



# G-B INTERNATIONAL

## INTERNATIONAL SHIPS REGISTRY OF GUINEA-BISSAU

### Marine Circular

Nr. 02/2024,12/03/2024

**Subject:** “G-B I.S.R. Applicable Procedures for Placing Private Contracted Armed Security Personnel (P.C.A.S.P.) on Board G-B I.S.R. Vessels”

#### References:

- (a) IMO MSC.1/Circ.1406/Rev.3,12 June 2015 revised interim recommendations for flag states regarding the use of privately contracted armed security personnel on board ships in the high-risk area.
- (b) IMO guidance for ship owners, ship operators and ship masters, through MSC.1/Circ.1405/Rev.2 (May 2012); and for flag States through MSC.1/Circ.1406/Rev.3 (June 2015).

**To:** Ship owners, Managers, Ship operators, Masters, Deputy Registrars, Port State Control Authorities, MoUs and ROs.

**Summary:** The current MAR. CIR. reports on the procedure to be followed and informs Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC), ship owners, managers, and operators of the requirements and procedures of the G-B I.S.R. for obtaining the approval for Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC) and for the authorization in order to place Private Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) on board G-B I.S.R. registered vessels transiting High Risk Areas.

## 1. Background – Legislative Context

**1.1** As a result of the rising levels of piracy mainly in the Red Sea, Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden in the recent years, privately contracted armed security personnel (PCASP) have been employed for protection on board some merchant vessels operating in, or navigating through, that region.

**1.2** Over the years the IMO Marine Safety Committee has developed, adopted and updated interim guidance on the use of PCASP on board ships in the High-Risk Areas (HRAs). This includes guidance for ship owners, ship operators and ship masters, through MSC.1/Circ.1405/Rev.2 (May 2012) and for flag States through MSC.1/Circ.1406/Rev.3 (June 2015). In May 2012, the IMO MSC through MSC.1/Circ.1443, developed interim guidance for Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSCs) providing PCASP on board ships in the HRAs.

**1.3** Taking into consideration the current actual situation in the High-Risk Areas, this Administration has developed procedures for the approval of Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC) and authorization of Private Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) on board the G-B I.S.R. flagged vessels.

## 2. Applicability

**2.1** This Marine Circular is applicable to all vessels registered with the G-B I.S.R. trading / crossing in High-Risk Areas and on which Armed Security Personnel is to be placed on board.

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### 3. Definitions

**3.1** High Risk Area: an area as defined in the Best Management Practices for Protection against Somalia Based Piracy (MSC.1/Circ.1339), as well as other HRAs, unless otherwise defined by the G-B I.S.R.

**3.2** Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC): Private contractors employed to provide security personnel, both armed and unarmed, on board for protection against piracy and armed robbery.

**3.3** Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP): armed employees of PMSC.

### 4. General Context – Risk Assessment

**4.1** The G-B I.S.R. emphasizes that the use of PCASP should not be considered as an alternative to Best Management Practices (BMP) and other protective measures, in line with relevant IMO Resolutions. Placing armed guards on board as a means to secure and protect the ship and its crew should only be considered after a risk assessment has been carried out.

**4.2** Shipowners should ensure that the G-B I.S.R. is consulted at an early stage in their consideration of the decision to place PCASP on board to ensure that any statutory requirements are met.

**4.3** Whether to use PCASP within the HRA is a decision for the individual shipowner after a thorough risk assessment and after ensuring all other practical means of self-protection have been employed.

### 5. Approval of Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC)

**5.1** Private Security Companies providing armed security personnel onboard G-B I.S.R. vessels shall be duly approved by the G-B I.S.R. PMSC should be selected against strict criteria, to ensure that the risks associated with the carriage and use of firearms on board are properly mitigated.

**5.2** The Private Maritime Security Company should submit the “Application for Approval of Private Maritime Security Companies” attached to this MAR.CIR. Upon review and in case all requirements are met, the G-B I.S.R. will issue an Approval Letter to the Company valid for three (3) years. If additional information is needed during the review the same will be requested accordingly.

**5.3** The G-B I.S.R. maintains the right to request an audit to the company to be carried out in the PMSC Head Office. Such audit will be conducted if necessary to verify the information submitted.

### 6. Approval of Private Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP)

**6.1** The G-B I.S.R. requires that every personnel carrying arms on board a G-B I.S.R. registered vessel needs to be duly authorized, therefore an “Application for Authorization of Private Security Personnel Individuals” attached to this MAR.CIR. needs to be provided for each person to be placed onboard.

**6.2** Together with the Application, among other requirements the following shall be submitted:

- .1 Copy of Valid Passport.
- .2 Evidence of no Criminal Record, to be issued by the relevant State Authority with issuance date not exceeding six (6) months prior to the application date.
- .3 Basic Safety Training Certificates (in case available).
- .4 Any qualifications and courses of the Individual proving Armed Guard Training Records.



**6.3** The G-B I.S.R. competent services after reviewing the information / documentary evidence and finding it in compliance with the IMO Guidelines and the G-B I.S.R. Code of Operation, will issue a “Letter of Authorization” for the individual to act as PCASP onboard a specifically stated registered vessel. The same individual can apply for authorization for another G-B I.S.R. vessel.

## **7. Issuance of Letter of Consent for the Vessel**

**7.1** Upon the finalization of the assessment procedure and once the Company providing the security personnel has been approved, and the authorization for armed personnel is in process, the concrete vessel shall apply to obtain a “Letter of Consent for the Placement of PMSC on board G-B I.S.R. Vessels”.

**7.2** The Letter of Consent to be issued for that purpose will state among others (a) the PMSC providing the security personnel, (b) the list of PCASP authorized to be placed on board, (c) the list of weapons to be placed on board including quantity, serial number and ammunition, and (d) the details of the voyage.

## **8. Obligation of the Ship Owner / Ship Manager**

**8.1** In all cases, the industry Best Management Practices should be implemented to the greatest extent possible when entering a High-Risk Area. The ship owner’s obligations to safety and security on board remains directly with the ship owner at all times. The Master’s overriding authority should be established in any contract with Private Maritime Security Companies. The Master should be familiar with the agreed rules of engagement and able to give authority to the security operatives for specific measures to be taken.

**8.2** Procedures should be in place and properly implemented on board concerning the carriage, control and use of firearms. The ship owner’s policy on carriage of firearms is the prevailing authority and there should be documented procedures that, inter alia, cover:

- .1 Master’s notification of firearms being on board;
- .2 Safety briefing to the person(s) carrying the firearms;
- .3 Measures for the secure stowage of the firearms.

**8.3** It is the ship owner’s responsibility to ensure that carriage of firearms is acceptable to their own insurers.

## **9. Enquiries**

**9.1** Any inquiries relating to this Marine Circular may be addressed to the G-B I.S.R. – Operations Department (E-mail: [ops@gbi-lb.org](mailto:ops@gbi-lb.org), Tel.: +30 210 4537950, +30 210 4537194).

For the Guinea-Bissau International Ships Registry

Authorized Signatory

**Office of the General Ships Registrar**





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### Attached in Electronic Form

1. G-B I.S.R. "Application for Approval of Private Maritime Security Companies" (p.3)
2. G-B I.S.R. "Application for Authorization of Private Security Personnel Individuals" (p. 3)
3. G-B I.S.R. "Application for Obtaining Letter of Consent for the Placement of PMSC on board G-B I.S.R. Vessels" (p. 3)