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MEPC.1/Circ.779
31 January 2012

**POLLUTION PREVENTION MEASURES IN THE AREA SURROUNDING THE
WRECKAGE OF R.M.S. TITANIC**

Communication received from the United States Coast Guard

A communication has been received from the United States Coast Guard concerning pollution prevention measures in the area surrounding the wreckage of the **R.M.S. Titanic**.

As requested, the above-mentioned communication annexed hereto is circulated to Member States for their information and action as appropriate.

ANNEX

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

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16707

The Honorable Koji Sekimizu
Secretary General
International Maritime Organization
4 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7SR
United Kingdom

Dear Mr. Secretary General:

As highlighted by the 2012 World Maritime Day theme, "IMO: 100 Years After the TITANIC," we remember the tragic day that R.M.S. TITANIC struck an iceberg on April 14, 1912, resulting in its sinking. Its wreckage and surrounding area are considered by many to be a memorial to the 1,512 passengers and crew who perished and a grave to the 1,179 who were never recovered.

Resting at a depth of approximately 12,600 feet, R.M.S. TITANIC is a stark and poignant reminder of the disaster, with scattered portions of its hull and artifacts largely intact and clear signs of where its passengers came to rest on the seabed. Unlike land memorials, R.M.S. TITANIC is unique in that much of the circumstances of this catastrophe are preserved by an environment that retains the remains of the vessel, the impact marks of where it struck the seafloor, and even pairs of shoes lying side by side to mark that this was, and is, where a person came to rest.

The notoriety of the disaster has made the wreck site a popular destination for both tourists and explorers. Explorers and scientific researchers who have descended to R.M.S. TITANIC have documented an alarming amount of garbage and debris discarded or left behind by surface vessels on or near the wreckage, in the form of non-degrading (plastic) waste and salvage equipment. Recent damage to the R.M.S. TITANIC's hull from submersible craft is also apparent.

The upcoming 100th anniversary of R.M.S. TITANIC's sinking will bring a surge of interest in the wreck as evidenced by the many cruises currently being marketed to prospective passengers. It is reasonable to expect that the high seas above the wreck site may receive substantially more vessel traffic on or around April 14. There are several safety concerns associated with multiple passenger and exploration vessels that may be keeping station in close proximity to each other. The concentration of vessel traffic will increase the potential for further damage to the wreck site, contamination of the wreck site, and adverse impacts to the surrounding marine environment.

Unfortunately the discharge of trash and waste by vessels operating over the wreck site has already created visible impacts that dishonor this gravesite. Additionally, the discharge of blackwater and graywater may have a potentially negative impact on the micro and macro biological communities currently inhabiting the wreck. Further, the proliferation of dive

weights, rigging, and other such materials from manned and unmanned submersible operations has the potential to litter this piece of world history and erase or confuse important archeological and forensic evidence related to R.M.S. TITANIC's wrecking and deterioration.

For the important reasons listed above, we endeavor to help preserve and protect the R.M.S. TITANIC and its final resting place by strongly recommending that vessels visiting the site adhere to the following:

a. Refrain from discharging garbage, blackwater, graywater, and any other incidental discharges to the operation of a vessel:

(1) within 10 nautical miles of the R.M.S. TITANIC wreck site, defined by the following coordinates:

49°43'11.0"W	50°10'16.7"W
41°55'04.7"N	41°32'21.3"N
49°43'38.4"W	50°10'00.0"W
41°32'06.7"N	41°55'19.5"N

(2) or, within 15 nautical miles up-current of the same.

b. Concentrate any drop weights or other materials necessary for the normal descent and ascent of submersible craft in four specific areas around the wreck site; defined as the areas within 100 meters of the following four coordinates:

49°56'46.0"W	49°56'32.3"W
41°44'07.5"N	41°43'50.6"N
49°57'06.0"W	49°57'01.0"W
41°43'57.5"N	41°43'41.2"N

c. Utilize biodegradable materials such as cloth for drop weight bags and for other items that must be left on the bottom during normal submersible operations.

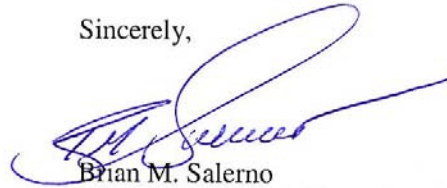
d. Refrain from installing, attaching, or placing additional plaques, memorials or other temporary or permanent fixtures, however well intentioned, on the R.M.S. TITANIC.

e. Comply with existing IMO standards that prohibit discharge of plastic, oil, chemicals, or other noxious or hazardous liquids.

The United States respectfully urges the IMO and its Member States to raise awareness of these issues, and to disseminate guidelines and recommended practices for preserving the R.M.S. Titanic as a maritime memorial. Respect for the wreck site as a memorial; heightened situational

awareness while in close proximity to other vessels; and continued vigilance to comply with applicable environmental, health, and safety regulations, as well as the measures the United States proposes herein, will help to preserve and protect this memorial for years to come.

Sincerely,



Brian M. Salerno
Vice Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard
Deputy Commandant for Operations

Enclosure: (1) Drop Weight Areas

