Conducting Effective Vessel Search and Seizure

Visit, Board, Search and Seizure Operations

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Types of Boarding/Inspections

- Compliant
  - Vessel complies with the direction of the boarding team
  - No apparent passive/active resistance measures are employed
  - No indication of threat

A **compliant** boarding may escalate to a noncompliant or opposed boarding at any time

- Noncompliant
  - A boarding where available intelligence does not indicate a specific threat, but the vessel employs active or passive measures to prevent and/or impede the boarding phase of the operations
  - Vessel fails to comply with directions

A **noncompliant** boarding can escalate to opposed at any time

Maritime Interception Operational Tenets

- Legal basis for Maritime Interception Operations (MIO)
  - Primary mechanism for search and seizure has been through UNSCR
  - Other examples of legal basis include:
    - Consent of a coastal state or flag state
    - Consent of the master of a vessel
    - A condition of port entry
    - Interception of a stateless vessel
    - Made pursuant to the right of self-defense
  - Based on international policy; given authority through national authority and/or regional authority
  - Development of course of action to respond to maritime threats through the Maritime Operational Threat Response (MOTR)
  - Identification of items to be considered as sanctioned material

Maritime Interception Operational Tenets

- Operational procedures
  - Law enforcement operations need to be defined within national law
    - Rules of engagement
    - Use of force determination and implementation
  - Define team setup
    - Composition of boarding team, roles and responsibilities
    - Control teams – command deck, engineering, medical and security representatives
    - Support teams – communications technical personnel, logistics

Maritime Interception Operational Tenets

- Development of Maritime Execution Plan
  - Initial review
  - Approach, man-to-man coverage
  - Go / No-Go Criteria
  - Activity prior and during inspection
  - Safety inspection, crew escort
  - Identification and verification of ships registration, certifications
  - Cargo matches manifest and matches master disclosure
  - Process, reporting and recommendations when boarding operation is complete
    - Process and determination for releasing, detain, divert, or disposition a vessel

Maritime Interception Operational Tenets

- Development of Maritime Execution Plan
  - Situational Awareness
    - Identification of possible hidden compartments
    - Identification of undeclared personnel
    - Be observant of any attempt to scuttle or destroy contraband or illegal goods
    - Identify inconsistencies or suspicious circumstances
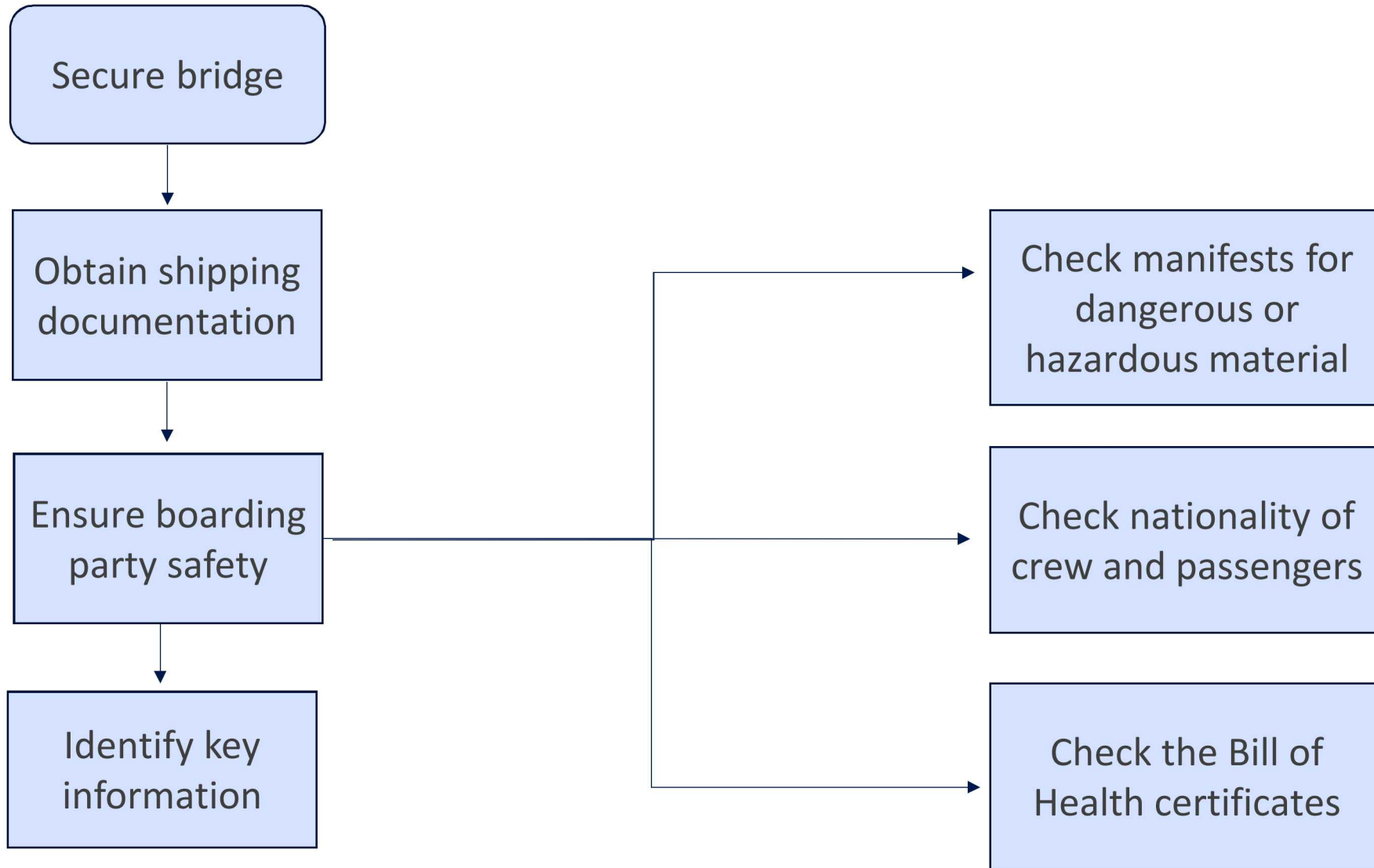   - Teams conducting inspections need to check-in at random intervals

Search Procedures
Ship Documentation

- Careful examination of the ship's documents and cargo can establish the degree of legitimacy of the ship's operations and help determine its true intentions
  - Obtain and validate an accurate description and destination of the cargo
  - Be familiar with the documentation suspect vessels are required to carry
  - Know the procedures for safely searching a suspect vessel when the danger of chemical, biological, explosive, and radiological exposure may be present
  - Boarding teams may be called upon to search for drugs and tasked to collect biometric data on suspect vessel's crew
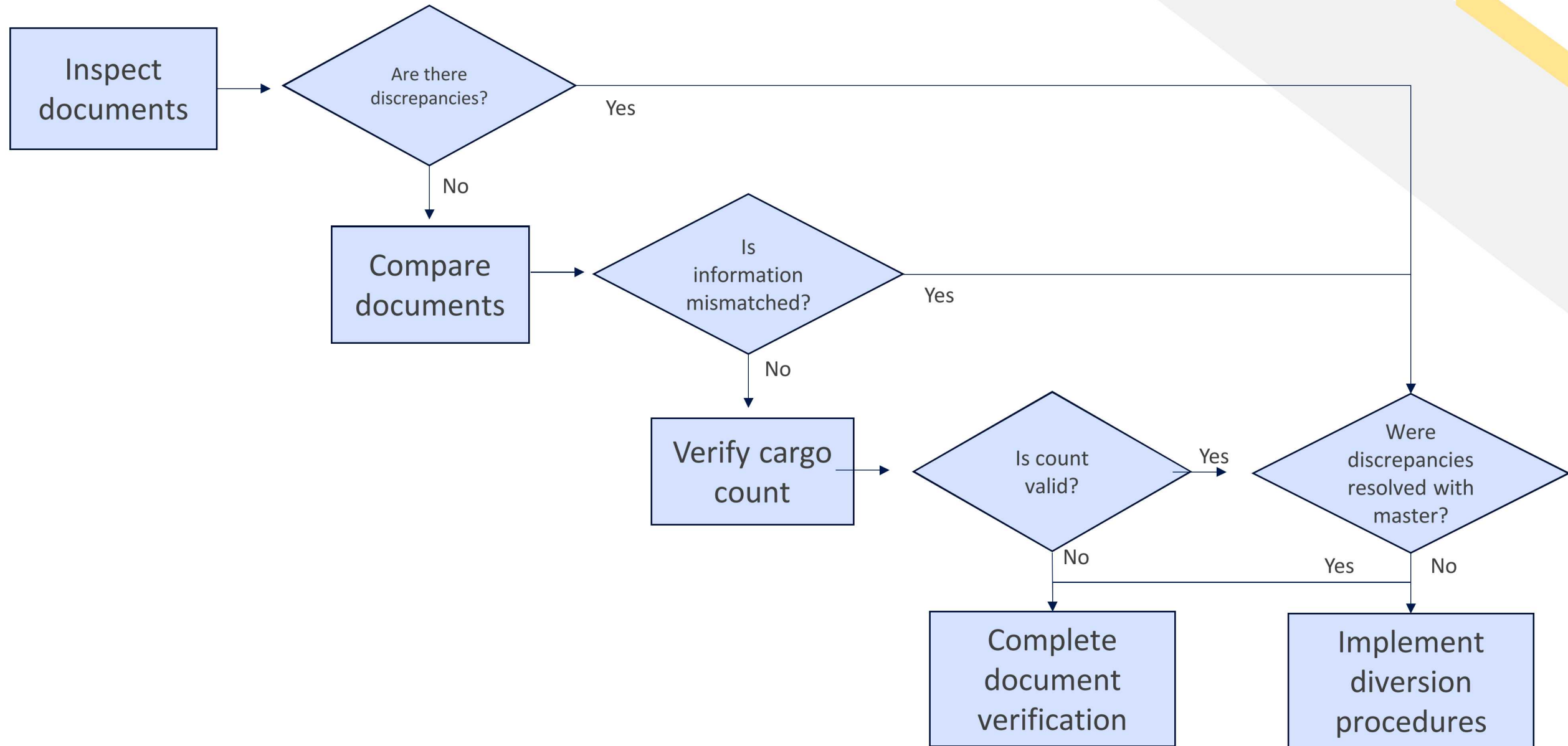
Search Procedures
Ship Documentation

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┌─────────────────┐
│  Secure bridge  │
└─────────────────┘
         │
         ▼
┌─────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Obtain shipping │          │  Check manifests for │
│ documentation   │          │  dangerous or        │
└─────────────────┘          │  hazardous material  │
         │                   └──────────────────────┘
         ▼
┌─────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Ensure boarding │────────▶ │ Check nationality of │
│ party safety    │          │ crew and passengers  │
└─────────────────┘          └──────────────────────┘
         │
         ▼
┌─────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Identify key    │          │ Check the Bill of    │
│ information     │          │ Health certificates  │
└─────────────────┘          └──────────────────────┘
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Search Procedures
Ship Documentation

Search Procedures
Ship Documentation

- Document inspection and validation
  - Boarding team must direct the master or chief mate to present the ship's documents for inspection
  - Consider any suspect vessel as holding unauthorized cargo unless proven otherwise
    - Inconsistencies in cross-referencing will invalidate the shipping documents
    - Information, such as the shipping company, ship's name, port of embarkation, and port of debarkation, should be consistent with each document
    - Whiteout and cross-out marks should only be acceptable if initialed by the master or stamped with an official stamp
    - Documents altered in any manner should arouse suspicion
  - Unapproved cargo shall not be allowed to originate or be addressed from designated countries that are sanctioned

Videotape the inspection process or photograph the documents to obtain an accurate account of the events for further review

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Vessel Inspection Compliant Boarding

- Go / No-Go Criteria
  - Must be continually assessed
- Boarding procedures
- Reporting and inspection determination
- Inspection route determination
- Safety inspections
- Roles of vessels master, crew and passengers
- Threat assessment
- Security sweep
- Inspection and evidence collection

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Vessel Inspection
Search and Seizure Checklist Handouts

Seaworthiness Assessment Checklist		
Item	Assess/Value	Go/No-Go
Period of Roll/Hang Time (>1.5 to 2 sec hang time)	sec	
List	°	
Trim		
Freeboard	ft	
Sea State		
Cumulative Assessment		Go / No-Go
En Route		
Draft Marking and Waterline (first 100 ft = 10 ft of draft; for every additional 100 ft, add 5 ft of draft)	ft	
Bubbles/Oil Slick	Yes / No	
Hull Penetrations	Yes / No	
Cumulative Assessment		Go / No-Go
Onboard Vessel		
Period of Roll/Hang Time	sec	
Bilge Water Level	in	
Sea State		
Use of Pumps and Eductors	Yes / No	
Anchor Viability	Yes / No	
Fire	Yes / No	
Flooding	Yes / No	
Toxic Hazards	Yes / No	
Electrical Shock	Yes / No	
Cumulative Assessment		Go / No-Go

Seaworthiness Assessment Checklist

Go/No-Go Checklist		
Item	Value	No-Go
Mission-essential support assets available.		
Sea state/weather/sea water injection temperature (seas in excess of 6 ft, winds greater than 35 kt, sea water injection temperature less than 50 °F).	ft. kt °F	
Suspect vessel enters TTW, and nation does not authorize pursuit.		
Suspect vessel traveling greater than 10 kt.	kt	
Loss of communications between OSC and BT (if unable to relay through RHIBs or another unit) (NCB only).		
Seaworthiness assessment.		
Authorized levels of force unsuccessful, and freeboard prevents NCB.	ft.	
Passive or active resistance measures intended to inflict serious bodily harm on the BT.		
Intelligence of possible threat/hostile intent.		
Suspect vessel opposes boarding.		
Boarding Party determines operation is unsafe.		

Go/No-Go Checklist

Vessel Inspection
Search and Seizure Checklist Handouts

Operational brief with boarding team	
Item	**Complete**
Weather forecast	
Intelligence brief on suspect vessel	
Type of vessel and size	
Vessel's flag/registry	
Last port	
Next port	
MIO history	
Type cargo	
Crew information	
RFIs/EEIs	
Threat level	
ONI database (reviewed)	
Overall mission plan	
Forces/units assigned	
Command organization	
Aircraft employment	
SROE	
COMM — Internal	
COMM — External (primary/secondary/tertiary)	
COMM — Code words/prowords	
Navigation considerations	
PPRs	
No-Go criteria (reviewed)	
ORM assessment	
Position of suspect vessel	
Extraction procedure	
Sanitation procedure	

Pre-Boarding Checklist

Bridge/Combat Information Center Checklist	
Item	**Complete**
Set MIO condition watch teams (bridge/CIC).	
Man query control position.	
Review query scripts.	
Review navigation track with BO.	
Commence seaworthiness assessment of suspect vessel.	
Obtain weather forecast.	
Set up boarding COMM circuits.	
Establish suspect vessel tracking watch.	
Nominate personnel for ship recording of boarding report.	
Set ship's material condition for MIO.	
Consolidate intelligence briefing information.	
Conduct ship/RHIB/BT COMM checks (EMCON permitting).	
Collect ES racket information.	
Monitor suspect vessel with SSEE.	
Check provisions for BT; resupply as required.	
Set/station as appropriate:	
1. Flight quarters	
2. Boat detail	
3. Navigation detail	
4. Special sea and maneuvering detail	
5. SNOOPIE team	
6. Designated SCAT and main battery weapons details	
7. BT.	

Boarding Team lead task checklist

Vessel Inspection
Search and Seizure Checklist Handouts

Permission Brief for Boarding Team and Boat Crew	
Item	Complete
Overall mission plan and goal	
Intelligence brief on suspect vessel	
Type of vessel and size	
Vessel flag/nationality	
Last port	
Next port	
Vessel MIO history	
Cargo type	
Number of crewmembers and nationality	
Threat level	
Suspect vessel's position (proximity to TTW/safe navigation considerations)	
Expected compliant or noncompliant	
Weather/sea conditions and forecast	
SROE	
Use of force continuum	
Communication procedures/call sign/prowords/code words	
RHIB employment	
Aircraft employment	
Personnel assignments and responsibilities	
Insertion point	
Boarding phases review	
PPR	
No-Go criteria review	
Boarding ORM assessment	
First aid briefing	
Extraction procedure	
Sanitation procedure	
Nonfiring weapons function check	
Equipment checks	
COMM checks (EMCON permitting)	

Brief to Boarding team and crew

Boarding Officer Mission Checklist				
Tactical Communication	Effective Communication	Yes	No	N/A
Commence Insertion				
Point man				
Two man				
Tactical bubble				
Commence Infiltration				
Ensure vessel crew muster confirmed				
Post watch over suspect vessel crew				
Complete ISI				
Commence Inspection (Action On Objective)				
Ship papers (certificate of registry, logs, clearance papers)				
Crew and passenger list				
Invoices or cargo manifest				
Receipts documenting onload of cargo/stores				
Tank sounding data				
Intelligence collection requirements				
Teams notified of dangerous cargo discovered				
Papers compared for inconsistencies				
Cargo count verified				
Commence Intelligence Gathering				
Information collection from all affected spaces				
Biometrics collection (photos/scans/interviews)				
Commence Exfiltration Preps				
Give recommendations to CO.				
Commence extraction.				
Make appropriate deck log entries.				
Observe crew movement.				
Identify extraction method.				
Disembark suspect vessel.				
Recover to supporting ship.				
Ensure Tactical Movements are Employed Properly				
Hallways				
Ladders, stairs				
Intersections				
Breaching				
Room entries				
Detainee marshalling				
Muzzle discipline				
Weapons awareness				
Ensure Medical Procedures are Scenario Specific				

Boarding Team lead task checklist

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Vessel Inspection Compliant Boarding

- Approach and visit procedures – engagement
  - Face-to-face communication
  - Boarding preparation and posture
  - Need for translation
  - Notification of the type of inspection
  - After action reporting

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Vessel Inspection Noncompliant Boarding

- Defined as meeting the following criteria:
  - Vessel fails to comply with the boarding teams directions
  - Passive measures and resistance intended to delay, impede, complicate, and/or deter search and seizure of suspect vessel
  - Boarding team may resort to disabling or methods to foul the vessel's screws to stop the vessel and allow for the boarding team to board and search
- Many events could trigger a change from compliant to noncompliant:
  - Maltreatment
  - Perceived mistreatment or disrespect of the boarding team
  - Fear or anger
  - Political and religious motives

Vessel Inspection Noncompliant Boarding

- Many of the tenets for the compliant boarding also apply to noncompliant boarding. However, execution must be much more thorough and comprehensively planned.
  - Clear lines of authority must be established to conduct the boarding
  - Go/No-Go Criteria
    - Assume that there are already passive and/or active resistance measures in place intended to inflict bodily harm
  - Operational briefing when dealing with a known noncompliant vessel
    - Tactical plans for entry and exit of the vessel
    - Emergency procedures and contingencies
    - Detection and surveillance
    - Decisions on approach (open or covert)
    - Determine levels of force and escalations:
      - Deterrence ➔ Show of force➔ Nonviolent ➔ Less than lethal ➔ Lethal
    - Mission Planning

Vessel Inspection Noncompliant Boarding

- Noncompliant boarding team roles & responsibilities
  - Size and composition will be determined by the size of the vessel
  - Team should have broad variety of skills to evaluate all aspects of the boarded vessel
    - Should include specialist such as engineers, navigation, vessel operations.
    - Qualified medical personnel, persons with skills in first-aid
    - Force protection and security force team members
- Rules of engagement
  - Medical and casualty treatment
  - Navigation and seamanship (ship control)
  - Engineering and stability
  - Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) exposure and detection skills
  - Language proficiency
  - Information assessment
  - Detainee handling and transport
  - Hostage situation

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Vessel Inspection
Noncompliant Boarding Execution

- Boarding procedures
  - The primary objective is to swiftly gain navigational control upon boarding
  - Establish security at the initial rally point and to move quickly to take control of:
    - the pilothouse
    - engineering control station
    - Steering gear equipment if not able to control pilothouse
  - Establish a secure holding area for passengers and crewmembers
  - Conduct a full inspection of the vessel and check all documentation on vessels cargo, destination, etc. – data and evidence collection
  - Process and determination for releasing, detain, divert, or disposition a vessel

Example Scenarios

Scenario 1

- Crew shows all required documentation upon request
- AIS transmits correct vessel identifiers
- Firefighting equipment not properly maintained
- Authorized to carry claimed cargo
- Emergency generator is missing

How would you characterize this vessel: compliant or noncompliant?

What next steps would you take to resolve potential issues?

Scenario 2

- Safety equipment is operational
- Initial inspection of the vessels shows signs that the IMO number has been recently repainted
- Several gaps in AIS transmission leading up to port call
- Crew attempts to delay the boarding team
- Flag state is party to SOLAS and vessel has required documentation

How would you characterize this vessel: compliant or noncompliant?

What next steps would you take to resolve potential issues?

Scenario 3

- Crew members show no evidence of basic training
- There is a passenger on the ship who is not documented on the ship's personnel manifest
- Master of the ship keeps looking around nervously as you question him
- Crew are not sure where all the documentation is stored and ask you to get ahold of the flag registry

How would you characterize this vessel: compliant or noncompliant?

What next steps would you take to resolve potential issues?

Scenario 4

- No visible deterioration on the decks or hulls
- Manuals are available and understood by the crew with no language barriers
- AIS transmits correct vessel identifiers
- Sufficient life-saving equipment on board for all crew members
- Crew is rested and appears healthy

How would you characterize this vessel: compliant or noncompliant?

What next steps would you take to resolve potential issues?

Scenario 5

- Flag state is not party to the Maritime Labor Convention
- You cannot locate the ship's engineer
- Dark corridors in the ship reported by search team; team awaits further direction
- Master asks you to leave vessel
- Crew starts offloading cargo into the ocean

How would you characterize this vessel: compliant or noncompliant?

What next steps would you take to resolve potential issues?

Scenario 6

- Vessel is leaking fuel into the ocean

- Visible vessel deterioration on the decks and hull

- Initial inspection suggests vessel may not be seaworthy

- Crew initially complies but when issues are raised threatens the team to allow the vessel to leave port without reporting deficiencies

How would you characterize this vessel: compliant or noncompliant?

What next steps would you take to resolve potential issues?