

## **High-Risk Channel Crossings**

# Preventing the supply of 'Small Boats' to Criminals

Date **April 2021**

Reference **0647-OIC**

This Amber Alert is issued by the United Kingdom's National Crime Agency (NCA). It is based on assessed intelligence and warns of dangers and threats from serious organised criminality. It is devised with the aim of bringing about preventative or remedial action.

We recommend you use this Alert to complement existing knowledge and support ongoing improvements to your business processes and procedures.

# High-Risk Channel Crossings – Preventing the supply of ‘Small Boats’ to Criminals

## Overview

Since global Covid-19 lockdown measures were imposed in March 2020 the number of migrants attempting to enter the UK using small boats has increased significantly with UK law enforcement detecting in excess of 8000 migrant arrivals throughout 2020. Consequently, there has been a rise in demand for vessels to aid migrant Channel crossings. Demand is unlikely to decrease especially as weather conditions improve moving into spring and summer. Organised crime groups facilitating migrants will attempt crossings whenever conditions and opportunities allow.

By working together and raising awareness of the issues associated to such high-risk Channel crossings, including how criminals operate and areas of vulnerability, we can help protect the marine industry and its stakeholders, both in the UK and on the continent.

## What we would like you to do

The content of this Alert is intended to inform the British maritime industry of the high-risk use of small boats in migrant Channel crossings. If any reader is aware or encounters events detailed in the Alert, they should contact the independent charity Crimestoppers and quote ref: **0647-OIC**. Contact details can be found below in the section titled ‘What you can do’.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) is a national law enforcement agency which leads the UK’s fight to cut serious and organised crime. The NCA Alerts process is the way in which we provide information to non-law enforcement bodies including the private sector to combat and disrupt serious crime. To help us to improve this service, we would welcome any feedback you have on both the Alert itself and the information provided to you. Please email all feedback to [alerts@nca.gov.uk](mailto:alerts@nca.gov.uk) and include the reference **0647-OIC** in the subject line.

## Information Report

### What is the risk?

Crossing the Channel by small boat is a high-risk method of reaching the UK. Some ventures are opportunistic, but many are facilitated by criminals who are aware of the dangers involved such as overcrowded boats and lack of safety equipment. Migrants pay for services with the promise of a better life, but are not always aware of what mode of transport they will end up on or the dangers posed. In the case of small boats, they are primarily at risk of injury and/or loss of life.



Image 1

The marine industry is at risk from abuse by crime groups who may seek to obtain access to vessels, engines or equipment, whether through theft, fraudulent activity or legitimate means. This may cause financial loss, reputational damage and harm to the industry and its customers.

It is probable that many boats used in small boats Channel crossings are sourced online providing buyers with more anonymity over face to face transactions. There is also evidence that some boats are stolen locally. Risk of theft can be significantly reduced by following practical security guidelines and adhering to best practice.

**The most common types of vessels involved in these incidents are:**

Rigid-Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBs), Small/Soft Inflatable Boats (SIBs) and Zodiac Type Inflatables.

**The most common vessel brands involved in these incidents are:**

Zodiac, Quicksilver, Bombard, Honwave, Suzumar, Aquaparx, Typhoon, Mercury, Hibo, Honda, Suzuki, Parsun, Silver, Viamare, Bark, Natoxx and Sharkline.

**The most common types of engines involved in these incidents are:**

Yamaha, Suzuki, Tohatsu, Honda, Hangkai, Johnson/Evinrude and Mariner/Mercury.



Image 2– Small boats seized from Channel crossings

**What you can look out for**

- Cash payments.
- Unusual combination of boats and equipment in one transaction.
- Repeat purchasing of boats and/or equipment from the same retailer.
- Lack of concern about the condition of the boat or equipment being purchased – i.e. it may not be for their own use.
- Unusual buyer behaviour i.e. something that just doesn't feel right.

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- Strangers approaching locals to purchase a boat on their behalf.
- Unusual boats docking for brief periods around harbours/marinas.
- Those avoiding engaging with the harbourmaster or other marina users.
- Customers wanting to complete their transaction and collection as quickly as possible.
- Customers who have purchased a vessel online and are insistent on travelling to collect the boat, avoiding the need to provide a fixed delivery address.
- Enquiries about bulk purchase of equipment i.e. life jackets.

### What you can do

- Adhere to general security guidelines and ensure all vessels and equipment are secured accordingly.
- Utilise CCTV where possible to monitor key areas of risk or vulnerability.
- Be vigilant and report any strange activity or behaviour.
- Ensure thefts are promptly reported, particularly vessels or engines.

If you have information regarding suspicious activity around the purchase of vessels, engines or equipment, please contact the independent charity **Crimestoppers** on **0800 555 111** and quote ref: **0647-OIC** or visit [crimestoppers-uk.org](https://crimestoppers-uk.org) to report online. You will remain 100% anonymous.

If you see anything else suspicious around our coastline, ports or waterways call the police on **101** and quote **KRAKEN** or visit [gov.uk/report-border-crime](https://gov.uk/report-border-crime).

Security/protection guidance material (approved and endorsed by British Marine)-  
COMPASS (Combined Official Marine Protection & Security System) –  
<https://www.datatag.co.uk/compass/>

'Channel migrants: Kurdish-Iranian family died after boat sank' - Oct '20:  
<https://www.google.co.uk/amp/s/www.bbc.co.uk/news/amp/uk-54717137>

'Channel migrants: People-smugglers jailed after woman dies' Dec '19:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-50855610>

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2. Collected for a specified, explicit and legitimate purpose and not further processed in a manner that's incompatible with these purposes;
3. Adequate, relevant and limited to what's necessary in relation to the purpose for which they are processed;
4. Accurate and where necessary kept up to date;
5. Kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purpose for which the personal data are processed;
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### Alert Markings

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### NCA Alerts Team

Recognising that the private sector is often the victim of serious organised crime and is engaged in its own efforts to prevent, deter and frustrate criminal activity, the NCA seeks to forge new relationships with business and commerce that will be to our mutual benefit – and to the criminals' cost. By issuing Alerts that warn of criminal dangers and threats, NCA seeks to arm the private sector with information and advice it can use to protect itself and the public. For further information about this NCA Alert, please contact the NCA Alerts team by email [alerts@nca.gov.uk](mailto:alerts@nca.gov.uk) or by telephoning 020 7238 8624. For more information about the National Crime Agency go to [www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk](http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk).

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- a) the prevention or detection of crime,
- b) *the apprehension or prosecution of offenders, or*
- c) *the assessment or collection of a tax or duty or an imposition of a similar nature,*

*to the extent that the application of those provisions of the GDPR would be likely to prejudice any of the matters mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c).*

(DPA 2018, Schedule 2, Part 1).

Any Section 7(1) information should be submitted to [alerts@nca.gov.uk](mailto:alerts@nca.gov.uk).

The NCA's Information Charter is published on our external website at [www.nca.gov.uk](http://www.nca.gov.uk)

**Handling advice – Legal information** - This information is supplied by the UK's NCA under Section 7(4) of the Crime and Courts Act 2013. It is exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It may be subject to exemptions under other UK legislation. Except where permitted by any accompanying handling instructions, this information must not be further disclosed without the NCA's prior consent, pursuant to schedule 7, Part 3, of the Crime and Courts Act 2013.

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