



## **INTERNATIONAL SAILING FEDERATION**

**Danger of Piracy - Guidelines for Yachts considering a passage through the Gulf of Aden and its approaches including the Indian Ocean north of 10 degrees south and west of 78 degrees east (see Admiralty Chart Q6099).**



*These guidelines are published in co-operation with the MSCHOA (Maritime Security Centre – Horn of Africa) set up by EU NAVFOR (EU naval force) Operation ATALANTA. A final decision on whether to enter the Gulf of Aden or any waters where pirates operate and how to conduct a vessel in those waters remains entirely the responsibility of the master of each vessel.*

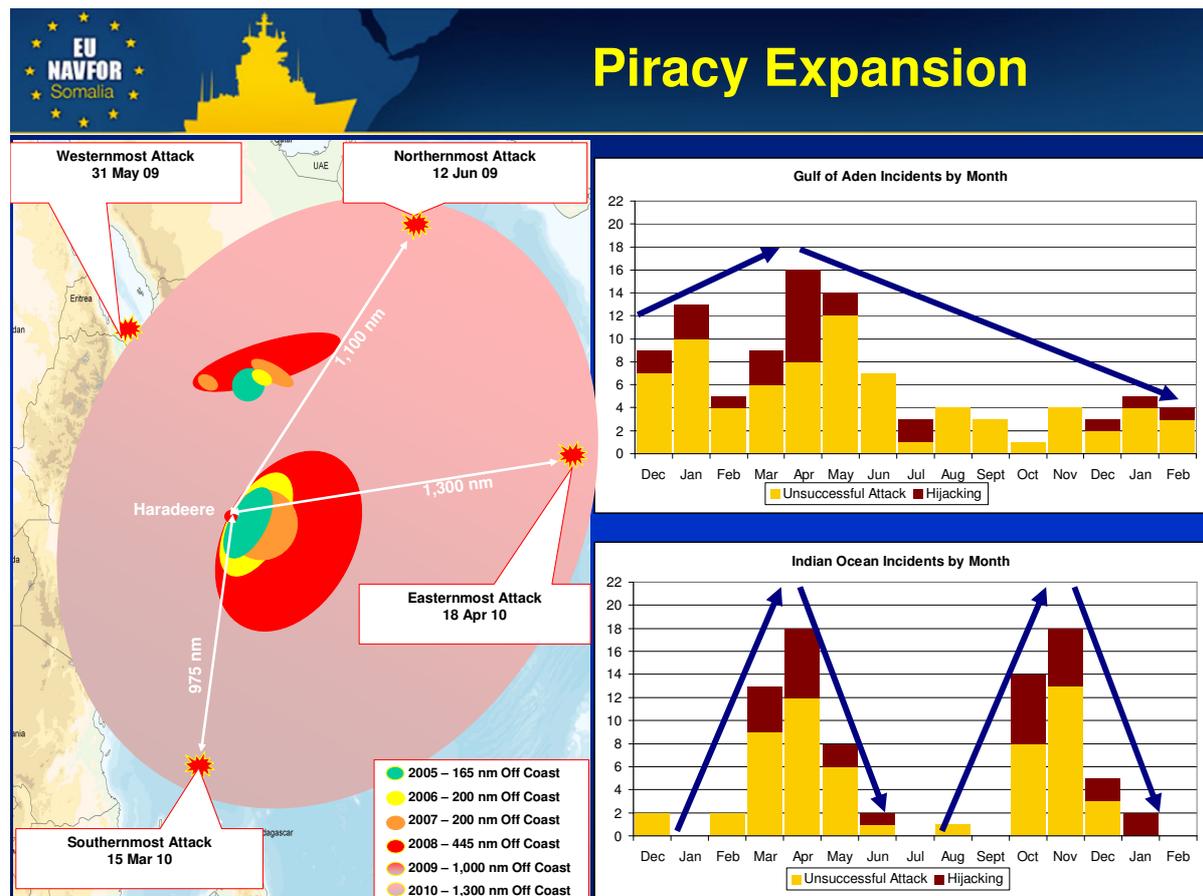
**The danger of piracy and consequent loss of life and property in the GoA (Gulf of Aden), Yemeni and Somali waters is high. Yachts are strongly recommended to avoid the area.** See also advice from the UK FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>.

If, despite this advice, a yacht does intend to sail through these waters, then the following information may be helpful and reporting to the naval authorities is strongly encouraged. A yacht which does not report to the naval authorities will be unknown to them and unlikely to receive any assistance if required.

### **Q: Have there been many attacks recently?**

**A:** The number of attacks on merchant ships in these waters has increased by about 45% in the past year although, as deterrence and defensive measures improve, the success rate has reduced, especially in the Gulf of Aden. This has caused the pirates to range widely

over the Somali Basin and far into the Indian Ocean. Activity has been reported in the southern end of the Red Sea but it is believed that most, if not all of the incidents reported were disagreements between Yemeni and Eritrean vessels, one country's fishing boats encroaching on the other's waters and being fired on by patrols.



**Q: What are the authorities doing to overcome this threat?**

**A:** As many as 28 warships are operating in the GoA and the Somali Basin. The majority are under the control of MSCHOA, whose operations are co-ordinated from Royal Navy Headquarters in Northwood. ([www.mschoa.org](http://www.mschoa.org))

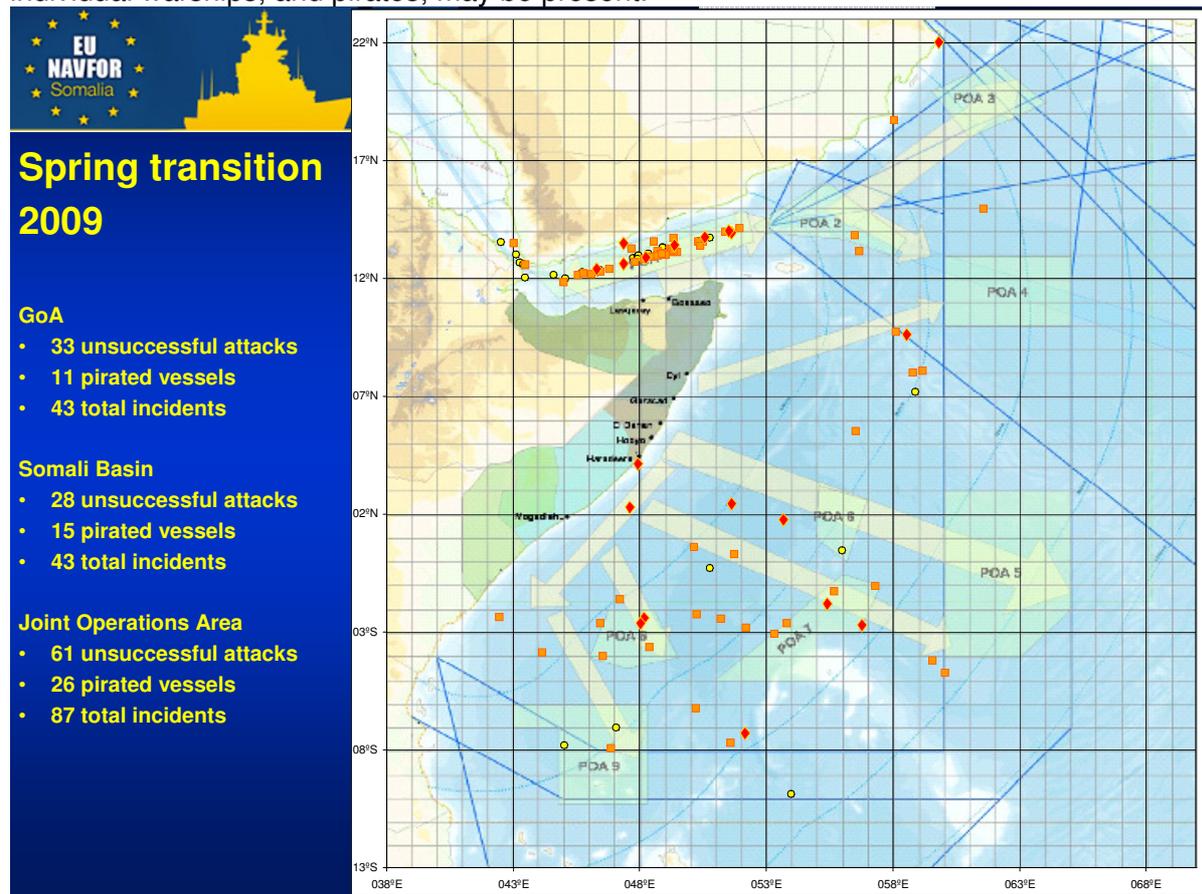
MSCHOA has established an IRTC (Internationally Recognised Transit Corridor) through the GoA. The IRTC has two lanes, each 5NM wide with 2nm wide buffer zone between them 2NM wide. To all intents and purposes it operates as a Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) although formally it does not have that status. The co-ordinates of the IRTC lanes are:

Westbound lane:      northern boundary: 12 00N 45 00E    14 30N 53 00E  
                                  southern boundary: 11 55N 45 00E    14 25N 53 00E  
 Eastbound lane:      northern boundary: 11 53N 45 00E    14 23N 53 00E  
                                  southern boundary: 11 48N 45 00E    14 18N 53 00E

The course eastbound is 072°T and westbound 252°T.

Merchant ships are recommended to use this route through the GoA. At any time some seven warships may be expected on patrol along the IRTC most provided with helicopters ready for action. In addition Naval patrols aim to disrupt pirate activity in a variety of ways but they are governed by International Law.

While successful attacks in the GoA have fallen in the past year, it is not possible to provide similar coverage in the Somali Basin or elsewhere including the Indian Ocean though individual warships, and pirates, may be present.



## Q: How are the Pirates organised and how do they operate?

**A:** The pirates are organized in criminal gangs whose object is to make money. Those on the land bankroll the ones who go to sea, pay for whatever ships they capture and then handle the ransom. Those at sea view themselves as warriors, “Jin al Bar” – Demons of the Seas. Mostly young without prospects, they chew a drug “Khat” which keeps them in a constantly heightened state in which their actions are unpredictable.

Generally the piracy operation is weather-dependent as the skiffs cannot maintain speed in large seas. Their optimum windows during the year are governed by the monsoons. A few large offshore fishing vessels and dhows have been pirated to act as mother ships allowing a much wider operating window.

The pirates typically go to sea in a long narrow roughly built open GRP boat of 30 to 40 ft with an inboard diesel towing two smaller open GRP boats fitted high-powered outboards giving a speed of 25 knots. The "mother ship" is often white in colour and the skiffs blue. All the boats are known generically as “skiffs”. With drums of fuel on board a mother ship could achieve a range exceeding 1,000 miles and may be at sea for 30 days. On finding a ship they will fire AK47s or RPGs to intimidate the crew while attempting to board using a hooked ladder if needed.

Not infrequently a pirate vessel will outrun its fuel supply and the crew will perish from lack of food and water. That is all part of the “Jin Al Bar” culture. If a ship has not been taken by the end of their deployment the pirates become desperate and liable to attack anything including yachts.

Other gangs operate people-smuggling in large open boats from the north coast of Somalia towards Yemen. Estimates of migrants reaching Yemen were 29,000 in 2007 increasing to 78,400 in 2010. On a number of occasions smugglers have turned back when still offshore and dumped their passengers into the sea with few survivors. People-smugglers and pirates may well be the same individuals, showing a ruthless disregard for humanity.

### **Q: How big is the threat to a cruising yacht passing through these waters?**

**A:** During just over 12 months two yachts were taken by pirates (*Lynn Rival*, in the SW of the Seychelles archipelago whose crew, Rachel and Paul Chandler were held for over a year before a ransom was paid for their release in early November, and *Choizil*, reportedly pirated on the border between Tanzania and Mozambique – crew Bruno Pelizzari and partner Debbie were taken hostage whilst owner/skipper Peter Eldridge escaped - also in early November 2010). Another yacht, the *St Victoria* (Fyodor Konyukhov) was attacked unsuccessfully in the GoA on 1<sup>st</sup> October. This last was escorted by a vessel carrying Russian marines who opened fire and drove off the pirates. In previous years there were more attacks.

To put that in context, in the past year it is believed that about 200 yachts sailed through the GoA.

**However, despite these statistics the opinion of MSCHOA staff is that the risk to yachts remains high and the consequences of being seized are dire.**

Yachts are not expected to be targeted in advance, since mostly they are not valuable enough to be as interesting as a merchant ship, but they may fall prey *either* to a pirate crew who are nearly out of fuel and have no other way to achieve at least some result as well as to replenish their fuel supplies *or* they may encounter a people-smuggling boat which has had to jettison its human cargo because of Yemeni patrols and is similarly looking for at least some compensation.

### **Q: Can yachts passing through the GoA expect a naval escort, perhaps by forming a large convoy?**

**A:** No. There are insufficient warships to provide this protection and their primary duties are to guard World Food Programme and vulnerable merchant ships.

### **Q: Can I expect help from naval forces if attacked?**

**A:** Realistically, probably not. It would take a skiff at 25 knots about 3 minutes from being spotted to being alongside a yacht. Once pirates have boarded, the rules of engagement of the naval forces prevent further action due to the risk of cross fire killing the yacht crew. The skipper of the yacht *Tanit* was killed by cross fire in a 2008 rescue attempt.

### **Q: So what is the advice to yachts considering sailing through these waters?**

**A:** The clear advice from MSCHOA is 'Do not go'. Only do so if you have fully considered the risks. If you decide to go ahead you are strongly encouraged to register in advance and to report during the passage (see below).

For the transit of the Somali Basin you may wish to plot a course which keeps you clear of the main areas of past activity. See chart above. However, the pirates follow their prey and as merchant ships sail ever further east, so do the pirates.

For the Gulf of Aden, register your intended passage with UKMTO Dubai and MSCHOA and provide the information set out in the attached Yacht Passage Advice Form, preferably by email but alternatively by telephone:-

- UKMTO (UK Maritime Trade Organization) (RN) Dubai [ukmto@eim.ae](mailto:ukmto@eim.ae)  
+971 50 552 3215 fax +971 4 306 5710; Telex (51) 210473 (24 hour watch)
- MSCHOA [postmaster@mschoa.org](mailto:postmaster@mschoa.org) +44 (0)1923 958547, 39, 35. fax +44 (0) 1923 958520 (24 hour watch).

US-flagged vessels may wish to contact MARLO (Maritime Liaison Office) (USN) Bahrain [marlo.bahrain@me.navy.mil](mailto:marlo.bahrain@me.navy.mil) +973 3940 1395 (24 hour watch) who will provide a similar service.

This information will be passed to patrolling warships which will then at least be aware of your intentions, likely time of transit and numbers of crew on board. In return you will be sent by email regular updates on pirate attacks and related warnings such as the one below:

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**WARNING      WARNING      WARNING**

Vessel was fired upon in position **1221N 06625E** at **181325Z NOV 10**. 1 skiff with 6 people on board. Vessels are advised to exercise extreme caution when navigating within 100nm of this position.

██████████ MSc CEng MIMechE

Lieutenant Commander Royal Navy

OIC UKMTO

SO2 N3 (MTO)

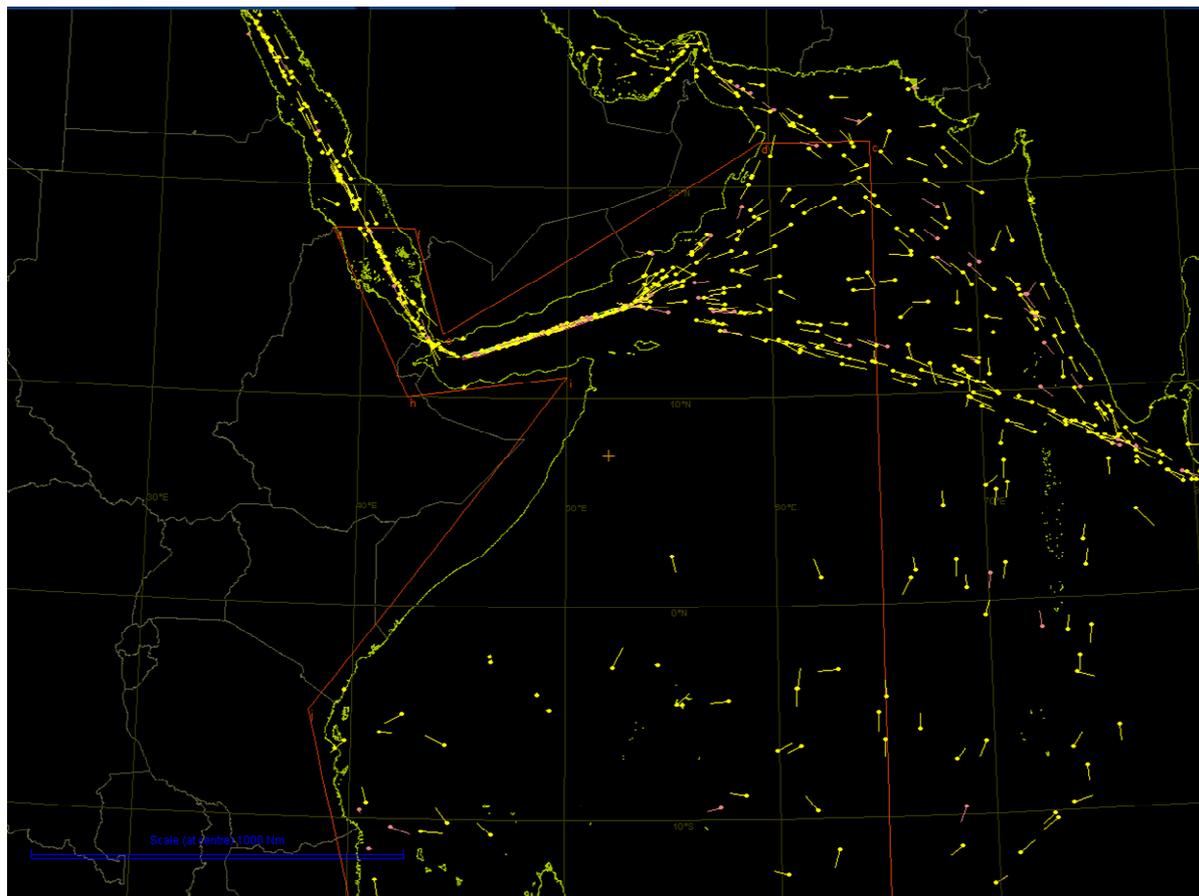
Tel: +971 4 309 4268 (Office - direct)

Tel: +971 50 552 3215 (Mobile)

Email: [OIC@ukmto.mod.uk](mailto:OIC@ukmto.mod.uk)

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## Snapshot of shipping, 2010



### **Q: What is the best course through the Gulf of Aden- in or close to the IRTC or close to the Yemeni coast?**

**A:** MSCHOA encourage yachts to sail EITHER in the 2-mile-wide buffer zone between the two lanes of the IRTC or close to the northern lane. These options give the best chance of a yacht's transmission on VHF 16 or VHF 8 being received by a patrolling warship, or being relayed by a merchant vessel.

However VHF contact is not guaranteed, a warship may well not be able to respond to an attack before the pirates are on board and there is the view that pirates loiter near the IRTC waiting for a merchant ship to pass.

A yacht coming from for example Aden eastbound or Salalah westbound may choose to join the IRTC some way from its start point. The area of the IRTC between 47E and 49E is considered the most dangerous and a yacht should ensure she has joined well before this high risk area" to enjoy the maximum possible protection. The yacht should plan to conduct as much of this part of the passage as possible at night.

As for hugging the Yemeni coast, MSCHOA state that the Yemeni coastal forces are NOT under MSCHOA control nor is there any formal co-operation. Naval units may not enter Yemeni waters without first obtaining permission from the Yemeni authorities which may take some time. There may be an increased chance of encountering a people-smuggling boat. Parts of the Yemeni coast have been reported to be under the influence of terrorist groups.

### **Q: What about convoys?**

**A:** It has long been common practice for yachts intending to transit the GoA to form informal convoys in either Djibouti, Aden or Salalah. The military forces support this concept.

If the convoy approach is to be followed it is suggested that there is a limit of no more than five or six vessels in any one convoy. This is because vessels will need to keep very close to one another if they are to offer any protection through numbers, and close station-keeping for the duration of the voyage through the GoA may prove a strain particularly if short-handed.

There are some who advocate a large convoy of 25-30 yachts (although organised into smaller sections of 5 or 6 boats except when under attack). The advocates of this approach claim that the large number of yachts acts as a deterrent, especially as the potential attackers will not know if arms are being carried.

While recognising that to be part of such a group may give a feeling of heightened security, the military do not believe that the large convoy does provide any deterrent effect. A Khat-affected young "Jin al Bar" warrior, who will cheerfully open fire on a warship, is not likely to be put off by the sight of 25-30 yachts. Additionally, given that it has taken such convoys some 25 minutes to form their defensive formation and only three minutes for a pirate skiff to approach and board a victim, it would be all too easy for outliers to be picked off.

### **Q: Should we carry firearms?**

**A:** Naval advice is very strongly against and also discourages use of flares etc. as weapons which could lead to an escalation of violence.

### **Q: What about nav lights, radio procedures, AIS and the like?**

**A:** Yachts should use only their deck-level navigation lights.

Monitor Ch 16 VHF. For intra convoy communications use a different channel at low power and never give a position but instead bearing and distance from pre-arranged arbitrary points.

For an early warning call discreet use of a satellite phone to one of the numbers given above may be the best option.

When in transit a radar transceiver should be used in the normal way. A radar target enhancer (RTE) provides an apparently large echo and should be switched off unless there is danger of collision.

If you have an AIS transponder, current naval advice to yachts is to leave it switched on in the Gulf of Aden so that the warships know where and who you are. In the Somali Basin or further afield where there are far fewer warships an AIS transponder should be switched off unless the yacht is either aware of military forces in their vicinity, or is under attack.

The military state that the pirates are not big users of modern technology but do use GPS.



**Q: What of the Hanish Islands in the southern Red Sea?**

**A:** Local militias are reported to be active around the Hanish Islands and Zuqar Island and a wide berth is advised.

**Q: is there ship transport available to yachts?**

**A:** A shipping company has expressed interest and if a service can be provided details will be published as widely as possible.

**Q: If I do decide to go against advice, what precautions should I take?**

**A:** Every skipper will have their own checklist of preparations which should be thoroughly thought through in advance. Security advisors have suggested:-

- split up money into different caches
- keep electronic copies of your passport etc. on yahoo- or Google-type accounts with spurious names - if your original papers are lost you can access the copies from any police station or internet cafe
- consider carrying only copies (not originals) of essential documents on the boat, although it is acknowledged that some countries insist on seeing originals.
- consider having two passports (a legitimate exercise for eg business travellers)
- wear a cheap watch
- have an old mobile phone
- keep only old (out of date) credit cards in your wallet
- (if ashore) wear only such clothing that you can afford to lose
- before entering a dangerous area study FCO advice on conduct if you are taken hostage
- advise your next of kin if you are going into a dangerous area so they are prepared to deal with matters if the worst happens – they should know in advance which authorities to talk to, etc.

**Q: What if the yacht is under attack?**

**A:** Set off the 406MHz EPIRB, make a Mayday call (VHF or HF DSC, VHF 16 or 8, Sat-C or any other means) and if possible report immediately to

- **UKMTO Dubai +971 50 552 3215 or**
- **MSCHOA Northwood +44 1923 958 547 or**

- **MARLO Bahrain +973 3940 1395.**

**Q: If pirates get on board how should the crew react?**

**A:** Security experts offer the following advice:-

- Stay calm - attackers are likely to be excitable and nervous - you will think more clearly and your conduct may also calm them – do not make sudden movements
- Stay together as far as practicable
- Offer no resistance
- Cooperate
- Do not use firearms, even if available – the risk of escalation is significant.
- Do not use flash photography, which may be mistaken for muzzle flashes by pirates or military forces sent to assist
- Do not use flares or other pyrotechnics as weapons
- In the event that military personnel take action on board the vessel, unless otherwise directed everyone should keep low to the deck, cover their head with both hands (always ensuring that both hands are empty and visible). Be prepared to answer questions on identity and status as military personnel will need to differentiate quickly between crew and pirates.

ISAF 12/2010

**Gulf of Aden/Indian Ocean YACHT PASSAGE ADVICE FORM for UKMTO / MSCHOA**

1. YACHT NAME	
2. MMSI	
3. NATIONAL REGISTRATION NUMBER	
4. HOME PORT	
5. FLAG STATE	
6. CALLSIGN	
7. LOA	
8. NUMBER OF PERSONS ON BOARD ....M/F/TOTAL	
9. SATCOM C NUMBER	
10. SATPHONE NUMBER(S) (state which can take SMS text)	
11. MF/HF (DETAILS PLEASE)	
12 CRUISING SPEED /MAX SPEED	
13. COLOUR OF TOPSIDES	
14. COLOUR OF DECK	
15. RIG	
16. SAIL NUMBERS/INSIGNIA	
17. EMAIL ADDRESSES ON BOARD	
18. MASTER'S NAME	
19. MASTER'S NATIONALITY/ PASSPORT NO	
20. PRINCIPAL YACHT CLUB/ASSOCIATION	
21. 24/7 SHORESIDE CONTACT	
22 DATES/PLACES OF INTENDED PASSAGE	