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Publication of Industry Guidance on the Safe Management of Vessel Transit through the Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is a vital international shipping route connecting the Gulf region of the Middle East with the open ocean. It is also a critical artery for energy shipments, including crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG).

In periods of heightened regional tension, vessels operating in and around the strait may face multiple risks, including attacks on vessels, mines, missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), as well as interference with positioning information such as GNSS, commonly referred to as GPS, through jamming and spoofing. Such interference can make it difficult to determine own-ship position and the positions of nearby vessels, increasing the risk of collisions, groundings and navigational errors.

If the security situation deteriorates and a large number of vessels remain waiting near the strait, a subsequent resumption of transit could lead to sudden traffic congestion and heightened navigational risk. In such circumstances, it would place a heavy burden on masters and crews if transit decisions were left to them alone. Information-sharing and shore-side support by shipowners, operators and ship managers are therefore essential.

The Industry Guidance on the Safe Management of Vessel Transit through the Strait of Hormuz is a practical reference for shipowners, operators, ship managers, masters and other stakeholders in safely planning and managing transit through the Gulf region, including the Strait of Hormuz. Although not legally binding, the Guidance sets out practical considerations such as pre-transit risk assessment, responses to GNSS disruption, decision-making during traffic congestion, and the option of postponing transit. Its principal value lies in providing a framework for ship and shore to make transit decisions based on shared situational awareness, rather than leaving such decisions to masters and crew alone.



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Main Text

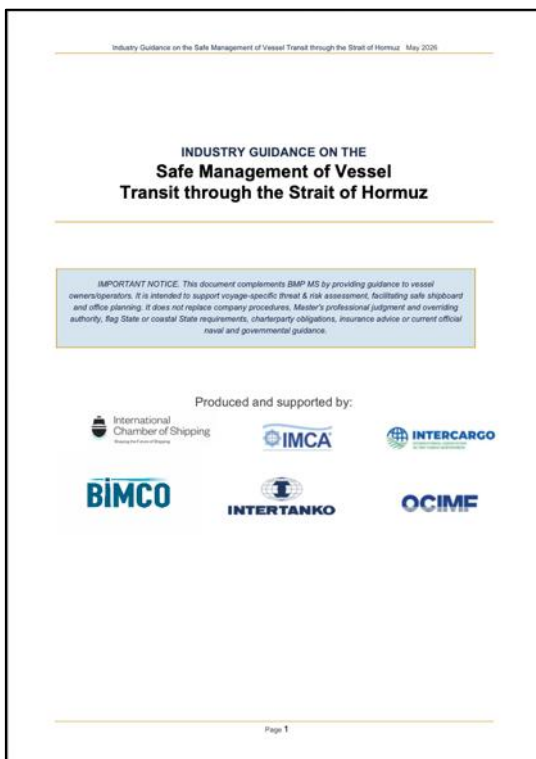
Introduction

On 20 May 2026, ICS, BIMCO, INTERCARGO, INTERTANKO, IMCA and OCIMF jointly published the Industry Guidance on the Safe Management of Vessel Transit through the Strait of Hormuz.

<https://www.bimco.org/news-insights/bimco-news/2026/05/20-hormuz-guidance>

The document provides practical industry guidance for shipowners, operators, masters and other stakeholders on safely planning and managing entry into, navigation within and departure from the Gulf region, including the Strait of Hormuz, during periods of heightened security risk.

This article provides an overview of the guidance.



The guidance emphasises that shipboard personnel, including the master, and shore-side organisations, including shipowners, operators and ship managers, should reach and implement transit decisions on the basis of shared situational awareness.

The risk environment addressed by the guidance is multi-faceted. Current threats in the Strait of Hormuz include not only armed attack, but also electronic interference such as GNSS jamming and spoofing and AIS anomalies, as well as unmanned aerial vehicles, missiles and mines. These threats may occur not in isolation, but simultaneously. In addition, at the time the guidance was issued, a large number of vessels were reportedly unable to transit the Strait of Hormuz. If transit were to resume, these vessels could move at once, creating a different form of navigational risk: extreme traffic congestion. On this basis, the guidance sets out approaches for responding to each of these risks.

1 Positioning of the Guidance

(1) Purpose and Nature of the Guidance

For transits during periods of heightened risk around the Strait of Hormuz, the guidance is intended mainly to support the following two areas.

1. **Companies preparing safe transit plans based on voyage-specific threat and risk assessments.**
2. **Ship and shore maintaining a common operating picture from before transit and throughout the transit.**

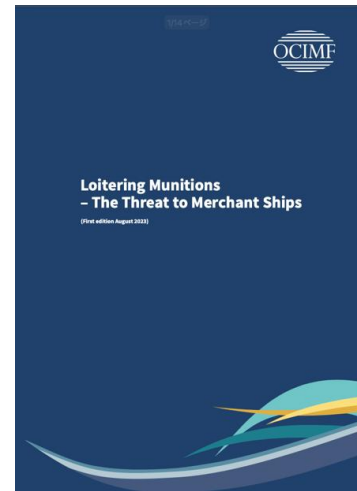
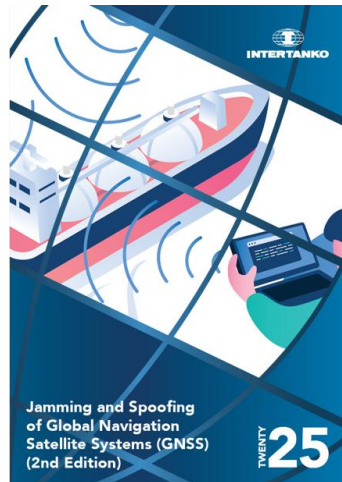
The guidance is not a legally binding instrument like the SOLAS Convention or flag-state legislation. It is practical safety-management guidance jointly prepared by industry associations. Its value therefore lies not in compelling compliance, but in providing practical material that can be used directly by those involved in operations. Rather than remaining at the level of abstract concepts, it includes operational tools such as the following.

- A pre-transit checklist
- A threat and hazard assessment matrix
- Criteria for triggering responses during extreme traffic congestion
- A quick-reference table for use on the bridge during GNSS disruption

(2) Relationship with Existing Frameworks

This guidance is intended to complement, not replace, existing frameworks. It also recommends that the following materials be consulted alongside it.

- BMP-MS (Best Management Practices for Maritime Security): general practical guidance, supported and issued by BIMCO, ICS, IMCA, INTERCARGO, INTERTANKO and OCIMF, to help merchant ships prepare for maritime security threats.
<https://www.maritimelglobalsecurity.org/>
- INTERTANKO's GNSS-related guidance: guidance for shipowners, operators and masters explaining different GNSS, the operational risks involved and how those risks can be managed.
<https://www.maritimelglobalsecurity.org/media/2cwigtc4/2025-jamming-and-spoofing-2nd-ed-web.pdf>
- OCIMF's loitering-munitions material: an information paper summarising the threat posed by loitering munitions and possible countermeasures.
<https://www.ocimf.org/document-library/854-loitering-munitions-the-threat-to-merchant-ships-1/file>



In addition, the guidance does not replace the following existing requirements and obligations. It is intended to be used together with them.

- Company procedures
- The master’s professional judgement and overriding authority
- Flag- and coastal-state requirements / charter-party obligations
- Insurance conditions, including war-risk insurance / official government and naval guidance

On that basis, the guidance calls for the latest information to be confirmed from official and highly reliable sources such as UKMTO, JMIC, MSCIO/EUNAVFOR and NAVCENT NCAGS. It also calls for attention to be paid to insurance and charter-party terms, as well as sanctions and trade-compliance requirements.

(3) Practical Positioning

In operational terms, the guidance identifies matters to be checked at each stage: before, during and after transit. Risk is not treated as fixed. Instead, it is to be assessed for each vessel, each voyage and each period, taking into account the latest threat information, traffic conditions, tensions associated with military activity, GNSS interference, vessel condition, crew fatigue and other factors.

Its presentation of the following five perspectives for transit decisions is particularly useful in enabling ship and shore to share a common decision-making framework.

[Five Perspectives for Transit Decisions]

“Threat situation”, “Navigational situation”, “Vessel readiness”, “Crew and security posture” and “Shore support”

2 Structure of the Guidance (See the annexed overview of Industry Guidance on the Safe Management of Vessel Transit through the Strait of Hormuz, May 2026 edition)

(1) Basic Structure

The main body of the guidance comprises purpose and scope, guiding principles, the current operating context, anchoring and waiting-position considerations, planning considerations, reporting channels, decision-making considerations, pre-transit preparation, transit-execution considerations and post-transit actions.

In its guiding principles, the document gives top priority to safety of life, safe navigation and protection of the environment. It also confirms the master's overriding authority and the need for transit decisions to be based on continuously updated voyage-specific assessments. For decision-making, the guidance does not set out a fixed Go/No-Go rule. Instead, it provides a structured decision-aid table based on the five perspectives described in Chapter 1 and explicitly identifies postponement of transit as a realistic option where risk is high.

With regard to reporting, the guidance organises registration and reporting arrangements with UKMTO, NAVCENT NCAGS, MSCIO, IFC-IOR, flag states and company crisis-management teams. It also calls for the submission of lessons-observed reports after transit to support future revisions of the guidance and wider industry analysis.

(2) Appendices and Annexes

The appendices and annexes contain practical materials designed for use in the field. They make it easier for operating companies and bridge teams to translate the guidance into day-to-day practice.

- **Appendix A (Threat and Hazard Assessment Matrix)**
Covers missile and drone attacks, mines, GNSS jamming and spoofing, AIS overload, collisions, forced reductions in CPA and related risks.
- **Appendix B (Pre-Transit Preparation Checklist)**
Covers preparation items for both shore and ship.
- **Appendix C (Advice on Bridge Manning and Extreme Traffic-Congestion Mode)**
Specifies numerical trigger thresholds, including cases in which AIS targets or radar contacts exceed 60 within a 12-nautical-mile range.
- **Appendix D / Annex I (Quick-Reference Cards)**
Bridge quick-reference cards covering actions before transit, during transit and when a threat arises, including cards dedicated to GNSS jamming and spoofing response.

3 Content of the Guidance

(1) Standard Responses

Much of the guidance aligns with ISM/ISPS Code practice and existing maritime-security guidance: prioritising safety of life, respecting the master's authority, confirming the latest information, reporting to UKMTO and other bodies, coordinating among stakeholders, and managing AIS policy and navigational equipment.

Its distinctive contribution is that it adapts these general principles to the Strait of Hormuz context and translates them into practical measures for use on board and ashore. Central themes include responses to electronic interference, extreme traffic congestion and operational security.

(2) Responses to Jamming and Spoofing

The guidance states that, during transit, planning should proceed on the assumption that GNSS signals may become unavailable or unreliable. Spoofing is particularly dangerous because, unlike jamming, which is often recognised as a loss of signal, false position information may appear to be displayed normally. Warning signs include abnormal sudden shifts in own-ship position on ECDIS and discrepancies between AIS, radar and visual observation.

To prevent false positioning data from propagating through navigational systems, the guidance calls for the following practical measures.

- Deliberately isolate and deselect all GNSS inputs to ECDIS, AIS and INS (Integrated Navigation System).
- If the radar overlay is displaced from the actual coastline or terrain because of false coordinates, remove the overlay immediately to prevent confusion.
- Carry out manual position plotting at intervals of no more than six minutes, using clearly identifiable shore-based structures rather than buoys, which may move or shift, as position references.
- Avoid collision-avoidance decisions based solely on AIS information, and place greater emphasis on radar and visual confirmation.

Accordingly, the guidance treats electronic interference not merely as a cyber or information-management issue, but as a navigational-safety issue directly linked to collisions, groundings and navigational errors.

(3) Responses to Extreme Vessel-Traffic Congestion

To help protect vessels from abnormal traffic congestion and confusion caused by spoofing, the guidance sets quantitative criteria (Appendix C), rather than relying on subjective judgement.

- More than 60 AIS targets or radar contacts are present within a 12-nautical-mile radar range; or
- The CPA (closest point of approach) with three or more other vessels shows simultaneous and unstable fluctuation;

Where either condition applies, the guidance identifies activation of “extreme traffic-congestion mode” and waiting before entry until conditions improve as possible responses.

(4) Handling of Personal Mobile Devices

As a measure specific to modern conflict zones, the guidance warns of the risk of location-data leakage from crew members’ personal mobile devices. When navigating near a conflict zone, it recommends treating all mobile devices as potential sources of location leakage and

disabling unnecessary communication functions such as Bluetooth, Wi-Fi and location services, restricting location-based apps, or setting devices to airplane mode.

(5) Other Measures

The guidance also sets out measures for protecting bridge personnel against unmanned aerial vehicles and missiles, preparing both ship and shore, and promoting continuous improvement through post-transit lessons-observed reports. Where risk is high, postponement of transit is presented as an explicit option.

Conclusion

The core value of the guidance lies in the way it treats transit risk in the Strait of Hormuz not as two separate issues, “maritime security” and “navigational safety”, but as a single, mutually interacting problem. It translates that understanding into voyage-specific risk assessment and practical measures for use in the field. From armed attack and electronic interference to traffic congestion when transit resumes and over-reliance on GNSS and AIS, the guidance addresses risks of different kinds within a common framework and provides practical decision-making material that goes beyond general cautions.

At the same time, the guidance is not legally binding. It complements existing frameworks such as BMP-MS, and the final transit decision rests with the master’s authority and the latest official information. It should therefore be understood not as a stand-alone standard that determines whether a vessel may transit, but as a practical foundation for enabling shipping companies and vessels to make informed decisions under a shared framework.

Finally, the guidance conveys a clear industry message: transit through the Strait of Hormuz in a heightened security environment is a weighty decision, and the associated burden should not fall on masters and crews alone. It should be supported by shore-side organisations, above all shipowners and operators, on the basis of shared situational awareness. This message is reflected in the explicit recognition of transit postponement as a legitimate option and in the placement of shore support as one of the pillars of decision-making. The guidance also encourages operating companies to carry out voyage-specific assessments, develop transit plans and establish shore-based support arrangements. Behind the checklists and numerical criteria is the principle that ships heading into dangerous waters should not be left to the isolated judgement of those on board, but should be supported by the wider industry, including shore-side organisations. This is arguably where the guidance’s greatest practical significance lies.

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Industry Guidance on the Safe Management of Vessel Transit through the Strait of Hormuz
(May 2026 edition): Overview

1. **Purpose and Scope:** Guidance intended to support the safe planning and management of vessels entering, navigating within and departing from the Gulf region and the Strait of Hormuz during periods of heightened regional security risk.
2. **Guiding Principles:** Gives top priority to safety of life, safe navigation and protection of the environment, and states that the master has overriding authority.
3. **Current Operating Context:** Describes the rapidly changing and complex threat environment, including GNSS and AIS jamming and spoofing, attacks by unmanned aerial vehicles and missiles, waterborne improvised explosive devices (WBIEDs), extreme traffic congestion and other risks, and its effect on crew situational awareness and decision-making.
4. **Anchoring and Waiting Position Considerations:** Sets out risk-reduction measures while anchored or waiting, including the selection of waiting positions when awaiting a safe transit window, the advantages and disadvantages of port areas and offshore locations, and evasive or irregular movement to reduce the risk of becoming a target.
5. **Recommended Planning Considerations:** Sets out multifaceted pre-transit planning, organised into the following subsections.
 - **Threats and Commercial:** Confirming the latest threat information and the scope of insurance cover, including war-risk insurance.
 - **Vessel and Technical Preparation:** Backing up navigational instruments and preparing paper charts.
 - **Crew and Manning:** Managing crew fatigue, disembarking non-essential personnel and taking psychological stress into account.
 - **Passage Planning:** Developing a flexible route plan suited to the actual situation.
 - **Operation of AIS and Navigation Lights:** Criteria for turning AIS on or off based on recommendations from military or other competent authorities, and the obligation to keep navigation lights on at all times.
6. **Reporting Channels:** Lists contact points for key relevant organisations such as UKMTO (UK Maritime Trade Operations), NAVCENT NCAGS (US Naval Forces Central Command), MSCIO and IFC-IOR, together with recommended ways to use each before transit and at the time of an incident.
7. **Decision Considerations:** Provides a decision matrix based on the five perspectives for transit decision-making: “Threat situation”, “Navigational situation”, “Vessel readiness”, “Crew and security posture” and “Shore support”. It organises conditions under which transit may be considered and conditions under which postponement should be considered.
8. **Pre-Transit Preparation Considerations**
 - **Shore side:** Providing threat briefings, pre-approving emergency-response routes, securing sufficient fuel and other preparations.
 - **Ship side:** Confirming navigation procedures by visual and radar means, preparing for GNSS disruption, reviewing the security posture, including consideration of raising to ISPS Level 3, testing steering and machinery, and conducting emergency drills such as loss of GNSS, steering failure and abandon-ship drills.
9. **Transit Execution Considerations:** Specifies strict bridge management during transit, including the master’s constant presence, additional watches and manual steering. It also emphasises operational-security measures to prevent location-data leakage from personal mobile phones and other devices, and navigational discipline when GNSS is unreliable, including confirmation of position by other independent means.
10. **Post-Transit Actions:** Requires submission of a post-transit lessons-observed report to support future revisions to industry guidance and industry analysis.



Appendices and Annexes

- **Appendix A:** Example threat and hazard assessment matrix
- **Appendix B:** Shore and ship preparation checklist
- **Appendix C:** Advice during transit execution, including responses in extreme traffic-congestion mode
- **Appendix D:** Bridge quick-reference cards (immediate actions when a threat arises, etc.)
- **Annex I:** Bridge quick-reference table dedicated to GNSS disruption, including jamming and spoofing