



Maritime Security Advisory

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MARITIME SECURITY (MARSEC) LEVELS

The [National Terrorism Advisory System](#) (NTAS) was recently updated with a [National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin](#) regarding the recent conflict and tensions in the Middle East. Further, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), in collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Department of Defense Cyber Crime Center (DC3), and the National Security Agency, recently published an [alert](#) urging organizations to remain vigilant against potential targeted cyber operations by Iranian state-sponsored or affiliated threat actors.

There is no known specific, credible maritime threat to the homeland at this time. The current Maritime Security (MARSEC) level remains at 1. This Maritime Security Advisory is intended to refresh understanding of MARSEC levels and associated responsibilities. Collective vigilance across U.S. ports and waterways in the physical domain and cyberspace is essential given the complexity of our Marine Transportation System (MTS), the breadth of government and industry stakeholders, and the vital role of maritime commerce to U.S. economic prosperity and strategic mobility. Accordingly, the Coast Guard is reaching out to our stakeholders subject to the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA) with information related to changes in the MARSEC Level.

Pursuant to statute and Presidential directive, the USCG maintains MARSEC Levels, a three-tiered system for managing the appropriate and scaled response to various threats to the U.S. MTS. Enforcement of MARSEC levels – national and regionally – is an important element of the Coast Guard's efforts to control, secure, and defend U.S. ports, waterways, and shipping. The MARSEC Level will direct appropriate maritime security activities for regulated maritime industry in accordance with approved port level, maritime facility, and vessel security plans. As the USCG continues its operations to facilitate commerce vital to economic security and strategic mobility, ongoing assessment of MARSEC levels is critical.

MARSEC Levels

- **MARSEC Level 1 (Normal):** This is the baseline or minimum Level of security that must be always maintained. It generally applies when there is no elevated threat, and basic security measures are sufficient. USCG maritime security activities provide deterrence through sustained operations, strategic communications, and credible presence. This includes measures such as maintaining appropriate access controls, conducting routine security patrols, and verifying credentials.

- **MARSEC Level 2 (Heightened):** Level 2 can be implemented in response to a specific or non-specific threat, and when there is a heightened risk of a transportation security incident. It requires appropriate additional security measures to be put in place on regulated facilities and vessels. USCG maritime security activities enhance deterrence through increased or focused operations and increased unpredictability. This includes measures such as increased frequency of security patrols, enhanced screening procedures for personnel and vehicles, and heightened surveillance of critical infrastructure.
- **MARSEC Level 3 (Exceptional):** This is the highest Level of security, activated when a transportation security incident is probable or imminent, or has already occurred. It is resource intensive and normally set in a very limited number of ports/locations at a given time. It requires the implementation of further specific protective security measures and may include restrictions on vessel movements and selected port operations. This includes measures such as restricting access to certain areas, implementing enhanced perimeter security, and coordinating with law enforcement agencies for increased security presence.

The United States' integrated network of ports and waterways – the MTS – is a functional extension of our border composed of 25,000 of coastal and inland waters and rivers serving 361 ports. From port infrastructure to shipping lanes to supply chains, stewardship of MARSEC levels is instrumental to safeguarding the homeland and restoring our maritime dominance. As an alternative or supplement to changing MARSEC Levels, MARSEC Directives are a security measure, also issued by the Commandant, to address specific threats or vulnerabilities in the maritime sector, with specific actions required to mitigate risks. These directives are often time-sensitive, mandatory, and legally binding. MARSEC Directives take precedence over the general requirements of a facility or vessel security plan. MARSEC Directives will specify the duration for which they are in effect.

Regulated maritime stakeholders are encouraged to review their approved vessel security plans and facility security plans with security officers and organizational leadership to ensure they are familiar with the requirements and procedures associated with a change in the MARSEC Level. Captains of the Port (COTP)/Federal Maritime Security Coordinators (FMSC) will work through Area Maritime Security Committees (AMSC) to promote the safety and security of our ports and waterways. Stakeholders are encouraged to reach out to their local AMSC and COTP/FMSC with any questions regarding maritime security within their port. Facility Security Officers (FSOs) and Vessel Security Officers (VSOs) should ensure their security plans are up-to-date and that all personnel are properly trained on MARSEC level changes and associated procedures. Consider conducting security drills and exercises to test the effectiveness of your security plans and identify areas for improvement.

Further information related to reporting breaches of security, suspicious activity, transportation security incidents, and cyber incidents in the MTS can be found in Coast Guard [Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular \(NVIC\) 02-24](#).

For questions or assistance, please contact your local Captain of the Port.

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