

Information Bulletin August 2022



Shipping Industry to remove the Indian Ocean High Risk Area

After more than a decade of effective threat-reducing counter-piracy operations the shipping industry has removed the 'Indian Ocean High Risk Area' (HRA). Notification of the removal of the HRA from 0001 UTC on 1 January 2023 by industry bodies was forwarded in a submission on the 22nd of August, to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for the next meeting of the Maritime Safety Committee scheduled to start on 31 October 2022. Although the situation is improving in the wider area, the *European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz* (EMASoH) shall remain committed to its mandate and keep its light footprint reassurance profile to contribute to the safety of navigation in the Gulf area and the Strait of Hormuz.

New chapter for Operation AGENOR

Strait Forward! For the first time in the history of EMASoH, the multinational military staff embarks the flagship of Operation AGENOR, the Italian Multipurpose Patrol Vessel *Thaon di Revel*, to conduct maritime operations from the sea. With the staff afloat, the European maritime initiative in the Gulf region and the Strait of Hormuz will improve:

- ✓ **De-escalatory approach:** EMASoH aims to foster de-escalation and to complement vital diplomatic efforts aiming at ensuring increasing stability.
- ✓ **Inclusive regional dialogue:** The Force headquarters will meet key regional partners in the Gulf region to improve the cooperative dialogue concerning maritime safety and security.
- ✓ **Surveillance:** The Force Headquarters will enhance the Maritime Situational Awareness, which provides safety and security assessments, optimising the allocation of naval assets such as Italian and French ships and French Maritime Patrol Aircrafts in the area of operation to serve the freedom of navigation.
- ✓ **Reassurance:** Personal reassurance calls with shipping operators of EMASoH merchant vessels. The EMASoH Manoeuvre (EMMA) calls enable shipping operators to express their concerns and to report illegal activity.



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New Operation commander Operation AGENOR

On 26th August 2022, the command of the Operation Headquarters of Operation AGENOR, the military track of EMASoH, was handed over from the French *vice-amiral* Jacques Fayard to the French *contre-amiral* Emmanuel Slaars. The newly appointed commander of the French forces in the United Arab Emirates, ALINDIEN, will also lead the Operation Headquarters of Operation AGENOR.

Engagement with shipping industry

One of the main objectives of Operation AGENOR is to reassure maritime merchant shipping transiting the Gulf region, the Strait of Hormuz, and the neighbouring Indian Ocean. Engagement with maritime stakeholders is important to EMASoH. In the context of trans-regional collaboration, following the meeting on the 25th of August with the **Information Fusion Centre** (IFC) of Singapore, a spectrum of possible interactions was identified, starting from the webinars and multilateral exercises on information exchange and data sharing processes.

AIS Data

AIS is one of the technical means supporting the capability to maintain a good picture of shipping in the area, as all ships above threshold tonnage are required to transmit their identifying data at all times, whether underway or at anchor. While this tool supports safety and security of navigation, we do observe instances where ships turn off their AIS transponders in the area, including when passing through the Strait of Hormuz. This practice not only makes the detailed monitoring of ships more challenging, but also may contribute to safety threats for ships sailing in the area, as switching off AIS highly likely draws the attention rather than dissimulate. We recommend strict adherence to the IMO guidelines with respect to the use of AIS by ships.

At EMASoH we use these AIS data and analyse them in order to better understand the patterns of life (POL) in this very specific area; what are the most used destinations, the distribution of traffic between tankers, container ships, passenger ships, supply vessels etc. We also look at the most used routes. These analyses are focused on the EMASoH flags and other EMASoH ships of interest. For this bulletin we will look at the most used destinations with regard to the incoming and outgoing traffic of EMASoH ships of interest in the Gulf.

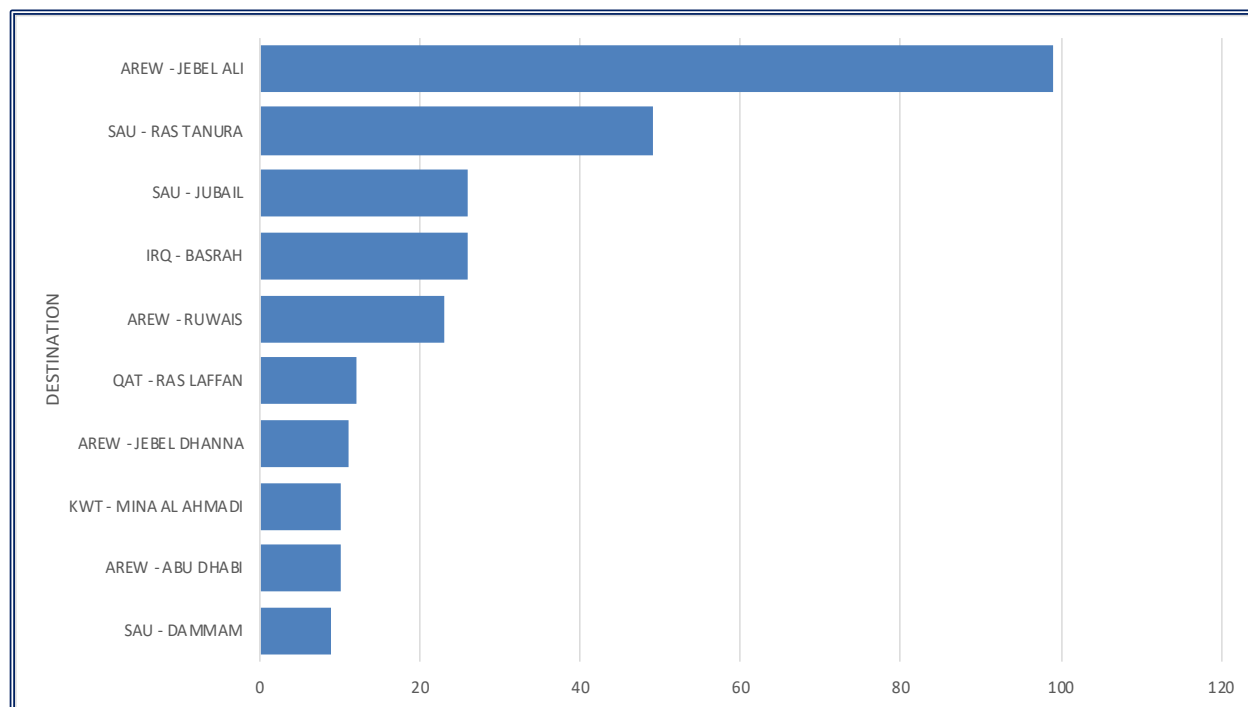


Figure 1: Shows the top ten destinations of EMASoH shipping of interest (including flags and country of economic benefit) having passed the Strait of Hormuz from the Gulf of Oman during the month of August.

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The first destination inside is Jebel Ali with not much surprise considering that this port is the eleventh biggest container terminal worldwide (ranking just behind Rotterdam) and that two out of the three biggest container shipping companies in the world are from EMASoH countries (APM-Maersk and CMA CGM).

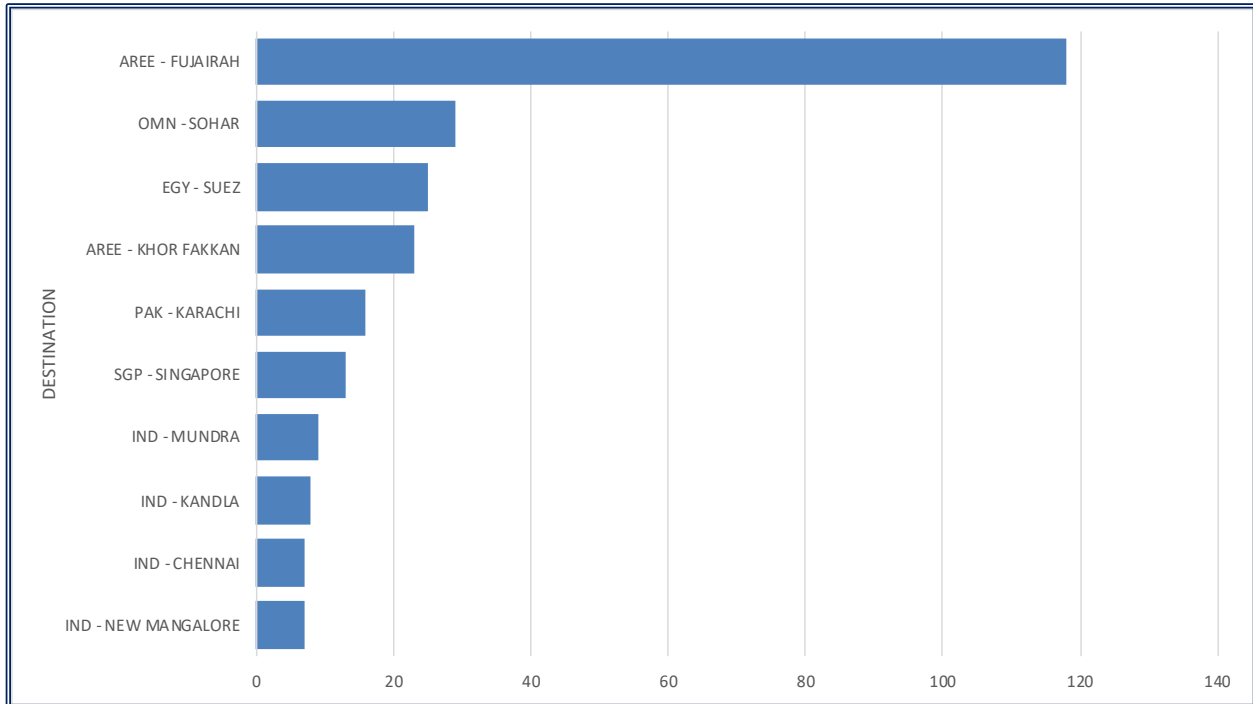


Figure 2: Shows the top ten destinations of EMASoH shipping of interest (including flags and country of economic benefit) having passed the Strait of Hormuz from the Gulf to the Gulf of Oman during the month of August.

The first destination outside is Fujairah also with not much surprise as it is a multi-purpose port and the third biggest bunkering port in the world. We can also see here that only a small fraction of the remaining traffic, that traffic that does not stop at Fujairah or Khor Fakkan is heading to the west through Suez. It indicates that most of the EMASoH shipping of interest is not heading to Europe.

Voluntary Reporting Scheme

Shipping operators are invited to participate to a Voluntary Reporting Scheme. Voluntary reporting improves the cooperation and guidance EMASoH can provide to ships on the basis of informing, reassuring, and promoting the freedom of navigation. Voluntary reported ships are also prioritised for possible accompaniments with EMASoH's naval assets and reassuring EMMA calls with naval and aerial assets.

Before entering the Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA), 48 hours in advance, or as soon as possible:

- ✓ **Inform** EMASoH of the timing of their intended entry and exit VRA;
- ✓ **Confirmation** of the planning 6 hours before entering and possible changes to their journey planning;
- ✓ **Report** any suspicious behaviour to the coast guard of the coastal state and to EMASoH.

The EMASoH **Voluntary Reporting Area** (VRA) comprises the entire Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and a part of the Arabian Sea between the 53E and 63E meridians and the 15N parallel.

Reporting to EMASoH is possible via ctf474-emasoh.vra.fct@def.gouv.fr or phone **+971 265 74 278**.
Standard reporting formats are available and will be accessible in the future via the EMASoH website.

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