify the credibility, experience and past experience of the company providing armed security services, the experience and capabilities of their personnel and their preparedness for the mission at hand, including verification of piracy prevention and weapons training, adequate equipment and ongoing maintenance of weapons and ammunition to assure safety and functionality.
  3. Accommodations and sufficient safety equipment must be available to the members of the security team and a safe and secure location be provided to store ammunition and firearms.
  4. It is the shipowners responsibility to verify the PCASP's ability to work and cooperate with the crew on board to assure the safety of the vessel.
  5. It must be verified that there is a 'Rules for the Use of Force' document in place, as part of the contract between the operator and the contracted security company.
  6. The crew and officers must receive training and be fully familiar with the Best Management Practices (BMP) to deter and prevent piracy.

For more information please contact the Security Department at telephone + 1 703 790 3434, email: [security@liscr.com](mailto:security@liscr.com); LISCRC Duty Officer + 1 790 3434, email [dutyofficer@liscr.com](mailto:dutyofficer@liscr.com).

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