SECURITY DOGMA

Ship Anti-Piracy Layers One-Page Reference

Based on BMP Maritime Security (BMP MS), June 2026 edition · checked November 28, 2026

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The idea: a threat needs capability, intent and opportunity. A ship can only reduce the **opportunity**, so it stacks protection in layers.

The layers, from far to near

Layer	What it means
1. Plan and report	Threat and risk assessment, a vessel hardening plan, route choice. If risk can't be brought as low as reasonably practicable, reconsider the voyage. Register and report in voluntary reporting areas.
2. Watch	Extra briefed lookouts, night-vision and thermal aids. Distinct alarms for attack and for all-clear.
3. Speed and steering	Under approach: maximum speed, steady course, only small helm changes (big turns cost speed).
4. Barriers at the rails	Razor wire, spikes and other barriers, water hoses and water cannons.
5. Hardened doors	Reinforced external and internal doors, bars on large windows, hinged plates on ladders.
6. Citadel	A protected space for the whole crew (plus extra people) for 3 to 5 days.

Citadel essentials

- Holds everyone on board for 3–5 days
- VHF radio and satellite communications
- Independent power
- Water, food and sanitation
- The Master decides when to use it
- Stay inside until the pirates have gone or a military "safe word" is given. It "could take days"

When a suspicious boat approaches

1. Raise the alarm, go to maximum speed
2. Mayday on VHF Channel 16 and DSC; activate the ship security alert system
3. Water spray, secure doors, gather the crew
4. If boarded: stop the ship and engines; crew to the citadel or safe muster point

Armed guards (if the operator uses them)

- BMP MS doesn't recommend them in general: it's the operator's decision
- "Only as an additional layer," never a replacement
- Company certified to ISO 28007-1:2015; flag state authorization
- Graduated, proportionate rules for the use of force; the Master's authority is overriding
- The ship's crew must not handle or use firearms

Reporting centres named in BMP MS (examples)

- **IMB Piracy Reporting Centre:** global, 24 hours
- **UKMTO:** Middle East, 24/7 incident reporting and liaison with military forces
- **MDAT-GoG:** Gulf of Guinea and West/Central Africa, 24/7

Remember: BMP MS is industry guidance, circulated by the IMO in 2025. Threats change: operators use the current BMP MS, the MISTO threat overview and their flag state's requirements.