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GUIDANCE ON PROVISION OF SHIP SECURITY ALERT SYSTEMS

1   The Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR), at its seventh session (13 to 17 January 2003), taking into account the urgency and importance of implementing SOLAS regulation XI-2/6 on Ship Security Alert Systems adopted by the Conference of Contracting Governments to the SOLAS Convention, 1974 (7-13 December 2002) to be used in the enhancement of Maritime Security, prepared the guidance on provision of ship security alert systems.

2   The Maritime Safety Committee, at its seventy-seventh session (28 May to 6 June 2003), agreed to the proposed guidance regarding Ship Security Alert Systems, as set out in the annex.

3   Member Governments are requested to bring the annexed guidance to the attention of Maritime Administrations, shipmasters, port authorities, port facility security operators, national authorities responsible for security, shipping companies, system manufacturers and designers.

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ANNEX

GUIDANCE ON PROVISION OF THE SHIP SECURITY ALERT SYSTEM

1   Regulation 6 of SOLAS chapter XI-2 requires ships to be provided with a ship security alert system. Section A/9 of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code requires ships to carry a ship security plan. Performance standards for ship security alert systems are given in resolution MSC.147(77). This Circular gives guidance on the design of ship security alert systems provided to comply with the SOLAS regulation.

2   The intent of the ship security alert system is to send a covert signal or message from a ship which will not be obvious to anyone on the ship who is not aware of the alert mechanism. It is of use therefore in circumstances where a ship wishes to inform a person ashore of a problem with a minimum number of the persons onboard aware of the action. The procedures for the security alert are agreed with the ship's Administration as part of the ship security plan and ideally should be individual to the ship. It is not intended that the ship security alert procedures should be to an internationally agreed standard or conform to any particular format for all ships.

3   Possible methods of achieving the alert are as follows:

.1   a system may employ proprietary tracking equipment provided by traffic service providers. The ship then carries a concealed equipment box working over a satellite system on its upper deck which transmits a position report at, typically, 6-hourly intervals. Interruption of power to the equipment or arming of the equipment by means of sensors or manual buttons causes the equipment to transmit a different format of position report. The tracking service providers monitor the transmission reports and inform the Company when the transmission format changes;

.2   a system may utilise modifications of GMDSS equipment.[*] Some GMDSS equipment is not very suitable for modification as it is optimised for "all station" calling and may involve manual setting of frequencies etc and provides confirmation on the ship of messages sent. In these types of systems the ship security alert contains identifiers to ensure that it is not possible to confuse it with a GMDSS distress, urgency or safety alert; and

.3   a system may utilise the exchange of messages containing key words between a ship and, typically, the Company.   These messages may be by speech or data communications. Ship equipment which may be used includes cellular phones in coastal areas and satellite services away from coastal areas. It may be possible to use GMDSS VHF/MF/HF equipment in areas where there are coastal facilities for receiving addressed calls.

This list is not intended as exhaustive and is not intended to inhibit future developments.

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[*] Inmarsat is developing modifications to existing equipment that will allow for this service to be implemented.

4   The ship security alert system requires two activation points, one of which should be on the bridge. These will typically be fixed or portable telephone handsets, fixed or portable keypads or fixed or portable buttons.

5   Measures should be incorporated in the activation points to avoid their inadvertent operation and the generation of false alerts.

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