

MSN 1704 (M+F)

CARRIAGE OF FIREARMS ON BOARD SHIPS Changes resulting from the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1997 and the Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1997

Notice to shipowners, operators, charterers, managers, shipping agents, masters, ship's officers, fishing vessel owners, skippers and crew

1. MSN 1685 (M+F) informed UK shipping interests that certain provisions of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1997 - which effectively banned large calibre handguns - entered into force on 1 July 1997 and set out how this Act affects the types of firearms which may be carried on board ships. It also forewarned of the Government's intention to ban small calibre pistols. Since the issue of MSN 1685 (M+F) the Firearms (Amendment) (No.2) Act 1997 - which effectively bans small calibre pistols - has gained Royal Assent. It will enter into force on 1 February 1998.
2. For ease of reference this M Notice repeats the advice given in MSN 1685 (M+F) and in addition sets out how the Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1997 will further affect the types of weapons which may be carried on board ships. MSN 1685 (M+F) should, therefore, be discarded.

Prohibited Firearms

3. The Firearms (Amendment) Act 1997 provides for the categorisation of large calibre handguns as prohibited firearms under Section 5 of the 1968 Firearms Act, with effect from 1 July 1997; the Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1997 provides for the same categorisation of small calibre pistols, with effect from 1 February 1998. The effect of these Acts is to introduce a general ban on the possession of all handguns. This ban will apply to the carriage of such weapons as ships' equipment. The ban has no effect upon the carriage of signalling apparatus.

Large calibre handguns

4. A large calibre handgun is defined as:

"Any firearm which either has a barrel less than 30cm in length or is less than 60cm in length overall, other than an air weapon, a small calibre pistol, a muzzle-loading gun or a firearm designed as a signalling apparatus."

5. All large calibre handguns which were held as ships' equipment by virtue of the previous exemption under the Firearms Act should have been legitimately disposed of by 1 October 1997 at the very latest. If you still have such a gun you should surrender it to the police, although you will not now be eligible for compensation.

Small calibre pistols

6. A small calibre pistol is defined as one which is either:
 - a) chambered for .22 or smaller rimfire cartridges; or
 - b) a high-powered air pistol which is designed to fire .22 or smaller diameter ammunition.

7. All small calibre pistols which are currently held as ships' equipment by virtue of the existing exemption under the Firearms Act must be legitimately disposed of no later than 1 February 1998, e.g. by lawful sale or surrender to the police. Any which are held by virtue of a firearm certificate may be held temporarily until 1 March 1998 (but see paragraph 8 below).

Compensation

8. The Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1997 makes provision for compensation payments to be made to those who owned a small calibre pistol by virtue of a firearm certificate on or immediately before 14 May 1997, and who surrender it to the police. The police will be writing separately with further details to those eligible.

Non prohibited firearms

9. The exemption from the need to have a certificate to possess non prohibited firearms (e.g. rifles and shot guns) as part of a ship's equipment will continue.
10. Since the issue of MSN 1685 (M+F) several queries have been raised regarding the carriage of firearms on board ships for use in the control of animals. All handguns are now prohibited but, where they are required solely for the humane killing of animals they may continue to be held. This exemption only applies to those handguns which are held on a firearm certificate which bears a condition restricting use of the handgun to the humane killing of animals. Although these guns may

have been held as ships' equipment without a licence until now, a firearm certificate is now required and may be obtained from your local police.

Further Advice

12. Further advice on the more general issues involved in the carriage and use of firearms on board ships can be found in M Notice 1517 on Piracy and Armed Robbery.
13. Any queries about this notice should be directed to:

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January 1998

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AND THE REGIONS