



Ref. T2/6.01

GUIDANCE FOR THE USE OF RADIO SIGNALS BY SHIPS UNDER ATTACK OR THREAT OF ATTACK FROM PIRATES OR ARMED ROBBERS

1 In accordance with the instructions of the eighteenth Assembly (operative paragraph 10 of resolution A.738(18)), the Maritime Safety Committee, at its sixty-eighth session (28 May to 6 June 1997), considered the adoption of guidance for the use of radio signals by ships under attack or threat of attack from pirates or armed robbers.

2 The Committee noted that ITU-R Study Group 8 had amended Recommendation ITU-R M.493-5 so as to include "Piracy/armed robbery attack" as a category of distress message for all classes of DSC equipment and Inmarsat had added a piracy message to the Inmarsat-C menu for the GMDSS.

3 There are two distinct phases to an attack by pirates or armed robbers, either:

- .1 the pirates are detected by shipboard personnel prior to boarding of the ship; or
- .2 the pirates board unnoticed, taking hostages and making threats of violence/death to the ships crew. At this stage they normally order the ship not to make any radio transmission and reinforce this with further threats of violence.

Pirates detected prior to boarding of the ship

4 Providing the ship has not been ordered by the pirates to maintain radio silence, contact should immediately be made with ships in the vicinity and shore authorities by sending a *piracy/armed robbery attack message* through Inmarsat or on an available DSC or other distress and safety frequency. Other methods to make the pirates aware that they have been detected should also be used*.

Pirates board unnoticed

5 When a ship is ordered by pirates/armed robbers not to make any form of transmission informing shore authorities of the attack, and complying with the provisions of paragraph 4 above may result in physical violence/death to the crew, any such order should be complied with as the pirates may carry equipment capable of detecting all radio signals, including satellite communications.

6 Member Governments are invited to bring this circular to the attention of their shipowners, ship operators and ship managers and to urge that, for ships trading in waters where piracy/armed robbery attacks have been known to occur, that the means for sending the *piracy/armed robbery attack message* mentioned above are provided and recommended for use in those circumstances where a ship has not been ordered by pirates or armed robbers on board to maintain radio silence.

* See ISF publication entitled "Pirates and Armed Robbers – A Masters' Guide"