

MARITIME ACTIVITIES CONSULTANTS S.A.

"CONNECTING YOUR BUSINESS TO THE MARITIME RESOURCES YOU NEED"



TECHNICAL SERVICE CIRCULAR No. 06/2021, Date: 08/04/2021

Subject: "New revised Guidelines for Transiting the Turkish Straits recently issued by the Oil Companies International Maritime Forum"



- 1. The Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF)¹** has recently issued an information paper² guiding vessel operators considering a transit of their tankers through the Turkish Straits. These guidelines comply with Turkish Straits regulations and contain additional measures to mitigate specific risks identified based on risk assessments.
- 2.** The Turkish Straits are **some of the busiest waterways in the world**. They are the only waterway connection between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea and more than 3% of the global oil supply passes through them. On average, 50,000 vessels per year transit through the Bosphorus Strait and the Çanakkale Strait (also referred to as the Dardanelles), or approximately 130 vessels per day, with around 20% being oil tankers or gas carriers.
- 3. The open sea approaches** to the entrance of each strait have no serious geographical hazards. However, current Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) rules require vessels to enter a controlled zone to register their arrival before entering the Straits. Vessels may then either anchor or return to sea while waiting for their allotted transit time.
- 4. Services available in the Straits.** While ship-to-ship (STS) transfer equipment is not available in the Straits for major operations, it is available in the Black Sea. STS service providers

¹ The Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF) founded in 1970, is a voluntary association of oil companies having an interest in the shipment and terminalling of crude oil, oil products, petrochemicals and gas, and includes companies engaged in offshore marine operations supporting oil and gas exploration, development and production.

² [https://www.ocimf.org/publications/information-papers/guidelines-for-transiting-the-turkish-straits-\(1\).aspx](https://www.ocimf.org/publications/information-papers/guidelines-for-transiting-the-turkish-straits-(1).aspx)

maintain equipment at Sevastopol and additional equipment is available in Piraeus. Repair facilities are available at Tuzla Shipyard, where the dry dock can accommodate vessels up to Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) size. Repair facilities are also available at Yalova Shipyard. Slop reception facilities are available at Çanakkale and also at Istanbul anchorage.

5. The Montreux Convention of 1936 set out the general principle of freedom of navigation through the Turkish Straits for all merchant vessels by day and night. However, vessels transiting the Turkish Straits must follow certain regulations and traffic systems. To be considered a vessel in transit, the vessel must not be bound for a Turkish port or have a stopover of more than 168 hours (7 days), excluding any involuntary waiting time.

6. Key safety measures have been introduced in 1994 after several serious marine casualties. The first was a Traffic Separation Scheme (T.S.S.), which was adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 1995. The second was the Maritime Traffic Regulations for the Turkish Straits and the Marmara Region. These regulations are designed to control traffic in the Straits to ensure safe navigation and protect life, property, and the environment. They are intended to apply to all vessels in the region.

7. Risks of transiting the Turkish Straits: The guidelines emphasize among others that while vessels 200 meters or longer can cause the largest oil spills, casualty data shows that the number of incidents that they cause and their overall pollution risk is both significantly lower than for smaller vessels. This is likely because of the current rules requiring one-way traffic. According to the OCIMF, the analysis of incident data shows that spills are caused more often by tankers that are less than 200 meters long. Tankers of this length are less rigorously restricted and are often treated like non-dangerous/hazardous cargo vessels.

8. Maritime Activities Consultants S.A. will further follow-up on priority basis reports & studies issued by major maritime industry associations providing information on safety considerations for the maritime traffic of regions and straits of particular relevance for the international maritime trade, and report as appropriate by providing consultancy services and guidance to international registries and ship-operators and managers.

"SIMPLIFYING YOUR MARITIME NEEDS"



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