

RÉPUBLIQUE GABONAISE

UNION – TRAVAIL – JUSTICE

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GABONESE REPUBLIC

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MARITIME ADMINISTRATION

**INTERNATIONAL SHIP REGISTRY OF GABON
COMMISSIONAIRE OF MARITIME AFFAIRS**

INTERSHIPPING SERVICES LLC.

OFFICE 601, AL SAWAN 1, AL RASHIDIYA 03, AJMAN, U.A.E P.O. BOX 4295

T: + 971 6 74 28 120 F: +971 6 744 1270

EMAIL : admin@intershippingservices.com

WEBSITE : www.intershippingservices.com

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To : Representatives of Gabon flagged vessels, Deputy Registrars, Ship-owners & Ship-operators, Masters, Recognized Organisation and Flag State Surveyors.

Subject: “Navigation in the Black Sea Region in View of the Escalating Situation”.

GENERAL:

1. The ISR Gabon wishes to draw the attention of all concerned to the escalating security tensions in Ukraine and according to reports in the public domain, all commercial operations at Ukrainian seaports have been suspended. Due to the escalating security situation in and around the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) and territorial waters of Ukraine and the Russian Federation in the Black Sea and the Azov Sea, Ukraine has set security level 3 in the sea and rivers ports of Ukraine. Dangerous sea areas and changes in the operational status of ports may occur at any time.
2. Ship movements and cargo operations are suspended at Mariupol, Berdyansk, and other ports. There had been reported some damage to Ukrainian port infrastructure and all Ukrainian ports have been closed. Seafarers are also not permitted to leave their ships. Yeisk, Rostov, Taganrog, are not accessible to commercial vessels since access to the Sea of Azov through the Kerch Strait is currently blocked by naval forces.
3. Masters and operators should exercise caution, be on high alert in the area and stay in close contact with national and local maritime authorities. They should also stay well informed about navigation warnings and keep well clear of these areas as well as warships and military crafts. Operators and Masters should complete a Risk Assessment before entering the Black Sea area.¹

¹ <https://shipping.nato.int/nsc/operations/news/-2022/situation-on-the-black-sea-and-the-sea-of-azov>



4. Masters and crew shall at all times observe restrictions imposed by local authorities. It is to be noted that given the situation, port services may be disrupted and security levels in ports may change at short notice. As required in terms of SOLAS XI-2/4.3 and XI-2/4.4, ships shall respond to the MARSEC level set by the Contracting Government.

GUIDANCE:

5. Shipmasters of Gabon flagged vessels trading in Russian or Ukrainian ports, are strongly advised to contact local agents for the latest advisories. Company Security Officers (CSOs) and Ship Security Officers (SSOs) should obtain security level information prior to entering ports through the appropriate Port Authorities. Ships should comply with the Port Facility security level if it is higher than the security level set onboard.

6. Gabon commercial vessels are advised to avoid any transit or operation within the EEZ of Ukraine or Russia within the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. Masters and operators of Gabon flagged ships that operate or that may operate in this area are strongly advised to evaluate the local security circumstances to determine whether their continued presence/or proceeding to ports in the area is safe.

7. Given that the Ship Security level for vessels within the EEZ of Ukraine or Russia within the Black Sea is set to Security Level 3, it is recommended that journeys to the Black Sea are carefully considered and planned based on an assessment of the escalating security situation.

8. In case vessels navigate in the area masters must ensure the automatic identification system (AIS) is always transmitting (except when the master believes that continuing to operate AIS might compromise the safety or security of the ship or when a security incident is imminent), consistent with provisions of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and monitor VHF Channel 16. To avoid an accidental engagement, it is recommended to maintain AIS signal containing basic identification information. Vessels in these areas may encounter GPS interference, AIS spoofing, and/or other communications jamming.

9. Exercise caution and be on high alert in the area. Stay in close contact with national and local maritime authorities. Stay well informed about navigation warnings and keep well clear of these areas as well as warships and military crafts.

10. In the event of any incident Gabon flagged commercial vessels should activate the Ship Security Alert System immediately and notify the NATO Shipping Center and the ISR of Gabon.

11. In case a vessel is located at a Ukrainian port or is blocked plans to depart should be arranged as safely as possible. In case such departure is being obstructed by military & navy forces or in any way, it is strongly recommended to comply with their instructions.

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12. Any vessels currently within Ukrainian and Russian ports of the Black Sea are encouraged to leave as soon as possible if it is safe to do so and follow local authority’s guidelines and instructions, if available.

13. Operators and Masters should ensure that any planned operations or voyages do not take the vessel into any area, or engage in any activity, that would expose her to the risk of ongoing military operations. Vessels operating in these areas may encounter GPS interference, AIS spoofing, and/or other communications jamming. Vessels should ensure they are broadcasting on AIS (except when the Master believes that continuing to operate AIS might compromise the safety or security of the ship or when a security incident is imminent) and clearly state their intentions across VHF, consistent with provisions of the International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), and monitor VHF Channel 16

14. Notwithstanding the obligations by the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 and other relevant international maritime conventions, owners and managers employing Russian or Ukrainian seafarers are strongly advised to seek independent legal advice on their potential liabilities.

15. This is a dynamic situation and changes may occur at any time. Owners, Operators, Company Security Officers, and Masters are suggested to monitor the developments and to liaise closely with local port agents and P&I correspondents for the latest information on facility conditions, dangerous sea areas, and temporary port closures and navigational restrictions.

Contact Information:

NATO Shipping Center (NSC): info@shipping.nato.int or +44 (0) 1923-956-574. NSC Advisories and warnings can be found at <https://shipping.nato.int/nsc>