



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.

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\* See ISF publication entitled "Pirates and Armed Robbers - A Masters' Guide".