Guidelines for Shipping Companies on Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR)

Q1:   What is the Information Fusion Centre (IFC)?

A1:   Established on 27 April 2009, the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) is a regional Maritime Security (MARSEC) centre situated at the Changi Command and Control Centre (CC2C) and hosted by the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN). The IFC aims to facilitate information sharing and collaboration between its partners to enhance MARSEC. The IFC has been at the forefront of providing actionable information to cue responses by regional and international navies, coast guards and other maritime agencies to deal with the full range of MARSEC threats and incidents. This includes piracy, sea robbery, maritime terrorism, contraband smuggling, illegal fishing and irregular human migration.

Q2:   What are some of the IFC's notable contributions?

A2:   The IFC has facilitated strong collaboration amongst regional and extra-regional stakeholders to arrest MARSEC incidents in the region. Through the IFC's contributions to MARSEC in the region, and its efforts in fostering close cooperation between countries, piracy and sea robbery incidents have declined significantly.

Q3:   How can the shipping industry contribute to regional MARSEC?

A3:   The Shared Awareness Meetings (SAMs) that the IFC conducts periodically are an important platform for the IFC to reach out, explain, and gather feedback on key MARSEC issues and challenges faced by the shipping community. The IFC also works with industry players to promote the exchange of best practices, such as Self-Protection Measures for the physical hardening of ships to hamper boarding efforts by pirates or sea robbers. Panel discussions are held for the shipping community to raise questions or challenges they face, and for enforcement agencies to address them.

Q4:   What is the VCR?

A4:   The Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) scheme was established in 2010 by the IFC for the shipping community to report MARSEC incidents or anomalous behaviours out at sea. Merchant vessels sailing under any flag which are operating in the VCR Area are strongly encouraged by the IFC to report MARSEC incidents or anomalous behaviour. Anomalous behavior is behavior outside the normal expectations of shipping, commercial trade, or marine practice. This includes any interference that is observed on RF, GPS, radars and cyber attack incidents. They

may be indicative of a MARSEC threat. As a voluntary-reporting scheme, the VCR does not seek to overwrite the respective coastal state's regulatory framework.

Q5:   What is the Real-time Information-sharing System (IRIS)?

A5:   Launched officially on 14 May 2019, the IRIS is an upgraded web-based information sharing system designed to enable rapid collaboration for MARSEC through an internet-facing portal. The IRIS builds on the IFC's decade of experience and expertise as a regional information sharing hub, and integrates the various portals that the IFC has developed over the years to fuse and sense-make information more effectively. Features include a fused recognised maritime picture, enhanced real-time collaboration, improved accessibility and improved user experience.

REPORTING FORMAT

A vessel participating in the VCR scheme is encouraged to transmit an **initial report** upon entering the VCR Area, and a **daily report** henceforth whilst it remains in the VCR Area to the IFC. Upon exiting the VCR Area, the IFC requests for a final report. All reports are to be sent to the following email address:
information_fusion_centre@defence.gov.sg

In addition, any vessel that observes anomalous behaviour at sea is also requested to send an additional **suspicious activity report** to the IFC. Details of this are provided below.

The IFC recognises that many ships are to send position reports to a variety of stakeholders. As such, the IFC requests that vessels simply add the IFC email address as provided above into their distribution list for ease of dissemination. For easier identification of the email, the IFC requests for the subject header of the email to include either one of the following: "initial report", "daily report" or "final report", as appropriate.

To coincide with the launch of the IFC's new web portal and interest site (https://www.ifc.org.sg), the IFC has now adopted procedures in accordance with BMP 5. Our aim is to fuse and exchange actionable MARSEC information to reduce burden on the ships at sea, and to increase collaboration with the regional IFCs to assist information-sharing, especially for ships that pass through various regional areas. The IFC works with established partners such as the UKMTO to improve the ease of inter-regional reporting. As such, feedback on the new formats would be greatly appreciated.

The IFC has adopted the BMP 5 reporting formats to minimise variation in formats and burden on the ships. The old VCR reporting formats, however, will be accepted as well as we transit into using the new reporting formats.

CONTACT

If you have any concerns about any incident at sea, including suspicious approaches near your or another vessel or observe anomalous activity at sea, please email the

IFC at **information_fusion_centre@defence.gov.sg**

The IFC operates a 24/7 Hotline, if you require **urgent** assistance, please call the IFC's duty officer immediately.

Tel :   **+65 9626 8965 (Hotline)**
          +65 6594 5728 (Office)

Initial Report

The IFC requests for a vessel to send an initial report each time it enters the IFC's VCR Area. For efficient identification and classification of the report, it is requested that the email subject header should be provided as "Initial Report/Company/Vessel Name/Date and Time", and that the report contains the following details:

01	Ship Name
02	Flag
03	IMO Number
04	INMARSAT Telephone Number
05	Time and Position
06	Course
07	Passage Speed
08	Freeboard
09	Cargo
10	Destination and Estimated Time of Arrival
11	Name and contact details of Company Security Officer
12	Nationality of Master and Crew
13	Armed/unarmed security team embarked

Daily/Transit Position Report

A vessel is encouraged by the IFC to increase the frequency of their reporting when transiting a high risk area.

For efficient identification and classification of the report, it is requested that the email subject header should be provided as "Daily Position Report/Company/Ship Name/Date and Time", and that the report contains the following details:

01	Ship Name
02	Ship's Call Sign and IMO Number

03	Time of Report in UTC
04	Ship's Position
05	Ship's Course and Speed
06	Any other important information*

Other important information could be change of destination or ETA, number of UK crew on board, etc.

Final Report

It is requested that a vessel sends its final report each time it exits the IFC's VCR Area. For efficient identification and classification of the report, it is requested that the email subject header should be provided as Final Report/Company/Ship Name/Date and Time", and that the report contains the following details:

01	Ship's name
02	Ship's Call Sign and IMO Number
03	Time of Report in UTC
04	Port or position when leaving the VCR Area

Suspicious/Irregular Activity Report

In addition to the regular reporting process, the IFC requests that the crew of any vessel that observes any anomalous behaviour whilst participating in the VCR sends an additional **suspicious activity report** by email to the IFC. Examples of the types of behaviours which can be considered as 'anomalous' include, but are not limited to the following:

- Unusual rendezvous (RVs) of ships at sea including transfers of cargo or people
- Darkened ships/not illuminating nav lights
- Ships anchored in unusual locations
- Ships not flying a flag/displaying a name
- Ships navigating contrary to the ordinary practice of seamen
- Ships outside of normal patterns/sea lanes
- Fishing boat without appropriate equipment
- Overcrowded/unseaworthy/overloaded ships
- Non-ocean-going ships in the high seas
- Abandoned ships
- Unwarranted/unsolicited approaches by ships to your own ship or other ships in your vicinity
- Non-military/government ships carrying arms
- Ships carrying boarding equipment
- Suspicious/unusual voice communications
- Ships underway / making way without AIS transmission

For efficient identification and classification of the report, it is requested that the email subject header should be provided as "Suspicious Activity Report/Company/Ship Name/Date and Time", and that the report contains the following details:

01	Ship's name
02	Ship's Call Sign and IMO Number
03	Time of Report in UTC
04	Ship's Position
05	Ship's Course and Speed
06	Sighting of suspicious activity. Time, position, brief description of craft and activity witnessed

Note: Where possible include any imagery to aid military appreciation.

The Voluntary Community Reporting (VCR) Area