

SECURITY ON BOARD

11.1 Introduction

11.1.1 Shipboard security is essential in reducing the risks of terrorism, stowaways, piracy and drug smuggling. The International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code published by the International Maritime Organisation, was introduced on 1 July 2004 and provides a framework through which ships and port facilities can co-operate to detect and deter acts which threaten security in the maritime transport sector.

11.2 Ship Security Plans

11.2.1 The ISPS Code requires internationally trading ships to have on board an approved Ship Security Plan (SSP) to prevent acts of terrorism and have an appointed Ship Security Officer (SSO). The ISPS Code requires the shipping company to appoint a Company Security Officer (CSO) who is responsible maintaining the security infrastructure of the company's ships.

11.2.2 The SSP covers amongst other criteria the procedures required at different security levels:

- to prevent unauthorised weapons, dangerous substances and devices intended for use against persons, ships or ports from being taken aboard,
- to prevent unauthorised access to the ship,
- to respond to security threats or breaches of security,
- for the use of the ship security alert system, and
- to maintain the ship's security infrastructure.

11.2.3 The SSP is protected from unauthorised access or disclosure, which may include restricted distribution of copies amongst ship's crew. The SSP will also specify the frequency of training drills and exercises. The SSO is responsible for enhancing security awareness and vigilance on board and ensuring that adequate training has been provided to those with security responsibilities.

11.2.4 The Maritime and Coastguard Agency has provided guidance on compiling SSPs and a model SSP directed to shipping companies with ships on the UK register. For information please contact the Maritime Security Branch on 02380 329478, or follow the link on the MCA website [Home > Ships and Cargoes > Legislation and Guidance > International Ship and Port Facility Security \(ISPS\) Code](#). Further guidance is available from other organisations to assist shipping companies in preparing SSPs that comply with the ISPS Code.

11.3 Security Levels

11.3.1 Governments are required to set one of three security levels for ships flying their flag, and for ports under the Government's control. The ship is required to maintain the security level set by the Government of the port it is entering unless the ship's Government requires a higher security level to be maintained.

11.3.2 Security Level 1 is the level for which minimum appropriate protective security measures shall be maintained at all times.

11.3.3 Security Level 2 is the level for which appropriate additional protective security measures shall be maintained for a period of time as a result of a heightened risk of a security incident.

11.3.4 Security Level 3 is the level for which further specific protective security measures shall be maintained for a limited period of time when a

security incident is probable or imminent, although it may not be possible to identify the specific target. When Governments set security level 3 they will issue, as necessary, appropriate instructions and provide security-related information to the ships affected.

11.3.5 For British ships the Transport Security Directorate (TRANSEC) of the Department for Transport is responsible for setting the security levels and communicates changes direct to CSOs for onward transmission to ships. They can be contacted on +44 (0)207 944 2844. Different security levels may apply to different countries.

11.4 International terrorism

11.4.1 The chances of a ship experiencing a terrorist attack are very low, but attacks do happen. The main threat is from people trying to smuggle weapons and explosives on board. An appropriate sign at all access points stating that "all items brought on board this ship are liable to be searched" will act as a deterrent. Other security measures that may be considered include surveillance and detection equipment.

11.5 Stowaways

11.5.1 If there is any likelihood of stowaways, a thorough search of the vessel should be made before departure. It is easiest to send stowaways ashore in the port where they boarded, and they may hide in places which are secured at sea and which may be deficient in oxygen so that they suffocate or starve, or in holds which may be fumigated.

11.6 Piracy and Armed Robbery

11.6.1 The latest information on piracy attacks and the regions at greatest risk may be obtained from the International Chamber of Commerce Piracy Reporting Centre who can be contacted via the International Maritime Bureau: ICC IMB (Far Eastern Regional Office), PO Box 1255950782, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The 24-hour anti-piracy helpline number is +60 3 2031 0014

11.6.2 The dangers to a vessel can be significantly reduced if the ship's crew take relatively simple precautions, such as remaining vigilant and keeping means of access closed as much as possible, particularly access to crew accommodation.

11.6.3 All ships operating in waters where attacks occur should have an anti attack plan. The plan should, *inter alia*, cover:

- the need for enhanced surveillance and the use of lighting and surveillance or detection equipment;
- crew responses if a potential attack is detected or an attack is underway;
- minimising the opportunity to steal cargo, stores or personal effects;
- ensuring the safety of the ships crew and passengers.
- details of the radio and alarm procedures to be followed, and
- the reports that should be made after an attack, or attempted attack.

11.6.4 The SSP contains details of precautionary measures that are to be taken. The following notes are for guidance only based of advice from security experts:

- **Be vigilant** — the majority of attacks will be deterred if the robbers are aware that they have been observed, and that the crew has been alerted and is prepared to resist attempts to board. Ensure that crew members are constantly seen to be moving around the ship, making random rather than predictable patrols.
- **Maintain a 24 hour visual and security watch** — including shortrange radar surveillance of the waters around the ship. The use of a small yacht radar, fitted in such a way as to ensure complete coverage of the stern, unobscured by the radar shadow of the ship itself, should be considered. Keep a special lookout for small boats and fishing boats that pirates often use because they are difficult to observe on radar. In

piracy blackspots, discourage the crew from trading with locals using small craft which may approach the ship.

- **Strengthen night watches** — especially around the rear of the ship and particularly between the hours of 0100 and 0600 when most attacks occur, with continuous patrols linked by “walkietalkie” to the bridge. A drill should be established for regular twoway communication between the watch and the bridge. If possible, an additional officer should assist the normal bridge watchkeepers at night, in order to provide a dedicated radar and visual watch for small craft which might attempt to manoeuvre alongside, and allow the watchkeepers to concentrate on normal navigational duties.
- **Seal off means of access to the ship** — fit hawse pipe plates, lock doors and hatches etc. While taking due account of the need for escape in the event of fire or other emergency, so far as possible all means of access to the accommodation should be sealed off and windows and doors of crews quarters should be kept locked at all times. Blocking access between the aft deck and the crews quarters is particularly important.
- **Establish radio (VHF) contact** — and agree emergency signals specifically for pirate attacks with:
 - crew
 - ships in the vicinity
 - shore authorities
- **Locate an emergency VHF set** — away from the master's cabin and the radio room which are often the first targets.
- **Provide adequate lighting** — deck and overside lights, particularly at the bow and stern, should be provided to illuminate the deck and the waters beyond and to dazzle potential boarders. Searchlights should be available on the bridge wings, and torches carried by the security patrols to identify suspicious craft. Such additional lighting should not however, be so bright as to obscure navigation lights or to interfere with the safe navigation of other vessels.

- **Water hose and any other equipment** — which may be used to repel potential boarders should be readily available. Keep a constant supply of water provided to the hoses. In danger areas keep the deck wash pump in operation at all times spray water over the rear deck where it is easiest for the attackers to board.
- **Reduce opportunities for theft** — remove all portable equipment from the deck, so far as is possible stow containers containing valuables door to door and in tiers, seal off access to the accommodation.
- **Establish a secure area or areas** — if large numbers of armed robbers succeed in boarding the ship, it may be essential for crew members to retreat to a secure area or areas. Depending upon the construction of the accommodation and the extent to which areas can be effectively sealed off, the secure area may be established in the accommodation as a whole, or in more restricted parts around the bridge and inside the engine room. Provision should be made, however for escape during a fire or other emergency.
- **Inform crew of the security plan** — hold a training exercise and ensure that they are fully briefed on the actions to take in the event of an attack by armed robbers.

11.6.5 If pirates succeed in boarding the vessel, resistance and confrontation are not recommended as the likelihood of violence will undoubtedly be magnified. Agreeing to the demands of the attackers will hopefully keep the unwelcome visit brief, thereby allowing full control of the ship to be regained as soon as possible. Crew members can assist passively by mentally noting as many details as possible and pooling such information later on.

11.7 Drugs

11.7.1 Another benefit of good security is preventing illegal drugs being smuggled aboard. Personnel should be alert to the possibility, and should be made aware of the procedures to follow if such substances are found or the

11.8 Travel Advice Notices

11.8.1 Information on personal safety is available through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and can be obtained by contacting the FCO or British Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates in the area concerned.

11.8.2 The full range of FCO Travel Advice Notices for over 200 countries based on the most accurate and up-to-date information available can be viewed by following the links at www.fco.gov.uk or by telephoning 0845 850 2829 (24hrs, 7 Days a week).